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**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON**

**FACULTY OF LAW, ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**School of Humanities**

**Jews under Fire: the Jewish Community and Military Service in  
World War I Britain**

by

**Anne Patricia Lloyd, BA (Hons), MA**

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

July 2009

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ABSTRACT

FACULTY OF LAW, ARTS & SOCIAL SCIENCE

SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES

Doctor of Philosophy

**JEWS UNDER FIRE: THE JEWISH COMMUNITY  
AND MILITARY SERVICE IN WORLD WAR I BRITAIN**

**by Anne Patricia Lloyd**

Jewish and national histories have been interwoven in this study to probe the collision between perceptions of Jewish identity and the legacy of an imperial hierarchy of martial masculinity, conditioned by the pressures of war. It was to create significant dislocation, both in the traditional relationship between Jews and the State, and within the Jewish community.

The negative stereotype of the Jewish male, which emerged in *fin de siècle*, is examined from three inter-connected perspectives; Jewish responses to the evolution of a masculine cult in the prelude to 1914, the changing dynamics of Jewish interaction with State officialdom in the war years, and issues of integration and separation which contributed to the multi-faceted profile of the Jewish soldier.

The results of archival research suggest that vested interests concerning the question of Jewish military service created tensions between Government Departments and within the community, where patriotism clashed with nationalism, both concepts being anathema to a large number of immigrant Jews. The consequences divided Jews in Britain, challenging the authority of the Anglo-Jewish elite, and revealing to the State its misconception of a Jewish corporate entity. Despite the Jews' military record, and the incipient demise of 'imperial man', negative perceptions of the Jewish male were diminished but not eliminated.

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## DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I,.....

Declare that the thesis entitled

‘JEWS UNDER FIRE: THE JEWISH COMMUNITY AND MILITARY SERVICE IN WORLD WAR I BRITAIN’

and the work presented in the thesis are both my own, and have been generated by me as the result of my own original research. I confirm that:

- this work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
- where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
- where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
- where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
- I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
- where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
- none of this work has been published before submission.

Signed: .....

Date: .....

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## ABBREVIATIONS

### Archival Sources

|      |                                                                   |
|------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| AJA  | Anglo-Jewish Archives, Hartley Library, Southampton University    |
| AJEX | Association of Jewish Ex-Servicemen and Women's Museum,<br>London |
| BL   | British Library, London                                           |
| BLO  | Bodleian Library, Oxford                                          |
| CUL  | Cambridge University Library, Cambridge                           |
| CCA  | Cheltenham College Archives, Cheltenham                           |
| CCL  | Clifton College Library, Bristol                                  |
| CRO  | Cumbria Record Office, Carlisle                                   |
| HLRO | House of Lords Record Office, London                              |
| IJM  | Irish Jewish Museum, Dublin                                       |
| IWM  | Imperial War Museum, London                                       |
| LMA  | London Metropolitan Archives                                      |
| LRO  | Liverpool Record Office                                           |
| MCL  | Manchester Central Library                                        |
| MJM  | Manchester Jewish Museum                                          |
| MU   | Manchester University, John Rylands Special Collection            |
| MULH | Manchester University, Labour History Unit                        |
| NA   | National Archives, London                                         |
| NAI  | National Archives of Ireland, Dublin                              |
| RA   | Rothschild Archive, London                                        |
| RHL  | Rhodes House Library, Oxford                                      |

### Others

|           |                                                              |
|-----------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| CJRC      | Central Jewish Recruiting Committee                          |
| CODORSGIL | Committee of Delegates of Russian Socialist Groups in London |
| DMP       | Dublin Metropolitan Police                                   |
| DSO       | Distinguished Service Order                                  |
| EEF       | Egyptian Expeditionary Force                                 |
| ELO       | East London Observer                                         |
| FJPC      | Foreign Jews' Protection Committee                           |
| GHQ       | General Headquarters                                         |
| KOYLI     | King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry                          |
| HMG       | His Majesty's Government                                     |
| JC        | Jewish Chronicle                                             |
| JLB       | Jewish Lads' Brigade                                         |
| JNMA      | Jewish Naval and Military Association                        |
| JRC       | Jewish Recruiting Committee                                  |
| JW        | Jewish World                                                 |

|      |                                    |
|------|------------------------------------|
| JWSC | Jewish War Services Committee      |
| NCO  | Non-Commissioned Officer           |
| PRC  | Parliamentary Recruiting Committee |
| RACL | Russian Anti-Conscription League   |
| RAMC | Royal Army Medical Corps           |
| RF   | Royal Fusiliers                    |
| RIC  | Royal Irish Constabulary           |
| UJW  | Union of Jewish Women              |
| VC   | Victoria Cross                     |

## DEFINITIONS

|                     |                                                                                                                              |
|---------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Chevra</i>       | A small synagogue, often with a mutual aid function                                                                          |
| <i>Cheder</i>       | Traditional Jewish elementary school                                                                                         |
| <i>Goyim Naches</i> | The games played by Gentiles (often used as a pejorative)                                                                    |
| <i>Kashrut</i>      | Jewish dietary laws                                                                                                          |
| <i>Kosher</i>       | Food prepared according to <i>Kashrut</i>                                                                                    |
| <i>Kol Nidre</i>    | Service held before sunset on the eve of the Day of Atonement                                                                |
| <i>Matzos</i>       | Made of plain flour and water, and used as a substitute for bread during Passover                                            |
| <i>Seder</i>        | Ritual feast held at the beginning of Passover                                                                               |
| <i>Shabbos</i>      | Sabbath – Saturday                                                                                                           |
| <i>Shiva</i>        | period and practice of mourning for the dead                                                                                 |
| <i>Tallis</i>       | prayer shawl                                                                                                                 |
| <i>Tephillim</i>    | small leather box containing texts from the Pentateuch worn on head and left arm during morning prayer except on the Sabbath |

## INTRODUCTION

World War I forced Jews in Britain into a new and often uneasy relationship with the State. During the period of high immigration from Eastern Europe in the last three decades of the nineteenth century, the Government had relied on the Anglo-Jewish leadership's ability to guide and control the community in matters which affected the State. After 1914, negative as well as positive Jewish responses to the call to military service revealed the extent to which the community was a divided rather than homogeneous grouping, and exposed the fragility of the traditional precedents of communal leadership.

Britain was unique among the combatants in maintaining a purely voluntary army until early 1916. Judaism had been formally accepted in the British Army in the 1880s although military service, even of a temporary nature, had attracted opposition from Jewish religious leaders, such as the Reverend Green, who claimed that 'the spirit of military ambition was condemned by the creed of the Jew as well as alien to his character.'<sup>1</sup> Jews played little part in Army service until the end of the nineteenth century when a small but slowly burgeoning interest in enlistment began. Few sought a military career *per se*, but some were attracted to join units of the Yeomanry, Volunteers or Militia, which entailed a minimal commitment to military duties but carried an element of social *cachet*.<sup>2</sup> Despite the considerable Jewish military contribution to the British struggle in South Africa, their service had been denigrated by domestic Liberal opinion that the war had been fought largely for the benefit of Jewish financiers.<sup>3</sup> Two years after the end of the Boer War Jewish men in Britain were

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<sup>1</sup> Harold Pollins, '11<sup>th</sup> Tower Hamlets Volunteers: the first Jewish unit in the British Army', *Military Historical Society Bulletin*, 48 (1998), 130 – 135, p. 130.

<sup>2</sup> The auxiliary units were re-organised in 1908 into the Territorials as part of a far reaching reform of the Army infrastructure, Gordon Corrigan, *Blood, Mud and Poppycock* (London: Cassell, 2003), p. 41.

<sup>3</sup> Niall Ferguson, *Empire. How Britain made the Modern World* (London: Penguin Books, 2004), p. 282.

exhorted to embrace the nation's martial spirit, and in so doing, 'to raise their standards of manliness and manly duty'.<sup>4</sup> Perceptions of the Jews as unwilling and unsuitable soldiers had their foundations in *fin de siècle* and were to haunt their military service in World War I.

### The Anglo-Jewish historiography

After 1918, the problematic nature of Jewish military service remained concealed for nearly half a century. The historical record was both directed and confined by the desire of prominent Anglo-Jews to promote only a positive image of the community.<sup>5</sup> Intense wartime xenophobia, and a growing British fear of Bolshevism in which Jews in Russia were perceived to be implicated, had caused fears that their pre-war standing had substantially deteriorated. Contentious issues, such as immigrant unwillingness to volunteer and subsequent evasion of conscription, were excluded from the post-war historiography in an attempt to exhibit unity and stem the growth of anti-Semitism. The 1922 publication of *The British Jewry Book of Honour*, the official record of those who served and died in World War I and compiled at the behest of the Anglo-Jewish leadership, exemplified their concerns. It not only paid tribute to Jewish servicemen but served as a post-war justification of the minority's place within the nation.<sup>6</sup> Despite intense intra-communal acrimony over the recruitment of Russian Jews from 1916, the story of those who served with the Judaeans in Palestine was portrayed as at one with that of British Jewry in a unified testimony to Jewish patriotism.<sup>7</sup> With the subsequent advance of

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<sup>4</sup> 'Jews as soldiers', *The Spectator*, 3 January 1903, cited in David Englander, *A Documentary History of Jewish Immigrants in Britain, 1840 – 1920* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1994), p. 345.

<sup>5</sup> The Jewish Historical Society of England had been formed in 1893 and exercised considerable influence over Anglo-Jewry for several generations.

<sup>6</sup> Michael Adler, (ed.) *British Jewry Book of Honour* (London: Caxton Press, 1922).

<sup>7</sup> Vladimir Jabotinsky, the instigator of the Judaeans, contributed a chapter to the *British Jewry Book of Honour* entitled, 'Jewish units in the war', which included the military service of the Zion Mule Corps in 1915, and drew on the account of the Judaeans' colonel, John Patterson, which was published as *With the Judaeans in the Palestine Campaign* (London: Hutchinson, 1922). The Judaeans were originally gazetted in the Army List as the 38<sup>th</sup> battalion of the Royal Fusiliers, to

Zionism in Palestine over the next thirty years, the movement's supporters gradually metamorphosed the wartime history of the Judaeen soldier into that of 'the new Jewish warrior', worthy of a national homeland.<sup>8</sup>

The work of the eminent academic and historian, Cecil Roth, who dominated Anglo-Jewish historiography from the 1930s to 1960s, perpetuated the image of national integration and communal wellbeing. Issues of separatism and division, such as political radicalism among immigrants and their widespread evasion of army duty in WW1, were simply excluded from the record.<sup>9</sup> An ever-present state of anxiety over military service was apparent in Roth's third Presidential Address to the Jewish Historical Society of England, in Oxford in the early months of WW II, which concluded, 'we, of all people, do not shirk our duty wherever it may lead us'.<sup>10</sup>

From the 1970s the scope of general historical discourse broadened, following the educational and social changes of the previous decade. The expansion of the redbrick universities encouraged the employment of academic staff and the admission of students from more diverse social backgrounds. As a result, a new school of historians emerged, eager to explore areas previously silenced by tradition, such as imperial prejudice, feminism and, with a greater sensitivity to 'difference' in post-World War II Britain, the history of minorities. Jewish scholarship reflected this shift in focus, and exhibited a new confidence in wishing to accurately record the community's heritage, possibly empowered by the creation of the Israeli state and its burgeoning power in the Middle East.<sup>11</sup>

Gartner's study of the immigrant *milieu* in England from 1870 to 1914 was in the vanguard of this new direction and was a 'grassroots' examination of

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which three further battalions were added by September, 1918. The battalions are frequently referred to in the literature as the Jewish Regiment or the Jewish Legion but this thesis uses their official Army title bestowed in 1918, together with the regimental emblem of the Menorah.

<sup>8</sup> Vladimir Jabotinsky, *The Story of the Jewish Legion* (New York: Bernard Ackerman, 1945).

<sup>9</sup> David Cesarani, 'Dual Heritage or Duel of Heritages? Englishness and Jewishness in the Heritage Industry', *Immigrants and Minorities*, (1990/91), 29 – 41, p. 36.

<sup>10</sup> Cecil Roth, 'The Jews in defence of Britain, 13<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century', *The Jewish Historical Society of England Transactions, 1939 – 1945*, XV, (London: Edward Goldston, 1946), p. 26.

<sup>11</sup> Isaiah Friedman, *The Question of Palestine* (London: Routledge, 1973).

their social and cultural conditions following the rapid influx from Eastern Europe.<sup>12</sup> This was followed by Endelman's exposé of Jewish life in pre-emancipation eighteenth century England and the participation of the Jewish underclass in the nefarious activities of pickpocketing, pimping and prostitution. He suggested that while this reflected life in the equivalent stratum of non-Jewish society it caused considerable embarrassment and discomfort to wealthier, and increasingly acculturated, Jews.<sup>13</sup> From Endelman's study it is apparent that the socio-economic divide within the community preceded the wave of immigrants who arrived a century later.

This new direction in the literature, characterised by interest in scrutinising the immigrant sector of the community, led inevitably to an examination of its responses to military service in World War I. Julia Bush's work on Jewish anti-militarism stressed East End interaction with socialist labour organisations and positioned the Russian Jew as an activist element in left-wing class consciousness rather than a military shirker, the image which had dominated contemporary national and Anglo-Jewish opinion.<sup>14</sup> The foundations of Jewish socialism in London had been discussed by Bill Fishman in his study of East End Jewish radicals in the four decades leading up to 1914. He suggested that the spread of socialism, led by a Russian intelligentsia, together with the genesis of a Jewish labour movement by the turn of the century, had already resulted in a diminution of Anglo-Jewish influence over the immigrant sector.<sup>15</sup> Sharman Kadish expanded on the damage that immigrant resistance to military service had inflicted on Anglo-Jewry's position in Britain at war. *Bolsheviks and British Jews* suggested that Government reaction to the Bolshevik regime following the October Revolution transformed the status of the Russian

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<sup>12</sup> Lloyd Gartner, *The Jewish Immigrant in England, 1870 – 1914* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1960).

<sup>13</sup> Todd Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England, 1714 – 1830: Tradition and Challenge in Georgian Society* (Philadelphia: the Jewish Publication Society of America, 1979).

<sup>14</sup> Julia Bush, *Behind the Lines: East London Labour, 1914 – 19* (London: Merlin Press, 1984). Julia Bush, 'The Ghetto and the Great War', *Jewish Socialist*, 4, (1985/6).

<sup>15</sup> William Fishman, *East End Radicals, 1875 – 1914* (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd., 1975).

Jew in Britain from the category of 'friendly alien' to that of 'suspect' if not national 'enemy', with damaging implications for the whole Jewish community.<sup>16</sup>

The Jewish pacifist and conscientious objector in World War I Britain, the butt of contemporary Anglo-Jewish 'scorn, derision and contempt' and hence a *lacuna* in the early literature, was brought into the historical record by Evelyn Wilcock.<sup>17</sup> Her article in the *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England* focused on the stand taken by the Reverend John Harris, minister at the Princes Road synagogue in Leeds, in upholding the equal right of Jews as well as Christians to object to military service, a move which had sparked fierce debate in the community.

Newly uncovered sources have enabled discrete studies on specific aspects of immigrant responses to military service to emerge. Martin Watts' military, political and social history of the Judaeans was the first to draw extensively on archival material in contrast with previous largely autobiographical accounts. It positioned the battalions not only as the symbolic forerunner of the modern Israeli army but also as fundamental to the British Government's evolving propaganda campaign in the Middle East.<sup>18</sup> The Judaeans' role in Palestine formed part of James Renton's re-appraisal of British policy towards the Zionists in the war. He concurred with Watts and also with Vladimir Jabotinsky's opinion in 1918 that the Government's primary motive in creating the battalions was for them to serve as a 'political performing company'.<sup>19</sup> Recently opened Russian archives informed Harold Shukman's work on the fate of the 3,000 Russian residents in Britain, including many Jews, who returned there in 1917,

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<sup>16</sup> Sharman Kadish, *Bolsheviks and British Jews: The Anglo Jewish Community, Britain and the Russian Revolution* (London: Frank Cass, 1992), p. 220.

<sup>17</sup> Evelyn Wilcock, 'The Reverend John Harris: issues in Anglo Jewish Pacifism, 1914 – 1918', *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England*, (1987/8), 163-177, p. 164. Evelyn Wilcock, *Pacifism and the Jew* (Stroud: Hawthorn Press, 1994).

<sup>18</sup> Martin Watts, *The Jewish Legion and the First World War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

<sup>19</sup> James Renton, *The Zionist Masquerade. The Birth of the Anglo-Zionist Alliance, 1914 – 1918* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 128. Jabotinsky's opinion is cited in Horace Samuel, *Unholy Memories of the Holy Land* (London: Hogarth Press, 1930), p. 13.



ostensibly in protest against the Anglo–Russian Military Convention.<sup>20</sup> Thus the new school of Jewish historians has revealed omissions and clarified some of the prevarications which had characterised the earlier historiography. In so doing, a different narrative of Jewish service has emerged, substantially revising Anglo–Jewry’s earlier portrayal of patriotic communal harmony through military contribution.

Correction of previous historical distortions led scholars to challenge, in varying degrees, the traditionally held Anglo–Jewish tenet of Britain as a tolerant society. Colin Holmes was among the first to suggest that a persistent climate of anti–Semitism had existed in Britain since the 1870s.<sup>21</sup> A decade later, Tony Kushner called attention to the school of thought prevalent between the Edwardian era and the 1930s that all Jewry, whether rich or poor, immigrant or assimilated, represented an alien presence in British society, a perception considerably sharpened by the climate of ultra–nationalism in World War I.<sup>22</sup>

The latest trend in Anglo–Jewish scholarship has moved away from a focus on Jews *qua* Jews towards the interaction of British and Jewish histories.<sup>23</sup> David Feldman’s work on the changing dynamics within the community between 1840 and the start of World War I was one of the first to take this approach.<sup>24</sup> Following this direction, Alyson Pendlebury’s recent publication on images of ‘the Jew’ in wartime Britain portrayed the war as the nation’s Holy Christian Crusade, from which Jews were automatically excluded. As the war progressed, she suggested, they were increasingly regarded as unassimilable by many Britons

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<sup>20</sup> Harold Shukman, *War or Revolution. Russian Jews and Conscription in Britain, 1917* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2006).

<sup>21</sup> Colin Holmes, *Anti-Semitism in British Society, 1876 – 1939* (London: Edward Arnold, c. 1979), and *A Tolerant Country? Immigrants, Refugees and Minorities in Britain* (London: Faber & Faber, 1991).

<sup>22</sup> Tony Kushner, *The Persistence of Prejudice: Anti-Semitism in British Society in the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989).

<sup>23</sup> Peter Stansky, ‘Anglo-Jew or English/British? Some dilemmas of Anglo-Jewish History’, *Jewish Social Studies*, 2 (1995), 159–179, p. 172.

<sup>24</sup> David Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews: Social Relations and Political Culture, 1840 – 1914* (London: Yale University Press, 1994).

and, for anti-Semitic motives, the Zionists' desire for a national homeland offered Britain an attractive alternative for her Jewish minority.<sup>25</sup>

The probing of individual experiences has offered nuanced insights into the complexity of Jewish national and personal identity when confronted by war and modernity. Mark Levene's comparative study of an assimilated Jew who participated in the nation's military effort as an army officer, and an immigrant from an enthusiastically Zionist family who resisted it, indicated the pressures that war placed on the individual.<sup>26</sup> By 1918, the anglicised Jew voiced some discomfort with his 'British' *id*, combined with an empathy with Zionism; by contrast, the Zionist had chosen the path of military evasion rather than service with the Judaeans in Palestine. These two narratives of war exposed the multi-layered nature of identities in times of crisis, and Levene has suggested that the compartmentalising of Jewish ideology along pre-determined lines of assimilability or Zionism is in itself problematical.

Susan England combined biographical and historical approaches in her doctoral work on the lives of three members of the 'The Cousinhood', the wealthy and highly assimilated Jewish elite, who served as officers in World War I. By exploring issues of identity and masculinity intrinsic in each man, her study showed all were affected by the spotlight cast by the nation state at war on the Jew as 'the outsider', a factor which impacted on even the most sophisticated and assimilated of young Jewish men.<sup>27</sup>

In summary, the Anglo-Jewish historiography has undergone immense changes over time in impetus, scope and interpretation. The most recent studies have deployed the interaction of Jewish and British histories, which has created new, more nuanced perspectives.

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<sup>25</sup> Alyson Pendlebury, *Portraying the Jew in First World War Britain* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2006), pp. 130, 134, 219.

<sup>26</sup> Mark Levene, 'Going against the Grain: Two Jewish Memoirs of War and Anti-War, 1914 – 1918', *Jewish Culture and History*, 2 (1999), 66 – 95.

<sup>27</sup> Susan England, 'Three English Jews. Identity, Modernity and the Experience of War, 1890 – 1950', (doctoral thesis, University of Southampton, 2002, currently in the process of publication).

## Approaches and Aims

The latest *modus operandi* of historians offers a more holistic approach to any new study on military service and the Jewish community in World War I Britain that seeks to add greater definition to the correlation between the State, British Jews, foreign Zionists and immigrant Jews. Interconnected histories also allow further aspects of militarization to emerge, such as the work of the Anglo-Jewish wartime organisations in co-operation with the military infrastructure, Home Office measures against Jewish military evaders in Ireland, and the tensions between 'difference' and integration in Army life for the Jewish soldier.

The legacy of Empire played an important role in Britain's military policies, and from the early months of the war many thousands of coloured colonial soldiers were deployed on the Western Front, and later in Mesopotamia and Palestine. This appears as something of a dichotomy as the coloured soldier was widely regarded by the nation's military elite as inferior *vis-à-vis* his manliness and fighting spirit, a charge which resonated with *fin de siècle* perceptions of the Jewish male.

Recent additions to the national literature of World War I have explored social conditions for coloured troops on and off the battlefields, and examined their reactions to Government opinion on discrete 'native' regiments. Richard Smith's work on Jamaican volunteers in the Imperial Forces has suggested that they regarded military service as the opportunity for coloured men to contest accusations of racial inferiority and he favourably compared their physical strength with the weakness of many white soldiers from Britain's working class.<sup>28</sup> A study of the British West Indian Regiment by Glenford Howe portrayed men trained as soldiers but excluded from combat service in France and largely confined to manual labour in Egypt and Palestine, such as carrying ammunition

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<sup>28</sup> Richard Smith, *Jamaican volunteers in the First World War. Race, Masculinity and the Development of National Consciousness* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), p. 104.

and water.<sup>29</sup> India sent the largest number of soldiers to fight for Britain in separate battalions in World War I, and Rozina Visram's history of Asians in Britain has offered insights into some of the inequalities and disparities they experienced.<sup>30</sup> Military discrimination was overtly apparent in coloured regiments, not only in deployment strategy and in the insistence on a 'white only' officer *corps* but in social segregation from white troops and inequalities in pay and conditions of service. Government expediency in terms of its need for military manpower appears to have conflicted with inherent elite perceptions of ethnic inferiority. This stemmed, in part, from the Victorian Army's 'martial race theory' in India, which tribally benchmarked her peoples according to their martial aptitude and loyalty to the Crown.<sup>31</sup> The tension between military imperatives and entrenched attitudes in the elite *mentalité* appears to have been reflected in the Government's recruitment policy in Britain, particularly regarding the most recent Jewish immigrants from Russia.

'Jews under fire' is not a military history. The community was suspected of divided loyalties at the outbreak of war, and the Jewish male of military age became subjected to accusations of shirking and job stealing. But this thesis contends that a constant, if subliminal, current in the stream of interaction between Jews and the State over wartime army service centred on perceptions of Jewish masculinity and martial worth, not only by non-Jews but within the community itself. Widely varying political, social and cultural opinions held by Jews in Britain collided over military service for the 41,500 men who participated in it as well as for the 20,000 who did not. To affirm patriotism and counter charges of unmanliness the Anglo-Jew felt obliged to override his historical antipathy towards warfare and soldiering by recalling the Jews' Biblical heritage

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<sup>29</sup> Glenford Howe, *Race, War and Nationalism: a social history of West Indians in the First World War* (Oxford: Ian Randle/James Curry, 2002).

<sup>30</sup> Rozina Visram, *Asians in Britain. 400 years of History* (London: Pluto Press, 2002).

<sup>31</sup> David Killingray, 'All the King's Men'. Blacks in the British Army in the First World War', in Rainer Lotz and Ian Pegg, *Under the Imperial Carpet. Essays in Black History, 1780 – 1950* (Crawley: Rabbit Press, 1986), p. 166.

of battles and warriors, and invoking a *renaissance* of the Maccabean spirit.<sup>32</sup> Conversely, the immigrant sought to shelter under the stereotype of 'the sickly Jew', neither fit for nor interested in military duty. These contrasting perceptions underpinned Jewish interaction with the British Government, and played an important part in shaping the wartime experience of the individual Jewish male as a serviceman or a military dissenter.

Michael Berkowitz has suggested that war raised the expectation that military heroism was translatable into acceptance and rewards.<sup>33</sup> Like other coloured troops from the Empire fighting for Britain, Indian soldiers began to think of their military service as a first step towards national independence.<sup>34</sup> British Jews also saw their own military contribution as a form of *quid pro quo* as well as a defining opportunity to rehabilitate the negative image of the Jewish male. The majority viewed it as the ultimate fulfilment of their obligation to the compact of emancipation, and an endorsement of their commitment to Britishness. Pro-Zionists identified with Zionist Max Nordau's image of the 'tough new Jew', which connected with their political ambitions for a national homeland.<sup>35</sup> The majority of immigrant families continued to regard army duty as a symbol of political oppression from which they had only recently escaped. Russian Jews, when confronted with conscription, questioned Britain's self-perception and reputation as a liberal nation, which had historically offered sanctuary to political and non-political refugees.

The Anglo-Jewish literature has tended to polarise the responses of British and non-British Jews to military service, but such division begs the further question of who was a British Jew? Nationality through birth or naturalization is somewhat one-dimensional in its taxonomy. It gives little indication of the

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<sup>32</sup> A reflection on the battle won by Judas Maccabeus and his followers against the Syrian army in Palestine in 164 BC, which resulted in a century of Jewish independence. The victory is celebrated each year as part of the Festival of Hannukah.

<sup>33</sup> Michael Berkowitz, *Western Jewry and the Zionist Project, 1914 – 1933* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 11.

<sup>34</sup> John Morrow, Jr., *The Great War. An Imperial History* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 133.

<sup>35</sup> Daniel Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct. The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man* (London: University of California Press, 1997).

chasm in beliefs between the assimilated British Jew, whose heritage stretched back to the seventeenth century, and the first generation British-born son of immigrant parents, or the 'new' citizen by dint of naturalization. 'New' British Jews tended to continue to work and live in London's East End or the immigrant areas of large cities. Shared history and tradition play an important part in self-perceptions of identity, and the transition period from ethnicity to national 'belonging' remains highly controversial in terms of time. Deborah Cohen has suggested that at the turn of the century many Jews in Britain led a 'double life' in their perceptions of identity. In her opinion, even second generation immigrants might have appeared assimilated, but 'it is everywhere a question how far they can be said to really assume the nationality of their adopted country'.<sup>36</sup> This factor becomes relevant in the reticence of some British Jews in the East End to enlist as volunteers in World War I.

Panikos Panayi has suggested that war invariably exacerbates existing majority/minority tensions, and that hostility by a majority grouping to a perceived inner threat has its origins in the course of preceding years if not centuries.<sup>37</sup> Although Jews in Britain had not been widely attracted to voluntary army service before 1914, the ensuing war was not a *tabula rasa* on which to scratch the first image of the Jewish soldier. A re-definition of British identity in the final decades of Victoria's reign emanated from a heightened imperial consciousness with its attendant responsibilities. This re-orientation had led to an idealisation of masculinity and warfare which had a deleterious impact on the nation's Jewish population.

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<sup>36</sup> Deborah Cohen, 'Who was Who? Race and Jews in Turn of the Century Britain', *Journal of British Studies*, 41 (4), 460–483, p. 479.

<sup>37</sup> Panikos Panayi, *Minorities in Wartime. National and Racial Groupings in Europe, North America and Australia during the two World Wars* (Oxford: Berg Publications Ltd., 1993), p. 19.

## Organisation and Evidence

The thesis is organised into three parts. The first examines the evolution of the cult of masculinity and its implications for Jews in Britain in the prelude to the war. Jewry's multi-faceted interface with State officialdom during the war, which challenged the traditional Anglo-Jewish leadership and the balance of communal relations, forms the focus of the second part. The final part probes the nature of the Jewish soldier's social and cultural encounter with modernity in the Gentile military environment.

Part I comprises two chapters, the first of which explores the growing veneration of war and warriors in *fin de siècle* Britain which, after the near military *debâcle* of the Boer War, appeared to be threatened by the degenerate domestic underclass in general, and its immigrant component in particular. Jewry's scientific responses to prejudice are then examined in conjunction with the consequences of the Anglo-Jewish elite's immersion in the customs and *mores* of the British upper classes, which led the nation in cultivating the ideal of manly men.

Chapters 3 to 5 of Part II focus on division within the community as a result of the Government's shifting policies towards the militarization of Jews. The changing dynamics of Jewry's interactions with departments of State are contrasted with the adamant refusal of many Anglo-Jews and the Home Office to heed the opposition of Russian Jews to British Army service. The long-standing monopoly of the Anglo-Jewish leadership in communal relations with the State was further challenged by a new and rapidly formed Government *liaison* with a small *coterie* of foreign Zionists, whose ambitions in Palestine briefly coincided with those of the War Cabinet. In parallel with this unsettling of official majority/minority relationships, Anglo-Jewry's dominance of Jewish wartime organisations, which addressed recruitment, together with religious observance and welfare during military service, came under fire from Jewish soldiers and sections of the civilian community.

Russian Jews reacted to their enforced incorporation into the British army at the end of 1916 in diametrically opposed ways, both of which rejected Anglo-Jewish tutelage. The majority took the route of passive resistance through evasion, which reflected their cultural roots in Russia. Others exhibited a nascent political confidence in their Jewish identity while accepting the support of non-Jewish politicians and sections of the national labour movement involved in the campaign against militarism and conscription.

The final part of the thesis addresses the military service of the Jew at the 'grassroots' level, an area which has received limited attention in the historiography. Three case studies are included in this section to give greater definition to differing perceptions of masculinity *vis-à-vis* the Jewish soldier. Chapter 6 explores how far religious and cultural differences and 'imagined' images of the Jew resulted in their marginalisation, and the extent to which army life altered the pre-war relationship of Jews and non-Jews. The last chapter contrasts the military experience of British Jews integrated into army regiments with that of Russian Jews, the majority of whom were segregated from combat service as a result of Government policy. Archival evidence is sparse about the 4,900 men who were posted to specially created battalions of the Labour Corps, a Government strategy regarded as derogatory by Anglo-Jewry. The Labour Corps remains an area of military service which has barely been addressed in the national and Anglo-Jewish literature of World War I. The final section of this chapter reveals the divisive nature of Jewish assumptions of masculinity and associated moral character. This becomes evident in the negative reactions of an Anglo-Jewish Medical Officer in the Judeans to the calibre of troops in his own battalion, sentiments echoed within the Zionist component of its officer *corps*.

Researches for this socio-political narrative history drew on a broad range of official papers and unofficial letters in Jewish and non-Jewish archives. These were occasionally ambiguous, sometimes partisan and often fragmentary, and the problems implicit in attempting to achieve comprehensiveness, coherence, and accuracy are readily acknowledged. File Minutes in State papers



occasionally offered more nuanced insights into departmental opinion than the documents themselves. But the lack of completeness in Government records was sometimes problematical, with Home Office files noting a considerable number of documents as 'destroyed as unimportant'. In the case of Tribunal hearings for exemptions from military service, almost all records, Minute Books and applications, were destroyed in 1921 by the Ministry of Health.<sup>38</sup> Some War Office records have also been destroyed, an action described by one researcher into the role of World War I Army chaplains as not just bureaucratic indifference to the accurate historical record but possibly also one of determination to suppress facts and effect a military 'whitewashing'.<sup>39</sup> A number of documents in the National Archives of Ireland relating to the Office of the Chief Secretary for Ireland in 1917/18 and the evasion of Russian Jews are also 'missing' although they have not been subsequently annotated as such in the catalogues compiled at the time. This may well be a consequence of the re-organisation of records after the introduction of Home Rule in 1922, and there remains the possibility that they may still exist elsewhere.<sup>40</sup>

Considerable use has been made of personal letters and diaries to illustrate the differing, and sometimes shifting, implications of identity for established and immigrant Jews in the British Army. The use of micro-histories has become a prevalent and accepted methodology in the recent national literature of World War I. Lyn Macdonald pioneered this approach using soldiers' personal experiences to illuminate the realities of army life on and off the battlefields of Flanders.<sup>41</sup> Recent interest in the experiences of coloured soldiers

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<sup>38</sup> Only the Middlesex Appeals Tribunal and Lothian and Peebles Tribunal were retained, although the National Archives acknowledge that others may have survived in local record offices, Military Records Information 16, NA.

<sup>39</sup> C. Kerr, 'A Consideration of the Service of British Army Chaplains in WWI, 1914 – 1918, with reference to War Expectations and Critical Elements in the Literature of Disenchantment', (unpublished Master's thesis, University of Birmingham, 1982).

<sup>40</sup> Opinion of Gregory O'Connor, Archivist of CSORP papers, NAI.

<sup>41</sup> Lyn MacDonald, *They called it Passchendaele: the story of the third battle of Ypres and the men who fought in it* (London: Joseph, 1978) and *Somme* (London: Penguin, 1993). Richard Holmes, *Tommy. The British Soldier on the Western Front, 1914 – 1918* (London: Harper Perennial, 2004). Max Arthur utilised sound recordings in the Imperial War Museum to compile a memoir of the

in the Imperial Armies has also followed this method. David Omissi's *Indian Voices of the Great War* gave detailed insights into conditions for troops serving in the Indian Army regiments in Europe and the Middle East, and drew extensively on soldiers' letters, often written for them by scribes.<sup>42</sup> While this method cannot claim to produce typicality, it reveals the diversity and complexity of the military experience. The *Jewish Chronicle* has been a major source of information into both the political issues of militarization and soldiers' perspectives, although the scope of its contribution has to be balanced against its inherent antipathy towards divisive issues.

Tony Kushner has suggested that through the study of its responses to minorities, the identity and nature of the majority society comes into focus.<sup>43</sup> The military service of Jews in World War I provides a complex arena for any discourse on Jewish/non-Jewish relations. On the eve of war there were 400 Jews serving voluntarily in the Regular Army and by the Armistice their contribution of 41,000 men accounted for less than 1% of the nation's military manpower. Government authority was far from monolithic, with divergences and tensions between Departments apparent in the State's often haphazard, sometimes opportunistic, and frequently insensitive approaches to its Jewish minority in wartime. At the official level, the Army's accommodation of diversity within its ranks appears nugatory. This stance was not always reflected in the experiences of the Jewish soldier where the empathy and practical help of his Gentile comrades towards the problems of 'difference' in Army service often co-existed with either total ignorance or misconceptions about Jews and Judaism.

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social and environmental conditions of army life, *Forgotten Voices of the Great War* (London: Ebury Press, 2002).

<sup>42</sup> David Omissi, *Indian Voices of the Great War* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1999).

<sup>43</sup> Tony Kushner, (ed.), *The Jewish Heritage in British Society: Englishness and Jewishness* (London: Frank Cass, 1992), p. 10.

## PART ONE

### IMPERIAL AND JEWISH PERCEPTIONS OF WAR, WARRIORS AND MANLY MEN AT *FIN DE SIÈCLE*

#### INTRODUCTION

David Feldman has intimated that the way in which Britain defined her national identity was crucial to Jews and non-Jews.<sup>44</sup> This was particularly so at *fin de siècle* as the long nineteenth century transmuted the nation from one focused on free trade to one of elite forms of imperial mission, which demanded a re-construction of Britishness.

After a somewhat piecemeal process of emancipation which began in 1858, British Jews had quickly advanced economically, politically and socially, becoming more confident of their place in the nation. But implicit in the civil freedoms and rights that had enabled their progress was the need to project an image of good citizenship. Until the 1870s there had been little interest in Jewish affairs on the part of the British Government. But disquiet had arisen among non-Jews and Anglo-Jews alike in the wake of the rapid influx of Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe, whose numbers multiplied tenfold over the following three decades.<sup>45</sup> The biggest surge came from Russia between 1891 and 1901, while the number of Russian Poles in Britain doubled in the previous decade.<sup>46</sup> The new arrivals were increasingly identified by non-Jews as part of the degenerate 'underclass', and regarded as a major social and economic scourge of the indigenous population:

As they came, so they remain – aliens, children of another race, amongst us, yet not of us. And the East End produces no type of man or woman so unfit, so un-English and morally and personally so alien, as the pauper immigrant when he

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<sup>44</sup> Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*, p.269.

<sup>45</sup> Gartner, *The Jewish Immigrant*, Appendix. Immigrant numbers from Russia, Russian Poland and Rumania rose from 9,574 to 99,263 between 1871 and 1911, of whom the vast majority were Jewish.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.* The census return for England and Wales recorded a leap from 23,626 to 61,789 in Russians, 1891-1901, and from 10,679 to 21,448 in Russian Poles, 1881-1891.

becomes a settler in the [...] East End.<sup>47</sup>

Such rapid and large scale immigration threatened to unsettle the ascendant but still precarious status of Anglo-Jewry in Britain. They feared the impact on the host community of the new arrivals' need for housing and their readiness to work in appalling conditions for low wages. Apart from poverty, the immigrants' cultural and political differences, particularly their growing engagement with socialism, led to them being equally regarded as aliens by established Jews in Britain.<sup>48</sup>

In the effort to assume responsibility for this troubling new sector of the community in the eyes of the British Government, assimilated Jews took active steps to alleviate the growth of national antagonism. The Board of Guardians, the dominant Anglo-Jewish philanthropic body, attempted to stem the tide of immigration by refusing welfare relief to new arrivals for the first six months of their stay, apart from a short period of grace in the Jews' Temporary Shelter. This strategy acted as an instrument for securing voluntary repatriation and resulted in the return of over 30,000 new arrivals from Russia and Poland between 1882 and 1906, although the Board maintained that families were not sent back against their will.<sup>49</sup> The majority of Eastern European Jews contemplated emigration to Britain and the United States in the hope of improving their standard of living, and publicity was arranged by Anglo-Jewry in the Russian Pale in an effort to deter migration in the light of Britain's declining economy. In a further attempt to reduce immigrant numbers, the Board's Emigration Committee, established in 1879, actively encouraged the transmigration of 25,000 new arrivals in Britain, mainly to the United States.<sup>50</sup>

In his review of the work of the Jewish Board of Guardians, Lipman portrayed community relations during this period as relatively free from conflict,

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<sup>47</sup> Extract from Arnold White's 'The Destitute Alien in Great Britain', 1892, cited in Stansky, 'Anglo-Jew or English/British?', p.165.

<sup>48</sup> Geoffrey Alderman, *Modern British Jewry* (London: Clarendon Press, 1998), pp. 151-2.

<sup>49</sup> Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*, p. 303. Repatriated families were principally those who had lived in Britain for less than seven years, Vivian Lipman, *A Century of Social Service, 1859 – 1959. The Jewish Board of Guardians* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1959), p. 95.

<sup>50</sup> Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*, p.303.

but more recent opinion has contended that the decades before WW1 witnessed the polarization of the so-called 'West End' and 'East End' Jews and of increasingly bitter division.<sup>51</sup> In the heyday of the British Empire, it has been suggested that many assimilated Anglo-Jews considered that they shared the white man's burden, although their own 'natives' were their co-religionists from Eastern Europe.<sup>52</sup> Conversely, immigrants resented the dominance and controlling policies of established Jewry over their lives.

This dissonance within the community was augmented by a developing British antagonism towards the immigrant as 'the other'. The expansion of the Empire generated a greater interest in qualifying in racial terms Britain's superior and the inferior colonial peoples. The basis for this classification became of increasing domestic importance at *fin de siècle*. The perception grew that the colonies deprived the nation of large numbers of its finest young men, replacing them with an expanding urban underclass rapidly augmented by large numbers of physically weak and impoverished immigrants from Eastern Europe.

The following two chapters examine the evolution of British attitudes towards the Jew in the context of the new quest for masculinity and the need for 'manly men' fit for war and Empire, and Jewish responses to these *goyim naches*, the games played by Gentiles.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Cited in Mordechai Rozin, *The Rich and the Poor. Jewish Philanthropy and Social Control in nineteenth century London* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 1999), pp. 2-4.

<sup>52</sup> Chaim Bermant, *Troubled Eden. An Anatomy of British Jewry* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1969), p.108.

<sup>53</sup> Daniel Boyarin, 'Goyim Naches or Modernity and the Manliness of the *Mentsch*' in Brian Cheyette and Linda Marcus, (eds.), *Modernity, Culture and 'the Jew'* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), pp. 67 – 68.

## CHAPTER 1    THE RE-DEFINITION OF BRITISHNESS

The want of physique was [...] not only serious from its military aspect [...] if these men are unfit for military service, what are they good for?<sup>54</sup>

Although the Empire attained the zenith of its territorial acquisition shortly after the First World War, imperial consciousness had reached its peak by the end of the 1880s.<sup>55</sup> But this period coincided with a sense of economic unease which was connected with a growing awareness of imperial vulnerability. By *fin de siècle*, Britain's industrial success of the early 1800s had come under threat from rising factory production and commercial enterprise in Germany and the United States.<sup>56</sup> The economic success of Britain's rivals threatened the wellbeing of her own middle and upper classes, and coincided with fears of growing European interests in colonization, particularly in Africa, a continent previously considered of little value to Britain. By the 1870s Africa had become a new and vital concern, not for reasons of further colonial expansion but rather to protect the sea routes to India and the East. India remained of primary importance to the British economy, representing 20% of total national investment, as well as acting as the power base for trade with Asia.<sup>57</sup>

The challenge to the East India Company's Bengal Army in the mutinies of 1857 – 8, which began in Meerut and spread to Delhi, Agra, Cawnpore and Lucknow, had resulted in a watershed in British rule in India. The Company was dissolved and the army, financial system and administration re-organised under a new British *Raj*. The redefined concept of Empire demanded qualities of

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<sup>54</sup> Memorandum of the Director-General, Army Medical Service, on the Physical Unfitness of Men offering themselves for Enlistment in the Army, 1903, cited in Oram, *Worthless Men: Race, Eugenics and the Death Penalty in the British Army during the First World War* (London: Francis Bootle, 1998), p. 75.

<sup>55</sup> David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism. How the British saw their Empire* (London: Penguin, 2002), pp. 3, 5.

<sup>56</sup> Jonathan Rutherford, *Forever England. Reflections on Masculinity and Empire* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1997), p.17.

<sup>57</sup> Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher, *Africa and the Victorians. The official mind of Imperialism* (London: Macmillan, 1963), pp. 11, 16, 464, 499.

manliness, steadfastness and courage in order to create an elite of soldiers and civil servants capable of administering Britain's new responsibilities in her expanding territories. The essence of the new imperialism became a central element in re-defining contemporary identity. While there was little opportunity for colonial service by those outside the upper and middle classes, there was considerable empathy with imperialist attitudes throughout the nation. Widespread interest in imperial exploits, particularly those inspired by military victory, created a national euphoria in which, 'every second man was [...] looking for something to rhyme with 'Victoria' other than 'gloria'.<sup>58</sup>

Concomitant with the transmuted imperial impetus, the masculine ideal, with its associated connotations of moral courage and strength of character, was nurtured in the public schools, pervading the *mentalité* of the British elite and permeating down through popular culture in the closing decades of *fin de siècle*. The ethos of the public school was to have a powerful influence on elite decision-making in the ensuing world war.

The imagined form of male identity created a paradigm shift in national values throwing into sharp relief those who appeared unable or unwilling to conform. Opinion had been formed from a *mélange* of contemporary ideas of physical and psychological inferiority. In the wake of Jewish emancipation in Europe, scientific notions of racial difference coalesced with Britain's imperial benchmarking of her colonial races to create a specific national attitude in intellectual and elite circles towards those who did not fit accepted norms.

### **Race, empire, and manliness**

The image of the Jewish male as old, dirty, limping and with an instantly recognised physiognomy was widespread in English and European literature well before late nineteenth century Continental scientists purported to confirm a racial as well as a religious difference between Gentile and Jew. Empirical

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<sup>58</sup> Novels by G. A. Henty were particularly popular, such as, *With Clive in India*, (1884), *With Buller in Natal*, (1901) and *With Kitchener in the Soudan*, (1903), cited in Ferguson, *Empire*, pp. 256-8.

observation in 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century Europe had sought to link the poor physical stature, weak constitutions and bad feet of Jewish men with military worthlessness. Johan David Michaelis, Professor of Oriental Languages at the University of Göttingen in 1782, had observed that very few Jews were of the necessary height to enter the army, and in Austria Joseph Röhner's study of the Jews in 1804 claimed that the majority of those called into military service spent much time in military hospitals before being released from duty.<sup>59</sup> But the scientific precision claimed by *fin-de-siècle* anthropological and medical discourse was considerably more damaging in its effects on Jewry because, although it ranged in essence over the same historical physical criteria, it dwelt also on their assumed connection with psychological and moral characteristics. Critically important was the fact that the discourse was afforded widespread professional prestige together with intellectual and social respectability.<sup>60</sup>

European cultural opinion had long been pre-occupied with the notion of the Jew as the outsider or dissenter. From being previously marginalised by the State on grounds of religion, their position in their new 'homelands' had now to be re-defined in the light of new civic freedoms. Scientific interest in alleged physical and psychological difference coincided with religious emancipation, and the increasing cultural and social integration of the Jews into European society. In an era which promoted and idealised the concept of 'masculinity' as the counter to national fears of European degeneration, the new 'racial science' sought to place the Jewish male in the realm of the 'feminine', with its associated characteristics of physical weakness and mental hysteria. These deleterious findings further threatened the link made between citizenship and military service, a factor of critical importance to diasporic Jews and regarded as part of the compact of emancipation. In Germany in 1831, the Jewish lawyer, Dr Gabriel Riesser had responded to Professor Paulus's claim that civil rights should be denied to Jews on account of their separateness, stating 'There is only one

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<sup>59</sup> Sander Gilman, *The Jew's Body* (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 39-40.

<sup>60</sup> John Efron, *Defenders of the Race. Jewish Doctors and Race Science in Fin de Siècle Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), p.5.



baptism that can initiate one into a nationality, and that is the baptism of blood in the common struggle for a fatherland and for freedom'.<sup>61</sup> This was to present a dichotomy for many Continental nations: on the one hand, citizenship required a period of conscripted military service, but, on the other, the Jewish conscript became increasingly regarded with disdain. These views impacted on developing British notions of masculinity and 'manly men', and became particularly relevant after the Boer War.

Comparative anatomy, pioneered by Georges Cuvier and his associates in France in the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, formed the basis of biological and anthropological research in European nations.<sup>62</sup> The latter decades of the century saw interest in these sciences assume paramount importance, and the Jewish physical and psychological profile become a subject for scrutiny. Emphasis moved away from the previous religious definition of the Jew to an ethnic and racial classification. The effect of manipulating contemporary scientific discourse to confirm an intrinsically negative image of the Jewish male marginalised Jews in general and questioned the Jewish individual's inherent fitness for military service in particular.

Scientific credence was given to continuing perceptions of the Jewish flat foot, the weakness perennially linked with notions of the 'limping Jew'.<sup>63</sup> Earlier imagery was subverted to suggest that the Devil's cloven hoof, hidden by the shoe, masked the true nature of the Jew, and the analogy had gained wide acceptance by the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>64</sup> Impairment of gait had been associated with indications of hysteria since the eighteenth century but in 1896 research by the Parisian neurologist Joseph Babinski hypothesised that limping

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<sup>61</sup> Paul Mendes-Flohr & Jehuda Reinharz, *The Jew in the Modern World. A Documentary History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p.145.

<sup>62</sup> Nancy Stepan, *The idea of race in science: Great Britain 1800 – 1960* (Oxford: Macmillan Press, 1982), xiii.

<sup>63</sup> Gilman, *The Jew's Body*, pp. 40 – 41. In France in 1870 Theodor Fontane challenged this stereotype and exemplified the case of a Jew drafted as a reserve into the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Prince's Own Regiment whose feet were 'open sores but who fought in the burning sun to the end of the battle of Gitschin'.

<sup>64</sup> Sander Gilman, *Freud, Race and Gender* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 23. The analogy of the Jew masking his true self became commonplace in the late nineteenth century, the anthropologist Richard Andr  e noting that 'the Jew can adopt customs, language, dress and habits though it is but a cloak under which the eternal Hebrew survives'.

was a sign of syphilis due to diminished plantar reflex in the foot. This appeared to clinically substantiate the fifteenth century fable of Jewish propensity to venereal disease<sup>65</sup> Myth and medicine combined to define the qualities of the poor soldier, *ergo* the poor citizen, irrevocably connected to the 'Jewish foot', and constituting an indelible marker of the Jewish body.

Narrow chests and small stature also became stereotypical and the subject of caricature. Anthropological surveys in Lithuania, Poland and Little Russia had singled out the Jew as being frequently narrow-chested. These findings were taken as confirmation of previous notions of Jewish susceptibility to consumption and poor health. Towards the end of the nineteenth century this characteristic became more dangerously equated with the physiological proximity of the Jewish male to the female type. This gendered weakness was condemned by the apostate Austrian Jewish psychologist Otto Weininger as a negative force in contrast to the characteristics of the male, which were logical, honest, honourable and virtuous.<sup>66</sup>

Since the eighteenth century French psychiatry had represented itself as a more liberal participant in the field of mental health in its use of the definition 'patient' as opposed to the term 'lunatic'. Simultaneously, its practitioners worked towards the stigmatization of certain social groups. In particular, it sought to identify women as victims of hysteria with the alleged characteristic traits of deceitfulness, contrariness and capriciousness.<sup>67</sup> Jean-Martin Charcot, *fin-de-siècle* leader of the prestigious *Salpêtrière* school in Paris where Freud had been among his pupils, progressed these areas of investigation under the umbrella of the new sciences to define a collective identity of the Jews as well as other 'marginal' groups.<sup>68</sup> He concluded that there was a high incidence of mental illness among Jews, attributing it to their inbreeding, and possibly to anxiety about their status in the nation State. Not all opinion supported this

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<sup>65</sup> Sander Gilman, *Franz Kafka. The Jewish Patient* (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 109-110.

<sup>66</sup> Efron, *Defenders of the Race*, p. 95.

<sup>67</sup> Mendes-Flohr & Reinharz, *The Jew in the Modern World*, p. 272.

<sup>68</sup> Jan Goldstein, 'The wandering Jew and the problem of psychiatric anti-Semitism in *fin-de-siècle* France', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 20 (1985), 521 – 552, pp. 523-525.

interpretation and there were those in France, such as the historian Anatole Leroy Beaulieu, who viewed hysteria as part of a wider neurosis, deducing that nervousness among Jews was a sign of their modernity, and of being the most cerebral of men.<sup>69</sup>

Germany stood at the centre of European racial science. As well as reinforcing physical differences, her anthropologists and psychiatrists focused on linking Jews in particular with mental illness and there was near unanimous opinion that they suffered a higher incidence of insanity. Georg Buschan, speaking to the Organisation of German Psychiatrists in Dresden in 1894, remarked on the extraordinarily high incidence of hysteria among European Jews, which was cited as a sign of their racial degeneration.<sup>70</sup>

Others rejected this supposition, including the Austrian Jewish psychoanalyst Freud. He, and many of his Jewish followers, regarded it as a malady of the imagination but nevertheless closely linked to the male Jew, especially those from the Eastern provinces.<sup>71</sup> This supposed distinction between eastern Ashkenazi and western Sephardi Jews with regard to hysteria was widely held, and, as Eastern Jews formed at that time 80/90% of the population of world Jewry, they became typical of the Jewish type, *Urjüdischer Typus*.<sup>72</sup> Viennese psychiatrist Alexander Pilcz was overtly anti-Semitic in his claim that mental illness was a question of race and that the madness of Jews was an inherent racial quality.<sup>73</sup> All interpretations coincided in their condemnation of the Jewish male as a poor soldier, 'a feminized intellectual whose nervousness can be read on his body'.<sup>74</sup>

The study of statistics and new anatomical methods of measurement, especially of skulls (craniometry), purported to discover two distinct skull types, long (doliocephalic) exhibited by German and Celtic peoples, and round

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<sup>69</sup> Gilman, *Franz Kafka*, p. 62.

<sup>70</sup> Gilman, *Freud, Race and Gender*, p. 94.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid*, p. 103.

<sup>72</sup> Efron, *Defenders of the Race*, p. 102.

<sup>73</sup> Gilman, *Freud, Race and Gender*, p. 106.

<sup>74</sup> Gilman, *Franz Kafka*, p. 68.

(brachicephalic) typical of Turks, Slavs and East Europeans.<sup>75</sup> This research suggested that each type exhibited a unique clinical identity, the brachicephalic being prone to certain psychopathologies and thus inferior.<sup>76</sup> Psychological differences between ethnic types were taken to be paramount, and by the end of the nineteenth century the skull had 'become the arbiter of all things racial'.<sup>77</sup> These findings informed late 19<sup>th</sup> century army conscription offices in Europe, and the medical examination of Jews for military service was often conducted by anthropologists with their results published in scientific journals.<sup>78</sup> Anatomical deliberations had become an accepted arbiter in matters of State.

Accusations that the Jews were a 'mongrel race' through interbreeding with Africans during the Alexandrian exile were also prevalent in nineteenth century racial tracts. In his *Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*, British-born anti-Semite Houston Stewart Chamberlain described the Jew as 'the white negro', not only in terms of alleged physical appearance but also with the implication that both were on a racial par. Otto Weininger, described by Gilman as the 'quintessential Jewish self-hater', went further in stressing a pathological Jewish relationship between the negro and the mongol, the Jew possessing the 'readily curling hair' of the former and 'the yellowish skin' of the latter.<sup>79</sup> This was a departure from previous literature in which Jews were regarded as having been racially pure for nearly two thousand years, and was a point hotly refuted by Jewish medical opinion. However, this did not prevent the Jew becoming widely denigrated as 'black', a factor of perhaps greater significance in Britain, where the measure of white versus black skin was a fundamental concern in the control of Empire, and a factor which was to play a pivotal part in the British Army's deployment policy for coloured troops in World War I.

In the long *fin-de-siècle*, which began in the later decades of the nineteenth century and ended on the battlefields of the First World War, an image

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<sup>75</sup> Finding of the Swedish physician, Anders Retzius, in Oram, *Worthless Men*, p. 78.

<sup>76</sup> Efron, *Defenders of the Race*, p.26.

<sup>77</sup> Stepan, *The idea of Race in Science*, xiii.

<sup>78</sup> Efron, *Defenders of the Race*, p. 84.

<sup>79</sup> Sander Gilman, *Difference and Pathology. Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race and Madness* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1985), pp. 30-31. Gilman, *Franz Kafka*, p. 107.

of the Jewish male had been fashioned by the medical and scientific men of Europe as pathologically deficient in terms of physical and mental health, with a predisposition to certain diseases. These markers of 'difference' lay in sharp contrast with the new ideals of classical masculinity and sound constitutions. Many of the scientific claims purported to authenticate earlier mythical imagery of the Jew. But the insistence on his femininity in an era in which the female realm was epitomised by hysteria and mental instability was both novel and damaging, and placed him outside the accepted white male gender profile. Such notions gained wide credence under the 'respectable guise' of empirical scientific research and undermined the fragile advance of Jews' integration into their chosen European homelands. Although the scientists denied their findings were racially motivated, their neglect of contrary evidence fostered a widespread climate of anti-Semitism. The development of these Continental ideas of racial inferiority, which had been dominated by the physical and psychological requirements of military service, coincided with an era of post-Darwinian thought in Victorian England, where initially a measure of confusion between biological and cultural concepts had created a vaguer definition of the subject.<sup>80</sup>

British attitudes towards masculinity and racial difference were formed from an agglomeration of perceptions gleaned to a considerable extent from a colonial interest in classifying parallel and unequal races. Darwin's explorations into man as part of the animal kingdom had spawned a new political and social ideology in which the human form became a specimen to be scrutinised by scientific methods. This scrutiny focused on external physical features, which were ascribed to inherited differences, not only in physique but also in character. Britain first developed her rationale to issues of racial difference through the exercise of her imperial hegemony.

In the early years of Victoria's reign, Jews aroused only marginal British scientific curiosity compared with European nations. As objects for

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<sup>80</sup> Christine Bolt, *Victorian Attitudes to Race* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971), p. 206.

anthropological inquiry the emphasis was firmly placed on the 'lower orders' of the Empire.<sup>81</sup> Imperial success had strengthened British patriotism and nurtured a belief in racial superiority; the exclusive nature of these sentiments, in turn, boosted a propensity for racism. India had proved to be especially instructive to the Victorians on matters of racial hierarchy. Observations by soldiers, civil servants and travellers acknowledged Indian intelligence, patience and loyalty but derided the general lack of physical strength and solidity of character, which were increasingly considered admirable and intrinsically British qualities. Important regional and tribal distinctions were drawn. On the North West Frontier, it was observed that the mountain peoples, such as the Pathans, exhibited courage and vigour, and these characteristics were also notable among other Northern tribes, the Kolis and Gujars, as well as among the Marawas, Kallars and Ramusis of Southern India. All were admired for their athleticism, love of war and hunting. These observations formed the basis of the 'martial race theory' in the Army's recruiting policy in India, and the introduction of men of 'any well-known cowardly race' into its ranks was firmly opposed.<sup>82</sup> The attitudes of the military elite appeared to change very little in the decades leading up to 1914.

In terms of physical appearance the Victorians were most impressed with the Caucasian peoples of Northern India, whom they described as extraordinarily handsome with fine teeth, hair and eyes, and fair colouring. By contrast, the tribes of Southern India were considered inferior due to their dark skin. Accepted forms of physical attractiveness, combined with masculinity and martial attitude, became the desirable male traits for the pundits of the British Empire although these were conditioned to an extent by the thirteen month Indian Mutiny in 1857 – 8, resulting in a re-evaluation of Indian loyalty in certain

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<sup>81</sup> Efron, *Defenders of the Race*, pp. 33-35.

<sup>82</sup> Lord Wolsey, Adjutant-General at the War Office, 1886 cited in Lotz & Pegg, *Under the Imperial Carpet*, p. 167.

regions.<sup>83</sup> Nevertheless, physical characteristics remained as the 'markers of internal traits, psychological distortions and moral essence'.<sup>84</sup>

By comparison, Africans, whose blacker skin relegated them to the lowest rungs of the imperial benchmark, were regarded as mere barbarians. Prejudice against skin colour had begun in eighteenth century Britain through her heavy involvement with the slave trade, with 'blackness' considered the external marker of internal mental and moral inferiority.<sup>85</sup> In the wake of Darwinism, these attitudes gained further credence, augmented by colonial observations. Baden-Powell, military veteran of the Boer War, described Africans as, 'dull as oxen, inert men. They may be our brothers but they are certainly not men'.<sup>86</sup>

Skin colour in relation to Jews had been explored in the Empire in the early nineteenth century. The Reverend Claudius Buchanan, a missionary in India, published his work *Christian Researches in India* in 1811 in which he suggested there was more than one Jewish type of physical appearance, and drew attention to the 'white Jerusalem Jew' and the 'black Jew'. Inferences that climate affected complexion rather than intermingling were challenged by the anthropologist James Prichard as early as the 1830s in his observation that English Jews had not become fairer in a temperate climate. But the transition from these earlier visual observations to the later British strain of biological racism lay in the anatomical claims of Robert Knox, who openly conflated the Jew with the negro, the accepted imperial norm of racial inferiority. It appears that British evolutionists were writing about race in similar terms to those in France and Germany.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Bolt, *Victorian Attitudes*, pp. 181 – 187.

<sup>84</sup> Heather Streets, *Martial Races: the Military, Race and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture, 1857 – 1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), p. 94.

<sup>85</sup> Stepan, *The Idea of Race*, xii.

<sup>86</sup> George Mosse, *The Image of Man: the Creation of Modern Masculinity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 15.

<sup>87</sup> Stepan, *The Idea of Race*, p. 89.

The assumed superiority of the white race was also intertwined with British belief in the superiority of class. Taller and fairer in complexion as a result of their rural environment and activities, Englishmen of landowning families feared the encroachment on society of metropolitan working class men with their shorter stature and darker complexions, characteristics perceived to preclude the desired moral traits of initiative, steadfastness and persistence. The inequalities of class, as well as race, underpinned British attitudes of mental and moral difference, and perhaps point to a divergence from the purely pathological concerns of Continental Europe. Arnold White, in his publication *Efficiency and Empire*, contended that class prejudice and racial prejudice were inseparable.<sup>88</sup>

Against a background of developing racial assumptions in Britain, the recruiting procedure for the war in South Africa had revealed the extent of physical inadequacy among Army volunteers, only half of whom were able to satisfy the medical criteria. British military statistics on fitness compared particularly unfavourably with those of the German Army, which was growing in manpower strength, and rejected only 16% of recruits as medically unfit.<sup>89</sup> In the light of this, and immediately following a hard-won victory against the Boers, the Government initiated a Royal Commission to inquire into the social conditions which had led to such low levels of physical fitness. General recommendations of the Report published two years later were to provide more open spaces for physical exercise and for 'shelters' to be fitted with gymnastic equipment. In an effort to specifically develop military discipline and suitability, financial grants were made to all clubs and cadet corps, 'in which physical or quasi-military training on an approved scheme is conducted and subject to public inspection'.<sup>90</sup>

The Commission's clinical report stressed the role of alcohol in the incidence of small stature, low weight and impaired physique among the working

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<sup>88</sup> Dan Stone, *Breeding Superman, Nietzsche, race and eugenics in Edwardian and interwar Britain* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2002), p. 107.

