

WINTER 2006



AMERICAN VETERANS OF ISRAEL

VOLUNTEERS IN ISRAEL'S WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

UNITED STATES & CANADA VOLUNTEERS

136 East 39th Street, New York, NY 10016

Symposium on Aliyah

Last July Raphael ben Yosef of Givat Shmuel wrote the letter below to Ira Feinberg, President of AVI. The letter, as you see, deals with the centrality of aliya to Zionist self-realization (hagshama). Below the letter is an objective background statement on the influences which led some mahal volunteers to remain in, or later return to, Israel while others chose to return to the lands from which they volunteered. I invited several members of AVI to write 100-150 words of comment on the ben Yosef letter. Others may want to supplement the comments below with accounts of their personal decisions. I will run such responses as Letters to the Editor in future Newsletters. The Editor:

Dear Ira:

You may not like this letter.

I will not renew my membership in AVI. It is beating a horse long dead.

The very fact that the address is New York and not Jerusalem or Netanya shows a half job was done by those who came and did not return.

Capturing a spirit in formaldehyde for show is not a game I wish to play.

SYMPOSIUM continued on pg. 18

Aliyah Bet and Machal Museum Dedicated: Lowenstein Lauded by Speakers

Some 37 veterans of Aliyah Bet and Machal converged on Gainesville, Florida, on November 18-20 for a weekend devoted to dedicating the Aliyah Bet and Machal Museum in the University of Florida's new \$8.5 million Hillel building.

The seven-cabinet museum is located in the main hallway of Norman H. Lipoff Hall, which just opened to the 6,500 Jewish students on the UF campus late last year. The main speaker for the official dedication ceremonies, attended by more than 200 persons on Sunday

morning, November 20, was Dr. Yitschak Ben Gad, Consul-General of Israel to Florida and Puerto Rico. Dr. Ben Gad, the son of a former chief rabbi of Libya, summarized current Israeli policy toward Palestinians in the search for peace. He praised the new Aliyah Bet and Machal Museum for establishing a



L-R Ralph Lowenstein, Arthur Bernstein, Si Spiegelman

GAINESVILLE continued on pg. 2

Bernstein and Warner: Assuming Presidency and Vice Presidency of AVI

Arthur Bernstein



Arthur Bernstein

Arthur Bernstein served in the Merchant Marine during World War II. In 1947 he served as a senior deck officer on the *Ulua*, a.k.a. the Haim Arlosoroff. The *Ulua*, an old decommissioned U.S. revenue cutter sailed out of Baltimore to rescue 1,378 Holocaust survivors, bringing them from Italy through the British blockade of Palestine.

The *Ulua* was beached south of Haifa on February 27, 1947. The refugees and crew were interned in Cyprus by British authorities.

Upon his return to the U.S., Art worked in the lumber industry and made his mark as a businessman. He retired from his business to devote his time to family and his avocation; the sea. Today he lives with his wife Evelyn in Peabody, Massachusetts where he can be seen at the helm of his motor boat, the *Ulua*.

BERNSTEIN continued on pg. 21

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SCHEDULE OF EVENTS- 2006

Purim Celebration.....	Sunday, March 12
Mission to Israel.....	First week in May
West Point Assembly.....	Sunday, May 21
Salute to Israel Parade.....	Sunday, June 4
Hanukkah Celebration.....	Sunday, December 17

GAINESVILLE continued from pg. 1

permanent symbol on American soil of the lasting bond between the citizens of the State of Israel and the Jewish communities of North America.

Presiding at all the dedication events was AVI President Ira Feinberg. He said that the thread of Jewish history was strengthened by the courageous actions of a small group of men and women. We were not particularly religious. We were Jew and Gentile. We were idealists, socialists, adventurers.



L-R Jerry Rosenberg, Al and Evelyn Bernstein

We consider ourselves fortunate to have received this challenge and, in a sense, got more out of this experience than Israel got from us; a chance to change history. Zipporah Porath followed saying, "Who would have dreamed that after its heroic struggle for survival, Israel would go on to create one of the best armies in the world and to become one of the greatest success stories of the 20th century. We Machalniks had a lot to do with making that happen. Now, our main mission should be to see that generations to come don't forget it. The museum being dedicated here aims to help preserve and

promote that legacy. Kol Hakavod to AVI!!."



Lou Laurie, his daughter and her children.

Si Spiegelman, Chairman of the AVI Executive Committee, officially presented the museum to the care of the UF Hillel and



Si Spiegelman and Lou Laurie

praised Ralph Lowenstein for the tremendous organizational and promotional efforts that made the museum possible. Receiving this responsibility, Keith Dvorchik, Executive Director of the UF Hillel, said: "The theme of this building was intended from the beginning to be 'Israel.' When Ralph Lowenstein came to us with the idea for the Aliyah Bet and Machal Museum, we seized upon it immediately as a fulfillment of our commitment to teach the thousands of students, parents and professors who come through this building the history of the State of Israel, and especially the bond of



Havdalah: L-R Sam Klausner; Roberta Sands, Ira Fineberg

American Jews to the Jewish State. It is with a great deal of pride that we now accept partnership with the American Veterans of Israel in preserving and enhancing this museum.”

Early arrivers at the dedication weekend had an opportunity on Friday night to attend Orthodox, Reform or Conservative services with the students, and then have dinner with about 200 students at the Shabbat-eve dinner following the services.

Some 120 veterans and their families attended a reception and banquet on Saturday night. Ira Feinberg presided at the banquet. Special guests were Max Barchichat, President of Machal West, who brought greetings from comrades on the West Coast, and Zipporah Porath, who brought greetings from Aliyah Bet and Machal veterans now living in Israel.

Principal speaker for the evening was Ralph Lowenstein, founder and director of the Museum. Ralph said, “I refer to this museum as the museum of the ‘courageous few.’ There were courageous businessmen like Shepard Broad, who were willing to spend their fortunes and risk their reputations by buying Aliyah Bet ships, while defying the existing official disapproval of help for Palestinian Jewry. Those of us who volunteered for Aliyah Bet or Machal were among the courageous few who defied official government policy and risked both our lives and our citizenship to come to the aid of

Israel. The Museum is our story, now finally being told. We can all be proud that we accepted the challenge almost sixty years ago, and we can be proud that our countrymen and our comrades played a significant part in creating a Jewish State.”

Also attending the banquet as special guests of AVI were Ann Bussel and Morris Broad, daughter and son of the late Shepard Broad, the Miami philanthropist who purchased the “Paducah” and “Tradewinds.” Other special guests were the production personnel of the Museum and their spouses.

Breaking the Silence: The Story is Told

When I began collecting questionnaires and documentary material about the Aliyah Bet and Machal veterans some 25 years ago, I did so because I thought that someday historians might be interested in details about the Americans and Canadians who volunteered to help Israel before and during the War of Independence.

Thanks to the support of American Veterans of Israel, the Aliyah Bet and Machal Archives grew and eventually became an official part of the University of Florida Libraries. At that time, I considered our role in the 1948 war a mere footnote, but one that should be considered in any overall history of the conflict.

Over the years, I became more and more annoyed that the major Jewish museums in the Northeast were ignoring our entreaties that they mention our role. Having visited all the Jewish museums in New York City, I became even more disturbed that they were not only ignoring our role, but also giving virtually no emphasis in their displays to the creation of Israel itself.

Like American Jewry as a whole, the Jewish museums have concentrated on the Holocaust almost to the exclusion of the phoenix that arose from the dust of the pogroms and Holocaust. Every Podunk university in America now has a Holocaust studies program, with thousands of books in their libraries and a host of faculty members with the Holocaust as their academic field. But the greatest miracle of the last 2,000 years in Jewish history – the rebirth of Israel – is a pauper and an orphan where the universities and the Jewish museums are concerned.

Thus, when the new Hillel building on the UF campus was under construction, I approached Keith Dvorchik, executive director of the Hillel, and Mickey Smith, supervisor of the construction activities, and asked about installing our own museum in the new building. Without a moment’s hesitation, they agreed, as long as AVI could raise the money. This question was posed by so many of our members: “Why Gainesville?” The answer: Because the bureaucratic idiots at the Northeastern museums were too money-grubbing (they wanted millions of dollars from us for the favor of a single display) or too unimaginative to recognize the void



Paul and Susan Kaye

in their own displays about the role of American Jews in the creation of



Ira Feinberg and Max Barchichat

Israel.

When I began the task of gathering a production crew (in the end, three people, including me), I still considered our role a mere footnote in the history of the war. However, as I did more research over the last two years about the North American men and women in Aliyah Bet and Machal, and extended my research to the role of American and Canadian Jews who stood behind us and provided the organization and funds to support Palestinian Jews and their aspiration for statehood at this critical point in our history, I came to the conclusion that North American Jewish communities were not a footnote, but rather an indispensable partner in the creation of the State of Israel.

My research revealed this startling fact: Were it not for North American Jews, including the volunteers in Aliyah Bet and Machal, there would not be a Jewish State today. The 1,200 of us were essentially the tip of the iceberg of a powerful North American Jewish community that stood behind Israel, helped engineer the two-thirds vote of the UN General Assembly, provided the political muscle to neutralize the negative effect of the US State Department, and generated the huge amount of money necessary to purchase ships and arms that made victory for Israel possible.

In Machal, the critical element was the Air Transport Command, almost completely

manned by American World War II veterans, which brought in the arms from landlocked Czechoslovakia. As for Aliyah Bet, the 12 American ships, crewed largely by Americans and Canadians, brought in 43 percent of all the Holocaust survivors carried to Cyprus or Palestine between the end of World War II and May 14, 1948. These ships increased the Jewish population of Palestine by 10 per cent, and provided a



Abby Rosenberg, Duke Labechewski and Paul Kaye

supply of manpower that Israel was desperately to need once war broke out officially on May 15.

