

SPRING 2006



AMERICAN VETERANS OF ISRAEL

VOLUNTEERS IN ISRAEL'S WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

UNITED STATES & CANADA VOLUNTEERS

136 East 39th Street, New York, NY 10016

AVI to Suspend Organizational Structure and Transition to Trustee Management

Several years ago AVI held a referendum. The choice was between admitting younger American veterans of other Israeli wars and so extending the life of the organization or terminating the organization at some point. The membership chose the latter alternative. In preparation for the end of our organization, we appointed twelve AVI Trustees. These individuals accepted a responsibility, not for continuing the organization, but for terminating it. At the time, we took the death of a central leader for whom there was no available successor as a signal for the shift to a trusteeship. The functions designated as critical were the archives, newsletter, treasury and executive of the board. The Executive Committee, at its recent meeting, agreed that a date certain for termination would be less confusing and would smooth the

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Samuel Z. Klausner, editor of the AVI Newsletter, has announced his retirement from the editorship at the end of 2007.

A Spy in Machal in 1948

Pilot Enlisted in Rome, Agent of British Intelligence

Following are selections from a research report by Avi Cohen for the history branch of the Israel Air Force entitled Miragel b'hel ha'avir (A Spy in the Air Force. The full report (58 pages) including text deleted here and

Al Schwimmer Awarded pras yisrael

At Independence Day ceremonies in Israel Al Schwimmer was awarded the *pras yisrael* (Israel Prize), the highest award presented by the Government of Israel. Following is the citation:

Al Schwimmer, founder, and for many years manager, of the Israel Aircraft Industry, was a central figure in Israel's attaining air superiority in her struggle for survival, in her daring operations. He smuggled aircraft to the emerging nation. He was among those who established the air force and a commander in the early days. As the manager of Israel Aircraft Industry he brought to one of the world leaders in its field. He made a major contribution to the state and to its economy.

Schwimmer was born in New York to parents who had immigrated from Eastern Europe. Early in his life he was drawn to flying and flight engineering. In the WW II he served in the

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explanatory footnotes and endnotes and citations to sources may be downloaded from the Israel Air Force Website. (Go to <http://www.iaf.org.il> and click on historia on the upper frame. In the next screen, a bit down and to the left, is a list. Click on mehkarim historiim. On the next screen scroll down to the second listed publication.) The report was translated by Chaim (Vivian) Steinberg, Ruth Stern, Miriam Steurman and Samuel Klausner.

Preface

Lieutenant Colonel (reserves) Zeev Lachish

Spying is considered one of the "oldest" professions in the world. And all through history you will find many that were ready to sell their country's secrets for a fee. It happened in the Israeli Air Force, during the War of Independence, that a spy was actively selling Air Force secrets to whoever was interested: the British, members of the UN, and also to Arabs. It was during the War of Independence, in December of 1948, the story

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transition. No particular date was agreed upon but it is likely that a date within the next two years will be selected.

Organization termination is a process during which Trustees would familiarize themselves with the central functions so that they could be legally and efficiently be terminated or sustained in a revised form by the Trustees. The Trustees would maintain a membership roster though no further dues would be collected. They would manage any remaining funds, put out a short Newsletter about once a year as both a necrology and as an organ to announce any events relative to Machal veterans. A Trustee would maintain a call center for veterans or anyone seeking information about Machal.

The Board endorsed this general plan on March 20th and it was decided to hold a meeting in New York on Sunday October 20, 2006. A committee of the Trustees consisting of Jeffrey Margolis, Chairman, Arthur Kiron, Henry Lowenstein, Donna Parker, Augusta Gooch and Daphne Genyk would attend this meeting. The following AVI Officers and Board members would prepare a briefing paper describing organizational functions for which they are responsible and attend the meeting: Samuel Klausner, Ralph Lowenstein, David Gerard, Arthur Bernstein and Si Spiegelman.

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American Army Air Corps as a flight engineer in the air transport command. After the war he founded an aircraft industry in California. He was recruited for service in the Hagana and, in this role, bought up military surplus aircraft and returned them to serviceability.

With the outbreak of hostilities between Jews and Arabs he came to Israel as a Machal volunteer. Upon his return to the United States

After the Israel War of Independence he returned to the United States where he was detained and tried for treason. He was assessed a large fine. Ultimately President Clinton pardoned him. After the trial he returned to California to continue his work. Ben Gurion visited him and asked him to make aliya and establish an aircraft industry in Israel. The rest is history

Events in the Regions and Abroad

Regional

On April 25, 2006, Yom HaShoah, Lola Sprinzeles addressed a gathering at the Kingsbridge Center of Israel in the Bronx. Her topic was "Commemoration of the Holocaust. Lola was introduced as one who had witnessed "Kristalnacht" in Austria and was later part of the "Kinder-Transport" to England and then

served in the War of Independence in the Israel Army Medical Corps. Lola holds a PhD in Rehabilitation Psychology and worked as a researcher at Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center.

Four AVI members in the Philadelphia area shared in the May 9th Independence Day Celebration in Constitution Hall. They were Samuel Klausner, Sidney Firth, Max Kahn and Phil Marmelstein. Max wore his blue parachutist beret. The event was sponsored by The Consul General Uriel Palti and Mrs. Palti hosted the event. The Consul reflected on Biblical texts relating to the sanctity of the Land of Israel and read the Psalm *barkhi nafshi* in Hebrew and English, which recognizes the divine creation of the natural world and the responsibility of mankind to protect the environment.

Zvi Rosenfeld of the Bronx and a veteran of the IDF wrote, on March 20, to Si Spiegelman and Paul Kaye, seeking help from the AVI in his efforts to organize American veterans of Israeli Wars subsequent to the war of Independence. At the meeting of the AVI Executive Committee of that evening it was decided to endorse and encourage Zvi in his efforts.

Los Angeles Opening of Machal Museum

The official opening of the Machal West-University of Judaism will take place on Sunday, September 11 at 11 AM. We welcome AVI members and their families. Additional activities will be planned for the weekend. University of Judaism President Robert Wexler has assigned his Director of Communications Iris Waskow to be coordinator of events for that institution. She has invited

Sharona Benami, Community Relations Chair of Machal West to serve as her artistic partner.

Ralph Lowenstein and Si Spiegelman have been generous in the ongoing advice and guidance. Ralph urged us to involve many people in the event and to prepare good visuals with few words.

A new panel will reflect the Machal West members, volunteers from all countries and participants in all of Israel's wars. Our President Max Barchichat is from Morocco; treasurer Jules Kraut is from Belgium while Vice President Phil Yankofsky served in 1967 and Sharona Benami in 1973.

Machal West Board members attended both the Yom HaZikaron ceremonies and the Yom Ha'Atzmaut festivities hosted by the Israel Consulate in Los Angeles at the Beverly Hills Hotel. An Israeli military musical group performed and an Israeli Seal who had participated in the capture of terrorists from Jenin gave a talk.

Consul General Ehud Danoch has been invited to speak at the opening of the exhibit on September 11.

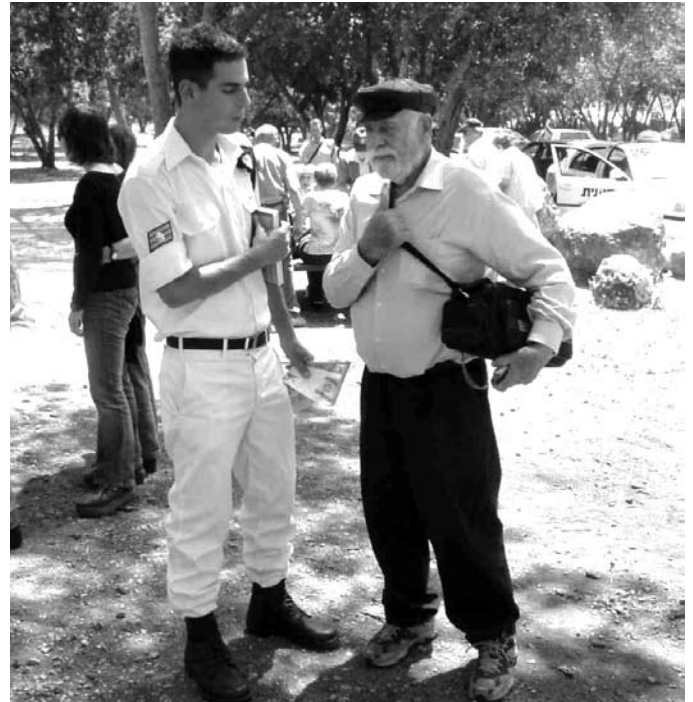
Sharona Benami

Abroad

ESRA, a journal for English-speaking Israelis has recently published an article by Zipporah Porath entitled "A Tribute to the Courageous Few: A New Museum

Opens in Florida." The article describes the various exhibits and includes a photograph of one of the exhibit cases.

Memorial Service for Machal Fallen



Mike Isaacson and grandson Alon (photo by Ostroff)

Marking Israel's 58th Yom Ha'Atzmaut, over 150 Machalniks gathered on Remembrance Day at the World Machal Monument in Sha'ar Hagai to honor the memory of comrades who fell in Israel's War of Independence. The annual Memorial Service took place on May 2, with the participation of a delegation of French Machal, headed by Joe Aybes, and of the United Kingdom, led by Stan Medicks, coordinator of Machal UK, Europe and Scandinavia, as well as of an honor guard of soldiers currently serving in the Mahal 2000 program.

The impressive ceremony, in the hills of Jerusalem, began with the lowering of the flag (Joe Aybes). At precisely 11:00 am, sirens were heard throughout the land for two minutes while Israelis stood

at attention in respectful silence for the fallen. After lighting the Memorial Flame (Yakov Caspin, Argentina) and Laying the Wreath (Philip Levine, USA and Solly Ben-Ami, South Africa), the names of the 119 Fallen Machalniks and the countries from which they came were read out (by Stan Medicks). Rabbi Ephraim Shach conducted the religious part of the ceremony, the reading of Psalms, a brief address, collective Kaddish and the *El Maleh Rachamim* prayer, followed by the singing of Hatikvah (led by Lee Silverman, USA). Masters of Ceremony were Zipporah Porath and Raphael Seroussi.

