

SOUTH AFRICA'S 800

The Story of South African Volunteers in Israel's War of Birth

by

Henry Katzew

**Compiled and produced by Maurice and Marcia Ostroff
from Henry Katzew's original manuscript**

Edited by Joe Woolf

Key to the Front Cover

Top to bottom:

- The famous Haganah immigrant ship S.S Exodus 1947, in which 4500 refugees were forcibly returned to Hamburg in September 1947. (See foreword & Palestine Post article page 23)
- Boris Senior in a Spitfire constructed from bits and pieces.
- A group of Machalniks, in the Tank Corps.
- A column of the 9th Palmach, Commando Battalion.

Revised and reprinted November 2003

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About this book

“South Africa’s 800” is about Machal, the collective Hebrew acronym for volunteers from abroad and about individual volunteers, colloquially known as Machalniks. The book reveals details never previously documented and provides a valuable new perspective on Israel’s birth and struggle for survival. It includes eye witness reports by active participants in the events. While written mainly through South African eyes, the book also contains gripping anecdotes about volunteers from the USA, Britain and other countries. It throws new light on important events and personalities of the time.

In his engaging eloquent style, Henry Katzew takes the reader on a fascinating expedition through recent historical events including:

- Adventures of 8 young South Africans in their ill-fated attempt to bypass British restrictions on immigration to Palestine, by travelling overland from Pretoria.
- The purchase of ramshackle small ships and their troubled voyages to Israel.
- Six Arab armies attacking the newborn state.
- Maps of the 1948 invasion and the 1949 armistice lines.
- The appalling lack of defensive arms.
- Purchase of light aircraft and flying them over Africa to Israel.
- The airlift of volunteers from South Africa and the staging process in Rome.
- Experiences of volunteers travelling to Israel in overcrowded refugee ships.
- Light civilian aircraft with “bombchuckers” to throw home made bombs over the side.
- The dramatic airlift to Israel of Me109 aircraft inside the fuselages of C- 46’s.
- The irony of Israelis flying German Me109’s against Egyptians in British Spitfires.
- The incredible operation Velvetta, flying Spitfires non-stop from Yugoslavia to Israel.
- Experiences in a Greek Jail.
- The Altalena and bewildered volunteers.
- The assassination of Count Bernadotte.
- Non-Jewish Volunteers.
- Jerusalem under siege.
- Machal and Israel’s first Air Force, Medical Corps, Ground Forces and Radar.
- The exploits of Ezer Weizman, now State President, Syd Cohen and other legendary fliers including non-Jewish Claude Duval and Gordon Levett.
- Personal battle experiences on the ground and in the air.
- The participation of Machal in many important battles.
- Epic adventures of ordinary men and women stirred to superhuman actions.
- West Air and Universal Airways and their role in maintaining links with the outside world before the founding of El Al.

To quote Ben Gurion, it tells how *“The war was not won by heroes. It was won by ordinary men and women rising above themselves -“*

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CONTENTS

| | |
|---|------------|
| ADDRESS BY HENRY KATZEW | 1 |
| MAY 1948 – SIX ARAB ARMIES ATTACK | 2 |
| THE 1949 ARMISTICE LINES | 3 |
| MESSAGE FROM THE STATE PRESIDENT, MR. EZER WEIZMAN | 4 |
| FOREWORD TO THE 2003 REPRINT | 5 |
| ROLL OF HONOUR | 7 |
| PHASES OF THE WAR | 10 |
| AUTHOR'S NOTE (2002) | 11 |
| AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION (1977) | 12 |
| THE ORDINANCE CREATING THE ISRAEL DEFENCE FORCE | 26 |
| CHAPTER 1 | 27 |
| LEGAL AND ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS | 27 |
| A day in May 1947 | 33 |
| THE ISRAEL FLAG | 36 |
| CHAPTER 2 - PART 1 | 37 |
| IMPACT OF THE PARTITION DECISION | 37 |
| NOVEMBER 29, 1947 to MAY 14, 1948 | 37 |
| JANUARY, 1948: EMISSARIES FROM THE PROMISED LAND | 43 |
| JANUARY 1948 IN PALESTINE | 45 |
| FEBRUARY IN PALESTINE | 49 |
| CHAPTER 2 - PART 2 | 51 |
| IMPACT OF THE PARTITION DECISION | 51 |
| MARCH 1948 | 51 |
| MARCH IN PALESTINE | 60 |
| CHAPTER 2 - PART 3 | 63 |
| APRIL 1948 | 63 |
| APRIL IN PALESTINE | 66 |
| IN PALESTINE MAY 1 - MAY 14 | 71 |
| CHAPTER 3 | 73 |
| OVER AFRICA - AND IN ROME | 73 |
| CHAPTER 4 | 97 |
| THE STATE IS BORN | 97 |
| HECTIC DAYS FOR FIRST SOUTH AFRICANS | 97 |
| CHAPTER 5 | 111 |
| THE NEXT TWENTY FIVE DAYS | 111 |
| THE RADAR TEAM | 123 |
| MAY – JUNE 1948 | 126 |
| IN SOUTH AFRICA | 130 |
| IN EUROPE | 131 |
| SUMMARY OF THE FIRST MONTH'S FIGHTING | 132 |
| CHAPTER 6 - PART 1 | 139 |
| THE ALTALENA AFFAIR: BEWILDERED VOLUNTEERS | 139 |
| CHAPTER 6 - PART 2 | 153 |

| | |
|---|------------|
| THE DOCTORS _____ | 153 |
| CHAPTER 7 - PART 1 _____ | 163 |
| TEN-DAY WHIRLWIND _____ | 163 |
| CHAPTER 7 - PART2 _____ | 175 |
| TEN-DAY WHIRLWIND _____ | 175 |
| IN THE AIR _____ | 175 |
| NIGHTMARE _____ | 175 |
| THE DOCTORS AND NURSES _____ | 179 |
| AT SEA _____ | 183 |
| CHAPTER 8 _____ | 185 |
| AS JULY ENDED _____ | 185 |
| CHAPTER 9 _____ | 191 |
| SIX SOUTH AFRICANS FALL _____ | 191 |
| CHAPTER 10 _____ | 203 |
| CECIL MARGO'S AIR FORCE BLUEPRINT _____ | 203 |
| Extract from the IDF Doctrine _____ | 210 |
| CHAPTER 11 _____ | 211 |
| THE TRUCE IN AUGUST _____ | 211 |
| AT SEA _____ | 217 |
| THE MEN OF THE AIR _____ | 218 |
| THE DOCTORS _____ | 224 |
| AUGUST DIARY _____ | 225 |
| CHAPTER 12 _____ | 227 |
| SEPTEMBER 1948 _____ | 227 |
| NEW ARRIVALS _____ | 227 |
| SKIRMISHES _____ | 228 |
| COUNT BERNADOTTE ASSASSINATED _____ | 234 |
| THE AIRMEN _____ | 237 |
| THE DOCTORS _____ | 241 |
| IN BRITAIN _____ | 242 |
| THE MONTH'S DIARY _____ | 243 |
| CHAPTER 13 _____ | 245 |
| IN A GREEK JAIL _____ | 245 |
| ON THE GROUND _____ | 248 |
| CHAPTER 14 _____ | 251 |
| THE STORM UNLEASHED _____ | 251 |
| ON THE GROUND _____ | 254 |
| RESCUE IN BROAD DAYLIGHT _____ | 257 |
| THE DOCTORS AND THE NURSES _____ | 262 |
| AT SEA _____ | 269 |
| POLITICAL _____ | 271 |
| CHAPTER 15 _____ | 273 |
| NOVEMBER - A FORTRESS FALLS _____ | 273 |
| THE AIR FORCE _____ | 275 |
| POLITICAL _____ | 277 |
| CHAPTER 16 _____ | 281 |
| DECEMBER - JANUARY _____ | 281 |
| THE FINAL BLOWS _____ | 281 |

| | |
|--|------------|
| CHAPTER 17 | 287 |
| FIVE R.A.F. PLANES DOWNED | 287 |
| CHAPTER 18 | 291 |
| THE WIND-UP | 291 |
| CHAPTER 19 | 299 |
| THE NON JEWISH VOLUNTEERS | 299 |
| CHAPTER 20 | 305 |
| VIGNETTES - BY THE VOLUNTEERS THEMSELVES | 305 |
| Appendix A | 345 |
| Les Bloch's burial place found after 48 years | 345 |
| APPENDIX B Personnel | 347 |
| South Africans who served during the War of Independence 1948 - 1949 | 347 |
| South Africans on Frontline Kibbutzim 1948/49 | 351 |
| Timorim | 351 |
| Shoval | 352 |
| Hatzor | 352 |
| Beit Herut | 352 |
| Kfar Blum | 352 |
| Massada | 352 |
| Kfar Etzion and Mizrahi Youth | 352 |
| Messilot | 352 |
| Ma'ayan Baruch | 352 |
| S.A. Nachal i.e. South African Volunteers who Served in the forces during 1956 to 1972 | 354 |
| APPENDIX C S.African 1948 Volunteers Listed by Sector Of Service | 357 |
| Analysis of South African Participation in 1948 | 363 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY | 364 |
| INDEX | 365 |
| MACHAL PHOTO ALBUM | 380 |

Extracts from the Declaration of Independence

Published in the *Official Gazette*, No. 1 of the 5th, Iyar, 5708 (14th May, 1948) (Erev Shabat)

On November 29, 1947, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted a Resolution calling for the establishment of an independent Jewish State in Eretz-Israel, and called upon the inhabitants of the country to take such steps as may be necessary on their part to put the plan into effect. This recognition by the United Nations of the right of the Jewish people to establish their independent State is irrevocable. This right is the natural right of the Jewish people to be masters of their own fate, like all other nations, in their own sovereign State.

Accordingly, we, members of the people's council, representatives of the Jewish community of Eretz-Israel and of the Zionist movement, are here assembled on the day of the termination of the British mandate over Eretz-Israel and, by virtue of our natural and historic right and on the strength of the resolution of the united nations general assembly, hereby declare the establishment of a Jewish state in Eretz-Israel, to be known as the state of Israel. we hereby declare that, with effect from the moment of the termination of the Mandate being tonight, the eve of Sabbath, the 6th Iyar, 5708 (15th May, 1948), and until the setting up of the duly elected bodies of the State in accordance with a Constitution, to be drawn up by the Elected Constituent Assembly not later than the first day of October, 1948, the People's Council shall act as a Provisional Council of State, and its executive organ, the People's Administration, shall constitute the Provisional Government of the Jewish State, to be called "Israel". THE STATE OF ISRAEL will be open to the immigration of Jews and for the Ingathering of the Exiles from all countries of their dispersion; will promote the development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants; will be based on the precepts of liberty, justice and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel; will uphold the full social and political equality of all its citizens, without distinction of race, creed or sex; will guarantee full freedom of conscience, worship, education and culture; will safeguard the sanctity and inviolability of the shrines and Holy Places of all religions; and will dedicate itself to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. THE STATE OF ISRAEL is prepared to cooperate with the agencies and representatives of the United Nations in the implementation of the Resolution of the General Assembly of November 29, 1947, and will take steps to bring about the economic union over the whole of Eretz-Israel. WE APPEAL to the United Nations to assist the Jewish people in the building-up of its State and to admit Israel into the family of nations. WE APPEAL - in the very midst of the onslaught launched against us now for months - to the Arab inhabitants of the State if Israel to return to the ways of peace and play their part in the upbuilding of the State, on the basis of full and equal citizenship and due representation in all its bodies and institutions - provisional or permanent. WE EXTEND our hand of peace and unity to all the neighbouring states and their peoples, and invite them to establish bonds of cooperation and mutual help with the sovereign Jewish people settled in its own land. The State of Israel is prepared to do its share in a common effort for the advancement of the entire Middle East.

WE APPEAL to the Jewish people throughout the Diaspora to rally round the Jews of Eretz-Israel in the task of immigration and development and to stand by them in the great struggle for the fulfillment of the age-old dream - the redemption of Israel. PLACING OUR TRUST IN THE ROCK OF ISRAEL, WE AFFIX OUR SIGNATURES TO THIS PROCLAMATION AT THIS SESSION OF THE PROVISIONAL COUNCIL OF STATE, ON THE SOIL OF THE HOMELAND, IN THE CITY OF TEL-AVIV, ON THIS SABBATH EVE, THE 5TH DAY OF IYAR, 5708 (14TH MAY, 1948).

David Ben-Gurion

*Daniel Auster
Mordekhai Bentov
Yitzchak Ben Zvi
Eliyahu Berligne
Fritz Bernstein
Rabbi Wolf Gold
Meir Grabovsky
Yitzchak Gruenbaum
Dr. Abraham Granovsky
Eliyahu Dobkin
Meir Wilner-Kovner
Zerach Wahrhaftig
Herzl Vardi*

*Rachel Cohen
Rabbi Kalman Kahana
Saadia Kobashi
Rabbi Yitzchak Meir Levin
Meir David Loewenstein
Zvi Luria
Golda Myerson
Nachum Nir
Zvi Segal
Rabbi Yehuda Leib
Hacohen Fishman*

*David Zvi Pinkas
Aharon Zisling
Moshe Kolodny
Eliezer Kaplan
Abraham Katznelson
Felix Rosenblueth
David Remez
Berl Repetur
Mordekhai Shattner
Ben Zion Sternberg
Bekhor Shitreet
Moshe Shapira
Moshe Shertok*

ADDRESS BY HENRY KATZEW

at a Machal reception in his honour during his visit to Israel in July 1998.

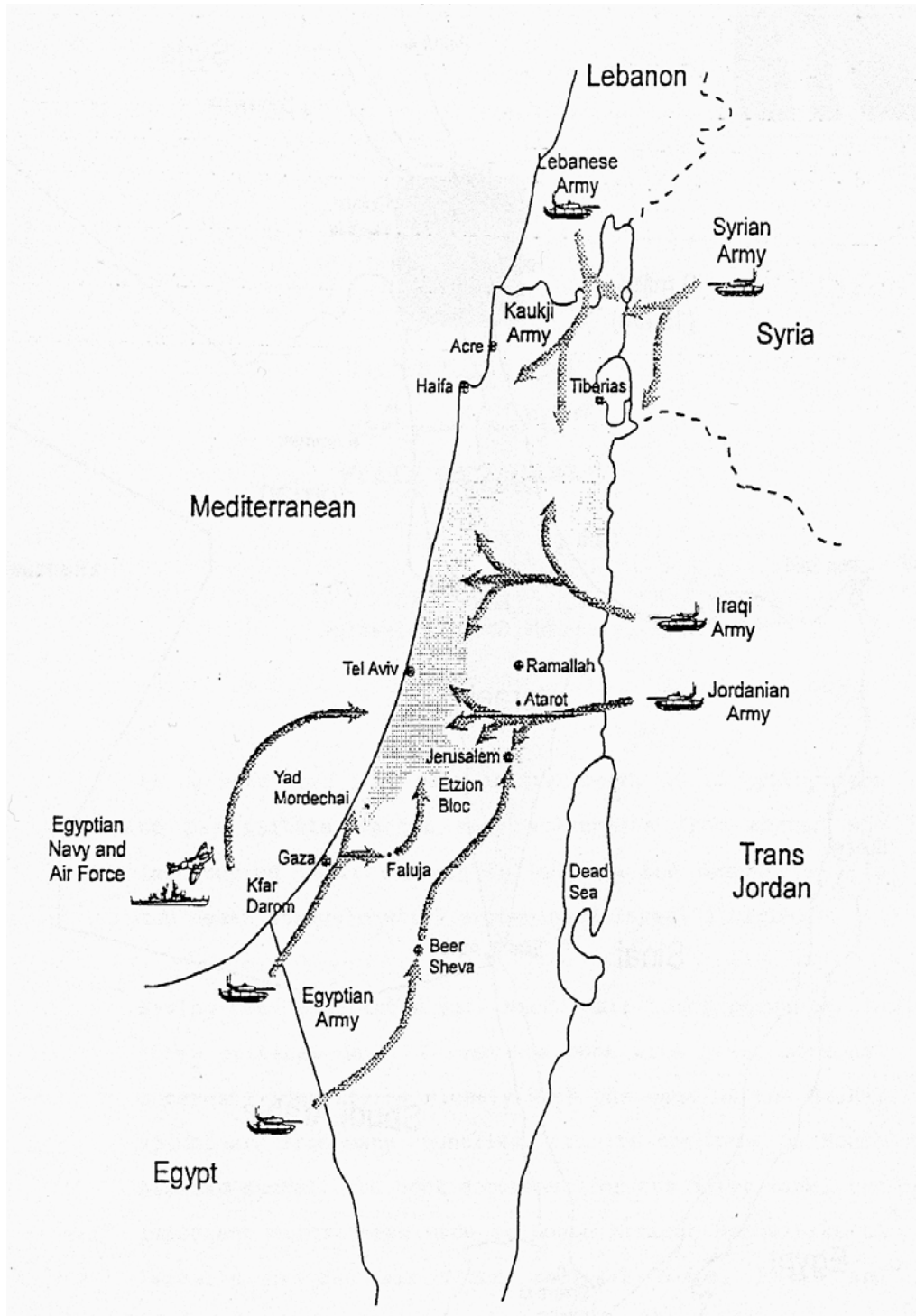
I have tried to give mind to what was in the book about you fellows to make you take to it in the way you have - even to the point of this lovely party. A clue comes from Shakespeare's reminder that all human experience, no matter how deep, remains an airy nothing until it is put in words and placed between covers. It was in the nature of my work on the book to fix what otherwise would have been for each of you personally a floating cloud.

You were involved in big history, in major and minor roles, without being aware at the time how really big this history was. Reflecting on my own experiences in World War II, I have to tell it this way to make my point. I wasn't at Dunkirk. I wasn't present on D-Day. I wasn't privy to the meetings of Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin. I was an insignificant dot on a minesweeper. But I was there.

In 1948 you guys were there, at the heart of miracle, the rebirth of Israel after two thousand years, an impossible event which you helped to make possible, and the repercussions of which will need more than a mere fifty years to unfold.

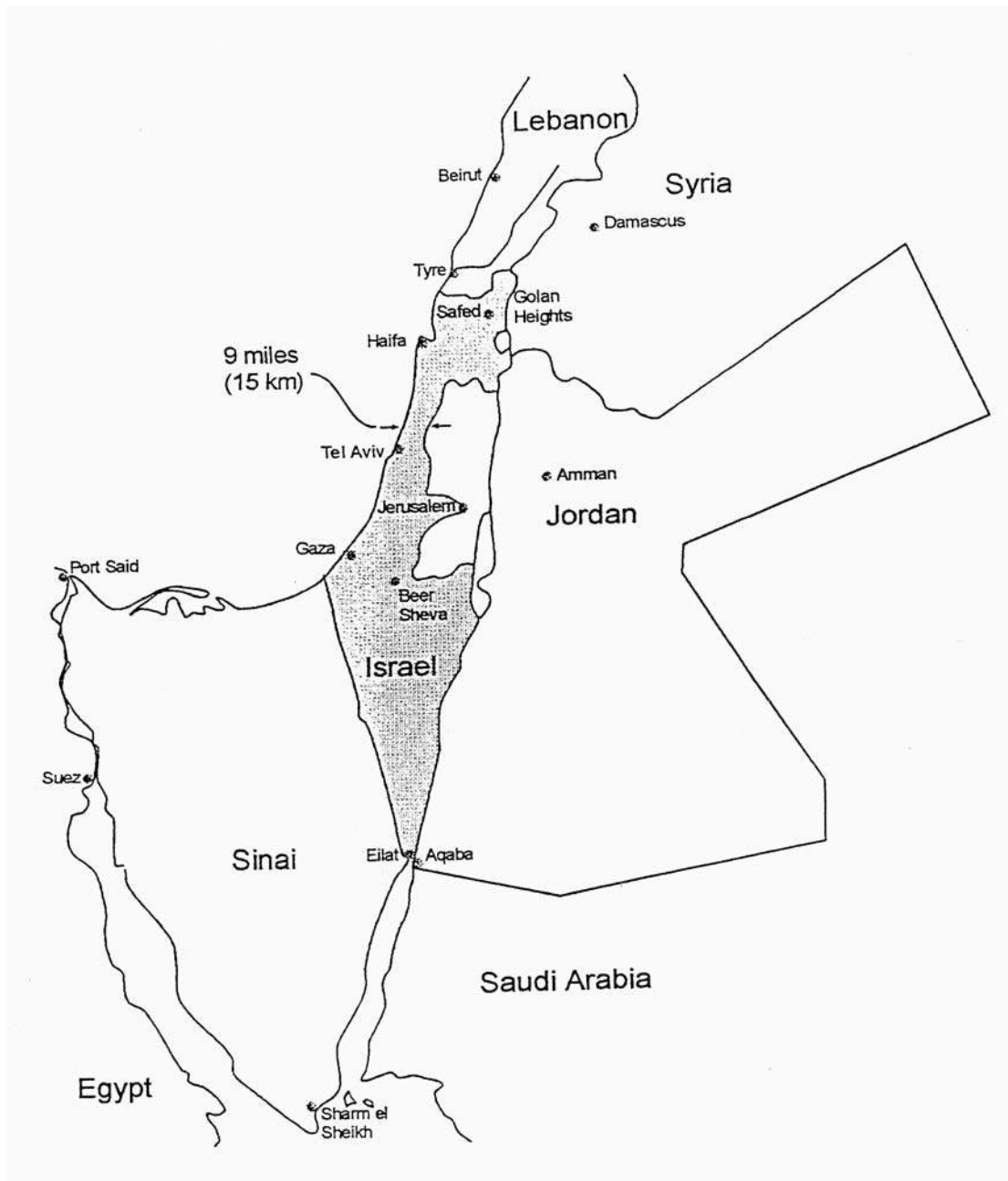
Fellows you were there. I was and remain proud to have been your chronicler. What we all have to do is to say thank you to the trio, Maurice Ostroff, Joe Woolf and Ralph Lanesman for their dedicated roles in bringing the book to fruition. Finally thank you to our gracious hosts Migdal Teperson and Shoshana, Thank you all for coming.

MAY 1948 – SIX ARAB ARMIES ATTACK THE NEWBORN STATE



Immediately Israel declared its Independence on May 15th 1948, the Arab League declared "Holy War", with the publicly declared intention of driving the Jews into the sea. Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, Egypt and Iraq invaded the newborn state. Among the first to fall were the isolated settlements of the Etzion Bloc, where the town of Efrat now stands.

THE 1949 ARMISTICE LINES



By the time the armistice lines were drawn, the struggle for survival had cost Israel the lives of more than 6,000 of its total population of 650,000. The armistice left the country vulnerable with a waist only 9 miles wide (15 km.), with the Galilee dominated by the Syrian army on the Golan Heights and Egypt in control of the Gaza strip. Jerusalem, which had been besieged and starved of food, water and arms, had been divided. Jordan, having expelled the Jews from the Old City, annexed East Jerusalem together with a large area on the West Bank of the River Jordan.

MESSAGE FROM THE STATE PRESIDENT, MR. EZER WEIZMAN





מדינת ישראל
دولة اسرائيل
STATE OF ISRAEL

رئيس الدولة
THE PRESIDENT

הנשיא

Jerusalem, 20th February, 1998

As we enter our 50th year of statehood, it is appropriate to pay tribute to the many volunteers from abroad who interrupted their careers to help in the desperate life and death struggle which accompanied Israel's birth.

Having been associated with Machal air force personnel in those critical days, I read the book with great personal interest, identifying closely with the saga of the Machal volunteers from many countries. In its emphasis on South African Machal, the book documents for the first time, the important contribution made by South African Machalniks to Israel's nascent air force, medical corps, radar and ground forces at the time of our desperate need.

The foreword to this book emphasises the importance of documenting actual eye witness accounts of this important chapter in our history and I congratulate the committee whose initiative and perseverance brought this long dormant manuscript to the publication stage.



Ezer Weizman

FOREWORD BY MAURICE OSTROFF TO THE NOVEMBER 2003 REPRINT

This fourth edition in response to popular demand is due largely to the tenacity and dedication of Joe Woolf, who has continuously followed up on the initial production, meticulously seeking to fill in gaps and ensure accuracy. With his eagle eye for detail, his phone calls and faxes at all times of day and night, his digging into archives, interviewing machalniks, carrying on an extensive world wide correspondence and identifying persons named in the book, Joe virtually compelled me to press on with compiling and producing the third and now the fourth revised edition which contains some interesting new details.

Joe enlisted the voluntary assistance of residents of Ilaniya. We are grateful to Michael Steigman for the many hours he spent patiently entering some of the data and to Joe's son Shaul (Woolf) Ze'evi, who performed a magnificent job assisting in preparing the book for publication.

Initial publication of this book in 1998 resulted from a chance discussion with Hertzel Katz, then chairman of the South African Zionist Federation in Israel (Telfed). Hertzel casually mentioned to me that in 1969 the S.A. Zionist Federation had commissioned journalist, Henry Katzew to research and record the story of South African Jewry's participation in Machal. Although completed in 1975, the result of Katzew's years of painstaking research had never been published. When Hertzel kindly loaned the original manuscript to me in May 1997, I was so impressed, that I urgently convened a meeting of Machalniks, comprising David (Migdal) Teperson, Boris Senior, Hymie Josman, Ralph Lanesman, Joe Woolf and the late Simie Weinstein z"l to review it and consider ways and means of arranging publication. Agreeing, unanimously, on the historical importance of the work we set to work on a voluntary basis to ensure that it saw the light of day.

The original content of Katzew's manuscript has, on the whole, been kept intact. Additions include maps, photographs, a comprehensive updated honour roll, lists of volunteers collated from many sources, including responses to a widely distributed questionnaire, layout, cover design, correction and addition of details relating mainly to persons who participated in events, spelling of names of persons and places, footnotes and preparation of an extensive index. The index, in particular, will be of value to historians seeking information about personalities, battles, other historical events and in general, the authentic early history of various segments of Israel's defence forces.

Many episodes in the book are based on diaries recorded while events were fresh in the minds of the scribes. Bearing in mind, however, that other personal recollections, related years later, may have been blurred by passage of time, Joe Woolf and I corroborated many details with persons who had actually participated in the events, some living in Israel, others abroad. In addition, Joe researched a great deal of documentary evidence in archives, libraries, museums and ships' and aircraft passenger lists. Having done all we could to ensure accuracy of the text and the lists of persons, we apologise for any errors and/or omissions, which may have eluded us.

I record my sincerest appreciation to the author, Henry Katzew (now 90) for his unstinted encouragement and cooperation. I have maintained fax contact with Henry in Johannesburg and several Machalniks, associated with the book, were privileged to meet with him when he visited Israel in July 1998.

The importance of chronicling this saga, as seen by the participants themselves, was vividly demonstrated during a 1997 Israel TV program about the refugee ship "Exodus". Several former refugee passengers and crew members who had lived through the ordeal participated together with two young historians. The historians emphatically contradicted the living

Introduction

eyewitness accounts, insisting for example that the refugees had been coerced to board the ship. The refugees, showing obvious astonishment at what they heard, told moving tales of how, to the contrary, they had struggled for places on board.

I also record my grateful appreciation to:

- My dear late wife and partner Marcia, for her invaluable input and untiring encouragement and cooperation even as she was nearing the end of her sojourn in this world.
- The S.A. Zionist Federation, for permission to edit and publish the book: in particular to Hertzal Katz, the late Mike Fredman z"l, David Kaplan, Morris Borsuk, Sidney Shapiro and Julius Weinstein for their encouragement and cooperation.
- Members of the book committee as well as Maurice Mendelowitz and Norman Spiro for contributions towards the initial costs, and Alec Wapnick of Pretoria, who contributed towards the publication of the third reprint. Also Tzokie and Gillian Merkel of Johannesburg, Leslie and Paula Marcus of Cape Town, Marcia Wolman of Connecticut, USA and Auryt Jacobson of Sydney, Australia, for sponsoring this fourth reprint.
- Ralph Lanesman for acting as treasurer and for coordinating orders for the book.
- Joe Woolf and Ralph Lanesman for editing and expanding the list of volunteers and Joe Woolf in particular for his incredibly detailed editing of historical data and my typing errors.
- Saville Kaufman for the maps, cover page and internet web page about the book.
- Eddy Kaplansky for his very helpful and knowledgeable advice in matters relating to the IAF.
- Jack Segall and the late Reuben Joffe z"l for contributions to the radar story.
- Tali Ganor, Peggy Tobias, Joyce Sofer, Galya Woolf, Yossi Shoshan of Ilaniya and Hayley Taitz and her father Cecil of Herzliya

Maurice Ostroff, Herzliya, Israel – November 2003

ROLL OF HONOUR

Killed In Action or Died On Service - 1938 To 2003

(listed chronologically)

MAY THEIR NAMES BE REMEMBERED AND BLESSED.

| | | |
|-----------------|---------------------|---------------|
| KATZ | AVRAHAM | 1938 Jul. 1 |
| KAPLOUN | ODED | 1948 Apr. 28 |
| BERELOWITZ | YECHESKIEL (Chatzi) | 1948 May 12 |
| LIPSCHITZ | ZVI | 1948 May 13 |
| ROSENBERG | GIDEON | 1948 May 16 |
| SILBER | MEIR (MATEY). | 1948 May 25 |
| COHEN | EDWARD SHLOMO | 1948 May 30 |
| BLOCH | LIONEL MORRIS (LES) | 1948 July 10 |
| HACK | LOUIS | 1948 Oct 23 |
| SANDERS | BASIL (BEN-ZION) | 1950 July 11 |
| LEVINSON | SHMUEL | 1951 May 10 |
| CHAIT | CHAIM | 1951 Sept. 23 |
| FRIEDMAN | NATHAN MORDECHAI | 1951 Oct. 29 |
| SIDLIN | MOSHE (MORRIS) | 1951 Dec. 25 |
| LEVY | JOSHUA | 1952 May 30 |
| GLAZER | YITZCHAK | 1956 Nov. 1 |
| LEMKIN | DONALD | 1967 Jun. 6 |
| LAVI (LOEWY) | ORIT | 1968 Aug 12 |
| LEIBOWITZ | ZVI | 1969 Sep. 1, |
| WEILER | ADAM | 1970 Mar.31 |
| KAHAN | DANIEL | 1970 Apr. 2 |
| SHUR | AVIDAH | 1973 April 10 |
| KATZ | RAMI (NAHUM BARUCH) | 1973 Oct. 6 |
| KAYE | TERRENCE | 1973 Oct. 6 |
| LOWENBERG | RAYMOND | 1973 Oct. 6 |
| GOLDMAN | MICHAEL | 1973 Oct. 7 |
| KATZ | AVRAHAM DAVID | 1973 Oct. 7 |
| BAR-EL (PINCUS) | MAYER JACOB | 1973 Oct. 8 |
| WEILER | GIDEON | 1973 Oct. 9 |
| URIE | MICHA | 1973 Oct. 12 |
| SHANAN | GIDEON | 1973 Oct. 14 |

Killed In Action and Died On Service - 1938 To 2002 (Continued)

| | | |
|---------------------|------------------|---------------|
| AGEYEV | YIGAL | 1973 Oct. 15 |
| AVIRAM (ABRAMOWITZ) | ELI | 1973 Oct. 16 |
| MELCER | YITZHAK | 1973 Oct. 16 |
| SHAPIRO | ELAN (CHAIM) | 1973 Oct. 16 |
| TAMARI | MICHAEL | 1973 Oct. 17 |
| FREED | NEIL | 1973 Oct. 18 |
| SILBOWITZ | DAVID YONATHAN | 1973 Oct. 18 |
| RUBIN | RAMI (AVRAHAM) | 1973 Oct. 22 |
| COMAY | YOCHANAN | 1973 Nov. 24 |
| SHOMRONI | JONATHAN | 1974 Sep. 4 |
| WHITESON | PAUL | 1975 Jan. 21 |
| MEYERSOHN (MEIR) | JOHN MAURICE | 1976 Jul. 23 |
| SOLOMON | HOWARD CHAIM | 1977 May 10 |
| WITTERT | SHAI | 1978 Mar. 15 |
| ADAR (WILK) | BOAZ | 1979 Jan. 15 |
| FELDMAN | ALAN MARK | 1979 Jun. 20 |
| GOLAN | GUY | 1979 Sep. 29 |
| PREISS | YOCHAI | 1980 Mar. 11 |
| BERMAN | OFER | 1980 Oct. 8 |
| CHEMEL | ROI | 1981 Sept. 10 |
| MYERS | GARY | 1981 Dec. 16 |
| LIPSHITZ | ZOHAR | 1982 Jun. 11 |
| ZIPPER | RAN | 1982 Jun. 11 |
| EIDELMAN | RONEN | 1982 Jun. 12 |
| MESSERER | RON | 1982 Jun. 16 |
| LAHAK (HACK) | YOEL | 1982 Jun. 25 |
| FREDMAN | DAN | 1983 Aug. 28 |
| WEINBERGER | JONATHAN (SANDY) | 1984 Nov. 30 |
| GOTTESMAN | YARON | 1985 Feb. 16 |
| BEN-ATAR | NEIL | 1986 Jun. 16 |
| RABINOWITZ | IDOR | 1987 Nov. 26 |
| EILON (ELIASTAM) | MARK | 1989 Nov. 6 |
| KAUFMAN | ILAN | 1990 Apr. 22 |
| ZLOTNICK | TAMAR | 1990 Oct. 1 |
| SHEMER | AVI | 1991 Mar. 27 |
| SHEFTS | NITAI | 1995 Sep. 19 |
| MISHEIKER | GILAD | 1997 Feb. 4 |
| RAZ | ABER | 1997 Jun. 26 |

Killed In Action and Died On Service - 1938 To 2002 (Continued)

| | | |
|-------------------|---------------|---------------------|
| LOEW | GUY | 2000 Dec. 20 |
| IFRAH | DANIEL | 2001 Dec. 9 |
| DAMELIN | DAVID | 2002 Mar. 3 |
| KENIGSBERG | STEVEN | 2002 Mar. 3 |
| YA'ACOV | AVIHU | 2002 May 3 |
| GARDI | MATAN | 2003 June 8 |

Wounded in Action (1948)

(in alphabetical order)

| | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| AYLON (LEVINSON) | URI (HENRY) |
| BANIN | JACK |
| CHASKELSON | RONALD |
| CLINGMAN | LIONEL |
| COHEN | ABE |
| GAMSU (GRUBER) | SONIA |
| GREEN | BERNARD |
| HACK | COLIN |
| HELLER | CHARLIE |
| JOFFE | HARRY |
| KANTEY | JIMMY (LEON) |
| KAPLAN | LIONEL (KAPPY) |
| KARPEL | LEON |
| LOSSER (LEIZER) | RAY |
| MARIK | COLIN |
| SAGAR | REG |
| SAKS | CHAIM |
| SCHLACHTER | GEORGE |
| SHEINBAUM | IVAN |
| SUSMAN | DAVID |
| WULFSON | SAMUEL JOSHUA |

Prisoners of War (1948)

| | |
|-----------------|--------------|
| GOLDBERG | MONTY |
| FLEISCH | JACK |

PHASES OF THE WAR

First phase, November 29, 1947 - May 14, 1948: Period of British withdrawal from Palestine and semi-underground fighting between Jews and Palestinian Arabs assisted by an Arab invasion army, the Palestine Liberation Army.

Second phase, May 15 - June 11: Invasion of new-born Israel by the regular Armies of Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and (later) units from Saudi Arabia and Sudan.

Third phase, June 11 - July 9: First Truce.

Fourth phase, July 10 - July 19: Ten-day Fighting Period.

Fifth phase, July 18 - October 15: Second Truce.

Sixth phase, Sporadic fighting until March 10, 1949.

AUTHOR'S NOTE (2002)

Nearly thirty years have elapsed since I researched and wrote this work after valuable initial research by Gidi Shimoni. History has not stood still since the South African Machalniks (men and women), mostly veterans of World War 2, answered the call of Israel in the trials of her birth in 1948.

The quality of these volunteers is evidenced by the manner in which they resumed their interrupted lives, many excelling in their post-war fields, be they in academia, medicine, commerce, industry, public life or other activities.

A few of numerous examples. Dr. Arthur Helfet was to be elected an Honorary Member of the prestigious Israeli Orthopaedic Association, Arthur Goldreich after a celebrated role in the struggle against apartheid in South Africa would become professor of architecture and design at Bezalel in Jerusalem. Syd Cohen would accompany President of Israel Ezer Weizman to the inauguration of South African President Nelson Mandela. In civic affairs, Eddy Magid and Morrie Egdes would become mayors of Johannesburg and Sandton respectively and Smoky Simon President of World Machal.

Chapter 18, written in 1975, follows the careers of a randomly selected few of the volunteers as they then appeared. A decision was made however not to update on careers. Eminence for many was prefigured in the kind of people they proved to be. The story belongs to a younger pen than mine, though my admiration for them remains unstinted.

Documentary material having either been lost or unwittingly destroyed, this work on South African Jewry's participation in Israel's stormy birth in 1948, had to be created mainly from the memories of the volunteers.

A war is not easily forgotten and the volunteers had much to tell. But they could not be precise about times and dates. Other information that was lacking concerned the composition of groups airlifted to Eretz Israel and the names of the lesser-known places and villages of the Land, in which the volunteers found themselves. In most cases it was not possible to reconstruct the full picture. There are, then, limitations to this book.

Nevertheless patient questioning, collation of replies, check interviews, pilots' logbooks, a few diaries, newspapers of the period and innumerable pictures, helped to supply a body of fact and personality sufficient for a substantial narrative.

Yet this book would not have seen the light of day without the collaboration, dedication and tenacity of Maurice Ostroff, Joe Woolf and Ralph Lanesman of Israel. I am deeply in their debt. So is every South African Machal family. So is South African Jewry itself. Without their painstaking labours, the finest (because the most spontaneous) hours in the community's history would have been without their record. This is the size of their achievement, made even more remarkable by the fact that they labored on to a second edition, then to this third edition, enriching each time with the fruits of further research and wider enquiry, and not to speak in the second and third, of enlarged dimension.

Most telling of all is its absolutely indispensable index (in all three editions), invariably the first item readers consulted. The debt to Maurice Ostroff, Joe Woolf and Ralph Lanesman only grows.

Thanks are due to the following: the South African Zionist Federation and the South African Machal Association, the sponsors of this book; the late Dr. Jack Penn, the propelling force in this direction; Dr. Giddy Shimoni, of the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, whose shrewdly compiled questionnaire to a number of volunteers elicited answers which made the writing of this book a compulsion of the spirit; the late Simie Weinstein, a legend of a man; the late

Introduction

Mrs. Phoebe Lange and Mr. Billy Elert for interviews with volunteers in Port Elizabeth and Cape town respectively; Mrs. Minnie Hurwitz, formerly of the Zionist Federation, for dedicated long-distance liaison with me in typing of the manuscript when I lived in America; to my wife, Ethel, and daughter, Helen Feiner for family help.

The deepest thanks of all to the volunteers who gave me of their time and encouragement. I came to know an impressive band of men and women and am proud to have been their chronicler. I read many books on the war but my deepest debt is to Netanel Lorch's, "The Edge of the Sword", published by G.P. Putnam and Sons. My acknowledgment cannot be adequate enough.

Henry Katzew, June 11, 2002 Golden Acres, Johannesburg



AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION (1977)

The Jews of the world and Imperial Britain came into violent conflict between 1944 and 1948. The British Mandatory power in Palestine progressively limited Jewish immigration and land purchase in order to appease the small, but restless Arab Palestinian population. A titanic three-cornered contest of wills developed. The Jewish will, after Hitler, became steel. The Jews bled and suffered and mourned once again, but their will held. Britain finally threw the problem of Palestine into the lap of the United Nations which surprised her with a resolution dividing the country into a Jewish State and an Arab State. The Jews accepted the resolution; the Arabs did not. When Britain quit Palestine in May 1948, the issue became one between the Jews and the Arab nations. The conflict continues to this day.

Two points at the outset:

This book is intended primarily for the 115,000 strong family of South African Jewry which knows very little about the participation of its 800 volunteers in Israel's war of birth, known as the War of Independence. The community, I believe, will be astonished by what these pages will unfold for it. But the intention creates a discord: the mixing of family detail with a great universal drama. However, I consider the family has the right to names and particulars which cannot be of concern to those outside it. I can only hope that the discord is not too strident.

I have tried to see war whole and without any attempt to glorify what, in any final sense, is a horror of man's condition. We Jews found ourselves at war against our will. But being in, we could do no other than so bear ourselves that the enemy should be aware of us. I am sure that somewhere in the high heavens exists a higher principle than that suggested by the harsh explosion of irreconcilable political differences, but men and peoples and nations have not yet found it.

The principle of selection worried me. In writing about the South African volunteers and in keeping strictly within the limits of my theme, I became sharply aware of the ludicrous impression I could create that the South Africans, not the Israelis, won the war. Perspective is therefore an immediate requirement. The carnage of her birth robbed Israel, population then a mere 650,000 of 6,000 of the flower of her youth. None of Israel's successive wars with the Arab nations, not even the Yom Kippur War twenty five years later, exacted such a high price. The South African losses were seven: two pilots, three kibbutz settlers, an underground fighter and an infantryman. The total number of volunteers killed from all countries abroad was about 120. The figures speak for themselves. The war was won - and the sufferings endured - mainly by the Jews of Israel.