In my research for the



Charlie Weiss and Duke Labechewski

Museum, two names stand out above all others: One is David Ben Gurion, who recognized the power that North American Jews could provide, and skillfully enlisted it. The other is Al Schwimmer, who knew how to buy the big planes and recruit the pilots that would essentially bring the critical arms and fighter aircraft from Czechoslovakia.

This story about the North American Jewish community and the courageous few who risked their

lives and citizenships to come to the aid of Israel in its time of need has never been properly told. It is a story largely unknown by American Jews themselves and by the population of Israel. For various reasons, Americans and Canadians involved were satisfied not to publicize their roles. And for reasons primarily involved with nation building, Israel was satisfied to remain silent about it, also. That Jewish historians and museums, here and in Israel, have never told this story is an indictment of their crafts.

No one can deny the tremendous sacrifice of Palestinian Jews. They were on the front line when no one in the world could or would help. They lost one percent of their population in a war that the rest of the world let happen, when it could have been prevented. The great powers and the United Nations turned their backs.

But almost 60 years have now passed since that war of survival. It is time to tell the complete story. Our Aliyah Bet and Machal Museum begins to tell it. The copy of our Museum that we provided to the University of Judaism in Los Angeles, through the effort of Dr. Jason Fenton and our brothers and sisters in Machal West, will begin to tell that story on the West Coast in this new year.

We now need to translate our story from museums into a book, and it is my hope that we will find the funds in 2006 to begin that task.

The two museums at the University of Florida and the University of Judaism would not have been possible without the pacemaker gifts from two sources. Ann Bussel and Morris Broad of Miami, children of the late philanthropist Shepard Broad (who purchased two of the 12 Aliyah Bet ships), provided \$20,000, just as

they had earlier provided \$20,000 to get our Aliyah Bet and Machal Archives into high gear some years ago. My friend Marion Brechner of Orlando provided another \$20,000.

Altogether, we raised about \$91,000 in cash and pledges, and the UF Hillel allowed me to spend the money pledged, even though all the cash will not be in for several years.

An incredible 131 members of AVI, their families and friends provided the remaining \$51,000. Eleven persons each gave \$2,500 or more, and 24 persons each gave \$500.

The absolute rocks of support for this Museum project were Si Spiegelman, Sam Klausner and



Jason Fenton

David Gerard, three men who play a largely unsung role in holding AVI together year after year, and who played a major role in generating the member support for the project. Si, especially, has been my constant partner, consultant and supporter. David Hanovice was my regular consultant on Aliyah Bet and the Israeli Navy.

One cabinet is dedicated to Eddy Kaplansky, who died while the Museum project was underway, but whose research on Aliyah Bet, the Air Force, the Canadian volunteers and our 40 fallen comrades provided material in each one of the seven displays. Until his death on March 6, 2005, in Haifa, he read,

changed or approved almost every word that I wrote. He wrote all the material that appears in the cabinet devoted to our fallen comrades, and provided, through some sort of miracle, photographs of each one of the 40 men killed. AVI and I will



Display Cabinets Machal Museum

miss this man deeply.

There were many others who provided photographs, official papers and encouragement. I wish I could mention them all.

We have been called "The Forgotten Heroes." I do not think for a minute that we were all heroes. But we have certainly been forgotten. No one, not even our Israeli comrades, did what we did. We traveled one-third of the way around the world to come to the aid of a country not our own. Some of us came in leaky ships that by all rights should not have been dispatched to traverse the Atlantic. Each and every one of us risked not only our lives but also our United States or Canadian citizenship. Most of us did it for \$6 a month. Almost all of our parents disapproved of our decision, and our friends generally thought we were demented.

Why shouldn't we be proud of being one of 1,200 people who had the idealism and courage to do what not one of the other 12 million Jews alive on this earth will ever have a chance to do again? The Museum begins to tell our story. The 57 years of silence has been broken.

Ralph Lowenstein

News From the Regions and Overseas

Canada

The big news here in Toronto is the planning and fund raising for the JEWISH WAR VETERANS INTERNATIONAL MONUMENT designed by Daniel Liebskin. Hopefully, the monument will be opened in about a year. Our goal is \$7 MILLION. The idea is to have a living reminder of the Jewish Veterans from around the world that fought for freedom and liberty in a number of wars. The monument will have two walls - one with the names of those that were killed in action and the second wall will have the names of those that fought. There will be separate sections for each country and a place for loved ones to come and actually see their family member remembered.

As more information becomes available, I will send it along.

Joe Warner

Celebrating South African Machal in Beit Proteia in Herzliya

A splendid exhibition of photographs of South African Machalniks from 1947-49 highlighted an evening of tribute by the South African Zionist Federation in Israel to South Africa's 800 volunteers from South Africa during the War of Independence -- and to the Nachalniks who volunteered in 1956.

The event took place on 2nd November in Beit Protea, a South



SAZF Tribute, L-R Amdur, Teperson, Lahat, Ostroff, Kalmanovitz and Simon

African retirement home in Herzliya, with the participation of some 60 South African Machalniks and about 100 South Africans (non-Machalniks) who live in Israel, joined by overseas Machalniks who were visiting Israel: Barney Meyerson, Chairman of Australian Machal, and his wife Bertha; and Stanley Medicks, Chairman of UK, European and Scandinavian Machal, and his daughter Elana. Also present was Avi Naor, Director of Mahal 2000, the current program in Israel for young volunteers from abroad to serve in the IDF.

Migdal Teperson prepared the exhibition from the archives collated for the proposed Machal Museum. He produced, especially for this occasion, an impressive photographic record in book form of South African Machalniks in action during Israel's War of Independence. Teperson had put the exhibition together almost single-handedly. At 79 he is still doing reserve duty and is the oldest serving Machalnik in the IDF. He has fought in all of Israel's wars. He has gathered over 4500 Machal-related photos and runs the Machal Museum in Latrun.

Stanley Medicks, who in fact volunteered in 1948 from Nairobi, Kenya under the auspices of the South African Federation, in his greetings spoke of his personal appreciation to the Federation for their having enabled him to get to Israel.

The Chairman of World Machal, Smoky Simon, presented a fact-full report on the background story of Machal and in particular the important role played by Machal

in laying the foundation of the IDF. Smoky, one of the first members of the Israel Air Force had already served five years in the South African Air Force before volunteering to fight in Israel. He detailed a statistical portrait of Machal. Approximately 3,500 Machalniks came from 44 countries – men, women, Jews, non-Jews. Most were WWII veterans. They served in 14 branches of IDF – Air Force, Navy, Infantry, Armour, Artillery, Medical, Anti-Tank, Radar, and Communications. Here I should mention Aliyah Bet (illegal immigration) in 1947-48 in which 250 Americans including some Canadians were in the crews bringing 31,000 “illegal



Zipporah Porath

immigrants.” By countries of origin we have USA 930 (6 million Jews); South Africa 810 (120,000 Jews); France and North African countries 450; UK 350; Canada 300; Latin-America 300; other European countries and Scandinavia 100. The South African component was 23% of all volunteers.

The Machal component was absolutely dominant in IAF in which 95% of flying crews were Machalniks. There were a total of 425 Machal flying crews in IAF and ATC

(including 92 non-Jewish flyers, 21.6%. Of the flying crews the breakdown was: USA 182; SA 79 (18.6%); Canada 53; UK 50; Sweden 18. The balance came from Holland, Poland, France, USSR, Australia, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, India, and Rumania. South Africans were prominent among the ground crews including those who cared for engines, fuselages and armorers and radiomen. Before the Air Force had established its code and ciphers program, we often used Afrikaans in operational messages between headquarters and the Air Force bases.

South African doctors and nurses played a prominent role in the Medical Corps, and in front-line casualty hospitals. South Africans amongst combat engineers trained IDF recruits and engaged in laying and clearing minefields, blowing up bridges, building roads, etc. South Africans were also prominent in the Artillery Corps. About 450 Machalniks served in 3 Palmach Brigades – Yiftach, Har-El, and HaNegev. South African Machalniks played a prominent role, particularly in Gedud 9, “Beasts of the Negev.” South Africans served in Alexandroni (3 Brigade); Oded (9th Brigade); Givati (5th Brigade). Machalniks, including many South Africans, played a prominent role in the 7th and 8th Armored Brigades.

One hundred and twenty Machalniks (116 men and 4 women) were killed or went missing-in-action during the War. Many were wounded, and some were taken prisoners-of-war. 1993 - The Machal Memorial was erected at the entrance to the Burma Road in the Sha'ar Hagai Forest, to commemorate the Machal Fallen – yearly remembrance service. 9 Non-Jewish Machal are buried in the Christian Military Cemetery in Haifa. 5 South African Machalniks lost their lives – Lionel Bloch; Edward (Eddie Cohen); Louis Hack; Zvi Lipshitz; Meir Silber.

Shlomo (Chitch) Lahat, a retired IDF Major-General, who served for 20 years as Mayor of Tel Aviv, emphasized the need for spreading the word about

Machal to Israelis. He claimed that though he himself had known about Machal, he was astounded to learn of the extent of Machal's valuable contribution to the State of Israel, and he felt certain that many of his colleagues in the IDF were similarly uninformed.

Two soldiers currently serving in the IDF, Dina Wolff and Ilan Bach, children of South African immigrants, laid a wreath in memory of the Fallen.