By tradition, at the conclusion of the program Machalniks and their families socialize and picnic with old friends, but this year the service was followed by a brief, moving ceremony, conducted by Smoky Simon, Chairman of the World Machal Committee, to honor the contingent of about 20 young soldiers who were present, representing the 163 volunteers in this year's Machal 2000 program: 82 serve in the Nachal Battalion, 65 in the ultra-orthodox unit (Nachal Haredi) and 16 in the special Garin-Olim IDF program. The deputy officer in charge of this unit at the Ministry of Defense, Lt. Col. (res.) Itzik Angelevitch, spoke with pride about the success of the program and about the wonderful young people who came this year from 15 countries worldwide to carry on the Machal legacy. The founder and prime mover of the program, Avi Naor was also present. Lastly, the soldiers were served a hearty picnic lunch and presented with a souvenir, the first day issue envelope (1998) of the special Machal/Gachal stamp.

Zipporah Porath

Machal Veteran Makes Aliya After 36 Years and Becomes an Israeli Tennis Star



Lee Silverman

Machalnik LEON (LEE) SILVERMAN, who has been living in Israel since 1984, has been making a name for himself as a national tennis star in his age group, representing and winning for Israel in international competitions.

Lee grew up in Cleveland, Ohio but left home in August '45 to join the US Navy. When he was discharged, a year later, he moved to Los Angeles and enrolled in UCLA. But in the spring of '48, Lee felt it was important for him to join the defense forces of the nascent State of Israel and take part in its struggle for survival. He abandoned studies and enlisted in Land and Labor for Israel. It took about six months until he was called up, but finally, in September '48 he was shipped out of the US. Arriving in Europe, he spent six weeks in St. Jerome, a transit camp for DP's near Marseille, along with other recruits, awaiting transportation to Israel.

Eventually, Lee sailed on "Mishmar Haemek" and spent 15 days on the battered boat which almost sank twice when lashed by two separate, severe storms in the Mediterranean. He arrived in Israel in late October and was sent to the induction center at Tel Letvinsky (now Tel Hashomer), a camp originally built by the British. Several weeks later he was assigned to the newly formed Air Force Intelligence Division at the H.Q.

in Tel Aviv, which was then headed by New Yorker Nat Cohen, and worked with Leon Agriss, also an American.

When the War of Independence ended, Lee had an opportunity to play basketball on the Israel Air Force team and won the national service tournament. As a member of the IAF team, he played against the US Marines team from Jerusalem in the country's first international competition, and beat them impressively. Two officials at the game were from Maccabi Tel-Aviv and invited Lee to play for them, the first American to play for the Maccabi team. In July '49 his mother became very ill and he returned to LA, resumed studies at UCLA, from which he graduated.

Lee joined the Civil Service in '55 and worked as an accountant for the US Air Forces in Europe at HQ12th AF, Ramstein, Germany.



LEE SILVERMAN - photo

Two and a half years later he transferred to a base in France (Toul Rosieres), then a year later to HQ USAFE in Wiesbaden, Germany. He had been fluent in Yiddish as a child but had never studied German. He says the Germans he worked with always commented on his unusual accent: actually, he was speaking more Yiddish than German.

In early '63 he transferred back to the States and spent the

next twenty-one years as Deputy Director of Accounting and Finance at the Space Systems Division in El Segundo, Calif. While in California, he was president of California Machal (now Machal West) for about eight years.

He returned to Israel in '68 for the 20th anniversary celebrations of the State and again in '73 for the 25th anniversary. It was then that he decided to make aliyah but he had to wait until he was eligible to retire, which finally happened in April '84. He returned to Israel as an oleh some 36 years after his initial arrival as an overseas volunteer.

Lee has been playing tennis on a daily basis since '88 and has been the number one player in his age group for quite a few years. Among many tennis feats, he represented Israel at an international tennis competition in Denmark in '89, France in '91, at the International Clubs of Tennis

Tournament in Mexico City in April '04 and in Uruguay in '06. He won First Place in the Senior Olympics Tournament in Jerusalem (over 75 category) in October 2004, and Second Place in Open Doubles (over 60). He then went on to win First Place in the over 75 category in Singles in the National Tournament in Eilat, November '04. The year '04 ended with his winning First Place in over 75 category of Singles. Last year, at the 17th Maccabia in Eilat, he won a Bronze Medal in Tennis Singles and a Silver Medal in Tennis Doubles (in the 75 year category), and he is still going strong.

Lee was captivated, in '96, by a beautiful Russian olah to whom he has been married for six years. His son from his first marriage is living and working in Geneva, Switzerland and he visits with him often.

Among his other activities, Lee volunteers as an English

instructor for Senior IDF students at the English Language Institute at Wingate. He always attends the World Machal annual Memorial Services for Machal Fallen on Yom Hazikaron at Sha'ar Hagai, in the Jerusalem Hills. Last year he and Leah Kaplansky (widow of Eddy Kaplansky) led the singing of Hatikvah, which he is scheduled to do again this year.

Lee is now looking forward to a Machal reunion, which hopefully will be planned for the 60th anniversary of the State in '08, and also to participate as a tennis player in his sixth Maccabia in '09. He extends best wishes to his fellow Machalniks and everyone else who is reading this write-up and hopes they will keep active, stay healthy and happy. Amen to that.

*Zipporah Porath
Givat Savyon, Israel*

Letters To The Editor

To the Editor:

Hey, you guys:

Don't get too starry eyed about living here (Re: discussion about letter from Raphael Ben Yosef in Winter 2006 Newsletter). True, Israel is a harbor of refuge for those who are very grateful to come here because whatever it is it is better than the place they left. But, for those who left a decent country such as the U.S., it ain't so hot. Of course, I am a secular agnostic and did not come here because I wanted to kiss the Wall every morning. My Israeli wife wanted to go back and retire here and, since I owed her a lot, I agreed.

I lived once for a year in Mexico a year in England and a year in

France. I lived in several U.S. states. I traveled in Canada, Switzerland and the Caribbean and the South Pacific. And, I gotta tell ya, Israelis have repulsive manners. The Tel Aviv bus drivers are the worst I've ever seen: panic stops, tail gaiting, jack rabbit starts and all without the slightest considerations for the comfort of the passengers. . And since the bus company is a cooperative, they can't be fired. I have arthritic knees and spine. If the bus would stop at the curb the five inches less of a step down would make life easier. They stop anywhere from six inches to six feet of the curb and the five inches stepping up or down is a lot when I'm boarding or descending. Of course there are exceptions.

Once I tested the good manners of the populace. I held doors open for people emerging from a building. I held the doors open for people coming in behind me. I did it ten times and not a single person said thank-you. This may not be important for you. It is for me. I remember with sadness how nice Americans are. If you're coming here, good luck, bonne chance, Buena suerte and, finally, mazal tov.

*Shepard Rifkin
Tel Aviv*

Letter from Paul Kaye to Moshe Nachshon (Lipson) in honor of his eightieth birthday, forwarded to the Editor:

Dear Moshe:

Yom holedet sameach.

For me to recall our wonderful experiences I would have to write a book. Briefly, we met in Cyprus in 1947 and you were the head of shoo shoo. You made life in a detention camp livable. For that alone, and there is more, we owe you a debt of gratitude.

Your excellent command of the sinking of the Empire Lifeguard needs many pages of writing. I remember you making me get the rucksack full of gelignite from the British, the "Butsy Story, the fuse timer, etc." You fathered us when you helped us escape from Athlit. You provided food, clothing, lodging, touring, and more. I shall never forget your kindness. We worked together briefly in Marseilles. Then in 1948 in Caesarea you trained me to be a *hablan*, in *shayetet shloshesray* even though I could not swim. On a *tiyul* to Masada, again, no water or food, you brought us back to safety. I remember our meetings when you took care of the cadets of the missile program in the U.S. Chava stayed with us when you performed your duties.

This is just the tip of the iceberg of the things you did to make and keep a Jewish homeland. I'm glad you are part of my life. In a word, you are a *mentsh*. Lots of love from Susan and me. Biz a hundred and twenty-seven.

Paul Kaye

Paul explains for the uninitiated that shoo shoo is modification of shesh shesh with the meaning of keep quiet or maintain secrecy. These guys held secret positions in the underground and were nicknamed shoo shoos by American volunteers. The Empire Lifeguard

was a British prison ship used to transport the ma'apilim between Cyprus And Haifa. The "Butsy" story involved a woman who bravely helped to smuggle gelignite onto the Empire Lifeguard. Athlit was a detention camp for DPs arriving in Palestine. A hablan is an explosives expert.

To the Editor:

In reading the wonderful report of the opening of the exhibit in Gainesville I was disturbed by the end. I do not wish to be so presumptuous as to say that the full record of the Aliyah bet participation of North Americans would have been forgotten but for the work of my book *The Jew's Secret Fleet*. I started the research after having had a conversation with Ben Gurion who did not seem to understand our role in the whole program. I then invested over ten years to put the facts together and hired (at my own expense) a wonderful writer to help put it into the final form. The culmination of the project was not only the publication of the book, which we presented to the President of Israel Haim Herzog. The presentation came at the time that Harold Katz and I had organized a visit to Israel by the former sailors. For many it was the only time that they ever came to Israel. This was in July 1987.

In fact Lowenstein told me that he used my book for much of his information about the crews. Just to let you know how I put the crews together is another story of writing letters to all the Jewish press and all kinds of Jewish organizations such as Hadassah, ORT, Mizrahi, etc. Of course I started the project in the sixties. The men who called were all ready to let me in on who and what they knew. In fact one of the men

that served was as a result of his wife reading the ORT magazine. He, incidentally, was not Jewish.

*Keep up the good work.
Murray S. Greenfield*

To the Editor:

I trust that you are keeping well. Many thanks for your very informative winter newsletter.

Please convey my sincere congratulations to Arthur Bernstein and Joe Warner on their presidency and vice presidency.

Raphael ben Yosef is inconsiderate, unsympathetic and downright disloyal to his former buddies by cutting himself off. He should re-join. Not everyone was devoid of responsibilities to be able to remain in Israel after the 1948 war. What better way to keep in touch, learn the latest news, mourn those brave souls who have passed away than by contributing to a magazine that informs. Those who stayed and assisted to lay the foundations of the IDF and helped in building the new Israel deserve much praise

The AVI magazine is a truly indomitable publication. I read it avidly and at times contribute. It is professionally set out and well edited with executive and lay contributors. Many have given years of dedicated service. I applaud them. The magazine brought together those chaverim who returned home and who otherwise would have disappeared into the morass of society, yet secretly proud at having done the right thing at the right time.