Thus, in following this drama of the South African participation in the War of Independence, the reader should always be aware of the greater drama that was under way, that of

beleaguered Jerusalem, hungry and thirsty; of kibbutzim under siege; of desperate battles for the roads; of men fighting with knives for lack of other weapons and of newly-arrived immigrants without any training, sent from ship to battlefield, many dying in their first days in their longed-for homeland.

On a proportional basis, the Israeli losses, as two authors¹ have pointed out, would have represented two million Americans, that is more than the number of Americans lost in two world wars. What was visceral, ruthless and pitiless in the war either preceded the arrival of the South African volunteers, or struck most only glancingly.

Yet, despite the foregoing, the record still remains the most thrilling chapter in the story of South African Jewry. The recollections of South Africa's volunteers must be seen, first, as an important fill-in of some of the gaps that still exist in the literature on Israel's rebirth; and secondly as a corrective to writings both in Israel and the United States which, unforgivably, diminish where they do not ignore, the great quality of the South African contribution.

The word to know is Machal, which is the Hebrew acronym for volunteers from abroad. They came from many countries, a number of non-Jews among them, their main reasons either biblical, or identification with the Jewish cause, as, for example, the admired American, Ted Gibson, son of a Baptist minister, and the Canadian pilot, Len Fitchett, who gave his life for the Jewish State. The South African non-Jews who came into the war find their place within the work itself.

The November 29, 1947, resolution of the United Nations partitioning Palestine into a Jewish State and an Arab State is the introduction to the story. That decision had profound implications for, and imposed great responsibilities on, Jewish communities throughout the world, particularly in view of the fact that the Arab nations had made clear their intention to annul the decision, by force of arms if necessary. The Jewish community of South Africa, perhaps more than any other, matched the responsibilities of the hour. It gave to Eretz Israel pilots, civilian planes, soldiers, doctors, nurses, radar men and money.

The very act of getting the volunteers to Eretz Israel was, in the case of several groups, high drama. The pages that follow tell for the first time the story of the airlift. And when the volunteers did reach the Promised Land, they not only participated in a great historical event, which the rebirth of Israel after 2,000 years undoubtedly was (some say the most significant event of the 20th Century), but they made history also. Out of nothing, they helped to create an Air Force, their role quite out of proportion to the small community whence they came; more than any other group, they gave Israel her Army Medical Service; and they were an important element in the establishment of Israel's infant Radar Service. Only in the Army and the Navy was the role of the South Africans no larger than that of "musket-bearers", yet even in these services they carried themselves with distinction. The barrier to high rank in the Army was lack of Hebrew. The language of the Air Force, in its first year, was English.

Mr. Ben Gurion, the then Prime Minister, honoured the South Africans by mentioning them first in a significant tribute to the Air Force volunteers. His words remain fresh:

"The pioneers of the air and our Air Force in the earliest period were sons of the Land of Israel and the part played by Israeli pilots in the operations, victories and battles of the Air Force is not small.

But we would not have reached and maintained an Air Force that in a short period became one of the decisive forces in the War of Independence without volunteers from abroad, professionally trained and experienced in the Armies of the Allies during the Second World War. Never has the unity of Israel been revealed in so tangible and clear a manner, and

¹ Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre in O' Jerusalem.

Introduction

there has never been, it seems to me, a body of Jews which has embodied so fully an ingathering of exiles as the Defence Force of Israel. But in no fighting force did the volunteers from abroad fulfil so important, responsible and blessed a role as in the Air Force of Israel, since this force demanded more expertise, professionalism and experience than any other branch in our armed forces. And from the midst of the Jews of South Africa, England, America, Canada and other countries, were forthcoming the experts and men of experience who volunteered their lives to the War of Independence in our Land."

I have only one addition to make to this comment: There were five South African airmen who, arriving early on the scene, flew night after night on bombing raids over enemy territory in Auster light aircraft, often encountering heavy ack-ack fire. They could never have been far from disaster. They returned home early: frayed, exhausted men. The life of the State was too young, and the times too chaotic, for war documentation. The record of the astonishing dedication of the five was locked up within themselves. The men figure anonymously, and then only in passing, in the histories. I hope the injustice is repaired in this work. I cannot be certain it is, since all five are modest men. And can the experience of nightmare be recaptured twenty-six years later?

In August 1949 when Ben Gurion uttered his words of praise, the collective role of young South African doctors in laying the foundations of Israel's Army Medical Service was unknown. It is unknown to this day. The first comprehensive account is in this book. It will give South African Jewry cause for great pride. South African doctors not only saved hundreds of lives, but also, like the men of the Air Force, "created something out of nothing". The Israel Army's Chief Medical Officer at the time was Dr. Haim Sheba. This great humanitarian remained until his death in the late 1960's, an ardent admirer of South African Jewry, generously expounding on the medical contribution of 1948 and 1949 to every South African journalist and visitor who met him. He never lost a sense of wonder at it.

From the perspective of today, (1977), Israel's war of birth can be seen as a middle chapter in a fifty five year old conflict. The first explosion of Arab resistance to the Jewish resurrection in Zion was in 1921, followed by the riots of 1929 and those of 1936-39. The 1948 war was followed by the Sinai War of 1956, the Six Day War of 1967, the War of Attrition of 1970-1 and the Yom Kippur War of 1973, followed by the terrorist activities of the Palestine Liberation Organization since then.

This writer, a Jew and a Zionist, is constitutionally unable to hate the Arab enemy; unable, also, to play the role of a Jewish propagandist who would be required to present the Jews as the children of light and the Arabs as children of darkness. War is war, however high the motives for which men fight. It does not cleanse, but sullies by its very nature. In the war of 1948, as in all others in human history, things were done by soldiers of both sides best not spoken of. Let me then say, simply, that the Middle East conflict has been a tragedy for both Jew and Arab, with suffering on both sides so profound that the propagandist's role, in the hireling sense of the word, would be impossible for me. But in the higher sense of the word I am a Jewish propagandist and this without apology. I had no qualms in writing this book for the South African Zionist Federation and for the South African Machal Association since two luminous principles were my guide.

The first was the famed Rabbi Hillel's declaration, "If I am not for myself, who will be?" (to which he added), "But if I am for myself alone, what am I?" The second principle derives from the facts themselves - the terrible facts relating to the centuries-old persecution of the Jews in both the Christian and Moslem countries.

A tendency has developed in present times for profound guilt in history to be transferred from the guilty initiators to the innocent victims. We Jews will have none of this. As for the top-ranking American Protestant leader who argued in the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War and the use by the Arab nations of the oil weapon that Israel's presence was a permanent irritant to Middle East tranquillity and that "it is quite conceivable that Israel may have to die for

Introduction

world peace”, I can only say that not only does he mistake the Jewish temper but is also blind to the mystery of the rebirth of Zion which more enlightened followers of his faith are today seeking to interpret in a spirit of contrition. The Christian world is moving towards reconciliation with Jewry and there are voices within it prepared to say, “Forgive us our past.”

The Arab Moslem world has still to come into insight on its duty - and need - to do the same. The case has not been more ably presented than by Tunis-born Professor Albert Memmi, in an open letter to Libya’s President, Colonel Gadaffi:

“Can you really believe in the myth that is being hawked around for the benefit of the Western world, about the idyllic life of the Jews in the Arab countries?”

As late as 1912, any Jew daring to leave a Jewish quarter in Morocco had to take off his shoes, as if it was a sacrilege for them to touch the sacred Moroccan soil. In the same Morocco in 1907, there was a great massacre of Jews in Casablanca, complete with rape, the carrying off of women to the mountains, the burning down of hundreds of houses and shops, and so on. In 1912 there was another great massacre, this time in Fez, and in 1948 in Oudja and other towns.

In Algeria, there was the massacre of Constantine of 1934, with 24 killed and dozens upon dozens seriously wounded. In Egypt the massacre of 1948 - this time with the refinement of hundreds of bombs. In Aden, in 1946, the local authorities declared that Jews were not entitled to live like human beings. A few months later, 82 were killed and 76 wounded, with two-thirds of the shops looted and burned. In Iraq, between the 2nd and 3rd of June 1941, 600 were killed, 100 seriously wounded, 600 shops looted, women raped and 1,000 houses burned.

In Libya, there were the massacres at Tripoli on November 5, 1945, and those of Zanzour, Zaouia, Fousabat, Ziltayin and elsewhere on November 6th and 7th, with girls and women raped in the sight of their families, pregnant women having their bellies slit open and fetuses dragged out, children beaten to death with iron bars. In 1967, 100 were murdered in spite of the protection of King Irdis. All this may be found in the newspapers of those days, including the New York Times, the Arab Press and in the works of serious historians like Smith, Fattal, Gradst, Brunschwing, Van Bery, Vajda and others.

But why do I need references and historical records. My own grandfather and father always remembered being afraid of being beaten over the head by any Arab who happened to come by. Like you, Mr. President, I suppose. Do you remember what you thought of the little Jews and how you treated them? I remember only too well, unfortunately.

What is more, the Jews were not only at the mercy of the populace, they had a status which in a way justified such slavery. That status is a matter of record: ever since the days of the Abassids it has been part of the Charter of Omar that, to put it briefly, the Jew is at best protected like a dog that is part of the chattels. But let him but raise his head or behave like a human being and he must be beaten to within an inch of his life, to remind him of his condition.

The truth is that we have lived in the Arab countries in fear and humiliation. I shall not recite another litany - that of the massacres before Zionism. I can let you have the lists, if you want to know. The truth is that those young people who left the Arab countries were Zionists before Auschwitz. The State of Israel is not the result of Auschwitz, but of the entire Jewish condition, including that in the Arab countries.

Memmi’s last point cannot be too strongly emphasized. The degradation and poverty to which, for example, the Jews of the Yemen were subjected was such that the only solace for them was messianic speculation. In the 19th Century alone, there were three false messiahs in Yemen. With such a background of despair and hope, the Jews there did not need any

Introduction

Zionist movement to call their attention to the Holy Land. The first aliyah² wave started in 1882, about the same time as the first pioneers were shaking the dust of oppressive Czarist Russia off their feet and leaving for Palestine.

All this needs to be recalled because the Arab case is that Israel was born of persecution in which Arabs had no hand and that they have been made to suffer unjustly for the sins of Christian Europe. It is not true. There is a shared guilt. If the story of Moslem pillage and massacre of Jews is not as terrible as that of Christian Europe, it is sufficient and bloody enough.

Also: What has been called “the Jewish theology of the land” is no invention of modern Zionists, but has over 3,000 years inspired the prayers and the actions of countless generations of Jews and in modern times the aspirations and the actions of many secularized Jews. More: the Jews of Palestine were not all dispersed by the Romans and not all went into exile. Talmudic literature, records of ancient synagogues, the writings of contemporary Gentiles, testify to the size and vitality of the Yishuv for centuries after the destruction of Jerusalem. The Arab case of an alien people planted in their midst is simply not true. The record of history, as historian Rose Lewis has so excellently condensed it, is that -

When the Arab armies marched into Palestine in the 7th Century they found there a sizable Jewish population - to say nothing of the many Jewish refugees who used this opportunity to return to their homes. One of the names which the Arabs themselves first used for the country was Land of the Jews, and in the first century of their occupation the Arabs so far recognized Jewish claims as to permit Jews to take back their farms that had been seized by the Byzantines.

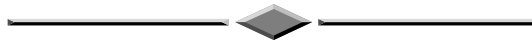
Subsequently, Arab policies changed. They themselves began to dispossess the small Jewish farmer in order to create large estates and settle the nomadic Arabs upon them as a new peasantry. The prevailing pattern of Arab domination over the succeeding centuries was one of oppression of the Jewish people: discrimination, harassment, denial of their rights, usurpation and desecration of their holy places, and periodic destruction of their communities.

To gather it all together: In this century well over half a million North African and Middle Eastern Jewish refugees fled their homes in the Arab countries - about the same number as that of the Arab refugees who fled Palestine in 1948. Thus came to an end the ancient Jewish communities of Syria and Iraq, of Egypt, Algeria, Libya, Tunisia, Morocco and Yemen, communities more than twenty centuries old, many of them well established before the Arabs arrived. The majority of the Jewish citizens of Israel today are of Middle Eastern and North African, not European, origin. There has, in fact, been a regional exchange of populations.

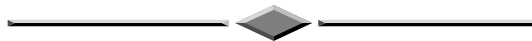
However, I would wish this to be a book of healing, not one of controversy and rancour. I cannot forget what Margaret Larkin wrote in introducing her book, *The Hand of Mordechai*, the story of a kibbutz that resisted an armoured Egyptian onslaught for days in May 1948: The veterans of the kibbutz showed keen interest in my work and were generous with criticism and advice. In an initial meeting some of them took exception to my reference to their heroism. They warned me against glorifying their deeds; they made me understand that they do not think of the battle as an example of man's courage in the face of great odds - they think of it as a tragedy. They pointed out they became front line soldiers by an accident of geography. They did their duty and killed when they had to, but they are men of peace.

Tell how we fought but let every page call out for peace, they demanded at our final meeting.

² Literally “rising to the land”



What impelled the young Jews of South Africa to volunteer in their thousands to fight alongside their brothers in Israel? Part of the initial research for this book was a questionnaire sent to a representative selection of volunteers. Their collective answer was illuminating, not only for what they said but for what they did not say. There was not a single expression of hate, resentment, anger or contempt for the Arabs. The protest of the young men and women was against the Jewish condition, for which condition, as I have indicated, Christian and Moslem have a shared guilt. The Jews had had enough. They were resolved, after Hitler, that they would never again be the toy of gangsters in politics and wolves in mobs. Whether explicitly or implicitly, they became Zionists.



Let the volunteers speak for themselves:

Cyril Steinberg (leading navigator, of Johannesburg):

My family was steeped in the Zionist faith. In World War II, I was in a SAAF bomber squadron. In December 1947 I went to a mass gathering of the Jewish community at Balfour Park to celebrate the United Nations partition of Palestine into a Jewish State and an Arab State. Chief Rabbi L.I. Rabinowitz, always an impressive speaker, asked those who had war experience to put their names down in case they were wanted. I put my name down. My decision flowed from my Zionist education and from the mark left on me by the slaughter of the Jews in Europe. I was qualified to serve and help my people.

Jack Weinronk (pilot instructor, of Port Elizabeth):

I was educated into a great feeling for Eretz Israel. My grandparents were buried on the lower slopes of the Mount of Olives. In 1935 my dad, then a sick man, visited Palestine and, returning, added a clause to his will that he wished to be buried in Jerusalem. He died in 1942. I was then a pilot in the South African Air Force. We fulfilled his wish. When the Israel war broke out in 1948, I decided I had to go.

Joe Leibowitz (air gunner, of Johannesburg):

It's a strange story. I was born in Lithuania where a Jew knew what anti-Semitism was, and came to South Africa at the age of nine. Then, three years after world War Two, came the prospect of a Jewish State. I was torn to pieces inside. I had a strong feeling that we had a moral pact with the slaughtered Six Million of Nazi Europe. This was the first chance to fight back against a world that hadn't cared.

But it was mixed up with other things. I was in rebellion against the old supine ways. Our rabbis used to snatch us indoors when we threw stones at Gentiles throwing stones at us. The rabbis broke our spirit before we could develop it. Turning the other cheek was no answer.

After World War 2, I shared a flat with a war-time friend, a non-Jew, Jeff Leipoldt. On that day when the Irgun hanged the two British sergeants, Jeff asked: "How can you condone an action like this?" The news story in the Rand Daily Mail shook me to the core. I did not have enough background to give an adequate reply. I could not condone the hangings but I could not find it in me to condemn what was a reprisal for the legal slaughter of Jewish boys. Brave Jewish boys. I was lost, didn't know what was going on in my people. Then Philip Zuckerman, of the Zionist Federation, approached me. Would I serve? I was twenty one. I had no hesitation. The battle inside me was resolved. I felt I could be helpful to my people.

Introduction

Louis Taitz (air force technician, of Springs, Transvaal):

On the way to Syria with the SAAF in World War 2, I met and enjoyed the company of Palestine Jews, and detected the British animosity towards them. That made me a Zionist and I jumped at the opportunity to help in 1948. I was fortunate to be working for a firm that offered to re-employ me when I returned. I was a partial supporter of the family and the absence of my cheque hit it hard. But they realized that this was make or break for the Jewish people and I received the blessing of my parents.

Joseph Rosen (radio operator, of Johannesburg):

I grew up in a South African dorp and was subjected to violent anti-Semitism in the 1930's. I realized the Jews had to have a state of their own.

Joe Katzew (pilot, of Virginia, O.F.S.):

Two reasons: I was ex-SAAF and therefore could be of help. I had also not overcome the restlessness engendered by World War 2.

Jack Levy (air mechanic of Johannesburg):

I was working at the time at Brakpan Mines, study department, underground. As a Jew I could not see my fellow Jews fighting alone. I had joined the I.L.H. in World War 2, transferred to SAAF, trained as a mechanic and had a technical background (Western Desert) which could be helpful.

Dr. Harry Feldman (of Brakpan):

I served in World War 2 as a Medical officer with the South African armed forces. To this day I try to analyse my motives for going to the Israel war in 1948. I was never a Zionist in the conventional sense, but I was always Jewish, very conscious and proud of my tradition. The idea of a Jewish Land took hold of me. I went to the Zionist Federation and volunteered as an ordinary soldier. I did not want to go as a doctor and did not tell anybody I was a doctor. Then, on parade one Sunday at Bacher's farm, somebody called out: "Hello, Dr. Feldman!" That was the end of it. I went as a doctor.

Philip Navon (radio operator and mechanic, of Tel-Aviv):

We were very unsettled after World War 2 and the State-to-be offered adventure. I had been in the Habonim movement all my life and there was a mixture of motives, the stronger of the two being the Zionist call. By that I mean the prospect of living in Israel and helping to build up the Land, no matter how modest one's role. It was make or break for the Jewish people. The influence of the home in which I grew up was not so much Zionist as Jewish. There was no resistance from my parents. They understood.

Joseph Jedeikin (Palmach driver, of Middelburg, Transvaal):

I joined the South African Tank Corps in May 1940, aged 18, as a driver. My dad was very upset when I volunteered in 1948. But I had to go - I felt something very important was happening for the future of the Jews.

Basil Herman (Military Administration, today of Israel):

I was discharged after World War 2 with the rank of Major. I had been concerned with administration and intelligence in Libya, Cyprus, Italy and the Dodecanese. In November 1947 after the U.N.'s partition resolution, a representative of the South African Zionist Federation, the late Mr. Chummy Hirschman, asked me to assist in raising funds and recruiting personnel for the coming war in Israel. I was twenty seven, married, one child, and studying on a demobilized soldier's grant. I served the Federation on a voluntary basis. After sending up the first few hundred volunteers, I left for Israel myself in 1948. I was involved emotionally, and restless in the face of big history. I felt I could not stand outside the struggle. My parents were not happy about this - I was an only child - but my wife, an Israeli, was understanding and was prepared to carry on in South Africa until I should call her to join me.³

Joe Shlain (Negev Brigade):

Most of Machal were ex-servicemen. I had been too young for World War 2 and came into the Israel war through a side door. I belonged to the Zionist Socialist Party and had been in charge of Zionist Socialist youth groups. The Zionist Federation allowed a percentage representation to each party movement for settlement in Israel. Our movement was granted six settlers on one trip - the limitation was strict because the priorities at that time were fighting men. There was fierce competition among Zionist youth for selection. I had just opened offices as an accountant with Percy Taylor when he rushed in one day saying he was off to Israel. He mentioned other Zionist Socialists who were going. I did not waste time and within five minutes I was at the Zionist Federation and got myself registered. That day I came home, walked into the kitchen and said, Ma, I have something to tell you. Without turning around, she said, I know, you're going to Israel.

Gerald Davimes (Seventh Brigade):

What weighed most with me were the disclosures about the holocaust in Nazi Europe. I became profoundly persuaded that the Jews needed a country of their own if they were effectively to defend themselves.

Simon Novikow (Seventh Brigade):

I was born in Poland and suffered much as a youth at Polish hands. I saw Israel as a land of succour for our people. It was clear to me that I should throw in what I could.

Solly Ossin (Seventh Brigade):

What moved me was the thrilling prospect of serving in a Jewish Army. I was a sergeant in the S.A. Army in World War 2, saw service in East Africa, North Africa and Italy. I knew I could offer some instruction in armoured cars and use of machine guns.

Gordon Mandelzweig (Seventh Brigade):

I saw there was a job to be done in Israel and I was prepared to do my bit. I interrupted my final year studies at Wits to go. Actually, difficulties were put in my way because I was a final year student. I protested to Mr. Bernard Gering. I was on the next plane.

³ Mr. Herman was a member of the Israel-Jordan Mixed Armistice Commission March 1949 - December 1949; and Military Governor of the Negev 1951-1953.

Cyril Gotsman (Navy):

In 1947 and 1948 the papers were full of Palestine and the Jews wanting a national home. A number of us from Krugersdorp wrote to the Zionist Federation offering our services if the Jews of Palestine needed us. Some time early in 1948 the Federation invited us for interviews. I was surprised by one of the questions - how much pay would I like, the fellow asked. I replied, I didn't come here for pay. If I can get three meals a day, I'll be happy. He said: Two meals I can promise - not three. And that ended our conversation.

Maurice Ostroff (Radar, of Johannesburg, now Israel):

I had a strong desire to identify myself with the struggle of the Jews in Israel and with the displaced persons fighting for the right to enter Palestine. I had served in World War 2 and felt I could be of help.

Philip Ozinsky (Today of Israel):

Why we went is a complex question. Many factors were at work. As the date of the British departure from Palestine came nearer and the fighting there more tense, one tended more and more to identify with one's people. This is what happened to me. I was nominally a Zionist Socialist, but in fact a social Zionist. Belonging to a party movement gave one mates. Then again, World War 2 had left me restless and open to renewed adventure. In our office at the City Engineer's Department of Cape Town, they said to the three of us who went, "Absolutely right. We respect your decision. Your jobs will be waiting for you when you come back."

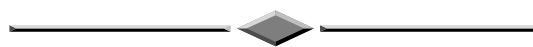
I'd heard about the American Jewish volunteers - those who felt they had not done enough to rescue the Jews in Nazi Europe. I did not have any guilt feelings. Our average age was twenty four. We were too young to do anything about the holocaust. The people who could have done more were the leaders, the forty-year olds, the fifties, the sixties. I felt terribly sad about the holocaust, but I was a youth then. In 1948 the feeling was - A State. Ours. After 2,000 years. If you die, you die for something.

Maurice Mendelowitz (today of Israel):

I went because I am a Jew and I was for a Jewish State after the Nazi holocaust. The papers were full about immigrant ships being turned away from the shores of Palestine. I recognized that only the Jews would look after the Jews. There had to be a State. So I went.

Barney Dworsky (Radar, of Johannesburg):

I had served in World War 2 as a sapper in the First Field, South African Engineers. I was wounded in Italy in June 1944 and was completely paralyzed at the age of nineteen for eleven months. I was left with a permanent eighty per cent disability. But I could not keep out of the Israeli war. So I went to the Zionist Federation to volunteer. Major Weinstein had often visited me at 106 Hospital in Cairo. He knew my case history only too well. He turned me down. I paid my own fare (R100) and went with some volunteers. I got fixed up at the Bat-Yam radar station. Don't ask me to analyze motivation, I had to go.



I find it necessary to introduce a personal note on the seven South Africans who fell in the war. Their deaths were reported briefly in the South African Jewish press when they occurred; their names were inscribed by the Jewish Guild on a memorial tablet, later transferred to Zionist Centre, Johannesburg; they were collectively remembered at Machal's

occasional reunions. And there the chapter ended. But for me, it could not be left at that. Research took me into the homes of parents, or relatives, or friends, and I became conscious of three things: the heartbreak and loneliness which linger long after war has exacted its price; the extraordinary quality of the young men, reflecting the general quality of South Africa's 800; and the different directions from which they came to share their common fate.

Yechezkiel Berelowitz and Zvi Lipschitz were devoutly religious young Jews who died in the saturnalia of Arab rampage at kibbutz Kfar Etzion in the hills of Hebron. Berelowitz, in choosing not to leave his fellows when he had a ticket in his pocket to return to South Africa to visit his parents, and Lipschitz by a demonstration of equal rootedness in the kibbutz in its dying days, were straightforward examples, not uncommon in Jewish history, of men whose faith in the unsearchable Rock of Israel, cannot dim.

Eddie Cohen, the pilot, was utterly different, an assimilated Jew without root in his people and a searcher for he knew not what. He would have been hard put to it to explain his presence at the northern Galilean kibbutz of Ma'ayan Baruch. In moments of exasperation, he was not above the outsider's exclamation of, "These bloody Jews" but a month or two before he met his death, he wrote a letter to his mother saying:

"Today, Shabbat, I spent the whole day studying the history of the Jews and surrounding nations, using the Bible and the other books. It is the most interesting study I have ever undertaken, as the area around this part of the world was the cradle of Western civilization. My greatest regret is that I did not think of studying this branch of history earlier in my life, as so much can be learnt from it..."

Eddie Cohen was just beginning to enter the dimension of his Jewishness when he fell.

His aging mother, living a lonely life in a Yeoville, Johannesburg flat, in showing me the letter, said: "I speak to Eddie. In this room, he is all I have."

The poignancy of war research were by then not new to me. In Tel Aviv I had already met Abraham Silber, formerly of Port Elizabeth, father of Matey Silber. Matey, an Irgun fighter, died in one of the battles for kibbutz Ramat Rachel on the outskirts of northern Jerusalem. He, too, like Eddie Cohen, had been an only child. Abraham Silber said in the saddest tones. "His mother did not survive the shock of his death. She died of heartbreak." The old man took out a file of newspaper clippings and we sat down together to peruse them. Abraham Silber's tears flowed, even though it was twenty five years later.

For particulars about Gideon Rosenberg, of Johannesburg, I travelled south to kibbutz Shoal, a gateway to the Negev desert in the pre-State days. His sisters, Hadassah and Ruth, brought out newspaper and magazine clippings. The literature, like that in possession of Abraham Silber, reminded me afresh of what Rabbi Dr. Jack Cohen, of Jerusalem, had written to a Christian friend in the wake of the Yom Kippur War:

"I know the youth of this land. I work with them every day... I know their abhorrence of war, their horror at having to kill, their deep sorrow at the loss of their dearest comrades, their passion for learning and building. During and after every miserable war Israel has had to wage just for the chance to stay alive, they have written all this out in prose, poetry and in letters, and their comrades and relatives have collected these statements in innumerable collections of memorial booklets. There is no other literature of this kind and in such magnitude in the world..."

At kibbutz Shoal I leafed through the memorial literature on Gideon. A letter to Ruth and Hadassah written by Zvi Zipper, formerly of Rhodesia, slipped out. He and Gideon, fellow kibbutzniks, had been posted to different fronts. Zvi's letter of condolence to the sisters could find a place in any anthology of anguish.

Introduction

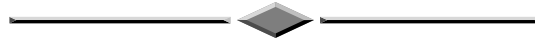
Ruth brought out a 1947 picture of the kibbutz when it was a year old. It showed Gideon, hoe in hand, working on a small patch of soil imported into the treeless stretch of white sand. In the immediate background were two donkeys and more remotely, the settlement's three ramshackle wooden huts. Only the young man from Honey Street, Yeoville - slender, dark-haired, open faced - was handsome in the bare landscape. One cannot escape the injustice of Gideon's not living to see the verdurous kibbutz of today.

The search for particulars about Potchefstroom's Leslie Bloch brought me to the Haifa home of a younger brother. A framed photograph of the ex-SAAF Lieutenant, showed the face of a young man not only handsome, but suggestive of depth. His sister-in-law said things which sank deep: "Leslie was the idol of the large Bloch clan of brothers, sisters, cousins, aunts and uncles. He shared an intellectual distinction with his cousin, Bobby Bloch, of Cape Town, later a Judge of the Cape Supreme Court... I never knew Leslie. He died before I came into the family. But such was the strength of report about him and his pervasive influence, that I was as much affected by his personality as those who knew him in life."

Leslie Bloch's mother died nineteen months after his death. His father, also broken, followed his wife not long after.

Louis Hack, of Johannesburg, was the happy extrovert, a boxer in his school days, later a soccer and hockey player, and later still, in his twenties before he enlisted for the war, an executive officer of one of Balfour Park's sections⁴. He was a man whose impulses were those of giving, not taking. His complexes were few, his wrestling, if any, not expressed. Only his death is mysterious. A shot pierced the night and took him. Even those who were nearest him and saw him fall in the patrol line, sought to know from me, researching years later, how Louis Hack had died. I sensed they were seeking to understand not "how?" for they knew how, but "why?" Why did the bullet have his name on it? There is no answer.

This, then, is my personal note on those who fell, the purpose to make visible, at least in part, some of the writing between the lines of the memorial plaque at Zionist Center.



For the non-Jewish reader of this book and for the young generation of South African Jews who grew up in the years after the State was created, an insight into the mood, spirit and turmoil of the immediate years preceding 1948 could be helpful as clarification. Two explanations, then:

The tempestuous passions which had built up between world Jewry and Britain left their mark on sections of the British-descended community in South Africa and their influential Press. They were not yet ready for recognition of what Winston Churchill had described as "this squalid war against the Jews". English speaking South Africans had been fed by their media on "Jewish terror" in Palestine. This terror included such admittedly grievous events as the blowing up by the Irgun underground early in 1947 of the King David Hotel in Jerusalem with heavy loss of life, mainly British (Jews also), and the hanging of two British sergeants by the same underground in reprisal for the hanging of four Irgun fighters by the British.

The Jews, on their part, saw Britain's Middle East policy as a shameful betrayal of the Balfour Declaration of 1917, Britain's historic document of initiative and support for the establishment of a National Home for the Jewish people in Palestine. The tenets of that Declaration were incorporated in the 1922 document of the Council of the League of Nations which granted Britain the Palestine Mandate. Britain was pledged to facilitate Jewish immigration and settlement in the land. In the end she did precisely the reverse. The reversal was climaxed

⁴ Balfour Park is a Jewish sports club in Johannesburg.

by the May 1939 Chamberlain White Paper, by which Britain in effect renounced her obligations under the Mandate.

In the impending world struggle with Nazi Germany, Britain sought Arab support. By her 1939 White Paper, Jewish immigration was to cease within five years and Jewish land acquisition was virtually prohibited. Ben Gurion, then chairman of the Jewish Agency, led the Jews of Palestine into World War 2 with a doctrine that became historic: "We will fight Hitler as if there were no White Paper; we will fight the White Paper as if there were no Hitler."

Not all Jews accepted the doctrine. The Irgun accepted it for three years only and its more extreme breakaway faction, Lechi, the Stern group, known to the British Press as the Stern gang, did not accept it at all. The Stern group, the hardened heart of Jewish despair, saw British policy as only a little less vicious than Hitler's and pursued an unrelenting policy of reprisal against British personnel in the Middle East.

With the ghastly revelations at the end of the war of what had happened to the Jews of Nazi Europe, and with the acceptance by Britain's newly-elected Labor Government of the policy of the Chamberlain White Paper, a sharp deterioration in the relationships between Britain and the Jews of the free world set in, even the restrained Haganah, the main Jewish "illegal army" in Palestine, going into action, as on June 16, 1946, when it carried out a highly organized operation, blowing up eleven major bridges linking Palestine with neighboring Arab states and interrupting communications on all major roads. Palestine became increasingly violent. The British retaliated in the unfolding months, with ever-increasing searches for Jewish arms, frequent curfews, arrests and banishment. But the two events which particularly raised Jewish passions were, first, the rounding up and detention by the British on June 29, 1946, of leading members of the Jewish Agency, the Yishuv's and World Zionism's representative body, and of known Haganah commanders; and secondly, the ramming by British destroyers of an "illegal immigrant" ship, the Exodus, the clubbing to death of three Jews by British marines in the fighting aboard, and the return of the ship's 4,554 refugee passengers -- remnants of the Nazi holocaust -- to Hamburg, Germany (August-September 1947).

Place into this cauldron, also, the effects on the minds of Jews of what their own newspapers were now belatedly able to report to them on the Nazi holocausts, for example, the cry of Emanuel Ringelbaum, an historian who died by his own hand in the Nazi furnace. "Why did we let the Nazi enemy extinguish us with such ease? We should have gone out into the streets, set fire to everything in our path, torn down the walls and fled the ghettos. Why did we not... why?"

The story of ill-fated illegal immigrant ships also came to be recapitulated, the story of the Struma, Milos, the Pacific, the Patria. To take the case of the Struma. This ship had 760 Jewish men, women and children aboard who had been spirited out of Romania by the Irgun-Revisionist rescue organization. Lord Moyne, the British Minister resident in the Middle East, made it known that the immigrants would not be allowed to land in Palestine. Because of engine trouble the ship put in at Istanbul. After two months the Turkish authorities ordered the ship to return to Romania and had her forcibly towed into the Black Sea. There, while still in Turkish waters, she mysteriously blew up and sank. There was one survivor.

It was inevitable that "the fighting Jew" should emerge in the post-Hitler period -- and he did.

One more thing under 30 readers should know: There were three Jewish underground armies in Palestine: the Haganah, the moderate underground of the shadow Jewish Government; the militant anti-British Irgun Zvai Leumi; and the even more militant Stern group. The relationship between the Haganah and the other two was bitter, sometimes vicious. The differences were political, ideological, tactical and temperamental. With these explanations, certain sharp condensations of history that appear in some chapters of this book need not cause confusion.

Introduction

A last word: a number of incidents described in the pages that follow might well appear to the reader to belong to fiction, not fact. But they took place as described. There is a reason for the occasional fictional quality of events. No one put it better than Cecil Wulfsohn, of Rustenburg: "When I look back, I am amazed at the way things turned out ... nothing was static; everything went fast and in the right way. It must have been due to the high motivation of men doing their best. Nobody worried what Headquarters would say. You took a chance. There was a supercharged individual initiative. And it worked. I think that coincidences belong to a situation like this." I cannot conceive of a more fitting note on which to usher in the story of South Africa's 800.

E GRESHAM Life Assurance Society Ltd.

COMPETITIVE TERMS FOR ENDOWMENT ASSURANCE PLANS

LATE Edition

JERUSALEM TUESDAY, SEPT. 8, 1947

THE PALESTINE POST

PRICE: 10 MIL VOL. XXXI No. 1

By Courtney

JAZZ FROM LOUDSPEAKERS BACKGROUND TO OPERATION REFUGEES FORCED TO LAND AT HAMBURG

BEVIN WILL NOT GO TO LAKE SUCCESS

Special to The Palestine Post LONDON, Monday.—Although Mr. Bevin will head the British delegation to the U.N. Assembly, he will not go to Lake Success, a Foreign Office spokesman said today.

The Government has decided that the Colonial Secretary, Mr. Creech Jones, and not Mr. Bevin's second-in-command, Mr. Hector MacNeill, will represent Britain at the Palestine report is discussed.

This last minute change follows consultations in London between Mr. Bevin, Mr. MacNeill, and Mr. McGillivray, the Government's Liaison Officer with UNSCOP. It appears that the British Government has now been convinced that the UNSCOP report will present a serious problem at the Assembly, and that it would be unfair on Mr. MacNeill to expect him to deal adequately with it.

FULL CABINET MEETS TODAY

By FRANK WINTON, Senior Diplomatic Correspondent LONDON, Monday.—The Prime Minister, Mr. Attlee, is back on his holiday in Wales to ride over tomorrow's first Cabinet meeting since Parliament adjourned for the summer recess early in August.

HAMBURG, Monday.—With more than 1,000 British troops armed with machine guns, rifles, tommyguns, tear-gas pistols, steel-tipped truncheons and high-pressure hoses in the cage-lined dock, British officers at first told pressmen that the disembarkation of the 1,400 refugees from the Ocean Vigour — first of the three "Liberty" ships carrying Jewish refugees back from Palestine — had "generally proceeded well" and that they had been "highly pleased with the Jews' cooperation."

A British press release later in the afternoon said, however, that forcible action against the Jews began when, after several hundred had disembarked quietly, some young Jews in one of the holds resisted and military police had to be brought aboard to assist the escort troops.

The reporters themselves tell of steel-helmeted soldiers of the Sherwood Foresters having to go aboard to silence the Jews singing hymns; of men and some women and children remaining clinging to the ship's rails; of the steel-tipped truncheons being applied; of a group of about 30 young refugees struggling for half-an-hour before they could be overcome and dragged across the gangway; of one man, whose head was bleeding and who tried to show his wounds to journalists, being hustled off the quayside by soldiers who rushed to surround him.

All but five members of the boat's crew limit gives the deportees to leave the ship without force passed in grim silence. Then, at nearly 7 a.m., women and children and a few men started scurrying across the gangway.

Trouble began when about a third of the last refugees, mostly women, children and old people, had landed. Then a company of troops went into the anti-nothing holds to push and drag off those who were holding up the proceedings.

At one point German workmen began to put up a covered gangway so that spectators should not see what force was to be applied.

RESISTANCE OVERCOME The resistance of the younger men overcame, the rest of the refugees landed quietly, disembarkation being completed by 10.30. Some of the soldiers helped women across, led children by the hand and assisted, with the refugees' packages — "all that they had left," as one soldier said, in a number of instances the offer of assistance was refused by deportees, who spat in the soldiers' faces and called them "dirty Fascists."

On the deck itself an incessant stream of abuse was added by loudspeakers blaring out dithyrambs as the Jews, after being manacled, filed to the waiting trains. Some of them were still wearing old Allied uniforms. About 25 sick people were placed on ambulances and a child with measles was taken to Hamburg hospital.

A woman photographer, one of a group of foreign correspondents held in a spot, appeared from time to time, was arrested for having photographed the disembarkation.

Women and Children First A few of the refugees were able to call across to the journalists before they entered the trains. One said that, seeing nobody but soldiers on the quays, they thought the world had forgotten them. Another said that disembarkation had begun with the Ocean Vigour man and children on board than the other two ships, the British considered it likely to offer least resistance. He expected greater trouble on the other ships.

The untrailing was not carried out quietly. Shouting defiance, over 100 had to be carried bodily to the smooches, raised suddenly through the barred windows at the quays. Military police entered the coaches and hustled several men across the pier in a temporary port erected on the dock.

By the way to Poppendorf, a Lüneburg camp, the train touched from its untrailing through a

Trying to Reverse "Polly"

British Women's Sit-Down Strike

Palatine Post Bureau HAIFA, Monday.—Twelve British women and five children are camped in a dimmed police barrack at the East on Nakura Frontier Post, where they are waiting for a reply from Jerusalem to their appeal to be permitted to re-enter Palestine to re-join their husbands, most of whom are officials of the Iraq Petroleum Company. The British-born wife of a Briton and her child were allowed to cross the border late yesterday.

The party arrived in a bus from Beirut, where they had been living since Operation "Polly" last February. They were turned back by the Frontier Control, but refused to leave and remained at the post. Despite a decision by the general authorities in Jerusalem not to permit them to enter, they sent a special appeal through the Frontier Control to the Acting Chief Secretary asking that their seven months' exile from their homes and their separations from their husbands be ended.

Eleven of the women are wives of I.P.C. officials, while the husband of the twelfth is employed by the Cable and Wireless Company.

The Manager of the I.P.C., Mr. G.H. Stridger, drove up yesterday.

FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

Within a few days, British civilians will again be allowed to work abroad unaccompanied in various parts of the country. The escort system was introduced when the Security Council resolutions were established in February.

It is understood that District Commissioners are preparing a number of "Certificates of Freedom of Movement" which will be allowed to travel freely.

Civilians will, however, still have to live in security zones.

What Happened?

HAMBURG, Monday (Reuters)—Disembarkation was held up because some of the refugees refused to land, and continued shouts and abuse were heard from the hold of the ship.

MAYORS' RELEASE WHEN THEY TALK

Palatine Post Staff The release of the three mayors, Mr. I. Rokach, Mr. O. Ben Ami, and Mr. A. Krinitz, was dependent on their willingness to reply to questions put to them by the security authorities.

A Government spokesman said in Jerusalem last night when asked if they would be released before Roah HaShabbat.

If the Mayors agreed to talk, each case would later be reviewed in the light of information already in the hands of the police and which may be obtained as a result of the interrogation of the spokesman.

Meanwhile, Noah Seroussi, Vadik Lerner, which landed in Jerusalem, and Daniel Yanovsky, a clerk at the Jerusalem Jewish Community Council, who were arrested on Friday night, were released yesterday.

A two-hour stoppage of work was observed throughout Palestine yesterday — "Hamburg Day" — as a protest against the British Government's taking the refugees back to Germany and turning them into D.P.'s again. The Zionist, Labour, and Jewish Affairs at half-mast, draped in black, from public buildings. All shops, offices and places of entertainment were closed, and all public traffic was stopped, but some meetings were attended by thousands.

A message of solidarity was sent to the refugees by the Vaad LeAmim, which also appealed to the Jews of America and Britain to help them.

The names of the refugees are to be inscribed in the Golden Book of the Jewish National Fund. Subscriptions will be collected from the public by members of youth movements.

JERUSALEM: Speakers at a meeting at the Vaad LeAmim, Chief Rabbi B. K. Uziel, and Dr. J. Thon, of the Jewish Community Council, while the meeting was in progress, an army patrol of three reconnaissance cars and a heavy armoured car stopped the near the hall for a few minutes during its tour of the city.

TEL AVIV: Thousands gathered in the square before the Habimah Theatre to demonstrate against Britain's immigration policy.

