Parachutists, Jewish

A group of Jewish volunteers from Palestine sent on missions in Nazi-occupied Europe between 1943 and 1945.

In 1942 the *Hagana* (the Jewish underground army of the *Yishuv* in Palestine) came up with a plan to send messengers into Nazi-occupied countries to raise Jewish morale, organize resistance, and rescue Jews. As the *Hagana* had no way to transport their emissaries to Europe, it turned to the British government for help. The British refused the Jewish Agency's proposal to send hundreds of volunteers. However, they did agree to drop trained individual parachutists, who would work both as Jewish emissaries and British agents.

The candidates were mostly recent immigrants who were members of the *Palmach,* the *Hagana's* strike force. Ultimately, only 37 were chosen- 32 parachuted in, and five snuck into the target countries. Of the 37, 12 were captured by the Germans and seven died in captivity or were executed. Some were caught while fighting in the Slovak National Uprising, while others, like Hannah Szenes, were found in Hungary. Others landed in France, Italy, Austria, Romania, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria.

These missions were meant to be just the beginning for Jewish groups infiltrating Nazi-occupied Europe. However, later missions never happened, due to British hesitations and technical difficulties.