

Document A: “A History of Israel”, Howard Sachar (1976)

Reared in a secular Russian Jewish home, Jabotinsky passed as a youth directly into Russian life, immersing himself in its literature and ideals. Tsarist persecution subsequently shattered his Russophilism. Like Herzl and Nordau, he detected in the vision of a Jewish state an immediate and thrilling opportunity for national freedom and self-assertion. At the age of twenty-three he attended the Sixth Zionist Congress, was overwhelmed by Herzl, and became a fiery advocate of “political Zionism.” Moreover, for Jabotinsky, as for Herzl, Zionism prefigured a revolution in character as well as in status.

Contemptuous of the limitations of Diaspora existence, he regarded Zionism as the instrument by which Jews would shuck off their qualities of submissiveness and timidity and become instead bold, proud, and militant. He yearned, too, for his people to become like the Gentiles on the battlefield, in the athletic world. Jabotinsky traveled widely afterward, becoming a versatile linguist. In Italy he studied and admired the works of Dante and d’Annunzio. The careers of Mazzini and Garibaldi tremendously impressed him. It was in Italy, as well, that Jabotinsky developed his forceful oratorical style, with its instinct for the theatrical. Despite his bespectacled, rather prognathous face and a distinctly authoritarian manner, he generated an extraordinary personal magnetism. Ultimately he would become the single most charismatic figure, after Herzl, in Zionist history.

Source: A History of Israel: From the Rise of Zionism to Our Time, Howard M. Sachar, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1976, p. 184

**Document B: “The Story of the Jewish Legion”, Vladimir
“Ze’ev” Jabotinsky (1926)**

I went to Bordeaux – and there, one wet morning, I read in a poster pasted on a wall that Turkey had joined the Central Powers and begun military operations. ...

I must confess: until that morning, in Bordeaux as everywhere else, I had been a mere observer, without any particular reasons for wishing full triumph to one side and crushing disaster to the other. My desire at that time was: stalemate, and peace as soon as possible. Turkey’s move transformed me in one short morning into a fanatical believer in war until victory; Turkey’s move made this war “my war.” In 1909 I had been chief editor in Constantinople of four Zionist newspapers at the same time (the sort of thing that occurs only in one’s youth); the Young Turks then ruled the Sublime Porte, and there and then I reached the steadfast conviction that where the Turk rules neither sun may shine nor grass may grow, and that the only hope for the restoration of Palestine lay in the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire.

Vocabulary

Sublime Porte: the Ottoman court in Constantinople.

Source: The Story of the Jewish Legion, Vladimir Jabotinsky, 1926, (Reprinted by Bernard Ackerman, United States, 1945) p. 29-31.

Document C: “Lone Wolf”, Shmuel Katz (1996)

If the dismemberment of Turkey was so certain, was it not enough to pursue the course proposed by Dr. Weizmann, of preparing for the peace conference and there to assert the right of the Jewish people to its homeland and its right “to independent national life as a constructive social and moral element in the international arena?”

To this question Weizmann’s own words, which he repeated tirelessly in his letters, gave a partial reply: “The trouble is that now only the guns are permitted to speak.” It was here that Jabotinsky’s mind made the leap forward, beyond Weizmann’s formulation, that brought the role and the fate of the Jewish people into the relevance of the war: the participation of Jewish “guns,” a military unit fighting as Jews – and fighting moreover to ensure the Jewish national future in the Jewish homeland.

Source: Lone Wolf Vol. 1, Shmuel Katz, Barricade Books, New York, 1996, p. 147

Document D: “*The Story of the Jewish Legion*”, Vladimir “Ze’ev” Jabotinsky (1926)

We knew from the very beginning that, given even a maximum of success, the Jewish Legion could be only a part of the Army of Conquest. But quite another matter was the question of the Army of Occupation. In this we saw the main purpose of the Jewish Legion. If there was to be no possibility of its being sufficiently large to win Palestine itself, it should be sufficiently strong – and this was our fundamental aim – to form the major portion of the garrison which would remain in Palestine after the conquest. A garrison need not be so large as a conquering army. For a small country like Palestine, not thirty, but twenty, or even fifteen thousand men would be sufficient to play the leading part in maintaining law and order. And it was important that it should play this part at the time when the various Powers were discussing the future of the occupied territories.

Source: The Story of the Jewish Legion, Vladimir “Ze’ev” Jabotinsky, Bernard Ackerman Inc., New York, 1945, p.145.