<sup>89</sup> Royal Commission on Physical Deterioration, Committee Report, 1904, Command Paper 2175, p. 6.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid*, p. 91.



class. Public houses were retreats from poor and overcrowded home conditions for both parents and youths in the cities. By contrast, it recorded that in Whitechapel and elsewhere, Jewish children were better nourished in domestic environments where parents were abstemious and thrifty, and where mothers were not employed outside the home. When measured at twelve years of age, they were considerably taller than Gentile children. But the knowledge and influence of Continental racial discourse was evident in some of the scientifically-based evidence given to the Committee. The Secretary of the Anthropological Institute, Mr Gray, stated that the Jews were an exceedingly degenerate type in Europe with a high percentage of insanity 'therefore insanity was connected with degeneracy'.<sup>91</sup> Another witness, Mr Rees, Chairman of the Anthropometric Sub-Committee of the Leeds Education Committee, challenged the data on the height of Jewish children. Rejecting evidence of better domestic environments, he ascribed it to Jews being part of a sub-tropical race with consequently different growth levels at different ages, and with the connotation of colour prejudice.<sup>92</sup>

The Darwinian Revolution had fused with fears of national degeneration and engendered an increasing interest in eugenics. The theory of improving humankind through selective breeding patterns to eliminate bad traits had been first introduced into the scientific arena in Britain in 1883 by Darwin's cousin, Francis Galton. Based on his research over the previous twenty years into the laws of inherited traits, it took root in a climate of domestic unrest caused by economic depression, unemployment, strikes and growing political radicalism. The wider implications for the practice of eugenics as a route to national rejuvenation were recognised between the end of the Boer War and 1914. British eugenicists appear to have been united in their belief in the primacy of heredity over environment, also the cornerstone of Continental racial thought. This factor appears seminal in Dan Stone's rejection of some scholarly opinion that

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<sup>91</sup> *Ibid*, p. 146.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid*, p. 178.

the British eugenics movement was a weaker strain than its European counterparts.<sup>93</sup>

Some British eugenicists found focus for their denunciation of degeneracy in the: 'dirty, disease ridden and [...] expensive underclass', the working class in general, and the Irish and Jewish immigrant in particular. They professed shock at the Government's acceptance of alien immigrants and damned them as diseased, insane, criminals and paupers. Karl Pearson, Galton Professor of Eugenics at University College London, directly associated his findings with imperial patriotism in his *Essays on Eugenics*: 'To no nation is a high human breed more necessary than to our own for we plant our stock all over the world'.<sup>94</sup> When working with Margaret Moul on the impact of Jewish immigration, he questioned the purpose of legislating for a superior breed of men if: 'at any moment it could be swamped by an influx of immigrants of inferior race hastening to profit by the higher civilization of an improved humanity'.<sup>95</sup> By the early twentieth century, publications on overtly racial issues came from members of prestigious institutions, such as Robert Rentoul, Royal College of Surgeons, who advocated the harsh treatment of 'degenerate' alien immigrants in *Race Culture: or Race Suicide* (1906).<sup>96</sup>

Compared with European trends, it appears that in the early years of the Victorian era there was a greater British anthropological interest in scrutinising the coloured people of her colonies than her minority Jewish community. Scientific interest moved closer to European thought in the three or so decades prior to the outbreak of war, and closer to the political centre of the State in engendering greater antipathy towards the alien in Britain. The Boer War created a watershed between the intellectual dissemination of ideas of inferiority and

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<sup>93</sup> Stone, *Breeding Superman*, p. 95.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid*, p. 103.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid*, p. 105.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid*, p. 95. Charles Armstrong's *The Survival of the Unfittest* attacked racial equality, and William and Catherine Whetham published widely on eugenics prior to 1914, *ibid*, pp. 97, 101.

difference and a need to find a redress for them, not only in the realm of science but in sociological reform.

Edwardian correlations of martial fitness and moral qualities led to a decade of reform in the interests of national efficiency. The cult of the Christian soldier, epitomised by General Gordon, did much to promote the acceptability of the military structure in the Boys Brigade, which, in turn, popularized military concepts among the population in general. William Smith, its founder, claimed that: 'no nation ever yet attained true greatness or influence without going through the training and discipline of war'.<sup>97</sup> After his military participation in the Boer War, and in an effort to combat perceived national degeneracy, Baden-Powell gave his active support to the concept of national efficiency, which became one of the most influential sociological objectives of the Edwardian elite. His vision was of a reformed British youth, organised through the Scouting movement's promotion of the activities and values of the rural life, replete with physical exercise and greater deference to the social hierarchy.

On the eve of the First World War, over 40% of British Army officers were from the aristocracy or landed gentry.<sup>98</sup> Surridge suggests that In the Boer War the officer corps exhibited a specific set of opinions derived from a conflation of anti-capitalism, anti-urbanism and anti-Semitism.<sup>99</sup> They lauded the superiority of the rural recruit as not only physically fitter but more compliant and deferential, a factor becoming increasingly eroded in the expansion of metropolitan environments. Urban populations were already of particular social concern but the urban male in particular was regarded by many of the military elite as confirmation of the existence of 'worthless men'. The stereotype of the degenerate city dweller, which was confirmed by the Boer War military manpower

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<sup>97</sup> John Springhall, *Youth, Empire and Society. British Youth Movements 1883 – 1940* (London: Croom Helm, 1977), pp. 16-17.

<sup>98</sup> In 1912, 9% of officers were from the aristocracy, and 32% from the landed gentry, P. Razzell, 'The Social Origins of Officers of the Indian and British Home Army, 1758 – 1962', *The British Journal of Sociology*, 14 (1963), 248 – 60, p. 253.

<sup>99</sup> K. Surridge, 'All you soldiers are what we call pro-Boer: a military critique of the South African war, 1899 – 1902', *History*, 82 (1997), 582 – 600, p. 583.

crisis, remained in the collective mentality of the British Establishment during the First World War although the indigenous weak and degenerate had, 'the saving grace of being English'.<sup>100</sup>

By contrast, and aligned to colonial opinions formed by experiences in India, the martial and masculine qualities of the Boers were much admired by the British military hierarchy. The General Officer Commanding in South Africa, General Sir William Butler, drew attention to the similarities between the Boers and the traditional British officer, both of whom he observed as: 'open air sportsmen and neither belonged to what is known as the shop-keeping class'.<sup>101</sup> This view was confirmed in more overtly racial terms by General Sir Ian Hamilton, Kitchener's Chief of Staff from 1901, in a conversation with the young Winston Churchill:

I cannot tell you how strongly I feel that if we could incorporate these Boers into the Empire, we should be doing a vast deal more for the future of our race and language than by assimilating a million Johannesburg Jews.<sup>102</sup>

These overtly anti-Semitic opinions were not isolated instances within the British officer corps in South Africa but rather were pervasive throughout the Army and were to continue during and after the First World War.<sup>103</sup>

Following the Boer War, eugenics was no longer a subject of peripheral concern, appealing predominantly to a scientific circle of enthusiasts and devotees, but moved into the ambit of politicians and academic theorists alike. Military service *per se* was perceived by many within the nation's elite as 'eugenically useful' in that it upheld the ideals of physical fitness and efficiency

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<sup>100</sup> Samuel Hynes, *The Edwardian Turn of Mind* (London: Pimlico Press, 1991), p. 27.

<sup>101</sup> Surridge, 'All you soldiers', p. 588.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid*, p. 597.

<sup>103</sup> In a witness statement at the Southborough Enquiry into Shell Shock in 1922, Captain J C Dunn, Regimental Medical Officer in the Welch Fusiliers, told the Committee that in his experience of service in the ranks in the Boer War 'the Jews weren't worth their salt', and that the soldierly qualities of certain races were suspect, particularly the Jews and Irish, in Oram, *Worthless Men*, p. 79.

together with the moral virtues of courage and patriotism.<sup>104</sup> Experience in South Africa had endorsed Britain's urgent need for an imperial race purged of 'effeminate' and 'degenerate' traits.<sup>105</sup> Karl Pearson wrote in 1912: 'National progress depends on racial fitness and the supreme test of this fitness was war. When wars cease mankind will no longer progress for there will be nothing to check the fertility of the inferior stock'.<sup>106</sup>

The association of militarism with masculinity was also common currency in Europe. This was particularly so in the new German Empire in response to Nietzsche's call for the re-masculinisation of Europe, which he viewed as having become feminised and Judaised.<sup>107</sup> While the Boer War had exposed the extent of the danger to Britain from the degenerate male, the possibility of a solution lay in the experiences of the battlefield. Colonel Melville, Professor of Hygiene at the Royal Army Medical College, contended that: 'An occasional war is of service by reason of the fact that in times of danger the nation attends to the virility of its citizens'.<sup>108</sup> As in other parts of Europe, it came to be regarded by a considerable number of Britons as an instrument for personal and national regeneration and a sign of withdrawal from a corrupt world.<sup>109</sup> Esteem for the catharsis of battle was later to render pacifism a particularly dangerous creed in the First World War, and doubly so for Jews whose patriotism came under intense scrutiny.

The cult of masculinity had resulted in the image of the Jewish male in Britain becoming more problematical in the decades before 1914 as imperial concerns focused on the identification of manly and martial traits, not only

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<sup>104</sup> Geoffrey Searle, *Eugenics and Politics in Britain, 1900 – 1914* (Leiden: Noordhoff International Publications, 1976), pp. 2, 36.

<sup>105</sup> Morrow, *The Great War*, p. 19.

<sup>106</sup> Pearson's publication *Darwinism, Medical Progress and Parentage* cited in Ferguson, *Empire*, p. 264.

<sup>107</sup> See Bryan Cheyette & Laura Marcus, (eds.), *Modernity, Culture and the Jew* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), p. 4.

<sup>108</sup> Searle, *Eugenics and Politics*, p. 36.

<sup>109</sup> George Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality: Middle-class morality and Abnormal Sexuality in Modern Europe* (Wisconsin: Wisconsin University Press, 1985), pp. 114 – 117.

among her colonial people but increasingly within national boundaries. Absence of such characteristics became widely synonymous with inferiority, and notions of 'difference' created a new form of hostility directed toward the immigrant component of British cities.

Jews in Europe and Britain were anxious to prevent their marginalisation on grounds of racial difference by actively responding to contemporary claims of hereditary inferiority. In parallel with scientific rebuttal, the assimilation of wealthy Anglo-Jews in the closing decades of *fin de siècle* into the customs and attitudes of elite Gentile society was to further colour their perceptions of the immigrant within the community.

## CHAPTER 2 JEWISH RESPONSES TO MASCULINITY AND *GOYIM NACHES*

It does one good to look at the sturdy youngsters who are being inculcated with the most valuable ethics of duty and obedience towards command, and the ripe development of the human body. Lithe and with the grace of trained athletes, the boys indeed gave the lie to the reproach so often levelled against us of being under-sized, underdeveloped and weakly.<sup>110</sup>

Jewish doctors, anthropologists and psychiatrists were well represented in Western European medicine in the *fin de siècle*, particularly in Germany.<sup>111</sup> They were anxious to prevent the Jewish male from becoming the passive object of race research and to personally engage, as *bona fide* members of the scientific community, with contemporary scientific claims.<sup>112</sup> Empirical facts were difficult to dispute but where Gentile physicians were ready to ascribe them solely to inherent racial differences, Jewish doctors were anxious to stress that the environmental conditions of Eastern European Jewry accounted for many of the physical effects. Integration into Western societies would, in time, repair these alleged deficiencies. In response to the alleged propensity to mental illness, the Jewish physician Leopold Löwenfeld asserted that there was no precedent for it having affected earlier generations, and that any contemporary predisposition was due to their present quality of life.<sup>113</sup>

Refuting accusations that the Jewish male was a 'martial misfit', Jewish scientists defended his alleged physical inadequacies as unrelated to pathological causes but the consequence of his occupational choices, many of which were forced upon him by exclusion from other options. Prevention from holding land before emancipation led to limited opportunities for employment in rural occupations and the Jew had become the urban dweller *par excellence* of European industrialised nations. Sedentary work in cramped conditions accounted for his narrow-chested, small stature. An additional explanation was

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<sup>110</sup> *Jewish World (JW)*, 18 January 1910, cited in Richard Voeltz, 'A good Jew and a good Englishman: the Jewish Lads' Brigade 1894 – 1922, *The Journal of Contemporary History*, 23 (1988), 86 – 119, p.123.

<sup>111</sup> Efron, *Defenders of the Race*, p. 30.

<sup>112</sup> Goldstein, 'The Wandering Jew', p. 525.

<sup>113</sup> Gilman, *Freud*, p. 96.

proposed in a 1895 study by Samuel Weissenberg, a Russian Jewish doctor trained in Heidelberg. His research on Jews in Southern Russia to determine the factors affecting human growth showed that they continued to grow until their thirtieth year.<sup>114</sup> This had a direct bearing on accepted Gentile opinion of their unfitness for military service as recruitment took place at an early age in European nations with conscripted armies. His findings claimed that 'Narrowness of chest among Jews as a racial characteristic appears to belong to the world of fable [...] the assertion of the absolute incapability of the Jew for military service is false'.<sup>115</sup> In terms of physical strength, Weissenberg found that Jews were similar to white Americans and Belgians until the age of twenty, when their strength levelled off while that of the other two groupings continued. A factor relevant to this observation was that Jews started school at the early age of four or five, and concentrated on intellectual development with little or no physical exercise. German Jewish doctors of the *Haskalah*, Elkan Wolf and Moishe Marcuse, made a direct link between the religious practices of Judaism in the *cheder* and the resultant physical condition of the Jewish adult male, referring to 'a lovely custom in Poland with our dear little boys[...] we send them to prison [...] we make our children pale, green and yellow. They cannot sleep well, hence they do not grow'.<sup>116</sup> Weissenberg concluded that traditional adult occupations of tailoring and shoemaking exacerbated this weakness which, often carried out in poorly lit working conditions, also led to defective eyesight.

At the zenith of racial discourse in Europe at the turn of the nineteenth century, and despite their efforts, Jewish scientists and doctors had been unable to dispel the spreading climate of anti-Semitism. But through their engagement with contemporary racial argument they endeavoured to offer European Jewry a degree of comfort and dignity together with the hope that, with application on their part, Jewish manliness was attainable. In 1900, the Hungarian Jewish physician and Zionist, Max Nordau, reiterated the environmental causes which

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<sup>114</sup> Efron, *Defenders of the Race*, p. 95.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid*, p. 100.

<sup>116</sup> John Efron, 'Images of the Jewish Body. Three medical views from the Jewish Enlightenment', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 69 (1995), 349 – 366, pp. 351, 359.



had been suggested were responsible for the Jews' poor physique, claiming that for centuries:

All elements of Aristotelian physics – light, air, water and earth – were measured out to us very sparingly. In the narrow Jewish street our poor limbs soon forgot their gay movements; in the dimness of sunless houses our eyes began to blink shyly; the fear of constant persecution turned our powerful voices into frightened whispers.<sup>117</sup>

Nordau exhorted Jewish males in the Western Diaspora to 'once more become deep-chested, sturdy, sharp eyed men', and called for them to follow a regime of physical exercise and gymnastics through which they would evolve into '*muskelfjuden*' (muscular Jews). A Jewish gymnastics movement, begun in the *Bar Kochba* club in Berlin in 1898, became established throughout Europe to challenge the anti-Semitic construct of the Jew's body. By application the new 'tough' Jew could supplant the old feminized imagery with physical strength and masculinity, and their perceived inherent moral qualities of courage, loyalty, self-discipline and self-sacrifice.<sup>118</sup>

As in Europe, Jewish doctors and scholars in Britain sought to counter the growing bias of mainstream Gentile anthropological discourse. Prominent in this *coterie* was the Jewish sociologist, Joseph Jacobs, who had emigrated from Australia in 1872 and studied at Cambridge. He had observed British prejudice toward Jewish immigrants from Russia and Eastern Europe, and attempted to allay Governmental fears through his sociological studies. These were largely statistical analyses based on data from the Jewish Board of Guardians, Jewish burial societies, hospitals and schools. In his 1891 report on complexion, hair and eye colour, based on examination of 120,000 Jews, he concluded that although they were, on average, darker than other nationalities, 21% were blue eyed, and 29% had blond hair, the preferred characteristics of 'imperial man'. These findings refuted the supposition of men like Galton, who had suggested that there was a typical Jewish physiognomy linked to particular traits. Jacobs

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<sup>117</sup> Max Nordau, 'Jewry of Muscle' (1903), in Mendes-Flohr & Reinharz, pp. 547-8.

<sup>118</sup> Paul Breines 'Tough Jews' in Daniel Boyarin, (ed.), *Unheroic Conduct*, p. 246.

concurred with Jewish medical men in Europe that the widely held perceptions of Jewish 'racial characteristics' were due to the effects of social and political isolation, coupled with different traditions and customs.<sup>119</sup>

Dr Redcliffe Salaman, committed to the new science of Mendelian genetics rather than Continental biometrics and social statistics, agreed with Jacobs that Jews displayed different complexions and statures and were not confined to a specific cephalic index. Many Jews were indistinguishable in appearance from the mixed Nordic community in which they lived. But he acknowledged that 'persons who are either Jewish themselves or who associated with them come to recognise almost infallibly the Jew by his general expression'.<sup>120</sup> In his contribution to the *Eugenics Review*, he contended, like Jacobs, that there was no clinical evidence to link physical features with specific psychological qualities. He was more ambivalent on the question of whether or not the Jews were a distinct race, a subject discussed at a Racial Congress in London in 1911. He suggested that before 1800 German Jews were 'almost free from European admixture', although Sephardis were less racially pure, noting that contemporary inter-marriage between Jews and Gentiles in Britain was 'very common' in Anglo-Jewry, with Mendelian results in physical appearance. However, he likened the Jew to the 'race horse of mankind', compared with domestic breeds, and considered that the existence of Jews as a definite body was essential to civilisation and human progress.<sup>121</sup> Other Jewish medical men, such as Dr Sidney Herbert, involved themselves in the Eugenics Education Society (EES), a body which acknowledged a certain admiration for Jewish family values and pride in ancestry. The comparative racial 'purity' of the Jews made them a focus of legitimate scientific interest, and in 1913 the EES set up a special

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<sup>119</sup> Joseph Jacobs, *Jewish Statistics* (London: D Nutt, 1891), xviii.

<sup>120</sup> Redcliffe Salaman, 'Heredity and the Jew', *The Eugenics Review*, 3 (1911-1912), 187 – 200, p. 190.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 189, 191, 200.

Committee, which included Jewish members, to investigate Jewish related issues and their possible contribution to the wider eugenics movement.<sup>122</sup>

### **The Public Schools' ethos and Jewish working class youth organisations**

Until the 1870s, the sons of the Anglo-Jewish elite were educated at day schools, such as St Paul's in West Kensington and University College School in Gower Street, London, and the Grammar School in Manchester. On leaving they generally entered directly into banking or family businesses, due, in part, to their exclusion from English universities, the exception being University College, London, which admitted Jews post-1828.<sup>123</sup> The 1871 University Tests Act opened the doors of all English universities, and by 1914 Oxbridge had become the academic choice of the Anglo-Jewish elite. At Oxford Jewish undergraduate numbers swiftly rose from eight to forty during the Edwardian era, and they accounted for 1% of the total student body by 1914, although the pervasive social anti-Semitism of the upper classes made the university a somewhat uncongenial place for Jews.<sup>124</sup> Entrance to Oxbridge was almost exclusively channelled through the leading public schools. This factor, together with the growing confidence of the Anglo-Jewish hierarchy of their place in the upper echelons of British society, encouraged some Jewish parents to send their sons to these institutions of imperial self-belief.

The British public school was at the height of its prestige in the four decades before the end of the First World War, with sixty four major schools in existence by the end of the nineteenth century. They educated about 20,000 pupils, less than 1% of the nation's boys aged between fifteen to nineteen, according to the 1901 census. Despite this tiny percentage, they exerted

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<sup>122</sup> Searle, *Eugenics and Politics*, pp. 41-42.

<sup>123</sup> Todd Endelman, 'Communal Solidarity among the Jewish Elite of Victorian London', *Victorian Studies*, 28 (1985), 491 – 526, p.520.

<sup>124</sup> T. Weber, 'Anti Semitism and Philo-Semitism among British and German Elites: Oxford and Heidelberg before the 1<sup>st</sup> World War', *English Historical Review*, CXV111 (475), 86 - 119, pp. 104, 110.

considerable influence over national attitudes, not least because of the popular fictional accounts surrounding their existence. This literature engendered a natural deference towards the nation's social hierarchy, and an appreciation of its values and cultural ideals. It has been suggested that these attitudes may explain the ready acceptance of the leadership of very young ex-public school officers by soldiers from many different backgrounds in the trenches of the Western Front in the Great War.<sup>125</sup> More importantly, public school values exercised an almost exclusive influence on the country's elite during the malleable years of their youth, with a resultant commonality in their adult mindset and attitudes.

Public schools were originally founded to follow the academic direction of classical scholarship but, after 1855, Britain's colonial interests encouraged public school competition for entry into the Indian Civil Service and, as imperial and military enthusiasm mounted, the cult of physical fitness and games came to dominate school life. Leonard Huxley, Assistant Master at Charterhouse, claimed that: 'the ideal of the average boy is to be an athlete in some form or other, and satisfy that fine Teutonic craving for muscular expansion which fires the true Briton'.<sup>126</sup> The school games ethic, with its associated tenets of leadership, fellowship and determination, produced useful colonists and uncomplaining soldiers. Belief that the skills of the playing field were transferable to the territories of the Empire in both the civil and military spheres was virtually unquestioned before 1914. The extent to which it permeated the mindset of ex-public schoolboys and encouraged them to view life as a greater Imperial game was evident in Colonel Baden-Powell's report on regimental action in the Boer War, 'Just now we are having our innings and have so far scored 200 days

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<sup>125</sup> G. Best, 'Militarism and the Victorian Public School' in Brian Simon & Ian Bradley, (eds.), *The Victorian Public School* (Dublin: Gill & MacMillan, 1975), p 130.

<sup>126</sup> William Reader, *At duty's Call. A Study of Obsolete Patriotism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), p. 91.

not out against the bowling of Cronje, Snijman, Botha [...] and we are having a very enjoyable game'.<sup>127</sup>

By the Edwardian era, the dominant elite vision of athletic masculinity in the British Empire was characterised by the ideals of sportsmanship. These were best developed through the contact sports of rugby, football, boxing and wrestling which combined controlled violence with discipline, the same criteria which also produced 'manly men' and good soldiers. This inter-relationship became the accepted norm, and created the perception that males of another class or culture who failed to identify with these gender maxims were not 'real men'. The expulsion of the effeminate and un-English became increasingly desirable, in tandem with the *renaissance* of chivalric symbolism in which the ideal Englishman was portrayed, if not as a Greek god, then as an erstwhile knight of Camelot.<sup>128</sup> Romanticism cloaked the violence of the British sports fields as it was to do initially on the battlefields of the First World War.

Although Eton continued to provide the largest number of officers to the Victorian Army, the newer schools, such as Marlborough, Wellington, Cheltenham and Clifton Colleges, introduced an alternative academic stream. This was specifically devised to prepare pupils for Army entrance, either through the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich, direct regimental intake into the Royal Engineers and Royal Artillery, and after 1870, into the Royal Military College at Sandhurst. This was known as the Modern (later Military) Side with an emphasis on Mathematics (as opposed to the Classics) and was accompanied by participation in School Cadet Corps. Marlborough, Cheltenham and Harrow established these corps in the 1860s and an Engineer Cadet Corps was created at Clifton in 1875. Founded in 1862, the Clifton sent 500 boys into the Army in the first thirty years of its existence. By 1893, half a century after its foundation, Cheltenham College was also described as having military rather than university aims. After 1901,

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<sup>127</sup> Ferguson, *Empire*, p. 277.

<sup>128</sup> Mark Girouard, *The Return to Camelot. Chivalry and the English Gentleman* (London: Yale University Press, 1981), p.171. Visible signs of chivalry abounded after the Boer War.

there was an increased military emphasis in all public schools. As part of Lord Haldane's military reforms in 1907, the Cadet Corps were re-constituted as the Officer Training Corps and by 1914, 20,000 public schoolboys were enrolled. Regular visits to public schools were made by the grandees of the Navy League and the National Service League, and it was openly acknowledged that the spirit of militarism prevailed in both the public schools and the universities.<sup>129</sup>

Although English public schools were strongly Christian in their foundations and values, this was not necessarily a deterrent to Victorian Anglo-Jewry, some of whom were prepared to accept even obligatory attendance at the school chapel. Todd Endelman has suggested that for many elite Anglo-Jews Judaism was largely represented by the non-religious tenets of, 'reasonable behaviour, fraternal responsibility, intellectual courtesy and communal charity'.<sup>130</sup> This more secular approach engendered an ambivalence towards religious practices as such. At Charterhouse the Headmaster, the Reverend Dr. Rendall, in correspondence with the President of the London Committee of the Board of Deputies of British Jews in August 1902, claimed that Jewish boys 'expressed their preference for existing Charterhouse arrangements', and that at another large public school they 'deeply and permanently regretted the aloofness which resulted from religious separation'.<sup>131</sup> Eton and Harrow conceded on religious regulations but it appears that some Anglo-Jewish parents remained equivocal regarding the merits of integration or separation.

Many of the Gentile families who chose public school education for their sons had a tradition of military service. As late as the 1930s, two thirds of Wellington College students had fathers with a military or naval background, and some schools offered special financial provision for the sons of officers. In turn, the public schools nurtured a military sub-culture, symbolizing and

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<sup>129</sup> Reader, *A Study of Obsolete Patriotism*, p.88-89. Edward Spiers, *The Army and Society, 1815 – 1914* (London: Longman: 1989), p. 279.

<sup>130</sup> T. Endelman, 'Communal Solidarity', p. 501.

<sup>131</sup> London Metropolitan Archives (hereafter LMA), papers of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, ACC/3121/B2/7/2.

accentuating its values.<sup>132</sup> By contrast the military tradition was a singular and little developed characteristic of the Jewish community. Two schools with a particularly marked association with the Army established Jewish boarding houses, namely Clifton and Cheltenham Colleges. They offered the elite of Anglo-Jewry participation in the educational norms of privileged English society including entry to Oxbridge, in tandem with the opportunity to retain their own religious and cultural practices.

### *Cheltenham College and Corinth House*

She gives her sons gladly for the Empire. As the Boer War showed, and whenever there is great work to be done as statesmen, administrators, and soldiers, Cheltenham is second to no other Public School in the country.<sup>133</sup>

Founded in 1841, and greatly favoured by colonial families, particularly in India, for the education of their sons, Cheltenham College rapidly became an important training ground for the Army and the Navy. Initially, the Jewish boy *per se* was refused admittance but was later grudgingly allowed to enrol on condition that no prize, however well deserved, was awarded to him.<sup>134</sup> The adulation of aggressive behaviour was an inherent ingredient of the masculine English gentleman, to be encouraged from boyhood: 'From the cradle to the grave, fighting, rightly understood, is the business, the real rightist, honestest business of every son of man. Everyone who's worth his salt has his enemies, who must be beaten.'<sup>135</sup> This advice was heeded by Montague Montague's grandfather, a Cheltenham scholar in 1853. He recalled his schooldays as, 'an awful time', during which he thrashed one of the boys who had insulted him but after which, 'I became a King among them [...] they quarrelled as to who should walk with me'.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> C. Otley, 'Militarism and Militarization in the Public Schools, 1900 – 1972', *British Journal of Sociology*, 29 (1978), 321 – 339, pp. 323, 334.

<sup>133</sup> Cheltenham College Archives (hereafter CCA), *Old Cheltonian*, 1911, p. 28.

<sup>134</sup> *Jewish Chronicle* (hereafter JC), 9 March, 1923, p. 16. Letter from Montague Montague.

<sup>135</sup> *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (1874), cited in Girouard, *The Return to Camelot*, p. 166.

<sup>136</sup> JC, 9 March, 1923, p. 16.

The College Council Minutes record the meeting held at the Westminster Palace Hotel in London on 18 December, 1891, at which the Principal proposed that a boarding house for Jews be established (eventually named Corinth House). The number of boys was originally limited to fifteen, and its first Housemaster was an exiled Russian Jew, Nestor Schumann, previously a well-regarded Master at St Paul's school in London. The School record claims that he, 'attracted Jewish boys of good family and intelligence to his House'.<sup>137</sup>

The Jewish Sabbath and Holy Days were observed by attendance at the local synagogue, and school work was completed on Sundays. Corinth's small numerical size gave little facility to nurture a team spirit compared with the other Houses whose boarding numbers averaged 50 boys. This resulted in poor achievement in inter-house games competitions. Sir Brunel Cohen recorded that he:

was never much use at games except lawn tennis. But I got into House Firsts at rugger though I never enjoyed the game. I went shooting at the College range at Seven Springs, which was better than cricket. Whilst I was there the Boer War broke out and a wave of ultra-patriotism overtook us all.<sup>138</sup>

It is evident that the divide between the Modern and the Classics Sides was effective from the beginning of a pupil's College life:

We were made specialists almost as soon as we started. For those hoping to reach Sandhurst and Woolwich, the two gates to a commission in the Army, it was a matter of maths, maths and still more maths. For those on the Classical Side it was all classics and no sidelines [...] the hours were long and the liberties few'.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> Michael Morgan, *Cheltenham College. The First Hundred Years* (Chalfont St Giles: R Sadler for Old Cheltonian Society, 1968), p. 106. Schnurmann was succeeded in 1916 by Daniel Lipson, but the Jewish House gradually declined in numbers and closed in 1922. By this time there seems to have been the feeling that (the boys) were not of the same social standing or character as their predecessors and the Council thought that a special Jews House was out of tune with the more fluid society of the post-war era, *ibid*, pp. 108 – 118.

<sup>138</sup> Tim Pearce, *Then and Now. Anniversary Celebration of Cheltenham College, 1841- 1991* (Aldershot: Ashgate Editions, 1991), p. 111.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid*, p. 131.



Overall College figures in 1912 record that 58% of boys followed the military stream but that only 16% of 56 Corinth House boarders between 1896 and 1912 chose this option.<sup>140</sup> This suggests that most Jewish parents selected the school for the academic opportunity to gain entry to England's most prestigious universities, its religiously oriented boarding house and the social *kudos* it offered their sons in adulthood rather than for its reputation for Service admissions. Nonetheless, the figures show some evidence of interest in an Army career, and during their educational life Jewish boarders undoubtedly absorbed the values of sportsmanship, masculinity and, increasingly, militarism which characterised the English public school before 1914.

There was no House magazine for Corinth but it is apparent that the school encouraged compulsory service in the Cadet Corps.<sup>141</sup> This aligned with Lord Roberts' demand that all boys and youths up to the time of military age train in drill and rifle shooting. The recommendation became effective in 1907 in the Senior School, subject to the wishes of parents. It is recorded that 'only 4–5% withheld consent', and there is no indication as to whether or not these were Jewish families. In addition, all public schools were encouraged to train their senior boys as Reserve Officers.<sup>142</sup>

#### Clifton College and Polack's House

From the great Marshal to the last recruit  
 These Clifton were thyself, thy spirit in Deed,  
 Thy flower of chivalry, thy fallen fruit  
 And thine immortal seed.<sup>143</sup>

Founded some two decades after Cheltenham, Clifton College established a Military and Engineering stream in 1875 and became a prestigious training ground for Army entrants, numbering World War I military commanders Earl Haig

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<sup>140</sup> CCA, Corinth Board House Records, Class Records for Military stream entry and College Records of Old Cheltonians serving in World War I.

<sup>141</sup> CCA, *The Old Cheltonian*, 1905.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid*, p. 264. In World War I, 40 Old Corinthians held the King's Commission.

<sup>143</sup> Engraved on the College World War I memorial gateway, in M. Christie, *A History of Clifton College, 1860 – 1934* (Bristol: J. Arrowsmith Ltd., 1935), p.194.

and General Birdwood among its former pupils. Its recruitment policy was at odds with the older public schools in that it did not seek favour among the country's aristocratic families nor did it 'despise new wealth'.<sup>144</sup> Its Headmaster, John Percival, enjoyed a reputation for introducing elements scarcely known in other public schools. Among these was the establishment of a Jewish boarding house. This was partly in response to requests from his personal friend, Lionel Cohen, a Tory MP and a leader within the Anglo-Jewish community, who had been instrumental in obtaining a Royal Charter for the College. The Chief Rabbi was also a direct supporter, although a proposition to properly accommodate Jewish pupils had already been under consideration by the Headmaster and the School Council. Despite its Anglican foundation, no boy was refused entry on the grounds of his religious belief, but Percival held the view that the school would not be wholly satisfactory if it did not include provision of instruction in the Jewish faith and a Jewish religious influence similar to that provided for Gentile pupils. He judged that this would be best secured in a separate boarding house with a Jewish Housemaster, to allow the positive expression of Judaism. This proposal was approved by the School Council in 1878, and a Jewish House of four boys (with an original limit of ten) was established under the supervision of Bernard Heymann. When he resigned in 1890, the post was awarded to the Reverend Polack, the first of four generations of the family to be appointed House Master, and after whom the House was named. Jewish pupils originally attended services at the Bristol synagogue until the House built its own place of worship. *Kosher* food was provided, although all boys ate separately in their respective boarding houses until the school was evacuated during World War II.<sup>145</sup>

Jewish Sabbath observance precluded full participation and success in school games. In addition, Polack's had a reputation for 'softness' and other

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<sup>144</sup> Nigel Rapport, *The Prose and the Passion: Anthropology, Literature and the writing of E. M. Forster* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), p. 51.

<sup>145</sup> Nicholas Hamond, (ed.), *Centenary Essays on Clifton College*, (Bristol: J. Arrowsmith Ltd., 1962), p. 51.

Clifton Houses took a certain relish in playing them.<sup>146</sup> Football and boxing were popular but, like Corinth, Polack's House was small in numbers and inter-school games took place on Saturdays. Polack's house magazine of 1904 lamented, 'our House is small and we are small and so it comes to pass, that we have had no luck with games and this is very sad'. This smallness of stature among Jewish boys was an acknowledged fact at Clifton although Neville Laski was commended as a useful football forward, 'who makes the most of his rather small size and weight'.<sup>147</sup> Their public school spirit appears to have been undiminished by their lack of prowess at games, and their adherence to Clifton's wider ambitions is exemplified by the House song:

Now past and present give three cheers for Polack's, for Polack's.  
And may they long be spared in years in Polack's, in Polack's.  
And may their boys all play the game and add their names to the  
Roll of fame of Polack's, of Polack's.<sup>148</sup>

Polack's was not highly regarded by other Clifton Houses, and there were some acknowledged difficulties in accommodating an openly Jewish community within an Anglican school.<sup>149</sup> Nonetheless, it rapidly became a favoured institution for the education of the sons of the 'Cousinhood', the oligarchic elite of wealthy and powerful Anglo-Jews.<sup>150</sup>

Following the Boer War, in which seven Old Polackeans served, the School Council gave its consent for all boys in Forms III and IV to participate in drill and shooting practice, but the House had already gained first place in Engineering and Drill in the Engineering Corps in 1901, and the boys were praised for their 'excellent spirit and *esprit de corps*'.<sup>151</sup> Despite this and Clifton's Army connections, the proportion of Polack's boys who chose to compete for entry to a Service College rather than university was very small in comparison with overall

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<sup>146</sup> Nigel Rapport, 'Becoming a British Jew through an appreciation of the English novelist, E. M. Forster', *Auto/Biography*, 3:1 & 3:2 (1994), 23 – 44, p.33.

<sup>147</sup> CCL, *Polack's House Magazine*, 1905.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid*, 1899. House song composed for 21<sup>st</sup> anniversary of its founding.

<sup>149</sup> Extract from transcript of interview recorded 2 October, 2003, with Ernest Polack, retired House Master, now deceased, held by author.

<sup>150</sup> Rozin, *The Rich and the Poor*, p.1.

<sup>151</sup> CCL, *Polack's House Magazine*, 1901. Captain Rintoul to Joseph Polack.

College figures. In the decade preceding 1905, Polack's House recorded only two Service College entrants compared with thirty five University admissions. Total College records for the same period showed seventy five joining a Service College, almost half the number who entered university. The House magazine (1905) commented that, '[these figures] seem to indicate that members of Polack's House, who have a taste for military matters but do not enter the Army for religious or other reasons, swell the numbers of those entering University'.<sup>152</sup> Despite this, Jewish Service entrants gradually increased and by 1913 there were sixty five former House members serving in HM Forces, including three in the Royal Navy. One hundred and twenty Jewish Old Cliftonians were to serve in WW1, of whom twenty four were killed in action, including two of the three sons of Polack's housemaster.<sup>153</sup>

It is evident that, despite their lack of success in competitive sports and an absence of enthusiasm in the early years of Polack's House for a military career, Jewish public schoolboys engaged in the activities of 'martial masculinity' which dominated public school life and sustained the imperial mentality of Britain's elite. The transference of these ideals to immigrant youth through their influence in the Jewish Boys' Clubs at *fin de siècle* occurred in parallel with the socially reforming Christian youth movement.

#### *Membership and Management in Jewish working class youth clubs*

Victorian ideals influenced the pattern of Anglo-Jewish communal life. The objectives of 'Muscular Christianity' and the Boys' Brigade but largely without their religious impetus, were transposed to the Jewish youth movement through which immigrant boys were to be recast into fit and respectable 'English gentlemen of the Mosaic persuasion'.<sup>154</sup> The literature on Jewish youth clubs is

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<sup>152</sup> CCL, *Polack's House Magazine*, 1905.

<sup>153</sup> CCL, List of Old Cliftonians who served in the Great War with a record of their Regiments, Honours, Casualties, November, 1919.

<sup>154</sup> Sharman Kadish, *A good Jew and a good Englishman. The Jewish Lads' and Girls' Brigade, 1895 – 1995* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1995), p. 39.

united in agreeing that the primary objective of Victorian Anglo-Jewry was to inculcate English values and norms and accelerate the assimilation of the immigrant working class into British society, thereby protecting their own hard won integration. Their earlier calls for immigrants to abandon overt alienism in the use of Yiddish and wearing of Eastern European dress were overtaken in the Edwardian era by their own new experiences of the major imperialist and elitist institutions of the British Establishment, the Army, the public schools and the universities. A more subtle, nuanced and idealized form of immigrant Anglicisation had developed in the mindset of Anglo-Jewry's elite.

It was widely believed by the upper echelons of British society that the diffusion of the public school games ethic down to the lower classes would transmit values of honesty, fair play and a hierarchical respect. This belief was an accepted tenet of Jewish Club Managers, often ex-university and public school men, who regarded sport, especially team games, as the perfect medium to teach deference and gentlemanly virtues. Following his Eton education, Basil Henriques, a vital force in the Jewish youth movement, extolled the games method as a route to virtue, to be accompanied by 'that system of self-government which enables the boy to be trained into the habit of subduing himself for the benefit of society'.<sup>155</sup> Sportsmanship was seen as a fundamental requisite in the construction of the Anglicised Jew. Equally important, paramilitary methods were followed in drill, gymnastics and physical exercises to attain improved physique and stamina. It is apparent that the accusations of Jewish physical and moral inferiority by European and British racial protagonists had been absorbed into the consciousness of Anglo-Jewry. This was reflected in the direction of their charitable work among the young in the immigrant districts of London and other large cities.

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<sup>155</sup> Bernard Lammers, 'A superior kind of English: Jewish ethnicity and English identity in London's East End, 1905 – 1939', (unpublished doctoral thesis, Rutgers University, New Jersey, 1997), p. 231.

The territorial scope of the Jewish Lads' Brigade (JLB), the size of its membership and its reputation for sacrifice during the Great War, has resulted in it becoming the focus of recent scholarly attention.<sup>156</sup> Initially established in 1894 in Whitechapel, within five years it had branches in the Jewish areas of Liverpool, Manchester, Hull, Cardiff, Leeds, Sheffield and Newcastle as well as colonial outposts in Canada and South Africa. From its inception the Brigade had direct military associations through Colonel Goldsmid, who had entered the Army via the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, and the first Jewish Army Chaplain, the Reverend Francis Cohen, both of whom are credited with its foundation.<sup>157</sup> Also from the outset, it was organised to conform to military standards of organisation and drill, and earned high praise from Lt. General Sir Charles Warren at his inspection at the Deal summer camp in 1899.<sup>158</sup> This is perhaps unsurprising given Goldsmid's own military background and the Reverend Cohen's view on Jewish youth in 1891 that 'if you called these boys 'boys' you didn't have a hope but if you put a fivepenny cap on them and called them 'soldiers', which they were not, you could order them about 'til midnight'.<sup>159</sup> This militaristic trait jarred with the sensitivities of many immigrant families, whose male members had fled Russia partly to escape military service. In addition, it is likely that many boys chafed at a discipline which was culturally foreign to them. By 1909 the Anglo-Jewish press was forced to admit that many immigrant boys preferred to join Baden-Powell's new Boy Scouts movement rather than the JLB, which they considered overtly militaristic. This caused considerable concern within the Brigade hierarchy, which promptly banned its

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<sup>156</sup> R. Voeltz, 'A good Jew and a good Englishman'. the Jewish Lads' Brigade, 1894 – 1922', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 23, (1988), 119 – 127. Kadish, *A good Jew*.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 1-2. E. Bradlow, 'Colonel A.E.W. Goldsmid: Everything British with old Jewish touches breaking through', *Jewish Journal of Sociology*, 39 (1997), 63 – 75, pp. 64, 66-67.

<sup>158</sup> Kadish, *A Good Jew*, p.11. Anglo-Jewish Archives, Southampton University (hereafter AJA), Papers of the Jewish Lads' & Girls' Brigade, 1897 – 1991, MS 244/839/GEN16. Captain Lessing, officer in charge of summer camp reported, 'He (Lt. Gen. Warren) highly commended them on their smartness adding that many a battalion of Regulars might take a few hints from the JLB'.

<sup>159</sup> AJA, MS 244/GEN128. Cohen quoted the words of Professor Drummond, which were printed in the *JC* in April, 1891 and cited in an essay written by a Brigade member, Simon Bernstein, which was based on primary sources and conversations with his contemporaries entitled, 'Ironing out the ghetto bend; a history of the Jewish Lads' Brigade, its aims and its influences up to 1914', pp.7-8.

members from joining any outside scouting organisation. Unease increased after the Brigade had approved the establishment of a rifle shooting range, the opening ceremony later attended by the Secretary of State for War, R. B. Haldane. By 1910 the range was open for five evenings a week.<sup>160</sup>

The alleged militarism of the Brigade remained a contentious issue and required delicate and diplomatic management by its governing Council. Eugene Black considered that the decision not to apply to the War Office for formal recognition as a Cadet unit in 1910 reflected their wish to retain full control of the organisation.<sup>161</sup> But any ambivalence in their motives did not preclude the addition of signalling to their existing paramilitary activities, although Claude Montefiore continued to deny in the Jewish press any link between the Brigade and the Army. On the outbreak of war, the Brigade immediately applied for recognition by the Territorial Forces Association. The military connections of the Brigade's founders, camp inspections by senior British military officers and the selection of a JLB detachment to line the route during the Coronation ceremonies of George V in 1911 would suggest that it was accepted by the British Establishment.

Clifton College was one of the public schools which directly participated in charity work among the local urban poor, and operated in the impoverished quarter of St. Agnes in Bristol. Impressed by this activity, Old Polackeans Charles Sebag-Montefiore and Lionel Montagu took an interest in the Victoria Club for Working Lads in London's East End, founded in 1901 with fifty six Jewish boys on the membership register. They empathised with the Club's general objective of promoting healthy recreation and, more especially, wished to bring it into direct contact with English gentlemen and British ideals.<sup>162</sup> A formal link with the Jewish House at Clifton was made in 1903, endorsed by another Old

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<sup>160</sup> AJA, MS 244/839/GEN84, Headquarters Minutes, 13 July, 1910.

<sup>161</sup> Eugene Black, *The Social Politics of Anglo-Jewry, 1880 – 1920* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), pp. 142 – 3.

<sup>162</sup> Hamond, *Centenary Essays*, p. 56. CCL, *Polack's House Magazine*, 1901. R. Waley-Cohen to Editor.

Polackean, Robert Waley-Cohen, and was welcomed within the Jewish youth movement as a 'wise provision for the future'.<sup>163</sup> Old Polackeans and current House members attended Club camps, and their London residents provided a continuing supply of Club Managers. In the spirit of Anglo-Jewish philanthropy it offered Jewish Cliftonians, past and present, a focus for their charitable work in the East End. Enthusiasm for the Club appeared to come mainly from former House members rather than contemporary pupils, of whom only three attended the Club's annual prize-giving in 1904.<sup>164</sup>

From its inception, Club emphasis was placed on sportsmanship with the associated moral objectives of accepting authority and defeat with good grace. Boxing, fencing, and cricket were played regularly, and the majority of members regularly frequented the gymnasium, where the Clifton College coat of arms hung after 1905. Boys were admitted to the Club at age thirteen although membership was denied to those of 'bad character'. Stern discipline prevailed; poor behaviour on the premises, 'a growing evil', was sternly repressed and while alcohol appeared to pose no enticement to young Jewish boys, gambling was punishable by suspension. Improvement in standards of personal cleanliness, a subject addressed in the East End findings of the Royal Commission on Physical Deterioration in 1903, was a Club objective with perhaps contemporary imperial connotations which lay beyond matters of pure hygiene. Edwardian advertisements for Pears' soap carried the homily, 'The first step towards lightening the White Man's Burden is through teaching the virtues of cleanliness'.<sup>165</sup> The Library was well used by its membership, and the managers commented on the increasing popularity of chess and draughts as: 'surely a good sign of intellectual development'.<sup>166</sup> There is no indication in the extant Club Log and Minute Book of any military emphasis in Club activities, and

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<sup>163</sup> AJA, Papers of the Stepney Jewish Lads' Club, MS 172 AJ 250/4. Report of Victoria Club, June, 1903.

<sup>164</sup> CCL, *Polack's House Magazine*, 1904. Letter to editor, 'all interest seems to have been lost by the greater part of its members'.

<sup>165</sup> Ferguson, *Empire*, p. 256.

<sup>166</sup> London Metropolitan Archives (hereafter LMA), Papers of The Victoria Club, Log Book, ACC/2996/1, 2 June, 1901.



it appears that the regular summer camps were intended to be recreational and offer an experience of life outside the cities, unlike the military infrastructure of the JLB and Clifton's OTC camps.<sup>167</sup>

Gentile members were welcomed at the Victoria, with Club Minutes for the Stepney Jewish Lads' Club noting that, 'we hope this intermixture with our Gentile neighbours will be greatly beneficial to the Club and its members'.<sup>168</sup> This ecumenical approach signalled further approval of the anglicising influence on young Jewish boys, the overarching objective of most club managers.

Other Jewish boys' clubs, with no direct public school connection, sought to engender a similar ethos. To introduce, 'The spirit of the great public schools' was the stated objective for the West Central Jewish Working Lads' Club, whose new premises were opened in 1900 by Claude Montefiore for its 170 members, aged thirteen to nineteen. Gymnastics and drilling were introduced to the boys to, 'cultivate the upright frame of the athlete and its almost universal corollary, upright bearing in their daily dealings with their fellows'.<sup>169</sup> The emphasis of the Club appears to have focused on physical and moral improvement, rather than paramilitary exercises, although at its second anniversary celebrations, during the Boer War, Montefiore alluded to the members' patriotic instincts. In his speech he, 'expected the lads wished they were bigger so that they may go out and fight'.<sup>170</sup>

Orthodox Jews in Whitechapel in 1901 deplored the increasing laxity and indifference to formal religious observance of the younger generation, and it appears that religion was not popular amongst Club members.<sup>171</sup> One of the smaller London Clubs, the Stepney Jewish Lads' Club, 'A Club for all and all for the Club', formed for boys aged between thirteen and sixteen living in the

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<sup>167</sup> CCL, *Polack's House Magazine*, 1907.

<sup>168</sup> AJA, MS 172 AJ 250/4, 5 December, 1903.

<sup>169</sup> AJA, papers of the West Central Jewish Working Lads' Club, MS 152 AJ 136.

<sup>170</sup> *JC*, Feb 9, 1900 cited *ibid*.

<sup>171</sup> Lammers, 'A superior kind of English', p. 60.

immediate area, was the only one to offer regular religious services. As at the Victoria, the Library, which was stocked with the popular boys' novels of the day, was well frequented. The literature of imperial adventures and public school yarns became a conduit for the transfer of ultra-English ideals to young Jewish immigrants, as well as to British youth in general.<sup>172</sup> Paramilitary activities appear implicit as a weekly shooting class commenced at the end of December, 1903, and congratulations were extended to the Brady Street Club on its new shooting range. In the wake of the Boer War, *The Bradian* reported that, 'a good muster of sharp shooters was to be hoped for'.<sup>173</sup> Certainly patriotism was a prevailing tenet, with the Club magazine of June 1915 claiming that 'the organisation of the club has justified its existence by the fact that so many of its members past and present have joined HM Forces'.<sup>174</sup>

One of the later Boys' Clubs to be established was Hutchinson House in 1905. It was opened by Lionel de Rothschild, later to play a leading *liaison* role with the Army in the war. He called upon privileged Jews to give financial support and to volunteer as managers, particularly those educated at Harrow and Cheltenham.<sup>175</sup>

A level of resentment was held by many Club members against the somewhat patronising attitudes of their Managers, who were drawn almost exclusively from privileged Anglo-Jewry rather than immigrant parents or past members. A partial exception existed at the Victoria, where Sub-Managers were *Old Victorians* but, although permitted to speak at meetings, they had no vote.<sup>176</sup> A sense of *noblesse oblige* appears to have motivated many Club Managers despite Basil Henriques' claim that, 'A club is not a place run by the privileged for the under-privileged. It is a place where the privileged and under-privileged share together in the life of the club and strive together towards the realisation

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<sup>172</sup> AJA, MS 172 AJ 250/4. Club Chronicle, 1903.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid*, *The Bradian*, December, 1904

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>175</sup> Black, *The Social Politics*, p.145.

<sup>176</sup> LMA, ACC 2996/002. Minute Book, 1913.

of the club's ideals'.<sup>177</sup> Old Polackean, Charles Sebag-Montefiore, who attended the Victoria Boys' Club's summer camp in 1907 with the Reverend Polack, declared: 'it means to Cliftonians a chance of meeting for the first time some of the rougher elements of Jewish life [...] and instilling into them something of the Clifton spirit we loved so well'.<sup>178</sup>

While it is apparent that there were differing levels of paramilitary activity in the clubs, one of the prime objectives of their managers was to secure the physical and moral improvement of their membership and counter accusations of masculine inferiority. In this they aligned with contemporary national objectives for reform, although they chose to have no direct association with Government schemes established by the Royal Commission on Physical Deterioration and the financial grants offered for compliance.

The literature of the Jewish youth movement is dominated by the broad term, 'anglicisation', which implies a distancing from Jewish customs and behaviours and an acceptance of the English *modus vivendi*. Yet this fails to reflect the new and nuanced form of elite English identity, whose values and aspirations were developed on the imperial and military training grounds of the English public schools, and which were brought to the clubs by patrons and managers from the upper echelons of Anglo-Jewry. The extent to which young immigrant males were influenced by these tenets is difficult to quantify. The relatively short period of the clubs' existence before 1914 may offer some insight. But it also appears that the anglicising character of the clubs was a deterrent to some immigrant families, and the militaristic ethos of the JLB, in particular, discouraged boys from either joining or retaining membership. The large numbers of immigrant Jews who were later loath to serve in the British Army might suggest that the scope of the club's influence on immigrant acculturation was somewhat limited.

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<sup>177</sup> Lammers, 'A superior kind of English', p. 242.

<sup>178</sup> CCL, *Polack's House Magazine*, 1907.

### Jewish 'warriors' in Britain before 1914

Before World War 1, an Army career was viewed by wealthy Britons as a leisurely and gentlemanly pursuit with opportunities for sport, especially riding and hunting. Although the middle class supplied the majority of officers in the artillery regiments of the nineteenth century British Army, the aristocracy and landed gentry maintained their dominance in the elite corps of the Guards and Cavalry to the exclusion of those from the world of commerce, who were automatically considered socially inferior.<sup>179</sup>

The officer corps of the Indian Army had attracted a small number of British Jews in the late nineteenth century, due partly to the comparative ease of gaining a commission.<sup>180</sup> However, most recruits belonged to the 'Beni Yisrael', long-term Jewish settlers in Bombay.<sup>181</sup> There was virtually no class exclusiveness in the Indian Army. It had evolved from the military service of East India Company merchants, whose background was in commercial activity.

Prior to the Boer War, there was sufficient Jewish contribution to the British Army to warrant special annual services of celebration on the Feast of Hanakuh. By 1900, there were forty two officers in the Regular British Army, with a further fourteen in the Militia and 143 in the Yeomanry and Volunteers, although none held rank above that of Colonel. Ferguson has noted that prior to the fourth generation, the Rothschilds, perhaps the leading Anglo-Jewish family, had been anything but keen soldiers. But by 1903 Nathaniel, a Major in the Royal Bucks Hussars, took a keen interest in military matters and was a supporter of Army Reform.<sup>182</sup> Enlistment in volunteer army units for new landowners of the *nouveau riche*, Jewish and non-Jewish, was an *entrée* into

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<sup>179</sup> Razzell, 'The Social Origins, pp. 255- 256, 259.

<sup>180</sup> Eli Rubin, *140 Jewish Marshals, Generals and Admirals* (London: De Vere Books, 1952), p.224. The 1869 Army and Navy Gazette listed 36 Jewish officers and 231 soldiers in the Indian Army.

<sup>181</sup> 'Jews as Soldiers' in *The Spectator*, January 1903, in Englander (ed.), *A Documentary History*, p. 343.

<sup>182</sup> Niall Ferguson, *The World's Banker. A History of the House of Rothschild, 1849 – 1998* (London: Penguin, 2000), p. 412.

county society. It has also been recently suggested that it was a form of identification with the quintessentially masculine ethos of the empire, a form of male assertion.<sup>183</sup>

The Army Volunteer movement had been inaugurated in 1859 in an effort to encourage military participation from the class of men described by the Prince Consort as those, 'who do not, under our present system, enter either into the Regular Army or the Militia'.<sup>184</sup> Men were obliged to take part in fortnightly drills and were liable to be called upon in the event of an invasion. While the military value of the auxiliary organisations was questionable, it is apparent that class-ridden Victorian society drew sharp social distinctions between the Army and the Volunteers. It was noted that 'the movement attracted increasing ridicule on account of its military pretensions and gaudy uniforms and the social aspirations of the officer corps attracted scant respect [...] (Volunteer officers) are men of intensely vulgar, conceited and ignorant manners, men who still drop their 'h's' and are among the uneducated *nouveau riche* in local society'. A sharp line was drawn between the exclusiveness of the elite Regular Army officer corps, drawn largely from the landed gentry of the shires, and the ambitions of the *parvenu* commercial class from the cities. The latter category became an accepted stereotype of the rich Jew, assimilated but never truly an Englishman.

In the cities, Jewish participation as officers and rankers in the Volunteers was reported in the Jewish press from the outset.<sup>185</sup> By 1878, Joseph Jacobs noted that over 2,000 'Israelites' had enlisted.<sup>186</sup> An all-Jewish unit in the East End of London was one of the first Volunteer corps to be established at the instigation of middle class Jews living in other parts of the city. Apart from the officers, the 200 volunteers of the East Metropolitan Rifle Volunteer Corps were from working class backgrounds. Within five years, lack of discipline and

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<sup>183</sup> John Tosh, 'What should historians do with Masculinity? Reflections on nineteenth century Britain', *History Workshop Journal*, 38 (1994), 179 – 202, p. 194.

<sup>184</sup> Spiers, *The Army and Society*, p.165.

<sup>185</sup> *JC*, 4 November, 1859, p. 5.

<sup>186</sup> Jacobs, *Jewish Statistics*, p. 24.

funding resulted in its disappearance from the Army List although the main periodical of the Volunteer movement, *The Volunteer Service Gazette*, 1875, acknowledged the contribution in manpower and financial support made by Jews in England. By the end of the century the Anglo-Jewish press openly opposed the notion of a distinctly Jewish unit claiming that 'Separation of this kind can only retard the work of assimilation so much desired, and which we have always advocated'.<sup>187</sup> This rejection of a specifically Jewish identity was to become a continuing *leitmotif* of Anglo-Jewry in World War I.

The Boer War was the first in British history in which established and immigrant Jews played a part. They viewed their participation not only as a privilege, and the opportunity to confirm their patriotism, but as a channel to reviving their historic warrior spirit and repudiating notions of the Jew as the weakling of Europe, who leaves the rougher work of patriotism to the Gentile.<sup>188</sup>

Now we Jews, we English Jews, O Mother England,  
Ask another boon of thee!  
Let's share with them the danger and the glory,  
Where thy best and bravest lead, there let us  
Follow o'er the sea!

Long ago and far away, O Mother England  
We were warriors brave and bold,  
But a hundred nations rose in arms against us,  
And the shades of exile closed o'er those heroic  
Days of old.

For the Jew has heart and hand, our Mother England,  
And they both are thine today –  
Thine for life and thine for death, yea, thine For ever!  
Wilt thou take them as we give them, freely, gladly?  
England, say!<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> *JC*, 4 March, 1898, cited in Pollens, '11<sup>th</sup> Tower Hamlets Volunteers', p. 133.

<sup>188</sup> *JC*, 26 January, 1900, p. 17, cited in Richard Mendelsohn, 'The Jewish Soldier. Anglo-Jewry at war, 1899 – 1902', *Jewish Affairs*, 54 (1999), p. 17.

<sup>189</sup> Extract from '*Talmudic legends, hymns and paraphrases*', (1908), allegedly written by Alice Montefiore, sister of Claude Montefiore, and cited by the Rt. Hon. G Russell in *The Daily News*, 17 September, 1917.

Twelve hundred Jewish officers and men joined the auxiliary forces of the British Army to fight against the Boers. Alfred Salinger, who served in the ranks of the Mounted Infantry City Imperial Volunteers in South Africa, claimed that they had done ‘a very good share of the work of the war [...] and [...] had vindicated the right of volunteers to be looked upon as soldiers and not boys playing at same’. Many like him saw it as their ‘glorious privilege as British Jews to be ready and willing to swell the ranks of our country’s defenders’.<sup>190</sup> But Salinger admitted that even those who were previously the most ardent military spirits were ready to lapse into civilian life again at short notice.<sup>191</sup>

Instances were recorded of immigrant Jews being refused enlistment in the Imperial Yeomanry, and the majority of successful recruits were volunteers from the JLB and the Jewish Working Men’s Club in the East End.<sup>192</sup> In 1900 the Anglo-Jewish press claimed that the war:

has also established once and for all the complete political solidarity of English Jews with their Christian fellow subjects. Never before have Jews fought for the flag in such numbers [...] Jewish loyalty and oneness with the nation are once more proved in the eyes of the world.<sup>193</sup>

This new fighting spirit was openly condemned by the eminent writer, Israel Zangwill, as symptomatic of the collapse of Jewish values following emancipation.<sup>194</sup> There was also criticism in the anti-Semitic press, on the one hand accusing Jewish immigrants of polluting the virility of the British Army through their physical inferiority while simultaneously attacking a lack of loyalty through their rejection of military service.<sup>195</sup> But the dominant cause of the anti-Semitism which surfaced during the Boer War was the alleged plutocracy of

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<sup>190</sup> *JC*, 8 November, 1901, p. 9. Letter from Mr E. Yates.

<sup>191</sup> AJA, MS 209 AJ 810/1/4. Written from Elands River Station, 14 June, 1900.

<sup>192</sup> Richard Mendelsohn, ‘The Jewish Soldier’ – Anglo-Jewry at war, 1899 – 1902’, *Jewish Affairs*, 54, (1999), 11 – 19, p. 15.

<sup>193</sup> *JC*, 21 September, 1900, p. 15 cited *ibid*, p. 18.

<sup>194</sup> Israel Zangwill cited in S. Bayme, ‘Jewish leadership and anti-Semitism in England, 1898 – 1918, (Unpublished doctoral thesis, Columbia University, 1977), p.45.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 83, 87. The racial sentiments of Arnold White and anti-Semitic Tory opinion published in *Sunrise* exemplified this prejudice.

South African Jewish financiers, who were accused of being the main beneficiaries of the conflict:

Helen's was the face that launched a thousand ships. In our golden age the face wears more often the shrewd features of some Hebrew financier. To defend the interests of Lord Rothschild and his fellow bondholders, Egypt was first occupied, and then practically annexed by Great Britain [...] the extremist case of all is perhaps our own South African War.<sup>196</sup>

By contrast, others supported Jewish military participation in South Africa. An article in an early 1903 edition of 'The Spectator' suggested that the British imperialist spirit had awakened 'the dormant fighting instincts of the (Jewish) race'.<sup>197</sup> This martial revival was encouraged by the presence of Field Marshal Lord Roberts at a special Jewish military service held a few days earlier at the Central Synagogue in London. In an attempt to analyse the Jews' historical martial reticence, the article suggested that their generic aptitude for military service had been suppressed by the course of Jewish history since the Middle Ages. Lauding current Jewish participation in European Armies where 50,000 were currently serving in the Russian Army and large numbers were in the Galician contingent of the Austro-Hungarian Army, it ignored the fact that recruits were likely to have been conscripts rather than volunteers. The racial tenor of Edwardian attitudes was evident in the corollary statement that: 'They have lost in Jewishness [...] but gained in manliness'.<sup>198</sup> After 1901, as Britain's perceptions of her superiority became increasingly threatened both domestically and internationally, the cultivation of Spartan qualities and discipline became paramount to the detriment of those whose values differed from these precepts.

Jewish scientific responses to nineteenth century notions of racial difference in Europe and Britain were unsuccessful in reversing notions of the feminized, sickly Jew, unsuited to physical hardship, and contributing to the

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<sup>196</sup> Extract from Henry Brailsford, *The War of Steel and Gold: a Study of Armed Peace*, (1914) cited in Ferguson, *Empire*, p. 284.

