# SOUTH AFRICAN JEWS

# IN

# WORLD WAR II

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PUBLISHED BY THE
SOUTH AFRICAN JEWISH BOARD
OF DEPUTIES
P.O. BOX 1180, JOHANNESBURG
1950

PRINTED IN SOUTH AFRICA
BY EAGLE PRESS LIMITED,
19 Rockey Street, Doornfontein,
Johannesburg, Transvaal

# SOUTH AFRICAN JEWS IN WORLD WAR II

TO THE JEWISH MEN AND WOMEN
WHO SERVED SOUTH AFRICA
IN WORLD WAR II

# Roll of Honour

## KILLED OR DIED ON ACTIVE SERVICE

Abrahamowitz, Abraham Elijah, Lieut.
Abramowitz, Joseph Barnett, L/Cpl.
Adelson, Percy, Lieut.
Alexander, Richard James, Lieut.
Alpert, Daniel, Cpl.
Arkin, Solomon David, Pte.
Aronson, John Cecil, Lieut.

Bachman, Siegfried, Pte.
Bagraim, Georges Michael, Pte.
Barron, Solomon Norman, Pte.
Batzofin, Hyman (R.A.F.), P/O
Baum, Harold, Pte.
Bauman, Ludwig Friedrich, Pte.
Beel, Hans, Lieut.
Behr, Hyman Aaron, Cpl.
Behrman, Sam Lionel, Gnr.
Beiles, Oscar D., Pte.
Bellerstein, Willy P., Gnr.
Benn, Harland Trevor, W.O.II.
Berkowitz, Oscar, A/Sgt.
Berman, Nicholas, O/S.
Bernstein, Sydney (Blikkie), Pte.
Black, Bernard, Gnr.
Bloch, Arthur Stanley, Pte.
Bloch, H. S. R., Sgt.
Bloch, Leonhard Berthold, W.O.I.
Blomson, Ben, A/Sgt.
Bloom, Abraham Joshua, R.F.N.
Blumberg, Max, Sgt.
Blumenthal, Benjamin, Gnr.
Bowman, Eric Isadore, 2/Lieut.
Bornstein, Joseph Francis, Pte.
Brener, Jack Ian, Lieut.
Bronstein, Abraham Ralph, L/A/M.
Brook, Stanley Joel, W.O.II.
Brooks, J., Cpl.
Buch, Harold Julius, Capt.
Buch, Isadore Lionel, A/Cpl.
Buirski, Alfred Louis, Sgt.

Carnovsky, Leonard Adam, Lieut.
Chideckel, Solly, L/Cpl.
Cohen, Albert Henry, Cpl.
Cohen, Cecil Joseph, Spr.
Cohen, Daniel Solomon, Cpl.
Cohen, Geoffrey Harold, Pte.
Cohen, George, Lieut.
Cohen, Leonard, W.O.I.
Cohen, Nathan, Pte.
Cohen, Philip, Capt.
Cohen, Reuben, A/Sgt.
Cohen, Ronald Errol, Cpl.
Cohen, Samuel, Sgt.
Cohen, Sam Matthew, Cpl.
Cohen, Walter Geoffrey, Pte.
Colman, Dave, Pte.
Crown, Jack, Sgt.

Daleski, Cyril Saul, W.O.II.
Datt, Zalman Aaron, 2/Lieut.
Davids, Maurice Henry, Lieut.
Davidsohn, Hellmut, Pte.
Davis, Isaac, Pte.
Davis, Leo, Tpr.
Davis, Maurice, Lieut.
Davis, Raymond, A/M.
Davis, Sydney, Sig.
Dee, Cyril, Lieut.
Deitch, Ralph, W.O.I.
Dembitzer, Jack Solomon, Sgt.
Denton, Philip Allan, Lieut.
De Saxe, Harold, Capt.
Dickman, Robert Louis, Pte.
Dorfan, Manuel Solomon, L/Cpl.
Duchen, Michael, Lieut.

Egnal, Alec H., Cpl.
Eliason, Jack, Tpr.
Eliastam, Simon, A/Sgt.
Elsas, M., Spr.
Epstein, D., Sgt. (Rhodesian Forces).
Epstein, J., Sgt.
Erlichman, Norton, Gnr.

Falcke, Roy, Pte.
Falk, Werner, Cpl.
Falkson, Jack (R.A.F.), P/O.

Feinberg, Aubrey Cyril, 2/Lieut.
Feinstein, S., Capt.
Feldman, Marcus Harold, F/Sgt.
Fillis, Robert L. Benjamin, 2nd/Lieut.
Fisher, F., Capt.
Flax, Maurice, 2/Lieut.
Flax, Sydney, S/Sgt.
Flior, Mendel, Spr.
Frame, Jack, Pte.
Frank, Isidore Meyer, Spr.
Freedman, Hyman (R.A.F.), Sgt.
Freedman, Philip, Pte.
Friedland, Max, Lieut.
Friedlander, Cecil A., Sgt.
Friendly, Jock (Jocelyn) (R.A.F.) D.F.M., W.O.
Friedman, Aubrey, A/Sgt.
Friedman, George Wilfred, Sgt.

Gafanowitz, Philip, Pte.
Geffen, Sonny (R.N.V.R.), Stkr.
Gerber, Isaiah Reuben, Spr.
Gerson, Michael, F/Sgt.
Gesundheit, Bertram Victor, Lieut.
Ginsberg, Freddy, Pte.
Ginsburg, Max, L/Cpl.
Gluckman, Joseph, L/Cpl.
Goldberg, Harry, Sig.
Goldfoot, Stephen, Lieut.
Goldmann, Gilbert, W.O.I.
Goldman, J. (R.A.F., Rhodesia), Sgt.
Goldstein, Lazar, Gnr.
Goldstone, Henry Benjamin, Lieut. (Mentioned in Dispatches).
Golombick, Israel, Pte.
Good, Ralph, Lieut.
Goodman, Max, Pte.
Gordon, Nathan L., Lieut.
Green, Morris, L/Bdr.
Greenberg, Albert (R.A.F.), P/O.
Greenberg, Harry, Pte.
Greenberg, Harry Noel, Lieut.
Greenberg, Max, A/Sgt.
Greenberg, Sam (R.A.M.C.), Capt.
Greenblatt, Ben Zion, Sgt.
Greenhill, Noah, S/Sgt.
Greenhill, Ronald Arthur (R.A.F.), Sq./Ldr.
Grek, Issy H., A/M.
Gruskin, Barney (Bernard), L/Bdr.
Guinsberg, Theodore, Sig.
Gutstadt, Johannes, A/M.

Hack, Ralph, Pte.
Hacker, Abe Mannie, Lieut.
Haft, Archie Aaron Hirsch, Capt.
Hanreck, Johnny, Cpl.
Hanson, Desmond Marcus, Lieut.
Harris, Louis E. (Wolf), 2/Lieut.
Hart, Elias Lionel, Lieut.
Hazeldine, Ernest L. J., Lieut.
Hefferman, Nelson (R.N.V.R.), O/S.
Heilbronner, Leopold, Capt.
Hellman, Joseph M., 2/Lieut.
Herbert, Jack, Pte.
Hillman, Wilfred (British Forces), 2/Lieut.
Hirschman, Alf (Grenadier Guards).
Hirschowitz, Philip Louis, A/Cpl.
Hirschowitz, William, Pte.
Hirson, Sydney, Tpr.
Hoffenberg, Joseph Selig, Pte.
Houthakker, Harold Samuel (British Forces), Sgt.

Isenberg, Maurice, Lieut.
Israel, Charles, Pte.
Israelski, Kurt, A/M.

Jacks, Albert, Pte.
Jacobs, John, Capt., R.M.
Jacobs, Kenneth I., Lieut.
Jacobson, Joseph, Pte.
Jacobson, Julius, Sgt.
Jacobson, Lawrence (British Forces), 2/Lieut.
Jacobson, Ralph, P/P.
Jochelson, Hyman, W.O.II.
Jocum, Sylvia (Miss), W.A.A.F., W.O.I.
Joffe, Jack William M., Pte.
Jones, Allan Mortimer, Pte.
Joseph, Lionel, Pte.
Josephson, Gerald, Lieut.
Jude, Philip, Pte.
Judes, Aaron, Pte.

Kacev, Jose, Pte.
Kahn, Allan, A/Sgt.
Kallenbach, Charles Ferdinand. Lieut.
Kaplan, Lionel, Gnr.
Karabus, Morris, A/Sgt.
Karstaedt, Abraham Oscar, Lieut.
Katz, Alec, Spr.
Katz, Barney, A/Sgt.
Katzenstein, Kurt Manfred, Pte.
Kauffman, Simm, A/M.

Kerbell, Jacob, Lieut.
Kesner, Abe, L/Cpl.
Kessell, William Alfred, Pte.
Kibel, Harry, S/Sgt.
Kirsch, Jack, Pte.
Klagsbrun, Raymond, S/Sgt.
Klass, David Emmanuel, Lieut.
Klatzkin, Adolph, Lieut.
Kossick, Mossy, Tpr.
Kossowsky, Theodore David, Cpl.
Kotkin, Max (R.A.F.), F/O.
Kretzmar, Lazar, Pte.
Kriseman, Denzil, Lieut.
Krombein, Sidney, Lieut.
Kruyer, Simon Isaac.

Landau, Derek R., Lieut.
Lange, Max, Gnr.
Lasker, Lionel, Pte.
Lazarus, Abraham M., Lieut.
Lazarus, Nevil Irwin, Bdr.
Lee, Harry, Sgt.
Lee, Solomon, W.O.I.
Leeb, Maurice, Pte.
Len, Aaron, Pte.
Lentin, Sydney, F/Sgt.
Lesheim, Werner, Pte.
Levin, Sam, Pte.
Levin, Samuel, Capt.
Levin, Sholm Harold, Cpl.
Levithan, Arthur, Cpl.
Levy, Astor, S/Sgt.
Levy, Jack, Cpl.
Lewin, Arthur, Lieut.
Lewin, Ralph Hyman (R.A.F.), Sgt.
Lewis, Norman Leonard (R.A.F.), P/O.
Lewis, Sydney, A/Sgt.
Lewison, Bernard Leon, Pte.
Lichtenstein, Heinz, A/M.
Linde, Isaac, Cpl.
Lipschitz, Cecil, Cpl.
Lipschitz, Simon Lionel, Cpl.
Lurie, David, Lt.-Colonel.
Lurie, Lionel, W.O.I.

Magid, Moses, W.O.II.
Magid, William Joseph, Lieut.
Manasewitz, Meyer Ansil, Sgt.
Marcus, A., L/A/M.
Margolis, Hyman, Pte.
Master, Samuel, Cpl.
Masur, Dennis Stanley (R.C.A.F.), P/O.
Medalie, Alexander Morris, Lieut.
Mendelsohn, John Moss, L/Cpl.
Mendelsohn, Joseph A., A/M.
Mervis, Gordon, Lieut.
Meyerowitz, Reuben, Capt.
Meyerson, Isadore, L/Bdr.
Michel, David James, Lieut.
Miller, George (Gershon), L/Cpl.
Miller, Harry, Pte.
Miller, Solomon, A/Sgt.
Milwid, Edgar, Pte.
Morrison, Edward (Teddy), (R.A.F.), F/Sgt.
Musiker, Ephraim K., Pte.
Myers, Lewis Mark, S/Sgt.
Myerson, Stanley Sydney, Sgt.

Nidzon, Leslie, Pte.
Nochumsohn, Harry, Tpr.
Noll, Jose, Sig.

Orlek, Leslie, F/Sgt.

Pack, Marcus, Pte.
Papock, Harry, Pte.
Pass, Michael, Pte.
Perel, Monty, L/Cpl.
Phillips, Dennis Stanley, L/Cpl.
Pines, Michael, Lieut.
Podlashuc, Leopold Zalman, Cpl.
Pogrund, Samuel, Pte.
Port, Isaac, Pte.
Porter, Montague Reuben, P/P.
Posel, Isaac, 2/Lieut.
Posener, Frederick Hyman (R.A.F.), P/O.
Posener, Ies L., 2/Lieut.

Radomsky, Solomon, A/Sgt.
Raphael, Philip Reginald (R.N.V.R.), A/S.
Resnick, Morris, Pte.
Robinson, John, 2/Lieut.
Robinson, Simeon Arthur, Cpl.
Rollnick, Ezra Jonathan, Lieut.
Rosenberg, Charles Issy, A/Sgt.
Rosenberg, Louis, A/M.
Rosenberg, Louis Israel, L/Cpl.
Rosendorff, Martin, Lieut.
Rosenstein, Ernest Willy, Lieut.
Rosenthal, Jacob, Pte.
Rosenthal, Norman, Cpl.
Rosier, Isaac, L/Cpl.
Rosofsky, Harold (R.A.F.), P/O.
Rosseinsky, Leo, L/Bdr.
Roth, A., Capt.
Rubin, Allan Bernard, Pte.
Rutkin, Sam, Lieut.

Sacks, Israel Ivan, Cpl.

Sackstein, Solomon, W.O.II.
Saks, Eric, A/Sgt.
Salant, Harold, Lieut.
Sandler, Israel, Pte.
Sapiro, Samuel, Gnr.
Sarcki, Eric, A/P.
Sarembock, Harold A., Bdr.
Sarembok, Nathan, Tpr.
Saul, Edward Lawrence, 2/Lieut.
Schilansky, Ivor (R.C.A.F.), F/O.
Schneider, Aron Wolf, Pte.
Schneider, Louis, Pte.
Schneider, Solomon, Lieut.
Seel, Isidore M., Lieut.
Segal, Bernard, Pte.
Segal, D., Lieut.
Segal, Shirley Listenborgh, W.O.II.
Segal, Sidney, Capt.
Senior, Leon, Lieut.
Sevel, Harry (R.N.V.R.), Stkr.
Shain, Benjamin, Pte.
Shapiro, Gordon, Cpl.
Shear, Leo, W.O.II.
Shein, Isaac Reuben, Capt.
Sheingold, Morris, Spr.
Shepherd, Alfred Maurice, Lieut.
Shore, Herbert, L/Cpl.
Shrier, Abraham, Sgt.
Sieve, Leonard (R.A.F.), F/Sgt.
Silberman, Wilfred, Pte.
Smith, Michael, Sgt.
(Mentioned in Dispatches).
Smith, Norman Louis, A/M.
Solomon, Emmanuel, Cpl.
Solomon, Isaac, L/Cpl.
Solomon, Joe, A/M.
Solomon, Laurie, A/M.
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(Mentioned in Dispatches).
Starfield, Sybil, W.A.A.F., Capt. (Miss).
Stayne, Roger Thomas, 2nd/Lieut.
Stein, Harry, Pte.
Stein, Isaac, Pte.
Stein, Sam, Pte.
Steinberg, Louis, Pte.
Stratford, John, Capt.
Susskind, C.B., Lieut.
Swiel, Ronald, Lieut.

Tager, Samuel, M., Pte.
Tankel, Sam, Pte.
Taylor, David (R.A.F.), P/O.
Tillim, Maurice Louis, Bdr.
Toyk, Harry, Pte.
Treisman, Gerald, A/S.
Tren, Ronald, Pte.
Trifsik B., Capt.

Udwin, Leon, 2nd/Lieut.
Ullman, Peter, Pte.

Vine, Gustav Leonard, F/Sgt.
Von Mentz, Brian (R.A.F.), D.F.C., F./Lieut.

Wallis, Jack S., Pte.
Wasserman, Joshua, Pte.
Weil, R., A/Sgt.
Weinrich, Norman Alfred, Lieut.
Weiss, Abraham, M.M., Tpr.
Weyl, Franz Wilhelm, Pte.
Wilk, Jack (R.A.F.), F/O.
Wise, Edward Douglas, Spr.
Wittenberg, Cyril Harold, Tpr.
Wittenberg, Ronald Albert, Lieut.
Wulfsohn, Moritz, Bmdr.

Yankelson, Benjamin, Cpl.
Youngleson, Frank, Lieut.

Zadikoff, Audrey A. (Mrs.), W.A.A.S., Pte.
Zahn, B. W. P., M.M., L/Bdr.
Zamkov, Maurice, Sig.
Ziegler, Bernard, S/Sgt.

הנאהבים והנעימים בחייהם ובמותם לא נפרדו

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book could not have appeared without the help and advice of quite a large number of people.

In the first place our thanks are due to Mr. Eric Rosenthal, who prepared the ground-work and compiled much of the manuscript, from material assembled by the S.A. Jewish Board of Deputies.

For comments, criticisms and general assistance, we are indebted to Mr. S. Ernst, Mr. Michael H. Kam, Mr. L. Kowarsky, M.B.E., Dr. L. L. Melzer, O.B.E., M.C., Mr. N. Philips, Mrs. H. Schwartz, Dr. H. Sonnabend, Mr. L. Hotz, and many others.

We also gratefully acknowledge the assistance of Mr. R. Rudolph and members of the staff of the S.A. Jewish Board of Deputies, including Mr. G. Saron, Mr. E. Tannenbaum, Mr. J. M. Rich and Mrs. C. Tichauer in preparing the manuscript for publication, and in seeing the book through the press.

Finally, we record our thanks to the numerous men and women, Jewish and non-Jewish, in the South African Army from whose letters and articles such abundant quotations have been made.

# FOREWORD

THIS is the story of the part played by South African Jews in World War II. It has been compiled by the South African Jewish Board of Deputies as a permanent record of the contribution made by the small Jewish community — numbering at that time about 100,000 souls — towards South Africa's war effort. We hope, too, that it will help to keep green the memory of all the Jewish men and women who made the supreme sacrifice in that great struggle.

It is far from our thought to exalt the contribution made by Jews above that of other South Africans. The Springbok armies were made up of many groups — of Afrikaans- and English-speaking, of Protestants, Catholics and Jews, of Indians, Africans and Malays — all of whom fought as one for the freedom of our country. We hope that this volume will be welcomed, not merely as a record of the Jewish part, but also as a contribution towards that comprehensive history of the total South African war effort which is still to be produced.

It was not easy to decide on the scope of this book. To write a detailed account of all that South African Jews did in the field and on the home front was clearly impracticable, and indeed impossible. The only alternative, therefore, was to give a picture in general terms of the Jewish contribution as a whole, and also to mirror the progress of the war from Kenya right up to the Apennines in Italy through the experiences and achievements of *individual* Jewish soldiers. What is here presented in the main, therefore, is not a history in the strict sense, but a collection of personal records and experiences illustrative of the part which Jews played alongside other soldiers.

This method of presentation carried with it at least one defect. Through the singling out of a number of indi-

viduals by name, an injustice was necessarily done to many others whose feats of courage and acts of unselfishness have remained unchronicled. We regret that this had to be so; but the omissions (which we realise are many) are unfortunately inherent in the method adopted for the writing of this story. We hope that the reader will not forget that it is the unknown, unnamed men and women who are often the real heroes of war.

For the most part, we have let the men tell the story themselves in their own language, in the words in which they recorded their thoughts and impressions when writing to their relatives and friends. No one who reads them will fail to respond to the freshness and spontaneity of what they wrote.

One feature of this record will, we believe, strike every reader. While it tells primarily of the experiences and achievements of Jewish men and women, the narrative reflects at many points the friendship and *cameraderie* which united them with their fellow-South Africans in a period of national crisis. May that selfsame spirit continue to thrive in the no less arduous tasks of peace.

May, 1950.

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## Chapter I.

## FATEFUL DECISION

ON September 3, 1939, the Prime Minister of Great Britain, Mr. Neville Chamberlain, announced that Britain and France were at war with Germany. Though the balance between war and peace had been precarious for many months, the world reeled under the impact of the announcement. Within a few days the various member states of the British Commonwealth of Nations had decided on their position. With the exception of Eire and South Africa the decision was unanimous that diplomatic relations with Germany should immediately be severed and a state of war declared.

The Prime Minister of South Africa, General Hertzog, believed that the Union should remain neutral, but during the next three days a Cabinet crisis developed. Led by the Deputy Prime Minister, General Smuts, a majority of the Ministers, both Afrikaans- and English-speaking, insisted that it was the Union's duty, as well as her highest interest, to range herself immediately with the democracies. On September 6, the Prime Minister took the issue to Parliament which, during a memorable session, voted for war. General Hertzog resigned as Premier; General Smuts succeeded him; and a few days later South Africa entered the fight against Nazi tyranny.

Thus was a momentous step taken. The country immediately prepared itself for war. Every section of the community contributed its share. Perhaps more than most of their countrymen, the Jewish community appreciated what a calamity for South Africa a Nazi victory would be. For long, through the medium of relief work sponsored by the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, they had been in touch with their persecuted brethren in Europe. From them, as well as from the hundreds of refugees who had reached these shores, they had learned beyond doubt that

the Herrenvolk doctrine, with all its dire consequences for the rest of mankind, was no mere passing propaganda, but the very fabric of the Third Reich. They had the strongest conviction that if the Nazis won the war, South Africa, like other countries, would become a vassal state and would have to align her outlook and institutions with the gospel of Nazism, as outlined in "Mein Kampf." In that event, although perhaps they themselves would suffer most, all South Africans would be made to feel the iron heel. It was, therefore, not only Jews, but as citizens concerned for their country's welfare, that they supported the war decision.

Nevertheless, in common with the pro-war element of which they formed only a small part, they felt none of the elation that marked the outbreak of the 1914 war. The nightmare casualty lists of that conflict were still too well remembered. The mood was rather one of sombre determination. Like their fellow-citizens, the Jews resolved to play their full part both on the battlefield and in all other aspects of the war effort.

The line of the Nazi advance into Poland lay directly across vast Jewish communities among which thousands of South African Jews had kith and kin. What was to happen to these ancient settlements if the Nazis overran the country ? Belsen and the gas chambers were still horrors undreamed of except in the minds of a few homicidal maniacs; yet sufficient was known of Nazi barbarity to make the hearts of South African Jews ache for their brothers in the danger zone. With anxious eyes they scanned the newspapers, and it was with deepening sorrow that they read of the fall, one by one, of the great cities of Lodz, Cracow, and finally Warsaw itself, with its huge Jewish community.

In the Union itself there was a special problem to be faced. As a result of Nazi machinations, anti-Semitic movements unknown previously in South Africa had sprung up in the country shortly after Hitler's rise to power in Germany. Long before the outbreak of war a regular propaganda barrage was directed against the Union. This propa-

ganda was intended to inflame one racial section against another, but particular emphasis was placed on the Jewish community about whom lies, innuendoes and distortions were constantly spread. With the aid of a number of South African quislings in Germany a steady stream of " tainted news" and "poison propaganda" reached the Union.

This was a grave and anxious period — one which called for clear and vigorous leadership. Fortunately the Jewish community had an organisation which could provide such leadership. For decades the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, elected as the representative spokesmen of hundreds of congregations and societies, had attended to Jewish communal needs. Now, in the hour of crisis, it stepped out unhesitatingly to lead the community through the difficult times ahead. The government itself turned to the Board for assistance, as it did to representative institutions of other sections of the people.

## Chapter II

## JOINING UP

POLAND was overwhelmed in three flaming weeks, and the fantastic seven months of the "phoney war" set in, during which the hostile armies watched each other more or less inertly across the Maginot Line. The battle-front being thus stagnant, General Smuts announced that for the present the Union would not send over an expeditionary force. Her task, he said, would at this stage be to build her small Defence Force into a modern army of adequate size, to secure her almost undefended borders and coastline, and to convert herself into an "arsenal for democracy."

Actually, recruiting in South Africa started some months before hostilities, under Brigadier-General G. Collyer. An appeal had been sent out to bring regimental units up to full strength and, in addition, a more general National Service Register, on the English model, had been set up.

The response of Jews was in both cases substantial. Many, after completing a period of compulsory training with the "Active Citizen Force," had voluntarily maintained their association with their units. They now came forward, and many more enlisted in those anxious months immediately before the war. With the outbreak of the conflict, however, the Government launched a general recruiting drive.

In this critical hour there was no indecision within the ranks of the community. Everyone was conscious of the issues at stake. The general feeling was reflected by the editorial writer of the "Zionist Record" a few days after South Africa entered the war.

"We Jews," the journal wrote, "need no special urging or persuasion as to the line which we must follow. We are necessarily at one with our fellow-men in striving for the preservation of all those human values which the world

holds dear; and in resisting an onslaught that seeks to destroy them, our resolve is strengthened when we recall that we, the people of the Book, have been the standard-bearers through the ages of the principles of social justice and of human brotherhood."

The South African Jewish Board of Deputies, as the representative body of the Jewish community, immediately threw itself into the task of mobilising South African Jewry behind the national war effort. Its attitude from the very outbreak of the war was well reflected in a Congress resolution, passed unanimously, which read:—

"At this critical hour when Nazism is destroying the liberties of nations and individuals, and challenging the fundamental ideals of civilisation, this Congress of South African Jewry solemnly affirms the obligation of every citizen resident in the Union to rally to the defence of the country, and further pledges that the Jewish community will do all in its power to assist the Union and its allies in the fight for victory."

The military authorities, in accordance with their policy of seeking the assistance of each section of the population, approached the S.A. Jewish Ex-Service League with the request that it launch a recruiting campaign among Jewish youth. The Executive of the League, consisting of men who themselves had seen active service, at once complied.

The League first held discussions with large employers. Having enlisted their sympathies, it then addressed meetings of staffs. Committees of Jewish ex-Servicemen were formed and more and more rallies took place in business places, halls and clubs, and even, during the lunch-hour, in private houses.

Dramatic incidents occurred. Thus, after a meeting of members of Balfour Park in Johannesburg—one of the favourite sports clubs of the Rand Jewish community—nearly seventy men came forward on the spot, formed themselves into fours and marched off to the Drill Hall. At a rally in Pretoria many Jews volunteered immediately and, having been passed by doctors who were waiting, insisted on

proceeding to the training centre at Roberts Heights.

Soon the League's Executive on the Rand was able to report that enlistments there were forging ahead. Equally encouraging reports came in from other centres, large and small.

In Cape Town the Jews and Christians Shellhole of the M.O.T.H.S., founded in 1930 and containing a large number of Jewish ex-volunteers of World War I, commenced to recruit almost immediately after the declaration of war. The Jewish members of this Shellhole made recruiting speeches at socials, meetings, and even private parties. They went to all the large Jewish firms in Cape Town and urged eligible young men and women to enlist.

In its work of recruiting throughout the country, the Jewish Ex-Service League received the full support and co-operation of the Board of Deputies, and acted throughout in conjunction with the Board. Immediately after the outbreak of war the Executive Council of the Board set up a War Emergency Committee to deal with all war problems affecting the Jewish community. The Board did not confine itself to questions of recruiting, but took under its care a large variety of other matters. Thus (as will be seen in later chapters) it concerned itself with the appointment of chaplains and with providing chaplains with all the necessary religious requisites. It sought to ensure that employers fulfilled their legal obligations towards their employees who joined the Forces, irrespective of whether they were Jews or not. It maintained contact with, and had representatives on, numerous war committees. And as the men began to be demobilised, the Board also played its part in assisting their re-absorption into civilian life.

The Executive Council's war work came to be carried out through three committees: the War Service Council, charged with the duty of invigorating the community's direct contribution to national service; the War Emergency Council, which had the task of assisting the Jewish chaplains in their ministrations to the members of the Forces; and the Soldiers' Assistance Committee, whose object it

was to attend to the needs of discharged soldiers whose cases fell partly or entirely outside the ambit of the Governor-General's National War Fund and of other national organisations.

Work on similar lines was undertaken also by the Provincial Committees of the Board (often in association with representatives of the Jewish Ex-Service League) in Cape Town, Durban, Bloemfontein and Port Elizabeth, although the lion's share was naturally done at the Board's headquarters in Johannesburg.

The personnel of these Committees throughout the country included many well-known personalities in the community. Some had seen service during World War I and were not eligible for further service. Others occupied key positions on the home front, and yet others went on active service as soon as they were able to. Many of them served on these committees from the very outbreak of the war, right through to the peace and even afterwards. It is proper in this record to pay tribute to them for their devoted and sustained service in the interests of the Jewish community and the country as a whole.

Because of her internal schisms the Union could not adopt conscription, and throughout the war was forced to rely on volunteering. The problem of recruiting was a national one, and was tackled in a great national effort in which the Jewish community played its full part.

The community's duty towards the Servicemen was voiced by the Chairman of its Executive Council, the late Mr. Cecil Lyons, at the Congress of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies in June, 1940.

" Many of our Jewish young men and women," he said, " have responded to the call to join the fighting forces, and many more will follow in their wake. In thus responding to their country's call, they have only done their duty. Many of us believe, however, that a corresponding duty devolves upon the community—upon those who will remain at home

—towards the dependents of the men and women who are going on full-time service.

"That duty—in so far as it rests upon the South African population as a whole—is recognised in the South African Mayors' Fund (later, the Governor-General's War Fund). A financial contribution to that fund should be recognised as an integral part of everybody's responsibility to the nation's war effort. . . It is apparent that that fund will have to play an ever greater part in the assistance of dependents ; and if it is to be in a position to do so, the public response will have to be much greater than it has been to date. I hope, therefore, that our community will generously support that fund.

"We cannot, however, ignore our obligations towards our own Jewish soldiers. We are in duty bound to see that the dependents of the men and women who have joined up shall not be left in want.

"We owe a duty, also, to some of those people, whether in professions or in trade, who, having thrown up their source of livelihood, may be confronted with grave difficulties when, in God's good time, they return to civil life."

Mr. Lyons also dealt with the responsibility of employers towards those of their men who joined up for active service. "By and large," he said, "Jewish employers have acted generously towards their employees. Many of them have taxed themselves beyond their resources; but there may be some who have not come forward so readily. I express the hope that upon reflection they will understand where their duty lies and will play the game."

The Board received throughout the fullest co-operation of the military authorities, and on many occasions its work was officially acknowledged. In 1940, at the instance of Colonel (later Brigadier) G. C. G. Werdmuller, the Director of Recruiting, representatives of the Board's War Service Council were co-opted to the Witwatersrand Defence Force Liaison Committee, and Colonel Werdmuller on a number of occasions addressed the Council. Thanks to the work of the Council, many men and women who were

desirous of joining up were enabled to iron out their problems and to enlist.

As the South African Army grew, so the number of Jewish recruits increased proportionately. In some cases whole families signed on, and it was very common to find several sons and daughters in uniform. Selecting some examples at random from among a great many, it may be mentioned that the seven children of Mrs. S. Gordon, of Johannesburg, all enlisted. So did the five sons of Mr. and Mrs. Max Baron, of Bulawayo. Mr. Samson Gordon, of Johannesburg, on his 92nd birthday, proposed a toast to his nine grandsons in the Army.

For actual numbers, however, the Bernsteins of Johannesburg, must have been hard to surpass. Altogether, they mustered sixty relatives on active service, mostly in the South African Forces but including also some in the British, Canadian and Australian armies. The Air Force, Navy and Army were all represented in that family.

A goodly number of Jewish war veterans succeeded in joining up, although many of them were, of course, now considerably over military age. Among them may be mentioned David Maurer, of Johannesburg, who, not far from seventy years old, claimed to be the " father " of the Army. He had served with Brabant's Horse in the South African War, and with the South African Infantry in France in World War I ; and now, in World War II, joined the Northern Rhodesian Forces—being placed in charge of an explosives dump. " I have taken part in every major war during my lifetime," he said, " but I hope I will be too old for the next one."

Another old Jewish soldier to join up (he did so in 1939) was 64-year-old Private C. Gordon. In the 1914-1918 war he saw action with the 38th Battalion, Royal Fusiliers (part of the " Jewish Legion ") in Palestine under Allenby, and won the Military Medal. In this war he served with the 11th Field Ambulance in Kenya until he was invalided back to the Union, where he joined the Essential Services Protection Corps.

The spirit which animated the Jewish community at the other end of the age-scale may be illustrated by the enlistment figure of "old boys" of the South African Jewish Orphanage, Johannesburg. At the annual meeting of the Orphanage, in June, 1940, the Chairman, Mr. Woolf Hillman, announced that of sixty youths of military age reared and trained at the institution, thirty-five had already enlisted or volunteered, while the remainder included several who were physically unfit. Later this record was even improved upon.

In August, 1940, a list was prepared of Jewish employees of mine stores on the Reef. One hundred and thirty-five had signed on for active service—88 per cent. of all the eligible men amongst them.

In the smaller towns of the Union, Jewish enlistments could stand comparison with those in the cities. At Oudtshoorn, a return was published showing the names of 122 men who had joined the Army. Twenty-five of them were Jews — an impressive figure in relation to the small percentage of Jews among Oudtshoorn's population.

South-West African Jewry responded equally well to the call of service. As early as May, 1939, when a Police Reserve unit was formed to assist the regular police in coping with possible trouble, a number of Jews enrolled. With the outbreak of war, the South-West Africa Infantry Battalion came into being; and of the fifty-two who signed up on the first night of recruiting, twenty-nine were Jews, a number of other Jewish volunteers being rejected on medical grounds. Subsequently more Jews joined the battalion as well as other units of the Army and Air Force. Altogether, more than seventy-five members from the small Jewish community in South-West Africa enlisted.

In his brochure, "They Fought For South Africa," Flight-Sergeant J. Sack gave this pen-picture of the position in various units:

"The Transvaal Scottish, the Dukes, the Cape Town Highlanders, the R.D.L.I., the Irish, the R.L.I., and all the

other regiments were being brought up to strength in numbers and up to maximum fitness in training. And the usual jokes were going the round about the Cohens and the Kellys and the Scotsmen and Jews.

" What is more, Jewish affinity for the Irish and Scots regiments was reflected in the roll call each morning, when Goldberg and O'Brien, Weinstein and Macdonald, Hirsch and van Rensburg, were often in close and cordial juxtaposition.

" By the end of the year they were together not only on the parade ground and fields of manoeuvre but in the war zone."

In April, 1942, Major-General George Brink, Officer Commanding the First South African Division, stated:—

" There is a gratifying proportion of Jews in the First Division and a very high percentage in the different battalions.

" These men are of a good type and have done well. They have worked and fought side by side with their fellows. In this respect I wish to draw no distinction between the men under my command. Jews or non-Jews, they have all shown up so well, but I can say that my Brigadiers and Commanding Officers have always spoken with approval of the work and gallantry and morale of the Jewish soldiers."

Special problems in connection with enlistment had to be faced by recent immigrants to South Africa, in particular refugees from Germany and Austria. All who had not become naturalised before the war were technically " enemy aliens." Nevertheless, recognising that they would want to participate in the war against Nazi Germany, the military authorities did not at first debar them from enlisting in such units as the A.C.F. and the Coast Garrison Force. Subsequently, however, as a result of the Fifth Column panic after the fall of France, many who had eagerly volunteered in defence of the country were discharged, and all further recruiting of refugees was stopped.

At the first opportunity the Board of Deputies stepped

in. It proposed to the Government that it would investigate the antecedents and *bona fides* of those Jewish refugees who desired to join the Forces, and when satisfied would issue certificates of loyalty to them. The military authorities agreed to recognise such certificates for the purpose of enlistment, with the reservation that refugees would not be admitted to the Air Force or the Tank Corps. Subsequently this reservation also fell away.

It has not proved possible to compile separate statistics of the enlistment of such refugees, but there were many indications that they played their part. For instance, the Chairman of the Independent Cultural Association, a body composed at that time mainly of Jewish refugees, was able to announce early in the war that 25 per cent. of the total membership was in the Forces, and that the youth group had been disbanded because practically all who belonged to it were serving in the Army. (Four of the group's members were later killed at the front—one at Sidi Rezegh and the others at El Alamein.)

Quite early in the war, and periodically thereafter, rumours were circulated in disparagement of the war effort of the various sections of the population. This was probably an inevitable wartime phenomenon; but in certain cases the purpose of the rumour-mongers was undoubtedly to undermine national morale, to disturb inter-group relations and to weaken the country in its fight against Nazism.

At one time it was alleged that the Afrikaners were not responding adequately—until it was proved that they made up the larger part of the Army. Later, similar whispers went round about South Africans of English descent, particularly those in Natal. These, too, were shown to be false. It was not to be expected that the Jews would be exempted from the charge that they were failing to do their fair share.

There was only one way in which these allegations could be effectively rebutted—and that was by showing, through figures, that the Jewish community was pulling its full weight. At the very beginning of the war the Board

of Deputies appreciated the need for authoritative statistics, but in the rush of recruiting and the many emergency tasks which fell upon its shoulders, it was unable to undertake their compilation. The military authorities similarly were far too busily engaged with other high-priority tasks to prepare such statistics.

By 1940, however, a beginning was made by the Board of Deputies in the preparation of a Jewish Service Register. Information was sought from many different sources — from the Jewish chaplains, from employers of large staffs, from the relatives of men who had enlisted, from institutions whose members were on active service, from newspaper reports, etc. The compilation of such a voluntary register was costly and laborious, but no alternative method was available, and the results at best could only be approximate.

At a later stage the military authorities fortunately found it practicable to assist the Board by making available such information as they had in regard to the enlistment of Jews, as well as figures of Jewish casualties and awards. This official co-operation helped greatly in ensuring the reliability of the Board's statistics. There remained, however, two outstanding difficulties: not all Jews when enlisting stated their faith; and men who enlisted abroad were not included in the South African records. But although the Register could not be regarded as entirely comprehensive, the margin of inaccuracy—it is believed—was small.

The statistics so compiled were used time and again with great advantage in order to refute unfounded accusations and to establish the true facts regarding the Jewish community's war effort. They were quoted in the press, in Parliament and from public platforms; and if they did not entirely succeed in silencing the rumour-mongers, they went far towards doing so.

In January, 1943, the Prime Minister, General Smuts, was able to tell Parliament that 8,366 Jewish men and 542 Jewish women had enlisted, of whom about 2,200 had already seen active service outside the Union.

By April 8th of the same year the South African Jewish Board of Deputies had traced 9,181 Jews in the Union Defence Force alone, comprising 8,625 men and 557 women.

On January 25th, 1945, the number of Jews in the South African Forces had reached at least 9,830.

By the end of the war South African Jews, serving in the Union Defence Force and other allied forces, who were listed on the Board's Register, numbered just over 10,000 (9,400 men and 600 women), out of a total South African army of 211,193 (according to the official figures of the Union Office of Census and Statistics).

In actual fact probably more than 10,000 members of the Jewish community enlisted, for despite all the Board's efforts it did not prove possible to trace every Jew who had signed on. It is an impressive figure, whether considered in relation to the total of the Jewish community (above 10 per cent.) or whether compared with the enlistment of the Union's population as a whole.

The Jewish soldiers constituted 4.8 per cent. of the army, whereas the percentage of Jews in the European population constituted 4.45 per cent. (In 1936 the European population was 2,003,857, of whom 90,645 were Jews —i.e., 4.5 per cent. According to the official census in 1946, the total European population had increased to 2,372,690, and the Jewish community had grown to 103,435 — i.e., 4.4 per cent. of the total.)

Three hundred and fifty-seven South African Jews gave their lives and 327 were wounded or injured; 143 were mentioned in dispatches, two were awarded the D.S.O., seven the O.B.E., 20 the M.B.E., 14 the M.C., 16 the D.F.C., one the A.F.C., two the D.C.M., two the G.M., 22 the M.M., two the D.F.M., four the B.E.M., and two the K.M.

On the home front (both in the Union and in South-West Africa) the record of service was no less impressive. Many individual Jews made outstanding contributions towards gearing the country's industrial machine to meet the demands of war. There were few, either over military age or medically unfit—or occupying key positions on the home

front—who did not serve in one or other of the part-time units which had been established. The National Volunteer Brigade, the Civic Guard, the Civilian Protection Services—all had their due quota of Jews, and many hundreds also served with the Red Cross and the St. John Ambulance Brigade. "South African Jewry," stated Field Marshal Smuts, "has made a contribution commensurate with its number in every phase of our war effort—recruiting, service on the home front, war funds, provision of hospitality and comforts, and also, unfortunately, the casualties which are the inevitable toll of war."