This delightful evening gave many Machalniks the opportunity of seeing fellow-comrades whom they had not met for some time, and also provided the chance of spreading the word on Machal to the those who know too little about it. The evening concluded with Migdal Teperson giving thanks to the SAZF and in particular to Hilary Kaplan for seeing fit to honor Machal in this fashion. Re'uma Weizman also attended the event. Her late husband, former President Ezer Weizman, was one of the few Israelis who flew fighter planes in the War of Independence, in

an Air Force that was made up of 95% Machalnickim. Sid Cohen, who was also at this week's event and actually commanded Weizman in Squadron 101, was one of Israel's first fighter pilots, and the father of the IAF fighter Squadron.

Adapted from material provided by Smoky Simon and a story in the Jerusalem Post

France

The French commandos were instrumental in the liberating on Be'er Sheva. On Tuesday, October 30, 2005 the veterans of the French commando unit held a ceremony in Be'er Sheva memorializing fallen comrades. Participants included Yaakov Ternar, Mayor of Be'er Sheva, Gérard Araud, Ambassador of France to Israel, Fernand Bybelezer, Second in Command of the French Commando unit, Ovadia Kalai, President of the Be'er Sheva Memorial Committee, Miky Cohen, historian

of and fighter in the Negev Brigade, Maurice Fajerman, President of French Machal.

The ceremonies were conducted in the Hall of Fallen Soldiers on the Field of Honor in Be'er Sheva and opened with a presentation of colors. This was followed by the dedication of the section consecrated to the memory of the Commando volunteers and the distribution of certificates of honor to the veterans of this campaign.

A plaque was dedicated at the corner of Herzl and Atsmaout Streets recalling the French Commando unit. Certificates of honor were also distributed to other defenders of the city. The following letter was received by Fernand Bybelezer following the ceremonies.

Great Britain

Members of the British and European Machal association visited Israel for Yom Hazikon/Ha'Atzmaut.

May 18th, 2005

**Mr. Fernand Bybelezer Ottawa
Canada**

Dear Fernand,

I am writing to express my sincere appreciation and gratitude for your willingness to give the city of Beer-Sheva the Historical Flag from the Liberation of our city 57 years ago, by the French Commando Brigade under your and Thadee Diffre's command. I am happy to inform you that we decided to establish a special place in Beer-Sheva's Memorial House to dedicate the great contribution of the French Commando Brigade to our city. It will have a special focus on the flag and other articles of the French Commando.

As part of our recognition and honor to the French Commando, we also decided to name the major intersection in the old city (next to the Turkish Governor's House) as The French Commando Intersection. I would like to invite you to Be'er Sheva to participate in these special ceremonies as well as in the Dignitaries of Be'er-Sheva Award, which will be held on Sunday October 30th, 2005.

On behalf of the Residents of Be'er-Sheva, the City Council members and myself, I would like to thank you for your courage and for your great contribution in Liberating Be'er-Sheva. I look forward to hearing from you and to see you in Be'er-Sheva.

Sincerely,

. P Yaakov Ternar

Mayor (Be'er Sheva)

The service at the Machal Memorial was well attended with family and friends also participating. Stanley Medicks arranged a visit to a parachute regiment where the group was received with honour. A superb lunch was provided and at each place everyone was given a parachute regiment emblem sticker and a key chain

The group visited the inspiring new Yad Vashem museum and in the evening watched the Torch Lighting Ceremony and Military Tattoo on Mount Herzl. It was very very cold but this did not dampen our warm enthusiasm for a brilliant evening.

Medicks concluded that we have never received worldwide publicity from the Government of Israel. I am sure it is because the sabra is too proud to admit that they could not do the entire job themselves. Yet, I believe Israel would not have existed in its present form without Machal.

Stanley Medicks

New York

HANUKKAH CELEBRATION 2005

On Sunday, December 25, AVI members, family and friends celebrated the first night of Hanukkah at the Bnai Zion hall. As in years past, old comrades assembled to celebrate the valor of our ancestors at the time of the Maccabees and swap tales of the miracles we witnessed in our own days with the rebirth of the Jewish State. While the years take their toll, nothing stopped us from enjoying a wonderful repast, light the Hanukkah candles and join together in singing the "Maoz Tsur" hymn led by Sam Klausner.

It was also an opportunity to introduce our incoming president, Art Bernstein, a veteran of the Uluva (Haim Arlosoroff). Ira Feinberg, the outgoing AVI president passed the baton by thanking the chaverim who pitched in during his term to keep the organization



Dan Kurzman

viable and productive.

The guest speaker this year was the prolific writer Dan Kurzman,



David Gerard and Sam Klausner

author of 15 books including the golden standard *Genesis 1948*. He spoke about his recently published book *No Greater Glory* telling the heart-wrenching story of the four chaplains on the *Dorchester*,



L-R Lola Sprinzeles, Leo Pressley, Theodore Schneider

a troop transport torpedoed near Greenland during WWII.

Si Spiegelman reported on the Aliyah Bet and Machal Dedication that took place in Gainesville on November 18-20. Future plans include a rollout of the exhibit to cover other venues. Los Angeles (A University of Judaism exhibit is in progress.) and other target cities on the wish list including New York City, Washington DC, Toronto and Tel Aviv. A poignant DVD was shown based on a collage of recent



Ruth Gruber between Betty and Ira Feinberg

photographs of the veterans attending the Gainesville dedication interspersed with vintage photos of 1947-1948. The



Nat Nadler, Edith and Sid Rabinovich

background music consisted of popular tunes sung by the soldiers during the War of Independence. The concluding images zoomed in on photos of the 40 North Americans who gave their lives during the war. The entire audience was moved seeing (for the first time) their young age and vibrant appearance and recognizing how much they missed as their lives were cut short. It was a sad but very epic way to end an afternoon celebrating a very epic Jewish holiday.



Israel Parade May 2005, David Gerard, Marshall (foreground)

The guests took leave standing around and chatting at the door until they risked ejection as another AVI Hanukkah celebration came to a close. Dave Gerard chaired the program. As they have done for many years, Dave and Arlene Gerard made sure that food served at the event was tasty and abundant.

Si Spiegelman

Obituaries

Elihu “Eli” Bergman, Aliya Bet and Briha



Syd Abrams (L) and Eli Bergman in Xylymbou detention camp, Cyprus, 1947

Elihu Bergman, age 78, died on November 23, 2005 in Seattle Washington from complications of a stroke. He was born in Seattle on August 18, 1927; his parents were the late Fred and Minnie Bergman both active members of the Seattle Jewish community and longtime Zionists. He attended local public schools and graduated from Garfield High School in 1944. He entered Reed College in Portland Oregon but after two years enlisted in the U.S. army.

After discharge in 1947 together with two friends, Sydney Abrams and Bailey Nieder, Eli volunteered to join “Aliya Bet” the section of the Haganah organized for the clandestine transport of Holocaust survivors in defiance of the British government’s restrictions on Jewish immigration to Palestine by attempting to break through the naval blockade. All three Seattleites were assigned as crew to the SS Paducah along with 30 other unpaid young men both from the U.S. and Canada: Jewish and Christian. The Paducah was a U.S. Navy gunship sold as surplus, built in 1904 it served in both World Wars. It was 190 feet long, 900 tons

Eli signed on as an able seaman and with no previous naval experience as with most of the rest of the crew, after only a week of training, sailed across the Atlantic. After stops in the Azores

and Lisbon, Portugal finally made port in Bayonne, France where the ship was outfitted so it could carry passengers. Then as the first Aliya Bet ship after the Exodus, the Paducah passed through the straits of Gibraltar across the Mediterranean to the Dardanelles. Finally after many delays the ship loaded on 1388 displaced persons in Burgas, Bulgaria. They had come from Romania in sealed trains. When the ship returned to the Mediterranean through the Dardanelles they were followed by a British naval flotilla and boarded as they approached the Palestine coast by armed marines. The passengers and crew were interred in a



L-R Eli Bergman, Bailey Nieder, Syd Abrams 1994

prison camp on Cyprus. When he was released two months later. Eli rejoined the Haganah and went back to Europe to assist DP’s. Elihu reentered Reed and graduated in 1950 as student body president and went on to the University of Chicago where he received an MA in Political Science in 1951. He then embarked on a long career in foreign aid and technical assistance, working for the U.S. Agency for International Development in Washington, DC, North Africa and Yugoslavia and for Robert Nathan Associates in Iran, for Vista in Alaska and for the Ford Foundation in Mexico City. He returned to the United States as assistant director for Mexico and Central America.

He returned to the United States in 1970 on a fellowship and received

a PhD from the University of North Carolina in Political Science where his major interest was population policy. He next served as Assistant Director of the Harvard University Center for Population Studies. While at Harvard he was the author and editor of books and articles on population and politics. Notable was the article in *Midstream*, October 1977 entitled “The American Jewish Population Erosion - Will Your Grandchildren be Jewish.” His articles were translated and published in foreign journals.

In 1980 Elihu moved to Washington, DC. He worked with the staff of Senator Henry Jackson on successful efforts to aid Soviet Jewry and provide military and social assistance to Israel. He then became Executive Director of Americans for Energy Independence, a research and information group promoting alternatives to dependence on foreign (Arab) oil.

Upon retiring in 1992 he moved back to Seattle but kept an apartment in Washington. He devoted most of his time to research and articles on the efforts by England to stop the Aliya Bet and the creation of the State of Israel. He spent a great deal of time in London searching the archives of Royal Navy, the British Foreign Office and the Colonial Office providing documentary evidence on how the United States State Department had cooperated with the British in the period between 1946 and 1948 until President Truman halted it. His articles on the subject have appeared in a number of publications including Modern Judaism and Palestine Studies.

Eli was active in AVI serving as president during 2002. He made many trips to Israel and worked with the group organizing the 40th Anniversary reunion in 1987. He also revisited Cyprus and found that the prison camp where he had been held was completely gone.