<sup>197</sup> 'Jews as soldiers', *The Spectator*, 3 January 1903, cited in Englander, *A Documentary History*, p. 343.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid*, p. 345.



degeneration of their adopted nations. Many well established Anglo-Jews were inherently antagonistic towards their immigrant co-religionists because they threatened to endanger the advancing status of the established Jewish minority in Britain. The exposure of Anglo-Jewry's elite to the broader imperialist ethos of the public schools, universities and army service gradually added a new dimension to these sentiments. They had acquired country estates and moved in elevated Gentile social circles in the latter decades of the nineteenth century, increasingly adopting the habits and *mores* of the non-Jewish upper classes to further their ambitions. The public school and the British Army were bastions of the cult of masculinity, nurturing the image of the 'chivalrous gentleman', who embodied, among other attributes, a fearlessness in war and an excellence in sports.<sup>199</sup> This chivalric obsession, with its violent masculine values, was considered by the majority of the immigrant community, and orthodox Jews in particular, as the essence of *goyim naches* and viewed with opprobrium.<sup>200</sup> But the Gentiles' 'games' were adopted as a new facet of Anglo-Jewish identity and, in the process, engendered a disdain for those in the community who did not seek to match such criteria. Anxieties over Jewish military service in World War 1 were to bring this dissonance into sharper focus, and deepen the rift within the community.

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<sup>199</sup> Girouard, *The Return to Camelot*, p. 260.

<sup>200</sup> Boyarin, 'Goyim Naches' in Cheyette & Marcus, *Modernity, Culture and the Jew*, p. 67.

## PART TWO

### THE WAR YEARS

#### JEWS AND THE STATE: PARTICIPATION AND DISSENT

##### INTRODUCTION

Whilst Jews in continental Europe lived under varying statutes of State control, particularly in Russia and Germany, Jewish residents in Britain had remained relatively free from regulation prior to 1914.<sup>201</sup> The community was largely self-regulating under the leadership of an Anglo-Jewish hierarchy, and administered through the auspices of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, a body awarded statutory recognition in 1836.<sup>202</sup> It had liaised with the Government as members of the same governing class, and claimed to speak, without challenge, for all Jews in Britain.<sup>203</sup> The outbreak of war altered the British majority/minority *status quo*, and forced Jews into a closer relationship with the State.

On the declaration of war, the British Government immediately classified the population of the country as either nationals (British born or naturalised) or aliens. The precarious balance within the Jewish community in Britain, challenged from the 1870s by the immigrant influx with its attendant impact on Anglo-Jewish goals of assimilation, was further destabilised by the regulations of the Aliens Restriction Act passed on 5 August, 1914. Overnight, immigrant Jews, accustomed since their arrival in Britain to, at best, the patronising benevolence of Anglo-Jewry, and at worst, its antipathy and social manipulation, became categorised and controlled by the mechanisms of the State.

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<sup>201</sup> Todd Endelman, *The Jews in Britain, 1656 – 2000* (London: University of California Press, 2002), p. 161. In discussing the diaspora, Katz instances Germany in which State legislation specifically ruled on what was permitted/forbidden to its Jewish population, Jacob Katz (ed.), *Toward Modernity. The European Jewish Model* (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1987), p. 239. In Russia 1,400 statutes restricted Jewish rights of settlement, barred them from university and public service, and prevented them from owning land, Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*, p. 261.

<sup>202</sup> Geoffrey Alderman in Pierre Birnbaum and Ira Katznelson (eds.) *Paths to Emancipation: Jews, States and Citizenship* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), p. 130.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid*, p. 134. Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*, p. 299.

Under the prevailing citizenship laws, Britain followed the principle of French *jus soli*, based on birthplace. The Inter-Departmental Committee on Naturalisation had decreed in 1901 that:

To the Common Law belongs the fundamental principle that any person who is born within His Majesty's Dominion is from the moment of his birth a British subject, whatever may be the nationality of either or both of his parents, and however temporary or casual the circumstances determining the locality of his birth may have been.<sup>204</sup>

The concept of citizenship and national 'belonging' remained a largely extraneous concept to the majority of immigrants from Eastern Europe. A considerable number intended to travel on to the United States when circumstances permitted and regarded themselves as British residents by default at the outbreak of war. Others had sought naturalization, and this had been much encouraged by assimilated Jews in general and the Board of Deputies in particular as signifying integration and conformity with the nation state. Citizenship was not an easy option for an impoverished alien to pursue. The Naturalization Act of 1870 required the qualifications of five years' residency and four householder's testimonials, together with a considerable fee. In 1905 the Act's requirements were extended to exclude those, who could not, 'speak, read or write English reasonably well'.<sup>205</sup> Moreover, applicants for naturalization were required to identify with the life and habits of the nation. Language ability and cultural attitudes continued to play an important part in the requirements of Home Office officialdom:

Mere conversational facility when he meets a Gentile does not suffice to show that a Jew is identifying himself with English life. On the contrary if the only newspapers he can read are Jewish ones, the likelihood is that his ideas are kept widely apart from those of the ordinary English citizen.<sup>206</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*, p. 381.

<sup>205</sup> P. Thane, 'The British Imperial State and the Construction of National Identities' in Billie Melman, (ed.), *Borderlines, Genders and Identities in War and Peace, 1870 – 1930* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 39-40.

<sup>206</sup> Black, *The Social Politics*, p. 317.

Even so, when war was declared, the East London press recorded that many aliens immediately applied for naturalization, the fee for which was £3.00, approximately £200 in current monetary values.<sup>207</sup>

Procedures for dealing with aliens in the event of war had been prepared in 1910 by the newly established 'Treatment of Aliens during War' Sub-Committee of the Imperial Defence Committee, under the chairmanship of Winston Churchill. Through its legislation, State powers over aliens could be extended at will. The major provisions of the Aliens Restriction Act were the amendment of the Official Secrets Act, 1889, to give powers of search and arrest without judicial intervention, and the registration of all alien arrivals. This latter recommendation was officially regarded at the time as impractical, but was, in fact, pursued covertly, although not fully, by the security branch of the War Office, MI5. The Metropolitan Police district of London, where the majority of aliens lived, had been exempted due to a lack of manpower but, on the outbreak of war, the process was brought into the open and its completion put in train.<sup>208</sup>

On the declaration of war, the non-British population was classified under the Act according to the status of the powers involved in hostilities. Those from the German and Austro-Hungarian Empires, Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire were classed as "enemy aliens", and in October, 1914, at the insistence of Lord Kitchener, a policy of internment was initiated, which does not form part of this study. This category also included immigrants from regions of Poland Lithuania which had come under the governance of Prussia and the Habsburg Empire at the end of the eighteenth century. Those from countries which affirmed their neutrality in August 1914, such as Italy, Portugal, Greece, Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey, were considered "neutral aliens", although this status changed during the course of the war with Italy and Romania becoming "friendly aliens" in 1915 and

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<sup>207</sup> *East London Observer*, 22 August, 1914.

<sup>208</sup> Ben Gidley, 'Citizenship and Belonging: East London Jewish Radicals, 1903 – 1918', (unpublished doctoral thesis, Goldsmith College, University of London, 2002), pp. 182 – 83.

1916 respectively.<sup>209</sup> Subjects of Allied States (France, the Russian Empire and Serbia) were classed as “friendly aliens” but, fundamental to the issue of Jewish military enlistment, were barred from serving in the British Army and Navy.<sup>210</sup> Ironically, many Russian Jews returned home from Britain in August, 1914 (as well as from France and the United States) to join the Russian Army and fight for the *Entente*. These were not infrequently university students forced to study overseas because of the *numerus clausus* applied to Jewish students in Imperial Russia.<sup>211</sup>

Thus Government legislation on immigrant status was instantly divisive in the mainly Yiddish-speaking East European Jewish communities in Britain. Overnight, the closely knit immigrant quarters in London and Britain’s larger cities, linked by heritage, language and culture, were separated by the matrix of State legislation.

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<sup>209</sup> Martin Gilbert, *The First World War* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1994), p.34. Gilbert has suggested that in August 1914 neutral nations were, in effect, waiting on the sidelines to assess future advantage in their participation.

<sup>210</sup> The National Archives (hereafter NA), HO 144/13362. Minute, Sir Edward Troup, Permanent Under-Secretary of State, 16 June, 1917. On the issue of the ‘friendly aliens’ recruitment, he observed that ‘permission to enlist in the British Army is a privilege’.

<sup>211</sup> Chimen Abramsky, *War, Revolution and the Jewish Dilemma* (London: H. K. Lewis, 1975), p. 9. Alexander Prusin, *Nationalizing a Borderland. War, Ethnicity and anti Jewish Violence in East Galicia, 1914 – 1920* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama, 2005), p. 21. Hubertus Jahn, *Patriotic Culture in Russia during World War I* (London: Cornell University Press, 1998), p. 113.

### CHAPTER 3 ANGLO-JEWRY AND VOLUNTARY ENLISTMENT

Jews are naturally a peace-loving people to whom war is hateful [...] but war was forced on this great country. We are responding with a spirit worthy of the highest conceptions of our race.<sup>212</sup>

In the summer of 1914, British political activity was focused on the movement towards Home Rule in Ireland. The rapidly developing political crisis in Europe during July, 1914, precipitated by events in the Balkans, had resulted by 1 August in the general mobilization of Russia, Austria, Germany and France. In the interim period between the assassination of Austrian Grand Duke Franz Ferdinand in Bosnia on 28 June and 30 July, when the tsar sanctioned Russian troop movements, Britain's reaction to the crisis had been largely muted, despite her political *entente* with France and Russia. Sir Edward Grey, Britain's Foreign Secretary, had attempted to defuse the crisis, which boosted German hopes of British neutrality in the event of all-out war. Both Grey and Prime Minister Herbert Asquith denied any contractual obligation to intervene, the latter recording in his memoirs, 'We kept ourselves free to decide, when the occasion arose, whether we should or should not go to war'.<sup>213</sup> Germany's declaration of war on France on 3 August, was followed a day later by her invasion of Belgium, whose neutrality had been guaranteed by all the European great powers since 1839. The strategic territorial threat this move posed to Britain, as much as the violation of international law, resulted in her government issuing an ultimatum requesting the withdrawal of German troops from Belgian soil. When this was disregarded, she declared war on Germany on 4 August, which came as a considerable surprise to many of the population.

It was not an entirely unwelcome development to those Britons who viewed warfare as an antidote to national degeneracy. Lord Wolseley had

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<sup>212</sup> *JC*, 14 August, 1914, p. 5.

<sup>213</sup> Asquith, *Genesis*, cited in Niall Ferguson, *The Pity of War* (London: Penguin Press, 1998), p.168.

claimed a decade earlier that ‘the drastic medicine of war alone can revive [...] former manliness’.<sup>214</sup> Although somewhat unexpected, it had been preceded by a literature of possible German invasion and spying since the end of the nineteenth century, frequently interlaced with anti-Semitic allusions. Le Queux had noted the potential *liaison* between the ‘riff raff from Whitechapel’ and national enemies abroad while Saki contrasted German racial vigour with the demoralising effects of Jewish immigration in Britain.<sup>215</sup>

As a diasporic people in Europe, Jews were historically regarded in their respective countries as separate and exclusive communities, whose international loyalties to their co-religionists took priority over their national affiliations. They were also seen as a people who ‘always look towards Palestine as the seat of their repose; and will never consider other countries but as places of passage, without ever attaching themselves to them’.<sup>216</sup> Four days before Britain declared war, for which it had appeared to have little appetite, Leopold Greenberg, editor of the semi-official voice of Anglo Jewry, *The Jewish Chronicle*, had expressed his abhorrence at the possibility of England fighting against Germany, ‘with whom she has no quarrel’.<sup>217</sup> The nation’s alliance with Russia, whose persecution of its Jewish population had been denounced by British and American Jewry in the years prior to 1914, was particularly repugnant. A few days’ later an embarrassing *volte face* from neutrality to war fever did little to reassure the community or to rehabilitate national perceptions of divided loyalties.<sup>218</sup> Greenberg’s statement became the basis of unfavourable national press comment in which Jewish financiers were accused of acting on Germany’s behalf to keep Britain out of the war. Wickham Steed, Foreign Editor of *The Times* in

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<sup>214</sup> J. Gooch, ‘Attitudes to war in late Victorian and Edwardian England’ in Brian Bond and Ian Roy, (eds.), *War and Society. A Yearbook of Military History* (London: Croom Helm, n.d.), p. 95.

<sup>215</sup> Saki, *When William Came*, Le Queux, *The Invasion of 1910*, cited in Daniel Pick, *The War Machine. The Rationalisation of Slaughter in the Modern Age* (London: Yale University Press, 1993), pp. 118, 129, 128.

<sup>216</sup> Michaelis’s response to Abbé Grégoire’s defence of Jews in the French Revolution, ‘An Essay on the Physical, Moral and Political Reformation of the Jews (1789)’, in Mendes-Flohr & Reinharz, *The Jew in the Modern World*, p. 51.

<sup>217</sup> *JC*, 31 July, 1914, p.7.

<sup>218</sup> David Cesarani, ‘An Embattled Minority: Jews in Britain during the First World War’, *Immigrants and Minorities*, 8 (1989), 61 – 81, pp. 63-64.

1914 described Nathaniel Rothschild's efforts to avert war as, 'a dirty German Jewish international financial attempt to bully us into advocating neutrality.'<sup>219</sup>

All leading European States with the exception of Britain had accepted the necessity of submitting their young men to military training in early manhood and requiring them, once trained, to remain at the State's disposition as reservists into their late maturity. In the summer of 1914, most belligerents could call on large armies of serving or potential soldiers.<sup>220</sup> By contrast, Britain's military strategy had been based on the 'Blue Water theory'; unlike European nations obliged to defend their long borders, her frontiers were coastal and readily protected by a large, powerfully equipped navy. At the start of the war, Britain's Regular Army manpower stood at 244,000, with a similar number of men in the Territorials, theoretically to act as a Home Guard.<sup>221</sup>

Despite growing support for a system of military conscription in the early twentieth century, voluntary service had prevailed as the *modus operandi* of the British Army. Lord Roberts, who had served as C-in-C in India, Ireland and South Africa, had stated, 'Compulsory service is [...] as distasteful to the nation as it is incompatible with the conditions of an Army like ours [...] I hold, moreover, that a man who voluntarily serves his country is more to be relied upon as a good fighting soldier than he who is compelled to bear arms'.<sup>222</sup> On the declaration of war, thousands of young men in Britain between the ages of eighteen and thirty rushed to the recruiting offices 'in the holiday spirit, and with an entirely unfounded conviction that the war would be over by Christmas'.<sup>223</sup> This was predominantly an urban response, and such positive enthusiasm came

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<sup>219</sup> Niall Ferguson, *The House of Rothschild*, p. 411. Mark Levene, 'The Balfour Declaration: A Case of Mistaken Identity', *English Historical Review*, 107 (1992), 54 – 77, p. 60. Levene describes *The Times* and other papers as conducting 'what can only be described as a hate campaign'.

<sup>220</sup> John Keegan, *The First World War* (London: Hutchinson, 1998), p. 20.

<sup>221</sup> Jay Winter, *The Great War and the British People* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1985), p. 29.

<sup>222</sup> Ralph Adams & Philip Poirier, *The Conscription Controversy in Great Britain, 1900 - 1918* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1987), p.80.

<sup>223</sup> Jay Winter, *The Great War and the British People* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1985), pp. 29-30. Hew Strachan, *The First World War Vol. 1*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 162. On the introduction of conscription (May 1916) the upper age limit stood at 41 and rose to 51 in April 1918, in P. Dewey, 'Military Recruiting and the British Labour Force during the First World War', *The Historical Journal*, 27 (1984), 199 – 223, p. 222.



mostly from young men of the commercial and professional classes, in contrast with the prevailing mood of the wider population, which was characterised by passive acceptance and obligation.<sup>224</sup> Patriotism was not the only, or even the primary, driving force and deeper motives soon became evident. Many early recruits envisaged the war as an adventure and a release from occupational drudgery while others were prompted by hatred of the enemy and the opportunity to fight. Undoubtedly many more were affected by peer pressure and crowd psychology, first explored by Gustav LeBon in the 1890s. His observations of war fever resulted in his conclusion in 1916 that, 'the mentality of men in crowds is absolutely unlike that they possess when isolated'.<sup>225</sup> As the war progressed and heavy casualties were sustained, press and poster campaigns increasingly condemned 'slackers', while soldiers in uniform and the parents of lost sons were particularly vehement against those who appeared to be shirking their patriotic duty.<sup>226</sup>

### **Minority Issues**

On the outbreak of war, there were officially 50 Jews in the Royal Navy, with 400 in Regular Army service and a further 600 in the Army Reserve.<sup>227</sup> The importance of enlistment to the Jews was openly stated in the Anglo-Jewish press, 'Our people see the fight not only for British interests but for the vital interests of the Jewish people as well'.<sup>228</sup> In Britain it was the implicit expectation of the Government, and perhaps more especially of long established Anglo-Jewry, that eligible Jews offer themselves voluntarily for military duty. At the same time it was apparent that the onus of military service had greater implications for them than for Gentiles. As part of a supra-national people, a Jew was obliged to eschew ethnic solidarity when he enlisted to fight for Britain

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<sup>224</sup> Strachan, *The First World War*, pp.149, 160.

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid*, p. 108.

<sup>226</sup> T. Procter, 'The motives of the soldier', *International Journal of Ethics*, 31 (1920 – 21), 26 – 50, pp. 27 -31.

<sup>227</sup> Barry Kosmin, Stanley Waterman and Nigel Grizzard, 'The Jewish Dead in the Great War as an Indicator for the Location, Size and Social Structure of Anglo Jewry in 1914', *Immigrants and Minorities*, 5 (1986), 181 – 192, p. 183.

<sup>228</sup> *JC*, September 4, 1914, p. 5.

against his German and Austro–Hungarian co–religionists in an alliance with Russia, the traditional persecutor of its Jewish population. This dichotomy was voiced by a Jewish sergeant serving in the Royal Munster Fusiliers in August, 1914, ‘we have done our duty to her [...] (the English nation) [...] although we may have been fighting against men of our own religion in other countries’.<sup>229</sup> Additionally, a Jew’s religion and culture were foreign, in varying degrees, to the norms and customs of the British Army. This was particularly the case for recently naturalized Jews and the British–born sons of immigrants, whose civilian lives had frequently remained embedded in the immigrant quarters of cities before 1914.

The historiography rightly suggests that the problems of Jewish military service were dominated by the reticence of ‘friendly aliens’ to enlist after they were ‘permitted’ to serve in 1916 by the Army Council. Even so, considerable efforts were necessary on the part of Anglo–Jewry to present a unified response and boost enlistment figures in the preceding period of voluntary enlistment. The all–embracing opinion of Michael Adler, Senior Chaplain to Jewish Forces in World War I, ‘that the sons of Israel came forward and bore their part thinking only of the great cause at stake’ has, to an extent, been modified by recent historians.<sup>230</sup> Examination of voluntary enlistment suggests that there were considerable numbers of eligible Jews who were deaf to calls for patriotic loyalty both from fellow citizens and their co–religionists.<sup>231</sup>

Julia Bush has suggested that the *Jewish Chronicle’s* rapid switch from pacifism to war fever within the space of a few days reflected Anglo–Jewry’s fundamental insecurity.<sup>232</sup> Initial reservations were replaced by assimilated Jewry’s commitment to play their part and they promised that ‘In the day of trial, in the stress of battle, these sons of Israel will not be found wanting’.<sup>233</sup> The willingness of many young Jewish men to join up in the early days of the war

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<sup>229</sup> *Ibid*, 14 August, 1914, p.13.

<sup>230</sup> Adler (ed.), *British Jewry Book of Honour*, p. 2.

<sup>231</sup> Cesarani, ‘An Embattled Minority’, p. 66.

<sup>232</sup> Bush, *Behind the Lines*, p. 165.

<sup>233</sup> *JC*, 14 August, 1914, p. 5.

appeared to reflect the national enthusiasm.<sup>234</sup> Emphasis was given in the Anglo-Jewish press to the fact that Jews were enlisting for military service in almost every regiment as a token of loyalty, with testimony to this at both the personal and official level. Michael Adler received a letter in September, 1914, from a Jewish soldier who was on the point of leaving for France, 'to convince England that we Jewish soldiers can do just as much for the Union Jack as anyone else'. In the following months, a Jewish father of four sons in the Army received a letter from HM the King voicing appreciation for their loyalty, 'which they share with so many thousands of others of the Jewish persuasion in the United Kingdom.'<sup>235</sup> As it had done in the Boer War, the *Jewish Chronicle* acted as the drummer for Jewish soldiering, and immediately established an Honour Record of Enlistments, soon to be accompanied by an ever-growing Casualties List.<sup>236</sup> To overcome reticence and ease the path to the recruiting stations, soldiers' letters testifying to a new spirit of *camaraderie* between Jew and Gentile in the British Army appeared regularly. How far this inter-relationship applied to naturalized and British-born recruits from the London's East End and immigrant areas in other cities is difficult to quantify. It may well imply a new development in social relations, as Tony Kushner has suggested that since the early 1900s interaction between Jews and non-Jews in London's immigrant areas was confined to the activities of commerce and organised labour.<sup>237</sup> Letters from Gentile servicemen in praise of Jewish fighting prowess and bravery were publicised. Jews in the Black Watch regiment were praised by their Gentile NCO, 'bonnier and bonnier lads I don't wish to see. They fought just splendid'.<sup>238</sup>

At the beginning of October, the *Jewish Chronicle* printed the following notice in English and in Hebrew:

Since the days of Oliver Cromwell Great Britain has meted out

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<sup>234</sup> *Ibid*, p.10.

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid*, September 18, 1914, p.26. *Ibid*, 2 October, 1914, pp. 5-6.

<sup>236</sup> Mendelsohn, 'The Jewish Soldier', p. 14.

<sup>237</sup> Tony Kushner, 'Jew and non-Jew in the East End of London: towards an anthropology of 'everyday relations'', in Geoffrey Alderman and Colin Holmes, *Outsiders and Outcasts*, (London: Duckworth, 1993), pp. 39 – 42.

<sup>238</sup> *JC*, 11 September, 1914, p. 10.

the fairest treatment, politically, socially and in every way, to Jews. Now it is time for Jews to reciprocate and show that the old spirit of the Maccabees is not dead.<sup>239</sup>

From the first days of enlistment, recruitment centres had been requested to advise the Senior Chaplain, the Reverend Michael Adler, of every Jewish enlistment, and by November, 1914, he reported a total of 4,000.<sup>240</sup> The Anglo-Jewish press anticipated that military records were never likely to be exhaustive and complete, and would result in ignorance among the national population of the true Jewish contribution to the war effort.<sup>241</sup> The *Jewish Chronicle*, intent on publicising recruitment statistics to the fullest extent, encountered considerable problems of accuracy due to the “invisibility” tactics used by a number of volunteers, both in changing their names and registering as Anglicans.

After visiting training camps at Newbury and Aldershot in 1914, Adler reported that a considerable number of Jewish men were concealing their religion.<sup>242</sup> A year later Lord Derby, Director of Recruiting, was told in an interview with the *JC* that Jews enlisted as Christians partly because they were ‘chipped’ (derided) by their comrades.<sup>243</sup> Dissembling of Judaism was roundly condemned by Anglo-Jewry but the practice did not always spring from fear of prejudice. Some soldiers of Jewish extraction no longer regarded themselves as such, a case in point being a recipient of the Victoria Cross, Captain David Hirsch.<sup>244</sup> Others were more ambivalent. Jews enlisting as members of another faith had some historic precedent in the British Army, a fact acknowledged by the *Jewish Chronicle*.<sup>245</sup> A Jewish soldier who joined up in the early days of the war later reflected that he had never thought about his religion on enlistment, but confessed ‘to be frank, I should have put up for the Church of England if he ( the Recruiting Officer) hadn’t taken the words out of my mouth – “Jew, I presume”’.

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<sup>239</sup> *Ibid*, 2 October, 1914, p. 13.

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid*, 14 August, 1914, p.10. *Ibid*, 6 November, 1914, p.24.

<sup>241</sup> *Ibid*, 18 September 1914, p.26.

<sup>242</sup> *Ibid*, 6 November, 1914, p.26.

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid*, 19 November, 1915, p.16.

<sup>244</sup> *Ibid*, 29 June, 1917, p. 6. Hirsch’s decoration was excluded from the official Honours List, Adler, (ed.), *British Jewry Book of Honour*, pp. 7-9.

<sup>245</sup> *JC*, 19 March 1915, p. 25.

He continued that his religion was given on his identity disc but that his father had commented 'well, you wear it underneath so it doesn't matter, does it'.<sup>246</sup> Negligence and indifference on the part of some recruiting officers, which went uncorrected by recruits, was also put forward by the Jewish press as an extenuating factor. But rumours of anti-Jewish prejudice in the British Army reached potential volunteers and doubtless played a part in deterring recruitment.

Name changing had become a common practice for immigrants landing in Britain, and had been discussed by Anglo Jewry as early as 1873. It had originally arisen from the fact that Eastern European immigrants frequently spoke no English on arrival and registered their names as their occupations. Foreign sounding names were increasingly changed in the anti-alien climate of late Victorian/Edwardian Britain to avoid social and economic antagonism.<sup>247</sup> In the increased xenophobic atmosphere induced by the war, 'difference' attracted suspicion and prejudice, and the motivation to 'blend in' became ever more pressing. Whatever the motivation for a recruit's hiding his Jewishness, the result was a diminution of enlistment figures at a time when the Anglo-Jewish hierarchy was intent on demonstrating its fullest support for the war effort.

After the high national enlistment figures of the first weeks of the war, which reached over three quarters of a million,<sup>248</sup> the all-party Government Parliamentary Recruiting Committee (PRC), established on 27 August, 1914 expressed concern over the public's perception that no further recruits were required.<sup>249</sup> The enlistment rate of August/September had dropped in November/December to 287,748.<sup>250</sup> It was estimated that a minimum weekly recruitment rate of 40,000 men was required for Kitchener's New Armies, and a

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<sup>246</sup> *Ibid*, 5 October, 1917, p.7.

<sup>247</sup> Asher Tropp, *Jews in the Professions in Great Britain, 1891 – 1991* (London: The Maccabeans, 1991), p. 94.

<sup>248</sup> 'Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire during the Great War, 1914 – 1920', in R. Douglas, 'Voluntary Enlistment in the First World War and the Work of the Parliamentary Recruiting Committee', *Journal of Modern History*, 42 (1970), 564 – 585, p. 566. Enlistments in the Regular and Territorial Forces in August and September totalled 761,824.

<sup>249</sup> British Library (hereafter BL), MSS 54192A, PRC Minute Book, 21 October, 1914.

<sup>250</sup> Douglas, 'Voluntary Enlistment', p. 566.

Householders' Return, to be completed by males between the ages of nineteen and thirty five, was issued to raise public awareness of the situation. A prolific publications sub-committee was immediately put in place which, by March 1915, had issued twenty million leaflets and two million posters in Britain and in the Empire.<sup>251</sup>

All religious denominations were canvassed through PRC publicity, and eligible Jews were specifically included in an appeal for recruits made in November 1914. The Chief Rabbi, the Very Reverend J H Hertz, called upon Jewish patriotism and a revival of the dormant Jewish fighting spirit:

In this solemn crisis of our nation's life when our beloved country is calling upon her children to fight her righteous cause, all my Jewish brethren will, I am sure, fully realise the supreme duty of the hour. Once more we will prove the old Maccabean spirit is still alive amongst us. We will offer our lives to defend Great Britain's ideals of Justice and Humanity. In ever larger numbers will we continue to join the army of our King. Be strong and of good courage. The God of righteousness is with us. He will guard our going out and our coming in.<sup>252</sup>

Concurrent with this appeal by the Chief Rabbi through official State channels, Michael Adler also proposed that a similar appeal be issued through a newly formed committee of the Anglo-Jewish Board of Deputies.<sup>253</sup>

### **Enlistment and Jewish Identity, 1914**

In Peace – such peace has been our lot – we do not care for the things of war. Perhaps we've a funny idea of what a man should be using his talents for. So in the Army Lists and such things as these we have never set out to make a show – but England is calling us; and we go, the Cohens, Levys, and Isaacs.

England, the home of a simple breed that is not 'cultured' enough to hate, or hold that an alien blood and creed should bar a man from a man's estate. For which – not gratitude, if you please!

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<sup>251</sup> *Ibid*, p. 568.

<sup>252</sup> AJA, Papers of Chief Rabbi J. H. Hertz, MS 175 AJ 141/2, PRC leaflet 22. The Very Reverend Joseph Herman Hertz had become Chief Rabbi of the British Empire in 1913.

<sup>253</sup> LMA, ACC/2805/4/4/1, Adler to Hertz, 24 November, 1914. Adler had also asked Lucien Wolf to 'bring the matter before the new sub-committee that I learn has been formed from representatives of the Board of Deputies and the Jewish Historical Society'.

Not thanks for that which is our right! But a partner's strength in a partner's fight from the Cohens, and Levys and Isaacses'.

Ballade of the Jewish Battalion, 1914.<sup>254</sup>

The initiative for Jews to be grouped together in units throughout the British Army had been prompted early in September 1914 by Lord Kitchener's guarantee that fifty friends joining up together would serve in one battalion. This was publicised through the Anglo-Jewish press, and a meeting was proposed by one of its correspondents for those interested in 'making a party to enlist together for our King and country'.<sup>255</sup>

The tension between British identity and Jewish ethnicity, the *bête noire* of assimilated Anglo-Jewry, surfaced immediately hostilities began. In the first week of the war the suggestion was made in the East End for a Jewish Corps to be organised on similar lines to the Jewish Volunteer Corps, which had served in the Boer War.<sup>256</sup> A few days' later a serving Jewish army officer, Captain Webber proposed a Foreign Legion of 2,000 Yiddish speaking Jews. His recruiting initiative was stifled by the Senior Chaplain's intervention at the War Office, although this was portrayed in the Jewish press as necessary to prevent Jews being regarded as either insular or fearful of prejudice in regular army regiments.<sup>257</sup>

On the grounds that it would overcome the difficulties of religious observance in military service, considerable support for a discrete Jewish unit was given by other elements of the community.<sup>258</sup> But the wish 'for Jews to play their part as Jews, any part for which they are called, so that Jewish nationality and the Jewish nation should not be left out of the final adjustment' was voiced by Dr David Eder, one of a small group of Zionist sympathisers who supported

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<sup>254</sup> *JC*, 25 December, 1914, p. 14. Verses 2 and 3 of composition by Leopold Spero.

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid*, September 4, 1914, p.6. Letter from Mr Edwin Wolf asking 'old friends and co-religionists to meet at the offices of the Siberian and General Trading Company'.

<sup>256</sup> Proposed by Simon Cohen in a letter to the *East London Observer*, 15 August, 1914.

<sup>257</sup> First reported in the *JC*, 11 August, 1914, p. 11. See also Cesarani, 'An Embattled Minority', p. 70.

<sup>258</sup> *JC*, 6 November, 1914, p. 11. Mr Maurice Myers to Editor.

the idea of a Jewish battalion in the first weeks of the war.<sup>259</sup> In early December, the War Office's refusal to sanction such a movement was published in the Anglo-Jewish press.<sup>260</sup> According to Eder, the Army's rejection was again instigated by influential Anglo-Jews, and he claimed that, 'the military first welcomed the idea and, when success seemed assured, converted the scheme, under Anglo Jewish influence, into futility'.<sup>261</sup>

Eder's disappointment was followed by a War Office initiative for which, according to Adler, 'they were really enthusiastic'. The proposed scheme was for Jews to serve together in a special unit but with no Jewish identity in its title. This would offer expression to an *esprit de Juifs* to mirror the *esprit de corps* of the Pals' battalions. The ethos of banding together men who were colleagues in the same workplace or were part of the same community was the *zeitgeist* of the Pals' Battalions, pioneered by Lord Derby in Liverpool. The proposal ostensibly met the concerns of assimilated Jews over enlistment hesitancy and also their rejection of any overtly Jewish identity. Eder was invited by the War Office to open the first recruitment office in the vicinity of Aldgate East for the 'Special Enlistment of Jewish Recruits'.<sup>262</sup> At the end of that month, the *Jewish Chronicle* published the following notice:

'For King and Country  
Jewish Recruiting Committee  
A Recruiting Office is now open at  
50 Leadenhall Street  
(By the kind permission of the Corporation of the City of London)  
Jews! Fall In!!  
Serve with your fellow Jews

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<sup>259</sup> Joseph Hobman (ed.), *David Eder. Memoirs of a Modern Pioneer* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1945), p. 135.

<sup>260</sup> *JC*, 11 December, 1914, p. 24.

<sup>261</sup> Hobman (ed.), *David Eder*, pp. 11, 33, 73, 135. David Eder was born 1866 in London of Lithuanian ancestry, and described by Hobman as a 'vanguard worker in Socialism, psychoanalysis and Zionism'. The family were socially assimilated Anglo-Jews and moderately orthodox. Eder's medical training was followed by a career as a doctor between 1905 and 1914 before he volunteered for service with the RAMC in 1915. His promotion of a Jewish unit was supported by his cousin, the writer Israel Zangwill, and his brother-in-law, Joseph Cowen, although Eder considered himself as the 'most detached among the groupings' involved in the issue.

<sup>262</sup> *JC*, 11 December, 1914, p.21. War Office letter of 7 December, 1914.



And as arranged with the cordial assent  
Of the War Office Authorities  
ENLIST AT ONCE  
England has been all she could be to Jews,  
Jews will be all they can be to England'.<sup>263</sup>

The final two lines echoed the *Jewish Chronicle's* reversal of Greenberg's original pacifist statement in early August, 1914.<sup>264</sup>

Publicity for a special unit for Jews and rallies held at Camperdown House, the premises of the Jewish Lads' Brigade (JLB), whose ex-members and managers had rushed to enlist in the first days of the war, called on Jews to join up and show 'the same inspiring fellowship which animates other battalions formed on the same basis of some particular bond of union'.<sup>265</sup> The 'special unit' was not a success. In February, 1915, Michael Adler, who had been instrumental in the demise of the previous proposals for Jewish units, advised the Chief Rabbi that the War Office considered itself misled by Eder's group, and were annoyed to the extent that they 'withdrew all their official sanction'.<sup>266</sup>

### The Jewish Recruiting Committees

'A Recruiting Sergeant stood outside a pawn shop,  
Getting recruits, picking the beauts, willing recruits.  
By the door he stood, he raised the fighting blood  
Of little Ikey Moses there just like a Sergeant should.  
Then Ikey joined the colours and he shouted through the door,  
'Rachel, put the shutters up, I've got to go to war.  
Goodbye Rachel, everybody knows  
I'm fighting for the shamrock, the thistle and the rose.  
I'll be there, dear, when the bugle calls  
Standing by the cannon with me three brass balls'.<sup>267</sup>

Despite this rallying song with its wry endorsement of national patriotism, the community's working class immigrant areas continued to present

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<sup>263</sup> *Ibid*, 25 December, 1914, p.14.

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid*, 7 August, 1914, p.5.

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid*, 1 January 1915, p. 7.

<sup>266</sup> LMA, ACC/2805/4/4/1, Adler to Hertz, 26 February 1915. Adler attributed the blame to Leopold Greenberg and the issue continued to divide them throughout the war.

<sup>267</sup> Imperial War Museum (hereafter IWM), Sound Archives, 11188. Song recorded in 1964 by Louis Levy, a music hall entertainer who performed Jewish songs for civilians and troops in World War I.

the greatest challenge to the Anglo-Jewish recruitment effort. Most Jews born in Britain of foreign parents still resided in these districts and retained many ethnic attitudes, inclinations and habits.<sup>268</sup> This was not the case for past members of the anglicising Jewish youth clubs, many of whom enlisted with enthusiasm. The *Jewish Chronicle* acknowledged the anti-military sentiments of many immigrant working class families, 'Our people considered it a disgrace to don the uniform', and who were afraid of their sons mixing with low company.<sup>269</sup> Similar attitudes had been prevalent amongst 'respectable' working class Gentile families in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century but imperial culture and the jingoism of the Boer War had subsequently transformed the image of the British soldier from that of wastrel to hero.<sup>270</sup> Jewish reticence was somewhat counter-balanced by the record of young boys from the immigrant areas enlisting three or four times under different names and at different recruiting stations because of family friction.

In an attempt to redress the low level of East End recruitment, the Chief Rabbi was invited by a new Jewish Recruitment Committee (JRC) formed in March, 1915 to address a mass meeting in Shoreditch.<sup>271</sup> Although Eder and Cowen served on the Committee, its leadership was dominated by those members of the Anglo-Jewish community who had been most directly involved with the 'improving' ambitions of the Jewish youth movement managers, augmented by Jewish chaplains and clergy.

At the end of June 1915, Lord Kitchener wrote to the JRC urging all able bodied men to enlist, adding that he would be, 'glad to hear of any reasons that

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<sup>268</sup> Julia Bush, *Behind the Lines*, p. 167.

<sup>269</sup> *JC*, 8 October 1915, p 16.

<sup>270</sup> Spiers, 'The regular army' in Ian Beckett, *The Nation in Arms. A Social Study of the British Army in the First World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), p. 46.

<sup>271</sup> LMA, ACC/2805/4/4/6. Denzil Myer to Hertz, 23 March, 1915. Committee members: Harry Lewis (Chairman, and President of the Jewish Athletic Association), Denzil Myer (Hon Sec. and Chairman, Stepney Jewish Lads' Club), Sir Frederic Nathan (Commandant Jewish Lads' Brigade and the highest ranked officer in the Army Reserve in 1914), C. E. Sebag-Montefiore (Hon Sec. Victoria Lads' Club), Arthur Joseph (Chairman Brady Street Lads' Club), Michael Adler (Senior Jewish Chaplain to HM Forces) S. Lipson (Assistant Chaplain to HM Forces), Revs. L. Geffen and J. Stern, Ernest Lesser, Solomon J. Solomon, RA, Dr Eder, Colonel de Lara Cohen, M. S. Salinger, P. E. Lyons, J. Cowen and Major Price, the Chief Recruiting Office for East London. Myer is described as 'London Jewry's Chief Recruiting Agent' in David Cesarani, *The Jewish Chronicle and Anglo Jewry, 1841 – 1991* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 118.

may be given to you by young and suitable men for not availing themselves of this opportunity to see service'.<sup>272</sup> Some of the experiences of potential recruits undoubtedly acted as a deterrent. From the early months of the war, there was evidence of prejudice against Jews in the enlistment process, and it was reported in the local London press that, 'when he does get in he is hustled about and things are made generally offensive for him'.<sup>273</sup> The refusal of some recruiting officers to enlist Jews continued on a regular basis up to the introduction of conscription in Manchester and Leeds as well as in London. Their actions were sometimes accompanied by specifically anti-Semitic remarks, such as, ironically, 'Lord Kitchener does not want any more Jews in the Army', and that Jewish recruits would be taken last.<sup>274</sup> In addition, Jews were refused enlistment in certain battalions, such as the 4<sup>th</sup> City of London Battalion, a factor acknowledged in the Anglo-Jewish press as a distinct discouragement.<sup>275</sup> Complaints persisted although Anglo-Jewry continued to maintain that refusals were not countenanced by the War Office.<sup>276</sup>

Racial prejudice against Jews in army regiments had existed before 1914, particularly among officers, undoubtedly reflecting the 'class' aspect of British racial attitudes discussed earlier. Lt. Stein revealed that he had:

[...] on more than one occasion experienced that prejudice (against Jews and those with foreign names) among officers [...] Expressions of ill feeling were never against me personally but against Jews as a whole or particular Jewish officers in other battalions.<sup>277</sup>

Antipathy towards Jews was apparent among some Recruiting Officers from the first weeks of the war. The Depot Officer at Devonshire Road, Hackney, stated 'We are entitled to refuse a man without reason given if, in our opinion, that man is not a fit and proper person, though he cannot be rejected on grounds of

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<sup>272</sup> *JC*, 9 July, 1915, p.6.

<sup>273</sup> *Hackney Gazette*, 12 October, 1914, p. 3. Letter Hyman Goodman to Editor regarding the Mare Street recruiting depot for the Reserve Battalion of the 10<sup>th</sup> Territorials.

<sup>274</sup> *JC*, 26 November, 1915, p. 9. *Ibid*, 13 August 1915, p.6, re. Leeds. *Ibid*, 17 December 1915, p. 21. Manchester Jewry complaint published in *Manchester Guardian*.

<sup>275</sup> *Ibid*, 13 August, 1915, p.6.

<sup>276</sup> *Ibid*, 26 November, 1915, p.9.

<sup>277</sup> AJA, MS 170 AJ 244/98. Letter received 4 March, 1911.

religion'.<sup>278</sup> Although the Army claimed this action served as a protection measure for Jews against the intolerance of Christian comrades, it could not disguise an overtly racial prejudice, which did not escape the notice of Jewish volunteers or servicemen.<sup>279</sup> Ironically, despite official exclusion from the British Army, a number of excluded 'friendly alien' Jews successfully enlisted, claiming British birth in order to be accepted.<sup>280</sup> However, those subsequently identified by the military authorities as ineligible were discharged from the Army and refused pay and pension. This War Office practice was later roundly condemned in the House of Commons by the Liberal MP, Joseph King.<sup>281</sup>

The Jewish press, anxious to dilute evidence of anti-Semitism, chose to attribute the paradoxical situation to a laxity at Army recruiting offices over the correct interpretation of the War Office regulations, and stated that such difficulties were actively pursued by the JRC. Some confusion had arisen over the status of British-born subjects with foreign born parents, which had been exacerbated by an ambiguously worded War Office letter of August 1914 regarding naturalized subjects. The legitimacy of the enlistment of British-born Jews was a serious enough national issue to be raised in the House of Commons in November, 1915.<sup>282</sup> In attempting to clarify the terms of the Military Services Act in February 1916, the War Office referred to 'the position of alien British-born subjects and men of indifferent character'.<sup>283</sup> Such pejorative wording suggests that an overt prejudice towards immigrant Jews prevailed among the Army elite, and was reflected in the equivocal attitude of some Recruiting Officers. Exasperated Home Office officials professed themselves, 'wearied and puzzled by the vagaries of military authorities of all kinds and degrees' on the

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<sup>278</sup> *JC*, 9 October 1914, p.17.

<sup>279</sup> *Ibid*, 16 October, 1914, p.10. Letter from Captain B Friend, 11<sup>th</sup> Btn, Essex Regiment: 'It is deplorable [...] when every able bodied man is required to defend his country's honour that there should be feelings of racial prejudice'.

<sup>280</sup> *JC*, 8 December 1916, p. 21. Mr A. Rollin, Secretary of the Leeds Jewish Tailors, claimed that this was common practice before Jews were officially accepted into the Army in the summer of 1916.

<sup>281</sup> *Ibid*, 15 June 1917, p. 12.

<sup>282</sup> *Ibid*, 12 November, 1915, p. 22. Mr Hands, MP, asked the Under-Secretary for War whether a British born Jew, whose father was not a naturalised British subject, was eligible for enlistment in the British Army

<sup>283</sup> NA, HO 45/10801/307823/6.

question of nationality, and acknowledged in early 1916 that, 'it would seem that a number of most eligible recruits have so far been lost in the consequence of mistakes on this question'.<sup>284</sup> By the time the problem was finally clarified in a War Office Circular of December 1915, voluntary enlistment had all but failed and conscription was imminent. Loath to directly criticise military confusion the Jewish press issued the mildly worded rebuke, 'That it has taken 18 months to carry out this simple duty is not very creditable to the military authorities'.<sup>285</sup> While this ambiguity deterred enlistment and demoralised the community, serving Jewish soldiers were actively encouraged by the JRC to act as military recruiters during home leave, a common practice in the British Army during the period of voluntary enlistment.<sup>286</sup> In October 1915, the estimated number of Jews serving in HM Forces was given as 17,000, which included a small number in the Royal Navy.<sup>287</sup> From the start of the war, young Jewish men in Australia, South Africa and Canada had also been encouraged to answer the call to arms.<sup>288</sup>

A scheme introduced by the new Director of Recruiting, Lord Derby, in October 1915, invited men to enlist or to attest their willingness to serve on the basis of a Group system. This required attendance at a recruiting centre to swear allegiance to the King, for which a man was given a day's pay and allowances. He then returned to his home and continued in his civilian employment until his Group was called up. Tilly Goodman's husband, a fifth generation British Jew in Manchester, 'tried to stay out of the army but when it came to his age group he had to go because he was fit [...] I used to say to him that he was a fool [...] was being exploited [...] was an idiot'.<sup>289</sup> Men were divided into single and married classes and placed in twenty three groups according to age: these were to be called up for service in rotation, single and youngest first. Essential employees

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<sup>284</sup> *Ibid*, 7 March, 1916. Home Office to War Office, 'Not a few instances have been mentioned in this department where natural born British subjects of foreign extraction have been given to understand at Recruiting Offices and elsewhere that they are not British subjects and therefore not eligible'.

<sup>285</sup> *JC*, 24 December 1915, p.15.

<sup>286</sup> *JC*, 8 October, 1915, p. 16.

<sup>287</sup> *JC*, 29 October 1915, p. 19.

<sup>288</sup> Adler, (ed.), *British Jewry Book*, p.3. 2,000 Australian Jews served in the Imperial Forces, as well as men from South Africa, Canada, BWI (Jamaica) and Bombay in India.

<sup>289</sup> Manchester Jewish Museum (hereafter MJM), J 107, Tape transcript Tilly Goodman.

(specifically listed as those working in munitions, the Admiralty, coal mining, the railways and certain agricultural occupations) were 'starred' (exempted) by Starring Committees established by Local Government Boards, and given armbands bearing the Royal Crown. The late Vivian Lipman has remarked on the virtual absence of Jews from 'starred' occupations.<sup>290</sup> The preliminary requisite for this system was a further intensive canvass of men aged between eighteen and forty one. Describing the exercise as 'of a delicate nature', canvassers were directed by the PRC to approach potential recruits with tact and not to threaten or bully.<sup>291</sup> In open acknowledgement of the persistent recruitment problems in the immigrant quarter, the JRC requested that the War Office make a special canvass in the East End in general, and in Stepney in particular. The result suggested that of 25,000 eligible British citizens, 7,330 had Jewish names.<sup>292</sup>

The appointment of Lord Derby as Director of Recruiting in October, 1915, and the introduction of his new scheme, was the Government's final attempt to satisfy military manpower requirements without resort to conscription. Cynics have viewed it as the prelude to enforced military service under the guise of an extension of choice. At the beginning of the scheme Derby had advised the Prime Minister, Herbert Asquith, that 'To bring out a bill for conscription before I have had my attempt to get men voluntarily would be a fatal error – but it equally would be a fatal error not to have the Bill ready to produce at once if I fail – but I shall not fail'.<sup>293</sup> Only a few days' later he was forced to admit that 'the scheme is trembling in the balance'.<sup>294</sup> In the event, it attracted only half of the eligible men identified by the canvass and sealed the inevitability of the Military Service Acts.<sup>295</sup> At this point, the leadership and

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<sup>290</sup> Cited in Levene, 'Going against the Grain', p. 70.

<sup>291</sup> BL, MSS 54192A, Minute, 5 October, 1915.

<sup>292</sup> NA, WO 32/4773. Edmund Sebag-Montefiore, 23 March, 1916.

<sup>293</sup> Bodleian Library, Oxford (hereafter BLO), Papers of H. H. Asquith, MSS 15/38. Derby to Asquith, 17 October, 1915.

<sup>294</sup> *Ibid*, 15/62. Derby to Asquith, 28 October, 1915.

<sup>295</sup> Arthur Marwick, *The Deluge. British Society and the First World War* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1967), p. 82. Report on Recruiting showed that of 2,179,231 single men on the National Register, only 1,150,000 had attested.

*modus vivendi* of a specifically Jewish recruitment organisation changed in anticipation of compulsory military service.

The Central Jewish Recruiting Committee (CJRC) was established at the invitation of the Army Council, thus creating a formal liaison with the pro-military men of the Anglo-Jewish hierarchy. Known colloquially in the community as 'Rothschilds' Recruiting Office', its premises being at 8, New Court, the London Headquarters of N M Rothschild, Edmund Sebag-Montefiore and Lionel de Rothschild were appointed President and Vice President respectively of the new body.<sup>296</sup> In addition to its chief officers, the committee consisted of the Chief Rabbi, the Senior Chaplain, the Reverend Lipson (Home Chaplain), Henry Henriques (lawyer, and member of the Board of Deputies of British Jews), J. Gluckstein, S. Moses, A. Woolf, S. Emanuel, B. Fersht and C. Sebag-Montefiore. The Committee's purpose was to continue to encourage the enlistment of Jews before the implementation of the MSA in May, and to advise the military authorities on specifically Jewish aspects of military service.<sup>297</sup>

Community sensitivity on the issue of Jewish enlistment remained of prime concern to Anglo-Jewry. In the light of the Derby Scheme canvass in the East End, and in the limbo period between the failure of the Derby Scheme and the introduction of conscription, the Committee was anxious that, 'propaganda should be carefully done [...] as it was not well to admit that Jews had not done their duty'.<sup>298</sup> In an effort to ameliorate the findings of the East London canvass, Edmund Sebag-Montefiore informed the War Office in March 1916 that his committee had received many complaints from Jews willing to enlist under

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<sup>296</sup> Edmund de Rothschild to author, 17 December, 2003, stated that his father was personally ordered by HM King George V to leave active service at the beginning of the war and 'return to N M Rothschild & Sons as he did not want the Bank to be without a Rothschild at its head'. Lionel de Rothschild (1881 – 1941) was one of 3 brothers (Evelyn and Anthony) who served as Army officers in the First World War. Before 1914 he was a Major in the Royal Bucks Yeomanry and an active recruiter for it and the Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry, (regiments based near the Rothschild country houses in Buckinghamshire). Harold Pollins, 'The Rothschilds as Recruiters for Buckinghamshire in the First World War', <http://www.hellfire-corner.demon.co.uk/snillop.htm> (para. 16). His brother Evelyn died of wounds in November, 1917, after a cavalry charge at El Mughar in the Palestine campaign.

<sup>297</sup> Rothschild Archives (hereafter RA), CJRC (subsequently JRWC) Minute Books, 000/358, Minute 18 December, 1915.

<sup>298</sup> RA, 000/358, Minute, 13 December, 1915.

Lord Derby's scheme, who were refused on grounds of religion or that their names were 'foreign sounding'.<sup>299</sup>

The results of the Householders Return carried out by the Government's PRC in April 1915 had indicated that significant numbers of men were willing to enlist if released by their employers. At the end of the Derby Scheme, the CRJC undertook negotiations with large Jewish employers to urge eligible men in their workforce to volunteer. The Jews' Free Schools provided the exemplar in granting their teachers every facility for enlistment by guaranteeing reinstatement without loss of salary and status after military service and the maintenance of full pension arrangements.<sup>300</sup> In addition, the Chief Rabbi was consulted on further means of achieving better enlistment and, from this, synagogue ministers were invited to 'lecture and communicate' on the subject. A particular difficulty was identified in the enlistment of young married men and single men with dependent parents, many of whom lacked an understanding of Army pay and allowances. To overcome this deterrent, the Committee was obliged to approach the Friendly Societies to furnish 'valuable figures' so the problem might be addressed. Many of these further measures mirrored those of the PRC's national scheme in the previous summer.<sup>301</sup> In addition, editors of Jewish publications in English and Yiddish were approached to use their influence through their respective papers.<sup>302</sup> Proclaiming that 'it was far better to be a volunteer than a "pressed" man' in the vanguard of conscription, the Anglo-Jewish press continued to express a certain delicacy by appealing to 'hesitants' rather than 'laggards'.<sup>303</sup> Unsurprisingly, the non-Jewish East London press, originally empathetic with issues of Jewish enlistment, had, by this time, eschewed any delicacy in favour of overtly anti-Semitic editorials. An anonymous Stepney councillor writing in the *East London Observer* commented

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<sup>299</sup> NA, WO 32/4773, 23 March, 1916.

<sup>300</sup> *JC*, 21 April 1916, p.6.

<sup>301</sup> BL, MS 54192A, Minute 25 June, 1915. It was suggested that co-operation should be sought from churches and chapels, brotherhoods and Friendly Societies.

<sup>302</sup> RA, 000/358, Minutes of 13 and 20 December 1915.

<sup>303</sup> *JC*, 14 January, 1916, p.7



adversely on the high number of Jewish marriages in Stepney after it became known that the first Military Service Act was confined to single men.<sup>304</sup>

Before the war the foundations of co-operation between Jewish and non-Jewish workers had been laid in the London Dock Strike. In the light of this, the Joint Labour Recruiting Committee, a sub-committee of the PRC established in October, 1915, to promote enlistment via the Trade Union movement, made a final direct appeal to British-born Jewish youth as part of a national campaign in February, 1916:

Appeal from the English Labour leaders to Jewish youth.

The Minister for Labour, Mr Henderson, Mr Appleton, O'Grady and others appeal to Jewish youth born in England to do their duty to the country. In England, there are thousands of Jews who should be grateful to it for their freedom and justice, to this country that protects them. They have come here from many lands, and in general they have been accepted here, free from racial prejudice and racial hatred. Any appeal to passions will not be appropriate; but an appeal to honour and gratitude will look quite different. In the current great crisis, the country is giving Jews their rightful place, and the opportunity to help the country. Many Jews have already demonstrated their courage and patriotism, offering their lives for their country; but there are still thousands of Jews born in this country who are able to bear arms and have not yet joined the army. It is claimed that many Jews would be happy to join the ranks of soldiers fighting to defend the civil rights granted to them if they could be persuaded their service is really necessary and that they would be welcome in the army. We, who have many times raised our voice for the welfare of the Jews, ask them now to demonstrate that we were justified in saying what we did. There is no doubt that they would be welcome if they join the army. They are still able to join as volunteers; the recruiting offices are now open, and they would greatly help the military authorities if they join soon, instead of waiting until the compulsory Act comes into force.<sup>305</sup>

The compact of emancipation is implicit in the wording of the appeal.

With the failure of the voluntary scheme, the first Military Service Act was passed by Parliament on 5 January 1916 for single men only, followed by a second MSA on 3 May extending conscription to married men. This was

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<sup>304</sup> Cited in Bush, *Behind the Lines*, p. 171.

<sup>305</sup> IWM, Poster PST 12101, translated from Yiddish.

welcomed in the Anglo-Jewish press.<sup>306</sup> Concurrent with these major changes in national recruitment strategy, the CJRC changed its name to the Jewish War Services Committee (JWSC).

Statistical evidence is fragmentary and ambiguous making it problematic to accurately quantify the total Jewish voluntary enlistment figure, as Harold Pollins has acknowledged.<sup>307</sup> The official Jewish record, the *British Jewry Book of Honour*, claimed that there were 10,000 Jewish volunteers in HM Forces when conscription was introduced, with wartime recruiting figures furnished by Jewish chaplains, the Jewish press and Jewish Recruiting Committees' records. Of this number 11% served as officers. It was further noted that families of British birth gave 90% of their available young men, which presumably referred to long-standing members of the community.<sup>308</sup> Little substantive detail is available about the numbers of British-born sons of immigrants who volunteered although past members of the youth clubs and Old Boys of the Jews' Free School were early recruits.<sup>309</sup> A similar vacuum exists regarding naturalized alien voluntary enlistments. In 1922 the *Jewish Chronicle* claimed that 20,000 naturalized Jewish aliens were serving by November 1918.<sup>310</sup> This total presumably included some 3,000 Russian Jews who were granted *gratis* citizenship between 1919 and June, 1921 on the basis of their military service.<sup>311</sup> As very few citizenships were granted during the war it would seem that *circa* 17,000 naturalized aliens were eligible to volunteer in 1914.

The *BJBH* voluntary enlistment figure of 10,000 men creates an immediate conundrum in that it is identical to the figure Adler had advised to the *Jewish Chronicle* in March, 1915, adding that as many Jews enlisted as Christians, 'I am more convinced than ever before that the estimate of 10,000 Jews in the Army is

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<sup>306</sup> *JC*, 7 Jan 1916, p. 9.

<sup>307</sup> A summary of voluntary recruitment figures is given in Appendix A. Pollins, 'The Rothschilds as Recruiters'. Pollins has also remarked on the omissions and inaccuracies in the *BJBH*, Harold Pollins, 'Jews in the British Army in the First World War', *Jewish Journal of Sociology*, 37 (1995), p. 102.

<sup>308</sup> Adler, (ed.), *British Jewry Book*, p. 3.

<sup>309</sup> *JC*, 14 August, 1914, p.9.

<sup>310</sup> *Ibid*, 22 December, 1922, p. 13.

<sup>311</sup> See Appendix B. The recruitment of Russian Jews and their naturalization is discussed in chapter 5.

far below the truth'.<sup>312</sup> This remark may explain the discrepancy with the JRC's figure of 12,000 volunteers in the same month, when Secretary Denzil Myer also stated that 'there were a large number who could be induced to enlist'.<sup>313</sup> But the *British Jewry Book of Honour* record is severely at odds with the estimate of 17,000 Jewish servicemen claimed by the *Jewish Chronicle* at the end of October, 1915. Perhaps apposite to the apparent difference of some 5,000 to 7,000 recruits is the accompanying qualification, 'although for reasons into which we need not enter, many have joined without recording themselves as Jews'.<sup>314</sup> This caveat may suggest that the figure of 17,000 included provision for 'invisible Jews' and perhaps accounted for Lord Derby's surprise at this number in his interview with the *Chronicle* the following month, and his stated impression that Jewish recruitment in some parts of the country had been "patchy".<sup>315</sup>

Pollins' explanation of the difference appears to suggest an oversight in the 1922 record, 'As so often happens an estimated statistic which is published continues to be referred to, irrespective of the period to which it refers. The *British Jewry Book of Honour*, in 1922, extended the date. [...] Adler's estimate of March 1915 thus became the total figure for Jewish voluntary recruitment before January 1916 when the Military Service Act was passed'.<sup>316</sup> This interpretation would seem questionable given Adler's editorship of the official record, and that, as the Jewish Senior Chaplain closely involved in the gathering of Jewish recruiting records, he was committed to portraying Jewry's contribution to the war in the best possible light. It appears more likely that only the number of recruits who enlisted as Jews, and were verifiable as such in national records, could be included in an official record due to be published in the same year as the Government's own statistics on war service.<sup>317</sup>

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<sup>312</sup> *JC*, 19 March, 1915, p. 25.

<sup>313</sup> LMA, ACC/2805/4/4/6. Myer to Hertz, 23 March, 1915.

<sup>314</sup> *JC*, 29 October, 1915, p. 19.

<sup>315</sup> *Ibid*, 19 November, 1915, p. 16.

<sup>316</sup> Pollins, 'Rothschilds as Recruiters', para. 10.

<sup>317</sup> 'Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire during the Great War', (London: HMSO, 1922).

After the war, the conservative total of 10,000 volunteers reflected adversely on the community's patriotism. Although the total figure of 41,500 Jewish recruits in November 1918 was a higher percentage of the community's population than that of the nation at 13.8 compared with 11.5, the percentage of Jewish volunteers at the point of conscription appears considerably lower than the national average. Approximately 8,000 servicemen had been ineligible for voluntary service, reducing the overall total to 33,500 potential volunteers before January, 1916, of whom only 30% had joined up of their own volition. Government statistics claimed that 2.4 million of the national total of 5,215,162 who served between 1914 and 1918, or 46%, were volunteers.<sup>318</sup>

From the 1970s the Jewish historiography of the war was dominated by the opposition of 'friendly aliens' to serve in the British Army following the Government's reversal of its recruitment policy in 1916. But the anxiety of the Anglo-Jewish recruiting committees over voluntary enlistment, particularly in London's East End, suggests that many eligible Jews, naturalized and British-born, were also reluctant soldiers. This was in step with the diminishing appetite for voluntary military service within the British male population at large as the realities of a long and horrific struggle became apparent. But the implications for the community were most keenly felt by established Anglo-Jewry, who had readily answered the call for patriotism, not least to fully justify the community's place within the nation state, but also to rehabilitate the *fin de siècle* image of the Jewish male to one of masculinity and a revival of the Maccabean fighting spirit.

Jewish recruiting committees had worked diligently, both in co-operation with the State organisation and independently, to enhance the Jewish military recruitment record. The fact that they were exclusively composed of Anglo-Jews is unsurprising given the precedent of their dominant role in the community prior to 1914. But this factor may have exacerbated recruiting difficulties in the immigrant districts, where a degree of antipathy towards Anglo-Jewry's activities

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<sup>318</sup> General Annual Report of the British Army 1913 – 1919, P. P. 1921, XX, Cmd. 1193 cited in Winter, *The Great War*, p. 28. *Ibid*, p. 27, for voluntary statistics.

to guide the private lives of new arrivals from Eastern Europe existed before 1914. That said, the committees operated in an ambiguous scenario, not only in the context of Army's ambivalent recruiting policy and associated antagonism at recruiting offices but also in an atmosphere of public criticism of Jewish recruitment figures, which began in the first days of the war.<sup>319</sup> In a Special War Issue at the end of 1915, the *Jewish Chronicle* commented, 'Sooner or later the truth must trickle through and the response of the Jews in the hour of crisis must be realised at its full extent and worth'.<sup>320</sup>

The recruitment campaign also reflects a paradox of Anglo-Jewry's making. Their overarching concern for the Jewish minority to be an integral part of the body of the nation at war might suggest that the voluntary recruitment of Jewish men who were, after all, of British nationality, should have rested purely in the hands of the State, *viz* the PRC and the Army. Their prime anxiety to be seen to be fulfilling all the responsibilities of British citizenship overrode this concern and may have served to exacerbate national perceptions of Jewish exclusivity and difference.

A similar dilemma faced Anglo-Jewish wartime organisations in the dual challenge of promoting the acceptance of Jews into British military life while simultaneously safeguarding the interests of a religious and cultural minority. The following chapter examines Anglo-Jewry's control of the spiritual and much of the practical welfare of Jewish servicemen.

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<sup>319</sup> Criticism, 'unfair taunts', and questioning of Jewish loyalty in the first weeks of the war were reported in *JC*, 28 August, 1914, p.5. *Ibid*, 4 September, 1914, p.5. *Ibid*, 11 September, 1914, p.7.

<sup>320</sup> *Ibid*, 19 November, 1915, p.7.

## CHAPTER 4    SUPPORT FOR JEWISH FIGHTING MEN

The British Army, with its traditions and rituals, was an alien environment for the majority of Jewish servicemen. Conversely, the Army confronted for the first time a new challenge to fairly and justly accommodate a significant number of soldiers within its ranks with different religious and cultural needs. The previous chapter suggested that the difficulties of preserving the Jewish faith and its observances in military service deterred some observant Jews from volunteering. Conscription in 1916 removed their choice. In addition to voluntary recruiting activities before conscription, newly-formed Anglo-Jewish wartime organisations liaised with the Army to ensure that Judaism could be observed in wartime military service. They also acted to provide welfare arrangements for the specific needs of Jewish soldiers. This latter provision appears to resurrect the age-old Gentile question of how far Jews wished to integrate within the State or preferred to remain a separate and exclusive minority.

