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Estandart Reyau d'a Cheneralísma, prencipal bandera carlista d'a primera guerra bordada por María Francisca de Braganza em 1833 Royal Standard of the General in Chief, main Carlist flag of the First War embroidered by Maria Francisca de Braganza in 1833). Wikimedia Commons

The Fighting Experience of the Jewish Brigade Group and Its Influence on the Creation of the IDF

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ABSTRACT: The purpose of this paper is to provide an in-depth analysis of the combat experience of the Jewish Brigade Group (JBG) and its influence on the formation of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). With the exception of a few studies published in Hebrew, there is a notable lack of scholarly research on the JBG's six-week engagement on the Italian front. Existing scholarship has primarily concentrated on the Brigade's postwar encounters with Holocaust survivors and its role in facilitating their clandestine immigration to Mandatory Palestine, often overlooking the earlier military service of its soldiers within the British Army. The first section of this study examines the formation and development of the key units that would eventually comprise the Jewish Brigade: the three Jewish battalions of the Palestine Regiment, the 200th Jewish Field Artillery Regiment, the 643rd Company of the Royal Engineers, and the 178th Company of the Royal Army Service Corps. The second and central section focuses on the Brigade's operational performance in combat—initially during the static fighting in the Mezzano–Alfonsine sector against the German 362nd Infantry Division and the 40th Regiment of the 42nd Jäger Division, and subsequently in the Brisighella sector near Faenza, where the Brigade faced the elite 11th and 12th Sturm Regiments of the 4th Fallschirmjäger Division. It then examines the Jewish Brigade Group's autonomous support role during the final Allied offensive, including the establishment of a bridgehead on the northern bank of the Senio River. Finally, after the three infantry battalions were withdrawn from the front line, the paper explores the formation and operations of an improvised ad hoc unit, the MAC GP Force, which—alongside the Brigade's artillery and engineering units—continued to support the Allied advance. The conclusion evaluates the JBG's legacy and its impact on the nascent Israel Defense Forces, to which many of its officers and soldiers would later contribute.

KEY WORDS: JEWISH BRIGADE GROUP; PALESTINE REGIMENT; 200TH JEWISH FIELD ARTILLERY REGIMENT; THE 643RD COMPANY OF THE ROYAL ENGINEERS; MAC GP FORCE; ITALIAN CAMPAIGN; JEWISH AGENCY; HAGANAH; IDF

This paper explores the wartime experience of the Jewish Brigade Group (JBG) on the Italian front—an understudied topic in English-language scholarship. Most existing research has focused on the Brigade’s post-war role in aiding Holocaust survivors, revitalizing Jewish communities in Italy, and organizing illegal immigration to the Land of Israel. In contrast, the JBG’s combat operations remain largely overlooked and merit focused analysis.

A major obstacle lies in the sources. While some wartime logs and journals from JBG headquarters and support units are preserved in English at the UK National Archives, most infantry company records—kept in Hebrew—are housed in the *Haganah* Archives. Further key materials include soldier-produced magazines like *Le-Hayal* (“To the Soldier”) published by Hebrew-speaking servicemen in the British army.¹ The earliest postwar publications were authored by military chaplains: Bernard Casper in English, and Ya’akov Lifshitz (Gil) in Hebrew. Lifshitz, being closer to the soldiers in combat, devoted extensive pages to frontline experiences, making his account especially valuable. In 1950, the poet Yitzhak Lamdan and Ze’ev Shefer edited *The Book of the Volunteers*, a Hebrew compilation of letters and diaries. Though not scholarly, it remains a rich collection of primary evidence. The first novel on the JBG, *The Brigade* by Hanoch Bartov, appeared in the 1960s. Drawing from the author’s personal experience, it offers psychological insight into the motivations of volunteers from Mandate Palestine and their encounters with Holocaust survivors.²

- 1 On the war logs of the JBG, W.O. 170/4488 the war journal of the JBG HQ, in part translated in Italian by Romano Rossi; before the creation of the JBG, the various companies which made up the Palestine Regiment, each kept its log only in English; W.O. 169/508 from its creation till 1943 and W.O. 169/10312 for the 1st Batt. Palestine Reg till September 1944; W.O. 169/16313 from its creation to January 1944 and then W.O. 169/16313 for the 3rd Batt. Palestine Reg till September 1944; W.O. 170/4762 of the 200 Field Reg. RA; W.O. 170/5262 of the 643 RE Coy; W.O. 170/5703 of the 178 RASC Coy. In Hebrew see for example the Intelligence Officer’s Summary of the Second Battalion for the First Week at the Front, H.A. 33/33□.
- 2 Ya’akov LIFSHITZ, *The book of the Jewish Brigade, A history of the Jewish Infantry Brigade Group*, Joseph Shim’oni Editor, Tel Aviv 1950, pp. 137-239; Bernard CASPER, *With the Jewish Brigade Group*, A.P.C. Book Service, Edward Goldston, London, 1947, pp. 107-111; Ze’ev SHEFER and Izhak LAMDAN, *The Book of the Volunteers, the Episode of the Jewish from the Land of Israel who volunteered in the Second World War*, Mosad Bialik, Jerusalem 1948, pp. 143-289; Hanoch BARTOV, *Puberty Scars*, Am Oved Publishing House, Tel Aviv 1965; Kibbutz Hameuhad Publishing House, Tel Aviv 2011, translated in English by David S. SEGAL as *The Brigade, A Novel by Hanoch Bartov*, Holt, Rinehart and Win-

The first serious academic study came only in the late 1970s, with Yoav Gelber's comprehensive Hebrew-language volume based on archival research. Together with Bartov, Gelber also curated a photographic exhibit emphasizing postwar humanitarian activities rather than combat. In the 1980s and 1990s, several important Hebrew works appeared. Baruch Bruchin examined the experience of Jewish volunteers in the Royal Artillery, including their service in Italy. Shaul Dagan documented the 3rd Battalion of the Palestine Regiment, while Pinchas Koppel and Israel Libertowsky compiled a visual record of RASC units such as the 178th Company.³

English-language contributions remain scarce. Among them are the memoirs of Wellesley Aaron, a British-born officer who commanded the 178th Company, and Leonard Sanitt, a sergeant major from London's East End. More recently, Howard Blum's *The Brigade* (2001) offered English readers a vivid narrative based on interviews with JBG veterans, while Morris Beckman's book adds little scholarly value. Italian publications in recent decades—by Romano Rossi, Samuele Rocca, and Stefano Scaletta—have added further perspectives, though most are aimed at general readers or focus on postwar themes. The only full academic

ston, New York 1968; the novel received Israel's Shlonsky Prize for literature.

3 Yoav GELBER, *Volunteering and Its Role in Zionist Policy 1939-1942, Jewish Palestinian Volunteering in the British Army During the Second World War I*, Yad Ben Zvi, Jerusalem, 1979; Yoav GELBER, *The Struggle for a Jewish Army, Jewish Palestinian Volunteering in the British Army During the Second World War II*, Yad Ben Zvi, Jerusalem, 1981, pp. 537-583 on the JBG on the frontline; Yoav GELBER, *Volunteering and Its Role in Zionist Policy 1939-1942, Jewish Palestinian Volunteering in the British Army During the Second World War I*, Yad Ben Zvi, Jerusalem, 1979; Yoav GELBER, *The Standard Bearers, Rescue Mission to the Jewish People, Jewish Palestinian Volunteering in the British Army During the Second World War III*, Yad Ben Zvi, Jerusalem, 1983; Yoav GELBER, *Jewish Volunteers in British Forces, Jewish Palestinian Volunteering in the British Army During the Second World War IV*, Yad Ben Zvi, Jerusalem, 1984. HANOKH BARTOV and Yoav GELBER, *The Living Bridge, The Meeting of the Volunteers from Eretz Israel with the Holocaust Survivors*, Beth Hatefutzoth, The Nahum Goldman Museum of the Jewish Diaspora in Tel Aviv, Tel Aviv 1983; BARUCH BRUCHIN, *Once a Gunner, Always a Gunner, the story of the firsts*, The Society for the Promotion of Military History, Tel Aviv 1987; SHAUL DAGAN, *Jewish Brigade Group, the Third Battallion*, Gastlit Haifa, Haifa 1996, 152-220. Published by Association of Demobilized Soldiers (War Veterans in Israel); the Israel Ted Harrison Foundation, Board of the Veterans of the Third Battalion; PINCHAS KOPPEL, ISRAEL LIBERTOWSKY (eds.), *Y.A.E.L., The Jewish Transport Companies in the Second World War I-II*, Ozer, Tel Aviv, 1990; and lately SHLOMO SHAMIR, *Divine Intervention and a Jewish Flag in the British Army*, Yehuda Salomon Editor, Tel Aviv 2014.

study is Scaletta's Hebrew- and English-based work, which still prioritizes post-war assistance. More problematic are the article and book by Gian Luca Fantoni, which centers on the controversies in Italy surrounding the commemoration of April 25th. Finally, only a handful of English-language articles, notably by James Bunyan and Cristina Bettin with Samuele Rocca, touch on the JBG's battlefield role—often only in passing.⁴

THE JEWISH BRIGADE GROUP ON THE FRONT

2.A. At The Beginning

The story of the Jewish Brigade Group began in fact in September 1939. At the outset of the war, the Zionist leadership actively sought to establish a Jewish

