

OF 76 Church Matters  
76c Jewish  
Box 8 July-Aug 1942

August 11, 1942

MEMORANDUM FOR HONORABLE A. A. BERLE: + 20

The attached is self-explanatory, except that I do not recall any commitment about lunch.

I do not see much sense in my sitting in on any powwow, but wish you would see him again.

You will remember he is heading, or is very active in this movement to arm the Jews in Jerusalem.

What shall I tell him when he calls?

M. H. McINTYRE  
Secretary to the President

Attachment: Let to MHM 8-8-42 from Alfred A. Strelsin,  
595 Madison Ave., N.Y.C., re the luncheon MHM agreed to  
arrange for Wednesday or Thursday with Berle to discuss  
the details of the Mission they discussed -- the Jewish  
Army; also attaches copy of sample of letter he is sending  
out to individuals urging them to support Jim Mead, partic-  
ularly stressing his interest in the Jewish Army movement.

MHM:B:J

76-c

4300-New York  
"71"

DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
ASSISTANT SECRETARY

August 11, 1942.

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. MARVIN H. McINTYRE

*Alfred* Strelsin does not strike me as heavy-weight. What he wants now (he says you agreed to it) is the designation of himself and some other people as a mission to persuade the British Government to do the right thing by a Jewish army.

This is enlarging things considerably. I should be inclined to give him a passport to go to London and lay the case before the British Government. I cannot see that the situation calls for anything more than that.

If he wants to put in for a passport, he is welcome to, but I doubt whether we could very well appoint him a "mission" in any official way.

*AA*  
A.A.B., Jr.

2317-15TH STREET, N. W.  
WASHINGTON, D. C.  
Telephone: ADams 0840



**COMMITTEE FOR A JEWISH ARMY  
OF STATELESS AND PALESTINIAN JEWS**

C O P Y

June 24th, 1942

The Right Honorable Winston Churchill  
White House  
Washington, D. C.

Sir:

The people of America, who are willingly sending their sons to fight on all fronts of the world, thousands and thousands of miles away, are naturally concerned about the full utilization of available manpower everywhere.

A group of outstanding Americans representing all walks of life, including the clergy, men of letters, educators, trade unionists, industrialists, Members of Congress, Members of the Senate and military experts have organized themselves into a Committee for an Army of Stateless and Palestinian Jews. For many, many months they have told the American public of the thousands of Jews in Palestine and in the Near East who have been clamoring for an opportunity to form themselves into a Jewish Army to fight and die, if necessary, in concert with all other people who are anxious to rid the world of the marauders of civilization.

This Committee with their now millions of followers take the privilege of addressing themselves to you at this critical period in the defence of the Middle East. We urge you to use your good offices for the creation of a Jewish Army of Stateless and Palestinian Jews to help defend the Suez Canal.

With intelligent recruiting between 80,000 and 100,000 men will answer the call within a very short period of time. These men need no transportation. They are there.



Page 2.

You, Sir, who are a stalwart banner-carrier for the freedoms of man and the moral rights of human beings can now give practical expression to your very laudable recent utterance, that this war is being fought for the freedoms of people and for the human decencies. In recognition thereof, we wish leave to propose the following:

1. That the Imperial War Council adopt the decision to form a Jewish Army to be placed under supreme Allied command.
2. That a command be set up without delay to recruit and train such a Jewish Army in which-ever of the Middle Eastern Countries they find most expedient from a military point of view: and that volunteers for this army be recruited from amongst the Jews of Palestine, Iraq, Syria, Egypt and Iran.
3. That steps be taken to enable the additional mobilization and training of stateless Jews and Jewish recruits from the non-combatant countries of the Western Hemisphere, who are willing to offer themselves to fight under the Jewish banner. Training quarters be set up for them, perhaps in Canada, to prepare them for service in any theater of war that the Allied command may designate.



Page 3.

These proposals have the wholehearted support of the people of America as evidenced by the limitless expressions received from them during the past several months.

We appeal to you as a Statesman of daring, boldness and imagination to take this matter into your capable hands and make an Army of modern Maccabees a reality.

Most respectfully,

COMMITTEE FOR A JEWISH ARMY

*Alfred Stelzin*  
Executive Chairman

P.S.

We attach copies of letter and memorandum on the above subject submitted to His Majesty's Ambassador at Washington on March 24th.

2317-15TH STREET, N. W.  
WASHINGTON, D. C.  
Telephone: ADams 0840



COMMITTEE FOR A JEWISH ARMY  
OF STATELESS AND PALESTINIAN JEWS

*Jib*

76-C

June 24th, 1942

The Honorable Franklin D. Roosevelt  
President of the United States  
White House  
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. President:

We are taking the liberty of submitting to you a copy of a proposal we have today communicated to the Honorable Winston Churchill.