He is survived by his daughter Andrea Korican (husband Steve) of Bainbridge Island, WA. His son David Bergman (wife Missy) of Canton, GA, and grandchildren, Griffin and MacKenzie Korican and Zachary Bergman. A brother, Dr. Abe Bergman lives in Seattle.

(Data for this obit was furnished in part from an obituary prepared by Dr. Abe Bergman published in Seattle newspapers Nov. 26 & 27, 2005).

Bailey Nieder

Condolences to

Family of Elihu Bergman

C/O Mrs. Andrea Korican

8331 Sumanee Place

Bainbridge Island, WA 98110-4505

Ed Kessiloff: Army and/or Etzel

The Newsletter has a report from Allen Chapnick that Ed Kessiloff of Winnipeg, Canada has died. Allen believes he served in the Irgun Zvai Leumi while AVI records have him serving in the IDF Army during the 1948-1949 conflict. Kessiloff was an attorney who, it is reported, was disbarred for slandering a judge. He lived alone and there is no record of any surviving relatives. In the last years of his life he drove a taxi.

Ed did, at one time, complete a questionnaire for the AVI archive. The following is taken from that response as summarized by Ralph Lowenstei.

Edward Kessiloff was born in Kiev, Russia on May 10, 1927. He was living in Winnipeg, Canada, when he volunteered for Israel. He said he served in the Canadian armed forces, but did not say which branch. He arrived in Israel on July 14, 1948, and was assigned to the 72nd Battalion. He later served in heavy mortars

in the Negev. He served in the southern offensive that captured the southern Negev in January, 1949.

He returned to Canada, and received a law degree in 1957. Then, he adds, "After being called to the Manitoba Bar in 1957, I practiced law for five years in Winnipeg, Manitoba, after which I voluntarily resigned from the practice of law because of my disillusionment with the corruption and hypocrisy in that area. This had a telling effect upon my personal well-being, which makes the detailing of the remainder of my work history less meaningful."

On July 28, 1995, in a letter that accompanied his questionnaire, he wrote: "The questionnaire has many good features, but it seems to have been drafted on the assumption that all Machalniks have, in the post-Israel period, led full and conventional lives. Unfortunately, in the real world, that is not always the case as in my own example, although it has nothing to do with Israel."

Anyone with additional information or information confirming or disconfirming the above, is requested to advise the Newsletter editor so that a more complete and fitting obituary may be composed.

Izzi Shlam, Army

Izzi Shlam of Fort Lauderdale, FL who served in the IDF during the War of Independence passed away on April 13, 2004. His wife, Leah, survives him. We have not been able to retrieve any additional information.

Reinterment of Math and Kaplan

The ceremony for the reinterment of Mendel Math and Jerry Kaplan was held at the military cemetery on Har Herzl on Wednesday, Nov 23, 2005. The whole thing was handled very well. About 100-150 people there, extended family and friends of the families of four of the five re-interred soldiers. No contact could be made with anyone of Jerry Kaplan's family, either here or there.

Saul Twicken

Yehuda Witenoff, Mala Crew and a Founder of Kibbutz Sasa



L-R Yohanan Dreyfus, Benny Newman, Yehuda Witenoff, Al Naftal

Eulogy given at the Funeral of Yehuda Witenoff held in the Kiryat Tivon Cemetery on October 31, 2005. Yehuda was born March 29, 1924.

We have come together today to say farewell to our father, Yehuda. It is too difficult to sum up the life of a man in a few words. Everyone present has known Yehuda from different aspects of his life; however we all have something of him within ourselves.

If I have to describe my father's life in one word, I would say CHALUTZ. He was a Zionist; he helped settle the land of Israel,

Machal: The Forgotten Heroes

was one of the founders of Kibbutz Salsa, worked the land as a farmer and was active in guarding the land as well. He was a man of work, and not just words. He was fortunate to be part of a generation that founded the State of Israel, and we will always be proud, and even envious of the generation that did so much, with so little. He always looked forward, and despite the fact that he came from a poor family in Montreal, and went to work at the age of 13, he was active in the youth movement of Hashomer Hatzair. He volunteered for the Canadian Air Force in WW2, as well as for Machal, and the Israeli Air Force during the Israeli War of Independence. In addition he volunteered to serve as a sailor on the refugee boat, the Mala, which brought immigrants from Europe to Israel during the period of the founding of the State of Israel. In later life, he devoted a great deal of time and thought to the genealogy of our family and of the Jewish people.

Father left us suddenly, but I recall that just recently the whole family sat together in the Succah, and I felt that he was terribly happy and proud of the accomplishments of his children, and his 8 grandchildren. We all pray that the day will come soon that we can say that there is peace in the land, as we know he wished for. He was a man that deeply loved his family, his land and his people.

Noam Witenoff in the names of his mother, Shulamit and his sisters Hagar and Dina

*Condolences to
Shulamit Witenoff
50 Oranim St.
36043 Kiryat Tivon*

The following article appeared in the e-newspaper www.israelinsider.com

Yesterday I received an invitation from World Machal to participate in the 'Yom Hazikaron service' to honour the memory of our 119 Fallen Comrades. They came from all over the world to lay down their lives for the defence of Israel. They didn't have to come, yet they did, and they died to allow us to live here as a free people in the state of Israel. Soon after World War Two ended, many volunteers came to help in the Ishuv. Many worked on ships helping to smuggle in Jews from Europe, mostly Holocaust survivors.

I am a Holocaust survivor and at the time when Israel became a sovereign state, I was serving with the US Army in Germany as an interpreter. I was supposed to immigrate with my father to Canada, but decided instead, to volunteer to join the IDF. There were those who couldn't understand why I would risk my life after four years of horrors in concentration camps. "You have done enough by just surviving, let others do the fighting." "It is a lost cause anyway. Israel will not survive the onslaught of a hundred million Arabs. Why do you want to die now when you have survived the worst slaughter of our people?" I couldn't give them a rational explanation. Perhaps it was an irrational decision. All I knew was that I had to go.

It wasn't until I met the Machal volunteers on the way to Israel, that I understood why. After saying goodbye to my father and friends, I left for France. Members of the "Bricha", mostly ex Palestinian soldiers of the Jewish Brigade, whom I met in Germany, directed me to a camp near Marseilles, by name of Saint Jerome. There,

members of the Hagana were training volunteers for the Israeli army. I decided to wear my American Army uniform and had no problems crossing the border from Germany to France and continue by train to Marseilles. From there it was a short distance to the camp. Upon arrival in Saint Jerome, because of my Canadian papers, I was assigned to a group of English speaking volunteers. They came from all over the world, The United States, Canada, Great Britain, South Africa, and other English speaking countries. They were mostly older than I and they received me in their midst with great warmth. They had many explanations of why they volunteered, but deep down all of us had the same feeling: "We Had A Need" to come and defend our ancient homeland. It was as if a call echoing through all the generations of Jews, came down to us from Mount Sinai. Most of us were not religious people, but I heard that sentiment expressed by many of the volunteers. There was one of us who knew how to put into words: He was our military instructor and taught us how to handle weapons. He was a tough looking man with a rugged face. He was much older than the rest of us, with greying hair, and those who knew him called him Cappy. He was an American who served with the Marines during World War two. I never did find out his name, as he remained in the camp after we left for Israel.

Tomorrow, at the 'Zicharon Service' when the names of our fallen comrades will be read, *I will remember Cappie's speech, and think of those who came from around the world to 'Make the ultimate sacrifice', for this country. We should never forget them.*

Solly Ganor

Letters To The Editor

To the Editor:

It was nice to receive the AVI bulletin. I take my hat off to all of you for continuing to get the bulletin out. I know what the problems are as we have this publishing house and, small or large, it takes a lot of work.

A small correction: On page 11 (Newsletter Summer 2005) there was a photo and I was pleased to see it but the persons in the photo are wrongly named except for Yaacov ben Israel (Yock) and Josh Lewis. From Left to Right are Adrian Philips, Yock, (sitting) Murray S. Greenfield, Hal Fineberg and Josh Lewis. I had a call from Harold Katz asking who sent the picture and the names.

Just as an aside if anyone is interested in a copy of Stones of the Middle Sea by Isaac Imber (see obituary of Imber in Newsletter Summer 2005, pages 14-15) Gefen Publishing published the book and for \$10 I will arrange to have it mailed to anyone.

After you read my typing you will be pleased to know that our son runs the business these days and we have great editors.

Murray S. Greenfield

To the Editor:

The Summer (2005) issue of the AVI Newsletter, page 4, states that Bill Bernstein was shot by a British soldier. To keep the record straight, Bill Bernstein was the Second Mate on watch and

Bill Millman, who was steering the ship at the time, were in the wheelhouse of the EXODUS 1947 when they were attacked by a group of British sailors. Bernstein was clubbed as he tried to hold them off with a fire extinguisher. Bill Millman was shot in the jaw as he struggled with one of the sailors. As a result of the clubbing Bill Bernstein received he died hours later of a fractured skull.

Frank Lavine

To the Editor:

On erev Shabbat, Anna and I received a gracious invitation from Paul Kaye to a pre-Hanukkah celebration at the B'nai Zion Building, 136 East 39 Street, NYC, hosted by the American and Canadian Volunteers for Israel (AVI), --- men and women who answered the clarion call to fight so that the State Israel could be born and established between 1946 and 1949.