**Document E: “The Story of the Jewish Legion”, Vladimir
Jabotinsky (1926)**

One of the pioneers, Yosef Trumpeldor, was older than the others. The same age as Jabotinsky, he had an unusual background for a Russian Jew. His father had been a “Cantonist,” a Jew impressed into the army as a child during the reign of Nicholas I. Despite forcible baptism and long, harsh years of military service, he had clung to his Jewish identity, and as it was punishable for men like him to reembrace Judaism once discharged, he had settled in a remote region of the Caucasus where he could raise his children freely as Jews. Yosef, influenced equally as a boy by his father’s Jewish loyalty and the ideals of a nearby Tolstoyan commune, studied dentistry, was drafted at the time of the war with Japan, fought heroically in it, and lost an arm in the battle of Port Arthur, for his role in which he was decorated several times and promoted to the rank of captain. He left the army as its highest-ranking Jewish officer, studied law in St. Petersburg, and in 1912 emigrated to Palestine, where he lived in communal settlements in the Galilee until joining the exiles in Alexandria. ...

The two men struck up an immediate rapport. They shared much in common, from a deeply Russian side of themselves to a tough-minded Jewish patriotism, and already at their first meeting Jabotinsky broached his plan for a “Jewish legion.” No one, he must have felt, could have understood him better than this former Jewish officer with four Orders of St. George. Unaffected by the war fever that had gripped many of their coreligionists in the West, most Russian Jews continued to associate armies with all the worst features of Gentile society – its empty pomp, brutality, contempt for the intellect, and disregard for human life. This was the traditional Jewish attitude toward the military. ...

Trumpeldor was won over immediately. As a first step, the two men set out to organize a group of volunteers from Camp Gabari to form the kernel of their legion. Close to a hundred refugees declared their willingness to join.

...

A meeting was held with General John Maxwell, commander of the British forces in Egypt. Maxwell put a damper on the volunteers’ enthusiasm. No British attack on Palestine was in the offing, he told them, nor was there any precedent for non-British subjects serving as combat soldiers in the British army. However, he had a counterproposal. Based on his knowledge

of a plan for an Anglo-French amphibious landing at Gallipoli, along the Dardanelles near Istanbul, he suggested the volunteers might form a transportation battalion in the army's mule corps and be sent to another front. England's gratitude he assured them, would be earned by such a gesture just as well and would stand the Jewish people in good stead.

Mules and draft horses were in extensive use with the British Expeditionary Force in France, nearly half a million being employed by the war's end to pull artillery, troop wagons, and ambulances, and to haul supplies and ammunition. Handling them under fire demanded skill and courage, and Trumpeldor, who felt no need to prove his mettle in combat, was for accepting Maxwell's offer. Jabotinsky was opposed. He had conceived of his legion, above all, as a way of mobilizing Jewish and world public opinion for the Zionist cause, and a contingent of Jewish "donkey drivers" elsewhere than Palestine was worth little in his opinion. Moreover, he was thinking ahead. In a letter to Zionist Executive member Viktor Jacobson, he wrote:

The newspapers and various rumors have misconstrued me as calling for a Jewish army that will conquer Palestine all by itself, etc. All that is ridiculous. What I'm thinking of is this: when one day a peace conference is convened, an item on the agenda will be the dismemberment of Turkey. (My whole plan is based on that.) The parts of Turkey to be divided up, including Palestine, will already be under military occupation. In Palestine, I imagine, some 20,000 soldiers will be needed. (That's for garrisoning the country during peace negotiations, not for conquering it.) My goal is to have a reasonably large Jewish unit form a third to half of this number.

Such a contingent, Jabotinsky thought, would be the quickest way to exert an immediate Zionist influence on British policy and a valuable card in the chaotic situation that was sure to prevail in occupied Palestine until a British administration was firmly in place. Eager to demobilize after a long war, the British would welcome Jewish troops to help guarantee public order against the Arab nationalist emotions aroused by the casting off of four hundred years of Turkish rule. A Jewish transportation unit disbanded at the war's end could accomplish none of this.

At the same time, however, there was no point in standing in Trumpeldor's way. Leaving him in Egypt to work out the details of what was to become

the Zion Mule Corps, whose soldiers served with distinction in the failed Gallipoli campaign of 1915, Jabotinsky sailed for England to promote his legion there.

Source: Jabotinsky: A Life, Hillel Halkin, Yale University Press, New Haven, 2014, p. 96-99.

Document F: “A History of Zionism”, Walter Laqueur (1972)

In his struggle for the formation of a Jewish legion Jabotinsky was ‘almost alone, discouraged and derided everywhere’, to quote Weizmann, one of the few who followed his activities with some sympathy. That Jabotinsky faced opposition from non-Zionists goes without saying. Both the liberal assimilationist establishment and the left-wing pacifists were bitterly hostile. But there was strong resistance among Jabotinsky’s colleagues too. After all, Zionists were fighting in this war on both sides, and there was a real danger that the Turks would react severely. Was it worthwhile to endanger the very existence of the small Jewish community in Palestine for a project of doubtful military or political value? While Weizmann was certain that the Allies would win the war, many Russian Zionist leaders were much less sure; nor, as far as Russia, the bulwark of antisemitism, was concerned, did they think the perpetuation of tsarist rule, the likely outcome of an allied victory, desirable.