It was a novel experience for Jewish ministers to become military chaplains and part of an inter-denominational Army organisation. In addition to providing support for their co-religionists, it gave them unique opportunities to make known to Gentile servicemen some of the beliefs of Judaism. But the majority of Jewish soldiers from the immigrant sector of the community were accustomed to their own forms of religious and cultural practices far removed from those of most Anglo-Jews. The latter's more secular religious attitudes, cultural norms and *mores* monopolised the arrangements they made for the spiritual wellbeing and welfare of virtually all Jewish servicemen in the British Army. This chapter explores some of the effects of this domination, and the dichotomy between Anglicisation and Jewishness which the wartime organisations were forced to confront.

## Faith under Fire

Live with the men. Go everywhere they  
go [...]. Pray with them sometimes, but pray  
for them always.<sup>321</sup>

Christianity played a prominent role in the British Army's management of morale in the First World War. It was perceived both as an opiate and a source of ideological uplift in the brutalizing context of killing and suffering, and measures to strengthen religious feeling were regarded as desirable on secular as well as religious grounds.<sup>322</sup> Siegfried Sassoon observed from his own experiences in France that in the trenches the principles of Christianity were either obliterated or falsified, and that, 'the Brigade Chaplain did not exhort us to love our enemies'.<sup>323</sup> Regarded as a necessary incentive for battle, the Christian faith represented the war as a rightful crusade requiring the virtues of courage, strength, patience and self sacrifice, nurtured in the public schools and more widely permeated through popular culture, which could now fully flourish on the battlefields.

As the war continued year after year, and severe military reversals were sustained, morale among the troops suffered, and Anglican padres were expected to assume a 'commissar' function among the men, monitoring their moods and combining spiritual guidance and comfort with assurances as to the necessity and justice of the allied cause. Field Marshal Haig, Commander-in-Chief of the British Expeditionary Forces from December, 1915, recommended that chaplains should be a vehicle for patriotic instruction, and noted that 'as a result of their teaching all ranks came to know and more fully understand the great and noble objects for which they were fighting'.<sup>324</sup>

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<sup>321</sup> Frontispiece, Museum of Army Chaplaincy leaflet.

<sup>322</sup> D. Englander, 'Discipline and Morale in the British Army, 1917 – 8', in John Horne (ed.), *State, Society and Mobilisation in Europe during the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p.137.

<sup>323</sup> Siegfried Sassoon, *The Complete Memoirs of George Sherston* (London: Faber & Faber, 1980), p. 274.

<sup>324</sup> Englander, 'Discipline and Morale' in Horne, *State, Society and Mobilisation*, p. 140.

The Chaplains' Department in the British Army had been formally created by Royal Warrant in 1796, which laid down that 'whenever an army is formed [...] chaplains shall be appointed [...] one to each Brigade or to every three or four Regiments' (the 'Royal' prefix was conferred by George V in 1919 in recognition of the contribution made by Army padres in the war). But it is likely that prior to the formal structure, Army chaplains were active in the Civil War on both the side of Charles 1 and of the Parliamentarians, and after the Restoration of the Monarchy every regiment had its own chaplain.<sup>325</sup>

Until the 1860s only the religious practices of the Church of England, the Roman Catholic Church and the Presbyterians were accepted in the British Army.<sup>326</sup> Some twenty six years later, and twelve months after the first Jew took his place in the House of Lords, Queens Regulations officially recognised Judaism in military service through the efforts of Colonel Albert Goldsmid and Private Woolf Cohen, 5<sup>th</sup> Lancers.<sup>327</sup> Shortly afterwards, the first Jewish Chaplain to the Her Majesty's Forces, the Reverend Cohen, was commissioned, and served at Aldershot Camp.<sup>328</sup>

It is evident from correspondence between the Archbishop of Canterbury and Diocesan Bishops in September, 1914, that offers from Anglican clergy to serve in the Army and Navy were 'far more numerous than could possibly be accepted'.<sup>329</sup> Quantity rather than quality may have prevailed as it was urged on Lord Kitchener by Lord Halifax in the early months of the war that he encourage the Chaplain General to exercise care in the selection of Army chaplains, 'such as was apparent in different religions', so that soldiers would receive 'exactly that

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<sup>325</sup> Joanna Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing. Face to Face Killing in 20<sup>th</sup> century Warfare* (London: Granta, 1999), p.258. Bourke claimed that chaplains had accompanied English soldiers on the battlefields since the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>326</sup> Spiers, *The Army and Society*, p. 49. Tropp, *Jews in the Professions*, p. 37. According to Tropp, 15 Jewish officers served with the Duke of Wellington at Waterloo who presumably were either converts, non-practising or concealed their religion.

<sup>327</sup> Roth, 'The Jews in Defence', pp. 8, 26. Before Britain's recognition of Judaism, the 1673 Test Act, which required any person holding a military commission under the Crown to adhere to the rites of the Church of England, had been repealed in 1829.

<sup>328</sup> Kadish, *A good Jew*, p.3.

<sup>329</sup> *East London Observer*, 12 September, 1914. Kerr, 'A consideration of the service of British Army Chaplains', p. 145. Between 1914 and 1919, some 4,487 chaplains of all denominations served in Britain's armed forces.



help which is most wanted under present circumstances'.<sup>330</sup> The training of chaplains in military etiquette and procedure was minimal, and their ignorance often placed a severe handicap on many in the fulfilment of their duties.<sup>331</sup>

The Army practice of attaching Anglican chaplains to individual regiments gave them specific parameters in terms of territory and numbers of men within their ministry. It also enabled personal acquaintanceships to flourish although the high number of fatalities and the evacuation of the wounded resulted in a constant rotation of officers and men. However, opinions varied considerably on their effectiveness.<sup>332</sup> Robert Graves commented that 'for Anglican regimental chaplains we had little respect. If they had one tenth of the courage, endurance and other human qualities that regimental doctors showed, the British Expeditionary Force might well have started a religious revival'.<sup>333</sup>

From the beginning of the war until March 1916, the Visitation Committee of the United Synagogue acted as the official liaison between the Jewish soldier and the military authorities for all matters other than recruiting. But for Jewish soldiers from the East End, the United Synagogue was a body in which they had little confidence.<sup>334</sup> The Visitation Committee comprised twelve members under the chairmanship of Felix Davis, none of whom had any direct military connections.<sup>335</sup> The scope of their work encompassed meetings at the War Office, the selection of Jewish chaplains, leave for Jewish soldiers, the visit of the Chief Rabbi to the Western Front in 1915, the compilation and issue of prayer books and other religious literature, and the marking of military graves in France.<sup>336</sup>

Their responsibilities for 'looking after the religious and moral welfare of Jewish soldiers' had been restricted until January, 1915, to the needs of

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<sup>330</sup> NA, PRO 30/57/73. Lord Halifax to Lord Kitchener, 5 October, 1914.

<sup>331</sup> Joanna Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing. Face-to-Face Killing in Twentieth century Warfare* (London: Granta, 1999), p. 286.

<sup>332</sup> Charles Blacker, *Have you forgotten yet? The First World War Memoirs of C. P. Blacker, MC, GM* (Barnsley: Leo Cooper, 2000). Blacker commented on his regimental padre, 'who, if I may risk the understatement, was not always busy', p. 26.

<sup>333</sup> Robert Graves, *Goodbye to All That* (London: Penguin, 1960), p.158.

<sup>334</sup> Alderman, *Modern British Jewry*, p. 151.

<sup>335</sup> LMA, ACC/2712/01/009, Minute, 7 June, 1915.

<sup>336</sup> LMA, ACC/2712/6/34/7, Committee Secretary to Chairman, 12 November, 1915.

servicemen in training camps in Britain. In August, 1914, the War Office had authorised 'special religious ministrations' for regiments containing sufficient numbers of Jewish soldiers in Britain but the only channel for religious support for Jewish soldiers on the battlefields was through correspondence with the Senior Chaplain, Michael Adler.<sup>337</sup> Complaints soon appeared in the Anglo-Jewish press that there were no Jewish chaplains at the Front to conduct burial services for fallen soldiers or offer spiritual comfort to the wounded.<sup>338</sup>

It was through the influence of the Jewish MP, Sir Charles Henry, that Adler was permitted to visit Jewish troops in France to ascertain the scope for padres of their faith to support them on the battlefields.<sup>339</sup> In this he had the approval of the Chaplain-General of the Army Chaplains' Department, the Right Reverend Bishop Taylor Smith, and on his arrival at Le Havre he was met by the Principal Chaplain, the Reverend J M Simms. The latter's intervention enabled him to challenge an Army Council letter instructing him not to 'venture beyond lines of communication on the chance of meeting with adherents of my faith', and a subsequent visit to General Headquarters established the foundations for his future work in France. Following delays, he was given leave of absence by the Visitation Committee and was appointed Chaplain, 4th class, with the equivalent rank of Captain, by the War Office on 15 January 1915, leaving for France a few days later.<sup>340</sup> Delay in sending chaplains to France in the early weeks of the war was not confined to Jews: Anglican and Non-Conformist padres were also forbidden passage from England by Army Order.<sup>341</sup> On Adler's permanent arrival in France he noted, 'the delightful readiness with which the military authorities assist me everywhere [...] every door is open'.<sup>342</sup> He was forty seven when he left Southampton for Le Havre, and was described as 'a most

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<sup>337</sup> *JC* 4 September, 1914, p. 10.

<sup>338</sup> *Ibid*, 13 November, 1914, p. 11.

<sup>339</sup> *AJA*, MS 125 AJ16/2, 1 May, 1916. A diary marginal note recorded the death of Lt Cyril Henry 'the only son of Sir Charles Henry MP who arranged my going to France through the War Office.

<sup>340</sup> LMA, ACC/2712/01/008. Council Minute, 18 January, 1915.

<sup>341</sup> Kerr, 'A consideration of the Service of British Army Chaplains', p. 69. Kerr suggests that possibly because of the Catholic emphasis on extreme unction for the dying, Roman Catholic padres were permitted to work on the battlefields early in the war.

<sup>342</sup> LMA, ACC/2805/4/4/1. Adler to Hertz, 31 January, 1915.

unmilitary looking man [...] neat, bearded and corpulent'.<sup>343</sup> His work in support of Jewish servicemen on active duty spearheaded the despatch of the first Jewish padres, wearing the Magen David in lieu of the traditional chaplain's badge on their battledress, to accompany Jewish soldiers of the British Army onto the battlefields.

Adler's background before the war was one of scholarship and a personal interest in narrowing the Jewish/Gentile divide. He had been guided in his ecumenical interests by Chief Rabbi Herman Adler, who exhorted Jewish scholars to address learned Gentile societies on all manner of Jewish topics.<sup>344</sup> His early religious life began with his training at the Jews' College, and his involvement in religious education resulted in the production of three textbooks on Hebrew grammar, which were considered to have revolutionised the teaching of Hebrew in the Anglo-Jewish community. Having served the Hammersmith Synagogue congregation for thirteen years, in 1903 he found preferment in the Central Synagogue, which he was then to serve for thirty one years. He was commissioned into the Territorial Army in 1909 and ministered to the small number of Jews then serving in the Regular British Army. Participating also in civilian life, he served on the Marylebone Borough Council where he was renowned for his work in local education departments.<sup>345</sup>

For much of his work with the British Expeditionary Forces (and those of his brother chaplains who followed him) he was based at Casualty Clearing Stations, where he was 'greatly affected by the dying and wounded'.<sup>346</sup> His diaries give some insight into the scope of his work and the long distances covered in order to liaise with GHQ, conduct services and burials, visit Jewish graves and the Front Line trenches, and attend courts martial. By the end of 1917, ill health forced him to take extended home leave and put in train his

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<sup>343</sup> Association of Jewish ex-Servicemen and Women, Museum (hereafter AJEX), Henry Myer, *Soldiering of Sorts*, (Private publication), p. 45.

<sup>344</sup> I. Finestein, 'Post Emancipation Jewry: the Anglo-Jewish Experience', 7th Sacks Lecture, 8 June, 1960, (Oxford: Oxford Centre for Hebrew Studies), p.14.

<sup>345</sup> Arthur Barnett, 'Memorial Address in honour of Past Presidents, the Reverend Michael Adler, DSO, SCF, BA (1868 – 1944), *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England*, XV (1939/45), (London: Edward Goldston, 1946).

<sup>346</sup> Adler, *British Jewry Book*, p. 41.

resignation. Hospitalised again with neurasthenia the following summer, he returned to England permanently in the summer of 1918, declared 'Fit for Home Duty Only'.<sup>347</sup> He was twice Mentioned in Despatches, and was awarded the Distinguished Service Order for his services in France.<sup>348</sup>

His continuing interest in disseminating the spirit of Judaism to non-Jews during his chaplaincy in France is apparent in his diary notes.<sup>349</sup> Through his leadership, this objective formed an important facet of active duty among the Jewish chaplaincy, which was acknowledged by his colleagues after the war. He took opportunities to lecture on Jewish history to Christian troops, and his work as a Jewish historian before the war enhanced his work in France.<sup>350</sup> His determination that Jewish soldiers should not appear to be advantaged over their Christian comrades by the granting of special privileges remained paramount and occasionally brought him into dispute with other Jewish chaplains. He overruled the sanction for Passover leave for ANZAC Jewish soldiers, granted by General Birdwood, on the grounds that it constituted preferential treatment. Adverse repercussions from the Australian chaplain in France, the Reverend Freedman, and criticism from the JWSC and the Chief Rabbi in London, left him 'deeply pained'.<sup>351</sup>

The Visitation Committee made considerable efforts for Jewish soldiers to receive religious literature while on duty. Before leaving for France, Adler had introduced a Jewish Prayer Book with a foreword by Lord Kitchener, bound in khaki and small enough to fit into the breast pocket of field uniform, for all Jewish soldiers and sailors. This was accompanied in 1917 by *A Book of Jewish Thoughts*, selected and arranged by the Chief Rabbi, 60,000 copies of which were issued not only for Jewish soldiers and sailors but also for their Christian colleagues. Like other chaplains on active service, Adler questioned the

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<sup>347</sup> AJA, MS 125 AJ 16/4. Diary entry, 15 July, 1918.

<sup>348</sup> Michael Goldberger, 'An Englishman and a Jew. The Reverend V.G. Simmons, A.C.D.', *Medal News*, December, 1993, p.14.

<sup>349</sup> AJA, MS 125 AJ 16/4. Diary entry, 12 October, 1917, records 'A Lecture on Jewish History' at a CCS in Buisans, and on 6 March, 1918, 'A Lecture on the Jews of England'.

<sup>350</sup> Reverend Arthur Barnett, 'Memorial Address', *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society*, p.191.

<sup>351</sup> AJA, MS 175 AJ 141/2. Adler to Hertz, 12 April, 1917.

appropriateness of its sophisticated language for Jewish soldiers, many with little education, operating in battlefield conditions. But, in acknowledgement of Adler's ecumenical approach, other Jewish chaplains noted the interest and appreciation of non-Jews to whom the literature was also distributed.<sup>352</sup> In 1918, Basil Henriques, a serving officer in the Tanks Corps, compiled a small anthology of twenty five prayers, entitled 'Prayers for Trench and Base', which was offered as a 'valued companion' to Adler's earlier prayer book.<sup>353</sup> In Britain, bereaved families received a copy of the Jewish Book of Comfort from the Office of the Rabbi. This was administered through the JWSC as the body holding the most complete list of Jews who had fallen in the war.<sup>354</sup>

Adler's diaries recorded the large attendances at his services in celebration of Jewish Festivals for which he had taken a portable Ark and the Scroll of Laws from England. Two services were held in a cinema in Baupaume for Jewish troops of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Army in September, 1917, attended by a total of 2,700 men.<sup>355</sup> Specially printed Service invitation cards from GHQ, BEF, were sent to Jewish soldiers, who were required to apply for permission to attend from their Commanding Officers, and Notice of Services was also published in Army Orders.<sup>356</sup> Occasionally the Army provided transport to bring Jewish soldiers to services from their units, such as the Yom Kippur service near Arras in 1916, when Divisional HQ allotted lorries which Adler acknowledged, 'saved them the fatigue of a long tramp'.<sup>357</sup>

The large number of men who attended Adler's services on the Western Front was not necessarily the norm. Low attendance at regular religious services was frequently reported by Jewish chaplains, particularly in Britain, in contrast to Anglicans whose attendance at Sunday Church Parade was compulsory. Chaplain Walter Levin, who served in Italy, Egypt and Palestine, noted that at a particular service only twenty three out of 160 Jewish soldiers were present. He was

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<sup>352</sup> *Ibid.* Rev. Geffen to Hertz, 24 January, 1918.

<sup>353</sup> Susan England, 'Three English Jews', p. 218.

<sup>354</sup> LMA, ACC/2805/4/9/1. Hertz's office to Major Schonfield, JWSC, 21 February, 1917.

<sup>355</sup> AJA, MS 125 AJ. 16/4. Diary entries 27 and 26 September, 1917. *JC* 17 Sept., 1915.

<sup>356</sup> AJA, MS 125 AJ 16/1. December, 1915.

<sup>357</sup> Adler, *British Jewry Book*, p. 49.

unsure whether this was due to disinterest, fear of showing Jewish religious colours or of being perceived as the recipients of special privileges by Christian comrades.<sup>358</sup> Battalion Commanding Officers regularly offered Army premises for Jewish services. This was sometimes abused by Jewish soldiers, who used them for smoking and playing cards, a factor which chaplains feared threatened its continuance and brought Judaism into disrepute. At the Jewish Chaplains' Conference in March 1918, it was proposed that services should be made compulsory in the interests of the soldiers themselves.<sup>359</sup> Some padres were more sympathetic to the realities of Army life, and were opposed to enforcing attendance at Sabbath services while in training, a day on which they were not excused fatigues or other military duties. Vivian Simmons, chaplain at the Aldershot training camp, informed the Chief Rabbi, 'I will not have men compelled to attend Saturday afternoon services – they go to the cinema or football matches with friends – it's the only afternoon they can do so in the Army'.<sup>360</sup> Sabbath observance was a notable marker of difference between servicemen, and Jewish soldiers may well have chosen to minimise its effects by non-attendance at services.

Chaplains observed that Jewish officers were the least likely to attend religious services. Some went further and criticised them for marching with their men at Anglican Church Parades. Paragraph 1333 of Kings Regulations stated, 'Every soldier, when not prevented by military duty will attend Divine Service, but a soldier will not be obliged to attend the service of any other religious body than his own'.<sup>361</sup> This created the sort of dilemma experienced by Major Henry Myer who, as an anglicised Jewish officer, consciously chose to accompany his men at Sunday Parades and Church Services, but he neither read the lesson, as was customary, nor took any other active part.<sup>362</sup>

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<sup>358</sup> *JC*, 1 March 1918, pp. 6, 14. *Ibid*, 22 March 1918, p. 8.

<sup>359</sup> *Ibid*, p. 14. Reverend Abrahams.

<sup>360</sup> LMA, ACC/2805/4/4/1. Simmons to Hertz, 29 April, 1918.

<sup>361</sup> *JC*, 15 March, 1918, p.14.

<sup>362</sup> Myer, *Soldiering of Sorts*, p. 79.

Jewish chaplains criticised officers for being ‘conspicuous in their anxiety not to be recognised as Jews, or at least not to be identified with their religious practices’, and their absence was, ‘in most cases prompted by pure moral cowardice’.<sup>363</sup> Such opinion took little account of the cultural and religious changes that had taken place in the Anglo-Jewish middle and upper classes in the previous two decades. In aspiring to the habits of an English gentleman, many men maintained only a nominal allegiance to Orthodox ways, and ‘simply ignored beliefs and practices that were an obstacle to worldly aims’.<sup>364</sup> Their absence at religious services in the Army did not go unnoticed by Jewish soldiers. Commenting on a service conducted by the Reverend Simmons, Private Lelyveld observed that, ‘the one thing that seems bad to me is that I have never seen any officers attend although there must be a considerable number of Jewish officers’.<sup>365</sup>

Poor attendance at religious services possibly reflected other, more specific, issues of dissatisfaction on the part of Jewish troops. The necessity to provide services appropriate and acceptable to all Jewish soldiers in war conditions also created problems for chaplains. There were complaints, largely by Orthodox Jews, of ‘betrayal’ of faith at ‘adapted’ services conducted in English rather than Hebrew, although it is evident that some were partly in English/partly in Hebrew.<sup>366</sup> The different customs and patterns of religious observance between the United Synagogue, from which most Jewish chaplains were drawn, and the Federation of Synagogues, which had brought together the synagogues and the *chevras* of the newly settled Jews in 1887, was a cause of dissension between immigrant soldiers and Jewish chaplains. Dissatisfaction was strenuously challenged by Jewish chaplains, including Adler, who claimed that their primary concern was to keep Jewish consciousness alive in adverse conditions.<sup>367</sup> In practice, many Jewish servicemen had no knowledge of Hebrew

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<sup>363</sup> *JC* 14 Sept 1917, p.28. *Ibid*, 1 March 1918, p.6, Report of Chaplains’ Conference.

<sup>364</sup> Katz, *Towards Modernity*, p. 229. Endelman, ‘Communal Solidarity’, p.501.

<sup>365</sup> *JC*, 23 February, 1917, p.18.

<sup>366</sup> *Ibid*, 19 November, 1915, p.23. *Ibid*, 5 October 1917, p. 9.

<sup>367</sup> *Ibid*, 16 Feb 1917, p.14.

although by 1917 efforts were made to overcome this.<sup>368</sup> Nevertheless, these 'khaki reforms' were resented by many soldiers who viewed them as a further dilution of Judaism.

When the Visitation Committee was approached by the JWSC in May, 1916 with the suggestion that, at the alleged request of the War Office, there should be only one Committee representing Jewish military interests, they capitulated with some chagrin. It appears probable that the transfer was, in fact, suggested by Charles Sebag-Montefiore, a member of the JWSC, and sanctioned, rather than suggested, by the Army.<sup>369</sup> Shortly afterward, a sub-committee of the JWSC was formed, led by the Reverend Lipson and Mr Ornstein (co-opted from the Visitation Committee) to continue the work of the Chaplains' Department. On the fusion of the two organisations, the Visitation Committee noted that, 'as a result of their labours there are now four Jewish chaplains serving in France (Adler had been joined by Reverends Simmons, Freedman and Barnett), one in England and nine officiating clergy recognised by the War Office who periodically visit the Camps in which there are a large number of Jews'.<sup>370</sup> The lack of clergy resulted in large numbers of Jewish soldiers being obliged to hold their own religious services. Wounded soldiers in hospital also voiced their dissatisfaction. Private Ludski, who spent fifteen months at Beckett's Park Hospital in Leeds, where there were over sixty Jewish patients, complained that 'none received a single visit from a Jewish minister'.<sup>371</sup> From the beginning of the war, all military hospitals had been instructed to forward the names of the Jewish wounded to Adler.<sup>372</sup> At Millbank Hospital in London, the wounded were grouped under different colour codes according to their religion, green being reserved for Jews.<sup>373</sup>

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<sup>368</sup> *Ibid*, 26 January, 1917, p. 17. Letter, Pte F T Hassan, BEF, France, 'A class for the study of Hebrew is actually being conducted out here amid the stress and turmoil of war'.

<sup>369</sup> RA, 000/358, Minutes 20 March, 26 April & 8 May, 1916. LMA, ACC/2712/01/009. WO to Committee Secretary, June, 1916.

<sup>370</sup> *Ibid*. Committee Report, May 1916.

<sup>371</sup> *JC*, 6 December, 1918, p.23.

<sup>372</sup> *Ibid*, 11 September, 1914, p.10.

<sup>373</sup> *Jewish World*, 28 October, 1914, p.9.



The principal complaint by Jewish soldiers on active service throughout the war and in all theatres was the lack of padres of their own faith, especially when compared with the religious support given to their Christian comrades. Chaplains acknowledged that 'Our Jewish soldiers see what is being done for their Christian comrades. Ought we to do less for them?.'<sup>374</sup> By November, 1918 the totality of Jewish chaplains on Active and Home Service was nineteen. Almost all were on Active Service throughout Salonika, Palestine and Egypt as well as the Western Front, with one chaplain on Home Service with Southern Command. In contrast to the flood of Anglican ministers volunteering to serve with the Army Chaplains Department, it was acknowledged in the Anglo-Jewish press near the end of the war that there had been a lack of volunteers to serve as Jewish padres in combat zones.<sup>375</sup> Using as a benchmark the generally accepted total of 41,500 Jews from Britain in the Imperial Forces by 1918, a Jewish chaplain was responsible for, on average, over 2,000 men, twice the number for a British and American Gentile padre.<sup>376</sup> In addition to their responsibilities for troops from Britain, Jewish padres also visited Army Divisions from Australia, India and Canada, and ministered to American Jewish forces in France in 1918 until their own chaplains arrived.<sup>377</sup> In the United States there were no Jewish chaplains in the Army until October 1917, when twenty rabbis were specially commissioned by Congress as 'at large' padres, entitled to wear a special insignia.<sup>378</sup> In the French Army, thirty seven rabbis served in the chaplaincy organised for military corps.<sup>379</sup>

The Reverend Vivian Simmons, commissioned and sent to France as the second chaplain in August, 1915, was attached to the Second Army which contained 3,000 Jews and had a trench frontage of over 30 miles. Between

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<sup>374</sup> *JC*, 3 May, 1918, p. 24.

<sup>375</sup> *JC*, 25 October, 1918, p.15.

<sup>376</sup> There appears to have been no provision of padres for the small number of Jews serving in the Royal Navy.

<sup>377</sup> *JC*, 24 January, 1919, p.17. Appreciation by Senior Chaplain C. Clark Kennedy, AEF to Rev. Lipson.

<sup>378</sup> Christopher Sterba, *Good Americans. Italian and Jewish Immigrants during World War I* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 122, 124, 191.

<sup>379</sup> Paula Hyman, *From Dreyfus to Vichy. The Remaking of French Jewry, 1906 – 1939* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), p. 51.

them, Adler and Simmons were initially responsible for religious ministry to Jewish soldiers on the British Front for 110 miles. Not only was Adler conscious of the privations this caused to the troops, he was also concerned about the reputation of Jews and Judaism among non-Jews.<sup>380</sup> When the JWSC assumed the responsibilities of the Visitation Committee, they were well apprised by the Senior Chaplain of the difficulties under which chaplains worked and the necessity for prompt action to send out additional padres. But at this point in the war, the committee was especially sensitive to the delicate situation for the community over poor voluntary enlistment figures, which they chose to take priority over the spiritual needs of Jewish troops.<sup>381</sup> By September, 1916, a further three chaplains had been commissioned but the Committee noted that 'at present no further appointment can be authorised'.<sup>382</sup> Throughout the war it received continuous requests for more chaplains, particularly for France, from the Senior Chaplain himself, although this matter was relegated to just a footnote in his post-war record.<sup>383</sup> Sometimes the JWSC chose to scale down requests and ask the War Office for a reduced number of new chaplains.<sup>384</sup> On other occasions the appointment of additional chaplains was declined by the Army.<sup>385</sup>

The JWSC's monopoly in the nomination of ministers to serve in the Army Chaplains' Department was challenged in November 1917 by the 38th Battalion of the Royal Fusiliers (composed largely of 'friendly alien' Jews), which rebuffed the intervention of the Home Chaplain, the Reverend Lipson, and made its own appointment. Its Commanding Officer chose a local Plymouth rabbi, Leib Isaac Falk, a Russian immigrant who required naturalization before he could be commissioned in the British Army. He was described by an Anglo-Jewish officer in the regiment as, 'a prince in Israel [...] I would rather have him a thousand

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<sup>380</sup> LMA, ACC/2805/4/4/1. Adler to Hertz, 19 August, 1915.

<sup>381</sup> RA, 000/358, Minute, 5 July 1916.

<sup>382</sup> *Ibid*, Minute, 29 September, 1916.

<sup>383</sup> Adler, *British Jewry Book*, p. 50. Autobiographical account, 'The experiences of a Jewish chaplain on the Western Front'.

<sup>384</sup> RA, 000/358, Minute, 30 July, 1917.

<sup>385</sup> *Ibid*.

times than this ghastly product of our ministry'.<sup>386</sup> By contrast, the appointment of the Reverend Grajewsky from Leeds as one of two chaplains attached to the Egyptian Expeditionary Force (EEF) proved to be highly contentious within the 39<sup>th</sup> battalion of the Judaeans, for which he occasionally conducted services.<sup>387</sup> He was allegedly despised by its Jewish officers as 'neither a minister nor a soldier', and its Christian officers were scandalised by his social ineptitude.<sup>388</sup>

A further major and logistic difficulty for the religious support of Jewish soldiers was the lack of motorised transport for chaplains on Active Duty. This factor did not affect Anglican padres, who were attached to specific units and were carried with them on military transport. Adler was fortunate to have had a car and military driver placed at his disposal by Field Marshal French at the start of his duties, which he acknowledged was essential to his duties.<sup>389</sup> Despite this facility, he was obliged to inform the Chief Rabbi, who had received many letters of complaint, that 'it is absurd for anybody to complain about men not being visited. I am only one man and cannot possibly visit one tenth of all out here'.<sup>390</sup> The other chaplains who gradually joined him were obliged to walk, ride or 'lorry hop', a factor that was only partly acknowledged by the troops. In response to a request for transport assistance from the JWSC by Reverend Morris, who went out to France in September, 1916, the supply of 'a few cars' was discussed by the Committee. Adler was asked to ascertain whether this would be permitted by Army Commands and whether the Army would supply drivers, petrol and maintenance.<sup>391</sup> It was subsequently decided that, 'having investigated the matter', cars would not be provided.<sup>392</sup> The matter was resurrected in the spring of 1917 and finally broached with the War Office by the JWSC that summer, some two years after it had been identified as a severe obstacle to

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<sup>386</sup> Cambridge University Library (hereafter CUL), Papers of Redcliffe Salaman, ADD 8171, Box 4, 10 November, 1917.

<sup>387</sup> Goldberger, 'An Englishman and a Jew', p.14. Grajewsky was commissioned in September, 1916.

<sup>388</sup> CUL, ADD 8171, Box 4, 21 July, 1918.

<sup>389</sup> LMA, ACC/2805/4/4/1. Adler to Hertz, 8 February, 1915.

<sup>390</sup> *Ibid*, Adler to Hertz, 19 August, 1915.

<sup>391</sup> RA, 000/358, Minute, 31 October, 1916.

<sup>392</sup> *Ibid*, Minute, 21 November, 1916.

chaplains' work abroad. It appears that, apart from Adler, they were forced to continue their improvised arrangements in order to fulfil their duties.<sup>393</sup>

Adler's relationship with New Court during his service in France was not always a cordial one as the incident over leave for ANZAC Jewish troops has intimated. Under the auspices of the Visitation Committee, the Senior Chaplain had been influential in the selection of his fellow chaplains. Appointments subsequently made by the JWSC were without consultation and were not always amenable to him and he was chastised for voicing his opinion.<sup>394</sup> In spite of their cognisance of the manpower problems for the chaplaincy on the Western Front, the JWSC registered its dissatisfaction with the Senior Chaplain's reports from France. In particular, Adler had been repeatedly requested by New Court to collect information and statistics from the battlefronts, partly in order to satisfy the needs of the Jewish press, anxious to publicise news of servicemen abroad. The *Jewish Chronicle* had already acknowledged the incompleteness of its records, and the Board of Deputies expressed its wish to secure an authoritative record.<sup>395</sup> In this and other matters, the high level Army co-operation with Jewish chaplains in France was frequently acknowledged in Adler's autobiographical account of his war work. He drew attention to the returns regularly supplied by Divisional Headquarters of Jewish soldiers within their command, noting them as 'a privilege conceded to Jewish chaplains alone'.<sup>396</sup> Despite the pressures on Adler due to a general shortage of chaplains on the battle fronts, and the lack of effective transport, the committee complained that '[...] the working and general organisation in France was in a state of disorder', and proposed an inspection with a view to offering the assistance of Major Schonfield, its officer-in-charge of administration.<sup>397</sup> By this time, Adler was in failing health and War Office approval was, in any event, refused.

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<sup>393</sup> RA, 000/358, Minute, 25 August, 1917. Adler, *British Jewry Book*, p.50.

<sup>394</sup> RA 000/358, Minute, 30 July, 1917.

<sup>395</sup> *JC*, 11 May 1917, p. 6.

<sup>396</sup> Adler, *British Jewry Book*, p.37.

<sup>397</sup> RA, 000/358, RA, Minutes, 13 April, 1917 and 30 July, 1917.

The integration of chaplains of all denominations was an inherent aspect of military life. Soldiers released from combat duty took opportunities to relax in the Expeditionary Force canteens where chaplains were in regular attendance, 'one day there might be a Catholic padre on and the next day a Protestant, a Jew or a Presbyterian. They were marvellous these people.'<sup>398</sup> Army Commanders, too, were pleased to incorporate Jewish chaplains into Gentile church services:

The C of E Chaplain was away on leave, and the Colonel was worried about the sermon. He could not ask any of the other Christian Ministers who had each their own service. So he asked tentatively if I would preach! So what we had that memorable day was a Church of England service, in a Roman Catholic monastery, practically all the staff and many of the (walking) patients, Wesleyans, and the sermon preached by a Jew!<sup>399</sup>

Adler's wish for Jewish padres to be wholly integrated within the Army chaplaincy on the Western Front is apparent in his own account of their experiences and in his observations. He relished the cordial relations between Jewish chaplains and other denominational padres in France, and the spirit of co-operation and 'catholicity' that existed was formally acknowledged at the end of the war.<sup>400</sup> This happy state of affairs did not always pertain in England. The Army Chaplains' Service in London was dismissive of a request by the Chairman of the JWSC for the Chief Rabbi to serve on a new Interdenominational Committee formed in 1916 to ensure equal treatment of soldiers in religious matters. Citing the small number of Jewish chaplains within the Army Chaplains' Department, the request was refused.<sup>401</sup>

By 1918, the reflections of Jewish padres revealed an atmosphere of unease concerning the health of Judaism as a result of wartime experiences. They considered that Jewish soldiers had been surrounded by many influences in

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<sup>398</sup> Arthur, *Forgotten Voices*, p. 197.

<sup>399</sup> Goldberger, 'An Englishman and a Jew', p. 13. The Reverend Simmons' account of Christmas Day, 1916.

<sup>400</sup> *JC*, 17 Jan 1919, p.19. Reverend Simmons.

<sup>401</sup> NA, WO 32/14826. R.Brade, Interdominational Committee to Chairman, JWSC, 5 December, 1916.

the Army which tended to dilute the importance of their Jewish origins and religion.

### **Army responses to Judaism**

Forced into the Army by conscription, some Jews remained fearful that military duties would oblige them to transgress their religious obligations. To allay concerns, the Chief Rabbi had clarified Jewish law by explicitly stating that they may engage in offensive warfare, even on the Sabbath.<sup>402</sup> It had been accepted practice for leave to be granted Jewish troops in HM Forces for religious festivals since the 1880s.<sup>403</sup> However, leave for Holy Days, dietary laws and Sabbath observance in wartime continued to exercise the Chief Rabbi. Occasionally leave was refused due to 'military impracticalities'.<sup>404</sup> But given the exigencies of the war, it was usually granted for Jewish festivals, especially for soldiers on Home Service, although not always to the full extent requested and often with the proviso of 'circumstances permitting'.<sup>405</sup> At times of particular military crisis, *viz* during the 1916 Somme offensive, Jewish sensitivities to national concerns overrode religious needs, and no requests were made.<sup>406</sup> The Anglo-Jewish press was punctilious in publishing details of special leave for servicemen to the wider community, and acknowledged, 'the thoughtful regard always extended to members of the Jewish faith'. On the first Christmas of the war, Jewish soldiers were encouraged to perform, 'a graceful action' and offer Christmas duties in return for special privileges for their own festivals.<sup>407</sup>

Early in the war on the Western Front, the burial of Jewish soldiers had been a source of great concern to their families especially, and to the wider Jewish community in general. Due to the dearth of chaplains, it became customary, wherever possible, for Jewish officers to conduct burial services for

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<sup>402</sup> LMA, ACC/2805/4/4/6.

<sup>403</sup> *JC*, 17 Dec. 1886, p. 8.

<sup>404</sup> *Ibid*, 19 March 1915, p. 24.

<sup>405</sup> LMA, ACC/2805/4/4/1. WO to Adler, 26 January, 1915.

<sup>406</sup> RA, 000/358, Minutes, 21 August 1916 and 11 April, 1917.

<sup>407</sup> *JC*, 4 December, 1914, p.16.

their co-religionists on the battlefields.<sup>408</sup> Military authorities were often unaware of the deceased's religion and crosses were invariably used as grave markers. Soon after his arrival in France in early 1915, Adler liaised with Major Fabian Ware, Officer-in-Charge of the Graves Registration Commission at the Front, and approval was granted for Magen David marker pegs to be placed on Jewish war graves, and for crosses to be removed on existing graves replacing them with the new form.<sup>409</sup> In Britain, free funeral services were available for all Jewish soldiers and sailors dying in hospitals in the Metropolitan area, with costs reimbursed by Military and Naval authorities. Perversely in the provinces, it would appear that servicemen were buried in the nearest Jewish cemetery with costs borne by the local Jewish congregation.<sup>410</sup>

Under the auspices of the Visitation Committee and in liaison with Adler, the Chief Rabbi visited Jewish troops at the Front near Ypres from 25 June to 8 July 1915, during which time he met with Sir John French, Chief of Staff of the British Army since 1911, and Commander of the British Expeditionary Forces in Europe.<sup>411</sup> He wished to make a further visit to British and ANZAC troops in France in November, 1917 but was deterred, firstly by the JWSC, and then by the deteriorating military situation.<sup>412</sup>

The Jewish wartime organisations were least successful over the issue of *kosher* food for their troops. It had been understood from Lord Kitchener's statement at the beginning of the war that where Jews chose to serve together in units *kosher* food could be provided. These groupings failed to occur, as the previous chapter has indicated. Although the matter had been a deterrent to recruitment during the period of voluntary enlistment, it became more crucial when conscription forced military service on orthodox Jews for whom dietary laws were fundamental to their religious observance. At this juncture, the Aliens Enlistment Committee (a body discussed in the following chapter) recommended

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<sup>408</sup> AJEX, E1/335. Segal to parents, 16 April, 1917, 'I helped to bury several Jews on the battlefield and said the Memorial Service over a good few graves'.

<sup>409</sup> JC, 18 June, 1915, p. 19.

<sup>410</sup> LMA, United Synagogue papers, ACC/2712/6/034/3. Letter to Adler, 18 November, 1914.

<sup>411</sup> Adler, *British Jewry Book*, p.36.

<sup>412</sup> RA, 000/358, Minute, 21 November, 1916.

to the War Office that it should, if possible, make special dietary provisions available for Jews during training.<sup>413</sup>

Shortly after the JWSC assumed responsibility for all Jewish military matters, the Chief Rabbi confided to Lionel de Rothschild that '*kosher* food for Jewish soldiers has most seriously occupied my mind', and he felt it should be available for troops, at least while in training and even when on active service.<sup>414</sup> Rothschild had previously informed Hertz that, contrary to the Chief Rabbi's wishes for Jewish Sabbath observance and the provision of *kosher* food in the Army, the disadvantages of Jews not training on Saturdays would be very great and cause confusion in their units, and that dietary requirements would be logistically impossible. Hertz suggested a possible compromise whereby the Army might establish three or four training camps where observant Jews could be sent, a privilege which he noted was extended by army authorities in Russia, Holland, Turkey, Germany and Austria.<sup>415</sup> Urged to bring this to the attention of the War Office with the least possible delay, Rothschild agreed to visit the Quarter Master General.<sup>416</sup> The JWSC, through the Chaplain for Home Service, Reverend Lipson, also contacted Regimental Commanding Officers.<sup>417</sup> Some sympathised with the dietary problems for orthodox Jews, but were unable to make any practical alternative arrangements.<sup>418</sup> At regimental level, Jewish dietary concerns exercised some catering officers. The Messing Officer of a training battalion in Maidstone contacted the Chief Rabbi expressing his concern over the difficulties of providing a Jewish diet for the 5% of Jewish men in his unit. He asked whether it might be possible for the Reverend Hertz to give Jewish servicemen 'partial or absolute' religious dispensation on consuming *trifah* food in Army rations, while confirming his 'ardent desire to do anything which is in my power to meet the requirements of the Jewish faith and the Jewish

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<sup>413</sup> NA, HO 45/10818/318095. Appendix to Report of Aliens Enlistment Committee, 26 July, 1916.

<sup>414</sup> LMA, ACC/2805/4/4/10. Hertz to Rothschild, 12 May, 1916.

<sup>415</sup> LMA, ACC 2805/4/4/12. Hertz to Rothschild, 3 April, 1916.

<sup>416</sup> *Ibid.* Rothschild to Hertz, 7 August, 1916.

<sup>417</sup> RA, 000/358, Minute, 5 June, 1916.

<sup>418</sup> LMA, ACC/2805/4/4/11. Officer in Command of Training Establishment ASC, Suffolk, to Hertz, 23 April, 1917.



people'.<sup>419</sup> The question of temporary dispensation on *kosher* food had been raised with the Chief Rabbi by a serving Jewish chaplain in 1916.<sup>420</sup>

The Army was unable or unwilling to supply appropriate food for observant Jews but had no objection to Jewish arrangements, 'for matzos being sent to Jewish soldiers or brought back by them on return from leave and to their using them in place of bread during Passover'.<sup>421</sup> There had been a Jewish scheme in 1915 for matzos to be distributed to troops in France through a society in Paris, funded through private Jewish sources or by an appeal in the Jewish press, but this failed to materialise and Adler confirmed that no further attempts were made.<sup>422</sup>

However, special dietary provision and a rest day on the Jewish Sabbath, described as a 'coveted privilege' by Lord Derby, was proposed for the special battalion of Russian Jews created in the summer of 1917.<sup>423</sup> This action brought the issue of *kosher* food for Jewish troops into the public domain, and articles appeared in the national press, citing the special rations provided for Indian troops in France.<sup>424</sup> This was an unsound comparison as discrete Indian regiments were not part of the Regular British Army and were provisioned and financed by the *Sirkar*, the Indian Government.<sup>425</sup> However, Indian casualties from France were treated in improvised hospitals in Brighton, including the Royal Pavilion, where separate catering arrangements were made during their medical care to satisfy the different dietary requirements of the Indian caste system.<sup>426</sup>

The matter of *kosher* food had been raised in Parliament in April by Sir John Randles, MP, who asked the Under-Secretary of State for War what measures the Army had taken to satisfy the food requirements of practising Jews. The House of Commons was informed that while the supply of *kosher* food for each

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<sup>419</sup> LMA, ACC/2805/4/4/12. Lt. Rendel, 24<sup>th</sup> Training Battalion to Hertz, 21 December, 1917.

<sup>420</sup> LMA, ACC/2805/4/4/10. Rev. Lipson to Hertz, 17 March, 1916.

<sup>421</sup> LMA, ACC/3121/A16. Letter to WO, 15 March, 1915.

<sup>422</sup> LMA, ACC/2805/4/4/1, 7 May, 1915.

<sup>423</sup> *JC*, 14 September, 1917, p. 8.

<sup>424</sup> AJA, Papers of M. J. Landa, MS 185 AJ 320 1/1, Leopold Frank to Lord Rothschild, 15 October, 1917, citing *The Times* and *Daily Mail*.

<sup>425</sup> Omissi, *Indian Voices*, pp. 295, 322.

<sup>426</sup> Visram, *Asians in Britain*, p. 181.

Jewish soldier was impractical, an Army monetary allowance in lieu of rations would be issued to Jewish troops on home service in connection with Jewish festivals and that 'this has gone a long way to meet the requirements of the Jewish religion'.<sup>427</sup> The gesture was not only small but largely futile as 'appropriate food' was unavailable for purchase in many isolated training areas. Some soldiers were not prepared to transgress their religious observances for Holy Days but Army authorities continued to maintain, 'with regret', that the exigencies of service must take priority.<sup>428</sup>

### **Jewish Welfare**

After the introduction of conscription, it was widely acknowledged within the community that military requirements forced from their homes large numbers of men only accustomed to a Jewish environment. In an attempt to address this social and cultural disruption, a Jewish Naval and Military Association was established in March 1916, in association with the YMCA. Its premises at the West Central Jewish Men's Club in the Tottenham Court Road in London offered 'friendly shelter' for Jewish soldiers on leave in the metropolis with dormitory accommodation, a canteen and recreational clubrooms. The Hostel, inaugurated by Lionel de Rothschild, was opened by Major-General Sir Francis Lloyd, who publicly acknowledged the contribution Jewish soldiers had made to the war effort.<sup>429</sup> Special arrangements for Passover and *Seder* services were made by the JNMA, and the premises were frequented by over 6,000 visitors between its opening and June, 1917.<sup>430</sup> Christian soldiers were also welcomed, and appreciated its facilities, largely, 'on account of the good meals' served there.<sup>431</sup> Its hostel accommodation was particularly sought after, and as this consisted of just two dormitories, extended facilities were proposed in July 1918

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<sup>427</sup> *JC*, 27 April, 1917, p. 20.

<sup>428</sup> LMA, ACC/2805/4/4/13. 16 ATS Yatesbury to Hertz, 24 March, 1918.

<sup>429</sup> *JC*, 14 April 1916, p.19.

<sup>430</sup> Adler, *British Jewry Book*, p. 18. *JC*, 25 October, 1918, p. 19.

<sup>431</sup> *JC*, 25 October 1918 p. 14.

at the Conference of the Jewish Association of War Workers.<sup>432</sup> The Association was also involved in providing a Jewish Soldiers' Club at Aldershot for 'the benefit of all Jews stationed in the Aldershot command'.<sup>433</sup> The limitation of the JNMA lay in the fact that there were no similar Club facilities outside London.

Prompted by the wishes of many Jewish soldiers to fraternize with their co-religionists on duty as well as on leave, the Association also sought to establish Jewish Huts similar to the YMCA scheme in areas of Britain where considerable numbers of Jewish soldiers were based for training, such as Aldershot, Salisbury Plain and Kinmel Park. Arrangements for huts at military camps in Britain were made through the auspices of the JWSC.<sup>434</sup> They were approved by the military authorities as suitable Jewish rallying centres and locales for prayer, and as a source of *kosher* food. Their overall purpose was 'to create a Jewish atmosphere and give comfort for those away from the traditions and customs of home'.<sup>435</sup> A more informal local initiative was taken by East End Jews who created a hut in the Mile End Road for local soldiers on leave.<sup>436</sup> Funds for the Huts were raised by the Jewish community, and they were managed by Jewish personnel under the auspices of the YMCA. Like the Tottenham Court Road Club, all members of HM Forces were welcomed but the premises were specifically set aside for Jewish purposes. The Jewish Battalions of the Royal Fusiliers enjoyed the use of such huts during their training at Crown Hill, Plymouth. The 'Maccabean Hut' was opened in December, 1917 as a result of fund raising within the community.<sup>437</sup> This was followed by the 'Astor Hut', owned and controlled by Jews, which was available to the 42<sup>nd</sup> Reserve Battalion. Friday evening and Saturday morning services were held there, one soldier writing to his parents that there were about 300 men present 'many of whom

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<sup>432</sup> *Ibid*, 26 July 1918, p. 10.

<sup>433</sup> LMA, ACC/2805/4/4/13. Reverend Simmons to Hertz, 23 April, 1918.

<sup>434</sup> RA, 000/358, Minute, 30 July, 1917. Photograph of Aldershot Hut in Adler, *British Jewry Book*, p. 329.

<sup>435</sup> *JC*, 27 July, 1917 p. 17.

<sup>436</sup> Adler, *British Jewry Book*, p. 18.

<sup>437</sup> LMA, ACC/2805/4/11, December, 1917.

nearly broke down during the Service [...] never in my life have I heard *Adon Alom* sung with such respect and reverence as I did this *shabbos* morning'.<sup>438</sup>

Other Jewish Welfare Committees were created after conscription in response to the difficulties that emerged specifically for Jewish servicemen, and were separate from Army initiatives. Chaired by the Reverend Green, the Sailors and Soldiers Dependents' Committee was established at Mulberry Street in Whitechapel, the premises of the Jewish Institute, to advise and support servicemen's families. By the end of the war it was dealing with an average of fifty cases daily, almost wholly from the immigrant community. To supplement the limited hostel facilities of the JMNA in London, an Anglo-Jewish Hospitality Committee was established, which arranged for soldiers on leave in the metropolis for Jewish Festivals to be accommodated in private homes. In early 1917, the Union of Jewish Women was approached to provide hospitality for Jewish colonial soldiers on leave for the Seder Service. While prepared to offer a meal, its members exhibited a certain reticence to provide overnight accommodation, 'in case some of the men were unsatisfactory guests'.<sup>439</sup>

Created to support the newly formed Jewish Battalions of the Royal Fusiliers, a Committee was formed of Zionist supporters, including David Eder and Leopold Greenberg, and chaired by Lord Rothschild. Rather more political in its activities, it was praised for its 'good work with the Americans' of the 39<sup>th</sup> battalion, for opening a Jewish ward in a Cairo Hospital, and for organising a regimental band to go with the troops to Palestine.<sup>440</sup> A regimental welfare committee was also established which included the wives of Chaim Weizmann and Colonel Fred Samuel, Commanding Officer of the 40<sup>th</sup> Battalion.

In the summer of 1918 a Conference of the Jewish Association of War Workers was held to review overall progress, attended by representatives of the various Committees. The JWSC was notable by its absence, perhaps unsurprisingly given the level of antipathy voiced by many from the immigrant

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<sup>438</sup> AJA, Papers of Pte Paul Epstein, MS 124 AJ 15, Epstein to parents, 26 January, 1918.

<sup>439</sup> AJA, Archives of the Union of Jewish Women, 1902 – 1976, MS 129 AJ 26/B4. Executive Committee Minutes, 13 February, 1917.

<sup>440</sup> JC, 25 October, 1918, p. 19.

quarters. With its military image, it was regarded very much as an extension of the War Office, and frequently unsympathetic with the needs of the Jewish soldier. In addition, many considered that its close association with the Rothschild Bank cast a long shadow over its supervision. It was, however, given credit for its success in obtaining leave for Jews in HM Forces. Its work on the collection of data on Jewish military service, largely through the efforts of Michael Adler, was considered by the War Workers' Committee as one of its most important and difficult duties.<sup>441</sup> Despite their reservations about the JWSC, Conference representatives suggested that a new department be created under its aegis for the dissemination of additional Jewish literature among servicemen, and also to provide further support for sick and wounded Jewish soldiers. As the end of the war became imminent, the need for a department to deal with the problems of demobilization, and to represent Jewish interests on the Government Pensions Committee, was also considered a necessary adjunct to the existing activities of the JWSC. These aspects arose out of the fears that Jewish soldiers might receive different treatment from their non-Jewish comrades when hostilities ceased.

The visiting of Jewish wounded soldiers in Military and General Hospitals in Britain by volunteers from the Union of Jewish Women (UJW) began in January 1915 on the initiative of Michael Adler. Private hospitals for officers generally asked to be excluded from hospital visiting.<sup>442</sup> Visit reports and patient details were passed to the United Synagogue (and after May 1916 to the JWSC), although some duplication of the Union's work by other organisations, e.g. the Hackney Committee for the Care and Visitation of Sick and Wounded Jewish Soldiers, was apparent. The latter's efforts were criticised by the JWSC and they were forced to channel their work through the UJW. While duplication of effort occurred, a certain lack of co-operation between the different welfare establishments is also evident in the refusal of the Jewish Soldiers' and Sailors' Club to accommodate

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<sup>441</sup> *JC*, 25 October, 1918, pp.14-15, 19.

<sup>442</sup> AJA, MS 129 AJ 26/B4. Executive Committee Minute, 2 March, 1915.

relatives of wounded soldiers visiting London hospitals from the provinces, a request made to it by the UJW volunteers.<sup>443</sup>

After four years of confronting the difficulties of Jewish servicemen, the *Jewish Chronicle* admitted that while the State had succeeded in placing itself on a war footing and organised its resources accordingly, the Anglo-Jewish community had failed to do so. The lack of effective organisation was in part attributed to the multiplicity of committees formed to support Jews in HM Forces, all of which worked independently of each other until virtually the end of the war, either duplicating responsibilities or working in opposition. A single centralised committee was then proposed to deal with soldiers' welfare to be known as the Jewish Welfare Council for members of HM Forces. The JWSC would remain as an 'extension' of the War Office, and the Dependents' Committee would operate under the auspices of the United Synagogue. The first meeting of the newly created Council was proposed for 14 November, by which time the Armistice had been signed.<sup>444</sup>

In summary, Gentile officers at the regimental level were frequently empathetic with issues of 'difference', and made practical attempts to enable Jewish soldiers to maintain their religious practices. This support was acknowledged by Jewish servicemen, sometimes to the detriment of the JWSC. When the Reverend Morris was recalled from Italy with no replacement provided, Private Hyman serving there with the RAMC, complained in the Jewish press that 'the army authorities are anxious to do a hundred-fold more for us to enable us to live as Jews than are some of our own people'.<sup>445</sup> At a higher level, the War Office appears to have done little more than was originally required by the State's recognition of Judaism in the 1880s.

During the war years, the Anglo-Jewish hierarchy attempted to maintain its historical role of representing the community, hardly a uniform entity socially, economically or religiously, in its *liaisons* with various bodies of the State.

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<sup>443</sup> *Ibid.* Executive Committee Minute, 7 November, 1916.

<sup>444</sup> *JC*, 25 October, 1918, p.19.

<sup>445</sup> *Ibid.*, 30 August, 1918, p.9.

Through its deferential attitudes to Government officialdom and its monopoly of religious and welfare arrangements for Jewish servicemen, it aroused antagonism and further unsettled the precarious balance between established and immigrant Jews. From 1916, Anglo-Jewry's traditional role was further challenged by the reactions of Russian Jews to the Government's reversal of its earlier military exclusion policy.

## CHAPTER 5    CONFLICTING FACTIONS: THE COMPULSORY MILITARY SERVICE OF RUSSIAN JEWS

‘I know the shock is bitter; I know that until now we Jews have been spared from the requisition for recruits. I know how unbearable it is to send a Jewish child to be a recruit. But you must face it, the doom is here, now’.

Yisroel Aksenfeld, *The First Jewish Recruit in Russia*, 1821 <sup>446</sup>

This chapter has particular resonance with David Feldman's claim that little research has been carried out on the characteristics of relations between Jews and the State in Britain, with particular emphasis on the treatment of aliens in the first three decades of the twentieth century. The circumstances surrounding the recruitment of Russian Jews in World War 1 also offers a perspective on the tension between the tenets of the Liberal state and its actions in the exigencies of war.

It has been earlier indicated that some unnaturalized immigrants, most likely to have been past members of the Jewish youth clubs, successfully breached their military exclusion and joined the Army in the period of voluntary enlistment. The majority harboured a psychological fear of military service *per se*, which was rooted in the *Cantonist* battalions of tsarist Russia, established in the 1820s. These units had attempted the Russification and forced religious conversion of Jewish boys as young as twelve. The menace of the *Khapers*, ('The Snatchers' and, in effect, the Tsar's kidnappers), remained central to conscription literature and folklore, forming part of immigrant identity in the diaspora and helping to preserve a sense of ethnic community. The worst excesses of the *Cantonist* system had, in fact, been removed in 1855 and shorter terms of service introduced, with selection by ballot, but the collective memory of the harshness of the earlier era remained in the forefront of Jewish immigrant consciousness.

Immigrant Jews of the diaspora cited conscription in the Russian Army as a principal reason for their flight from Eastern Europe. But recent research into

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<sup>446</sup> Cited as part of Haskalah literature in 'The Portrayal of the Myth' in Davidson, 'Painted with a Black Brush'.



the relationship between Jewish emigration and military service in collective memory, in parallel with the late John Klier's work on the *pogroms* of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, has resulted in re-evaluation of these issues.<sup>447</sup> Litvak has suggested that few aspects of Jewish experience under the Tsars defy the distinction between fact and fiction as manifestly as Russia's first Jewish soldiers.<sup>448</sup> But the conscription theme was central to the retelling of the Russian Jewish past, and came to represent a legend of heroic resistance to the ravages of modern life.<sup>449</sup> As a factor of migration, it was in the interests of Eastern European Jews to portray their arrival in Britain, America or other European countries as the flight from persecution. Cesarani has stated that immigrants in Britain were either too old or too young for conscripted service to be the threat they claimed it to be, echoing David Löwenthal's remark that, 'the past is always altered for motives that reflect present needs'.<sup>450</sup> This is undisputed in terms of the *Cantonist* era, but anti-war, anti-conscription sentiments continued and were reflected in later popular culture. Mendele Mocher Seforim's hero Benjamin, when captured for Russian Army service, pleaded, '[...] that we don't know a thing about waging war, that we never did know, and never want to know [...] our thoughts are devoted to other things; we haven't the least interest in anything having to do with war'.<sup>451</sup> In 1916 Britain, the deep cultural roots of anti-militarism in the psyche of the Jewish male from Eastern Europe undoubtedly underpinned the response of many to the nation's demand for their military service.

Since the 1980s, the enforced enlistment of the Russian Jews in Britain has dominated the literature of the Jewish community during WW1. It has been widely discussed by scholars of Jewish history in the broader sense of East End

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<sup>447</sup> John Klier, *Pogroms: anti Jewish violence in modern Russian history* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

<sup>448</sup> Olga Litvak, *Conscription and the Search for Modern Russian Jewry* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), p.3.

<sup>449</sup> *Ibid*, p. 12.

<sup>450</sup> David Cesarani, 'The myth of origins: ethnic memory and the experience of migration' in Aubrey Newman & Stephen Massil, (eds.), *Patterns of Migration, 1850 – 1914* (London: JHSE, 1996), pp. 250, 253.

<sup>451</sup> M. Seforim, *The Travels and Adventures of Benjamin the Third* cited in Davidson, 'Painted with a Black Brush'.

political activity, and through the narrower lenses of the Judaeans and the Conventionists, those who returned to Russia in the wake of the Military Services Act (Convention with Allied States) signed in July, 1917.<sup>452</sup> Less heed has been paid to the synergy between the Government's protracted efforts to conscript 'friendly aliens' and its wider national interests in events outside the military manpower requirement.

The Government's reversal of its recruiting policy *vis-à-vis* aliens from Allied nations in 1916 has raised questions from historians which ostensibly venture beyond the demands of 'more war, more men'.<sup>453</sup> It has been mooted that HMG's decision to force Army service on non-British citizens on pain of deportation cloaked other motives *viz* a tactic aimed at reducing Britain's immigrant population.<sup>454</sup> Although deportation was employed as a recurring threat, it was impracticable in wartime shipping conditions, and known to be so by Government bodies. Nevertheless, longer term thinking on alien immigration policy might have played some part. Certain sectors of the press supported the forcible removal of Russian Jews who refused Army duty '[...] it would be rather a good thing to get rid of the lot while the opportunity offers. Sooner or later this will have to be done'.<sup>455</sup>

Political issues undoubtedly affected Government policy on conscription. A case in point is Ireland whose citizens were exempt from the MSA. At the second reading of the Bill in Parliament in January 1916, the House was urged 'not to force too fast the sentiment of Imperial patriotism which is of

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<sup>452</sup> Bush, *Behind the Lines*. Kadish, *Bolsheviks and British Jews*. Asher Tropp, 'Russian Jews in Britain during the First World War', (Master's Dissertation, University College London, 1988) examined the topic through scrutiny of three specific sources, the *Jewish Chronicle*, *The Call* (published between 1916 and 1920 and, according to Bush, the paper most closely in touch with Jewish anti-conscription), and certain Home Office files. Watts, *The Jewish Legion*. Shukman, *War or Revolution*.

<sup>453</sup> Isaac Rosenberg's vacillation over enlistment cited in Ian Parsons, *The Collected Works of Isaac Rosenberg. Poetry, Prose, Letters, Paintings and Drawings* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1979), p. 219.

<sup>454</sup> Levene, 'Going against the Grain', p.73.

<sup>455</sup> *ELO* cited in Julia Bush, 'East London Jews and the First World War' *London Journal*, 6 (2), p.155.

new growth in the greater part of Ireland'.<sup>456</sup> An alternative interpretation of such delicacy may well point to suspicions of Irish loyalty to the British cause, especially in the light of continuing Nationalist unrest, which was to explode in the Easter Uprising. In any event, imperial patriotism was unlikely to have featured large in the mentality of new Jewish arrivals from Eastern Europe, whose existence in Britain was largely confined within the boundaries of immigrant districts.

The conscription of the Russian Jews was a multi-faceted issue, and, as such, merits consideration as a totality rather than in the isolation of specific factors, which has characterised the historiography to date. This chapter examines HMG's tactics in implementing its recruitment policy and exposes the ongoing tensions between Government Departments regarding the desirability of alien military service, together with the effects of foreign policy on the deployment of Russian Jews. Cabinet strategy is interwoven with the changing nature of Jewish influence on Government decision-making. As the war progressed, it brought new imperatives to the War Cabinet. This resulted in the pendulum of political influence swinging away from the traditional Anglo-Jewish power base towards a *coterie* of foreign Zionists newly arrived in Britain, who were empathetic, in their own interests, with evolving British policy in the Middle East. Tortuous tactics were employed by both the Government and the different factions within the Jewish community to pursue their diverse aims. Jewish involvement in the conscription of 'friendly aliens' was characterised by internal division within the community, but was also interspersed with brief episodes of strategic *liaison* between conflicting factions.

In the face of the Government's protracted efforts to force military service on 'friendly aliens', the efforts of Russians and Britons, Jews and non-Jews to continue their exemption, are reconsidered. Opposition to military service blurred previous Jewish/non-Jewish boundaries and made common cause between dissident Jews and the national anti-war movement in Britain.

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<sup>456</sup> House of Lords Record Office (hereafter HLRO), papers of Herbert Samuel, SAM A/52/1, 12 January, 1916. Sir Edward Carson raised the exclusion of Ireland from conscription.