4 Wellesley AARON, *Wheels in the Storm, The Genesis of the Israel Defense Force*, Roebuk Book, Canberra 1974; Leonard SANITT, *On Parade, Memoirs of a Jewish Sergeant – Major in World War II*, SPA Books, Herts, 1990; Morris BECKMAN, *The Jewish Brigade: An Army with Two Masters 1944-45*, Spellmount, Staplehurst (Kent), 1998; Howard BLUM, *The Brigade: An Epic Story of Vengeance, Salvation, and WWII*, Harper Perennial, New York (NY), 2002; Romano ROSSI, *La Brigata Ebraica, Fronte del Senio 1945*, Bacchilega, Imola, 2005; Milena GUTHÖRL, Milena, *Die Jüdische Brigade Ein Beispiel transkultureller Wirkungsprozesse im Zweiten Weltkrieg, Magisterarbeit zur Erlangung des akademischen Grades Magistra Artium (M.A.)*, Prof. Dr. Madeleine Herren-Oesch and Prof. Dr. Edgar Wolfrum (Supervisors), Zentrum für Europäische Geschichts- und Kulturwissenschaften, Heidelberg 2010 It is very well documented, and in its final conclusions it offers an interesting comparison between the motivations and purposes of the IRA during the Great War and those of the Jewish Agency/Zionist movement. Both sought to use their respective units within the British Army to advance their own political agendas. Samuele ROCCA, *La brigata ebraica e le unità ebraiche nell'esercito britannico durante la seconda guerra mondiale, Soldiers and Weapons 18*, Soldiershop Publishing, Bergamo, 2013; Stefano SCALETTA, *La Brigata ebraica tra guerra e salvataggio dei sopravvissuti alla Shoah (1939-1947)*, Zamorani, Torino 2024; Gian Luca FANTONI, *Storia della Brigata ebraica. Gli ebrei della Palestina che combatterono in Italia nella Seconda guerra mondiale*, Einaudi, Torino 2022; Gian Luca FANTONI, "The Jewish Brigade Group and Italy: A Political and Historiographical Quarrel", *Journal of Modern History*, 93 (1) 2021; Lacking knowledge of Hebrew, Fantoni essentially expanded on an earlier article in which he argued that the JBG was neither Jewish nor Zionist and that her importance was completely marginal; James BUNJAM, "To What Extent Did the Jewish Brigade Contribute to the Establishment of the Jewish State?", *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 51, No. 1 (January 2015), 28-48; Samuele ROCCA & Cristina BETTIN, "Fighting - Rescuing and Building - The Jewish Palestinian Soldiers in Italy", *Modern Judaism* 44, 2024; Antonio GIUSTI, "La Brigata Ebraica del British Army", *Storia Militare* 4, 2025, pp. 18-33 provides a solid overview of the history of the JBG, though it is limited by the absence of primary sources.

Army as part of the Allied war effort. As early as September, negotiations between the Zionist leadership members of the British Cabinet and senior military officials regarding the formation of a Jewish army begin. From the spring of 1940 through the summer of 1941, Weizmann and Ben-Gurion pressed the British to create a full division composed of Jews from Britain, its dominions, and refugee communities. Although the War Cabinet adopted a favorable resolution, the initiative was rescinded in October 1941. It soon became clear to the Jewish leadership that recruitment efforts would have to focus primarily on the Jewish population of Mandate Palestine. To the Zionist leadership and the Jewish Agency, the outbreak of war was seen as the possibility to achieve “political rights on the battlefield” through the formation of a Jewish army fighting under a Jewish flag, with the hope that this would pressure Britain to support the establishment of a Jewish state in the Land of Israel. Thus, from the outset, the participation of Palestinian Jews in the British Army was marked by persistent efforts to assert a distinct national identity within the framework of a foreign military. Central to this identity were the use of the Hebrew language and a shared Zionist ethos, expressed through aspirations to fly the blue-and-white flag of the Zionist movement alongside the Union Jack, as well as to wear distinctive insignia. In the words of one of the volunteers, Ilan Ben-Zion, the vision was to forge “a seasoned soldier capable of fulfilling the strenuous duties of modern warfare.”⁵

Volunteer enlistment in the British Army began immediately. The volunteer movement is rightly described by Yoav Gelber as a “spontaneous movement of self-fulfillment.” Thus, for most of the volunteers, enlistment was driven by a combination of personal and national or ideological motives, prior experiences in Europe, a desire for revenge, unemployment, family hardships, career aspirations, and the appeal of travel.

At the outbreak of the war in 1939–1940, recruitment was made possible through enlistment offices established by the British military. However, the Mandate authorities imposed a policy of strict parity between Jews and Arabs, requiring a one-to-one enlistment ratio. During this period, the Jewish volunteers served in non-combat roles such as the pioneers. However, few volunteers joined

5 Ilan BEN-ZION, *An American Soldier/Pioneer in Israel*, Labor Zionist Letters, Inc., New York (NY), 1979, letter to his wife Frieda dated the 30th of November 1943, p. 45.

as individuals in existing British artillery units as well as the medical corps. In response to Italy's declaration of war and the resulting threat to Mandate territory, the Jewish Agency launched its first general enlistment campaign. This time, the Jewish volunteers could join also separate supply and transport companies, engineers' companies, and in September 1940 were recruited the first infantry Jewish companies. Additionally, the air force allowed the enlistment of Jewish volunteers. In the spring of 1941, the Jewish Agency started a second recruitment drive. It is in this period that recruitment of Jewish volunteers in the Royal Navy began. Besides, many women volunteered for various female auxiliary corps, primarily in the army, but also in the air force. By the end of 1942, some 20,000 Jews from Mandate Palestine were serving in the British Army. At the same time, the Jewish Agency issued the "Yishuv enlistment order" in an attempt to institute a form of conscription. However, this effort ultimately failed, as compulsory enlistment was not legally enforceable. The primary motivation for enlistment between summer 1940 and the victory at El Alamein was the existential threat posed to the Jews of Mandate Palestine in the event of an Axis triumph. Following El Alamein, however, a shift occurred: volunteers began to adopt a more offensive posture, seeking active combat against the Nazis and the opportunity for revenge. Another significant motive was the desire to aid Holocaust survivors. A growing disillusionment resulted in a sharp decline of enlistment rates in early 1943.⁶ By then, 25,000 Jews were serving in the British Army. From the very beginning, RASC, RE, as well as an ATS company took part in the Italian campaign. By the end of the war, no fewer than 30,000 Palestinian Jews had volunteered to serve in the British Army.

To this number must be added the Jews who served in all branches of the Palestine Police—most notably the Jewish Settlement Police—for a total figure of over 20,000.⁷

6 GELBER, *Jewish Palestinian Volunteering in the British Army I*, pp. 25-148; 205-220; 297-365, 447-586; for a resume, YOAV GELBER, "The Jewish Brigade Group in the British Army in WWII", Paper submitted at the conference *Jews against Nazi Germany*, The Jewish Museum, Warsaw 19-20 September 2019; BARTOV and GELBER, *The Living Bridge*.

7 Data on the number of the Jewish volunteers was collected separately by the Jewish Agency responsible for the enlistment but also from the Colonial Office relying on the data provided by the British civil administration in Mandate Palestine. The total data collected by the Jewish Agency in 1945, at the end of the war, as well that of the Colonial Office presented almost similar number, 25,784, for the Jewish Agency

Of all the Jewish units raised during World War II, one of the most significant were the infantry companies of the Buffs, which would form the core of what would later become the Jewish Brigade Group (JBG). Early in the war, British authorities hesitated to recruit Jews into infantry roles. However, in June 1940, General Wavell requested the establishment of garrison infantry companies, modeled after the Cyprus Regiment. A meeting between Dov Joseph of the Jewish Agency and Brigadier General Brunskill led to the decision to raise eight companies—four Jewish, four Arab. The *Haganah* handled Jewish recruitment through the Agency. The first four Jewish companies—2nd, 4th, 6th, and 8th—were created in September 1940 within the Buffs Regiment. Further companies followed: the 10th, 12th, and 14th in 1941; seven more (16th–28th) in 1942; and the final one, the 30th, in early 1943. Recruits trained at Sarafand, then in the Jordan Valley. Training, described by Dan Vittorio Segre, emphasized discipline but offered little live-fire practice. After training, companies were assigned to guard duty in Palestine—airfields, depots, and POW camps—fulfilling the critical role of defending the Yishuv during the looming threat of a German invasion in 1941–42.⁸

and 27,028, according to the Colonial Office. Yet, in the eighties, Gelber after a careful study demonstrated that many Jewish units had not been included by neither, and the total number of Jewish volunteers surpassed 30,000, to be exact 30,824, or 8% of the total population of the Yishuv. LIFSHITZ, *A History of the Jewish Infantry Brigade Group*, pp. 38–39; gives the number at 26,000 in 1946; SHEFER and LAMDAN, *The Book of the Volunteers*, p. 52; number provided by the Jewish Agency totaled as 25,784. GELBER, *Jewish Palestinian Volunteering in the British Army IV*, pp. 299–304 provides both data, according to the Jewish Agency, circa 26,000 in 1945; and 27,028, using British sources. Yet, the final account settles for 30,824; The Jewish volunteers in the Palestine Police were organized in the Jewish Settlement Police, which on a total of 15,930, included 2,650 regulars and the rest part time reservists. The Tel Aviv Police force numbered around 800 constables, while an additional 1,000 Jewish constables served in Haifa. Approximately 300 guards were assigned to detention camps for enemy nationals. In 1945, the RAF airport and coast guard units included about 1,855 Jewish personnel. The number of Jewish regulars in the Palestine Police stood at around 650, and approximately 400 Jews served in the Trans-Jordan Frontier Force; TNA CO 537 1821; CO 733/438/6; WO 32/10874; Gershon RIVLIN, *To Fire and Shield, History of the Jewish Constabulary*, Misrad HaBitachon, Tel Aviv 1962, pp. 49–63, 96–98, 157–159, 299–352; Edward HORNE, *A Job Well Done, A History of the Palestine Police Force 1920–1948*, The Anchor Press, Tiptree 1982, pp. 243–266, 536–541.