Source: A History of Zionism, Walter Laqueur, Schocken Books, New York, 1989 (First Published 1972), p. 341.

Document G: “Foreward to *The Story of the Jewish Legion*”, Col. John Henry Patterson (1945)

It is not my intention to go into details of the services rendered and the gallant deeds performed by the now famous Zion Corps during the entire period of the Gallipoli invasion. ...

I may, however, state that we won some of the highest military awards during the campaign and everybody from General Sir Ian Hamilton, the Commander-in-Chief, down to the private in the ranks of the British Army, gave us unstinted praise. In fact, “The Zion Mule Corps became indispensable in Gallipoli.” These are not my words but those of Sidney Moseley, a representative of the War Office who witnessed the outstanding gallantry and devotion to duty exhibited day after day by the Zion men on the shell-swept and bloody shores of the Dardanelles.

Eventually, when the High Command decreed the evacuation of the peninsula, the hardy Zionists were among the last to take to the boats for Egypt. Yes, Jabotinsky had indeed “builted better than he knew,” for when he later tackled the London War Office on the creation of the Jewish Legion, he found that a legend of Jewish gallantry in Gallipoli had taken root there and this lightened his task immensely.

Source: The Story of the Jewish Legion, Vladimir Jabotinsky, 1926, (Reprinted by Bernard Ackerman, United States, 1945) p. 18-19.

**Document H: “Speech to G.H.Q.”, Vladimir Jabotinsky
(1918)**

The Passover week in Jerusalem and Jaffa was a week of regular Jew-hunt, as I am prepared to prove by witnesses – officers in charge of Jewish leave parties. But this practice survived Passover. Innumerable complaints have been received in all the three Battalions that military police are generally hunting “Fusiliers.” I have a list, long but incomplete, of witnesses prepared to swear that they were frequently stopped by M.P.s while men wearing other badges were not. ...

Our soldiers’ complaints of anti-semitism in military hospitals are numerous and unfortunately well founded. Here again I am prepared to produce a list of volunteers.

The same anti-semitic spirit permeates the military railway service. A Fusilier traveling by train was admitted to a certain carriage when he wore his helmet; as soon as he put on his cap and the badge revealed, he was turned out by the same NCO. This is only one instance, the complaints are many.

...Unfortunately, this spirit, spreading from a high center, has now reached the rank and file and envenomed the relationship between our soldiers with those of other units...

In this way, Sir, an all-enveloping atmosphere of military anti-semitism has been created. It follows the Jewish soldier wherever he steps out of the vicinity of his battalion – in the street when he goes on leave, in hospital when he is sick, on the train during his journey, in the Y.M.C.A., where he repairs for rest; and even on guard duty outside his regiment.

Source: Lone Wolf Vol. 1, Shmuel Katz, Barricade Books, New York, 1996, p. 495-496

**Document I: “The Story of the Jewish Legion”, Vladimir
“Ze’ev” Jabotinsky (1926)**

When one is subjective through and through, one always tries to prove that one “won,” “succeeded.” I have not said that. I did not win: I dreamed of a great Jewish Army, not of five thousand men. But those five thousand did “succeed,” the Legion itself did play a part, a decisive part, in the history of Zionism....

The moral value of the Legion must be clear to every thinking person, whether he is a pacifist or not. We all abhor war; it is nevertheless a fact that we obtained our official right to Palestine as the result of the war – that is, of great human sacrifices. It is difficult to imagine what our moral position would have been if people could throw the question in our faces: “Where were you? Why did none of you come forward and demand that you, as Jews, should also shed blood for your own country?” Today we have a reply: five thousand; and there would have been more, but for the procrastination of the British government. ...

But greatest of all was the political significance of the Legion. ... I say with the deep and cold conviction of an observer – speaking only of the short war-period: half the Balfour Declaration belongs to the Legion. For the world is not an irresponsible organism; Balfour Declarations are not given to individuals. They can be given only to Movements. And how could the Zionist movement express itself in those war years? It was broken and paralyzed, and was, by its nature, completely outside the narrow horizons of a warring world with its war governments. Only one manifestation of the Zionist will was able to break through on to this horizon, to show that Zionism was alive and prepared for sacrifice; to compel ministers, ambassadors and – most important of all – journalists, to treat the striving of the Jewish people for its country as a matter of urgent reality, as something which could not be postponed, which had to be given an immediate yes or now – and that was the Legion Movement.

Source: The Story of the Jewish Legion, Vladimir “Ze’ev” Jabotinsky, Bernard Ackerman Inc., New York, 1945, p.145.