It is appropriate that reference should be made here to a proposal put forward shortly after the outbreak of the war that the military authorities should be approached to make provision for separate Jewish units. Discussion on the *pros* and *cons* of the proposal continued for a long time. Various arguments were adduced in its favour, the main one being that irrefutable evidence would thus be afforded to the world at large that Jews were playing their due part in the great struggle. Reference was also made to the precedent established in World War I when the Jewish Legion and the Zion Mule Corps were brought into existence as separate units. It was contended that Jewish national aspirations in Palestine would be furthered after the war if there were tangible proof that the Jews had contributed *as Jews* to the Allied war effort.

As against this view, however, a widespread feeling against "segregation" showed itself. Many communal leaders urged that the association of Jews and non-Jews in the Armed Forces would promote a degree of fellowship and mutual understanding not possible if the Jewish servicemen and women were placed in separate units. This view was shared by the Jewish Board of Deputies, but in deference to the minority view it eventually consulted General Smuts on the matter. He emphasised the insuperable military difficulties of such separation and also set his face strongly in principle against what he called "racial segre-

gation." That ended the debate as far as the leaders of the Board were concerned.

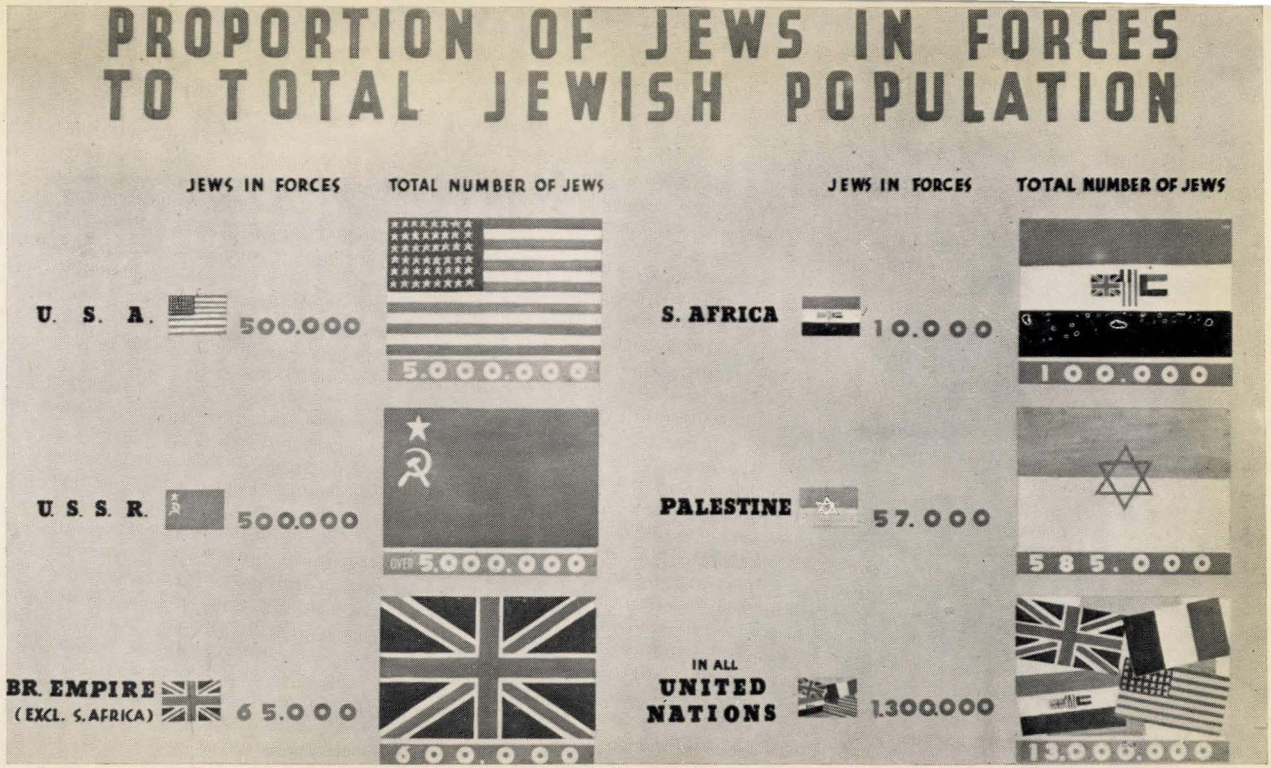
Nevertheless, the question was not allowed to drop. At the Congress of the Board in May, 1940, it once more provoked considerable discussion. The arguments of those favouring the creation of the separate units, while appreciated, were, however, not strong enough to win the day, and the proposal was finally abandoned.

Meanwhile, in Palestine itself the question was receiving serious consideration. Mr. Moses Shertok, the head of the Political Department of the Jewish Agency, made clear the attitude of the Jewish community in a Press conference which happened to be held only a few days after the Board's Congress. He explained that the position in Palestine was quite different from that in the Diaspora. Jews in Palestine could not be considered merely as Palestinians who happened to be Jews. They were in their National Home, and thus entitled to participate on a national basis in the war. Despite the strength of the case, however, the Jewish Brigade did not come into being until 1944.

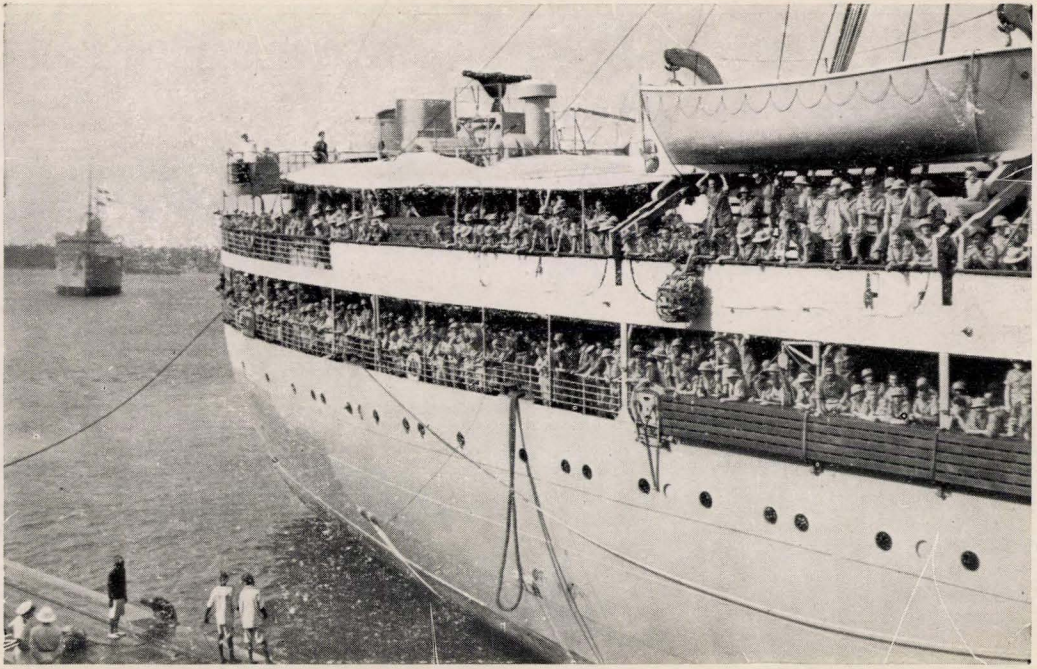
To-day it is generally conceded that a great deal of goodwill—much of it, it is hoped, of an abiding character—was indeed established because Jews fought side by side with their Afrikaans and English-speaking countrymen. There are many moving stories of comradeship between Jews and non-Jews in the Forces.

Captain H. B. Theunissen, of the Second Infantry Brigade, reflected what was being thought by many Springboks when he wrote from "Up North" to the "South African Jewish Times":

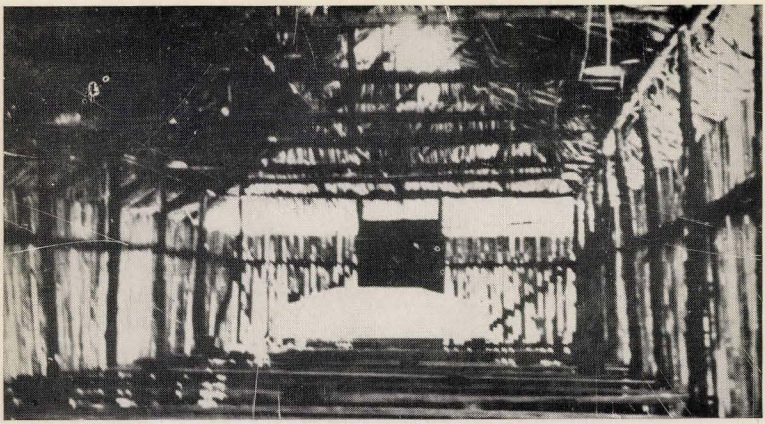
"There will be no 'Jews' or 'Dutchmen' or 'English' after this war. We have seen the rough part of life and gone through everything together. We shall be 'South Africans,' and I am sanguine that racial feeling and intolerance will go by the board. There has never been a trace of racialism in the Army, and we are going to see to it that there will be none in politics."



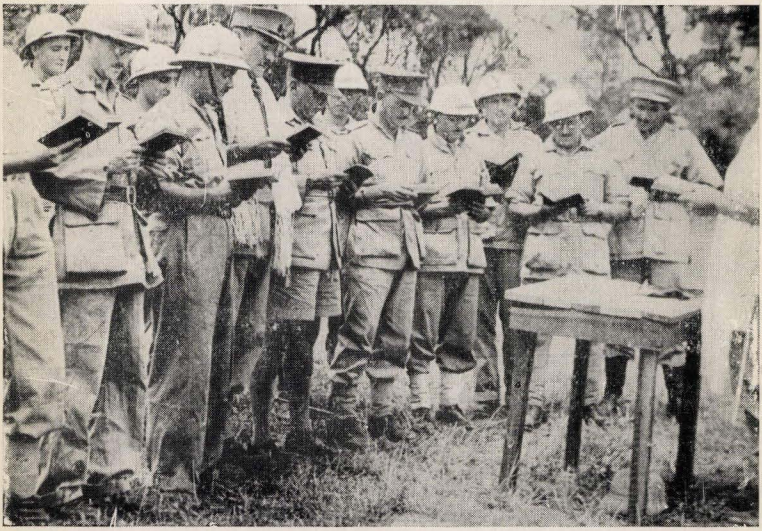

The total number of Jews who fought in the armies of the United Nations was 1,300,000—i.e., 10 per cent. of the world Jewish population. (The above chart formed part of a map displayed at the Liberty Cavalcade in Johannesburg in 1942.)



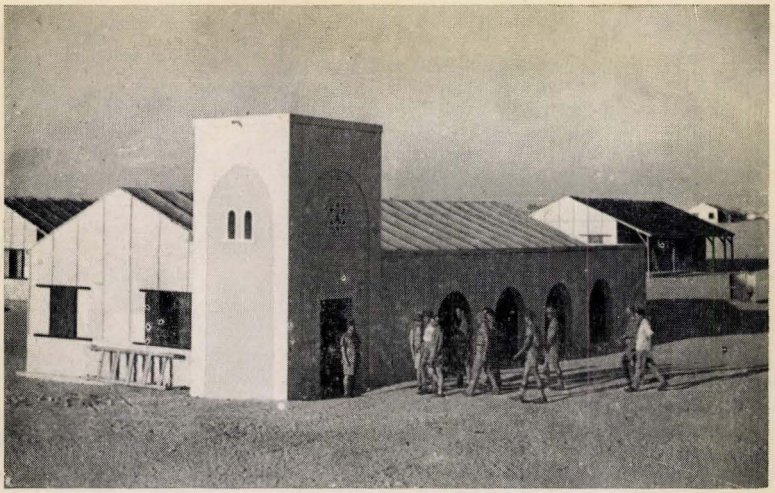
Springboks arrive in Kenya.



A temporary Synagogue at Gilgil in East Africa.



Open-air Service somewhere in East Africa.



Synagogue at Helwan.
(By Courtesy of the Bureau of Information.)



Service at Mersa Matruh.

## Chapter III.

## UNDER FIRE

ON June 10, 1940, when France was reeling after the German break-through, Italy declared war. The Fascists had joined the Nazis ; and with Italy's entry into the war the Union's position was instantly changed. The battle had suddenly leaped to South Africa's own continent. Italy had big armies in her colonies poised to strike eastward and southward. No longer could the Union content herself with keeping the Cape route open for the Allies or making herself into an arsenal for them. Self-preservation demanded that she meet the enemy on his own ground, as far away as possible from her borders.

Fortunately, she no longer stood relatively defenceless. During the "phoney war" period great camps had risen on the veld at Sonderwater, Potchefstroom, Ladysmith and many other places. Nearly 100,000 South Africans were under arms and an expeditionary force had been built up to attack Mussolini's empire in Africa. Shortly after the fall of France a fleet of transports, laden with South African troops, sailed from Durban harbour.

A week later the Springboks were on the soil of Kenya, their first base up North. In the pleasant equatorial uplands of Gilgil, and soon afterwards in the blazing Turkana desert on the outskirts of Italian East Africa, the men received their final training and waited for orders. The Springboks were about to move into battle.

On December 16, 1940, the Springboks fought their first action at El Wak, on the border of Kenya, followed soon afterwards by their drive into Italian Somaliland, past Kismayo, towards the interior and the mountains bordering on Abyssinia. It is not intended to trace the sequence of the military struggle as it unfolded; rather is it proposed to quote from interesting letters of individual soldiers and to report incidents of interest in which Jews were involved.

The story of how Lance-Corporal Ben-Arie, a Springbok born in Palestine, "captured" an island is one which was often retold in the First Brigade. The adventure took place after the fall of Kismayo. The Italians had withdrawn across the Juba River, destroying the bridges and placing as much artillery as possible on the island of Jumbo. At the end of considerable fighting, the Springboks had everything ready for a final assault, when the enemy ran up the white flag.

"Once the white flag was hoisted it was our duty to parley," wrote an eye-witness. "A soldier of the Italian Colonial Infantry appeared on the bank opposite to our positions near to where Ben-Arie was situated. The officer commanding the company (Major B. Wells) told Ben-Arie to cross the river in a little boat and to ascertain the Italians' intentions.

"In spite of being covered by mortars and machine-guns, Ben-Arie's mission was dangerous. The Australians had had several bad experiences in the Western Desert, where the Italians used the white flag as a decoy.

"Rowed by a Somali, he crossed the Juba. When he reached the Italian bank, he instructed the infantryman to take him to the Garrison Commander of the fort and town. Corporal Ben-Arie issued his orders in accordance with instructions conveyed to him by dint of much shouting and gesticulation from Major Wells, who waited impatiently on the far side of the river. In terms of the surrender, the Italian soldiers advanced to the banks and laid down their arms.

"When this ceremony was concluded, the Italian Commander asked Ben-Arie whether he was an Arab or Italian. Without turning to the Somali who had acted as interpreter during the proceedings, Ben-Arie replied: 'Je suis Juif' (I am a Jew).

"By this time many men of the regiment had made their way across, some by boat and others by means of a cable a little way upstream. It had, however, definitely been established that Ben-Arie was the first man in the

Imperial Forces to set foot on Jumbo Island, and, in accordance with military tradition, 'he took Jumbo'."

Glimpses of the fighting in the East African campaign were given by a Jewish Springbok, Sergeant-Major Susser, who wrote in his diary:

"My company received orders to proceed to Turbi Hill (about thirty miles from the Abyssinian border as the crow flies) to establish ourselves there, and send out patrols to Sololo Hills, just off the border, for reconaissance purposes.

"We arrived at our destination early in the morning and sent out our first patrol, headed by armoured cars. All went well until fifteen miles from Turbi, when the leading armoured car was fired on and returned the fire, chasing the enemy out of their position. One of my platoons went forward to investigate, but found nobody, so we continued on our way.

"Ten miles further on the leading armoured car fell into a tank trap, and then they let go with everything they had. It is impossible for me to give a clear account of what happened. We were up against Native troops and were, in a sense, quite unprepared for what occurred, as we had been given no information about enemy activity in this region. We were well and truly ambushed. The bush there is terribly thick, and it was impossible to see five yards in front of you.

"The boys behaved marvellously. They took what cover they could and withheld their fire until they could see what to fire at, and then let them have it full speed ahead. It was extremely annoying to be under machine-gun fire, to take cover behind a bush, and then have the bush shot away above your head until practically nothing was left of it. The enemy were so close that we could hear their rifle-bolts clicking. Anyhow, after they had set the bush alight and destroyed one of our lorries, we managed to put them to flight and returned to our station, having had 11 casualties, including one officer. All these have now recovered.

"We ascertained from documents captured that the enemy consisted of a trained colonial infantry Native batta-

lion (the full battalion was not there), and not the usual untrained bands of irregulars.

" Quite a baptism, eh? After that, they never came back again. My company was relieved and we returned to a place near Marsabit for a rest.

" While we were at Turbi we were rationed to three bottles of water per day for all purposes, as our water had to be transported from Marsabit eighty miles away. We also had no fresh bread, vegetables, etc., while we were there. Several of our fellows have been mentioned in dispatches and may get awards.

" When we passed the place, we noticed a frightful stench which came from the dead enemy bodies. I believe we accounted for a hundred of the enemy.

" Just before we entered British Moyale one of our vehicles struck a land-mine and had its mudguard and front wheel blown off. Nobody was hurt, the driver and officer being only temporarily stunned. After this, the engineers went forward to examine the road and removed 115 land mines before we proceeded on our way. We slept at Italian Moyale, just inside Abyssinia, that night and went on to Mega, 70 miles inside Abyssinia, the next day. At Mega we had to be very careful where we walked, as practically the whole area had been mined by the Italians, who had wonderful defensive positions there, which they were unable to hold on account of not having sufficient men or equipment. I am now the proud possessor of a *siddur* signed by Captain Menachemson (a Jewish padre) in Abyssinia.

" Wajir was the worst place we had struck so far. It is real desert, pukka Foreign Legion. The daily temperature averaged 125 degrees, and the water was the worst we have had and was almost undrinkable. I believe that this is supposed to be the place where the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon met and sank 1,000 wells.

" Here, too, we did not get fresh food. We left the fort and arrived a day later at Nanyuki, 200 miles north of Nairobi. This is civilisation once more. The place is situated right on the Equator, but the altitude is

some 7,000 feet, and accordingly, although it is hot by day, it is extremely cold at night. We get everything here—fresh food of all kinds, even cows' milk, and tents once again."

An incident of a more amusing kind was related by Staff-Sergeant V. D. Michelson, who had fought at Gorai and Mega. "An Italian officer who surrendered a little mud fort to us," he said, "made a long speech. 'Like soldiers we have fought,' he declared, 'and like soldiers we make peace. Politicians make wars. You and I fight them. We recognise that you have done very well. I hand you my fort.'"

Among those in the bayonet attack at Mega was Staff-Sergeant Rosen, of the South African Irish. Three Nazi officers, who had brought naval guns from the coast, were captured with the Italians. "These Germans," said Rosen, "were all curiosity. When we told them that we were South Africans, they seemed to find it difficult to believe, and when we added that we were all volunteers, they did not accept it."

Rosen was not the only Jew to serve with this Irish regiment. Quite a number enlisted under the emblem of the shamrock, among them Private Geoffrey Harold Cohen, of the 1st South African Irish. Being a musician, he was made piper to his battalion.

Service of a different nature was rendered by Lieut.-Colonel Jack Lurie of Cape Town. When the war broke out he was in England, intending to qualify as a lawyer. Suspending his studies, he joined the Middlesex Regiment as a private, was promoted rapidly and at the end of 1940 was in charge of a machine-gun platoon in Scotland. Lurie was then included in a picked group of men and sent on a "hush-hush" mission to East Africa. Here he was seconded to the King's African Rifles. Before he was thirty, Lurie was Assistant Adjutant and Quartermaster-General in East Africa, and at the age of thirty-one was one of the youngest Colonels in the British Army.

Another South African attached to the King's African

Rifles was Captain Israel Genussow, formerly of Barkly West, son of a well-known Zionist pioneer. Though the authorities asked him to continue with important research work at Leeds University (where he specialised in agricultural chemistry), he soon joined the Green Howards and was transferred to the K.A.R. He did well with this unit and was then placed in another responsible position during the Madagascar expedition. Unfortunately Genussow, after service in India, lost his life as a result of injuries sustained on active service.

An exceptionally gallant group of Rhodesians fought in the lone and desperate campaign which resulted in the temporary evacuation of British Somaliland. Among them were a number of Jews, including Sergeant David Fleischman. Born at Robertson, Cape Province, Fleischman went to Bulawayo at an early age and was among the first to enlist in the Colony's forces. His earliest opportunity to go on active service was with the Somaliland Camel Corps. For gallantry during the retreat he was awarded the Military Medal, probably the first Southern Rhodesian Jew to gain a decoration in World War II.

When the Springboks penetrated into Abyssinia they encountered a most interesting community, the Falashas, or Abyssinian Jews. Contact with them was made by individual South African Jewish soldiers, one of whom—Company Sergeant Major Cedric Feinberg of Pietermaritzburg—wrote :

"In doing our job for the safety of South Africa we have also done a service to Jewry. Somewhere in Abyssinia there are about 50,000 Falasha Jews. By our conquest we have also freed our co-religionists from the yoke of Fascist persecution, and at the first *Seder* when we celebrated in our own small way the exodus of Jewry from Egypt, these people also celebrated the lifting of the yoke and the regaining of their freedom."

Another interesting contact was reported by Sergeant-Major Bennie Goldberg, of the First Field Bakery in East Africa, and later of the First Divisional Field Bakery. He

had to perform the funeral rites for Sergeant-Major Astor Levy, who died at Dire Dawa. The Falashas not only provided a *talith,* which was draped over the coffin next to the Union Jack, but also lent the *paroches* of their ancient synagogue. Elders of the Falashas were present. Jewish and Christian soldiers clubbed together to pay for the tombstone.

The spirit of comradeship and mutual regard which prevailed in the Army is described by Private L. Witz, of a motor transport unit, who wrote home:

" A wonderful spirit prevails in the Army among Jews and Christians alike. Many of our comrades who have never before been in contact with Jews now tell us how misled they were about the Jewish people before the war started. To-day they look forward to the near future when we shall all live in close harmony in the Union."

The comradeship was unbroken even in death. Among the large number of Springbok graves scattered far and wide in East Africa, Somaliland, Eritrea, and Abyssinia are those of many Jews. The *Magen David* can be found on tombstones near Cambolecia and Addis Abeba, at Omo and at Amba Alagi. The melancholy distinction of being the first member of the South African Army to fall in action goes probably to Sydney Lazarus, of Robertson, Cape Province, who was shot down by the Italians near El Wak. Private Harry Miller, of the " Dukes," had the first military funeral after the South Africans left for the front. Private Aaron Judes, of the South African Irish, from Randfontein, was the first South African Jew killed in Abyssinia—in February, 1941.

The parents of Lieutenant H. B. Goldstone of the South African Engineering Corps who fell in Abyssinia, received this message from his Commanding Officer:

" Your son," wrote the Colonel, " died gallantly while cutting the demolition cables of an important bridge, which was at the time still under the control of the enemy. He showed the utmost keenness to complete his task, the importance of which was obvious. He was killed on Union Day, 1941, pledging with his own life his faith in South

Africa's future." The message could well serve as an epitaph to all those who gave their lives in the campaign.

By the end of 1941, the last stronghold of the enemy in East Africa had fallen to the Allies. Keren, a reputedly impregnable fortress, flew the Union Jack. British Somaliland had been reconquered. The Duke of Aosta had marched down from the peak of Amba Alagi in order to surrender. Gondar, where the Italian flag remained the longest, capitulated in the end.

A chapter in World War II. was over. The next was due to open in the Middle East.

## Chapter IV

## INTO EGYPT AND THE WESTERN DESERT

THE drama in Abyssinia closed with the capitulation of the Italians, and the curtain was about to rise for the Springboks in the Western Desert. To British and other Commonwealth troops, however, the scene was already familiar. They had previously tasted both success and misfortune there. General Wavell had once driven back the armies of Graziani. Then the tide had swung against the Allies and the enemy besieged Tobruk. It was at this stage that a large contingent of South African troops moved up into Egypt by land and by sea.

Of the journey by land Lieut.-Colonel Lionel Melzer, O.B.E., M.C., a Jewish doctor with the Union forces, wrote:

"The trip from Abyssinia to Egypt by road took us close on seven weeks, though it can be done by air in just over a day. Although very trying, it was most interesting. Whenever we reached a new village or town, we immediately inquired whether it contained any Jews. In most of the villages the only Europeans were British Government officials, and we seldom found any Jews among them. In Khartoum, however, it was very different. My first intimation that an organised Jewish community existed in Khartoum came when I overheard one of my men being greeted by a pal from a previous convoy with the words: 'You should meet the Rabbi's daughter. She's a real peach.' When we eventually contacted the Rabbi, we found that the description of his daughter was hardly an exaggeration.

"The Rabbi himself was quite indistinguishable from any elderly Rabbi. He was a little man with a white beard and was dressed in a long white cloak. He was barefooted and sat cross-legged on the couch in true Arab fashion. Arabic was his home language and he lived in the Arab quarter. Through him we met several Jewish families, mainly Spanish Jews. I found a strong desire among many

of these people to migrate to Palestine."

Cairo, brain-centre of the Allied defences in the Middle East, was soon overrun with red-tabbed South Africans, who mingled with Australians, New Zealanders, Indians, West Africans, British and Free French. There were also in Egypt a large number of Jewish soldiers from Palestine, for this little country had sent thousands of her Jewish settlers to join the Allied forces and had also become an important source of war material. These Jews, now in uniform, were often to be seen in Cairo.

The Springboks established their base at Helwan, and new drafts constantly arrived. Some were rookies fresh from Sonderwater, others veterans who had seen action many times. Brass-hats of all kinds were in evidence, including the much-loved late General Dan Pienaar.

Everybody knew that big things were being decided beyond the far, empty horizons of the Western wilderness. The hush-hush railway, destined ultimately to reach Tobruk, was being extended as fast as fighting would allow. Nazi and "Iti" planes scouted over the Suez Canal and occasionally attempted to block it by bombing the ships. Enemy speed-boats tried to raid the base at Alexandria, and finally succeeded in sinking a British battleship.

While the South African Forces were undergoing rigorous training to equip them for the special demands of war in the desert—and later, when they came to Cairo on leave from the fighting zone—they were always made welcome at "Smuts House." Here they came together to exchange experiences. Sometimes there was community singing.

Lance-Bombardier B. Gordon said that he was present one evening during *Rosh Hashana* in 1943, when "Sarie Marais," the unofficial South African "anthem," was sung in Hebrew, the text being supplied by some ingenious Palestinians. The new version went right through the Middle East and was specially featured in the "Springbok," weekly organ of the Union Defence Forces, printed at Cairo.

The Jewish communities of Cairo and Alexandria set

themselves out to provide entertainment for Jewish soldiers from abroad and their task was made easier because one of the leading personalities in Egyptian Jewry originally came from Cape Town. This was Mr. Aaron Alexander, younger brother of a man who had been for more than a generation a member of the Union Parliament, namely, the late Morris Alexander, K.C.

In World War I. Aaron Alexander did his utmost to help South Africans and co-religionists, and when World War II. came, again excelled himself in good works. Thousands of Springboks, as well as Imperials, a goodly percentage of them Jews, enjoyed his hospitality. General Smuts himself was his guest on many occasions during visits to the troops in Egypt. Neither Aaron Alexander nor his wife, a member of the well-known Mosseri family of bankers in Cairo, spared themselves, and his death a few months after victory in 1945 was mourned by a large number of men and women to whom he had been a warm friend.

There were other Jewish families, too, both in Cairo and Alexandria, who entertained the troops royally. To them the Jewish community of South Africa, and South Africans generally, owe a debt of warm gratitude.

Meanwhile, the Springboks had been built up into a formidable striking force and batch by batch, as they completed their training, moved into the battle zone. Other troops in the Western Desert were awaiting their arrival.

The First South African Division took up position at Mersa Matruh, in peacetime a coastal resort on the Mediterranean, now a formidable fortress and a gateway to the open desert. It was here that the Springboks encountered the first evidences of the battles of the year before when Graziani's guns had shelled the fortress. Everywhere buildings lay in ruins. The roads were littered with debris. Amongst the dunes there were burnt-out vehicles and charred scraps of steel, and near the sea deep bomb-craters which the moving sands were constantly filling up. Higher up, around the bay, the men had made their dug-outs.

Training by day and bombed by night, they were soon hardened enough to begin the first stage of the long pilgrimage which lay ahead—a pilgrimage which started with Auchinleck's encircling attack and ended in the great victory of El Alamein.

In the battles which followed the Springboks played a notable part; there were many Jews among them. Not a unit, from the Transvaal Scottish to the Orange Free State's Afrikaans-speaking Regiment President Steyn; not an arm of the Service, from Infantry to Artillery, Armoured Cars, Engineers, Medical Corps and Air Force, but had its quota of Jews who participated in every phase of the fighting.

One of the first great disasters which the South African troops faced was at Sidi Rezegh, November, 1941, when the 5th Brigade, under Brigadier Armstrong, was overwhelmed by superior German forces.

A number of Jews were among those killed that day, including Lieutenant Philip Denton, an artillery officer, and Dennis Roy Falcke. Dennis' brother, Corporal Wilfred Montague (Billy) Falcke, of Vereeniging, a veteran of Abyssinia, was captured but escaped after a few hours and linked up with the remains of the 5th Brigade. The same eventful afternoon, however, he was taken prisoner a second time and regained his freedom only at the end of the war.

Better fortune came to Private Ernest Cohen, of Johannesburg. Wounded in both legs, the hands and back, he was taken prisoner by the Germans, but escaped by leaping from a captured ambulance. For four days he wandered about the desert without food or medical attention and almost without water. Then he was recaptured, but broke away again when the enemy guard was intercepted by a British patrol. Under cover of severe shelling Cohen and some friends escaped.

Private Marcus Levin, of Cape Town, captured and placed in a German truck, was kept on the move for two hours. "Then," he said afterwards, "our artillery opened fire on the column and I was hit in the head by shrapnel. I remembered nothing more until two days afterwards,

when I found myself in a British ambulance."

The Military Medal was awarded to another Jew, Lance-Corporal Joseph Wallis, 5th Field Company, South African Engineering Corps. He was in a sub-section which went forward to the 1st South African Irish. While the vehicles were going up the slopes of Two Tree Hill, they came under artillery fire. Orders were given to withdraw to cover.

Lance-Corporal Wallis brought out his own vehicle and under shellfire walked back to remove an infantry vehicle whose driver had apparently not heard the withdrawal order.

" After that," according to the citation, " he went forward with his sub-section under Lieutenant Barker, the sub-section following the advance of the infantry and looking for minefields on the road." When the minefield on the left of the road was discovered, Lance-Corporal Wallis was the first man to get there.

" He dug with his bayonet until he found a mine, removed it and personally took it to pieces to discover how best it could be rendered harmless before removal. This was a most courageous action, as the mines were home-made, and Lance-Corporal Wallis had absolutely no knowledge as to how they worked.

" As was subsequently discovered, most of the mines in this particular field had a hair-trigger setting. Lance-Corporal Wallis knew precisely the effect the mines had on exploding, but knowing it was essential to make them safe to handle, he unhesitatingly stripped the first one he came across."

Captain Frank Solomon, of the Transvaal Horse Artillery, was awarded the Military Cross. Son of the late Charles Solomon and Mrs. Bertha Solomon, M.P., Captain Solomon had qualified for the Bar before the war. His achievement was officially recorded as follows:

" On November 23, 1941, at Sidi Rezegh, this officer was at his battery post, which was being heavily shelled and which was being attacked by enemy infantry. The cable between ' D ' Troop and its observation post had been cut by shellfire. Lieutenant Solomon called for volunteers to

man a cable-laying vehicle, which he himself drove, and re-established communications.

" The cable was laid over absolutely open country, and the vehicle became the centre of enemy fire. During the whole operation, Lieutenant Solomon showed remarkable initiative, great presence of mind and bravery under heavy fire. His act enabled our guns to continue firing and beat off the enemy infantry attack."

A well-deserved M.B.E. came to Captain (later Major) A. L. Kowarsky. He had received his commission in 1940 and on the eve of the battle had been promoted to captain. The citation read: " This officer served in the Third Transvaal Scottish and the Fifth South African Infantry Brigade in Abyssinia and Egypt. He was present with his regiment at Sidi Rezegh in command of a company, where he displayed great courage on the battlefield. He was badly wounded on that occasion and was subsequently evacuated to the Union."

For his part in the battle Lance-Corporal Herman L. Katz was mentioned in dispatches and the same honour was conferred on Sergeant H. L. Friedland and Sergeant-Major Philip Grossman.

Interesting descriptions of the fighting around Sollum were given by Padre W. Yesorsky, of the Third Brigade, Second Division.

" We have so long now been here in the emptiness," he wrote, " that the sand and dust seem to have entered into our very bones and to have become part of us. We have moved about this vast desert so much and so often, that the wanderings of our ancestors pale into insignificance. True, they were forty years in the desert, but they had quite a lot of static life. As for us, no sooner did we encamp, than we were again on our journey.

" At last the time came when we were called upon to drive the enemy out of their strongly-held positions at Bardia, Sollum and Halfaya Pass. The brigade to which I am attached has the distinction of having more Jews in

its ranks than any other Brigade in the South African Army. One of its regiments, the famous Imperial Light Horse, has earned for itself the name of 'Israel's Last Hope' on account of the large number of its Jewish members.

" To this brigade and attached troops was assigned the task of attacking and occupying the fortress of Bardia. It was during *Chanukah* that the first attack was made, in which we lost two of our Jewish boys, Corporal I. Sacks and Private W. Hirschowitz, both of the First Battalion of the Royal Durban Light Infantry. They died like Maccabees in defence of freedom and justice. Both displayed great courage and were very popular among the officers and men of their regiment.

" When the second and main attack took place on December 31, 1941, and on January 1, 1942, the battalions mainly concerned were the Imperial Light Horse and the Rand Light Infantry. In this action, we had the misfortune to lose ten Jewish boys in the Imperial Light Horse, one in the Rand Light Infantry and also one in the supporting regiment, the Kaffrarian Rifles. Many of our boys were wounded.

" Very soon afterwards came the battle of Sollum, in which engagement we lost four Jewish boys. No fewer than eighteen laid down their lives during these fierce battles and more than thirty were wounded in the Imperial Light Horse.

" We lost Corporal A. Levitan, Private C. Israel, Private M. Resnick, Private L. Schneider, Private S. Bernstein, Private J. Frame, Private M. Pass, Private H. Baum, Private A. Bloch and Private L. Baumann. The Jewish casualities in the Second Transvaal Scottish (in the battle of Sollum) were Corporal J. Mendelson, Private I. Golombik, Private L. Nidzon and Private A. Jacks. In the Rand Light Infantry, among those who fell were Private D. Colman and, in the Kaffrarian Rifles, Rifleman A. J. Bloom. All were fine Jewish boys, whose names will be enshrined for all time in the minds and hearts of their comrades, and whose sacrifice will not have been in vain. May their dear souls

rest in peace.

"Memorial services were held in all the units, and our fallen comrades are remembered by us in our prayers at our services. Many were the amazing acts of courage and bravery, and some of our boys have been commended for their heroism."

Corporal Leo Meyerowitz of the Rand Light Infantry, was awarded the Military Medal. "On the morning of December 31," Padre Yesorsky stated, "an enemy gun-post was holding up the advance of a platoon on the right flank. Meyerowitz's section was detailed to bring mortar-fire on the post. Owing to the proximity of our own troops to the enemy, this was not possible without endangering their lives.

"Meyerowitz volunteered to go forward and deal with the post himself. He crawled until it was possible to bring fire on the machine-gun. By so doing, he considerably reduced the number of casualties incurred. The Corporal was seriously wounded, though he is making good progress to complete recovery."

Another piece of gallantry was described by a non-Jew, Private Felix Werdmuller, who wrote from a prison camp in Italy about a friend: "Just one important matter, which might be handed on to Mrs. Chorn, of Malmesbury. Her son Alec, in my platoon, when I was wounded, regardless of his own safety, with shells dropping all around him and under intense gun-fire, bravely came to my help; he placed me in a small trench for safety and kept guard over me until a tank contingent of the enemy captured us."

The good feeling which existed between the Jews and their comrades often expressed itself in banter. For example, an armoured car which was manned entirely by Jews was nicknamed "Hopping Moses." Occasionally, however, the comradeship was expressed in a graver way. An illustration is the following notice inserted in a newspaper by a non-Jew in memory of a Jewish friend:

"Jacks.—In proud and loving memory of Pte. Albert Jacks, of the Transvaal Scottish, who was killed in action

IN DEATH THEY WERE NOT DIVIDED.



El Alamein.



Sidi Rezegh.



Bir El Gubi.



Padre M. Natas meets the Tigrinna Jews in North Africa.



With a group of Liberated Jews on Djerba Island.



The Late Brigadier F. H. Kisch of the Eighth Army.

NEW YEAR MESSAGE TO JEWISH OFFICERS AND MEN

OF THE 6 SA ARM'D DIV

FROM THE G O C

My message to you at KHATATBA last year referred to the dawning of a New Year full of hope, and marked by the massing of the forces of the United Nations for the final drive to liberate the oppressed peoples of Europe.

The United Nations are now well on their way towards their goal and it has taken stern fighting on all fronts to achieve the progress made.

The 6 South African Armoured Division has played a big part in driving the Hun back through ITALY to his present positions and all ranks of the Division have done their full share of the work.

I would like to thank all you members of the Jewish Faith for the part you have played and for the high standard of courage and determination which you have shewn throughout. Some of your members have made the supreme sacrifice - all honour to them.

To those of you who have recently joined us, I extend a hearty welcome and recommend to you to follow the fine example set by your older comrades.

We continue forward with the firm resolve to do all in our power, individually and collectively, to prosper the Allied Cause.

May the nascent year 5705 be the most momentous in History, bringing Victory and Peace.

God bless you in all your undertakings.

Maj - Gen
G O C
6 SA ARM'D DIV

Major-General W. H. Evered Poole's New Year Message to Jewish Springboks in September, 1944.

at Sollum on January 11, 1942, and to the memory of his pal, Jumbo, and other gallant comrades of 'C' Coy., who made the supreme sacrifice and are buried together at Fort Capuzzo. Go into the darkness and put out thine hand into the hand of God."

During these few months fate was kinder to the Allied forces in the Western Desert. Bardia and Sollum were stormed and overrun; Tobruk was relieved; and Halfaya Pass was captured.

Early in 1942 the Allies entrenched themselves in a defence line around Gazala Bay and southwards towards the sandy regions of Libya. Opposite them lay the Afrika Korps and elements of the Italian Desert Army. A commander of genius, General (later Field-Marshal) Rommel was reorganising the enemy army, preparing it for a gigantic assault aimed at penetrating the Allied defences and driving the defenders back to the Suez Canal. The attack came in May 1942. The Afrika Korps struck at the southern end of the line, which was considered impenetrable because of the heavy sands. Nevertheless the enemy tanks broke through, encircling the forward troops from the East and cutting through the tenuous communication lines.

The Allied forces, cut off from supplies, were soon forced to retreat along the shores of the Mediterranean eastwards towards Tobruk. The aim was to reach static positions once more, so that an effective counter-attack could be launched.

## Chapter V

## TOBRUK

ON Saturday morning, June 20, 1942, the Afrika Korps launched a sudden attack upon Tobruk. Enemy aircraft soared over the besieged garrison in preparation for the assault on the eastern perimeter. There was no air cover; hardly any tanks; and the few anti-aircraft guns were too scattered to put up an effective air screen. The outside defences crumbled almost at once, and before nightfall enemy tanks had driven a deep wedge into the citadel almost to the harbour's edge.

General Klopper, who was in command of the garrison, wirelessed Eighth Army Headquarters for instructions. He was keen to fight his way out and rejoin the eastward withdrawal, but no instructions came; and, acting upon the advice of his senior officers, he surrendered.

The days which followed were among the darkest South Africa experienced during the whole war. The country lost a Division of trained fighting men. Virtually the entire Second Division was taken prisoner and removed to the prison camps of Italy and Germany.