8 On the activities of the various companies of the Buffs, see their logs: Coy. 2: Log: W.O. 169/371; W.O. 169/5086; Coy. 6: 169/1760/W.O. 169/10319; Coy. 14: W.O. 169/5097;

On August 5, 1942, the British Cabinet approved the formation of the Palestine Regiment, incorporating Jewish and Arab battalions, and absorbing the existing Buffs companies. The Palestine Regiment was officially established by Royal Warrant in September 1942. GHQ in Cairo ordered the establishment of these three Jewish and one Arab battalion, while a fourth battalion was planned but never implemented. The British Army requested more arms to enhance the regiment's firepower. The Jewish companies were reorganized into three battalions: the 55th (1st) with companies from central Palestine; the 56th (2nd) with companies from the Haifa area; and the 57th (3rd) with newly trained recruits. For the Zionist leadership, this offered a chance to advance the goal of a Jewish army with its own insignia. However, British policy remained cautious. While publicly endorsing the regiment, internal correspondence revealed efforts to block the creation of a symbolic Jewish military nucleus. Still, Shertok's meeting with General Harold Alexander in November 1942 inspired renewed hope for improved training and broader deployment. The 55th Battalion, first led by Lieutenant Colonel Duggan and later Major P.F.A. Grouse, was initially based in Palestine, guarding sites like Lydda Airfield. In December 1943, its 18th Company was sent to Egypt to secure Port Tewfik's oil refineries. By February 1944, the entire battalion relocated to the Suez Canal area, performing guard duties until September. The 56th Battalion, commanded first by Colonel Best and then by Colonel Cubitt, was transferred in July 1943 to Benghazi, Cyrenaica. On September 29, 1943, during Rosh Hashanah, the "Flag Affair" erupted: Jewish company commanders requested to raise the Zionist flag. Best refused, but the flags were displayed during the holiday meal. The next day, soldiers ignored orders to remove them, gathering outside the mess and singing "Hatikvah." The flag continued to appear, prompting a battalion-wide camp arrest and removal of ammunition. Though the British maintained discipline, they recognized the protest's symbolic nature. Best was recalled to Cairo and replaced by Cubitt. In October 1943, authorities lifted the arrest, restored arms, and restored guard duties. The battalion began training for combat, receiving weapons, vehicles, and specialized instruction. By November,

Coy. 16: W.O. 169/5098/W.O. 169/10315; Coy. 22: W.O. 169/10336; Coy. 26 W.O. 169/10338; GELBER, *Jewish Palestinian Volunteering in the British Army I*, pp. 252-277; 284, 293, 497, 634, 642, 656, 670, 683, 685, mainly 293-295, 468-469; 496-498; 643-646; Dan Vittorio SEGRE, *Memoirs of a Fortunate Jew, An Italian Story*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago (ILL), 2008, pp. 176-177.

it was stationed in El Abyar for intensive preparation. The protest thus marked a turning point in the battalion's operational role. The 57th Battalion (Third) was led by Colonel Montgomery and Colonel Scott. It reached full strength in July 1943 but remained in Palestine, its companies dispersed for guard duties. Unlike the 56th, it received minimal advanced training. Company 22 briefly deployed near Suez but returned. The limited presence of Jewish officers and the dominance of British leadership negatively impacted morale. Still, in late 1943, British command authorized Jewish battalions to use Jewish symbols—Stars of David on pennants and vehicles, and blue-and-white shoulder badges—though the Zionist flag remained officially banned. This partial recognition signaled growing British acceptance of the battalions' Jewish identity and future as the nucleus of a Jewish national force.⁹

In contrast to the infantry, the artillery and engineering units that would form part of the JBG already had operational experience. Jewish service in artillery began on September 1, 1939, with volunteers joining the 17th Battery of Heavy Artillery. By 1941, it had evolved into the 14th Battalion, Coast Artillery, Royal Artillery, with Jewish volunteers spread across three companies—300, 178, and 179—operating coastal guns and working alongside the Royal Navy at Stella Maris in Haifa. In October 1940, the British Army established the 1st Palestine Light Anti-Aircraft Battery (1 Pal. L.A.A. Battery). From early 1941, it trained with captured Italian weapons and Lewis guns. Its defense responsibilities included Haifa, the Dead Sea Potash Works, and airfields. In summer 1941, the battery downed an enemy plane. Battery 434 later joined British forces in Syria

9 On the Royal Warrant establishing the Palestine Regiment (0176/686), on the composition of its battalions (General McConnel to British GHQ Middle East, W.O. 169/4333, 26.9.1942); on the order of the GHQ Middle East to the British Army Headquarters in Jerusalem to establish three Jewish battalions and one Arab battalion (W.O. 201/2669, 25.10.1942); on the plan to establish a fourth Jewish battalion (W.O. 32/10258, 14.11.1942); On the British Army Headquarters in Palestine request for additional arms (Letter from General MacConnell to British Command in Cairo, W.O. 169/4333, 26.9.1942; on the design of its regimental badge (W.O. 32/10258, minutes of 24.8.1942); on the olive branch as a symbol of reconciliation between Jews and Arabs (General J.G. Walters Clark, C.O. 733/448, 76147/AI, minutes); on the battalion logs; 1st Batt: W.O. 169/16311 -W.W. 169/16312; 2st Batt: W.O. 169/10317; 3rd Batt: W.O. 169/10323; On the creation of the Palestine Regiment, GELBER, *Jewish Palestinian Volunteering in the British Army I*, pp. 596–600; 613–638; *Jewish Palestinian Volunteering in the British Army II*, pp. 165–173; 229–278.

and Lebanon, defending Tripoli with 75mm guns and searchlights. As enlistment grew, the Middle East School of Anti-Aircraft and Coastal Artillery was opened near Haifa. In early 1942, British command began dismantling the mixed British-Jewish coastal artillery units. The 1st Pal. L.A.A. Battery, however, was re-equipped in 1943 with Bofors and 20mm guns. Training on self-propelled weapons followed. The battery grew to five companies—A through E—comprising over 300 men. In November 1943, it was transferred to Port Said, then to Cyprus, tasked with defending Famagusta and Nicosia. A detachment was also sent to Castellorizo in the Aegean.¹⁰

The 643rd Field Engineering Company, Royal Engineers, originated as the 743rd Artisan Works Company in September 1941. From February to August 1942, it operated near Ma'ale Adumim, then moved to the Haifa region. Initially responsible for building military camps, it expanded to defensive works, including the “Last Fortress in Palestine” project—constructing fortifications to repel a potential Axis invasion. In January 1943, the company deployed to Tobruk, restoring the port and constructing a military hospital. In August 1944, it returned to Egypt to prepare for overseas service, arriving in Taranto, Italy, the following month. Sixty additional Jewish engineers from other units in Italy joined its ranks.¹¹

The 178 General Transport Company, RASC, was formed in February 1941 to support Royal Engineers in the Suez Canal and Western Desert. It was later deployed to Benghazi, where its trucks helped retreating British forces during Rommel's April 1941 counteroffensive. Evacuated from Tobruk in July, the unit returned to Egypt and assisted with road and railway construction, later relocating to Qena to work on the Safaga–Nile Valley Road. The company rejoined the Western Desert campaign and took part in the Allied advance through Libya and Tunisia. In April 1943, it moved to Tripoli and then Malta, where together with the 468Coy, RASC, the company participated in various exercises, and preparing for the Sicily invasion. Landing in Italy in December, together with the 468Coy, RASC, it supported airfields in Foggia and front-line troops near Monte Cassino,

10 BRUCHIN, *Once a Gunner, Always a Gunner*, pp. 9-55; GELBER, *Jewish Palestinian Volunteering in the British Army I*, pp. 166-168; 644-646; on the 17th Battery of Coast Artillery (W.O. 169/284); on the 14th Battalion, Coast Artillery, RA, W.O. 169/4906; on the 1 Pal. L.A.A. Battery RA see its war log, W.O. 169/329.

11 GELBER, *Jewish Palestinian Volunteering in the British Army I*, pp. 502, 520, 644; for the unit log, 743rd Coy, RE, W.O. 169/5348.

advancing to Ancona and Arezzo by late 1944. Notably, it was the first Jewish unit led by a Jewish-Palestinian officer, Major Wellesley Aaron, and among the first to widely use Hebrew and Zionist insignia.¹²

2.B. The JBG: Creation and Training

In October 1944, Chaim Weizmann met with Winston Churchill to advocate for the creation of a Jewish Brigade Group (JBG). Negotiations had resumed in February 1944 between Moshe Shertok of the Jewish Agency and Weizmann, in discussions with War Secretary James Grigg and officials from the Colonial and War Offices. British officials, however, opposed the creation of a large Jewish force, fearing it would bolster Jewish national claims and provoke Arab opposition. As a compromise, they proposed forming a brigade group. Disagreements continued, especially over the British plan to possibly deploy the Jewish force to the Far East—an option the Jewish Agency firmly rejected. Frustrated by delays, Weizmann bypassed official channels and turned to Churchill, who, moved by Jewish suffering during the war, supported forming a smaller brigade rather than a full division. By July 1944, Churchill formally recommended to the Secretary of State that a Jewish brigade be established and sent to Italy to fight the Germans, with whom they had, in Churchill's words, "a quarrel." While Churchill agreed it would not be stationed in Palestine postwar, his proposal was adopted by the War Cabinet on August 9. On August 29, Churchill announced in Parliament that the Government had agreed to the Jewish Agency's request for a Jewish Brigade Group to take part in active operations.¹³

Recruitment efforts proved challenging. The Jewish Agency's campaign among labor settlement members yielded only 200 volunteers. Unexpectedly,

12 For the unit log, 178th Coy RASC, W.O. 169/11761; W.O. 170/2447; W.O. 170/5703; KOPPEL and LIBERTOWSKY (eds.), *Y.A.E.L., The Jewish Transport Companies*; AARON, *Wheels in the Storm*; GELBER, *Jewish Palestinian Volunteering in the British Army II*, pp. 141, 144, 239, 283, 293, 302, 304; 178-178

13 GELBER, *Jewish Palestinian Volunteering in the British Army II*, pp. 371-410; The Times 20.9.1944; Winston S. CHURCHILL, *Triumph and Tragedy, The Second World War*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1985, pp. 596-597-600-601; LIFSHITZ provides a list of all the letters exchanged between the Zionist leadership, Weitzmann and Shertok on one hand, and Churchill and Grieg, on the other hand, translated to Hebrew; LIFSHITZ, *The book of the Jewish Brigade*, , pp. 47-52; GELBER, *Jewish Palestinian Volunteering in the British Army II*, , pp. 412-428.

large numbers of young people—many recent high school graduates and even schoolboys—volunteered and would come to comprise nearly half the new recruits. Alarmed by the slow pace of enlistment, General Harold Alexander of the 15th Army Group warned that if numbers did not improve, he would add 1,000 non-Jewish British soldiers and 33 officers to the brigade. This threat prompted a renewed recruitment campaign in February 1945. Ultimately, more than 2,000 volunteers from Mandatory Palestine joined the JBG between 1944 and 1946, with most enlisting between September 1944 and February 1945.¹⁴

Initially, Brigadier Ernest Benjamin commanded the brigade with the support of several British-Jewish officers. All three battalion commanders were British, though two were later replaced by Jewish officers from Palestine. The rest of the command structure was predominantly Jewish. The JBG was officially designated a “Jewish Brigade Group,” indicating it was an infantry brigade reinforced by auxiliary units, granting it operational independence. A standard brigade comprised 3,000–4,000 men, while the JBG, as a reinforced brigade, was planned to reach 6,500—about a third the size of a full division. Alongside its three Jewish battalions from the Palestine Regiment, the brigade included artillery, engineering, transport, and additional ancillary units. The artillery arm was the newly formed 200th Jewish Field Artillery Regiment, comprising the 604th, 605th, and 606th Batteries, staffed by veterans of the 1st Palestine Light Anti-Aircraft Battery and new recruits, alongside some British personnel. The engineering unit, the 643rd Field Company, Royal Engineers, included soldiers from the disbanded 743rd Artisan Works Company, totaling over 250 men. The 178th Company, Royal Army Service Corps, provided transport and already operated in Italy with around 500 members. Several other support units consisted mostly of British non-Jewish soldiers: the 140th Field Ambulance, an Ordnance Field Park unit, Royal Army Signal Corps, Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, and the Provost Corps. In total, these support personnel numbered just over 500.¹⁵

The main challenge in forming the Jewish Brigade Group (JBG) was balancing the Yishuv’s eagerness to fight the Nazis with the risks of hasty preparation.