I congratulate Ralph Lowenstein by accomplishing his grand project, the Gainesville Machal and Aliya Bet Museum. I also congratulate Migdal Teperson for his valuable work at the Latrun museum dedicat-



Top row from left: Joe Woolf (South Africa), Sam Fagin (UK), Jack Frances (UK). Middle row from left: Shelomo Dehad (Israeli), Center of Magen David David Fritz Horenstein (Rumania), Rubin Saul (Bombay). Bottom line: Ziggy Stein (South Africa), Stanley Medicks (UK and Kenya), Aharoni Landman (Israeli). Far right Luther Brand (South Africa).

ed to the WWII soldiers and Machal volunteers. Both will provide education and publicity regarding an unparalleled Machal story for posterity. World Machal in Tel Aviv under the chairmanship of dedicated South African Smoky Simon and his skilled secretary Doreen, have kept haverim in Israel and around the world informed of events and other interesting matters. Kol HaKavod.

I run a newsletter in London for 167 UK and 141 European Machalniks: It is very satisfying to arrange that old comrades get in touch with one another. I have also made provision that all my members receive their entitled awards: the Ot Hakomemiut and Ot Lochme Hamedina from the Israeli government. For the past 20 years I have arranged informal and formal meetings. At

times with leading Israeli personalities and those at the Israeli Embassy in London. I instigated, together with the Keren Kayemeth L'Israel, the erection and dedication of the Machal Memorial at Sha'ar Hagai in 1993. This is now a focal point for chaverim to gather on Yom Hazikaron and commemorate those who gave their lives in that bitter and crucial war.

Newspaper articles and public relations are all part of my work.

I was born in Kenya and served in WWII as an infantry commander in the Kings African Rifles and then served as a

platoon commander. I completed my service in 1946 as a Captain, Company Commander. I was in touch at the time with the South African Zionist Federation and made arrangements for them to pick me up at Nairobi together with two other colleagues and transport us to Rome. From Rome we flew together with a number of South Africans and military hardware in a WWII Dakota to Sde Dov in mid-June 1948. There I served in the 7th Brigade under Canadian Ben Dunkelman. I married in Jerusalem in 1949 and worked there as a plumber. Unfortunately I had to return to Kenya and run the family business, as my father took ill. In our hearts we are all proud. Yitzhak Rabin praised our contribution. In our hearts we are all proud. Even more so let us remember the

words of Ben Gurion. "Volunteers from the diaspora were the single most significant contribution to winning the war".

In the attached photograph with myself kneeling centre, together with my comrades under the Magen David attests to this and our Jewish faith.

With my very warm and kind regards

*Stanley Medicks
Co-coordinator, The British and
European Machal Association*

To the Editor:

The winter issue of AVI Newsletter included an article about my early life in Tarboro, N.C. and my family. Included was my military service in both WW II, as an officer in the US navy, with our assignment being antisubmarine patrols in the North Atlantic. I was in Jerusalem during the siege and afterwards in the Israeli navy. I am most grateful for this article as my family, and their descendents, will remember, for all eternity, that we few did not stay on the sidelines but participated.

In particular, I am indebted to Ira Feinberg for his tremendous effort in writing the article and to Samuel Klausner for assembling and publishing the article about myself. A few key gentlemen keep AVI alive. Si Spiegelman, as coordinator, David Gerard as treasurer, Paul Kaye, public relations and there are others. AVI and all American Jews are eternally indebted to Ralph Lowenstein for compiling and assembling the Machal Museum, a reminder for all times of the sacrifice of American Jews

Regarding the article by Raphael ben Yosef, stating that AVI is a relic, that we did nothing extraor-

dinaire for a young Jew and, to really contribute, we should live in Israel. I could not disagree more strongly. Out of five million American Jews, some 1200 of us chose to volunteer, put our lives on the line, and witness a prophecy of the Bible fulfilled before our very eyes. Some twelve cargo aircraft, purchased by American Jews and flown by American pilots ferried weaponry from Czechoslovakia, which was a lifesaver for Israel. Two years after the creation of Israel, the language of the air force was English. Aliyah Beth ships, overflowing with DPs, brought the attention and sympathy of the world for the Jewish people and Israel. American Jews purchased these ships. An American Jew, who was a partner of President Harry Truman, is the man who persuaded Truman to see Weitzman. Harry Truman remarked, "you Jews beat me and I'm glad you did." What a mensch! From that meeting, the US then supported Israel's passage of Statehood thru the UN. And, what about American political support for Israel!

Some 39 of our comrades paid the ultimate sacrifice. AVI is no relic. While we are still on this good earth, and time is taking its toll, we are telling our children and future generations that we few proudly served. This is living history and Americans Jews should take note that we simply did not send over money but put our lives on the line. Many units of the armed forces from WW II have annual reunions. Are they relics? Is history itself a relic?

Regarding my not making Aliyah, I went to Palestine (now Israel) in 1947 because I felt that a struggle would ensue and I wanted to contribute as much as possible. I served with the Haganah in Jerusalem during the siege and after the

siege with the Navy. My life was endangered many times. My compound at Yemen Moshe, opposite the Old City, was car bombed and demolished. Even though I was 100 yards away, the force of the blast threw me on the ground; my 81 mm mortar imploded on the one occasion an alternate crew manned the weapon, killing the entire crew; a sniper wounded me and I required medical attention and my ship was strafed by an Egyptian spitfire. As gunnery officer of the Eilat, I directed gunfire from the roof of the pilot-house. Bullets hit the deck between my legs, with paint chips penetrating my trousers into my legs. There were other instances but those come readily to mind.

We were in Israel when every man was needed. When the fighting was over, I returned home to my family for which I do not apologize. I feel not one particle of guilt for not making Aliyah. I, and most Americans, have contributed to Israel, both monetarily and politically. Israel, even during biblical times, had hundreds of thousand Jews living outside its borders, along the entire Mediterranean.

I admire those who stayed. However, we, who served and returned to our birthplace, are no less dedicated to Israel's survival than those who remained. To ben Yosef, I wish you well.

Harold B. Shugar

To the Editor:

My name is Batya Lam, formerly Bessie Wolfson of Toronto, Canada, and I served in the War of Independence as a "little cypher clerk" under the command of David Macarov in the fledgling Israeli Air force. In the last issue of the American Vet-

erans Of Israel the issue was raised of Machal-Aliyah and this has bothered me for a long time. Why did so many of the Machal volunteers go back to their home countries when the war was over? Winning the war was crucial but building the country afterwards was also a challenge. The truth of the matter is that many volunteers had no intention whatsoever of remaining and the "call to arms" was answered and that was it. It was regrettable since their talents, and there were many very gifted among the volunteers, could have been used in the early years (which were difficult) to help in building the country. I myself, left my job, said goodbye to my parents and friends and came here to stay. I did my stint in the air force since English-speaking cipher clerks were needed to work with the volunteers who did not speak Hebrew. I helped to start Kibbutz Sassa on the Lebanon border and later married into Kibbutz Eindor where I had 4 children all of whom served in the army. Life has been difficult but I do not regret one moment the decision I made to stay and I do share with the other Machal volunteers who left after the war the knowledge that we had the privilege to participate in the making of history. The fact that the volunteers still like to get together, meet old buddies and reminisce shows how meaningful their service was. I appreciate the fact than anybody who served and went back home still supported Israel, financially, morally and politically. Our ranks are quickly being depleted and it is a good thing that the memory of the times gone by is being written and archived.

Batya Lam

Obituaries



Sarah Plen, 1948

Sarah Plen: Wireless Operator

From the Hartford Courant, October 30, 2005:

Sarah (Marder) Plen, 76, of Windsor, CT, passed away at her home on Friday, October 28, 2005. She was born in Hartford to Abraham and Lillian Marder of Hartford and Hadera, Palestine. She served as a wireless operator in Israel's War of Independence. For twenty-five years, she worked for the Shaklee Corporation selling health products. She was past-president of the Israel Philatelic Society and a lifelong member of Hadassah.

Sarah's own statement of her wartime service submitted to the AVI in 1994:

In your May Newsletter you requested personal experiences for the AVI Mahal issue. The following is my experience. My parents were ardent Zionists who left Hartford, CT to live in Palestine in 1933 with two

daughters. We lived in Hadera for six years and returned for a visit to the United States in August 1939. Hitler marched into Poland on September 1, and we were stuck during the war years.

The first ship leaving for Palestine after the war was a converted troop ship called "Marine Shark." She left New York June 8th and arrived in Haifa June 22, 1946. We were on it. We were now four children, the youngest 9 months old. Also sailing on the boat were

two other members of AVI--Moshe Brodetsky and Benjamin Steuerman (he was called The Rov--probably because he had a beard). The family returned to Hadera but in September 1946, I moved to Tel-Aviv and got a job with The Imperial Chemical Industries Levant Ltd. (I.C.I.) on Salame Street in Jaffa/Tel-Aviv. I shared a room with a girl in Kiryat Meyer and through her joined the Hagana in early 1947. My job was to clean ammunition at the Central Egged Station in Tel-Aviv from convoys returning from Jerusalem, which was blockaded.

After the United Nations partitioned Palestine in November, 1947, I signed-up for "Part Time" Army. Early in 1948 I was attached to a Palmach Unit that traveled with convoys to Jerusalem and Haifa. The British were still in the country and the girls were used to hide the Sten Guns and grenades under their coats and, when needed, they were to give the ammo to their partner to use.

After the convoy duty I was sent to Sarona in Tel-Aviv for a 3-day ammunition course. After returning to work at I.C.I. I noticed that the city was emptying. Friends disappeared. I spoke with a friend of mine who was working with Shin Bet in Haifa to make contact with someone so that I could go out on a course. He spoke with Yochai Fishman Ben-Nun, who was head of the Palyam in Haifa. Later he became Commander in Chief of the Navy. We made an appointment and on the designated day I met Yochai at the Palyam office on King George Street. We drove in his car to a street in Hadar Hacarmel and soon a fellow was approaching us. Yochai introduced me to Yossi Hashaman (later I found out his name was Rosenthal and that he was Communication Officer in Carmeli, Chativa 2). He asked me one question--was I musical--I answered yes, I had sung for four years in the High School Choir. He told me to go back to Tel-Aviv and say nothing to anyone and I should contact a fellow named Itzhak. I was to come with a suitcase and be ready to leave at once. At work I asked for a leave of absence. I found Itzhak and after talking with me he sent me to Kibbutz Shefaiim. Only after I arrived at the Kibbutz did I find out that this was a Wireless Operating Course and that I would be there for a month and a half. The study was intensive; thirteen hours a day. We found out that in the U.S. Army this course took 6 months. One day I was surprised to see my sister Alice talking to our instructors. It turned out that she had an idea that I was taking the course. I had no knowledge that she was a Wireless Operator. Because of the

times secrecy was a must.

