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**WAR CABINET.****RECRUITMENT OF JEWISH UNITS FOR GENERAL SERVICE IN  
THE BRITISH ARMY.***Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies.*

1. WE have seen the letter from Dr. Weizmann to the Prime Minister of the 10th September.

2. Dr. Weizmann's proposal that Jewish contingents should be raised, both in Palestine and in other countries, for service with the British Army was accepted in principle by the Cabinet last October. No announcement was to be made and no action taken until after the Presidential Election in the United States, when the measures to give effect to the scheme would have to be further considered.

3. The scheme was to be on the following lines:—

- (a) Authority should be given to recruit contingents amounting to a total of approximately 10,000 Jews for incorporation in the British Army, of which not more than 3,000 would be drawn from Palestine.
- (b) Each Jewish volunteer should have to satisfy the Recruiting Officer that he would be readmitted on demobilisation to the country from which he was recruited.
- (c) The Jewish contingents should be trained in the United Kingdom, officers being selected on Jewish nomination subject to the approval of the War Office.
- (d) The Jewish contingents should be liable for service in any theatre of war.
- (e) Equipment should be provided by His Majesty's Government as and when their resources allowed. Cost of equipment, maintenance and pay, and of the allowances of the contingents should be borne by His Majesty's Government.

4. At the end of the year when the details were being worked out, General Wavell, and also to a less degree the High Commissioner for Palestine, expressed grave apprehension that the carrying out of the scheme at that moment would have a very serious effect on the delicate situation in the Middle East. The Prime Minister accordingly directed that the project must be put off for six months, but might be reconsidered in four months, the sole reason given being lack of equipment.

5. Recently, after I had consulted the Secretaries of State for War and Foreign Affairs and the Minister of State at Cairo, the Prime Minister directed that the question should be left in cold storage for another three months.

6. Dr. Weizmann's letter to the Prime Minister follows on this decision. He had already told me he was grievously disappointed with it and would greatly have preferred a final decision one way or the other to the continued suspense. I feel much sympathy with this point of view.

7. The question is one which it is difficult to consider objectively. From a purely military point of view the Secretary of State for War opposes it. It is true that there is a shortage of man-power, but he is doubtful of the fighting

value of these 10,000 Jews. He fears that the effect upon the Arab world of an announcement that Jewish contingents were to be formed would be disastrous; and that it would result in alienating the sympathy of our best Arab friend, King Ibn Saud, and in the destruction of Arab confidence in Britain, which has been so carefully built up as a result of our operations in the Middle East during the past year. In that case we should have to face an internal security commitment in the Arab countries which would be a constant drag on the military forces needed for fighting Germany. The movement of these Jews would require shipping, which could only be provided at the expense of other more urgent needs. Equipment could only be found by reducing what is available for ourselves or for Allies of proved fighting capacity. Indeed, the equipment situation is now even more of a limitation than was the case when the proposal was, on that account, postponed six months ago. Although production has improved during these six months, we have not yet completed our own requirements, and we have now the additional burden of providing large quantities of equipment for the Russians and for the reconstituted Polish army in Russia. This provision is at the expense of our own urgent requirements, and we cannot afford to fritter away our resources on untried and untrained troops.

8. On the political side, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs would see no particular advantage to ourselves in the proposal. He does not, however, consider that it need be rejected on political grounds alone, more particularly if a public declaration can be made, in order to reassure Arab opinion, to the effect that it is the intention never to send the Jewish contingent to the Middle East. It may be that, if such a condition is made, Dr. Weizmann will prefer to drop the whole project, and it is in any event one which will be difficult to maintain once the principle is conceded. The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs is, however, assured that the employment of Jewish forces in Palestine would have serious repercussions in neighbouring Arab countries. Unless, therefore, it is clearly understood from the outset that the Jewish contingent will only be employed in other parts of the world, a decision in favour of the force must entail grave risks. The Minister of State is in general agreement with Mr. Eden's view.

9. My own view as to the immediate political objections corresponds closely with that of the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and the Minister of State. As, however, any political advantage in the proposal would accrue not to us but to the Jewish Agency, I recommend that the question be decided on military grounds. If the decision is favourable, it is for consideration whether it should be made conditional on the proviso that the Jewish units would not be sent to the Middle East.

10. If the decision is unfavourable, we shall certainly be asked why, with our admitted shortage of man-power, we have refused the offer of 10,000 able-bodied Jews. Such criticism will be difficult to meet, and I am inclined to suggest that, as an alternative to refusal, we might accept the offer, but only if war service of a different kind could be substituted. We might point out that the crying need of the moment is for technical personnel (doctors, engineers, &c.) and for more men to discharge various functions, not combatant in the narrower sense, but none the less essential to the successful prosecution of the war. I have in mind pioneer labour and garrison duty; possibly even such civil defence services as A.R.P. and so forth. It would be for the various departments to say in what capacity the men could be most usefully employed. It could be put to Dr. Weizmann that he will be rendering the best possible service to the cause if he lets us have his men on these conditions. I doubt very much whether he will agree, as he has set his heart on building up "a Jewish army" which the Zionists regard as the first prerequisite of a Jewish State.

An alternative suggestion for the use of Jewish man-power might, however, be better than a flat refusal. At least we should be better able to answer the kind of criticism indicated above.

M.

*Colonial Office, S.W. 1,  
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