14 LIFSHITZ, *The book of the Jewish Brigade*, pp. 56-60; GELBER, *Jewish Palestinian Volunteering in the British Army II*, pp. 441-486.

15 W.O. 106/4103 dated to 19.7.1945; W.O. 32/10874; War Office Memorandum, TNA W.O. 106/4103; LIFSHITZ, *The book of the Jewish Brigade*, pp. 75-83 SCALETTA, *La Brigata ebraica*, pp. 112-125, mainly 112 and 119.

On September 20, 1944, the three infantry battalions of the Palestine Regiment assembled in Alexandria and traveled to Burgh El Arab, near Bahig, where they established camp. Brigadier Ernest Benjamin then subjected the 2,500 soldiers to intensive training over five weeks. Time constraints were a major issue. Whereas the British Army usually required a year to form a unit, the JBG was created in only four months. Training was uneven: the 2nd Battalion received thorough instruction, the 1st much less, and the 3rd had to be trained from scratch and equipped with combat gear it previously lacked. The brigade's organization was reshaped to match a standard frontline unit, with support and headquarters companies added. Troops were issued more reliable weapons like the Thompson submachine gun, and also trained with Bren light machine guns and PIAT anti-tank launchers. By late October, the first training phase was complete. On October 31, Benjamin declared the battalions ready. They embarked on the H.M.T. Staffordshire and landed in Taranto, Italy, on November 5. Five days later, they reached Fiuggi, a spa town southeast of Rome, where the brigade headquarters was set up at the Acqua di Fiuggi bottling plant, while Benjamin lodged at the Grand Hotel Palazzo della Fonte. Hotels were requisitioned and marked with English and Hebrew signs. There, training continued in mountainous terrain until February 1945, with exercises also held in Collevero, Zagarolo, and Palestrina. The incoming recruits from Egypt had varied training backgrounds. Some had served since 1940, others were veterans of underground organizations like the *Haganah* and *Etzel*. The *Haganah* had initially viewed British military training as unsuited to guerrilla warfare, but its members gradually came to appreciate its discipline and professionalism. The brigade progressed from platoon-level drills to full brigade exercises. Training included offensive and defensive tactics, small arms use, fieldcraft, and combat procedures such as house-to-house fighting, river crossings, mine clearance, and anti-aircraft/anti-tank operations. Communication tasks like message encryption and decryption were also covered. Outside experts trained the soldiers in physical fitness, sniping, sabotage, and reconnaissance. Younger recruits often took on the more technical roles, like anti-tank platoons, while older volunteers gravitated toward less specialized tasks. Artillery training was a priority for the *Haganah*. The 1st Palestine Light Anti-Aircraft Battery was integrated into the 200th Field Regiment, Royal Artillery, a veteran unit stationed in Malta that had participated in the Sicily campaign. This integration brought two challenges: transitioning from light anti-aircraft guns to field artillery (like the QF

25-pounder and howitzers) and managing tensions between the Jewish (over 600) and the roughly 300 British veterans, many of whom resented being absorbed into a new Jewish-designated unit. The regiment, totaling 915 men, was structured into three mixed batteries: the 604th under Major Edmund de Rothschild, the 605th under Major Fryer, and the 606th under Major Rosenberg. Training began in November at the Artillery Training Depot in Eboli, separate from the rest of the brigade. Additionally, thirteen NCOs were sent to the UK for officer training. On March 25, 1945, the artillery regiment joined the JBG at the front near Brisighella, where brigade headquarters was located. As the brigade matured, more Jewish officers and NCOs replaced British personnel, but the new cadre often lacked experience. Some officers were sent to special courses, including Officer Cadet Training Units (OCTU). Many infantry volunteers enrolled during training, but often declined to attend once deployed, preferring to stay with their comrades. Artillery personnel, however, prioritized attending even while at the front. On February 8, Brigadier Benjamin met with Moshe Sharett to confirm that the brigade was nearly ready for combat, though he expressed concern that two-thirds of the officers lacked any combat experience—a reality shared by many enlisted men. Meanwhile, British authorities were increasingly worried about the danger faced by Jewish soldiers if captured. Axis propaganda had already reacted to the unit's formation with threats. Nazi and Fascist broadcasts accused the Allies of preparing to “unleash an entire brigade of Jewish dogs.” Finally, on February 26, 1945, the 1st and 2nd Battalions entered Rome and moved north toward Foligno. The 3rd Battalion remained in Fiumicino, awaiting reinforcements. Due to traffic along the Via Casilina, the brigade regrouped in Cervia, where the infantry and support units assembled in preparation for frontline operations.¹⁶

2 C. *The Jewish Brigade Group at the Front: The Mezzano-Alfonsine Sector*

The Jewish Brigade Group (JBG) began its combat operations in Italy in March 1945. Its campaign can be divided into three phases. The first, from 4 to

¹⁶ War logs of the three battalions: 1st Battalion: W.O. 169/16311 and W.O. 169/16312; 2nd Battalion: W.O. 169/10317; 3rd Battalion: W.O. 169/10323; LIFSHITZ, *The Book of the Jewish Brigade*, pp. 101–136; GELBER, *Jewish Palestinian Volunteering in the British Army II*, pp. 499–537; BRUCHIN, *Once a Gunner, Always a Gunner*, pp. 57–68.

24 March, began with the brigade's attachment to the British Eighth Army's 8th Indian Infantry Division, under 5th Corps, and ultimately part of the 15th Army Group commanded by General Mark Clark. The 8th Indian Division included Indian and Scottish formations, such as the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders. The Royal Irish Horse Armoured Brigade operated nearby in support. Replacing the British 2nd Armoured Brigade, the JBG was assigned to the Mezzano–Alfonsine sector between Alfonsine and Ravenna—a relatively calm section of the Gothic Line suited for acclimating a new unit to combat. Facing the JBG were the German 362nd Infantry Division, reconstituted after serving on the Eastern Front, and the 40th Regiment of the 42nd Jäger Division, experienced in anti-partisan warfare in Yugoslavia. Both were capable mid-level divisions. Only the 2nd and 3rd Battalions were initially deployed; the 3rd joined the front on 10 March. Brigadier Ernest Benjamin rotated battalions between front-line and reserve duties. The artillery regiment, still training in Forlì, would arrive on 18 March. The Alfonsine front's flat, canal-ridden terrain and farmhouses made it ideal for gradual immersion into combat roles: reconnaissance, patrols, laying mines and ambushes, and finally planned attacks. The no-man's land between lines was heavily mined. Despite entrenched German resistance, the Brigade launched two successful assaults to improve tactical positions and repelled a counterattack.¹⁷

The 3rd Battalion was the first to arrive at the front on 3 March, stationed near Russi as reserve for the 8th Indian Division. On 4 March, the 2nd Battalion arrived and took over a sector near Villanova, replacing a Welsh unit. The area, defined by the Fosso Vetro canal, was flat, exposed, and heavily mined. The 1st Battalion arrived soon after and remained in reserve. The 2nd and 3rd Battalions conducted nightly reconnaissance patrols—nicknamed *Tyulei-Laila* ("Night Promenades")—some jointly with the Royal Irish Horse. The brigade's first engagement occurred on the night of 3–4 March, when Sgt. Eliahu Lankin led a patrol across the Fosso Vetro. Though successful in its reconnaissance, German artillery opened fire once the patrol was detected, injuring three. The brigade also captured its first German prisoners. On 5 March, the 1st Battalion took up a position near Mezzano. The battalion rotated twelve days on the front with

17 JBG, W.O. 170/4488; LIFSHITZ, *The Book of the Jewish Brigade*, pp. 137–238; GELBER, *Jewish Palestinian Volunteering in the British Army II*, pp. 540–551; BRUCHIN, *Once a Gunner, Always a Gunner*, pp. 69–71.

six in reserve. On 6 March, Brigadier T.S. Dobree inspected the 2nd Battalion; German mortars hit the outposts during his visit. Over the next days, mine explosions wounded soldiers in all battalions. On 10 March, the brigade experienced a handover under fire, with German mortars and machine guns wounding another NCO. U.S. Congresswoman Clare Boothe Luce visited headquarters that day.¹⁸

On 11 March, the 2nd Battalion moved to reserve, replaced by the 3rd Battalion on the line. In reserve, the 2nd continued joint training with tanks. German mortar fire struck brigade positions on 12 March, and the next day enemy reconnaissance flights suggested the Germans were probing for weaknesses. On 14 March, the 1st Battalion clashed with German forces, and three soldiers were wounded. On 15 March, the 3rd Battalion ambushed a German patrol, reportedly killing eight, though suffering mine-related injuries. The following day, a 3rd Battalion patrol captured eight German prisoners. By 17 March, all three battalions had been blooded.¹⁹

The following week marked the final and most intense period of operations: the Battle of La Giorgetta. On 19 March, Allied intelligence suggested a possible German withdrawal. Patrols from the 2nd and 3rd Battalions advanced 800 meters past their positions. One patrol led by Sgt. Yehuda Harari came under machine-gun fire while attempting to cross the canal and veered into a minefield. Later that day, a 2nd Battalion patrol under Capt. Carmi attempted another approach toward La Giorgetta but was hit hard by mortar and small arms fire. Six men were killed in what became a disastrous mission. In contrast, two patrols from the 3rd Battalion, led by Lt. Antony Van Gelder and Lt. Moshe Rinat, captured three German positions, killed about 30 soldiers, and took 12 prisoners—though one was killed during withdrawal. The following day, 20 March, the 3rd Battalion, supported by artillery and tanks, launched a full assault on La Giorgetta. Preparations for the operation had been underway since 16 March, when Lt. Yochanan Peltz discovered German artillery positions on elevated ground dominating the Allied flank. On 17 March, Peltz's patrol was pinned down for two

18 JBG, W.O. 170/4488 on the activities of the 1st and 2nd battalions at the front between the 4 – 11 of March 1945; LIFSHITZ, *The Book of the Jewish Brigade*, pp. 155-161; on the visit of Clare Boothe Luce, CASPER, *With the Jewish Brigade Group*, pp. 107-111.