We were effusively greeted by Paul and his wife Susan, in turn being introduced to many among the 60 attending, all of them heroes and heroines, remembering a youth spent serving their Zionist ideals to bring the modern Jewish Commonwealth into being: Jack and Lillian Alson, Arthur Bernstein (incoming AVI president), Ira (AVI's outgoing president) and Yaffa Feinberg (with whom we share mutual friends Tina and Morris Erbesh), Samuel Klausner, Nat Nadler, Sidney Rabinovich, Lola Sprinzeles; also volunteers

like Bob, Raisa, Zvi, evoking scenes from Israel's latter-day conflicts in the Yom Kippur War (1973), and the Lebanon action in 1982. In our rounds, we happily encountered celebrated authors Ruth Gruber, and keynote speaker Dan Kurzman, who related the untold story of the four chaplains, including Rabbi Good, who sacrificed their lives in order to temporarily save others in a doomed, torpedoed mission.

In the main, however, AVI's more than 400 active members trace their heroics to Ha'apala (the battles to create the State); several were veterans of World War II; others were ferrying weapons (as did our personal idol Paul); they were piloting Messerschmitts to Tel Nof Air Base, acting as radar technicians, artillery gunners, tank commanders, even surgeons for eye wounds and burns. All were directly, or otherwise involved in populating Mandate Palestine with immigrants in Aliya Bet, even sailing the clandestine, now famous, "Exodus 1947."

An afternoon highlight was the DVD report on the visit of more than 200 AVI members to the campus of Florida University, Gainesville, for the opening of a new museum exhibition to permanently display the saga of the North American volunteers in Israel's struggle for independence, November 20, 2005! (Kudos to Dr. Ralph Lowenstein, AVI archivist and museum project director, www.israelvets.com)

The video's poignant

segment was the inclusion of period songs, Paul and others joined chanting their martial spirit, echoing, after all, the quintessential campaign that is Hanukkah represents, with High Priest Matathias and the Macabees. Both efforts concluded with epic success? but not without the requisite sacrifice of lives, many of them in their youth's flowering. Forty individuals, with photographs gave their last breath so that Israel may live and thrive.

With every best wish, and high regard. Happy Hanukkah 5766!
Sincerely, and with fraternal affection,

Asher Matathias
Vice President, MetroNorth
Region, B'B'

To the Editor:

In early summer, 1947, the Mossad assigned me to the Northland to reposition her from southern France in the Mediterranean around the Iberian Peninsula to Bayonne, France in the Bay of Biscay. Favorable currents sped the offshore passage but this required remaining alert so as not to drift onto the beach. My only experienced watch officer was a former Italian submarine commander and he couldn't navigate a toothpick in a washbasin. Fortunately, we had a fair-haired young Canadian aboard who appeared to understand navigation and he took a load off my shoulders. That quiet and unassuming lad was, unknown to

me, was an experienced fighter pilot, Ed Kaplansky (see obituary in Spring 2005 Newsletter).

In later years we became firm friends. A lot of people were lucky to have Ed "take a load off their shoulders" in the IDF Air Force. He never stopped contributing. Right down to the very end he was getting history correct.

Arthur Bernstein

To the editor:

The mention of Dov Shugar brings back many memories. Dov was in the same Hebrew class at the Hebrew University in the fall of 1947 as were my wife, Frieda and myself. A gentle soul and excellent teacher named Aharon Rosen taught the class. Rosen wrote the classic Hebrew textbook, *Elef Miliim* (A Thousand Words). When Rosen learned that the underground Jews in Russia were secretly studying Hebrew, using his book, he remarked to me, in all seriousness, "Maybe it is for this that I was born."

In any case, Dov Shugar had even less Hebrew background than I did (I had a least gone to afternoon Hebrew school for a while), and when he finally mastered his first phrase, he used it on every occasion, suitable or not. The phrase (in a deep Southern accent) was "*Mah atah rotzeh memeni - dam?*" ("What do you want from me - blood?"). Whenever Rosen prodded Dov to come up with the correct word or translation of a word, he invariably received the same answer, delivered proudly.

Dov was, indeed, in charge of the mortars during the siege of Jerusalem, although in my memory we had only one mortar. He may have moved it around in taxis sometimes, but I remember him standing on a flatbed truck, the mortar next to him, as he rushed from side to side of the city to give the enemy the impression that Jerusalem was surrounded by mortars. His truck had right-of-way over all other traffic in Jerusalem.

He is particularly outstanding for the day that he rode around on his truck with his index finger pointed upward. No one could figure out if he was saying he had only more shell left, or whether he had knocked off one enemy, or whether he was pointing to God (unlikely). Only later did we learn that a bullet or shell fragment had grazed his finger, and he was holding it up in pride.

My final memory of Dov is from our period defending Neve Yaakov, then a moshav outside of Jerusalem. We were instructed to approach a suspicious house in the Arab section and blow it up, and then destroy the bridge that might bring in their reinforcements - all of this to be done by ten men with two rifles and three hand grenades (not each). Both Dov and myself were in the group assigned this task. However, just as we were ready to set out, the *yoreh* (the first rains) came. The heavens opened and cancelled our assignment, and we were told we would be taken back to Jerusalem the next morning. As a consequence, we gave a big farewell party, at which all the Palmach songs were sung

over and over.

Being unfamiliar with the songs, and bored with the proceedings, and having had a bit too much wine, Dov stood at attention on his bed and started singing "Dixie." As an Atlantan, I, of course, also came to attention on the top of my bed and joined in. However, Dov was the focus of attention because he had begun to prepare for bed, and as he stood there - tall as he was - he did not realize that he was naked.

Dov and I have written to each other once since those days, but we have never met again.

(Save your Confederate money, Dov. The South will rise again).

P.S. Mickey Marcus' cover name was David Stone - not Mickey Stone. (How picayune can I get?)

David Macarov



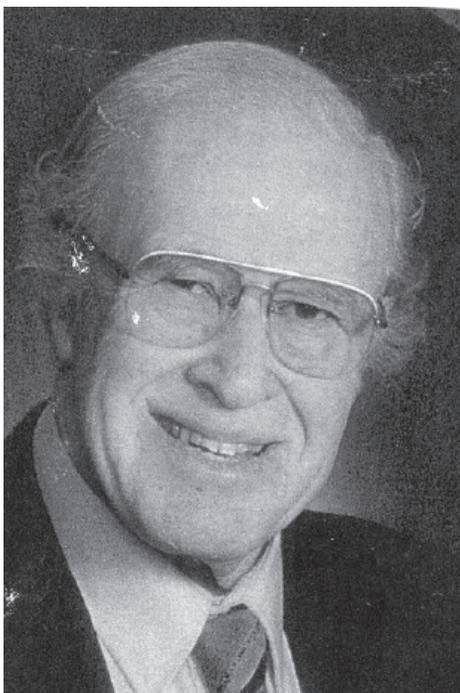
Dov Shugar, contemplative moment, Jerusalem, 1948

From time to time, the Newsletter publishes biographical material on Mahal volunteers, especially accounts of their military or Aliya Bet service. Ira Feinberg prepared this sketch of Harold Shugar, currently of Loudonville, NY.

over one hundred miles from the nearest deli, his Mother was able to keep a kosher home during the High Holy Days. Both parents were strong influences on young Harold. At its height, some fifteen Jewish families comprised the Jewish community of Tarboro who prayed, celebrated, and raised their young as Jews. Jews had lived in Tarboro before the civil war but as the years went by the Jewish Community was reduced considerably as the younger generation sought life beyond of Tarboro.

Harold, tall in build, played basketball and football for Tarboro High School. In 1940 he entered The Citadel Military Academy, (The West Point of the South) where he studied and remained for three years. He was a member of the varsity boxing team, welterweight division at 145 pounds and a member of the International Relations Club, showing his proclivity toward world events. In September 1943, Harold and the entire Citadel class

HAROLD BERNARD SHUGAR, 1923....



Dov Shugar, 2005

A Man of Curiosity, Mysticism, Luck, and Dedication

Few stories of a lifetime and intensive involvement with history are as adventure filled and poignant as that of Harold Bernard Shugar. Most of us are prone to letting others take the chances. Not Harold who made his own lot and decided one day to be a part of history, and not an observer.

Harold Shugar was born in Tarboro, North Carolina April 10, 1923, a small agricultural town, the son of an orthodox Jewish father. Although located

enlisted en mass into service. Harold chose the United States Navy where he served during WW II. After his third year at the Citadel, the Navy sent him to the University of South Carolina for one semester. He was then transferred to Northwestern Midshipman School in Chicago, where in May 1944, he received his commission as an Ensign in the Navy. From the time he was commissioned, he served aboard a ship throughout the war.

He was immediately assigned to a PY (patrol yacht), with his homeport Boston and whose task was to patrol the North Atlantic, off the coast of the United States. His ship was armed with a 75 mm, two 50-caliber machine guns, depth charges, sonar and radar, a fully operational anti-submarine ship except there was no deck armor and no watertight compartment. It was really not suited for the North Atlantic. Once his ship joined with destroyers to hunt for a Nazi submarine wolf pack. On an anti-submarine patrol in February 1945, his ship was caught in a hurricane in the North Atlantic. The waves towered over the ship and Harold estimates the waves were some 60 feet high. His ship was in a giant trough with the clinometer registering a 65-degree roll. It was so cold that salt water froze on deck. Because the ship had no deck armor and a low center of gravity, it was able to right itself, although losing the lifeboat and stack.

Immediately after Germany surrendered, he was transferred to the Pacific arena stationed out of Pearl Harbor



Dov Shugar, mortarman, near Jerusalem, 1948

where he was promoted to Lt. Junior Grade. When the war ended, his ship took part in Magic Carpet operation, bringing the troops home. His last assignment was in 1946, when he volunteered for the Atomic bomb tests at Bikini. There, he witnessed the



Dov Shugar and shipmates, 1948

two nuclear detonations. The first was from the air. The second, under water, made the strongest impression. A geyser of water rose over one mile high into the air and was shaped like a long stem wine glass. He estimates the geyser remained aloft for five or six minutes. Bikini atoll, that beautiful paradise measuring several miles in length and home to 150 natives, living off of coconuts and fish, is still hot (radioactive) after 59 years. The grandchildren of the natives wish to return but this will never be. Shortly thereafter he was decommissioned honorably and meritoriously from the Navy.