REMOVAL

NEW DELHI: out within Indian troops engaged in with them.

An official day's dead a hysterical and Moulana Fuzul were out of the fighting was heavy military British officials believed the numbers were shot dead by a group of soldiers.

Dr. N.C. Joshi announced that a joint press conference would be held to restore the Anglo-Palestine Council.

The Anglo-Palestine Council announced that it would be held to restore the Anglo-Palestine Council.

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OUR LONDON

THE ORDINANCE CREATING THE ISRAEL DEFENCE FORCE

May 26 1948

DEFENCE ARMY OF ISRAEL ORDINANCE

No. 4 or 5708—1948*

An Ordinance establishing a Defence Army of the State of Israel.

By virtue of section 18 of the Law and Administration Ordinance, 5708—1948, the following Ordinance is hereby enacted:—

1. There is hereby established a Defence Army of Israel, consisting of land forces, a navy and an air force.

2. In a state of emergency, there shall be introduced compulsory enlistment for all the services of the Defence Army of Israel.

* Published in the *Official Gazette*, No. 3 of the 22nd Iyar, 5708 (31st May, 1948).

The age of those liable to enlistment shall be as shall be prescribed by the Provisional Government.

3. Every person serving in the Defence Army of Israel shall take an oath of allegiance to the State of Israel, its Constitution and its competent authorities.

4. It is forbidden to establish or maintain any armed force outside the Defence Army of Israel.

5. Orders, declarations, regulations and any other directions concerning matters of the national service which were published by the Jewish Agency for Palestine, the General Council (Vaad Leumi) of the Jewish Community in Palestine, the People's Administration, the Provisional Government or any of their departments between the 16th Kislev, 5708 (29th November, 1947) and the date of publication of this Ordinance, shall remain in force so long as they have not been varied, amended or revoked.

6. Any act done in accordance with the provisions of this Ordinance shall be legal, even if it is repugnant to any other provision in the existing law.

7. The Minister of Defence is charged with the implementation of this Ordinance.

8. This Ordinance may be cited as the Defence Army of Israel Ordinance, 5708—1948.

17th Iyar, 5708 (26th May, 1948)

THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT

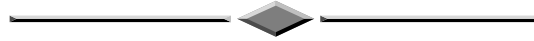
DAVID BEN-GURION

Prime Minister

CHAPTER 1

LEGAL AND ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS

Between 1945 and 1948 pioneer South African settlers entered Palestine both legally (that is with benefit of immigration certificates from the Mandatory Power), and "illegally." Four groups were involved in the collective story...



One day in August 1945, a legal group of some forty⁵(young men and women) made for Durban where 29 boarded the British Malaysian Company's ship, Hon Kheng and sailed the sixth of September; four – Sonia Gamsu, Rona Moss Morris, Ruth Rosenberg, Yehudith Werbranchik – sailed on the "Chopra" the twentysixth of August; three – Fanny Goldberg, Dot Ogin, and Rebecca Polon – sailed on the "Rio-Pacífico" the twentyseventh of August, all northward bound. It was a history-making group, although its members could not be conscious of the fact at the time. It was the second organized group of South African Zionist youth to settle in Palestine, the first having left a few years before. The first group left no significant traces on the life of the Yishuv, the majority of its members finding the life incredibly tough and returning to South Africa. Barney Joffe, today of Ashkelon, is one of the few who remained.

This second group, under the leadership of Karl Silberman, of Johannesburg, was to write itself large in the history of pioneer settlement from South Africa. It was composed of members of all the Zionist youth movements except Betar, youth movement of the Zionist Revisionist party whose political philosophy did not embrace land settlement. The Zionist Socialists of the group were to join later founders of Kibbutz Ma'ayan Baruch in the Northern Galilee; the Hashomer Hatzair were to be among the founders of Kibbutz Shoal in the Negev, the Mizrahi group were to go to the young Kfar Etzion kibbutz between Jerusalem and Hebron, and then to a settlement in the Bet She'an Valley; and the General Zionists were to become the founders of Timorim. All these are flourishing settlements today.

Not all of them remained. A few returned to South Africa; others left the land for the cities; three were to die in the War of Independence, three years later. All have their place as pioneers who mapped out a path and made possible the absorption of later groups. Their names thus necessarily belong to the record. In addition to the seven mentioned above, they were Karl Silberman, Abe Toooh, Isaac Zagnoev, Gideon Rosenberg, Max Lifschitz, Abe Beinart, Leslie Shandel, Hymie Stein, Meyer Wachs, Zvi Lipschitz, Tefke Kolnick, Max Berman, Cyril Tiger, Clara Alter, Chana Eife, Slavin Fanerov, Jack Gross, Maisie and Basil Berman, Yehezkiel Berelowitz (Chatzi), Neville Silbert, Eliezer Joffe, Haig Kaplan, Issy Lowenstein, Hillel Fine, Zvi Zipper, Ursula Treuherz (Sachs), Sarah Beinart, Ben-Zion Judelman, and Sybil Judelman.

It took the Hon Kheng a month to reach Egypt. Its passage delayed a week by a breakdown which necessitated repairs in Mombasa. The majority of the ship's passengers were pilgrims to Mecca, among them a contingent of South African Indians, with whom the young South African Jews established pleasant rapport.

Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the Jewish calendar, fell during the vessel's stay in Mombasa. In preparation for observance of this day of fasting and repentance, the young people went in search of the Jewish community of Mombasa. They were gladly welcomed and put up in

⁵ 1945 correspondence found at the Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem provided a comprehensive list.

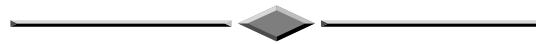
Chapter 1

different homes. Karl Silberman and Isaac Zagnoev stayed with the ex-Austrian consul who put his chauffeur and car at their disposal.

This was the first encounter of the S.A. Jews with Jews unlike themselves. In the synagogue on Yom Kippur were two Indian Jews, one of whom, a goldsmith, invited Silberman and Zagnoev to visit him on the morrow in the Indian market. This they did, threading their way through the narrow lanes, and at last surprised to find, not the Western-clothed man of the synagogue, but a man reverted to his origins. His store was the typical Arab kind of Mombasa markets, four walls and an interior bedroom. The goldsmith was sitting cross-legged on the floor, wearing a sheet, hookah next to him, working on a bracelet. The language of communication was Hebrew. Silberman, a matriculant in Hebrew, was impressed by the goldsmith's generous quotations from the Bible.

The group landed at Port Taufiq where they were met by a Jewish Egyptian official of the Jewish Agency who arranged for them to travel by train to Palestine. There, the group split up into its various ideological segments, each segment going to its appropriate hachshara (preparation) farm. The coming of the group was an event, as Karl Silberman discovered as he went touring the country with fellow General Zionists. "Volunteers?" the kibbutzniks asked. "Not refugees?"

Great was the pleasure and rejoicing in receiving such people.



South African Jews, like all others, declined to accept the British imposition of conditional rights to enter their spiritual and national homeland. Accordingly the Zionist Federation, challenging and defying the British limitations initiated a pilot plan for "illegal" immigration. The plan was for a pathfinding group of eight- ostensibly on safari - to cross Africa by truck to Cairo, and there to make contact with appropriate people who would see to the rest.

The plan did not succeed. If it had succeeded, it would have carved the way for an Aliyah Bet⁶ from South Africa. At least, that is the belief of Eddy Magid, one of the eight, but it is not shared by Phillip Navon, another of the group, who maintains that the British District Commissioners they met on the way, alert and intelligent men, would have understood quickly enough the significance of successive "safaris" of young men from South Africa.

Two reasons are given for the failure of this pilot effort. First - not valid - is that the 3-ton, ex-Army truck purchased for the "safari" was a "crook". Indeed it was: its first breakdown, a broken gasket, was just after Pretoria and thereafter there were regular breakdowns. The demoralization that these brought about was, however, temporary. A greater professionalism and meticulousness in the equipping and planning of the "safari" would certainly have eased what turned out to be a rugged, halting and arduous trip. Nevertheless the eight did reach Ed-Duem, a town south of Khartoum. It was on the lap between the two that the unforeseen happened: an accident knocked Henry Harris off the truck and injured his back. In the upshot he had to be flown back to South Africa. The money for this could only be acquired by selling the truck.

The eight young men, their ages ranging from 18 to 24, were Benny Miller, of Oudtshoorn, leader of the expedition, Phillip Navon (then Nowesenitz), of Randfontein, Harry Bloch, originally of Port Elizabeth, Henry Harris, of Johannesburg, Morris Galp, of Johannesburg, today of Cape Town, Issy Rieback, of Johannesburg (today of Israel), Hymie Zahavi [Goldblatt] of Johannesburg (now in Israel), and Eddy Magid, today a Johannesburg City Councilor. Five were drawn from the general Zionist hachsharah farm near Johannesburg and three were Betarim.

⁶ Term applied to illegal immigration of Jewish refugees into Palestine.

Chapter 1

In the final result only Morris Galp managed to worm his way into Palestine. The story, in some of its detail, is this:

Two hours after midnight on December 15, 1946, the truck nosed its way out of Johannesburg. By night-and-day driving, with a few pre-planned stops at supplied addresses, the eight men hoped to reach Cairo in twenty one days. Their tinned food was stacked inside compartments of the truck. A driver, co-driver and an observer were in the cab in front. For the five off-duty men there were three mattresses on the floor of the truck and two hammocks. Duties were to go by rotation.

The adventure had its chronicler. Eddy Magid, then 19, kept a diary. The document is not untypical of what would be the record of any youth on such a mission, often scribbling by twilight. The diarist offers no insights into his companions; only once or twice does he communicate mood or temper ("boys in the back bitching we're going too fast"); vast, mysterious, endless Africa, provokes no comment as do not interesting human encounters during the trip. The diary is, in fact, a logbook, a series of brief, bald, staccato statements of events. But it fixes times and dates and in its cumulative detail reflects the rigor of the forty six days to Khartoum before it passes on to the untoward events that broke up the group and diversified the adventure in the settings of Alexandria, Port Sudan, Massawa, Aden and the Seychelles.

To return to the beginning:

Sunday December 15: Spent day in back-yard of garage south of Pretoria.

Friday December 20: Reached Salisbury last night. New rings £20.

December 27: Reached Lusaka. Truck serviced. Tyres changed. Continued journey: mud, ditches, skids; radiator leaking; wild animals. Made Broken Hill 1 a.m. Issy and I slept in the ladies' waiting room at the station.

Sunday December 29: Arrived Ndola 5:30 a.m., Arrived Elizabethville, Congo 8P.M.

Monday December 30: Spent day fixing starter of truck. Boys all cheesed off with truck. Hospitality that day with Mr. R.

Tuesdays December 31: Stuck with generator trouble at 4:30 a.m. Ben and I walked for help, roads slippery, raining, very dark, stopped at every noise of wild animals. Found South African mechanic. Bought new generator. Arrived Jadotville 11:30 p.m.

Saturday January 4: Passed over Luika River by primitive ferry service.

Sunday January 5: Reached Costamansville at noon. Received at beautiful home overlooking Kivu. Slept over. Strawberries and cream. Had truck repaired.

Wednesday January 8: Reached Rutshuru early morning. Trouble with lights. Slept on mountain.

Friday January 10: Drove on using handbrakes. Had brakes and lights fixed.

Saturday January 11: Gasket and radiator bust. Tried soldering all night. Failed.

Sunday January 12: Harry and I walked for help, reaching farmhouse after six km. Found mechanic who replaced gasket. Sign on road read - "Grobler" - went in and had tea with South African farmer. Spoke Afrikaans.

Chapter 1

Wednesday January 15: Entered Sudan, Arrived Juba midnight.

Friday January 17: Nile in flood.

Friday January 31: Arrived in Kosti 10 a.m, Met trekkers going to South Africa at rest house. Left in afternoon. Got stuck two miles out. Henry and I walked to next house for help. Slept over, brought help next morning.

The accident happened on the night of Saturday February 1. Having enjoyed a sundowner with the Town Major at Ed-Duem the men accepted his suggestion not to carry on but to rest for the night at a nearby rondavel. At 9 p.m. they made for the rondavel, with Henry Harris ensconced in one of the two tyres lashed to the roof of the truck and Eddy Magid sitting beside him. When the truck turned into a side street, the two spotted huge overhanging branches forming a near archway. The driver did not hear their shouts. Eddy Magid flew through the air landing ten yards behind the truck, fortunately not seriously injured. The wedged-in Henry Harris took the brunt of the blow, suffering a cracked vertebra.

After a bad night Harris was sent to hospital at Khartoum by steamer, Morris Galp accompanying him. The remaining six set out in the truck.

Thursday February 6: Fought with gasket most of the day. Had just about given up all hope, when car arrived from nowhere. An Englishman stepped out and gave Issy and me a lift to Khartoum to bring help in the morning.

The rest of the story is richly anecdotal but only now of passing relevance to the story of Machal. Briefly, the truck was sold in Khartoum for £370, Henry Harris was sent back by plane to South Africa on March 2 and on March 15, the remaining seven entrained for Port Sudan. Here an Englishman, owner of a 7-ton yacht, Three Bells, motor and sails, came into their lives. Demobbed after World War 2, Harvey, as he became known to the men, had earned money in 1946/47 by taking aboard press correspondents and photographers to follow the landing in Cyprus of Jewish refugees prevented from entering Palestine.

Harvey was bound for the Seychelles and needed four deck men. By ballot the four came to be Benny Miller, Phillip Navon, Eddy Magid and Issy Rieback. Their secret plan was to turn the yacht around for the coast of Palestine but Harvey, perhaps not unsuspecting, kept the sextant to himself and nothing came of the plan. The will to execute it was also lacking.

Left at the Seamens' Mission at Port Sudan were Morris Galp, Hymie Goldblatt (Zahavi) and Harry Bloch.

The picture of March 25 to April 25 is that of the four men in the yacht, often at first violently seasick, bouncing in the Red Sea; a sojourn in Massawa, then a risky sail to Aden. Here there was an undesigned reunion with Harry Bloch and Hymie Goldblatt (Zahavi) who had arrived in Aden on a French cargo ship with £2 between them. They reported that Morris Galp "could not leave Port Sudan until everything was paid for".

Benny Miller, Phillip Navon and Hymie Goldblatt (Zahavi) sailed with Harvey to the Seychelles. We leave them for the present to trace the return to South Africa of Eddy Magid, Harry Bloch and Issy Rieback. Rieback had had enough. Sea sickness had laid him low for many days. He boarded a cargo ship, Fort George, at Massawa, and worked his passage to Lourenco Marques, where he entrained to Johannesburg, arriving in April 1948.

Eddy Magid and Harry Bloch had not yet given up hope of reaching the Promised Land and made contact with some Yemenite Jews, then in a Jewish camp in Aden, in the hope of an overland caravan trip with them through Mecca to Palestine. The Yemenites backed out at the last moment, saying it was far too dangerous for them to be caught with the strangers.

Chapter 1

The two men then sought a ship going north to the Suez, but this proving fruitless, they worked their way to Beira on a French cargo ship, and there entrained for South Africa.

Sunday May 25: Arrived in Mafeking 9:30 a.m. Bought copy of Sunday Times. Arrived in Johannesburg 7:30 p.m.

Benny Miller, Phillip Navon and Hymie Goldblatt (Zahavi), enjoyed a pleasant interlude of three months in the Seychelles, waiting for money from South Africa, which eventually came. They bought a sail boat (no motor) for £20 and made for the east coast of Africa. As Phillip Navon put it, "if you're a sailor, you would know the dangers, but if you're not, you just go".

So they just went, having learnt something of sailing from Harvey. The sea concealed its darker tempers and in the passage of weeks they made Zanzibar though they intended Mombasa. For various reasons they sailed up to Mogadishu, then went south to Mombasa where they boarded a Union Castle ship for Durban. Waiting to greet them was Eddy Magid.

Morris Galp made the Promised Land, but almost a year later. His experiences divide into several divisions. Needing money, he sought and obtained a work permit at Port Sudan where he met a Mr. Bishop who owned a gold mine sixty miles in the interior, reputedly the gold mine of Rider Haggard's King Solomon's Mines. Here he worked for two months with two Europeans and 100 Arabs, earning £120 a month.

Back in Port Sudan, he boarded a Canadian steamer Aden-bound. In Aden the question was: back to South Africa or go north? The issue was decided by the arrival of an Australian ship carrying back Italian POW's of World War 2. The POW's were to disembark at Port Said, entrain to Cairo, thence by plane to Italy. Galp's good fortune was that he spoke Italian, having learned the language in Italy during the war. His problem was how to get through customs and immigration, since only the Italians were allowed to land. An arrangement with an Arab vendor of curios who boarded the ship was fixed for near midnight. The two slipped on to the quay from the engine room (then pumping in oil) by sliding down the oil pipe.

This was the beginning of Galp's haunted life in Egypt, a land where documents of identification were everywhere demanded and whose xenophobia was virulent. On the first night, as luck would have it, he fell in with a group of the Italian POW's making for their hotel. He overcame the obstacle of lack of papers by speaking Italian, giving an address in Italy known to him and successfully passing off as one of the group.

Thereafter he became "a merchant seaman", Cairo-bound for a day or two by train. His story was that his papers were with the purser of his ship. In Cairo he sought the address given to the safari group in Johannesburg. The door was opened by a woman in mourning. The man of the house had died a few weeks earlier. She had "enough troubles of her own" and could not help him.

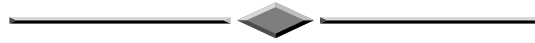
A Jew in a strange city seeks out other Jews and a day came when Galp made contact with a Zionist who gave him a letter to a person in Alexandria.

The bus journey from Cairo to Alexandria was perhaps the most tense of his wanderings. There were three roadblocks on the way, the reason for the Egyptians' diligence being a cholera epidemic in the land and the need to check on all people moving from city to city. Galp surmounted these obstacles thanks to the merchant seaman story and the inability of the check point officials to handle the pressing streams. In Alexandria he made contact with Hashomer Hatzair⁷ and under its umbrella he was able to stay in Egypt for seven months and learn some Arabic. Hashomer Hatzair had ways of slipping Jews into Palestine: the ways for example, of the "married couple" going on holiday to the land. A ship took this "Egyptian" and

⁷ A left-wing Zionist youth movement.

Chapter 1

his "wife" to Haifa. Two months later Galp was working with the Timorim group at Ein Sara, near Nahariya.



Twelve settlers boarded the Winchester Castle in Durban in March 1947. The ship had arrived from the Far East and Australia taking home to Britain and other countries soldiers of World War 2. The settler group, with different destinations and purposes in Palestine, included ex-SAAF air mechanic Abe Nurick, ex-SAAF pilot Hugo Alperstein (later Hebraised to Hagai Agmon), Sheinie Nurock, Bob Damelin, his wife and two children, Mr. Rosenberg, father of Mordechai and Dr. David Kidron, both well-known Israelis today, Val Shanan (then Levy), Mr. & Mrs. Judkowski, of Cape Town, Isaac Fabran and Sara Babrow.

Our concern is with the three bound for Kibbutz Ma'ayan Baruch: Abe Nurick and his wife Riva, and Alperstein. Nurick's link with the Ma'ayan Baruch project began in 1946 in Cape Town whence he had gone on his first holiday after the war. There he heard about Harry Salber, Haig Kaplan and Issy Lowenstein and the ex-servicemen's group gathered around them for the purpose of founding a kibbutz in Palestine. At a meeting of the group he met Riva, whom he married a few months later, by which time the first group of pioneers had already founded the settlement.

Hugo Alperstein, product of Dale College, Kingwilliamstown, belonged to a family that had always been warmly Zionist. As a youth he was a member of his town's Young Israel Society and later of Habonim. He served during the war in Italy in 24 Squadron, SAAF, and on his return to South Africa joined the Johannesburg group of young Zionist socialists planning the Ma'ayan Baruch project. To prepare himself for his new life, he took advantage of the Government's COTT scheme which trained demobilised soldiers for a trade. Alperstein, living the dream of Jewish redemption by self-labour, joined a builder's course.

The twelve South Africans disembarked from the Winchester Castle at Port Said and in a night train packed with Arab travellers reached Lydda on an April morning in 1947 a few days before the Jewish Passover.

Nurick and Riva made immediately for Ma'ayan Baruch on the Triumph motor cycle which Nurick had brought with him and which became the settlement's transport vehicle. Hugo Alperstein first went to Jerusalem to find the girl friend whom he had met in Egypt during the war. Within a few weeks Alperstein had joined the kibbutz and some months later succeeded in bringing his girl friend there also. The two were married at the kibbutz.

Abe Nurick was made for kibbutz life. A son of the veld, a helper in his schoolboy days in his father's Upington butchery and farm, he had abandoned his university studies in 1937 to learn the building trade. Now he became both the kibbutz's builder and its expert in butchering meat. His service in the SAAF, with its 5-year tent and workshop life in Kimberley, North Africa and Italy, also turned out to be excellent preparation for the raw life of pioneering. He took Alperstein under his wing in the settlement's building projects and their lives were full.

Eddie Cohen arrived a few months later, an interesting example of the wind blowing where it listeth. Before the war he had had no Jewish interests and was far removed from contemporary Zionist-minded youth. It was possibly a visit to Palestine on leave that transformed the young fighter pilot into the obsessed 23-year-old, dreaming only of joining the Ma'ayan Baruch kibbutz. He abandoned his university studies and, like Hugo Alperstein before him, joined a builder's course under the COTT scheme. He was now afire with Zionism. At lunch times he would walk over from the trade school to the nearby University of the Witwatersrand to attend meetings of the Students' Zionist Association. His friend, Shaul

Bar-Levav (then Levinson) and an early Machal volunteer, describes Eddie as all ears at these meetings.

"He arrived at Ma'ayan Baruch in October 1947, an urban man with well-chosen suits and ties, books, a fine collection of classical records and a hungry idealism. Quiet and reserved, he had interior depths which his new life began to stir. But this new life was destined soon to end, for a country at war would need the ex-servicemen."



A day in May 1947

A new name had just been painted on the whaler: "Drom Afrika 1", meaning South-Africa 1. She was a modest craft of 500 tons, rising to the gentle waves of Table Bay harbour. Used in World War 2 as a South African minesweeper: she had been converted afresh, this time to a fishing trawler, she was bound soon for the Mediterranean.

"Drom Afrika 1" was the carrier of several dreams. The first was the big dream of three Cape Town Jewish businessmen, Jaffe, Salber and Albow, to establish a Jewish Mediterranean fishing fleet, based in Haifa. It would help to feed the Jews of the Yishuv. "Drom Afrika 1" was the first embodiment of the dream.

The seven young Jews of the all-South African lower deck had private ambitions of their own, unrelated to the businessmen's hope of an occupational group reclaiming a seafaring biblical ancestry. Four of them, Jack Shirk, of Muizenberg, two Johannesburg youngsters, Tuvia Ozen and Yehuda Hershon and Issy Greenberg from Capetown, were aiming somehow to slip the British requirement for an immigration certificate and join a kibbutz of their movement, Hashomer Hatzair. Sam Wulfson, of Johannesburg, and Chaim Chait, of Pretoria, were colourful young men of the Zionist Revisionist Movement, nourishing hopes of joining the Irgun underground. Finally there was Ernst Groenewald (Grunwald), a Jew despite his deceptive name, also ready to fight Briton and Arab.

"Drom Afrika1" sailed on a day in May 1947. The captain was a Dane, the engineers a Dutchman and a Norwegian, the mate a Scot, the bosun a South African, the rest of the crew the young Jews already mentioned and a handful of non-Jews. The first night out was their worst. "Drom Afrika 1" ran into a heavy storm, her bearings ran hot, the bilge pumps failed and the trawler shipped water, requiring a sea-sick crew to bale out with buckets. Engine trouble was to be a permanent experience, with the ship returning to every harbour on route, for repairs.

It took the ship two months to reach Haifa. The untoward events were the taking on at Mombasa of water which was not potable, which meant drinking beer instead (no hardship) and running aground on a sand bank in the Red Sea. For the rest, the voyage was an enlargement of experience, in pleasant form, for the young Jews: the life of the 4-hour watch, taking the wheel, chipping, painting and the open-air life, the crew abandoning their unventilated fo'c'sle to sleep in chosen places on deck. Then there were the unnameable rewards: pleasant all-round human relationships, sunrises, sunsets, flying fish, the mystery of the ocean - things without relation to a Tomorrow that would bring Sam Wulfson back to South Africa minus a leg, which would take Issy Greenberg into two remarkable air dramas from Czechoslovakia to Israel, kill Chaim Chait in a monstrous parachuting accident and shape afresh the lives of the others.

The first hint of the politically troubled arena into which the ship sailed came with her entry into Haifa harbor. The captain asked the Jews with whom he had become very friendly, what flag he should fly. Issy Greenberg and his friends produced the Zionist flag and up it went. British officials boarded the trawler, fuming. How dared the captain fly this flag? For what it is

Chapter 1

worth as an interesting marginal fact to history, "Drom Afrika 1" was the first ship to enter Haifa harbor flying the flag of the future Jewish State (the illegal immigrant ships had their flags torn down before they reached port).

"Drom Afrika 1" tied up to the breakwater, the crew not allowed to land. The men became eye witnesses to the drama of those days, the transfer of Jewish refugees from their illegal ships to ships which would take them, caged on the deck, to Cyprus. A whole line of these illegal ships, now confiscated, was a daily reminder to the crew of the bitter struggle being waged between Jewry and Britain. To the line were to be added two of the historically most famous of the DP ships, the Exodus, whose refugee passengers, the British, either with great insensitivity or with great malice, returned to Hamburg, Germany, bringing passions to boiling point, and the Irgun's yacht, Ben Hecht. At night police launches purred across the water, the whole bay lit up by powerful search-lights. The launches dropped mines to discourage frogmen. There were also constant patrols around the breakwater. Despite this surveillance, the crew of "Drom Afrika 1" were able to visit a friendly ship which they reached by means of an inflatable dingy that floated to the trawler from the Exodus.

Serious efforts were made by the captain of "Drom Afrika 1" to fulfill her purpose as a Jewish fishing vessel, but the propeller, becoming impaired, frustrated the first attempt and the vessel limped back to Haifa. Thereafter it went to dry dock in Alexandria. A cholera plague in Egypt kept her there for a month. Only years later did Greenberg learn that Morris Galp, of the "safari" truck from Johannesburg was in hiding in Alexandria at the same time. While in Alexandria harbour several other vessels were raided by "pirates" and the "Drom Afrika 1" crew were constantly on guard, beating off one attack successfully.

Back in Haifa, "Drom Afrika 1" resumed her expeditions, picking up more information than fish, the value of the information being where fish were NOT to be found. One night, at sea, there was a fire aboard. This was no Conradian sea drama, but it might have been. Issy Greenberg came up from below to see the men streaming onto the deck. He passed the galley, next to which was the fidley. Clutching hold of the iron framework, he looked down into the stokehold. It seemed, with its smoke and flame, an inferno. The men now bent on trying to launch the life-boat, but the process of getting steam on the winch to lift the boat from its davits, had snarled. The captain, tearing out of his cabin and tripping, hurled things into the sea in his humiliation and anger.

The gods were mocking, but they had not counted on the ship's cook, a shell-shocked man after the terrible bombardment of Benghazi in World War 2, but apparently now without fear of fire. That, at any rate, is how Issy Greenberg put it. He went into the seething inferno and put it out with a fire extinguisher. On this note of anti-climax "Drom Afrika1" limped back to Haifa.

She never made it as a fishing vessel, though Mr. Meyer Jaffe, returning to Cape Town in November 1947 from a visit to Palestine, was not to foresee this. He was hopeful, reporting in an interview in a Cape Town newspaper, that full-scale operations were about to begin. In Haifa he had appointed Louis Shapiro as his agent, Shapiro, a young fellow from the Strand, the first member of the Zionist youth movement to settle in Palestine, had arrived in the country in 1934. The trials of "Drom Afrika 1" and its later companion, "Drom Afrika 2", became his and they were many. "Drom Afrika 1" carved out a little niche for herself in the history of the War of Liberation as the vessel that made a night trip from Haifa to Nahariya to land urgently needed supplies and arms to the beleaguered town, then cut off by Arab guerrillas. As one of the ships of the rescue patrol should Operation Velveta 1 fail - an operation involving a number of South African pilots flying Spitfires from Czechoslovakia into Israel. She was then equipped with a 20 mm cannon. But that is another story.

The Jewish sailors of "Drom Afrika 1" were smuggled ashore by men of the Haganah shortly after the November 29, 1947, partition decision. They had been on the ship for six months. In the subsequent unfolding of events, each was caught-up in a story of his own.

Chapter 1

“Drom Afrika 2”, originally the Brakvlei, a whale chaser, used as a mine sweeper in World War 2, left for Israel in January 1949 on her voyage round the west coast of Africa. The period is outside the scope of this work. The ship, a derelict fit only for scrap, should never have been sent. It reached Haifa late in April. Jews among the crew included Cecil Abrams, of Johannesburg, M. Abramowitz, Jack Kaplan, Solly Melzer, Harold Levithan, Peter Silverstein, Solly Blecher (Israel Ben Ami), Harry Milner, Barney Smith, Mike Shakenovsky, Joe Witkin and Ronnie Slender

The Israelis had no use for the ship and eventually sank it

THE ISRAEL FLAG

Soon after the State was declared, a debate arose about whether to retain or replace the flag of the World Zionist Organization as the flag of Israel. The matter was not decided until October 28, 1948 with publication of the following notice in the Official Gazette.

**The Provisional Council of State
Proclamation of the Flag of the State of Israel**

The Provisional Council of State hereby proclaims that the flag of the State of Israel shall be as illustrated and described below: The flag is 220 cm. long and 160 cm. wide. The background is white and on it are two stripes of dark sky-blue, 25 cm. broad, over the whole length of the flag, at a distance of 15 cm. from the top and from the bottom of the flag. In the middle of the white background, between the two blue stripes and at equal distance from each stripe is a Star of David, composed of six dark sky-blue stripes, 5.5 cm. broad, which form two equilateral triangles, the bases of which are parallel to the two horizontal stripes.

25 Tishrei 5709 (28 October 1948)
Provisional Council of State
Joseph Sprinzak, Speaker



The blue on white stripes, considered colours of purity, were chosen to represent the stripes on the tallit, symbolizing the spirituality of the Jewish people.

CHAPTER 2 - PART 1

IMPACT OF THE PARTITION DECISION

NOVEMBER 29, 1947 to MAY 14, 1948

The November 29, 1947 decision of the United Nations to partition Palestine into a Jewish State and an Arab State sent throbs of excitement through South African Jewry, as through Jewish communities everywhere. At that time South African Jewry was a community of some 115,000 of largely immigrant parents and their first South African-born generation of sons and daughters. In Johannesburg, which had the largest concentration, this community, speaking Yiddish and English, lived mainly in the suburbs of Berea, Yeoville, Observatory, Bellevue, Doornfontein, Mayfair, with smaller scatterings in Turffontein, Rosettenville, La Rochelle, Booyens and Ophirton, and was beginning to spread into the wealthier northern suburbs. In Cape Town and Durban they lived in suburbs comparable to these. Jewish communities were also in platteland towns all over the Union. A few of them, like the one in Oudtshoorn, making a fusion of the characteristics of a tight-knit traditional Jewish community of Lithuania with characteristics imbibed from the wide spaces and open sky of the Southern African veld. The blend was excellent.

The community had two major institutions - the South African Jewish Board of Deputies and the South African Zionist Federation. The Board of Deputies had at that time recently emerged from years of concern with the South African pro-Nazi Greyshirt movement of World War 2 days and was still concerned with what appeared to it and the Jewish community at large, the anti-Semitic utterances and policies of the Opposition National Party.

The South African Zionist Federation embodied, expressed, and channeled the energies of the community into the cause of the restoration of the Jewish Homeland in Palestine.

Two other aspects distinguished the community. It counted in its ranks thousands of young South African-born Jews who had served in the South African Air Force, Army and Naval services in World War 2 and it had created on South African soil, through the Zionist Federation, the phenomenon of farms preparing young people for settlement on kibbutzim in the Homeland. The farms were according to party key, General Zionists, Zionist Socialist/Habonim, and Hashomer Hatzair. The parties reproduced in South Africa the World Zionist political structure. Their infighting was fierce, the various shades of ideology creating passions near torrid. Every party, including the religious, had its own vision of the heaven-to-be and of the principles on which it should be moulded and shaped.

Overshadowing all these aspects was the consciousness of the horror of the annihilation of the Six Million in Nazi Europe. There was hardly a single Jewish family in South Africa not touched by the loss of near or distant relatives. The immediate mainspring of all the community's action was this haunting, though emotionally and intellectually indigestible tragedy. But politically the Jews had their answer: they could no longer allow themselves to be strewn defenceless among the nations. The analysis was that the international disease of anti-Semitism could only be cured by a sovereign Jewish State. This analysis was not incorrect. Anti-Semitism diminished dramatically after the birth of the State.

November 29, 1947 was a Saturday. Jews all over South Africa were glued that night in groups or individually to the live broadcast of the voting of the Palestine issue at Lake Success. At 2 a.m. on Sunday the voice of Doctor Aarha, President of the U.N. General Assembly announced that the required two thirds majorities for partition had been obtained. South Africa's vote, through the then Minister of Interior/Justice, Mr. Harry Lawrence, was among the "Ayes".

Telephones buzzed, though the hour was early. Spontaneous rejoicing broke out in many homes.

Sunday, November 30, saw the excitement mounting. The prayers of worshippers at the usually well-attended Sunday morning services in the main synagogues were pregnant with fresh meaning. The first representative gathering at which reference could be made to the great event was that of the Board of Deputies scheduled for that morning. Neither the chairman, Mr. S.M. Kuper, K.C., nor the executive, nor the deputies themselves were in the mood for any other business but the topic of the day. The agenda was scrapped. The longing for some kind of articulation of the wonder, which really called for poets and psalmists, was tangible. In the absence of these sayers, the community listened rapt to its lawyers. "For the first time in 2,000 years we are recognized as a people by the peoples of the world", said Mr. Kuper. "We look back at the miracle of our survival, our triumph over the persecutions of the Middle Ages, the tortures of the Inquisition, the pogroms of Czarist Russia and the holocaust in Nazi Europe. Ahead is the dawn of a new life for our people in their own land... We can imagine the surge of joy in the breasts of every one of our brothers and sisters among the survivors of European Jewry. For them it means an early prospect of going to Palestine... We can picture, too, the scenes of joy in the Yishuv today... We have seen how important votes of individual States can be in the United Nations. Now the Jews of Palestine will soon be eligible to join that Assembly and will be able to play their part in the United Nations through their properly constituted government."

Bernard Gering, chairman of the South African Zionist Federation, a small, slender, smouldering man, then took the microphone. Subduing himself to disciplined statement, he said:

"The last time I addressed the deputies was eighteen months ago when we were labouring under the impact of the news of the raid by British forces in Palestine on the Jewish Agency building in Jerusalem and the arrest of Zionist leaders. At that time the Jewish community of South Africa felt as one man that something must be done. Since then there have been sacrifices and struggle. Now there has come the great news that the nations of the world will accept the principle of granting statehood to the Jewish people. As we worked together in the days of tribulation, so will we work together in the days of rejoicing and endeavor. If the world outside will not interfere, I am sure the Jewish people will find a way with the Arab world. It is good news that the Irgun Zvai Leumi is prepared to end its existence in the Jewish State... I could not help feeling today that if the news has meant so much to us, what must it mean to the displaced persons of Europe, faced otherwise with the prospect of rotting in the camps of Europe? Our thoughts go out to the Yishuv which held the fort for us. Let us not forget, too, that we owe thanks to Great Britain. It is true there is no Balfour, no Lloyd George there now, but it was Great Britain which was responsible for the Balfour Declaration, and we look forward to the restoration of harmonious relations between the Jewish and British peoples".

A reminder came from Mr. I.A. Maisels, vice-president of the Board, of the part played by non-Jews in the fulfillment of Jewish hopes. Mr. Maisels named particularly the Prime Minister of South Africa, Field Marshall Smuts. Mr. Louis Pincus, another speaker, recalled that the Jews had wondered a few years earlier, if they would ever see the end of Hitler and Nazism. Now they stood on the threshold of a new day. They had beheld the amazing spectacle of the United States and Soviet Russia voting together to do justice to the Jewish people.

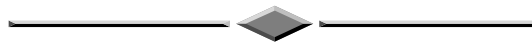
The executive of the Federation met that afternoon and issued a public declaration. The statement added: "Although partition imposes great territorial sacrifices on the Jews, it nevertheless gives the Jewish people an opportunity for re-establishing its statehood, and enabling it to make its full contribution to the progress of mankind as an equal member of the community of nations... We reiterate the traditional policy of Zionism in extending a hand of friendship to the Arab people of Palestine. We urge the nations of the world to ensure speedy

implementation of the U.N.'s decision and to take immediate steps to end the misery of the hundreds of thousands of Jewish displaced persons in Europe. The fateful decision of the U.N. imposes on Jewry grave responsibilities..."

There was on that Sunday the usual weekly number of Jewish engagements, weddings and barmitzvahs. Glasses clinked, speechmakers revelled, dancing had extra verve, and sound filled the air.

The first day of the new era was exhilarating. Seemingly far off now were the days once ironically described by the Zionist Revisionist leader Vladimir Jabotinsky: "There were times in Odessa when we would quiver at the news that the fifth butler of the third under-secretary of the Turkish vice-consul in a tiny Balkan state had smiled benevolently (not made any promises, God forbid) at a Zionist preacher in a provincial Romanian cafe. That was considered a huge political victory."

There was now international sanction for a reborn Jewish State.



On the Monday, a young Johannesburger by name Maurice Mendelowitz:⁸ called at the Zionist Federation to offer his services to the Yishuv. This was too quick off the mark for the Federation. An official thanked him and took his name. Mendelowitz is important as a symbol of what was to follow that month and in succeeding months in the ranks of Jewish youth in South Africa, both those remote from organized Zionist activity, like Mendelowitz, and those deeply involved in the Movement.

Event now began tumbling upon event. On the Tuesday, thousands of Johannesburg and Reef Jews poured into the grounds of Balfour Park, summoned to a short-notice mass rally convened by the Zionist Federation and the Board of Deputies. Young people filled the air with song. The purpose of the rally was, in the trite journalistic phrase, "to hail the United Nations' decision".

The vast sea of faces was expectant when the speakers mounted the platform, an expectation that could only be satisfied with poetry to match the largeness of what had happened. It was provided by Jeremiah, Chapter 31, intoned by Chief Cantor I. Alter:

I will build there again and thou shall be built, O virgin of Israel: thou shalt again be adorned with the tabrets, and shall go forth in the dances of them that make merry.

Behold I will bring them from the North Country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child, and her that travelleth with child together: a great company shall return thither.

In ordinary circumstances (and more so in the inclement weather of that day) ten speakers would have been a crass imposition on the audience. But not on this occasion. Jews could not hear enough about the wonder that had happened. Deep in their consciousness was the knowledge that this had not happened before in the story of Man that a People should return after millennia to the Land of their Fathers. On another scale, it had been put by the philosophers that no nation fills the stage of history twice. But the bell had sounded that the Jews might prove the philosophers and the Christians wrong (the latter having maintained that Christianity overtook the Jews and Judaism, that the Jews no longer had any theological function in history and that, indeed, they were "theological fossils in time".)

⁸ Chairman of the Israel-South Africa Chamber of Commerce at the time this manuscript is being written in 1975.

Chapter 2 – Part 1

One observation of Chief Rabbi Rabinowitz must be attached to the record. This was the first time, he told the large gathering that he had occasion to be present at a Jewish rally of rejoicing in South Africa. "At last the long weary Golah will cease..."

There was one rumble of dissonance. An airplane flying over the gathering dropped leaflets in the name of an anonymous body styling itself "The Anti-Partition League". The leaflets, couched in extreme language, missed their mark, landing away from the field where the meeting was being held. The Anti-Partition League wanted a Jewish state that would include "all Palestine under the Mandate in its historic boundaries" (meaning both sides of the Jordan), "a state for the whole Jewish people", not "a tiny smudge on the map", which it called "The Jewish Agency State".

The "Jewish Agency State", said the leaflet "was impossible to defend. Its average width was twelve miles; instead of solving the Jewish problem, it would make it more acute. "For this the cowardly Zionist leadership expects you to send your sons to fight... Partition is treason! Down with treachery!"

The United Zionist Revisionist Party shared the view of the Anti-Partition League, but couched its objection to partition in the balanced language of political statement. Three days after the Balfour Park meeting, it said:

"In common with Jews the world over, the Revisionist Party of South Africa voices its feelings of deep satisfaction that once again the comity of Nations has reaffirmed the rights of the Jewish people to nationhood rooted in the historic soil of Palestine. This decision, in principle, is the more welcome in view of the strenuous opposition by certain nations, and the pressure of international power politics which have been successfully resisted in the interests of international justice. It would, however, be idle to deny that a substantial section of the Jewish people sees in the proposal to partition Palestine a denial of its historic right to the whole of that land, which, reaffirmed by the nations of the world at the close of the last War, has become more than ever justified and necessary in the light of our tragic history in the past 25 years. Nowhere else in the world can the Jewish people find a haven, but the area now proposed as the limits of the "Jewish State-to-be" is so pitifully small that it would be purblind to imagine that it could ever serve as a State for the Jewish people, the achievement of which the modern Zionist Movement came into existence.