19 JBG, W.O. 170/4488 on the activities of the 1st and 3rd battalions at the front between the 11 – 17 of March 1945; LIFSHITZ, *The Book of the Jewish Brigade*, pp. 161-167; GELBER, *Jewish Palestinian Volunteering in the British Army II*, pp. 541-546.

hours by artillery and mortar fire near the Fosso Vetro. A smoke screen allowed their withdrawal. Over four nights, Peltz conducted patrols to map German positions and chart routes for the upcoming assault. On the third night, he climbed atop a bunker and surveyed the enemy layout—identifying strongpoints, patrol routes, and minefields. On the fourth night, he and his men cleared a path wide enough for tanks. On 20 March, Peltz led 96 men—including B Company and part of D Company—through a cleared corridor in the minefield, with three Churchill tanks from the Royal Irish Horse providing support. As they advanced, a mine killed NCO Haim Brot. Peltz then ordered a full bayonet charge. While one group suppressed enemy fire, Peltz and twelve men stormed the farmhouse command center. Within minutes, the German stronghold had fallen, and La Giorgetta was secured. During the operation, the Brigade and a neighboring Indian brigade pushed forward with support from artillery, tanks, and aircraft. Although successful, the assault came at a cost: three killed and six wounded. That night, the 3rd Battalion repelled a determined German counterattack. One officer and two NCOs were wounded. While the battle had limited strategic impact, it carried deep symbolic meaning. For the first time, a Jewish force—under its own flag and leadership—defeated German troops in open combat. Moshe Mehlman, who later fell in service, recalled the moment's importance: "When we arrived, the front was quiet... We changed all that. 'Action!'—that was the rallying cry of the boys... soon our name was known throughout the Allied ranks."²⁰

Combat persisted. On 21 March, during Chaplain Israel Brodie's visit to Mezzano, a soldier was killed by German fire. On 22 March, a patrol captured three retreating German soldiers near Mezzano. This marked the Brigade's final combat engagement in the sector. All units had now seen battle and learned to operate as a cohesive and disciplined force. That same day, the JBG was relieved by Italy's Gruppo di Combattimento Cremona. Ya'akov Lifshitz recorded his impression of the incoming Italian troops: "Their discipline and bearing were lacking... Their gear was British. Some were Jewish, including an officer from Trieste who spoke Hebrew. These Italians had volunteered to fight their own countrymen

20 JBG, W.O. 170/4488 on the activities of the 2nd and 3rd battalions at the front between the 17 – 20 of March 1945; LIFSHITZ, *The Book of the Jewish Brigade*, pp. 167-178; GELBER, *Jewish Palestinian Volunteering in the British Army II*, pp. 546-551; On Peltz's experience, BLUM, *The Brigade*, pp. 68-69; 75-80; 88-99; on the testimony of Moshe Mehlman, SHEFER and LAMDAN, *The Book of the Volunteers*, p. 217.

to free them from their former allies. Their plight reminded us of Jews in past wars—fighting on both sides in hopes of liberating their enemies.”²¹

2.D. The Jewish Brigade Group at the Front: The Brisighella Sector

The second phase of operations for the Jewish Brigade Group (JBG), from 27 March to 15 April 1945, marked a notable intensification of combat. Following its earlier deployment in the Mezzano–Alfonsine sector, the JBG was relocated to the Brisighella sector near Faenza. By 27 March, all three infantry battalions and the artillery regiment were active on the front line. After a two-week period of static operations, the Brigade participated in the major Allied Spring offensive launched on 10 April. This phase concluded on 15 April, when the infantry battalions were withdrawn. In the Brisighella sector, the Senio River separated the JBG and German positions. The terrain was mountainous and rugged, creating logistical challenges. Supplies had to be brought forward by mule due to the scarcity of passable roads. Both forces occupied high ground, and combat took place primarily under cover of night. In the weeks leading to the offensive, control of the no-man’s-land was critical. Daytime saw mortar and artillery duels, while night operations involved patrols, ambushes, and mine-clearing. Evacuating the wounded was especially difficult. The JBG came under the British 10th Army Corps and replaced the 43rd Gurkha Brigade between 25 and 28 March. One of the first practical issues was adapting the Gurkhas’ shallow foxholes to the taller Jewish soldiers. The JBG now operated in support of the Italian Gruppo di Combattimento “Friuli,” flanked by Polish divisions to the west and the Friuli group to the east. Their sector stretched through Villa San Giorgio in Vezzano, south of Cuffiano.²²

Here, the Brigade faced the elite 11th and 12th Sturm Regiments of the 4th Fallschirmjäger Division, led by General Trettner. The Fallschirmjäger Division was an elite force. Formed in Venice in 1943 from German and Italian paratroop-

21 JBG, W.O. 170/4488 on the activities of the 2nd and 3rd battalions at the front between the 21 and 22 of March 1945; On the meeting with the soldiers of the Gruppo di Combattimento Cremona, LIFSHITZ, *The Book of the Jewish Brigade*, pp. 178; SHAMIR, *Divine Intervention and a Jewish Flag*, p. 188.

22 LIFSHITZ, *The Book of the Jewish Brigade*, pp. 178-183; GELBER, *Jewish Palestinian Volunteering in the British Army II*, pp. 551-580, BRUCHIN, *Once a Gunner, Always a Gunner*, pp. 71-75.

ers, it first saw combat at Anzio and later fought delaying actions near Rome and along the Gothic Line. Ultimately, the division was defeated in April 1945 near Padua, with survivors surrendering on 2 May. A confidential JBG report contrasted the Fallschirmjäger with earlier opponents, noting their superior training, morale, and ideological conviction. JBG officer Shlomo Shamir questioned why the Brigade was assigned to face such a formidable force so late in the war. He believed the assignment reflected the British high command's trust in the Brigade's capabilities, proven at Alfonsine. Shamir, while recognizing the German unit's professionalism and ideological fanaticism, maintained a balanced perspective. Reflecting on General Richard Heidrich's 1944 "Order of the Day," he noted its similarities to Allied morale-building speeches. Though never excusing Nazi crimes, Shamir emphasized the enemy's determination and effectiveness.²³

By 24 March, the three battalions of the Palestine Regiment reached the front, officially replacing the Gurkhas on 27 March. That same day, the 200th Jewish Field Regiment of the Royal Artillery joined them, with the 604th, 605th, and 606th Batteries respectively supporting the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Battalions. On 28 March, a patrol from the 1st Battalion encountered German fire; one NCO was killed. The following day, mortar fire killed two more and wounded fifteen. During a reconnaissance mission near Plicotto, the Brigade clashed with German paratroopers, killing six but losing one soldier and wounding two. Patrols continued over the next days. On 30 March, another patrol inflicted enemy losses but again suffered one fatality and two wounded. On the night of 31 March to 1 April, heavy fighting broke out. The Brigade lost four killed, thirteen wounded, and one missing, but succeeded in establishing an outpost on a hill overlooking the Senio. On 2 April, the front was quiet. That night, Brigadier Ernest Benjamin ordered the capture of Fugnana and Plicotto to secure the sector. The operation succeeded.²⁴

23 JBG, W.O. 170/4488, Confidential JBG Int Summary No. 2 dated 22 March 1945; SHAMIR, *Divine Intervention and a Jewish Flag*, pp. 188-189; "Bitaon HaChayil 2" 6 of June 1945, "Who is Fighting against Us" which quoted Richard Heidrich' Order of the day of May 1944; Shamir also quotes from the 4th Division journal *Der Komet*, published in April 1945, and the journal *Der Grüne Teufel*, Journal of 1st Division of Paratroopers, published in April 1945.

24 JBG, W.O. 170/4488, log 24 March – 4 April 1945; LIFSHITZ, *The Book of the Jewish Brigade*, pp. 184-202; GELBER, *Jewish Palestinian Volunteering in the British Army II*, pp. 558-564.

During this period, a patrol mission led by Lt. Tony van Gelder and involving Captain Yochanan Peltz aimed to capture German soldiers for intelligence. The team, composed of two officers and eight enlisted men, crossed into enemy territory during daylight. They discovered fourteen sleeping German troops in a bunker. Van Gelder arrested them, but when the prisoners noticed the Star of David insignia on their captors' uniforms, tension rose. One soldier urged executing them, and others mocked the prisoners. Van Gelder immediately stopped the threats. A few days later, Brigadier Benjamin issued a firm order: live prisoners were essential for intelligence and must be treated according to the laws of war. He acknowledged the trauma many JBG soldiers had suffered—including the loss of family in the Holocaust—but warned that revenge undermined operational goals. While there were no executions, some symbolic acts of humiliation occurred. Captured Germans were sometimes ordered to paint Stars of David on vehicles or help clean the synagogue ruins in Turin. These actions aimed at moral accountability, not vengeance. The principle of purity of arms remained central to Brigade conduct. As Hanoch Bartov later noted, revenge would have compromised the unit's ethical foundations. Despite widespread personal loss, no rapes by JBG soldiers were recorded. Romano Rossi later recalled how JBG veterans still refused to shake hands with Germans, including General von Trettner, reflecting the enduring emotional scars.²⁵

On 3 April, a formal presentation of the Zionist flag to the Jewish Brigade took place at headquarters in Faenza. Brigadier Benjamin, the full Brigade, and Moshe Shertok of the Jewish Agency were present. Shertok's brief speech emphasized the flag's symbolic link to Jewish nationhood and the historic Zionist movement. The formation of the Jewish Brigade was seen not only as the culmination of wartime Zionist advocacy but as a first tangible step toward establishing a Jewish state.²⁶

From 5 to 14 April, patrol activity resumed. Passover fell during this week. The 5th was quiet, but the 6th brought intermittent enemy mortar and Spandau fire. That night, tragedy struck. A building used as a military outpost exploded while