Out of the navy Harold decided he wanted to be a lawyer where he was accepted and enrolled at George Washington University Law School. Here is where a major turn in his life would take place as he witnessed the impending conflict between Arabs and Jews over the Palestine question. Something in him connected with his heritage. It was a most mystical experience for which he had no reasonable explanation. He questioned himself as to "why he was a Jew" and experienced a calling instinct that something monumental was about to happen, and he had to be there when it occurred. He was drawn to go to Palestine to be there as history was surely to be altered. Altered, hopefully in favor of his people.

Since the British were in control the only way to gain entry into Palestine at that time, 1947, was with a student visa. Harold secured a visa and enrolled at the Hebrew University in early

1947 studying Hebrew and the Humanities. He felt being there was his destiny. A short time after he enrolled at the University and not far from where he was domiciled the tragedy that happened at Sheikh Jarrah severely affected him. Fifty Doctors and Nurses on their way to Hadassah Hospital on Mt. Scopus were ambushed and killed by a Palestinian Arab militia. This was the same route Harold took to the Hebrew University. The British, whose duty was to separate the Arabs and Jews, and by so doing protect both groups from warring against each other. This, however, was not the role the British carried out as they clearly sided with the Arabs. The ambush at Mt. Scopus could have been prevented if the British had truly wanted to act impartially. An armored convoy, with the High Commissioner passed within two blocks of the firing and did nothing to stop the massacre. When they finally decided to act, a couple of bursts of machine gun fire stopped the attack.

Riled up by his witnessing this mass murder of innocent medical professionals, Harold left his studies at the university, and joined the nascent Haganah. Jerusalem was divided then between the Old City, Arabs and Jews, and the New City mostly Jews. The Arabs attacked in both cities, and Harold was almost killed when a bomb exploded on Ben Yehuda Street killing over 57 Jews. Arabs and Jews lived in separate neighborhoods and each wanted to protect and expand his area. Once, his group of eight men heard there was an

Arab patrol in their sector. At this time, the Haganah worked with small groups. Girls would carry handguns under their skirts to different locales, as men would frequently be searched. Word was received that a group of Arabs were in the neighborhood. Harold and his comrades were deployed in the yard. Harold heard footsteps and observed a group of ten Arabs trotting along the lot line some ten feet away. He was armed with a Sten (submachine) gun and waited for the order to fire. None was forthcoming. After the Arabs passed, Harold turned around and found that his group had been recalled into the house and he was alone. He patrolled outside Jerusalem and observed the convoys of many lorries (armored trucks) slowly climbing the road with Arabs firing from both sides of the road with the lorries returning fire. Harold likened the scene to American Indians attacking a wagon train. A memorable experience comes to mind. One Friday evening on the outskirts of Jerusalem, his group constructed a campfire and held services, which Harold found very moving. From the higher elevation he observed Arabs training in their villages below Jerusalem.

When the Old City was about to fall and evacuations were taking place of all residents. Shugar observed this sad and perilous movement where Jews had lived for over two thousand years. Glubb Pasha, a British Officer who commanded the Arab Legion of Trans Jordan ordered the seizing of the Old City and directed his troops to seize as

many prisoners as possible. A number of Jews escaped across the plain between the Old City and Yemen Moshe. Jordanian Legionnaires fired from the ramparts of the Old City at them but he observed no one being hit. On the evening of the fall of the Old City, detonations began destroying the first of 57 synagogues dating from antiquity. With a shortage of manpower, presence of the British and no heavy weaponry, the Haganah could do nothing.

On April 15, 1948 the British withdrew from the city of Jerusalem, leaving it the Jews and Arabs to fight it out among themselves. The Haganah now came out into the open. Now they were able to organize companies instead of small groups of men and attacked the Arab positions. At that time, there were three 81 mm mortars in Jerusalem, which constituted the heavy weaponry. Because of his previous knowledge of weaponry, Harold was given command of one of the mortars, supporting the attacks and responding to Arab shelling of Jerusalem.

Using archeological research reflecting back to biblical times, two decisions were made. Since the water pumping station was in the Arab sector and although the UN guaranteed it would be safe guarded, the Jews wisely did not believe them. Surely enough, the Arabs blew up the pumping station. Before this happened, the underground cisterns, dating from biblical times, were cleansed and filled with

water. This saved Jerusalem. Even during the shelling, water trucks would distribute water throughout the city. Secondly, the Jerusalem brigade of the Palmach, aided by the presence of Colonel Mickey Marcus, were able to bypass the Arab Forces by building a road through the hills surrounding Jerusalem into the city while a periodic truce was in place. Without heavy weaponry, the Haganah had made three major attempts to open the existing road without success.

Somehow, the Israelis discovered that Harold had been an officer in the American Navy. At this time, there was no action now in Jerusalem. Naval service had always been his favorite and when he was requested to join, he did so. He was now prepared to enter another phase of his service to Israel by enlisting in the embryonic Israeli Navy. The Israelis felt that an officer of a rank of Lt. Junior Grade in the United States Navy would be sorely welcomed to its ranks.

With Jerusalem liberated Harold made his way to Tel Aviv via the recently opened but uncompleted Burma Road. Incredibly, he witnessed a terrible tragedy on the shores of Tel Aviv, the battle challenging the arrival of the Altalena. This ship was loaded with arms for the Irgun Zvai Leumi, the revisionist sector of the Zionist movement founded by Jabotinsky.

In Tel Aviv, Shugar met with Paul Shulman, an Annapolis Graduate, who was asked by Ben Gurion to organize, acquire sailing vessels, and train the

newest navy in the world. Hal was assigned to the Eilat (Northland) as a Gunney officer on the first Israeli warship. The Eilat had been a U.S. Coast Guard icebreaker and taken part in Aliyah Bet. On the Eilat, he monitored and commanded a 65 mm cannon, dating back to WW I. Additional armament included two 20 mm anti-aircraft guns on the bridge, two machine guns over the pilothouse, 40 mm bofors on the stern and a quintuple hispano-switzer (anti-aircraft guns about 15 mm) amidships. On one occasion and in a combat mode, Harold had to de-breach his cannon manually catching each artillery piece, as it was de-breached, and tossing each defective (duds) shells into the sea.

To his knowledge, the Eilat was the first Jewish ship to take offensive action since the days of King Solomon. His ship shelled the port of Tyre, bombarding the enemy in Lebanon and then with a flotilla of three ships entered into combat off the coast of the Negev bombarding the invading Egyptian army. On one occasion an Egyptian flown spitfire off of Tel Aviv strafed him. Sailors under his command were killed and wounded. With the gunner on the 20 mm killed, Hal personally took over the firing of an anti-aircraft gun. Unhappily, a bullet from the aircraft hit the magazine disabling the weapon. Harold had the aircraft in his sights and is certain that had the weapon been operational, he would shot down the spitfire.

After all hostilities ended,

Harold received a discharge from the navy and returned to the United States. He then enrolled in law school only to rediscover that this was not his calling. He then entered the construction field and was known amongst his professional peers for his excellent reputation as a chief estimator and project manager. His wife Sally Hope Shugar of 46 years of marriage sadly passed away in 2002. Harold is a proud grandfather of three grandchildren, and the father of two very successful sons, Dr. Joel Shugar an Ophthalmologist from Florida and Daniel Shugar, president of a large Solar Energy company in California.

Harold Shugar adds the following personal statement. *Having been overseas, I know the blessings of living in the United States. I have had the privilege of being present at the birth of the State of Israel, a prophesy of the bible fulfilled in our lifetime. I have participated in two wars, WW II and the War for Israeli Independence. I have been bombed, shelled, machine gunned and strafed. My mortar exploded on one occasion when I was not present, killing the entire gun crew. My position was destroyed by a car bomb. I have had a loving wife, two wonderful sons, who have beautiful families and three handsome grandsons. I consider myself a most fortunate person and count my blessings.*

(See Macarov letter on Shugar in Letters to the Editor)

SYMPOSIUM continued from pg. 1

Mahal and AVI continue with the American boys who come to join Zahal. It did not end with us who came in '48. We did nothing extraordinary for a young Jew at that time. We are not a breed apart but a part of the Jewish nation who should be in Israel.

**Shalom,
Raphael ben Yosef**

A background comment by the editor:

Both the followers of Herzl and Hovevei Tsiyon at the first Zionist Congress agreed that aliya was fundamental to the Zionist movement and an essential measure of commitment to Jewry. At the time much of the orthodox religious community dissented from this view as did organizations such as the Reform Movement and later the Bund and the Jewish Territorial Association, to name a few. Leaders of the Vaad Leumi of the Yishuv and early leaders of the State, including Ben Gurion, strongly advocated for the centrality of aliya. After the Holocaust the call for aliya became even more insistent. The politically divided American Zionist movements only weakly advocated for aliya but they tended to have small groups of youth within them who saw their future in Palestine. This possibility hardly entered the mind of the vast majority of American Jews. Israel immigration records show that the number of American olim from 1919 to the present has regularly hovered between 2000 to 3000 per

year while the Jewish population has grown from around three and half to five million. The orientation of the olim has shifted from liberal and labor to orthodox, including numbers of haredim who's views are anything but supportive of the secular State.