I graduated on May 11 1948 and reported to Chativa 2 Carmeli in Haifa on May 15, 1948. It was an historic moment to watch the last British soldier depart. The Station was on Shoshanat Hacarmel, but there were no accommodations, for all of the people were from Haifa or the surrounding towns. For a while I was given 21 Pounds monthly for living expenses. I rented a room on Pevsner Street on the Hadar Hacarmel Later on I just slept in the Radio Station. We never did go through Basic Training and we never slept in camp. The problem with that arrangement was that we also did not get food and I had to pay my way through the Army. I served for 1 1/2 years in Haifa as a Wireless Operator plus coding and decoding. The last half year I was transferred to Eir Ganim and Tarshicha. I was discharged on March 9,1950 after two years.

On March 11 I went down to Eilat to join "Operation Arava" Its purpose was to build a road from Beer Sheva to Eilat where I met my husband, Reuben Plen.

David Plen adds that his father, Reuben, was born in Nairobi in 1922 and moved with his family to Petach Tikva in 1929. He served in the Palestine Police Scottish Brigade in 1937 and was drafted into the British Army in 1929 where he fought in North Africa and Sicily. In 1944 he transferred to the Jewish Brigade and served in North Italy. He served in the Israeli Army from 1948-1949 when he was sent to Eilat to assist in developing the area.

Sarah's husband Reuben Plen and their sons David and Michael Plen and their wives Donna and Catherina survive her as do her sister Alice Mileikowski and her

husband Hovav and four grandchildren.

*Condolences to Reuben Plen
53 Arrowbrook Rd.
Windsor, CT 06095*

Aaron "Red" Finkel: Fighter Pilot with 101 Squadron



Aaron Red Finkel (recent)

Aaron Lee Finkel, nicknamed "Red," died in an assisted living facility in Woodland, CA on February 23, 2006. Aaron

was born in Brooklyn on May 21, 1919 to Esther (Nagler) Finkel and Isadore Finkel. After high school he went into business with his father's company, Star Industries. Which made universal plates for car radios. Later he worked in the family business, JFD Electronics. Aaron was drafted into the Army in WWII where he served as a medic. Subsequently, he transferred to the Army Air Corps pilot training program and earned his wings. He flew P-

47s over the China-Burma hump. A cousin described him as being dashing in his uniform, a good dancer, a good drinker, a good smoker and as having a gorgeous smile.

As the State of Israel was coming into being, Aaron was recruited and served in the elite 101 Fighter Squadron. It is related that one night early in May 1948 a stranger sitting on his bed awakened him. He assumed his roommate let the man in but had no idea who the guy was. The stranger tried to convince Finkel to fly for the Jews in Palestine and asked what it would take. Aaron is reported to have responded that any Jews willing to stand up and fight for their life deserved all the help he could give them. He told the man that he would do it for a bottle of whiskey, cigarettes and thirty dollars a month. Days later he flew to Rome on a Constellation sitting alongside his future comrade in arms, Syd Antin. The two of them finished their S-199 training at Ceske Budejovice in early June and hitched a ride on a LAPSA C-46 from Zatec to Israel with a stop over in Ajaccio, Corsica.



Aaron Red Finkel

Aaron returned to the United States where he met Claire. They had Joshua and Aaron and raised Claire's two sons, Stephen J. Shapiro and Andrew L. Shapiro. He leaves five grandchildren (Jason, Lisa, Jessica, Robbi and Rachel) and four great-grandchildren (Jordyn, Kayla, Raya and Sophie). He went into the real estate business and gave lectures to young people about his Israeli experience. Aaron was not only committed to his 101 Machal friends his entire life but also to maintaining Israel's freedom, which he fought so bravely to create.

Based on contributions by Tom Tugend and Jason Fenton

Eulogy for Aaron Finkel

Mitchell Flint

In many ways Aaron Finkel and I were similar because we were of the same generation and made the same decisions among the choices of that generation. Both of us became American fighter pilots during WW II and both of us volunteered to fly in defense of the new State of Israel and we both had red hair. Since he arrived at the fighter squadron before me he could claim the name "Red" Finkel.

Aaron and I met at the fighter squadron base at Herzliya in 1948 and have been close friends ever since. Aaron said, on many occasions, that he decided to volunteer when he heard that Jews were going to stand up and fight unlike those who died in concentration camps without the ability to fight back. Aaron was one of my heroes. He was selected by the squadron commander to go on a very dangerous, but important, mission. A few Spitfire planes had been acquired in Czechoslovakia and the challenge was to fly them to Israel despite the fact that these

planes were not designed to fly that distance. The plane was fitted with additional fuel tanks and Aaron took on the mission, ready to fly a one engine and one seater plane whatever the weather. We considered this a feat of honor.

Another feat of honor was when he delivered his son Josh Finkel when the baby was coming before Claire could make it to the hospital. On that occasion, he had Claire to advise him.

I don't think Aaron had any regrets. He was his own man and, as Sinatra sang, he did it his own way. He was a constant friend of all the volunteers. We will miss him.

*Condolences to Claire Finkel
2385 Roscomare Rd. B-2
Los Angeles, CA 90077*

Adrian Phillips: Second Engineer on the Hatikvah



Adrian Phillips (underlined) with Friends

Adrian Phillips, 86 years old, a crewmember of the Hatikvah, passed away suddenly on February 25, 2006. Adrian was born in New York City on October 11, 1919, the son of Hungarian immigrants, Joseph and Rose Phillips. In 1942 he graduated from City College of New York, cum laude, as a mechan-

ical engineer. He attended the Merchant Marine Academy, and served during World War II in the European Theater of Operations.

He volunteered in 1946 to join the crew of the Exodus. When the ship was forced to return to port he was reassigned to the Hatikvah (Tradewinds) as a Second Engineer. The ship was captured by the British Navy on May 18, 1947 with 1500 Holocaust survivors on board, all of whom were interned in Cyprus. Three months later they were transferred to a prison ship, the Empire Life Guard, sailing for Haifa. As the vessel sailed into the harbor, explosives that had been smuggled aboard were detonated to sink the ship. Along with several other American crewmen, the British as one of the suspects in the sabotage held Adrian. He was interned in Athlit along with other crewmembers, of whom 26 were Americans. Most of the crewmembers were released soon after, including the skipper, Sidney Yellin, in the British attempt to avoid an international incident over the American prisoners. Adrian and two other New Yorkers (Herman Braverman and Michael Weiss) continued to be held in Athlit without being charged. Adrian's mother, Rose Phillips, launched a one-woman campaign from her home in the Bronx. She contacted newspapers, State Department officials, and congressmen and fought intrepidly for the prisoners' freedom. After a lengthy battle, in Palestine and in the US, her son returned home. Adrian had met a young woman among the holocaust survivors in Athlit, Gerda Gottesman. Seven years later they married. During his imprisonment, Adrian Phillips wrote to his mother " Please keep up your courage; the worst is behind us, and that goes for all the Jews."

Returning to the U.S. he enjoyed a successful career as a professional engineer, presenting papers and lectures for his peers from various professional organizations. He traveled frequently, including many business trips to Europe, the Middle East as well as China. Upon his retirement, he became well known as an amateur guide in the lower Manhattan area where he resided. He liked to “rescue” lost tourists and point them in the right direction. He was recognized in articles in Swedish and Czechoslovak newspapers for his good deeds.

Adrian was married for 50 years to his dear wife Gerda, who passed away last February. He was predeceased, in his youth, by his sister Sylvia and later on by his beloved daughter, Dorly. He is survived by his granddaughter, Zeeva Weisman, 25, and her husband Roy; his grandson Joshua, 22, and his fiancé, Lisa; his brother, Shlomo and sister in law, Lillian; his niece, Haya Luftig and her husband Steve; his son in law, Abe Altman; as well as two great grandsons, Eliav and Isaac and a great-nephew, David.

Adrian served on AVI’s board of directors for many years as a dedicated officer. He was generous with family and friends. He leaves family members, many friends and neighbors who will miss him.

*Shlomo Phillips
Si Spiegelman*

Julius Weiss-Naval Officer

Julius Weiss, 76, a veteran of the Israel Navy during the War of Independence, died on January 10, 2006 in Melbourne, FL after a lengthy illness. He was born in Borislav, Poland and a survivor of concentration camps under the German occupation of Poland. He came to appreciate the



Julius Weiss, Israel Navy (far right)

role of fighting resistance to would-be oppressors of Jewry. He remembered the Warsaw Ghetto Revolt as especially heroic. He wrote to the New York Post citing the hostility of some Poles to the Jews in the Ghetto. After World War II he was repatriated by a London based Jewish War Orphans Organization. The organization sponsored his education and retraining at Grays Naval Academy. When the War of Independence broke out in Israel, Julius went to Israel and enlisted in the Haganah and served with the Israel Navy in formation. After the war he was employed by the ZIM lines and, in the late fifties, came to the United States and became an American citizen.

He married in 1963. That marriage ended thirteen year later. He worked as a commodities trader. From 1969 he worked for World Commodities and later for Merrill Lynch, Pierce, Penner and Smith. From the mid-seventies he became an interdependent trader and consultant on commodities trading.

Julius Weiss is survived by his son Herbert and the family of Scholomo Weiss of Tel Aviv.

Following is an autobiographical tale of his life in German concentration camps:

I was born in the Carpathian mountains of Poland, in a town called Borislav, which was then the center of the second largest oil field in Europe. The Germans occupied that area in 1941. Within a period of 2 years they killed or deported nearly all the 14,000 Jews who lived there. The first year of occupation we were convinced that they were taking us to work in German factories. The Nazi deception worked very well, for who could have possibly imagined that the best educated and technologically advanced nation in Europe would resort to total mass murder of defenseless men. Women and children, Some of us fought back. but it was too late and too little.

The Poles and Ukrainians were against us too. In 1943 the Germans killed my beautiful beloved and accomplished mother Tylda Weiss. She was caught carrying food from another town. Twenty-three years later in a German court in Bremen I faced SS Obersturmführer Freiderich Hildebrand. It took me a long time to track him down. He was being accused of killing my mother and received a life sentence. He was in charge of all labor camps in Galizia and was responsible for killing at least 600 Jews.

I spent 4 years in Borislav Ghetto, in the Carpathian forest and in concentration camps (Plaseow, Wieliczka and Flossenburg.) Let me give you an idea what one day in a concentration



Julius Weiss, Officer in Israel Navy



Julius Weiss (L) with Rabbi Irving Block

camp was like, In Wieliczka, for instance, I worked deep underground in building an arms factory. My job was to pull little trains, often in darkness. 10 hours a day. I was 14 years old. Anyone who could not work was killed. My total worldly possessions consisted of a tin plate and a spoon (not even a toothbrush),

The food was a piece of black bread and ersatz coffee twice a day. In some camps they also added a plate of soup. The worst part was working outside without an overcoat. so most people either froze to death or died from hunger. At the end of each working day we would drag the bod-



Presentation of The Jew's Secret Fleet to President Herzog (July 1987) (see Greenfield letter, p. 6)

ies back so they could be counted.