25 On Peltz and Van Ghelder's patrol, BLUM, *The Brigade*, pp. 104-105; JBG, W.O. 170/4488.

26 GELBER, *Jewish Palestinian Volunteering in the British Army II*, pp. 564-567; Letter of Shertok to Drancefield and to BG Benjamin, of 14.4.1945, C.Z.A. S-25/5091; Shertok to the Zionist Organization in London, 18.4.1945, C.Z.A. S-25/6074; CASPER, *With the Jewish Brigade Group*, pp. 46-49.

a patrol from the 3rd Battalion was crossing the Senio River. Five soldiers died, including Lt. van Gelder. An internal explosion was determined to be the cause. The event deeply affected the battalion and the wider Brigade. On 7 April, the Passover Seder was held at Brigade headquarters in Faenza, attended by Brigadier Benjamin, officers, NCOs, and soldiers. That same day, a 1st Battalion patrol suffered one killed and eight wounded in combat. The next two days were relatively quiet. On 8 April, a deserter from the 4th Fallschirmjäger Division surrendered to the Brigade. Also, on 8–9 April, the Brigade was visited by Hana Robina, the celebrated Israeli actress and founding figure of the Habima Theatre. Her visit underscored the cultural and Zionist dimension of the Brigade's identity, reinforcing the soldiers' sense of connection to the Jewish people and the national revival.²⁷

2. E. The Crossing of the Senio and the Following Battles

On April 10, 1945, the Allied general offensive to liberate northern Italy—aptly codenamed Operation Passover—was launched. Within the British Eighth Army's framework, the JBG was assigned an autonomous support role. Their mission was to cross the Senio River, establish a bridgehead on its northern bank, and advance to support the Polish Corps' right-flank thrust and the Gruppo di Combattimento Friuli's assault toward Imola. At 4:00 a.m., the offensive began with a British artillery barrage. By 4:25 a.m., heavy mortars and Bren guns from the JBG's 1st and 2nd Battalions joined in. Smoke grenades were deployed to conceal the river crossings. The 1st Battalion stayed on the Brigade's eastern flank, while the 2nd Battalion crossed east of Cuffiano.²⁸

Sergeant Israel Carmi of the 2nd Battalion recalled waves of American bombers followed by a thunderous artillery barrage. After a sudden silence, a command rang out: "Forward!" Engineers had laid pontoon bridges, and Carmi's company crossed with minimal resistance. German troops had mostly retreated, and the Brigade swiftly secured the north bank. Staff Sergeant Ilan Ben-Zion, also of the 2nd Battalion, described the scene in a letter. Watching from a dugout, he

27 JBG, W.O. 170/4488, 5–9 April 1945; LIFSHITZ, *The Book of the Jewish Brigade*, pp. 202–207; GELBER, *Jewish Palestinian Volunteering in the British Army II*, pp. 558–565.

28 JBG, W.O. 170/4488, 10 April 1945; LIFSHITZ, *The Book of the Jewish Brigade*, on crossing of Senio and the following battles till 15 of April, pp. 207–218; GELBER, *Jewish Palestinian Volunteering in the British Army II*, pp. 567–574.

recounted the aerial bombardment, artillery fire, and the confidence of success. His unit crossed the river unnoticed and reached its target without casualties.²⁹

Once crossed the Senio, Company D of the 2nd Battalion, led by Uri Shay and supported by the 643rd Engineer Company, reached Fantaguzzi Mill about 1:45 a.m., meeting no resistance. They fortified the position by morning. The 3rd Battalion remained in reserve while the 643rd Royal Engineers cleared minefields. On April 11, the Brigade encountered sporadic mortar and Spandau fire. That night, the 1st Battalion conducted reconnaissance patrols while the 2nd expanded its bridgehead. The 3rd Battalion moved across the Senio and advanced through the 2nd Battalion's sector toward Monte Ghebbio. Their uphill assault met stiff resistance, halting them at Cuffiano. Scouts eliminated enemy squads hidden in nearby houses. The battalion sustained three killed and about twenty wounded. By nightfall, German withdrawal had begun, and the 3rd Battalion linked up with Friuli forces at Riolo. Just after midnight, German forces launched several counterattacks on Fantaguzzi Mill. The 2nd Battalion entrenched in the ruins held firm under heavy fire. At dawn, a reinforcement unit arrived but came under fresh attack. An officer led a bayonet charge, throwing grenades into a German machine-gun nest. The startled Germans surrendered. The battle raged through the night, but accurate artillery and rifle fire from the 1st and 2nd Battalions repelled further assaults. By midday, the mill was fully under JBG control.³⁰

On April 12, the Brigade was assigned to support the Polish Corps on its right and the Italian Folgore Regiment on its left. The British 10th Army Corps ordered the Brigade to capture several objectives: Mount Ghebbio, Querzola, Mazzolano, Carotte, and Columbara. They were to maintain pressure on German positions north of the Senio and conduct patrols along the Polish right flank. Ultimately, they would move to occupy Ca Zanelli and Torre.

The 1st Battalion crossed the Senio and moved toward Ca Zanelli and Torre on the left flank. The 2nd Battalion's progress was halted by heavy Spandau and mortar fire from Pediano. The 3rd Battalion advanced unopposed, passed the 2nd

29 On Carmi's narrative of the crossing of the Senio, BLUM, *The Brigade*, pp. 133-134; BEN-ZION, *An American Soldier/Pioneer*, letters to his wife Frieda dated the 10th of April 1945, pp. 56-57.

30 JBG, W.O. 170/4488, 11 April 1945; LIFSHITZ, *The Book of the Jewish Brigade*, pp. 239-308.

Battalion's old positions, and resumed its advance on Mount Ghebbio. Artillery, British tank destroyers, and engineers clearing mines supported their effort. The task of seizing Mount Ghebbio fell to the 3rd Battalion under Major Max Cohen. From positions around Cuffiano, three platoons began the climb in staggered formation. The hillside was mined, and explosions from Schu mines wounded several soldiers. Medic teams evacuated the injured, including a private who lost his foot. Despite sniper and mortar fire, the battalion pressed on. Near the summit, Cohen and Lieutenant Peltz took cover in a natural fold in the hillside. Cohen relayed coordinates for artillery support, which promptly hammered the German positions. He then split his company into two assault teams. With bayonets fixed, they advanced, flanking left and right. The Germans, overwhelmed, abandoned their artillery and retreated. By midday, the entire Mount Ghebbio ridge was under Brigade control. The assault cost the battalion three dead and eight wounded. Mount Ghebbio, fought against elite German paratroopers, was a turning point, firmly established the JBG as a capable combat unit.³¹

The 3rd Battalion continued its advance, capturing Monte Quersola by afternoon. A patrol from its lead company made contact with Polish troops on the right flank. After a brief rest, the push toward Imola resumed. Engineers from the 643rd Field Company advanced with units from the Friuli Division's 87th Regiment, but Imola had already been liberated the previous day by General Anders's Polish forces. On April 13, the 1st and 2nd Battalions continued advancing. They encountered renewed German resistance. Fighting around Torre left two dead and seven wounded. Later, a 2nd Battalion patrol was hit by mortar fire near La Torre, wounding three more. The 1st Battalion reached Mazzolano without incident, and the 3rd Battalion advanced unopposed. On April 14, the 1st Battalion came under mortar fire from the Sirolo area. Meanwhile, the 2nd and 3rd Battalions had already been pulled back and regrouped south of the Senio near Brisighella, signaling the end of their combat operations. On April 15, the 1st Battalion also withdrew and rejoined the others. Though initially told the pause was temporary, the battalions never returned to the front.³²

31 JBG, W.O. 170/4488, 12 April 1945; on the ascent of Mount Ghebbio; on Peltz description of the assault on Mount Ghebbio, BLUM, *The Brigade*, pp. 134-137; LIFSHITZ, *The Book of the Jewish Brigade*, pp. 212-218; GELBER, *Jewish Palestinian Volunteering in the British Army II*, pp. 572-574.

32 JBG, W.O. 170/4488, 13, 14, and 15 April 1945; BRUCHIN, *Once a Gunner, Always a*

2.F. MAC GP Force

While the three infantry battalions of the Jewish Brigade Group (JBG) had concluded their frontline combat, the supporting units—signals, artillery, and engineers—continued to assist the advancing Allied forces. Brigade Headquarters assumed control of the boundary line between the British 8th Army and the American 5th Army. It was also tasked with leading a newly formed, improvised unit called MAC GP Force, whose mission was to hold the Monte Grande area, a critical zone at the junction of the two armies of the 15th Army Group. On April 15, JBG Headquarters took command of this mixed force, comprising its own signals unit, six battalions of Scottish and Indian infantry, British light anti-aircraft artillery, and logistical and engineering detachments. Based in San Clemente, MAC GP Force replaced the 10th Indian Division, which had been reassigned to support the Polish Corps' advance toward Bologna along Route 9. The new sector command initially fell under British 13th Corps and later under the 10th Corps, due to a shrinking front caused by German retreat and Polish advances. Throughout April 17 and 18, MAC GP Force maintained artillery exchanges with German forces near Montecalderaro. On April 19, German patrols increased pressure on both flanks of the defense line, but Allied artillery struck enemy dug-outs on Mount Castellaro. The attached Indian battalions began their advance on April 20. With their mission complete, MAC GP Force was disbanded, and the JBG Headquarters and signals unit returned to Brisighella. Meanwhile, the 200th Artillery Regiment of the JBG remained active at the front, supporting the Gruppo di Combattimento Friuli. On April 13, it took new positions north of the Senio River and resumed firing on April 16 as the German withdrawal began. Following orders from British 10th Corps, the artillery advanced roughly 12 kilometers along Route 9 to aid the Polish Corps' capture of Bologna. Stationed at Castel San Pietro, the JBG artillery supported the Polish offensive, often engaging with full or partial batteries as needed. On April 21, the unit received orders to regroup with 10th Corps, and the following day returned to Faenza—despite coming under attack from enemy aircraft. The 643rd Royal Engineers Company, reinforced by Italian pioneers, remained north of the Senio guarding the Riolo–Castel Bolognese Road and water tower. On April 17, they moved to Imola to maintain Route 9. Though initially instructed to join MAC GP Force on April 20, the order

was canceled after the unit was dissolved. Instead, the engineers were tasked with dismantling Bailey bridges behind the front before continuing north. The company remained under 10th Corps command but did not see further combat. On April 25, British 10th Corps formally ended its role in the Italian offensive. By mid-April, the 178th Royal Army Service Corps Company had been reassigned to work under the 10th Corps' confiscation officer, managing captured German equipment. It later oversaw transport operations across Eighth Army-held areas, temporarily separating from the JBG. On April 25, the JBG signals unit was assigned to the British 5th Corps to help manage traffic on vital supply routes but rejoined the Brigade in early May. Even at this stage, combat duties persisted for some. From April 17, the machine-gun companies of the three infantry battalions were ordered to secure bridges across the Po River and protect the engineers working on them. The rest of the JBG regrouped in Brisighella.³³