It was to this diverse community that the recruiters for the Haganah and aliya bet turned in 1947-1948. Some volunteers were already in the aliya pipeline, some in hachshara or seeking professional employment in Israel, when hostilities broke out. They were the most likely to remain after the War of Independence. Others responded to a sense of Jewish peoplehood, diaspora nationalism (sort of Dubnowian), secular Yiddishism, Zionist sympathy or a kind of tiqqun olam in aiding the DPs. Few of these remained. Others were drawn in for their technical expertise with little relation to their ideology much like the Christian volunteers. Typically, members of the latter two groups had little Jewish education and varied greatly in the extent to which Judaism was part of their lives. Over half of the returnees had no interest in continuing a fellowship through an organization such as the AVI.

SZK

Comments:

Raphael Ben Yosef
PO Box 110
Givat Shmuel 54100
Israel

Dear Raphael,

Thank you for your letter

of July 18, 2005. Where I respect your opinion and your zeal and love of Israel, I beg to differ with your view.

Not everyone who participated in Israel's War of Independence, or who performed an outstanding service prior to or during, or after the war, may have had the inclination to settle in Israel. This is very personal choice, and one should not be condemned or thought less of because of that choice. Nor does that choice change the fact that when Israel needed us we were there. We are different from the millions of Jews who did not answer the call when the Jewish People needed them.

What our AVI's contributed cannot be reduced by one iota because they did not remain in Israel. Many of us went on to contribute to Israel's welfare and security in other ways. Many of us simply moved on with our lives and families. Our organization, which is winding down by a fatal act of nature is not for self-aggrandizement nor for looking for kudos and admiration. It represents a group of men and women who band together to remember their buddies, who did not return, and to care for each other as comrades, and to celebrate each year the joy of knowing that we took part in such a key moment in Jewish History together.

Many of us have family in Israel. I have a son, and two grandchildren who live in Israel. Our love for Israel and for our families is unbreakable. I hope you will be more tolerant, more respectful, and more caring of your fellow machalniks who are with you and the people of Israel

every waking moment wherever they are, in Israel or in the galut.

Please consider your decision and renew your membership. We need you. We welcome you.

Sincerely yours
Ira A Feinberg
President, AVI

The prospects of Aliya, or being recruited to serve on Aliya Bet Ships or volunteering to serve in the Israeli Armed Forces during The Israeli War of Independence of 1948/49 are associated with many motives and considerations, depending on the background and affiliations of the individuals in political, religious or family upbringings, their ideology as well as their nationalistic feelings. Being a member of AVI/ Machal does not require that its members become Olim, remain or return to settle in Israel. The matter of Aliya is a personal choice and consideration of the individual, depending on his or her convictions and ideological motivations. If Raphael Ben Yosef does not want to renew his membership in AVI, why did it take him this long to declare his thought about it?

David Hanovice

I have more than 400 detailed questionnaires on the approximately 1,200 Americans and Canadians who volunteered for Aliya Bet and Mahal. Relatively few were active Zionists at the time. Excluding the Christians, they were young people with a

Jewish heart whose motive mainly was to help fellow Jews in a time of need. Although there were some Zionist youth group cadres, especially in Aliyah Bet, this was the exception. American "Zionist" youth, for the most part, sat on their hands. So, in fact, the minuscule number of men and women who risked life and citizenship were "extraordinaire."

I greatly admire Raphael ben Yoseph, because he not only volunteered, but also devoted the rest of his life to building the Jewish State. I believe only a few hundred of the Aliya Bet and Mahal veterans did likewise. The rest came back to their families, jobs or university educations, as they had planned to do all along.

Raphael represents a disconnect between *chalutzim* and North American Jews that goes back to Aliya Aleph. The *chalutzim* cannot believe that there is any country outside *Eretz Yisrael* where Jews can achieve on their own merits and not face eventual if not imminent destruction.

AVI is not and never was a Zionist organization. It is a fraternal organization for a fast-disappearing band of brothers and sisters who did in 1948 what their contemporaries did not do. I hope Raphael will reconsider our role, when compared to the 5 million other Jews in America in 1948, and not diminish our ranks further by resigning.

Ralph Lowenstein

Aliya was not the main motivation or even the issue facing

North Americans who put their lives on hold and rallied to Israel's defense during the struggle for independence. Yet, it was sad and disappointing that after the war more Machalniks did not choose to remain on, or to return later, to give life to the nascent state they had helped to create. Aliya is a very personal matter: not everyone is willing or able to commit to the challenges involved. Statistics aside, each individual *oleh* in this small country counts just by being here and can be counted upon to make a difference. The role of AVI and other World Machal affiliates should now be to encourage young people, in the Machal tradition, to make Israel the focus of their Jewish identity - enhancing their lives and also giving our middle-aged state a renewed lease on life, geared to potential *olim* in the 21st century.

Zipporah Porath

The extent, basis, and range of Israelis' feelings about *yordim* (as well as Jews who do not live in and/or have never visited Israel) has never been empirically investigated or analyzed, and is probably as various as many other individual attitudes. Ben Yosef's letter expresses one person's feelings in this regard, and is subjective and therefore understandable.

However, when we speak of people who gave up their time, their families and their careers to put themselves in danger in order to help establish the State of Israel, and who never came with the expectation of staying,

there is enough glory to go around. They deserve the thanks and remembrance of all of us.

Perhaps, as ben Yosef hints, those of us who stayed in Israel should have formed our own organization with reunions, news bulletins, etc. However, with the exception of small groups, we really did not (and still do not) know one another, and besides, we are now members of the Veterans of the Hagana, or other such groups, which is enough for us.

On the other hand, the AVI--especially through its Newsletter-- does a useful service in unearthing and publishing stories, incidents, and personal accounts that would otherwise have been lost to history. In a comparatively short time there will be no more American Veterans of Israel. Let us postpone the discussion until then.

David Macarov

Considering that aliyah, or the return of Jews to their ancestral homeland, is a tenet of the Zionist vision it is not surprising that the writer of the letter finds it enervating that so many Machalniks, devoted Zionists among them, did not remain in Israel after 1948 and did not return to Israel on Aliyah.

It is an indisputable fact that many Machal volunteers were not Zionists and settling in Israel was not built into their personal agenda, whereas defending the Jewish State was. They came to help with the idea of returning home when it was "over, over there".

Nevertheless several

hundred Machalniks made their home in Israel. Many held strong Zionist views and settled in Kibbutzim. Others overcame severe hardships and carved out lives in the cities. But a majority, Zionists included, felt compelled to return to their countries of origin driven it seems by the economic hardships and difficulty in conforming to the particularities of Israel's melting pot. Possibly, had there been a focused effort to absorb them, more might have remained. Israel's policy makers in 1949 were absorbed with daunting issues relating to absorption of immigrants, shortages of all kinds and getting the economy running in addition to defense matters. Machal veterans endured economic hardships, as did others who had come to Israel. However, whereas others had nowhere else to go, for many Machalniks there was a "back home" that beckoned with opportunities for study, employment, business and professional advancement coupled with a comfortable standard of living and familiar culture. Once home they settled down to deal with the mundane issues of living. A good number made Aliyah later on, but the majority chose to support the State of Israel without uprooting their families or leaving children and grandchildren. That is the human condition, like it or not.

We can rationalize away the aliyah issue or express self-righteous indignation as much as we like, the fact remains that the Galut is part of our people's psyche and history far back in biblical antiquity and it won't be waved away. There was a Jewish

Diaspora even after the return from Babylonian exile and there was a large Jewish Diaspora in the days of the second temple as we read about the sizable and influential Jewish communities that dotted the Mediterranean basin. Then as today it improved the prospect of Jewish survival in a threatening world and offers strategic opportunity obvious to any thinking person.

Si Spiegelman

BERNSTEIN continued from pg. 1

Joseph Warner

Joseph Warner served in the Canadian Air Force during WWII after graduating from the University of Toronto. He was trained as a Wireless Air Gunner on bombers. He joined the Machal volunteers, but the Israel Air Force had no bombers mounted with weapons requiring his skills. Joe joined the 5th troop-anti-tank regiment of the Artillery Brigade. The unit provided anti-tank firepower in support of the Givati Brigade's actions at Faluja, Iraq es-Suweidan and other points in the South of the country - all of which led to the encirclement and defeat of the Egyptian units in the Negev.

After the war Joe built a career in the corporate world working for the Pfizer Corporation. He ran Pfizer's business in Israel for 12 years in spite of the Arab boycott in effect at the time. He retired from the company in 1995 after 40 years of service.

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Another battalion, Mackenzie-Papineau (Two Canadian anti-British rebels in 1837), consisted of Canadian and US volunteers.

Turning to numbers, it seems that the total number of volunteers in the International Brigades was around 35,000. However, considering different arriving and leaving times and the toll of the war, not much more than a half of this number was active at any given moment. When the war approached its end the number was even smaller.

There were about 7000 French volunteers, 1600 Dutch and Belgian, 5000 Poles, 5000 Germans and Austrians, 3000 from the US, 2000 from Great Britain, and 1600 from Yugoslavia. Some hundreds came from each of a number of other countries such as Switzerland, Palestine (almost all of them Jews), Canada, Italy, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary. There were soldiers from about 50 countries. Even some "white" (anti-Communist) Russians volunteered, hoping this act would facilitate their returning home. Some volunteers came from Ethiopia, which was occupied then by Fascist Italy.

There were six French (or French - Belgian) battalions, two German, one Austrian, Hungarian, Bulgarian, Italian, British, Czechoslovakian, Polish, Yugoslavian, one Polish-Hungarian-Yugoslavian, one "mixed", one from the Balkans, one Yugoslavian-Albanian, and one Latin American. There were many changes in this pattern, and one important change was the

replacing of foreign volunteers by Spanish conscripts.