Since this is, we believe, a matter of immediate importance to the cause of the United Nations, we respectfully hope you will give it your earnest consideration.

We pray you will use your great influence to obtain for the Jewish people, who were the first to feel the barbaric onslaught of Hitlerism, the privilege of fighting back as dignified human beings under their own banner.

With profound respect,

COMMITTEE FOR A JEWISH ARMY

*Alfred Steinhilber*  
Executive Chairman

C O P Y

March 24, 1942

The Rt. Hon. Viscount Halifax, K.G., P.C.  
British Ambassador to the United States  
British Embassy  
Washington, D. C.

Excellency:

It is on behalf of the Committee for a Jewish Army that we have the honor of addressing this communication to you together with the enclosed memorandum.

The Committee for a Jewish Army is a non-partisan and non-sectarian body formed for the sole purpose of bringing about the formation of a Jewish Army composed primarily of Palestinian and stateless Jews.

In our judgment, based on moral as well as military considerations, the formation of a Jewish Army is of utmost and immediate importance.

We, therefore, respectfully submit the following suggestions:

1. That the Imperial War Council adopt the decision to form a Jewish Army to be placed under the Supreme Allied Command.
2. That the Middle-Eastern High Command begin, without delay, to recruit and train such a Jewish Army in whichever of the Middle-Eastern countries they find most expedient from a military point of view.

Volunteers for this army will come from amongst the million Jews residing in the Middle East, particularly from Palestine. Conservative estimates show that between 80,000 and 100,000 men will answer the call.

3. That steps be taken enabling the mobilization and training for the Jewish Army of the large numbers of refugees and stateless Jews residing in Allied and neutral countries. They might then be sent to the Middle East or to any theater of war where, in the opinion of the Supreme Allied Command, they can be most effectively used.

In view of the imperative need for an all-out effort to save the Suez and the Middle East; in view of the imperative need to completely abandon the remainders of the policy of appeasement in the now vital Middle Eastern area and in view of the fact that the above proposal completely separates the Jewish Army plan from the Palestinian-Zionist-British relations, we feel there can no longer be any valid objections to the formation of this army.

Page 2 - Viscount Halifax

It is also our definite view that the technical obstacles cited by opponents of a Jewish Army can easily be overcome, since the Allied Governments would, to the best of our information, willingly cooperate in the solution of the problems that might come up in connection with the mobilization, equipment, training and transportation of such a Jewish Army.

Moral and military considerations should, it seems to us, outweigh any reasons that might be brought forward against this passionate desire on the part of a large section of the Jewish people to face and fight under their own insignia the common enemy of mankind.

This Committee is convinced that the great and noble British people whose courage and moral impregnability saved the World in the moment of its greatest peril, cannot fail to approve a plan which is of vital concern to the very principles for which we are fighting this war.

We respectfully request that you bring this communication to the immediate attention of His Majesty's Government, bearing in mind the extreme gravity of the situation in those very theatres of war where the Jewish Army would be of substantial and perhaps determining importance as a military as well as psychological factor in successful resistance to Axis aggression.

We have the honor to remain,

Respectfully yours,

Pierre van Paassen  
National Chairman

Alfred A. Strelsin  
Chairman, Executive Board

MEMORANDUM OF THE JEWISH ARMY

As President Roosevelt emphasized in his first major speech to the nation after Pearl Harbor, on December 9th, the war against the Axis has assumed a Universal character, and any event occurring anywhere on the globe affects the situation of the Allied Nations.

It was on the basis of this conception of the present world war that the non-sectarian and non-partisan Committee for a Jewish Army was organized. No other considerations were involved - neither questions of Zionist or (purely) Jewish affairs, nor problems connected with the Internal British-Zionist relationship. The Committee for a Jewish Army, whose members include influential representatives of every walk of American life, is concerned with the interests of the United Nations in their fight to win this war.

With this as its basic point of view, the Committee has put forth their demand that the Jews be given an opportunity to fight under their own banner against the enemies of democracy and civilization, just as such an opportunity has been granted to the Free Czechs, the Free Poles and the Free French. The primary reason for this demand is that the Jews, or at least a large number of them, eagerly desire such an opportunity.

To refuse this privilege to the people who were the first victims of Hitler's aggression is contradictory to the spirit and letter of the Atlantic Charter. To persist in this refusal sets up an obstacle to the moral victory of the United Nations over the forces of evil. For reasons of morale and honor, therefore, the Allies should welcome any group that demands the right to fight the common foe.

Military experts agree that a Jewish Army serving in the Near and Middle East would be of inestimable value to the United Nations from a strategic point of view. For Palestine is the gateway to the East and the key to the defense of the Suez Canal and of the Russian "back door" on the Persian Gulf. To endanger Palestine therefore means the imperiling of the British Mediterranean lifeline as well as the supply line to the Russian front.