There had been Jews among those holding Tobruk even during the earlier siege by the Germans, when the fortress held out for a long period until relieved. For instance, Lieutenant Wilfred Hillman, of Johannesburg, who was practising as an architect in England when war broke out, served with a famous North of England machine-gun regiment inside the perimeter for seven months and took part in the repulse of the two onslaughts of April and May, 1941.

When the Springboks took over garrison duty, the number of Jews among the defenders of the fortress increased. Some of them distinguished themselves. Thus the George Medal went to Temporary Lieutenant Abraham Barnard, 95 Bomb Disposal Company, South African Engineer Corps. The citation stated that he "performed excep-

tional services while commanding a bomb-disposal section at Tobruk from March 12, 1942, until the fall of the town on June 21, 1942. During this time, he disposed of over one hundred unexploded bombs. During the night of May 27 to 28, 1942, he was called upon to deal with a 500-kilogram bomb which had fallen into a gunpit on the south-west perimeter. Owing to enemy action, he was unable to approach the site on his truck. He took his party forward on foot, dug out the unexploded bomb and dragged it 300 yards clear of the gunpit, thus enabling the gun crew to go into action once more.

" During this operation, his party was subjected to heavy air attacks. He showed complete disregard of his own personal safety while directing his men."

Here it may be mentioned that of the eight South Africans who received the George Medal during the war, two were Jews: Lieutenant Abraham Barnard, and Corporal Bernard Friedlander of Port Elizabeth. Barnard joined the South African Engineering Corps in 1940. Both he and his brother were taken prisoner at Tobruk.

On the eve of the disaster Private Ernest Kirsch, of the Cape Town Highlanders, was in one of the two platoons chosen to fight the rearguard action upon which depended the safe withdrawal of his battalion. Confronted by a solid line of German machine-guns, both gallant little units were overwhelmed. They had fought until they were physically unable to continue. Kirsch was among the prisoners and was taken to Derna and thence by hospital ship to Naples.

Private Ernie Fingleson, of Johannesburg, wrote to the head of the firm for which he worked in peacetime: " We were under fire at 4.30 a.m. Daylight came and there were about 150 yards to go, with just six inches of bush to cover us. The stream of lead that came our way could have made a battleship . . . Never would I have given a halfpenny for our chance of getting out alive.

" Their artillery put up a barrage and we jumped with fixed bayonets to a ' Charge of the Light Brigade.' We covered 100 yards with the feeling in our stomachs that

the machine-guns had us well beaten. One opened up on the right . . . we fell flat . . . I prayed ten thousand times. Then they dropped mortar bombs on the whole area.

" We were so close that we could hear the screaming of the Jerries or the Itis, though no Iti could have remained there while we advanced. My pals from another section said that the way I came through a hail of lead was enough to make them laugh. They shouted: ' Six to four they don't get you.' In fact, my Major asked me if I was laying the odds. A smoke-screen was laid down and my section in front was able to do a ' Dunkirk ' back."

Twenty-two-year-old Private Montague Cecil Goldstein, of the Royal Durban Light Infantry, won the Military Medal during this period in the following circumstances: " Private Goldstein," said the citation, " restored a vital telephone wire when, during a heavy attack, all the communications had been broken in the locality of his platoon. Enemy tanks were only 200 yards away and the area was being subjected to heavy fire, but Goldstein coolly crawled along the line for 400 yards and mended nine breaks. On two further occasions he went out to mend fresh breaks, finally volunteering to lay a new line.

" Private Goldstein displayed the highest quality of gallantry and devotion to duty, besides rendering first-aid to many men who had been wounded."

The list of prisoners captured at Tobruk included about 750 Jewish names. The majority of these men had to await the end of the war before they were released. A number of others, however, succeeded in escaping from the fortress just before or just after the surrender. Amongst them were Signaller L. K. Friedman, Sapper Joe Stork and Corporal Harry Lourie. These men penetrated the enemy lines round the harbour and made their way to the open desert, subsequently rejoining their comrades.

Extraordinary adventures befell a little group which included Sergeant A. N. Goldman, of Bloemfontein. They broke through the enemy front just as the Germans were completing the envelopment of the town. They set out in a

car, but it ran over two land-mines and was blown to pieces. Miraculously the fugitives were left alive. For a whole day they lay in the broiling Libyan sun just outside Tobruk. Then they essayed a final spurt, and although the Germans spotted and machine-gunned them, they remained unhurt. However, they ran out of water and found some only when they were nearly dying of thirst.

For another three days they marched on foot through the desert, hiding as best they could during the day. Once they saw an enemy tank approaching and crept inside a broken motor lorry. The tank halted and the crew walked over to investigate. When the Germans were near enough, the South Africans held them up at the point of their revolvers, forced one of them to act as an instructor, and took charge of the tank. In this vehicle they travelled until the fuel gave out. They then smashed the tank and went into hiding.

Presently an enemy truck drew near. One South African walked out, and started talking to the crew. While he was doing so one of his friends suddenly fired a shot. A fight ensued, in the course of which Nathan Goldman sustained two broken ribs. However, the truck was captured, and in it the Springboks, now supplied with petrol, food and water, travelled 60 miles southwards through the desert and then onwards for another 100 miles completely unmolested. Finally, they turned north again towards Mersa Matruh.

They reached the coast road and found themselves moving undetected in the midst of the enemy. Suddenly the Germans realised that the lorry with the swastika was not in their hands and began to shoot at it. By the skin of their teeth the Springboks escaped alive. As they approached their own lines, they were nearly shot at by the British before they could make their identity known. At last, however, they reached safety. Their proud souvenir was the flag of the Second Royal Durban Light Infantry, brought with them all the way from Tobruk.

Captain Benjamin Hermer unintentionally became the hero of a film. After being captured by the Germans, he

broke away and trekked through hundreds of miles of desert until he rejoined the South African positions. Meanwhile, a South African girl, Miss Olda Mehr, whom he had known for a long time and who had been interned in Germany, had been released on an exchange agreement. She had gone to Egypt on war service and after Captain Hermer's escape passed him in a street in Cairo. They recognised each other, and in due course entered on their "biggest adventure yet" —marriage. Hollywood was delighted with the story, and it was quickly put to use by the script writers.

Adventures also befell Jewish Springboks in other parts of the Western Desert during these months.

For his part in the battle near Bardia Sergeant Gerald Goddard was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal. His parents in Benoni received the following account of the circumstances from the Officer Commanding the Imperial Light Horse Infantry:

"Your son was acting as a Section Commander of a platoon which was detailed to mop up a strong-point on the outer defences. During the operation the platoon came under very heavy fire from machine-guns and 16 members were killed, including an officer and sergeant . . . A number were badly wounded, and, as a result, only nine members were left.

"Your son then took command of the men and charged the strong-point at the point of the bayonet. The position was captured. Immediately it had been cleared up, he pushed on to the next objective and remained in command throughout the day, handling his men with exceptional courage and at all times inspiring them with his leadership."

Soon afterwards Sergeant Goddard was taken prisoner.

Corporal Sidney Freeman was awarded the Military Medal. "On June 29, while commanding a car in a troop of armoured cars," said the official narrative, "he was ordered to act as a decoy to three German guns which were shelling the forward patrol line. Corporal Freeman did this with skill and courage and with a total disregard for personal safety, and it was in a great measure due to him that

the two-pounder gun was deployed with success. Throughout this action Corporal Freeman's car was under heavy fire."

The Desert Rats had their quota of South African Jews, and one of them, Trooper Jeffrey Kark, was awarded the Military Medal. He was one of the twelve grandsons of a well-known Rand pioneer, eleven of whom were in the Armed Forces.

Another Desert Rat, Corporal Leib Lerer, gained the Military Medal at a time when the Eighth Army was reeling back towards El Alamein. "We were on patrol," wrote Corporal Lerer afterwards, "when a German column broke through our lines near Mersa Matruh. We lay 'doggo' and remained behind.

"In the morning, we found two enemy 50-millimetre guns about one-and-a-half miles away from the main columns. We held our fire because that would have attracted the Huns. We charged up, and I stood on the running board of the car, and at the pistol point we captured the guns. We then made a wide detour and succeeded in rejoining our comrades."

Among other adventures, Lerer took a leading part in rescuing twenty-six men and one officer taken prisoner by the Germans. He was in charge of an armoured car which was attached to the rearguard holding off the German advance near Maus, south of Benghazi. Across country he encountered a pair of enemy lorries laden with British prisoners of war and guarded by four of Rommel's men. One of the enemy vehicles had broken down and the other lorry was towing it. Lerer gave chase single-handed and not only stopped the procession, but took the four German guards prisoner, amid the cheers of the captives.

The Tobruk chapter was over. The reaction both on the battle front and at home was one of sombre determination. In the Union thousands of new recruits rushed to the colours. Soon the Springboks, reinforced, were ready to play their full part in the final stages of the desert war.

## Chapter VI

## EL ALAMEIN

FOR a few months the Allied forces lay dug in between the Qatara Depression and the sea while General Montgomery was preparing his decisive counterstroke.

An account of those anxious days before El Alamein was written by Major Peter W. Rainier in " Cosmopolitan," the New York magazine. He told how in the big retreat the Allies abandoned 500 miles of the main water pipe into the desert. They blew it up at every point where water could be tapped and demolished as many underground reservoirs as possible.

In connection with the dismantling of the pumps, Major Rainier related an episode involving two members of the South African Forces, one of them a Jew, Captain Joe Lentzner. He said:

" Once at Fuka pumping station, we got our pumps out with enemy shells bursting around us and a Messerschmidt doing a ground-strafing stunt. The hero of that job was Captain Joe Lentzner — one of my South African sapper officers — and a South African sapper private named Jim.

" Joe came rattling over the desert from the west in a battered Army truck with half-a-dozen men. The truck stopped at Fuka pumping station and the men got out. Hardly had they done so, when an enemy shell whined overhead. ' What the hell ? ' Joe gazed wrathfully at the enemy overhead. Night was just gathering. The flash of the enemy guns was closer than we had realised. There were other flashes even nearer, not half a mile away. Those nearer flashes were our own gunline.

" At any minute now, that gunline of ours might be forced to move back. And when our guns moved back, there would be nothing between Fuka pumping station and a rapidly-advancing enemy.

" ' Bill,' Joe shouted to the driver of the truck, ' go back

to that gunline and ask them how long they can hold. Take Jim with you. Drop him when you get to the main road. Tell him to hold up any vehicles big enough to carry these two blasted pumps and bring them back here. The rest of you go below and get those damned pumps loose.'

" ' Suppose the drivers of the vehicles won't come back with me, Captain ? ' Jim stuck his head out of the cab of the truck. The dust of many days was plastered on his face.

" Joe scribbled in his notebook. Then he ripped out the page. ' Take that. It's written orders for those drivers. You'll note that I've written that you have orders to shoot them in case they won't obey.'

" Jim grinned till the dust plaster cracked. The truck drove off.

" Joe went underground, where he heaved and sweated with his men to get the big pumps loose from their concrete foundations. In half-an-hour Bill returned with the truck. ' Gunners say they can hold an hour, Captain. As I came back I saw Jim standing by the main road. He hadn't seen the right kind of vehicle pass yet, but he sent word he'd get something here if he had to kill the driver and drive it himself.'

" Joe scratched his head. That loud thudding on the wall of the underground pumping station was the blast of enemy shells bursting outside. The gunners had given him an hour. Bill had used fifteen minutes of that hour to get back from the gunline. It would take the best part of an hour to get these heavy pumps manhandled on board.

" Another fifteen minutes passed. The pumps lay loose on their beds, but still no vehicles. Joe walked up the steep concrete ramp to the surface. Shells were whining overhead and bursting near him. He heard the roar of traffic on the main road—our rearguard moving back. Then he took a quick breath. A heavy vehicle was approaching the pumping station.

" Rattle . . . rattle . . . bump ! There was only one type of vehicle in the Eighth Army that could make such a hellish rattle. A tank-transporter, the monster vehicle which

carries a forty-ton tank as easily as a jeep carries a case of beer. Perfect: the tank-transporter had a heavy winch and a cable which would pull those pumps on board in a few minutes.

" A couple of minutes later Jim's grinning face looked out of the cab of the transporter. ' Only got one vehicle, Captain, but she'll do the trick. The driver's a good guy. I didn't need to do any persuading.'

" The huge machine backed up to the ramp. Its deck was empty. The passenger tank lay smoking in the desert. One pump crept slowly on to the deck. Then a flare burst overhead, hanging. A lurid glare illuminated the scene. An enemy aircraft had dropped that flare to light the traffic on the road for ground strafing. But the pilot had seen what was going on at the pumping station.

" Leaving the road traffic, he dived at the transporter with all his guns blazing. The driver leaped from the cab and dived under his machine. Joe cowered behind the pump, which had just been loaded. Tracer bullets shot past in a stream of fireworks.

" Jim rushed to Bill's truck, clambered on it and fumbled with the machine-gun mounted on the roof of the cab. But the ground-strafing 'plane was gone before he could get it working. ' Keep standing by that gun, Jim. He'll be back,' Joe poked his head out from behind the loaded pump. Jim stood by the gun.

" The Messer was back before the second pump was halfway on board. The plane dived again. Jim stood up to him. Two opposing streams of tracers seemed to interlace in one stream of blood-red flames. Then there was a violet flash in the air. A roaring mass of flame spread over the ground not a hundred yards away. Jim had got the Messer with his first burst.

" A few minutes later the transporter was rattling eastward, the two pumps on board. Joe and his gang struck eastward over the desert to dismantle the next pumping station thirty miles further on."

October 23, 1942: El Alamein! The seemingly endless

preparations were over, and in an enormous burst of flame the course of history changed. On that fateful day the Springboks were privileged to play a distinguished part. Among them were hundreds, perhaps thousands, of Jews. One of the finest accounts of this battle, " The Tide Turned at El Alamein " (published by Central News Agency, Johannesburg) was written by a South African Jew, B. L. Bernstein.

Captain E. Tannenbaum, an information officer attached to the Regiment President Steyn, gave his personal impressions of the first night of the battle in an article which he wrote for the Johannesburg " Star."

" Zero hour was at ten o'clock. Our sector moved silently through the minefields, the trucks crunching deep into the old tank ruts. The moon was up feebly yellow, its light broken against the black shadows of No Man's Land. There was a great silence, so still that even the movement of the earth was palpable, the macabre silence of a battlefield, unbroken, still as death . . .

" Suddenly, far in the rear of our lines, a solitary Verey light shot up, flickered for an instant and was gone. We moved forward. Point 24, Point 28, West 100, 200, 1,000 yards, and there were our positions, dug long before by our patrols, the trenches piled high with sandbags. The air was cold and fragrant with the dew and the scent of night.

" Feverishly the men began to dig in our Vickers' guns. There was the thud of pick-axes in the sand, the rattle of ammunition lorries over stone, and the muffled sound of many voices.

" The minutes were long and strained. Nine o'clock . . . half-past nine . . . twenty to ten. Suddenly the sky was criss-crossed with great Catherine wheels of flame. Then came the powerful thunder of guns and the whining of shells overhead. The desert heaved in agony under the tumult of sound that rose and fell in jarring crescendos and decrescendos. The lights of trailer ammunition danced will o' the wisp over the flat land of Alamein.

"Ten o'clock: at once all was still, a silence like the death of a requiem. Then the machine-guns opened, low at first, but gradually assuming a terrible regularity. The line moved forward, a solid line of infantry, silhouettes against the sky, with their bayonets gleaming in the moonlight. From the Mediterranean to the Qatara Depression there was a heave towards the enemy lines. The Australians and the 51st Highland Division in the North, the South Africans in the centre; and southwards, the Indians, the Greeks and others. Behind, the armoured divisions lay in readiness to move in as day broke.

"The shrapnel whistled round us. The line wavered for an instant in the face of the withering counter-barrage, and again moved forward, forward, forward . . .

"Two of our battalions moved in from the flank through the minefields, cutting their way into enemy territory. Their lines thinned perceptibly, but they went on.

"For four and a half hours the battle was unceasing in its violence. Then, abruptly it stopped, except for the occasional splutter of a German Spandau far away, and the anti-tank balls that bounced up high like meteors.

"Day broke bleakly over Alamein. The tanks and the armoured cars thundered through to join battle. The enemy were on the run."

Among those killed in the great assault against Rommel were many Jewish soldiers, including Captain John Reginald Maurice Jacobs, of the Imperial Light Horse. Major S. B. Gedye wrote to his family:

"As you have already learned, our dear old friend John passed over the great divide during the attack on the enemy positions outside El Alamein during the early hours of October 24, 1942. Although he was second in command of 'A' Company, he voluntarily led a platoon against an enemy machine-gun nest, and when his men were pinned down by machine-gun fire, he gallantly charged the post single-handed, distracting the fire from his men and enabling them to get in with the bayonet to wipe the position out.

"Unfortunately, before he could achieve his object, he

was hit in the chest by a burst of machine-gun fire and killed instantly. John's death was the culmination of many brave acts performed by him during the arduous times we have passed through, and although we have lost a very dear friend, I know that you will take pride, as I do, in the knowledge that he gave his all for the sake of those whom he held dear in life, and died a gallant gentleman to the last.

"John endeared himself to every member of the company, and he was admired by all for his outstanding courage in the most trying circumstances. He is sadly missed, not only by his friends but by every officer and man of the regiment. We have buried him in the military cemetery at El Alamein.

The "Star," Johannesburg, reported the same incident and added further details of Jacobs' earlier heroism.

"Battle-scarred men of the Imperial Light Horse felt a lump in their throats when they heard of the death of Captain John Reginald Maurice Jacobs. He was a local insurance man who enlisted as a private.

"A sergeant now recuperating in Johannesburg was Jacobs' messenger. On January 3 he was ordered to carry a message through a hail of shell and machine-gun fire to a post at Bardia. On the way back he was hit and fell unconscious. When he awoke, Jacobs was at his side. Despite the murderous fire, he had set out to find his messenger. He bound his wound, wrapped the sergeant in his greatcoat and lumber jacket, and carried him back to safety two-and-a-half miles away.

"Another time Captain Jacobs was on patrol with six men when two of them were badly wounded. He carried them to safety on his back. He kept up a regular correspondence with men invalided home."

The friendships forged between Jewish soldiers and their comrades in that testing time are among the precious things which came out of the desert war. Thus, in 1943, Padre H. V. Becker, Free Church chaplain, addressed a letter to the Rev. Dr. Lichtigfeld, Jewish minister in

Germiston, which bears testimony to this fine spirit. He wrote:

"In the 'Daily Mail' I noticed that a memorial tablet is to be unveiled in the synagogue to the memory of Trooper Abraham Weiss, M.M. I would very much like to have been present to honour the memory of one whom I was happy to count as my friend, but since this is impossible, I shall be grateful if you will convey to his loved ones and friends my expression of sympathy in their great loss and of grateful participation in memories they cherish of him.

"I first met Abie at Gazala when he attended a service I conducted with the 3rd Recce Battalion. I saw him on several occasions after that and we had many talks. I was proud of the gallant action which gained him the Military Medal.

"For the great Alamein assault of October, 1942, he was temporarily attached to my battalion—the Regiment President Steyn—and I saw much of him. I had my last talk with him only a day or two before his death. The news came to me as a tremendous blow and I deeply regretted that at the time I was in another part of the line and so was unable to attend his burial.

"I have on several occasions made grateful mention of Abie Weiss as one showing the spirit of co-operation and teamwork which rises above religious distinctions, and on which the new world will alone be built."

Several years after the war Lieutenant Allen Loxton recalled the heroic circumstances in which Weiss met his death. He wrote:

"On the 23rd October, 1942, on the morning of the commencement of the Battle of Alamein, I was present when the men of my regiment were paraded and asked if eleven of them would go into action as volunteer machine-gunners with the 2nd Regiment Botha that night. We had had a very tough time and no man moved until Weiss stepped forward and said to the Colonel: 'Sir, I have not handled a machine-gun since I left the Union two-and-a-half years

ago, but if I can get a little practice between now and sunset, I volunteer.' Ten other men followed him.

"I remember thinking to myself: If anyone is killed to-night I hope it's not you, because we need men like you in our country. I was later told that Weiss had been killed."

Abraham Weiss was the only Deputy on the Jewish Board of Deputies to be killed in action, although others went on active service. The Weiss Memorial Bursary was founded by the Board after the war as a tribute to him.

## Chapter VII

## HIT FOR A SIX

AFTER its fierce ordeal at El Alamein the First South African Division was moved into camp at Qassasin. Captain E. Tannenbaum described how the place looked to veterans from the Desert:

"A stretch of sand, some hundreds of white tents, a dilapidated mud-brick building isolated in a sea of gray dust and gravel, and a tarred road—this is Qassasin. To the south are a few dozen tents formed in a square; and to the north the amenities of life—cold, cold showers that freeze you to the marrow in the early winter mornings; the ubiquitous Naafi and Y.M.C.A.; a worn old bioscope of tin-plate and plaster; and finally, the usual officers' club, luxurious and exclusive as though it were off Piccadilly.

"A few miles further down the road are the hospitals and the Suez Canal; and still further, patches of green cultivated land that show little of the tawny beauty of the desert. In the other direction a few villages cluster about the waterfront, the scene of scores of romantic novels that have no connection with reality.

"There are only screaming, bedraggled children there, a few dirty-bearded patriarchs sunning themselves on the steps of the public-houses, and heavily-veiled women crying out their lamentations to the passers-by. This is the old, the dead Egypt, so rich in symbolism, forgotten long ago in its misery and distress, and now aged without hope and without rejuvenation."

General Montgomery had promised that the Eighth Army would finish the job in the Western Desert once and for all, and early in 1943 it did so. The enemy, to use his famous phrase, was "hit for a six." Although the First South African Division was already homeward-bound, among the victorious troops that marched into Tripoli were many Springboks.

In this North African city, famous since medieval times, N. L. Lewis obtained a glimpse of the squalor in which many of his co-religionists there had been compelled to dwell. He also learned something of their distinctive religious observances. " With some of the boys I had the opportunity of visiting the ghetto. I was born and bred in Stellenbosch. I have never before seen this side of Jewish life. I was terribly shocked to see the filthy conditions under which these Jews were forced to live. The streets were so narrow that at times one could not see the sky. Dirt and degradation were present everywhere. I eventually staggered out of that environment, nauseated and full of pity for all those Jews.

" Soon I met other civilian Jews, most of whom lived together in a colony, where things were much better. I spent *Pesach* with a family from the colony, and will never forget *Seder* night. The men sat around the table, clad in pyjamas, whilst the women squatted on the floor. I got into my pyjamas, too, asked the Four Questions and ' stole ' the *aficomen.* For the second night, I and a hundred other soldiers were invited to the colony, and after *sedering* everyone collected at one house and songs were sung till the early hours of the morning."

In liberated Tripoli that gallant soldier, the late Brigadier Kisch, reviewed the Jewish troops. It was a significant occasion. All the men were aware of the almost legendary reputation of the engineer who had conceived and built the desert pipeline which connected the forward troops with the municipal water supply of Alexandria.

Private S. R. Karnovsky, of Johannesburg, wrote to his parents:

" We assembled in the courtyard of the Exposition Hall and then marched down one of the main streets of Tripoli to the martial strains of the bagpipes of a famous Highland regiment. Brigadier Kisch took the salute as we swung down Michael Angelo Street. It was a dramatic moment.

" Shortly afterwards, we found ourselves crammed in the small and plainly-decorated synagogue. The service, which was most impressive, was conducted by Major Louis

Isaac Rabinowitz, senior Jewish chaplain to the Middle East Forces, who delivered a moving address. (Dr. L. I. Rabinowitz is now Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of Johannesburg.)

"Brigadier Kisch was called to the *Torah* and a highlight of the service was the magnificent singing of a former member of the Palestine Opera, now a sapper in a Palestinian engineering unit stationed in the town.

"It was a coincidence that, at the same time as we were gathered in the synagogue, the R.A.F. were interrupting Goering's speech in Berlin. Strangely enough, a German 'plane appeared overhead during the service and created such a terrific din that parts of the service became inaudible.

"Cheered by hundreds of civilians who lined the route, we marched back to the Exposition Hall. Here we were served with light refreshments prepared by the Jewish community, who were deeply grateful at having at last been liberated from the yoke of the oppressor. For the first few days after its recapture, Tripoli was a dead city. Now it is springing to life again as the inhabitants become more and more impressed with the good conduct of our troops."

Only a few weeks later Brigadier Kisch was mortally wounded by a land mine near Sousse, in Tunisia. The tragedy of his death was heightened because it came on the eve of victory. Though not a South African, he had visited the Union more than once on behalf of the Zionist movement, and when the news of his death came through it was to Durban that General Montgomery addressed his cable of condolence to Mrs. Kisch. Of this great military engineer General Montgomery said: "He died as he would have wanted—a soldier."

There were many other posthumous tributes. When Mr. Churchill was informed of the tragedy, he sent General Montgomery his "personal regrets at the loss of his gallant Chief Engineer," and requested him "to convey his sympathies to the Sappers led so gloriously by Brigadier Kisch." But perhaps the greatest tribute of all was that paid by Montgomery's Deputy Chief of Staff, Lieutenant-Colonel

Byrne, who wrote: "When the history of this war comes to be written, the roll of famous men of the Corps of Royal Engineers, which includes Gascoyne, Napier, Gordon and Kitchener, will have added to it the name of Brigadier Kisch of the Eighth Army."

To the South Africans the distinctive religious customs and way of life of the Jews of North Africa were an eye-opener. Many were the exclamations of surprise which appeared in letters from the front.

Sergeant Maurice Gerber saw them at the Sabbath evening meal. "For about an hour after *Kiddush*," he said, "various verses, each commencing with *Yehi Ratzon*, were recited, followed by the appearance of small tasty dishes, of which we all had to partake. These included, in their proper order, apple and then quince preserve, raw spring onions, a mixture of onion, egg and various vegetables, both ripe and unripe dates, fried pumpkin and sugar, marrow boiled in ginger and sugar, a mixture of some small brown seed and sugar, and lastly, pomegranates.

"Apparently the custom of lighting candles is not observed in Tripoli, for when our host was informed that such was our custom on *Erev Shabbas* and *Yom Tov*, candles were immediately forthcoming and one was placed before each of us on the table, though the night was extremely warm and humid."

The most heart-warming features of these encounters was the kindliness and courtesy with which the poorest people welcomed the Jewish soldiers. "Thanks to the Jewish population of Tripoli," declared Sergeant Gerber, "most of us were made to forget that we were not at home."

A few more months passed, and then the war in Africa came to an end. The Americans and British were in Algiers. On the fields and hillsides of Cape Bon, on the northernmost tip of the continent, ended the trek which had started near El Wak.

The toll had been heavy. A large number of Springboks

had given their lives. Along the road from Mersa Matruh to Tobruk and beyond, and in the battle zones deep in the interior of the desert, there are many cemeteries where Christian and Jewish graves lie side by side.

## Chapter VIII

## WITH THE ITALIAN PARTISANS

ON September 3, 1943, the Allies invaded the Italian mainland, but by then Italy had received shattering blows. Her colonial empire had vanished, Sicily had been conquered and the Fascist Government had fallen. Mussolini's successor, Marshal Badoglio, continued the war for a month on the side of the Axis, but with the invasion Italy's resistance collapsed. On September 8 she surrendered. The Germans, however, were already prepared for such an event, and their armies, accompanied by the Gestapo, swiftly took over, first in the north of the peninsula and then in Rome itself. The Italian campaign was only starting, though prisoner-of-war camps had opened their gates and thousands of Allied captives, including a large number of South Africans, had escaped. Most of them were retaken by the Germans, but many fled to the hills and succeeded in linking up with the Partisans. Included in this more fortunate group was a good proportion of South African Jews. Although the South African Forces as such did not take part in the tactical landings in Sicily a number of Springboks did, and men from the Union fought behind the enemy lines in Italy from the very outset of the invasion and even before. Indeed there were two Italian campaigns—one conducted by the Allied armies and the other by the Partisans. In this chapter will be told something of the part played by South African Jews in the guerilla fighting.

One of them, Major Joseph Liebman, aged 33, already had a military record stretching over 15 years. He was present at the Sicily landings and was among the first to set foot in Italy. Soon afterwards he was instructed by General Sir Miles Dempsey to raise a group of 200 anti-Fascist Italians for special work in conjunction with the Thirteenth Infantry Brigade. Liebman was to train them as commandos for raids behind the German Lines. He could

not speak a word of Italian, yet somehow picked the right candidates and effectively taught them. Split into patrols of five and six men, they penetrated far into enemy territory where they produced a surprising amount of dislocation in troop movements. One of Liebman's *coups* came near the end of the war. He and his Italians captured a group of 20 S.S. troopers in the woods on the Italian-Austrian border. They handed them over to the authorities.

At the close of the campaign Major Liebman was attached to the newly constituted Jewish Brigade, with which he worked his way through Germany and Belgium, finally reaching Holland. There the battalion headquarters was located in an old house near The Hague. One day a young girl came by and told the soldiers that her family had owned the house before she had been taken prisoner by the Nazis. Now she had been set free again. She met Liebman, and before many days they were married.

Another South African Jew to win fame as a guerilla fighter was Corporal Mark Rubenstein, attached to the Second Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment. His career certainly did not lack adventure. He fell into German hands on the tragic morning of June 21, 1942, when climbing the cliffs outside Tobruk. Sent first to Tripoli and its vile prison camps, he later embarked with 700 other prisoners on a transport bound for Italy. The ship narrowly missed being torpedoed by a British submarine. Then came the collapse of the Fascists. Rubenstein failed to get away, and with crowds of others was jammed into a cattle truck bound for the Reich. While the train was slowly climbing the foothills of the Alps, Rubenstein and his comrades saw that there was a chance of escaping. A corporal laboriously cut a hole in the roof of the truck with a penknife, the others meanwhile, singing uproariously and playing to drown the noise. When night fell planking was levered away, blankets were twisted into ropes and some of the men hoisted themselves over the side and jumped. Rubenstein was one of those who leaped, landing in a deep gully and sustaining a broken knee, injuries to a shoulder and two fingers damaged. His head

was also hurt and bled profusely.

Thus he lay for hours until figures appeared out of the gloom. The strangers were Italian peasants — anti-Fascists—who hid him away in a house. More than once Rubenstein listened while Germans and pro-Nazi Italians made merry in the room below. When the coast was clear the peasants gave him some of their clothing and guided him to the next village. In this manner he made his way across country. Even the president of the local Fascist Agricultural Union was his host for a short time. Then Rubenstein's luck changed. He was caught by the Fascists, brought before a court-martial and sentenced to be shot as a spy at dawn the following morning. For the night he was placed in a tiny hut and a man with a tommy-gun was detailed to watch over him. The fact that there was only a single guard however did not escape him. Waiting until the sentry turned round, Rubenstein jumped on him from behind, strangled him and disappeared into the darkness with the tommy-gun.

He walked for many miles not knowing what to do next. Presently he noticed men dressed in Italian uniforms near him in the bush. They were in no way aggressive. " We are deserters," they confided, and showed him the way into the mountains.

Next came the extraordinary spectacle of Mark Rubenstein as a guerilla leader in command of his former enemies, raiding villages for food and taking pot-shots at Nazi lorries. Besides seizing considerable quantities of weapons, his irregulars improvised an unpleasant method of obstructing enemy road traffic. They stretched a wire across dark roadways at a height approximately corresponding to that of the necks of passing German motor-cyclists. More than one Nazi was killed in this way. " General Marco " was the name the Italians bestowed upon this South African Jew. Before very long he was at the head of 500 men, the body being known as the 51st Garibaldi Brigade.

The adventures of Bombardier Leon Falkson are also

worthy of mention. He and his comrades heard rumours of an Italian armistice in 1943, and held meetings in the camps to discuss future plans. As soon as it was officially announced that Italy had capitulated, the Italian guards threw down their arms. Allied officers took over and, apparently thinking that the British were near, told the men to remain in the camp. Only a few refused. Two days later the Germans arrived. Among the few who escaped was Falkson.

All he had in his possession, apart from the clothes he wore, was a razor. He spent the first four days in the bush with several other men and then left, accompanied by an Italian. Living in the hills with snow falling continuously, he contracted rheumatic fever but recovered a few weeks after. "Several times," he wrote, "I bumped Jerry and actually saw the Allied guns in action. The Germans had their sentries out, and special dogs were also used to try to locate their escaped prisoners.

"Realising that I had to lie low for a time, I made my home in a small cave and scrounged food—what there was of it—from Italians in a nearby village. I managed to learn a fair amount of the language, which helped me considerably when I eventually got through.

"I had a narrow escape from death when I walked through a field of land mines.

"Once I was in a house with some Italians when a Nazi officer walked in. He asked whether there were any English in the house. The reply was no and he shook hands with the inhabitants — including me. I made six attempts to get through the German lines, all of which failed. Then I tried once more and succeeded."

A vivid description of an adventure with the Partisans was given by Captain (later Major) H. Sonnabend, of Johannesburg, who was seconded from the Union Forces, first to the British and then to the Americans, to take charge of "loudspeaker" operations on the Fifth Army front. He wrote:

"My first contact with Partisan units was on the

Ligurian coast. I met them again in Bologna, where they helped me to get a newspaper started the very day our troops entered the city. Still, the first time I had to depend on them completely for protection and assistance was in the town of Mantua.

" My group of fourteen men, six vehicles and two light machine-guns—known as the ' S ' Force—was ordered to ' liberate ' this ancient city. As soon as we crossed the Po (the Germans were still shelling the bridge), we were met by a detachment of armed men dressed in a variety of captured uniforms or just in plain civilian clothes, but all displaying the characteristic Garibaldi handkerchiefs round their necks.

" Thus reinforced, we drove in triumph through streets thronged with deliriously applauding citizens. I rose (literally) to the occasion and received the homage of Mantua standing in my jeep. I think I instinctively copied the mannerism of a great conquering general entering a friendly city. The boom of distant artillery mingled with the sharp crack of rifle shots and short bursts of machine-gun fire somewhere in the vicinity.

" The Partisans explained that the Germans were still holding some barracks and the bridge over the Mincio River, but now that ' the Allies have arrived ' their resistance could not last much longer. At once it was clear to me that our tiny group was taken to be the vanguard of the mighty army about to enter the city. It was obviously good propaganda and excellent psychology not to dispel this illusion. I muttered something about an American armoured division. I thought that this child of my imagination would be more impressive if provided with armour.

" We installed ourselves in the most central hotel. A map was spread over the table in the entrance hall and a lieutenant played the part of Chief of Staff. Every now and again an out-of-breath Partisan would report a new German pocket in and around the city, and my American friend would enter the information on the map, using a very impressive red pencil.

" After a day and a night the map became alarmingly red. We still could do nothing about it, but the businesslike manner of registering each report gave the men confidence that something would soon happen to relieve the situation. On the first day of our ' occupation,' I took over the local daily. The printers, who had fought a minor action to prevent sabotage, produced a prisoner, the assistant editor of the paper. I was rather embarrassed when the foreman asked my permission to shoot the shivering Fascist. I advised him to send the ' ex-vice-director ' to the Partisan headquarters and installed myself in the office of the editor-in-chief.

" The beautiful room had been converted into a miniature arsenal. I sat down at the desk of the editor and became very conscious of the meaning of symbolism, that marvellous shorthand writing of the human mind. On my left stared at me a copy of the ' Protocols of Zion,' on the right glittered the steel of my revolver, and in the centre was a sheet of paper on which my predecessor had jotted down the first passages of a leading article inspired by the ' Protocols.' I turned the sheet and wrote on it an article on freedom, justice and the new brotherhood of man.

" After a few hours of sleep, interrupted by many alarms (the town was getting nervous), I went to ' inspect ' the local Gestapo headquarters. I later had the opportunity of visiting other chambers of horror, but I still think the one in Mantua deserves special mention. The iron, electrically heated, and used as a seat for Gestapo victims, was nothing special, but the ' propeller ' was certainly amazing in the simplicity of its cruel psychological principle. Just imagine three sharp blades in the form of a propeller attached to a little dynamo. Its working was explained to me by a Partisan: ' I was chained to the chair, but my head was free to move,' he said. ' The propeller was turning fast near my head, and the slightest movement meant death. So I sat for many hours while the Gestapo questioned me.'

" One of the Partisans at the Gestapo headquarters struck me by his gentle, timid and yet dignified look.

" I was told ' un Ebreo.' He was the first Jew I had met in the liberated zone. When I told him I was also ' un Ebreo,' he shook my hand with deep feeling. I represented to him both the free world and the people of Israel. The following two days he was always near me, as if to guard my person against some real and many imaginary dangers. I could see that he was fond of his gun and happy to be near another Jew. Imagine Spinoza with a gun. I grew to like him."

Captain Sonnabend was also present at the funeral of a Jewish girl. " She was the heroine of many daring exploits and fell in action against the retreating Germans. Her comrades brought the body to Verona, opened the synagogue previously desecrated by the Fascists, and thousands of Partisans flocked to a solemn ceremony. They wanted to pay homage to a fallen heroine, but they were also deeply conscious of the crime committed against the people to whom she belonged.

" Many things were said on that occasion, but I remember only the speech of one Partisan chief. I quote his words from memory (I kept a record only of the headlines) : ' What have the Fascists done to us? Even the glory of religious tolerance has been taken away from our poor fatherland. How could we tolerate the anti-Jewish laws? Many of us tried to help the Jews, but the shame remains. How is our nation going to make amends for this great sin? We partisans must ask our Government to pass a law that every Jew who died in a camp or on the scaffold must be honoured in exactly the same way as those of our comrades who have fallen in battle. The widows, mothers and children of these men must receive the same pension as the dependants of the soldiers who have died in action '."

## Chapter IX

## SIXTH DIVISION IN ITALY

ALTHOUGH the Partisans were of great service to the Allies, incomparably the major share of the fighting in Italy fell, of course, to the armies. The peninsula had once been regarded militarily as part of "the soft under-belly of Europe." It had now become a very tough proposition indeed. The Allies had to fight their way northwards along the whole length of the Apennine bastion, with the Germans bitterly contesting every inch of ground. It is a matter of history that in the fierce struggle the Sixth South African Armoured Division played a notable role. In addition to the common pool of experience, which it is not the purpose of this book to describe, members of each race in the Springbok forces saw the campaign from their own angle. The Jewish angle will be given here, but the narrative will necessarily be anecdotal and fragmentary, and the reader is invited to keep constantly in mind the great scale of the campaign as a whole.

A great and moving occasion for the Jews no less than for the non-Jews was the Allied entry into Rome. The Eternal City was not only a centre of Christendom but the seat of a famous Jewish community dating from Roman times.

"As the Allied armies marched triumphantly through the thronged streets," wrote a Jewish Springbok, "to the accompaniment of church bells joyously pealing the hour of liberation, a truck wended its way slowly through a quiet sector of the city. The driver was a Palestinian private, and the two passengers a rabbi and a Palestinian major commanding a motor transport company. They were looking for a synagogue—and for their own brethren, the Jews of Rome.

"Pedestrians gave them directions and they drove on, not knowing where they might end. Then slowly, the

building they sought loomed up before them, the Star of David proudly glittering on its dome. Although unscathed, it still bore the mark of the Nazi invader, for it was barricaded with barbed wire fencing and wooden obstructions.

"The two passengers got out, leaving the driver to guard the truck and, with ferocious vigour, began to tear down the barricades. They cut their hands on the wire, but continued as if they were tearing down a part of the Nazi empire, tearing down the obstructions, persecutions and miseries of their people. And then, out of the crowded streets, came the people.

" Weeping with joy they crowded round the truck. ' Jews in the army that liberates us! ' they cried. Later all gathered in the synagogue to offer fervent prayers of thanksgiving. The rabbi and the major were then led to the house of the Chief Rabbi of Rome, who for so long had been confined to his house. Together they made plans—vital plans—for the future.

" One week later a Palestinian motor company arrived in the city, bringing with it the men who would set up a Jewish club with the assistance of the Jewish community."