With all solemnity, therefore, the Revisionist Party affirms that the Jewish people cannot be bound by the artificial limits now sought to be imposed upon it, nor can it recognize that the aim of Zionism will have been achieved by the establishment of the State as envisaged by the United Nations. The Revisionist Party will work unceasingly by all legitimate means to bring about a revision of the proposed boundaries so that ultimately Palestine will become a Jewish State of such dimensions as will enable it to provide a home for all those Jews who wish to migrate there and thus constitute the answer to the problem of Jewish homelessness.

Having thus enunciated our policy, we wish at the same time clearly to record that as and when the Jewish State is established, even if it be within the limits now proposed, the Revisionist Party will take its place as a party within a democratically elected parliament of the Jewish State, and will assume its due share of the burdens and responsibility for the security, of building and development of this State in accordance with the customs, traditions and precedents of democracy. The Revisionist Party retains to the full its abiding confidence that despite all vicissitudes, it is the destiny of the Jewish people to inherit once again their ancient homeland".

In Cape Town a gathering of 2,500 in the City Hall swelled the echo of the call to service - without dissonance.

The next word came on December 7 from Smuts himself - not directly but through his Minister of Health, Dr. Henry Gluckman. The occasion was the annual Chanukah Service in

the Great Synagogue, Wolmarans Street, Johannesburg, arranged by the United Hebrew Congregation in association with the South African Jewish ex-Service League. Jews throughout the country, hanging on to the live radio broadcast and aware of the presence in the Synagogue of Johannesburg's First Citizen, Mr. C.B. Gordon, members of the City Council, high-ranking army personnel and decorated Jewish ex-servicemen of World Wars 1 and 2, were moved by the liturgy poured by cantor and choir into the Synagogue's high-domed vault.

"And so", said Smuts' message, "a new start will be made which, small at the beginning, may lead to great things for this People of history. Much has it suffered and much has it contributed to our human heritage. May the future see this noble and notable contribution further enlarged for all Mankind."

Chief Rabbi Rabinowitz reached eloquence in the peroration of his sermon: "Dull indeed of soul would be that Jew who, turning the tear-stained pages of his prayer book, would not know that at long last his prayers have been partly answered, who would fail to hear the voice of God saying, Refrain thy voice from weeping and thine eyes from tears ... there is hope for the latter end and thy children will return to their border..."

"The shofar has sounded for our freedom and the banner has been lifted up to gather in our exiles. The shofar calls us to solemn dedication... that the banner shall remain aloft and not dropped from our fingers to dust again, that the Redeemer may come unto Zion, and let us say Amen."

Words, words, words, unless accompanied by action. The action came three days later.

It expressed itself in hundreds of young men putting their names down for service in the homeland. They filled the Coronation Hall in Johannesburg at a meeting convened by the South African Zionist Youth Council. Enthusiasm was high. No publicity was given to the meeting and the details only emerged later. Rousing speeches were made. It was foreseen that there would be fighting in Palestine, the Arabs having made it clear that they would resist the United Nations' decision by force of arms if necessary. Forms were handed out asking volunteers for their names, addresses and particulars, and where applicable, of service in World War 2.⁹

The rally passed the following resolution with acclamation: "The United Nations have taken an historic decision proclaiming the establishment of the Jewish State. Grave trials and grave tasks face the Jewish nation in creating its State. In particular Jewish youth must take up with courage and determination the burden which faces it. This mass rally of Jewish youth, fully aware of the responsibilities which devolve on it, pledges its unqualified service to the Jewish State. In this great hour our hearts and thoughts are turned to the Yishuv, to Eretz Israel, the front-line of the Jewish struggle. Zionist Youth of South Africa will take their place beside their brethren in Palestine to serve, to build and to defend Eretz Israel, the Jewish State."

Also with little publicity and this a week later - on December 19 - the South African Zionist Federation launched a special emergency fund. The money poured in. An exchange of cables took place between the Jewish Legion in Tel Aviv and the South African Jewish ex-Service League;

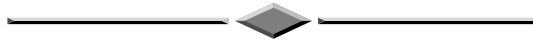
From Tel Aviv: - "With historic decision of U.N., we have put ourselves at the service of the nation in the higher Zionist institutions. Declare same;"

From Johannesburg: - "South African Jewish Ex-Service League heartily endorses your decision. Likewise pledge ourselves. Will give you every assistance in our power."

⁹ The speakers were Lionel Hodes, Dave Waks, Israel Herling (an emissary from the Yishuv), Philip Zuckerman, Major Simie Weinstein, Selig Dunsky and Dave Wynberg.

Thus December ran its course.

The news from Palestine in this period was lurid.



Arab snipers kill three women, two men, wound seven, in Jewish bus from Netanya to Jerusalem.

Arab High Committee declares 3-day strike in protest against the U.N. decision.

Arab mob on rampage in old commercial centre of Jerusalem. British police stand by without intervening. Jewish shops looted and burned. Jews stoned and knifed.

First exchange of fire between Jewish quarter of Hadar Hacarmel and downtown Arab quarter in Haifa.

Major Arab attack from Jaffa on Jewish Hatikvah quarter, Tel Aviv. Two Haganah platoons force Arab retreat, Seventy Arabs dead.

Britain announces she will evacuate most of her forces by May 14 insists on remaining in full control until then.

Irgun sets fire to Jerusalem's Rex Cinema, frequented by Arabs, in retaliation for Arab mob rampage.

Irgun-planted bomb kills several Arabs near Damascus Gate, Jerusalem.

Arab Legion men intervene for first time, killing fourteen Haganah men in Jewish convoy to youth village of Ben Shemen

Pickup truck of kibbutz Revivim in the Negev attacked by Bedouin. Wounded handed over to Arabs by British Commander of nearby camp.

Colin Hack, of Pretoria, pioneer settler of South African founded kibbutz, Ma'ayan Baruch, wounded while riding in a wagon between Kfar Giladi and Ma'ayan Baruch. Assailants six Arab snipers.

Irgun-thrown bomb in British oil refinery, Haifa, wounds number of Arab workers, outnumbering Jewish workers four to one. Thirty nine Jews massacred in retaliation.

"The entire month of December witnessed a process of segregation throughout the country. In many areas before the war Jews and Arabs lived and worked side by side. Now they became separated. Roadblocks sprang up at points of entry from Jewish into Arab quarters, erected first by the Arabs, and then by the Jews." - Netanel Lorch in *The Edge of the Sword*.

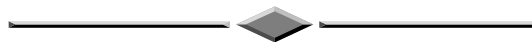
Among the passengers on the Durban Castle, voyaging between Cape Town and Durban in January 1948 was Sir Simon Marks, of the famous London firm of Marks and Spencer, and a 33-year-old Rustenburg man, Cecil Wulfsohn.

Sir Simon invited Wulfsohn for a talk.

"I hear you're Jewish", he said, "and that you served in the last war?"
"That is correct".

Wulfsohn had been flying since the age of 22; Two years later, in 1937, he left Rustenburg to work for the Johannesburg Light Plane Club at Baragwanath. For the first two years of the war he had been connected with the training of South African airmen and from 1943 he had served with RAF Squadron 216, based at Ramat David, Palestine, flying Dakotas.

"I don't know if you know", said Sir Simon, "but we are expecting trouble in May when the Jewish state is proclaimed. When you get back to the Transvaal, you will meet a man named Palgi whom Haganah is sending out. Tie up with him. See how many Air Force chaps you can gather together. "



JANUARY, 1948: EMISSARIES FROM THE PROMISED LAND

January and February 1948 were the months of the emissaries. The South African Jewish leadership lowered its voice and joined with the community at large to listen to the message of those who had come from the storm centers. The first of these (arriving January 13) was Michael Comay who, together with three other South African-born men, Abba Eban, Arthur Lourie and Simon Herman, had lived through the dramatic experience of the partition vote as part of the Yishuv's delegation at the United Nations. Comay's mission to the Union was both public and private. The public one was to acquaint the community with the realities of the situation in Palestine; the private one was to help set in motion the apparatus of organization for the challenge to come. One of his first contacts was with General Smuts; another with Dr. Lionel Meltzer, M.C., O.B.E., a Lieutenant-Colonel in World War 2. Comay wanted Meltzer in charge of recruiting for the Yishuv.

Comay, son-in-law of Bertha Solomon, South Africa's first woman member of Parliament, had served as Information Officer to the 1st South African Infantry Brigade and later as Senior Information Officer to the 6th South African Armoured Division. After the war the army sent him to England as Senior Information Officer for South African POW's released from Germany. This assignment fulfilled, he returned to South Africa where Bernard Gering asked him to take up a new post as Liaison Officer in Jerusalem between the South African Zionist Federation and the Jewish Agency. From Jerusalem Comay went to U N Headquarters in Lake Success to play his role - and it was significant - with the Yishuv's lobby there. He was thus an ideal message bearer to the South African community. Firstly he was one of them, secondly, a knowledgeable man of war, thirdly, one with an inside story.

Comay had been in and out of South Africa in the preceding twelve months.

Four months before the partition decision he had discussed the Palestine situation with General Smuts, summing up the interview for the executive of the Zionist Federation on July 24, 1947, as follows:

We talked for about half an hour. The gist of what Smuts said was this: He failed to see how the British could possibly carry on in Palestine without a radical change of policy, now that they had turned the whole Jewish community against them. The position was becoming impossible and every effort had to be made to get UN to reach a clear decision and to put it into effect in the near future. If this did not happen, the whole policy of a national home for the Jews might be placed in jeopardy,

Smuts himself had always been strongly opposed to partition as the country was so small. What was now Transjordan had definitely been intended to be for the Jews. Smuts could well remember saying at the time that the highlands of Moab were not unlike the highveld and were capable of development. Then the British found themselves embarrassed by promises made by some of their people to the Arabs ("or promises which were not made; I have never

known just what was promised and what wasn't") - so they cut off Transjordan and gave it to the Arabs. After that there could be nothing more due to the Arabs.

The Jews still had a big opportunity to make a Jewish country out of Western Palestine but they had missed the bus in regard to all of Palestine. They had not taken full advantage of the next decade. If they had forced the maximum immigration and colonization, things might have been different. But the response was poor and the tempo of advance very slow. Ten years after the Mandate things began to deteriorate. One had the rise of Hitler and at the same time the growing pressure of Arab nationalism. The British tried to placate these new forces by putting obstacles in the way of the rush of new immigrants and from that point Palestine policy got deeper and deeper into the mire. Today (Smuts went on) there was a situation which could not have been anticipated originally. A strong Arab national movement had developed in Palestine and the whole of the Arab world with its six independent states was linked up in support of it. British policy had turned against Zionism and he, Smuts, had very reluctantly come to the conclusion that the only way out of the impasse was a decent partition scheme which would give the Jews control of their own affairs and some room for development. He realized this way out was very unpalatable to many Zionists but he regarded it as the best that could be got under existing circumstances. With their intelligence, their drive and financial resources the Jews would make the best of this opportunity, given a free hand.

All this, and more, was in Comay's mind when he now addressed the Jewish community in various parts of the country. At a reception in his honour at the Carlton Hotel, he said bluntly that the time for speeches was past. "You cannot build a Jewish State on eloquence. The fight is on." States were not made at Lake Success. The Jewish State would have to be created by the men and women in Palestine. Nobody else was going to work or fight for it.

How serious was the Arab threat? Comay's answer was that the Arabs could not prevent the establishment of the State, the prospect of bloodshed was very real. It was not only the Palestine Arabs that the Jews had to reckon with. There were surrounding states which had British-trained armies, planes, tanks and guns. Comay was prescient:

The Arabs have in the past quarreled among themselves. I remember being told that there was so much dissension among them that there could never be an Arab League. Nevertheless the League was formed. I was told that they would never unite at Lake Success. But they did. We are told that they will do nothing now. I do not believe it.

The Mufti of Jerusalem, Comay added, was bringing pressure to bear on the Arab states to send trained, equipped forces into Palestine when the British left. A show-down was inevitable. The Jews were working day and night under grave difficulties to organize their forces. The British were hampering them. Some Jewish settlements were in the most isolated and dangerous areas of the country, but the settlers did not intend evacuating, though the British were pressing them to do so. These settlements, meagrely armed, would be hard-pressed to maintain themselves against superior forces. The most serious strain of all was the economic. The Yishuv had ambitious plans for mass immigration and the development of farming, building and export trade in order to double the population in the next few years. The situation would not be eased if the Jews had to become engaged in guerrilla warfare, had their communications cut and a great proportion of their workers taken away for defence purposes.

The Jews of the dispersion had it in their power to determine whether the struggle would be long or short, Comay concluded. Constructive development depended on how quickly and how decisively the struggle could be ended. The Yishuv had faith and confidence. The Jews of Palestine, brought up in a hard school, were tough and resilient. Their spirit could not be broken. Now it was up to the Jews of the dispersion to play their part.

JANUARY 1948 IN PALESTINE

Unofficial war in Palestine grows in intensity. Etzion bloc settlements fifteen kilometres from Jerusalem near Hebron and settlements in the Negev resist Haganah military view that settlers and equipment should be evacuated. Policy of "no budging" fixed once and for all.

Scores of Arabs killed by Stern Group bomb planted at Jaffa clock tower.

Arab Liberation Army, an invasion group from Syria, supplemented by local villagers, in first Arab attack on a Jewish settlement. Kfar Szold, assisted by a British armoured unit, repels the attack.

One thousand strong Arab assault on kibbutz Kfar Etzion repelled with 150 dead. Grievous Jewish toll also.

Postal delivery truck explodes in Jewish Haifa.

Thirty five Palmach soldiers, on way to reinforce Kibbutz Kfar Etzion fight to last man on being trapped in Hebron hill caves.

David Ben Gurion calls Yishuv to unflinching effort and sacrifice.



FEBRUARY 1948

February brought four more emissaries to South Africa, all distinctive people. These were, first, Yoel Palgi, a legendary figure in the Jewish world, his Cape Town wife, the former Phyllis Rabkin, Boris Senior, and towards the end of the month, South African born Captain Colin Gluckman (Gillon), formerly of the Jewish Brigade of World War 2. As leader of the South African Habonim Movement in the 1930s, Gluckman had a host of admirers in the country.

Palgi and Boris Senior, working in the offices of the South African Zionist Federation in Commissioner Street, became close-knit in their mission. Their purpose was clear-cut. Palgi, moving on the larger terrain, scanned lists and interviewed specialists of all kinds. Some came to see him, he sought out others. Boris Senior came for pilots and, if possible, planes for the Air Force the Jews would have to create. The two emissaries brought about a change in emphasis, focusing not on the thousands of young men and women, mainly untrained, clamouring to go, but on the Jewish ex-servicemen of World War 2.

The stormy biographies of the emissaries reflected the turmoil of the period:

Palgi was parachuted by the British into Yugoslavia to work behind the Nazi lines. A son of the Balkans, born in Hungary, he had become a leader of the Zionist Youth and organizer of that country's Habonim movement. Shortly before the outbreak of the war in 1939, he contrived the exodus of a number of Jews out of Hungary to Palestine. Three days after the war began, he himself left. He received training at kibbutz Afikim and thereafter became one of the founders of kibbutz Ma'agan in the Jordan Valley.

In June 1941 he joined a special unit of the British Army, seeing front-line service in the Western Desert.

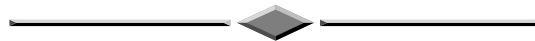
In 1943 he was one of a number of Palestinian Jews dropped behind Nazi lines. Haganah had won the cooperation of British Intelligence for the plan. After three months with the

partisan troops of Marshall Tito, Palgi crossed into Hungary. The Hungarian police caught up with him and he was arrested, imprisoned and tortured. He escaped under the most adventurous circumstances. At large, he organized a Jewish underground resistance group, involving a fantastic rescue scheme. For a time he masqueraded as a member of the Special Nazi Police. In this disguise he entered jails, rounded up Jewish prisoners on the pretext of marching them off to execution and led them to safety. (It was he who brought back to the Yishuv the sad news of the execution in Hungary of the captured Jewish girl parachutist, Hannah Senesh).

When Hungary was liberated by the Russians in 1945, Palgi organized the repatriation of Jews from concentration camps. In June 1946, he returned to Europe to become part of the Haganah underground which organized "illegal" Jewish immigration into Palestine. He worked mainly in the displaced persons' camps.

Also working in the camps at that time was Cape Town's Phyllis Rabkin, a member of the South African Zionist Socialist Movement. Later she joined Kibbutz Ma'agan. The two were married.

In 1947 Phyllis, temporarily released by the kibbutz, worked for the Jewish Agency's offices in Cairo, where she developed connections with the South African Embassy in charge of Minister Plenipotentiary, Major-General F.H. Theron. Sounding him on a South African visa for her husband, Theron, a knowing man, replied: "You are a naughty girl but we'll give it to you."



Boris Senior's young life was equally studded with high drama: He grew up in a Johannesburg home in which the restoration of Palestine to the Jews was a faith and a religion. His father, a shipper, and his mother, were quiet doers of good for Jew and non-Jew. They were shattered by the loss in World War 2 of their SAAF pilot son, Leon in Italy, but for the world they had a brave face.

Boris came out of World War 2 (239 Wing SAAF) with the insignia of an airman who had been shot down and parachuted to safety.

The family's direct involvement with Eretz Israel had begun in 1939 with Leon, then a settler of some months who returned to South Africa to enlist, the RAF in Palestine putting obstacles in his way. It was the intention of the rest of the family to follow. After the war, Boris came with his parents to spy out the land. He had not been a member of any Jewish youth movement, his Zionist education coming from his home. From Palestine he went on to London University to study Economics and there, in Britain, he became involved with fellow student Ezer Weizman in the Irgun underground. He had no particular political sympathies, but he found Irgun "available". Boris and Weizman were drawn into Irgun's activities.

Though Scotland Yard did not know everything, it suspected something - enough to send Senior packing. He returned to his parents' home in Johannesburg, a young man obsessed, carrying within himself the pain of what had happened to his people in Nazi Europe and the pain of the "illegals" turned away from the shores of Palestine. The UN's November 29, 1947 partition decision was the turning point in his life. He immediately boarded the plane to Palestine. At Lydda Airport, waiting for him, was Ezer Weizman who took him to his home. Weizman had joined the local Aero Club and within three days Senior was also a member.

Now he was back in South Africa with a letter from "the General Council of Jewish Aviation", the roof body of Jewish flying activities in Palestine, granting him a general Power of Attorney to purchase aircraft and to recruit airmen and mechanics.

Fate seemed to run to him with an unbelievable opportunity - this provided by a Government sale of fifty Kittyhawk fighter planes at Kimberley airfield. Hiring a Cessna, Senior flew down to Kimberley with Louis Taitz, of Springs, a former SAAF aircraft mechanic who had served in North Africa, Syria and Italy and had handled Spitfires, P-51's and Mustangs. The Kittyhawks stood dispersed in a section of the field. The Jewish scrap dealers, all known to one another, switched their attention from the planes to the two young men. Who were these newcomers to the scrap dealers' scene? Intuitively they guessed - and guessed right. The two had come to buy the planes for the Jews of Palestine.

Senior aged 23 and Taitz, aged 24, studied the Kittyhawks - and what they saw pleased them. The engines had been inhibited, that is to say sealed up and therefore could be presumed to be in potentially good condition. The air frames were sound. Senior had flown Kittyhawks in Italy. The young men called each other's attention to the once-so-familiar particulars of the war days: the South African markings, the camouflage paints, the squadron numbers.

"Excuse me..." The scrap dealers were eager to make a gesture. Would the young men accept the planes as a gift from them. The moment was warm and ripe with implicit Jewish understandings.

It was an exultant couple who flew back to Johannesburg: A fighter force of fifty Kittyhawk P-40's for the as yet unborn state for R600 - R12 a piece. It was past believing. The exultation could not last.

Shipping the planes through Port Elizabeth was an idea dismissed as soon as it was mooted. There was a United Nations embargo on war material to Palestine to which the South African Government was bound. Not that Senior did not have his sly thoughts. Could the planes be taken out inside other aircraft? The twin-engined Bristol Wayfarer had recently come on the market and measuring one of them, Senior assessed that it could take a Kittyhawk with wings and fuselage dismantled. But hard realities dashed this optimism. There was no way of getting past customs and no possibilities of secret loading anywhere considering the equipment and facilities required. And even if this were possible, the Wayfarers would get no further than British Rhodesia before being apprehended; and if Rhodesia provided a miracle, most certainly the stops over Africa would not.



When Cecil Wulfohn returned to the Transvaal, he found Senior at the Zionist Federation offices. The Kittyhawk chapter was closed. Together the two men set about interviewing pilots and other airforce personnel. Among the airmen were Cyril Katz, Naftali (Tuxie) Blau, Leslie Chimes, Elliot Rosenberg, Cyril Steinberg and Arthur Cooper all ex-SAAF. A division of labour was decided upon: Senior and Palgi would recruit the pilots, Wulfohn would organize the purchase of planes.

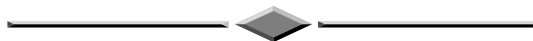


Captain Colin Gluckman, addressing himself mainly to members of the Habonim movement, was a man with a special message under two headings. First, he outlined why Haganah's policy of haflaga (restraint) had broken down. Haganah, he said, had set great store by the "purity of its arms" and had refused to see every Arab as such as an enemy. There was no escaping the truth that Jew and Arab would have to live together and this could only be on the foundation of healthy human relationships. Haganah had hoped that selective action would discourage the Arab masses from following those who incited them. It had not worked out that way. The philosophy went overboard finally when in January, a Palmach relief unit of

thirty five on the way through the Jerusalem hills to Kibbutz Etzion, had been slaughtered, their presence reported to Arab irregulars by an old Arab shepherd.

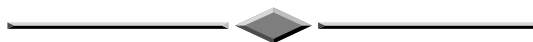
The next part of Gluckman's message was a vivid description of the encounter after the war between the Jewish Brigade (which Churchill allowed in 1944) and the survivors of Hitler's camps. Out of the shadow of death the survivors had come upon the phenomenon of the Jewish soldier, not indiscriminately mixed with others, but fighting under a banner of his own, and last heard of more than 2,000 years ago. The encounter, in its various forms of compassion, aid, rescue and organization, said Gluckman, plumbed depths beyond the range of words. The moral pointed, he stressed the need for men of military age to be ready to serve and continue the work of the brigade.

While he was thus addressing audiences, a strident body, styling itself the Hebrew Legion, suddenly emerged in Johannesburg, couching the call to serve in a way that deeply disturbed the leadership of the South African Jewish community.



No man in South Africa was more dismayed by the disunity of the Yishuv's underground forces than Chief Rabbi Rabinowitz. On February 12, he left Palmietfontein to fly to Palestine to see what healing, if any, he could bring into the situation. "The salvation of the Yishuv in the present emergency which faces it", he said, "depends largely on the unity of the fighting forces... Negotiations for such unity which at one time appeared to offer every prospect of success, have either broken down or seem to be unduly protracted. Various important visitors have arrived here in South Africa from Palestine, each one giving a different version of the reason for the failure to establish such unity. Meanwhile the danger to the very existence of the Yishuv increases, and confusion and uncertainty are growing in the minds of South African Jewry - a confusion which is having a bad effect upon the success of the emergency campaign which every Zionist has pledged to support. I feel it is essential to investigate the position on the spot and it is for this purpose that I am proceeding to Palestine."

The Rabbi stated disarmingly that he had another reason for flying North and this was "to fulfill a number of engagements in Kenya..."



This was the background and setting in which, suddenly, Victor Michelson, an unknown man, emerged, proclaiming the formation of the Hebrew Legion. He placed advertisements in the general press and gave interviews calling on young Jews to enlist for the Legion. The Revisionists certainly had sympathy with some of the sentiments expressed by Michelson, but they could not approve his roof-top flamboyance. They had indeed become the first movement to find farms for the unobtrusive training of their men.

The Zionist Federation, dismayed, believed Michelson could do incalculable harm. It was important that the Government should not be placed in an embarrassing position. News had already found its way into the press that American citizens on their way to Palestine to join Haganah had been stopped by the American authorities and that American citizens living in Palestine and joining Haganah had been asked to surrender their passports.

With Michelson enjoying a splurge of publicity in the general press, the Jewish representative bodies could not maintain silence. The Zionist Federation reacted with a statement disclaiming any responsibility for the Legion and making clear that the Legion was not a recognized communal body. The Legion, however, pressed on with its publicity, at the same time seeking to gain respectability by applying to the Board of Deputies for membership. The

Board reacted, through Mr. S.M. Kuper, K.C., presiding at a meeting of deputies on February 22.

Mr. Kuper disclosed that the honorary officers had asked Mr. Michelson, as chairman of the Legion to see them. Michelson had come along with his vice-chairman, one Bourghstein. Michelson's case was that the Yishuv "was fighting a real war" and it was essential to train personnel all over the world so that they could go and fight in Palestine in due course. As no other communal body appeared to be taking action on these lines, the Hebrew Legion, he said, was entitled to act on behalf of the Jewish people. The Legion also proposed to collect funds for the payment of allowances to dependants while the men were on service in Palestine. Michelson announced his intention of proceeding with his movement with or without the sanction of the Board. The fact was, Mr. Kuper said, the Hebrew Legion did not recognize any authority in the Yishuv and had no contact with any organization there. The opinion of the Board was that the Jewish Agency was the responsible authority, and it was for the Agency to call for whatever action it thought necessary. It was wrong for individuals to flout recognized authority. If there was to be recruitment of personnel for service in Palestine, it had to take place under the auspices of a responsible body. The executive council of the Board felt most emphatically that the Hebrew Legion was an undesirable undertaking.

That night the Hebrew Legion held its first public meeting. The content of the speeches was highly emotional and critical of the South African Jewish leadership¹⁰.

As February came to its end, the Legion was already searching for a farm near Johannesburg where it could train its first recruits. Its success in calling attention to itself could not be minimized. However, it was too maverick an organization and with a leadership too little known to become a rallying point for the essentially conservative South African Jewish community.

FEBRUARY IN PALESTINE

Editorial offices of the Palestine Post in Jerusalem wrecked by explosion of British armoured car parked nearby, loaded with explosives. Two British army deserters and an Arab involved. Casualties and great damage.

Tirat Zvi, a settlement in the Bet She'an Valley repels attack of Kaukji's invasion army.

Fifty Jews killed in their sleep in Ben Yehuda Street, Jerusalem by explosion of planted British armoured car.

At Lake Success, Britain's Creech-Jones denies his country plans to create chaos and disorder in Palestine.

Arabs detonate first electric mine on road leading to Negev settlements, a grave blow to the Yishuv's communications with the south.

Haganah sets in motion "Operation 35", penetrating into various Arab areas to put Arabs on defensive.

British constables and Arab bystanders killed by explosion of dynamite-loaded truck planted by Stern Group's Abraham Cohen in heart of Nablus. Cohen executed.

¹⁰ The editor amongst many others attending –having no Zionist movement background was among the first to enlist in the Hebrew Legion. He knew that his cousin was a leader of Habonim in the town of Benoni and that some neighborhood friends were members of Betar, but at that time had no idea that the Zionist Federation existed.

Chapter 2 – Part 1

British High Commissioner in Palestine publishes Order-in-Council enabling him to repeal, annul, suspend or modify any existing laws at his sole discretion.

British Government declares that as from May 15 it will recognise the UN Commission for Palestine as the legal government.

CHAPTER 2 - PART 2

IMPACT OF THE PARTITION DECISION

MARCH 1948

A scrap of documentation of the early March period: "Hebrew Legion of South Africa in liaison with Hebrew Legion of England and Hebrew Legion, France. You will report 1945 hours on March 4 at Jewish Center, Berea, for training purposes. L. Herbert, Major, Training Officer, Hebrew Legion of South Africa."

The Zionist Federation repeated its disapproval, Bernard Gering using the Jewish press to appeal to all true friends of Zionism "to refrain from giving any kind of assistance to this body".

The second week in March brought into creation a second recruiting organisation, this one with the prestige behind it of Haganah, the underground army of the shadow Israel Government. The development was organized through the annual general meeting of the South African Jewish ex-Service League. In expectation of the showdown that was shaping with the Hebrew Legion, a large gathering of about three hundred ex-servicemen filled the Jewish Guild Hall on March 9.

It was announced at the meeting that "the South African League for Haganah had been formed on the initiative of a number of people who state that in the present hour it is the duty of Jews everywhere to rally to the cause of the Jewish Defence Movement in Palestine". The founders, it was stated, had the authority of Haganah to establish such a body which would be similar to the League for Haganah existing in the United States and other parts of the world. It was stated further that the Friends of Haganah had the blessing of the South African Zionist Federation and the Board of Deputies.

The eloquent speaker of the evening was a former chaplain to the Jewish forces, Major "Simie" Weinstein, whose interests straddled both the Zionist Federation of which he was an important official, and the ex-Service League, of which he was an executive member. He recalled the events already outlined here - the enthusiastic Balfour Park meeting, the call to youth to serve and the Coronation Hall meeting - and disclosed that since that time the offices of the South African Zionist Federation in Commissioner Street had been inundated with young people seeking to serve. In this situation, the Federation had cabled the High Command of Haganah for guidance. The first reply was that South African Jewry's task should be that of raising funds. Soon after came another guideline saying that the following categories of manpower were being sought: pilots, air mechanics, radar experts, telegraphists, armourers, instructors in small arms, artillery men, armoured car drivers and naval men. Haganah also required young people to serve in kibbutzim whose settlers had been called up. "The registration of personnel continues", said Mr. Weinstein. "We want as little noise as possible for reasons which are understandable." He then turned his attention to the Hebrew Legion. It was disturbing, he said, that this body unattached to any responsible organization, should splash advertisements in the press. "We have one authority and one authority only - that of Haganah. It is to the discipline and guidelines of this body that we are required to submit."

Victor Michelson, present at the meeting, argued that he had formed the Legion because the Jewish leaders were "not aware of the needs of the Yishuv". However, he could carry little weight at a gathering that had as its guest speakers Palgi and Captain Gluckman, and whose executive (present on the platform) included Major A.L. Kowarsky, M.B.E., Major D.S. Gonski, M.B.E., his brother, Major J.W. Gonski, Major Weinstein, Captain Leo Lovell and Lieutenant D. Judah. The main resolutions of the meeting, moved by Major Weinstein were:

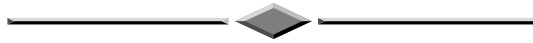
(a) That this meeting of the National Council of the South African Jewish ex-Service League welcomes the formation of the South African League for Haganah and will fully support that organization.

(b) That consequently this meeting of the National Council of the South African Jewish ex-Service League, while recognizing the high motives which prompted men to join the Hebrew Legion, condemns the formation of the Legion, which has no association with any official body in the Yishuv, and appeals to all those who wish to answer the call of the Yishuv to pledge their support for the South African League for the Haganah.

There were four dissentients.

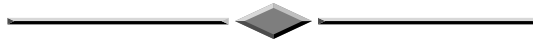
At a Jewish press conference, a week later, Major Gonski said: "The aim of the League is to enroll all volunteers who are prepared to go to Palestine when required after May 15." The call to service was now explicit and open.

The times were to produce the men: in a matter of weeks Leo Kowarsky and Simie Weinstein were the dominating figures of the South African League for Haganah.



In World War 2 Major Kowarsky had commanded an infantry company in the Transvaal Scottish and was later a staff officer to Major General B.F. Armstrong, commander of the Fifth South African Infantry Brigade. He came out of the war with both infantry experience and experience of staff work, and an M.B.E. He was national vice-president of the South African Jewish Ex-Service League and chairman of the Johannesburg branch. He now neglected the factory he had set up on his return from the war and, using the offices of the South African Jewish ex-Service League as his headquarters, planned his recruiting and training organization.

In Simie Weinstein he had an aide eminently fitted for the coordinating role he was to play. Weinstein became national organizer of manpower, straddling, as only he could, the communal concerns of the Zionist Federation, the military concerns of the South African Jewish ex-Service League and the conjuncture of these as they met in the South African League for Haganah.



With the stage set for action, it became necessary for the Zionist Federation to approach General Smuts to acquaint him with the Jewish needs of the hour and to win his cooperation. It did this through a deputation consisting mainly of Jewish Members of Parliament. The essence is contained in a memorandum which Smuts circulated to members of his Cabinet on March 17, the day after the deputation saw him. The deputation consisted of Mr. Gering, Mr. M. Kentridge M.P., Dr. B. Friedman M.P., Mr. Max Sonnenberg M.P. and Mr. Colin Legum. According to the Smuts memo, the deputation asked for permission to send money and food to Israel. It "mentioned" airplanes that could be bought and would require S.A. registration; and sought to know whether a South African ship could carry food to Palestine. Smuts asked his appropriate Ministers to deal with these issues, as well as the issue of an air ambulance, after which he would call the Cabinet together for consultation.

The deputation's account of the interview contains the nuances. Smuts expressed profound concern at what might happen in Palestine unless something was done immediately. There could be a massacre that could horrify the world. He was continuing in this vein when Gering managed to steer the discussion from the politics of the situation to issues of practical help,

mentioning first anti-aircraft guns. Smuts replied vaguely, evading Gering's broad hint. The deputation then asked for aid in regard to the transfer of capital to Palestine and food supplies in a government ship. The Prime Minister's difficulty was that "Britain would have to be asked" about the transfer of the money. South Africa was a member of the sterling block, of which Britain was the manager. ("The idea that we need not refer to her is wrong", said Smuts.)

Smuts, notoriously impatient of detail, stood up at this stage and said he could have been helped had matters been taken further with his Ministers and departments without involving him in minutiae. He ended the interview brooding again "on the provision of adequate international security for the Jews of Palestine in the next two months".

Three days later the Federation sent the Premier a memorandum on the matters that needed his intervention. It sought, among other things, to buy with S.A. currency in South Africa, supplies to the value of £250,000. These included vegetables, maize, dehydrated potatoes, other foodstuffs, blankets, clothes and stretchers.



Michelson had left the ex-Servicemen's meeting unchastened. In ordinary times, his prospects in opposing such recognized authorities as the Zionist Federation (whose hand in the formation of the League for Haganah was clear), the Board of Deputies and the ex-soldiers' body, would have ended there and then. But the times were not ordinary. The daily news from Palestine was that of bloodshed and from Washington and New York were coming disturbing hints of a change of mind about partition and instead, the placing of Palestine under an international trusteeship. Would the powers renege on their promise to the Jews? Against this background, it was not difficult for Michelson to dramatize the arrival in South Africa of a Jewish activist who had been in the news - Lieutenant David de Lange, R.N.V.R., vice-chairman of the Hebrew Legion of England. De Lange addressed several meetings, identifying himself with the cause of the Stern Group, whose leader, Abraham Stern, had been cornered by the British C.I.D. in Palestine in 1942, and shot dead.

Leo Kowarsky did not bother fighting the Hebrew Legion. He set about the enormous task of recruiting, consolidating and training the thousands, hesitant about the Legion, and waiting for the leadership he was able to give. His greatest achievements were the week-end assemblies of thousands on Bacher's Farm and the setting up with his cousin, Cecil Margo, of a Jewish flying school at Palmietfontein.

The Zionist Federation undertook the political fight against the Legion, its most effective sally being a question-and-answer interview between its representatives in Tel Aviv and the official spokesman for Haganah in Palestine.

Question: Is the Haganah in favour of the recruiting efforts of the Hebrew Legion in South Africa or elsewhere?

Answer: No. The Hebrew Legion is a private organization which does not submit itself to national discipline. It has no connection with any recognized authority either in the Yishuv or outside. The leadership of the Hebrew Legion is part of a chain which links Peter Bergsen in America to Weiser in London and Rabbi Korff, in France, all irresponsible. We have records to show they have collected large amounts of money but there has been no accounting for these monies to any authorized Jewish organizations.

Question: The Legion claims that by recruiting now, they will be able to contribute towards the defence of the Yishuv as from May 15th?

Answer: The Haganah High Command has taken into account all the necessary available human and material resources of the Jewish people in planning its overall strategy. We will mobilise them at the right time and through the right channels. Any separate action taken independently of these plans is harmful to a carefully-determined strategy which aims at conserving our resources and using them to the best advantage.

Question: You say then, that the Hebrew Legion's activities are actually prejudicial to the Yishuv's defence?

Answer: Yes. They may even amount to an act of sabotage.

Question: Do you think it is possible for the Hebrew Legion to carry out its plans to train recruits and bring them to Palestine?

Answer: There is no possibility that Hebrew Legion recruits will ever reach the shores of the Jewish State. All the means and channels to bring Jews to Palestine are in the hands of the Haganah as has been shown in the past eight years. Therefore you would do a great service to the young Jews of your country by advising them to keep away from the Hebrew Legion. We appreciate their healthy idealism, but we would be failing in our duty if we did not warn them against disillusionment.

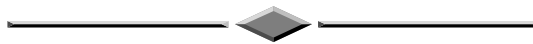
Question: What then is your advice to these young Jews anxious to rally to the defence of the state-to-be?

Answer: To be ready to answer if called upon. The Haganah has already asked certain categories of volunteers to come. With the help of Jewish Agency sources, the South African Zionist Federation was doing everything that was being asked of it with regard to the security of the Yishuv and is opening a register of those anxious to settle in Palestine and prepared for what sacrifices may be necessary for the up building and realization of the Jewish State.

Question: What is Haganah's attitude to non-Jewish volunteers?

Answer: A great number of non-Jews have volunteered to fight in our ranks. We are deeply touched by this noble spirit and their willingness to sacrifice, if necessary, their lives, in order to help repair injustices done for so long to the Jewish people. We feel, however, that the Jewish State should be defended by the Jewish nation itself. My advice to non-Jewish volunteers is to offer their services to the United Nations in the international force to implement UN's decision. Such a force would be a symbol of humanity's conscience and they would be the right people for it.

This answer of Haganah was the beginning of the end of the Hebrew Legion in South Africa.



The third recruiting and training group was the South African wing of the Irgun¹¹ which was later to incorporate the disillusioned Hebrew Legion men. Unlike the League of Haganah and the flamboyant Hebrew Legion, the Irgun wing operated in complete secrecy during its existence of twelve months. Its leader was Raphael Kotlowitz.

Kotlowitz grew up in the sleepy Cape Province town of Darling and in this setting Afrikaans became his language. He had come to South Africa with his parents at the age of seven. After completing junior school in Darling, he went to Cape Town where he attended high school and entered the University of Cape Town as a law student, qualifying in 1939. But it was not law that engaged his mind. The kind of history rolling over the Jewish people carried

¹¹ The Irgun initiated illegal immigration to Palestine, to be followed by the main effort of the Haganah.

him into deep involvement with the Revisionist Party and Betar, its youth group. He became leader of Betar in the Cape and ran financial campaigns for the party. The logic of things brought him in 1946 to Johannesburg where he set up the head office for Betar and took his place in the executive of the Zionist Revisionist Party. The discussions of this executive were related to the conflict in Palestine and more immediately, to the running battle between the Irgun and the British Mandatory Power:

March 1946: Irgun damage twenty two RAF planes at Kastina airfield.

April 1946: Irgun soldier, Dov Gruner, wounded and captured by the British in the wake of successful Irgun raid for arms and ammunition on British police station at Ramat Gan, near Tel Aviv.

July 22: Irgun attack on King David Hotel wing housing British military headquarters, the secretariat, and the civil government, after warning to evacuate. Toll: 80 dead, including number of British officers, alien civilians and 15 Jewish civilians. Sharp condemnation of attack by Haganah, privy to Irgun's plans but angered at casualties.

August 1946: 20,000 British troops, infantry supported by tanks, occupy Tel Aviv. Four-day curfew. Every house and apartment searched. Menachem Begin, leader of Irgun, hides for four days in cupboard of his home and escapes detection. 800 Irgun and Sternists led away to detention, some to camps in Africa.

The month of August 1946 brought Kotlowitz a request which was to take him into Irgun's ranks. It came from the leadership of World Betar, which asked him to visit the Jewish refugee camps in Germany, Italy and Austria to organize the remnants of Jewish youth and win them for Zionist Revisionism. Kotlowitz stayed three months in the camps, an observer of the devastation brought on European Jewry and the hopelessness of the situation of the refugees in the face of Palestine's locked gates. While Kotlowitz was in the camps, the following events took place:

October 1946: Irgun blow up British Embassy in Rome.

December 26: Two 17-year old Irgun fighters in Palestine, Katz and Kimche, sentenced by British military court to 15 years imprisonment and 18 lashes for carrying arms.

Irgun warning to General Barker, O.C. British forces in Palestine: "If you whip our men, we'll whip yours."

December 27: Barker confirms whipping sentences. Kimche whipped in Jerusalem Central Prison.

December 29: Irgun snatch British major and three N.C.O.'s give them 18 lashes each. New Irgun warning: "If the oppressors dare in future to abuse the bodies and the human and national honour of Jewish youths, we shall no longer reply with the whip, but with fire."

Begin: "Katz was not whipped, nor was any Jew whipped again by the British in Palestine."

On January 2, 1947, Kotlowitz set foot in Palestine. On that day the British military court sentenced Dov Gruner to death. In the succeeding days Kotlowitz made contact with Begin who asked him to establish an Irgun wing in South Africa and to take command of it. Kotlowitz remained in Eretz Israel for four months, a near witness to the following events:

January 25, 1947: General Barker confirms death sentence on Dov Gruner. Date of hanging set for January 28.