My last concentration camp was Flossenburg in Bavaria. There I had my first chance to get back at the Germans. A small group of us became adept at sabotaging German aeroplane parts. My beloved father, Eizig Weiss, who was a petroleum engineer, was still with me. We went. Through several selections together. Unfortunately,

in 1945 several months before liberation, the Nazis separated us and killed him.

I survived my final death march and was liberated by General Patton. I was 16 years old then and I went from place to place looking for Nazis. I felt badly all my life that we didn't fight back from the beginning, but found partial redemption in fighting in the Israeli War of Independence.

I am eternally grateful to the fighters of the Warsaw Ghetto. They stood up against the German army for three weeks. They died in attics and sewers. forgotten by the whole world and brought us honor. The lesson they taught us is that it is our duty to teach our children to know how to defend ourselves.

Out of the bitter experience of the Holocaust a new generation of Jews was born who will NEVER AGAIN allow anyone to destroy us.

Am Israel Hai.
Julius Weiss
4/16/93

Condolences to Herbert Weiss
1709 Palm Ridge Rd.
Melbourne, FL 32935

Sidney Halperin: Wounded in the Battle of Latrun

Sidney Halperin passed away in Israel in late 2005. Sidney was born on May 12, 1922 in St. Catherine, Canada. His father had immigrated from Palestine and his mother from Russia. He attended the University of Toronto for a few years and then moved to the United States. He served in WWII in the US Army as an infantry signaler. In 1948 Ben Dunckleman recruited him to what would become Machal. He fought in the Battle of Latrun, along with Bobbie Eisen, and was wounded. Upon his return to Canada he was accused of treason for fighting against Great Britain, an ally of Canada. Later he returned to Israel and settled in Ashkelon where he worked as a land surveyor.

Hebrew-English Translators Wanted

The "Spy" article was translated by AVI volunteers. We have more like it. If you are willing to render 6-8 pages of Hebrew into good English, please e-mail
sklausner@ucwphilly.rr.com
Thank-you

Is anyone familiar with **Eugene Finch** who served in Israel, probably as an aircraft mechanic, during the War of Independence? He may have returned to work in the aircraft industry in Fort Worth, TX. Anyone with information contact Zipporah Porath (zip@netvision.net.il)

of the spy Hans Alex Lehman, was published in an Egyptian newspaper under the headlines “Secrets of Israel’s Air Force.” The publication is tendentious and emphasized what were then “negative attitudes” toward Israel in general and the Air Force in particular.

A. The tie with Czechoslovakia and behind it the Soviet Union, formed a dangerous proof to the Western Block of what is expected from “Communist Israel,” something far from reality.

B. The shady character of Mahal (volunteers from abroad) Air Force crew who were active in operation Balak (the air train which transported combat aircraft and arms from Czechoslovakia to Israel) received special emphasis in the spy’s notes. In his words, most pilots were drunkards and gamblers. In reality, viewing the history of those days, the crews supported the state of Israel at the time when Israel’s existence was in a critical state. The transportation of the combat aircrafts – supported the air force in its early stages of the war, changing it from an inferior force then, to a superior air force of today. Their contribution during that period was critical to the military, without them it would be hard to understand the history of the air force.

With that, there are many details in the article about the air force and its activities in those days. We found it right to use this “particular” story to tell about the air force during that period – of the climate it was functioning in – and especially about the Air Transport Command which was

responsible for air transportation from all of Europe to Israel.

It is difficult to estimate the amount of damage caused by this spy during the period of his service with the air force on the one hand, and the influence of the information that he supplied to the Egyptian newspaper on the other hand. Yet, if he was exact and continued to send British Intelligence detailed information after each trip, altogether 20 reports containing approximately 250 pages, then it is clear that his activity caused damage. Proof will be found only when our archival examination of documents is performed (especially the British, Egyptian, and United Nations archives) at least with what is connected to the B17 crafts (“the flying fortresses”) in Czechoslovakia, as Lehman reported the correct timing for a plan to bomb Cairo. This information was discovered but did not spoil the plan, in Lehman’s words, only because the Egyptians did not believe him. But it is clear that the information and the names of the American Air Crews as described in the spy’s publication, hurt them since in those days, some of them were prosecuted for their part in helping Israel.

Introduction

On December 16th, 1948, in the midst of the War of Independence, the Egyptian newspaper Al Musri published an editorial under the lead “Secrets of the Jewish Air Force” claiming a full confession by an American pilot regarding the smuggling of arms to the Jews. At the end of the article, the name of the spy was revealed: Alex Lehman. In his own words, this

non-Jewish pilot, was employed by the British Intelligence Service, gave details regarding the air force, in general, and the Air Transport Command, in particular. He was engaged as co pilot during operation Balak). Balak was the air train that transported arms and Messerschmitt combat aircraft from Czechoslovakia to Israel.

The purpose of publishing the article, with accurate details, planned to show ties between Israel and the Soviet Union via Czechoslovakia. This was meant to deepen the West’s suspicions that Israel was deeply involved with Communism and therefore they would disassociate themselves from Israel and maintain an embargo against the state. All of this happened during the cold war existing between the West and the Soviet Block. Added proof to this was found in another article published by the same newspaper December 25th – under the lead “Military Alliance between the Soviet Union and the Jews – 4 air routes between Tel Aviv and Russia.” The article argued that the Jews could not have purchased the crafts without a Russian permit.” The Soviet Union’s involvement in Czechoslovakia’s approval to supply combat aircraft and military support to the state of Israel – has never been verified.

Yet, Lehman’s testimony was very important because it was made directly by a pilot flying for Israel from the end of June to the middle of August during the critical period of the War of Independence in the infancy of the Israeli Air Force. On August 11th, the Czechs discontinued the project and evacuated the American aircraft and crews from Zatec airport, where the Balak project

was in operation. Concurrently, three B-17s, purchased in the US arrived in Zatec and on July 14th flew to bomb Cairo, El Arish and Gaza.

We will investigate how much the force knew about this spy, how much of the article's details were correct and explain Lehman's attitude and how the Air Force conducted its security in those days. This research draws on materials from the Zahal archives and internal research documents published by the newly formed air force. These include *Origins of the Air Force*, *First Flyers*, *The Air Transport Command and other literature published on this subject*, especially *Secret Mission*, *They Took Off in the Dark* and *The Faithful*.

Background

Operation Balak

One of the major problems that the Jewish Community in Israel faced on November 29, 1947 was the prospect of war with a paucity of arms. Again and again, Shaul Mayerov (Avigoor), who headed the European active purchasing agency, needed to rush the purchase of arms that were already bought in Czechoslovakia. But, the main problem was how to transfer what was already purchased. It was clear that naval transportation was not secure and needed too much time to get to its destination. Air transportation was more efficient and quicker but the amount of arms that could be transported by air was limited. Also, it was much more expensive and just as dangerous as the naval transportation, because the British were still in Israel and their

agents, as well as the FBI and the American CIA, kept a strict watch, with regards to the purchasing activities and followed closely Israeli agents in Europe. The possibility of organizing a large jet transport and its crew, willing to transfer the arms to Israel, disregarding the United Nations embargo and camouflaging its departure and arrival in Israel, seemed monumental. At the same time, Ben Gurion, kept requesting again and again, several times a day, to send arms.

In the end, due to the critical situation that the Israeli community faced, (especially during the month of March 1948) a Skymaster jet with its American crew was leased to bring over 200 guns 40 machine guns and a large cache of arms from Czechoslovakia to Israel. After the jet landing in Beit Dras on March 31st (Operation Balak 1) that night, the arms were transported to the fighters on the road to Jerusalem with Operation Nachshon. At the same time, the jet returned to Czechoslovakia to bring more arms to Israel, but when it landed, members of the crew were warned by representatives of the American Embassy not to perform additional flights from Czechoslovakia to Israel. This type of activity would be considered as acting against the American embargo policy for this region. And so the Skymaster aircraft and other transportation jets that were purchased in those days, in the United States, were mentioned in a detailed report that was given by the head of the CIA R. H. Hillencoter to President Truman and his staff. We learned of constant effort by intelligence to follow the purchasing agents. The British were also involved in

trying to foil the attempt to deliver arms from Czechoslovakia. The urgency of transporting arms appeared again on the 12th of May, when there was a meeting of state officials with Ben Gurion:

If we remain with the arms we currently possess, our situation seems very dangerous. My own opinion is that this situation will improve. We already have some arms that have not yet arrived in Israel. If we had all of these arms, which may be on the way, we could stand at ease... It's not easy to transfer immediately all that we have purchased abroad. There is a chance that at least part of the purchase will be in our hands, but when? How much? It is a difficult task to resolve these two questions.

In the end, a group of Swedish pilots, flying Dakota aircraft, transported arms from Czechoslovakia to Corsica and from there to Israel, to the Air Force base at Ekron (Tel Nof) with a Skymaster used in two flights. On the 12th of May and the 14th of May, the road opened for transportation of arms that arrived from Europe using Commando aircraft purchased in the United States under a fictional aviation company called LAPSA (Lineas Aereas de Panama Sociedad Anonima). They were also included in the air train called Balak. Until then, (on the 23rd April) especially thanks to Otto (Uriel) Felix (Doron) who had been sent to Czechoslovakia by Ben Gurion. In November 1947, an agreement was signed to purchase 10 Messerschmitt combat aircraft. Equipping the combat aircraft was the highest priority. Until then, there was no other place to purchase combat

aircraft. The purchasing agents were forced to pay a large sum of money, in the amount of \$180,000 for each plane. At the same time, several pilots were sent to take courses to familiarize themselves with that type of plane. The transportation of aircraft was still an issue. The planes could not fly directly to Israel, and needed to stop periodically for refueling. None of the European countries wanted to break the embargo publicly but some allowed the refueling secretly. The need of combat aircraft heightened especially from the 15th of May 1948, day following the announcement of Israel's Independence, when the Egyptian air force started bombarding civilian communities.