" The city as a whole," wrote Sapper J. M. Rosenberg, of Vredehoek, Cape Town, " seemed very normal. Rome has been hardly touched by the war except on the outskirts, where our bombs did some damage. The people of Rome gave the troops a frenzied welcome. One could see that they were happy that Jerry had left. They showered us with roses and other flowers, and many of the girls came over and kissed us."

As Rosenberg was walking with a friend, a " stranger in civvies " approached them and asked whether they came from the Union. Hearing that this was so, the man said that he was a South African who had escaped from the Fascists. For two months he had helped the Partisans with sabotage. Then he had been taken by an Irish priest to the Vatican and hidden underground. " For seven months," added Rosenberg, " he stayed in that hole, except for a few occasions, until at last he risked going to Rome.

Sapper Rosenberg met a cardinal, who took him with a group of 50 South Africans to see the Pope. In a large room His Holiness extended a cordial welcome in English. One of the brightest pages in the story of the Catholic Church was the absence of religious discrimination in the help given by the Vatican, which treated Jews on the same footing as other Springbok prisoners of war. Scores of Jews gained refuge on papal soil while the Nazis held all the area around; and when comforts were distributed in the camps, their needs were not forgotten.

Constantly, as the Allied armies pushed northwards, the Jewish soldiers inquired about the fate of their Italian co-religionists. A grim little account of one such inquiry was given by Captain Sonnabend. A captured Nazi, whom he designates as " corporal M.", was brought before him and Major A. Z. Berman, of Cape Town.

" Corporal M. talked freely about his unit, his officers and his glorious military past," said Captain Sonnabend. " One question only made him stagger.

" ' Where are the Jews? ' asked Major Berman.

" To underline the question, I added: ' Allied troops have occupied half of Germany, the Russians are on the borders of the Reich, but we cannot find the millions of Jews who lived there before the war.'

" The thought that his interrogators were Jews crossed the mind of the German and his face registered terror. A minute of silence descended upon all of us, silence punctuated by the salvoes of our guns and the shriek of a battery of enemy ' sobbing sisters.'

" Finally the Nazi said in a halting voice: ' Only a year ago I saw some decent Jews.'

" His eyes wandered from us to the tommy-gun of the guard and he shivered. He expected retribution. I saw in his frightened eyes only the cold, cruel, irretrievable hopelessness of man's animal heritage."

Sometimes inquiries led to happier results. Lance-Corporal Hersowitz, of Muizenberg, a member of the South African Engineering Corps, one day stopped his jeep to ask

the way, and in the ensuing conversation was told that in a neighbouring village there was a South African woman. He investigated, and she proved to be Mrs. Viotti, daughter of Mrs. E. B. Rathfelder, of Constantia, near Cape Town, and widow of an Italian Commander. Hersowitz and his comrades shared rations with her and her children, and provided the first link with her home in years.

But perhaps one of the most extraordinary reunions of the whole war, something which no fiction writer could have dared to invent, was that between Major A. Z. Berman of Cape Town and his son Harold, of whom there had been no news for very many months.

When the episode occurred Major Berman himself already possessed an unusual military record. Understating his age (which was 47), he enlisted as a private in 1940, leaving his work as an accountant and his position as a Cape Town city councillor of 15 years' standing. He was sent to East Africa and was present at the capitulation of the Italian fortress of Keren, in Somaliland. Returning to the Union as a lieutenant, he soon tired of being a "base wallah" and had himself transferred to North Africa. However, although he said he was only 40 years old, even this was regarded by the South African Command as too advanced an age for the field. Major Berman became impatient and secured a transfer to the British Army where the authorities were less particular.

After serving on an adventurous propaganda expedition behind the German lines in the Balkans, he was transferred to the American Fifth Army, the first South African in its ranks. Placed in charge of a field propaganda unit, he helped to conduct a strange bombardment with special shells fired from 105-millimetre and 25-pounder guns over the enemy positions. Every week an average of 4,000,000 leaflets and newspapers were dropped in this fashion.

So accurate was the marksmanship that, provided the weather was suitable, 90 per cent. of the leaflets could be placed at a range of more than five miles in a target a few hundred yards square. Often Major Berman walked within

hailing distance of the enemy, who responded with mortar fire. Twice he crossed the German lines on foot through minefields and hostile patrols. A detachment of Nazis having supper very nearly caught him in a farmhouse while he was sitting upstairs with his men. " The Zulu Major " was the nickname which the American Fifth Army gave him.

Writing of the dramatic circumstances in which Major Berman met his son, Captain Sonnabend, who was with him at the time, wrote: " Major Berman spoke very seldom about his only son whom he had not seen for five years. I knew that his name was Harold, and that he was a promising student before he volunteered on the same day as his father joined the army. I also heard that Harold had been taken prisoner at Tobruk, had escaped from a P.O.W. camp in Italy, was hiding with Partisans and had tried unsuccessfully to reach the Swiss border. For 18 months he had given no sign of life.

" At Partisan headquarters in Mortara we inquired about German ' pockets ' and then put the routine question about the whereabouts of any Allied prisoners of war. Promptly came the reply that they always had some Allied men fighting in their ranks. ' In fact,' said a Partisan officer, ' in my detachment there were three British soldiers: one was killed in action not long ago and two are still with us.'

" A young man came up and said: ' One of them—I know well. His name is Harry and he is the son of an officer.'

" Major Berman took out a picture and enquired in a voice broken with emotion, ' My son ? '

" ' Yes, this is the man,' explained the Partisan.

" A few minutes later, reinforced by another lorry load of armed and excited men, we drove in procession to the village of San Angelo. A group of Partisans came to meet the caravan. Among them were Berman junior and an Afrikaans-speaking Springbok.

" Not being in possession of a lyrical pen, I shall not try to describe the meeting between father and son. I only remember a procession, complete with band and priest, a




Liberated Jewish refugees in Italy record their Tribute in Hebrew to Padre S. Ernst.



Refugees join Jewish Springboks in a meal after Yom Kippur at Turin, Italy.



**Badly damaged by Fascists and Nazis, the Great Synagogue of Florence was repaired by Springbok Sappers, and afterwards used again for worship.**
(By Courtesy of the Bureau of Information.)



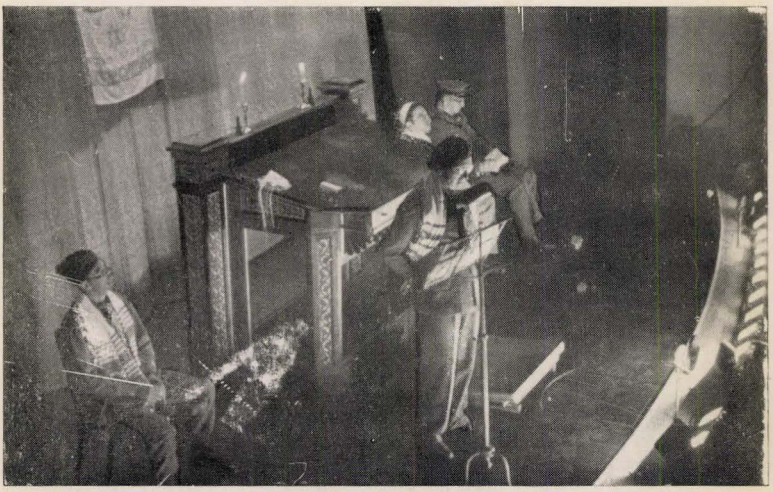
A Jewish Religious Study Group at Cadenabbia, Italy, after VE Day.



A Chanukah Service in Italy (conducted by Padre I. Romm).



Springbok Padres meet the Chief Rabbi of the Holy Land. Left to right: Padre R. Rechtman, Padre J. Potashnik, Chief Rabbi I. Hertzog and Padre I. Freedman.



A Rosh Hashonah Service, conducted by Padre S. Hickman in a Florence theatre in 1944. Others present were: Captain A. Paperman, of New Jersey, Jewish Chaplain to the American Fifth Army; Ralph Stemberg, of New York; and Major Frumkin, of Palestine.

crowd of overjoyed men and crying women. Major Berman ran to our car and came back with a rucksack. The son went into a house and later emerged in a beautifully-fitting battledress, complete with Africa Star. So this was the mysterious parcel which Major Berman always took with him when going up the line."

At this time the Springboks were involved in bursts of heavy fighting. To people scanning the newspaper at home progress seemed disappointingly slow, but to the men at the front life was frequently only too exciting. One incident involving a Jew was described by an Afrikaner, B. J. Olivier, who was at Castel Nuovo with the Sixth Division when the South Africans went forward. South of Satona a company of Union infantry tried to take a hill overlooking the town, but a strong German rearguard posted on the other slope held firm and opened fire as soon as the Springboks showed their heads above the ridge. Three South African tanks were then sent forward. One of them, under Sergeant Wolfe Miller, a Jewish soldier from Johannesburg, led the attack. Advancing up one side of the hill along a straight road, Miller felt instinctively that he was under observation and would soon be running into trouble. Taking a quick decision, he turned the tank at right angles, and crashed through a ditch on the side of the road into a field whose trees afforded a little cover. He then sent back word to the officer in the second tank to tell him what he had done.

This tank followed Miller's tracks, but just as it was turning off the road it received a hit from the heavy gun of a German Tiger tank which had been lying in wait. The whole crew managed to bale out, though some were badly wounded.

Meanwhile, Miller's tank had to make the attack alone as the others could not go forward because of the still unlocated Tiger tank. "Ahead of him," said Olivier, "he saw a house, and as you can realise, Miller had grave suspicions that it might possibly be a German strongpoint, so he proceeded to blast it with high explosives from his

heavy guns. On examining it later, he found out that he had been correct in his surmise. There was also a constant danger from short-range anti-tank rocket-guns (equivalent to our bazookas) hidden in the undergrowth.

" However, this wasn't the time to be timid, so rolling rapidly forward, he opened with all guns on the enemy infantry position. At last our own infantry could move."

One infantryman was badly wounded and the tank signalled for an ambulance, but as the ambulance came up the road the enemy opened fire on it, forcing it to return. Two stretcher-bearers thereupon carried the wounded man for more than two miles under protective fire from the tank. When this task was completed, Miller waited on the hillside until nightfall for an opportunity to bring his tank back. After dark he undertook the return journey by devious ways. At one place, he had to descend a steep ridge. Both drivers pulled hard at the brake levers, but the tank slid forward under its own momentum and almost turned a somersault. Fortunately it was stopped by a big tree. At last after careful manoeuvring in the pitch dark, it reached safety.

Another Afrikaner, A. C. Wessels, of Stellenbosch University, told of the death in action of Lieutenant Abraham Lazarus, of Vryburg. Writing to the dead man's mother, Wessels said:

" Hammie and I lived in the same home for a few years and I, who am a Dutch South African, felt for him, a South African of Jewish extraction, the attachment one feels for a favourite younger brother. We all—English, Dutch and Jewish people—had worked and played with him. At school too and on the sports field he was one of the favourite masters on account of his lovable nature, his great and fine humanity. We all feel that he was a good Jew and at the same time an excellent South African. In making the supreme sacrifice, I feel he has made our land, South Africa, dearer to us."

A moving experience befell Signaller Ben Magid, of Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia, and Private Eddie Callaghan,

of Belgravia, Johannesburg, who had been friends for 16 years. Somewhere in a deserted house they found a piano, which they began to play. A priest heard them and, knowing that the South African forces were about to enter the village, called them into his ruined church. Nearby the funeral of a Springbok infantryman was in progress. At the priest's request Callaghan sat down at the organ and played the accompaniment while Magid sang Schubert's "Ave Maria."

Signaller Magid, by the way, while on 48 hours' leave in Rome, visited Benjamino Gigli at his house. After much talk Magid persuaded the tenor to sing, and was allowed to sing a few scales himself. So pleased was Gigli with the South African's voice that he coached him for an hour. Back in the lines, Magid asked for 11 days' special leave to resume lessons. "And I got it," he wrote in triumph. "I ate, drank and everything bar slept at Ben's house all the time."

Slowly but inexorably the Germans were beaten back, and at last the Springboks, after undergoing considerable hardship, found themselves before Florence. The famous city was set free shortly before *Rosh Hashana*, 1944. Giving his impressions of the entry in a broadcast to South Africa on September 16, Philip Durnford, of the South African Broadcasting Corporation, said that the Jewish troops had the special privilege of helping to release their surviving co-religionists in the city.

In the same broadcast a Jewish officer, Major Frumkin, told the graphic story of how help was given to the Jewish community:

"Immediately there were bridges over the Arno River, our tankers went across to deliver water to the civilian population of Florence, a hard task in view of the real scarcity. Long queues of men, women and children awaited our tankers, each person carrying as many bottles as he could hold and filling them up from the taps. The state of some of the people was pitiful, and it was obvious that they had suffered.

" One of our first considerations was to inquire into the fate of the Jews of Florence and those who were known to have taken refuge, and see in what way we could assist them. There are many still left in the town, and more are coming in daily from the hills and villages where they have taken refuge. Some pass at night through the fighting lines and arrive penniless and without any baggage or knowledge as to where they will spend the night.

" Naturally our means are limited, but we help them in every way we can. Our main assistance is given through the offices of the Jewish community, which have been set up and have started registering the Jews present in the town. A soup-kitchen has been organised, monetary aid has been, and is being, given from funds made available to the community by the Church, the American Jewish Joint Organisation, and the Jewish soldiers' own contributions. Arrangements are also being made to open a school for the Jewish youth of the town.

" The big synagogue of Florence, one of the finest in Europe, has been badly damaged by the Fascists, but we hope to clear it up sufficiently to hold a Jewish New Year service. The help of the South African chaplain here has been greatly appreciated. The Jews of Florence have to be grateful for the assistance of the Church given through Cardinal Della Costa, who gave them great assistance and protection. The Jews on their part contributed to the Allied success by joining the Partisan movement. In fact one of the Partisan leaders and some of their officers are Jews."

Staff-Sergeant Joe Jacobs, of the 12th S.A. Motorised Brigade, wrote to his parents:

" After the first half of Florence had been taken, our unit was pulled out of the lines and we were granted a rest for a few weeks. We needed it, especially our brigade which had been at it continuously, except for a three-day break, for three months. Fighting over 300 miles of enemy-held territory, we haven't had much rest."

A few days before writing Jacobs attended a Thanks-

giving service in the Siena Synagogue on Friday, August 11. "It is beautiful," he wrote. "Jerry missed the place, as it has an outer shell of an old dilapidated building. All their thirty-six *Sefer Torahs* are safe. It was a beautiful service, conducted by Captain Hickman and a Jewish chaplain of a British Brigade. Afterwards we were given buns and coffee.

"The service was attended by nearly all the Jewish members of the division, about a dozen Gentile officers and chaplains and a few Jewish members of a British unit. Even two Catholic priests of the city were there to show their goodwill. I thought it a fine gesture.

"It is only on such occasions that one gets the opportunity of meeting friends in the division, as they are scattered over a couple of hundred miles of territory."

Many deeds of gallantry were performed by South African soldiers in the latter half of the Italian campaign. One Jewish officer, Lieutenant Rudolph Martin, of the South African Engineering Corps, who had been seconded to the 238th Field Infantry Division, received the American Bronze Star. The presentation was made by General Thomas Holcomb, former head of the United States Marines and later American Minister to the Union.

"Lieutenant Martin," said the citation, "demonstrated outstanding courage and coolness by volunteering to clear mines and booby-traps laid among piles of rubble on a bridge across the Mignone Canal, knowing that the bridge was covered by enemy machine-guns. But Martin moved forward, taking advantage of the scanty cover available. Arriving at the piles of rubble, he had removed about half of the mines and disarmed several booby-traps when he was observed by the enemy, and machine-gun and sniper fire was directed at his position.

"Concealing himself as best he could in the debris, he waited until the firing died down and then completed his mission, and returned safely to his unit, thereby enabling attacking troops to pass safely over the bridge and destroy the enemy."

In Cassino and Anzio, on the Sangro River, in Florence and Bologna—everywhere lie the remains of South African soldiers.

During October, 1944, an observer sent home an account of a forgotten group. " Three graves rest at the foot of one of the mountains that form the Gothic Line. They are the graves of three South African soldiers who fought their way up in darkness through shell, mortar and machine-gun fire. At the top they were killed.

" Next morning, their comrades brought them down. They were Lance-Corporal Derrick Charter, of Durban, aged 22, Lance-Corporal Barend Nel, of Schweizer-Renecke, and Private Aaron Len, of Benoni, aged 25. They had been members of the same platoon of the Imperial Light Horse Kimberley Regiment, fighting with the Sixth South African Armoured Division . . .

" Barend Nel and Aaron Len had always fought together and were inseparable. Twice they were the sole survivors of their section during the particularly heavy fighting in the hills and mountains. Nel was tall, lean, fair-headed, Afrikaans-speaking, and rather quiet. Len was one of the smallest men in the regiment, five feet three inches, always cheerful and joking—' the Russian Lion ' they called him. They had shared in many exploits.

" In the fighting for Florence they lay in a slit trench for nearly three days without food and water—the only two survivors of their section of eight men—and successfully held their position in an area which was being swept by shell, mortar and machine-gun fire. Len, who was a rifleman, took over the Bren gun from a dead machine-gunner. Nel was a Tommy-gunner.

" That night an enemy patrol attacked them. The two of them fought back so fiercely that they beat back the attackers. For two more days and nights they lay there in the small slit trench. Len crawled out and plucked a bunch of green grapes from a nearby vine. They squeezed the juice out of each grape into a mug and then drank the bitter liquid. They were not hungry—just thirsty. They

had been without food for so long that they had lost all sense of hunger.

"Nel crawled away to help a wounded comrade of another section to get a stretcher-bearer. When he returned he found Len half buried in the sand, the back of his head exposed to the fierce sun. He dug him out. Len was delirious and Nel dragged him back to platoon headquarters, where he was placed beneath a tree to recover. Nel crawled back to the slit trench. He stayed there alone until the men came to relieve him. Both Nel and Len rested for a while, had some food and then rejoined the section just in time to go into action again.

"Two nights before they met their death together on the mountain, they were two of a four-man patrol which penetrated behind the German lines and shot their way back, killing five Germans. It was led by their Platoon-Sergeant, Eric Eliott, of Pretoria, the fourth member being their Section Commander, Corporal Phil du Plooy, of Johannesburg. The next day the South Africans, as a result of this daring raid, moved up and took the area."

Aaron Len was laid to rest on the first day of *Rosh Hashana*, 1944.

## Chapter X

## WITH THE JEWISH BRIGADE

SOON after the outbreak of war, Dr. Weizmann offered on behalf of the Jews of Palestine to enter into immediate arrangements with the British Army for utilising Jewish manpower, technical ability and resources for the war effort. Britain did not accept his offer. Zionist leaders nevertheless continued to urge that a Jewish Division be raised for service wherever the Imperial General Staff might so decide. It was envisaged that the manpower would primarily be derived from Palestine, but not entirely. Jews of other countries, in addition to playing their part in the war effort of those countries, would also provide men for a purely Jewish Division.

This proposal actually received approval in principle by the then Chief of the Imperial General Staff, but owing to opposition on the part of certain political leaders in Britain, no further progress was made. After the entry of Italy into the war, Dr. Weizmann saw Mr. Churchill, and at that interview, the British Prime Minister gave his unqualified approval to a proposal for the establishment of a Jewish force. Nevertheless political factors once again led to the postponement of concrete measures to raise such a force.

By this time there was a fairly widespread feeling in favour of a distinctive Jewish formation amongst large sections of Jewry in Allied countries. It was argued that hundreds of thousands of Jews were serving at the Front in the existing armies of the democracies (afterwards the total was estimated to exceed 1,000,000), but nowhere did the Jewish people as such appear in the fighting zones, although they had been singled out by the Nazis for the worst barbarities. The pressure was kept up, but the request was not granted until September 20, 1944.

On this date the British War Office issued the following

announcement which was broadcast to the world by the B.B.C.:

"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 dispatch to a theatre of war.

"Supporting and auxiliary 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."

The news of the formation of the unit sent a thrill throughout Jewry. In the British House of Commons Mr. Churchill summed up the feelings of nearly all Jews and many non-Jews when he said: "It seems indeed appropriate that a special unit of that race which has suffered indescribable torment from the Nazis should be represented as a distinct formation among the Forces gathered for their final overthrow."

Thus was the Jewish Brigade launched. In its ranks it counted Jews who came originally from virtually every part of the world. Describing the composition of the force, Bernard Casper, its chaplain, wrote in his book, "With the Jewish Brigade" (Edward Goldston, London):

"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." Of the

Brigade Commander, Brigadier E. F. Benjamin, R.E., Casper wrote: "He was a Canadian-born Jew, brought up in a completely British environment and tradition, with a record of twenty-five years' distinguished soldiering."

How the news of the formation of the Brigade was received in the combat zones was thus described by a South African, Major Joseph Liebman.

"The first knowledge I had of the Jewish Brigade," he wrote, "was one day in Italy when reading General Orders. These called for Jewish officers with some battle experience to volunteer for the Jewish Brigade, which had just arrived in Italy after undergoing extensive training in the Middle East.

"At the time I was seconded to the Imperial Army and was operating with a special band of Italian commando troops. I was very much attached to them, but the call of my own was too strong, and on that fateful day towards the end of 1944 I volunteered for service with the Brigade.

"The sequel came a few months later, and on March 1, 1945, I found myself attached to the Brigade in the capacity of Infantry Company Commander. Naturally, I was as curious to see my new men as they were to see me, and I was more than surprised to see about one hundred and fifty sunburned, husky fellows in my company.

"They were all keen to get to grips with the enemy of our people, and I began to realise that my men were more than ordinary soldiers. They were true crusaders of modern times, and I felt sure that the Jerries who got in our way would have more than a bad time."

The Jewish Brigade went straight into action at Alfonsine, on the eastern Italian coast near Lake Commachio. The country was most difficult and consisted of flat ground, freely cultivated and interspersed with numerous canals, ideal for ambush and surprise. Major Liebman's company took over a sector from an Italian unit, and as the Italians left they informed their successors that this was one of the "stickiest" areas on that front.

"From the outset," said Major Liebman, "the sector

' hotted up,' and although Jerry did not yet realise that their mortal foes were opposite them, they knew there had been a change-over and reacted accordingly. They brought up all their modern improvements, including a battery of ' Moaning Minnies ' consisting of large-calibre six-barrelled mortars, and several self-propelled guns of heavy metal, stiffened up by infantry. We, too, had good supporting arms and surprised the Huns several times by the bold use of tanks as mobile artillery, and also by daylight attacks and other novelties.

" This sector produced two outstanding engagements, which shook the German morale considerably. The first consisted of establishing an advanced ambush position. This involved digging by night with the utmost caution, as the actual position was well within the enemy lines. The working party had to withdraw before dawn and carefully camouflage its work before leaving. The climax to this came a few nights later, when we sent in a strong fighting patrol.

" Their patience was well rewarded when a German patrol approached in close formation. The enemy had not yet deployed into battle formation and unsuspectingly walked into the trap. Six dead Germans were left on the field. We had no casualties, although the enemy opened up with all they had and made the night hideous.

" The following night they staged a full-scale counter-attack, but this was beaten off, not without some cost to ourselves. A few days later our C.O. decided to shake the Huns again and, after due consideration, decided on a full daylight infiltration and attack without any preparatory fire. This took place one morning, and before the enemy realised the position, thirteen prisoners were on their way back. The Germans opened up with bitter fury and soon two of their own men went to Valhalla having been killed by fire from their own lines. The rest of the prisoners needed no coaxing and doubled up very smartly.

" The rearmost German, very tall and very frightened, was assisted by a very short ex-Berliner, who encouraged

him with his rifle and also some well-chosen phrases in the prisoner's mother tongue. The climax came later when the prisoners were informed that they were in the hands of the Jewish troops. However, they were not killed out of hand —as they fully expected to be—and were given the normal treatment accorded to prisoners of war."

A short while afterwards the Jewish Brigade was transferred to a mountain sector on the Senio River, where it took over from a Gurkha unit. This area it held for three very trying weeks, taking part in many skirmishes.

On their flank the Jews had Italian troops whose trench discipline was very bad. The brigade bore the brunt of most of the enemy counter-fire, and its casualties were heavy. After a short rest it took part in the huge attack which was the prelude to the end of German domination in Italy.

" I find it difficult," Major Liebman wrote, " to describe the combined air force and artillery barrage which preceded the attack. It was awe-inspiring. We then moved off and the approach led through the densest minefields. However, we managed to clear a reasonable path and soon we were in contact with the Germans. After a bitter skirmish they withdrew under cover of darkness and the following morning my company followed up. We ran into some very heavy rearguard fire, but took our objective, which we held for two days. By that time, other Allied troops had passed through us and we retired for a well-earned rest. It was the end of the fighting, and very soon afterwards, the German armies in Italy capitulated.

" What a wonderful feeling," Major Liebman recorded, " to see the *Magen David* proudly flying at the head of this historic column. The Germans at first could not believe that the men were Jews, and it was amusing to note their reactions when they realised that this fine, well-disciplined body of stalwart men was composed of the people they had tried to exterminate. The men bore themthemselves with the greatest restraint and ignored the overtures by the Huns.

"It is a great tribute to their discipline to record that there were no incidents."

Another South African Jew who served with the brigade was Major K. Keet. He had come to South Africa from Russia as a youngster and had settled in Kingwilliamstown, where he grew up with his brothers, all of them keen Zionists. Keet himself went to settle in Palestine in 1935 as one of the *chalutzim*. There he did well on the land, and when World War II came, enlisted in the "Buffs." Afterwards, he was transferred as an officer to the Palestine Regiment.

In this mixed unit of Arabs and Jews, he was the first Jewish adjutant. After achieving an excellent record in Egypt, Keet was promoted to the rank of Major and became a foundation member of the Jewish Brigade.

"It was a great thrill to command Jewish soldiers in Hebrew in a purely Jewish unit," he said. "It is difficult to describe our feelings of pride and satisfaction every time we gained a victory. We felt it to be a little milestone in the path of fulfilling our ultimate aspirations in Eretz Israel."

Right through Italy, and later in Holland and Belgium, Major Keet remained with his unit and was responsible for saving many Jewish refugees. The climax occurred in the Landsberg camp in Germany when the inmates discovered that their rescuers were of their own faith. Their enthusiasm was delirious. One soldier, incidentally, found his father there.

The Jewish Brigade was only a small unit amongst the gigantic armies which the United Nations had gathered for the final assault on Germany. Its meaning, however, was out of all proportion to its numbers. For the pathetic remnants of European Jewry it was a beacon light of a new future. For Jews throughout the Allied world it constituted a symbol — a symbol of the magnificent part they played in the final overthrow of Nazism.

The role played by the Jewish Brigade also undoubtedly marked an important milestone on the road to the creation of a free and independent Jewish State.

## Chapter XI

## SOLDIERS OF LIBERATION

PERHAPS the most stirring experience which befell South African Jewish soldiers was to see how Jewish communities were liberated from the Fascist and Nazi yoke. Even in Abyssinia they had assisted, first in freeing, and then in helping, the oppressed Jews, and when they came to North Africa and reached Tripoli and then Tunisia, they encountered thousands of men, women and children only recently rescued from Fascist persecution. In previous chapters the story has already been partially told. Here it only remains to tell it a little more fully, and further to give a picture of the position after the hour of liberation had struck.

A moving episode was described by Flight-Sergeant Max Joffe, who came across a hidden synagogue on the borders of Tunisia. "To-day is Saturday, and we are resting," he reported to his family. "Two other lads and I decided to go for a walk into the little town. There is a building and we decided to go in. It was a *shul*. Our entry was greeted with fear and amazement. Soldiers ! Well, we came in just as they were lifting the *Torah*, and as it passed us we kissed it. That set the seal on us as to our identity. What a transformation ! There were deep sighs, and one could almost hear dozens of hearts beating again. How joyously they then *davened*. They just couldn't believe their eyes. One old Jewess came up and kissed my hand, while others almost fell at our feet, thanking God that they could now go and *daven* in peace.

"For three years they had been suffering hell. An old man showed me how they had kept the *Torah* under the flooring boards and how they had had to camouflage the little *shul*. They had been tormented first by the Itis and then with even greater brutality by the Huns. We were the first Jewish soldiers who had visited their *shul*.

" They are very poor. The little children came up to us and begged us to come again. It seemed that for the first time in their lives they smiled. All signs of fear left them. Outside we later saw them dancing and laughing. When they had put the *Torah* away, one old man went up to the *Rebbe* and asked him to send up a special prayer for our welfare. We were asked to go up to the *Bimah*, and there we stood, and honestly, if ever a prayer from the heart was sent up to God, it was that one the *Rebbe* sent. Tears rolled down the old gentleman's eyes. How those poor people all cried!

" We were told that this was the first time since the Itis had entered the war that the *Rebbe* had been among his people and had *davened.* When it was all over, we were asked to stand aside, as each and everyone wanted to wish us ' Good *Shabbas.*' It was worth everything in the world to see the delight and peaceful look in those drawn and weary faces as we bade them farewell.

" That little *shul* is well beyond Tripoli. If victory will only mean that those poor souls will now be allowed to go to *shul* and *daven* in peace, then this fight and struggle will have been worth all the trials and hardships we have endured and are still likely to endure. May God protect them."

In Italy the tale was continued (as narrated in the last two chapters). Finally came the moment when Jewish soldiers reached some of the Nazi concentration camps. The sight of tattered, anguished, despairing people of their own faith who came to greet them was more than even the hardened Springbok soldiers could bear — and not alone Jewish Springboks. They gave from their belongings and from their own rations.

Padre Rechtman reported to the South African Jewish Board of Deputies: " Quite a number of men in my care have been fortunate enough to be able to go to a Jewish transport unit nearby for an *Oneg Shabbas* each Friday night. I visited them during the past few days and was very happy during the few hours I spent in their company.

They told me about the action they have already taken to help the refugees in these parts. This includes the donation of the priceless weekly slab of chocolate, as well as of clothing and food received from *Eretz Israel.* They have started schools and soup kitchens and organised the transfer of neglected orphans to orphanages in more settled portions of Italy.

"There is also the question of the collection of all information regarding these refugees and, as far as possible, the saving of communal property. I have also made arrangements to hold a collection among the men under my care towards the cost of all this service."

The men of the Union Defence Force Repatriation Unit were the first to meet Jewish refugees who reached Naples after a flight from the German-occupied part of Italy. These refugees were the advance-guard of ten thousand, mostly from Yugoslavia, who had escaped from their country immediately after the German invasion and settled in Lombardy, where they had remained unmolested by the Italians. The remaining sixty thousand met the same tragic fate as the millions of Jews in Poland and the Baltic republics.

When Italy gave up the struggle and surrendered to the Allies, the Jewish refugees who had made their temporary home in that country resumed their wanderings until they crossed the German lines under fire to safety in the Allied zone. Many of the fugitives were assisted by Italians and had hair-raising escapes. When they reached the Allied lines they needed encouragement, confidence, spiritual comfort and uplift.

It was due to the efforts of, among others, such men as Corporal S. Poliva, at Resina Camp, near Naples, that they were able to spend a few hours every week in a Jewish atmosphere.

"The first service was a great and unforgettable event in the lives of the refugees after they had been unable to attend a synagogue for years," wrote Padre Natas. "A number of soldiers, Jewish as well as non-Jewish, also the non-Jewish chaplains attached to the unit, were present and

even participated. The services were very ably and impressively conducted by Corporal Poliva. Each gathering was followed by an *Oneg Shabbas*. There was a fine spread of food, such as the refugees had not seen for a very long time. A glass of wine for everyone—fruit, cakes, biscuits and hot drinks—all were provided by Poliva, who did not spare any effort to make these unique functions a success.

" Among the audience one could see men from all the Allied armies sitting side by side with the civilian refugees. These looked upon every soldier as their personal saviour and it was not difficult to detect the gratitude in their eyes. Even the small children felt the solemnity of the occasion and gazed with reverence at their elders. Such services and gatherings were continued for some seven months, until one day the refugees were told that they must move to another camp."

Sergeant Martin Hauser, a Palestinian, on his own initiative started an organisation which rapidly spread wherever there were Jewish troops in Italy. " I visited many places where thousands of Jews from Dachau, Buchenwald, Auschwitz, and other concentration camps were living under difficult conditions," he wrote in one of his reports. " More than from lack of food and clothing, they were suffering mentally because of lack of any information about their families, and also because of the feeling that they were a forgotten people. Wherever I came I was received with such enthusiasm that I felt repaid for any trouble I had taken, and for the five years of my life spent in this war.

" It was an unforgettable sight: the faces of people who drank in every word I spoke about the Jewish Brigade, about our efforts to help them, to supply them with information, to get them to Palestine. I could write a book on what I saw and heard. I came back sick after learning of their sufferings. I came back with a feeling of utter helplessness, because I compared the scale of assistance needed with the true possibilities of helping them. I came back with bitterness against those people of the world who kept the doors of their countries still closed against Jewish

immigrants, and against those who let the gates of our country remain shut to the remnants of European Jewry."

Sergeant Hauser roamed all over Northern Italy, from town to town, setting up relief committees. He continued: "Then came V-Day and the end of my activities in Italy; that is to say, the most important of them, namely, to get into a liberated town, as the first Palestinian, twenty-four or forty-eight hours after its capture, and to reorganise the Jewish community.

"Suddenly the problem of Trieste had to be dealt with, several hundred Jews having been left without food during weeks of political friction. Something fresh continually cropped up, until one fine day I was faced with the task of proceeding into Austria and Germany to examine the position there, to find out where the Jews were, their numbers, where they came from, what their condition was, and how they could be helped."

Other war victims, this time in Egypt, had reason to bless the name of Sergeant W. Remark. "A party of us," he reported, "paid a visit on the occasion of *Purim* to an U.N.R.R.A. refugee camp situated in the desert at the southern end of the Suez Canal. We had known of the existence of this camp and we had been advised that the Jews among the refugees in the Yugoslav section intended to celebrate the festival.

"The Jewish fellows in our unit had a whip-round, which yielded over £5, and this we used to buy sweets and other gifts for the kiddies. Then it occurred to us that those refugees might appreciate it if we came ourselves, just to show them that they were not forgotten by their own people, and those of us went along who could be spared from military duties. The Officer Commanding very kindly lent us a lorry for the purpose.

"I spoke to as many of the Austrians as possible. Practically all were unable to speak English and were pathetically pleased to find someone from the outside world who knew their language. The stories they told us were the kind so often read and heard, and so seldom believed.

" One elderly man had been in fourteen different camps, and each time managed to get out just half a jump ahead of the Germans. Many had trekked with the children over mountains, through snow and rain. Others told of life under the Gestapo in Vienna and other places. They had lost literally everything except their dignity and, looking at them, I could not help thinking that we really have no worries comparable with theirs. All were grateful to have found this refuge in a friendly country; and they were all loud in their praise of what U.N.R.R.A. had done for them. Some hoped to get permits to enter Palestine; some (especially those from Yugoslavia) want to go back.

" The refugees were grieved to leave the Repatriation Unit where they had met with such hospitality, and they expressed their gratitude to the authorities for all that had been done for them—in particular, ' for restoring to us our human dignity.' More than anything else they will remember the services at which they renewed their contact with Jewry and the Jewish heritage."

Displaced persons also crowded to the service held by Padre Potashnik at Udine, in sight of the Alps. Not all the glimpses of displaced persons, however, were quite as happy as they were here. Thus Major Liebman who, as already mentioned, was serving with the Jewish Brigade, wrote as follows of others among the liberated Jewish survivors:

" These poor, homeless creatures wander about Europe, hopeless and helpless. Their expressions are so full of despair that one realises they have given up all hope. It makes one boil with rage to think they were once fine people, full of pride and dignity, and now mere wreckage in the streams of life."

But they have not remained so. Now, five years after the war, the picture has changed. Owing to their indomitable will to survive and to the help which they received from Israel, from world Jewry, and also in some measure from the democratic nations, life has begun anew for many of them. In Israel, particularly, they have found a welcome haven.

## Chapter XII

## JEWISH AIRMEN

SOUTH Africa's effort in the air started in a minor key. At the outbreak of the war she had only a small Air Force which, in conjunction with the country's Navy, was used almost entirely to patrol the seas round our coastline. It soon became apparent, however, that even the work of patrolling the coasts demanded greater air strength than was available. The enemy raider, "Graf Spee," was reported near Union waters; enemy submarines were known to be lurking dangerously close; and there were many sinkings of Allied craft, including the "Africa Shell," which was lost off Mozambique in 1939. Everyone knew, moreover, that it was only a matter of time before Italy entered the war and that with her entry South Africa would need a very much augmented Air Force to help defend her own continent.

Accordingly a call was made for air personnel. The response was so good that when Italy did become a belligerent, planes from the Union were already ranged on the borders of Abyssinia and Eritrea. They dropped some of the first bombs on the enemy on this continent, and thereafter the S.A.A.F. followed the Army through the East African campaign, onward to Egypt and Libya, into almost every corner of the Mediterranean theatre, and up the length of Italy.

Hardly once in all that series of onslaughts, through nearly six years, were Jewish South African airmen absent from the scene, whether as members of the S.A.A.F. or the Royal Air Force.

The war was only a few days old when the R.A.F. carried out its first raid on Germany. The attack was made on enemy naval units at Wilhelmshaven, some of the British aircraft being shot down. Among these first casualties was

a young South African Jew, Pilot-Officer Harold Rosofsky, who lost his life. He had chosen the Royal Air Force as his career eighteen months before and was among the earliest to go into action.

A substantial number of other South African Jews in Britain joined the R.A.F. on or before the outbreak of hostilities. Among them was Pilot-Officer N. L. Lewis, who had gone to England to make flying his career and was in action from the very start. He was killed in an air battle over Heligoland Bight on December 14, 1939.

Another such volunteer was Air Gunner Louis Kolitz. Born in Lithuania, he settled in Bloemfontein in 1928, and later signed up in Rhodesia. As tail-gunner in a Vickers Wellington in the first days of the war he took part in one of the most bitter battles over Germany. Still another was Sergeant Jocelyn Friendly, who was awarded the Distinguished Flying Medal in 1940 — the first South African N.C.O. to win an award in the Royal Air Force. He was killed in action in 1943.

Pilot-Officer Hyman Batzofin, from Johannesburg, an engineer by profession, joined the R.A.F. immediately war broke out and took part in twenty-two raids on Germany. He was transferred to the Middle East in 1941 and later was reported missing. Sergeant-Pilot Lionel Flax, a dental student from South Africa, served in the R.A.F. Ferry Command and flew the Atlantic regularly. Equally fine was the record of young Harry Amschewitz, a fighter pilot and son of the eminent painter, J. H. Amschewitz. Flight-Lieutenant W. Mirkin, of Port Elizabeth, one of three brothers in the Forces, served in the Mediterranean and at the height of the German assault on Malta was seriously wounded while medical officer to an R.A.F. unit on the island.

Lieutenant-Colonel L. Gordon, of Cape Town, had a distinguished record, both with the South African and Royal Air Forces. Leaving his job in the Union Post Office, he first joined the S.A.A.F. and went to the Middle East in 1941. Promoted to the rank of captain, Gordon received the

Distinguished Flying Cross while serving in No. 12 Squadron for his part in the " Shuttle Service " bombing of the Germans west of El Alamein in October, 1942. After the campaign he was given the command of a squadron in Italy, although he was only twenty-eight, and on one occasion was forced down into the sea with his crew, only he and the navigator surviving. Later he was placed in command of an R.A.F. intruder squadron.

When Mr. Winston Churchill visited the Fifth Army in Italy and made his memorable remark, " Greater ventures lie ahead of you," Colonel Gordon was picked from one of the small groups of officers to be introduced to the Prime Minister. Gordon was also presented to the King during His Majesty's visit to this front.

Another South African who saw service with the R.A.F. was Pilot B. Blieden, who was the first South African to sign on under the Empire Air Training Scheme in Rhodesia. He was later transferred to the South African Air Force and did combat duty in light bombers with 21 Squadron.

The " grandfathers " of the Royal Air Force included men from the Union. Among them was Wing-Commander Lionel Cohen, who at the age of sixty-nine won the D.F.C. In his youth he had fought in the Matabele War and South African Wars, and by the time World War I came was already in his forties. Nevertheless in that conflict he won the D.S.O. and the M.C. He joined up afresh in Hitler's war and, somehow or other, worked his way into a tail-gunner's turret in Coastal Command.