Irgun snatch Major Collins, a British Intelligence officer.

January 28: Irgun snatch Judge Ralph Windham from his Tel Aviv court .

January 28 (evening): General Barker postpones "indefinitely" hanging of Dov Gruner.

Jewish Agency pressures Irgun to release held Britons. Irgun rejects Agency's reasoning, but on merits of its own considerations, releases the two men.

February 1947: Commons debate on events in Palestine. Churchill, Opposition leader, utters words of mixed value: "We demand the evacuation from Palestine of the British forces... Hand back the Palestine Mandate to the United Nations if the United States refuses to share in responsibility for governing... I hate this quarrel with the Jews. I hate their methods of outrage. But if you are engaged in the matter, at least bear yourselves like men." Churchill dismissed as "excuse" the Government's explanation that an appeal to the Privy Council had delayed the hanging of Gruner. He said: "The Jewish Agency has been brought into the matter, but the condemned man himself has refused to sign any appeal. The fortitude of the man, criminal though he is, should not escape the notice of the House... In face of the terrorist threat, the British Government has not found the strength to implement the process of law..."

Thus Churchill, as the Irgun read him: "Hang Gruner before British prestige suffers another blow." As most Jews saw it, tragic counsel.

February 13, 1947: General Barker secretly leaves Palestine. His last official act: Confirmation of death sentence on three Irgun men, Yechiel Drezner (born Dov Rosenbaum), Mordechai Alkoshi and Eliezer Kashani.

Irgun imposes death sentence on Barker.

February 1947: General McMillan, the new Commander in Chief, heralds his command with assurance that execution of the three sentenced men will not be carried out before Dov Gruner's appeal is decided by the Privy Council. (This same McMillan required that British announcements should not refer to terrorists but to "thugs" and "murderers").

March 1, 1947: Irgun challenge martial law threat. Sixteen operations carried out, including frontal assault on British Officers' Club at Goldschmidt House in the centre of Jerusalem. (Nine killed and many wounded), four army camps attacked by mortar and machine gun fire.

Martial law imposed on area of Tel Aviv, Ramat Gan and Petach Tikva and part of Jerusalem. No movement allowed out of zones.

The following fortnight: Sixty-eight Irgun and Stern group operations inside and outside the martial law zone.

March 16: Martial law lifted.

Churchill in the Commons: "100,000 Englishmen are being kept away from their homes and their work for a senseless squalid war with the Jews. We are getting ourselves hated and mocked by the world at a cost of millions."

End of March: Dov Gruner joined in death cell of Jerusalem Central Prison by Drezner, Alkoshi and Kashani.

Moshe Barazani , member of the Stern group, sentenced to death.

At the beginning of April 1947, Kotlowitz left Palestine by sea for Paris and London. Palestine was on the front pages of the European and British press.

April 14: Dov Gruner, Drezner, Alkoshi and Kashani transferred from Jerusalem death cell to Gallows Prison, Acre fortress.

April 15: Strict curfew imposed throughout country. Hundreds of thousands confined to their homes.

April 17: Morning news item: Gruner, Drezner, Alkoshi and Kashani executed by hanging.

Begin in his book, Revolt: "The Irgun searched roads and streets in towns for British officers. It was our duty to pay the hangman in his own coin. We did not succeed... The British left their camps only in convoys escorted by tanks. "

April 25 fixed as day for execution of Feinstein (Irgun) and Barazani (Stern group). With grenade smuggled into their cell, they embrace each other with the grenade squeezed between their bodies, release the pin, blow themselves up and cheat the gallows.

With a now-passionate identification with Irgun, Kotlowitz went to London where he did some work for the underground there.

The news of May month:

May 4: Irgun attack "impregnable" Crusader fortress of Acre to free prisoners. Successful operation but grievous losses in withdrawal.

Captured Irgunites, Haviv, Naker and Weiss, brought to trial before military court.

During the month: Irgun scours streets for British officers as hostages to counter death sentences. In vain. Take two British policemen at Ramat Gan swimming pool. Haganah, in continuing conflict with Irgun over methods and political philosophy, cooperate with British in search for policemen, whose place of detention is discovered. Policemen freed.

Kotlowitz received "visitors" from Scotland Yard when he boarded the Dominion Monarch in June. The King and Queen were at that time visiting South Africa and Kotlowitz had "become of interest" to the Yard. The detectives asked him many questions, one whether he was against the British in Palestine. Indeed he was, Kotlowitz said, and offered the officer copies of his speeches. Diary of the period:

June 16: Haviv, Naker and Weiss sentenced to death.

Same day: UN Special Committee of Inquiry arrives in Palestine.

Succeeding days: Irgun snatches two agents of British Intelligence, sergeants in Netanya.

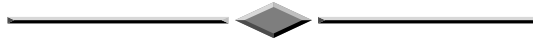
Martial law imposed on Netanya. Haganah cooperate with British in search for the missing sergeants.

Irgun seeks intervention of UN Special Committee on behalf of condemned Irgun fighters.

Back home at the end of June 1947, Kotlowitz immediately began the establishment of Irgun in South Africa on the cell system. The recruits came mainly from Betar. Each cell consisted of five young people. Members took oaths of fidelity and secrecy.

July 23, 1947: British hang Haviv, Naker and Weiss.

July 24: Irgun hangs the two sergeants. Begin: "Gallows against gallows."



Three particular activities invite attention. One was in a home in Orange Grove, the second in a home in Oaklands and the third was a coding and decoding unit. Duplicating machines were used for dissemination of information and propaganda received from Irgun in Israel. Much of it was political, restating Irgun's political beliefs and its attitude in the evolving situation. The material was sent to Members of Parliament, newspaper editors and other leaders of opinion. A small cell including Morris Egdes and Shulamith Becker (today Harris) was responsible for the coding and decoding of the propaganda and of messages.

Meanwhile, something more dramatic than the dissemination of propaganda was under way. In the British detention camp of Gil-Gil in Kenya were a number of Irgun and Stern group detainees. Six, including Yacov Meridor, Irgun's second in command were planning an escape and needed a stand-by airplane to spirit them out of the country once they had tunneled their way to freedom. The provision and planning of this required Kotlowitz's aid. The intermediary between Johannesburg and the detainees was Chief Rabbi L.I. Rabinowitz. It happened thus:

The rabbi, no believer in "havlaga",¹² identified himself with the Revisionist Party. On the day he opened his newspaper to read of the transfer of the underground fighters from the detention camp in British Eritrea to Gil-Gil, he had telephoned Harry Hurwitz, general secretary of the Zionist Revisionist Party in South Africa, to say that "just as in Zionist matters the South African Zionist Federation was responsible for all Zionist activities south of the equator, so the Zionist Revisionist Party was responsible for all Etzel (Irgun and Stern) men in the same area.

Kotlowitz and the rabbi were soon locked in earnest discussion. Early in 1947 Rabbi Rabinowitz, as already outlined, visited the detainees in their camp while on his way to Palestine and also discussed their situation with the responsible minister, Mr. Foster Sutton. The rabbi's role was twofold: An open role as a rabbi to a detained congregation and a secret role as an Irgun volunteer. He was not formally a member of Irgun but had placed himself without reservation at Irgun's disposal. The effect of his vigorous personality was to raise the morale of the exiles. He pledged to do everything in his power to obtain a promise from the High Commissioner of Palestine, General Cunningham, whom he knew personally, to return them to Eretz Israel.

On his return from Palestine, Rabbi Rabinowitz visited the camp again. The day was March 18. This time the rabbi was dispirited. Both his missions had failed. He had failed to achieve the return of the exiles despite Britain's announced intention to quit Palestine and had not succeeded in his effort to bridge the gap between the Irgun and Haganah. Yacov Meridor, leader of the detainees, and the rabbi were closeted together for some time. Meridor had been arrested in his home in Ra'anana near Tel Aviv at the beginning of 1945, his whereabouts disclosed to the British C.I.D. by an informer. Without conviction or trial he was flown to Cairo where he was detained for three months. Thereafter he was to see the inside of several British detention camps in North Africa, from all of which he escaped. But he was always recaptured. A man of indomitable courage, keen observation, great resourcefulness and unyielding spirit, he now told Rabbi Rabinowitz that he (and five others) were planning another attempt to escape and asked for the rabbi's blessing. This the rabbi gave from his heart.

The message Rabbi Rabinowitz brought back with him to South Africa set Kotlowitz in search of a pilot to fly the escapees to the Congo. Kotlowitz approached Boris Senior, who replied that he was a member of Irgun but was in South Africa for Haganah also - "If you want me to do it, I'll do it," he offered. Kotlowitz absolved Senior if he would find another pilot. Senior

¹² Havlaga - literally "restraint", a policy urged by the Jewish Agency.

brought him World War 2 pilot, Bernard Woolf, of Johannesburg, who asked that another pilot accompany him. Gerald Shneer was one of Irgun's cell members and these two men were briefed for the operation.

The Irgun bought a plane and sent Woolf and Shneer to the Karoo to perfect their landings and take off. It was a dismayed Kotlowitz who read in the Rand Daily Mail one morning that on the previous evening a plane had crashed in the Karoo with the two occupants (their names incorrectly spelt) miraculously escaping with their lives. The aviation authorities began enquiries. The take-off had not been registered.

Kotlowitz adjusted to the new situation. March 27, the day set for the camp break, was near and no other Irgun pilot with a visa was available. He sent a secret message to Meridor. The plan was changed as follows: Bernard Woolf would fly to the Congo on a routine commercial flight, hire a car, meet the escapees on the highway near the camp and speed them to the Congo border. Irgun would also send Dr. Isaac Kaplan, of Johannesburg,¹³ to link up with Irgun's agent in the Congo. The duty of these two would be to meet the escapees and Woolf at the Uganda-Congo frontier post of Rochuro and secure flight tickets and other documents. The end of March came with the planning of the escape still continuing.



The Irgun led the way in establishing training centres in South Africa. The first in the Transvaal was on a farm near Witbank and the second in Rivonia, about ten miles outside Johannesburg, on an estate belonging to Syd Seidman, brother of Otto Seidman, a leading member of the Zionist Revisionist Party. The Rivonia camp was for Sunday gatherings, the Witbank farm for full weekends. At the latter there was target shooting, commando training and grenade throwing, under the instruction of high-ranking Jewish officers of World War 2.



Cecil Wulfsohn's first assignment was to obtain an ambulance aircraft. Sir Ernest Oppenheimer, approached by Yoel Palgi, was not interested, and the donor became Mary Segal, of Cape Town. Through friends at the De Haviland Corporation, Wulfsohn learned of a Rapide, YPYCP, available from Central African Airways. He flew it down from Rhodesia to Johannesburg in March 1948 and had it equipped for the Magen David Adom, the Yishuv's "Red Cross". At the same time, he and Senior mustered three Fairchild's and bought two new Bonanzas. A few days later Wulfsohn flew to Port Elizabeth to pick up an Anson, ZSBHD.

The big political news of the month was the retreat of the United States from its support of the partition resolution and its advocacy instead of a Trusteeship for Palestine. South African Jewry reacted sharply through its two main bodies, the Zionist Federation and the Board of Deputies.

The Zionist Federation:

"The United States has surrendered to threats of intimidation and force, thus giving direct encouragement to aggression and resistance to the will of the United Nations.

It should be clearly understood that any reversal of the United Nations' decision will strike a blow not only against the Jewish State, but will constitute an attack on world peace. It is not only the Jewish people who are affected by the ability of the United Nations to stand by its decision and implement it. The abandonment of partition is the abandonment of a carefully thought out plan, fully investigated and thoroughly discussed. None of the facts held relevant to the decision that caused the General Assembly to declare for partition on November 29, 1947, has been altered. Throughout the General Assembly's discussions, the Arab delegates

¹³ A the time of writing head of the Plastic Surgery Department in Beilinson Hospital, Israel .

repeatedly stated that partition could only be imposed by force. Nevertheless, the decision was taken, with a clear intention of facing the consequences... The latest reversal of policy adds one more incident to the long experience of the Jewish people in pledges given and pledges broken. When the United Nations took its decision on partition, the leaders of the Zionist Movement hoped that it would assist in ensuring the Jewish effort to maintain security and create the machinery of government. Instead, by the failure to act against the aggressors and the simultaneous refusal to defend either the Jewish community or to enable it to defend itself, all the events that have happened since the UN decision was taken, have served to weaken, and not to strengthen the security position in Palestine.

The South African Jewish community, while expressing its bitter and profound resentment over the latest decision of the United States, is determined to continue to give all possible aid and support to those who are struggling to establish a Jewish state, and will not be deterred in these efforts to fulfill the legitimate aspirations of the Jewish nation."

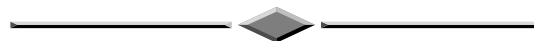
The Board of Deputies statement echoed these views in different language, making the following further points:

The conclusion seems inescapable that the American action has been determined not by the intrinsic merits of the Palestine problem, but by the maneuverings of international power politics... We call upon men of goodwill everywhere to exert themselves to prevent another Munich, another betrayal of international good faith.

Smuts, however, did not share the outlook of the Jewish bodies. Dread of a massacre of the Jews of Palestine filled him. He saw the trusteeship plan as a cushion against this. (Even with his keen insight he failed to appreciate that the days of massacring Jews were over). In a private letter to a Jewish leader he said:

"I do not assume that partition is in immediate danger as American Trusteeship proposal appears intended as interim response to prevent terrible situation which may arise in Palestine immediately on termination of British Mandate. I myself feel terribly concerned over possibilities of this situation. Something may happen in that vacuum of public authority after British withdrawal and before new regime is in order, which may shock the conscience of mankind and even precipitate a grave international crisis. Britain herself is deeply involved in difficulties of her own and under the circumstances, an appeal to UN which sponsored partition is not unreasonable. I myself see no alternative to partition, but nobody wishes it to be achieved through massacre and international complications..."

Ben Gurion and Jews everywhere had given the reply to trusteeship. They were ready to fight to the death for their State.



MARCH IN PALESTINE

Haganah issues order henceforth to resist British attempts to search men and position or seize arms. This follows the disarming of Jewish workers in the Hayotzek factory by British soldiers and their abandonment to Arab irregulars. Eight Jews massacred.

A Jew in the Galilee writes to a friend in America: "It is almost unbelievable how hard the British work to make things difficult for us. The Arabs are very frightened of close combat and therefore keep well away and snipe at us. They have had some difficulty in hitting our vehicles, so the new British order which comes into effect on March 15 is that we must make a white border 15 cm broad all around our vehicles to show where the armour finishes..."

Thirteen Jews, all in the civilian wing of the Jewish Agency, die in explosion of Arab-planted car containing quarter of a ton of TNT.

Desperate battle of the roads all month. Arabs in ascendance.

Haganah ambushes Beirut convoy of arms and ammunition destined for Haifa. Diary lament of Arab Haifa-ite: "End for us in sight".

Jewish armoured car from Jerusalem to Atarot on road to Valley of Jezreel, hits Arab mine. Fourteen killed.

Sustained Arab harassment of convoys to and from Jerusalem, mainly between Roman fort of Kastel and Bab-El-Wad (Hebrew Sha'ar Hagai). Section filling up with more and more burnt-out Jewish armoured cars.

Arabs win control of the coastal highway to the south.
Two Austers of the Air Service¹⁴ only link with Negev settlements.

Jerusalem cut off from coastal plain, short of food, arms and ammunition.

Convoy to Yechiam settlement in western Galilee ambushed, with severe Jewish losses.

Sixteen Haganah soldiers killed near Atarot. Arabs parade captured armoured cars through streets of Bethlehem.

Anglo Trans-Jordan Mutual Defence Treaty signed in Amman.

Big Five call on Arabs and Jews to agree to a truce.

U.S. drops bombshell, declaring itself no longer in favor of partition plan. President Truman modifies this, saying while still favoring partition, U.S. considers trusteeship necessary in Palestine as temporary expedient, Ben Gurion's reply: "We shall not agree to any kind of trusteeship, whether permanent or temporary. We shall no longer submit to any kind of foreign domination whatever. We insist on termination of British rule... The Jewish State exists and will continue to exist because we defend it. We will find a way to mutual understanding with the Arab people."

From a letter written on March 12, from northern Galilee by the first volunteer doctor, Dr. Leo A. Bornstein, of Jersey City, New Jersey: "it is a great strain on our manpower to have the same men who plough the fields fight the battles... no previous army experience compares with this. The only comparisons I can make is with the first settlers in America who were continually attacked by the Indians, who were supplied with guns by the French. However, in those days a wooden fence was security enough, but now we have to protect ourselves against the most modern British guns".

"The British Command has just informed us that because of the barbarous act of defending ourselves, we shall be under complete curfew for seven days. This curfew applies to the whole Galilee and, of course, it pertains to Jews only - another aid to the Arabs since they will be able to transport their arms without any hindrance on our part. The Command also informed us that they will be carrying 'goods' in British vehicles to the Arab villages and if one of these vehicles is mined or fired upon, we shall be held responsible and the curfew will be extended for a longer period. Of course, our running short of goods does not matter."

"Our supplies are very meager. If you saw the conditions under which I have to operate, you would be absolutely shocked. They are as primitive as can be. I continually say that I shall go

¹⁴ The pre-state Haganah Air Service, precursor to the Israel Air Force

Chapter 2 – Part 2

to Tel Aviv and demand more help, and if they tell me that they cannot supply it, I shall not return. But in my heart I know I shall not desert these boys even if I have to use canvas as bandages, nails as needles and a hammer as an anaesthetic. I feel proud to be one of them and I only hope that God gives me the courage and strength to hold out and not collapse under the strain. This army of ours is without uniform, without arms and without medals, but, in spite of all the discomforts and dangers, I would not change all this for Buckingham Palace in England or any other mansion in the diaspora..."

Illegal immigrant ship, Yechiam, arrives with 750 displaced persons from Europe. British deport them to Cyprus.

Fresh fighting on Jaffa-Tel Aviv border.

Renewed failure to reach Haganah-Irgun-Stern group agreement for unified command and co-ordination of action.

Haganah forms an artillery nucleus without an artillery piece, purchasing missions active abroad. Palestine Liquidation Bill passes in House of Commons. Mandatory Government announces suspension of all postal services by April 15th.

Total Jewish dead from November 30 to end of March: 1,200. British begin evacuating.

CHAPTER 2 - PART 3

APRIL 1948

Early in the month, Mr. Bernard Gering publicly announced to a mass meeting of Johannesburg Jewry that the Federation had approached the Government on the problem of "keeping contact with our brethren in the Yishuv. The Government have shown us sympathy and understanding and we are planning to charter planes to replace the postal services suspended by the Mandatory power. We shall send clothing and food and we shall do everything in our power to help the Yishuv establish a Jewish State."

In major key was a "revolt" of organized Zionist youth, stung by the recruiting emphasis on ex-servicemen. Close to the event was Israel Dunsky, treasurer of the Federation:

The Zionist youth felt touched in their honour and demanded that some of their numbers be sent. They had been too young to serve in World War 2. This, they said, should not be used against them. It would be a blot on their records if they were not sent. Urgent meetings were held. Eventually we reached a compromise: a percentage of Zionist youth would go after some preliminary training. Others would go to settlements of their choice.

Thus came about the creation of Bacher's training farm, with Leo Kowarsky as the key figure. His report:

"We soon had 5,000 men under training - it was the maximum we had at a given moment. We could have had more, but the operation had to be controlled in the light of many considerations. Of these 5,000 a considerable number were youth of the Zionist Movement. In the Transvaal, the arena was the farm of Mr. K. Bacher, father of the later South African cricket captain, Ali Bacher. The farm was situated on the Main Reef Road on the way to Krugersdorp."

The stage was set and Bacher's Farm, lying in a hollow and surrounded by trees, gathered to its grassy acres an initial 1,000 Sunday volunteers, with the numbers to rise in the immediate months following. Of these, ten to fifteen percent were girls, placed under charge of Molly Fisch, wife of Jack Fisch. Some were strangers to war and were offering their services as nurses. There were also those who had served as meteorologists, in radar, coastal batteries and other coastal services.

The South African League for Haganah gave the Police no occasion for interference. Training weapons were out. The only weapons were small arms for instruction in assembling and disassembling. Shooting was forbidden. There was basic infantry training given by such men as Morris Kleinman, who had been regimental sergeant major with the Transvaal Scottish, and World War 2 instructor, Alec Cooper. The organizational arrangements were in the hands of Phil Kaye, Transvaal leader of the League for Haganah. After parade, the commander would usually say, "Thank you", and from this came the catch phrase of Bacher's farm: "Don't thank us, send us."

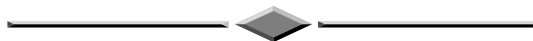
The young people responded well to the instruction and Kowarsky would have been prepared to take the majority into action after two or three months. The training was from early morning to afternoon. Bacher made overnight accommodation for those from distant places. He was somewhat taken aback by the dimensions of the enterprise that grew under his feet, but uttered not a word of demur.

Gerald Gordon, Bertie Stern and Sergeant Major Lewis did the job at Wemershoek in the Cape that Kowarsky did in Johannesburg and Kowarsky rejoiced in their thoroughness. Leo Lovell, of Benoni, later Minister of Finance in Swaziland, was in charge of the East Rand. Kowarsky also initiated a scheme to train pilots. He and his cousin, Cecil Margo, the most

distinguished Jewish airman in the South African Air Force in World War 2, were later to set up an air school at Germiston.

Bacher's farm had its extensions in Johannesburg itself. First there were Haganah League headquarters in Shakespeare House, Commissioner Street. Molly Fisch recalls a time when staff could not cope with the growing stream of volunteers. A regular visitor, almost every two days, was an Afrikaans policeman named van der Merwe (could it be other than a van der Merwe?) who sought acceptance in vain. Then there were lecture centres, one in Doornfontein, another in Rosettenville, a third in Berea and several others. Lectures were two nights a week on military subjects and security; and finally, of great value, was target shooting at a rifle range on the East Rand which came about from the luck that a Jewish range officer of the South African Civilian Defence agreed to co-operate with the Haganah League. Jack Goldberg, of Germiston, brought Bacher farm volunteers up to standard.

Dr. Wilfred Kark examined the volunteers at Coronation Hall before their departure.

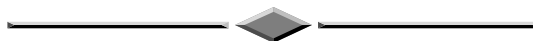


Within a matter of days the airlift of the men to the Promised Land (by regular commercial flights) would begin. The airlift was a masterpiece of organization by committees within the Zionist Federation and the League for Haganah, working co-operatively. The Federation's main committees were Manpower, Supply and Dispatch, the key figures David Dunsky, Simie Weinstein, Philip Zuckerman and Nat Lee.

Basil Herman left university to work full-time, unpaid, as the Federation- Haganah link. His would be the task - from his home - of briefing departing groups.

The airport at Palmietfontein was the final symbolical extension of Bacher's Farm. Here took place the last mime of the blind eye. Immigration and customs officials assumed poker faces and let the groups through, only now and then tossing off remarks to indicate that they knew. Occasionally real problems were encountered.

Implicit in official acquiescence was the stern demand for discretion. Yet how could a bombsight, mounted on a large metal chassis (urgently requested by Israel) be transferred "discreetly" to the plane on the tarmac? Members of the departing group of that particular evening stripped the sight down to its main components, putting them in suitcases and in packets. Still left was the huge piece of metal, the base on which everything fitted. A young man named Sokolowsky, usually called Socky, working then for a travel agency, did the sensible thing: he thrust the paper-wrapped load under his arm, walked through customs and deposited it in the aircraft.

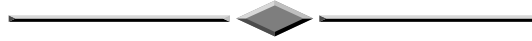


Bernard Woolf, arriving in Kenya, allowed himself a brief leisure before the day of the planned escape from Gil-Gil - a Sunday. That night, at the time the escapees would be expected to emerge from their tunnel, Woolf was due to meet them on the main highway at a bend near a ruined farm clearly visible from the roof of the camp barracks. Woolf would stop his car, lift up the bonnet (seemingly on a repair) and then switch on a red flash light.

On Sunday morning Woolf checked out of his hotel, had his suitcases loaded into the car and drove to Nakuru, not far from the camp, attending the annual horse races there. He found himself next to the detention camp officers, Colonel Rice, commandant of the camp, and his deputy, Clarke. They fell into conversation. Two women were with the officers. One spoke about the dangers that would face women of the neighbourhood if "the Palestine terrorists"

were to escape. The officers laughed this away and, indeed, expressed opinions on the detainees bordering on admiration.

The escape plan succeeded. Everything went off as planned and at 10.30 p.m. Woolf had Meridor and his companions loaded in his car and was speeding to Kampala. Thirty-six hours later the men reached Rochuro, on the Uganda-Congo border. There, according to plan, they were met by Dr. Isaac Kaplan and Irgun's agent in the Congo, who shepherded them to Leopoldville. A week after the break, April 4, the men were walking freely in the streets of Paris. On April 15, the Government of Kenya announced the escape. Dummies and effective cover-up work in the camp by the remaining detainees, had worked splendidly.



The friction between Haganah and the Irgun in the Yishuv reproduced itself sharply on the South African scene in this month. On April 4, Mr. Joel Pincus, chairman of the South African Zionist Revisionist Party, announced the launching of a "state campaign" for the Irgun. The Zionist Federation saw this as a breach of an undertaking given by the Revisionists at the last Zionist conference not to run a separate campaign. Nevertheless, the Irgun drive went on, gaining impetus from a visit by Mr. Samuel Katz, a former South African, then a member of the Irgun high command in Palestine.

Thus, within the community, were three recruiting organizations and three fund-raising drives. The factionalisms were too deep for compromise. The leadership of the Irgun, consisting of Kotlowitz, Joel Pincus, Julius Kaplan, an engineer, Abram Sandler and Otto Seidman, played around with big ideas. In Lourenco Marques they negotiated to buy a ship and 10,000 rifles. It was intended to send men, arms and a ship to Palestine at the appropriate time. Nothing came of this.

In the early months of 1948 one of Kotlowitz's main difficulties was to contain the impatience of his volunteers. He had about 400, some 300 in Johannesburg, seventy in Cape Town and others scattered. All had committed themselves by oath to Irgun and were straining at the leash to go. But Kotlowitz was under orders to hold back.

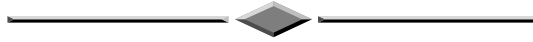
There is on record only one case of the police stopping training of volunteers. This was on the Joshua Tobias farm, Elandsvlei near Kalabaskraal, where thirty Irgun volunteers were given quarters some distance from the main house. The week-end training was in unarmed combat, judo and rifle practice. The police confiscated the rifles, kept the men under surveillance for the night, then released them next morning on bail. Nothing more was heard of the matter, due to the intervention of the oldest son, Felix [Boykie] Tobias, who was on friendly terms with the local policemen.

The men thereupon switched their training to a mountain area on Dorfmann's farm near Hout Bay. The training here was in knives, physical culture and judo, the instructor Leslie Marcus of Cape Town. On occasion Kotlowitz would come down to this and other camps in the Cape and speak to the men about his experiences in the displaced persons' camp in Europe and about the escape of the Irgunists from Gil-Gil.

In the middle of April there came to South Africa a tall, thin man, of sensitive face and blunt speech, who told the Jewish community what it already knew but what it was, nevertheless, grateful to hear from his lips. What he said was backing for everything the community was prepared to do for the Jewish State. Dr. James G. Macdonald, former League of Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, destined later to be the first U.S. Ambassador to the State of Israel, warned the Jews of South Africa that political strategy - not noble humanitarian motives - conditioned big power policies on Palestine.

"No Government will do anything for the Jews if it can help it. I have been mixed up with the Jewish problem since 1933 and I could give you almost incredible instances of the discrepancy between political promises and government actions in regard to Jews."

Dr. Macdonald carried his message further in an address to a crowded mass meeting of Johannesburg Jewry at the Ginsberg Hall, Doornfontein: "The warning not to place faith in princes as written in the Old Testament has come true today. Statesmen are generous in words to the Jews but always negligent and cowardly in action. The Jewish people stands alone in the face of Arab opposition, aided and abetted by some of the greatest powers in the world. The eternal illusion of the Jewish people has been trust in other peoples. This will not stand you. Only you, the Jewish people, can save the Jewish people..."



"If somebody were to approach you to go to Palestine, would you go?" Ronnie Chaskelson asked Max Barlin. The prospect seemed remote, but Barlin answered "Yes". The two, friends at the University of the Witwatersrand, were ex-S.A. Army.

"Well, said Chaskelson, we have been approached".

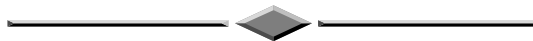
Simie Weinstein introduced them to Yoel Palgi. "Have you any information on Radar?" Palgi asked.

In World War 2 the Special Signals Services, South Africa's radar unit, had designed and constructed its own radar equipment which it named the JB (after Johannesburg). Barlin, Jack Segall and Reuben Joffe who had attended courses on the JB, which had since become obsolete, still had notes and drawings. They were no longer secret.

The notes were typed at the Federation and the drawings reproduced. A 007 touch was introduced when Barlin was given a suitcase with the material sewn in the bottom.

Jack Segall ex radar officer in the South African army had been approached by his cousin Jack Fleisch who told him that fighting was expected in Palestine and that trained personnel were desperately needed. Segall volunteered and before leaving was entrusted with a substantial cheque to be handed to the treasurer of the Jewish Agency. As he would be travelling ostensibly as an impecunious student, the cheque was wrapped in a condom and concealed in a tube of toothpaste.

Barlin and Segall were in the first group sent from South Africa, Chaskelson in the second. These groups were to be followed by scores of others, leaving throughout the rest of the year. History requires the names of the first group: Elliot Rosenberg a pilot, Max Barlin, Jack Segall, the husband and wife team of Eddie and Masha Rosenberg, Norman Skolnik and Hillel Daleski. The group flew out of Palmietfontein on April 20.



APRIL IN PALESTINE

First airlift of arms from Czechoslovakia arrives the night of April 1st at a secret air-strip near Beit Daras in the south, and first secret shipment on following day. British evacuating steadily. Haganah sets mobilization target of 30,000 by May 1.

Jerusalem tastes bitter days, dwindling food stocks; the city is without water or electricity. Sources of both in Arab hands.

Haganah mobilizes 1,500 men for major operation to open road to Jerusalem. Name of operation: "Nachshon", legendary Hebrew who first ventured into the parting waters of the Red Sea to lead the exodus from Egypt.

Operation Nachshon begins April 6. Arab promontory village of Kastel in Jerusalem Corridor captured. First convoy in two weeks reaches Jerusalem. Arabs recapture Kastel, but demoralized by death of leader, Abdel Kader-el-Husseini, abandon it. Two more convoys get through.

Units of Irgun and Stern Group captured village of Deir Yassin, April 7, massacre scores of villagers, take rest prisoner and parade them through streets of Jerusalem. Jewish Agency and Haganah High Command express disgust. Showdown between Haganah and dissident armies looms.

70 Jews, majority leading professors and doctors, killed in 7 - hour Arab attack on convoy to Hadassah hospital and Hebrew University (sited on Mount Scopus). British Commander stands by, takes no action. His comment: "Appropriate reply for Deir Yassin".

Arab seize Augusta Victoria Hospital on Mount Scopus, Jewish attempt to recapture it fails.

Largest Jewish convoy (350 vehicles) sets out for Jerusalem (April 20). Arabs regain control of road, fierce encounters. Convoy in confusion. Jerusalem cut off again, Arab blockade renewed.

33 Palmach men die in Arab ambush near Nebi Samuel. Haganah, in Jerusalem, take whole area between Kiryat Shmuel and Saint Simon, Katamon, Greek Quarter and German Colony. British Commander orders Haganah to halt advance and accept armistice in city.

Kaukji, Commander of Arab liberation army, determined to be first Arab leader to capture a Jewish settlement, attacks Mishmar Ha'Emek in foothills of Mount Ephraim. Repelled after four days fighting.

Arab population of Tiberias on shores of Sea of Galilee evacuated, enter Trans-Jordan (April 18). Haganah Commander declares "autonomous Jewish regime in this city".

Haganah gains control of entire Haifa in 24-hour campaign.

Eve of battle for Safed.

Irgun daringly attack Jaffa (April 25), find headway difficult, renew contact with Haganah which assumes command through Irgun position commanders. Irgun's spearhead reaches beach, cuts off Manshiya from rest of Jaffa. Ernest Bevin instructs British Army still left in Palestine to prevent Jewish capture of Jaffa at all cost. British shell Bat Yam, outpost village of Tel Aviv. Haganah captures Tel Litwinsky camp; Arabs take over Lydda airport.

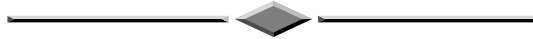
Political: Security Council calls for immediate cease-fire and Special General Assembly meeting; U.S. lays Trusteeship plan before Security Council, which plan is rejected by the Zionist General Council. British intercept another illegal immigration ship, 800 sent to Cyprus.



Yoel Palgi became involved in, what till then was alien to him, fund-raising. The slogan was - "Today your money, tomorrow your sons". In his daily routine he met outstanding men who, of their own accord, sought him out. Syd Cohen, "the flying Rabbi of World War 2", so-called from the beard he affected, was one of them. Cecil Margo became Palgi's aviation adviser. A major problem was that of the transfer of monies. The obvious answer was to turn the money

into commodities and the development on this was an all-purpose activity including an attempt to purchase war materials mainly heavy guns and arms. Smuts stopped it.

One day a Cape Town Jew arrived to say that two submarines were available and did Palgi want them. One sub was in Cape Town, the other in Mombasa. Bernard Gering paled when Palgi told him he had cabled Ben Gurion. "Gosh", Gering said, "what more?" Then his face lit up and he said: "Let us get them;" Clearly the wine was making heads a little giddy. How would any submarine get across? Where were the Jews to get a crew? The sellers fixed a deadline. After that, they said, the submarines would be scrapped. Palgi went to inspect one of them, still waiting for an answer to cables now becoming desperate. It came after the deadline, on May 15, the day of the Arab invasion. "Want them", said Ben Gurion. It was too late. Anyway, the scheme was hare-brained.



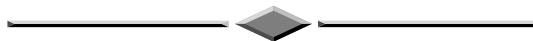
Smuts broke his silence on the situation in Palestine on May 10 - four days before the proclamation of the Jewish State. Speaking from the non-political platform of the Johannesburg Rotary Club, he uttered words befitting the then only surviving author of the Balfour Declaration. His concluding question was prescient. He said:

My feeling has always been in favour of a national home for the Jewish people. It seems to me almost an historical necessity. The Jewish State is emerging in Palestine and I give it my blessing. My innermost sympathy is with them and I wish them every success.

... The problem of Palestine is a tragedy on our doorstep, almost in our house. Britain has tried for many years to solve the problem which has touched her honour so dearly. She has not succeeded. The United Nations, including the United States, have also failed. The problem has proved too much for the statesmanship of the world which has looked on it as something small and local.

Palestine lies on one of the great highways of history and we just cannot leave the Jews and Arabs to fight it out among themselves. My nose tells me that this is one of the great problems of the world today and that the whole world will in the future feel the effects of what is happening now. Palestine is as closely connected with the big issues of world history in the future as it has been in the past.

Power is on the move. The supply of oil, bound up with the problem of Palestine, is one of the major instruments of world power, and Palestine also lies across the border that divides the great powers of the world. You never know what may happen tomorrow. There is one power, Russia that is keeping in the background now. It is not mixing up with the problem. But what may happen tomorrow?



The drama was now mounting. The Palestine Arabs had behind them the armies and volunteers of the Arab nations and the Jews of Palestine had behind them the Jews of the world. In South Africa emotions, sympathies and antagonisms came into play through causes ancient and modern, religious and political, local and international.

Die Burger, senior newspaper of the Nationalist Party, May 14:

The small Jewish community in Palestine, barely more than 600,000 strong, wishes to carve out for itself and for racial brethren without a homeland, a place on the map against opposition of hostile states with a population of 30-40 million. If this is folly, then it is folly on a heroic scale. But not all comment was as generous or as understanding as this. Three papers, The Star, Natal Mercury and Natal Witness, were less than enthusiastic in their greeting of the State about to be born.

The Natal Witness, writing on May 14, put it thus:

Despite the vicious propaganda that has been freely used, history will vindicate much of Britain's policy. Though so many Jewish claims have been made, it is impossible reasonably to deny that the real object of the Balfour Declaration was not the creation of a national state, but merely the establishment of a refuge, and this was in no way to jeopardise Arab rights.

This is now an argument of history. We content ourselves with the reminder that General Smuts, one of the authors of the Balfour Declaration, can be presumed to be THE South African authority on the document and its aspirations and his record is free of the retreats that marked British policy.

Other newspapers were warm:

The Friend (Bloemfontein):

Few men who have absorbed the cultural and spiritual heritage of the West and are conscious of its traditional and historic associations with Palestine can remain wholly untouched by the spectacle of the Jewish national rebirth ... The tragedy is that the renaissance of Jewish nationalism, in itself an event which has caused world-wide sympathy, came into inescapable conflict with the rights and national interests of the Arab population.

Rand Daily Mail (Johannesburg):

The old promise is fulfilled, Today the Jews enter into their new status as a self-governing nation on the soil from which they were dispersed two thousand years ago.

Daily Dispatch (East London):

We both hope and believe that the infant will survive the ordeal of its birth-pains and grow into a strong and influential state.

Cape Argus (Cape Town):

Tomorrow the Jews will proclaim their independent state in accordance with the decision of the United Nations. They will be called upon to defend it against Arab attack. In doing so, they will be acting within the rights conferred upon them by the United Nation's plan of partition.

Daily News (Durban):

It is this obligation to humanity itself which we believe makes a Jewish national home a necessity which, in the end, will compel partition in Palestine by one means or another.

Cape Times:

The Jewish people will no longer be stateless. For them, indeed for the whole world, it will be an historic occasion... The Jews are entitled to the recognition of their nation and to their rights to enjoy it.

The Nationalist Afrikaans press, reflecting a people nearer the Bible than the English, and with its own memories of conflict with Britain, poured forth greater warmth:

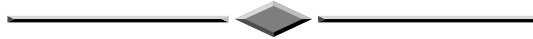
Volksblad (Bloemfontein):

The flames of war cannot hide one fact: The rebirth of a free Israelite state after nearly two thousand years is a great historic event. The Jewish nation has never throughout its centuries of exile lost faith in the prophecy that Canaan would rise again, and for the whole world, for Christianity in particular, the resuscitation of the Jewish state and the bitter struggle that is being waged at present is a question of great meaning, because it is there in the Promised Land that Christianity and Western civilisation first saw the light.

Dagbreek (From the pen of a churchman columnist):

The news of the establishment of the new State of Israel is significant for every Western person, whether he is in favour of the new state and the aspirations of Israel or not. A world event... The history of no nation is more saturated in tragedy than that of Israel. As Western people who have been educated against a background of the Old Testament, we are conscious of the meaning of Israel and of its history up to the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Many of us did not know much of the later history of the Jewish nation until recently. We think purely in terms of ghettos and concentration camps and the thirst for Palestine...

Die Vaderland, Johannesburg, possibly bearing in mind South Africa's fiercely controversial ban on Jewish immigration two decades earlier, referred to the growth of anti-Semitism in Christian countries as a result of increased Jewish immigration and said it was the duty of the Western nations to help the Jews stabilise their state.

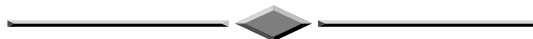


At the setting of the sun on Sunday May 16, thousands of Jews poured into the Wolmarans Street Synagogue for a service under the auspices of the League of Haganah. The Synagogue could not accommodate the congregation, the greater part of which stood in Wolmarans and Claim Streets, hanging on to the S.A.B.C.'s broadcast service. The voices of cantor and choir filled the streets with the ancient liturgy. The sermon of the Chief Rabbi spoke to the hearts of the people: "Happy is the generation that has lived to see this day... The Lord has done great things for us..."

Then followed a convergence on the Johannesburg City Hall in the greatest demonstration in the history of South African Jewry. Led by Basil Herman, as flag bearer, Major Leo Kowarsky and leaders of the community, a procession of Zionist youth carrying banners and torches preceded a two mile parade through the city's streets. Conspicuous were the uniformed men of the Zionist Revisionist Party. The rear was brought up by thousands of the community joining themselves to the exhilarating hour. From flats and buildings people streamed down on to the street pavements to watch the march. Friendly greetings sang out to the marchers.

In the City Hall, packed to the aisles and with a vast overflow audience outside in the street, six speakers, Bernard Gering, Advocate B.A. Ettlinger, K.C., Rabbi I. Kossowsky, Dr. Bernard Friedman, M.P., Mr. Morris Kentridge, M.P., and Mr. Leo Tager, met the peoples' longing for words of gladness.

But the day found its frankest and most eloquent voice in the Garden Synagogue, Cape Town. The Third Jewish State was history's answer to the Third Reich, said Chief Rabbi Israel Abrahams. It was the supreme monument to the defeat of Hitlerism. Jewish homelessness had been a calamity for the gentiles, no less than for the Jews. The Jewish people, a universal minority, feared and hated as a strange, unaccountable phenomenon, had become a kind of disembodied national ghost. Persecution had been an inevitable consequence. If the Jews had suffered physically and materially, their persecutors had suffered morally and spiritually. Jew-hatred struck oppressor as well as oppressed. "In our time," said the Rabbi, "we turn the page to start a new chapter..." In the smallest synagogues, in the remotest country areas, there were also services of thanksgiving.