The Suspect Hans Lehman

Hans Alex Lehman was born in Switzerland. He was not Jewish... He flew as a co-pilot during Operation Balak (in the War of Independence). He took part in operational flights including several with Larry Raab, one of the captains of the command. On the earliest personnel lists of crews active in Operation Balak, from June 11 (1948) his name is not mentioned, nor does it appear on the list of 27 June. Lehman arrived at the Jewish Agency offices in Rome on May 28. His story was that he had deserted from the Swiss Air Force to volunteer for the Israeli Air Force. After waiting there for a few days he was sent first to Paris and later to Czechoslovakia. He had a visa for three months in Israel beginning starting June 23rd and a few days later he became part of Operation Balak. Soon after – in

the first week of July – he aroused the suspicion of the organizers of the operation in Czechoslovakia who shared their suspicion with the staff of the Air Transport Command in Israel. On July 9 the Israel based staff requested “a full report including details of the questionnaire used for his posting to his job.” On the same date a letter was sent to Yehuda Brieger, head of the communication with Israel in Operation Balak, from Meir (Munya) Mardor's adjutant, Yaacov Feldman: “With reference to the suspect Hans Lehman: we immediately sent a wire on this matter. In the meantime we have detained him in Israel, but we cannot arrange for an investigation before receiving the details requested.”

A few days later, on July 13, a letter in English from Mardor to Hal Auerbach, operations officer of the command, stated that regarding the investigation against Lehman the following details have been received from Zatec (Zebra): He is definitely suspected of being a spy. He had contact with a prostitute who is known to be a British agent. He often left Zatec for Prague, where he stayed in the most expensive hotels, despite being penniless when he was recruited to work for operation Balak. Moreover, he made contact there with an unknown Swiss citizen in whom he confided that he was now working for us and that he was an agent of the Swiss Secret Service. He also showed him an order, which had been distributed in Zatec, and which had been marked ‘Read and Destroy’. Mardor ordered that Lehman be sent away immediately, from the base in Zatec, since a feverish effort was under way

there to get Flying Fortresses (B17) operational. According to the details of Operation Navot which had been prepared at the headquarters of the Air Force in Israel, the planes were to bomb Cairo, Gaza and El-Arish on their way to Israel. It was therefore recommended that the operations officer of the command should consult Zvi Sokolnik, the Security officer of the command as to what immediate action should be taken against the man, his arrest or any other action found advisable.

But the damage had already been done, as verified in Lehman's article printed in an Egyptian newspaper: “In July I informed the Egyptian minister in Prague in the presence of his secretary that in Zatec there are three Flying Fortresses which are about to bomb Cairo. Unfortunately I was not believed, and I could not endanger myself further in Czechoslovakia.” And indeed, as aforesaid, Lehman was prevented from leaving Israel.

The Bombing of Cairo

On July 15 the three Flying Fortresses took off from Zatec. The captain of the plane scheduled to bomb Cairo was Ray Kurtz, as was stated in Lehman's testimony, Bill Katz was second pilot and there were another six crewmembers. Also in the plane was the deputy commander of the air force Hyman Shachman (Shamir) who arrived in Zatec one day before especially for this mission.

The flight from Zatec to Cairo passed almost without difficulties and the plane dropped about two and a half tons of bombs over the centre of the town – near Abdin palace. The intelligence

report accounts for 30 killed and about 55 wounded, and damage to the railway line and a few houses. The second plane indeed bombed Gaza and the third bombed Rafiah mistaking it for El-Arish. The bombing of Cairo had far reaching repercussions; it evoked widespread fear in Egypt and British concerns that Egypt would demand assistance under the Anglo-Egyptian treaty of 1936. They also suspected that additional bombings of the town would lead to the downfall of the government and would force them to intervene militarily in Egypt. The commander of the British forces in Egypt even suggested pressuring the UN to forbid the use of air warfare in the war and in the event that this demand was not obeyed – the RAF should destroy all the air forces involved.

The pursuit of Lehman continued. A report from David Fliegelman (Peleg), Administrative Officer of the Air Transport Command dated 18 July reads: “At present special attention is being paid to a pilot suspected of spying. Steps taken in this investigation include a special security agent who has been placed at the Park Hotel. In addition, in order to control direct contact between aircrews and journalists while they were housed in Tel Aviv and especially in the Park hotel, a hotel called Bristol was rented in Ben-Yehuda Street as residence for aircrews. It was guarded by the military personnel at its entrances to prevent the entry of unwelcome guests. A report at the end of July reads: “Hotel Bristol has begun to function. All pilots of the Air Transport Command in Tel Aviv have been placed there. The case

of Lehman who is suspected of spying continues to be dealt with.”

It is not clear if there is a direct connection with the spy Lehman, but the Order of the Day of the staff of the Air force dated 2 August runs ‘Every member of the Air Force understands well that the enemy derives significant advantages from any information they receive regarding anything concerning the Air Force. Different pieces of information gathered such as types of planes, kinds and numbers of bombs, pilots, location of bases etc. enables the enemy to piece together a picture of the state of our forces... All loose talk can cause the death of our flyers and destruction of bases. All air force personnel are herewith warned that this is a serious offence and every one who oversteps the rules of operational security will stand trial and be punished severely.

In the meantime Lehman was not scheduled to participate in Balak flights and not permitted to leave the country. During that period, on August 11, the Czechs ordered the evacuation of all transport planes and the American air crews from the base at Zatec. Thus Lehman remained in Israel until the planes and crews assembled in the country. Another letter of the same date runs: “Following the American intervention threatening the Czechs we have been forced to leave Czechoslovakia tomorrow on August 11 at 11 A.M. with all equipment and American staff.”

American pressure on the Czechs to stop the airlift continued and until today the reason is not clear why on that particular date, on August 11, the Czechs submitted to the pressure.

Benjamin Kagan explains the timing and facts in his book *They Took Off into Darkness*. Until that date the Americans had been filming the base in Zatec from the air and then the State Dept. addressed the Czechs with proof of the operation carried out there, and even threatened to bring the subject up in the UN. In addition, according to Kagan’s book, they hinted that if the airlift was stopped, they might lift part of the American export sanctions against Czechoslovakia. But nevertheless there is no clear explanation of the timing.

Lehman Feigns Support of Israel

In the meantime the investigation of Lehman continued. Joseph Horngrad, from the Security Section of the Air Force headed by Shraga Yanai, met Lehman in the Park Hotel in order to arrange for him to get an ‘Eretz-Israel passport’. Based on his Swiss passport, Horngrad filled in the form for an Israeli passport. At the same time Lehman told him that ‘he had been on active service with the Swiss Air Force and had deserted in order to join the (Israeli) Air Transport Command. While in Rome, he had met a Swiss journalist a past acquaintance who later published an article (including Lehman’s picture) stating that he had joined the Israel Air Force. Lehman concluded that if he were to make a forced landing anywhere he would be delivered to the Swiss consul and sent back to Switzerland. That was the reason he asked for an Israeli passport, but he would not give up his Swiss passport.’ Summarizing the conversation

with him, Horngrad wrote: "I find it very difficult to imagine that this boy is a secret agent. I do have the impression that he talks a lot... I am awaiting the report from Margitay."

Indeed Thomas (Gad) Margitay together with Benyamin Kagan, both from the Security Section of the Air Force met with Lehman on August 3 at the Gat Rimon Hotel in order to create a small scenario to try him out. They introduced themselves to him as people interested in 20 mm cannons, which, as far as they knew, Lehman had ways to bring into the country. During the conversation they spoke about important weapon smugglers they knew and about transfer of weapons in Europe, and tried to give him the impression that for money they were ready to do everything. Lehman's words convinced them "that he was not satisfied with his conditions in Israel, from the salary that we should have paid him, and that he was ready to leave the country, to work in Europe and to do the things they asked him to." They arranged to meet again the next day, but Margitay intentionally postponed the meeting to August 5, and then met with him, again, at the hotel. After a few drinks took him to a quiet café on Ben-Yehuda Street at the corner of Trumpeldor. There Lehman suggested "that one could do good business not only with weapon sales but also with information." Margitay asked him "if I were to send you to Paris or somewhere else in Europe would you be ready to render information you had gathered in Israel and later to return to Israel and to continue to work for me?" Lehman replied in the affirmative

and for a salary of at least 600 dollars a month "plus a certain percentage of weapon sales." Four days later they met again at the Eden Hotel in Ramat-Gan. There, according to Margitay, they gave the impression that "the situation is heating up and we are leaving in a hurry." He suggested that Lehman should leave for Paris, according to the conditions he had set at their previous meeting. They arranged to meet next day at café Brazil where Lehman would give him pictures for his passport. However, Lehman turned to the security officer of the command – "excited and frightened" - and told him that a foreign agent wanted to buy information from him and he was frightened they would kill him. He also related all he had been told at the Eden Hotel. Nevertheless Margitay wrote, "despite Lehman's reaction to what I said I am not sure of his trustworthiness." He summed up, therefore:

I am not of the opinion that Lehman is a typical spy who has been sent here by our enemies, but I do find that he has the potential of being turned into a spy in the technical sense by people who are aware of his life story. Furthermore I do not think it advisable that he should be held at the Hotel Bristol in Tel Aviv. My recommendation is that he be sent to one of our bases but not to work as a pilot but, rather to keep him there for some time under supervision of his comrades.

Nevertheless despite this recommendation, during the third week of August a report reached the officer in charge of the command stating "it has been decided to terminate the Lehman case with the decision to send him

out of the country," and indeed on August 19 he was obliged to leave Israel. Lehman objected to the decision that he be deported, and wrote a personal, detailed letter to Nat Cohen, head of the Air Force intelligence. The date of the letter is not known. In it he stipulated that after a long conversation with Benjamin Shrager who is obviously Shraga Yannai, the head security officer of the Air Force intelligence sector, it was decided to discharge him from the Air Transport Command on August 19. According to his words, he understood clearly the need for an investigation, but "until now I cannot imagine how the suspicion against me arose," since it can be easily explained how he got to know Lilian Hoppl (the woman mentioned in the document of July) in Prague, through Bob Citroen, who as far as we know was a navigator in the Air Transport Command. During that meeting Lehman stated that he could not return to Switzerland and, for that reason and also because of his "sympathy" for the Israeli cause, he would be willing to accept the responsibility and cost to undertake a special mission to Cairo. In his letter Lehman does not mention the Air Force reaction to his request, but in a later report written obviously by Benyamin Kagan – who was also responsible for matters relating to security of Air Force activities in Europe – we find a mention relating the Lehman affair:

Hans Lehman was suspected of spying for the British in Ofary (Czechoslovakia) and Arnon (Israel). He was transferred for investigation to the security department of the Air Force but we could not produce facts. The

higher authorities revoked our suggestion to do away with him without evidence and it was decided to return him to Europe. Before we left he offered to steal into Egypt and do some work for us there. He argued that thus he wanted to prove that he was straight and that he wanted to start a new life in Israel. Because it had been decided to return him we told him he could do as he wished but he would not get any help from us and that we had finished with him. As far as I know he tried to contact Egypt but it seems that at the same time he also contacted the British.