Here is an impression of him written by a Squadron-Leader: " He never gave the impression of being older than, say, 45 to 50, and he never wore his Matabele or South African War ribbons. Everybody said that he had fought in the Crimea and that he had been in the Indian Mutiny too ! He was popular because he entered fully into any fun and games going on in the Mess, especially on guest nights, when he had his ' puff puff ' with the rest of us and never had any jumpy hangovers."

Flying-Officer Joe Friend was another old-timer who

reappeared. He joined the Imperial Light Horse on the outbreak of the South African War and gained several campaign awards. Then he went to Rhodesia, where he lived at the Cam and Motor Mine till he joined the British Army during World War I. On the outbreak of World War II, at the age of fifty-six, he volunteered for the R.A.F. He enjoyed the distinction of having his own son with him in the ranks.

In one of his letters, Flying Officer Friend wrote: "O'Keefe (the Rhodesian High Commissioner in London) has asked me to wear the Rhodesian badge on my shoulders. The O.C. there was pleased to sanction it. He and I are the only two officers with eight medal ribbons. Others are up to four. The men here call me 'Old Friend,' but I can still out-distance them in many ways."

We turn now to the Union's own air effort. Many Jewish reservists joined the South African Air Force when hostilities started. A large number of others soon enlisted, going on patrol around the coasts and later meeting the enemy in East Africa.

When No. 12 Squadron bombed Italian Moyale at the very beginning of the war Sergeant-Gunner Hellman was among the crews participating. Sergeant-Gunner S. S. (Lukie) Berchowitz, of No. 41 Squadron, and his pilot were among the first to land at Gimma, second largest town in Abyssinia, and Berchowitz was in the first plane to touch down in Addis Abeba after the capture of that town. Three members of his family were in the S.A.A.F., the other two being Corporal Monty Berchowitz and Captain A. B. Berchowitz, Acting Adjutant of No. 40 Squadron.

Among the first prisoners to be taken by the Italians was Sergeant-Gunner Louis Aaron Fineberg. Later he participated in an attempt to escape, helping to dig a tunnel 160 feet long and six feet below the concrete floor of the Adi Ugri prison camp. Before the Springboks could use this exit, however, they were rescued by the rapidly-advancing Allied troops. After his return to the Union, Fineberg was trained as a navigator and commissioned;

and in 1942 was posted to the famous 24 Bomber Squadron in the Western Desert. He was one of the few survivors of the original crews who developed the shuttle-bombing technique used to stop the German advance to El Alamein, and was awarded the D.F.C. for a specially plucky piece of work carried out while he was wounded. Once again back in the Union, Lieutenant Fineberg, after recovering, trained as a pilot and was able to carry out a short tour of combat duty in Italy before the war ended.

An exciting episode in which Wireless Operator H. E. Fuchs figured before the defeat of the Italians in East Africa was recorded in a letter to his mother, Mrs. G. E. Fuchs, of Johannesburg. During a raid on targets at Dessye, in Abyssinia, the aircraft in which Fuchs was serving ran into very severe hailstorms and was driven off its course. It was eventually forced to land on Vichy territory. The crew, however, was not aware of this. Nor were they immediately enlightened, their reception leaving little to be desired.

"Next morning, however," Fuchs wrote, "we awoke terribly hungry and mooned around waiting for breakfast. This was not forthcoming, and it was some time later that we learned that, owing to the scarcity of food, breakfast had been done away with. We then realised that we were in French Somaliland and thought we would be internees for a long time to come."

The Springboks decided to escape. "Zero hour was fixed for the evening of April 17," Fuchs related. "We each put a medicine bottle of water and a few bars of chocolate in our pockets and wore only soft shoes, socks, shorts and khaki shirts, fearing that undue bulges would arouse suspicion." At 7.15 p.m. they silently crept away. Including a number of R.A.F. men who had crashed some months before, there were thirteen in the party. Edging their way along within a few hundred yards of lighted outposts, they got through all the entanglements, though the last took half-an-hour to negotiate, and reached the desert.

" We had a fairly decent rest at No-Man's-Land on the border, and then pushed on. It had turned light and we were thirsty, having finished our water some time before. Then we came to a pool of water near an outpost. We could just make out the flag flying there, and boy, were we glad to see the Union Jack ! "

The party reached Zeila, from where its members were taken by ship to Aden, then to Berbera, and finally back to their squadron.

Another Jewish airman from South Africa who took part in operations over the Western Desert was Major Cecil Alexander Golding, of Cape Town, who was shot down over Bir Hakeim. However, he managed to rejoin his unit and took part in the final assault in Italy. He told of one of his adventures. " I feel particularly chirpy at the moment, having shot down a 109 yesterday. As if that wasn't exciting enough, I just managed to pull out in time from the very steep dive I was in, and found myself about 100 feet above quite a battle progressing on the ground. There was shelling and what not going on, and anxious as I was to get out of the way, I found it impossible to turn sharply enough, as I was doing about 420 miles per hour and the controls were nearly immovable at that speed. After a bit my speed dropped and I got away from the tanks and tried to get back to the formation, which was still engaged with the other M.E. 109's up above."

Presently news came that Cecil Golding was missing. Just as anxiety about him was deepening, a letter arrived from him: " I hope this reaches you before the casualty list. I am writing from a hospital near Cairo, where I landed after quite a scrap we had over Bir Hakeim a few days back." He had been shot down and wounded by an M.E. 109 after himself " bagging " three-and-a-half enemy aircraft confirmed, the half being his share of a German plane shot down by himself and another pilot.

After a spell of leave in the Union, Golding returned to operations and eventually commanded his squadron.

On one occasion he closed on the enemy at tree-top level and, in the face of violent ack-ack fire, wiped out an entire battery. He was eventually awarded the D.F.C.

Among those who did not come back—and there were many—was Leonard Adam Carnovsky, who enlisted in the South African Air Force and served as a navigator with No. 15 Squadron. He was reported missing in the Western Desert forty miles from Sidi Barrani and was later presumed killed. In his will he left a bequest to the University of the Witwatersrand to promote Native political and social welfare in any manner the University thought fit. After consultation with his relatives, it was decided to use the bequest, amounting to £1,500, to establish bursaries for deserving Native students. "The University has accepted," said the Principal, "and is proud to be able to give effect to the practical interest of one of her most gallant graduates in the welfare of the least privileged people of the Union."

Another link with the University was provided by Lieutenant Stephen Goldfoot, of Johannesburg, a dental student who was killed in an air battle over the Mediterranean. In an obituary notice, Professor J. C. Middleton Shaw, of the University's Dental Faculty, wrote:

"He was a Jew and proud of the fact. He volunteered for active service in the very early days of the war, although his doing so met with opposition from the Dental School authorities and others. I remember well his saying to me when seeking permission to join up: 'Doctor, we Jews have said a lot about conditions in Germany, and about Hitler. It's up to us now to do something more than talk, and nothing will prevent my going to fight.' After that there was nothing more to be said, except to wish him good luck and a safe return.

"He will not return, but he will be remembered by all who knew him as a fine fellow who had before him, had he wished to take the easy way, every prospect of a brilliant dental career and a life of happiness and success."

Many Jewish airmen were among those who took part

in long-distance bombing during the Mediterranean campaign.

Among the Spitfire pilots operating from Corsica into France were Lieutenant J. Franks, of Klerksdorp, and Captain A. Sachs, of Randfontein, the latter serving on secondment to the R.A.F. During a dog-fight Sachs destroyed two enemy fighters, and had subsequent successes. He was awarded the D.F.C.

Among the South African Jewish flyers who rendered outstanding service during the war was Lieut.-Colonel Cecil Margo, D.S.O., D.F.C. His official citation read:

"Lieutenant-Colonel Margo commenced his third operational tour on May 4, 1944, having completed two previous tours in East Africa and the Western Desert, North Africa and Italy. On the conclusion of his second tour Lieutenant-Colonel Margo (then Major Margo) was awarded the D.F.C. on October 29, 1943, being then a Flight Commander in his squadron.

"Lieutenant-Colonel Margo took over No. 24 Squadron at the beginning of his third tour. He led six raids against the enemy landing grounds, harbour installations and shipping in the Aegean Islands. In particular, during two separate raids on targets on the island of Crete, enemy anti-aircraft fire was intense and accurate, through which Lieutenant-Colonel Margo led his squadron with cool courage and determination, straddling the target on both occasions.

"On another occasion, during an attack on a landing ground in Crete, the formation was attacked by enemy aircraft, but so skilfully did Lieutenant-Colonel Margo lead the formation that only one aircraft was slightly damaged and the target was well hit. Just prior to 24 Squadron's return to this theatre he was posted to Italy, where he served in 3 Wing as S.A.S.O. for a while.

"Lieutenant-Colonel Margo was again appointed Officer Commanding No. 24 Squadron, South African Air Force, on November 24, 1944, and since December 4, 1944, he has personally led the squadron on no fewer than 34

occasions. On each raid, without exception, Lieutenant-Colonel Margo has displayed outstanding courage, coolness and skill and has proved himself a leader of very considerable ability.

"With the concentration of the enemy's A.A. defences in Northern Italy, only a few targets were undefended, and the fierce enemy reaction frequently encountered has in no way affected his proved qualities of skill and leadership, nor deterred him from pressing home his attacks at all times.

"Throughout his current tour Lieutenant-Colonel Margo has been the exemplification of courage and the model of leadership. He has completely devoted himself to his duty and his great ability has been the inspiration not only to all under his command, but also to all with whom he has come in contact."

Lieutenant-Colonel Oscar Galgut, O.B.E., also rendered distinguished service. At 35 he was too old to fly, but unofficially went into action in the air many times. He was Senior Operations Officer in East Africa and later, as Senior Air Staff Officer to No. 3 Wing, helped to maintain the brilliant offensive record of that Wing. He was directly responsible for many of the tactical developments in the Desert Air Force and took command of No. 24 Squadron in March, 1944, after it had lost its Commanding Officer and two-thirds of its combat strength.

Major I. A. (Issy) Maisels, now a Rand K.C., had a fine record of service in the East African campaign. After his return to the Union he played a big part in the Directorate of Air Organisation.

Major Sonny Starfield, M.B.E., was an outstanding member of the Directorate of Air Personnel. Handicapped by serious illness, he yet worked incessantly and was one of the best-known administrators in the South African Air Force. Though warned repeatedly by his medical advisers that he must rest, he refused to relinquish his task and died in harness early in 1945.

Among the members of the ground-crews who saw ex-

tensive service were Air-Sergeant S. W. Kentridge, son of Mr. Morris Kentridge, M.P., who served in Egypt, Tunisia, and Malta; and Lieutenant Mervis, of Johannesburg, and Lieutenant Allschwang, both of whom were with No. 60 Squadron in its trek with the Eighth Army across North Africa.

Many were the adventures and escapes. For example, Corporal Lewis Myers was reported missing after Sidi Rezegh, and the worst was feared when, by a strange chance, his birth certificate was found in a burnt-out tank in Libya. Months later, however, it was discovered that he had been taken prisoner, that his ship had been torpedoed a mile off the Greek coast, that he had swum ashore, and that he had again fallen into the hands of the enemy. He regained his freedom when victory came.

Air-Corporal Jack Friedman, of Johannesburg, was a ground-crew member of a famous Kittyhawk squadron. In December, 1942, he observed an aircraft on fire coming in to land. It crashed. Disregarding the danger from exploding fuel tanks, he ran to the plane and helped to free the trapped pilot. For his gallantry Friedman was awarded the British Empire Medal.

The main service of South African Jewish airmen was, of course, with the S.A.A.F., but a few took part in the air war against the Japanese. One was Pilot Selwyn Lurie, of Durban, who flew a Thunderbolt as a member of the Southern Burma Fighter Group, having been seconded to the Royal Air Force and serving with 135 Squadron. Among the unhealthy places, literally and figuratively, over which he fought was Akyab Island. The Squadron operated up to an altitude of 40,000 feet and its work included fighter sweeps, the escorting of Liberators and Dakotas, bombing attacks and every type of strafing.

It is impossible to give anything even approximating to a complete account of the contribution made by South African Jewish airmen to the distinguished reputation which the South African Air Force as a whole won for itself. It can, indeed, be said that no arm of the Union's Defence

Force made a greater contribution to ultimate victory than the Air Force; and within it the Jewish airmen played their part meritoriously.

## Chapter XIII

## MEDICAL AND SCIENTIFIC SERVICES

FROM earliest times Jews have been prominent in medicine — indeed at one period in the Middle Ages they almost had a monopoly of the art. With this tradition it is not surprising that the number of Jewish doctors in the Union forces should have been high, nor that they contributed so much towards the distinguished achievements of the South African Medical Corps as a whole.

In this chapter it is possible to mention the work of only a few individuals. They were not necessarily the most outstanding. Amongst those who remain unmentioned there were many whose personal contributions would also have merited being placed on record if space had permitted and all the information were at hand. Whether named or unnamed, all have, however, served South Africa well.

Not a few of the Jewish doctors had previous war service. Thus the Army record of the Grand Old Man of the South African Medical Corps, Colonel D. Horwich, went back to 1905, when he became an officer in the Regulars. Although he had retired by 1939, he insisted on rejoining the Defence Force and became Chief Inspector of Recruits.

Another old soldier to rejoin was Major Herbert Leviseur, of Bloemfontein, a member of a well-known family of pioneers in the Orange Free State. Major Leviseur had served with the Royal Navy in a destroyer in the North Sea during 1915 and 1916. He returned to Guy's Hospital in London to finish his training, and then he joined the Royal Air Force Medical Service in 1918, seeing service in France. Despite his age Major Leviseur went North again in the Second World War, and in Libya found time to produce a charming book for his little daughter, entitled "Desert Magic."

Major Leviseur's older brother, Alfred, who had also served in World War I, was a medical officer in the field in

North Africa. The brothers are grandsons of the late Isaac Baumann, the first Jew to settle in Bloemfontein (every one of Isaac Baumann's sons, grandsons and great-grandsons who were of military age and medically fit served either in the Boer War — on the British or Republican side — in World War I, or World War II. Major Leviseur's father fought for the O.V.S. in the Basuto War of 1866, and was one of the two first burghers to reach the top of Thaba Bosigo in a successful assault on the Basuto fortress.)

Major L. P. Sanders, who had been almost right through the First World War with the South African Medical Corps, also placed his services at the disposal of the country once again.

Another doctor who rejoined the forces was Lieutenant-Colonel the Hon. Henry Gluckman, who subsequently became the first Jewish Cabinet Minister in the Union. Between the wars he had remained on the Reserve of Officers and in January, 1940, enlisted again and was promoted to the rank of Colonel.

Major Bernard Friedman was another Member of Parliament who assumed military duties, and a member of the Transvaal Provincial Council, Major (later Lieutenant-Colonel) E. B. Woolf, went on full-time active service.

In the early days of the war, before the Springboks went North, the duties of medical officers were mainly confined to the military depots in South Africa itself. Nevertheless the work often entailed heavy responsibilities, and was vital to the placing of the Union Defence Force on a war footing.

Major William Emdin, of Cape Town, who was in charge of the Medical Division, 134 Military Hospital, Potchefstroom, acquitted himself with distinction during the influenza epidemic at the Potchefstroom camp in the winter of 1943. It was due to his initiative and zeal that the outbreak did not dislocate the regular flow of artillery and tank personnel from Potchefstroom to the North.

Other Jewish doctors who held important posts at bases in the Union included Lieut.-Colonel H. Roseman, of



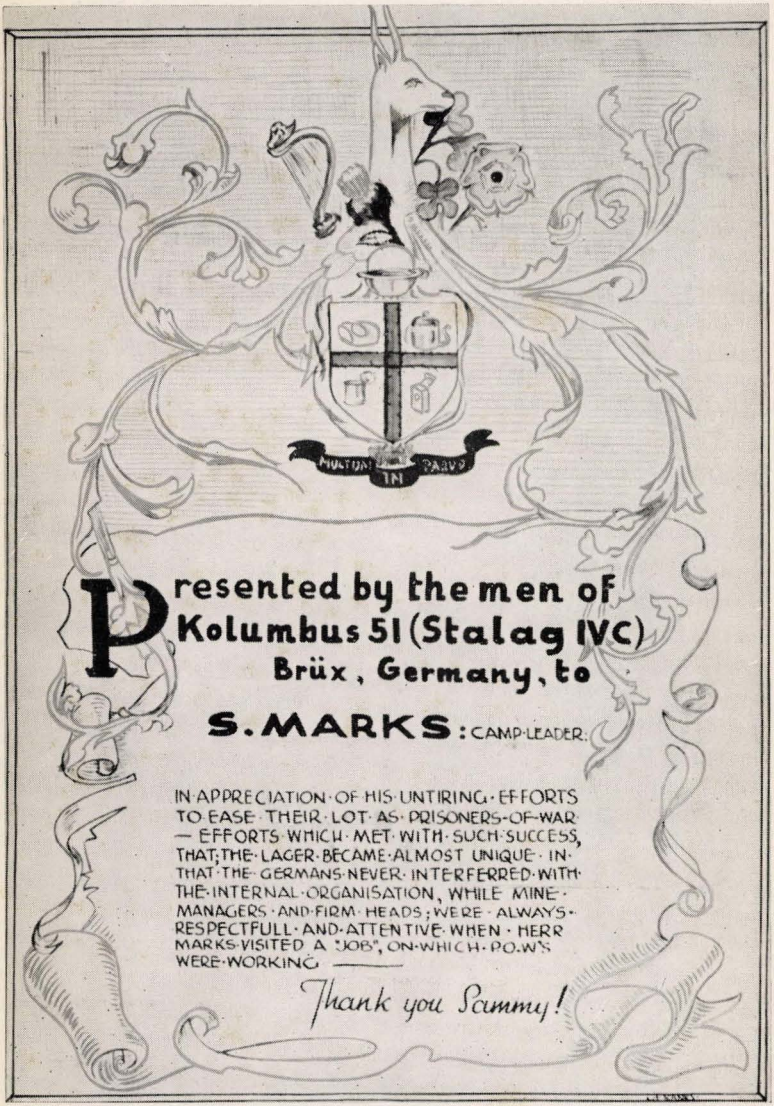
Brigadier E. F. Benjamin taking the Salute at the March Past of the First Battalion of the Jewish Brigade.



Springbok at wheel of Jewish Brigade Jeep.



A Jewish Brigade group.




An Illuminated Address presented by P.O.W's to their Camp Leader, S. Marks, of Johannesburg.




Conference of Jewish Chaplains in Cairo, August, 1941. Left to right: S. Weinstein (1st S.A. Division), Rabbi Israel Brodie (Senior Jewish Chaplain, R.A.F.), Rabbi I. Raffalowitch (attached to the Palestinian Forces), Rabbi Nahum Effendi (Chief Rabbi of Egypt), Rabbi L. I. Rabinowitz (Senior Jewish Chaplain, British Forces, Middle East), Rabbi M. Goldman (Australian Forces), W. Yesorsky (2nd S.A. Division) and Mr. Berman (Chairman of the Cairo Ashkenazi Community).

Pretoria, in charge of the Medical Division, 110 Military Hospital, Voortrekkerhoogte; Lieut.-Colonel M. M. Suzman, of Johannesburg, in charge of the Medical Division, No. 5 S.A. General Hospital; Lieut.-Colonel P. Leftwich who, after a period of service in East Africa and Abyssinia, returned to Cape Town in charge of the Medical Division, 160 Military Hospital, Wynberg; Lieut.-Colonel Maurice Weinbren, Adviser in Radiology to the Director-General of Medical Services, U.D.F.; Lieut.-Colonel M. Malk who, after service up North, was on his return placed in charge of the Medical Division, 110 Military Hospital, Voortrekkerhoogte; Major Dreisenstock who, after service in Abyssinia and Egypt, returned to Pretoria as Staff Officer to the D.G.M.S.; Major Friedland, of Pretoria, Radiologist, 110 Military Hospital, Voortrekkerhoogte; Major H. Moross who, after supervising the military section of the Pretoria General Hospital, became Officer Commanding Potchefstroom Military Hospital; Captain Harold Falcke, of Vereeniging, Registrar, 134 Military Hospital, Potchefstroom; and Captain A. Frame, General Duty Medical Officer, 134 Military Hospital, Potchefstroom.

There were women doctors, too, who played an important part in the work of the Medical Corps. Amongst them was Dr. Mary Gordon, who attested in 1942 and served for more than a year after the end of the war. Dr. Gordon was attached to the R.A.M.C. in World War I as a surgeon. She is at present in Israel.

A full quota of Jewish doctors went North with the troops into the fighting zones and shared in their adventures. Some gave their lives. Lieutenant David Emmanuel Klass, of the S.A.M.C., was killed in action near Sidi Rezegh. One of the greatest losses sustained by the S.A. Medical Corps was Colonel David Lurie, a surgeon of repute, who was second-in-command at the South African Hospital No. 106 in Egypt. He met his death in an accident up North.

A number gained awards for gallantry or distinguished service. The regimental medical officer of that famous old

unit, the Royal Natal Carbineers, Captain M. Reznek, was awarded the Military Cross, as was the former Springbok Rugby player, Captain Louis Babrow, of Bloemfontein. Lieut.-Colonel L. Melzer, who went up North with the 11th Field Ambulance and later became Commanding Officer, won the O.B.E. and M.C. Captain (later Major) H. Sampson, of Johannesburg, was mentioned in dispatches and gained the M.B.E. Lieut.-Colonel (later Colonel) L. I. Braun, of Johannesburg, also gained the M.B.E. The list could be continued at length.

Every branch of medicine was represented among Jewish doctors in the S.A.M.C. Dr. Morris Fisher, honorary anaesthetist to the Johannesburg General Hospital, went North in 1941 with the rank of Major and served at No. 5 General Hospital in Cairo. Major Sam Weyburne and Capt. M. Peskin rendered excellent service in field ambulance work, as did many others. Lieut.-Colonel Nelson, appointed Director of Hygiene Services at the Medical Directorate in 1940, paid frequent visits to units in East Africa, Egypt and Italy. He was ably assisted by Major John Freed.

Lieut.-Colonel A. L. Agranat served as physician in senior positions both in the Union and East Africa. In May, 1945, he was appointed Officer in Command of the medical division of 107 S.A. General Hospital in the Middle East. Major M. Franks served as ophthalmogist from 1940 till the middle of 1945. Major H. Penn was an ear, nose and throat surgeon with the forces both in South Africa and the Middle East.

In addition to holding other important appointments, two South African Jewish surgeons also served for a spell in a hospital ship. They were Major J. Wolfowitz, who for fourteen months was appointed surgeon to the hospital ship, "Amra"; and Major N. Pencharz, who for a time also served on the surgical staff of that vessel.

Distinguished service both in the Union and in the war zone was rendered by Lieut.-Colonel L. D. Adler. From July, 1940, until April, 1942, he was Staff Officer to the Director of Hygiene, and then Deputy Assistant Director

of Medical Services at Durban. In 1943 he left for the Middle East, where, after a spell as Acting Officer Commanding No. 101 Non-European Hospital, he became Senior Medical Officer at the Union Defence Force base of Helwan. After holding a number of other high-ranking posts he was released from full-time military service towards the end of December, 1945.

In the field of plastic surgery Major Jack Penn served with distinction. He was placed in charge of the Red Cross Hospital at Brenthurst, the Johannesburg residence of Sir Ernest Oppenheimer, which had been suitably converted. Later he was in charge at Tara Hospital. He was awarded the M.B.E. in recognition of his valuable work. Major Penn's close associate in this work was Captain Lester Brown, a well-known dental surgeon.

More than a hundred South African Jewish dentists served in the Union Forces. The majority were attached to the South African Medical Corps, but a number served in fighting units. Several, including Captains Monk and Berman, were captured by the enemy.

A number of South African Jewish doctors joined Imperial units. One was Captain H. Schrire, of the Royal Army Medical Corps, and another, Major Alan Orlek. Both received the M.B.E.

A considerable group enlisted in England. Mention must be made of Dr. Henry Rosenberg, whose mother, Mrs. Jenny Rosenberg, of Johannesburg, had the honour of receiving a letter from the King, in which His Majesty congratulated her on her son's work. Early in 1941 a heavy air raid took place in Worthington. Dr. Rosenberg, who had lost a leg years before as a result of an injury during a Rugby match in Johannesburg, spent the night under fire, stumping round among the wounded and the dying, leading his own first-aid mobile unit into action. General Smuts, in the Union, and the Minister of Home Security, in London, also wrote personally to Mrs. Rosenberg praising her son's efforts.

Like Dr. Rosenberg, Dr. G. S. Norris, of London, and formerly of Cape Town, received a personal commendation from the King. This happened in 1941. A house had been struck by a German bomb and completely demolished, burying two people. For three hours Dr. Norris, though in the greatest danger, helped to tunnel through the wreckage until he could reach and treat the victims.

Captain Isaac Jacobson, of Cape Town, who had been a student in London when the war broke out, was taken prisoner at Dunkirk while serving with the Royal Army Medical Corps. Jacobson was among the first South Africans to be repatriated under the exchange arrangement between the Allies and Germany in 1943.

At Malta Major Bernstein, of Cape Town, won very high praise from the authorities. He had reached the island with the first batch of British reinforcements in January, 1940. During the worst period of the siege poliomyelitis broke out among the troops, and on Bernstein fell the duty of fighting off the peril. He was given charge of the General Hospital at Imtarfa, with its two thousand beds. In three months more than five hundred cases were reported, including sixty-four among the garrison. To make matters more difficult, there were too few "iron lungs" and the electric power needed to keep them going was interrupted by the bombing. Bernstein organised relays of men to operate the machines by hand and so keep their comrades alive by artificial respiration. This continued for six to seven days on end. Three to four teams were kept permanently ready in a special ward.

In addition, Major Bernstein, in co-operation with the Royal Engineers, built "iron lungs" and similar instruments from parts of old aircraft. Thanks to these measures and drastic restrictions on crowding, the outbreak, which very gravely threatened the whole defence of Malta, was ultimately stamped out.

From a distant corner of the world came news of Surgeon J. Blank. He was stationed in Penang, in Malaya, at the time of the Japanese attack in 1942. When that town

was lost, he went to Singapore, and the Director of Medical Services placed him in medical charge of a ship bound for Rangoon, carrying refugee women and children. Blank not only performed his medical duties but, when the ship's crew mutinied, helped to keep the vessel going and to obtain the assistance of passengers in stoking coal. His human cargo was safely delivered.

When U.N.R.R.A. commenced operations, Dr. Mark Tombuk, of Cape Town, who had been a member of the Union Health Department before joining the South African Medical Corps in 1940, became Chief Medical Officer for the Salzburg area in Austria. Here more than 15,000 displaced persons were concentrated, and the only hospital was in an unusable condition. Dr. Tombuk immediately reorganised it, with the result that soon 152 beds were available, as well as special sections for children, men and women, ear, nose and throat wards, dental wards, heat therapy and X-ray wards, and gymnastic and massage departments. Working with a minimum of money, Dr. Tombuk built up one of the most efficient institutions in the war zone, which contributed enormously towards reducing human suffering.

But it was not only as medical officers that South African Jews rendered service to war-time medicine. A few of them, by scientific research bearing on health achieved results which proved of far-reaching consequence to the whole Allied war effort.

Perhaps foremost among them was a former Capetonian, Professor Solly Zuckerman. Originally he had gone to England while still quite young, had concentrated on medical research and had successively held appointments at Oxford, Yale and London. Fellow of the Royal Society, Professor of Anatomy at the University of Birmingham, scientific and technical adviser to the Chief of Combined Operations — these were some of the distinctions that came his way.

When a bomb fell in crowded cities, every team of rescue

workers put into effect lessons on the human effects of blast ascertained by Zuckerman. "Behind the award of the C.B. to Professor Solly Zuckerman," wrote the "News Chronicle" in January, 1946, "is one of the remarkable stories of the war. It began at the outbreak of hostilities, when the Ministry of Home Security called him in—he was then Demonstrator in Human Anatomy at Oxford—to carry out monkey experiments on the effects of blast, flying splinters, shock, and allied problems. That led him and his colleagues to a study of the Blitz, which was to be turned against the Germans when our own massed-bombing began. It led, too, to his appointment as one of the scientific advisers to Lord Louis Mountbatten at Combined Operations Headquarters.

"His work was now far removed from the anatomy of monkeys. It was concerned with amphibious operations, with fire-power and weapons. After the invasion of North Africa his investigations, under battle conditions, brought him in touch with Air-Marshal Tedder, who later made him his scientific adviser.

"It was then that Zuckerman was handed the problem of the invasion of Pantelaria, the heavily-defended Italian base which beset our Mediterranean sea routes and threatened to baulk the Sicilian landings. He was given a free hand in working out the 'softening-up' by advance bombing and the co-ordination of air and naval bombardment. General Spaatz, the air C.-in-C., prepared the attack on the basis of these calculations. Zuckerman flew over the island.

"He was with the bombardment fleet when it moved into action. Pantelaria, with a garrison of 15,000 men, surrendered before a single soldier set foot on the island. The 'war-book' of that attack became the text-book for subsequent invasions.

"In the preparations for D-Day, Zuckerman was one of those who worked on what was nicknamed 'Operation Strangle,' the attack on the German lines of communication through France. Everything had to be done to reduce

French civilian casualties. The methods worked. The casualties were a fraction of those calculated, and the effect on supplies was a big factor in the Allied success. Hence it comes that, in the unofficial records of the war, a group of experts who worked on 'backroom' lines to carry out his ideas were proud to refer to themselves as 'the Zuckerman Boys'."

Vitamin therapy, to prevent undernourishment in war-time and particularly to forestall the inheritance by children of tuberculosis, epilepsy, organic forms of insanity or other defects, was substantially improved by Dr. Cecil Gordon. His home was in East London, but having graduated, he became a lecturer in Aberdeen, Scotland. On the outbreak of war the Royal Air Force Coastal Command retained Dr. Gordon's services for important secret work. As a result of his proposals, the flying capacity of Coastal Command was doubled without the need of adding a man or machine to the establishment. So far-reaching were the effects of his discoveries that it has since been announced that the peace-time organisation of the Royal Air Force is being "streamlined" on the basis of his ideas.

The "Lancet" in 1941 paid a very high tribute to a pair of young South African medical men from Cape Town —Dr. Solly M. Cohen and a non-Jew, Dr. C. A. R. Schulenberg, both of the Royal Army Medical Corps. Working together as a team, they provided the British and Allied forces with information of fundamental value, based on medical experience after the evacuation of Dunkirk. Dr. Cohen and Dr. Schulenberg were able to demonstrate methods whereby the risk of gangrene could almost be eliminated, and made recommendations of great importance to the well-being of all men in the field.

It was not only in medicine and cognate spheres that South Africans did useful work. They made their contribution, too, to the scientific side of the war. Particularly valuable was the work they did in industrial research

and the gearing of industry for the requirements of the struggle.

At the outset special mention must be made of the fine work performed by German Jewish refugees in the Union. Their part on the battlefields has been referred to, but they also rendered valuable service in the technical field, for which they were fitted by their specialised knowledge of many industries. Dr. J. Meyer, of Johannesburg, a former member of the staff of the Technical University in Charlottenburg, Berlin, for instance, helped to overcome the problems created in South Africa by the rubber shortage; and Dr. A. Orgler, formerly of the Allgemeine Elektrizitaets Gesellschaft, of Berlin, furnished important information to the engineering industry.

Jewish technicians in the Union, particularly German refugees, experimented until they successfully produced special alloys required for war purposes. New methods were also developed for the mass production of bearing metals urgently required in large quantities by the British Admiralty for the Far East campaign. This work was carried out to the entire satisfaction of the Director-General of Supplies. Gun metal, bronzes, tin, lead, zinc and aluminium alloys were turned out, and South African industry furnished component parts in enormous variety. Firms run by refugees also refined metal recovered from scrap and residues previously exported or simply thrown away.

The making of precision instruments and tools was another branch of work in which Jewish technicians, many of whom had been employed by great German concerns, did outstanding work.

German refugees also played their part in the fields of censorship and intelligence, where they were able to use their wide knowledge of foreign languages and their practical experience of Nazi methods. Though the highest tributes to their skill were again and again received from overseas, the public, because of the very nature of their work, heard nothing about them.

In addition to the refugees, other members of the South African Jewish community were to be encountered in many spheres of the country's war industry as expert advisers, technicians and organisers. For example, Louis Milner was sent overseas to arrange the supply of machine tools, then desperately needed in the Union. He lost his life in an air crash in 1943. Major David Harris was dispatched by the Union as its liaison officer to the supply centre in India. He became largely responsible for organising the exchange of stores between the Union and India.

In Canada the Army authorities used a process for the preservation of vegetables evolved by Major Robert Kark, of Cape Town. Originally he went to America to do research at Harvard University, and joined the Royal Canadian Air Force as a flight-lieutenant, specialising first in the effects of high-altitude flying. His most striking contribution, however, was the production by chemical methods of fresh vegetables in the frozen solitudes of Labrador.

Mention should also be made of Dr. Leonard Klatzow, of Bloemfontein, a Rhodes Scholar. He had been on the staff of University College of the Orange Free State as a lecturer in physics before going to England. Here he first worked on television and was then retained by the British Government for research on bomb-sights. He died at the age of thirty-three.

South Africa's wartime role in the scientific field, though perhaps not large in relation to countries with bigger populations and more mature academic traditions, is nevertheless one which earned for her considerable respect in many parts of the world. The great all-round progress that was made was only possible because of the initiative, the enterprise and the ingenuity of some of her sons, belonging to diverse races and creeds.

## Chapter XIV

## PRISONERS OF WAR

ALL Jews who enlisted in World War II were confronted with a common problem: should they, if captured, disclose their Jewish identity ?

No one had any illusions about the Nazis and their attitude towards the Jews. There was a fairly widespread belief, therefore, that any Jewish soldier taken prisoner would share the fate of those of his people already in the clutches of the Nazis; and in view of the prevailing fears it might have been expected that large numbers of Jews would not declare their religion. This, however, did not prove to be the case, only an insignificant number adopting this course either upon enlistment, or later when they happened to be captured.

Eventually, as it turned out, Jewish Springboks who were captured were in the main treated no differently from other prisoners, though in isolated cases the enemy did try to discriminate. One such attempt was described by Private Sandground, of the Imperial Light Horse.

After the collapse of Italy Sandground was among the South African prisoners who were sent to Brux, where they were set to work in the coal mines. " Before we went there," he wrote, " we were interrogated, and cards were completed giving information about our nationality, religion, etc. When I said my religion was Jewish, the British sergeant who was filling in the card advised me to conceal this fact since, in his words, ' They will take it out of you.' However, I refused to hide my religion.

" One day the order came through to the Camp Commandant at Brux that all Jews were to be sent to Teschen. Seven of us were collected and told to prepare to move. On arrival at Teschen we found about eighty Cypriots and Imperials, and I learned that the work we would have to do was to load coal.

"When I first arrived the second-in-command entered our billets and attempted to persuade the non-Jews to ostracise us 'Israelites.' They took no notice of this, however, and relations between us were always of the very best.

"The Teschen Camp Commandant called us into his office and explained to us that we had been sent to his camp because we were Jews, but that, provided we complied with the regulations and made no trouble, we would be treated exactly the same as other British prisoners.

"In December, 1944, the order came through from higher authority that all Jews were to be separated from non-Jewish prisoners, and the Camp Commandant informed us that we were being sent to Teklowicz. The non-Jews were very distressed when they heard this and showed their sympathy in many ways. At Teklowicz we found that the camp contained only Jews. There were twenty-eight of us, including Palestinians, Moroccans, Czechs and Americans. We were put to work in a quarry.

"While we were there a high official came to visit our camp and addressed us, saying that we had been sent to 'Straflager' (punishment camp) because we were Jews, and it was the Jews who had plunged Europe into war. The guards at the camp were elderly men and, although pro-German, were anti-Nazi; nor did they conceal their views. On the whole they were quite decent to us, and for a few cigarettes we could obtain many favours from them. They were, however, definitely anti-Jewish."

In some camps the Nazis tried hard to stimulate anti-semitism among the non-Jewish prisoners. From all accounts, however, they met with little success. There were many reports, in fact, which showed that the P.O.W.s were so revolted by the Nazi treatment of the Jews that they refused to look at Nazi propaganda.

"Amongst the inmates of my camp," wrote Private Silverman, of Natal, "there was no anti-Semitism. A lot of Nazi propaganda was introduced into the camp, but it evoked no response among the non-Jews. All the copies of the book, 'Jews Must Live,' were marked by the R.A.F.

prisoners, 'And how !' The authorities threatened reprisals against them, but no further action was taken."

In fact, the Nazis were so unsuccessful in their bid to stimulate anti-Semitism among South Africans that they gradually abandoned the attempt.

Ill-treatment was indeed common, but it affected prisoners of war without regard to racial origin. In fact, behind the gates of the prison camps, between the decks of the hell-ships which carried the men across the Mediterranean, and in the cottages of the Partisans (where some gained a temporary haven) differences of religion and custom tended to fade away. South African Jews and non-Jews lived and worked together in friendship. When they reached the Germans, the same phrase welcomed them : "Für dich ist der Krieg vorbei" ("For you the war is over"). Events, however, showed that this was often a mistake on the part of the enemy. Indeed, many a shrewd blow was struck by men who had been captured.

While the South African Jewish prisoners were let off lightly, Jewish prisoners from other countries, both soldiers and civilians, were very often subjected to the severest ill-treatment. Lance-Bombardier J. Jawitz reported that in his camp a German guard singled out a Jew among the Russian prisoners and drove him with bayonet and rifle butt to almost impossible tasks, calling out all the time, "Verfluchter Jude ! Schweinehund ! Verdammter Auslaender !" and so on. Eventually the Russian Jew turned to the guard, put both his hands above his head and in German whispered, "I have had enough, please shoot me." He repeated this and fainted. "This same sentry, they told us, used to kill about five Russians a week," added Jawitz.

Private Barney Holtzmann, who was stationed with other South Africans in Ueberaltstadt, 100 miles west of Prague, told a grim story. On arrival they found about 900 Jewish women prisoners employed on flax spinning in a nearby camp. Each woman had a *Magen David* sewn on the left front of her dress and tattooed on an arm. He was told that the emblem was also tattooed on each woman's chest.

After the fall of Hungary a further 300 Jewish women arrived and were billeted a few hundred yards away from the others. They were very poorly clad, wearing wooden clogs and thin, cheap cotton dresses with a red stripe down the back. Their guards were German women who were responsible to the S.S. This latest batch worked twelve hours a day in the mill, in addition to washing and sweeping their quarters and preparing their food.

Most of the British and South African prisoners of war were moved by their plight and bribed the guards with cigarettes to take over food and medical supplies, including cocoa, chocolate and milk from Red Cross parcels. The women, however, were very cruelly beaten if they were found receiving gifts, and for this reason the men afterwards discouraged the practice of giving presents.

" I was told of the exploits of Sergeant J. A. Dreyer, an Afrikaner, in civil life a policeman at Windhoek," wrote Mr. (formerly Sergeant-Major) A. M. Melamet in " Jewish Affairs." " He had coaxed, cajoled, threatened and lied until he succeeded in securing slightly better treatment for some of these Jewish slave workers in a neighbouring camp.

" After the German collapse, he forced German women to cook for these girls, to wash their clothes and to wait on them at table. He commandeered food from the village shops. He organised dances and arranged orchestras. A great-hearted Afrikaner, he was so touched by the suffering of Hitler's victims that he did all in his power to make some meagre restitution to them, to give them a few of the things of which they had been deprived for years, to bring back laughter to their lives."

After the war it gradually became possible to piece together the many varied experiences, exploits and adventures of those Springboks who spent long and weary periods in internment camps in Italy and Germany. There are many graphic and inspiring stories which might be told; here it is possible to select only a few of them.