The ethnic history of military evasion by Jews in Russia was reflected in the extensive and varied efforts made by many immigrants in Britain to escape the ranks of the British Army. As Levene has stated, of the estimated 29,000 to 30,000 Russian Jews of military age in Britain during the war, less than a third of that number served.<sup>457</sup> Taking exemptions into account, it is apparent that many thousands were successful in evading military service through numerous devices. Many went to Ireland, a sanctuary for English Conscientious Objectors and absentees from the French and Belgian Armies. To date little has been revealed of State efforts to deport Russian Jewish evaders back to England, or of local reactions to their presence in Ireland.

#### **The Imperatives of Expediency: the British Government, the Anglo-Jews and the Zionists**

In 1916 Home Office records confirm that from the start of the war it had urged that 'friendly aliens' might be usefully enlisted in the Army but that the War Office remained wary.<sup>458</sup> Although the issue of the military service of Russian Jews did not enter the public arena until the spring of 1916, it had been presaged in November, 1915. In an interview with the *Jewish Chronicle*, Lord Derby, then Director of Recruiting, stated that 'he was trying to make arrangements for those born abroad in allied countries to enter the Army voluntarily'.<sup>459</sup> He warned that if this occurred, such men would become liable for compulsory service in the event of conscription. This was a considerable advance in intent on the PRC's Minute of 1 November, 1915, which records only the possibility of voluntary enlistment.<sup>460</sup> This portent of military service by foreign Jews was the situation which faced Herbert Samuel when he became Home Secretary on 12 January, 1916.

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<sup>457</sup> Levene, 'Going against the Grain', pp. 70-71.

<sup>458</sup> NA, HO 144/13362. Minute, John Pedder, 6 May, 1916. Pedder was Assistant Secretary to Sir Edward Troup, Permanent Under-Secretary at the Home Office. An expert on alien immigration, Pedder had worked closely on the 1905 Aliens Act.

<sup>459</sup> *JC*, 19 November 1915, p.16.

<sup>460</sup> BL, MSS 54192A. Minute, 1 November, 1915.

In March, 1916, the CJRC (precursor to the JWSC) proposed to the Home Secretary that it should make 'further representations' to the Army Adjutant-General to remove the restrictions against Russian citizens entering the Army.<sup>461</sup> The wording suggests that it had already been vocal in encouraging the inclusion of immigrant Jews in the military war effort. In the event of this occurring, the committee offered to place its administrative machinery at the Government's disposal to investigate voluntary applications. The War Office was also informed that 'friendly aliens' felt they had been 'snubbed in their desire to show their gratitude to the country which has offered them a safe shelter'.<sup>462</sup> In their effort to portray Jewish patriotism and unity in the war effort, the CJRC set the expectation that Russian Jews were only awaiting the opportunity to serve.

Concurrent with Anglo-Jewish interventions, overtures were made to the Foreign and War Offices for the creation of a specifically Jewish military unit by Vladimir Jabotinsky, a Russian journalist from Odessa and fervent political Zionist, who had arrived in London in August of the previous year. A man at ease in the wider non-Jewish world, his former link with the British Army arose from his establishment of the Zion Mule Corps in Alexandria in the spring of 1915.<sup>463</sup> The unit had been manned by Russian Jewish settlers in Palestine and Egypt, many of whom had fought in the Russo-Japanese war. The Mule Corps was involved in a non-combat role in the abortive Gallipoli campaign, commanded by Lt. Col. John Patterson, an Irish Protestant, under the auspices of the C-in-C Mediterranean Expeditionary Force. Although the Corps wore British Army uniform, it was regarded by the War Office as a locally raised colonial force and, as such, did not breach the 1908 Army Act, still in force, restricting the number of foreign soldiers in any British military unit to 2%.<sup>464</sup>

Hubert Montgomery at the Foreign Office approached Lucien Wolf, Secretary of the Conjoint Foreign Committee of British Jews, the body which

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<sup>461</sup> The Adjutant-General was responsible for the administration and infrastructure of the Army and was junior only to the Chief of the General Staff.

<sup>462</sup> NA, WO 32/4773. Edmund Sebag-Montefiore, CJRC, to War Office, 23 March, 1916.

<sup>463</sup> David Goldberg, *To the Promised Land. A History of Zionist Thought* (London: Penguin, 1996), p. 173.

<sup>464</sup> Watts, *The Jewish Legion*, pp. 23 – 27.

conducted Anglo-Jewish foreign policy and maintained formal and informal links with the Foreign Office, to ascertain the views of Jewish communal leaders on Jabotinsky's new proposition. Many Anglo-Jews were opposed to the suggestion, which revived the 1914 spectre of David Eder's Jewish unit. Wolf's personal opinion was that it would attract no support, even from other Zionists.<sup>465</sup> Accepting these views, the Foreign Office decided there was no official Government interest in such a scheme. But its potential international propaganda value registered with the head of the War Propaganda Bureau, Charles Masterman, and was to become a lynchpin of HMG's pro-Zionist strategy in 1917.<sup>466</sup>

In April 1916 Samuel advised Wolf that the Russian Government had made no formal application for the surrender of Russian subjects in Britain, and that a scheme was under War Office consideration to embody them in the British Army, together with French and Italian subjects living in England.<sup>467</sup> Optional methods of incorporation were put forward by the Director of Recruiting, McKinnon, to the Adjutant-General, including the creation of a Foreign Legion as in France. This was rejected outright by the War Office, which remained generally apprehensive as to the 'desirability' of recruiting Russians at all.

With the implementation of conscription, reports reached the Home Office of strong public feeling in the East End about healthy foreigners escaping military service.<sup>468</sup> MI5's ongoing warnings to the War Office of the possible security risks posed by aliens being accepted into the Army were countered by the Home Office's continued prodding of the Army Council to construct a system for alien enlistment, 'it would be a curious position if you had to call out British soldiers to protect Russians and Belgians because you refuse to enlist them in

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<sup>465</sup> LMA, ACC/3121/C/11/2/9, Law & Parliamentary Committee. Wolf to Zangwill, 19 June, 1916.

<sup>466</sup> Watts, *The Jewish Legion*, p. 60.

<sup>467</sup> AJA, Archives of the Anglo-Jewish Association, MS 137 AJ 204/1. Conjoint Foreign Committee Special Reports, interview Wolf/Samuel, reported 4 April, 1916.

<sup>468</sup> NA, WO 32/4773. Troup to Major-General Macready, Director of Military Intelligence, 13 May 1916.

the British Army'.<sup>469</sup> In the event, the Army was persuaded to consider the enlistment of up to a total of 50,000 'friendly aliens' (the accepted ratio under Section 95 of the Army Act), with the proviso that the JWSC provide certificates of *bona fides* for Russian Jews.<sup>470</sup>

To encourage voluntary recruitment, Samuel suggested that Russian 'friendly aliens' who served with good conduct in the British Army be granted post-war *gratis* naturalization although the statutory requirements of residency, good character and language ability would continue to apply. The Treasury raised no objections, and the War Office and the CJRC were duly informed. Wolf mistakenly believed that naturalization would reconcile very large numbers of Russian Jews to eventual compulsory enlistment.<sup>471</sup> Some weeks later Lord Derby, in correspondence with Herbert Samuel, recommended that Russian Jews be immediately naturalized on entering military service. Home Office officials, however, exhibited at best circumspection, at worst prejudice, and favoured a qualifying period of three months' service in case, 'the man might be an utter scoundrel and get turned out of the army and otherwise disgrace himself in a few weeks or months'.<sup>472</sup>

In the changed circumstances of general conscription, the Jewish press lent some support to the reconsideration of a special Jewish unit, but it was apparent that the War Office was opposed any such scheme. In addition to Jabotinsky's lobbying, it had also been approached by a Jewish officer in the 1<sup>st</sup> London Regiment, concerned that in the East End there were many physically suitable Russian and Polish Jews who were willing and anxious to serve together.<sup>473</sup> He offered to raise a full battalion of such men, an offer declined by the Army Council but forwarded to the Director of Recruiting with the comment that if such men were enlisted in various corps 'we might be able to utilise the

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<sup>469</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>470</sup> NA, HO 144/13362. Derby to Samuel, 17 July, 1916, 'As you know, Russian Jews may be accepted for military service on production of a certificate from the Jewish War Services Committee'.

<sup>471</sup> LMA, ACC/3121/C/11/2/9. Wolf to Rothschild, 2 June, 1916.

<sup>472</sup> NA, HO 144/13362. Minute, Pedder to Troup, 17 July 1916.

<sup>473</sup> NA, WO 32/11351. Major Nathan to WO, 26 May 1916.

services of some of them'.<sup>474</sup> This response gives some indication of Army ambivalence on the potential military value of immigrant recruits.

At the beginning of June, Wolf confided his concern to Samuel over public unrest in the East End and advocated the compulsory service of Russian Jews to prevent an explosion of anti-Semitism, a matter he wished to discuss with the appropriate authorities on behalf of the Conjoint Committee and with the support of the JWSC. The existing problems of appropriate food and ritual observances would be overcome 'as in the case of Indians', he mistakenly anticipated, if Jews were conscripted in full measure.<sup>475</sup>

In order to effect this change in recruiting policy, the Foreign Office contemplated a direct approach to the London Consuls of Britain's allies, whose citizens would be affected, but the Home Office doubted the legality of such a procedure. In early June, Samuel formally announced that all 'alien friends' should serve in HM Forces or return to their own countries. Two days later, the War Office issued Army Council Instruction 1156 formally sanctioning the enlistment of 'friendly aliens'. It stated that only men fit for General Service would be taken, with good service rewarded by free post-war naturalization, and that Russian Jews would be posted in batches to serve together in the same unit if they so wished.<sup>476</sup>

Shortly before the issue of ACI 1156, Lord Rothschild confirmed to Wolf that the question of the recruitment of Russian Jews had been under consideration by the authorities for a long period and that Jewish communal leaders had made frequent representations to them. Like Wolf, the Jewish leadership considered that the scheme should be compulsory and that there should be no question of forming a specifically Jewish military unit.<sup>477</sup> By the end of the month, the JWSC recorded that the Government was making 'different arrangements' to recruit 'friendly aliens' and that the Union of Jewish Women,

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<sup>474</sup> *Ibid.* Memo WO to Dir. Of Recruiting, 27 May, 1916.

<sup>475</sup> Memorandum by Wolf, 16 June 1916, in Zosa Szajkowski, *Jews and the French Foreign Legion* (New York: Krav Publishing House Inc, 1975), pp. 230-31.

<sup>476</sup> NA, WO 32/4773, 8 June, 1916.

<sup>477</sup> RA, papers of Leopold de Rothschild, 000/81/2, Rothschild to Wolf, 6 June, 1916.



part of the traditional Anglo-Jewish philanthropic infrastructure, had offered its help in a campaign to enlist Russian Jews.<sup>478</sup> In the Anglo-Jewish press, Jabotinsky played on fears that future immigration into Britain and the United States would be adversely affected by the reticence of foreign born Jews to enlist. His compromise solution was the establishment of an exclusive Jewish unit for the defence of England and her Dominions.<sup>479</sup>

Wider repercussions of evolving British policy were felt in France, causing dismay within Jewry there and resurrecting fears of anti-Semitism. The Home Office was informed by Abraham Belazel, leader of the Foreign Jews' Protection Committee, that he had learned at a meeting with Marius Moutet, a member of the Franco-British Inter-Parliamentary Committee and Deputy for Lyons in the French Chamber, that 8,000 out of 40,000 Jewish refugees in France had attempted to enlist, and that 3,000 were fighting with the colours.<sup>480</sup> In 1914 the French Government had decided to exempt foreign Jews from conscription on the grounds that it struck at their right of asylum and that they could not be expected to offer the same patriotic self-sacrifice as French citizens. On a more pragmatic basis, it had concluded that 'the game was not worth the candle' because the numbers involved were so small relative to the difficulties of invalidating asylum laws.<sup>481</sup> Wolf met with Emile Durkheim, Sorbonne Professor and part of the Commission which examined the issue in 1914, and made clear to him the divergence between French views and those of Britain's Home Secretary and established British Jewry. The outcome of his meeting, and the views of the *Alliance Israelite* and *Franco Jewish Comité d'Action*, were communicated both to Montgomery and Samuel. Further meetings were arranged in London between Moutet, Lord Newton, Minister for Propaganda at the Foreign Office, and also with Leopold de Rothschild. In the House of Lords, Lord Newton warned that if the position of French Jews changed *vis-à-vis*

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<sup>478</sup> RA, 000/358, Minute, 27 June, 1916.

<sup>479</sup> JC, 30 June, 1916, p.15.

<sup>480</sup> NA, HO 45/10818/318095. FJPC to HO, 26 July, 1916.

<sup>481</sup> AJA, MS 137 AJ 204/2. Report on Wolf's visit to Paris, 10 July, 1916.

military service, it would be as a result of England's initiative.<sup>482</sup> At the end of July, Wolf assured Durkheim that the matter would be handled with 'great delicacy' by HMG. In the event, Newton was proved correct and an agreement was signed between France and the Russian Provisional Government in the summer of 1917 to mobilise Russian citizens in France and Frenchmen in Russia. Compared with the situation in Britain, only a few hundred Russians were affected as many had already volunteered for Army service, had travelled to the United States or were political activists who returned to Russia after the March Revolution.<sup>483</sup>

Later in July, Wolf was approached by Gregory Benenson, a Russian Jewish banker and former founder and Chairman of the Anglo-Russian Bank in Petrograd, whose Board members included Arthur Balfour, British Prime Minister from 1902 – 5 and later Foreign Secretary in Lloyd George's Cabinet. Benenson had made his fortune in Baku in the oil industry and later expanded his interests into gold mining and real estate. He arrived in London at the beginning of the war with his daughter, Flora Benenson Solomon, who was also to become an activist on behalf of Russians in England.<sup>484</sup> Benenson told Wolf that the Russian Jews were poorly informed of the Government's intentions for them, that they were bitterly opposed to the activities of the JWSC at New Court but had no reputable leaders of their own. In view of these factors he offered to establish a Russian Committee to represent them at his own expense. Wolf sensed an impending *impasse* and, anticipating the scandal that immigrant reticence would cause to the Jewish community as a whole, as well as compromising the work of the CFC, saw some merit in a less anglicised intermediary body between the Russian Jews and HMG, and was prepared to request approval for it from the Government and the JWSC. It is also likely that he saw benefit in shifting the responsibility for the Russian Jews from the shoulders of Anglo-Jewry.<sup>485</sup> He counselled Benenson to obtain the 'adhesion' of Zionists like Chaim Weizmann

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<sup>482</sup> LMA, ACC 2805/4/4/22. Newton statement in House of Lords, 13 July, 1916.

<sup>483</sup> Szajkowski, *Jews and the French*, p. 43.

<sup>484</sup> Shukman, *War or Revolution*, pp. 9 – 10.

<sup>485</sup> LMA, ACC/3121/C/11/2/9. Wolf to Rothschild, July, 1916.

and Nahum Sokolov, 'who, by their silence had led the East End to imagine that they were in sympathy with the Anti-Service Party'.<sup>486</sup>

Educated in Europe as a bio-chemist, Weizmann had arrived in Britain in 1905, already a fervent member of the Zionist movement. From 1915 he had attempted to interest Lord Robert Cecil at the Foreign Office in the concept of the restoration of Palestine to the Jews under a British Protectorate.<sup>487</sup> Initially, he lacked the political contacts to channel his ambitions although his Government war work had brought him into contact with David Lloyd George, then Minister for Munitions. Possessing a facility for winning important and influential friends, he was later to empathise with Prime Minister Lloyd George's ambition for a British presence in Palestine.<sup>488</sup> Together with a small *coterie* of foreign Zionists in Britain, Weizmann gradually became prominent in his dealings with the State at Anglo-Jewry's expense. Nahum Sokolov, historian and journalist from Eastern Poland, had been General Secretary of the Zionist Organisation from 1906 to 1909, and acted in support of Weizmann during World War 1.

In July, 1916, the Anglo-Jewish press published the Board of Deputies' endorsement of the Government's proposals, and, echoing Wolf, feared the collateral damage to Anglo-Jewry if the Russian Jews chose to remain outside the military effort. In his editorial, Leopold Greenberg castigated those Russian co-religionists who 'whimper and whine' at the prospect of rendering service.<sup>489</sup> A retraction of Anglo-Jewish charity was used in an attempt to manipulate the Russian Jews: loans already in place were withdrawn from those capable of military service who failed to enlist.<sup>490</sup>

The Government's Aliens Enlistment Committee set up in June 1916, which included Edmund Sebag-Montefiore of the JWSC, published a report in July

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<sup>486</sup> AJA, MS 137 AJ 204/1. Report of visit by Benenson, 27 July, 1916.

<sup>487</sup> Isaiah Friedman, *The Question of Palestine, 1914 – 1918. British – Jewish – Arab Relations* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), p. 38.

<sup>488</sup> Renton, *The Zionist Masquerade*, pp. 62-3.

<sup>489</sup> *JC*, 21 July 1916, p. 9.

<sup>490</sup> AJA, Archives of Jewish Care, MS 173/1/2/3. Board of Guardians for the Relief of the Jewish Poor, Executive Committee Minute, 3 July, 1916.

on the numbers of male Russians over the age of eighteen in Britain, estimated to total over 31,000:

|            |                      |         |       |
|------------|----------------------|---------|-------|
| London     | 19,000/20,000        | Leeds   | 2,322 |
| Manchester | 3,212                | Glasgow | 2,800 |
| Liverpool  | 3,050 <sup>491</sup> |         |       |

During July, initial negotiations took place between the British and Russian Governments through the latter's London Consul for Russian subjects in Britain to have an unconditional right to serve in HM Forces or to return to their own country to fight.<sup>492</sup> At British urging, Baron Heyking, Imperial Russian Consul General, issued the following *ukase*,

His Majesty, the Emperor of Russia, will pardon all Russians abroad who failed to present themselves for military service belonging to the classes 1914, 1915 and 1916 if such people enter the ranks of the English, French, Belgian, Servian (*sic*) or Montenegrin Armies and produce certificates to that effect.<sup>493</sup>

A month later Heyking told the Home Office that Russia had no wish for its citizens in Britain to be returned as, 'they were not much use and might spread dissatisfaction in the Army', a caveat which could hardly be made public in London.<sup>494</sup> Voluntary enlistment would apply until the end of September.

Anticipating no serious legal obstacle to the eventual imposition of military conscription on 'friendly aliens', the Government acknowledged that the system of Tribunals set up to address general exemptions from conscription (there were twenty eight in the London area and one for the City which included Lionel de Rothschild<sup>495</sup>) would be both inadequate and inappropriate to deal with Russian cases. A Special Tribunal was proposed for London, to include

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<sup>491</sup> NA, HO 45/10818/318095. Appendix, 26 July, 1916. The figure is questionable as it was based on the 1911 census and took no account of Jewish immigrants who had moved on to the United States, often their intended final destination, between 1911 and 1914.

<sup>492</sup> NA, HO 45/10818/318095. Count Benckendorff, Russian Consulate, London, to Samuel, 21 July, 1916.

<sup>493</sup> *Ibid*, 14 August, 1916.

<sup>494</sup> *Ibid*. Henderson's note on meeting with Baron Heyking, the Russian Consul General.

<sup>495</sup> Parliamentary Debates, Commons, 5<sup>th</sup> Series, Vol. LXXX, pp. 1214/15. Lionel de Rothschild was accused in the House of Commons of 'trying to evade the wishes of Parliament and drag men into the Army by bullying and improper action', which he strongly denied.

military representatives, which would be divided into eight sections to cover specific districts, and chaired by Julian Younger. Composed of a third membership representing Jewish interests, a third with legal experience from the London Appeals Tribunal and a third from local tribunals in boroughs with a significant Jewish population, the Special Tribunals were estimated to have the capacity to hear 1,300 cases weekly. There was little right of appeal and all Russians were obliged to undergo a military medical examination before lodging an exemption application. The Special Tribunals' remit was to consider exemptions on non-political grounds only.<sup>496</sup>

Special Committees were later set up in Glasgow, Leeds and Manchester to hear cases of Russian Jews, with their Jewish members nominated by the JWSC, which also arranged the services of Yiddish interpreters.<sup>497</sup> Leeds Anglo-Jewry excused their domination of an immigrant issue on the grounds that foreign Jews had not been resident in the city long enough to develop any standing within the general community. In Manchester, where a large number of foreign Jews came from Lithuania, Nathan Laski, a member of the local Board of Deputies, was one of two Jewish members to sit on the Tribunal Board.<sup>498</sup>

By 10 August, Benenson's Russian Committee was formed in London, including the markedly unenthusiastic Zionist members, Weizmann and Sokolov, whose interests focused on the movement's political ambitions rather than the enlistment of Russian Jews into the British Army. A propaganda office opened in the East End, for which Wolf pressed Benenson to secure the return of David Mowshowitch from Sweden, and provincial committees were envisaged in Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds and Glasgow.<sup>499</sup> In addition, Yiddish newspaper editors were approached for their support.

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<sup>496</sup> NA, HO 10818/318095. Appendix to Aliens Enlistment Committee Report, 26 July, 1916

<sup>497</sup> HO NATS 1/917. Schonfield to Rothschild, 11 September, 1917.

<sup>498</sup> *Ibid.* Manchester Rec. Office to WO, 18 September, 1917.

<sup>499</sup> LMA, ACC/3121/C11/2/9. Wolf to Sebag-Montefiore, 21 August, 1916. Wolf also considered David Mowshowitch essential to the work of the CFC, and that his own work was at a standstill in his absence.

Wolf had sought to impress on the committee that its primary duty was to assist in the British Government's objective of securing voluntary service. But at a meeting with the Home Secretary, also attended by Jabotinsky, Benenson pressed for the threat of deportation to be excised from any Governmental statement. Samuel refused to delete the clause but, as a concession, agreed to extend the period of voluntary enlistment by three weeks.

Even at this early stage Wolf appeared sceptical of the committee's success.<sup>500</sup> In provincial Jewish communities there were difficulties in finding influential Russian Jews to take part in enlistment campaigns in parallel with a resistance to call on the help of leading English Jews.<sup>501</sup> Internal difficulties within the Russian Committee and the lack of any evident enlistment propaganda in the East End prompted Wolf to confide in Joseph Cowen, an avowed Zionist, that, 'you and I and our friends could still do better than the New Court Committee'.<sup>502</sup> This might appear an ambivalent suggestion on Wolf's part as he attributed the ineffectiveness of the Russian Committee in part to the obstruction of its Zionist members but he was also well aware that any overt action on the part of the JWSC could well have adverse effects.

At this point Wolf officially withdrew from his part in the Russian Committee and put Benenson in contact with Edmund Sebag-Montefiore but he continued his involvement in the issue. In his dealings with the Home Office in early September, Wolf openly referred to the Russian Committee as abortive. Although he was aware that the Russian Committee was planning a big conference with delegates from the provinces, he advised Samuel to discontinue negotiations as he, Wolf, was of the opinion that they wished to act solely as protectors of the Russian Jews rather than as a *liaison* with HMG. He confided to Sebag-Montefiore his opinion that there was a conspiracy of silence in some

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<sup>500</sup> LMA, ACC/2805/C/11/2/29. Wolf to Samuel, 17 August, 1916.

<sup>501</sup> NA, HO 45/10818/318095. Louis Kletz, Committee of Deputies of Manchester Jews, to Samuel, 31 August, 1916.

<sup>502</sup> LMA, ACC/3121/C/11/2/9. Wolf to Cowen, 31 August, 1916.

quarters, including the Yiddish press, to withhold information from the immigrant community. In his view, this justified covert action on the part of the JWSC to circulate leaflets and posters in Yiddish but to, 'let it be a bolt from the blue, quite anonymous'.<sup>503</sup> This tactic would have the additional advantage of exposing and discrediting Benenson's Committee. Wolf's personal fear was that the coercion of friendly aliens was becoming ever more problematic for the Government to resolve. The shipping route to Archangel in winter was impossible for deportation, the Russian General Staff in France was unwilling to accept deportees, and direct conscription would require legislation to amend the MSA, which he feared the Government was loath to risk putting to a Parliamentary vote. Moreover, the Home Secretary had been told by Sebag-Montefiore that the members of the Russian Committee held widely divergent views and that Benenson 'had no plan beyond abusing Gaster and Sokolov', both committed Zionists.<sup>504</sup>

Despite his ideological divergence from Zionism, Wolf then approached Jabotinsky and Cowen in early September in an effort to establish a new, informal committee to enlist Russian Jews. He counselled Samuel to 'make some concessions to Jabotinsky's views [...] I do not think they need take a very serious form'; these 'views' included the creation of a Jewish military unit and the limiting of Russian recruits to Home Defence (which included service in India and Egypt).<sup>505</sup> Within two weeks the new committee had opened an office in Aldgate, posted 1000 placards, distributed handbills and issued press notices. A new Yiddish paper was functioning and Cowen promised public meetings in the near future. When these occurred in October they were broken up, 'presumably by Russian-born Jews opposed to their views', in the opinion of the Jewish press.<sup>506</sup> Jabotinsky was becoming increasingly aware of the potential damage to his cause by directly linking the aliens' recruitment issue with his proposed

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<sup>503</sup> LMA, ACC/3121/C/11/2/9. Wolf to Edmund Sebag-Montefiore, 8 September, 1916.

<sup>504</sup> NA, HO 45/10814/318095. Edmund Sebag-Montefiore to Samuel, 4 September, 1916.

<sup>505</sup> AJA, MS 137 AJ 204/2. Wolf to Samuel, 1 September, 1916.

<sup>506</sup> JC, 13 October, 1916, p. 6.

Jewish unit. A specific danger was a change in Army Regulations altering the proposed service by Russian Jews in 'separate units of 200' to 'posting in batches to serve together'. In Jabotinsky's view, this replaced the opposition of the Anglo-Jewish hierarchy with that of the War Office.<sup>507</sup> At this point, Wolf declared himself deceived by the Zionists and divorced himself from their activities complaining 'I was too naïve, and I have been shamelessly milked'.<sup>508</sup>

After War Office 'permission' was granted for Russian subjects to serve voluntarily in the British Army (known in the Home Office as 'Russia B'), instructions were sent at the end of August, 1916 to all Chief Constables that 'Group Russia' (its categorisation of Russian subjects of military age), 'shall as far as possible be enlisted into the British Army', and advising that a voluntary recruitment campaign was about to begin. Constabularies were also informed that recruits could lodge naturalization applications with them at the time of enlistment. Police Alien Records were to be used to supply details of all male Russians between eighteen and forty one. Lists were then to be compiled and sent to the JWSC for certification.<sup>509</sup> Between 8 June and 25 October, the committee issued 1,528 certificates of eligibility to enter the British Army. Perhaps reflecting Anglo-Jewish reservations of immigrants as 'manly men', the committee stated that it was not prepared to express an opinion on the suitability of these men for military duties and that the onus rested on the Army to accept or reject them.<sup>510</sup>

The Home Secretary was anxious to publicise the fact that although other 'friendly aliens' had been called back to their respective countries by their Governments, the Russian Government was willing for its subjects abroad to serve in allied armies. Forced deportation, he stated, was a misconception and any further measures were in abeyance until the period of voluntary enlistment

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<sup>507</sup> Manchester University, John Rylands Special Collections (hereafter MU), C. P. Scott papers, MS 135/118. Jabotinsky to Scott, editor of the Manchester Guardian, 3 September, 1916.

<sup>508</sup> LMA, ACC/3121/C/11/2/9. Wolf to Zangwill, 23 October, 1916.

<sup>509</sup> NA, HO 45/10818/318095, 22 Sept 1916.

<sup>510</sup> NA, HO 45/10818/317810. Memo re JWSC reporting, 24 October 1916.



expired.<sup>511</sup> Meanwhile, German propaganda during August had claimed that 25,000 Russian Jews had already been shipped back to Russia, a statement designed to antagonise Jews in the United States in particular.<sup>512</sup>

By early October, only 400 or so Russians had volunteered for Army service. While the JWSC kept a low profile in the public arena, its total support of compulsion under MSA legislation was made officially known to the Government.<sup>513</sup> Simultaneously, Leopold de Rothschild and Lord Swaythling published an open letter to the Russian Jews on 4 October attempting to reassure them on their right to Jewish religious observances in the Army, 'as far as military exigencies permit', and of their equality with their Christian comrades.<sup>514</sup> Equality would not, however, extend to their eligibility to hold the King's commission.

At 5 pm on 2 November, Lord Derby attended an internal meeting on Russians and Military Service in Samuel's office at the House of Commons to review the deliberations of the Cabinet Committee on the Enlistment of Russian Jews held two days earlier. The JWSC's official letter of support formed part of the assembled papers. However, its supposition that conscription of Russian Jews could be implemented by amending the standing legislation of the MSA had been judged to flout international law. Article XIV of the 1859 Anglo-Russian Treaty had stated that citizens of these two countries were not liable for military service in any other army than their own in time of war, although the Cabinet anticipated that Russia would probably agree to some modification. In the two weeks before Samuel's meeting, correspondence between the Foreign and Home Offices had established that an agreement between "Two High Contracting Parties" on reciprocal military service could supersede international law and that

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<sup>511</sup> Englander, *A Documentary History*, pp. 315-6. Letter from Herbert Samuel to the Reverend John Clifford, 20 September, 1916.

<sup>512</sup> NA, HO 45/10810/311932, 24 August, 1916.

<sup>513</sup> NA, HO 45/10819/318095. JWSC to Samuel, 25 October, 1916.

<sup>514</sup> NA, WO 32/11353. Open letter to Russian Jews, 4 October, 1916.

any resultant treaty could be embodied in a schedule to the Military Service Act to eliminate any legal problem in municipal law.<sup>515</sup>

The possibility of enforced deportation of Russian Jews to countries other than their own was also on the meeting's agenda. The only alternative destinations outside the war zone were the United States and South America, each of which was judged to be either illegal or impractical. HMG and the US Government had signed an agreement early in the war not to rid itself of its aliens at the other's expense. Furthermore, it was considered that shipping companies serving South America would be loath to carry passengers not in possession of a Russian passport, who might be rejected on arrival and returned to Britain. The problems of sending men back to Russia were both pragmatic and political. Firstly, Archangel was only open in the summer and most British shipping was involved in the movement of munitions. Secondly, though seemingly of lesser importance, the Government was aware that not only immigrant Jews but Russian and English Socialist organisations, certain dissident British politicians and a small section of the national press, e.g. *The Manchester Guardian*, were strongly opposed to their deportation.

When the Home Secretary formally presented his scheme to the Cabinet for the compulsory enlistment of the Russian Jews on 6 November, 1916, the Prime Minister, Herbert Asquith, voiced his strong opposition on the grounds that such a move would create prejudice and misunderstanding. It was apparently, 'the only subject on which he (Asquith) had expressed any opinion with decision since early July'.<sup>516</sup> The following day the Cabinet resolved to introduce a Bill to compel the enlistment of 'friendly aliens', from which Asquith unsurprisingly withheld his assent.<sup>517</sup> Lloyd George, Secretary of State for War and opposed to Asquith whom he was soon to succeed as Premier, supported

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<sup>515</sup> Liverpool Record Office (hereafter LRO), Papers of Lord Derby, 920 DER (17) 27/13, Appendix II (c). FO to HO 24 October, 1916.

<sup>516</sup> John Vincent, (ed.), *The Crawford Papers. Journals of David Lindsay, 27<sup>th</sup> Earl of Crawford and 10<sup>th</sup> Earl of Balcarres, 1871- 1940* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), p. 364.

<sup>517</sup> NA, CAB 41/37/39. Minute, 7 November, 1916.

the scheme.<sup>518</sup> It was put into action two days later in a cipher to the British Ambassador in Petrograd, Sir George Buchanan.<sup>519</sup> Within a few days Buchanan was urged to stress the urgency of the matter on the Russian Government, as the exemption of Russians from military service was causing, 'great dissatisfaction and some ill feeling amongst the British population'.<sup>520</sup> Again, no response was forthcoming from the Russian Government and Buchanan was reminded that the situation in the East End of London 'necessitates an early decision'.<sup>521</sup> By the middle of the month, the Home Office was forced to conclude that Russia was reluctant to agree the proposal.

When Asquith resigned as Prime Minister in December 1916, Samuel declined Lloyd George's offer of a post in his new Cabinet and left Government, henceforth largely bereft of Liberal politicians. Lord Rothschild continued to press the Government for action on compulsion but, to further complicate the issue, the new Home Secretary, Sir George Cave, received a note on 23 December from the Russian Ambassador in London regarding the proposed free naturalization for Russian subjects who joined the British Army. It stated that Russian nationality was indelible, even to the extent that children born of Russian parents on British soil remained Russian in principle: Russian *jus sanguinis* was deemed to prevail over British *jus soli*.<sup>522</sup> Russians in Britain were required to apply for liberation from their nationality prior to British naturalization. In the light of increasing domestic unrest in Russia this was likely to have been a delaying tactic and the British Government was minded to ignore this request, repeated on 5 January 1917, but, on reflection, requested the matter be deferred until the war had ended. To acquiesce, they feared, would create two classes of naturalized British citizen, one under Russian law and the other outside it, but to refuse bore the risk of compromising their broader

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<sup>518</sup> Vincent, (ed.), *The Crawford Papers*, p. 364.

<sup>519</sup> NA, HO 45/10819, 318095. Cipher to Buchanan, 8 November, 1916.

<sup>520</sup> NA, HO 45/10819/318095, Buchanan's note to Russian Government, 13 November, 1916.

<sup>521</sup> *Ibid*, cipher 1 December, 1916.

<sup>522</sup> NA, HO 144/13362. HO to FO, 11 January, 1917. Shukman, *War or Revolution*, p. 67.

proposal on conscription. The matter was eagerly seized upon and reported in *The Jewish Voice*, a strongly anti-conscription Yiddish paper in the East End.<sup>523</sup>

In February, Russian signature of the Convention appeared imminent on condition of its reciprocity, making legislation possible for the conscription of Russian subjects in Britain. Only 450 British subjects resident in Russia would become liable for military service there, and it was anticipated that Russian recruits would be available to the British Army in May/June.<sup>524</sup> An agitated state of affairs existed in the East End, and Anglo-Jews feared hostile demonstrations by Russian Jews at the increasing pressure brought to bear on them to enlist under threat of deportation.<sup>525</sup>

Finalisation of the Convention arrangements was interrupted by the abdication of the tsar and the demise of the regime. A Special Branch report suggests that the March Revolution came as a great surprise to both the Government and the Labour movement in Britain.<sup>526</sup> Anxious to deflect any hope of the scheme's collapse by Russian Jews in London, Bonar Law chose to present the change of government in London as the delaying factor in negotiations between the two countries, stating that these were proceeding with the new Russian Government.<sup>527</sup>

The political upheaval in Russia encouraged Anglo-Jewry to anticipate that many of their Russian co-religionists would return to their liberated homeland. They also hoped that a considerable numbers of those remaining would be prepared to enlist in the British Army to fight with a Russian ally, which had now abolished the Pale and was no longer intent on Jewish persecution<sup>528</sup> When the Convention with Allied States, as an adjunct to the MSA, was finally

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<sup>523</sup> NA, HO 144/13362. Included in J. F. Henderson note, 5 January, 1917. Henderson was Senior Clerk at the Home Office.

<sup>524</sup> NA, HO 45/10819/318095. WO to Henderson, 19 March, 1917.

<sup>525</sup> Stein (ed.), *Letters and Papers*, p.338. Weizmann to Harris Morgenstern, 4 March, 1917.

<sup>526</sup> NA, HO 144/13339. Special Branch report, 21 March, 1917.

<sup>527</sup> MCL, M 138, Box 68. Weekly bulletin of Recruiting Service, 2 April, 1917.

<sup>528</sup> *JC*, 23 March, 1917, pp.11-12.

agreed by Russia on 10 July, Weizmann recorded that, 'there was howling in Whitechapel'.<sup>529</sup> Lucien Wolf continued to fear that the option for Russian Jews to return to their native land was 'the fatal concession', and anticipated that the overwhelming majority of aliens would avail themselves of it.<sup>530</sup> The Bill had then to be quickly put before Parliament before the summer recess at the beginning of August, with conscription implemented on 21 September, 1917.

Outside the continuing military pressure on the Western Front, other areas of concern were gaining importance in War Cabinet circles. The British invasion of Palestine had already begun. In the US many Jews remained unenthusiastic about America's entry into the war. The domestic situation in Russia under the Provisional Government was becoming increasingly unstable to the extent that Leo Amery, Assistant Military Secretary to Lord Derby, commented at the end of July that Lloyd George was, 'very depressed about Russia and convinced that there is no more to be hoped from her'.<sup>531</sup>

In a meeting with Lord Derby in the spring of 1917, Jabotinsky claimed that between 5,000 and 10,000 Russian Jews would enlist voluntarily to fight in Palestine for the Zionist cause.<sup>532</sup> In his renewed agitation for the creation of a Jewish Legion, he met with Lloyd George, who was becoming increasingly convinced by his Foreign Office advisors that there were 'the strongest reasons for pressing on with the proposal of the Legion as rapidly as possible on political grounds'. In wider negotiations prompted by the new Zionist *coterie*, Weizmann was nearing the final stages of talks with Mark Sykes on the part Zionism might play in British strategy in the Middle East, particularly in Palestine.<sup>533</sup>

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<sup>529</sup> Stein, *The letters and papers*, p. 379. Weizmann to Ahad Ha'am, 1 August, 1917. Ha'am was a Zionist from the Ukraine, who moved to England in 1907, and played a part in securing the Balfour Declaration.

<sup>530</sup> NA, HO 45/10821/318095/325.

<sup>531</sup> Barnes and Nicholson, (eds.), *The Leo Amery Diaries*, p. 164.

<sup>532</sup> HLRO, Lloyd George papers, LG/F/14/4/34. Derby to Lloyd George, 9 April, 1917.

<sup>533</sup> BL, C. P. Scott papers, ADD 5090. Weizmann to Scott, 20 March, 1917.

Early assessments by historians of British interest in Zionism concluded that Britain was obliged to 'play the nationalist card' in Palestine as a tactic of international diplomacy. Military conquest alone violated the principle of non-acquisition of territory by war held by American President Wilson and the Russian Provisional Government Prime Minister Kerensky.<sup>534</sup> Recent revisionist opinion on the Balfour Declaration has suggested that HMG linked Jewish national aspirations in Palestine with the securing of Jewish support for the *Entente* in the United States, Russia and the neutral countries through a propaganda campaign enhanced by the creation of a Jewish Legion. This strategy was based on the Government's incorrect assumption that Jewry was a cohesive supra-national people, committed to a return to Palestine.<sup>535</sup>

In March, 1917, Leo Amery, one of a small secretariat of advisers to Lloyd George's War Cabinet, was persuaded that the Government had:

no need to commit to Zionism but, from a military point of view, utilising "our Russian Jews" in a special corps for service in the East will secure us better fighting value than putting them in ordinary units, where they will not be too welcome, for service in France.<sup>536</sup>

Approval was given for special Jewish units on the distinct understanding that they were not officially linked with Zionism. In anticipation of their inception, the JWSC was asked to recommend suitable officers for these training units which, they were given to understand, were to be, 'free to be drafted to any regiment, wherever needed'.<sup>537</sup> Unsurprisingly, they put forward the names of two Anglo-Jewish officers, one in the Buckinghamshire regiment.<sup>538</sup> This appears to have been a concession to Anglo-Jewry as the War Office had been given to understand that Russian Jews preferred to be commanded by British officers rather than anglicised Jews, 'unless he was a Jew who had done outstandingly in

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<sup>534</sup> Friedman, *The Question*, p. 287.

<sup>535</sup> Renton, *The Zionist Masquerade*, pp. 12-13.

<sup>536</sup> Friedman, *The Question* p. 138. Amery advised Arthur Balfour of this view on 23 March, 1917.

<sup>537</sup> NA, WO 32/11353. Rothschild to General Auckland Geddes, Director of Recruiting, 3 April, 1917.

<sup>538</sup> NA, WO 32/11353. Rothschild to Major-General Taggart, 17 April, 1917.

the war'.<sup>539</sup> With this seeming empathy with their views, and conscription not likely until early September, the JWSC undertook a further energetic recruiting campaign through, 'a very respectable and pleasantly spoken Russian Jew', Morris Aaron, who was prepared to canvass his Socialist friends in the East End.<sup>540</sup> To the embarrassment of the JWSC, but perhaps not to the surprise of War Office officials who were becoming increasingly exasperated with the opinions of 'prominent, over-age Jews', no volunteers were forthcoming.<sup>541</sup>

In early August, Major-General Taggart was told by the JWSC that the Government's firm action in arresting Abraham Belazel, leader of the Foreign Jews' Protection Committee, had had an excellent effect on Jews in the East End, 'who are now thoroughly cowed and prepared to accept anything'.<sup>542</sup> The War Office had a high opinion of its Vice President, Lionel de Rothschild, whom it described as having, 'done very good work for the Army and his opinion on these matters is sound'.<sup>543</sup> When the 38<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Royal Fusiliers, was finally gazetted on 23 August, David Cesarani has suggested that contemporary Jewish opinion was divided over whether a Jewish regiment was a recruiting device connected to the Convention or was created for a specifically Zionist purpose.<sup>544</sup> The Government's final decision had been taken without consultation with the Anglo-Jewish leadership. The JWSC informed the War Office that British Jews were, 'much alarmed at the possibility of having their good name and reputation entrusted to aliens who had shown no desire to do service for Britain or the Allies'.<sup>545</sup> But assimilated Jews were bound by their part in HMG's alien recruitment policy, even when the outcome diverged so widely from their own sentiments. They consequently felt obliged to support the *fait accompli*, and to this end, a Jewish Regiment Committee was immediately formed, chaired by Lord

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<sup>539</sup> NA, WO 32/11353, 12 June, 1917.

<sup>540</sup> *Ibid.*, 3 April, 1917.

<sup>541</sup> *Ibid.*, 10 May, 1917.

<sup>542</sup> *Ibid.* Major-General Taggart, GHQ, to Director of Organisation, WO, 3 August, 1917.

<sup>543</sup> *Ibid.* Re. visit of Rothschild and Montefiore.

<sup>544</sup> Cesarani, 'An Embattled Minority', p. 71.

<sup>545</sup> WO 32/11353. JWSC to WO, 18 October, 1917.

Rothschild, himself a Zionist sympathiser, who exhorted its members to do their utmost to make the regiment a success.<sup>546</sup>

The Jewish press deplored the divisions between Orthodox Jews, Zionists and anti-Zionists caused by this decision and, in an editorial directed at Lord Derby, asked whether it had been taken to excuse regimental commanders from being forced to admit foreigners.<sup>547</sup> Some Zionists, such as David Eder, were keen to portray the battalion as an Army tribute to Jewish military worth while others regarded it as an absurdity.<sup>548</sup> Weizmann claimed in the wake of its establishment that he had never spoken of it with HMG, and had persistently fought Jabotinsky in his endeavours, but it has been suggested that although Weizmann regarded a Jewish unit as Jabotinsky's '*idée fixe*', he gave it his discreet encouragement.<sup>549</sup>

Derby had already been made aware by Lloyd George that the battalion's political importance was paramount in gaining support for the Allies by international Jewry. But he was prepared to placate some of Anglo-Jewry's anxieties by excluding a Jewish identity from its title before it was gazetted, 'personally I am ready to call (the regiment) the Joppa Rifles or the Jerusalem Highlanders or anything else as long as I get the men [...] of course we shall employ them in Palestine but I don't think they ought to be specially told that that is what they are going to be employed for'.<sup>550</sup> It is evident that from the regiment's inception that the War Office proposed to man it with Jewish recruits of low medical category deemed suitable for Home Duties only, fitter men being posted to or retained on the Western Front.<sup>551</sup> This may go some way to explain

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<sup>546</sup> AJA, MS 185 AJ 320/1. Lord Rothschild to members of Jewish Regiment Committee, August, 1917.

<sup>547</sup> *JC*, 31 August, 1917, p. 7. 'Mentor' editorial.

<sup>548</sup> *Ibid*, p. 14. *Ibid*, p. 15, letter from Dr Fox appealing to every Zionist society to protest.

<sup>549</sup> Goldberg, *Promised Land*, p. 177.

<sup>550</sup> NA, WO 32/11353, Derby to Lloyd George, 22 August, 1917.

<sup>551</sup> NA, WO 32/11353. Minute, 21 August, notes not only the posting of B1 and C1 men (both categories listed as Not Fit for General Service) but that the Assistant Adjutant-General was prepared to waive objections to men of lower categories being posted. Army medical categories are noted in WO 162/6, NA.



why those Jews who applied for transfers from active regiments in the coming months were refused. General Taggart had stated early in August that the impression generally prevailing was that the War Office intended to raise and train a Jewish battalion, and despatch it to France where it would be deployed in the most unhealthy part of the line to 'get it exterminated'. His personal opinion was that this course of action, 'however desirable from one point of view, is not the intention' but that such units would be used as training facilities with men drafted out as needed.<sup>552</sup> The impression that the Jewish unit was 'just a scheme to get the riff raff together and destroy them' had a wide circulation which, by October, extended to the battalion itself.<sup>553</sup>

In the wake of the Convention, the Police reported to the Home Office that Russians proposed to apply in large numbers to return home as a strategy to overwhelm the Government's ability to transport them. However, it appears that only 5,000 applications were received in London, 1,400 in Scotland, and approximately a further thousand in other provincial centres.<sup>554</sup> The Treasury estimated that transport costs back to Russia would be in the order of £60,000, plus railway expenses, which it hoped to recover ultimately from the Russian Government. In the event only 1,850 men had sailed by the end of September, 1917, and a further sailing took place in mid-October bringing the number to just under 3,000, the Home Office commenting that, 'the majority were inoffensive enough but we could well do without them'.<sup>555</sup> None went with any guarantee of the right to return, and the total included 900 Lithuanian non-Jewish miners from Lanarkshire, whom the State could ill afford to lose, together with 540 political *émigrés*.<sup>556</sup> Of the few hundred Conventionists, Kadish considered that most were attracted back to Russia by the Revolution rather than

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<sup>552</sup> NA, WO 32/11353. Major-General Taggart to Directorate of Organisation, 3 August, 1917.

<sup>553</sup> CUL, Papers of Redcliffe Salaman, ADD 8171, Box 4. Salaman, MO to the 38<sup>th</sup> battalion, noted, 'I hear in Manchester there is a report that we are a Death Unit', 31 October, 1917.

<sup>554</sup> NA, HO 45/10821/318095.

<sup>555</sup> NA, HO 45/10823/318095.

<sup>556</sup> NA, HO 45/10821/318095. File note, Henderson, 14 October, 1917.

as a means of evading British military service.<sup>557</sup> Applicants who subsequently decided to stay in Britain lost the right to appeal for exemption. Great secrecy prevailed over the actual figures, which extended to House of Commons debates and particularly to questions raised by Joseph King, who had spoken repeatedly in Parliament since 1916 on behalf of Russians in Britain, both Jews and non-Jews. Commenting on the return of men to Russia, Pedder remarked that it was 'credible that it was done with so little disturbance [...] it is beyond hope to teach decent behaviour or loyalty to many of those who remain'.<sup>558</sup>

Lloyd George's geo-political strategy for the Middle East in 1917, and the situation in Bolshevik Russia after October, radically altered the conscription of Russian Jews from a domestic manpower issue to one with far wider implications for the *Entente's* conduct of the war. Despite Clause 5 of the Convention, which stated that it would, 'cease to have force from the conclusion of the present war', the Bolshevik Government immediately declared its invalidity on its seizure of power, the prime intent being to make peace with Germany in order to consolidate and extend domestic control.

The Balfour Declaration, signed on 2 November, 1917, has been the subject of many interpretations, which are not discussed in this thesis. Suffice to say that in 1922 Sir John Shuckburgh, Head of the Middle East Section of the Colonial Office, stated that the Declaration was made when the cause of the Allies was in extreme peril and, 'it would be a shameful act to throw Zionism overboard once the danger was over'.<sup>559</sup> This suggests that it coincided with the period of extreme crisis in Russia and was intended to sway Jewish pacifists and socialists there towards supporting a continuing war effort. It has been evaluated as HMG's last desperate bid to avert the withdrawal of Russia from the war, which came too late.<sup>560</sup> Recent opinion has suggested that although

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<sup>557</sup> Kadish, *Bolsheviks and British Jews*, p. 208.

<sup>558</sup> NA, HO 45/10822/318095. 1 October, 1917.

<sup>559</sup> Friedman, *The Question*, p. 311.

<sup>560</sup> Mark Levene, *War, Jews and the New Europe. The Diplomacy of Lucien Wolf 1914 – 1919* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 143.

Zionist efforts bore fruit in the shape of the Judaeans before the Balfour Declaration was announced, there can be little doubt that both were the consequence of the same political and military impetus.<sup>561</sup>

Between 1 October and 15 December, 1917, 1,500 Russians and Russian Poles had been recruited under the terms of the Convention: 974 of these were Jews and all but twelve wished to be posted to the Jewish battalion of the Royal Fusiliers.<sup>562</sup> British Government concern over the validity of the Convention, already signalled by the Bolsheviks, was heightened in January, 1918. Men born in 1899 were no longer called up in Russia, and Russians in Britain were automatically issued with exemption certificates by the Russian Consulate in London. The Home Office anticipated that the issue of Russian exemption certificates would cause trouble in the House of Commons but that this would be as, 'nothing compared to the trouble which will arise if Russia makes a separate peace and if it should turn out to be necessary to discharge Russians from the Army here'.<sup>563</sup>

In the light of such poor recruitment figures, Lord Derby, then Minister of War, proposed that Russians who refused to serve be interned in concentration camps to await transportation to Russia, with no right of return. The Home Office, which felt it 'had borne the brunt of the Russian trouble hitherto', was appalled by this proposition, not on ethical but on logistical grounds, and distanced itself from any involvement in such a scheme.<sup>564</sup> By 13 January the War Cabinet was of the opinion that to continue, 'to enforce the Convention under existing circumstances by which we should be recruiting neutral subjects, would be indefensible'.<sup>565</sup> A few days later this decision was reversed by domestic concerns that if the call-up of Russians was cancelled 'we shall be in

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<sup>561</sup> Rodney Gouttman, *An ANZAC Zionist Hero. The Life of Lt. – Colonel Eliazar Margolin* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2006), p. 73.

<sup>562</sup>NA, NATS 1/920. Progress Report of numbers of Russian subjects dealt with under the Convention.

<sup>563</sup>HO 45/10822/318095. File note, Henderson, 10 January, 1918.

<sup>564</sup>*Ibid.* Minute, 3 February, 1918.

<sup>565</sup>HO 45/10821/318095. 13 January, 1918.

the same social trouble which originally induced the Government to conclude the Convention'.<sup>566</sup> The application of the Convention was to continue, and 'in the event of it being impossible to get them all into the Army they should be sent to camps as Lord Derby suggested, with no right of return'.<sup>567</sup>

In these uncertain conditions and on the advice of Weizmann, the 38<sup>th</sup> battalion, RF, was hastily despatched to Egypt in early February, after an impressive march through the nation's capital, accompanied from their regimental HQ at the Tower of London by many 'thousands of Jews and Jewesses'.<sup>568</sup> The parade was filmed by the Ministry of Information and given extensive publicity. Each recruit received a special medal, ostensibly to symbolise, 'the turning point in Jewish history from degradation to empowerment'. It has been recently suggested that such an apparently remarkable reversal in the Government's treatment of the Russian Jews was part of its extensive propaganda campaign to create visible symbols of a new Jewish national life in Palestine for the benefit of world Jewry.<sup>569</sup>

Formal British/Russian diplomatic relations ceased in January, 1918 but were replaced by unofficial channels in Petrograd through Foreign Office representative Bruce Lockhart, and through Maxim Litvinov, the Bolshevik representative in London. Following Derby's statement on the Russian Jews, the Foreign Office was advised from Petrograd that any threat of internment/deportation would be fatal to British interests there and that concessions should be made by treating Russians in Britain as 'neutrals'. A Petrograd cable of 9 February stated, 'In view of the insignificant value of the Convention to British interests as compared with the extreme importance of our relations here, I venture to recommend most strongly that this question should be settled at once in the most conciliatory manner'.<sup>570</sup> For the Cabinet to follow

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<sup>566</sup> HO 45/10822/318095. Minute re. War Cabinet meeting, 23 January, 1918.

<sup>567</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>568</sup> *JC*, 8 February, 1918, p. 16.

<sup>569</sup> Renton, *A Zionist Masquerade*, p. 109.

<sup>570</sup> NA, HO 45/10822/318095. Cable from Lindley, 9 February, 1918.

this diplomatic recommendation raised the dilemma over the British Army's retention of 5,000 Russian Jewish soldiers were recruitment to cease. It would also threaten the presence in Palestine of the Jewish battalion, a vital constituent of British strategy in the Middle East. The dichotomy for HMG revolved around destroying the remnants of their relationship with the Bolsheviks at this crucial point in the Allied war effort by continuing to apply the Convention, or compromising its foreign policy and resurrecting domestic difficulties by abandoning it.

Russian vacillation in peace negotiations brought a new German military offensive on the Eastern Front in mid February. This critical development, in addition to Foreign Office advice from Petrograd that any measures such as forced deportation 'would be fatal to our interests here', appears to have prompted the British Government to announce the temporary suspension of recruitment for Russian Jews in Britain.<sup>571</sup> Its principal hope was that by encouraging a renewed Russian military effort Germany would be prevented from plundering Russia's vast resources, including Ukrainian wheat, to relieve her own dire domestic situation in which many of her citizens were starving.<sup>572</sup> However, the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was finally signed on 3 March. At a War Cabinet meeting four days later, Lord Derby voiced his fear that the 1,600 men of the 39<sup>th</sup> battalion RF in training in Plymouth would have to be released because, 'our agreement with Russia is no longer valid'.<sup>573</sup> The legality of retaining Russian troops in the 38<sup>th</sup> Battalion, recently arrived at Helieh near Cairo, was immediately questioned by the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Egypt.<sup>574</sup>

The Home Secretary remained concerned about the Convention's legitimacy but the Divisional High Court test case of Joseph Kutchinsky on 22 March judged that it held good. On 25 March, a week after the German-

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<sup>571</sup> NA, HO 45/10821/318095. Cipher, 14 February, 1918.

<sup>572</sup> Richard Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet Relations 1917 – 1921. Intervention and the war* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), p.16.

<sup>573</sup> NA, CAB 23/361.

<sup>574</sup> NA, WO32/11353. GOC-in-C. EEF, to Chief of the General Staff, London, 10 March, 1918.

Russian peace treaty was finally ratified, the Cabinet reversed its February ruling and resumed the recruitment of Russian subjects liable for military service.<sup>575</sup> At the War Cabinet meeting Arthur Balfour had drawn attention to an imminently anticipated, massive German military offensive in France as a motive for overriding diplomatic difficulties.<sup>576</sup> Russian Jews already in the Army were to be retained and new recruits posted to Labour units 'for diplomatic reasons' unless they chose combat duty or the Jewish battalions.<sup>577</sup> The Foreign Office was optimistic that the compromise would avert an 'open breach with this crazy system' in Russia, which it continued to hope would eventually collapse.<sup>578</sup> Despite the Kutchinsky case, the Home Office considered that the final decision was taken in the face of international rather than domestic considerations. No communication of this change in policy was given to the press for fear it would, 'merely make the men bolt'.<sup>579</sup> The new arrangements came into effect on 8 April. A Home Office file note a month after the resumption of recruiting stated that, 'we worked hard to secure it and it came off'.<sup>580</sup> It is unclear whether this Home Office satisfaction refers purely to the recommencement of conscription in the face of Russian neutrality or to its growing preference for non-combatant service by 'friendly aliens'. The latter is more likely as Sir George Cave's opinion in December, 1917 was that 'even in peacetime Russian refugees formed a very undesirable element in the community and recent events had shown them to be a burden and danger in time of war'.<sup>581</sup>

Most Anglo-Jews found the Cabinet's decision on non-combat service for immigrant Jews wholly objectionable. They feared it would be regarded by non-Jews as a concession and likely to further inflame anti-Semitism. An additional anxiety was that the stigmatization of immigrants as, 'hewers of wood and drawers of water', unfit or distrusted for the common national cause, would inflict

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<sup>575</sup> NA, HO 45/10821/318095.

<sup>576</sup> NA, CAB 23/5. Minute, 371. The offensive began on 31 March.

<sup>577</sup> NA, HO 45/10821/318095.

<sup>578</sup> Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet Relations*, p. 3.

<sup>579</sup> NA, HO 45/10822/318095. 25 March, 1918.

<sup>580</sup> NA, HO 10821/318095/615. Pedder.

<sup>581</sup> NA, HO 45/11068/374355, 21 December, 1917.

damage on the whole community and perpetuate the image of the Jew as inherently inferior. They judged the Government's policy to be, 'all very much in character with the whole history of the regiment for the Jews and the enlistment of Russian subjects in this country'.<sup>582</sup> The *Jewish Chronicle* re-affirmed Anglo-Jewry's belief in one law for the native Jew and for the alien Jew, 'in all things'.<sup>583</sup> In his editorial, Leopold Greenberg questioned both the logic and the legality of the decision once Russia had become a non-belligerent, stating that 'if it is right to place men in Labour Battalions it cannot be an outrage to place them in a fighting unit'.<sup>584</sup> Anglo-Jewry continued to criticise the actions of the Government in creating a Jewish military unit then subsequently, 'refusing to allow the very class of Jew for whom it was created, the Russian-born resident in this country, to join it. Now they are assigned to Labour Battalions'.<sup>585</sup> Comparison was drawn with the Armies of the United States and Canada where Russian Jews had been encouraged to join the Jewish battalions to serve in Palestine.<sup>586</sup>

By March, 1918 the Russian Consulate had issued 2,500 exemption certificates, only a slightly lower number than those awarded by the Special and Regional Tribunals.<sup>587</sup> Much as it may have wished to cancel the Russian certificates, HMG was effectively stymied as to do so would have led to embarrassing questions on the dubious diplomatic status of the Bolshevik Consul in London. Two months later Moscow demanded that the British Government discontinue the conscription of Russian subjects on the grounds that the Convention was not recognised by the Bolshevik Government and that Russia's neutrality rendered it invalid. The Home Office urged the Foreign Office to respond that 'the utmost consideration for the change of circumstances' had been shown in posting Russians to labour units.<sup>588</sup>

Meanwhile Home Office anti-alien inferences continued. It had expressed

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<sup>582</sup> *JC*, 12 April, 1918, p. 5. *Ibid*, 17 May, 1918, p. 3.

<sup>583</sup> *Ibid*, 26 April 1918, p.6.

<sup>584</sup> *Ibid*. Editor's comment.

<sup>585</sup> *JC*, 19 July, 1918, p.6.

<sup>586</sup> *Ibid*, 17 May, 1918, p.3.

<sup>587</sup> NA, HO 10822/318095, 27 March, 1918.

<sup>588</sup> *Ibid*. HO to FO, 14 June, 1918.

concern over action on 'waste' Russians, those who were not fit for military service or who resisted it 'in every possible way'. Loath to openly admit that any option of sending them back by sea to Murmansk or Archangel was no longer possible due to the chaotic internal situation in Russia, it considered that, 'it is a wholesome thing for the Russians to have the fear of repatriation hanging over their heads'.<sup>589</sup>

In the summer of 1918, the Government was condemned in the Commons by General Croft, Conservative MP for Bournemouth, for its 'unfair treatment' of Russians under the Convention in comparison with other aliens. He criticised HMG for its lack of clarity over enlistment figures for Russian Jews, which were given as between 5,000 to 8,000. Their treatment was contrasted with that of the 13,000 Italians of military age in Britain, of whom only 700 were serving in the British Army. Moreover, it appeared that the Italian Ambassador had issued 3,000 exemption certificates. The usefulness to the war effort of Russian civilian workers in clothing, leather goods and woodworking to produce army uniforms, boots and saddles, crates, hospital and camp furniture was also contrasted with that of Italians, frequently employed as cooks, waiters and confectioners.<sup>590</sup>

The following month Colonel Wedgwood, MP, questioned the embargo placed on Russian Jews joining the Jewish battalions. In response, the Minister of State for War claimed that the military authorities judged the only 'advisable' deployment for them was in special units of the Labour Corps. The decision was condemned by Wedgwood as 'lacking in tact and common sense' and similar to HMG's treatment of the Irish at the beginning of the war.<sup>591</sup>

It is evident that some political opinion continued to regard the Government's treatment of the Russian Jews as a challenge to British probity. Such adverse Parliamentary questioning may have led to a change in Government policy shortly afterwards. At the end of July, Lord Stanhope, Parliamentary

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<sup>589</sup> *Ibid*, 13 June, 1918.

<sup>590</sup> Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, Series 7, 24 June 1918, p. 766.

<sup>591</sup> *Ibid*. 3 July, 1918, p. 1697.



Secretary at the War Office, informed Lord Rothschild that 'it has now been decided that we can call for volunteers for combatant units from among the Russians'. Russian Jews who responded would be transferred from the Labour Corps to the Royal Fusiliers and posted to the Jewish battalions. The Jewish Regiment Committee, with War Office approval, immediately planned, 'posters and letters [...] to the London Russians telling them they are to volunteer for fighting with the 'Jewish Regiment''.<sup>592</sup>

The outcome of *gratis* naturalization for Russian Jews appears somewhat contradictory. The small number who volunteered to fight with the British Army was reflected in the low number of applications for free naturalization before September 1917, with none in Scotland despite a sizeable Jewish community in Glasgow. After the Convention was implemented, the facility was extended to conscripts. In March 1918 the Home Office reported that no applications had been received, which it attributed to Zionist ambitions in Palestine, while others were, 'waiting on events'.<sup>593</sup> This does not accord with the 1923 Home Office record of seventy seven cases of *gratis* naturalization in 1917, and 145 in 1918, probably as a result of early discharge from the Army due to injury or ill health.<sup>594</sup> Naturalization was also granted to the widows and minors of Russian subjects who died while in Army service, and these may have been included in the 1917/18 numbers.

The military system of recommendation for naturalization, designed to become effective post-war, appears to have been unwieldy and inefficient, and it was not uncommon for an application to bear twenty two Minutes from army officers in France, and three from other Government Departments, by the time it finally reached the Home Office.<sup>595</sup>

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<sup>592</sup> AJA, MS 185 AJ 320/1/2. Lord Stanhope to Lord Rothschild, 27 July, 1918. *JC*, 2 August, 1918, p.5. Report of change of policy for the Judeans.