The tracking of Lehman continued – on September 11th, the commander of the air force, Aharon Remez, requested a French visa for Benjamin Kagan, who, as stated, began to deal with matters of security in various centres of the Air Force activity, so “he can keep track of Lehman who is there”. Remez’s orders were: “Benjamin should end the Lehman affair. If this cannot be done in Europe, he should be brought to us.” On September 20 a note about Lehman was again sent to Israel stating that “he is suspected of having contact with enemy intelligence. The man is known to representatives of our air force in Europe who state that this Lerman (Lehman) was already suspect when he was in Israel and has been expelled from there. He now moves about in Europe. Do get a photo of him and let us have it.”

But Lehman returned for a visit to Israel during October and acted on behalf of Israel, supposedly directly for the Intelligence Branch of the air force, as he wrote in his statement which was released

in the press: “Last time I was in Israel in October I fulfilled two missions for Israel in Europe and the American authorities know now what these missions were.” There is no doubt that that was correct, because in his statement he mentions the operation Avak. On October 21, 1948 Lehman (accompanied by two others, probably British intelligence) met at the Ambassador Hotel in Paris with Ralph Bunche, the mediator of the UN. There he related the whole story of his activity in the Air Transport Command, starting with his recruitment on May 29 1948 in Rome. On the same occasion he also told all he knew about the Air Force in general. Finally he stressed that his life was in danger and asked for the protection of the UN. Towards the end of the month a detailed interview with Mr. X in La Monde was held in which he told the whole story of his activities in the air force, and a few days later this article was also published in the press in Israel. Among other things it says: “There is a secret line of supply from an airfield in Czechoslovakia to Israel. About 200 fliers, most of them Americans, work for an organization called Israeli Air Transport Command.”

On November 3 there appeared another reference to Alex Lehman, in a letter from Shraga Yanai, head of security in the Air Force Intelligence branch, to the Political Section of the Foreign Office. Further to a letter which he sent them on October 27 he now forwarded to them two photos and stressed that, “We have in our possession additional material regarding the above mentioned, such as his passport photo, his commitment

not to use information he obtained whilst in Israel, etc, which we are prepared to pass to you if you need them”. In response to these disclosures about Lehman the Israeli foreign Office spokesman declared, according to a report in the newspaper Hamashkif.

Israel has not received military aid from Russia. The entire story is based on imagination and wicked lies...the story is typical of the defamatory propaganda, which some parties have been waging against Israel since the establishment of the State. All that is missing to complete the nice little picture is a beautiful blonde spy.

At about the same time, on November 13, information from France revealed that the source of this information was Alex Lehman, “a British Intelligence agent holding Swiss citizenship.” It stated further that Lehman “... enlisted to serve in the Israeli Air Force in Rome, from there he was transferred to Prague and carried out a number of flights to Israel. After a short stay he left Israel and returned to Europe. Today he is in Paris, we have arranged with Lehman that he return to Israel. We will be sending him in the next few days. Arrange for his reception and for the continuation of dealing with him”. However Lehman sensed the ongoing and tightening surveillance and did not return to Israel. On December 3 a twelve page Steno gram with all the details which Lehman passed on to the UN was sent to Aharon Remez, Lechi Yasachar, Shaul Meirov, and to Benjamin Kagan who was in Czechoslovakia at the time. The following day Benjamin Kagan wrote from Czechoslovakia:

After having investigated him my personal opinion has always been that he is capable of doing anything for money. He has no connection with the Security Branch of the Air Force. He has to be related to as a spy and a traitor. There is in the possession of the Security Branch in Israel his declaration in which he commits himself not to reveal any detail of our work. Before he left the country I warned him that he would come to an unpleasant end if he speaks. In my opinion, if the facts are sufficient he should be eliminated.

At the same time he wrote to "Yishayahu" (Aharon Remez) for Shraga Yanai, that "I have given details of the Lehman case to Nat C. (Nat Cohen). I regret that the initial decision to eliminate him was not accepted. In my opinion this should be done if the facts are sufficient."

The affair does not finish here. On December 16 the newspaper Al Musri published "The complete confession" of Alex Lehman – "On the smuggling operations of weapons to the Jews". Lehman repeated the story, including names of those heading the squadron, the pilots, the aircraft, and the daily routine of the transport pilots. He even mentioned Margitay and Horngard, two people of Air Force security with whom he met, as has been noted, during the course of July-August, 1948. The main thrust of the article was to prove how strong the cooperation was between Israel and the Soviet Union via Czechoslovakia. In this matter there is a very big exaggeration at the end of his article. He adds, "I sent about twenty reports comprising some 250 pages to British Intelligence.

It was my routine to send a report after every trip. The report that I gave to Dr. Bunche had twenty-five pages and contained my answers to the questions I was asked. I signed the report and Dr. Bunche promised me that he would keep it in his safe. Some of what Lehman said was substantiated in a letter from the Head of Intelligence Chaim Herzog.

The suggestion to eliminate Lehman was scrapped by "Ben Yehuda" (Shaul Meirov); in an urgent telegram to Paris he instructed, "I do not approve your plan. We will not deal with the louse. Let him go to Hell".

It is obvious that this publication by Lehman, accurate to a fair degree, harmed the need for secrecy concerning the actions of the squadron in particular and the Air Force in general. Moreover, at the height of the trials in the United States against the flyers who participated in Operation Balak this publication, replete with details about Communist support and influence on the State of Israel, did not help the defence counsel to defend their actions or to refute them. However the importance of the details submitted by Lehman should not be exaggerated; a December 8 report of Chaim Herzog, head of the Intelligence service states:

The head office of the CIA in Washington received from the FBI detailed lists of American flyers who volunteered to serve in the Israeli Air Force, inside and outside Israel. These lists reached the offices of the FBI in various places in the USA, sometimes in several copies. The senders of the lists remain anonymous.

As of today we have not succeeded in determining what

became of Alex Lehman. In a later interview, in 1985, with Hal Auerbach, operations officer of the squadron in those days, he recalled the affair and summarized it as follows:

We had an incident with a pilot, a European non-Jew, where one day we were informed from Czechoslovakia that he was a spy and we were instructed not to tell him anything and to bring him to Israel where he would be arrested. We did this and housed him in a room in the Park Hotel. Intelligence kept tracks on him and I had to explain to him why he had to remain in Israel and not to be flying. In the end there was a plan to kill him but for some reason he was placed on an aircraft and sent out of the country. That was the end of the affair.

During the course of the War of Independence more details about the Air Force were revealed in the media. However it seems that the publications of Lehman were relatively the most accurate of these.

Document

Secrets of the Jewish Air Force:
Full Confessions of an American Pilot on the Smuggling of Arms for the Jews

Following is the text of an article published in the Egyptian newspaper al-Musri on December 16, 1948. Israeli Military Intelligence translated it into Hebrew on January 3, 1949. This is a translation from the Hebrew. The original might have been in English, French or German. Because of the successive

translations, we cannot always be certain of the spelling of names of persons and places. The Hebrew version was published along with the above paper by Avi Cohen and accompanied by extensive notes on the correctness or incorrectness of Lehman's assertions. Unfortunately, this commentary is too long for inclusion in the AVI Newsletter. Cohen denies Lehman's statements that the Israelis worked hand in glove with the Soviets. Cohen's comments also identify the individual mentioned where Lehman has misspelled their names or erred in their roles.

The title of this news story refers to Lehman as an American. Eddie Kaplansky in his work *The First Flyers* reports that he was American and served in the United States Army Air Force. In the above report by Avi Cohen he is reported as a Swiss citizen.

After translating this document I (Sam Klausner) found it difficult to believe that Lehman could have amassed so much information. The reader may wonder about this as well. I wrote to Avi Cohen saying that I was billeted in the Bristol Hotel, where Lehman was also living, from mid-May to mid-August 1948 and had nowhere near the knowledge which Lehman displays. I suggested that either he was a master spy equipped with audio and photographic equipment or he had accomplices. Since he did not know Hebrew and accessed numerous organizational files, that accomplice could even have been an Israeli. Avi Cohen responded as follows:

As you know I am no longer working on this subject. For the last two years I have been

concerned with other matters. Nevertheless, it appears to me, that your astonishment at the amount of information contained in the article published in *al-Musri* is much exaggerated. From what I learned from the many documents that I read on the history of the air force in the War of Independence, I have no doubt that that they were not at all strict in maintaining security at the airfield. The pilots and other aircrew members spoke over and over again about their activities. And let the information out without any restrictions. See for example what is related in Harold Livingston's book *The Coasts of the Earth*. This is an excellent book and well-reflects the atmosphere of those days especially regarding the leaking of information and gossiping around especially among the Machal volunteers. I described these activities in detail in my book *History of the Air Force in the War of Independence*. As far as I know Lehman did not know Hebrew at all and I surmise, intuitively, that there were other spies in those days. I did not find any evidence that he had confederates but it is indeed possible that he did.

In all events I suggest that you not rely entirely on the article about the Spy, as published on the IAF website, but that you read all of the additional material in my works for the air force during the war. That is more precise material and relies on additional documents not available to me when the article was written.

Text of the article in Al Musri

Our airplane arrived in Aqir and was immediately unloaded

and returned at four in the morning from whence it had come. In this way the airfield at Aqir was always free of planes during the day unless there was a technical problem with one of the planes.

Four crewmembers were on each plane: pilot and copilot, wireless operator and a navigator. These individuals were not necessarily from the same country and it sometimes occurred that one of the individuals would have no understanding of the task to which he was assigned. Since the crewmembers did not receive their salaries—we were told that the money was deposited for us in a Tel Aviv bank—they began to engage in their own smuggling. They would buy marijuana and exchange it in Czechoslovakia for objects of crystal and handguns. And this because the price of a pistol in Prague was 500 Crowns (about \$10.00 on the black market) and in Tel Aviv one could sell it for twenty pounds (between \$60 and \$80).

As for the flight itself—in these circumstances there were no safety arrangements and it was very dangerous—only in rare instances did the men arrive at their destination in a composed state of mind. In Czechoslovakia and in Ajaccio one could obtain champagne and cognac very cheaply whereupon the crewmembers would drink heavily to overcome their fear. It is a miracle that there were not more accidents than there were.

Until July we were forced to avoid flying over Yugoslavia. Several times, Yugoslavian fighter planes attacked us offshore from Yugoslavia and Trieste. But later, around July 15, an astonishing event occurred. A

small Yugoslavian military base in the mountains near Krosifo, close to Albania, was placed under our control. From that time on we had two intermediate landing places—Krosifo and Ajaccio. In Krosifo we were not permitted to leave the airfield. Yugoslavian soldiers guarded the field, which, in time, became a rest stop for us.