IN PALESTINE MAY 1 - MAY 14

May 1

Mandatory Government ceases all operations without transfer of authority to anyone. Effect: Trains stop running, Palestine no longer a member of the International Postal Commune, police disband, judicial processes suspended.

Evacuation of British forces continues.

May 4

Arab Legion begins assault on Etzion Block of four settlements between Jerusalem and Hebron. The settlements: Kfar Etzion, Massuot (Torchtlight), Ein Tzurim (rocky spring) and Revadim. Attack repulsed and Russian Monastery retaken by settlers with severe losses on both sides. No further Arab attack for seven days.

May 10

Golda Meyerson (Meir), member of Jewish Agency executive, disguised as an Arab woman, sets out to meet King Abdullah of Transjordan in the house of a friend in Amman, to test Abdullah's October 1947 attitude to agreement whereby the King would annex Arab Palestine without going to war against the Jews. Abdullah's reply: "The situation has changed. Then I was alone, now I am one of five." Golda: "If His Majesty wants war, he shall have war"

May 12

Arab Legion overwhelms Etzion block Kibbutzim.



Badge of the Jewish Brigade

Consisting mainly of Jews from Palestine, the Jewish Brigade served with the Allied forces in World War 2 as an independent, national Jewish military formation.

Soldiers of the Brigade met with Holocaust survivors in Displaced Persons camps and played an important role in bringing many survivors to Palestine.

CHAPTER 3

OVER AFRICA - AND IN ROME

By the end of March Boris Senior and Cecil Wulfsohn had organized the method of getting the purchased planes to Palestine. Senior registered one Bonanza in his name, the other in the name of Cyril Katz. The three Fairchild, the Anson and the Rapide were registered with Pan African Air Charter (PAAC), a charter company run by a group of South African Jews. The Fairchild would be flown to Palestine by Les Chimes, Tuxie Blau and Arthur Cooper, and the Rapide air ambulance by a non-Jewish pilot, Alf Lindsay .

The first to leave were the two Bonanzas, the pilots Boris Senior and Cyril Katz. These were four-person single-engined planes that had been fitted at Palmietfontein with long-range tanks. Senior and Katz, having had test flights, felt good when they clambered into the planes on the morning of April 3, 1948. Unlike the used Fairchild, the Bonanzas gave the same thrill as a new car. Smell, seats, plastic-wrapped flying manuals, all conveyed the tang of newness.

Clearing customs at Pietersburg (young businessmen off to the British Industries Fair) the two crossed over into Rhodesia. Flying first in sight of each other, they later purred on separately, keeping in radio contact, their destination Lusaka. The weather, in the meantime, had become bad. Senior arrived safely, but storms downed Katz at an unlicensed airfield at Chirundu. When Senior received a message to this effect, he flew to Chirundu. The two men slept that night at a nearby police station. Monkeys leaping on their planes and the sight of elephant tracks next morning were suggestive of the great wide continent.

Then came the first mishap. In the take-off, the nose-wheel of Senior's plane landed heavily in a hole. The surface of the field was baked mud on top, soft mud underneath. In this dilemma the men went back to the police station and there found a car to take them to Salisbury where they arranged with an aeronautical firm to bring in the damaged plane by truck and to fly in the other. Senior flew back to Johannesburg in the sound Bonanza and Katz, after some days in Salisbury where it became clear that it would take some time to repair the damaged Bonanza, returned by train.

A new plan was evolved. Cecil Wulfsohn would fly the Bonanza, 25 BWR, to Wadi Halfa in Egypt where Senior, keen to fly the first plane from South Africa into the State-to-be, would take over. Senior would get to Wadi Halfa by ordinary commercial flight. Cyril Katz, accompanied by a navigator Cyril Steinberg, D.F.C., ex-SAAF Marauder Squadrons 12 and 30, would take up a newly-purchased Bonanza.

This is what happened, but not without further adventures for all four men involved.

Senior, having taken over the Bonanza, spent the night in Luxor, Egypt. He booked out for Beirut next morning, but diverted, planning to land in the Negev at kibbutz Nirim, to tell his friend, Ezer Weizman, there with the Negev "squadron" of Piper Cubs that he had arrived. The settlers at the landing strip, seeing a plane from the direction of Egypt, were not to read Senior's mind. They ran to shoot the Bonanza down, but one man had a hunch that the plane was friendly and stopped them. From Nirim, Senior flew to Sde Dov airfield, Tel Aviv. The delivered Bonanza was the first plane from a diaspora community. The day was May 4.

A few hours later Senior was flying the plane on the Jerusalem front, for some months already an arena of preliminary fierce fighting, with tragic Jewish losses and more to follow.



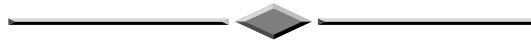
Chapter 3

The two Cyrils, Katz and Steinberg, left on April 27, landed in Bulawayo and then lost themselves on the way to Salisbury (now Harare), their compass proving faulty. Steinberg took to map reading. What looked like a railway line proved to be a strip road,¹⁵ a design then unfamiliar to him. It was getting dark. The men could not find the airport and flew, as they later discovered, further and further away from Salisbury. As they were looking around for some open ground on which to belly-land they saw, as if it had been planted there for their salvation, an airfield with windsock flying. They put down a few moments later, seconds before darkness. The airfield was that of a local farmer, who was pleased to see them. He took them to his farm forty miles beyond Marandellas, 120 miles from Salisbury, dined them well, and on the following morning went into Salisbury by car where his wife had given birth to a child. The Cyrils flew to Salisbury where they had to report how they had come to be lost and what they did. They managed to satisfy the curiosity of the authorities without arousing suspicion.

Remaining in Salisbury for a few days for the repair of their radio, they crossed in stages over Northern Rhodesia, (now Zambia) Tanganyika (now Tanzania), Kenya and finally to Wadi Halfa in Sudan.

A test for the two men had been the questions fired at them at RAF stations on the way. "There's a war brewing in Palestine", they were told. "Where are you chaps going?" The reply was -"To Cairo, Sicily, and then to England for the Olympic Games." "There are Egyptian fighter squadrons at El Arish", was the veiled warning of the RAF men, They were not innocents.

The Bonanza had been equipped with an extra long-range fuel tank which gave it a supply to keep it five to six hours in the air. The Cyrils crossed the Suez, passed safely over El Arish and landed at Sde Dov, Tel Aviv's airfield, the second South African plane to arrive. The date was May 6.



Dr. Arthur Helfet, carrying with him 200 lb. weight of surgical instruments, was the first doctor to leave from Palmietfontein. Two friends, Doctors Lionel Meltzer and Jack Penn, saw him off. They discussed the somber news. A few days earlier seventy Jews, the majority doctors and professors, traveling in convoy to Hadassah Hospital and the Hebrew University on Mount Scopus, had been ambushed and massacred. Among the dead was Professor Yascsky. Dr. Helfet had special reason to mourn him.

Dr. Helfet was no stranger to the Middle East. During World War 2, while serving in the Royal Army Medical Corps, he had spent a year as Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon to the Middle East forces, with headquarters in Cairo. One of his duties was to tour military hospitals in countries of the Middle East, including Palestine. In Jerusalem he had visited the wounded in British and Allied military hospitals and, in compliance with a request, had also seen orthopaedic patients being treated at Hadassah. There he met Dr. Yascsky and Professors Saul Adler and Edward Joseph who interested him in the medical problems of the Yishuv and the Haganah .

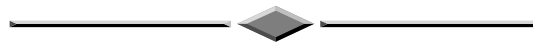
Shortly after the partition decision, Dr. Helfet had received cables and letters from Michael Comay, then at Lake Success, on behalf of the Jewish Agency, and from Prof. Yascsky in Palestine, foreshadowing the inevitability of war. Would he be prepared to come and assist in the organization and treatment of casualties, expected to be heavy? It had been impossible for the underground to organize medically.

¹⁵ Economy roads common in Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) at the time, comprising two parallel macadamised strips, one for each wheel of a vehicle with unmade sand between the strips.

The chartered Dakota in which Dr. Helfet left in the second week of April would take four days to reach Lydda, avoiding Egypt. But it didn't work out that way, En route it was learned that the Arabs had fired on a TWA plane near Lydda. This troubled the pilot. Leaving Wadi Halfa for the final leg of the flight, he announced that the plane would land in Cairo "owing to engine trouble". Cairo was, in fact, but little nearer than Lydda. When the plane landed on the runway, an agitated agent of the air charter company came aboard and breathlessly advised all passengers to say, when questioned about their religion, "Church of England".

Dr. Helfet gave his religion as Reform. The two officers, nonplussed, looked at each other, shrugged their shoulders and signed his temporary visa.

The Dakota remained in Cairo for three days before leaving ostensibly for London, but landing a little later in Lydda.



For twenty four hours on April 21 1948, the situation at Lydda (Lod) Airport was one of confusion. The British were pulling out of Palestine and no longer cared. Two passenger planes from South Africa landing at the field in this period became part of the drama.

The first was a London-bound Suid Air Dakota that carried the first group of volunteers ostensibly travelling as students intending to study at the Hebrew University. It was the only group to disembark at Lydda in the pre-State period. It consisted, as we have already noted, of Eddie and Masha Rosenberg, Elliot Rosenberg, Norman Skolnik, Hillel Daleski, Jack Segall and Max Barlin. Nobody was at the airfield to meet them and nothing appeared to them to make sense. The anxious and impatient pilot of the plane flew out as soon as he could with newly loaded passengers, mainly monks and nuns.

A few British soldiers were in the hall, but the immigration and customs officials were Arabs. The South African "students" were not to know that the airfield would soon be in Arab hands.

Hillel Daleski recalls:

The seven of us, all carrying kitbags and not looking particularly like a group of students walked across the tarmac past a line of British soldiers with fixed bayonets who glared at us. In the concourse it seemed that all chaos had broken loose. People were milling around all over the place. I remember going up to a British sergeant and very politely asking if he could tell me how to get to Tel Aviv. He looked me up and down and then said "yer don't chum". It turned out that the road from Lod to Tel Aviv was under siege; no Jew could travel on it and the British were preparing to evacuate the airport that morning. As the British left strategic places such as the airport and the Taggart forts dotting the country, they regularly tipped off the Arabs and these places had to be bitterly fought for to get them back.

An accident of fate saved them from being stranded and taken prisoners of war, possibly even being slain. Fortunately a taxi owner, Koppel by name, driving a rudimentary armoured car, had been sent by Haganah to the field for the one or two employees left behind in the departure of Jewish personnel. "Who are you?" he asked the newly arrived volunteers. "Do you realize your good luck?" he queried on learning their identity. "I'll take you to Tel Aviv. There'll be no further transport from Lydda." He bundled them into the back of the vehicle.

Daleski:

The journey was a special experience. One of the airport employees was a pretty Australian girl who sat on my lap for lack of space. No sooner was she seated than I was asked if I knew how to use a hand grenade. I said yes and so rode to Tel Aviv with one arm round the girl and the other holding a grenade.

Chapter 3

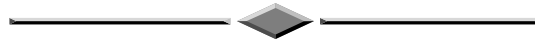
On the way the vehicle stopped at a British sentry post. A bottle of whisky changed hands. There was no search and the armoured car went on. At a second sentry post another bottle of whisky was passed on. Then came the surprise for the volunteers. Arms (mainly Sten guns) and hand grenades were whipped out from under a covering on the floor of the truck and thrust into their hands. It dawned on the innocent South Africans that they were traveling on a dangerous road. The tension only relaxed when they reached Petach Tikvah.

An irrelevant but suggestive morsel: The customs officials had attempted to confiscate Max Barlin's radio since it was "without a license".

"How can I possibly have a license?" Barlin asked. "I have just arrived". "Well, look," said the Arabs, "leave it with us and you can fetch it tomorrow." Barlin refused to part with it and the Arabs desisted from pressing the matter.

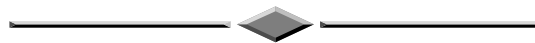
Jack Segall recalls

In Tel Aviv we were found by a certain Nat Cohen who took the radar men to the Yarkon Hotel (which was to become Air Force HQ) - goodness knows how he knew about us. Next day we were inducted into the army. We were then accommodated at the Excelsior Hotel where we were later joined by Reuben and Bat-Ami Joffe, Abe Goldes and Eli Isserow.



The volunteers on the second plane did not disembark at Lydda, having been given instructions to sit tight when they landed and proceed to Rome. The men stared at the deserted field with mixed feelings. For future identification they will be called the Ronnie Chaskelson group. It included names we shall meet again, Victor Katz, Ronnie Chaskelson, Harold Osrin, Titch Isaacson, and two men of the previous year's "safari" trip across Africa, Benny Miller and Phillip Navon.

This group was to be the first of many to encounter Jewish survivors of the Nazi holocaust in displaced persons camps on the soil of Europe.



Group number three was the nine-strong Lionel Hodes group. Seven of the nine spent an anxious two days under detention in Cairo, making the blunder of replying "Jewish" to the question, "Religion?" Six-foot-three David Teperson, of Namaqualand, and Harold Evian, of Johannesburg, replied "Dutch Reformed Church", which reply gave them two days of sight-seeing in Cairo and environs while their companions were under guard. But the story must properly start with the briefing of the men in Johannesburg and with their departure from Palmietfontein, for the pattern was applied to all groups, making the story of the one the story of all.

In the Africa of 1948 the flag of Imperial Britain still held large sway and in the North were the Arab countries. It was thus necessary to take precautions to maintain secrecy and to prime the men in some mime. In the case of the Hodes group the men were to travel in groups of two or three and gradually work up an overt acquaintanceship as young people on a plane with sleep-over and stopping places would naturally do. Two were "farmers", two "engineers", two "students" and one a tourist. The five machalniks were to disembark in Rome and the four kibbutz settlers in Paris. Parents - those cases in which they knew their sons were leaving - were not allowed farewells at Palmietfontein.

In Nairobi a number of British Colonial personnel, apparently ex-Army going home, augmented the number of passengers in the Hodes group plane, correcting the balance between Jewish and non-Jewish names, which was all to the good.

The questions the seven detained men were asked in Cairo revealed the suspicions of the Egyptians that these young men with S.A. passports were not what they purported to be. They were asked. Were they Zionists? What did they think of the Palestine problem? Did they intend going to Palestine? What were they going to do in Europe?

A guard was posted at the door of the room into which they were ordered and in which they would sleep the night. The seven were Lionel Hodes, Leib Golan, Horace Milunsky, Jack Fleisch, Barney Rosenberg, Faivie Cohen and Hymie Goldblatt (Zahavi). The Egyptian guard, for whom the seven were to develop an affection which he reciprocated, fell asleep during the night and Milunsky awakened him "because it is not nice to sleep on duty". The seven maintained their own guard to protect their luggage and not to be surprised by any move on the part of the Egyptians. The next day's news was dismal: The plane might be detained in Cairo for three or four days, the "radio repair being more difficult than originally believed". However, there was some relaxation in the detention, the seven being allowed to dine in the main restaurant. This was followed by a further relaxation, but under conditions. The men were taken to the Heliopolis Palace Hotel but could not leave the hotel grounds. The guard remained and was even persuaded to have a drink with them. Twenty-four hours later the plane resumed its flight and none were more relieved than the seven.

In Rome the group divided, five making for the Haganah headquarters in Milan and the four prospective settlers for the Zionist Federation in Paris, thus dividing into an attenuated Hodes group and a David Teperson unit. It is a wry commentary on what can be between Jew and Arab, that Horace Milunsky was seen off at Rome station by an Arab with whom he had become friendly there.

In Milan the Hodes five chose, for idealistic reasons, to go to a displaced persons' camp rather than stay in a proffered hotel. The camp - a handsome villa in large spacious grounds - was at Castel Lambra on the Swiss border. Here they found the Ronnie Chaskelson group, thus making a South African group of twelve in the company of young Jews, men and women, who had survived the hell of Hitler's Europe. What each of the South African volunteers gained from the encounter depended on two things: ability to communicate in Yiddish and capacity to absorb another's experience of hell.

Twenty-six years later, at Kibbutz Ma'ayan Baruch in the Northern Galilee, Leib Golan told this writer that the tragic dimensions of the centuries-old Jewish tragedy first became manifest to him at Castel Lambra.

"Bear in mind that I had gone through the Zionist Movement and had studied Jewish history. Logically, I should not have been as one hit by revelation. But I was. There is a difference between reading about things and coming up against the reality. These people had spent days and nights crossing mountains in the snow. They had concentration camp marks on their arms. Some told of watching parents marched off, others of parents killed in front of them, others still how they had escaped the fate of their near ones. To this day when I speak to youth groups and try to explain the meaning of Israel, I tell them of my days at Castel Lambra to explain why we need a Jewish State. No people were willing to take in these refugees - except their own.

We spent Passover¹⁶ in the camp. I'll never forget it. We Anglo-Saxons were transfixed. The refugees continued the ceremony into the early hours of the morning, singing freedom songs. They were going home, to freedom at last. The experience was deeply emotional and one couldn't restrain tears. This was something new to us".

¹⁶ Jewish festival celebrating the exodus from Egypt.

Chapter 3

For South African Jews the celebration of Passover is ritual poetry, festive and ceremonial. But having been born to freedom, we had not drawn from the celebration what these people did.

The DPs of the camp were from Romania, Poland and Hungary, young people, men and women, specially selected and allotted priority passage to Palestine as suitable for the Israel army-to-be or as pioneers of settlements. They had not been left unwrapped by the sub-human world from which they had emerged three years earlier. Their adolescence had been wiped out and their education was in the grossness of herded thousands.

This was reflected in the state of the villa as the Ronnie Chaskelson group found it. The young South Africans unaccustomed though they were in their own country to such work, set to immediately to make the villa habitable, to end the regime by which lavatories were left blocked and the spacious grounds used instead, and to organize other improvements. The Lionel Hodes group carried the education further by initiating lectures on hygiene and related topics.

Two of the Chaskelson group had already left for Palestine, having been included in a batch that sailed for Palestine on a ship, *Russiya*, which arrived in Haifa on April 25. The two were Bennie Miller and Phillip Navon of the 1947 "safari" trip. They had been given forged papers as were those who followed - the British still being in control - and entered as displaced persons who knew no English.

The Chaskelson group left Castel Lambra a week after the Hodes group arrived. The days dragged on for the others but there was no word of a ship for them. The main question was the unanticipated one, whether they would reach Palestine before or after the proclamation of the State. They had left South Africa in the first week of April and now, in the opening days of May, they were still not there.

Then came the moment for which they had been waiting. "Pack up. You're moving:"

The vehicle on which they left was a bus hauling a trailer. The journey was slow, taking the better part of a day. A little Italian vessel, clean and neat, was waiting for them, but a mechanical fault delayed departure for a day. The passengers were told to stay below.

The voyage was pleasant, interrupted only once when an Italian destroyer loomed over the horizon and raced up with all her guns manned. A boarding party checked on the ship, apparently looking for arms. Finding none and establishing that the ship's papers were in order, the boarding party left.

The main question now became Tel Aviv or Haifa? Hodes:

On the night of Sunday May 9, six days before the proclamation of the State, we neared its shores. The sea was calm and the air stirred only by a faint, cooling breeze. The sky was starry. We gathered on deck and, with a portable radio, searched the ether for the voice of our people. At last Kol Israel (The Voice of Israel)...

We retired, slept fitfully, and on the morrow were up early for our first glimpse of the Holy Land.

Meanwhile the Teperson unit of four, arrived in Paris, reported to the Zionist Federation there and was sent on to a big DP camp in Marseilles where they were told not to speak English, and thence to a nearby castle in whose grounds they were given elementary military education, how to dismantle a Sten gun, how to crawl, how to take up firing positions and the like, and from which there was no permission to leave. Harold Evian was shipped off to Palestine with a DP group some two weeks after his arrival. David Teperson was kept back, used as a strong-arm man to watch a Romanian suspected of being a spy for the British. He eventually sailed with 300 others on a small ship, the *Tetti*, which should reasonably have carried only 100, and which reached the shores of Palestine on May 15, the State not yet a day old. Hugging the rails of the ship, the newcomers saw Egyptian planes bombing Tel Aviv,

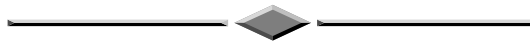
then the sight of an Egyptian plane falling. They were to learn later that Victor Katz's gun had helped to smoke it out of the sky.

A yell pierced the customs and immigration hall into which the newcomers poured. One of the immigration officials had spotted his brother. Each had believed the other dead. The embrace was poignant.

Early in May, a group of eight had reached Palestine after a trouble-free air trip via Rome. Unfolding events were to make it an important group, with names high up in Machal history. It included Harry (Smoky) Simon, his wife Myra (they had advanced the date of their marriage to come as man and wife), Joe Leibowitz, air gunner, Tev Zimmerman and Chaim Grevler, ex-SAAF flight engineers from the Orange Free State, Joseph Jedeiken and Max Rosengarten, veterans of the Western Desert and David Rosenberg, gifted administrator and Doctor.

Smoky Simon¹⁷ became one of the founders of the Israel Air Force. His background belongs to a later chapter.

The drama of "getting there" was far from over.



The three Fairchild and the Rapide ambulance sailed into the skies from Wonderboom on April 19, the Fairchild pilots three early-twenty Johannesburgers, Les Chimes, Arthur Cooper and Tuxie Blau, and the pilot of the Rapide Alf Lindsay. The Fairchild remained within visual range of one another. The three young pilots, using old SAAF strip maps that covered the entire route from Cape to Cairo, had no qualms. Their planes, single-engine, four-seater aircraft, with a Ranger 200 horsepower engine and a range of 400-500 miles between refueling stops, had been used by the U.S. Air Force as a commuting and liaison craft, and had a good reputation. The route for the first part of the flight, before the men ran into trouble in Khartoum, was Pietersburg - Bulawayo - Salisbury - Lusaka - Ndola - Kasama - Abercorn - Kisumu - Saroti - Tabora - Juba - Khartoum, nine days flying.

No flight over Africa is without its spectacular sights and the famous Juba elephant herds provided the pilots with one of them, temporarily erasing from their minds the worry of some curiosity about them in British Central Africa. Their flight over (then) Tanganyika and Uganda coincided with the escape of six Gil-Gil Etzel detainees. The story and pictures ran over columns on successive days on the front page of the East African Standard of Nairobi. It is coincidental that one of the detainees, an Irgun man named Gross, not among the escapees, was Tuxie Blau's cousin and that the idea had passed through Blau's mind to fly to Gil-Gil to try to see Gross, a plan he wisely did not attempt to carry out. A few months later Blau received a newspaper cutting from Johannesburg reporting that the three Fairchild had flown in to pick up the escaped men. However, the men experienced no untoward problems at Abercorn, Tabora or Kisumu at which they landed just at the period when the story was running hot. When they reached Khartoum on April 20, however, unaccountable things happened which clearly hinted that they were under suspicion. There was, indeed, more than a hint. "Are you quite sure that you chaps are not going to Palestine?" asked Civil Aviation Chief, Wing Commander Leatherborough. The pilots adhered to their story, referring again to their documents showing that the planes had been sold to a party in London and that they were flying them there.

¹⁷ Smoky Simon's air force tradition has been carried on by his two sons, Saul and Dan, F15 and Phantom pilots respectively and by his grandson Erez Tik, a Hercules captain. (See editor's note to Smoky and Myra Simon's history in chapter 18)

Chapter 3

Leatherborough did not hesitate to warn them that should the aircraft ever land in Palestine, the landing rights of Pan African Air Charter over the Sudan would be taken away.

From what subsequently happened, it is clear that Leatherborough decided to delay the men in Khartoum to give himself time to check their story. One of the aircraft had its tail smashed by a truck backing into it - an odd accident since the aircraft was parked in a corner of the airfield isolated from traffic.

The nine days the men spent in Khartoum were days of impatience and dispiritedness which the comforts of the Nile Hotel could not dispel. The heat was torrid, only to be mitigated by their sitting in bath tubs drinking iced drinks. Commerce in the town stopped at 10 a.m. and reopened at 5 p.m. There are better places than Khartoum for long delays.

When Leatherborough received confirmation that the planes were due to be taken over in London - a sign of good homework in Johannesburg, he could not reasonably delay the men's departure, and the Fairchilds flew out on April 29, eighteen days after leaving Wonderboom. One other reason had delayed departure, the ruling that single-engined aircraft were prohibited from flying over the Sudan unless accompanied by a multi-engined aircraft equipped with two-way communication. Two new uncertainties had also developed: First, the news that Lydda Airport, where the men had been scheduled to land, had passed into Arab hands; and secondly, the awareness that the purpose of their mission was not as secret as they had imagined. In Khartoum a pilot named Charles Cary had shuffled up to them: "I know you're going to Palestine", he said. "Can't you get me there?" Dropping his voice: "I can supply a lot of things, ... Beaufighters for example...."

How fast does rumour spread? It was not without anxiety that the men headed north.

Atbara - Station 10 - Wadi Halfa - then Luxor in Egypt. Here, for the first time, the men were asked their religion. This had been foreseen.

One of the considerations in their choice for the mission had been their "unJewish looks". Alf Lindsay, temporarily linked with them again, added credibility. But now there was another problem: the tail-wheel of Tuxie Blau's plane was damaged. Should they wait for a replacement from Cairo, with all the uncertainties that went with this, or risk the flight despite the damaged part? The decision was to push ahead. The men lifted the broken tail-wheel and wheeled the aircraft wheel barrow-style on to the runway. The take-off was smooth, but since Blau did not know what effect the defective wheel would have on landing, he called for emergency precautions at El Maze. However, he landed without mishap, but aware of a new problem: Some of his instruments were not working and there was mysterious damage to one of his wing tips. He had the greatest difficulty in getting the repairs done. On test flight, the instruments failed again. Were the authorities, alerted by Leatherborough's suspicions, employing, more delaying tactics? Blau described the men's seven days at the Heliopolis Palace Hotel as days under "comfortable surveillance". But there is no certainty in the minds of the other two about this. The only hard fact is that the Egyptians could not pin anything on to them and that on May 7, having enlisted the aid of an official at the S.A. Embassy in Cairo in securing an extension of their visa stay for Egypt, they flew out. The distance between Cairo and Tel Aviv is some 250 miles. A comfortable 2½ hour hop for the Fairchilds, and there had been debate among them on feigning going west, then turning east for the final lap. Tuxie Blau favored the idea, but to the other two it was unwise, not to say rash. It turned out that they had no option but to go west, for Egyptian Spitfires rose into the sky when they did. The men had tried to buy the right maps in book shops in Cairo for this unforeseen North African flight and, failing, had enlisted the aid of the Egyptian Air Force: However the Egyptians could do no better than supply weather charts. (It was only at El Adem that they managed to procure the maps from a reluctant British official at the airfield.) The 3-hour flight to Mersa Matruh with the Spitfires as "escort", put Tel Aviv beyond their non-stop range, but

to make doubly sure, one of the Spitfires tailed them to a point half-way to El Adem before dipping his wings in departure.

The flights to Benghazi (May 7), Castelvenito, Tripoli (May 8) were straightforward. At Cagliari, Sardinia (May 9), Tuxie Blau became detached from his companions. The latter considered a straight-on flight to Rome too long a hop and made for Ajaccio in Corsica. Blau nosed to Rome, landing safely at Ciampino, but he had no visa for Italy and found himself detained for some considerable time at the airfield before being rescued by a mysterious Finn named Leo Seigerkranz who comes later into our story. On May 10 Leslie Chimes and Arthur Cooper flew in. They had visas and booked in at an hotel. Foul weather was now to frustrate the final design of getting the planes to Palestine before the proclamation of the State. Against this, there was the urgency of the situation, conveyed to by Cecil Wulfsohn, then also arrived in Rome. "Look boys", Wulfsohn said in the hotel room, "all hell is breaking out in Palestine and they need you."

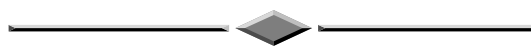
"But Cecil", demurred Arthur Cooper, "with all the flying aids, even the international airliners are not leaving."

May 14 dawned and the Fairchilds were still in Rome. Tuxie Blau flew off alone that day, reaching Athens. Next day, May 15, the new State's first day, he flew on to Rhodes, thence to Nicosia in Cyprus, where he met a marooned South African volunteer group whose story comes later. Not delaying long, Blau flew out at 4.20 p.m., landing at the Tel Aviv air strip at 6.10 p.m. The Egyptians were then making their last raid of the day on the airfield. As Blau's plane was coming to a standstill, a little car purred alongside of him, one of the occupants got out, jumped into the Fairchild and said: "Get off the runway: We're being bombed:" Blau obeyed orders. "Now you're on your own," said the man. "Get out and run:" Blau ran after some other running men, finding refuge with them in a hole. A rumble of bombs was accompaniment. An hour later, when it was all clear, painters replaced the South African markings of the Fairchild with the Israeli Star of David.

Les Chimes and Arthur Cooper had also taken off on May 14, making for Brindisi on the east coast of Italy. The weather still foul and the mountains dangerous, they turned back and flew to Naples. From here they essayed again to get to Brindisi but again they were turned back. On Sunday May 15 they made Athens, next day May 16, Rhodes (sighting there four impounded Ansons, the story of which also comes later in this chapter) and Nicosia. Here they too met the marooned South African volunteer group. Dov Judah, one of the group, conveyed the news that Arab armies had invaded the new-born State and that it would be unwise for them to land in Tel Aviv. "Make for Haifa," he advised.

This they did. Their greeting at the Haifa airfield, thirty five days after leaving Wonderboom and after 100 hours 5 minutes in the air, was by an immigration official. His stamp in Arthur Cooper's passport is a curiosity: "Government of Palestine, Immigration Department, admitted for temporary residence..." Underneath the stamp the official wrote in Hebrew, Harishon (The first). This could not have been correct but it reflects; nevertheless, the new Jewish history now in the making.

Chimes and Cooper slept at the Technion that night and on the following day flew into Tel Aviv, to be greeted by Boris Senior and Smoky Simon. Alf Lindsay, untraceable for his story, had not made it in the ambulance plane.



In Cyprus in the middle of May was the marooned group of nine already referred to. Two engaged couples had hastily married before departure. They were Lawyer Dov Judah and his wife Elsie, and Reuben Joffe and wife, Bat-Ami. The other volunteer was a young doctor, Stanley Levin, who was later to be joined in the war by his brother Basil.

Chapter 3

The group was completed by Colin Gluckman,¹⁸ his wife Sa'ada, and their two children. An unexpected turn of events had brought the plane to Cyprus. It had left Wadi Halfa and the ribbon of the blue of the Suez was in sight, when the pilot announced his decision to switch to Nicosia. He reported that there was fighting in Palestine and claimed the Jews "would collar his" plane. He was beyond persuasion. Before plunging into a sustained drinking bout in Nicosia he had the grace to hire a taxi for his passengers. This took them to a pleasant bungalow type of hotel in the little village of Zefros, which faces Turkey. At midnight the pilot turned up at Zefros, hopelessly drunk, with a fresh harangue why he could not go to Palestine.

Levin sought out the M.O.H. next morning to say forcefully that the man was not fit to fly a plane. The pilot, his plight worse, was committed to a nursing home.

The quandary of the group was not now lessened by Egyptian reports that Tel Aviv was in flames and that the Arabs were driving the Jews into the sea.

There was only one thing to do and that was to return to Nicosia Airport and sit it out, waiting for a turn in fortune. This brought about several interesting encounters. On the third day, a monoplane landed and out of it stepped a woman with calm eyes and a strong face. Golda Meyerson (Meir) was on her way to a session of the United Nations in San Francisco. She and the group sat down to tea. The South Africans pressed her for news. Her reply was that King Farouk would never live to see the day when the Jews would be driven into the sea. The Egyptian stories of Tel Aviv in flames were false.

Earlier the group had met Dr. Mary Gordon, the South African Doctor ministering to refugee patients in the Jewish wing of the British Military Hospital. Her counsel to them was to find a ship. She gave them an address in Famagusta and, the mystery heightening, a password. Stanley Levin was delegated to go to the address, which turned out to be that of an hotel and his man the captain of a seized refugee ship. But the captain had no word of hope. The British, he said, were not about to release some ships, as Dr. Gordon had thought. He added his own touch of conspiratorial air. Would Dr. Levin, since he was going to Israel, take an envelope and deliver it to a Mr. Arsi at the Zion Hotel in Haifa? It was urgent, he said, and should not be allowed to fall into strange hands. Levin pocketed the envelope.

The third encounter raised, then damped, spirits. Out of a Fairchild plane stepped a familiar face, that of Tuxie Blau, friend of both Judah and Levin in Habonim days. They hurried to meet him, but Blau, observing strictly the secrecy of his flight, walked past them without a hint of recognition. In the toilet Blau said he could not take any of them.

The group returned to consideration of a hitherto rejected prospect, Captain Gay, a British pilot working for the Iraq Petroleum Company and engaged in flying the company's employees out of the Palestine war zone. He left in his Beechcraft, marking TJ (Transjordan?) in the mornings and was back in the evenings.

"You're crazy," said Captain Gay. -"The country is in flames. In any case, why should you want to go there?"

Someone was quick to say that they were archaeological students anxious to save certain antiquities. Captain Gay pretended to believe them.

"Look", he said, "I am prepared to take you at six a.m. tomorrow if I can be assured you are not Zionists. If it were known I was flying in Zionists, I'd be in big trouble."

¹⁸ Colin Gluckman (Gillon) was later to become the prosecutor in the Eichman trial

The assurance was given.

"And you have no arms?"

"No,"

They had discussed it before and now they debated it again: Could Captain Gay be trusted? After all, he was working for Iraq Petroleum. What if he changed course to Beirut or Amman? These and other questions occupied the group that night at the Nicosia Hotel. Should the women and children not stay in Nicosia until they received the all-clear from their men?

The women objected.

Next morning they boarded with their not inconsiderable luggage (particularly Elsie's which, for a war, was copious indeed). A mosquito could hardly have got into the plane after all had settled hard on one another.

Distrust of Captain Gay, now handsomely paid, had not abated. The plane took off. Dov Judah stood over the pilot to make sure the man was not deceitful. After four hours, beautiful Haifa Bay came into view. At 10 a.m. the group was safely on the tarmac of the airfield, just in time to witness the Union Jack coming down and the flag of Israel going up.

Earlier on 9th May, Bob Levinsohn had landed at Haifa airport, and the group of five without the Colin Gluckman family, also landing Haifa on 18th May.

Stanley Levin hurried to deliver his mysterious envelope to Mr. Arsi at the Zion Hotel. Dov Judah sought out "Jossie", the Haganah man who was to give them instructions. Like the spy who sings tra-la-la and lives on the third floor, there was not Jossie but a Berel or Schmerel and he provided tickets for the group's hotel accommodation that night.

An alarming journey in an armoured bus next day, the driver peering through a small slit, took them into Tel Aviv. The road between Haifa and Fureidis, having been cut, the driver had taken a route through Wadi Milek behind the Carmel Mountains. It had been bump, bump, bump, all the way.



It was written in the stars that Mary Gordon, making a priestly vocation of the practice of medicine, would become the doctor in overall charge of the Jewish wing of the British Military Hospital in Nicosia, in the fateful 1947/1948 period. This woman, brusque outside, flame-lit inside, was born to serve.

In 1922 during the bitter miners' strike on the Witwatersrand, General Dr. MacKenzie, Superintendent of the Johannesburg General Hospital convened a meeting on humanitarian grounds calling for volunteers to render medical aid to the wounded and dying of the besieged miners in Fordsburg. Dr. Gordon, then 24, stepped forward immediately. There was only one other volunteer. Under cover of the Red Cross, both reached the miners lines safely and worked unremittingly among them.

Mary Gordon served the Johannesburg General Hospital for thirty years. She was its first woman doctor and the first woman on its honorary staff. She became physician in charge of wards. Later she acted as senior physician, doing part time and honorary work. She lectured at the Medical School first in anaesthetics and later in clinical medicine. A generation of doctors passed through her hands. In 1939 she was planning to leave for Palestine when World War 2 broke out. The South African war authorities would not release her. War's end found her a captain at Roberts Heights, Pretoria, a consultant physician. She told the Army

Chapter 3

she would stay on if it would send her up North (military hospitals were still there). Palestine was in her mind. There she set foot in 1946 wearing the not fondly regarded British uniform. The Stern group hounded her.

Unable to secure an immigration certificate, she returned to South Africa in August 1946 after a stay of only three months.

But nothing could stop this determined woman. She quit the South African Army, resigned from all her employment at the Johannesburg General, the University and the Transvaal Education Department, turned her back on what was possibly the largest private practice in Johannesburg and left for Palestine on October 19, 1946, as a "temporary laborer with WIZO", as her passport had it. As such, she had periodically to get her visa extended.

She was back to the austere living of her youth.

There were nine camps for the refugees in Cyprus. The camp population increased or decreased according to various accidental circumstances. For example, British naval patrols captured three refugee ships in February 1948 and the population went up by 1,648. On the other hand 5,386 were allowed to leave under a new special infants and youth quota. This was exceptional. The regular monthly quota of Palestine certificates was 750.

When Dr. Gordon arrived in Cyprus shortly after the partition decision the total camp population was 30,000. Financial responsibility for its welfare was borne by the Jews of the world through the American Jewish institution, the Joint.

A section of the British Military Hospital in Nicosia was given over to the Joint and became the Jewish wing. There were three wards: medical, surgical and maternity, part of a complex of buildings in large grounds, with the Jewish wing put behind barbed wire and with a separate gate and pass system instituted. Dr. Gordon became the main communication link between the Joint and the British.

What was thenceforth played out in that setting was that not uncommon aspect of war in which medicine operates on its own superior level, remote from the abrasions and poisons of political conflict. Jewish doctors and nurses took over from the British in the medical and maternity wards, but British surgeons continued to work in the surgical ward.

Dr. Gordon and Tova Friedman, an Israeli nurse close to the South African, found Palestine and Cyprus two different worlds. In Palestine the British were the imposers of curfews and the tough searchers at roadblocks. In Cyprus hospital they were friendly and considerate, from surgeon to orderly to sentry at the gate. There were fraternal evenings between British personnel and the patients, celebration of birthday parties and friendships. The case that particularly imprinted itself on the minds of the two women was that of a refugee with a bad skin disease, a rare kind of disease for which a special medicine had become available. The treatment required that every four hours, day and at night, the patient should be stripped of the bandages all over his body for new bandages. A British staffer working in the laboratory made this his special duty, giving the task an uncommon conscientiousness and the patient an uncommon devotion.

Dr. Gordon was more than a doctor. She was the shade of a Banyan tree. Her patients were not ordinary patients but people whose lives had been cataclysmic. Their great need was a fount of compassion, an ear open to listening, a confidante with "a soul". Mary Gordon became Mother Mary. Nurse Friedman tried in vain to protect Dr. Gordon's afternoon rest, but the doctor insisted that her door be kept open. "They have to speak," she said. So they came in, even if she was lying down. "One can measure temperature," Dr. Gordon used to say during these occasions and during ward rounds, "but one cannot measure pain, physical or mental."

Listening and counseling were her two ways of giving balm to pain that could not be measured. She had Yiddish for the refugees, Hebrew for the Israeli nurses, English for her British colleagues.

The woman was great. Directness of speech, absolute integrity, complete self-reliance, were her qualities. The self-reliance rose above her one frailty - trembling hands, a kind of palsy. She never sought assistance for the writing of her prescriptions, notes or letters. Slowly, falteringly, the shaky hand would distill its spidery, jerky handwriting on to the paper.

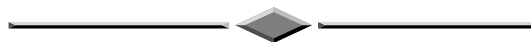
She made it a point of honour not to abuse the privileges which allowed special cases to be sent on to hospitals in Palestine. She knew what she should and could ask from the British authorities and what she could not. She earned their complete trust.

The compassion in her expressed itself particularly in understanding of certain Romanian patients who, reflecting a medical fad of their native region, insisted on having calcium injections and certain tablets, the demand for which the hospital pharmacy would not fulfill.

"Don't worry," she told the patients. "I will get the tablets for you." And on Sundays, accompanied by Nurse Friedman, she would go into Nicosia to a pharmacy and buy the medicines, paying from her own pocket. It was on these occasions that nurse Friedman managed to persuade her to enter a cafe for coffee as some sort of relaxation, for she never took a day off. Nurse Friedman also contrived to organize another little break for her once a week. ("I would come into her room and say, Time for a hair wash, and keep her rooted a while").

"Mary Gordon had a deep feeling for her people," Nurse Friedman recalled for this writer. "The Jewish people were her life. Her private life was incidental. She stood completely by herself. She never asked for anything, always gave. She made decisions firmly and was beyond considerations of status and prestige."

When the Arab Armies marched into Israel on May 15, the Israeli nurses in the wing asked to be sent back to Israel. "Not yet," Dr. Gordon told them. "Your service to your people is in this hospital." She later relented in the cases of a few. She herself stayed at her post until October 1948. Soon after, the state emerging from the war, the Jewish wing in Cyprus was liquidated, its work done. The patients were transferred to Israel. Dr. Gordon's crowning glory was still to come, the years she gave to the Jews of the Yemen brought over in Operation Magic Carpet.



Three men and a Ridgeback dog, Guri, took off from Palmietfontein in the Avro Anson. This was to prove the longest of all the flights. ZS-BHD, converted from a trainer bomber to a five-seat passenger craft, never made Israel, but it made history. The crew was Max Bentel, of Boksburg, pilot, Morris Segal, navigator, and Norman Isaacs, flight engineer. They had been assembled and briefed by Basil Herman, who himself intended to leave soon and who successfully persuaded them to take his dog, Guri, along with them.