The proportion of Jews among the volunteers was relatively very high, about one fifth, partly because the rebels were allies of the Nazis, partly because of the political tendency of many Jews towards the left. Especially high was their proportion among the medical corps - about 70%. There was even a Jewish Company, which was called Naftali Botwin (a Polish Communist Jew who was executed in 1925), in the Polish Battalion, 13th Brigade.

Another conspicuous contingent was of intellectuals: writers, poets, philosophers, artists, journalists. Or, as a Canadian volunteer "complained": "Everybody was there but Shakespeare." For these intellectuals this was an opportunity for fighting aside working-class, a situation not natural in their countries of origin. Some of them were killed, such as the British Christopher Caudwell, John Cornford and Ralph Fox.

Arthur Koestler described Spain as almost a branch of Greenwich Village. Numerically, the working-class was predominant. The most famous among them were Andre Malraux, George Orwell, Ernest Hemingway and Arthur Koestler. Koestler and Hemingway had never been in the Brigades. Orwell and Malraux fought in separate units. Most of the volunteers, though not all of them, were Communist but many of the others were politically leftist. Some of the volunteers were graduates of working-class struggles in their own countries,

such as “Hunger Marches”, strikes and other conflicts with the authorities. For them, fighting in Spain seemed as continuing their struggles of the past. Such was, for example, a group of militant Welsh miners. Others, many Jews among them, fought the Spanish Nationalists because the rebels were allies of Hitler and Mussolini. These volunteers came to stop the Fascism before it was too late. Few volunteers were adventurers.

During the first months the International Brigades had some characteristics of a democratic army. Commanders were called “comrade;” there were no salutes, and informal manner was common. Gradually, all these characteristics vanished. Separate dining rooms (and menus), ranks and other formalities, strict discipline, including executions, replaced the democratic spirit. As a volunteer put it, since he crossed the Spanish border, he felt a conscript, not a volunteer anymore. In addition, in 1937 the International Brigades were merged into the Spanish army and were to follow its rules. However, the separate structure of the International Brigades continued. A unique (and problematic) characteristic of the Brigades was the sharing of the command between professional officers and commissars. The commissars were responsible for the education, the moral and political correctness, which meant following the guidelines of the Communist party. Sometimes they also helped in arranging supply and welfare resources. In addition to the commissars and in parallel to the

formal military structure, there was also a structure of Communist cells in every unit.

Regarding fighting, the Spanish Civil War was one of the hardest and cruelest of the 20th century. Massacres, rapes and executions, including of POWs, gave the impression that both sides read The Hague Convention rules quite superficially. The rebels’ behavior, in particular, was as “an occupying army whose soldiers accidentally have the same nationality and language of the occupied.” Volunteers who perhaps imagined Spain in terms of an ever-sunny country were disappointed to realize, like the soldiers at the Italian front a few years later, how awful winters follow horrible summers. Worse than that, incompetent commanders sent the Republican soldiers, who were frequently poorly equipped and armed, both absolutely and compared to the Nationalists, to the battlefield. Hence, from Republican point of view the war was generally a sequence of defeats and retreats. In addition, sometimes the international Brigades were used as “shock troops” in the more dangerous or critical points of the front and at the most critical and dangerous times. About one fifth of the volunteers were killed, and by adding injured, MIAs and prisoners, the proportion of casualties was almost a half.

In order to make Madrid “The Tomb of Fascism”, as Dolores Ibarruri, the general secretary of Spanish Communist Party declared, the international Brigades participated in the successful defense of Madrid in

winter 1936/7. At the same time other volunteers fought in Lopera, near Cordoba. The Brigades also participated in the battles around Madrid such as those of Jarama Valley, Guadalajara, Brunete and Teruel. These lasted from the winter of 1937-37 to the winter of 1937-38.

Meanwhile, the number of volunteers decreased substantially with time, partly because information on the treatment of volunteers made its way back to the home countries. Also, the course of the war went against the Republicans and undermined the enthusiasm of potential volunteers. The International Brigades participated in two unsuccessful Republican attacks at the Ebro front, in summer 1937, and in summer 1938. The latter was the last Republican attack of the war. While this attack took place, Juan Negrin, the Republican PM declared that the foreign volunteers will be sent home. Even after this declaration some volunteers could not get out of the battlefield and continued to fight. Among the about 10,000 volunteers who remained at this stage, most of those who could return, for example citizens of the Democracies, left Spain. Many of the others, who had no welcoming country to return to, such as Germans or Italians, preferred to receive Spanish citizenship that was offered them and continued fighting until the Republicans were defeated.

In spring 1939 the war ended. Republican refugees, among them many volunteers, crossed the French border and stayed in camps under poor

conditions, a fact that took its toll in lives.

It seems that history sometimes sends us a “message in a bottle,” which describes a near disaster. Such was, for example, Bonaparte’s retreat from Acre, which was portentous for a greater disaster in Russia. These DP camps in south France, at a time while the storm over Europe was already gathering were a portent of the 1940s. A new war was waiting for most of the volunteers. Madrid did not become the “The Tomb of Fascism”.

The American volunteers in the Lincoln Brigade returned to the United States and formed a veterans organization. Unlike the AVI that organization pursued the political goals, which had sent the volunteers abroad. Since these veterans are a dozen or so years older than the AVI veterans, only a small number survive today. Younger people sympathetic to their cause manage their office.
Editor.

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Book Review

Liebreich, Fritz. Britain’s Naval and Political Reaction to the Illegal Immigration of Jews to Palestine: 1945-1948. London: Routledge, 2005.

This is a thoroughly researched academic treatment of the subject and duly footnoted and referenced. Scholarly treatises such as this clarify the history of our role. The author, now a British subject, had lived in Israel and had served in the IDF Navy. The work deals extensively with the legal tactics of both sides of the Aliyah Bet “engagement.” He limits his research to a few of the ships involved in the illegal immigration and interdiction. Of interest to members of AVI is the treatment of the voyages of the Exodus, Northland, Paducah and Paris.

From my perspective he has done an admirable job of historical accuracy and documented British and American anti-Semitism for which he gets two “Brownie points.” I do question some of his observations on the American political at the time. This volume is a must read for Aliyah Bet researchers. Any reader will enjoy a belly laugh at several cited official communiqués. Amusing was his discussion of the term “refoulment” used to describe the deportation of Exodus passengers and crew back to Germany. The term is not English but of French origin Lewis Carroll said, in Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There, “Speak in French when you can’t think of the English for the thing.”

When this mariner looks back to those days long ago there were many Alice-in-wonderland events.

Arthur Bernstein

The International Brigades in Spain

We have had an interest in comparative studies of volunteers for the military in countries other than their own. A few years back, we published an article on foreign Arab volunteers for the Palestinian cause in 1947-49. Here Benny Gshur, currently a doctoral student at the Hebrew University writing a dissertation on Machal, reviews foreign volunteers in the Spanish Civil War. Editor.

The 20th century has seen several mass volunteering movements in support of one side or the other in conflicts outside their homelands. For example, volunteers, mostly from Sweden supported Finland in the Winter War with Russia. Perhaps the most famous volunteering movement was that of the International Brigades in the Spanish Civil War. There should be some *déjà vu* for readers familiar with the experience of Machal. Aside from the recruiting center (Paris), the recruiters and recruits faced the problems of illegal recruiting, clandestine transportation or blocked borders. Sometimes the solutions were almost the same as those arrived at by recruits to Machal.

Despite the fact that some Zionists and Communists had close relations, I have not found yet any transfer of ideas from the International Brigades organizers to Machal organizers. Zionist recruiters faced these problems as if they were unique.

Since the Napoleonic occupation of Spain in the early 19th century Spanish political

life was desperately unstable. An unsuccessful and short democratic experience in the 1930's ended violently in July 1936. The Nationalists, which included the clergy, the Royalists and the landowners, supported by some elite units of the army, rebelled against the government of left and center parties. Germany and Italy quickly and effectively supported the rebellion. The regime that was constituted by the rebels differed from that of Germany and Italy but was called "Fascist" by its opponents. It was authoritarian but did not have the ideological base of the Fascist parties.

Hundreds of volunteers came spontaneously to support the government (The Republicans). By chance, some of them were already there, as participants in alternative Olympic games that took place in Barcelona in order to protest against Berlin's. The number of such spontaneous volunteers was probably a few thousands. Some later joined the International Brigades, or were used as a nucleus for new units. Others preferred not to join.

A short time after the rebellion, the Communist parties around the world, coordinated by the Comintern, began to organize volunteers to support the Republicans. The units of these volunteers who joined the Republicans army were called "The International Brigades". The center of the recruiting activities was in Paris and the volunteers were sent to Spain by trains or boats. A little later, since France, which was one of the powers

committed for a non-intervention policy, closed the Spanish border, the volunteers were forced to infiltrate in the night over the Pyrenees. This was a hard, dangerous, and for hundreds, a costly way. The Mediterranean option was also dangerous due to Italian submarines.

The volunteers were concentrated in Albacete where they received basic training, which was limited by lack of training ammunition. The commander of Albacete was Andre Marty, a French Communist who was responsible for bloody purges of hundreds of the volunteers.

Most of the volunteers served in brigades numbered 11 to 15. Each brigade consisted of 3-4 battalions, some hundreds of soldiers in each. Each battalion had a dominant language and a unique name and type, which was a derivative of its national origin. For example, one of the French battalions was called "Commune de Paris". The Italian battalion was called, of course, "Garibaldi." Two battalions of volunteers from the US were called "Abraham Lincoln" and "George Washington". The two US battalions were merged later, after they suffered heavy casualties. These were the first American units in which black soldiers served as equal with "whites" and even as commanders, such as Oliver Law, who was the commander of Lincoln until he was killed in Brunete.

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