A Jewish Army would help consolidate the Allied positions around the Suez Canal. Such a Jewish Army would, furthermore, obviate the necessity of diverting a numerically equivalent force from the Western hemisphere to the Near and Middle East. American military experts agree with the Committee for a Jewish Army in viewing Palestine as a vital element in the defense plans for this hemisphere.

The history of the British defeats in this war shows that they have been caused by lack of manpower in the British forces. Thus General Wavell's victories in Libya last year were quickly nullified because, as Prime Minister Churchill told the House of Commons on May 7, 1941, he had "only a single armored brigade and one infantry division" to throw into battle against the numerically vastly superior German and Italian forces. More recently the British suffered another defeat in Libya because they could not withstand the pressure of General Rommel's 90,000 soldiers.

Memorandum on a Jewish Army - 2

Singapore was lost because the numerically inadequate British Army there was no match for 100,000 Japanese.

A Jewish Army of 100,000 strong would enable the British to outnumber the Nazis and Fascists in Libya. Had such a Jewish Army been in existence, it would have been able to release the Anzac forces in the Middle East for the Battle of Singapore.

The first to join the Jewish Army will be the Jews of Palestine who will defend their homeland and their lives from attack by military aggression and by the powerful fifth-column elements among Palestinian Arabs inflamed by anti-British and anti-Jewish propaganda.

As soon as the war broke out the leaders of the Palestine Jewish Community called upon their people to register as volunteers for war service. Out of a Jewish population of 550,000, 136,000 men and women answered this call. Many of them are already trained in defense methods; a large proportion of them know the desert and how to fight in it. At a conservative estimate, at least 70,000 men of this group would be available for immediate service in the Jewish Army.

Other countries in the Near and Middle East also have considerable Jewish populations. Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey have many thousands of Jews who are eager to join forces with the democracies to help prevent the Axis from overrunning their countries. About 30,000 of these Jews may be expected to join a Jewish Army.

Another important group that would seize the opportunity to join a Jewish Army consists of the stateless and refugee Jews from Nazi-dominated Europe. Scattered throughout England, the British Dominions, the United States and the South American countries, these men are eager to battle for the cause of democracy. For many thousands of them a Jewish Army would mean an opportunity to fight against the forces that rendered them homeless.

Then there are the native South American Jewish communities, many of whose members would welcome a Jewish Army for service in which they could volunteer and thus contribute toward the defeat of Hitler.

As the Jewish Army proposal has already been discussed with representatives of the British Government on several occasions, it is not out of place to clarify some points on which opponents of the plan base their arguments.

The point, frequently cited, that not all Jews support the demand for a Jewish Army is utterly immaterial, just as it is immaterial whether or not the whole French people are backing General de Gaulle. The Jewish Army would be organized for those Jews who wish to serve in it and who are not eligible for service in the armed forces of the United Nations.

Another argument that has been brought forward against the Jewish Army plan is that there is no need for manpower and that the necessity has been completely outdated, as witness Prime Minister Churchill's speech before the House of Commons early in December, 1941, when he said: "The crisis of equipment is largely over, and an ever-broadening flow is now assured. The crisis of manpower and womanpower is at hand and will dominate the year 1942".

Memorandum on a Jewish Army - 3

But even if a shortage of material existed it could not serve as a decisive reason for not permitting the Jews to form their Army. For the prime requisite for an army is the manpower. Furthermore, it is not Britain but the United States which is the main arsenal providing equipment for the democratic forces. And There is no reason to suppose that the United States would refuse equipment to a Jewish Army mobilized to defend Suez - particularly since the Roosevelt Administration has granted Lend-Lease aid in the form of equipment to the Free Czechs and Free French.

The main reason for the British reluctance to approve the formation of a Jewish Army is admittedly the fear of resentment among the Arabs of the Near and Middle East. The answer to this objection can be formulated as follows:

Only the anti-British, pro-Nazi Arab elements are opposed to a Jewish Army. These elements do not wait for the organization of a Jewish Army in order to make trouble. The Nazi-inspired revolt in Iraq took place in 1941. Syria had to be conquered from the Vichy administration and native troops by hard fighting in 1941.

Egypt is still neutral in spite of the fact that the British and Allied armies have been shedding blood for over two years in the defense of that country, and the Kingdom of the Nile has as yet not deigned to join the Allies.

In fact, the only country where the Arabs did not come out in open opposition to the British was Palestine where the Jews are strong part of the population.

While there are many signs and demonstrations of pro-Axis sympathy on the part of the Arabs in countries under British rule or influence, no pro-Allied sympathy has been observed among the Arabs under Italian, French or Spanish rule. Hence the appeasing of Arab pro-Nazi leadership by refusing permission for the formation of a Jewish Army is a futile and meaningless gesture.