By the time the men were due to leave, the South African Zionist Federation was aware that the Egyptians had become more than curious about the unusual number of young "businessmen" and "students" flying over from South Africa. Wisdom dictated that the Anson should take the roundabout route via the west coast of Africa. A long-range fuel tank had been fitted into the plane, making its maximum flying time six hours. The crew flew out ostensibly to chart a route for the future El Al.

Chapter 3

The vast spaces of Africa were not new to Isaacs. In World War 2 he had operated in a shuttle service between South and North Africa in Junker 52's and Dakotas and had ferried Venturas from Takoradi to South Africa.

The Bulawayo Ndola Elizabethville flight was smooth, with contact men waiting to receive the crew at the respective air fields. The first trouble occurred about an hour's flight away from Leopoldville. One of the engines was losing pressure. A passenger, taken aboard at Luluaborg on the persuasion of the crew's contact man there, enquired about the black smudges on the side window. An oil leak. Bentel, throttling back on the draining engine and stepping up power on the other, landed safely. The passenger, director of a large French transport firm, immediately sent a mechanic to help Isaacs replace a broken stud and bolt, a hand-drilling job that took two hours.

The Immigration officer at Stanleyville was a Briton.

"You fellows going to Rome?"

"Yes."

"Sure you not going to the Jews?"

That evening, in the hotel lounge, he passed them.

"When you get to Palestine..." he began.

"We're not going to Palestine."

"Well, when you get to the Jews, see you do a good job".

The next stop was Point Noire airfield, run by the French Air Force, water was precious there and, like everybody else, the South Africans quenched their thirst with champagne. The flight, continuing to Douala, was uneventful. Near here Africa begins its rotund bulge to the west. The men stayed in Douala a day and two nights, servicing the plane and checking routes. Unhappy with their road maps, they decided to follow the coastline.

They expected to reach Lagos in four hours and, in good weather, would have. But after three hours' flying, they were enveloped in sheets of rain, the plane a lonely speck reduced to 100 M.P.H. in a sky of growing menace. Visibility was poor and Bentel came down to 150 feet above the confusing medley of rivers of the region. He flew up and down four of them but there was no sign for comfort. The men were fast reaching the point of no return.

"I'll fly round another five minutes," said Bentel.

Nothing showed up.

"It's back to Douala", Bentel decided.

The deluge was even worse on the way back. The Anson hugged the coastline, purring 10 feet above the waves of the raging storm. It was the eeriest flight in any of the men's experience. Morris Segal tried in vain to make contact with Douala.

It was dark when they came over Douala. The plane's radio was dead. The rain, fortunately, had stopped. Bentel flicked his landing lights on and off. Tensely, the peering fliers waited for a response. One minute passed, two, three four... Suddenly, to their intense relief they saw ten to twelve cars speeding towards the airfield and then lining up on both sides of the runway with headlights on. Bentel, mistrusting his first attempt to land, did a reciprocal and

essayed again. Isaacs had his head out of the one window, Morris Segal his out of the other. The bump on the tarmac brought the assurance. The tanks had fuel for another ten minutes.

The flight had been an ordeal and the men spent the weekend at Douala to recover from it and to have their radio repaired.

They made Lagos without trouble on the second attempt. They refueled, obtained weather reports and continued, experiencing their next tight situation in the Spanish Sahara while trying to land at Villa Cisneros. A violent sand storm obscured the airfield and Bentel had to land by radio control beam. The plane was brought to a stop by eight men who grabbed it. The first to get out of the plane was Guri, the dog, but the wind bowled him over and over again along a distance of 50 yards. A runner retrieved him.

Agadir in Morocco was a surprise. The airfield gave the impression of just another lonely outpost in Africa, and, after filling in the necessary customs and other forms and sealing the aircraft for the night, the men, negligently clad, went by jeep to the town. But at the end of the ten-minute drive, hovels and dirty streets gave way to a heavily-wooded park, a riot of flowers, avenues of trees, the sea and a sumptuous 15-story hotel, resplendent above any known to the men in their native South Africa. It teemed with the well-dressed and the men were embarrassed by their garb. To make matters worse, Guri behaved inexplicably. He had always remained contentedly in hotel rooms when the fliers dined but this time he whined and scratched. Isaacs had to stay with him while the other two went down.

In Casablanca Morris Segal caught a chill and when the plane reached Algiers was ill indeed. He rose shakily after three days in bed. The fight resumed, but the troubles of the three were not yet over. Difficulties caused by a strike at the airfield in Sicily could only be solved by a generous supply of Yankee dollars. Thus refueled for the last leg, the Anson sailed down on to the tarmac at Ciampino Airport, Rome, to complete a flight of thirty days.

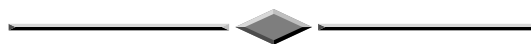
Not by design, but by local decision, the Anson was kept in Rome for the "secret" flying school set up there by Haganah. It was the plane in which several "aces" of the future IAF received their initial training in Rome. Just installed as Commander of the school was ex-SAAF pilot, Jack Weinronk, of Port Elizabeth.



Maurice Ostroff, looking through the window of the PAAC Dakota as it was flying over Tanganyika on May 30, spotted oil pouring down the port wing. He quietly informed the engineer and the plane turned back to Tabora airfield which, at the time, was an RAF base. The group of 26 "tourists" were ushered into the RAF mess while awaiting repair of the leak.

The first sight that greeted their eyes was a "wanted" notice with pictures of the escaped Gil Gil detainees labelled prominently as "terrorists" and offering a reward for their recapture. This was the only occasion on which discipline was broken. One of the group fell into an argument with a British officer. "They are not terrorists", he said. "They're patriots...."

The other members of the group stirred uncomfortably. Fortunately, they acted detached spectator roles well enough to avoid the incident expanding into a major confrontation.

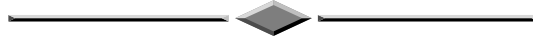


Early in June Bernard Gering was summoned to Israel on urgent business. A group of volunteers on the Dakota, including Dr. Harry Feldman, of Brakpan, Sam Tucker, of Benoni and Louis Taitz, of Springs, maintained the pretense of not knowing him. But this mime broke down during the flight. The plane developed engine trouble after leaving Ndola. Commander

Chapter 3

Kurt Kaye made an excellent forced landing at Abercorn. In pitch darkness some hours later, an old bus picked up the passengers and took them to an old RAF emergency strip with quarters. Here the group was stuck for five days. There was nothing to do except go lion-hunting.

At least, that was what four of the men, including Dr. Feldman and Taitz, essayed to do, with 303's borrowed from the airfield's chief, Mr. Savage Read. Gering marched along with the hunters, armed with a stick. The hunters spotted no animals. After three days, Gering flew back to Johannesburg. Two days later a plane brought a spare engine and the Dakota resumed its flight.



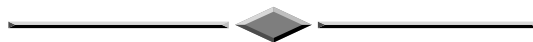
Haganah was operating in Rome in a little world of wink, nod, blind eye, secret radio and mute acquiescence of the authorities. The overwhelming majority of the South African volunteers touched this world only marginally. They were met at Ciampino Airport, taken either to the Eden or Boston hotels, kept in Rome from one day to a week with strict instructions to maintain secrecy - which was a joke because all Rome seemed to know who they were and why they had come - and then sent on by Dakota to Israel.

But for eight South Africans, coming at different times, Rome or what flowed from It, was more than an interlude of a few days. These eight included three pilots, Danny Rosin, Joe Katzew, and Roy Schapera; two pilot instructors, Jack Weinronk and Kalman Meyers as well as Norman Isaacs and Basil Herman;

Three characters in Haganah's shadowy world impinged on them. The first was a man whose code name was Assam (Shalom Levin) who had overall responsibility for Haganah's operations in Rome. The second was Dan Agron, son of the then editor of the Jerusalem Post, Gershon Agronsky, whose concerns were both the "secret" flying school that Haganah was operating at the Urbe airport near Rome and pilot volunteers and other air force personnel coming through via Rome; and the third was a Finnish born mercenary and adventurer, Leo Seigerkranz, about whom fact and fiction cannot be disentangled. Seigerkranz had been in South Africa some years when World War 2 broke out. He enlisted in the SAAF and flew in Air Transport between Pretoria and Cairo, later Italy. Legend has it that he came to South Africa via America on a tramp steamer. He joined the ship in a humble capacity and was its owner when it reached Cape Town. It is not important that the story is wildly untrue. Seigerkranz was the true property of cinema in his style of speech, his bluff hearty manner and the centrality he came to own wherever he was.

Not being a South African, he chose Rome as the place of his discharge at the end of World War 2. Report had it that he had become the owner of a hotel, a coffee bar and other enterprises during his war shuttles there.

This was the man, known then as the "Mayor of Ciampino", who in two and three shuttles a week, flew the South African volunteers to Israel from Rome in a Dakota whose miracle was that it stayed in the air. The seats were either loose or non-existent, depending on whether the shuttle would be taking military equipment or not. It is the common Machalnik memory that the run from Rome to Athens, thence to Israel, was highly uncomfortable and tight, to say the least.



An end of May flight from Palmietfontein brought, among other volunteers to Rome, a man who was later to be talked about in all conversation as "special". What was special about Bothaville's Syd Cohen was that undeniable thing called character, meaning a reserved force

in him which acted directly by presence and without means. In the evolution of Israel's fighter force, this undemonstrable force in Syd Cohen was to exercise a profound influence on those who became associated with him in Fighter Squadron 101. "Everything I know," said the ever-ebullient Ezer Weizman, later an O.C. of the Israel Air Force,¹⁹ "I learnt from Syd Cohen." Weizman is not a humble man, but when he speaks of Syd Cohen, his accents fill with respect.

Captain Cohen, Flight Commander of SAAF Fighter Squadron 4 in World War 2, visited Palestine twice while he was in the Middle East. "I got some kind of taste for it," he said. In April 1948 no power on earth could have pinned him to Johannesburg, though he was then a third year medical student making up for the lost years of the war. He sought out Yoel Palgi who snatched him. Cohen came up with two other ex-SAAF pilots, Issy Noach and Les Shagam.

Agron shunted the three pilots off to Geneva. There Cohen and Shagam were informed they would be leaving next day for Czechoslovakia where they would learn to fly Messerschmitts. The irony of the Jews fighting for their lives with the dreaded German plane of World War 2 was not lost on Cohen. He learned soon enough how this had come about. On April 23, 1948, Haganah had made a deal with the Czechs for ten Messerschmitts, an option on another fifteen, and Czech testing out of Israeli and Machal pilots in the flying of the planes as well as the dispatch of Czech mechanics to Israel to assemble them.

The first group of pilots tested out by the Czechs had consisted of eight Israelis, five of whom were too inexperienced to make the grade. The three who came through were Modi Alon, Ezer Weizman and the ex-SAAF kibbutz-settler, Eddie Cohen.

Syd Cohen and Shagam, showing South African passports in a Czechoslovakia that had been taken over by the Communists a month before, were not well-received. As instructed, Cohen mentioned the name of Otto Felix. This worked magic and the South Africans were no longer shunted around. They were transported in company with two American Jewish pilots to Ceske Budejovice, to join a handful of other pilots already there. This second group included Boris Senior.

The group was handed over to two Czech instructors who had flown in the RAF's Free Czech Squadron in World War 2 and spoke English. Members of the group who hadn't flown since the end of the war, were first checked out in an Arado, a two-seater trainer resembling a Harvard, and then each pilot was given about three hours dual training in a Messerschmitt trainer. The heroes of the enterprise were the Czech instructors, hardly able to see from awkward cockpits and not really helped by the expedient of removing the fuselage tanks.

Circuits and landings followed and then, finally, the pilots went solo. The Messerschmitts were devils (Syd Cohen's words) but well within the capacities to handle of this experienced group of South Africans and Americans. A Czech pupil on a parallel course crashed and was killed while the Machal group was there.

At the end of the course the men threw a party for their instructors, spent a few days in Zatec and Prague, and then boarded an Israeli bound Skymaster, taking with them equipment and light arms. They arrived at Ekron (Akir) on the eve of the first truce.



Three Irgun men, Morrie Egdes, Eddy Magid and Stanley Behr, of Cape Town, left Paimietfontein under orders to establish contact with Irgun in Italy. The plane on which the trio flew was a Pan African Air Charter Dakota. Fellow passengers were a group of six

¹⁹ Ezer Weizman - appointed president of Israel in 1995

Chapter 3

League of Haganah volunteers led by Yoel Palgi. This was the plane that brought Syd Cohen. At Rome airport the ferry plane to Israel came under direct control of Palgi, who, despite the entreaties of Cohen and Charles Mandelstam²⁰, refused to allow any Irgun men on his plane. The plane went off to Israel without the three. No great disaster. The trio made contact with the Irgun, visited displaced persons camps and flew into Israel in an army plane from Czechoslovakia.



"Shalom:"

Hyman Harber, of Johannesburg, was taken aback at first by this street greeting, then became accustomed to it. The people of Rome, clearly sympathetic to the Jewish cause, seemed resolved to show it.

He bought a newspaper and found details in it of the number of volunteers in the city at the time (early June) and where they were staying:

"Ah well..." still the South African volunteers continued to move about only in two's and three's. Part of the fun of Rome's streets was to observe other volunteers (and they were from all over the world) doing the same.

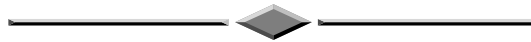
Harber had a "mama" and a "papa" in Rome, an Italian family which had befriended and cared for him during World War 2.

He knocked at the door of their apartment.

"Papa! Look who is here!"

Warm greetings. Embraces.

They guessed where Harber was going, but he fobbed them off with a yarn. But it worried him that, still maintaining secrecy, he did not return to say goodbye.



In Rome Dr. Jack Penn found all regular plane services to Israel had ceased.

The few days of subsequent cloak and dagger maneuver were amusing enough to create an Italian comic opera as good as Fra Diavolo. Penn was recognized and accosted in the street by a man named Griffiths, who reminded him that he had delivered Griffiths first-born when he had been a general practitioner in Benoni fifteen years earlier. The two repaired to a pub. During the conversation Penn learned that Griffiths was piloting a plane to Oklahoma - the code word for Israel - on the very next day. Oklahoma, said Penn, was his destination. Next day the two flew into Israel.

Basil Herman, who left South Africa on a flight early in June, met Assaf by arrangement at a certain cafe in Rome to identify himself. "I don't want to funnel you to Israel yet". Assaf said. "First, a truce is in the offing; secondly, I am not satisfied with the American fellow I have."

There was a meeting of minds. The duties of the American referred to were to meet the volunteer planes, pay the hotel bills and take the volunteers to the airport for the last leg. The

²⁰ Charles Mandelstam apparently also flew into Haifa with the Irgun trio, his name being included on the same passenger arrival list for the 20th of June, 1948.

previous night he had dined and wined the volunteers of Herman's group at a nightclub. Everything was "on the house".

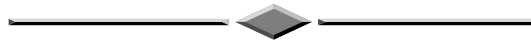
Herman was vexed. In South Africa he and Inez Bernstein had joined forces to address lunch-hour and after-work fundraising meetings of "the small chaps" of Johannesburg Jewry, workers whose contributions had been out of proportion to their modest means. At the nightclub the American had spent 20,000 lira.

"I want you to take over from this chap", Assaf said. Herman regarded it as his duty to do so. He set up his headquarters at the Eden Hotel, noting wryly that every bell boy and clerk knew the truth about the "students" and transients "on their way to the Olympic Games in London".

Some American volunteers gave Herman a lot of trouble, rightly claiming a breach of faith. Apparently recruiting agents had promised them \$100 on their arrival in Rome. Herman had no authority to pay this money, nor had Assaf. Some of the Americans did what would have been unthinkable to any South African volunteer: they returned home there and then.

The climax came when one American went hysterical, ran to the window-sill of the third floor room and threatened to jump into the street unless he was given his money. This could have created a scandal which the Italian police could not have ignored. Victory went to the American. He was given his \$100 and put on the next plane to New York.

Herman stayed a month, arriving in Israel in the last days of the first truce.



Norman Isaacs found that his 30-day flight in the Avro- Anson round the west coast of Africa was only the beginning of his adventures. At Ciampino airport was a C-46 ferrying a Messerschmitt 109 from Czechoslovakia, which had come down with engine trouble. The plane had been "impounded". The Italian officials, however acquiescent, could not overlook that the cannons of the ME were fully loaded with 20mm shells. Isaacs, still new to Haganah's "arrangements" in Italy, was surprised to see the "arrested" crew take off in another C-46. They were on their way back to Zatec. .

"See what you can do with the plane", Agron said.

Isaacs and an American engineer found the source of the trouble: water in the ignition. They also learnt what exactly was involved in the ferrying: in the main cabin was the complete ME and in the freight hold a spare engine.

Isaacs teamed up with Leo Seigerkranz, flying four trips with him to Israel and back, not once having his passport stamped, coming or going. The aircraft's manifests read, "Typewriters, water pump spares" and so on.

Seeking "a more settled existence", Isaacs alighted at Tel Aviv Airport in August, this time to stay. The period was the second truce. He was dressed in a neat light-weight suit, pork pie hat, overcoat on his arm - hardly the garb for the immediate adventure at the Dead Sea which was to befall him.

The group with which Joe Katzew came to Rome early in June was sent on to Israel next day, but Katzew was asked to remain in the hotel, the Boston - reason to be given later. Agron phoned him from the Eden Hotel. "Come and see me, Joe." "I am expecting another pilot from South Africa, by name Roy Schapera", Agron exclaimed. "I have a special job for both of you."

In the meantime would Joe look after Guri, the dog?

Chapter 3

"Why not?" Katzew shrugged.

Only the exclusive Excelsior Hotel deigned to take dogs. Among the guests at that particular time were the screen celebrities, Orson Welles and Myrna Loy. Two days with the dog were enough for Katzew and he put Guri on Seigerkranz's next shuttle to Israel.

The job for which he had been asked to stay was hare-brained. He and Schapera were to sneak their way to Rhodes and steal back two Ansons impounded at the island's field. No further details were given. Katzew had no relish for cloak and dagger but did not demur.

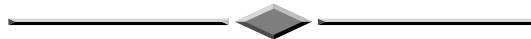
In a street in Rome, he detected from look, apparel, manner and veldskoene, a fellow South African. Correct. Roy Schapera.

The two pilots stayed in Rome for a month, waiting to learn more about their mission. In the meantime they got an insight into Agron at work. His room had been transformed into a communications center. He was in touch with planes and all other Haganah communications centers in Europe.

"I am not ready to brief you", Agron apologized.

The two men filled the days putting in flying practice in strange Italian light planes (they had not flown since 1945), sightseeing and visiting a displaced persons' camp, which left them shaken. The imperturbable Seigerkranz at work, the arrival at Urbe of newly purchased Norsemen, Israel-bound, and Haganah's Roman world, became etchings on their minds. Katzew also met the PAAC Dakotas bringing in more volunteer groups from South Africa and assumed their direction before the next shuttle.

So the two pilots waited - until the day Agron told them their mission was off. Katzew and Schapera arrived in Israel in the first days of the second truce. They were to be "founder members" of 35 Flight - as motley a band of men as only Israel in 1948 could have gathered together.



Two non-Jewish women, Sister Audrey Benedict and Sister Marie Roux, left on a Dakota flight from Palmietfontein at the end of June, answering a cabled summons from Dr. Penn. They were the only women aboard. The volunteers on the plane were unknown to them.

The southbound Union Castle liner steamed slowly through the Suez Canal, (Sister Benedict had written in a newspaper article seven months earlier). I leaned over the rail, my eyes on a horizon of desert. To the east lay Palestine, where storm clouds were gathering. The faint rumble of thunder was to be heard all over the world, but nowhere quite so audibly as in Britain, the country I had left a few weeks before and where I had been working for the past year. The British like to be liked - jolly good sportsmen and all that - and many were the arguments I had had with Britishers on their Palestine policy. I was not a Jew, but I am a Zionist. One day, I hoped, I would see for myself...

Now she was on the way to see for herself. The flight to Rome was uneventful although after the indoctrination the two nurses had received in South Africa on the need to preserve secrecy, they were startled to hear a voice call out at Ciampino: "All those for Israel here:"

Next day the group left for Athens, their reception there a cool one. Their Dakota was alarmingly overloaded and the Greeks suspicious about many things. The group was herded into a little room and not permitted to leave the airport until the flight resumed.

"Benedict?" said the newly appointed official at the Tel Aviv airfield.

"You're not Jewish."

"No."

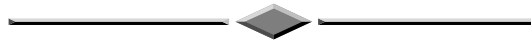
"Your passport has not been endorsed for Israel."

His suspicion grew. His un-English ears related Benedict to Bernadotte. "I'm not exactly putting you under arrest," he said finally, "but until we find out more about you, regard yourself as detained."

Marie Roux, whose papers were approved, refused to be separated from Benedict. The two were taken by jeep to a private house about a half hour drive from the airport and left in a room, not locked up, but not free either.

They were released next morning, Lionel Meltzer coming to their rescue. Transported to Haifa in an ambulance, the women began a life of meritorious nursing service to Israel.

A Dakota, flying from Rome, glided on to the tarmac at Athens Airport and came to a stop next to a shining bright UN plane. The volunteer contingent, acting as a tourist group, disembarked for a break in the airport restaurant, settling down at a table next to which the UN crew was having tea. A Greek ground hostess who called out gave the game away: "All passengers to Haifa please embark." The suspicions of the UN group were confirmed and when the Dakota took off, they took off too. The Dakota, whose passengers included Dr. Ossie Treisman, was the faster plane of the two. Instead of going to Haifa, it made for Tel Aviv where the group was quickly bundled out. The plane arrived at Haifa, empty²¹.



Early in July Kotlowitz received the go-ahead signal to come with his Irgun groups (which had also assimilated Hebrew Legion volunteers²²). He hired two planes from PAAC and led the first group himself. Khartoum threw up piquancy. The local newspaper of that day had a handsome picture of a parade of the Sudanese contingent (the men the volunteers would be fighting), about to leave for Palestine.

Irgun had two centres in Italy, one the castle and grounds of a former nobleman at Villa Forragiano on Lake Maggiore and the other a DP camp at Ladispoli due west of Rome on the coast.

The South Africans were dispersed in these two centers where they continued training for some weeks while waiting for the busy ships S.S. Dolores and the Kedmah to take them and displaced persons to Israel. They went on false papers as refugees arriving late in July and early August. (More of their voyages later).

Dan Agron had studied Jack Weinronk's World War 2 record: A lieutenant in SAAF's 24 Squadron, flying Bostons in the desert war; transferred to Oudtshoorn to take over training of navigators under the Empire Training Scheme; transferred to Training Command, Port Elizabeth; shuttle service flying Venturas to Cairo.

Weinronk's arrival was timely. Hal Green, the American Commander and instructor at Haganah's flying school, was summoned to Israel to fill the post of Director of Air Training. Green had put the first group of young Israelis through their initial training and the group had now gone for their second course to Czechoslovakia. Agron asked Weinronk to take charge

²¹ One of the conditions of the truce terms was a ban on the movement of military personnel. Both sides flagrantly ignored it.

²² The editor was one of these assimilated Hebrew Legion volunteers to fly north with Kotlowitz.

Chapter 3

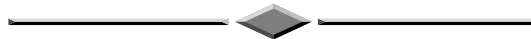
of the school. A second pupil pilot group had come from Israel. It included young men who, like many of the first course, were to become personalities in Israel's Air Force.

Weinronk was tremendously impressed by the quality of the young Israelis. He set about perfecting the organization of the school. His instructors were Italian pilots of World War 2 and American veterans, most without instructors' licenses. Second in command to Weinronk was Kalman Meyers, a man of considerable experience in instruction of RAF pupil pilots in Rhodesia. The intermediate training of the pilots, after initial training in FL 3's, was in planes called Abrosini Griffio, made of plywood and flying like a Harvard. These planes called for careful handling in the landing run.

The record of the school under Weinronk was three minor taxi-ing accidents. Two lads tipped wings, cost of repair 15 dollars. The third taxied slightly off the runway, a bit of fabric under the wings of his plane being torn. A fourth, with three hours solo experience, had a lucky escape when an engine cut at 400 feet. He disappeared into the deep, wide valley which borders Urbe. Weinronk leaped into a plane to find the wreckage. There was none. Pupil and plane were safe on a field so small that only a Claude Duval would have essayed a landing there. The pilot had been saved by innocence and luck. Weinronk asked how he had managed to fly between the high tension wires and a telephone wire over the valley to make the field. "What wires?" the lad asked.

Weinronk's services were not limited to command and instruction. He tested American pilots on their way to Israel. On one occasion he joined Yehuda Fishman, of Israel, to buy arms and ammunition from an American dump in Naples. He organized the flights of South African volunteers from Rome to Israel and, during the second truce, landed a cargo of war material at Ramat David. The sight of the Israeli flag flying over the duty pilot's box, moved him deeply.

In November he received a cable from South Africa that an uncle had died. He flew home, leaving the school under the joint command of Kalman Meyers and an American non-Jew, Jim Chadouin. Soon after Israel initiated flying schools in Israel itself.



Danny Rosin came up to Rome in June with a group of twelve other volunteers. Agron detached him from his companions. "I'd like you to instruct at the flying school," he said. Weinronk supported the plea. Rosin was unenthusiastic.

His first theater of service in World War 2 had been in Abyssinia, followed by secondment to RAF and to the Americans in Spanish Morocco. He flew Blenheims, mainly in Mediterranean patrol.

During another period he was back in South Africa instructing in the flying of Tiger Moths.

Demobilized a year after war's end (he was then 25), he opened a crockery and cutlery business in Johannesburg and was in this staid occupation when the Palestine storm began mounting.

One evening he found himself among a group of volunteers at the Oxford Synagogue in Parktown. A small number were ex-servicemen, the majority youngsters who had just attained military age. The group was divided into platoons to whom it was conveyed there would be week-end training at Bacher's Farm. This was not for a qualified pilot and instructor. Accordingly Rosin went to the Zionist Federation to give details of his military background. Ten days later he was in Rome.

Chapter 3

A special mission ended his days of irresolution. Agron, operating from his hotel room, summoned him. A Haganah arms plane from Czechoslovakia had developed engine trouble and had force-landed at Treviso, near Venice.

Agron pressed a wad of notes into Rosin's hands: "Get the fellows out of gaol and help to fly the plane back to Czechoslovakia". Rosin made his way to Treviso to find the crew released and the money expected. The non-Jewish pilot of the plane, an American, indicated that he was pulling out. He had had enough. Danny and the co-pilot, an American Jew, flew the plane back to Zatec. This was Rosin's introduction to American Machal that was operating an arms, planes and ammunition run to Israel from Zatec. The great figure there was Sam Pomerance, an aeronautical engineer.

A Vrystaat accent halted Rosin. It belonged to Tev Zimmerman, the gifted ex-SAAF mechanical expert from Winburg, who had been sent to Zatec to effect repair jobs. The Americans attempted to persuade Danny to join their outfit, but his mind was on Israel. He hopped on to an Israeli bound plane which glided on to the tarmac at Ekron on July 21, the opening days of the second truce. The slim pilot who descended little dreamed of the experiences that the war would have in store for him from this former RAF airfield.



One Palestine Pound Banknote used in 1948

Equivalent at the time to one pound Sterling

These notes became legal tender on August 17, 1948.

Note that the name, Israel, does not appear. The reason:- plans for the new currency were made while the state was in the process of being established and before the name of the state had been decided.

The banknotes could not be printed in Palestine as the British Mandate had not yet expired. There was also a lack of expertise. The notes were printed by the American Banknote Company and to obviate the need for State Department approval for printing banknotes of an as yet, non-existent foreign country, the notes gave no indication that they were intended as legal tender. The words "Legal tender for payment of any amount" was subsequently overprinted..

CHAPTER 4

THE STATE IS BORN

HECTIC DAYS FOR FIRST SOUTH AFRICANS

We are now required to follow the trails of the volunteers who had arrived before the proclamation of the State and were witnesses to, and participants in, the drama of its immediate birth.

Claude Duval and Del Webb, non-Jews from South Africa, were among the first. They stayed to become two of the "greats" of South African Machal. Of Claude Duval "the greatest civilian flier of the war", every Air Force volunteer was to have his anecdote. And where Claude Duval was, no matter how dangerous the mission, there, too, was Del Webb. The war forged a deep friendship between the two. It was to be buttressed by their growing admiration of the Israelis and their high regard for the air volunteers from South Africa who came after them.

Duval and Webb became all-purpose flyers for the Jews, both before and after the State: water for besieged Jerusalem, supplies to cut-off Negev settlements, carriers of dignitaries in and out of the country, and occasional bombing raids. Del Webb's logbook records operations under "local flights" from April 29 to May 5 and again from May 27 to August 28, 1948.

It started like this:

Duval and Webb, flying a Dakota for Pan African Air Charter, were in the air between Athens and Cairo, en route to Johannesburg on a routine flight from London, when they received a radio message instructing them to change course and proceed to Lydda Airport where the company's agents would have further instructions for them.

The day was April 22, 1948 - one of the first days of the astonishing exodus of 70,000 Arabs from Haifa. After a 24-hour battle, Haganah had gained control of the city.

The message to the crew of four, Duval, Webb and the two others, the engineer and co-pilot, was that, until further notice, their mission was to fly out Arabs from Palestine and fly in Jews.

The Dakota flew out Arabs. Its last peace-time flight ended at Haifa Airport on April 24. Duval had taken an exodus load to Beirut, had returned to Haifa and was ascending for Lydda when Haifa radio ordered him to return to the tarmac as Lydda was in the possession of Arab troops.

Duval disembarked his Lydda-bound passengers, parked the aircraft and, with his companion, left for the Lev-Hacarmel Hotel in Haifa, which the men reached some time later after having been forced to undergo arms searches at roadblocks manned variously by the British, Haganah, Irgun and Stern group forces.

Duval and Webb, new to the realities of the Middle East, had not comprehended that the Jews were without an Air Force. However, a day or two later, they were huddled with some Haganah officers and frankly told how serious the situation was: the imminent invasion of the State-to-be by Arab Armies supported by the Egyptian Air Force.

"Your Dakota could be of help to us", the Haganah men said. "We have only our Air Service's few Piper Cubs."

Duval suggested that Pan African Air Charter be offered a certain sum for the outright purchase of the DC-3. The deal was sealed in a miraculously short time, and Duval and

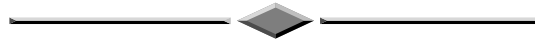
Chapter 4

Webb, both sympathizers with the Jews, volunteered to stay and fly the airplane. The co-pilot and engineer opted out.

Duval kept the South African markings on the aircraft as he was required to carry out "respectable" international flights between operations. He and Webb were in and out of the torn country. The international airlines were no longer flying to Palestine, an inconvenience which the Yishuv would have keenly felt had the Dakota of these two fliers not alleviated it. In Geneva, on May 8, the Dakota picked up, among others, Munyan Mardor, one of Ben Gurion's arms purchasers in Europe and Colonel "Mickey" Marcus, a Jewish-American soldier of World War 2 designated for leadership of Israel's as yet unformed Army.²³

Duval landed with fifteen minutes' petrol left in his tank. On May 12, he brought back Moshe Sharett, future Foreign Minister, returning from Lake Success and also stranded in Geneva. In the plane was Rustenburg's Cecil Wulfsohn, whose later adventures in Europe as a plane purchaser for Israel were to be as strange as the experiences of South Africans in the new-born State. Later that month the Dakota flew out the first batch of young Israelis to Geneva en route to Czechoslovakia for a course in flying Messerschmitts.

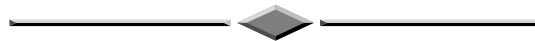
It cannot be a surprise that Claude Duval and the ebullient Ezer Weizman (later an O.C. of the Israel Air Force) should discover an affinity. Piquancy was the essence of some of Duval's missions. He arrived back at base one dawn, only to put back hurriedly the civilian seats and carpets in the plane in order to fly the Habimah Orchestra to Athens to catch its TWA connecting flight to New York. A marginal event, certainly, but illustrative of the service that was to characterize his and Webb's contribution to Israel's cause.



Arthur Helfet, the first medical volunteer from South Africa, was met at Lydda by Dr. Haim Sheba, head of the shadow Army Medical Services. That night at a meeting of all the medical sections of the Yishuv - the Haganah, the Kupat Cholim, the Jewish Agency's Medical Services, Malben and the Medical Association -- Helfet was appointed Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon, an appointment confirmed a few days later. (After May 14 this was changed to an official appointment to all the medical services of the State of Israel. Historically it was the first such post and of all the distinctions Professor Helfet has won, this is the one he cherished most).

During his first few weeks in the land, the Cape Town doctor visited and examined Haganah, Irgun and civilian wounded in hospitals in Tel Aviv and environs, advising treatment. Dr. Sheba, meantime, was searching for beds, basic medical and surgical supplies and even kitchen equipment, to equip the surgical units being formed. A windfall came by way of the chairman of the Potash works who allowed the doctors to take over equipment just arrived for a projected convalescent home.

On the day after its capture on April 22, Dr. Helfet was directed to a small Arab hospital in Haifa. A new two-pounder British gun graced the entrance and an enormous poster of the Mufti of Jerusalem dominated the main hall. Half-finished plates of food and half-smoked cigarettes were on the bedside lockers and in the dining hall. On the patients' beds were horrible Arab propaganda leaflets showing the tortures which it was suggested the Jewish Forces were likely to inflict on the captured. Which explains a lot about the Arab flight and the subsequent Arab refugee problem.



²³ Marcus, unable to understand Hebrew failed to respond to a sentry's midnight challenge and was tragically killed on the night of June 10.

Early in May, Boris Senior, anxious for news of the second Bonanza, flew his into the Sinai hoping to meet Katz and Steinberg or to make radio contact with them. Disappointed, he flew back. His relief was great on May 6 when he heard a drone over the Tel Aviv airfield and recognized the plane.

"The Messiah coming in a Bonanza", Cyril Steinberg quipped when he and Katz landed. There was little delay in pressing the plane into service. Katz's logbook:

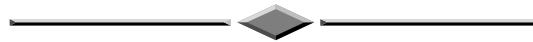
May 8: 4-hour test flight with Hugo Alperstein (Hagai Agmon) ex Kingwilliamstown, ex-Kibbutz Ma'ayan Baruch in Bonanza.

May 9: Flight to Ekron (Akir) airfield with three Army men.

May 10: Instruction in the Bonanza of David Sprinzak.²⁴

On the same day, Katz had his first sharp taste of the war. He flew to Be'er Tuvia in what was then called the Negev, to pick up three Haganah men, for a reconnaissance of a skirmish then raging. He had taken off with them and was climbing over the edge of the settlement's airfield when a bullet passed between his legs, smashing the windscreen. Below he saw Arabs firing at the plane. He continued the flight, listening to the unintelligible (to him) Hebrew radio communication of one of the Haganah's officers with base. The reconnaissance completed, he landed. As he did so the wheel was shattered, having been hit by a bullet during the flight.

That afternoon Katz attended the funerals of three men killed in the skirmish. His punctured wheel was repaired that afternoon and late in the day he flew back to Tel Aviv with memories - and these only the first - that were to remain part of his life.



Pre-State arrival Joe Leibowitz, ex-SAAF air gunner (102 sorties in Baltimore and Marauders in the desert and Italy) noted at Sde Dov airfield on May 10 the strength of the nascent State's "Air Force": two Rapides, a Fairchild and a Bonanza (ZS BWR).

No scope, he saw, for an air-gunner. Leibowitz teamed up with Elliot Rosenberg, becoming the bomb "chucker" of one of the Rapides, a fabric covered bi-plane. The door of the plane (as the doors of the other light aircraft) was removed. Leibowitz's first targets (the planes only went up at night), were Arab villages harassing Israeli ground communications and convoys. Other assignments were psychological distraction of the enemy in support of Israeli ground units. Israeli intelligence was poor. Over one Arab target, the crew ran into the fire of 20 mm guns. They had been told they would encounter nothing more than 303's.

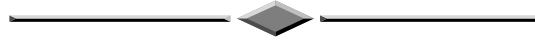
Leibowitz's plane was manned by the pilot, himself and young Sabra volunteers "keen on the job". Leibowitz would not allow the youngsters to throw the bombs. These homemade explosives had an upperpin and a lower, the lower having to be pulled out first and the upper seconds before throwing out. Leibowitz noted that as many did not explode as did. Incendiary sticks, it was to be found later, were more effective in that they distracted the Arabs from firing. The real cumulative strain for the "chucker" was in the leaning over and throwing. The possibility of some slip that might have the thrower toppling into space was never far away. The plane carried no parachutes. Communication between pilot and "chucker" was by torch. A flash from the pilot indicated Over target, a flash from the "chucker" All bombs unloaded.

²⁴ Three weeks hence Sprinzak and Matty Sukenik were to be deeply mourned casualties. Sprinzak was the son of the man who was to be the first Speaker of Israel's Parliament. Matty Sukenik was the younger brother of Yigal Yadin, Acting Chief of Staff.

As primitive as that.

But there were compensations, provided by the people in the streets. "Airmen? From South Africa?"

Leibowitz and Elliot Rosenberg were admired by the Israelis; the practical expression of which were free meals at restaurants, free haircuts, and admiration. At the age of 22, this wine obliterated memory of the sophistication's of planes and procedures of World War 2. The new raw war was accepted as it was.



On May 12 Yigal Yadin told the brutal facts to the Provisional Council of Government:

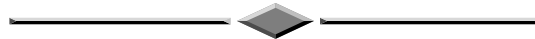
We have no Air Force. The planes have not yet arrived. It is possible that they may come before the decisive day, but I cannot rely on that... The Arab Air Forces are a hundred and fifty times the size of ours. At this time our planes operate contrary to all the rules of aerial tactics.

No other pilots would dare to take off in planes like ours. They are antiquated patrol planes or trackers. We have already had grievous losses with them... We are in a poor state... It would be best not to take into account as a military factor the planes we have...

According to Netanel Lorch, the Israeli historian, the Egyptian Air Force had two fighter squadrons of forty Spitfires, two transport squadrons (C-46s and C-47s), some of which had also been equipped as modern bombers, and a number of Harvards. The main Egyptian air base was at El-Maze. In preparation for the invasion one squadron of fighter planes and a number of transports had been moved to El Arish, an RAF Palestine air base in World War 2. The Egyptians had also constructed or repaired a number of temporary landing fields in the vicinity of El Arish.

Transjordan was bound in treaty to Britain who would support it in case of attack. Lebanon posed no threat, possessing only a few planes for training: The Syrians had a squadron of Harvards piloted by a mixed bag of Germans, Yugoslavs, Italians and Syrians who had been trained in the French Air Force. The Iraqi Air Force possessed British fighter planes, including a nucleus of Furies. In preparation for the invasion it had established its advance base in Mafrak, Transjordan.


The total number of Arab planes that could be arraigned against Israel was 131.




On the day before the proclamation of the State, Boris Senior and Smoky Simon made the first air reconnaissance over enemy territory. Flying a Bonanza, they crossed the bridge of the Daughters of Jacob in the northern Galilee and then circled the entire region, observing with sinking hearts what was afoot on the roads leading from Transjordan, Syria and Egypt into Israel. They counted hundreds of vehicles, tanks, trucks, half-tracks, armoured cars and transports, moving in for the kill from the north (the Lebanese), from the south (the Egyptians) and the east (the Syrians). The enemy's airfields, dotted with planes, were no less ominous.

Returning to Tel Aviv for their debriefing session with Army Command, the South Africans could not conceal their anxiety. Army Command took their tidings coolly.


"We know," said Yadin.



Ben Gurion proclaimed the birth of the State to the People's Directorate at 4 p.m. on Friday, May 14. The setting was the heavily-guarded City Museum of Tel Aviv. The ringing Hebrew of the leader said: "Eretz Israel was the birthplace of the Jewish people. Here their spiritual, religious and political identity was shaped.. The people kept faith... throughout their dispersion they never ceased to pray and hope for their return. We declare that, with effect from the moment of the termination of the British Mandate, being tonight, the eve of Sabbath, the 6th Iyar, 5708... The People's Council shall act as a Provisional Council of the State, and its executive organ, the People's Administration, shall be the Provisional Government of the Jewish State, to be called Israel... The State will be open for Jewish immigration and the ingathering of the exiles... We appeal to the Jewish people throughout the Diaspora to rally round the Jews of Eretz Israel..."



The proclamation of the State was an act of faith by Ben Gurion who was Churchillian in resolve, inspiration and decisiveness. On May 12, two days before the British left, he had weighed the prospects before the People's Directorate. "Do we foresee any real chance of withstanding and repelling invasion?" he asked and answered his own question: "If we are able to increase our armed forces, by mobilization in the country and immigration from abroad, if we are able to intensify our training and add to our equipment, partly through our own manufacture in the country, but mainly by transferring to the country what we have purchased abroad, we will be able to repel, indeed, to win; not, however without grievous casualties and shocks. The Yishuv must be prepared for that."



On the indisputable facts, it was difficult for the majority of Ben Gurion's colleagues to share his faith. There was not a single artillery piece in the land; it had no Air Force and its skies were wide open to the enemy; and the arms purchased abroad could not be expected immediately.