The decision to pull the infantry battalions from combat has puzzled both participants and historians. At the time, many Brigade soldiers attributed the withdrawal to heavy casualties and a lack of reinforcements—particularly from the UK. By April 15, the Brigade had suffered 30 fatalities among Jewish volunteers from Palestine, 27 among British Jews and Gentiles, and around 150 wounded. Although not catastrophic, these losses were significant. British command concluded it was unwise to continue deploying the understrength Brigade. In a post-war interview, General Mark Clark allegedly told an Israeli journalist, "You Jews have already shed more than enough blood in this war." Practical considerations also factored into the decision. Historian Gelber notes that the main reason for the withdrawal was the reassignment of the British 10th Corps to reserve status. A planned Po River crossing never materialized, as the Germans were already retreating and other Allied forces had entered the Po Valley. With the fall of Bologna to Polish and American forces, the Corps had fulfilled its objectives. As such, the JBG was likely withdrawn as part of a broader drawdown. Nonetheless, the

33 HQ 10th Corps Log, W.O. 170/4261 13/14.4.1945; JBG, W.O. 170/4488, 15-20.4.1945; Log of 200th Regiment Field Artillery, RA, W.O. 170/462 13-30.4.1945; Log of the 643 Coy., RE, W.O. 170/562 14-21.4.1945; on the activities of the signals, log of HQ 10th Corps, W.O. 170/4261 23/27.4.1945/JBG, W.O. 170/4488, 25.4.-15.5.1945; log of the 178 Coy., RASC, W.O. 170/5793 from 13.4.1945 onwards; GELBER, *Jewish Palestinian Volunteering in the British Army II*, pp. 524-525; 574-577; BRUCHIN, *Once a Gunner, Always a Gunner*, pp. 81-82.

Brigade's solid battlefield record earned it an important assignment: command of the MAC GP Force. This sensitive mission—securing the boundary between two advancing armies—testifies to the Allies' trust in the JBG. Simultaneously, the Brigade's support units remained active in combat zones through the end of April, reinforcing its contribution to the Allied effort.³⁴

With the war over, the Brigade turned to ceremonial duties and recognition. In late May 1945, General Mark Clark, commander of the 15th Army Group, wrote to Brigadier Ernest Benjamin, praising the unit's achievements, stating amongst else "My Dear Brigadier Benjamin, the victory in Italy over the German forces was won by a coalition of military forces, which are as diverse in origin, perhaps, as any group of armies ever to take the field. ... I address this letter to you as the Commander of the Palestinian Forces to ask you to thank all ranks, for me, for the splendid co-operation which you gave in the offensive that forced the Germans into unconditional surrender. Your operations around Lake Comacchio and south of Route 9 were of great importance..." In May 1945, the JBG was relocated to the Tarvisio region, between Alto Adige and Carnia. There, they encountered large numbers of Jewish Displaced Persons (DPs)—survivors of the Holocaust—as described by Primo Levi in *If Not Now, When?* Working alongside the Royal Army Service Corps and Royal Engineers, the Brigade provided vital aid to survivors of ghettos and extermination camps. By July, the Brigade was reassigned to the Northwestern European Theater, first relocating to Holland and later to Tournai, Belgium. Once again, its duties were dual: serving as an occupying force and as a support center for Jewish DPs. The Jewish Brigade was officially disbanded in June 1946. But for many of its veterans, this was not an end. Rather, it marked the beginning of a new struggle that would culminate in the founding of the State of Israel and the War of Independence two years later.³⁵

34 GELBER, *Jewish Palestinian Volunteering in the British Army II*, pp. 579-580; log of HQ 10th Corps, W.O. 170/4261 21/27.4.1945/ JBG, W.O. 170/4488, on the JBG losses, minutes, of letter of J.S. Steele, Assistant Adjutant-General at the War Office, to Grigg, James P. Grigg, the Secretary of State for War, W.O. 32/10874; for a short biography of the fallen, LIFSHITZ, *The Book of the Jewish Brigade*, pp. 239-308. SHAMIR, *Divine Intervention and a Jewish Flag*, p. 207.

35 GELBER, *Jewish Palestinian Volunteering in the British Army III*, pp. 289-356; 463-530; less detailed HANOCH and GELBER, *The Living Bridge*.

*Conclusions. The Contribution of Jewish
Brigade Group Veterans to the Emerging
IDF*

To understand the impact of JBG veterans, one must view their service in the broader context of over 30,000 Jews from Palestine who volunteered for the British Army during World War II. These volunteers gained military training, organizational skills, and combat experience that proved vital to the establishment and success of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), especially during the 1948 War of Independence. As Yigal Allon, a Palmach commander, noted, these veterans became the “backbone of the fledgling army.” Yoav Gelber similarly emphasized their decisive influence. British Army veterans played a pivotal role in training *Haganah* forces and, later, the IDF. Their operational knowledge shaped the *Haganah*’s wartime training programs and facilitated the transition from a fragmented territorial militia into a centralized military force. This process began with the November 1947 reorganization of the *Haganah* into six infantry brigades, each with a defined operational sector, followed by their incorporation into the IDF on 26 May 1948. Additional brigades were later created, including three from the elite Palmach. Conscription, introduced for men and women aged 17 to 25 in November 1947, helped build the citizen army that would underpin Israel’s defense.

The impact of JBG veterans extended beyond combat units. They helped establish the IDF’s general staff, artillery and engineering corps, logistics, medical services, and fledgling air and naval forces, including the Chen (Women’s Auxiliary Corps). The JBG’s ancillary units—especially in artillery, engineering, and supply—formed the backbone of the IDF’s logistical infrastructure. Though their full strategic impact became more visible in the 1950s and 1960s, their early institutional contributions were crucial to the army’s development. The JBG’s infantry battalions made a more complex contribution. Although Jewish officers and NCOs commanded platoons, the battalions rarely operated as cohesive units, nor did the Brigade as a whole engage in coordinated tactical operations. With the exception of the assault on La Giorgetta, most combat resembled First World War-style trench warfare. At La Giorgetta and Monte Ghebbio, static engagements and bayonet charges underscored this reality. Artillery support, often supplied only at the corps level, was limited or unavailable. These conditions were ironically mirrored in the early IDF, where a lack of armored and air support

forced similarly rudimentary tactics. The key difference lay in the level of command: while JBG veterans had served mostly at the platoon and company level, they were often promoted to lead battalions and brigades during the 1948 war. Their battlefield experience, combined with British Army discipline and training methods, made them indispensable in shaping the IDF's operational ethos and mentoring younger commanders. Their knowledge in logistics, training, and tactical deployment—mainly at the battalion level—proved especially valuable.³⁶

Yigal Allon stressed that the JBG's true contribution lay not in its battlefield engagements in Italy, but in the professional training its personnel received: familiarity with modern and conventional weaponry, tactical knowledge at the company and battalion levels, cooperation with air and armored units, and above all, experience in the highly organized and disciplined structure of the British Army. Shlomo Shamir (Rabinovitch), the most senior *Haganah* officer in the JBG, offered a more nuanced view. Demobilized as a major in 1946, he later commanded the 7th Armored Brigade during the War of Independence, breaking the siege of western Jerusalem. Though offered the position of IDF Chief of Staff by David Ben-Gurion, he declined, instead becoming Commander of both the Navy and later the Air Force before retiring in 1951. For Shamir, the deeper significance of JBG service lay not just in technical military training but in its effect on national consciousness and the aspiration for sovereignty. The Brigade represented the first legitimate Jewish military force and served as a key reservoir of knowledge for the nascent IDF. The British Army instilled more than just battlefield skills. JBG veterans learned how to command multi-ethnic units, manage large formations, and uphold military ethics. Their service acted as an informal military academy, providing future Israeli officers with experience in planning, logistics, and operational discipline. They absorbed the values and routines of a modern army, particularly the importance of training, chain of command, and thorough preparation. Veterans also brought expertise in a wide range of weapons systems, desert and mountain warfare, and command of units from platoon to brigade level.³⁷

36 Yigal ALLON, *Shield of David, The Story of Israel's Armed Forces*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London 1970, pp. 138-141; 186; Yoav GELBER, *The Emergence of a Jewish Army - The Veterans of the British Army in the IDF* (Hebrew), Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, Jerusalem 1986, pp. 276-432.

37 ALLON, *Shield of David*, p. 186; SHAMIR, *Divine Intervention and a Jewish Flag*, p. 329-338.

These veterans proved instrumental in professionalizing the IDF. Their experience helped build an army that combined organizational complexity with ideological commitment. The service of JBG personnel became a cornerstone of Israel's emerging military structure.