At the same time the headquarters of the Air Transport Command was transferred from Zatec to Aqir, near Tel Aviv. The reason for this is that Aqir now became a base for planes that flew to Zatec for the sole purpose of picking up freight.

During this same period we were told that our salary was reduced to \$275 per month and also that it is impossible for us to leave the service for this would cause us difficulties with the police of the country in which we were. They told us that \$175 of our monthly pay would be deposited to our credit in a bank in Tel Aviv. We never saw these accounts and have no idea about what happened to them. One hundred dollars was considered our “pocket money,” accounted as one Israeli pound for each day in Tel Aviv or 500 crowns in Prague. When the pilots were angered at this deception some would take advantage of a day or two rest in Prague or Carlsbad where they would drink and gamble with cards. The aim was for one of them to spend more than he could afford and then on the next day meet with Dr. Felix and tell him that they had amassed a debt of twenty or twenty five thousand Crowns and each time Dr. Felix was forced to pay this to escape the scandal but in the end they withdrew support for trips to Prague and Carlsbad.

The wives of the flyers in Europe or America received support payments. The Jews tried by all means to convince them to join their husbands in Israel. They promised them that were they to come they would live in Jewish settlements rather than receiving support payments abroad. However, they would be required to perform services in addition to that of their husbands. This is the way the Jews treated us.

The Bristol Hotel was the headquarters of the Jewish Air Force in Tel Aviv. Later the Staff officers—for their own comfort—moved the headquarters to the British airfield at Aqir. The Constellation suffered an accident in Zatec and was then disassembled and the parts sent to Russia.

List of the headquarters staff of the Air Transport Command: The administrative staff worked from the Yarkon Hotel in Tel Aviv. The command for air operations was Colonel Heyman (American). In charge of the staff was Lt. Col. Monian assisted by Gutlieb from California. Investigation by the American Department of State showed all of these names to be authentic except for Gutlieb, which was a pseudonym. The names of the Russians were all falsified in order to protect their bearers.

The Jewish Air Force

The Jewish Air Force is composed of two groups: the Air Transport command and the Fighter Command following the American model and their advisers were Russian officers. The head of the Jewish Bomber Command was Major Kurtz who

received awards for his operations in Germany in World War II. After the war he became a New York police officer. Lt. Albrecht from the American Air Force assisted him. Irahan served as an advisor as did Gross, a famous Canadian flyer.

The Air Transport Command

Head of Operations: Hal Auerbach, Lead Pilot: Sam Lewis. Personnel Matters: Walkowitz. Chief Engineer: Sam Pomerance. Swedish pilots: Captain Krokstead, Captain Anderson and Captain Nilson. (Anderson was in charge of the plane of Count Bernadotte in 1945 when he was the representative of the International Red Cross). Radio operators were Liebing and Ekstrand. The American pilots were Applebaum, Captain Raab, Captain Kaufman, Captain Munitz, Captain Sisik, Captain Ribakoff, who piloted the Constellation at the time of its forced landing in Zatec, and Captain Polansky (previously Professor of Psychology at the University of Chicago). Copilots included Moore, Frank and Waterhouse. Breyer, Swing and Sunderland. Flyers from Canada included Captain Levett and Captain Ilowite. Among the Russians was Laszlo Strack (an alias indicating that he was from Hungary but was, in fact, was an officer in the Russian army) and Misha Henelson. They did not fly alone but as copilots in the Constellation or Skymaster. They also served as liaison officers between the Soviet Union and Israel. I recall, for example, that Strack was instructed to prepare a memorandum on military

and professional services in Czechoslovakia.

Wireless operators included Si Cohen, Saltzman, Tulchinsky, Chinsky, Fingerman, Braverman, Newman, Kilgore and Mikohan. The only French pilot was Ben Simon who served with Air France in Indochina. Among South African pilots were Al Klosner, Bal Shimoni, Widman and Bob Mead.

The Flying Fortresses were sent from Panama to Zatec via the Azores Islands. When the plane left the islands, the commanding officer sent out a distress signal and announced that the planes were lost but, in fact, they landed in Czechoslovakia. The whole incident was made up by the Jews in order to conceal the planes' route. The Eastern Air Company purchased the Fortresses as military surplus and then sold them to the Panama Aircraft Company. The pilots who transported the Flying Fortresses were Lt. Col. Judge Bean (he lost his rank in America), Major Bob Weid, Lt. Dusty Miller. The Jews sent the three of them back to America because they were drunk. Major Kurtz was appointed head of the Flying Fortress squadron. He led the bombing of Cairo. The planes flew straight from Zatec to Cairo and from there to the Ramat David airfield, which is currently the center of the Jewish air forces. Kurtz says he was able to fool the people at the Cairo airfield. He contacted them by radio and announced that three British squadrons with supplies were about to arrive—immediately after this the airfield lights went on.

Defense Institutions in Europe and the United States

New York Office: Administrator: Steve Schwartz, Schwimmer, and Reisberg: At this time the last was also an intelligence officer a role that permitted him to conceal what the Jews were doing. The American government detained him for two days after receiving information from me in Paris.

Paris: Hotel California, supervisor Fred Kant.

London: Friman is not in prison. He arranged for sending airplanes to Israel.

Prague: Palace Hotel, supervision is Dr. Felix and his assistant is Dr. Pollack, Meir, and a Russian liaison officer whose name I cannot reveal for personal reasons.

Rome: Hotel Massim daSiglio. Coordinator; Danny Agronski and his wife. The assistants were Leo Shedarntaz and another person called "Joseph" who was the treasurer. Col. Green was responsible for the training of Jewish pilots who were entering the School for Pilots that opened in the south of Rome in July. He had sufficient funds to allow him to train a hundred pilots in four months. Green was considered a replacement for Spreling whom the Jews had arrested. In Rome the pilots received only primary training after which they were sent to the Skoda company in Prague to learn to fly fighter planes. And then to Russia to learn to fly jet planes or to Israel to be trained in flying transport or bombing planes. From the 15th of July we began to transport people, about 25-30 Jews from Israel to Czechoslovakia and from there

they would be sent to Russia for a six week course and return through Rome. At the time I served as a copilot on a Skymaster, which carried Russians from Israel to Ajaccio where they would be concealed. Later I learned that these were agents for spreading Russian Communist propaganda. The American government also knew this and detained several of these propagandists.

The Jewish Air Force

The airplanes included 3 Flying Fortresses, 5 planes types 64 (numbered 132, 133, 134, 135, 137, 139), 5 Skymasters (54), 12 Norseman's, 4 Dakotas C-47, 2 Constellations, 3 Spitfires, 60 Messerschmitts, 4B-26 Marauders, 1 Halifax, 1 Lancaster, 1 Bonanza, 21 Austers, 3 Lightning's, 1 DC-5, 1 Fairchild, 1 Grumman seaplane, 1 Haviland (freight). In early October the Air Force received Russian Yak fighters and about 70 American and Russian aircraft mechanics were in the Air Force at that time. Attention was given to maintaining good relations between them.

The Jewish Security Office

The staff headquarters was in the Yarkon Hotel in Tel Aviv. The administrator was Benyamin Shrager and security was in the hands of Sh. Hahaman, of Russian descent and a member of the Russian secret service. Miss, Simone Marenberg whose country of origin is not known to me, assisted him. Her task was to take an interest in United Nations personnel, to provide them with information and deceptive announcements. She is very

beautiful and looks like Hedy Lamaar. Other assistants were Margitay and Horngrad (formerly an officer with British intelligence an expert in falsifying passports) and "Zivi" who would make friends with new pilots and draw from them information on their experiences in order to prepare a report the next day. Horngrad would take the passports of each pilot and, in the event of an accident, use them for another pilot.

Stern and Etzel

We asked Shrager about these two groups (gangs) in relation to our personal security and he assured us that there is an agreement between all of the groups. It is desirable that the public still believes that the quarrel between them continues since it might become necessary to blame someone regarding an important matter. Shrager threatened us that the Etzel would kill us if we were considered treasonous. Etzel is a group of Jews in the Land of Israel committed to the destruction of Israel's enemies. British intelligence has information on this dangerous group.

It is clear that under these conditions that the UN observers are not able to move about the country. It happened that a plane due to land at Aqir was diverted to another airport since UN observers were there at the time. Once all of the planes were used to transport armaments to a place in the Negev over a period of three days. For this purpose two airfields were constructed in the Negev. At one time all of the planes were used to carry water to Jerusalem.

Ramat David was considered

the center for the Jewish Air Force. Because of this American and Russian engineers using the most up to date equipment improved the field. This new center was ready to be converted to a Russian base. This was the Israeli's trade off for all the military help the Russians had provided.

There are documents proving that the Israelis are paying the Czechoslovaks a third of the value of the materiel they purchase. It is known to British intelligence that the Jews are obtaining dollars for the Russians, much needed hard currency, to cover the cost of Soviet espionage in the United States.

Purchase of Airplanes

Agents of Trans World Airlines or Eastern Airlines purchase planes in the United States for the Jews. For these companies a man by the name of Bilady buys the planes through Panama. In Europe the agency is KLM.

Families of the pilots send letters to two addresses in a way that permits examination of the letters: (1) Schulman, Lausanne St. 153, Geneva and (2) Ralph Cohen, 31 December St. 16, Geneva.

For security reasons the Jews designated names of places with nicknames such as the State of Israel "Oklahoma," Czechoslovakia "Zebra," Russia "New York."

In 1943 I worked as a Deputy Agent of the Swiss Intelligence Service or for British Intelligence. When I worked for British Intelligence I would pass information to them in Prague, Paris and Rome. I was astonished that the Arab states

had no information on these matters. Recently, it became clear to me that the reason for their lack of information is the dual responsibility of the staff of British intelligence, which works to conceal knowledge favorable to Russia or Israel. In Paris I learned that the head of the special espionage group for the Middle East suppressed my report and informed the Israelis of my true task...and the Jews have me under surveillance...and therefore I was placed under the protection of the United Nations.

During the month of June I told the Egyptian Ambassador in Prague in the presence of his secretary that three Flying Fortresses are in Zatec preparing to bomb Cairo. Unfortunately, they did not believe me. I could not risk myself further in Czechoslovakia.

The last time I was in Israel in October I carried out two tasks for Israel in Europe and, currently, the American government knows what those tasks were. I sent some twenty reports adding up to about 250 pages to British intelligence. I usually sent a detailed report after each mission. A twenty five-page report that I sent to Dr. Bunche, the UN mediator, included responses to all questions that I was asked. I signed the report and Dr. Bunche promised to keep it in his iron box.

(signed) *Hans Alex Lehman*