<sup>593</sup> NA, HO 45/10822/318095. Henderson Minute, 1 March, 1918.

<sup>594</sup> NA, HO 144/13362, 17 November, 1923. 1917 and 1918 figures included in list of free naturalisation certificates issued for service in HM Force. AJA, ACC 3121/C13/001/008, complaints by ex-soldiers whose naturalisations were delayed, 27 June, 1918.

<sup>595</sup> NA, HO 144/13362. HO to WO, 7 April, 1917.

Appendix B gives figures for certificates issued to Army applicants between 1919 and June 1921; shortly afterwards, the scheme was abruptly terminated.<sup>596</sup> From this record it appears that of the 8,000 or so Russian Jewish servicemen, only 3,000 applied for free naturalization as only eighty Home Office refusals are noted. In contrast with the British procedure, the United States Government, by an Act of Congress in May, 1918, waived all naturalization requirements for every immigrant soldier who served in the armed forces and was honourably discharged.<sup>597</sup>

When the Government's intention to conscript 'friendly aliens' was first made public it had resulted in considerable opposition, not only from the nationwide community of Russian born immigrants but also from British radicals and Socialists. Given the immigrants' lack of any substantive voice in a community dominated by an Anglo-Jewish elite, which had pro-actively encouraged HMG's policy of 'friendly alien' conscription, it was perhaps unsurprising that they should look elsewhere for support. Previous divisions between Russians and Britons, Jews and non-Jews, were overcome in the wider cause of anti-militarism and the traditional liberal right of asylum.

### **The Case for the Russian Jews: Jewish and non-Jewish support**

Isaiah Wassilevsky, President of the Manchester branch of *Poale Zion* ("The Workers of Zion", a Left Wing Zionist party active in British politics since 1905), published a tract in the immediate wake of HMG's 'new arrangements' for Russian Jews. It claimed that the character, aspirations and psychology of Britain's immigrant Jews were largely enigmatic to both non-Jews and the majority of Anglo-Jewry. Citing England's strong libertarian traditions as a seminal reason for many Eastern European Jews to flee to its shores to escape persecution, it appealed to a sense of fairness on the part of the British

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<sup>596</sup> *Ibid.* HO to WO, 5 August, 1921.

<sup>597</sup> Sterba, *Good Americans*, p. 200.

Government: 'you ask Russian Jews who came here but recently, and whom you regard as strangers, to come willingly to join in this war'.<sup>598</sup>

A measure of Anglo-Jewish support for the non-conscription case was sought by the small number of articulate members of the Russian Jewish community, mostly students at British universities. In a pamphlet entitled, 'The Deportation or Conscription of Russian Jews', they claimed to speak for 'that huge majority of Russo-Jews whose ignorance of the English language prevents them from pleading their cause'.<sup>599</sup> They considered that the sacrifice demanded of foreign Jews was entirely disproportionate to their status in Britain, which gave them none of the rights and privileges of citizens. Russian Jews were, they claimed, in an entirely different position to that of their British co-religionists, who had amply shown their patriotism, and different duties should be expected of them. Another immigrant student at Manchester University challenged those Anglo-Jews who favoured deportation to better acquaint themselves with the conditions of Russo-Jewish life, which was characterised by imprisonment, expulsion and humiliation.<sup>600</sup>

Far stronger language was used against Anglo-Jewry and the *Jewish Chronicle* by Joseph Leftwich, anti-conscriptionist, Zionist and friend of Isaac Rosenberg.<sup>601</sup> He accused the *JC* of 'servile abasement and toadyism', and English Jews as persecutors of the persecuted and oppressors of the oppressed. Denouncing also the silence of Zionist leaders in the face of the Government's unfolding strategy, he stated, 'we should have stood up for them like men, not hounded and vilified them'.<sup>602</sup>

Although the national press was generally antagonistic towards the Russian Jews, the *Manchester Guardian* showed consistent support for their

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<sup>598</sup> Isaiah Wassilevsky, 'Jewish Refugees and Military Service. The Ethical Aspect of Compulsion under threat of deportation. Why the Russian Jew hesitates to join the Army', (Manchester: The National Labour Press Ltd., n.d.), p.7.

<sup>599</sup> LMA, ACC/2805/4/4/22. Letter from Brandt and Chadwick, University Union, Manchester, 17 July, 1916.

<sup>600</sup> NA, HO 45/10818/318095, 21 August, 1916.

<sup>601</sup> Leftwich was born in Holland in 1892, and was part of a circle of Jewish writers and artists in London.

<sup>602</sup> *The New Age*, XIX (14), p.335. Joseph Leftwich to Editor, 'The Jewish Question', 3 August, 1916.

position. It claimed that most were not opposed to army service provided certain arrangements were established to take account of their ethnic sensitivities. It criticised the lack of special units for 'friendly aliens' in the British Army in 1916 and, in similar terms to the appeals of immigrant students, it considered that military service for Britain was payment of a debt which was not owed.<sup>603</sup>

Deep misgivings over alien enlistment were expressed in both Houses of Parliament by non-Jewish Members. On 27 July 1916, the Liberal peer, Lord Sheffield, defended the 'friendly aliens' on the grounds that Britain had traditionally offered asylum to political and non-political refugees, and he condemned the Home Office for using 'coercive and fraudulent means' to recruit them. He also drew attention to the negative effect of HMG's actions on British/American relations as was evident in US press articles.<sup>604</sup>

That summer, the issue was further discussed in Commons debates. Philip Morrell, Liberal anti-war Member whose home at Garsington became a *locus* of English conscientious objection, condemned the Home Office action as unconstitutional, and the Home Secretary as, 'unworthy of the Liberalism which he professes, and [...] unworthy of his race, of which he ought to be proud'.<sup>605</sup> Russian Jews, he protested, 'cannot speak our language, have a horror of militarism and have not yet learned patriotism'. Joseph King, Liberal MP for North Somerset, was a former barrister, whose pre-war interests had revolved around religious and social work.<sup>606</sup> He was not opposed to military service *per se* but was a fervent anti-conscriptionist. He, too, considered the Home Office strategy badly conceived and drew attention to the vulnerable position of immigrants within the Jewish community, noting that, 'the old Jewish families do not have the confidence of these people, understand their point of view, or are patient with them'.<sup>607</sup>

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<sup>603</sup> NA, HO 45/10820/318095. 23 August, 1916.

<sup>604</sup> House of Lords Debates, Vol. XXII, p. 986.

<sup>605</sup> House of Commons Parliamentary Debates, Vol. LXXXV, p. 171, 1 August, 1916.

<sup>606</sup> *Who was Who, 1941 – 1950* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1967).

<sup>607</sup> House of Commons Parliamentary Debates, Vol. LXXXV, p.253, 1 August, 1916.

Hilary and William Rubinstein have drawn attention to the admiration and support for Jews in the highest English political circles.<sup>608</sup> Within the Liberal Party this should perhaps be qualified by the somewhat wider horizons of its dissident foreign affairs group. Their views were dominated by libertarian traditions of political asylum, which drew them to be also closely identified with the non-Jewish *émigré* cause and the contentious imprisonment of its political extremists, Georgi Chicherin and Peter Petroff.<sup>609</sup> Both King and Lord Sheffield were supporters of Chicherin, became activists in Jewish and non-Jewish organisations committed to fight militarism, and continued to plead the Russian case in Parliament. This was a source of considerable embarrassment to those Cabinet Ministers required to respond to their questioning in Parliament, who often resorted to political filibustering.

The Anglo-Jewish press duly reported on Gentile political support for the Russian Jews. One of its correspondents reproached Jewish MPs for their, 'woeful deficiency of a sense of racial sympathy with their own kith and kin' and the humiliation felt by many Jews that Christian MPs were forced to, 'take up the cudgels' on behalf of the immigrant community.<sup>610</sup> Conversely, some Anglo-Jews evidently hoped that this Gentile political support might be employed to encourage alien enlistment. In the summer of 1916, the Committee of Deputies of Manchester Jews advised the Home Secretary that the Russian Jews appeared to be much impressed with the sympathetic attitude of certain MPs and that, 'if some of these gentlemen could be prevailed upon to address recruitment meetings, the results would be eminently satisfactory'. Like Lord Newton's warning about alien immigrants in France, Manchester Jewry also raised the point that foreigners had never been pressed into the army of any foreign State, and

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<sup>608</sup> William Rubinstein & Hilary Rubinstein, *Philosemitism; Admiration and Support in the English-speaking World for Jews, 1840 – 1939* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999).

<sup>609</sup> J. McHugh & B. Ripley, 'Russian Political Internees in First World War Britain: the cases of George Chicherin and Peter Petroff, *The Historical Journal*, 28 (1985), 727 – 738, pp. 730 – 733.

<sup>610</sup> *JC*, 18 August, 1916, p. 14. Letter from Mr Woodis.

warned that the British precedent could jeopardise the status of Jews worldwide.<sup>611</sup>

John Slatter has attributed the failure of the Government's voluntary scheme to recruit 'friendly aliens' to the success of two organisations, the Foreign Jews' Protection Committee (FJPC) and the non-Jewish *émigré* Committee of Delegates of Russian Socialist Groups in London (CODORSGIL).<sup>612</sup> The FJPC viewed the military service by 'friendly aliens' as a purely Jewish issue although it welcomed support from sympathetic British individuals and groups and the Russian anarchist organisations. From the outset, it invited the active participation of those politicians who opposed enforced military service and it valued the support of non-Jewish activists in 'peace politics', such as Sylvia Pankhurst. Prominent in the public domain for her work in the suffragette movement, she was strongly opposed to the tsarist regime and supported the right of Russians to dissent from British military service as an intrinsic right of asylum. She lived and worked in the East End, where she observed the poor treatment of Jewish applicants at Tribunals, especially in Bethnal Green, and helped to publicise the military executions of young East End soldiers. She proclaimed that, 'the fight of the FJPC on behalf of their compatriots was a fight for the freedom of every section of the British people'.<sup>613</sup>

In mid-August a small group of six Jewish trade unionists met with the Home Secretary who was accompanied, among others, by Edmund Sebag-Montefiore. This meeting was at the suggestion and under the auspices of W. A. Appleton, the non-Jewish Secretary of the General Federation of Trade Unions and a member of the National Council against Conscription (NCC). The Jewish trade unionists complained that immigrants were disadvantaged in comparison with British citizens in having little information about the Government's intentions for them. Sam Dreen of the Mantle Makers and Amalgamated Society of Tailors stated that 'The Jew does not read newspapers and does not know

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<sup>611</sup> NA, HO 45/31818/318095. Louis Kletz, Manchester Board of Deputies, to Samuel, 31 August, 1916.

<sup>612</sup> Slatter, (ed.), *From Another Shore*, p. 128.

<sup>613</sup> Bush, *Behind the Lines*, p. 178.

what is really happening around him [...] they are not interested in anything except where their own bread and butter is coming from'.<sup>614</sup> Most importantly, they considered that the threat of deportation amounted to compulsion, even though it was cloaked as a voluntary choice, and that 'so long as the threat hangs over them they could not consider the question of serving in the British Army'. Appleton later told Henderson, Senior Clerk at the Home Office, that the object of the meeting was to clarify the situation and that, 'the deputation never expected you to concede the request but were very afraid of what might happen to them in the East End if they did not urge their point'.<sup>615</sup> A British trade unionist present at the meeting, William Brace, later stated that he hoped the national trade unions would do their utmost to convince the Jewish trade unions of their responsibilities.

The Jewish deputation claimed that probably only 10,000 Russian Jews eligible for military service would be physically fit for duty.<sup>616</sup> It would appear that the image of the Eastern European immigrant as, 'the sickly Jew' existed not only in the mindsets of Gentiles and many Anglo-Jews, but was also a self-perception. Apposite to this point is Mark Levene's observation that Arnold Harris, a Russian Jew who took steps to evade army service, may have knowingly exploited assumptions of the Jewish male 'weakling'.<sup>617</sup>

In addition to the Jewish labour organisations, the Council of United Jewish Friendly Societies (CUJFS) also announced their wish to become actively involved in protecting the rights of Russian Jews by giving their Russian-born members advice in the preparation of their appeals. They asked that appellants to the Special Tribunal be represented by members of the CUJFS and that the Council should be granted some form of representation on that body. They also questioned the authority of the police to certify a man as Russian in the absence

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<sup>614</sup> NA, HO 45/10818/318095. Report of meeting, 14 August, 1916.

<sup>615</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>616</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>617</sup> Levene, 'Going against the Grain', p. 77.

of any papers of nationality.<sup>618</sup> Most had left Russia without passports, often crossing national borders by bribing Russian and German agents, and they claimed asylum from persecution in Britain not as Russians but as Jews.

By July, when Herbert Samuel threatened the deportation of Russians, the FJPC had been drawn from numerous Jewish immigrant bodies, including many trade unions, under the Secretaryship of Abraham Belazel, a Rumanian who had come to Britain from France at the start of the war. Originally settling in Glasgow he had moved to Whitechapel in 1916. He was assisted by Jacob Salkind, a religious scholar and anarchist from Kobrin in Poland, and the organisation was chaired by Joseph Kruk, a lawyer and Yiddish journalist who had also come from Poland early in the war.<sup>619</sup> It is interesting to note here that the Russian-Jews in Britain considered themselves vulnerable in terms of their lack of facility with English language and customs, and any effective channel to the British Government. The committees set up to represent their interests were also headed by recent *émigrés*, unknown and unversed in national domestic politics. This may go some way to explain their readiness to accept the active support of British sympathizers with their cause, as well as that of empathetic established Jews, such as Israel Zangwill.

On 10 August, Belazel requested Home Office permission to bring a small FJPC deputation (under the auspices of King and Zangwill) to meet Samuel, and gave details of some twenty five of its constituent organisations including trade unions, the Workers' Circle, *Poale Zion* and the *Bund* group of socialist workers. Joseph King also wrote to Samuel drawing his attention to the limited representative nature of his previous meeting with Appleton's TU deputation compared with that of the proposed FJPC group. The FJPC listing was immediately passed to the Metropolitan Police for scrutiny, who categorised the membership's sympathies as ranging from 'plainly revolutionary' to 'very

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<sup>618</sup> NA, HO 45/10818/318095. Percy Cohen, Secretary CUJFS, to Sir Stuart Cohen, President, 11 August, 1916.

<sup>619</sup> Gidley, 'Citizenship and Belonging', p. 231.



extremely anarchist'.<sup>620</sup> Following Home Office refusal to meet the deputation, King raised the issue in Parliamentary Debate. The House was told by the Home Secretary that among the organisations represented, 'are some which could not in any circumstances be received at the Home Office'.<sup>621</sup> In November Lord Rothschild informed the Home Office (via the Foreign Office) that Belazel and Salkind were involved in a 'violent paper', the *Jewish Daily Voice*. The Home Office response was pragmatic; they considered that, 'any attempt to muzzle [...] (it) [...] would do more harm than good'.<sup>622</sup> In the event, the publication was short-lived.

Dissident activity by Russians against the Government was largely confined to protest meetings as they feared more radical action would result in swift deportation, an outcome dreaded by all participants. A large FJPC meeting took place in March, 1917 to protest against the Convention's abrogation of the right of asylum and to celebrate the demise of the tsarist regime. Lord Sheffield presided and Sylvia Pankhurst was one of the speakers, as was the British Socialist Mrs Bridges Adams. When the Convention with Allied States was signed by Russia, 6,000 allegedly attended the FJPC protest meeting.<sup>623</sup>

Concurrent with the establishment of the FJPC, various Russian *émigré* organisations were also formed to oppose military service. Socialist in tone, they sought to represent the war as a struggle between imperialists and the proletariat, and conscription as a useful weapon in the battle. The CODORSGIL was formed in March, 1916, when rumours of the conscription of Russians resident in Britain, not only Jews but political exiles, first began to circulate. Its Secretary, Georgi Chicherin, was a Russian aristocrat who had abandoned a career in the tsarist diplomatic service to engage in revolutionary Socialist

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<sup>620</sup> NA, HO 4/10818/318095. Report, 16 August, 1916. After the 1911 siege of Sidney Street, the East End had been regarded as a hotbed of anarchist activity, see Levene, 'Going against the Grain', p. 71.

<sup>621</sup> House of Commons Parliamentary Debates, Vol. LXXXV, p. 1840.

<sup>622</sup> NA, HO 45/10818/318095, 8 December, 1916.

<sup>623</sup> NA, HO 45/10821/318095, 24 July, 1917.

activities, firstly in France and, on the outbreak of war, in Britain.<sup>624</sup> His assistant was Mrs Bridges Adams. In the name of Socialist unity, it appealed for support for Jewish immigrant workers, 'those without wealth and political influence', and condemned Anglo-Jewry, in the language of class warfare, as 'moneyed parasites'. Seeking to widen the rift between East End and West End Jews, CODORSGIL publications claimed that, 'the contempt and hatred of the Anglo-Jew for his Russian and Polish brethren is deep seated', and had existed long before 1914.<sup>625</sup>

Another militant group composed largely of Russian Socialists, the Russian Anti-Conscription League (RACL), was based at the offices of the Amalgamated Society of Tailors and Tailoresses in Whitechapel. Its Secretary was the Socialist, I. Himmelfarb, and a leading part in its management was played by Abraham Golub.<sup>626</sup> Similar to Chicherin's CODORSGIL, it abhorred participation in 'an Imperialist war which is contrary to the principles of the international solidarity of labour'.<sup>627</sup> According to police reports, it was eager to emulate the example of non-Jewish bodies opposed to military service, such as the No Conscription Fellowship (NCF). In following the latter's practices, the League employed lawyers to defend members against action by the military authorities. Absolute exemptions were rarely given but the co-founder of the NCF, Clifford Allen, advised his members to apply for this on the grounds that, 'it is not fighting in particular which revolts us, it is war itself'.<sup>628</sup> Fenner Brockway of the NCF sent greetings to the London branch of the RACL in November 1916, and published its support for Russian comrades in *The Tribunal*, the Fellowship's weekly newspaper:

Conscription is infamous under all circumstances but the

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<sup>624</sup> Richard Debo, 'The making of a Bolshevik. Georgii Chicherin in England, 1914 – 1918', *Slavic Review*, 25 (1966), 651 – 662, p. 654.

<sup>625</sup> CODORSGIL leaflet, September 1916, in Szajkowski, *Jews and the French*, pp. 237-8.

<sup>626</sup> Gidley, 'Citizenship and Belonging', p. 234. The Committee was formed in December, 1916 according to police report, 22 February, 1917. The Police named the Secretary as I. Himmelfarb of 22, Brick Lane, London. Kadish named him as P. Himmelfarb, editor of *Dos Arbayer Vort*, 1915 – 1917.

<sup>627</sup> MULH, WNC 5/2/3/11. 'Russians organise against conscription', 16 November, 1916.

<sup>628</sup> Thomas Kennedy, *The Hound of Conscience. The No Conscription Fellowship, 1914 – 1919* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas, 1981), p. 86.

conscription of subjects of another nationality with the alternative of deportation is doubly infamous [...] It is not without significance that the Russian anti-militarists in this country have decided to follow the policy of British Conscientious Objectors and resist military service altogether. The British NCF must make the cause of these Russian comrades their own and give them sympathy and advice.<sup>629</sup>

It was agreed in consultations between the two organisations that the RACL would remain independent but that the NCF would offer help where appropriate. There is evidence of Jewish Conscientious Objectors among the membership of the Stepney branch of the NCF after the introduction of general conscription although the organisation issued a circular letter asking all non-British members to withdraw.<sup>630</sup> In August, 1917, applications were received from Russians in Liverpool and London wishing to join the NCF as conscientious objectors, which resurrected the question of the eligibility of non-British subjects. Catherine Marshall, NCF Secretary and previously involved in the suffragette movement, recorded that in the past such applications had been forwarded to the RACL but that a deputation from the League was to meet London Fellowship members to consider methods of closer co-operation. No record of this meeting has been found but in October 1917 a letter went to all NCF branches extending full membership of the Fellowship to aliens affected by the MSA who accepted their 'statement of faith'. Special membership forms were printed which suggests that a considerable number of applications was anticipated.<sup>631</sup>

An intrinsic empathy between British and Russian Socialist anti-war bodies was evident in an article in *The Herald*, the national Labour weekly newspaper, which alleged that large numbers of aliens had come to England precisely because of their pacifist leanings. It appealed, 'to our brothers of the Russian Socialist Groups not to blame us of the British Labour Movement for a

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<sup>629</sup> NA HO 45/10817/316469. Fenner Brockway, *The Herald*, 9 November, 1916.

<sup>630</sup> Kennedy, *The Hound*, p. 56. LMA, ACC/2805/4/4/10, 19 September, 1916.

<sup>631</sup> Cumbria Record Office (hereafter CRO), Papers of Catherine Marshall, D/MAR/4/22. Secretary, NCF, to branch Secretaries, 19 October, 1917.

situation arising entirely out of conscription, which we earnestly combated'. The article also drew attention to the fact that 'rich and prominent Jews' had urged the Government to extend service in the British Army to unnaturalized Jews.<sup>632</sup> This allegation substantiates the supposition in the previous section that the Anglo-Jewish hierarchy was strongly pro-active in the formation of HMG's alien recruitment strategy, and suggests that this had become common knowledge among Russian Jews.

The activities of Jewish and non-Jewish anti-conscription organisations are largely derived from Police reports, themselves rarely analytical, and it is problematical to accurately gauge the extent of group inter-relationships or the level of involvement of individual Russian Jews. After the March revolution in Petrograd, it appears that certain Russian Jews not only held anti-conscriptionist views but were regarded as Bolshevik sympathisers. Among those named as such were M. Remback, Henry Gogal, M. Sabolinsky, Reuben Cohen, I. Himmelfarb, Serge Koninoff and Theodore Rothstein from Highgate. Rothstein became an important supporting figure to Maxim Litvinov, the plenipotentiary of the Bolshevik Government in London in early 1918 while simultaneously working for MI7 at the War Office, the department dealing with censorship and propaganda.<sup>633</sup> His ambiguous roles appear to substantiate the nature of HMG's covert relations with the Russian Government at the time.

Some FJPC delegates were known to the authorities not only as pacifists and military absentees but as recognised participants in non-Jewish organisations. Based on Police reports, FJPC delegates Isaac Goldberg, Lewis Weisman and Julius Allman appeared on a Home Office list of Russians whom it regarded as, 'desirable to repatriate'.<sup>634</sup> Although the Assistant Commissioner of Police regarded the FJPC leaders as largely 'agents or hangers-on' of more militant organisations, Kadish has considered that the FJPC was a cover for anti-

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<sup>632</sup> NA, HO 45/10818/318095. *The Herald*, 15 July, 1916.

<sup>633</sup> NA, HO 144/13339. Police report, 23 October, 1918. McHugh & Ripley, 'Russian Political Internees', p. 737.

<sup>634</sup> NA, HO 45/13339, 23 October, 1918.

war pro-Bolshevist activity.<sup>635</sup> In its communications with Government departments, it employed less abrasive and more diplomatic language than the *émigré* groups and, as late as March, 1917, claimed, 'The freedom of the Jews has for so long been a point of honour with the British nation [...] it would be a calamity if it is lost during a great war for liberty'.<sup>636</sup>

After the Convention was ratified, the Home Office began to take action against the Russian organisations. Chicherin, Belazel and Bloomfield (Secretary of the RACL) were arrested and placed in military detention pending deportation. Non-Jewish anti-militarist bodies were vocal in their protests. Describing Belazel's life as devoted to the cause of the Jewish people, *The Herald* claimed that there was 'genuine mourning over him' in the East End.<sup>637</sup> Catherine Marshall of the NCF went further in her criticism of the Government, 'I am wondering whether this is part of deliberate military policy for dealing with these men, just because it objects to them as Conscientious Objectors. If so, it is the distinct overriding by the Military of the intentions of Parliament'.<sup>638</sup> In a climate of national strikes, and unrest in the Army, there was also increased State repression of British peace and civil rights movements, with raids on the offices of the Womens' International League and those of the National Council for Civil Liberties (NCCL) of which Joseph King was a member of its Executive Council.<sup>639</sup>

After Belazel's arrest, a new Committee, the Russian Jews' Protection Committee (RJPC), was formed under Moses Margolin, which adopted a more moderate stance and favoured co-operation with the authorities in conforming to the Convention.<sup>640</sup> It was implacably opposed to the formation of the Jewish military unit, stating:

If a Jew fighting on behalf of the country kills an enemy Jew,  
the deed is not a Jewish one. But a Jewish unit fighting under

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<sup>635</sup> NA, HO 45/10818/318099/110. Assistant Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Report. Kadish, *Bolsheviks and British Jews*, p. 202.

<sup>636</sup> NA, HO 45/10821/318095. Belazel to HO, 6 March, 1917.

<sup>637</sup> MULH, WNC/5/2/3/11. *The Herald*, 25 August, 1917.

<sup>638</sup> CRO, D/MAR/4/25. Marshall to Fisher, President of the Board of Education, 13 October, 1917.

<sup>639</sup> Gidley, 'Citizenship and Belonging', p. 248.

<sup>640</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 246- 247.

a special Jewish flag – it will be a pure Jewish deed – worse than the crime of Cain.<sup>641</sup>

By the summer of 1917, the FJPC had branches in Manchester, Leeds, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Birmingham, Cardiff and Blackpool although the London branch was virtually bankrupt by September, despite receipt of a £1,100 (more than £170,000 in today's value) from the Russian Consul towards the care of the Conventionists' families.<sup>642</sup> Like the RJPC, the FJPC appears to have moderated its activities overall although it made efforts in January 1918 to contact soldiers on leave from the Jewish battalions and encourage them to agitate against continuing military service when Russia had virtually withdrawn from the war.<sup>643</sup>

A new FJPC branch was formed in Manchester on 5 August, 1917, and included, like the original London Committee, trade unionists, and representatives from *Poale Zion* and the Anarchist Group, although its Minute Book indicates some curious dichotomies. While Anglo-Jewry in the metropolis distanced itself from immigrant action groups, delegates at a Manchester FJPC conference on 19 August included Nathan Laski, JP, and Louis Kletz from the city's Board of Deputies. Indeed, Laski was later invited to become Branch Treasurer but declined. The primary activities of the Branch concerned charitable relief for the dependents of those returning to Russia and the funding of legal representation for conscripts. Addressing the need for financial support for Conventionists' families, Nathan Laski suggested an approach be made to Lord Rothschild's Committee for Comforts for Russian Jews' Wives and Children.

At a mass meeting of Russian Jews of military age held on 8 August at the Bijou Picture Theatre in Cheetham Hill Road, their emphatic protest against the formation of a special Jewish Regiment was recorded and forwarded to the Prime Minister, Lord Derby, the press and Mr Laski. Despite the FJPC's more conservative path after the Convention was ratified, a mass meeting in Manchester, headed by the militant activist, Himmelfarb, was publicised by the

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<sup>641</sup> NA, HO 45/10821/318095. RJPC leaflet, August, 1917.

<sup>642</sup> MCL, Minute Book of the Manchester FJPC, M239/2. Minute, 13 September, 1917.

<sup>643</sup> NA, HO 45/10821/318095, 5 January, 1918.

branch and three representatives were elected to work, 'conjointly where possible', with the CODORSGIL. It is apparent that financial straits were also felt at the Manchester branch, and this prevented it sending two invited delegates to a London Committee meeting at the end of September.

The branch Minute Books and correspondence were removed in a police raid in August 1918 as a result of a forged passport matter connected with the Russian Consulate in London. After careful examination, it was concluded that the committee was a *bona fide* organisation and that police suspicions were unfounded. Len Locker, Branch Secretary, recorded his belief that 'the police were greatly disillusioned, and they did not hide it, were he to judge by their attitude subsequent to the raid'.<sup>644</sup> The Committee was dissolved in November 1918, and at a conference at Zion Hall on 3 November, it claimed:

It had been a real boon and blessing to the community which was advised on matters military, exemptions by the Russian Consul General in London etc. Substantial service had been rendered to the British Military authorities while disinterested and reliable advice had been given to applicants concerned, the majority of whom were Russian Jews. A number of Gentile cases had also been attended to.<sup>645</sup>

It also maintained that it had enjoyed excellent relations with all authorities, both British and Russian.

While no similar evidence of post-Convention *liaison* between the Board of Deputies and the FJPC in London has come to light, legal defence for Russian Jews in London, who ignored their conscription papers, was arranged by solicitors, Fraser & Christian in Finsbury. They were frequently represented in court by the Anglo-Jewish lawyer, Henry Strauss Quixano Henriques, Chair of the Law & Parliamentary Committee of the Board of Deputies. By February, 1918, Fraser & Christian were acting for some 200 – 300 Russian Jews in London with considerable measures of success. The Russian Jews were considered by the Home Office to be 'highly organised [...] and taking every technical point in the

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<sup>644</sup> MCL, M239/2. Reported at conference at Cheetham on 3 November, 1918.

<sup>645</sup> *Ibid.*

Courts in England and Scotland'.<sup>646</sup> In the light of this, the Home Office contemplated taking legal action against Fraser & Christian, 'for the evasive and dilatory proceedings for which they are responsible in connection with the enlistment of Russian subjects'.<sup>647</sup> Many test cases in Court centred on the question of nationality, and the proposition that Russian Jews outside Russia were not full Russian subjects.<sup>648</sup>

When the Provisional Government came to power in Russia, amenable to proceeding with the Convention, it took an interest in its potential effects on Russians in Britain. The Russian Vice-Consul in London, Mr Gambs, proposed the Russian government be represented on the London Special Tribunal by David Jochelman and Krugliakoff.<sup>649</sup> Jochelman had come to England in 1915 as manager of the Volga Insurance Company. He was also Chairman of the United Russian Committee, which came into being at the request of Nabokov and Sablin, London representatives of the Kerensky Government. It is unlikely that he was actually appointed to the Tribunal as Police reports on his character in August, 1917 considered him 'not very satisfactory' and too disposed to favour East End Jews.<sup>650</sup> When the War Office announced the creation of the Jewish battalions of the Royal Fusiliers, Nabokov signalled Russian approval for this 'excellent scheme', provided that there was no compulsion for Russians to join.<sup>651</sup> The following month an incident involving Yiddish-speaking Jewish soldiers was reported to the Russian Consulate, which complained of their poor treatment to the British press. John Pedder at the Home Office considered that the Consulate was being unduly sensitive and that, 'the East End Russians were

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<sup>646</sup> NA, HO 45/10822/318095. Item (6), Memorandum on Anglo-Russian Military Service Agreement, 11 February, 1918.

<sup>647</sup> *Ibid.* Minute, January, 1918.

<sup>648</sup> The case of Boris Gelsner, defended by Henriques, was reported in *The Times*, 21 Dec 1917.

<sup>649</sup> NA, HO 45/10821/318095, 5 April, 1917. NA, HO 45/10822/318095. Metropolitan Police Report, 3 January, 1918, noted that a Mr Krigliakov (sic), a Russian advocate and member of the Russian Delegates' Committee, was in contact with Joseph King, MP, in connection with the case of Georgi Chicherin.

<sup>650</sup> NA, HO 45/10818/318095. New Scotland Yard to HO, 27 August, 1917.

<sup>651</sup> NA, WO 32/11353. Nabokov to FO, 16 August, 1917.



fortunate not to have got into more trouble long ago [...] (and) have behaved very badly towards this country'.<sup>652</sup>

After the Bolshevik *coup* in October, followed by repudiation of the Convention, the Soviet Consulate in London attempted ever more direct intervention in the deliberations of HMG. In December, Gambs wrote to the Home Office stating that when a Russian Jew was abroad he could claim to be a Jew only and therefore not liable to conscription. Ironically, this point was diametrically opposed to the tsarist government's stated objections to the British naturalization of Russian Jews at the end of 1916.

The issuing of exemption certificates by the Russian Consulate in London in January, 1918, which helped to provoke Derby's threat of internment, was followed by Litvinov's declaration that he had an unlimited right to do so. In a previous communication, he claimed to have been inundated with letters from Russians in Britain on the great injustice of being called on to serve in a war in which their own country no longer participated. He urged that it would be fair and highly expedient of HMG to discontinue applying the Convention, and to release from the Army and prison all Russians already enlisted.<sup>653</sup>

In reviewing the activities of the FJPC and CODORSGIL, it would appear that Slatter's supposition of their effectiveness in preventing voluntary enlistment by Russian Jews is highly questionable. Jewish and *émigré* anti-conscription organisations *per se* appeared to cause little real concern to the British authorities, and certainly no more than the anti-war movement in general, although their effect on public morale remained a prime consideration. It is more probable that the reticence of Russian Jews to enlist centred on a historic anathema towards war and army service, and coincided with the economic opportunities offered to them by vast military materiel needs in wartime. Most migrants had left Russia to improve their standard of living, and their traditional trades of tailoring, boot making and woodworking were in high demand to provide for Army uniforms and equipment. Before the Convention

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<sup>652</sup> NA, HO 45/10822/318095. Pedder Memorandum, 25 September, 1917.

<sup>653</sup> NA, HO 45/10822/318095. Litvinov to Balfour, 2 February, 1918.

came into force, civilian financial returns far exceeded a soldier's pay of a shilling a day, and in the East End in April 1917, the press reported rejoicings over the Russian Revolution and that celebrations of Passover, 'revealed an extraordinary spectacle of wealth and abundance'.<sup>654</sup>

Both Bush and Kadish have drawn attention to the closer labour relations between Jewish and non-Jewish trade unions which pertained after the war. But it appears that the interaction between supporters of the Russian cause from all quarters was wider ranging and more fluid than perhaps has been previously appreciated. More embarrassing to the Government than the activities of the Russian anti-war committees were the revelations made in Parliament through persistent questioning by sympathetic politicians. War Cabinet decisions on the validity of the Convention after October, 1917, came under fire from both British and Russian diplomatic channels. Appeals by British representatives in Russia for HMG to disengage from the Convention in the interests of international relations were mirrored by those of the Bolsheviks in London. After Russia withdrew from the war, Bolshevik leverage in the military deployment of Russian citizens in Britain was virtually lost.

Kadish also suggested that the majority of Russian Jews in the East End were not politically motivated, and that their resistance to Government coercion was more informal than organised.<sup>655</sup> They preferred the paths of exemption applications and various well-tried methods of evasion. The latter route had formed part of immigrant identity and cultural history, and was one of the few paths of protest open to minority groups. European conscripted armies had become well accustomed to dealing with desertion and an unwillingness to serve long before World War I.<sup>656</sup> It was new and uncharted territory for the British Government after 1916.

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<sup>654</sup> NA, HO 45/10820/318095. *Daily Mail*, 9 April 1917.

<sup>655</sup> Kadish, *Bolsheviks and British Jews*, p. 227.

<sup>656</sup> Oram, *Worthless Men*, p. 31.

### A Route to Evasion: Across the Irish Sea

James Scott has noted that resistance to military service by those without a political voice was not a phenomenon of the First World War nor was it restricted to any specific region. In France, self mutilation to evade service in Napoleon's Armies in the previous century had been accompanied by networks of collective complicity in which families, parishes, local authorities and cantons played their part in sheltering those bent on passive non-compliance. During the Civil War in the United States the Confederate Army encountered similar responses on a wide scale from workers on the Southern plantations.<sup>657</sup>

For immigrant Jews in Britain facing army service, their resistance reflected, to a considerable degree, the cultural norms of their previous existence in Russia where service in the tsar's armies was generally held in low public esteem by Jews and non-Jews. Russian soldiers in uniform were excluded from theatres and restaurants, banned from tram interiors, and notices at the entrances to public parks proclaimed that dogs and soldiers were forbidden to enter.<sup>658</sup> Evasion was commonplace with a wide range of techniques practised by all Russians, not just Jews, when faced with the imminent prospect of conscription. But it is apparent that Jews attempted to avoid military service *en masse* and the level of evasion was significantly higher than that of Orthodox Russians. Sanborn notes that in 1912, a third of Jewish conscripts failed to report for duty with Government penalties borne by their families, who were fined 300 roubles for their recalcitrant members. Bribery was generally too expensive for most prospective recruits but many succeeded in failing medical examinations by varied and ingenious efforts to damage themselves, such as by pouring caustic fluids in eyes and ears and even by cutting off their trigger fingers.<sup>659</sup>

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<sup>657</sup> James Scott, *Weapons of the Weak. Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (London: Yale University Press, 1985), pp. 30-31.

<sup>658</sup> Shukman, *War or Revolution*, p. 2.

<sup>659</sup> Joshua Sanborn, *Drafting the Russian Nation. Military Conscription and Mass Politics, 1905 – 1925* (Illinois: North Illinois University Press, 2003), pp. 23-24, 117.

The ethnic history of Jews in Imperial Russia, handed down in immigrant folklore, reinforced evasion tactics as a normative course of action in the face of compulsion. This contrasted with British Conscientious Objectors, to whom enforced militarization was a new and morally repugnant Government directive. But in seeking to escape military service, many alien, and possibly more than a few British, Jews followed the example of thousands of non-Jews in travelling to Ireland which, excluded from the MSA, was regarded in the early days of conscription as a safe haven. From the outset, Ireland proved to be a dubious sanctuary as, theoretically, men evading military service (referred to in official British documents as 'shirkers') could be arrested by the Irish Police and remanded in custody for seven days, during which time their presence was reported to the appropriate Chief Constable on the mainland. The presence of Englishmen, Welshmen and Scotsmen had caused the Royal Irish Constabulary to approach the War Office for clarification of the legality of their apprehension duties as 'awkward questions were continually arising'.<sup>660</sup> The Government's ongoing confusion prompted the Dublin press to record, 'the vast change of feeling which has been created by the blundering and the misconduct of the British War Office and the Coalition Government'.<sup>661</sup>

The widely used tactic of escaping British military service in Ireland reinforces the hypothesis of the previous section, *viz* that interaction between Jewish and non-Jewish anti-war groups was not confined to the field of organised labour. That said, there were small Jewish communities in Ireland, largely composed of migrants from Lithuania who had arrived in the early nineteenth century. In 1911, 3,805 Jews were recorded as resident in Ireland, of whom two thirds lived in the working class district of Dublin around the South Circular Road, known as 'Little Jerusalem'. Dublin Jews were very much a closed community, with little 'marrying out' or social connections with non-Jews. Belfast was the second largest settlement with less than a thousand Jews, and

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<sup>660</sup> National Archives of Ireland (hereafter NAI), Papers of the Chief Secretary's Office, CSORP/1918/99622. Royal Irish Constabulary to WO, 29 August, 1916.

<sup>661</sup> NAI, CSORP/1916/11164. *Freeman's Journal*, 2 September, 1916.

Cork and Limerick cities housed even smaller communities. Irish Jews worked largely as pedlars, tradesmen and small shopkeepers, and encountered considerable economic anti-Semitism. Like their co-religionists in England, from the outbreak of the war they were regarded by the press and members of the general public with suspicion and accused of German sympathies.<sup>662</sup>

Shortly after the Russian Provisional Government agreed the Convention in July 1917, the Home Office began to receive police reports of aliens going to Ireland. In Leeds, where 200 out of 794 aliens called up had failed to report for military duty, the police claimed that considerable numbers had left the city to take up residence in Ireland.<sup>663</sup> The adopted system of travel was the purchase of a Third Class train ticket to Holyhead, First Class boat passage to Dublin, with nationality stated as British on arrival.<sup>664</sup> Similar reports of evasion came from the Glasgow police, who bemoaned the fact that the Military Police had no powers of challenge. The War Office acknowledged this problem and also that of the Irish Police in subsequently attempting to trace them. Home Office Aliens Officers at Liverpool, Glasgow and Holyhead, the only ports from which aliens were allowed to embark for Ireland without a special permit, were instructed to scrutinise traffic and refuse embarkation to Russians of military age who could not prove Irish domicile. This led the Home Secretary to question his Department's powers under the Aliens Restriction Order and the Defence of the Realm Act, which was restricted to vigilance at British ports. The Anglesey police suggested that wounded soldiers not yet returned to the Front and those unfit for General Service be deployed to keep watch on boats for men, 'of all nationalities, including British', and in November a large number of young Russians were turned back in Holyhead. By early December, the constabulary

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<sup>662</sup> Dermot Keogh, *Jews in Twentieth Century Ireland* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1998), pp. 9, 54. Cormac O'Grada, *Jewish Ireland in the Age of Joyce: A Socio-Economic History* (Woodstock: Princeton University Press, 2006), p.3, 187.

<sup>663</sup> NA, HO 45/10822/318095. Major Gannett, Northern Command, 23 October, 1917.

<sup>664</sup> *Ibid.* Leeds Police report, 24 August, 1917.

reported only two Russians had been charged with making false declarations and three were refused embarkation.<sup>665</sup>

While it acknowledged that considerable numbers of Englishmen of military age were evading service in Ireland, the Home Office was alerted to the presence in Dublin of, 'many young, well-to-do Jews of sporting and gambling tastes who attend race meetings and indulge in sharp practice in many ways'.<sup>666</sup> Jewish deserters were confident enough of their ability to stay outside the clutches of the Police and the Army to travel from Ireland to the Ayr races in Scotland, returning via Ardrossan.<sup>667</sup> Categorising such men as 'undesirables', the Home Office anticipated that Irishmen would not protest against drastic measures being taken to secure their removal. Consequently in December, 1917, a conference took place between the Solicitor-General for Ireland and the Director-General of Recruiting at the Ministry of National Service concerning the 'recent exodus to Ireland, *particularly of Russian Jews*' (author's italics) and the legal problems of prosecution for desertion.<sup>668</sup> The difficulties in apprehending men at ports of embarkation was made clear to the Irish Chief Secretary and, to exacerbate the problem, many men crossed the Irish Sea in fishing boats. The Home Office suggested an *ad hoc* arrangement by which the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) would interrogate all men of military age at Irish ports and make arrests in 'well chosen cases', the onus being on the men concerned to prove they were not absentees. The Irish Office requested official authority from HMG to execute this task but none was forthcoming. Despite this, the Ministry for National Service insisted that the matter of evasion was pressing, and should be pursued in Ireland with greater vigour.<sup>669</sup> The Irish Office again requested a formally agreed system to question suspected evaders in Ireland but HMG's main concern appeared to centre on the avoidance of a large and costly administrative machinery until it was satisfied that the numbers involved

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<sup>665</sup> NA, HO 45/10822/318095. Anglesey Constabulary, 3 November, 1917.

<sup>666</sup> NA, NATS 1/935. Report, 'English Conscription Slackers in Ireland', 28 November, 1917.

<sup>667</sup> NA, HO 45/10822/318095. Statement of Herbert Aarons, 2 October, 1917.

<sup>668</sup> NA, NATS 1/935. Conference report, 13 December, 1917.

<sup>669</sup> *Ibid*, 31 January, 1918.

justified the expense. The situation continued to deteriorate and by February, 1918, the Amendment Committee for Defence of the Realm Regulations reported that Russians and other foreigners liable for service under the Convention were evading service in such numbers that, 'the evil has become acute'.<sup>670</sup>

The lack of any proper authority did not prevent abortive attempts to question suspected shirkers by the Dublin Metropolitan Police, who were furnished with warrants by English Constabularies. The case of Russian absentee, Barney Young a.k.a. Yedal Bernard, was typical. Leeds City Police contacted the Dublin police with a warrant to arrest Young, who had been called up on 8 October, 1917 but had failed to report. He was stereotypically described by the Leeds Constabulary as being of, 'Jewish appearance and with a foreign accent'. Young was traced to lodgings in Dublin but had fled to a hotel in Cork city where a search of all hotels failed to locate him.<sup>671</sup> Irish records contain similar cases investigated by the DMP with warrants from the mainland, *viz* Jacob Rosenfield from Manchester, Harry Greenberg a.k.a. Harry Hill, Joseph Gotliffe and David Morris Isaacs from Leeds.<sup>672</sup> Without a warrant, police were powerless to approach a stranger suspected of being a shirker, and complained that such circumstances arose every day, 'Our streets, trams and places of amusement are filled with persons of this class'.<sup>673</sup> In May 1918, the Chief Secretary wrote to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland at Dublin Castle regarding the serious difficulty in establishing the identities of deserters as false names and addresses were frequently used, and complaining about the conflict on legal procedure between courts in Ireland and England.

Although many Irish Jews had volunteered a family member to the British Army since 1914, a local Recruiting Officer alleged that they also offered

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<sup>670</sup> NAI, CSORP/1918/3143. Defence of the Realm Regulations Amendment Committee, 1 February, 1918.

<sup>671</sup> NAI, CSORP/1918/31022. Dublin Metropolitan Police reports, 19 October, 6 November and 15 December, 1917.

<sup>672</sup> *Ibid.* Dublin Metropolitan Police to C.C. Leeds, 2 October, 1917.

<sup>673</sup> NAI, CSORP/1918. Dublin Castle Law Room, 19 December, 1917.

sanctuary to Russian Jews from the mainland fleeing conscription.<sup>674</sup> This apparent ambiguity reflects the ethnic ties of the diaspora and of Jewish communities in supporting their co-religionists. Apposite to Scott's description of networks of local support in French communities, Levene's study of Arnold Harris revealed the vibrant, informal, Jewish network of relatives and friends who assisted his escape from London to Ireland. On arrival in Dublin, he 'made his way to the home of a relative of one of his East End teacher colleagues, soon meeting up with many school chums who were also 'fly boys''.<sup>675</sup> This was to become a source of resentment among some in the Irish population. A Dublin complainant reported that for many months in the Jewish district 'many English and "rich Jewish men's sons"' had been coming as shirkers to Dublin'.<sup>676</sup> This observation raises the question as to whether all Jewish 'shirkers' were from the immigrant community. He advocated military and police raids on all Jewish houses, claiming that the Jewish community was, 'getting large sums of money to hide them in the daytime and they come out at night'. Further complaint of 'an exceptionally grave scandal in the South Circular Road district where there are close on a thousand young Jews over here from large English cities to avoid military service' was recorded as causing much irritation in the district. It was noted that 'this crowd is well dressed and does not hesitate to say blatantly "we are here and we will remain here"' and the complainant warned of serious trouble unless such men were removed.<sup>677</sup> Until the summer of 1918, the Dublin Metropolitan Police repeatedly countered accusations of inaction by stating that they did not possess the necessary powers to deal with the situation.

Mainland Jews were occasionally convicted of aiding and abetting Russian aliens to escape to Ireland. Samuel Cohen a.k.a. McAlister, a machinist in Glasgow, was fined £50 with the alternative of serving 4 months in prison, at which the Home Office noted that, 'it seems the man successful in hiding has

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<sup>674</sup> NAI, CSORP/1918/21675. John Kelly, Dublin Councillor and Army Recruiting Officer, to Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, 3 September, 1917.

<sup>675</sup> Levene, 'Going against the Grain', p. 81.

<sup>676</sup> NAI, CSORP/1918/21675. 3 September, 1917.

<sup>677</sup> NAI, CSORP/1918/11649. H. Keene to Sir William Thompson, Registrar General, 20 April, 1918.



scored over the man who wasn't or retained sufficient decency to comply'.<sup>678</sup>

The Anglo-Jewish press was anxious to condemn such practices, acknowledging that the smuggling of Russian Jews to Ireland was something of a regular occurrence, and expressing satisfaction that it had been suppressed as it, 'belittled the efforts of the great mass of Jews to the patriotic cause'.<sup>679</sup>

Home Office consultations took place in June 1918 with the Inspector-General of the Royal Irish Constabulary, the Chief Commissioner of the Belfast Metropolitan Police, HQ Irish Command and the Lord Mayor of Belfast to construct an effective machinery to finally address the problem. Relatively small numbers of suspected absentees were anticipated to be found in a planned initial 'comb out', with results in Dublin and Belfast forecast to be in the region of 600 each, and a further 300 in the Irish counties. This would suggest that large numbers were involved overall, and that Belfast rivalled Dublin as a haven from conscription. With its small Jewish community it was also a likely destination for Russian Jews from the mainland but no research has been carried out for this thesis in Northern Ireland.

In the following month, HMG judged it expedient to issue an official Proclamation in Ireland calling to the colours Army reservists, ordinarily resident in Great Britain, who were in Ireland to evade military service. The Irish Office was loath to issue such an edict and this was undertaken by the Secretary of State for War. Men were ordered to report to the nearest Police station, which would arrange onward transit to Army barracks in Dublin. Failure to comply after 17 July would result in arrest. It was anticipated by the Director-General of Recruiting that a number of men would attempt to return to the mainland, and this appears to have been the case. The Dublin authorities were informed that Holyhead Police had arrested twenty men in one day from the boat and that "the flyboy" is not nearly so conspicuous as before [...] whether he has left Dublin for elsewhere in Ireland, was lying low or was hidden by Sinn Feiners could not be

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<sup>678</sup> NA, HO 45/10822/318095. Henderson Memorandum, 23 February, 1918.

<sup>679</sup> *JC*, 22 March, 1918, p. 8.

ascertained'.<sup>680</sup> On the latter possibility, Dermot Keogh has suggested that some Jews permanently resident in Ireland may have become involved in the cause of radical Irish nationalism to a greater extent than has been previously realised.<sup>681</sup> This little researched connection may point to the existence of a possible route to concealment offered by Irish Nationalists to Russian Jews from the mainland.

Shortly after the Armistice, the Home Office reported that Russians who had been in hiding to escape military service, 'who numbered hundreds if not thousands', wished to know whether it was safe for them to emerge. Initial opinion was that these men had, in effect, committed offences against the ARO, and should be considered for deportation as soon as was practicable. Indeed, John Pedder's personal view was that alien 'shirkers' should be prosecuted for hiding specifically in order to highlight the deportation issue.<sup>682</sup> Escape to Ireland was only one route of evasion. In the summer of 1918, the Metropolitan Police reported typical occurrences of men who appeared fit and eligible for service but held certificates of exemption, and suggested that 'an explanation must be looked for in some other direction'.<sup>683</sup> Forged papers, exemptions stolen from Tribunal Offices, and lying low by constantly changing addresses were among the alternative methods of evasion used by those intent on resisting the State. Given the obduracy of the Government in obtaining the sanction to forcibly recruit 'friendly aliens', they appear to have been singularly unsuccessful in its execution. Good intelligence at the Home Office on the evasion route to Ireland and an apparent willingness on the part of the Dublin Metropolitan Police to co-operate were hampered by the lack of a legal mechanism at a higher level. The manpower crisis on the Western Front in the early spring of 1918 had prompted HMG to announce the introduction of conscription in Ireland. This was strongly resisted, especially by the Nationalists, and resulted in a General

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<sup>680</sup> NA, NATS 1/935. Diary note, ADNS, Dublin, 15 – 18 July, 1918. Sinn Fein was strongly anti-conscriptionist.

<sup>681</sup> Keogh, *Jews in Twentieth Century*, p. 71.

<sup>682</sup> NA, HO 45/10818/318095, 26 November, 1918.

<sup>683</sup> NA, HO 45/10823/318095. New Scotland Yard to Home Office, 5 July 1918.

Strike. It may well be that the delicate state of Anglo-Irish relations played a substantial part in the administrative *impasse* over military evasion, to the benefit of those Russian Jews who found temporary sanctuary in Dublin, Belfast, Cork and Limerick.

As with voluntary enlistment figures, it is difficult to accurately quantify the number of Russian Jews who actively sought to evade conscription. Of the 30,000 Russian Jews recorded by the Police as eligible for conscription, approximately 8,000 served either in labour battalions, the Judeans or in army regiments. Of the remaining 22,000 it seems likely that approximately 1,500 Jewish Conventionists returned to Russia in the autumn of 1917. Exemption certificates issued by Special Tribunals and the Russian Consulate accounted for over 6,000, and in the summer of 1918 another 8,000 were waiting for their applications to be heard. This would suggest that approximately 6,000 men remained outside the Army by other means.

This re-appraisal of the conscription of unnaturalized Russian immigrants in World War 1 Britain suggests that it was a complex process, closely inter-related with foreign policy developments and changing Cabinet priorities. Fear of unrest on the Home Front was a prime Home Office consideration, and deep concerns over rising anti-Semitism if part of the community remained outside the Military Services Act greatly exercised the majority of Anglo-Jews. Having played a seminal part in accomplishing the Convention, they were gravely disappointed by the outcome. The undertaking in the summer of 1916 that 'friendly aliens' would be treated in the British Army in the same way as British subjects was subverted by the successful strategy of the Zionists, and by international pressures. The predominance of immigrant service in the Judeans and the Labour Battalions was largely the result of Britain's foreign policy aims, which ultimately served those of the *Entente* but, in so doing, effectively marginalised the Russian Jew as a fighting man in the British Army.

British Government policy on ‘friendly aliens’ has been criticised by Jewish historians. Englander referred to the Military Services (Allied States Convention) Act of 1917 as a ‘discreditable racist campaign’.<sup>684</sup> In his recent work on the fate of the Conventionists, Shukman considered that Britain’s distinctive discriminatory policy towards Jewish residents was unique compared with other combatant countries where they were treated no differently from indigenous citizens.<sup>685</sup> It would appear that Britain’s liberal *credo* to provide sanctuary to refugees from political and religious persecution was breached by the 1905 Aliens Act, and further violated by Government measures against foreign Jews in 1916/17.<sup>686</sup> In terms of the small number of Russian Jews recruited they can hardly have been regarded as a vital military resource, nor did the Army consider the immigrant soldier a desirable addition to His Majesty’s Imperial Forces either in terms of his fighting potential or patriotic reliability. In addition, the War Office’s own preference for immigrant service to be restricted to non-combat duties was supported by Home Office opinion that this was the preferred choice of the majority of Russian Jews. Nonetheless, the War Cabinet’s vacillation in February and March of 1918 give an indication of the conflicting interests at work domestically and internationally.

By 1914, Jewish immigrants had already entered the arena of national labour relations.<sup>687</sup> Subsequently, although the foreign Jews were unsuccessful in achieving any direct interaction with the Government or in altering HMG’s commitment to their conscription, their *liaisons* with organisations and individuals outside the community strengthened their political voice as Jews, and gave them a sense of their place in Jewish and non-Jewish environments. On this count, together with the ascendancy of Zionist political influence on Government strategy, the traditional role of Anglo-Jewish leaders *vis-à-vis* the

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<sup>684</sup> David Englander & John Osborn, ‘Jack, Tommy and Henry Dubb: the Armed Forces and the Working Class’, *The Historical Journal*, 21 (1978), 593 – 621, p. 606.

<sup>685</sup> Shukman, *War or Revolution*, p. 32.

<sup>686</sup> Tony Kushner, *The Persistence of Prejudice*, p. 141.

<sup>687</sup> Feldman, p. 383.

State appears to have been undermined and diminished by the pro-active, pro-Government part they played in the process of recruiting the Russian Jews in World War I.

### PART THREE

#### SOLDIERING OF ALL SORTS <sup>688</sup>

##### INTRODUCTION

The British Empire was a fertile, if ambiguous, environment in which ideas of race and nation developed pre-1914. During World War I, these precepts continued to influence Government and military strategy along ethnic and racial lines and, in so doing, prevented the moulding of an inclusive image of shared responsibilities and rights. The exigencies of the military manpower requirement forced the Army High Command to re-fashion its old imperial practices. It devised an accommodation which satisfied numerical need while denigrating certain troops by inequality of treatment and thus significantly affecting their morale. *Fin de siècle* notions of Anglo-Saxon racial superiority resulted in Britain welcoming her 'masculine' white citizens from South Africa, Canada, Australia and New Zealand into the Imperial Armies, while simultaneously excluding from the European battle fronts her 'inferior' black citizens of the Empire.<sup>689</sup>

India expanded her Army from 150,000 to one and a half million troops during the war, in addition to voluntarily bearing all costs for her troops overseas. Despite such loyal commitment, Army authorities made every effort to segregate her soldiers during periods of troop training in England from 'white' society in general, and white women in particular.<sup>690</sup> In the early days of their deployment in France, Indian soldiers faced many inequalities compared with white troops in their off-duty mobility and privileges, while their use and reliability on the battlefields was questioned.<sup>691</sup> After 1915, many Indian

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<sup>688</sup> With acknowledgement to Henry Myers' memoir of his own Army experiences in World War I, *Soldiering of Sorts*.

<sup>689</sup> John MacKenzie, (ed.), *Popular Imperialism and the Military, 1850 – 1950* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), p. 84.

<sup>690</sup> P. Levine, 'Battle Colors. Race, Sex and Colonial Soldierly in WW1', *Journal of Women's History*, 9 (1998), 104 – 30, pp. 107-8, 111.

<sup>691</sup> Gilbert, *The First World War*, p. 391. The fighting worth of Indian troops was also questioned in the German army. Officers captured in Jerusalem in 1917 had been told their battle would be easy against an enemy comprised of 'Indians and the scum of Egypt'.

regiments were withdrawn from the Western Front and relocated to the Middle East and East Africa.<sup>692</sup> Similarly, the British West Indian Regiment was excluded from combat duty in Europe. Hostility towards black troops was palpably prevalent not just within the military High Command but among white officers at regimental level.

Such prejudice was not unique among the Allied armies. For differing reasons, American Army opinion of its indigenous black troops was not dissimilar to those of the British Establishment. While the latter was based on an imperial hierarchy, the US mindset focused on the North/South divide, with Southerners vehemently opposing a black draft.<sup>693</sup> US Army commanders were adamant that coloured troops would be useless in battle, and in the event 80% of black soldiers serving in Europe in World War 1 were deployed as Army labourers, the military equivalent of chain gangs. In Germany's final military assault on the Western Front in the spring of 1918, General Pershing released the US 93<sup>rd</sup> Division of coloured troops for service with the French Army where they gained considerable fame in fighting off a German attack. Despite this military success, Pershing's similar offer of black American troops was adamantly refused by the British Army, 'even British desperation had its limits, specifically racial'.<sup>694</sup>

In contrast with the British Army's virtual exclusion of coloured troops from the Western Front after 1915, France readily deployed her black Africans as combat troops, the *Force Noire*, to great effect in Europe throughout the war. French Army commanders delighted in the savagery of their black soldiers and their ability to 'slice and dice' the enemy with their large combat knives. In 1917, the XXth Corps specifically selected colonial soldiers from Senegal, Algeria and Morocco to spearhead new attacks on the Western Front although it has been suggested that their reputation as a 'warrior race' was perhaps of lesser

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<sup>692</sup> Morrow, *The Great War*, p. 81.

<sup>693</sup> *Ibid*, p. 228

<sup>694</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 243 - 244.

importance to the military deployment policy than the saving of precious French blood.<sup>695</sup>

The problem of accommodating the presence of coloured soldiers in His Majesty's Imperial Forces was partly ameliorated by the fact that they were almost always non-resident in Britain, whose own coloured community was small and relatively unaffected by the war. But Establishment attitudes towards those considered 'inferior men' created difficulties in accommodating diversity within national boundaries, particularly with regard to the Irish and the Jews.<sup>696</sup>

Stereotypes of the Irish had existed since the sixteenth century in their portrayal as brutish and untrustworthy, and by the late 19th century many Britons viewed the Irish Catholic peasantry through a similar lens as the coloured peoples of the Empire.<sup>697</sup> Nonetheless, over 140,000 Irishmen, including 60,000 Catholics, volunteered to fight with the British Army in WW1. Although there has been relatively little academic focus on Irish troops, Corelli Barnett described them as 'hardy and brave, but ignorant, mad for drink, violent and undisciplined'.<sup>698</sup> Like other 'martial races' in the Empire, the Irish male was considered as a child with the body of a man, and importantly, a 'naughty child', who was unreliable.<sup>699</sup> Army prejudice regarding their fighting worth was exacerbated by an increased suspicion of their loyalty in the deteriorating political situation in Ireland.<sup>700</sup>

Jews occupied a unique position in the British Army in World War I. They were integrated but simultaneously frequently regarded as 'outsiders' in terms of social, cultural and religious practices, which distanced them from their non-Jewish comrades. Discounting the general effects of the war on the Jewish

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<sup>695</sup> *Ibid*, p.183.

<sup>696</sup> W. Young, 'Minority Groups and Military Service', (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Cambridge, 1979), pp. 107, 114.

<sup>697</sup> Robb, *British Culture*, p. 5.

<sup>698</sup> Corelli Barnett, cited in T. Denman, 'The Catholic Irish Soldier in the First World War: the racial environment', *Irish Historical Studies*, 27 (1990/91), 352 – 365, p. 353.

<sup>699</sup> R Field, *War Letters to a Wife, France and Flanders, 1915 – 1919*, and the memoirs of Brigadier W. Carden Roe, cited in Joanna Bourke, 'Effeminacy, Ethnicity and the End of Trauma: the Sufferings of 'Shell shocked' men in Great Britain and Ireland, 1914 – 1939, *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 35 (1), 57 – 69, p.61.

<sup>700</sup> Denman, 'The Catholic Irish Soldier', pp. 354, 364.



civilian population, Rubinstein has claimed that there was remarkably little evidence of anti-Semitism in the trenches while simultaneously acknowledging that little is known of the military experience of Jews in the war.<sup>701</sup> Taking his supposition as a basis for inquiry, chapter 6 addresses some of the aspects of 'difference' for the Jewish soldier in the Christian Army, which affected his integration or exclusion, from both the Jewish and the non-Jewish perspectives. These factors are contrasted in Chapter 7 through an exploration of the different tensions which occurred in units of Russian Jews, the majority of whom were deployed with their co-religionists rather than integrated with Gentile servicemen and were largely excluded from combat service. Evidence is based on individual observations, which is not to suggest that these were generic but rather that military experiences were diverse and multi-layered.

Army service in World War 1 challenged *fin de siècle* theories and stereotypes of manliness and 'martial men' in the minds of Gentiles and Jews alike. For Britain's soldiers it was to prove the ultimate test of Edwardian notions of masculinity.

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<sup>701</sup> William Rubinstein, *A History of the Jews in the English Speaking World* (MacMillan: London, 1996), pp. 195-6.