It is often claimed that Palmach officers dominated battlefield command in 1948, while British Army veterans focused on logistics and staff work. While this may have been true within Palmach units, the wider IDF depended heavily on the experience and leadership of British-trained veterans. David Ben-Gurion recognized this early on. To him, *Haganah* commanders lacked the professionalism of a modern army, while the Palmach was seen as politically unreliable. He placed strategic trust in British-trained veterans. Accordingly, several former JBG officers played central roles in organizing and leading the IDF. These included Mordechai Makleff, Shlomo Shamir, Meir Zorea, Haim Laskov, Israel Tal, Avraham Yoffe, Aharon Yariv (Rabinowitz), and Avraham Tamir. The IDF's first chief of staff, Ya'akov Dori, had served in the Jewish Legion during the First World War. His successor, Yigal Yadin (1949–1952), emerged from the *Haganah*, but the next four chiefs—Maklef (1952–1953), Moshe Dayan (1953–1958), Laskov (1958–1961), and Tzvi Tzur (1961–1964)—were all trained in the British Army or its affiliated institutions like the Jewish Settlement Police. Similarly, the Israeli Air Force drew heavily from Royal Air Force veterans, including Aharon Remez (1948–1950), Dan Tolkovsky (1953–1958), and Ezer Weizman (1958–1966). The Chen (Women's Corps), modeled on the British ATS, was founded by Mina Ben-Zvi (1947–1949) and later led by Stella Levi (1964–1970), both British Army veterans.³⁸

Ben-Gurion's recognition of this legacy is enshrined in Israel's Declaration of Independence, which states: "In the Second World War, the Jewish community of this country contributed its full share to the struggle of the freedom- and peace-loving nations against the forces of Nazi wickedness and, by the blood of its soldiers and its war effort, gained the right to be reckoned among the peoples who founded the United Nations." This declaration underscores both the mili-

38 GELBER, *The Emergence of a Jewish Army*, pp. 552–557; Moshe BEN SHAUL, *Generals of Israel*, Hadar Publishing House Tel Aviv, 1968, I. Hanoach, Haim Laskov, pp. 45–52; Avi'ezer Golan, Israel Tal, pp. 167–177; Yesha'yahu Aviam, Abraham Yaffe, pp. 177–189; Yair Kotler, Aharon Yeriv (Rabinowitz), pp. 189–199; D. Ben Elkana, Meir Zorea (MC), pp. 210–218; Eli Landau, Abraham Tamir, pp. 295–304.

tary and political value of Jewish participation in the British war effort, first and foremost the Jewish Brigade Group. The service of these soldiers laid the groundwork for Israel's international legitimacy and its ability to field a disciplined, professional army at its inception.³⁹

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³⁹ On David Ben Gurion and the Declaration of Independence, ELIYAKIM RUBINSTEIN, "The Declaration of Independence as a Basic Document of the State of Israel", *Israel Studies*, 3.1. 1998, pp. 195-210; <https://catalog.archives.gov.il/chapter/declaration-of-independence/>; <https://www.gov.il/en/pages/declaration-of-establishment-state-of-israel>

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APPENDIX ILLUSTRATIONS

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- 5 - Royal Army Service Corps, Metal Badge (Author's Collection)
- 6 – RASC 178th Coy - Vehicle Marking (Author's Collection)
- 7 - Royal Artillery, Metal Badge (Author's Collection)
- 8 - Royal Engineers, Metal Badge (Author's Collection)
- 9 - Jewish Chaplain – Unofficial Metal Badge minted in Palestine. This badge was sometimes used by the soldiers of the JBG instead of that of the Palestine Regiment (Author's Collection)

B - The JBG at Training

- 10 - Brigadier General Frank Benjamin, depicted in battledress, was the Canadian born Royal Engineer officer, who commanded the Jewish Brigade Group (KLINOV Yehoshua & SHILOAH, Zvi. *The Volunteers*, The Committee for the Celebrations of Volunteering in World War Two, A Decade Since the Brigade's Entry into the Front.", Yavne, Tel Aviv 1954, p. 98)
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- 12 - Road Sign of the JBG, Fiuggi (SHEFER Ze'ev and LAMDAN, Izhak. *The Book of the Volunteers, the Episode of the Jewish from the Land of Israel who volunteered in the Second World War*, Mosad Bialik, Jerusalem 1948, ill. 1)
- 13 - Sign of Officer Mess, Fiuggi (SHEFER Ze'ev and LAMDAN, Izhak. *The Book of the Volunteers, the Episode of the Jewish from the Land of Israel who volunteered in the Second World War*, Mosad Bialik, Jerusalem 1948, ill. 3)
- 14 - Ilan Ben Zion in the uniform of the JBG - (BEN-ZION, Ilan. *An American Soldier/Pioneer in Israel*, Labor Zionist Letters, Inc., New York (NY), 1979, letter to his wife Frieda dated the 30th of November 1943, p. 1).

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- 17 - Soldiers of the Palestine Regiment, Jewish Brigade Group, advancing on tanks of the Royal Irish Horse, March 1945 (KLINOV Yehoshua & SHILOAH, Zvi. *The Volunteers*, The Committee for the Celebrations of Volunteering in World War Two, A Decade Since the Brigade's Entry into the Front.", Yavne, Tel Aviv 1954, p. 109)
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Appendix Illustrations

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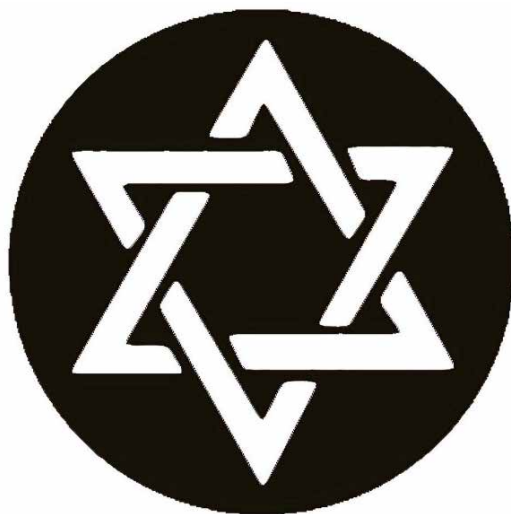
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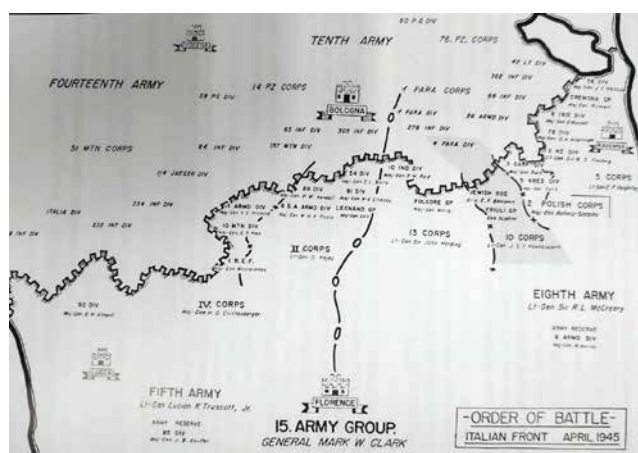


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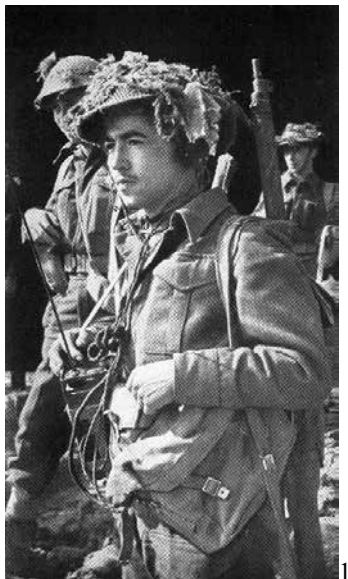


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C – The JBG on the Front: The Mezzano-Alfonsine Sector



15 – Map of the Theatre of Operations of the JBG (SHAMIR, Shlomo. *Divine Intervention and a Jewish Flag in the British Army*, Yehuda Salomon Editor, Tel Aviv 2014, p. 75)



16 - A soldier of the Jewish Brigade Group, in helmet, 1937 webbing, and Lee Enfield No. 4 MKI rifle, the quintessence of the British Tommy, March 1945 (KLINOV Yehoshua & SHILOAH, Zvi. *The Volunteers*, The Committee for the Celebrations of Volunteering in World War Two, A Decade Since the Brigade's Entry into the Front.", Yavne, Tel Aviv 1954, p. 105).



17 - Soldiers of the Palestine Regiment, Jewish Brigade Group, advancing on tanks of the Royal Irish Horse, March 1945 (KLINOV Yehoshua & SHILOAH, Zvi. *The Volunteers*, The Committee for the Celebrations of Volunteering in World War Two, A Decade Since the Brigade's Entry into the Front.", Yavne, Tel Aviv 1954, p. 109)



18 - Soldiers of the Palestine Regiment, Jewish Brigade Group, advancing on tanks of the Royal Irish Horse, March 1945 (Courtesy of the Imperial War Museum)



19 - A patrol of the Palestine Regiment, Jewish Brigade Group, March 1945 (KLINOV Yehoshua & SHILOAH, Zvi. *The Volunteers*, The Committee for the Celebrations of Volunteering in World War Two, A Decade Since the Brigade's Entry into the Front.", Yavne, Tel Aviv 1954, p. 106)



20 - Soldiers of the Palestine Regiment, Jewish Brigade Group, March 1945
(Courtesy of the Imperial War Museum).



21 - Soldiers of the Palestine Regiment, Jewish Brigade Group marching on road sides,
March 1945 (Courtesy of the Imperial War Museum).



22 - A patrol of the Palestine Regiment, Jewish Brigade Group, March 1945
(Courtesy of the Imperial War Museum).



23 – Patrol of the Soldiers of the Palestine Regiment, Jewish Brigade Group, advancing, March 1945 (KLINOV Yehoshua & SHILOAH, Zvi. *The Volunteers*, The Committee for the Celebrations of Volunteering in World War Two, A Decade Since the Brigade's Entry into the Front.", Yavne, Tel Aviv 1954, p. 110)

D – The JBG on the Brisighella Sector: The Artillery and the Visit of Shertok



24 – Major Edmond De Rotschild together with Lieutenant Yehuda Ginzburg, 200th Field Regiment, Royal Artillery, Jewish Brigade Group, 1945 (BRUCHIN, Baruch. *Once a Gunner; Always a Gunner; the story of the firsts*, The Society for the Promotion of Military History, Tel Aviv 1987, Ill. 8)



25 – Group of Officers and noncommissioned officers, 200th Field Regiment, Royal Artillery, Jewish Brigade Group, Italy 1945 (BRUCHIN, Baruch. *Once a Gunner; Always a Gunner; the story of the firsts*, The Society for the Promotion of Military History, Tel Aviv 1987, Ill. 9)



26 - 200th Field Regiment, Royal Artillery, Jewish Brigade Group, Italy 1945 with a QF 25-Pounder (KLINOV Yehoshua & SHILOAH, Zvi. *The Volunteers*, The Committee for the Celebrations of Volunteering in World War Two, A Decade Since the Brigade's Entry into the Front.", Yavne, Tel Aviv 1954, p. 107)



27 - Moshe Shertok, head of the political department of the Jewish Agency in visit to the Jewish Brigade Group headquarters, Brisighella, 3rd April 1945 (KLINOV Yehoshua & SHILOAH, Zvi. *The Volunteers*, The Committee for the Celebrations of Volunteering in World War Two, A Decade Since the Brigade's Entry into the Front.", Yavne, Tel Aviv 1954, p. 118)



William Balfour Ker (1877-1918), *Knights of Columbus*, 1917 / Poster showing a priest looking heavenward and raising a crucifix, blessing kneeling soldiers. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540 USA. Reproduction Number: LC-USZC4-10131
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