Outstanding are the tales of those men who, while they were prisoners, continued the fight against the Nazis,

ignoring the risks to which they were constantly exposed. Many were the courageous feats of sabotage they carried out, sometimes under the very noses of the Nazis. The exploits of Barney Sheinuk, one of the considerable number of Jews in the Second Transvaal Scottish, show effectively how some of the more daring prisoners did obstruct the enemy's war effort.

Sheinuk had joined up in June, 1940, and had gone North with the Second Division in June, 1941. He had taken part in the capture of Sollum and, when his battalion withdrew from Gazala, was one of the group which held the strong-point known as the "Acroma Keep," outside Tobruk. It was while he was in the " Keep " that an incident took place for which he was awarded the Military Medal.

" On the evening of the 16th June, 1942," read the citation, " an enemy convoy of captured British troops, after taking the wrong route, was fired on by mistake by our machine-guns, anti-tank rifles and mortars. A large number of British troops jumped from their trucks and made towards our positions and, before they could be stopped, had run on to our minefields.

" Lance-Corporal Sheinuk, with complete disregard for his own safety, although the enemy were shelling the position, rushed into the minefield several times, helped to remove the wounded and guided many others through the minefield, thereby saving many lives and showing a fine example of courage and devotion to duty."

The garrison of the " Keep," after fulfilling its difficult mission, withdrew into the Tobruk perimeter a few days before the surrender. When the town fell, Sheinuk was taken prisoner.

After the capitulation of Italy he was removed to a prison camp in Germany and there began a career of active sabotage.

An apparently trifling incident launched him on it. Attached to a working party at Adorf, near Chemnitz (he was the only Jew in this party), Sheinuk found that his job was to unload briquettes of coal from railway trucks.

The briquettes were made of compressed coal dust, and he noticed that when one of them fell off his shovel into the snow, it immediately disintegrated and dissolved. He immediately got all his colleagues to join him in dropping as many as possible. So successful was this practice that the Coal Stores Officer complained that thirty-five tons of coal briquettes were unaccounted for each week.

Sheinuk was then transferred to another job which gave him scope for a more specialised form of sabotage. His work was now to carry quantities of machine parts, machine tools and similar articles from railway trucks to an adjacent siding. Between the permanent way and the siding were scattered a number of empty 45-gallon oil drums filled with sludge and dirty water. Into these drums Sheinuk and his colleagues, whom he had put up to the scheme, dropped whatever they were carrying. In addition they crushed delicate instruments whose nature could be detected through the hessian packing. When opportunity offered, other items were buried.

When there was no unloading to be done, Sheinuk and his companions were ordered, among other duties, to remove the hub-caps from railway trucks, fill them with grease and screw them on again. Instead of using grease, however, he used sand and induced his friends to do the same. Another exploit involved a Czech in his working party. The Czech's job was to work a crane, with which he had to lift coco-pans filled with coal and tip them into the tenders of locomotives as they arrived at about ten-minute intervals. Sheinuk wondered what would happen if the crane were put out of order. He persuaded the driver to wreck part of the mechanism, and soon had the satisfaction of seeing sixteen engines drawn up in line waiting to be coaled by hand. It took several days to end the chaos.

After six weeks Sheinuk's " picnic " at Adorf came to an abrupt end. He and 38 others were suspected of sabotage and packed off to Bohlen, near Leipzig, where saboteurs from other work parties were also congregated. In terms of the Geneva Convention, it was necessary to elect a " man

of confidence " to represent the men in all negotiations with the Detaining and Protecting Powers. Sheinuk was put up by his group, and two other candidates were put up by the rest, but he was elected by 137 votes to ten.

He set about organising the routine of his camp, and at the outset agitated for permission to have regular direct contact with the area " man of confidence," whose headquarters were at Stalag 116, Oschatz. This demand, hitherto denied, was acceded to, and from then on the working party came under the direct supervision of the Protecting Powers.

Sheinuk's party was put to work in a benzine plant. The military authorities were responsible for the housing of the workers and for preventing them from escaping, but the conditions of work were laid down by the directors, who were all members of the Nazi Party.

In accordance with the Geneva Convention, Sheinuk demanded a six-day working week for his men, and a meeting between him and the managing director was arranged by the Feldwebel (sergeant), who was Camp Commandant.

It was almost fantastic to see the pompous Nazi magnate, Herr Schwartz, who employed five thousand workers of different nationalities, confronted across his office desk by a young South African Jewish soldier, while the Feldwebel in charge of the camp stood stiffly to attention at the door. Sheinuk actually offered the director an English cigarette, which the director politely refused. Sheinuk in turn refused a cigarette proffered by the German.

As a result of the interview a compromise was reached whereby the men were granted one full day off every fortnight. This meant some relaxation—and also a reduction in output.

One of the greatest shortages experienced by the Nazis during the war was that of timber, and prisoners of war had great difficulty in securing enough for cooking and heating. In this camp, however, the prisoners were permitted to use broken wood if any were found lying about. Sheinuk soon contrived ways and means of securing good timber and having it chopped up. It could thus be brought into the



Larks with the children of a Jewish Settlement.



In the Farmyard.



Springboks visit the Churvah Synagogue, Old City of Jerusalem.
It was destroyed during the Arab-Jewish War in 1948.



Leave party on a Settlement.



Padres of all denominations meet at the Victory Cavalcade, Johannesburg, in 1945. Sitting, left to right: Rev. J. Gurney (Principal Chaplain, Free Church), Rev. R. F. Strathern (Principal Chaplain, Church of England), Rev. O. Coertse (Principal Chaplain, Dutch Reformed Church), Rabbi W. Hirsch (Principal Jewish Chaplain), Rev. L. Du Manoir (Principal Catholic Chaplain). Standing: Rev. M. Natas (Jewish), Rev. J. Jansen (Catholic), Rev. H. Pike (Presbyterian), Rev. S. Weinstein (Jewish), Rev. H. Leibenberg (Dutch Reformed Church), Unknown, Rev. L. Lysett (Catholic), Unknown, Rev. T. Oliff (Church of England).

## THE TABLET FOR THE FALLEN AT VOORTREKKERHOOGTE.



Rabbi I. Brodie, Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the British Commonwealth, conducts the Service.



(Left) Mr. B. A. Ettlinger, K.C., President of the South Africa Jewish Board of Deputies, and (on his right) Mr. A. B. Klipin, National President of the South African Jewish Ex-Service League, unveil tablet.

workers' quarters as " broken."

He often reminded the men to do no more work than was necessary to keep out of trouble with the authorities, and in general to adopt a go-slow policy. But he felt that it was also necessary to undermine the morale of the enemy in his area, and he hit on an ingenious scheme.

He had access to the German radio service and had noticed that the announcers frequently stressed that the Allied countries were on the verge of starvation. Thereupon he asked his comrades, when they received their issues of Red Cross parcels, to remove and collect all the labels from the tins and packages and scatter them on the way to and from work. German civilians were thus provided with an exhibition of labels of British, Dominion and United States food products, casually cast away by Allied prisoners of war. The effect was marked. Indeed, so successful was this manoeuvre that the authorities issued an order forbidding the distribution of Red Cross parcels until all the labels had been removed. The prohibition, however, failed to achieve its purpose, for Sheinuk, in his capacity of " man of confidence," had to be present when the parcels were opened. He simply arranged for a fatigue party of his own men to pick up the labels and take them away. So they still found their way into the streets of Bohlen, Oschatz and Leipzig.

Sheinuk secured many amenities for his men, among them an up-to-the-minute news service. His position entitled him to free access to the Leipzig prisoner-of-war hospital. Here he struck up a friendship with a British naval officer who was supplied with the latest B.B.C. news by a pro-British doctor. This information Sheinuk carefully collected and brought to his fellow-prisoners. His contacts with newly-captured United States airmen enabled him to supplement the service, so that his camp was kept well-informed about the world in general and the war in particular.

Another South African Jew to secure early notoriety with the Detaining Powers was Private Barney Orlin, of the Imperial Light Horse. Because of his attempts to escape

and of the frequency with which he helped others to escape from the camp at Aguapendente, he was classified as a "pericoloso" (dangerous prisoner) and transferred to Camp 54 at Fara Sabina. Later he was transferred to Germany and spent about four months at Stalag IVB, Muhlberg-on-Elbe, before being sent out with a party of seventy men to work in a lignite mine at Moenitz, near Zeitz. Here he was unanimously elected "man of confidence" and was soon asked by the men of the whole area, comprising about two thousand prisoners, to undertake the distribution of Red Cross food parcels.

In the capacity of interpreter he was once called upon to act for a prisoner who had deliberately set fire to a coal briquette factory. Orlin took on the role of defence counsel and secured the man's release. Conviction would have meant death.

Towards the end of the war Orlin was able to be of service to some Americans taken at the Ardennes Gap. They were brought to his camp, where the Nazis, who hated Americans, refused to release Red Cross food parcels for them. Orlin demanded an interview with the Area Camp Commandant and insisted that the terms of the Geneva Convention should be applied. The interview was successful, and he was permitted to tour the area where the United States troops were held and to distribute packages to them regularly.

Apart from the usual go-slow policy, Orlin persuaded the French medical officer to certify at least ten per cent. of the personnel unfit for work — with a corresponding reduction in output.

From a secret radio-set Orlin circulated a daily news bulletin to his camp, sending translations in Dutch, French, Polish, Czech and Russian to neighbouring work parties.

When the arrival of the victorious American Army was imminent the German officer and sentries handed over their arms to Orlin and surrendered to him. But Orlin was able to pass on more than prisoners. On his numerous trips round the area he had taken note of enemy airfields, and

artillery, anti-aircraft and anti-tank gun positions. He now gave the information to the American Intelligence Officer.

Another prisoner who helped to lighten the lot of his friends was Sammy Marks, of Johannesburg, who had an extraordinary history. As Camp Leader he consistently burned all the Nazi propaganda sent to the camp for distribution. Perhaps his crowning achievement was that he was able to rescue a Czech Jewess from deportation to the Eastern Front and to marry her and to bring her back to South Africa. His "Lager" was almost unique in that the Germans never interfered with the internal organisation.

After being rescued Marks was presented with an illuminated address by his grateful fellow-prisoners in recognition of his devoted services.

Less spectacular, perhaps, but in its way no less vital, work was that done in various camps by prisoners who set themselves out to save their fellow-victims from boredom. One such prisoner was Private Dave Katzeff, of the Second Transvaal Scottish. At his camp—Tarhuna, near Tripoli—conditions were very bad. No communication existed with the Red Cross, nor were parcels ever received during the men's five-and-a-half months' stay there. Katzeff took a prominent part in organising and carrying out a comprehensive programme of educational classes, lectures, debates, competitions and entertainments—with a marked effect on the mental health of the men.

On *Rosh Hashana* Katzeff arranged for a short service to be conducted in English for the thirty-one Jews there by Captain Ronald Letcher, a Methodist padre, for whose co-operation and understanding the Jewish prisoners of war were deeply grateful. The following week, with the assistance of another Jewish prisoner of war named Mendelsohn, Katzeff conducted the *Kol Nidrei* service.

Afterwards, as a prisoner of war in Italy and still later in Germany, he did much useful work, including the organising of concerts. In December, 1943, with a staff of willing helpers, he edited and produced a weekly wall-newspaper known as the "Observer," and found

means of side-stepping the Nazi censor—with the aid of a British artist who had become expert in forging censors' stamps. Back in the Union he collected all the wall newspapers which he issued in a single volume. This was sold in aid of the Springbok Legion.

In 1944 while organising Union Day celebrations in Stalag IVB, Katzeff was struck by a burst of cannon fire from American Lightnings which were strafing enemy lines of communication near the camp. He returned to South Africa in June, 1945, after having completely recovered from his wounds.

This chapter would not be complete without reference to some of the daring and spectacular escapes from Italian P.O.W. camps after the capitulation of Italy. They are stories of determination and fortitude, of unbelievable hardships and great ingenuity.

One of the many Jewish Springboks who made a bid for freedom was Sydney Jacobson, who had been taken prisoner at Sidi Rezegh. Jacobson had many breathtaking adventures. In 1941 he was in a ship which was torpedoed off the south coast of Greece. Seven hundred lives were lost. Jacobson was, however, one of the survivors and temporarily ended his military career in an Italian prison camp. He gave the following account of his escape after the capitulation of Italy, when he and a number of friends were en route to a P.O.W. camp in Germany.

" A fortnight before the Italian armistice we were transferred to Camp 57 at Udine, and I was there at the time of the surrender. We were told that we were free men, but the guards were not removed, and three days later the Germans took over the entire place. We left on September 13 under Nazi escort, en route for Germany.

" We were fortunate that only sixteen men had been allocated to a cattle truck. Even so, travelling was hardly comfortable. The truck was completely closed in, with only a little ventilation. The Germans, however, forgot to lock the door, and so we managed to escape.

" Basil Levene, Charles Richardson and I jumped out

eight miles from the Austrian border at two o'clock in the morning and we went up into the mountains immediately. We had no idea at all where we were, and were still in British battle-dress. Going up to a house, we asked for food. The people gave us a plate of soup and, fearing we would come back again, gave us away. We decided that the only hope we had was to get back to the plains and wait for our troops. (We thought we would only have to hang on a few days.)

"For three nights we lay quiet in the hope of jumping a goods train. Unfortunately none stopped at this particular small station. We were without food during this period. The fourth night, in desperation, we boarded the Vienna-Rome express and promptly hid ourselves in the first W.C. we found. After three hours of travelling we heard that the train was due to arrive in the vicinity of Venice at 1.30 a.m. We made midnight our zero hour, hoping to jump off unseen as the train slowed down. Unfortunately this little scheme did not work because the train was so crowded that the corridors were just one mass of people—and someone was blocking the doorway of the W.C. We could hear German voices drifting in from the balcony.

"It was bright moonlight, but fairly dark inside. At midnight the train stopped at Sachile, a small station, and we plucked up all the courage we had, saying to each other, 'Make or break.' With our greatcoats on and our caps in our pockets we opened the door. I politely said 'Excuse me' in my best Italian and found that the gentleman sitting against the door was a German. We saw that the other two with him were fully armed, but we just strolled on. Being nervous, I fumbled with the handle of the door and one of the Germans opened it for us. We thanked him in Italian, said good-night, and jumped off the train.

"Three Italians discovered us, and I told them frankly who we were. They warned us that there were Germans in the village and gave us directions on how to get into the open country.

"For about twenty days we wandered around in uni-

form, getting help from Italian peasants. Then we managed to get some civilian clothes. Our original intention was to go down south, but these peasants dissuaded us. Our troops did not reach us, and as winter had set in, it was difficult to travel. We stayed for seven months with these families.

" One night we were betrayed by the mayor of a town, and four Germans came to look for us. These Germans were very well armed. Being warned of this, we kept clear of the houses and then decided to try and get through to Switzerland, since we did not want to endanger the lives of the Italians hiding us."

The South Africans obtained a compass and maps, and started off. For six days they walked, although they had little food and unsuitable clothing. Then, as they were crossing the Adige River, Germans halted them and offered hospitality. When the fugitives hesitated to accept, the Germans became suspicious and took them off to the guard-room.

" We told them we were Italians, but after twenty-four hours disclosed our true identity. Next morning we were tied together with chains and sent to the S.S. Command at Bolzano. We were kept in chains all day and were marched through the city to the local civilian gaol. Here, we went through quite a stiff interrogation by an S.S. major, but our story was already worked out and we would not give him the information he desired. In the gaol we spent six weeks. The conditions were appalling—we were separated, treated like criminals, and nearly lost our lives in an air raid.

" From there we were transferred to an Austrian military gaol, where we were treated very well indeed and given a certain amount of liberty. After a fortnight we felt that we had enough strength to plan escape.

" By this time there were ten of us—four Englishmen who had escaped over the Austrian border, three Frenchmen, my two friends, and I. In collaboration with a Frenchman of the Organisation Todt, we planned a very elaborate escape in a German truck. Everything was in

perfect order, but unfortunately this Frenchman betrayed us at the last moment and we were put back into cells. From there we were supposed to be moved to Mantua, near Verona, to a German transit camp. Various unsuccessful attempts to escape were made.

" At Verona we had to wait overnight in a large hall with about three hundred German soldiers waiting for various trains to and from the front. They gave us coffee and bread, and we were very disappointed indeed as we saw our hopes of escape fading. At 1.30 I asked to be accompanied to the W.C. Two other fellows came along in full battle-dress.

" Our guard thought that the W.C. was situated in the courtyard and left his rifle behind, but I observed that it was across the road (outside the courtyard). From the latrine I had a good look at the surrounding countryside and decided on the course of action. Chatting with the guard, I got him into a sentimental mood and crossed the road with him. On reaching the entrance of the courtyard, with a brief 'Auf Wiedersehn,' I ran as fast as my legs could carry me.

" Soon I found myself in the heart of the city, took off my boots, and spent three hours wandering around trying to get out into the country. When day broke I again put on my boots and mingled with the workers. I met a farmer and he gave me a lift out of the town. I walked back across country to our original starting point about 120 miles away. There I was once more helped by the same friends and I started actively collaborating with the 'Vittorio Veneto' Partisan Brigade. Our main tasks were to collect arms and ammunition dropped by our aircraft, mine railway lines, cut telephone wires, mine bridges and carry out the usual acts of sabotage."

Jacobson continued with the Partisans and then did other sabotage work until he was liberated by the British in April, 1945.

Another remarkable story is told by the South African poet and playwright, Uys Krige, in his book, " The

Way Out." Krige escaped with a Palestinian Jew, Samuel Rochberg, and dedicated the book to him and to an Italian peasant who befriended them both.

Krige's greatest treasure, it appears, was a file of his manuscripts containing material for two books.

"When I sat down in the forest and discovered that I had taken the wrong file, I felt pretty sick," he wrote. "To get back would mean the great risk of falling into German hands. Sam tried to console me as best he could. I toyed with the idea of getting some civilian clothing and returning for the file, but Sam dissuaded me, saying that this would involve the danger of being captured and shot by the Germans as a spy. So I gave up the idea."

Rochberg seemed surprised that Krige should be so upset over the loss of a few poems. "We're free," he said, "and doesn't that mean more to you than the loss of a couple of poems? Why, if you're really a poet, you can write fifty poems a day. A hen lays its eggs daily with clockwork regularity, doesn't it? Well, if an insignificant bird can fulfil its function, surely you can, too . . . "

"I laughed at his humour and optimistic outlook," said Krige, "but I was inconsolable."

Exhausted, they both fell asleep. On waking next morning, Krige found Sam gone. "Only on the following night did he join me, disguised as a farmer, and carrying my file under one arm and his uniform under the other.

"I shall never forget that this real friend risked his liberty, if not his life, to save my manuscripts.

"Sam was a remarkable fellow. I first met him when he was transferred from the South African Camp No. 47 to the British Camp No. 78, in which I was confined. My friend in 47 asked him to convey certain messages to me. That is how we got acquainted. Sam had previously been a prisoner of war in Greece. He could speak German fluently and this helped him to become a first-rate saboteur. He

once showed me a photograph of himself with his arms round two Nazis, all with a broad grin on their faces."

Conditions in the transports which carried prisoners across the Mediterranean were often indescribably bad, but somehow the men managed to maintain their good spirits. In the following circumstances Lance-Corporal "Bull" Friedlander, of the Third Transvaal Scottish, won the George Medal. The story might never have come to light but for a friend, Driver L. Wooley, of the 11th Field Ambulance, who was captured with him.

"On December 8, 1941," wrote Wooley, "one thousand two hundred Allied prisoners, including two hundred Springboks, captured at Sidi Rezegh, set sail from Benghazi in a Dutch freighter which the enemy had captured. The following afternoon the ship was torpedoed, and the Italians on board made no attempt to handle the vessel.

"A boat was lowered, and into it climbed the captain and senior naval officers, who abandoned the vessel and everyone on board. Finally, the ship grounded on a reef about five hundred yards from the Greek coast. Lance-Corporal Friedlander offered to make an attempt to swim ashore with a line, though one or two other attempts had failed because of heavy seas.

"After a gallant struggle he got ashore with his line. A heavy cable was then attached to the line and hauled from the shore out to the vessel. With it the ship was dragged off the reef and wedged among some rocks. Those on board gripped the cable and worked their way to the shore, many being blinded by the oil pouring from the ship."

Sometimes the prison ships were attacked by Allied planes, incidents which were viewed with mixed feelings by the men in the holds. One such incident was described by Private Koseff in a letter to the Union.

"At Tripoli," he wrote, "five hundred of us were packed into the small hold of an Italian ship. There was one tiny ventilation hole. The sirens went—six Liberators visiting Tripoli. I never prayed so much in all my life, but we cheered, too.

"An ammunition ship next door to us got it. Twenty Italians in our ship were killed. For hours the ammunition ship went on exploding. Holes were blasted in our ship by flying fragments of hot metal, but we went on cheering."

In a vivid description of how the end of the war came to some South African prisoners in Germany, Signaller Neville Levin, of Johannesburg, wrote that on March 30, 1945, the inmates of his camp began to hear artillery fire. That night Allied planes strafed the neighbourhood. The men could hear the rumble of transport, which they took to be that of the retreating Germans. The next day the guards started to panic, and ordered the prisoners out into the woods. All day they stayed there, listening to shells screaming overhead and exploding nearby. One burst upon the recently-vacated barracks. Eventually a "really miserable" German arrived with instructions, and the prisoners started on a seemingly endless march. Actually they covered nearly two hundred miles on foot. At last, on the eighth day, Levin and a number of companions escaped.

After a long journey and many adventures, they came upon a column of political prisoners, mostly Jews, guarded by S.S. troops. "We had our military greatcoats on and were still cold, but they, pitiful souls, were clad only in cotton prison suits." Every now and again an S.S. trooper would fell one of his charges with a rubber truncheon, or shoot those who had fallen. Sickened, the handful of unarmed fugitives turned away.

At last came a supreme moment when they saw a body of troops ahead who were obviously not Germans.

"'They're Yanks ! They're Yanks !' we whispered to one another. At first, we were nervous to show ourselves in case we were shot in error. Eventually we plucked up enough courage and shouted: 'We're South Africans ! Is it all right to come out ?'

"'Sure, buddies ! Come out and show yourselves.'

"Gee, it was grand to be talking to them again, to realise that we were free, free, free !"

## Chapter XV

## IN OTHER WAR ZONES

THERE was hardly a battle zone where South African Jewish soldiers did not serve—either under their own flag, or in the armies of other nations. They fought in Africa, Europe, and in Asia, and their service extended to virtually every branch of the Allied fighting machine.

Not long after serious warfare began on land in Western Europe, Major Aaron Orlek was mentioned in dispatches twice, and gained an M.B.E. for his services at Dunkirk. Nor was his case unique. Writing of the same epic action, Lieutenant Gerald Dixon, of Standerton, Transvaal, who served with the Royal Army Medical Corps, said: "Not for anything in the world would I have missed the show." He wrote this in a letter to his family from a hospital near London, where he spent the best part of a year recovering from shrapnel wounds.

During the withdrawal from Arras to Dunkirk, Private Robert Montague, of Johannesburg, and two comrades, one named Colbard and the other nicknamed "Mike," put military equipment on a lorry and prepared to trek to the coast. A London newspaper told what happened.

"Punctiliously they returned to tidy up under the nose of the enemy. Their last act was to rip the telephones from the walls. With difficulty they struggled to a train already packed with troops.

"At Lens the train was attacked by bombers. From then on bombing and machine-gun attacks were sustained day and night. Every few hundred yards the train encountered a strip of blown-up line. During two days and nights the distance travelled was barely four miles. By this time most of the other soldiers had left the train to finish the journey on foot. The three comrades stayed on.

"After four days the train had crawled less than sixty miles, zigzagging across country to reach St. Omer, where

it was shelled throughout the night. The men took cover in the fields and ditches, and in the dawn, when the firing ceased, crept back to the train for a breakfast of water and biscuits.

"After breakfast that morning a furious bombardment broke out from close range and the order was given every man 'to get to Dunkirk.' The three indomitables took to the road. Walking several miles in the direction of Calais, they found themselves heading straight for a group of light German tanks and machine-guns. So they threw themselves into a ditch and crawled around the ambush and across fields until they struck the Dunkirk road, where finding things, as they reported, 'a bit hot,' they made a twenty-five mile detour and arrived at Bombourg.

"They fell in with sixty British troops who had been ordered to hold a stretch of road to the last man. The weary trio promptly joined in the fight. Throughout the night they helped to keep up a rapid fire to deceive the enemy as to their numbers. Next morning they were relieved by the French.

"Driving a lorry to within six miles of Dunkirk, the three friends walked across country to the beaches, where the immortal evacuation was in full swing to the accompaniment of furious enemy attacks."

South African Jewish airmen and sailors were also present that day. Those who were taken off the beaches included Emmanuel Nathan and Clifford Kallenbach, of Johannesburg. Lieutenant I. Schrire, of Cape Town, and Lieutenant J. Jacobson, both of the Royal Army Medical Corps, were captured with other members of the British Expeditionary Force.

There were quite a number of Jews in the little ships of the South African Seaward Defence Force, later amalgamated with the South African Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve into the South African Naval forces. In conjunction with the South African Air Force these ships helped to guard the Union's coast, intercepting and bringing into port

many hostile vessels; they swept up enemy minefields; and they took part in fighting off Tobruk and Greece and in other parts of the Mediterranean, as well as in the operations against the Vichy troops in Madagascar. South African Jews also served in the Royal Navy—for example, in the "Dorsetshire," afterwards sunk—and were present at a number of hard-fought engagements.

Again, Jews participated in the successful South African expedition against Madagascar, and held a *Rosh Hashana* service on the island in 1942. Sergeant M. Mervis, of Pretoria, wrote home: "Owing to our being scattered over a wide area, it was not possible for all to be present, but it was unanimously decided to hold a service every Friday night if circumstances permitted. It is possible that this was the first Jewish service ever to be held in Madagascar."

Many South Africans also served in the armies of other Allied Powers or were seconded for special duty from the Union Forces. In Europe, Asia, America, and Australia, even in the frozen regions towards the Poles, they fought against the Axis, and some of their experiences would make first-class material for adventure books or films. How interesting, for example, was the glimpse afforded of "26 British Liaison Unit," whose work was cryptically described as "highly specialised." It numbered two hundred rankers and sixty officers and was detailed for "hush-hush" duty, at Pahlevi, in Persia, on the southern shore of the Caspian Sea. Among the officers were five Springboks, four of them Jews — Major Jack Gonski, of the South African Air Force; his brother, Major Dan S. Gonski, of the Rand Light Infantry (who received the M.B.E.); Captain Charles Makower, a former mining man from Barberton, Transvaal; and Major R. Wendrow, of the South African Corps of Signals. The unit also contained a South African Jewish N.C.O., Sergeant Stiller, of "Q" Services.

Jews were among the earliest supporters of Free France in Africa. One of the first to enter General de Gaulle's forces there was G. B. Daniel, who was associated with

Colonel Pechkoff, delegate of General de Gaulle in the Union.

In the compilation of documentary records of the war a number of South Africans rendered distinguished services. Leon Schauder, of Port Elizabeth (who died after the war, cutting short the promise of an outstanding career), specialised in the filming of important personalities and historic occasions. He was present at Brazzaville when the flag with the Cross of Lorraine was first unfurled, and recorded the proceedings for the screen.

Lieutenant Harry Lotzoff, another Springbok, also helped to record history in 1942. He was chosen to attend the meeting of Allied leaders, first at Cairo and then at Teheran, Persia, and was the only South African to do so. Well-known as a sportsman before the war, Lotzoff had been seconded to the British Ministry of Information and was frequently at the front with the British Army Film Unit. He had travelled with Abdul Illah, the Regent of Iraq, Field-Marshal Alexander, Prince Mohamed Ali and Nahas Pasha, Prime Minister of Egypt, and the British Ambassador, Lord Lampson.

He told the following story of a very important occasion:

"We were shown into the garden where three empty chairs faced us—three empty chairs which were going to be filled in a few minutes with the brains, power and judgment of the world. And we were there to record it.

"Mr. Churchill stepped on to the scene and took his seat at Mr. Roosevelt's left, and Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek on the President's right. After a few moments, we were given the word.

"One would think that with a group of three sitting, one would only need one or two exposures, but we were not there just to depict three people sitting. We wanted to catch an expression that would appeal to the world, and at every change of expression or attitude, the cameras would go 'hell for leather'."

The next stage in the adventure came a few days

later. "From the door a voice was heard: 'Passengers for Teheran, please follow me . . .' By now it had become lighter and we could make out the shape of a number of graceful, yet grim-looking aircraft of all shapes and sizes standing about. Soon we were speeding through the clouds on our way.

"The trip lasted about eight-and-a-half hours and, on arrival there, we saw that very stringent security measures had been taken.

"We were driven to the British Legation to await Mr. Churchill's arrival. The next two days were spent in the grounds, photographing prominent personalities with whom we soon became very friendly. Among the people we met were Mr. Eden, Admiral of the Fleet Sir Arthur Cunningham, Field-Marshal Sir John Dill, Sir Archibald Clerk-Kerr, British Ambassador to Moscow, Mr. Averill Harriman and many others.

"The following day we made our way to the Russian Legation, where we were to photograph the presentation of the Stalingrad Sword of Honour and to take pictures of the 'Big Three.' Suddenly there was a tense silence and all eyes turned towards the door.

"In the doorway — calm, silent and dignified — stood Marshal Stalin. He moved across the room to shake hands with Mr. Churchill. Cameras were working at full speed as the presentation took place.

"We proceeded to the steps outside the Russian Legation, where again three empty chairs had been placed. The 'Big Three' took their places and our cameras went into action once again. We took pictures of them in a group and then with Allied Chiefs of Staff and diplomats.

"Suddenly, President Roosevelt beckoned to me and said: 'Would you come up here and take a picture I would like?' He asked me to photograph the crowd below the steps, for apart from the camera-men, many prominent people watched the proceedings.

"I really think that the most pleasant coverage in the whole assignment was when Mr. Churchill celebrated his

sixty-ninth birthday in Teheran. The celebration took place in the Victorian drawing-room of the British Legation, and the guests of honour were President Roosevelt and Marshal Stalin. Only three of us were lucky enough to be in on this."

Dutch Jews living in South Africa were recruited in the Union by the Netherlands Government. Some fought with the Dutch troops in Europe, others took part in fighting in Greece. One of the latter was Private S. Bergman, of 104 Water Boring Company, South African Engineering Corps. He came ashore near Athens in October, 1944.

"I landed at the Piraeus in Greece on October 15, 1944," he stated, "as part of General Scobie's Third Corps. We expected the dam in the Piraeus to be blown up and it was our assignment to bore for water. When we arrived there we found that the dam had not been damaged, but that the Greek trade unions had called a general strike, and it was necessary for us to take over the running of the city.

"About fifteen or sixteen of us were ordered to maintain and guard the cold-storage plant in the Piraeus. We were attacked by the Elas forces and after holding out for fifteen days were forced to capitulate. We were not classed as P.O.W.s, but as hostages, so we were not protected by international laws. I was with the Elas forces for thirty-five days."

The garrison of the principal hotel in Athens, where the British were besieged, included Major A. F. Goodman, of Johannesburg. Among those wounded there was Captain Leo Heilbronner, of Johannesburg. Captain Heilbronner was later killed when the plane in which he was being evacuated to Egypt, crashed.

Although they were newcomers to South Africa, a special word should be said about the gallant Polish Jews who reached South Africa after fighting the Nazis in Poland in 1939. At Pietermaritzburg a group of more than two hundred of them, under Lieutenant-Colonel A. Idzik, was stationed for a time.

To one Polish Jew the Polish Government awarded the Krzysz Zaslugi (The Cross for Valour). "Corporal Itzok Goldberg, age 28, profession, high school teacher, took part in the defence of Warsaw," says the official record. "Under the German occupation he taught secretly in the Warsaw ghetto which was created by the Nazis. In April, 1940, he managed to escape from the ghetto and after a very arduous journey reached Trieste, in Italy. But the Italian authorities refused to let him go to France. Instead he was sent back to Austria.

"After hiding for over four months in Vienna, he once more succeeded in escaping from German-held territory, and passed through Yugoslavia, Greece and Turkey until he reached Palestine, where he immediately enlisted with the Polish Carpathian Brigade. Later, he took part in the defence of Tobruk, where he distinguished himself.

"While manning a machine-gun, he was seriously wounded in his right arm and both legs. He owes his life to one of his comrades, who, himself seriously wounded in the leg, performed an operation with a simple pocket knife on his own leg and then dressed Corporal Goldberg's wounds.

"After this episode, in spite of their wounds, both continued their duty at the machine-gun post.

"After the siege of Tobruk Corporal Goldberg was evacuated, first to Oribi Military Hospital, then to Baragwanath Hospital in the Union of South Africa. He lost his right arm but, as a result of the excellent care and treatment he received in those hospitals, his right leg was saved, and thanks to the instructions and lessons given to him at the Occupational Therapy Centre he is to-day (1945) able to perform very useful work at the Polish Consulate in Johannesburg in the capacity of Information Officer."

Corporal Goldberg has since settled permanently in the Union.

Captain G. Lewkowski, another Polish Jew, found his way into the South African Engineering Corps and lost several fingers on active service, but his knowledge of lan-

guages brought him a new job. An American officer, Lieutenant-Colonel M. Culver, of the Psychological Warfare Branch of the United States Army, 'borrowed' him to deliver loudspeaker addresses to Polish soldiers in German formations.

In the Allied operations on the Continent Jews from the Union played a part, a number as paratroopers. Two of these were Lieutenant Vogelman, of Brakpan, who won the Military Cross, and Sergeant J. Jacobs, of Cape Town.

Seconded from the Imperial Light Horse to join a raiding support regiment, Jacobs operated in Yugoslavia and Albania under Lord Jellicoe, son of the famous admiral. Jacobs was one of those who helped to stir up revolt among the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. Like so many others who did good work, he was not given to talking. "It is one way of seeing life," was his only comment when he came home off the ship.

When at last D-Day came, Jewish soldiers from South Africa were among those who landed in France. One of them was Lieutenant Isaac Goldstein, of Benoni, of the 47th Royal Marine Corps, who won the Military Cross in the Cherbourg Peninsula. Having served in the Western Desert, he was transferred to the famous Portsmouth Division of the Royal Marines, to be included in the first storming parties put ashore in Normandy. The spot chosen was called Port-en-Bassin and lay between the British and American beach-heads. Goldstein's Commandos were ordered to capture the place from the rear.

"You are probably anxious to know what has been going on," he wrote to a friend. "We landed just after the first wave went in and lost a few boats through mortar-fire. My boat ran into a ramp and the bottom was torn open. We had to swim for the shore, losing some of our weapons on the way. After a slight delay on the beach, we went forward to our objective twelve miles away.

"After going forward two miles, we were on our own and continually met pockets of the enemy which we had to wipe out or by-pass. At one such hold-up, I was sent to

find a way round the right. After moving along the edge of a wood and reaching the top of a hill, I suddenly saw a German sitting against a woodpile with his back to me. I did not want to shoot him in the back, so I fired a shot over his head.

" Two Germans then leapt up and, throwing away their rifles and pistols, waved a white handkerchief. I shouted to them to come to me; just then, I saw another German with a rifle dash across a field, so I let him have it. After my second shot, he fell and staggered, and the men following me pumped a few bullets more at him. I sent the prisoners back and we continued the advance.

" Another time I was again sent to find the way round the left and saw a number of Germans sneaking round a hedge. There was an open gap in the hedge which they had to cross, so as each German came to the gap, I fired my rifle. Then I got a Bren position to fire at the gap while I went forward. When I got there, I found three dead and one with a wound in the leg. When we eventually got to our objective, we cleared the town first, then attacked the high features on either side.

" As we went forward I took a party of men carrying Bangalore torpedoes to blow a gap in the wire. After blowing the gap we went forward, and halfway up we came under fire from two flak-ships in the harbour. The fire was terrific, shells bursting all around, so the Captain decided to withdraw. I never got the order and went forward with about eight men.

"About fifty yards from the German trenches I saw four Jerries and fired two shots with my rifle. It was too slow, so I called for a Tommy-gun from my men—there were only two left. I fired a few rounds and the gun stopped. Just then I saw a grenade coming my way, so I fell flat. As it burst three yards away from my head I felt myself go hot all over and everything went black for a minute. As my sight came back, I saw blood all over the show.

" As Jerry had a machine-gun trained on me, I decided

to get back for more men and weapons. I rounded up a few of the wounded and returned to the town. There I ran against a German patrol coming in from our way. I only had a pistol and rifle left, so fired a few shots at the patrol to give us time to make a getaway. We dashed down a side street and I was getting very weak, so we dashed into a peasant's house, and I remained there under their care until a Red Cross doctor came to fix me up. I sent the men to report to the C.O. what had happened."

Later, at Arnhem, Captain Lipman Kessel, of Johannesburg, was with the British airborne troops who were cut off from help and fought to a standstill.

On another occasion the son of one of the Judges of Appeal in Bloemfontein, Lieutenant P. B. Greenberg, distinguished himself, and the Military Cross was bestowed on him in the field by Field-Marshal Montgomery. The citation read:

"On April 3, 1945, Lieutenant Greenberg's troop was ordered to reconnoitre, on the left flank of his division, a bridge at Hagen, on the Osnabrueck Canal. The approach road and the bridge itself were under observation from high ground on the east side of the canal and were under continual shellfire.

"Lieutenant Greenberg realised that the seizing of this bridge intact would greatly assist the speed of the advance, and therefore, regardless of enemy infantry fire in the area and of continuous shellfire, he reached the bridge, which was intact, and held it until support arrived two hours later, although the troop was subjected to two infantry attacks with heavy supporting artillery fire."

The long trail from Sonderwater had come to an end. At virtually every stage Jewish soldiers had been present. The war was, however, not over. Japan had still to be beaten. Six South African officers had already been selected by the British Government in 1943 to do special service in Japan. Among them was a Jew, Captain M. F. Stern, who was later sent to Burma to examine and report on Japanese

equipment and to translate captured documents. Colonel Gordon Davies, of the South African Air Force (a veteran of the original Royal Flying Corps in World War I) was entrusted with important special work in the Burmese theatre and was selected for still more important duties when hostilities came to an end.

## Chapter XVI

## THE SYNAGOGUE IN THE FIELD

IN the critical months preceding the outbreak of the war many organisational changes took place in the Union Defence Force. To prepare for a possible flare-up of hostilities steps were taken by the authorities to build up an organisation of chaplains adequate to minister to the spiritual needs of a considerably enlarged army. As early as May, 1939, Brigadier-General J. S. Collyer, Director of Reserves, addressed the following letter to the South African Jewish Board of Deputies:

"I have the honour to suggest that if, at any time, the employment of the Union Defence Forces on active service should become necessary, the question of the supervision of their spiritual welfare by chaplains of the different churches to which the members of those forces belong will become of importance. It is desirable that in this matter, as in all others affecting preparation for a national emergency of any kind—not necessarily war—advantage should be taken of the opportunity for making deliberate arrangements at a time when normal conditions prevail.

"Generally speaking, any clergymen selected for duty as military chaplains should be physically and medically fit to accompany troops in the field—though, of course, less active men can well do duty in depots and bases. They should be chosen, too, so that their absence from their positions in their church will cause as little disturbance as possible to its normal condition."

The Board immediately consulted with the Jewish ecclesiastical authorities and prepared a list of suitable clergy.

After the declaration of war a Jewish Chaplains' Nomination Committee was established consisting of Rabbi Israel Abrahams, the late Rabbi J. L. Landau (who was succeeded on his death by Rabbi L. I. Rabinowitz) and Rabbi W.

Hirsch, with Rabbi A. T. Shrock as secretary of the committee and also the representative of the Board. This committee was responsible for making recommendations to the Adjutant-General in regard to the appointment of Jewish chaplains.

As time went by and the numbers in the field grew beyond all earlier estimates, it became clear that the number of Jewish clergymen on active service was quite inadequate to cope with the spiritual requirements of the members of the forces. The position gave the community cause for some concern, chiefly as there were no more professional ministers to fill the gaps. Fortunately there were a number of men who, while they were not ordained ministers, yet showed a deep desire and aptitude for religious leadership, and they were eventually called upon to fill the vacancies. After a few months eleven chaplains were serving full-time, and twenty part-time, in the Union Defence Force.