## CHAPTER 6 'THE MILITARY JEW' AND THE JEW IN THE MILITARY

'Nor war nor wisdom yields our Jews delight,  
They will not study, and they dare not fight'  
Crabbe, 1810 <sup>702</sup>

By the end of the nineteenth century, Jewish scholarly achievement was evident in Britain's leading schools and universities. The slowly growing presence of Jews in the British Regular Army was accompanied by the voluntary participation of Jewish Auxiliaries in the Boer War. The small but increasing military interest was challenged on religious grounds from within the community. Before the conclusion of the Boer War, a Liverpool correspondent in the Anglo-Jewish press in 1901 observed that:

There exists [...] a small section of Jews who have been contaminated by the military, patriotic spirit, but the modern Jew in general, modern compared to [...] the Biblical Jew, is, thanks to his religious principles, a creature of God, with little or no military spirit.<sup>703</sup>

This opinion was energetically countered by the response that any lack of military spirit only existed to a small degree amongst 'England's outcast foreign Jews', illuminating the divisive nature of attitudes within the Jewish community.<sup>704</sup> In particular, it identified but under-estimated the strength of immigrant anti-militarist traits, which were not based on religion *per se* but which became the focus of intra-community dissent in World War I.

Both Anglo-Jews and British Zionists saw the war which began in the summer of 1914 as the opportunity to don the mantle of the Jewish 'warrior', and overturn the stereotype of the disloyal, uncourageous and constitutionally unfit Jewish male. After 1916, they were determined to demonstrate to their fellow citizens that the 'foreign born' of their community were also capable of serving militarily with honour. The Zionist hope was that the heroism of the new Jewish military man would be a proof of his worthiness of a future homeland in

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<sup>702</sup> Extract published in *The Borough*, cited in Roth, 'The Jews in Defence', p.1.

<sup>703</sup> *JC*, 1 November, 1901, p. 7. Letter from Alfred Bussweiler.

<sup>704</sup> *Ibid*, 8 November, 1901, p. 9. Letter from H. Behrend.

Palestine under British protection. Even Jewish schoolboys harboured the hope that 'England will take Palestine and give it to the Jews to live in under English rule [...] everyone believes that it is the duty of the English to restore Palestine to the Jews because of the belief that they are the lost tribes'.<sup>705</sup> The fight against the negative stereotype of the Jewish male was of common cause to both factions.

It is questionable whether many Jewish soldiers who fought in World War I empathised with either interpretation of this military paragon. The majority of recruits were from an immigrant background. Their view of Army life was of a culturally alien environment, while that of the war was of a protracted, mechanised and bloody experience to be endured and, if possible, survived.

### **Two Volunteers from Bristol: Isaac Rosenberg and Benjamin Polack**

Although the number of conscripted soldiers exceeded that of volunteers by November, 1918, the national historiography of the Great War has focused on the enlisted man as, 'the brave knight in the crusade of chivalry and sacrifice', largely ignoring the conscript who endured the same hardships and often also made the ultimate sacrifice.<sup>706</sup> This emphasis also presupposes that the volunteer necessarily identified with such patriotic imagery.

In this section, the experiences of a Jewish private, born of immigrant parents and brought up in the East End, and a Jewish officer, educated at public school and Cambridge, are juxtaposed to explore some of the nuances of Jewish voluntary enlistment and the prevailing concepts of masculinity. Both men were born in 1890 in Bristol; each was one of three sons, all of whom enlisted for military service in the war. Probably their only connection, albeit not a personal one, lies in Rosenberg's early memories of his 'wild little pick-a-back days in Bristol', which included 'the name of Polack in connection with, I fancy, Hebrew

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<sup>705</sup> IWM, Diary of Richard Miller, 02/38/1. Miller was a Jewish schoolboy in Grimsby during World War I.

<sup>706</sup> I. Bet-El, 'Men and Soldiers: British Conscripts, Concepts of Masculinity and the Great War' in Billie Melman, (ed.), *Borderlines*, p. 73.

classes and prize-givings'.<sup>707</sup> Since his death in 1918, Isaac Rosenberg has emerged as one of the foremost and celebrated of the war poets, consequently his life and work have become the focus of much scholarly interest.

The eldest of three brothers, Benjamin Polack's formative years as a pupil at Clifton College coincided with the success and expansion of Polack's boarding house in Percival Road to 'the level of the best type of Public School Boarding Houses', under the guidance of his father, Joseph, its eponymous Housemaster.<sup>708</sup> The additional premises enabled the construction and consecration of its own Synagogue in 1906, which was regarded as 'a new and valuable influence in the House'.<sup>709</sup> Academic success among Polack's pupils continued to flourish with two Scholarships and an Exhibition for Cambridge gained between 1903–6. Bennie (his family name), like all Clifton boys, took an active part in College games and gained cricket colours and a cap for football, as well as being a member of the Army Cadet Force. He entered King's College, Cambridge where he read Modern Languages, and on leaving in 1913 he was appointed Modern Language Master at Battersea Grammar School, 'where the time table was arranged in accordance with his stipulation for absence on Saturdays'.<sup>710</sup> Chapter 2 has indicated the involvement of ex-public schoolboys with the youth clubs of the East End, and Bennie served as a Committee member of the Victoria Club in London.<sup>711</sup> When war broke out he joined the University and Public School Corps, and enlisted as a Private in the Royal Fusiliers on 3 September 1914, obtaining a commission four months later and a transfer to the Worcestershire Regiment.<sup>712</sup>

His younger brother, Ernest, who gained a scholarship at Clifton to St John's College, Cambridge, also volunteered at the outbreak of hostilities and joined the Gloucestershire Regiment. His values and his strong family sense of

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<sup>707</sup> BL, Poems, prose and letters of Isaac Rosenberg, ADD 58852, Rosenberg to Miss Ruth Löwy, later Lady Gollancz, written during Army service in France, undated.

<sup>708</sup> CCL, 'The Early History of Polack's House'. Open letter from A David, Headmaster, and J. Polack, Housemaster, to the Friends of Polacks, 28 November, 1905.

<sup>709</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>710</sup> *JC*, 21 April, 1916, p. 6.

<sup>711</sup> LMA, ACC 2996/002. Minute, June, 1914.

<sup>712</sup> Letter from Ministry of Defence to Mrs M. Polack, August 1996, (copy held by author).

Jewishness are evident in a letter he wrote on the death of his greatest friend, Leonard Stern:

He (Stern) combined in the most remarkable manner a great personal attractiveness, an irresistible sense of humour, and a very strong sense of duty – in fact I am not exaggerating when I say that to me he always appeared as something not far distant from the ideal Jewish young man [...] Now he has gone, doing his duty.<sup>713</sup>

Ernest, too, ‘did his duty’ and was killed near Ovillers La Boisselle, France in July 1916.

Bennie sailed with the 9<sup>th</sup> battalion of his regiment on the ‘Cawdor Castle’ from Avonmouth on 20 June 1915, and served in the trenches at Gully Ravine, Cape Helles, and at Lemnos in Gallipoli.<sup>714</sup> By way of Alexandria, the battalion moved to Mesopotamia on 5 March, 1916, to aid in the relief of Kut. Bennie was killed in the second attack on Sannaiyat, which was undertaken at night in intense cold following a day of great heat. At dawn the ground was littered with the dead and wounded, and Bennie was one of nine officers who fell that night. It seems unlikely that his body was recovered but his name was commemorated on the Basra Memorial in Iraq.<sup>715</sup> Posthumously Mentioned in Despatches, he was also remembered, in company with Rupert Brooke, on the King’s College memorial to past scholars who fell in the Great War. Throughout his life, Bennie exemplified the Anglo-Jewish ideal; he was masculine, athletic and intellectually gifted, as well as philanthropic and patriotic, answering his country’s call to arms without hesitation.

By contrast, Rosenberg’s life prior to his Army enlistment in October, 1915 exhibited a tension between his Jewish culture and his artistic talent for which he sought recognition in the wider English Christian sphere. Unlike many of his acquaintances in the Young Socialist League, who were openly atheist in

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<sup>713</sup> Lawrence Houseman, *War Letters of Fallen Englishmen* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1930), p. 217. Letter from Ernest to Leonard Stern’s father, Reverend J. Stern, 21 May, 1915.

<sup>714</sup> Ministry of Defence to Ernest Polack, 30 September, 2003, copy letter in possession of author.

<sup>715</sup> *JC*, 21 April, 1916, p. 6. Harry Stacke, *The Worcestershire Regiment in the Great War* (Kidderminster: G T Cheshire & Sons, 1928), pp. 146, 555.

their views, Rosenberg continued to accept the existence of a God despite anger at his own suffering through poverty and his thwarted artistic aspirations.<sup>716</sup>

At birth, Isaac was described as, 'so tiny you could put him in a jug'. By the age of twenty two he was described by Lawrence Binyon, Keeper of Prints and Drawings at the British Museum as 'small in stature, dark, bright eyed, thoroughly Jewish in type'.<sup>717</sup> He had also developed a stammer, which caused him to say little and appear reserved and aloof. This may have contributed later to his sense of isolation in the Army, as he remarked while in France, 'If I was taciturn in England, I am ten times so here'.<sup>718</sup> Never keen on games, his temperament was serious and moody, and he was prone to repeated periods of depression. In addition, he appears to have suffered from weak lungs. He attended the local school in Whitechapel, where 90% of the pupils were Jewish, although he remarked that, 'we Jews were all taught Hebrew but I was a young rebel and would not be taught'.<sup>719</sup> Subsequently he received Jewish sponsorship to study at The Slade School of Art until 1914. Unlike other Jewish artists such as David Bomberg and Mark Gertler, who moved effortlessly into English artistic circles, Rosenberg never outgrew his Whitechapel background. Indeed, Leftwich considered that Rosenberg's life and work was always influenced by his Jewish home and upbringing, and his sense of Jewishness.<sup>720</sup> Siegfried Sassoon later wrote of him, 'I have recognised in Rosenberg a fruitful fusion between English and Hebrew culture. Behind all his poetry there is a racial quality – biblical and prophetic. Scriptural and sculptural are the epithets I would apply to him'.<sup>721</sup>

Isaac's parents held the traditionally pacifist views of immigrants from Eastern Europe. His father, Dorber, a Hebrew scholar and the weaker partner in a loveless marriage, had a deep antipathy towards the regimentation and

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<sup>716</sup> Joseph Cohen., *Journey to the Trenches. The Life of Isaac Rosenberg, 1890 – 1918* (London: Robson Books, 1975), p. 51.

<sup>717</sup> *Ibid*, p. 77.

<sup>718</sup> Ian Parsons, *The Collected Works of Isaac Rosenberg, Poetry, Prose, Letters, Paintings and Drawings* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1979), p. 245.

<sup>719</sup> Cited in Jean Liddiard, (ed.), *Isaac Rosenberg, 1890 - 1914. Poetry out of my head and heart: unpublished letters and poem versions* (London: Enitharmon Press, 2007), p.95.

<sup>720</sup> IWM, Papers of Joseph Leftwich, 12274. P351. Letter to Editor, *Jewish Monthly*.

<sup>721</sup> Jon Stallworthy, *Anthem for Doomed Youth. Soldier Poets of the First World War* (London: Constable & Imperial War Museum, 2002), p. 161.

brutality of army service based on his earlier experiences of life in Russia, and his knowledge that Jewish conscripts there endured constant humiliation. Isaac's mother, Hacha, was the dominant force in his life, controlling and manipulating his actions.<sup>722</sup> Similar circumstances prevailed in many Jewish households, but perhaps especially so in immigrant families. This Hebrew tradition may have contributed to Gentile perceptions of the feminised Jewish man, dominated by the female figure.<sup>723</sup> It contrasted strongly with the prevalent British culture, which encouraged the flight from domesticity and the disparagement of the feminine.<sup>724</sup>

With Leftwich he walked the streets of the East End 'hopelessly unemployed, unwanted, before he decided to join the Army, unwilling to go on living on his family'.<sup>725</sup> In contrast to his daily hunger in Whitechapel, he had recently experienced during a visit to his relatives in South Africa in August, 1914, 'wonderful breakfasts, unimaginable lunches, delicious teas and colossal dinners' at the house of the wealthy Molteno family.<sup>726</sup> The extensive literature on Rosenberg has emphasised his motive for enlisting as primarily one of easing his financial position and no longer burdening his family. In the early autumn of 1915, while he struggled with his conscience about enlisting, his greatest concern was for his mother's reaction.<sup>727</sup> During the period of indecision, the seeming futility of his situation engendered fatalistic thoughts, 'First I think of enlisting and trying to get my head blown off'.<sup>728</sup> In the event, 'he leapt into the furnace of war in which he did not believe and for which he had no patriotic stimulus'.<sup>729</sup> Whatever his true motives, within three months he appeared

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<sup>722</sup> Cohen, *Journey to the Trenches*, p. 110. Bomberg and Gertler, friends of Isaac, also had powerful mother figures in their domestic lives.

<sup>723</sup> England, 'Three English Jews', p. 220.

<sup>724</sup> Rutherford, *Forever England*, p. 19.

<sup>725</sup> IWM, 12274 P. 351.

<sup>726</sup> IWM, Letters of Isaac Rosenberg, I/R V/2-3. Letter to parents, n.d.

<sup>727</sup> Parsons, *The Collected Works*, p. 219.

<sup>728</sup> Cohen, *Journey to the Trenches*, p. 122. Rosenberg subsequently wrote to Edward Marsh, literary patron to several writers such as Siegfried Sassoon and Rupert Brooke, and secretary to Winston Churchill, concerning Brooke's death in April, 1915, 'What can I say? [...] What is more safe than death?', Parsons, *The Collected Works*, p. 214.

<sup>729</sup> Lazarus, 'Isaac Rosenberg', p. 33.

resigned to his choice of action, remarking that 'I suppose we must all fight to get the trouble over'.<sup>730</sup>

In August 1914, at the Central London Recruiting Office, the regulation minimum height for Army recruits was set at 5'3".<sup>731</sup> But the crowded living conditions and poor nutrition of many metropolitan workers resulted in considerable numbers of volunteers falling below this parameter. In order to fulfil manpower requirements, 50,000 British and Canadian soldiers were enlisted in Bantam battalions, with a reduced lower height limit of 5' – 5'3" and a minimum chest requirement of 34".<sup>732</sup> Schooled in the *credo* of the muscular male form as the sole expression of manliness, Army officers generally regarded the Bantams as sub-standard at best and failures at worst. In France, they were taunted as 'piccaninnies', the appearance of physical inferiority underpinned by racial connotations.<sup>733</sup> Their denigration has since been challenged by Jay Winter's research, which has showed that miners from the North of England were frequently posted into the Bantams on account of their short height but that they were regarded as some of the toughest soldiers in the Army.<sup>734</sup> Rosenberg had hoped to join the Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC), 'as the idea of killing upsets me a bit', but his small stature and poor physical condition resulted in his posting to the 12<sup>th</sup> Suffolk Bantam Regiment.<sup>735</sup>

From his poetry it is evident that he acknowledged his unmasculine appearance as the antithesis of the accepted physical form; that, as well as his Jewishness, heightened his sense of inferiority, which he expressed in his writing:

'The blond, the bronze, the ruddy,  
With the same heaving blood  
Keep tide to the moon of Moses,

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<sup>730</sup> Parsons, *The Collected Works*, p. 227.

<sup>731</sup> Sidney Allinson, *The Bantams. The Untold Story of WWI* (London: Howard Baker, 1981), p. 26.

<sup>732</sup> *Ibid*, p. 27.

<sup>733</sup> *Ibid*, p. 137.

<sup>734</sup> Winter, *The Great War*, p. 32.

<sup>735</sup> Rosenberg to Ernest Schiff, a literary patron, 15 November, 1915.



Then why do they sneer at me'.  
*The Jew*, 1916

His experiences in the Bantams, 12<sup>th</sup> Suffolk Regiment, are well recorded, as is the anti-Semitism he encountered.<sup>736</sup> Physically he was the epitome of the unsuitable soldier. Possibly as a route to escape his unsavoury environment, he enquired of his patron, Edward Marsh, about the possibility of getting a commission.<sup>737</sup> Alternatively, his interest in becoming an officer may chime with Cohen's suggestion that his enlistment reflected 'a long suppressed death wish' as officers were three times more likely to be killed in the first year of the war than Other Ranks.<sup>738</sup> Despite his physical frailty and slovenly, unmilitary appearance<sup>739</sup>, his Sergeant observed that he was more intelligent, conscientious and hardworking than the majority of his fellow recruits, and he was offered 'a stripe' (promotion to Lance Corporal) in December, 1915. He declined this on the grounds that he did not wish to become part of the Army's machinery, and that he viewed militarism as terrorism by another name.<sup>740</sup>

In the late 1970s, surviving veterans of his Bantam battalion recalled Rosenberg as, 'untidy, polite but painfully reserved', and thought he felt shunned primarily because he was a Jew.<sup>741</sup> They claimed, possibly with hindsight, that differences in religion and race were immaterial in Army life and that the only criterion of acceptability was to be a reliable comrade. It may well be that their sense of his separation derived from Rosenberg's artistic nature, often associated with effeminacy if not homosexuality, and the inability to 'fit in' socially with the crudities of Army life. But these factors are not mutually exclusive and he may well have represented the Jewish male stereotype in Gentile consciousness.

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<sup>736</sup> Cohen, *Journey to the Trenches*, pp. 126-7.

<sup>737</sup> Parsons, *The Collected Works*, p. 228.

<sup>738</sup> Cohen, *Journey to the Trenches*, p. 123. Winter, *The Great War*, p. 87.

<sup>739</sup> AJA, Waley Family Papers, MS 118 AJ 24/39/1. Waley later wrote of him as 'quite impossible in a fighting battalion, always late on parade, improperly dressed, puttees coming down, cap on crooked.'

<sup>740</sup> Cohen, *Journey to the Trenches*, p. 130. IWM, I/R V/46. Rosenberg to Schiff, November, 1915.

<sup>741</sup> Allinson, *The Bantams*, p. 253.

The Bantams were dispersed at the end of 1915, and in March 1916 he joined a Regular Army unit, the 11<sup>th</sup> battalion, King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry (KOYLI), which was posted some two months' later to France. Seven months of training had broadened his experience of life, and he appears to have had no objections to the harsh duties and menial work on the grounds that they hardened him physically and psychologically.<sup>742</sup> On the eve of his departure for France, he declared himself in 'splendid condition'.<sup>743</sup> Bourke claims that, in spite of Army censorship, servicemen regularly sent horrifying stories of the battlefields back to England.<sup>744</sup> Rosenberg's correspondence barely reflected on the grim realities of life in the trenches, which he merely described as, 'rough days' in the 'extraordinary gamble' of battle.<sup>745</sup> Despite his continuous punishments for slovenliness and absentmindedness, he prided himself on being a good soldier who had been regularly in the Front Line.<sup>746</sup>

In late 1916 or early 1917, through the intervention of a sympathetic Commanding Officer, who became aware of Isaac's unsuitability as a combat soldier, he was transferred to work in the stores and cookhouse.<sup>747</sup> Later that year Captain Waley, a Jewish officer who also sympathised with Rosenberg, arranged his transfer to a Labour Battalion, 'behind the lines to build roads and railways and not fight. [...] I heard later he had been killed when the Germans broke through our line in the Spring offensive (1918) when these Labour Battalions were hastily armed and thrown into the gap'.<sup>748</sup> This assumption was incorrect as Isaac was killed near Arras serving again with the KOYLI for which he had volunteered.<sup>749</sup> His death was reported to his family on 16 April 1918, (two

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<sup>742</sup> Cohen, *Journey to the Trenches*, p.138. IWM, I/R V/44. Rosenberg to Schiff, 15 November, 1915.

<sup>743</sup> *Ibid*, V/52. Rosenberg to Schiff, May, 1916.

<sup>744</sup> Joanna Bourke, *Dismembering the Male. Men's Bodies, Britain and the Great War* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 1996), p.22.

<sup>745</sup> IWM, I/R V/58, 69. Rosenberg to fellow poet, R.C. Trevelyan, undated.

<sup>746</sup> Cohen, *Journey to the Trenches*, pp.3 – 4.

<sup>747</sup> AJA, MS 118 AJ 24/39/1. Undated.

<sup>748</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>749</sup> IWM, I/R V/85. Red Cross to Annie Rosenberg, 19 December 1919. Ironically, the Imperial War Graves Commission reported 6 years later that Rosenberg's body had been found, carefully reburied with members of his Company, and 'marked with a cross', *ibid*, V/86.

weeks after his death), who mourned him according to traditional Jewish custom.<sup>750</sup>

‘None saw their spirits’ shadow shake the grass,  
Or stood aside for the half used life to pass  
Out of these doomed nostrils and the doomed mouth  
When the swift iron-burning bee  
Drained the wild honey of their youth’.  
*Dead Man’s Dump*, 1918

Neither Rosenberg’s sense of Englishness nor Jewishness exhibit the confidence and ease of Benjamin Polack. Certainly there is a discernible tension in Isaac’s attitudes and actions in his years of Army service, and it has been suggested that his burgeoning interest in Zionism near the end of his life was partly due to his discomfort in the Anglo-Christian Army.<sup>751</sup> This appears contrary to his remarks to Leftwich, while on leave in London in 1917, when he appeared fit, well and boisterously happy, indignantly refuting stories that he hated the army.<sup>752</sup> Cohen has suggested that his interest in securing a transfer to the Jewish battalions of the Royal Fusiliers in the Near East in October, 1917, was motivated by a wish to escape from the horrors of the Western Front.<sup>753</sup> This appears somewhat debatable, given the tenor of his letters from the trenches, and, in any event, such a move could well have served both purposes. Rather, the realisation of Jabotinsky’s vision of a Jewish Legion, followed in early November by the Balfour Declaration, appears to have impacted on Rosenberg’s sense of his own ethnicity and latent Zionism. On a personal level, his sisters, Annie and Minnie, and many in his circle of friends, were fervent Zionists, and Isaac had been in correspondence with David Eder during his army service (Eder was an ally of Jabotinsky and one of his few supporters in Whitechapel).<sup>754</sup> Despite Rosenberg’s failure to join the Jewish battalions, he confided to his brother his wish to write a ‘a strong and wonderful’ battle song for the regiment

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<sup>750</sup> *Ibid*, V/21. Annie Rosenberg to Gordon Bottomley, fellow poet, 23 April, 1918.

<sup>751</sup> D. Harris, ‘Rosenberg in the Trenches: Imagining King David’s World’, *Jewish Culture and History*, 5 (2002), 1 – 28, p. 2.

<sup>752</sup> Cohen, *Journey to the Trenches*, pp.169-70.

<sup>753</sup> *Ibid*, p.173.

<sup>754</sup> Harris, ‘Rosenberg in the Trenches’, p. 3. Hobman, (ed.), *David Eder*, p. 25.

after its famous parade through the London streets early in 1918.<sup>755</sup> Harris suggests that his last poems portray his rejection of the Aryan West and a closer identification with Hebrew culture and Jewish history.<sup>756</sup> By this point it seems that Rosenberg had moved far from his early personal reasons for enlisting in the Christian Army, and possibly closer to the Zionist ideal of fighting for a homeland in Palestine.

In contrast to Benjamin Polack's patriotic impulse in the first days of the war, Isaac Rosenberg undoubtedly went against the grain of his own anti-militarist convictions in offering himself as a volunteer. Moreover, he was the antithesis of masculinity and the ideal soldier, physically fragile, temperamentally artistic and totally unsuited to brave the rigours of Army life.<sup>757</sup> Yet his stoic acceptance of the military regime, which he regarded as idiotic and meaningless, and his refusal to weaken under its demanding conditions and the hardships of modern warfare, appear to refute the paradigm of manliness and virility prevalent at the time. Benjamin Polack could well be regarded as an exemplar of the Anglo-Jewish 'Military Jew'. But was not Isaac Rosenberg, the physical antithesis of the Zionist Muscular Jew, equally heroic?

### **Between Separation and Integration**

In every army of the belligerents, the *camaraderie* of the trenches relied on interdependence, with each man supporting the other in order to survive. In the trials of warfare Jews and non-Jews had a common bond.<sup>758</sup> The wartime experience of Jewish soldiers in the British Army in combat largely mirrored that of their non-Jewish comrades, with a journalist recalling at the beginning of World War II that 'They were neither braver nor less brave than the rest; they just

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<sup>755</sup> Harris, 'Rosenberg in the Trenches', p. 4. IWM, I/R V/7. Rosenberg to his brother, David, March, 1918.

<sup>756</sup> Harris, 'Rosenberg in the Trenches', pp. 2, 4.

<sup>757</sup> Mosse, *The Image of Man*, p. 109. Mosse has suggested that the stereotype of normative masculinity offered little room for artistic sensibility, and that artists were often suspected of homosexuality, viz, Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen.

<sup>758</sup> *JC*, March 19, 1915, p.13.

fitted in'.<sup>759</sup> But the social dislocation and implications of ethnic difference suggest that the experience of the Jewish soldier was frequently one of singularity and unease. The all-male environment of the British Army epitomised masculinity. For many Anglo-Jews the transition from civilian to military life was not dissimilar to that of the Gentile recruit, but military service, whether voluntary or enforced, abruptly removed thousands of young Jews, more recently arrived in Britain, from a civilian life centred on family and home in predominantly Jewish areas of London and other cities. Boyarin has suggested that the life of the unassimilated Jewish male focused on 'indoors' in contrast with the 'outside' Gentile world 'with its threats and practices'.<sup>760</sup>

Anglo-Jews and non-Jews alike regarded the atmosphere of the immigrant areas as one of 'exotic strangeness'.<sup>761</sup> Conversely, the Army environment, with its Spartan environment and outdoor drills, was equally alien to the immigrant soldier, and challenged his sense of ethnic identity. Elite Anglo-Jews were convinced that segregation in civilian life before the war, with an ensuing ignorance of English customs, had done much to aggravate British ill-feeling against Jewish immigrants. They hoped that Army life would encourage greater cohesion.<sup>762</sup> Similarly, the Anglo-Jewish press, having denied the existence of anti-Semitism in the Army in the early years of the war, was obliged to concede the point, but also attributed it to the segregation of Jews and non-Jews in civilian life.<sup>763</sup> Joe Pollick, who had experienced anti-Semitism in Manchester before the war, stated that the mixing in army units narrowed the social gap between Jew and Gentile, although there were occasional fights due to anti-Semitic remarks.<sup>764</sup>

Army life with adequate food, fresh air and physical exercise transformed many wartime soldiers from weedy, sallow children to ruddy complexioned,

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<sup>759</sup> Douglas Reed, cited in England, 'Three English Jews', p. 178, footnote 4.

<sup>760</sup> Boyarin, '*Goyim Naches* or Modernity and the Manliness of the *Mentsch*', in Cheyette & Marcus, (eds.), *Modernity, Culture*, p.72.

<sup>761</sup> Gartner, *The Jewish Immigrant*, pp. 173, 180. Bush, 'East London Jews', p. 148.

<sup>762</sup> Basil Henriques, cited in Lammers, 'A Superior Kind of English', p 236.

<sup>763</sup> *JC*, 31 August, 1917, p.5.

<sup>764</sup> *MJM*, J 197.

upstanding, square shouldered young men of courage and nerve.<sup>765</sup> This applied to large numbers of economically deprived immigrant soldiers, who readily acknowledged that their military service resulted in better standards of health: they had become, 'tall, upright with alert eyes and the tailor's hump has completely disappeared'.<sup>766</sup>

Even under the pressure of war, the King's Commission demanded a certain standard of education and social standing. Jewish officers were drawn almost entirely from the middle and upper classes of the community, 172 of whom were educated at Clifton and Cheltenham. Few men from immigrant families were commissioned, and less than 1% of officers killed in action came from the East End.<sup>767</sup> Records show that Jews as Officers, Non-Commissioned Officers and Other Ranks served in all regiments of the British Army and that they were not infrequently isolated from their co-religionists within their units. Lt Marcus Segal wrote to his parents from France in September, 1916, 'you will be surprised I have practically not seen one Jewish boy since I have been here except several officers in the Royal Flying Corps, which seems to suit our race'.<sup>768</sup> He also remarked on the welcome he had received from his fellow officers on arrival and the patronage of his Commanding Officer.

In parallel with the reticence of some Jewish soldiers to enlist as such, there was a certain unease and ambivalence among Jewish officers in seeking to identify co-religionists outside their immediate acquaintance. It has been observed that in the early years of the twentieth century, Jews had become increasingly 'invisible' as they climbed the social ladder of British society. The onset of the war crystallised this trend, with Britishness dwarfing ethnicity and religiosity.<sup>769</sup> Major Sir Philip Sassoon, a member of the Anglo-Jewish 'Cousinhood' and one who epitomised assimilation, might be regarded a

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<sup>765</sup> Arthur, *Forgotten Voices*, p.135. Memoir of Lt Charles Carrington.

<sup>766</sup> AJA, Letters and Diary of Private Paul Epstein, MS 124/2. Cairo, 2 March, 1918.

<sup>767</sup> Barry Kosmin, Stanley Waterman, & Nigel Grizzard, 'The Jewish Dead in the Great War as an Indicator for the Location, Size and Social Structure of Anglo Jewry in 1914', *Immigrants and Minorities*, 5 (1986), 181 – 192, p. 183. H. Pollins, 'Jews in the British Army in the First World War', *The Jewish Journal of Sociology*, 37 (1995), 100 – 111, p. 101.

<sup>768</sup> AJEX, Papers of Lt Marcus Segal, E1/355. Segal to parents, 28 September, 1916.

<sup>769</sup> Levene, 'Going Against the Grain', p. 72.

supreme exemplar of 'invisibility'. Educated at public school, his family had been connected with the Royal Family for three generations, and during the war he served as Private Military Secretary to Sir Douglas Haig. Ostensibly part of the inner circle of elite Gentile society, his military career and many decorations reflected his personal abilities.<sup>770</sup> Nevertheless, even he found himself, on occasion, on the periphery of upper class social acceptance, and the subject of racial and sexual innuendoes. His 'hooded eyes, sleek black hair, slightness of build, distinctive manner of speech, and lithe agility' marked 'the outsider' at the acme of British society.<sup>771</sup> In the coded language of the conservative English elite, he was described as, 'that semi-Oriental figure [...] who flitted like some bird of paradise against the sober background of GHQ'.<sup>772</sup> Unsurprisingly, those like Sassoon who moved in circles which were covertly anti-Semitic were the least likely to be reconciled to their Jewishness.<sup>773</sup>

In the early nineteenth century Benjamin Disraeli's father, Isaac d'Israeli, had compared the Jew with the chameleon, remarking that 'they reflect the colour of the spot they rest on'.<sup>774</sup> This observation translated into a stance of diffident opacity for some Anglo-Jewish officers, not only in relationships with their Gentile brother officers but also with their co-religionists. It sometimes resulted in rather circuitous behaviours, and prompted an Anglo-Jewish officer stationed in France to enquire through the established community in England whether an officer in a sister battalion of his regiment was a Jew.<sup>775</sup> The correspondence of an officer in training for the Artists' Rifles at Gidea Hall near Romford revealed that a soldier's religion was entered against his name on the hut door. While he proclaimed his Jewishness to his comrades, 'sometimes I say my prayers in the hut [...] which makes not the slightest difference between our mutual relations', he discovered in conversation an 'invisible' fellow Jew in his

<sup>770</sup> England, 'Three English Jews, pp.188 – 194.

<sup>771</sup> *Ibid*, p. 206.

<sup>772</sup> R. Blake, (ed.), *The Private Papers of Douglas Haig*, cited *ibid*, p. 194.

<sup>773</sup> Chaim Bermant, *The Cousinhood. The Anglo-Jewish Century* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1971), p. 233.

<sup>774</sup> Cohen, 'Who was Who?', p. 478.

<sup>775</sup> IWM, Conshelf. Captain Holt asked his parents to ascertain whether Captain Montague was a Jew, 'the Meyers will know', 24 October, 1917.

hut, and remarked that 'everyone was very surprised while I, of course, was not a bit surprised'.<sup>776</sup>

Cultural assimilation among Jewish officers was not necessarily accompanied by a lessening of religious observance, and, as with other ranks, this was respected by non-Jewish fellow officers. Henry Myer was on a working party with his men in France on a Jewish Holy Day:

Although it was *Kol Nidre*, the eve of the Day of Atonement, I went with my men and observed the fast. It was a strange way of doing so because all I could do that night in the way of observance was to abstain from all food and drink. [...] (I) continued the fast for 25 hours [...] my company officers were very considerate and [...] somewhat concerned.<sup>777</sup>

Other Jewish officers proudly upheld and defended their religion and their race. When a Jewish soldier complained that he had been insulted, his officer, Captain Rothband, publicly proclaimed himself a Jew during the morning parade and warned of severe penalties for future insults.<sup>778</sup>

In contrast to the secular habits of the majority of anglicized officers, Jewish soldiers were more likely to overtly display their ethnicity and Judaism:

I know of several young men who lay their *Tephillim* regularly and will only eat *kosher* food. I might add that Jewish soldiers who rigidly adhere to their faith are honoured and respected by their non-Jewish comrades. It is the Jew who has not sufficient courage to practise the laws and customs of his religion who is unpopular.<sup>779</sup>

A Jew from Glasgow, where there was a sizeable Jewish community, served with the Royal Scots Fusiliers in France and Belgium and spent many months in the trenches where 'he prayed three times a day and ate only bread and tins of sardines. He laid *tefillim* every morning in his trench and his fellow trenchmates remained quiet throughout this time'.<sup>780</sup> *Tephillim* had been

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<sup>776</sup> AJA, Papers of P. Goldberg, MS 148 AJ 729, 27 February, 1916.

<sup>777</sup> AJEX, Myer, *Soldiering of Sorts*, p. 54.

<sup>778</sup> JC, 4 August, 1916, p. 12.

<sup>779</sup> JC, 22 December 1916, p. 17. Letter from Gunner J. Mendelowitch.

<sup>780</sup> Renée Lauffer, 'Tales from the First World War', private paper, copy held by author. After being wounded on the Western Front her father returned to England and later transferred to the 38<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Royal Fusiliers.



traditionally carried by Jewish soldiers in battle as a charm against danger, and Colonel Goldsmid, veteran of the Boer War who retired from the Army in 1903, had worn his so that he would be recognised as a Jew if he 'died suddenly among strangers'.<sup>781</sup> In other circumstances, wartime superstition apparently overcame any Gentile prejudice towards Judaic practices:

‘I read today in a Jewish newspaper about a Jewish soldier in the Hussars who put on his phylacteries every morning even while in the trenches, despite the jibes of his Christian comrades. One day they were told to charge while he still had them on and though he was in the thick of the fight and thousands of his comrades were killed he remained unhurt. The other soldiers, thinking the phylacteries bore some charm all asked for a bit of leather as a mascot’.<sup>782</sup>

In the early months of the war, it was reported in the Anglo-Jewish press that Jewish and Union flags were flown outside soldiers’ tents.<sup>783</sup> On the battlefields a wry acceptance of religious difference among the troops is evident in a letter from the Front which commented that ‘there are three Jewish lads in our dugout’. It’s called by our Christian pals “the *Kosher* House”.<sup>784</sup> Jewish soldiers appeared to display none of the hesitancy of officers in seeking to identify their co-religionists, ‘if we meet someone we think is Jewish, we say “*Sholem Aleichem*”. Eight Jewish boys have been discovered in a fortnight [...] We are always looking out for Yiddish boys’.<sup>785</sup>

Divergences in religious and social practice between assimilated and immigrant Jews, which had been less evident in pre-war civilian life due to their territorial segregation, continued during Army service and became more apparent to each group in the military environment. Soldiers’ comments on the absence of Jewish officers at religious services discussed in Chapter 4 exemplify this observation.

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<sup>781</sup> Bradlow, ‘Colonel A. E. W. Goldsmid’, pp. 64, 71. Goldsmid was ignorant of his Jewish heritage until he was twenty one, and he converted to Judaism three years later.

<sup>782</sup> IWM, 02/38/1. Diary entry, 13 January, 1915.

<sup>783</sup> *JW*, 21 October, 1914, p.10. Letter from Private Sam Palmer.

<sup>784</sup> *JC*, 17 March 1916, p. 21. Letter from Private Leonard Baronowitsch.

<sup>785</sup> *Ibid*, 11 February 1916, p. 18. Letter from Private B. Caplan.

By 1917, many thousands of troops had not been on leave for eighteen months.<sup>786</sup> Religious toleration by Christian troops was not necessarily inclusive of special religious leave allowances for Jewish servicemen, and gave rise to a more parochial but strongly felt resentment:

There was only one person I knew whose professed religious beliefs did him any good, and that was a Jew named Levinsky. He came to our company on a draft, and had only been with us for about four weeks when he was given a week's leave in Blighty to attend services in connection with Passover. It is not difficult to imagine the feelings of Gentiles in the company who had been in France for a year with no leave, or hope of any in the foreseeable future.<sup>787</sup>

Complaining to his parents about the lack of any imminent leave, Private Clark commented, 'All the "shonks" have got four days leave this Easter to celebrate the Passover'.<sup>788</sup> Even Saturday services for Jews in training were at times unpopular with other soldiers, who felt it was an unfair privilege and an escape from military duties.<sup>789</sup>

While the observances and practices of Judaism were largely respected by Christian officers and soldiers alike, with the proviso that they were considered reasonable, Jewish customs and *mores* may well have created a wider chasm in terms of comradeship and integration in the ranks of the British Army. Differences in diet and the use of alcohol had been a distinct marker of Jewish ethnicity prior the war. While dietary laws were always an intrinsic element of Judaism, with the strictly Orthodox observance of *Kashrut*, Jews generally chose to consume food which was home-made, well cooked and contained few ingredients.<sup>790</sup> Fried fish was considered symbolic of Jewish identity in contrast to the roast beef and ale fare of the archetypal John Bull. Diet set apart the Jew

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<sup>786</sup> LRO, 920 DER (17) 27/2. Field Marshal Haig to Lord Derby, July 1917.

<sup>787</sup> David Lister, *Die Hard, Aby. Abraham Bevistein – the boy soldier shot to encourage the others*, (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Books Ltd., 2005), p.128.

<sup>788</sup> IWM, Papers of J.A.C. Clark, 96/57/1. Clarke to parents, 8 April, 1917.

<sup>789</sup> *JC*, 1 March, 1918, p.14. Report of Rev. Levin at Chaplains' conference.

<sup>790</sup> Royal Commission on Physical Deterioration, Committee Report, 1904, Command Paper 2210, p. 54.

and the Christian, and Orthodoxy made a further division between the assimilated, more secular, Jew and his co-religionist from the immigrant areas.

The official daily Army food ration consisted of 1lb fresh or preserved meat, 1 ¼ lbs bread, 4 ozs bacon (*trifah*, and not acceptable under Jewish dietary law), 3 ozs cheese, ½ lb fresh vegetables and small amounts of sugar, jam and tea. In the Front Line the meat ration was frequently replaced by bully beef and Maconochie (stew).<sup>791</sup> Bacon with 2 slices of bread were usually served for breakfast with tea, but in the trenches 'big, square biscuits like dog biscuits' were substituted for bread (so stale they often required a trenching tool to break them), and hot food was rare.<sup>792</sup> Under fire in the front line trenches, all food was scarce. Lt Segal was in the trenches during a big attack and survived for three days with a biscuit and a cup of water.<sup>793</sup> Many Orthodox Jews chose to resist 'Christian food' whilst on Army Service, only eating food sent from home, and even in France refused to transgress Judaic principles.<sup>794</sup> Some publicly decried its acceptance by co-religionists, one soldier commenting that he 'always found it tragic to reflect that compulsory Christian food and atmosphere, which was to my own father the worst thing of service in the Russian Army, should be accepted, even welcomed, in England by conscripts and volunteers who surely could have made their own conditions'.<sup>795</sup> Insensitivity or worse on the part of Army personnel to the Orthodox dietary observances of some Jewish soldiers continued even at the end of the war.<sup>796</sup>

During training in England, some Jewish servicemen received parcels of fried fish from home through the postal service, and tinned or bottled fish was

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<sup>791</sup> Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), p.49.

<sup>792</sup> Arthur, *Forgotten Voices*, pp. 135, 285.

<sup>793</sup> AJEX, E1/335. Segal to parents, 11 May, 1917.

<sup>794</sup> JC, 27 July 1917, p. 10. Letter from Private Eli Vogel.

<sup>795</sup> *Ibid*, 19 October, 1917, p. 15.

<sup>796</sup> LMA, ACC 2805/4/4/13. Gunner J. Harris to Hertz, 23 December, 1918. Despite the intervention of a visiting rabbi, this Jewish soldier in hospital in England was repeatedly served bacon.

frequently requested from Britain by those on Active Service abroad.<sup>797</sup> Jewish officers often indulged in more exotic culinary tastes.<sup>798</sup> By 1916, it was possible for relatives in England to send boxes of special foods to serving men via Jewish grocery merchants, such as Abramson's, who advertised in the Anglo-Jewish press. Containing smoked beef, ox tongue, salami sausage, almond pudding, matzos, together with biscuits and chocolates, boxes could be sent to France, Egypt or Salonika, arriving in two to four weeks.<sup>799</sup> This method was particularly popular in order to celebrate Jewish Holy Days on the battle fronts, *viz*, 'to bring the atmosphere of Passover right into the trenches'. The *Jewish Chronicle* was pleased to announce that, 'Delicious nosh preserved in tin and glass ready for use' was now available to our 'khaki Maccabees'.<sup>800</sup> The revival of the old Jewish fighting spirit was encouraged in diverse ways.

Drunkenness was the most prominent military crime in the British Army before 1914, with 9,230 men fined for it in 1912 – 13.<sup>801</sup> Without alcohol many pundits considered that the First World War could not have been fought, and one medical officer later declared that had it not been for the nightly rum ration, Britain and her allies would not have won it. This was a considerable understatement as men consumed vast quantities of drink out of the front line.<sup>802</sup> A German Cavalry officer reflected in 1916 that British prisoners were 'rickety, alcoholic, degenerate, ill-bred and poor to the last degree'.<sup>803</sup>

Biblical records of the Hebrews showed them to have been historically copious drinkers but there had arisen a fear of drunkenness, which resulted in alcohol being largely confined to religious ceremonies in a domestic setting.<sup>804</sup> In Victorian/Edwardian Britain, Jews considered alcoholic moderation not only as

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<sup>797</sup> AJA, MS 148 AJ 94/94/738. Goldberg received fried fish from his mother during training. IWM, Conshelf. Captain Holt to parents requesting tins of sardines and dried kippers, 8 March, 1917.

<sup>798</sup> AJEX, E/335. Lt Segal to parents requesting *crème de menthe* and preserved ginger, 5 October, 1916.

<sup>799</sup> *JC*, 25 February 1916, p.1. *Ibid*, 24 March, 1916, p.3.

<sup>800</sup> *Ibid*, 2 February, 1917, p. 26.

<sup>801</sup> Spiers, 'The Regular Army' in Beckett, *The Nation in Arms*, p. 46.

<sup>802</sup> Ferguson, *The Pity of War*, p.351.

<sup>803</sup> Richard Holmes, *The Western Front* (London: BBC Books, 1999), p. 193.

<sup>804</sup> Mark Keller, 'The Great Jewish Drink Mystery', in M. Marshall, (ed.), *Beliefs, Behaviours and Alcoholic Beverages. A Cross-Cultural Survey* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1979), p. 408.

a sign of identity but also of respectability. The consumption of alcohol had been a social demarcator between the Jew and non-Jew in civilian life prior to 1914: 'The pubs were for the *goyim*, and all the violence, puking, the boozy *bonhomie* deriving from a gut distended with beer'.<sup>805</sup> Conversely, the relative sobriety of the East End Jews had not always endeared them to some of their fellow residents.<sup>806</sup>

Abstemious habits continued for many immigrant Jews in Army service. The exemplary behaviour of Jewish soldiers from Poland and Russia who, 'hardly ever drink and are therefore more fit', was praised by senior British officers.<sup>807</sup> At the Plymouth training camp near of the 38th battalion R F (comprised largely of Russian Jews from East London), the bar was closed for lack of demand.<sup>808</sup> For troops on active service in France the nightly tablespoon of rum, or more on the eve of an assault, was a routine occurrence.<sup>809</sup> But orthodox Jewish soldiers on the Western Front had frequently to be persuaded by their officers to accept the rum ration in a futile effort to keep warm.<sup>810</sup>

Inter-dependence among men was a vital element in battle and led to intense friendships between men who co-existed alongside each other.<sup>811</sup> The consumption of alcohol was an all important element in male bonding and comradeship, a Gentile NCO remarking, 'It was useless to say I would not drink or I would have no pals and nowhere to go'.<sup>812</sup> While sobriety might have enhanced a man's military readiness for action, it was surely a marker of cultural and social difference between Gentile and Jewish soldiers, and a possible cause

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<sup>805</sup> Lammers, 'A Superior Kind of English', p.125.

<sup>806</sup> A. Lee, 'Aspects of working class response to the Jews in Britain, 1880 – 1914', in Kenneth Lunn, (ed.), *Hosts, Immigrants and Minorities. Historical Response to Newcomers in British Society, 1870 – 1914* (Folkestone: Wm. Dawson & Sons, 1980), p. 121.

<sup>807</sup> *JC*, 14 May, 1915, p.12. Report of interview with Major-General Sir Alfred Turner.

<sup>808</sup> Patrick Streeter, *Mad for Zion. A Biography of Colonel J H Patterson* (Harlow: the Matching Press, 2004), p. 107.

<sup>809</sup> Arthur, *Forgotten Voices*, pp. 93, 101.

<sup>810</sup> Lauffer, 'Tales from the First World War'.

<sup>811</sup> Ferguson, *The Pity of War*, p. 354.

<sup>812</sup> Bourke, *Dismembering the Male*, p. 151. Statement by Sgt. Andrews.

of division. Jewish officers, too, were noted as abstemious with alcohol although not with tobacco.<sup>813</sup>

However, temperance may not have been a generic practice among Jewish servicemen. In the 1950s, research in the United States suggested that some Jews drank heavily while on military service to gain acceptance among their Gentile comrades in the tightly knit units of Army life. The social habits of military service produced acute anxiety, 'damned uncomfortable I was in the Army [...] my buddies would criticise me for not drinking enough'.<sup>814</sup> This factor may well also have pertained to some extent in the British Army in World War I, but in either case the consumption of or abstention from alcohol involved elements of cultural unease and social distancing.

At the start of his military service each soldier was given a homily from Lord Kitchener, to be kept in his Active Service Pay Book. Among other things, he was exhorted to guard against the particular excesses of wine and women, 'You must entirely resist both temptations, and while treating all women with perfect courtesy, you should avoid any intimacy'.<sup>815</sup> The village *estaminets* in France substituted for the town and village pub, serving wine and beer, and were well frequented by soldiers out of the trenches 'on rest'.<sup>816</sup> They were also synonymous with sexual opportunity.<sup>817</sup> Fuller contends that brothels *per se* played a relatively small part in soldiers' off duty life, 'we front line men either have the money and not the opportunity, or the opportunity and not the money, or both and not the inclination'.<sup>818</sup> However, this assertion was strongly challenged by other memoirists.<sup>819</sup> By 1918, 60,000 British and Dominion soldiers were designated, 'sick through negligence', and were receiving treatment for venereal disease. There was no hiding the shame. During

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<sup>813</sup> AJEX, Myer, *Soldiering of Sorts*, p. 97.

<sup>814</sup> Charles Snyder, *Alcohol and the Jews: A Cultural Study of Drinking and Sobriety* (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1958), pp. 3, 15, 153-4.

<sup>815</sup> LMA, ACC 3121/B5/1/1. Personal papers, Neville Laski.

<sup>816</sup> Fuller, *Troop Morale*, p. 74. Sassoon estimated that his battalion spent £500 a weekly in the *estaminets* while 'on rest'.

<sup>817</sup> Arthur, *Forgotten Voices*, p. 94. Sgt. Alfred West.

<sup>818</sup> T. Hope, *The Winding Road Unfolds* cited in J. Fuller, *Troop Morale and Popular Culture in the British and Dominion Armies, 1914 – 1918* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p. 75.

<sup>819</sup> Arthur, *Forgotten Voices*, p. 94. Sgt. George Ashurst.

treatment a soldier's pay was stopped as was the Army allowance paid to his wife or mother.<sup>820</sup> Less likely to frequent the *estaminets* in France, it could be surmised that Jewish soldiers were also less likely to suffer from such 'negligence'.

This supposition may have been less applicable to members of the Judaeans in Egypt, where officers and men served with their fellow Jews and a different national culture prevailed. The conventions of the country were favourable to the frequenting of brothels, which became the practice of a number of Jewish officers and troops in Cairo, and was seemingly condoned by the regimental padre.<sup>821</sup> The consequences may well have been considerable. A regimental private with a friend in hospital with venereal disease, described it as, 'ruining the world's manhood to a greater extent than this war'.<sup>822</sup>

The military environment brought to light differences in social behaviour and attitudes between Christian and Jewish soldiers, especially those whose civilian life had been confined to the immigrant areas. These non-religious differences between Jew and non-Jew were not restricted to the British Army. Rabbi Salzberger in the German Army forecast at the start of the war that 'This close life together results in a very precise process of acquaintance: each man acts as he is. We Jews can only rejoice at this: when they get to know us, they will also learn to understand and respect us'.<sup>823</sup> But the crude soldierly rituals, drinking bouts and sexual jokes emphasised separation rather than integration in the German Army as they may well have done in British Army life.

### **Soldiering under sufferance**

While the *Jewish Chronicle* strove to portray the union of Jew and Gentile in the common cause, especially during the period of voluntary enlistment, the

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<sup>820</sup> Fuller, *Troop Morale*, p.75.

<sup>821</sup> CUL, ADD 8171, 25 May, 1918. Captain Redcliffe Salaman, Medical Officer to the 39<sup>th</sup> battalion noted that the Reverend Falk 'tries to keep strictly *kosher* but smiles on men and officers who go to the brothels'.

<sup>822</sup> AJA, MS 124/3, 27 October, 1918.

<sup>823</sup> C. Hoffman, 'Between integration and rejection', in Horne, (ed.), *State and Society*, p. 101.

*Jewish World* admitted that, although anti-Jewish prejudice was not widespread in the Army, it was futile to deny its presence.<sup>824</sup> Despite the expansion of ethnic history studies and a growing interest in the relationship between war and society, Panayi contends that the study of minorities in wartime has remained relatively limited. War inevitably breeds insecurity on the part of the majority and a fear of defeat, which results in greater intolerance of national and racial 'out-groups'.<sup>825</sup> This may well have impacted on perceptions of the Jewish soldier by the Christian military majority, and resonates with Eric Leed's broader contention that, 'class tensions, anti-Semitism and racism can be found in any national army at war'.<sup>826</sup> While the focus of this study is on Jewish experiences in the British Army, the widespread prejudice towards 'the other' in military service in Europe invites some brief comparison in order to contextualize the specific nature of British perceptions.

The Social Darwinism of the *fin de siècle* had reached Russia rather later than in Western Europe but after the Russo-Japanese war ethnicity was considered an increasingly important issue in military circles. Jewish conscripts were regarded as physically and morally unfit for combat duty and typically placed in regimental bands or posted as orderlies. In 1909 there was a call by the War Ministry and the Duma's Defence Council to exclude Jews from Army service altogether on the grounds that they corrupted their comrades in time of peace and were extremely unreliable in time of war.<sup>827</sup> This was followed by the suggestion that Jewish soldiers be posted to labour battalions to drain the Pinsk marshes and clean Army latrines.<sup>828</sup>

The Army had been given very broad powers of control in all civilian areas of Russia from the first days of the war. This gave the opportunity for their obsessions, which included fervent anti-Semitism, to be played out without

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<sup>824</sup> *JC*, 28 May 1915, p. 16. *JW*, 9 December 1914, p. 8.

<sup>825</sup> Panayi, (ed.), *Minorities in Wartime*, pp. 3, 19.

<sup>826</sup> Eric Leed, *No Man's Land. Combat and Identity in World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 82.

<sup>827</sup> Sanborn, *Drafting the Russian Nation*, p. 118.

<sup>828</sup> Prusin, *Nationalizing a Borderland*, p. 18.



hindrance from the local population.<sup>829</sup> Purporting to base their opinion on officers' reports from the battle fronts, the Russian High Command cast doubt on the worthiness of Jewish soldiers, and voiced fears of their influence over their comrades.<sup>830</sup> Ironically, the first Cross of St George, awarded by the Tsar for exceptional bravery, was conferred on a Jewish soldier, Leo Osnas.<sup>831</sup>

Fear of Jewish spying was endemic in allied and enemy armies. In Russia, Jews had been anxious to participate fully in the battle against Germany in 1914, not only as a demonstration of their right to full Russian citizenship but also to ease tensions between Jew and non-Jew. As the war progressed, they were increasingly suspected of being in the pay of Germany, and their military duties were restricted to rearguard action, which even applied to Jewish engineers and doctors.<sup>832</sup>

In the German Army, as the likelihood of military victory diminished, Jews were increasingly stigmatized as the internal enemy, while at the same time, berated for shirking their duty, 'their grinning faces were everywhere but in the trenches'.<sup>833</sup> In October, 1916, the Prussian War Minister, Adolf Wild von Hohenborn, demanded that a Jewish military census be carried out.

The Habsburg monarchy was the most liberal in admitting Jews into the officer corps of the Austro-Hungarian Army where they achieved high rank, with three Field Marshals and eight Generals serving in World War I.<sup>834</sup> While Deák claimed that 'Franz Josef himself never wavered in his religious tolerance, and his appreciation of the loyalty of the Jews' he remains unconvinced that they were fully accepted by their brother officers.<sup>835</sup> World War I may have marked the apogee of Jewish participation in the life of Central Europe but he suggests that,

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<sup>829</sup> Eric Lohr, *Nationalizing the Russian Empire. The Campaign against Enemy Aliens during World War I* (London: Harvard University Press, 2003), pp. 137-8, 171.

<sup>830</sup> AJA, MS 137 AJ 204/2. Telegram from General Janove, Russian Army, 30 March 1916, among documents sent to the FO by the Conjoint Foreign Committee of British Jews.

<sup>831</sup> *Yorkshire Herald*, cited in Gilbert, *The First World War*, p. 80.

<sup>832</sup> Mark Levene, 'Frontiers of Genocide: Jews in the Eastern War Zones, 1914 – 1920', in Panayi, (ed.), *Minorities in Wartime*, pp. 93-94.

<sup>833</sup> Hoffman, 'Between Integration and Rejection' in Horne, *State and Society*, p. 97.

<sup>834</sup> Gilbert, *The First World War*, p. 107.

<sup>835</sup> István Deák, *Beyond Nationalism: A Social and Political History of the Habsburg Officer Corps, 1848 – 1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 175.

for the first time in the history of the monarchy, the bravery of Jewish soldiers failed to dampen anti-Semitism, and Jews were attacked in the right wing press for alleged cowardice, war profiteering and treason.<sup>836</sup>

In Britain, State legislation in 1914, which excluded the 'friendly alien' from military service and from the spirit of national cohesion, engendered a level of suspicion of the Jew within the British Army. During the war 'foreignness' was feared in Britain, and Captain Neville Laski informed the Board of Deputies that in the Army's opinion all foreigners were Jews.<sup>837</sup> This anomaly manifested itself to the disadvantage of immigrant Jews. Many were unable to read newspapers printed in English and were therefore unlikely to be able to write in English.<sup>838</sup> While on active duty, they were forbidden from writing letters home in Yiddish, which could not be understood by their unit officers, who frequently acted as military censors.<sup>839</sup> This course of action was also taken in the French Army.<sup>840</sup> The 'Unseen Hand', the notion of German influence undermining Britain from within, even extended into suspicion of Jewish chaplains on the Western Front. In the winter of 1916 at Beaumont Hamel, Adler was suspected of spying by the Military Police who failed to recognise the Magen David on his uniform, and he only escaped arrest through the intervention of the local Town Major.<sup>841</sup>

Fears as to the general reliability of all new army recruits gained currency in Whitehall after conscription, when heavy casualties were accompanied by low morale among many servicemen, who voiced their dissatisfaction about food, allowances and treatment of the wounded. Questions were raised in the Army about the cohesion and commitment of the British Forces, and this nadir in the war coincided with Bolshevik successes in Russia in 1917, which were perceived

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<sup>836</sup> *Ibid*, p. 196.

<sup>837</sup> Cited in Wilcock, *Pacifism and the Jews*, p. 6.

<sup>838</sup> *JC* 6 July 1917, p. 14. Letter from Lt. Harold Boas stationed at Tidworth.

<sup>839</sup> LMA, ACC 3121/B5/1/1. Personal papers, Neville Laski.

<sup>840</sup> Hyman, *From Dreyfus*, p. 127.

<sup>841</sup> *Jewish Guardian*, 9 January, 1920, p. 7, 'Experiences of a Jewish Chaplain'. Town Major was a military rank giving the holder overall responsibility for off-duty troops in specific areas behind the lines, e.g. Poperinghe and Ypres, see WO 95/4042 and WO 95 /4048.

in Britain as being partly engineered by Russian Jewish intellectuals.<sup>842</sup> Jew and Bolshevik soon became inter-changeable in Britain, with the Jew becoming internationally equated with Judas, the internal betrayer of the nation. The rising tension of this period was exacerbated by claims that Maxim Litvinoff, the Bolshevik representative at the Russian Consulate in London, was inciting British soldiers of the Jewish faith to engage in Bolshevik propaganda within their regiments.<sup>843</sup>

British antagonism towards the Jew was multi-faceted and class-related. In civilian circles, many aligned with the views of the Liberal MP, Josiah Wedgwood, in his objection to certain types of Jews, whom he described as, 'Jingo Jews of the bulldog breed, the Jewish Junker class'.<sup>844</sup> The Anglo-Jewish community was sensitive to this form of antipathy and frequently expressed unease at the large number of Jews in prominent positions in society. In the army, the stereotype of the 'vulgar' Jew was a commonplace concept among officers:

Sammy [...] is of very unsuitable appearance, talking loudly to another member of the Yiddish fraternity and thinking he was creating an impression. There are many people of this type. They infest the Commons and the commercial world and are beginning to force themselves upon the professional world. I think any scheme of deporting all Israelites to Palestine and letting them become independent ought to be completely welcomed in Europe. No Jew [...] can ever hope to become an Englishman as they have always proved a perfect pest in our nation's life and can well be spared. [...] Our Mess, despite the fact of our having a Jew (we always refer to Sammy now as 'the Hebrew Captain') in it [...] is very nice indeed.<sup>845</sup>

Similar sentiments were expressed by Siegfried Sassoon, Jewish by birth but brought up as a Christian, who noted in his wartime diaries:

'Lt X is a nasty, cheap thing. A cheap-gilt Jew. Why are such Jews

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<sup>842</sup> Englander, 'Discipline and morale in the British Army', in Horne, *State, Society*, p.141.

<sup>843</sup> David Englander & James Osborne, 'Jack, Tommy and Henry Dubb: the Armed Forces and the Working Class', *The Historical Journal*, 21, (1978), 593 – 621, p.606.

<sup>844</sup> Almog, 'Anti-Semitism', p. 8.

<sup>845</sup> IWM, letters of Lt. H C Brundle, 98/34/1. Lt H Brundle to his father, 21 and 28 May 1916. The anti-Semitic impetus of Palestine as a national homeland for the Jews was evident, even in 1916.

born, when the soul of Jesus was so beautiful? He saw the flowers, and the stars; but they see only greasy banknotes and dung in the highway where they hawk their tawdry wares'.<sup>846</sup>

Even the most anglicized and patriotic of Jewish officers were not exempt from anti-Semitic prejudice at a senior level. Henry Myer was nearly refused promotion on account of his Jewishness, and later reflected that there were a substantial number of Gentiles who either did not understand, did not want to be associated with, or disliked Jews, however assimilated they were or appeared to be.<sup>847</sup>

A similar iconography of the 'vulgar Jew', although unconnected with class, existed within the ranks. It was frequently based on ignorance arising out of a lack of any previous acquaintanceship with Jews, especially for soldiers who came from rural areas. A Gentile Private in the late Captain Frank Haldenstein's Company wrote to the *Jewish Chronicle*:

We don't like the idea of calling him 'Ikey' for 'Ikey' he never was. He convinced nearly everyone that the whole of his race don't hang about with a huge cigar, enormous watch dials, rings on every finger and throw their weight around. Till I met [...] that was my impression [...] my eyes are now opened with regard to Jews. [...] He has proved what a real Jew is.<sup>848</sup>

Other stereotypical imagery held by soldiers, also based on lack of previous social contact, was of the Jew as a music hall character or comic cartoon. This had been the perception of Henry Myer's groom, who wept when Myer was transferred to the Judeans, and offered to become a Jew in order to accompany him.<sup>849</sup> The Gentile association of Jews with the music halls resonated with similar Edwardian perceptions of black people, a number of whom worked in the entertainment industry in British cities.<sup>850</sup> This suggests that the racial connection made between black and Jewish people at *fin de siècle*

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<sup>846</sup> Rupert Hart-Davis, (ed.), *Siegfried Sassoon Diaries, 1915 – 1918* (London: Faber & Faber, 1983), p. 123.

<sup>847</sup> IWM, papers of H. D Myer, 6600 79/17/1, p. 79.

<sup>848</sup> *JC*, 9 November, 1917, p. 18. Letter from Private F Franklin.

<sup>849</sup> AJEX, Myer, *Soldiering of Sorts*, p.94.

<sup>850</sup> Jeffrey Green, *Black Edwardians. Black people in Britain, 1901 - 1914* (London: Frank Cass, 1998), p. 80.

was not confined to elite opinion, and went beyond the boundaries of 'difference' and 'foreignness'.

While the irony of the 'old lie', *Dulcie et decorum est pro patria mori*, came to be seen as the hallmark of the English War Poets' disillusionment, the supposed cowardice of the Jew, the antithesis of the glory seeker, was a well-established perception in Western Europe prior to 1914.<sup>851</sup> Willpower, the characteristic of contemporary German masculinity, was equated with courage and the facing of pain and danger.<sup>852</sup> German Jews were determined from the outset to prove that they possessed the strength, courage and willingness to fight. The Jewish newspaper, *K C Blätter*, encouraged each Jew to attempt to become a hero, 'whether it is in battle or in his occupation is unimportant'.<sup>853</sup>

In His Majesty's Imperial Forces, Jewish soldiers undoubtedly experienced the same fears and the same exhilaration on the battlefields as their non-Jewish comrades. Under sniper fire in the trenches at Gallipoli, Frederick Mocatta wrote of the excitement of the Front Line, and that, 'being in the trenches in a night attack is a wonderful experience and a most extraordinary sight'.<sup>854</sup> But Gentile perception of the uncourageous Jewish soldier, the unmasculine male, prevailed throughout the war, 'So they are rounding the gallant Hebrews up. They are not quite so bad as I thought. [...] I can see Whitechapel getting a V.C. yet – if the war goes on long enough.'<sup>855</sup>

The Anglo-Jewish press was always anxious to counter accusations of cowardice by publishing soldiers' testimonies. Private Albert Lissack wrote from Malta, where British military hospitals had been established to take the wounded from the Gallipoli campaign and later from the Greek Islands, 'I have sometimes heard in peacetime belittling remarks about Jewish bravery, but the stories one

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<sup>851</sup> The final lines of Wilfred Owen's poem written between October 1917 and March, 1918.

<sup>852</sup> Mosse, *The Image of Man*, p. 100.

<sup>853</sup> Hoffman, 'Between integration and rejection' in Horne, (ed.), *State, Society*, p.94.

<sup>854</sup> AJA, Salinger-Nathan Family Papers, MS 209 AJ 810/1/2. Letter dated May 1915.

<sup>855</sup> IWM, 96/57/1. Clarke to his father, 26 May, 1917.

hears out here of our poor Jewish men makes one feel proud of the Jewish religion'.<sup>856</sup>

In a personal account of his experiences as Senior Chaplain, Adler made specific reference to the fact that only one Jewish soldier had been shot for cowardice, and that, fortuitously, he was entered in his battalion record as an Anglican.<sup>857</sup> Nowhere in the contemporary Jewish literature is there mention of the three Jewish soldiers, Privates Louis Harris, Lewis Phillips and Abraham Harris (Bevistein), who were executed by Army firing squad in France between August, 1915 and November, 1918. Nor was there any Jewish presence, legal or religious, at their courts martial. The connection between military executions and shell shock first came into the political and public domain in 1915, and the Under-Secretary of State for War was questioned in Parliament the following May about the case of Harris, a Jewish boy soldier who had enlisted under-age and suffered a nervous breakdown a month before he was sentenced to death by an Army court martial.<sup>858</sup>

The post-war Jewish record of military service listed all recipients of military decorations.<sup>859</sup> During the course of the war, there was great Anglo-Jewish sensitivity for the Jewish contribution be regularly publicised, and the *JC* made specific note of decorations awarded in each weekly issue. Four Victoria Crosses for Conspicuous Bravery were won by Jewish servicemen from significantly different social backgrounds in England. Lieutenant Frank Alexander de Pass was a Regular Indian Army cavalry officer, and the son of Sir Eliot de Pass, KBE. The family, who traced their settlement in England back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, were distinguished Sephardi Jews and direct line descendants of Alvarez de Pass.<sup>860</sup> Lt. de Pass was described as 'the very perfect type of British officer. He united to a singular personal beauty a charm of manner and a degree of valour which made him the idol of his men'. It failed to mention that he was

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<sup>856</sup> *JC*, 24 March, 1916, p.20.

<sup>857</sup> Adler, *British Jewry*, p. 45.

<sup>858</sup> Lister, *Die Hard*, p.129.

<sup>859</sup> Adler, *British Jewry*, pp. 9, 157 – 187.

<sup>860</sup> AJA, Notes on the De Pass family, MS 116/13.

Jewish.<sup>861</sup> Sergeant Issy Smith (Israel Schmuluvitch), the champion heavy weight boxer of his regiment, the Manchesters, was the first Jewish soldier to win the decoration in August, 1915 for his gallant action at Ypres, and he also received the Russian Order of St George and French *Croix de Guerre*.<sup>862</sup> His high military honours did not protect him from prejudice at home. While in Leeds on a recruiting campaign, he was refused service at a restaurant because he was a Jew. There was, 'no objection to serving Sergeant Smith's friend because he was not Jewish'.<sup>863</sup> The ironic situation prompted Smith to claim, 'A good deal was often said about Jews being treated badly in the Army but it was quite the reverse [...] they were well treated and appreciated'.<sup>864</sup> Private Jack White, (Jacob Weiss), whose parents were Russian Jews, was a past member of the JLB, which he had joined in 1907. At a time when many Jewish boys were victimised when seeking work, he followed his father into the waterproof clothing industry which employed large numbers of men in the Manchester area. He enlisted in 1914 in the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion, King's Own Royal Lancaster Regiment as a Signaller.<sup>865</sup> Captain Robert Gee served with the 2nd Royal Fusiliers, and was also awarded the Military Cross.<sup>866</sup> After the war, there appeared to be a national sense of amnesia regarding both the Jewish military contribution and Jewish courage on the battlefields. It has been suggested that any faint praise of Jewish gallantry became increasingly obliterated by fears of Jewish Bolshevism.<sup>867</sup>

This kaleidoscope of experiences presents a complex and nuanced perspective on Jews as soldiers, whether volunteers or conscripts. Military service acted as an accelerator of modernity for many immigrant recruits but, at the same time, challenged their sense of identity and ethnicity, which many went to considerable lengths to retain. In terms of comradeship and the development of Jewish/non-Jewish relations in the Army, Jewish soldiers often

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<sup>861</sup> *The History of the Indian Corps in France* cited in Gilbert, *The Great War*, p.113.

<sup>862</sup> MJM, Scrap Book.

<sup>863</sup> *JC*, 22 October, 1915, pp. 5, 13.

<sup>864</sup> *Ibid*, 1 October, 1915, p. 9.

<sup>865</sup> MJM, Scrap Book.

<sup>866</sup> Adler, *British Jewry Book of Honour*, pp. 6 - 9.

<sup>867</sup> Hilaire Belloc, *The Jews*, cited in England, 'Three English Jews', pp. 179 -180.

appeared to be marginalised from their Gentile comrades by differences in social habits. Anti-Semitic attitudes were frequently the consequence of ignorance through a lack of social connection before the war. But the pre-war assimilation of Anglo-Jews proved to offer little protection against the class-based prejudices of some of the most traditional British Army officers although antagonism towards the Jew was rarely based on his religion *per se*.



## CHAPTER 7    THE DEPLOYMENT OF THE RUSSIAN JEWS

While the exclusion of black troops from European theatres of war was an overtly prejudiced measure, the racial lens through which the Army High Command viewed its soldiers was not confined to skin colour, and was affected by entrenched attitudes concerning heredity and military worth. At the first commemoration service at the new Cenotaph in London in 1919, the several thousands of Russian Jews who served with the British Army during the war were placed in the same category as black troops from India, Africa and the West Indies, and specifically excluded from taking part in the march-past and parade.<sup>868</sup>

Mark Levene has drawn attention to the fact that of the approximately 8,000 Russian Jews recruited under the Convention, over half (4,900) were, 'slated for induction into the lowest form of (military) pond life, namely the labour battalions'.<sup>869</sup> A further 1,200 to 1,500 men were posted into the Jewish battalions of the Royal Fusiliers, with the remaining 1,500 or so, presumably the fittest, absorbed into regular regiments of the British Army. The military experiences of the men in the first two categories of army service obviously differed from those in regular combat units. But comparison of the attitudes of the Army High Command, some elements of Anglo-Jewry and the Zionist 'military Jews' towards the alien Jewish soldier bore certain similarities.

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<sup>868</sup> Tony Kushner in Levene, 'Going against the Grain'.p.89. The exclusion of black troops from the 1919 Victory celebrations is noted in Levine, 'Battle colors', p.106.

<sup>869</sup> Levene, 'Going against the Grain', p.74.

### Deference or Disdain: the Labour Battalions

Nearly three quarters of a million men of many nationalities served in the Labour Corps of the British Army during the First World War, yet it is a reflection on the nature of the national historiography of 1914 – 1918 to date that so little is known of its activities.<sup>870</sup> The Labour Companies formed before 1916 were part of the Army Service Corps, which assisted with transport and worked in lines of communication. These were all professional services, for which men received technical training. During the period of voluntary enlistment, Army recruits were entitled to request non-combatant service if they so chose.<sup>871</sup> The demand for labour units expanded hugely as the war progressed, and with the introduction of conscription, a new medical category (C2) was created for men for whom front line duty was not viable, *viz* those suffering slight physical disability, downgraded fighting men, and volunteers who had become over-age.

In September, 1916, 10,000 Western Indian labourers were recruited to build light railways in France, and this change to imported labour from the Dominions signalled the start of a coherent Government scheme to use non-white colonial men in labour battalions. The new direction was concomitant with British elite opinion that regarded the black man as racially inferior, and inherently unfit for active military service. A complete re-organisation of military labour took place at the end of that year and the Labour Corps, as such, was formed in January, 1917, under a specifically constituted Directorate, with pre-existing units coming under its control. Large numbers of unskilled men were increasingly imported from China, India, South Africa and other places in the Empire totalling 300,000, of whom 193,500 were deployed on the Western Front. There was a continuing problem to find adequate shipping to bring these new sources of

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<sup>870</sup> Very few individual labour company studies have been compiled, and consist largely of foreign units, see Michael Summerskill, *China on the Western Front. Britain's Chinese Work Force on the Western Front* (London: private pub., c. 1982), Norman Clothier, *Black Valour. The South African Labour Corps Contingent* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1987) and Albert Grundlingh, *Fighting their own war. South African Blacks and the First World War*, (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1987).

<sup>871</sup> NA, WO 162/6. Labour Corps Administration, p. 94.

labour to Europe from their home countries, and in March 1917, many thousands of men earmarked for labour duties were awaiting embarkation, including 20,000 Indians and 40,000 South Africans.<sup>872</sup> Foreign labour was allegedly kept some ten miles from the Front Lines on the battlefields, but in the German assault on the Western Front in April 1918, and possibly before, Labour Companies, untrained in combat, were armed and used as emergency infantry.<sup>873</sup>

Non-indigenous labour placed under the Directorate was described as 'unskilled' but skilled and unskilled are relative terms. A post-war evaluation of the economic efficiency of the organisation of labour in the Army in France suggests that there was significant variation in expertise, which ranged from 'Whitechapel Jews turned onto digging to Chinese fitters repairing tanks'.<sup>874</sup> This manpower collectivity appears to confirm that Russian Jews resident in Britain were viewed, and often used, in the same way as non-white labour from overseas. After the introduction of conscription, not only was coloured labour from the Empire increasingly drafted into the new Labour Corps, but also German prisoners-of-war, Conscientious Objectors and large numbers of those categorised as severely unfit, *viz* imbeciles, epileptics and the certified insane.<sup>875</sup>

There are grounds for concluding that the Army regarded the Labour Battalions as the most suitable depository for 'friendly aliens' when the issue of their possible enlistment was first raised at the end of 1915. The following July, when their 'permission' to enter the British Army was publicly announced, the Home Office acknowledged War Office concerns, stating that, 'if it were deemed inadvisable that such persons should be enlisted for active service at the Front, they might yet be usefully employed in labour battalions'.<sup>876</sup> When their

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<sup>872</sup> HLRO, Lloyd George papers, LG/F/14/4/32C. 'Men awaiting embarkation and for whom shipping required', 31 March, 1917.

<sup>873</sup> 'The Long, Long Trail – Labour', <http://www.1914-1918.net/labour/htm>.

<sup>874</sup> A. Lindsay, 'The organisation of labour in the Army in France during the war and its lessons', *The Economic Journal*, 34 (1924), 69 – 82, p. 72.

<sup>875</sup> Sir Frederick Mott, 'Neuroses and Psychoses in relation to Conscription and Eugenics', *The Eugenics Review*, 14 (1922/3), 13 – 22, p. 16.

<sup>876</sup> NA, HO 45/31818/317810. Samuel to WO, July 1916.

conscription was imminent, the issue of whether they would then be deployed in a combat role or a labour battalion was discussed at the War Office, with the implications of different terms of pay and pension for non-combatants.<sup>877</sup> At this point in the recruitment campaign, the Home Office still favoured posting men who volunteered for military service to fighting units. But the Army's reluctance to accept Russian Jews on active service lingered on. The Home Office conceded that, 'there is no need to require them to fight as the British subject is required: but they ought to labour and the opportunity for them to do so now exists'.<sup>878</sup> In March, 1917, the Army Council announced that the machinery was in place for 'friendly alien' labour units. By then, the Home Office had become convinced that 'the Russian Jews do not want to enlist at all and if they are enlisted a Labour Battalion would be their desire. If an Austrian Jew were admitted to a labour unit, the Russian Jew who subsequently found himself not in a labour unit would agitate on the grounds that the Austrians were getting better treatment'.<sup>879</sup>

Further inferences of Russian Jews' unsuitability for combat duty occurred in Government circles during the protracted period of diplomatic negotiations with the Provisional Russian Government. Lord Derby, then Minister for War and a close *confidant* of the Army High Command, was warned by Leopold Amery that conscripted Russian Jews might not be 'quite good enough' for 'hard battle conditions' but would be adequate for work in communication lines, i.e. the Labour Corps.<sup>880</sup>

The demand for more labour units to support the Army continued. In January, 1918, Lord Derby wrote to Earl Haig, 'the labour question is really becoming a very critical one as we depended on getting a lot more Chinese but the shipping situation is such that we shall have to abandon the idea'.<sup>881</sup> Some two months later, during the temporary cessation of 'friendly alien' conscription, the

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<sup>877</sup> NA, HO 45/10818/318095. Minute, 14 August, 1916.

<sup>878</sup> NA, HO 45/10818/317810. Henderson Minute, 16 November, 1916.

<sup>879</sup> *Ibid.* Henderson Minute, 6 January, 1917.

<sup>880</sup> NA, WO 32/11353. Amery to Lord Derby, 5 April, 1917.

<sup>881</sup> LRO, 920/DER (17) 26/3. 16 January, 1918.

low medical category of the 25,000 Russians of military age was discussed at a conference at the Ministry of National Service in the context of General Vesey's warning that there would shortly be a very large demand for men for the Labour Corps in France.<sup>882</sup> The War Cabinet's decision on 25 March to resume the recruitment of Russian Jews but to deploy them only on non-combat duties appeared to address these immediate concerns while ostensibly making some international diplomatic concession to Russia's neutrality. Deference played little part in the change in Government policy, although War Office disdain of the Russian Jew as a suitable soldier in the British Army had been evident throughout the war. It appears probable that opportunism and the imperatives of expediency, factors which guided much of the Government's policy towards immigrant enlistment, prevailed.

A Home Office record of 429 non-British subjects who served in the British Army after September 1917 and were eligible for free citizenship shows that 251 (58%) were posted into Labour Companies after 21 September, 1917, the date on which the Convention became operative. Virtually all the recruits were from London, with 70% giving addresses in the Stepney, Whitechapel, Bethnal Green and Shoreditch districts of E1 and E2.<sup>883</sup> Of the 251 Labour Corps recruits, 111 men joined after 8 April, 1918, the date of the first intake of Russians following the War Cabinet's decision to confine their recruitment to non-combatant units. This small sample is not necessarily scientifically representative but it suggests that the large scale posting of Russian Jews to Labour Battalions had been commonplace from the outset.

Questions were asked in Parliament in the summer of 1918 about the proportion of Russian Jews aged 18 to 51 (the upper age limit had been extended in 1918) enlisted into Labour Battalions. Sir Auckland Geddes, Minister of National Service, stated that 22% were in Labour Battalions 'or other special units for

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<sup>882</sup> NA, HO 45/10822/318095. Report of conference, 20 March, 1918.

<sup>883</sup> NA, HO 144/13362.

Russian Jews', with a very large percentage categorised as unfit, a considerable number of exemptions and a 'quite appreciable percentage' of absenteeism.<sup>884</sup>

### Two Russian Labour Battalions

The 8th and 9th Labour Battalions were especially formed for the reception of all-Russian Labour Companies, which included the 1001st and 1002nd with a total of over 700 men.<sup>885</sup> The 1001st arrived in France in July, 1918 and the 1002nd followed in October. A further Russian Company, the 1021st, was also sent to the Western Front in that summer.<sup>886</sup> The 8th Battalion was stationed at Sevenoaks in Kent and complaints about poor treatment of its men were made in the House of Commons in May 1918, largely regarding 'food unfit for consumption' and denial of the customary 48 hour rest period after vaccination.<sup>887</sup> The 9th was based firstly at Fort Scoveston, Neyland, Pembrokeshire and later at Pembroke Dock.

Compared to the extensive historiography of the Judaeans, the experiences of immigrant soldiers in the Labour Corps remain fragmentary, but a Jewish minister in Cardiff, the Reverend H Jerevitch, drew attention to the difficulties encountered by several hundred men of the 9th Battalion in the summer of 1918. Their training camp was isolated from any Jewish community, and they lacked funds for leave travel. Many appeared to have no relatives or friends in Britain nor could they read English. Anxious about their welfare, the minister wished to establish a support committee for them and appealed to the community, through the *Jewish Chronicle*, for financial contributions. He claimed that it was the community's duty to meet their needs as, 'they are loyally serving their King and

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<sup>884</sup> Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, CVIII, p. 149. Question by Colonel Yate, MP, July 1918.

<sup>885</sup> Adler, *British Jewry*, pp. 414 - 458.

<sup>886</sup> NA, WO 95/5495.

<sup>887</sup> Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, CVI, p.2403. The Secretary of State for War was questioned by Mr C Duncan, MP.

country, and their importance to the State cannot be minimised'. Jerevitch also praised their Gentile Commanding Officer, Lt. Col. Morgan Jones, who had taken considerable interest in the men and arranged religious services for them.<sup>888</sup> Asher Tropp has expanded on this glimpse into the plight of immigrant soldiers in Wales in relating that the first announcement of Jewish religious services at the Regimental Institute at Fort Scoveston was made in May, 1918. Following Jerevitch's appeal, substantial sums of money were raised in the Jewish communities in Cardiff and Merthyr. At the end of October, the local press reported the arrival at Neyland of a detachment of 600 men of the 8<sup>th</sup> Russian Labour Battalion for final training with the 9<sup>th</sup> before leaving for overseas duties.<sup>889</sup>

The interest of the Jewish communities of South Wales in the men of the nearby Russian Labour Companies contrasted with the experiences of Russian Jews in the 8<sup>th</sup> Labour Battalion at Wilderness Camp in Sevenoaks. They complained to the Chief Rabbi that they were never visited by Jewish ministers, and that 'You, who have advocated our being in this position, ought to do more for us than simply preach patriotism'.<sup>890</sup> Christians in the neighbourhood of the camp, they claimed, had given them more support than the Jewish community.

It is unclear what preparation for conditions on the Western Front was made for labour companies of Russian Jews. The Army considered it uneconomic to train men in the Labour Corps and generally considered that units within its structure were 'very tolerant of defective and unstable men'.<sup>891</sup> At a post-war Government Inquiry into shell shock, later published as the Southborough Report in 1922, one of the witnesses, Colonel Gordon Holmes, Consultant Neurologist to the British Army, observed that a Labour Battalion of Russian Jews suffered numerous cases of men reporting sick after an air raid warning.<sup>892</sup>

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<sup>888</sup> *JC*, 23 August, 1918, p.10. Letter, Rev. H. Jerevitch, Cardiff to Editor.

<sup>889</sup> Asher Tropp, 'Russian Jews in Pembrokeshire', *Cajex*, XXXIX, 2 (1989), 39 – 41, p.39. *The Haverford West and Milford Haven Telegraph*, 30 October, 1918.

<sup>890</sup> LMA, ACC/2805/4/4/12. Pte. Glassman, 8<sup>th</sup> Labour Battalion to Hertz, 11 August, 1918.

<sup>891</sup> 'Report of War Office Committee of Enquiry into Shell Shock', Command Paper 1734, Accounts & Papers (2), Army, Vol. XII, (HMSO, 1922), p. 59. Witness statement, Captain J. Dunn, RMO.

<sup>892</sup> *Ibid*, p. 40.

The reluctance of foreign Jews to volunteer for Army service in 1916 may have hardened the Government's existing hostility towards the alien as a fighting man, and affected decisions on their deployment after the Convention. The large scale Army posting of Russian Jews into the Labour Corps from September, 1917, appears to signal a considerable element of War Office disdain for them whatever the Government's true motives may have been in March 1918. Like their fellow immigrants in the Judaeans, they were regarded by the War Office as unfit and reluctant soldiers, to be kept essentially isolated from action against the enemy, and unable to prove their worth either to the nation or to community.

#### **Redcliffe Salaman and the Jewish Regiment**

‘I suppose it is wrong in a doctor but I find it very difficult to keep my patience with men who cringe and writhe and behave like worms’.

‘My Sick (Sick Parade) enraged me today [...] so cowardly and mean [...] I was becoming an anti-Semite at 4pm today but I am slacking off now’.<sup>893</sup>

The Cabinet's political strategy, which required the War Office to create specifically Jewish battalions in the Royal Fusiliers for service in Palestine, was clearly contentious to Jews and non-Jews alike. As part of the Government's propaganda scheme, immigrant Jews from the United States, Canada, Egypt and Palestine were gradually recruited into the 39th and 40th battalions during 1918, with those from Britain supplying a little over 25% of the total manpower of 5,000.<sup>894</sup> British Army attitudes had altered little since the 1880s when Lord Wellesley had advocated keeping alien races out of British regiments, warning that ‘if we ever begin to fill our ranks with alien races, our downfall must soon

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<sup>893</sup> CUL, ADD 8171, Box 4. Diary entries 30 October, 1917, and 18 February, commenting on the lack of physical condition and fighting spirit of Russian Jewish troops.

<sup>894</sup> Watts, *The Jewish Legion*, Appendix, ‘Strength Returns, March 1918 – May 1921’, pp. 244 - 247.



follow'.<sup>895</sup> Antipathy was heightened by the multi-nationalism of the three battalions.

Given the problematic establishment of the battalions, the wartime correspondence of one of its medical officers offers new insights into Anglo-Jewish attitudes to masculinity and 'worthy men', and a nuanced portrayal of their internal tensions. Todd Endelman has described Redcliffe Salaman as one of the last and most articulate of the Jewish old elite.<sup>896</sup> That said, many of Salaman's opinions reflected the intrinsic social prejudices of his class in parallel with his long-standing professional interest in Jewish racial types and heredity.

His family background of privilege and wealth, together with an education at St. Paul's school in London, had enabled him to become one of the few Jewish students at Cambridge in 1893, where he entered Trinity Hall. This was followed by a medical career, which began at the London Hospital in Whitechapel Road, where some wards were exclusively reserved for the treatment of Jewish patients. Fully assimilated into British society, from the beginning of the war he acted as the Army Honorary Recruiting Officer for Royston, a town near his home. In 1914, Salaman had openly opposed David Eder's initiative for an all-Jewish Regiment on the grounds that a 'religious battalion is a mistake and an anomaly'.<sup>897</sup> When the war began he was determined to work in one of the military hospitals in France, and was commissioned into the RAMC in March 1915. Overseas duty, however, had eluded him when Colonel Patterson approached him as a possible Medical Officer for his nascent Jewish battalions in early August, 1917.<sup>898</sup> Still sceptical about the efficacy of such a unit, Salaman attended a meeting with Patterson and others representing a broad cross-section of Jewish opinion at which he openly declared that 'the Zionists have played us the Columbus egg trick. They have confronted us with an accomplished fact and thus stopped all discussion'.<sup>899</sup> Such

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<sup>895</sup> Lotz & Pegg, *Under the Imperial Carpet*, p. 167.

<sup>896</sup> Todd Endelman, 'The Decline of the Anglo-Jewish Notable', *The European Legacy*, 4 (1999), 58 – 71, pp. 62-65.

<sup>897</sup> CUL, ADD 8171, Box 3. Salaman to Eder, 4 December, 1914.

<sup>898</sup> *Ibid*, Box 4. Salaman was invited by Patterson to attend a meeting at the War Office as one of the men 'of light and learning', 6 August, 1917.

<sup>899</sup> Cited in Watts, *The Jewish Legion*, p. 105.

a response suggests that, while he was not unsympathetic to Zionism, he was far from committed to the movement in the political sense. His initial, conservative reaction was to canvass the views of Jewish religious leaders as he rightly anticipated that such an innovation would significantly widen the schism between anglicised and foreign Jews. After the British Army confirmed the creation of a Jewish military *corps*, he was one of those among Anglo-Jewry convinced that 'if it is going to be run it had best be made a success'. When he left to take up his new post, he was pleasantly surprised and heartened by the positive reaction of respect for an all-Jewish unit from the Gentile officers of his unit in Colchester, 'Our position as Jews first seems to give me an *entré* into hearts one would have thought closed and prejudiced'.<sup>900</sup>

By contrast, he despaired over the 'howling and nonsense' of the deputation made up of the Anglo-Jewish elite to Lord Derby, which sought to distance itself from the battalions' Jewish identity. He also commented adversely on the silence of the Chief Rabbi on the matter of *kosher* food for the proposed units, which had been interpreted by the Army's Adjutant-General as signifying that no special provisioning was required, 'I am [...] so angry and saddened at the dirty and cowardly way the regiment is being treated by the Jews. Here is a great body of men given every opportunity of living in a Jewish way, free from unfriendly criticism, and in our vulgar snobbery we turn it down'.<sup>901</sup> At a stage when his Zionist sympathies were still tepid, his natural empathy with the traditional Jewish hierarchy was ostensibly undermined by their reactions.

When Salaman took up his post at the Crown Hill training camp in Devon, the condition and behaviour of newly recruited immigrant soldiers were anathema to a man whose privileged background and education had instilled in him the public school goals of physical fitness, courage and manliness. The troops' poor quality caused him great concern, not only on account of their low medical category but also their 'lack of moral fibre', and he rightly suspected that the

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<sup>900</sup> CUL, ADD 8171, Box 4. Salaman to Nina Salaman, Colchester, 24 August, 1917.

<sup>901</sup> *Ibid.* Salaman to Nina Salaman, 2 October, 1917.

fittest recruits were sent to other regiments. Instancing their intense fear of vaccinations, with men 'rolling on the floor and bellowing', Salaman admitted that, 'for a Jew to do such a thing is almost more than I can bear', and that he was, 'trying to make men of some of the craven skunks they are sending us'.<sup>902</sup> At his Sick Parades, which he alluded to as "M & D" (Medicine and Duty), soldiers received little medicine but often an hour's extra drill duty, 'to stiffen them up, which does the trick'.<sup>903</sup> Once the battalion reached Egypt, after several months' initial training in England, he observed that far fewer men reported sick, and most 'have quite given over shamming'. Not only their physique but their general discipline had been greatly improved by the Army's training regime.

The Government's temporary hesitation over the recruiting of Russians in February 1918 created restlessness among the newer recruits in training at Plymouth. A violent political meeting, 'a Bolshevik gathering', took place in the Jewish Hut, which was subdued by the Gentile Regimental Sergeant Major, assisted by Salaman, although on a subsequent route march, cheers were given for Trotsky by the troops. He admitted to having a limited level of sympathy with their complaint that they were obliged to serve while other Russian Jews were, at that point, free of such obligation. But the entrenched antagonism of elite Anglo-Jews towards the immigrants was evident in his disgust at the general behaviour of the 'pure Russian Jews [...] it makes my blood boil to think such scum are my brothers'.<sup>904</sup> Questioning the Government's wisdom in halting the recruitment of 'friendly aliens', he feared that the battalions would be completely disbanded, resulting in the recall of the 38<sup>th</sup>, which had already sailed for Egypt.

When he first arrived at Crown Hill, Salaman found fellow officers regularly eating *trifah* food and called for the Officers' Mess to follow Jewish dietary observances. Patterson then invited him to establish the degree of

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<sup>902</sup> *Ibid.* 1 November and 15 November, 1917.

<sup>903</sup> *Ibid.* 18 November, 1917. 'Medicine and Duty' was a widely accepted 'prescription' given by Army MOs: the patient would remain at work while he took the appropriate medication, see Richard Holmes, *Tommy. The British Soldier on the Western Front, 1914 – 1918* (London: Harper Perennial, 2004), p.469.

<sup>904</sup> CUL, ADD 8171.Box 4. 18 February, 1918.

*kashrut* to be adopted throughout the regiment. He defined this as no pork, no forbidden food, no milk foods in meals with meat, and separate milk products in the canteen (although the use of separate dishes in Mess kitchens was not possible). The Jewish press later reported that Jewish women in the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps (WAACs), established in January, 1917, were required as cooks at Crown Hill.<sup>905</sup> Discrepancy exists as to the effectiveness of Salaman's *kashrut* system. Jacob Plotzker claimed that the food was no different than that in other Army regiments, apart from Holy Days when *matzos* and wine were made available, and there was an option of buying fish from a trader on the perimeter of the training camp. This was not regarded as a hardship, 'Everyone was glad to eat non-*kosher* food'.<sup>906</sup> When the regiment reached Palestine, the literature records that the Jewish lines were littered with empty bacon tins (Army breakfast ration).<sup>907</sup>

Regimental officers were drawn largely from the assimilated Anglo-Jewish community, some of whom were vehemently anti-Zionist, with few committed to a Jewish presence in Palestine. There were also eight non-Jewish officers attached to the battalion at the beginning of September, 1917.<sup>908</sup> The Gentile colonel of the 38<sup>th</sup>, John Patterson, who had been closely involved with Jabotinsky in the later stages of negotiations with the Government, has been described by his recent biographer as 'the truest Zionist of them all [...] a man seeking to belong and a man looking for a cause'.<sup>909</sup> In his 1922 publication, Patterson portrayed the regiment as enabling the dramatic appearance of the 'Jewish warrior' fighting for the redemption of Israel under the banner of England, and, in effect, the Zionist ideal of the 'Military Jew'.<sup>910</sup> This ran contrary to majority views in Britain in which the Palestine campaign, and particularly General Allenby's entry into Jerusalem in December, 1917, was

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<sup>905</sup> *JC*, 12 April, 1918, p. 11.

<sup>906</sup> IWM Sound Archives, 12506, Reel 2.

<sup>907</sup> Samuel, *Unholy Memories*, p. 19.

<sup>908</sup> *Ibid*, p. 12. CUL, ADD 8171, Box 4, 4 September, 1917. The officer strength of the 38<sup>th</sup> battalion was first recorded in March, 1918, as thirty, see Appendix 1, Watts, *The Jewish Legion*, p. 244.

<sup>909</sup> Streeter, *Mad for Zion*, pp. 3, 109.

<sup>910</sup> Patterson, *With the Judaeans*, xiii.

regarded as the fulfilment of the early Crusades and of Christianity triumphant in the Allied cause.<sup>911</sup>

The victory had a romantic appeal to British officers in the EEF, who were grounded in military history and imperial expansion. According to Horace Samuel, who served with the regiment, a considerable number of EEF officers regarded the recently issued Balfour Declaration as, 'a damned nonsense, the Jews as a damned nuisance and natives into the bargain – and the Arabs as damned good fellows'. Many officers tended to regard Christian Arabs as superior to Moslem Arabs, with one British official referring to a certain Arab as, 'a Christian therefore a white man'.<sup>912</sup> This racial connotation was to prove a hallmark of Army attitudes towards the Judaeans. Samuel's opinion of the EEF was less charitable than that of Weizmann, who, in an effort to defuse anti-Jewish sentiment in Palestine, suggested that news of the Declaration had not reached many of Allenby's officers. Isolated from Europe, he suggested, they concentrated only on holding their position against the Turks.<sup>913</sup>

Salaman's scientific interest in racial characteristics soon prompted his description of battalion soldiers and officers as 'poor specimens' or of 'very, very dark Jewish Hittite type'. He also categorised his fellow officers along class lines, regarding Anglo-Jewish officers transferred from other regiments as 'superior types', and many of the senior NCOs as 'quite gentlemen and several are superior to some of the officers [...] and all have come over because they wanted to'.<sup>914</sup> One of his fears was that the dearth of good Jewish officers would result in more posts filled by Christians, thereby threatening his growing Zionist ambitions for the regiment. Later, on active duty in Egypt, he remarked on distinct differences between Jewish and Christian officers based on professional ability and class:

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<sup>911</sup> Illustration in *Punch*, 19 December, 1917, p. 92, in which Allenby is portrayed as the latter-day Richard the Lion Heart.

<sup>912</sup> Samuel, *Unholy Memories*, p. 37.

<sup>913</sup> Chaim Weizmann, *Trial and Error: the autobiography of Chaim Weizmann*, (New York: Harper, 1949), p. 272.

<sup>914</sup> CUL, ADD 8171, Box 4. Salaman to Nina Salaman, 5 October, 1917. Observations on Jewish racial traits were a dominant theme of Salaman's post-war publication, Redcliffe Salaman, *Palestine Reclaimed* (London: Routledge, 1920).

junior Jewish officers were neither as militarily experienced or effective as their Christian brothers, nor were they ‘gentlemen of the first order’. They looked to Salaman to act as a medium and bulwark between themselves and the Gentile officers, which he viewed as unnecessary. This suggests that an atmosphere of unease and tension existed in the command structure of the battalion despite his protestations to the contrary. Myer, too, remarked on dissent among the officers at Crown Hill, and on his role as arbiter.<sup>915</sup> It has been suggested that one of Patterson’s greatest difficulties, as overall commander of the battalions in Egypt and Palestine, was to retain his Christian officers, who were widely regarded in the EEF as quasi-Jews. This led to several requesting Army permission to resign their commissions or to transfer to other units.<sup>916</sup>

Active antagonism towards Zionism existed within the Jewish officer *corps*. Salaman took lessons in Hebrew from a Palestinian Jew in the regiment, but most Anglo-Jewish officers objected to its use and openly disdained it as, ‘that horrible cannibal language’. Although anathema to the majority, the Hebrew language became somewhat of a fetish among a few, prompting heated discussions over its use among company commanders. A compromise was agreed whereby it was used at Saturday parades only.<sup>917</sup>

Attached to the 39<sup>th</sup> battalion which was formed in Plymouth in January, 1918, Salaman sailed with it to Egypt in that spring together with its new Commanding Officer, Eliazer Margolin.<sup>918</sup> Margolin was ostensibly an ideal leader for Russian soldiers in the Middle East. Born in Belgorod in Russia, he had spent his early years in Palestine before settling in Australia, where he enlisted and was commissioned in the Australian Imperial Forces. When training in Egypt prior to embarking for Gallipoli, he had met Jabotinsky, and he subsequently served on the

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<sup>915</sup> CUL, ADD 8171, (folder 21). Excerpts of letters from H D Myer, 1918 – 1919 to his wife, 28 June, 1918.

<sup>916</sup> Roman Freulich, *Soldiers in Judea* (New York: Herzl Press, 1964), p. 196.

<sup>917</sup> Samuel, *Unholy Memories*, pp. 15, 20.

<sup>918</sup> Margolin’s first name is given as Eliazar in Rodney Goutmann, *An ANZAC Zionist Hero. The Life of Lt.-Colonel Eliazar Margolin* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2006), and as Eliezer by Watts, *The Jewish Legion*.

Western Front at the battle of Passchendaele. A Russian speaker, though with poor English and Yiddish, he was a fervent Zionist and demanded the highest standards of soldiering in order to bring credit to the Jewish people. In battle at Es Salt, his greatest wish was for his men to appear brave and heroic to Gentile troops. As Freulich has concurred, Margolin's ambition was for his battalion to be exemplars of the Zionist 'military Jew'.<sup>919</sup> His men, few of whom possessed little if any Zionist enthusiasm, fell short of his ambitions, and Salaman considered that many of the problems encountered by the battalion later in the year at Ludd were caused by Margolin's attitudes. Like other Jewish officers, and indeed Salaman himself in the early months at Plymouth, Margolin viewed them at times with disgust, regarding any bad qualities as inherently characteristic of their heredity. During hard marches under difficult conditions, men would at times 'fall out', only to be berated by Margolin as 'stinking fish'. Inevitably, he recorded that 'the fish began to stink, or rather thought they did, and a great depression fell on the men and officers'.<sup>920</sup>

Patterson's military career began in India. He had fought in the Boer War before serving in Flanders at the beginning of World War I, and later as commander of the Zion Mule Corps. The chasm in background and nature between himself and Margolin resulted in a poor relationship between the two battalion commanders.<sup>921</sup> During training in Egypt, the atmosphere between the two appeared to Salaman to be, 'a little strained [...] one loves and lives in the limelight, the other hates it and is confused when it is turned on'.<sup>922</sup> Salaman admired Margolin as a good soldier but came to question his judgement and officer qualities, which he attributed to 'ignorance to an appalling degree', causing him to, 'rampage in the china shops of his imagination'.<sup>923</sup> The tensions between the two commanders continued, and were later exacerbated by the

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<sup>919</sup> Freulich, *Soldiers in Judea*, p. 114.

<sup>920</sup> CUL, ADD 8171, Box 4. Salaman to Nina Salaman, 28 October 1918.

<sup>921</sup> Gouttman, *An ANZAC Zionist*, pp. 13, 19, 25, 35, 51, 61, 63.

<sup>922</sup> CUL, ADD 8171, Box 4. Salaman to Nina Salaman, 8 May 1918.

<sup>923</sup> *Ibid.* 7 June, 1918.

antipathy towards Patterson of Colonel Fred Samuel, Salaman's brother-in-law and Commanding Officer of the 40th battalion of Palestinian Jews, These personal rifts at the highest level were hardly conducive to military efficiency or regimental cohesion.

Imperial Army attitudes to coloured troops in World War I resulted in their social segregation and military marginalisation. Patterson, who often accused the EEF of outright anti-Semitism, deplored the frequent use of the Jewish battalions for 'fatigues and 'dirty work', and suspicions of EEF racial antagonism lurk beneath the surface of Salaman's correspondence. Prior to the battle of Meggido, in which an Indian cavalry regiment also took part <sup>924</sup>, the 38<sup>th</sup> and 39<sup>th</sup> battalions were the only white infantry to be deployed in the poisonous climate of the Jordan valley, where 80% of officers and men contracted malaria. This caused him to question whether their presence there, together with that of the British West Indian regiment, was for purely military need.

The supposition that the racial inferiority of blacks as soldiers was linked with that of Jews in the mindset of the British elite was strengthened by General Allenby's request to the War Office to brigade the Jewish battalions with the West Indians in Palestine. This action caused Patterson to threaten his resignation. Allenby had been opposed to the Jewish battalions coming out to the Middle East from the outset, but the suggestion to brigade them 'with two battalions of negroes' was made initially by General Bols, described by Patterson as, 'the worst Jew hater I have ever come across'.<sup>925</sup> The War Office rejected the proposal but this failed to quash Jewish anxieties that racial sentiments were endemic among senior EEF officers. Margolin complained to Headquarters that Allenby's actions confirmed, 'this anti-Jewish attitude, which has filtered down through all channels

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<sup>924</sup> Omissi, *Indian Voices*, xvi.

<sup>925</sup> Streeter, *Mad for Zion*, pp.110, 122, 153. Colonel Meinertzhagen considered that Bols, who became Chief Administrator of the Occupied Enemy Territory Authority (OETA) after the war, was a weak character easily influenced by others, particularly Colonel Richard Waters Taylor, OETA's Financial Adviser, who was strongly pro-Arab and anti-Zionist, see RHL, Meinertzhagen Diaries, Vol. 21, 31 December, 1919.



[...] men were made to feel that they were of the 'despised race'.<sup>926</sup> Jabotinsky accused Allenby in writing of being an enemy of Zionism and of the Judaeans in particular.<sup>927</sup>

The participation of the Jewish battalions in the battle of Megiddo against the Turks in September, 1918, earned no public accolades from EEF HQ which, Martin Watts has suggested, was determined to keep the profile of the Jewish troops as low as possible, on and off the battlefields.<sup>928</sup> This vacuum of recognition in the Middle East is consistent with HMG's desire, after the Balfour Declaration, to avoid antagonising the Arabs by drawing attention to a Jewish military presence. According to Renton, the Jewish units' only role in Palestine was to form part of a British pro-Zionist propaganda campaign to gain Jewish support in the United States. This appears to offer an explanation as to why the battalions' combat involvement in the Jordan Valley, while silenced locally, was lauded in the dispatches released in the West.<sup>929</sup>

Patterson has been lionized in much of the Jewish literature of the Judaeans. In the *British Jewry Book of Honour*, Jabotinsky wrote of him, 'with extraordinary thoroughness of purpose he made our ideals his own [...] he kept watch over the Jewish honour'.<sup>930</sup> Salaman, however, came to consider that Patterson himself engendered much of the EEF's hostility toward the battalions, and that the antagonism encountered was often 'anti-Patterson as much as anti-Semitic'. The colonel's direct allegations of anti-Semitism resulted in an Army Commission of Enquiry, during which he was obliged to formally retract them. Salaman's high regard for his commander in the early days of the regiment's training at Crown Hill as, 'a splendid fellow – absolutely the man for the job' had evidently faded during his duties with the battalion in Egypt and Palestine.

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<sup>926</sup> Watts, *The Jewish Legion*, p. 184.

<sup>927</sup> Freulich, *Soldiers in Judea*, p. 150.

<sup>928</sup> Watts, *The Jewish Legion*, p.193.

<sup>929</sup> Renton, *The Zionist Masquerade*, p.129.

<sup>930</sup> Jabotinsky 'Jewish units in the War' in Adler, *British Jewry Book*, p.60.

At the end of his Army service, Salaman reflected on whether the regiment had been a success, confessing that, 'the question haunts me like a ghost'. Apparently ignorant of the Government's political motivations, he criticised its decision to create a Jewish force in which national factionalism was allowed to undermine military effectiveness, and which suffered from inadequate officer numbers, training and equipment. In addition, he deplored the internal tensions at officer level between Zionists and anti-Zionists, Christians and Jews, and between the colonels of the three battalions. From a military viewpoint, Salaman's opinion was that the alien Jews would have been better deployed in other Army regiments. The situation in June, 1917, as he perceived it, was that the Government needed more men for Army service, and that:

There were 30,000 aliens of eligible age of which at least 10,000 would have been 'A' men. Had the Government acted firmly and consistently they should have called up these 10,000 and, apart from the Jewish aspect of the case, they might have scattered them throughout existing units and would have obtained that number of really good men who would have done as well – and that means very well – as their naturalized brethren.<sup>931</sup>

He acknowledged that the Russian Jews from Britain took longer to train as effective soldiers but once they had left their homes they matured quickly, 'and now our group of English aliens are really good', although he accepted that they were neither Zionists nor idealists and that their centre of gravity remained in their homes in England.

The Jewish immigrant volunteers from the US were, in his view, unquestioningly inferior to the British alien groups. They were poorly trained and inexperienced, and lacked a sense of comradeship and *esprit de corps*. His opinion runs counter to that recently expressed by Shlomit and Michael Keren about the growth of Jewish national identity through the military service of US

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<sup>931</sup> CUL, ADD 8171, Box 4. Salaman to Nina Salaman, 3 January, 1919.

immigrants in the 39th battalion.<sup>932</sup> Salaman concluded that the American soldiers had failed to integrate with their co-religionists from Britain, who regarded their behaviour with disdain. In his opinion they had done the reputation of the regiment a great injury through their lack of discipline. In contrast, the Palestinians of the 40<sup>th</sup> battalion were all genuine volunteers with real spirit although difficult to command. He hoped that through their enthusiasm for a potential homeland in Palestine they would form the nucleus of the future Jewish militia, which, he anticipated, would be the, 'most powerful weapon the Zionists have forged'. Recent scholarship has endorsed the Judaeans' existence as opening Palestine to the founders of Israel.<sup>933</sup>

Many of the difficulties experienced in the battalions resulted from their internal diversity, and from the indifference, if not antipathy, shown by officers and men towards Zionism. Salaman was more equivocal on how far the units had brought credit to the Jews: he considered that they had done all they were asked to do, an opinion confirmed in Martin Watts' recent study.<sup>934</sup> However, what they had been asked to do by EEF HQ bore all the imprints of Britain's 'martial race theory' in India at *fin de siècle* and the Army's negative attitude towards active combat by allegedly inferior troops.

Salaman's wartime service was a decisive experience in his life, not only in sealing his commitment to Zionism.<sup>935</sup> From his family background with its inherent elitist attitudes towards the immigrant community, it had also served to partially rehabilitate his view of the '*schneiders*' (tailors) from the East End, who, with training and military experience, had evolved from 'hopeless people' to men greatly improved in physique and general discipline. Like Major Henry Myer in the 40th battalion, who also harboured decidedly negative thoughts about immigrant

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<sup>932</sup> Shlomit and Michael Keren, 'The Jewish Legions in WW1 as a Locus of Identity Formation', Place and Displacement in Jewish History and Memory Conference, Kaplan Centre, University of Cape Town, South Africa, 3 – 5 January, 2005.

<sup>933</sup> CUL, ADD 8171, Box 4. Salaman to Nina Salaman, 3 January, 1919. Watts, *The Jewish Legion*, p. 243.

<sup>934</sup> *Ibid*, p. 241.

<sup>935</sup> Endelman, 'The Decline of the Anglo-Jewish Notable', p. 66.

soldiers, Redcliffe Salaman's experiences in Plymouth, Egypt and Palestine reinforced the complex nature of Jewish male identity when confronted by the new challenges of war.

Compared with the fulfilment of Anglo-Jewry's paradigmatic 'Military Jew' in the war record of Benjamin Polack, his brother, and others of their circle, few parallel exemplars of the Zionist 'muscular Jew' can be discerned in the men of the Jewish Regiment, however much Jabotinsky, Patterson, Margolin, Salaman and other officers might have hoped for him to emerge. The men from Britain in the Jewish Battalion were undoubtedly of low army medical category. But Salaman's inherent animosity shown towards them during training, particularly in his condemnation of their alleged cowardice and meanness of spirit, reflects all the prejudices of 'imperial man', which had been absorbed by the Anglo-Jewish elite before 1914. His reactions also reflected Anglo-Jewry's extreme sensitivity to the issue of cowardice, which led to officially excising it from the record and, in effect, sweeping it under the carpet. Nonetheless, the battalion's improvement through military service, both in physique and *esprit de corps*, confirmed the riposte of Jewish doctors to *fin de siècle* anthropologists that nurture would, in time, prevail over nature.

## CONCLUSION

*Fin de siècle* notions of the Jewish male as ill-fitted to the Gentile image of martial masculinity were brought into critical focus in World War I Britain. Military service proved to be a crisis of identity for the Jewish community, forcing to the surface pre-existing tensions between the Jew and the non-Jew, and between assimilated and immigrant Jews, in which perceptions of manliness and martial spirit played a seminal role. In a period of national crisis, historic immigrant anti-militarism was not only anathema to the widely accepted Gentile ideal, but threatened the aspirations of assimilated and pro-Zionist Jews to revive the spirit of the Biblical Jewish warrior and recast the image of the Jewish male.

Jews spoke with many voices during the war on the matter of military service, revealing the State's mistaken assumptions of a Jewish corporate entity, and the reality of a diverse and pluralistic community. To ease Government anxieties over the influx of Jews from Eastern Europe at the end of the nineteenth century, the communal authority of the Anglo-Jewish elite at that time was such that it had been able to effect the removal of many thousands of impoverished immigrants from Britain. By 1916 their ability to guide the community within State parameters had diminished to the extent that they were powerless to directly persuade 30,000 Russian Jews to enlist. The long-established monopoly of the Anglo-Jewish leadership to liaise with the State on matters of communal concern was undermined by foreign Zionist *arrivistes* and Russian Jewish newcomers from Europe, who operated in association with non-Jewish anti-militarists. Febrile tactics by all sectors of the community ensued in efforts to secure their own specific aims, which were matched by continuing Government *volte faces* and vacillation. Thus Jewish military service was marked by diverse responses on the part of the minority and inconsistencies in State decision-making.

The attitude taken by the community's leadership towards the masculinity of the Russian Jews was ostensibly schizophrenic, although its involvement in

their recruitment has been interpreted as a part of painful choices made between Jewish ties and accepted patriotic behaviour.<sup>936</sup> On the one hand, through Anglo-Jewry's East End philanthropy after the 1880s, it was fully cognizant of the poor health and physique, and anti-militarism of many immigrant men. On the other, War Office inferences of immigrant military inferiority were met by ongoing hyperactivity by Anglo-Jewry's elite to secure their incorporation into the British Army in 1916 lest their continuing exclusion reflect badly on the wider community. This was followed a year later by strong Anglo-Jewish opposition to their marginalisation from normative military service in the Judeans and the Labour battalions, a Government policy they regarded as both communally divisive and demeaning to Jewish masculinity.

Although unnaturalized immigrants followed the historic practices of military evasion used by the politically powerless, the opposition of the Anglo-Jewish elite to their anti-military stance resulted in their collaboration with non-Jewish activists committed to a national stand against enforced military service, and was not confined to the socialist labour movement. Russian Jewish activism extends Feldman's claim that the early twentieth century witnessed the entry of immigrants into the British political arena to pursue, rather than abandon, their Jewish identity.<sup>937</sup> Burgeoning confidence in their independence from Anglo-Jewish opinion, exemplified by their stand against military service, may well have acted as an accelerator for continuing changes in communal power after 1918.

The majority of Russian Jews regarded the involvement of elite Anglo-Jewry in the Government's conscription policy as a 'betrayal' of communal loyalties. By the end of the war, their antagonism was coupled with the dissatisfaction of many Jewish servicemen and civilian welfare workers with the pro-War Office stance taken by the Jewish War Service Committee. The norms and *mores* of elite Anglo-Jewry largely aligned with the Gentile *status quo*, and dominated their official liaison with the Army on matters of Jewish military service. Their eagerness to conform often resulted in insensitivity to the

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<sup>936</sup> Cesarani, 'An Embattled Minority', p. 75.

<sup>937</sup> Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*, p. 383.

concerns of Jewish soldiers from distinctly different backgrounds. It appears that these factors damaged the traditional leadership and contributed to the post-war restructuring of power relations in the Jewish community.

David Cesarani has drawn attention to the 'clumsy and halting efforts' of the British Government to address the enlistment of Russian Jews but this ineptitude characterises its' general handling of conscription.<sup>938</sup> The need for military manpower became a pressing issue for the Government within the first three months of the war, and the consequences of Asquith's reluctance to introduce conscription resulted in the rapid creation in 1916 of a new and untested infrastructure to consider exemptions on medical and occupational grounds, and counter evasion and desertion. Few of these *ad hoc* arrangements worked efficiently. In July 1916, 93,000 men failed to report for army duty, and three quarters of a million initially claimed exemption.<sup>939</sup>

Government authority was not monolithic, and conflicts of interest over the recruitment of Jews between Government Departments continued throughout the war and resulted in vacillations and policy reversals. Historic War Office discrimination against 'the other', evident in the deployment of coloured troops from the Empire, was echoed in its attempts to marginalise ethnicity within Britain. Army obfuscation over the recruitment of British Jews from the first days of the war, followed by its later resistance to the enlistment of 'friendly aliens', clashed with Home Office fears of domestic unrest after the introduction of the MSA, and the prospect of young Jewish men remaining in their civilian occupations and visible on the streets of Britain's cities. Home Office unwillingness to become involved in any large-scale deportation of Russian Jews at the beginning of 1918 was countered by its enthusiasm for sending many back after the Armistice and its creation of obstacles to their post-war naturalization.

War changed the men who served in it, permanently incapacitating many thousands through injuries to minds or bodies. But paradoxically, military

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<sup>938</sup> Cesarani, 'An Embattled Minority', p. 67.

<sup>939</sup> Corrigan, *Blood, Mud and Poppycock*, p. 74.

service resulted in improvements in general health and the broadening of social horizons for those who survived relatively unscathed.<sup>940</sup> Many from the Jewish immigrant community had been loath to become soldiers but when choice was removed, army life often bettered their physical strength and wellbeing, endorsing the *fin de siècle* Jewish belief in nurture over nature as exemplified by the Judean *schneiders*. In regular units of the British Army, their integration into a non-Jewish environment appears to have acted as a catalyst for acculturation and modernity for those whose social connections had been limited to their co-religionists before 1914. However, the demands of military duties *vis-à-vis* the preservation of Jewish identity, particularly in matters of diet, were an ongoing dichotomy for many of the more orthodox. That said, Jewish participation in army life, together with the work of Jewish chaplains, helped to ameliorate to a small extent the widespread pre-war national ignorance of Jews and Judaism, which was palpable in the remarks of Gentile soldiers.

It has been suggested that drinking marks the boundaries of personal and group identities, and functions as a practice of inclusion and exclusion.<sup>941</sup> Male *camaraderie* was based on shared experiences out of the lines as well as inter-dependence in the trenches, and many Jewish soldiers who avoided the coarse drinking culture of the *estaminets* found it difficult to be fully accepted by their non-Jewish comrades-in-arms. A different form of separation beset assimilated Anglo-Jewish officers. Even those who had moved furthest away from Jewish traditions and practices, such as Major Henry Myer, were not immune to the often subliminal class prejudices of the traditional British Army officer towards the 'outsider'. Integration did not signify social acceptance for either Jewish officers or men.

Despite their reluctance to join the army in World War I, veterans from immigrant backgrounds formed some of the first ex-servicemen's groups in the East End. Ex-soldiers of the Zion Mule Corps and the Judeans initiated The

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<sup>940</sup> Jessica Meyer, *Men of War: Masculinity and the First World War in Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 162.

<sup>941</sup> Thomas Wilson, (ed.), *Drinking Cultures* (Oxford: Berg, 2005), p. 13.



League of Old Judeans in 1921.<sup>942</sup> Unsurprising in the light of its wartime opposition to any promotion of ethnic identity, Anglo-Jewry opposed the creation of separate Jewish ex-Servicemen's legions, advocating instead that Jews should join the British Legion. In the 1930s the Board of Deputies moved covertly to bring about the demise of the newly formed Jewish Ex-Servicemen's Association of the British Empire.<sup>943</sup>

In the East End, immigrant veterans wished for a more publicly visible memorial to the Jewish dead than the numerous plaques placed inside synagogues, and reproached Anglo-Jewry's Jewish War Memorial Committee for failing the fallen.<sup>944</sup> But shared remembrance of Britain's war dead brought veterans together in Spitalfields with Jews, Protestants and Catholics marching together into Christ Church for an Armistice commemoration service in 1923.<sup>945</sup> Aspects of identity in the Jewish memorialisation of World War 1, and the activities of Jewish veteran organisations in the inter-war years, could well be areas of interest for further research.

Unlike the conscript armies of other European combatants, which had exhibited varying degrees of institutional anti-Semitism before 1914, World War I presented the British Army with its first significant challenge to accommodate Jews within its infrastructure, albeit in a period of national crisis. Its responses to the different needs of over 41,000 largely conscripted soldiers appear to have been virtually unchanged from the pre-1914 era, when only 400 volunteers were serving, although this may partly reflect the acquiescence of the Anglo-Jewish wartime organisations with War Office preferences. Nearly a century later the Ministry of Defence is still attempting to monitor and regularise the experience of military service for minorities although a lack of statistical evidence hampers progress. Elite regiments, in particular, continue to exhibit something of the

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<sup>942</sup> Mark Connelly, *The Great War, Memory and Ritual. Commemoration in the City and East London, 1916 – 1919* (Woodbridge: the Boydell Press, 2002), p. 214.

<sup>943</sup> LMA, ACC 3121/B4/GL/36. BoD Secretary to Rabbi Gollop, senior Jewish Chaplain to HM Forces, advocated 'the destruction as quickly, as quietly, and as decently as possible, of the Jewish Ex-Servicemen's Association of the British Empire, 29 June, 1936.

<sup>944</sup> Connelly, *The Great War*, p. 218.

<sup>945</sup> *East London Advertiser*, 24 November, 1923, cited *ibid*, p. 161.

Masonic quality evident in the pre-1914 army, a fact which prompted a two year commission on Racial Equality in the Household Cavalry as recently as 1996.<sup>946</sup> In contrast with official Army policy in World War I, many unit commanders at the regimental level showed some sympathy with the difficulties experienced by Jewish soldiers in maintaining their religious identity in a Christian army, and offered practical support.

World War I undermined the imperial ideal and exposed the fragility of concepts of masculine identity.<sup>947</sup> Four years of heavy fighting ‘opened the abyss between the imagery of knights and angels and the reality of war’ although the consequent disillusionment took many years to percolate throughout British society.<sup>948</sup> Combat soldiers had quickly found that notions of manliness, courage and the catharsis of battle were eroded in their continuous assaults on largely static and increasingly fortified lines of trenches, and the use of massive fire-power, tanks and gas. By 1916 the widespread medical phenomenon of neurasthenia, or shell shock, among servicemen on the battlefields and behind the lines accounted for 40% of casualties.<sup>949</sup> Its occurrence challenged the notion of ‘imperial man’ as one who was ‘strong, patriotic, heroic and psychologically robust and did not suffer from hysteria’.<sup>950</sup> Its universality also empirically refuted the nineteenth century pseudo-scientific stereotype of the Jewish male as effeminate and cowardly, the victim of his tainted heredity.

In the immediate post-war years, official tributes by non-Jewish luminaries to the *renaissance* of the Jewish martial spirit were given prominence in the *British Jewry Book of Honour*:

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<sup>946</sup> Stuart Crawford, ‘Race Relations in the Army’, in Hew Strachan, (ed.), *The British Army, Manpower and Society into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (London: Frank Cass, 2000), pp. 140, 145, 147, 153.

<sup>947</sup> Paul Rich, ‘Imperial Decline, 1918 – 1979’, in Tony Kushner and Kenneth Lunn, (eds.), *Traditions of Intolerance. Historical Perspectives on Fascism and Racial Discourse in Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), pp. 35, 39.

<sup>948</sup> Peter Buitenhuis cited in Bourke, *Dismembering the Male*, p. 18.

<sup>949</sup> Daniel Pick, *Faces of Degeneration: a European Disorder, 1848 – 1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 231.

<sup>950</sup> Cathryn Corns and John Hughes-Wilson, *Blindfold and Alone* (London: Cassel & Co., 2001), p. 74.

The Jews are a cautious people and not anxious to make war, but in this great conflict they waged it just as vigourously as they did in the wars of the Bible.

Lord Northcliffe<sup>951</sup>

The ancient traditions of Jewry have been revived.

Lord Crewe<sup>952</sup>

The positive tenor of these statements, the high proportion of Jews who served in the wartime British Army relative to the size of the community, and the award of over 1,500 military honours and decorations might suggest that the Jewish male had redeemed his negative image. Yet despite the war record and the gradual implosion of idealised masculinity in the post-war period, Tony Kushner has suggested that the stereotype of the 'timid Jew' persisted in Britain during World War II.<sup>953</sup>

The tension between myth and reality was slow to dissolve, exemplified by immigrant 'memories' of military service in Russia. Excluding those Russian Jews who were separated from normative military service in Labour Companies and in Palestine, approximately 35,000 Jewish soldiers were integrated into a British Army of over five million servicemen. It should perhaps be unsurprising that historical negative perceptions of the Jewish warrior were only marginally affected by the very limited Jewish/non-Jewish interface in army service. The persistence of prejudice in the mindset of the military elite is given further weight in the claim of American social scientists that the beliefs men hold take priority over the evidence before them, and that experience is assimilated into an existing framework of inherited ideas.<sup>954</sup>

The hubristic image of 'imperial man' as the quintessential soldier hero was fatally punctured by the realities of twentieth century warfare. Further research into Jewish attitudes to military service in World War II Britain, albeit conscripted, and changes in the nature of prejudice, may extend insights into the

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<sup>951</sup> Adler, *British Jewry Book of Honour*, xviii.

<sup>952</sup> *Ibid*, xvii.

<sup>953</sup> Kushner, *The Persistence of Prejudice*, pp. 125-6.

<sup>954</sup> Zara Steiner in McKercher & Moss, *Shadow and Substance in British Foreign Policy*, p. 26.

evolution of a Jewish soldiering culture, which has been evident in Israel since 1948.

## APPENDIX A

### **SUMMARY OF ENLISTMENT FIGURES GIVEN IN JEWISH SOURCES BEFORE THE INTRODUCTION OF THE FIRST MILITARY SERVICES ACT – JANUARY 1916**

| <u>Date</u>   | <u>Estimate of<br/>Numbers</u>                                             | <u>Source</u>                                                         |
|---------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| November 1914 | 4,000                                                                      | <i>JC</i> 6 Nov. 1914, p. 24.                                         |
| March, 1915   | 10,000                                                                     | <i>JC</i> , 19 March 1915, p. 25                                      |
| “ “           | 12,000                                                                     | Hon Sec, JRC to Chief<br>Rabbi, 23 March 1915,<br>LMA, ACC 2805/4/4/6 |
| October, 1915 | Estimated 17,000                                                           | <i>JC</i> , 29 Oct 1915, p.19.                                        |
| January, 1916 | Estimated 10,000<br>Jews on active service,<br>of whom 1,140 were officers | Adler, (ed.), <i>British Jewry Book<br/>of Honour</i> , p. 3.         |

## APPENDIX B

### CERTIFICATES OF NATURALISATION GRANTED 1919 – 1921<sup>955</sup>

| Year              | Total no. of certificates granted | Army cases granted     | Total Refused | Army Refusals |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| 1919              | 1,714                             | 1,236 (72.1% of total) | n/a           | n/a           |
| 1920              | 2,259                             | 1,656 (73% “ “ )       | 27            | 26            |
| 1921 to<br>3 June | 535                               | 268 (50.1% “ “ )       | 59            | 54            |

After the war the Board of Deputies complained to the Home Office about the difficulties encountered by Russian Jewish veterans in satisfying the reading and writing sections of the statutory Naturalisation requirements. The Home Office obfuscated, stating that there was no specific literary test for men who had served in HM Forces while they stressed that an adequate knowledge of the English language was a statutory qualification for naturalisation.<sup>956</sup>

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<sup>955</sup> 3 June, 1921, HO 144/13352, NA.

<sup>956</sup> Ibid, 29 May, 1919.

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##### **Liverpool: Liverpool Record Office**

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##### **London: British Library**

Papers of the Parliamentary Recruiting Committee

Papers of Isaac Rosenberg

Papers of C. P. Scott

##### **London: House of Lords Record Office**

Papers of Herbert Samuel

Papers of David Lloyd George

##### **London: Imperial War Museum**

Letters of Lt. H. Brundle

Letters of J. A. C. Clarke

Papers of Joseph Leftwich

Private papers of H. D. Myer

Diary of Richard Miller

Papers of Isaac Rosenberg

##### **London: London Metropolitan Archives**

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Papers of the United Synagogue

Papers of the Victoria Club

##### **London: National Archives**

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41/37/39, 23/361

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45/10818/317810, 45/10818/318095, 45/10819/318095, 45/10820/318095,  
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144/13352, 144/13339, 144/13362,

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