A Chaplain-General at Salonika during the First World War once told a novice who had asked him what a chaplain's duties were: "You have no duties. Go out and find work, and do it." The job, of course, was not as vague as that; there were very definite religious offices to perform; but the words do express the spirit of a chaplain's task. He had to become the friend, adviser, comforter and helper of the men, the personal link between them and the officer commanding, and often between them and their families at home. He was a vital factor in the maintenance of morale. In all these respects both Christian and Jewish chaplains set and maintained a high standard of conduct.

Their reward was the confidence which the men placed in them. Jewish Springboks frequently turned to their padres for advice on their personal problems. They always received a sympathetic hearing and, wherever possible, practical help. The chaplains often used their good offices in situations in which tact was especially required. Assiduous in hospital visiting, they received confidences which the patients would not entrust to the medical atten-

dants, and in many instances were able to advise the doctors on personal matters affecting their patients.

A number of Jewish padres were with the troops in the front line. Sometimes they acted, in emergencies, as stretcher-bearers or first-aid attendants.

Close co-operation grew up between the Jewish and Christian chaplains. Combined services were often held both in camp and in the field. Instances occurred when Jewish chaplains conducted Christian worship in the unavoidable absence of their Christian colleagues, and vice versa. In emergencies burial services were conducted by chaplains irrespective of denomination. On the Jewish High Holidays Christians volunteered to take over duties from Jews, and on Christmas Day and other Christian festivals, Jews reciprocated.

The main function of the chaplains, both Jewish and Christian, was, of course, to hold regular formal services for the troops whenever possible. In the Union itself there were generally few difficulties with which the chaplains had to contend. The men were always available to attend services, and the large established camps almost without exception had accommodation set aside for religious worship.

Sometimes, however, there were problems. This was the case at Piet Retief, one of the smaller camps on the home front. Here, on one occasion, the existing structures were inadequate to accommodate a crowd of three hundred Jewish troops who gathered together to attend a *Kol Nidrei* service. It was therefore resolved to hold the service in the open. Describing the occasion, Signaller M. Glazer wrote feelingly:

"With the moon and stars for lamps, eternity for a background and the sky above as a canopy, the congregation in military uniform solemnly engaged in prayer."

Up North the opportunity presented itself only very rarely for holding formal services. The chaplains instead tried to visit the men in their separate detachments; even this arrangment was difficult since the units were scattered and mobile, and not always readily accessible.

In Abyssinia, however, it sometimes happened that Jewish soldiers, as the army passed through, came across Jewish congregations engaged in worship. On these occasions they generally seized the opportunity to participate. This was the experience of Air-Mechanic R. L. Alperstein, who wrote from Addis Abeba:

"Here I had the opportunity of attending a service at a *shul* at which there were eight Yemenite Jews. It was conducted by a Yemenite Rabbi, while the Rabbi of the town also attended. Afterwards, we made a collection for the poor. The fellows who attended came from all branches of the army, and the eagerness with which we all went to *shul* shows, I think, that the men here are displaying a keen interest in matters Jewish."

As already mentioned, Jewish troops established contact with the Falashas, that unique group of aboriginal Abyssinian Jews who, until comparatively recently, believed themselves to be the only members of their faith in the world.

Sergeant Bennie Goldberg, who has been referred to earlier, was given the honour of a life membership of the *Succath Rahamim*, a Falasha congregation. Among those present at the ceremony were the head of the Falasha Jews as well as other Jews from Yemen, Italy and Aden. Israel Jacob, president of the Dire-Dawa congregation, came specially to Addis Abeba for the occasion. The ceremony opened with a sermon. Then Ephraim Yohne, the 96-year-old "father" of the congregation, delivered an address in which he praised the South African sergeant's religious outlook and his compassion for his Jewish brethren. In his reply, the newly-appointed honorary member emphasised the issues at stake in the war and assured the Falashas that South African Jewry was concerned with their welfare. This address was reprinted and distributed. On behalf of the Falashas, Mr. Ephraim Yohne presented Sergeant Goldberg with a pair of ancient candlesticks.

Mogadiscio, in Somaliland, was another remote point where local Jews were joined by South African Jewish

soldiers for New Year. In Dire-Dawa Jewish Springboks found a synagogue in a back street. A man, over eighty years of age, conducted a touching *Kol Nidrei* service.

But although Jewish Springboks often stumbled on and participated in religious services in out-of-the-way places, practical measures soon became necessary to ensure that isolated groups of Jewish soldiers should be provided for spiritually in a systematic way. Moreover, as the South African troops moved into Egypt and there came into contact with other Commonwealth and Allied troops, a certain amount of overlapping of religious facilities became evident. Steps were required to prevent this, and, in December, 1941, a conference of Jewish chaplains met in the Jewish Welfare Club in Cairo under the chairmanship of the Grand Rabbi of Egypt. Those present included Padre Weinstein and Padre Yesorsky, of South Africa; the future Chief Rabbi of the Transvaal Federation of Synagogues, Padre Louis Isaac Rabinowitz, then Senior Jewish Chaplain, M.E.F.; Rabbi Israel Brodie, the future Chief Rabbi of Great Britain; Rabbi Isajah Raffalovitch, of Palestine; and Rabbi Eliezer Goldman, of Australia. The subjects covered were practical in their scope and included all phases of welfare work in the army.

As a result of this meeting and similar conferences, including various interdenominational gatherings, it became possible to establish an adequate organisational system which would avoid duplication.

A significant milestone was the opening of the little synagogue, afterwards so well known, at the Springbok base at Helwan, near Cairo. It was consecrated in May, 1943, by Padre Potashnik after his appointment as senior South African Jewish chaplain in the Middle East. Like other denominations the Jews had been given a hut, which was later converted into a place of worship. A Palestinian soldier, an architect in civilian life, drew the plans, which provided for an Ark, a pulpit, and pews. A dome was constructed and adorned with a large *Magen David* bearing a

Springbok in its centre. On one of the walls was painted in English and Hebrew: "And I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day. In that day, saith the Lord of hosts, shall ye call every man his neighbour under the vine and under the fig-tree." (Zechariah III: 9 and 10.)

On the day of the official opening, Major-General F. H. Theron, General Officer Administration, wrote to Padre Potashnik:

"I am glad you asked me to join with you and your co-religionists to give thanks for the opening of this House of God in Helwan Camp. It is most fitting that the Jewish soldiers from the Union should have a place of worship in these lands where God revealed Himself and His purpose to mankind. What is more, we stand here on common ground; three great religions meet here and in the adjacent Holy Land; Christianity and the Moslem way of life have their sources in the inspiration of the Hebrew Holy Writ. I join with you in asking for God's richest blessings on this place of worship."

All denominations were represented at the ceremony, and to thousands of Jews Up North the Helwan Synagogue became a spiritual sanctuary. The building held only 150 people, but next door was another small hall which served as a library, a meeting place and, on every Friday night, the scene of an *Oneg Shabbat* Here, at any rate, they could for a moment forget the war.

Subsequently General Theron again showed his goodwill. He wrote:

"I wish to send heartiest congratulations on the occasion of the celebration of *Rosh Hashana.* Last year your celebrations were clouded by events throughout the world and particularly in occupied Europe. The light has broken through, however; more than a ray of sunshine is visible at this moment, and I trust that when next you celebrate *Rosh Hashana* Jewry throughout the world will be able to follow the dictates of its religion in perfect freedom.

"Christianity is greatly indebted to the Jewish religion, which gave the Old Testament to the world. Chris-

tianity, therefore, has its roots in Judaism. My congratulations come to you at a most vital time—the eve of that great event to which not only we, but the whole world, have been looking forward with such intense and expectant longing—peace ! "

As the battle front kept changing, the provision of religious facilities kept pace with it. Here, for example, is a description of *Erev Rosh Hashana* as celebrated by some South Africans in the desert:

" We had a *Yom Tov* of which any other collection of boys or, for that matter, people anywhere in Africa would be envious. We were given the honour and privilege of preparing a *shul* and ' banquet.' First of all the *shul* was prepared. Corporal Hummel was made C.O. *Shul*-builders and, later, the engineers assisted. Our Colonel gave us a *banda*, which Corporal Hummel turned into a *shul*. We arranged rows of benches to seat some three hundred persons. At the east end of the *banda* he built an Ark, altar and *bimah*. Private Ressel delicately embroidered a *Magen David* on the blue curtain for the Ark, and he also lined the Ark."

*Purim* was also celebrated in the desert, as Staff-Sergeant M. Shall, of the South African Corps of Signals, recalled. " As the Festival fell on a week day, it would have been impossible for all or most of the Jewish personnel to attend," he wrote. " The supper (of which I have a souvenir menu in English and Hebrew, signed by all present) was prepared by Sergeant Lesser, of a British unit stationed here. There were fifty officers and other ranks present. They included Palestinian, British, Polish, German and South African Jews, also one Indian Jewish staff-sergeant.

" The comradeship among all was delightful, and many new friends were made in this small group, all appreciating the traditions of Judaism. The proceedings were opened by a short speech in Hebrew by Captain Kaiser, who is one of the medical officers here and who acts as chairman at these affairs. A short service and *Kiddush* was then recited by Captain Eckstein. After supper short sketches were given by the Palestinian section, and they ended at 10.30

p.m. We are now preparing for a *Seder* on the first night of Passover, which we are trying to make as homely as possible."

"*Pesach* is an interesting festival to spend in the desert, so close to Egypt," wrote Private J. S. Abert, of the South African Medical Corps. "Like our forefathers of old, we have eaten *matzos* made in Egypt. Unfortunately we have not crossed the Red Sea, but are forced to wander in the Western Desert instead of the Arabian."

Lieutenant L. Caminsky, an artillery officer, added: "Never before have I been so absorbed in an act of worship as I was in these simple, homely services held under the desert sky. The parallel between our present position 'Up North' with that of the ancient Israelites was clearly brought home, and hardened us in our resolve for the future."

In the field the chaplains worked hard. All of them dedicated themselves unstintingly to the welfare of the men. Where all shared in the great common contribution they made towards maintaining morale it is invidious to single out some for special mention. Yet, in telling the story of their work, this is unavoidable. It should, however, not be assumed that those who are mentioned necessarily rendered more valuable services than did their colleagues.

Very high praise indeed was earned by Padre S. Weinstein. Sergeant-Major M. C. Twersky, of No. 3 Armoured Car Company, wrote of him: "No action ever took place without Padre Weinstein going into the front-line with the fellows. He took his *shofar* with him, and his triumphant sounding of it after every victory gained by the South African troops was one of the features of the campaign.

"The regular services organised for the Jewish members of the forces aroused tremendous interest among the men, both Jewish and non-Jewish. Weinstein had, in fact, a non-Jewish assistant to help him with these services who carried out his duties with enthusiasm and devotion. The

interest taken by this assistant in the services was shared by a number of other non-Jews, who showed great respect for the Jewish point of view. Although attendance at services was voluntary, some fellows in the company travelled fifteen miles to be present and they always came willingly. The sympathy of the military authorities was shown by the readiness with which they helped."

It was Padre Weinstein who took the first organised party of Springboks to Palestine in June, 1941. He was accompanied by a group of fifteen soldiers. Further mention of the tour is made in Chapter XVII.

Padre Yesorsky was among the ministers who came into the news at the storming of Bardia. "Among those giving valuable help," wrote Sapa's war correspondent, "were a number of chaplains of all denominations. Under heavy fire they crept up to the front line, helping to bandage the casualties, placing lighted cigarettes between the lips of the wounded and cheering those in great pain . . . "

Often during a burial service the chaplains would have to take cover from the shells whistling overhead. "One chaplain, a Roman Catholic priest from Kimberley who was attached to a regiment of marksmen from the Rand, was never far behind the vanguard and did valuable work interpreting in German and Italian for the enemy wounded. Others who worked without regard for themselves included a Durban Presbyterian minister, a Johannesburg Anglican priest with the Police Regiment, a Pretoria chaplain with a Johannesburg regiment, and a Jewish Rabbi from Kimberley." (The Rabbi referred to was Padre Yesorsky.)

"I have held services during the last few months in every conceivable kind of place, and often under most difficult conditions," Captain Yesorsky reported. "The message and faith of Judaism have been heard on escarpments and in wadis, in dug-outs and near gun-emplacements. An enemy position of one day has often become our *Beth-Knesset* on the following day.

"Throughout all these difficult months, I have found the men eager to come to services and proud to show their

allegiance to their ancient faith, for which they are prepared to give their all. Our job is not yet over, nor do we know what further sacrifices we may yet be called upon to make, yet South African Jewry can rest assured that its sons will not be found wanting. In defence of freedom they have already played their part and they will carry on in the same spirit in the future."

After the break-through at El Alamein, Padre Natas made a tour of inspection of units from Cairo to Tripoli and even beyond. "The task of discovering our units and of getting in touch with our men," he reported, "was most formidable, but I succeeded in finding most of them. My visits were very much appreciated and the welcome given was most encouraging.

"There are still many South Africans on the roads, in the construction companies, the engineers, among the Railways and Harbours Brigade and the surveyors, and they include quite a number of Jews. These soldiers very seldom see a Jewish padre, as they are usually moving about. Occasionally the headquarters is in one place and some of their sections are 400 or 500 miles away.

"It was a real inspiration to see the fellows carrying out their dull and difficult tasks with so much devotion and determination. I was very glad to find our Jewish men well represented in these 'construction units' and holding responsible positions there. I spoke to individual soldiers and heard what they had to say. I left books, distributed papers and tried to restore for a little while a homely atmosphere by bringing messages from some of their people and friends. The spirit prevailing in the units which I visited is excellent.

"From the conversations I had with the men—Jewish and non-Jewish—I came to the conclusion that the relations between them are highly encouraging. The hospitality extended to me as a Jewish padre was wonderful and reflects the appreciation of the authorities of the work our men are doing in the various units. Many of the officers told me so personally."

And when Union troops went across to Italy, energetic steps were taken to ensure that there too Jewish Springboks would be provided with adequate amenities for religious observance. Attention to this was continued up to the end of the war in Europe and beyond. For example, a stimulating gathering of padres took place at Rome on January 2 and 3, 1945. Twenty-seven Jewish chaplains participated, representing South African, British, American, Palestinian and Canadian troops. They were officially welcomed at a dinner in the Ambassador Hotel by General Brown, the American in command of the whole area. Padre Potashnik, as Senior Jewish Chaplain to the Union Defence Force, together with Padres Romm, Ernst and Rechtman, formed the Springbok delegation, and on the second day they entertained all their Allied colleagues. Help to refugees and displaced persons, relief work, Passover preparations, the need for a Chaplains' Library, and refresher courses for the troops were among the host of subjects discussed.

After VE-Day, the chaplains of the Sixth Division organised a School of Religion at Cadenabbia, on the shores of Lake Como. A period of twelve days was allocated to the Jewish denomination, and thirty-five men, under the guidance of Padre Ernst, took part in an intensive study course in various Jewish subjects. Members of the *Chalutzim Chayalim* (Soldier-Settler) organisation were present, and it was there that final plans were made for their settlement in Palestine. It was during that period, too, that contacts were made by Padre Ernst with the first large groups of displaced persons.

All the good work of the Jewish padres would have been impossible without the sympathetic and tactful attitude of the military authorities both in Africa and Italy. Defence Headquarters were throughout friendly and helpful to the Jewish chaplaincy. There was great pleasure in the ranks when Major-General W. H. Evered Poole sent a special message of goodwill to Jewish troops during Passover, 1943, and again at *Rosh Hashana*.



The Durban Jewish Club offers hospitality to soldiers from abroad.




Relaxing in the Club Reading Room.



Temple Israel Sisterhood provides sleeping accommodation for men on leave in Johannesburg.



Packing Passover gifts for men "Up North."



Saturday night at the Soldiers' Rest Room, Jewish Guild, Johannesburg. Noel Coward (left foreground) has just entertained the crowd.



Jewish nurses at Chanukah Service, Gardens Synagogue, Cape Town.



Fleet of field ambulances—the gift of German-Jewish refugees to the South African Government.

In his first message Major-General Poole stated that throughout the war a large number of Jewish soldiers had served in the field " in all our combatant and non-combatant forces, where on all occasions they have proved their worth and fully justified themselves."

" In this Division," continued Major-General Poole, " I have been most gratified to note the hearty spirit of co-operation and enthusiasm so evident in all your ranks."

Special tribute must be paid to the Union Defence Force Institutes for their invaluable help. When Jewish Servicemen's Clubs were established, with the aid of the Board of Deputies and General Headquarters, in Egypt and later in Italy, the U.D.F.I. showed their goodwill in very practical ways. While in the Middle East Padre Hickman wrote: " I must say that without the aid of the U.D.F.I. our task would have been impossible. Such is the spirit and comradeship which exist that the non-Jews do all in their power to help me."

The South African Jewish Board of Deputies throughout the war kept in the closest touch with the chaplaincy, giving whatever help and assistance was required. Between the Board and the chaplains there existed a spirit of harmony and intimate co-operation which contributed in no small measure towards the success of the work which the chaplains were doing.

The Board did whatever it could to make the Jewish Servicemen and women feel that, however far away, they were not forgotten by their own community. They were the Board's constant concern, despite the multitude of other exacting tasks that claimed its energy and attention.

In the first place, the Board made itself responsible for sending the chaplains whatever was required for the religious needs of the men: Scrolls of the Law, Bibles and Prayer-Books, *Taleisim,* and other appurtenances for worship. At the request of many Jewish soldiers who wanted to wear them on the cords of their identity discs, the Board

had a special supply of *Maginei David* struck in silver. The Board further made available to the chaplains thousands of copies of the late Chief Rabbi Dr. Hertz's "Book of Jewish Thoughts." These were distributed amongst the troops. At Voortrekkerhoogte the Board provided the furnishings of the synagogue built for the Jewish troops by the military authorities. (Years later, on April 23, 1950, this synagogue was dedicated as a shrine to the Jewish members of the Forces who had fallen in World Wars I and II. This was at a special service arranged by the S.A. Jewish Ex-Service League in collaboration with the Board. It was conducted by the Very Rev. Israel Brodie, Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the British Commonwealth, who happened to be on a visit to the Jewish community of South Africa at the time. On the southern wall of the synagogue, a plaque was placed bearing the inscription: "This synagogue is dedicated as a National War Memorial to the memory of those men and women of the Jewish faith who made the supreme sacrifice in the service of their country. 1914-1919. 1939-1945.")

Later in the war the Board equipped a motor van as a mobile Synagogue which proved invaluable to the chaplains in the field and was used both in North Africa and Italy.

It was on the main Jewish Festivals, such as *Pesach* and *Rosh Hashana,* that the Board played a particularly important part in making the Jewish soldiers feel that their people at home were appreciative of the sacrifices they were making. Thousands of gift parcels, supplied by the Board, were on these occasions distributed by the chaplains. Great assistance was given by the Union of Jewish Women in the dispatch of these parcels. The enthusiastic letters written home or to the Board testified to the gratitude of the recipients. Here are a few, chosen at random:

"It really was a great surprise to come home one day and find a parcel on my bed, and upon opening it to find it was from the Board.

"I really cannot thank you and the members of the Board on behalf of the troops on active service. The parcels

were well thought out and greatly appreciated, and if everybody received theirs with as much joy as I did, you may be sure your good work has really been worth while."

"You have no idea how much I appreciated your kind thought and I can assure you it arrived at a most opportune moment. It gives us that added incentive to give of our best in the great struggle ahead when we are occasionally reminded that we are in your thoughts."

The Rev. J. C. Richardson, Anglican Chaplain in the Middle East, wrote:—

"I should like to take the opportunity of saying how much all you are doing is appreciated by your people in the Forces, not least in the forward areas. Not a Festival comes and passes without some little gift of remembrance appearing and connects them through you with the people at home."

Although intended primarily for the Jewish soldiers, many of their non-Jewish friends naturally shared in the good things contained in the parcels. Among the recipients were also Palestine soldiers serving side by side with the Springboks up North. One of them wrote to the Secretary of the Board:—

"I received with great pleasure your gift parcel and your wishes for a happy New Year. It is not the contents of the parcel which made it for me so valuable. It is for me the sign that anywhere in the world are people who feel connected with us. I am a refugee and since 1934 in Palestine. I volunteered for the Army to fight Hitler and his followers. But sometimes I feel very lonely, and ask what is all this for ? In such moments small things like your parcel and congratulations back me up . . . "

The chaplains were constantly clamouring for reading matter for the men under their care. To meet this demand an effective organisation for collecting books and maintaining a steady flow of literature to the Jewish members of the Forces was set up by the Board and was continued almost to the last days of the war. A few figures may help to convey some idea of the day-in and day-out effort to

assemble suitable literature and to dispatch it to the various fronts: In 1944 alone 20,000 copies of "Jewish Affairs," the Board's official journal, and other journals were sent. Over a period of two years no fewer than 18,000 books of Jewish interest, which the Board sent through the chaplains, reached the troops. This figure excludes pamphlets and journals, and also the 4,000 volumes of fiction, "belles lettres," and biographies of a general character which were forwarded.

In October, 1943, Rabbi W. Hirsch, the Principal Jewish Chaplain to the Forces, wrote to the Board:

"It is with much pleasure that I write to you on the occasion of the forthcoming Festivals to express to the Executive Council of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies the sincere thanks of the Jewish chaplains and soldiers for the excellent work which you have done for them during the past year.

"I should like to assure you that your assistance to the chaplains both up North and in the Union has been of great benefit to them and to our boys.

"The varied and manifold nature of your work makes it impossible to enumerate all your activities on behalf of our soldiers. I wish, however, to place on record the regular supply of gifts and comforts to the troops, requisites for the celebration of our Festivals, the despatch of religious and secular literature to all military camps, your valuable gifts to our Garrison Synagogue and the Chaplaincy in Roberts Heights, and the work of your Welfare Officer in giving assistance to soldiers in need and in helping to find employment for discharged soldiers. Our boys greatly appreciate your efforts."

In the course of a New Year message to the Board, the following year, Rabbi Hirsch again thanked the Board "for the excellent manner in which you have co-operated with the soldiers and the Jewish chaplains of the U.D.F. during the past year . . . The Board and its staff have helped us greatly in executing our official duties.

"The Board's work is being recognised more and more,

and the men in the Army are of the opinion that the Board has a very important part to play in shaping the destiny of the Jewish community in this country."

To which it might not be inappropriate to add the footnote that the Board, in its turn, believed that the Jewish soldiers would after demobilisation have an important part to play in the life of the community, and offered every encouragement to them to do so.

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## JEWISH CHAPLAINS IN THE U.D.F.

### Full-Time

Padre Israel Levinson — first Senior Jewish Chaplain at Voortrekkerhoogte, retired in 1942 on reaching the age-limit.

Rabbi W. Hirsch — Principal Jewish Chaplain at Voortrekkerhoogte, 1942 to 1946.

Padre S. Weinstein — after enlisting as a private soldier, was appointed first Jewish Chaplain with the South African Expeditionary Force. On his return to the Union in 1944 he became Assistant Principal Chaplain.

Padre W. Yesorsky — first Chaplain with the Third Brigade, and later attached to the Second South African Division.

Padre I. Friedman — served in the Union, Egypt and Italy, and after VE-Day went to England as chaplain to repatriated soldiers.

Padre J. Potashnik — after service in the Union, went up North as Senior Jewish Chaplain in Egypt, and later accompanied General Headquarters to Italy.

Padre S. Ernst — became Assistant Principal Chaplain at Voortrekkerhoogte in 1942, and later Chaplain of the Sixth S.A. Armoured Division in Italy.

Padre M. Natas — served in the Union, and was later attached to the South African Air Force in North Africa and Italy.

Padre I. Romm — served in the Union, North Africa and

Italy, and for a time worked among refugees in Italy.

Padre I. Hickman — served with the Sixth Division.

Padre J. Green — first stationed at Voortrekkerhoogte, and then served in Egypt.

Padre R. Rechtman — appointed chaplain to the Reserve Group of the Sixth Division in 1944.

Padre C. L. Matz — served in Egypt and Italy.

Padre L. Dison — was successively chaplain at Voortrekkerhoogte, Cape Town and Durban.

Padre N. Menachemson — was with the troops in Kenya and also for a short time in Egypt.

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Part-Time Chaplains.

Rabbi Dr. A. T. Shrock, the Rev. S. Kibel, and Dr. H. Abt at Johannesburg.

Dr. A. Lichtigfeld at Germiston.

Rabbi W. Hirsch at Pretoria.

Rabbi A. H. Freedman at Durban.

Rabbi Dr. M. Romm at Bloemfontein.

The Rev. A. M. Kaplan at Potchefstroom.

The Rev. J. I. Levine at Pietersburg and Louis Trichardt.

The Rev. A. Levy at Port Elizabeth.

Rabbi Dr. M. Wald at East London.

The Rev. S. Kassel at Cape Town.

The Rev. I. Wolff at Windhoek.

The Rev. M. Wulf at Kimberley.

The Rev. B. D. Glass and Rev. I. Reichenberg at Vereeniging.

The Rev. M. Altshuler at Brakpan.

The Rev. M. Diamond at Pietermaritzburg.

## Chapter XVII

## SPRINGBOKS DISCOVER PALESTINE

THE Second World War made it possible for South Africans of all sections to visit Palestine and to become acquainted at first hand with Jewish achievements there. From Egypt and the Western Desert thousands of men came to spend their leave in the country. They journeyed across it from end to end: steeped themselves in its rich and sacred history; partook of its hospitality; and then went back marvelling at the great constructive work that was turning an arid desert into a Land of Promise once more.

The impressions which the Holy Land made upon those Springboks who visited it were quite indelible. This is revealed in the many letters which were written home. A few of them are quoted here; they are not necessarily the most outstanding, but they do reflect the tremendous impact which Palestine made upon the South Africans, both Jewish and non-Jewish.

Writing soon after the first South African troops reached Palestine in June, 1941, Harold Fridjohn, a Jewish soldier from the Union, commented:

"They were the vanguard of the thousands of Jewish Springboks who will make the pilgrimage to their ancestral home while serving South Africa and the Commonwealth in Egypt. The members of this party were drawn exclusively from the brigade which had campaigned through Kenya, Italian Somaliland and Abyssinia, and they were enjoying their first real leave after more than a year's active service.

"But this enjoyment was tempered with something deeper than the mere superficial pursuit of pleasure and escape from army life. To all of us the trip to *Eretz Israel* was the most thrilling and satisfying adventure in a year

crammed full of novel experiences and exciting adventures.

" When the party left the Western Desert, we were not all Zionists. Some were. To Captain S. Weinstein, Jewish chaplain to the Brigade, the tour ahead was, to quote his own words, ' a dream come true,' but to others it was to be but a holiday in a new country. When the party left Rehovoth after five days of intensive travel, without exception each man felt, not that he had visited a strange land, but that he had really come home after an epoch of wandering."

If this was the effect on a South African Jew who was not a Zionist at the time, the impression made on Zionists can be well imagined. Here they were treading soil not only made dear by the Biblical past and the prayers and longings of two thousand years, but also by the devoted striving of the people during the past fifty years, a struggle in which they themselves had played their part.

Something of the deep feeling evoked by Palestine in the Jewish Springboks was expressed by Sergeant Lionel Goldman on his return from a visit. " Six days' leave spent in Palestine among my own people in their national setting," he said, " has made me grateful to the Lord that I was born a Jew.

" After the arid Western Desert this country was indeed a land flowing with milk and honey. I felt that I was experiencing the same relief as my ancestors when they emerged from the desert and beheld the spectacle of green fields and rugged mountains. To gaze upon this country produced a satisfying confirmation of all that I had read about the agricultural and industrial development of Palestine.

" The newness of Tel Aviv contrasts with the mellow charm of Jerusalem. In this brand-new metropolis the dazzling spectacle of clean, modern buildings, spacious Continental cafés and wide boulevards, the thrill of seeing the *Magen David* painted on an ambulance, of reading Hebrew characters on shop windows, advertisement hoardings, bus tickets, coins, policemen's uniforms, and of listening to the animated chatter of the passers-by—all this was adequate

testimony to the rebirth of a nation, and a sight and experience that must be seen and felt to be appreciated.

" It was satisfying to wander along the streets of Tel Aviv, to tread reverently on the holy cobble stones of Jerusalem, and to plod through the fertile fields of the settlements, where on one occasion I observed a sturdy girl milking a cow. The heavy boots and blue cloth dress did not seem incongruous, and she wore an expression of simple contentment with her obviously congenial task. It changed to a smile when I called out '*Shalom* !' She sang back a musical '*Shalom* !' and said something in Hebrew which I could not understand. I registered a resolution (subsequently fulfilled) to purchase a Hebrew grammar and dictionary so as to get on speaking terms with my Hebrew brethren.

" The Palestinian settlers have shown the world our love of the soil, and the numerous Christian soldiers who have spent a few days on the settlements have, as a result, become most sympathetic to our cause.

" The good impression which Palestine has made on the non-Jewish Springbok has created a spirit of goodwill from which South African Jewry will reap more benefits than from any mere propaganda."

Many other Jewish Springboks wrote in the same strain. Captain E. Tannenbaum described his first contact with a communal settlement just outside Tel Aviv.

" My visit to the communal farm was my first contact with the land women of Palestine. I found them engaged in a variety of duties; some were preparing lunch in the kitchen, or scrubbing the floors; others were weeding the vegetable patch, or digging, or pushing heavily laden wheelbarrows full of manure to the beds. I spoke to one of them.

" She was a girl of sixteen perhaps, slight, but with the healthy bloom of spring on her clear skin, and there was a smell of the soil about her clothes. She had lost her parents in Rumania, she said, when the Nazis came. Although she was concerned about her brother with whom she had lost contact, now that she had her work here, her hard work

and her wholesome food, life was not as unbearable as it used to be.

" ' One day I shall find him,' she said confidently. ' When the war is over I shall find him.'

" I rejoiced in her happiness and confidence. Even the tragedy of these last years had not broken the spirit of this gentle girl. Israel is truly eternal."

Afterwards Captain Tannenbaum had the privilege of spending an evening at Ein Hashofet, a young collective settlement in the Hills of Ephraim. Here a number of South Africans had made their home.

" After supper everybody filed out into the dining-room to dance. Dancing in a *Kibbutz* isn't an inane gyration around the room. It is alive and vigorous, a full-blooded emotional experience. A circle is formed of men and women linked together, arms about shoulders, and they sway rhythmically to the thrum of some Hebrew ditty, slow at first, then faster, faster . . . until the wheel breaks up from the sheer speed of their revolutions.

" For the first time in my life I saw ecstatically happy Jews. Fatigue and cares were forgotten; there were no restraints, no thoughts of the past or doubts of the future. It was indeed the rejoicing of an eternal people released at last from the bonds of many persecuted centuries. The spirit of the *Kibbutz* was embodied in the symbolism of dance—its strength and its character.

" What a strange new society is in the process of evolution here ! It is probably the first self-contained unit of society in the world in which equal emphasis is placed on the intellect, the body, the emotions, with a superb balance struck between them."

A member of the Sixth South African Division, Corporal G. M. Lyons, gave a similar verdict on the *kibbutzim*: " This way of life," he said, " is what I always thought it should be. Everyone here seems happy. Each and all, on my making inquiry, said that they would not change for anything that they might have had before; and, as you can guess, many of them had been high up in what the world is pleased to call the social scale."

No less profound was the effect the Holy Land had on the non-Jewish Springboks who were able to spend a short time there. Private H. M. Gillespie was particularly impressed with the warm hospitality which the visiting Springboks received. He voiced his appreciation in a letter which he wrote to the South African Zionist Federation.

"As a non-Jewish South African I am writing to tell you of the great hospitality which we received in Palestine, where large numbers of us spent our leave. We really had a marvellous experience and much appreciated all that the Jewish community did for us here. Like many others, I was entertained in private homes in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, where we had a very good time at parties, and it was very welcome to experience some home life again.

"Then I spent a night at one of the colonies and was much impressed by the work being done there and by the life led by the members. In the colonies also we were most hospitably received and had a good opportunity of coming into close contact with what is being achieved and attempted in these places. We spent a very happy evening trying to do the national dances, especially the *Hora,* and thoroughly enjoyed ourselves. We have all brought back glowing accounts of all we saw and did in Palestine and of the warm welcome we received there."

Another non-Jewish soldier wrote to the Johannesburg newspaper, the "Rand Daily Mail," that he had never experienced such hospitality.

"Never in my life," he said, "have I experienced such kindly hospitality as from the Jewish community here. My first day alone is but an example. Barely had I stopped in town to gaze around, when I was approached by a middle-aged lady, who said: 'You are looking for something—may I help you ?' By the time we parted I practically knew the town.

"I then proceeded to a stop, where an overcrowded bus pulled up. Unable to climb on, I waited, only to hear a Jewish policeman say, 'Soldier !' whereupon a civilian dismounted and I was hustled on. Later in the same day an

R.A.F. man and I set out for the seven o'clock show at the Esther Cinema. On arrival a further privilege awaited us —no soldier need stand in a queue.

"I am not a Jew singing the praises of that race, but let us take a lesson from their treatment of South African soldiers in Palestine."

In 1943 a single party of 7,000 South African troops visited the Holy Land. Trips on such a scale were made more than once. But there were many other less ambitious excursions. A special hospitality committee was formed in Palestine to provide the visitors with contacts in the Holy Land. This committee consisted of Mr. Herzl Zuckerman, of Tel Aviv, Mr. Louis Schapiro, of Haifa, and Mrs. Polly Resnik, of Jerusalem. The greatest effort was also made by the Zionist organisations to make things easy for the visitors. The South African authorities were officially informed: "The Chief Rabbi keeps open house for South African troops whenever they spend their leave in the Holy City, and the Chief Rabbi would be grateful if the families of these men would, when writing, extend his invitation to them."

Different aspects of Palestine clearly struck different visitors. Thus Private Desmond Burridge, of Johannesburg, thought that the country had much in common with South Africa. He wrote:

"That brief glimpse of the Holy Land will always remain a cherished memory; and often in my quiet moments I will review—sometimes with a laugh, sometimes with a sigh—the unparalleled beauty of the valleys, the rocky bareness of the hills, the dirty but intriguing squalor of the Old City, the uplifting of many churches, the compelling significance of sacred shrines, and, above all, the successful and smoothly-running state of communal living as practised in the Jewish settlements.

"I love Palestine as a second South Africa. She has the same problems of race and colour, of droughts and pestilence, of pride and prejudice, as our country. May God and her people make her one day as prosperous as He has made South Africa!"

Many of the visitors were particularly interested in the farming methods in use on the settlements and the type of person who made the farms their new home. A Springbok from Graaff-Reinet, Private Arthur Parkes, was amazed at the fact that former professional men were content to throw their training overboard and to embrace a life on the land. He wrote:

"To give you some idea of the type of person on the settlement: it consisted of eighty families (total population three hundred, of which eighteen had been fully qualified doctors in Germany). One old fellow we met was a doctor, scientist and philosopher—one of the biggest in Germany at one time—black frock coat, typical of the sort one sees on the pictures. Out of the eighteen doctors, only one was still practising; the rest were all farmers.

"The father-in-law of the man who showed us around had been chairman of the Overseas Chamber of Commerce in Berlin. All those people were living on plots of land half the size of my pocket handkerchief. Their homes were all very small, but well-kept and clean. They never hire any labour except when they absolutely have to.

"The visit shook me properly when I thought of us South Africans who are supposed to be farming people. Of course, everyone says, 'Our big trouble is water,' but I am darn certain those doctors and office boys from Germany could make a flower-garden out of any part of the Karroo."

Another South African who was particularly impressed by Jewish agriculture in Palestine was Corporal Britz, a member of a well-known South African family. He went to Palestine on several occasions in order to study farming conditions. Eventually, he prepared a special report of his observations which he sent to the Union Minister of Agriculture. In a letter he wrote: "The only way to solve the Poor White problem in South Africa is to imitate the Palestinian way of farming."

The fact that so many thousands of South Africans were able to visit Jewish Palestine during the war undoubt-

edly contributed towards forging many bonds of friendship between the two countries and the two peoples. A very special link, however, was the planting of a tree by a group of Springboks in honour of Major-General Dan Pienaar at the colony named after General Smuts. The ceremony which took place on this deeply symbolic occasion is described in the following letter which was written by Richard Richter to Major-General Pienaar shortly afterwards:

"On the 7th of August, 1941, a group of South African soldiers came on a visit to Palestine. They were shown around the country and taken care of by various hospitality committees. Under the auspices of the Jewish Agency, a trip was arranged to show them some of the Jewish agricultural settlements, as had been done with other groups previously. I was again asked to guide them.

"One of these settlements, as you may perhaps know, is named in honour of General Smuts — *Ramat Johanan* (*Ramat*, meaning 'Hill,' and *Johanan* being the Hebrew word for 'Jan'). This particular colony was one of those they visited. Trees in this country are rare as they are necessary. Hence the planting of a tree has developed into an almost sacred custom with us, symbolising the revival of nature as well as the revival of our nationhood.

"So this group of soldiers asked—as others did before—for permission to plant a tree, and they asked, furthermore, for leave to name this tree 'Dan,' in proud tribute to their victorious leader in the battle for freedom in Abyssinia, Daniel Pienaar. The proposal was, of course, gladly accepted and the tree was joyfully planted.

"A young boy by the name of Dan was chosen from among the children of the settlement, and the care of the young tree was entrusted to him. A protocol was signed by all participating, commemorating the event. Then the gathering was called to attention, and a salute was given to the young tree, and to the man it is to honour.

"I have great pleasure, sir, in enclosing herein a few photographs taken during the ceremony, and a photo-copy of the protocol, with its translation."

Hebrew was the language in which the accompanying protocol was drawn up. It placed on record that the tree was to be known as the "Dan Avocado," and added:

"In the name of Brigadier Daniel Pienaar, we, the undersigned, plant this tree. Let this earth be blessed, and let it be a covenant between us and you." Thus it was written "on the 13th day of *Av* in the year 5701."

It remains to record the impression which Jewish Springboks made on Palestinian Jews. P. Ungar, a member of the first all-Jewish unit of the R.A.F., wrote to a friend in the Union:

"In you we Palestinians see Jews who are proud of being Jews. Although very few of you look upon Palestine as your mother country, yet your attitude to our country and our Jews here is full of honour and understanding.

"I have on many occasions seen people off from the *Yishuv* who left for your country on Zionist work, and I have also met them on their return full of enthusiasm about their visit, and of the great impression which you made upon them. I follow with deep interest every utterance of your great leader, General Smuts. Like all Jews, I respect him and call him by the honourable name of Zionist No. 1. These are proofs of our attitude towards you—an attitude of respect and appreciation."

By the end of the war a good proportion of the entire Union forces in the Middle East had been to Palestine. Normally many of them would never have had the opportunity; but having been, they carried back to South Africa with them only goodwill and friendliness for a small people fighting so courageously to reclaim its historic land. And when, a few years later, the independent State of Israel came into being, there was rejoicing not only in the Jewish ancestral home and amongst Jews throughout the world, but also in the hearts of many South Africans, especially those who once had an opportunity of seeing Zionism for what it really is—one of the great constructive movements of history.

## Chapter XVIII

## THE WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTION

IN the vital contribution made by the Union to the war effort of the Allied Nations the womenfolk played a significant part. No small share, for instance, of the success achieved in the recruiting of the men was due to the willingness of the women to make sacrifices. The fact that the Union was able to put so great a body of troops in the field is sufficiently eloquent testimony of the spirit of service which animated them.

Their contribution, however, extended much beyond the moral support which they gave. They filled the gaps in industry and other essential services caused by men going on active service; many of them enlisted, performing indispensable nursing and clerical functions, and others helped to maintain morale by sending gifts to the troops and by providing entertainment for those on leave.

Within the scope of this impressive contribution the Jewish women acquitted themselves with distinction. They took their share in the vast and varied home front effort, and also provided their quota of recruits for the auxiliary units of the army, nearly six hundred joining up. Nor was this all. It should never be forgotten that Jewish women, in common with the rest of the South African Jewish community, always bore a double burden ; for, apart from their contribution to the Union's war effort, they were called upon to assume many additional obligations in rendering such relief and assistance as could be brought to their kith and kin suffering under Nazi tyranny in Europe.

Some of the Jewish women on active service gave their lives. One of them was Captain Sybil Starfield, of Johannesburg. A qualified pilot, she helped to found the South African Women's Auxiliary Air Force and was a well-known figure at Air Headquarters in Pretoria. After serv-

ing for some time there, however, she decided to go to England to join the Air Transport Auxiliary of the Royal Air Force. On the way the ship she was in was torpedoed. The passengers and the crew hurried to their stations, but the vessel was sinking too fast to enable everybody to reach the boats. As there were not enough lifebelts to go round, Sybil Starfield slipped off her own and gave it to an elderly passenger. The action was a heroic one, but typical of her. She was last seen swimming round in the icy sea.

Another Jewish woman killed on active service was Miss Sylvia Jocum, who met her death in an air crash. She was in the first contingent of W.A.A.F.s to go up North. She was of a quiet, retiring disposition and very popular with all who knew her. She was buried with full military honours.

The Women's Auxiliary Air Force (W.A.A.F.) was a popular unit among Jewish women and a substantial number joined it. Sometimes all the girls of a family enlisted in it together, like the three Kupewitz sisters. One of them, Sergeant Molly Kupewitz, was attached to Royal Air Force Headquarters for the Middle East, and did outstanding work of a confidential character during a period of great strain. She was mentioned in dispatches.

Nursing also attracted a large proportion of Jewish women. As early as August, 1939, numbers of them joined the South African Women's National Service League to qualify in first-aid. Later, although many continued to serve in the general ranks, others formed their own specific Jewish units both in the Red Cross and the V.A.D., as well as in the National Service League and other organisations. An example was No. 10 Ambulance Division, V.A.D., which was entirely Jewish. Out of its fifty members, all volunteered for emergency duties, twenty-five signed on for services anywhere in Africa and, by September, 1940, twenty-two had actually left. Numbers of South African Jewish women also served in the base hospitals in Abyssinia and the Middle East.

Deserving special mention is Rose Millicent Vandecar, who was one of the four South African women awarded the Florence Nightingale Medal in 1947. She worked for the entire duration of the war in East Africa and Italy, "giving evidence of remarkable courage and of devotion which was an example to all, including her colleagues." The medals were presented to the four recipients by the late Mr. J. H. Hofmeyr, who was then Acting Prime Minister.

The Air Force and the nursing services were not the only military branches in which Jewish girls enlisted. These young women were scattered throughout every type of unit open to them in the army and naval forces. They were to be found among the rank-and-file and the heads of Provincial Commands and units of the South African Women's Auxiliary Services, in charge of Cape Coloured V.A.D.s and in the ranks of the St. John Ambulance Brigade.

Not a few held positions of responsibility at headquarters, both in the war zones and in the Union. For example, there was Captain Sylvia Rosenberg, who was personal secretary to Mr. Robert Casey, Australian Minister of State in the Middle East, and afterwards acting secretary to Lord Moyne. When the war moved to Italy she was in turn personal assistant to Field Marshals Wilson and Alexander. After the end of the war she spent several months in Germany in the Iron and Steel Section of the Allied Control Commission. Sylvia Rosenberg was awarded the M.B.E., and was mentioned in dispatches.

On the home front the Jewish women played a part second to none. They organised and participated in hundreds of work parties, whose tasks included anything from the rolling of bandages and knitting of socks to the provision of comforts and fund-raising; they drove lorries, turned shells, undertook administrative work, ran canteens. They visited the sick and wounded in the military wards of hospitals, helped to distribute sweets, cigarettes and literature.

All over the country they organised sewing and knitting circles, and the Blood Transfusion Services counted several thousands of Jewish women amongst their donors.

A certain number of those who had worked on the home front in World War I readily offered their services in World War II, and their experience was invaluable, although most of the ground to be covered was new. On the other hand, the resources available were also greater. Jewish women's associations were now far more numerous and influential than they had been in 1914-1918. Well-organised groups like the Union of Jewish Women, the Women's Zionist League, the Sisterhood of the Jewish Reform Congregation, and the Women's Section of the Ort-Oze eagerly gave their aid. A magnificent spirit of co-operation developed, not only among different sections of Jewry, but between them and great official bodies like the Red Cross, St. John Ambulance, the National Council of Women, Home Comforts, the Y.W.C.A., the Guild of Loyal Women, and many others.

The records of the War Relief Department of the S.A. Red Cross Society are an indication of the spontaneous and enthusiastic manner in which Jewish women volunteered for service in one of the most important fields of Red Cross activity—that of assisting in the carrying out of the terms of the Geneva Convention. The head of the department was a Jewess, Mrs. Clara Urquhart. On November 22, 1944, a silver plaque, suitably inscribed, was presented to Mrs. Urquhart at a meeting of the Central Executive Committee of the S.A. Red Cross by the President of the Society, the Hon. Mr. Justice O. D. Schreiner. He paid high tribute to her as Head of the War Relief Department, and said that her work would be honoured not only in the ranks of the Red Cross, but in the homes of thousands of people all over the country. In 1944 Clara Urquhart resigned from the Red Cross and joined U.N.R.R.A. In this organisation, too, she served with great distinction.

To Mrs. Inez Jacobson of Johannesburg goes the distinction of having conceived the idea of the great Anti-

Waste Organisation which made such a creditable contribution to the home front effort. She was also Organising Secretary of the Voluntary Lift Club and of the Home Comforts, and served on many other committees. Her work received wide appreciation and recognition. In 1946 she became a Life Governor of St. Mary's Hospital for Women and Children in London, in appreciation of the outstanding part she played in the provision of parcels and financial assistance in aid of the bombed areas of Britain.

Clara Urquhart and Inez Jacobson were amongst those whose names were gazetted in 1947 as having been brought to the notice of His Majesty, the King, for valuable services rendered in World War II. Amongst the others were: Mrs. Sallie Friedlander, Mrs. Ann Hepker, Mrs. Gertrude Masur, Mrs. Judith Pinchuk, Mrs. Mabel Schlesinger, Mrs. Sarah Serebro, Mrs. Annie Shar, and Mrs. Rita Rebecca Shtein.

All these women were subsequently awarded the Protea Emblem.

The Government, more particularly the Defence Department, was not slow in making use of the help which Jewish women so willingly offered. Never was an appeal made for volunteers for nursing, social work, office duties or war industries, without these women responding readily. And at the same time never-ending toil went on in private homes that could not be measured in statistical terms—sewing, hospitality, the preparation of glory-bags, the arranging of motor drives for men on leave, and so forth.

In all the large centres where branches of the Union of Jewish Women existed, members and affiliated societies were mobilised for specific tasks such as canteen work, hospital supplies, the provision of comforts and amenities, the convening of stalls at markets and fetes, hospitality to troops, the care of soldiers' dependents and many other undertakings. This system was also gradually introduced in the smaller centres, until even the most obscure dorps had their working parties, depots and hospitality centres.

Some of these volunteers worked with Mrs. Smuts personally at "Libertas," her official home in Pretoria.

Fund-raising was one of the important features of all programmes, the sums raised going far into six figures. Memorable was the first drive on behalf of the South African Red Cross Society launched by the Union of Jewish Women early in the war. Following the unanimous decision of its branches to donate a standard ambulance in the name of their organisation, members set out to obtain the money. So successful were they that the Red Cross received not only the one vehicle, but also a mobile field laboratory, two dental units for non-European troops, and a substantial contribution towards the first Mercy Plane in the country. Even after these gifts a surplus still remained, and it was agreed among the branches to use it for prisoner-of-war parcels and to endow beds at auxiliary military hospitals at Bethlehem, Bloemfontein, Cape Town, East London, Johannesburg, Krugersdorp, Oudtshoorn and Pretoria.

In fact, during the course of the war South African Jewry gave whole fleets of ambulances to the South African and other Allied forces, including those of Russia. The South African Central Committee for Jewish Refugees alone presented to the Director-General of Medical Services twelve field ambulances paid for by its members. The thirteenth was given by the small group of Jews in South-West Africa.

The Union of Jewish Women contributed to virtually every war fund, including the Governor-General's War Fund, the South African Gifts and Comforts, the Home Comforts, the Navy League, the Merchant Navy, Medical Aid for Russia, Bundles for Britain, Chinese War Relief and Holland Relief. It also assisted to the full in street collections, branches convening meetings in their centres and providing the necessary personnel.

The Jewish women's home front effort was not, however, limited to those activities in which they were associ-

ated with other women in undenominational organisations. Over and above this, they made a special Jewish contribution by establishing a number of canteens and clubs. While the amenities were provided for all in uniform, and were, in fact, mainly made use of by non-Jewish serving men and women, the costs were borne and the personnel provided solely by the Jewish community. Thus it came about that while some Jewish women assisted in the canteens conducted by the S.A.W.A.S., others were responsible for the running of purely Jewish canteens in centres where soldiers were quartered or spent their week-end leave, and at coastal towns where convoys touched on their way to the theatres of war. It has been computed that, throughout the war, more than two million men of the Allied armies enjoyed the hospitality provided by South Africa's Jewish women. As a result these women earned the warm gratitude not only of large numbers of South Africans, but of many people in distant parts of the world.

The story of how these clubs and canteens were organised and of the warm hospitality and friendship which they extended to so many unknown men and women reads like a romance. There were canteens at Durban, Johannesburg, Cape Town, East London, Potchefstroom and many smaller centres. They provided billeting, rest rooms, meals and refreshments, entertainments, and many other amenities; in fact, whatever lay in their power to make the troops feel that, though far away from home, they were not forgotten.

Perhaps the best-known canteen of all was the one established at Durban in the premises of the Durban Jewish Club. Started shortly after the outbreak of war, this canteen ministered to the needs of hundreds of thousands of Service men and women who passed through the city to the various theatres of conflict. Over a million men passed through the Club's portals. In the interests of this war effort, members of the Club voluntarily surrendered their privileges of membership, and the fighting forces were not only

adequately fed, but all amenities of the Club were thrown open to them: library and writing rooms, hot and cold showers, billiards, squash, bowls and tennis. A free concert was provided for them in the hall every Sunday night, and an average of 1,000 attended every concert. By the middle of 1945 the hundredth concert was held. The Jewish public of Durban and far beyond contributed the funds enabling this war effort to continue, and the canteen was known throughout the world wherever the drums of war were heard.

The extent of the work of the canteen is best illustrated by the following figures. During the year ended October, 1942, when large convoys made their way to the Middle East Theatre of War, it served no fewer than 307,480 soldiers with food and refreshments. This was the canteen's peak period. The year previously it served 60,000 troops, and during the year ended September, 1945, when there were hardly any convoys and the canteen catered only for passing sailors and the troops stationed in Durban itself, 31,728 still availed themselves of the hospitality offered. This compares with the figure of 111,837 for the year ending October, 1944.

Thousands of tributes from many different countries poured into the Club, testifying to the gratitude of the men who had made use of the Club's amenities.

General Smuts himself wrote :

"It has been most gratifying to learn of the excellent work that is being done by your club in the way of entertaining both our own and Imperial soldiers in Durban. Especially to Imperial troops spending a few days on shore after a long sea voyage, the many facilities afforded by the Jewish Club must indeed be a great boon.

"I desire to thank you, your Committee of Management, and all members of the Jewish community of Durban for your excellent services on behalf of our boys."

Brigadier Salisbury-Jones wrote to the Durban Jewish Club:

" On behalf of the British Army, I should like to thank you and your committee and members for all that you are doing to help our troops who pass through Durban. Be sure that your work is appreciated by all of us."

Towards the end of 1945 the canteen closed its doors and the Durban Jewish Club once more resumed its normal peacetime activities. The occasion was marked by the receipt of a number of interesting tributes.

Brigadier Daniel, Fortress Commander in Durban, wrote:

" On behalf of this Headquarters I would like to place on record the sincere appreciation of the Fighting Services for all that you have done throughout the war period.

" Your work was a very necessary one, and was of a type that could only be carried out successfully by a voluntary organisation. The fact that the men in uniform were being looked after so kindly by a voluntary organisation provided that link with the home life they had given up to serve their country. The link was good for the morale of the men.

" No words can express adequately the gratitude and appreciation of the Services for all that you did for them."

From the O.C., Base Works Camp, Major McIntyre, came this letter :

" On behalf of the Officers, N.C.O.s and men stationed at Brickhill Road, S.A.C. Camp, I would like to express my appreciation and grateful thanks for the excellent services you have rendered us in the past six years."

In Johannesburg, too, there were several Jewish organisations which provided hospitality and entertainments. On April 6, 1940, the South African Jewish Ex-Service League opened a Rest Room at the Jewish Guild to cater for men on week-end leave. A large committee of women later assumed the running of the club which was completely turned over to the Forces for the whole duration of the war. The urgent need for expansion soon made itself felt and women (and also men) volunteered for service in relays so that the Rest

Room could remain open every day from early morning till late at night. Before long the Rest Room was extensively patronised by members of the Armed Forces of many countries fighting on the Allied side, and on occasion its atmosphere assumed a strong international character.

When the Club got into its stride it served four hundred to eight hundred meals per day. On gala occasions, such as Christmas and New Year, room had to be found for seven hundred to eight hundred at each meal. Entertainments were lavish, too. A special Hostess Committee was constituted to take charge of this sphere of activity. They organised dances every Saturday night which drew large numbers of Servicemen. In addition, U.D.F. entertainers (who for a short, but memorable, period included Noel Coward) delighted large audiences at the Club every Sunday afternoon. The South African Jewish Ex-Service League further collaborated with the Sunshine Club which organised picnics and drives for the men over the week-ends.

Periodically, public presentations were made by the Jewish Ex-Service League to all those women who had completed two years' service in the Guild Canteen. As a token of the League's appreciation they were presented with silver medals specially manufactured for the purpose. The first batch of women to receive these medals numbered no less than two hundred.

By the time peace came the Jewish Guild had served 460,704 meals. More than 100,000 soldiers enjoyed the Saturday night dances and the other entertainments provided.

Many were the tributes which the Club received before it finally ended its wartime work. A quotation from one soldier must suffice.

"I feel that I must let you know how much we men in the Air Force appreciate your services to us," he wrote "I spent last week-end in Johannesburg and slept at your Jewish Guild hostel on Friday and Saturday. I can only say that the food you supply is excellent and rendered more

so by being served by your charming volunteer waitresses. And your beds are so comfy. Then, on Sunday, you took us all out to Northcliff and let us use your pool, besides giving us such a smashing tea.

"My reason in writing is that in the past I have sometimes listened to voices of the anti-Jewish section at home (I come from Brighton), but now I feel ashamed of my past feeling and as a Gentile I say, 'God bless the Jews of Johannesburg and may He prosper those working for Servicemen."

At the closing-down reception on December 1, 1945, a distinguished gathering was present, and messages were received from both Field-Marshal and Mrs. Smuts. The message from Mrs. Smuts read:

"I visited your Soldiers' Rest Room and Recreational Centre at the Jewish Guild shortly after it started and was much impressed by all I saw. Especially by the cheerful faces and kindly voices which welcomed all arrivals and made them feel at home and happy, and I was therefore not surprised how popular the place had become and how many spent most of their leave there."

Another activity which deserves special mention was the billeting project of the Sisterhood of the Reform Temple. At Herholdt House they converted a garage into a dormitory sufficiently large to accommodate four hundred men per night. Clean linen was in constant supply and members of the Sisterhood gave their services freely.

Other billeting facilities were later added, and when the scheme finally came to an end more than 100,000 soldiers had been provided with beds. It was clear from all the letters which the Sisterhood received that the scheme would long be remembered as an important part of Johannesburg's war effort during the large-scale troop movements which necessitated the immediate accommodation of thousands of men who arrived in the city daily.

At a cocktail party which marked the closing down of the dormitory Brigadier J. B. Kriegler, Officer Command-

ing Witwatersrand Area, said that the billeting of 100,000 men provided eloquent testimony to nearly six years of devoted service.

A number of other organisations also played their part. In co-operation with the Union of Jewish Women and the Sisterhood of the Reform Temple—who took the lead—they, for instance, made themselves responsible for substantial monthly contributions towards a new convalescent home, "Thatchings," which had been established at Sandown in Johannesburg. Another duty which many took upon themselves was to visit the various military hospitals and to cheer those confined to bed. Many thousands of pounds of fruit and comforts were distributed — also to non-European patients.

In several other centres, both inland and at the coast, Jewish women ran further canteens. In the Gardens Synagogue Guild at Cape Town soldiers who came ashore from convoys were made welcome and provided with entertainment and refreshments. At the Zionist Hall further amenities were available. How much the work done in Cape Town was appreciated, particularly by passing troops, is illustrated by the following letter which the Zionist Hall Canteen received from the officer in command of one of the ships, Lieutenant-Colonel George Clarke. He wrote :

" I wish to thank you and your associates for the whole-hearted efforts in entertaining our men. The homelike atmosphere and hospitality of Cape Town will be long remembered by every member of this ship's company."

At East London the Service Club devoted itself towards providing hospitality for soldiers from the beginning of 1943 onwards. The Club provided meals, a telephone and postal service, including free stationery, and entertainments of various kinds. In 1943 alone it served meals for 37,273 guests.

During five years the Soldiers' Recreation Club organised by the womenfolk of the Potchefstroom community entertained over 35,000 men and women in uniform. In

addition the Club donated generously to various funds such as the Red Cross, Governor-General's Fund, Y.M.C.A., etc. Many of the women who were in charge of the Recreation Club also undertook duties at the Y.M.C.A. and Air School canteens.

The Pretoria Jewish Women's Troops Entertainment Committee functioned right through the war as an independent sub-committee of the Union of Jewish Women. It provided workers for the Y.M.C.A.'s and S.A.W.A.S.'s canteens and in addition organised monthly dances for the troops. An important part of its work was the care of convalescents. The Committee regularly took convalescents out for drives, organised concert parties for them and adopted two wards in the Pretoria Military Hospital. During the war 60,000 men and women were entertained by this Committee.

The final word on the South African Jewish women's war effort was said by Mrs. Smuts in December, 1945, when she addressed a formal farewell to a group of enthusiastic workers.

"On looking over your long list of activities, including meals and teas, dances, concerts and other entertainments of all kinds," she said, "one remembers that all work was voluntary. I think you must feel very happy yourselves to know that you were able to bring joy and happiness to so many of our brave soldiers, who, I am sure, will always think of you with love and gratitude."

## WOUNDED OR INJURED

Abramowitz, Abraham Elijah, Lieut.
Adelman, Michael, Lieut.
Adler, Milton L., Pte.
Alge, Harold, Pte.
Amshewitz, Marion Harry (R.A.F.).
Arluck, Joe, Spr.
Assness, Alec Meyer, Pte.

Back, Alfred, Pte.
Bailey, Jack, Pte.
Baker, David Gnr.,
Bank, Norman, Cpl.
Banks, Monty, Pte.
Barlin, Bernard, Tpr.
Barnett, George, L/Cpl.
Bass, Joseph, Pte.
Bayer, Morris, L/Cpl.
Beer, Frederick Eric, Gnr.
Behrman, Eric Wilfred, M.C., Lieut.
Bendelstein, Leonard Hirsch, Pte.
Benjamin, Frank Rupert, Pte.
Berelowitz, Kalman Solomon, M.C., Capt. (twice wounded).
Berelowitz, Ralph, Pte.
Berman, Emanuel, Cpl.
Berman, Eric Mark, L/Bdr.
Bernstein, Bernard, Pte.
Beron, Abraham, Capt.
Block, Hilbert, Pte.
Block, Hyman, Spr.
Bloom, Nathan, Sgt.
Borkum, Max Mendel, L/Bdr.
Bradlow, Frank Rosslyn, Cpl.
Bregman, Sam, Spr.
Breit, Isadore, Tpr.
Brener, Jack Arthur, Spr.
Broer, Laurence Bertram, Sig.
Brown, Wally, Lieut.
Buirski, Sydney, S/Sgt.
Bussin, George Lionel, Pte.

Caganoff, Nathan, Pte.
Cahn, Ernst, Spr.
Carel, Mark, W.O.II.
Caro, Ralph Leonard, Tpr.
Cassel, Louis, Pte.
Chazen, Aaron Barney, Cpl.
Chiger, Joseph, Spr.
Chimes, Abe, Gnr.
Cohen, Ernest Lew, Pte.
Cohen, Fred, Sgt.
Cohen, Hyman Jock, Pte.
Cohen, Jack, Gnr.
Cohen, Leslie Bernard, Major.
Cohen, Louis, Cpl.
Cohen, Maurice, Pte.
Cohen, Morris, Pte.
Cohen, Morris, Pte.
Cohen, Montague, Cpl.
Cohen, Raphael, Lieut.
Cohen, Reuben, Pte.
Comaroff, Abraham, Pte.
Cooper, Abraham Joseph, Lieut.

Damelin, Gabriel, Pte.
Damelin, Leslie, Pte.
David, Louis, Cpl.
Davids, Edward Henry, M.M., Sgt. (twice wounded).
Davidson, Alexander, Pte.
Davin, Lionel, Sgt.
Davis, Jack, Tpr.
Diner, Harry, Pte.
Dison, Gerald (R.A.M.C.), M.C., Capt.
Dison, Leon, Spr.
Dodo, Monty, Gnr.
Duchen, Raymond Basil, Sgt.
Dworsky, Barney, Spr.
Ehrlich, Walter, Gnr.
Eisenhammer, George Mark, M.M., Bdr.
Eisenstein, Sydney, L/Cpl.
Ellman, Israel, Pte.
Emdon, Mark Henry, Pte.
Emdon, Rufus L., Sgt.
Evans, Isadore, Tpr.

Fainsinger, Benjamin E., Pte.
Faivelewitz, Joseph, Sgt.
Falk, Bennie, Pte.
Falk, Herbert Julius, Pte.
Fehler, Boris Michael, Cpl.
Fein, Hyman, Pte.
Feinberg, Louis A., D.F.C., Lieut.
Feldman, Joseph, Pte.
Fine, Mark, Major.
Fisher, Percy, Pte.
Fleisch, Hayman Jacob, Pte.
Fleischer, Maurice, Pte.
Frank Hans P., Cpl.
Frank, Louis, Sig.
Frankel, Fred Harold, Cpl.

Freedman, Stanley Leonard, Pte.
Freedman, Zume, Pte.
Frenkel, Herman, Pte., (twice wounded).
Freund, Hans, Capt.
Friedlander, Leon, Pte.
Friedman, Fritz Wilhelm, Lieut.
Friedman, George Wilfred, Sgt.
Furman, Aaron Benjamin, F/Sgt.

Gampel, Max, Pte.
Gavronsky, Jack, Pte.
Gelb, Raphael, D.F.C., Lieut.
Ginsberg, Hans, Sgt. (twice wounded).
Glasser, Michael, Pte.
Goldberg, Harold, Pte.
Goldberg, Louis, Pte.
Golding, Cecil Alexander, D.F.C. 2nd/Lieut.
Goldstein, Arthur Montague, L/Bdr.
Goldstein, Charles, Gnr. (twice wounded)).
Goldstein, Isaac, M.C., Lieut.
Goldstein, Montague Cecil, M.M., Cpl.
Goodman Derek Raymond, Cpl.
Goodman, Max, Pte.
Gordon, Nathan Sonny, Sgt. (twice wounded).
Gottschalk, Norman Hyman, Sgt.
Green, Israel, Cpl.
Green, Solomon Charles, Cpl.
Greenbaum, Fred, Pte.
Greenberg, Harold, Cpl.
Groll, David, A/M.
Gross, Henry Jacob, Cpl.
Grossman, E. S. (Miss), W.A.A.S., Pte.
Grunebaum, Hugo, L/Cpl.
Greenberg, Godfrey, Tpr.
Gruss, Alfred Isadore, Pte.
Hanauer, Viktor, Gnr.
Harber, Hyman, Pte.
Harris, Arnold, Lieut.
Harris, Mark, L/Cpl.
Harris, Max, Tpr.
Harris, Nathan, Lieut.
Herman, Joseph Nathan, Gnr.
Immerman, Jack, Gnr.
Isaacs, Gerald Lionel, M.M., Spr.
Israel, Robert Nathan, Cpl.
Jacobson, Israel, Pte.
Jacobson, Laurie, Pte.
Jaffit, Ivan Leonard, Pte.
Jaffit, Jesse, L/Cpl.
Jammy, Joel Isaac, Capt.
Jankelow, Charles Hyman, Pte.
Jodeikin, Henry, L/Cpl.
Joffe, Sam, Sgt.
Judelsohn, Alec I., L/Cpl.

Kaplan, Clarence, Pte.
Kaplan, Jeffrey, Pte.
Kaplan, Jerry (R.N.).
Kaplan, Louis Arthur, Pte.
Kaplan, Morris, Tpr.
Kark, Jeffrey Arnold, M.M., Tpr.
Karp, Harry, Pte.
Karstaedt, David, M.C., Lieut.
Katz, Herman Lionel, Pte.
Katz, Hyman, Pte.
Katz, Myer Ellis, L/Cpl.
Katzew, Joe, L/Cpl.
Kirsch, Russel, Gnr.
Kirshon, Lionel, Capt.
Kirsten, David Henry, Gnr.
Kleiman, Maurice, Sgt.
Klein, Benjamin, Gnr.
Klopfer, Ernst Leopold, Spr.
Kobrin, Mark, Cpl.
Koff, Maurice, Sgt.
Kopelowitz, Nathan, Pte.
Kowarsky, Alexander Leopold, M.B.E., Lieut.
Kruger, Herbert, Sig.
Kupshik, Isadore, Pte.
Lazarus, David A., Pte.
Lazarus, Hector, Cpl.
Lazarus, Norman, Sig.
Lazarus, Philip, Cpl.
Lax, Peter Frederick, Pte.
Leeb, Maurice, Pte.
Leibowitz, Benjamin, Cpl.
Lentin, Ephraim, Lieut.
Leventhal, Lionel, Sgt.
Levi, Izak, L/Cpl.
Levin, Basil Harold, Spr.
Levin, Jack, Sgt.
Levin, Marcus, Pte.
Levin, Harold M., Pte.
Levitte, Morris, Pte.
Levy, Arthur Lionel, Tpr. (twice wounded)
Levy, Joe Hyman, Sgt.
Levy, Stanley Paul, Pte.
Lichtenstein, Edwin A., Sig. (twice wounded).
Liebmann, Raphael Rudolph, Pte.
Lipschitz, Max, Pte.
Lipson, Manfred, Sgt.
Lubinsky, Israel Emanuel, Cpl.
Lurie, Harry, Pte.

Lurie, Martin, Gnr.
Lurie, Robert, Pte. (twice wounded)
Lurya, Alec, Pte.
Lyons, Lionel S., Pte.

Mafcher, Abe, L/Cpl.
Marcus, Abraham, Sig.
Maresky, Simeon Judah, Spr.
Margowsky, Isaac, Lieut.
Marx, Milton, Cpl.
Medalie, Philip Ellis, Cpl.
Melmed, Herbert Meyer, Spr.
Mervitz, Myer, Sgt. (twice wounded)
Metter, David, Cpl.
Meyer, Benjamin, Sgt.
Meyerowitz, Boris, L/Cpl.
Meyerowitz, Leo Maurice, M.M., Cpl.
Meyerowitz Robert, Pte.
Mierowsky, Bernard, Pte.
Miller, Azriel, Lieut.
Miller, Clement, Pte.
Miller, Harold Gnr.
Miller, Hymie Eddie, Tpr.
Milner Maurice, Pte.
Mograbi, Julius, L/Cpl.
Muscat, Robert Joseph, Pte.
Myers, Ian, Lieut.
Myerson, Morris J., Cpl.

Narunsky, Maurice, Pte.
Nelson, Cecil Philip, Capt.
Nerwich, Louis, Pte.
Newfield, Aaron, Pte. (Rhodesian Forces)
Noach, Gerald Max, L/Cpl.
Norman, Jack, Tpr.
Norman, Philip, Pte.

Odes, Solly, M.M., Pte.

Perl, Herbert, Tpr.
Perlman, Leonard, Pte.
Perlman, Mark, Pte.
Plen, Leon, Pte.
Poplak, Morris, Pte.
Poplak, Reuben, Pte.

Rabie, Maurice, 2/Lieut.
Reichman, Jacob Herman, Sgt.
Reznek, Joel Robert, M.C., Capt.
Richard, Israel, Tpr.
Robinson, David, Capt.
Rodin, Manuel, Pte.
Roettgen, Berthold, Pte.
Rosen, Mervyn, A/Gnr.
Rosenberg, Cyril, Pte.
Rosenblatt, Edmund M., Pte.
Rosenstein, Abraham A., A/M.
Rosenthal, Herman, Pte.
Rosenthal, Kenneth Joseph, Pte.
Ross, Leslie, Pte.
Rostovsky, Stanley, Pte.
Rothschild, Gerald Francis, Sig.
Rudnick, Rudyard, Tpr.

Sachs, Albert, D.F.C., Lieut.
Sachs, Feodore, Lieut.
Sack, Irwin C., F/Sgt.
Sack, Morris, Pte.
Sacks, Frank, A/M
Sacks, Louis, Pte.
Sacks, Samuel, Capt.
Sandground, Jack, Sgt.
Sandler, Leslie, Pte.
Sandler, Maurice Myer, Pte.
Sang, Nicholas, Sgt.
Sang, Samuel John, Sgt.
Schneider, Joe, Pte.
Schumacher, Max (R.E.), Major.
Schyler, Harry, Pte.
Scougal, George, Cpl.
Sebba, Desmond James, Gnr.
Segell, Mannie, Pte.
Selby, Maurice, Pte.
Selikman, Jack, M.B.E., Lieut.
Selkon, Louis H., W.O.II.
Seltz, Hillel, Pte.
Shapiro, Meyer Hennoch, M.M., Pte.
Sher, Julius, Gnr.
Shirk, Julius, Pte.
Shnaps, Cecil Solomon, Tpr.
Siegenberg, Mossie, Cpl.
Siff, Robert, Sgt.
Sive, Herbert, Gnr.
Sklar, Solly, Spr.
Slighting, Edward Desmond, Sig.
Smith, Louis, L/Bdr.
Smollan, Stanley, Pte.
Solomon, David, Pte.
Solomon, Frank I., M.C., Capt.
Sonnenberg, Stanley, Pte.
Stark, Geoffrey, Pte. (twice wounded))
Stein, Abe, Pte.
Stein, Leslie, Tpr.
Steinberg, Reuben, Pte (twice wounded)
Steyn, Jack, Pte.
Strathborne, Charles, Pte.
Sturisky, Harry Jack, L/Cpl.

Sussman, Trevor Felix, D.F.C., Lieut.
Suttner, Montague, Pte.
Symon, Israel, L/Cpl.
Taitz, Louis Sam, Sgt.
Tankle, Philip, Cpl.
Tayfield, Sydney, Pte.
Taylor, Harry, Gnr.
Toubkin, Moses M., Pte.
Troube, Eric, M.M., Cpl. (twice wounded)

Unterslak, Alec, Pte.

Victor, Otto, Tpr.
Vogelman, Nathan, M.C., Lieut.

Wade, Jack, Tpr.
Wainer, Myer, Pte.
Wainstein, Ellis Zellick, Bdr.
Wartski, Alec, Sig.
Weinberg, Leslie A., Cpl.
Weinronk, Jack, Lieut.
Weiss, Otto, Spr.
Wenezky, Harry, Spr.
Wiener, Heinz Adolph, Pte.
Witte, Frederick David, S/Sgt.
Wolf, David, Gnr.
Wollf, Herman, Pte.
Wolffe, Jacob Harris, Pte.
Woolf, Julius, Pte.
Woolf, Keith, Gnr.
Woolf, Nathan, Pte.
Wulfsohn, Lionel Mendel, Cpl.

Zack, Michael, Pte.

## AWARDS AND DECORATIONS

### M.B.E.

Asher, Joseph, Major

Bernstein, Hyman George Gillies (R.A.M.C.), Major

Gonski, Dan S., Major
Goodman, Harold, Capt.

Hermer, Benjamin Samuel, Capt.

Kantey, Basil, Capt.
Kesler, Abram, W.O.II.
Kowarsky, Alexander Leopold, Major

Levinkind, Disraeli Hyman, Lt.Col.
Levy, Philip, Lt.-Colonel.

Marcus, Harold, Lieut.
Mirkin, Leopold, Capt.

Orlek, Alan Aaron (R.A.M.C.), Major
Penn, Jack, Major

Rosenberg, Sylvia Unita (Miss), Capt.

Samson, Hyman Harold, Capt.
Selikman, Jack, Lieut.
Steyn, Leopold S., Major

Zimmerman, Leon, Lieut.

### O.B.E.

Ash, Sidney Hubert, Lt.-Colonel.
Braun, Loswel Israel, Lt.-Colonel.
Galgut, Oscar, Lt.-Colonel.
Hart, Sydney Charles (Sonny), Lt.-Colonel.
Katzin, Alfred George, Lt.-Colonel.

Melzer, Lionel, M.C., Lt.-Colonel.

Myers, Harry, Lt.-Colonel.

### D.S.O.

Leon, Lionel Edward, D.F.C. and Bar, Wing/Cmdr.

Margo, Cecil Stanley, D.F.C., Lt.-Colonel.

## M.C.

Babrow, Louis, Capt.
Behrman, Eric Wilfred, Lieut.
Berelowitz, Kalman Solomon, Lieut.

Dison, Gerald (R.A.M.C.), Capt.

Goldstein, Isaac, Lieut.
Greenberg, Philip Bernard, Lieut. (British Army)

Karstaedt, David, Lieut.
Karstaedt, Gabriel, Capt.

Melzer, Lionel, O.B.E., Lt.-Colonel.
Reznek, Joel Robert, Major.

Solomon, Frank I., Capt.
Spiro, Sidney, Capt.
Stein, Louis Henry, Lieut.

Vogelman, Nathan, Capt.

## D.F.C.

Benson, Basil George, Capt.
Cohen, Lionel (R.A.F.), D.S.O., M.C., Wing/Cmdr.
Feinberg, Louis Aaron, Lieut.

Gelb, Raphael, Capt.
Golding, Cecil Alexander, Major
Gordon, Louis Lazarus, Major
Jacobs, Ronald Harry, Capt.
Leon, Lionel Edward, D.S.O., D.F.C. (and Bar), Wing/Cmdr.

Margo, Cecil Stanley, D.S.O. Lt.-Colonel.
Rosenthal, Gerald, Capt.
Sachs, Albert, Major
Said, Elkin, Major
Steinberg, Cyril Max, Capt.
Sussman, Trevor Felix, Capt.
Von Mentz, Brian (R.A.F.), F/Lt. (deceased)
Yudelman, Montague Mortimer Lieut.

## A.F.C.

Smulian, Philip Keith (R.A.F.)), Sq/Ldr.

## D.C.M.

Colin, George Gerald, Cpl.

Goddard, Gerald Sidney, Sgt.

## GEORGE MEDAL

Friedlander, Bernard, L/Cpl.

Barnard, Abraham, Lieut.

## MILITARY MEDAL

Davids, Edward Henry, Sgt.
Eisenhammer, George Mark, L/Cpl.
Epstein, Lazar, S/Sgt.
Freeman, Sydney, Cpl.
Goldstein, Montague Cecil, Pte.
Hummel, Hymie C. S., Sgt.
Isaacs, Gerald Lionel, Spr.
Kark, Jeffrey Arnold, Tpr.
Lerer, Leib, Cpl.
Lowenthal, John Morris, Sgt.
Meyerowitz, Leo Maurice, Cpl.

Odes, Solly, Pte.
Ruda, Albert Merwin, Pte.
Shapiro, Meyer Hennoch, Pte.
Sheinuck, Barney Louis, L/Cpl.
Sher, Bennet, Pte.
Traube, Eric, Cpl.
Unger, Hans Ernest, Gnr.
Wallis, Joseph, L/Cpl.
Weiss, Abraham, Tpr. (Deceased)
Wilkinson, Thomas Joseph, Cpl.
Zahn, B. W. P., L/Bdr.

## D.F.M.

Bernstein, Sydney M., Lieut.

Friendly, Jocelyn (R.A.F.), W.O. (Deceased)

## B.E.M.

Friedman, Jack, A/Cpl.

Morris, Joseph, F/Sgt.

Schneider, Ruben, Sgt.

Slutzkin, Alexander Elias, S/Sgt.

## KING'S MEDAL (Silver)

Murcia, Leslie, W.O.II.

Solomon, Herman Israel, Capt.

## PURPLE HEART (American Award)

Jacobson, Herbert, P/fc.

## BRONZE STAR

Martin, Rudolph, Lieut.

## ORDER OF THE STAR OF ITALY (Stella Solidarieta Italiana)

Sonnabend, Henry Haskel, Major.

## MENTIONED IN DESPATCHES

Asher, Joseph, M.B.E., Major
Bach, Ferdinand, Lieut.
Barnard, Abraham, Lieut.
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## GLOSSARY OF JEWISH WORDS AND PHRASES

*Aficomen:*
Portion of unleavened bread reserved for the end of the Passover meal. It has become customary for the host to hide it; the youngsters hunt for it, and the finder is rewarded. (See also *Seder.*)

*Av:*
Fifth month of the Hebrew Year.

*Beth Knesset:*
Synagogue.

*Bimah:*
Platform in the synagogue from which the services are conducted.

*Chalutzim:*
Jewish agricultural pioneers in Palestine.

*Chalutzim Chayalim:*
"Soldier Pioneers"—i.e., servicemen who after demobilisation would enter a land-settlement in Israel.

*Chanukah:*
Festival of Dedication (of the Temple)—commemorates the victory of the Jewish revolt under the Maccabees against Greek rule in Palestine (164 B.C.).

*Daven:*
To pray.

*Davened:*
Anglicised past tense of *daven.*

*Eretz Israel:*
Land of Israel.

*Erev Rosh Hashona:*
Eve of the Jewish New Year.

*Erev Shabbat:*
Eve of Sabbath (Friday evening).

*Good Shabbas (Shabbat):*
Salutation used on meeting friends on the Sabbath—"Good Sabbath."

*Hora:*
Round-dances popular in Israel.

*Kibbutz:*
Collective Jewish Settlement in Israel.

*Kibbutzim:*
Plural of Kibbutz.

*Kiddush:*
"Sanctification" — a prayer recited over wine on Sabbath and Festivals.

*Kol Nidrei:*
"All vows" — opening words of the introductory invocation at the service on the eve of the Day of Atonement.

*Magen David:*
"Shield of David" — the symbol of the interlaced triangles, which has become the Jewish emblem.

*Maginei David:*
Plural of Magen David.

*Matzos:*
Unleavened bread eaten on Passover.

*Oneg Shabbas (Shabbat):*
"Sabbath Delight" — an informal gathering on the Sabbath at which songs are sung, speeches given, etc.

*Paroches:*
Curtains for the Ark of the Law in a Synagogue.

*Pesach:*
Festival of Passover, commemorating the exodus from Egypt.

*Purim:*
"Lots" — the name of the Festival, based on the story of the Book of Esther.

*Rebbe:*
Rabbi.

*Rosh Hashona:*
"New Year."

*Seder:*
The Passover service conducted in the home on the first and second nights of the festival.

*Sedering:*
Anglicised present participle of *Seder.*

*Sefer Torahs:*
More accurately, *Sifrei Torah* — scrolls of the Law (the Five Books of Moses).

*Shalom:*
Literally "Peace" — the Hebrew salutation used on meeting, departing, etc.

*Shofar:*
The ram's horn trumpet used in the synagogue services especially at the New Year and on the Day of Atonement.

*Shul:*
Synagogue.

*Siddur:*
Prayer-book.

*Succath Rahamim:*
"Booth of Mercy" — the name of a synagogue.

*Talleisim:*
Plural of *Tallith.*

*Tallith:*
"Prayer shawl" worn by males in the synagogue.

*Torah:*
The Pentateuch; the Law.

*Yehi Ratzon:*
"May it be Thy will" — opening words of a prayer.

*Yom Tov:*
"Holiday" or Festival.

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