By sheer force of will, conviction and character, Ben Gurion won over the doubters. His arm was strengthened two days later by two events, one retrospectively, with a comic touch but at the time causing quivers of anxiety, the other of profound significance. The British had towed to Haifa, for search, a freighter which carried a shipment of smuggled small arms under a mountain of onions. The smell of the onions discouraged the search. On May 15 the guns became available.

The big drama came from Washington where, on the heels of Israel's proclamation, President Truman, ignoring the "second thoughts" of his State Department, recognized "the Provisional Government as the de facto government of the State of Israel". The trusteeship idea, very much alive on May 14, was dead a moment after midnight.

May 14, the day of drama, etched itself on the minds of the South African volunteers already in the land in various ways. Cyril Katz did not hear Ben Gurion's address. In the morning he had flown out of Tel Aviv in a Dakota, as second pilot to an American, Percy (Pussy) Tolchinsky. Their destination was the settlement of Kalya at the northern end of the Dead Sea and their mission the evacuation of women and children to Tel Aviv and Haifa. In the absence of further briefing, the two strangers to the land regarded this evacuation like earlier ones: routine without urgency. They were innocent of the importance of the day and of the poised Transjordanian threat to Kalya. Twice they landed and twice they left, taking twenty-

Chapter 4

eight passengers on each flight. The afternoon was wearing on when they landed for the third time.

"Will you come again?" asked the bearded kibbutz head, a plea in his eyes. The two weary pilots exchanged glances. "Won't tomorrow do? We'll be back tomorrow."

The kibbutz head did not press his plea nor say there might not be a tomorrow. And if there were a tomorrow, there might not be a day after tomorrow.

Returning from Kalya to the Yarden Hotel in Tel Aviv, Katz learnt from his friend Cyril Steinberg that the State had been proclaimed in the afternoon and that a big celebration was planned at Dizengoff Square. The news did not leave any deep impression on the then Zionistically innocent Katz. Exhausted by the day's continuous flying, he chose to go to sleep rather than celebrate, for he had to be up early to continue with the evacuation on the morrow.

On the same day Cyril Steinberg flew with a friend, Lionel, (Kappy) Kaplan, to Ekron (Akir), a former RAF base near Rehovot, which had just come into Jewish possession. There he examined sledge-hammered aircraft left by the British, hoping to salvage, if possible, navigation and bombing equipment. The search yielded little. The destruction had been shrewdly aimed. Flying back to Tel Aviv, the South African spotted some RAF Spitfires. Later the facts emerged: the Spitfires were based in the Canal Zone and were doing a final reconnaissance for the Egyptians for their air raid on Tel Aviv at dawn the next day. The Spitfires were over the power station and the Sde Dov airfield.

At 4 p.m., while the two were sitting in a street cafe, there was the bip-bip-bip of the radio and Ben Gurion's voice came on the air. Silence fell on the street, all halting in their tracks to listen, the men from Johannesburg as conscious of the significance of the craggy tones as those to whom the language was not strange. Afternoon hurried into evening (the Land has no twilight) and evening into night. Tel Aviv was blacked out, but there was gaiety in the streets, the young people marching with torches and singing the songs of freedom... The climax to 2,000 years of torrid history.

Arthur Helfet attended one of the festive dinners of that night. It was given by Golda Meyerson (Meir) and the president of the South African Zionist Federation, Mr. Nicolai Kirschner. Among the guests were leaders of the Yishuv's labor movement, foreign press correspondents and a young officer with a patch over his eye, Moshe Dayan.

For Lionel Hodes, Jack Fleisch and Horace Milunsky, May 14 was a day on the roads. A few days earlier there had been two claimants for them, the Army on the one hand, and a representative of kibbutz Ma'ayan Baruch on the other. The matter was argued out at the Tel Litwinsky camp between the camp commandant and a representative of the kibbutz. All three men (said the kibbutz representative) had had army combat experience in World War 2. Ma'ayan Baruch, not a kilometer away from the Lebanese border, expected an attack on May 15. It needed all the manpower it could get - immediately. In any case, the three had affiliations with their fellow South Africans of the kibbutz.

A compromise was reached. The men would go to the settlement as military personnel for one month, at the end of which period the position would be reviewed.

The three set out for the Galilee in a crowded bus. Most of their fellow passengers were settlers returning to defend their homes. The British were still manning military points and would remain masters until midnight. British tanks and other equipment rolled towards Haifa harbor.

At Afula where the proposed Jewish State was to border the proposed Arab State, the South Africans changed buses, reaching Tiberias by way of a long detour. There they and others

transferred to an armoured bus, for now the road would be dangerous, Rosh Pina, key Jewish town of the Upper Galilee, lay through the hills and past the blue waters of the Sea of Galilee. The South Africans' first view of the region was through the slits of the armour plating. Later the doors were opened and the driver gave a running commentary of the history and scenes that lay before them.

At Rosh Pina, the armoured bus joined a big convoy led by armoured cars. The signal was given and the convoy moved steadily into "the finger" of the Galilee. The British had given the fortress-like police station of Nebi Yusha to the Arabs who sniped at the convoy. Doors slammed and shutters closed. The pitter-pat of the bullets was the South Africans' introduction to the war.

The bus stopped at a little outhouse, the driver opened the door facing away from Nebi Yusha and three men quickly clambered in. They were members of kibbutz Kfar Giladi, one of the oldest of the northern Galilee settlements. The men had been working at the kibbutz's fish pond directly below the police station. War or no war, the work had to go on.

In the distance fires burned and the clatter of a small arms skirmish was clearly audible. The news quickly spread: Haganah was attacking a hostile Arab village. The bus moved on.

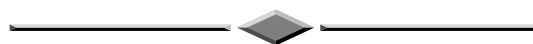
Greeting of the three men at Ma'ayan Baruch had little ceremony, for they arrived in the middle of an alarm exercise. The situation was briefly explained to them. Each settlement in the valley was expected to defend itself until the surrounding settlements could come to its aid. Kfar Szold, Dan, and other settlements near Ma'ayan Baruch had already beaten off attacks. But now organized armies, not irregulars, would bear down on the settlements whose inter-communication would be maintained by radio, heliograph, lamps and flares.

The briefing showed the situation in its harsh reality. By accepted military calculations, the kibbutz could offer little resistance to a determined assault. Its arms were about twenty five weapons, including one old 2-inch mortar with a few shells, a Chateau light machine gun with several hundred rounds and twenty or so smaller arms of diverse makes and age. The locally-made Sten gun, with an effective range of not more than fifty yards, vied for pride of place with a Tommy-gun, an old shotgun normally used for hunting buck, and French, German, English and Czech rifles. Each weapon had idiosyncrasies. An order had been issued by Josef, the military commander that ammunition was to be sparingly used, for none knew when the next lot would come.

The settlement had been well prepared against attack, both from the air and ground. Bunkers and shelters enabled the whole community to go underground and a little sick bay had been prepared in a shelter. The perimeter of the meshek was surrounded with several layers of barbed concertina wire and mines laid. Shooting and observation posts ringed the camp and dugouts were linked to one another by wide communication trenches and telephone.

Due note had been taken of Arab superstition of the night. One thousand crackers, ready to go off when tramped upon, were strategically strewn around and phosphorescent figures were ready to serve as apparitions. The exercise over, the settlers, except the sentries, gathered together for a party. Glasses clinked. The State had been proclaimed. What would come would come.

The metallic clang of the alarm sent everyone dashing to action stations. What menaced in the darkness? The word went round: "Relax. False alarm. The alarm had been struck accidentally." Kibbutz Ma'ayan Baruch slept peacefully on the night of May 14.



The situation at kibbutz Shoal, at the other end of the State and in what was then, though not today, the Negev was interesting. Across the road from the kibbutz was the encampment

Chapter 4

of a famous Bedouin sheik, Abbu Sheik Suleiman Huzeil. There had never been any difficulties between the young kibbutz with its South African, Israeli and Buchenwald garinim (nuclei) and the Arabs. Indeed, the two peoples got on well together, the Kibbutz tractor had often been placed at the disposal of the Arabs. Flight did not enter the minds of these Arabs. The area was one of several examples of good relationships, illustrating that there need never have been an Arab refugee problem. The relationship between the kibbutz and the Arab encampment was such that a young Czech Jew of Shoal would go over nightly to the encampment to translate Arab radio news service for the sheik into everyday Arabic, for although the sheik was a judge of the Bedouin High Court, he had his difficulties with "literary Arabic."

Kibbutz Shoal consisted then of three huts, one used as a dining room and kitchen, the other two as living quarters. There was the customary kibbutz water tower and by May 14 a barbed wire fence around the settlement and a two-storey security house with a parapet and emplacement. From the heights of the tower, the kibbutzniks on guard duty could see the village of Hatzirim and a glimpse of the aluminium roofs of Mishmar Hanegev. The Iraq el Suedan fortress, of which much will be told in later pages, was nearby but not visible from Shoal. In the whole large area between Gaza and Hebron there were not more than three or four trees and the talk in the Kibbutz dining room was not of war but how the kibbutz's recently-purchased cows, then on a settlement near Netanya, would fare when brought down to this arid region. (To jump a little in history, the kibbutz won the prize for the best herd in the country a few years later).

Not that the menace of war had not threatened the young kibbutz. In a little fort up the road had been a detachment of the Transjordan Frontier Police but in the way things happen in war, this force inexplicably disappeared shortly before May 14 and the kibbutz men took the fort over.

The only stringency before May 14 had been an order that no one could leave the immediate kibbutz compound without a guard and that a sentry had always to be on duty at the watchtower. "It was there", said Issy Greenberg, "that I read most of my Greek tragedy".

The entire garin was not more than thirty young people; the majority women, among them the Rosenberg sisters, of Johannesburg, and Nina Herbstein, of Cape Town. Zvi Zipper, of Rhodesia, and Gideon Rosenberg, were on service on other fronts in the country. Other men of the kibbutz were earning for the struggling settlement in various jobs near Netanya. The arms of the kibbutz were a few British rifles, three Stens, Molotov cocktails a couple of hand grenades and 1,000 rounds of ammunition, the standard arsenal of the Negev kibbutzim.

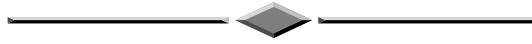
There was little foreshadowing on May 14 of the fierce encounters that were to take place in the region, notably the seven Israeli attempts to dislodge the invading Egyptians from the Iraq el Suedan fortress, "the monster on the hill", before finally succeeding.

One more cameo of May 14: On this day, in Tel Aviv, Joseph Jedeiken, of Middelburg, met Yigal Allon, commander of the elite Palmach Commando Force. Jedeiken, a veteran of the Abyssinian and North African campaigns, on arrival five days earlier with the Smoky Simon group, had filled in the days teaching Sabras to drive armoured cars and half tracks.

"I want to form a new unit"; Allon confided to Jedeiken.

The unit was to be the 9th Battalion of Palmach, operating in the Negev, the unit that was to gather in many South Africans in the months to follow. Gedud Teisha, they called it, following the Hebrew.

Jedeiken became Allon's personal jeep driver. Next day he was in the Negev.



The South African presence in Israel on the day it was born comprised the two already established kibbutzim of Ma'ayan Baruch and Shoval and a core of urban residents in the three major cities of Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and Haifa. There was also the non-ideological work platoon of General Zionists, the Zups as they called themselves. After three years of hachshara (preparation) at the kibbutzim of Ramat Yochanan and Kfar Glickson, the Zups would be founding their own settlement of Timorim within six weeks. Meanwhile they were operating as a work party based on Ein Sara, a private farm near Nahariya in the western Galilee. Some members of the platoon, however, were earning for their collective, not on the farm, but in building and harbour jobs in Haifa. Among the latter was Karl Silberman who had led the 1945 mixed group into the land.

Of the main land groups, Ma'ayan Baruch, Shoval and Ein Sara, it was perhaps that of Ein Sara which had experienced most vividly the prologue to the State's rebirth. By the partition decision, western Galilee fell into the Arab area. The work platoon stayed put on orders from the Army. Haifa, as a work centre, now became closed to the peripatetic workers by the blocking Arab city of Acre. Only irregular trips by sea were at first possible.

Ein Sara's owner, an elderly German Jew, quit his farm on the partition decision and gave over his handsome two-storey stone house to the group. In the months before, the Jewish Agency had built for them on the plot, three wooden pre-fabs, a dining room and a storeroom.

What had given the work party their keenest sense of drama was the beaching in the pre-partition period of two small immigrant ships. The two beachings took place within a period of twenty four hours. The first ship came in at night and the South African settlers were among those assigned to help the immigrants, men, women and children, off the ships. The reception group was under orders to resist physically if the British, getting wind of the ship's arrival, would attempt to detain the immigrants and send them to Cyprus. However the British were caught by surprise. The immigrants vanished into the population by a then well-organized "melting" procedure. A beached hulk was all the British found.

The second ship "boomed" and came in by day. The British commander immediately had the area cordoned off. What followed was comedy. The Jewish leader in the area gathered together some Jewish girls, loaded them with bottles of liquor, and sent them down to the beach "to chat" the British soldiers. The soldiers were not averse to the overtures of the girls. They became preoccupied enough to make it possible for the reception team to whisk the immigrants out of sight.

This was not the end of the comedy. The British commander, on friendly terms with the Jews, sought from them "a handful of chaps" to show his superiors in Haifa that his men had rounded up at least some of the illegals. The "chaps" the Jews gave him were those they specially wanted on Cyprus for the instruction of the DPs in Hebrew, physical training and psychological preparation for their new lives in the Land.

Also organized, in the passage of time, was the "Mary Line" to Haifa. Mary was a girl friendly with an officer of British Transport Command in Nahariya. She persuaded him to allow a daily truck to Haifa to bring back supplies and mail for the settlers who, wearing khaki and English-speaking passed as British soldiers when they themselves had occasion to use the Line.

But this was a land of tragedy and death as well as of comedy and guile. The South Africans felt the pain of Yechiam on their pulse. Yechiam, a collective settlement occupying the site of a Crusader castle, came to denote, in a larger meaning, the ill-fate of a convoy from Haifa with supplies and reinforcements for the Western Galilee. The convoy succeeded in slipping past Acre undetected and safely reached the South Africans at Ein Sara which had become

Chapter 4

the "clearing house" for the western Galilee. That night South Africans celebrated the convoy's arrival with a party.

On its way inland to Yechiam, the convoy was ambushed near a bend in the road. The first few cars managed to escape and reached besieged Yechiam but the majority with their drivers and passengers were mowed down.

The tidings hit the people of Israel hard but none harder than the South African Zup platoon who had entertained the ill-fated guests the night before.

History at this stage was moving fast. The exodus of 70,000 Arabs from Haifa in April and the Jewish encirclement of Acre foreshadowed Jewish victory in the north. Seen 27 years later, the big event in the experience of the South African work platoon at Ein Sara was not Ben Gurion's proclamation of the state ("We expected it") but the UN's partition decision. They had sat in their primitive prefabs with ears glued to the radio. When the final count was given and, with it, the recognition of Jewish statehood by the international community, the settlers hugged one another, sang and danced. "After that" said Karl Silberman, "no one ever doubted that the Jewish State would arise."

They listened to Ben Gurion's ringing Hebrew tones on May 14 as young people confident of their future in the land.

The work platoon had no men in the army, their service in the founding on the morrow of the border kibbutz of Timorlm being seen both by themselves and the Army as equivalent to military service.

Kibbutz Ma'ayan Baruch, on the other hand, had already given to Israeli Air Service two ex-SAAF pilots, Edward Cohen and Hugo Alperstein. Abe Nurick was soon to join them.

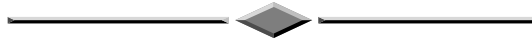
Kibbutz Shoal in the South had several South African settlers in the Army, among them Issy Greenberg (Granoth) of the Drom Afrika 1 crew, Zvi Zipper, of Rhodesia and Gideon Rosenberg, of Johannesburg. Rosenberg fell two weeks before the State was declared in one of the many battles for the hills of Jerusalem.

To recapitulate: The men and women of the three settlements constituted one of the South African faces in Israel at its birth. There was, also, as indicated an urban S. A. presence. With the coming of the volunteers, Mr. J. Janower, of Tel Aviv, a former chairman of the South African Zionist Federation, was to initiate the Israel office of the Federation. This was in the premises of a South African housing company, Binyan, in Achad Ha'am Street. Others of the Tel Aviv nucleus were Herzl Zuckerman, Lazar Broido, Eli Kirschner, Max Schumacher, Alec and Zipporah Rubin, the Jack Geri family and Advocate Solly Tor (Turtledove).



In beleaguered and starving Jerusalem were two well known journalists Harry Levin and Marcia Gitlin, fiery Irgun fighter Doris Kaplan (Lankin today), the Policansky couple of Cape Town, Polly Resnick (now Salber of Ramat Gan), Colin Gluckman and his family. Norman and Nadia Lourie, Rose Jocum, a schoolteacher, Mrs. Edie Navon and the Rosenberg (Kidron) brothers.

In Haifa the home of Cape-born Louis Shapiro and his wife, Hetta, was to become the "home from home" for South Africans and others passing through the harbour city. The sister of Dr. Jack Penn, Milly Levy and her husband Abraham, shared in the devoted labours of the Shapiro family, as did the Solly Friedman and Lenny Rabinowitz families and Julia Slonim (nee Levinson), sister of Shaul Bar-Levav and Uri Aylon..



At midnight, May 14/15, the Union Jack came down and the flag of the new State was raised. Israel was born. The British retained an enclave in Haifa and the Ramat David Airfield until June 30.

Dawn was breaking on May 15, the first day of the State's life, when a driver arrived to take Cyril Katz and Pussy Tolchinsky to the nearby Sde Dov airfield. They had clambered into the cockpit of the Dakota, Katz had pressed one of the energising switches and was watching the propeller, when an explosion rent the air. They thought at first that the engine was backfiring. Then, when they saw smoke rising from a green little hut that served as an armoury, they thought there had been an accident. Several more explosions before they realised Spitfires were dive-bombing the field.

They wasted no time. Their bombed-up and heavily fueled plane could make a carnival for the Spits. They jumped out of the cockpit and raced along the runway to the sea. From behind the protection of a small sea wall, their legs in the water, they followed the Egyptian operation. One of the Spitfires pointed its nose at the nearby Reading power station dropped a bomb, pulled up and made off. A gaping hole was left in the station. The Spitfires came back, not to dive-bomb this time, but to rake the field with machine gun fire. Then it was over. The enemy was gone as suddenly as he had come. Katz and Tolchinsky ran back to the field. Stretcher-bearers were carrying men into ambulances. Katz recognized one of the wounded: Norman Skolnik, the armourer, who had been in the only South African group of volunteers that had landed at Lydda. Fortunately Skolnik was only suffering from shock.

Boris Senior was sleeping at the Yarden Hotel in Hayarkon Street when the first Egyptian Spitfire came over. He immediately recognised the sound of the Merlin engine. Shots followed. The Air Force men (wives too) came down the stairs to the lounge. Some of the men were still in their pyjamas. Pilots without planes.

At the debriefing session the evening before, Senior had admired the cool of Yadin, but had pressed, all the same, for the dispersal of the planes on Sde Dov airfield. He named three emergency fields for this. "We are going to be bombed," he warned. Yadin told him not to worry.

It was blindness to Air Force considerations that the Haganah's leaders, trained to underground warfare were to demonstrate for some years. It was an arm they did not understand and which they were to undervalue until the Sinai War of 1956. Perhaps it is in the nature of underground fighters. Senior summoned a taxi to take him to Sde Dov. The hut used as an armoury was burning and a man outside shouting hysterically. Two of his sleeping friends in the armoury had been killed. The hole in the Reading Power Station was telltale. Senior jumped into a jeep and sped along the runway to one of the South African Bonanzas. A bomb blast had damaged the whole side, though the marking ZS-BWS was still intact.

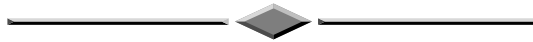
The neglect of elementary precautions angered him. The planes had been left lined up, easy targets, on the sides of the runway. At that moment Senior's attention was distracted by the arrival of a big black car coming down the runway. Ben Gurion stepped out and surveyed the scene with a big pair of field glasses. He stayed a few moments, then left, his face, according to Cyril Katz standing nearby, incredibly sad. Not two minutes later the Egyptians were bombing again. Senior ran for the shelter offered by some concrete blocks of a nearby factory. Between the blocks, lying full length on his stomach, face down, was a figure that looked familiar. The man turned over at Boris's arrival: Yigal Yadin.

Chapter 4

Later that day an Egyptian Spitfire was hit by a 20 mm gun. Victor Katz, of Johannesburg firing a MG34 machine gun had possibly also hit the aircraft²⁵. It went down trailing streams of glycol. Senior took off in the second Bonanza, putting down at a small emergency field. Gripping his revolver, he went in search of the Egyptian pilot. Army men had got hold of him already and had taken him to a nearby factory. Flight Lieutenant Baraka was in a bad state of shock and feared for his life. "You will be treated as a P.O.W. according to the Geneva Convention", Senior assured him. The man had a wound at the back of his head that puzzled Senior, for pilots who crash usually have wounds on the front of the head, not the back. Baraka explained that when he climbed out of the cockpit, "a Yemenite came with a Sten gun" and let me have it".

Boris accompanied the blindfolded Baraka to the headquarters of Army command for questioning. Baraka's information was that Egypt had eighty Spitfires - forty five of them serviceable.

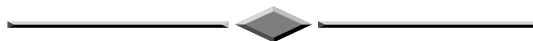
Not comforting news. The Egyptian raids on Tel Aviv continued till evening. Elliot Rosenberg, returning from the Galilee, landed an Auster on the field when a Spitfire was bombing it. With the Auster still rolling along, he dived out.



May 15 had threatened to be lively at Ma'ayan Baruch, but in fact passed quietly with more "sights" than action. In the morning the alarm sounded and the settlers raced to their posts. There was a brief exchange of shots, then the Arab initiators disappeared. The invasion from Lebanon did not take place at this point, but on the Malkiya route, which was chosen to make it possible for the Lebanese units to join with the Syrians and Iraqis for the projected Arab pincer movement on Haifa. In actual fact, the Lebanese, who really had no heart for the war and needed to husband their small army against the unforeseeable possibilities of an inter-Arab conflagration, were stopped at Malkiya and made no deeper incursions into Israel.

Instead of meeting a feared invasion, Ma'ayan Baruch watched movement in the opposite direction. Scores of Galilean Arab villagers trekked all day along the road towards Lebanon. The South Africans of this kibbutz and their American-and Israeli companions, watched them go. They did not fire at them or molest them. The villagers had been asked to stay. Some chose to do so (and they and their children are still in Israel), others left.

This was the Arab refugee problem, seen from South Africa's Galilee kibbutz, on the first day of the State.



Desolate Sdom at the southern end of the Dead Sea was to be the setting of many strange South African experiences. To understand how it came about that from the outset of the war there should be soldiers, workers and engineers in this arid region completely cut off except by air, from the rest of the Yishuv, we must go back to the partition decision. At the northern end of the Sea was the settlement of Bet Ha'arava and potash works established by the Jews. These were to be included in the area of the Arab State, a decision now nullified by the Arab resolve to annul the partition resolution. The Jews would have defended both the works and the settlement if they were defensible, they were not, particularly after the fall of the two Jewish settlements north of Jerusalem, Neve Ya'akov and Atarot. The Arab Legion was in control of the roads.

²⁵ There were six claimants to the downing of the Spitfire. However, subsequent IAF research showed that it was Sam Rose, an English volunteer and experienced AA gunner of WWII, the only one firing a 20 mm. gun. His was the only claim supported by an eye witness of high repute.

On May 16 Tuxie Blau was instructed to fly to the now-isolated Bet Ha'arava - in his Fairchild to bring back two gravely wounded men. On landing he was surprised to meet Moni Chemel, a school chum of Athlone High days. The settlement itself was a rugged romance in which Chemel was a leading figure. The settlers had virtually washed every handful of soil by hand to get the salt out of it. But they knew that the days of their settlement with its remarkably flourishing tomato fields were now numbered. The only route for evacuation, the settlers told Blau, lay south through the entire length of the Dead Sea to Sdom, site of a branch of the main potash works.

Blau wished them success. The two wounded men were carried into the plane. It was with difficulty that one of them, in splints, was manoeuvred into the interior. He was positioned in a back seat with his legs on Blau's shoulders. In that position he died on the flight back. The other survived.

On a moonless night, a few days later, potash works men and the settlers were loaded on the company's lighters and towed to Sdom. They were to live in caves, sustained by supplies brought to them over a five-month period by many pilots, including South Africans, landing either at dawn or dusk when the skies were free of Egyptian fighter planes.

The pressure on Blau was maintained till June 10 when the first truce came into effect.

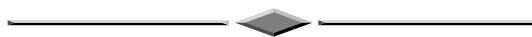
May 16: Flight to the north to Beirut with two Army Intelligence men taking pictures.

Same day: Flight over Zemach on the Sea of Galilee where the Syrians were pressing the Israeli settlers hard. Bombchucker: South African Zvi Green.

May 21: Flight over Jerusalem to bomb Arab Legion moving in on Jerusalem.

Other days: Flights in the Fairchilds, after maintenance and repairs, to test fly the planes and check out Israeli pilots.

Flying military personnel to various locations.



Leslie Chimes had not been in the land twenty four hours when Boris Senior commanding the Tel Aviv airfield, ordered him to fly his Fairchild to a settlement near the Dead Sea to evacuate a woman and some children. This turned out to be a nightmare for Chimes.

"I need a navigator," he told Senior.

"No one is available," Senior said. "In any case the space might be needed."

Dusk over the Dead Sea. Chimes felt his loneliness. A green light came on. Then a red light. The contradictory lights puzzled him. Should he land? Would he be landing among Jews or Arabs? In an emotional ordeal he hung in the air doubtful what to do.

He landed, immensely relieved to find it was the kibbutz he was seeking. But returning, and going off course for inexplicable reasons, he could not find Tel Aviv. When he hit the coast he was nearer Haifa than Tel Aviv. The Haifa dome was in darkness. He tried to call it on his primitive communications set, but received no response.

He worried about the woman and the two children. From one danger to another, he thought. But he kept control of himself. "I am going to land on the beach," he said. "You're not to be afraid. Everything will come right."

Chapter 4

Everything did, "more by luck than by good flying", Chimes confessed. The four clambered out of the plane and walked until they came to a depot from which the police were phoned. Next morning the Fairchild was pulled off the beach on to a road and Chimes flew it back to Tel Aviv.

Arthur Cooper had his baptism of fire on the night of May 16. This was in a raid on Gaza. The starboard door of the Fairchild had been taken out and a young Israeli bombchucker threw the bombs out of the opening. In the entire war Cooper was not to encounter such heavy flak as he did on that night.

CHAPTER 5

THE NEXT TWENTY FIVE DAYS

The war falls into two periods. The first was that between the partition decision of November 29, 1947, and May 14, 1948, when the British were still in control but quitting and loosening their grasp, the second from May 15 to the end of the year when Israel's victory was established. In the first period the fighting was between the Jews of Palestine, on the one hand, and, on the other, the Arabs of Palestine supported by Kaukji's Arab Liberation Army of local irregulars and volunteers, about 5,000, from other Arab countries. The fighting was raw and savage, with victory, on balance, going to the Jews.

The second period saw the conflict widen to that of the Jews of Palestine, supported by their volunteers from abroad, against the invasion armies of Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Transjordan, Saudi Arabia and Iraq and (later) a unit from the Sudan. The purpose of the invading Arab armies was not to assure an independent homeland for the Palestine Arabs –(they had rejected the UN decision to divide Palestine into a Jewish State and a Palestine Arab State), but to grasp what they each could of the Palestine cake left by the British. The declaration on May 19 of Azzam Pasha, secretary of the Arab League, that the Arab armies would each establish an administration in the area under its control until such time as an independent, unitary Arab State could be established for the whole of Palestine, was the gloss under which the Arab States concealed their conflicting ambitions. The Arabs believed they would have the Jews in the sea within a week or two. It is an irony of history that the creation of the State of Israel prevented a fierce inter-Arab conflagration.

The frightful unofficial war of the first period, outlined by the brief diaries in earlier chapters, did not fall within the experience of the overwhelming majority of the South African volunteers who came mainly in the first four months of the State's life, that is, when it was meeting the challenge of the invaders. Yet the volunteers could not be unaffected by what had preceded their coming, for they inherited the results. They came, as indicated, to a Jewish State whose Arab population had shrunk. The Arab exodus actually began during December 1947 and January 1948 with the departure of families wealthy enough to get away from the trouble. They simply locked their doors, as people going on holiday, expecting to return when the Jews had been vanquished.

The Arabs of Tiberias lived on friendly terms with their Jewish neighbors and, as historian Netanel Lorch has recorded, "as late as the end of March Jewish and Arab notables would ride together through the streets in open pick-up trucks appealing to the population to remain calm." However the friendship was not strong enough to stand the strains of the conflict. The Arabs moved out to Transjordan in buses and other vehicles provided by the British Army in an organized and unflurried evacuation.

Four days later the glittering prize of the mixed Jewish-Arab city of Haifa fell into Jewish hands. Why 70,000 Arabs of this city fled in a few tumultuous days is still argued to this day. The facts are that on April 21 the general commanding the British forces in the city informed the representatives of both the Jews and Arabs that the British concern henceforth would be only the harbor enclave to allow for the British evacuation plan. Battle was joined between the Jews, living halfway up the mountain on the Hadar Hacarmel and on Mount Carmel, and the Arabs in the downtown city. On the morning of April 22, Jewish mortar shells struck buildings in which were situated Arab headquarters.

Amin Azzidin, the Arab commander and his staff, quietly slipped out of Haifa and made for Beirut. In succeeding days an irrational herd instinct swept through the Arabs of the city. The Jews, contemplating the exodus in astonishment, urged the Arabs to stay, but the Arab leadership, after some hesitation, rejected the offer of a shared Jewish-Arab administration. Then came the Arabs' stampede to get out. They left food half-eaten on their tables, beds

Chapter 5

unmade and swarmed to the dock area and the airfield. This was the period in which Claude Duval and Del Webb came into the picture with their South African Dakota to fly some to Beirut.

The exodus has been explained in five ways:

Low Arab morale which first set in with the ambush by the Jews just outside Haifa on March 17, of a convoy bringing arms from Lebanon. In this ambush Mohammed Bek, commander of Arab Haifa, was killed and replaced by the less worthy Amin Azaddin.

The devastating psychological effect on the Arabs of the home-made Jewish Davidkas, used for the first time, a not very sophisticated mortar but one with a shattering noise, making battle seem more terrible than it was.

An Arab radio broadcast to the Arabs to leave the city temporarily to allow for free movement of the shaping Arab forces.

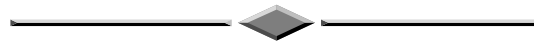
The Arab belief that the Jews would do unto them what they contemplated doing to the Jews.

The unforeseen effect of Arab propaganda portending vicious Jewish slaughter of the Palestinian Arabs.

Thereafter flight became a contagion. In the two-week period before the declaration of the State, tens of thousands of Arabs fled from Jaffa, under assault first by the Irgun, then jointly with Haganah, and from Safed, the undeclared Arab capital of the Galilee. They made for Lebanon, Transjordan, Syria and Gaza. Cyril Katz and Cyril Steinberg, flying in their Bonanza from South Africa on May 6, looked down on a sea full of boats streaming south out of Jaffa towards Gaza.

"I wonder what all that's about?" Katz asked. Steinberg wondered also.

A still sizeable Arab community remained in the land. This community divides into two: first, those in Nazareth and scores of villages throughout the country who stayed (and materially prospered) and those, particularly of Ramle, Lydda, Beersheba and the Jerusalem corridor, whose fortunes were to be affected by the tide of battle. The essence is this, then: In the period before the South African and other volunteers reached Eretz Israel, the brunt of the Arab fighting was borne by the local Arabs and Kaukji's volunteer army. This fist was now limp. The land was safer from within than it had been, but its borders were wide open to the marching armies from without. On May 20, a week after the State was born, a Syrian infantry unit, supported by five Renault tanks and armoured cars, penetrated to the perimeter of Kibbutz Degania A on the shores of the Lake of Galilee. The stout and successful resistance of the poorly-armed seventy kibbutzniks, led by a young one-eyed soldier Moshe Dayan, was one of the turning points of the war.



There were only a handful of South African volunteers in the country to experience the confusion of Tel Litwinsky camp near Tel Aviv in the first days of the war. This had been a British camp used in the years of World War 2 mainly by Americans. The Israelis captured it from the Arabs and took over "a filthy mess." Tel Litwinsky was then converted into an assembly point for Machal and young immigrants from the D.P. camps (Gahal), but there was no organization because the Israelis, had no organizational structure at Army HQ, Ramat Gan, to handle the newcomers. The Israeli reception men were swamped, although they soon caught up with the fact that among the volunteers were spies sent by several

countries to provide information on conditions in the new State, assessments of its prospects and general observations.

A room called Kelet 9 became central. Here the volunteers came to report their arrival. There might or might not be a man there. If there was, he would immediately give them four days leave, for he would not know what to do with them.

It was different for the Air Force. When they left Tel Litwinsky it was for good. Their quarters were rooms in cheaper hotels near the beachfront, and they were soon on operational duties. The gulf between the South African Air Force they had known and the Air Force they now come into was that between a man and a toddler.

In the upshot, the early ex-SAAF pilots and navigators, grounded by day by the presence of Egyptian fighters and bombers over Tel Aviv, became air guerrillas in Austers and Rapides at dawn and dusk when the Egyptian danger was not present. Arthur Cooper, Smoky Simon, Boris Senior, Les Chimes, Cyril Katz, Elliot Rosenberg and Joe Leibowitz, were often associated in one or other combination in these "Spitpiper" raids. The raids were over Arab Legion positions around Jerusalem, an enemy radar station in the same area, Nablus, Isdud and other places.

A raid over Gaza became part of the lore of those early days; the men involved, Cyril Katz, pilot, and Ezer Weizman, bombchucker. Weizman was already known as "a bit crazy" - a description stemming from his utter indifference to danger. Gaza is a 25 minute flight from Tel Aviv by light aircraft and Weizman and Katz were over the target for two hours. Having thrown his bombs, Weizman said he had some bottles to throw.

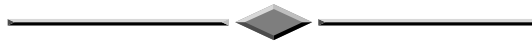
The bottles made a whistling noise that would frighten them. "O.K. We're going back", said Katz after the dispatch of the bottles.

"No, no, we've got to draw their fire." "There's no point in that", said Katz.
"We'll worry them and keep them awake."

Katz had already made his calculations. Machine gun fire can reach to about 4,000/5,000 feet. At 6,000 a plane is reasonably safe.

"Go lower! Go lower!", Weizman was dancing around and telling him. When Weizman was not looking, Katz adjusted the altimeter, putting on an extra 1,000 feet, so that when he was at 5,000 the altimeter read 4,000. That kept Weizman quiet for a time.

"We're going home now", Katz said. "No, no," Weizman said. "Let's worry them more..."
A weary Katz landed at Tel Aviv field two hours later. "What's this?" asked Weizman, noting that the clock of the taxiing aircraft read 1,000 feet.



"What do you chaps think?" Aharon Remez, Air Force O.C., would ask the South Africans in informal discussions on projected raids. The strain was on all in those early days. One morning Moshe Dayan came striding angrily into Remez's office demanding to know why the Air Force was "sitting on its arse." Israeli units were being hard pressed at several points.

The men of the recently-emerged undergrounds had no understanding of the air. Joe Leibowitz, present in Remez's room at the time, recalled that the Army continually asked for air support, but the bombs the Pipers could throw could as easily fall among the Israeli men on the ground as among the enemy.

Chapter 5

The nightmare for Leibowitz was in the period when the Israelis were clawing out the "Burma Road" to Jerusalem. A Palmach unit was surrounded and called for air support. The specific task for Elliot Rosenberg, pilot, and Leibowitz, chucker, and an Israeli helper, was to drop by parachute to the unit two Piat guns and two bags of ammunition. The arrangement was a green light for Parcel Received, a red light for Not Received. The drop would be one Piat, one ammo, one Piat, one ammo, to minimize the danger of both Piat and ammo falling into Arab hands. There was no wind intelligence for the fliers and no calculation of drift allowance.

The plane was over the valley. The door of the Rapide having been removed, there was only left the metal handle on the side. The ammo bags were tied to the handle until ready for the push. Leibowitz used his feet against the banking of the plane.

Red light. Leibowitz stumbled into the cockpit to ask Rosenberg to go lower to 500 feet. Thereafter green light.

A mysterious thing happened on the fourth drop, the ammo bag. The metal handle broke and Leibowitz would have gone hurtling into space with the bag had not Elliot Rosenberg at that precise moment tilted to port. The mystery is that from his cockpit (and it was dark in any case) Rosenberg could not see Leibowitz and had no logical reason to tilt. Some mysterious instinct came into play. "We talk about it to this day", said Leibowitz. "How did Elliot know something was wrong?"

There is no explanation. Both prize the badge of honour the Palmach awarded them.

Dov Judah and his wife Elsie were greeted with loud laughter at Tel Litwinsky. The laughter was for Elsie's brimmed green hat, too large for any of her suitcases. Her copious luggage suggested a wealthy tourist arriving at the wrong place. The laughter was short-lived. Sirens announced an Egyptian air raid. Everybody scattered. Judah and Elsie found themselves in a slit trench with an American, Nat Cohen, who had immigrated to Palestine a few months earlier.

From Tel Litwinsky, when the dust of the air raid had settled, Judah and Elsie were taken to Air Force HQ and given accommodation at a rundown hotel on the beachfront. No one at HQ knew who he was, which was understandable, but, it seemed to Judah, no one cared either, which was not understandable. He returned to his hotel, despondent, there to find armed Israelis at the door, reluctant to let him in and suspicious of his English tongue. These were Stern group men who had prevented Elsie from leaving the hotel.

The keen young lawyer (artillery in East Africa, later SAAF navigator in the Italian theater), who had advanced his marriage date and sold his practice at the urging of Yoel Palgi ("the State urgently needs men like you") was now discovering something about the gap between Johannesburg and Tel Aviv.

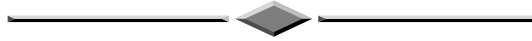
It took Judah three days to persuade the Air Force that he had come 4,000 miles to join its ranks. Convinced at last, they took him and Elsie out of the Stern group's hotel and billeted them in the Yarden Hotel. But Judah was not put to work. Bursting with frustration, he watched inexperienced Israeli pilots taking off on so-called raids on the enemy. He offered to fly as a bomb-chucker, but to no avail. There were plenty of young Israelis for this.

Judah's break came one late afternoon when Alperstein, who had served with him in Italy, said: "Come, we're going to bomb Jenin police station." In the dusk Judah observed the gunfire of Arab armies and the tracer bullets of their machine guns driving the Israelis back at all points to the north and east of Tel Aviv. Alperstein flew about 1,500 feet over the police station. Judah gingerly pulled the safety pins out of the explosive caps of the ten and twenty kilo bombs and pushed them out of an open panel in the Bonanza's fuselage. The bombs fell wide.

Judah was not summoned for further flights and was back again to "hanging around."

"You were an ack-ack gunner", Victor Katz said. "Why not start a course on the field?"

Judah did this. His pupils were young Israelis and men from the D.P. camps. Did they understand English? Judah was not sure. Perhaps the chalk, blackboard and pictures conveyed his message. Elsie, in the meantime, had been accepted in the Air Force's cipher section, whose coding was in English, the language of the Air Force that year.



A Dr. Frankel called at the Olympic Hotel for Dr. Stanley Levin and drove him to the then little village of Kfar Schmaryahu. On a hillock was a tower and a school where a new battalion, composed of young men recently arrived from the D.P. camps, was being formed. The recruits, originally from Poland, Czechoslovakia and Romania, were training with sticks. Levin was now accustomed to shocks. Fresh in his mind was the bombing of the Palgi Hotel where his group had spent their first night in Tel Aviv but a few days earlier.

Dr. Frankel guided Levin to the tents, introducing him to Yocheved, until then medically in charge.

"Your battalion doctor", Frankel announced. Yocheved, a seventh generation Sabra, had served as a nurse with the British Army in Egypt and Italy. Levin was thankful she could speak a little English. The ten orderlies were young men patently unfit for the Army.

"Equipment?" Levin asked.

The answer was a modestly sized green box, containing a few bandages, small splints, scissors, scalpel, forceps, a few syringes, needles and a little primus to heat up and sterilize the instruments. The battalion's medical corps was sans blood, sans plasma, sans intravenous fluids.

Dr. Levin could be forgiven his wry smile. At the Johannesburg Children's Hospital before his departure, his colleagues, shrewdly guessing what lay behind his sudden announcement of departure abroad to visit a sick member of his family, had given him in the next ten days as much surgery as possible.


That memory of sophisticated medicine now belonged to another world.

"Fit up a 10-bed sick bay", Dr. Frankel said in parting.

By the end of the day; doctor, nurse, Israeli sergeant and the orderlies, had done just that. Three spick-and-span rooms of the school, with beds, mattresses and blankets were evidence of a thorough day's work.

On May 20 the battalion received orders to move south to Tel Litwinsky. A few guns were handed around and the convoys moved off. The hospital was left behind.

Levin's job started again. The British had done their worst, stripping the camp even of its light bulbs and switches. Levin and his unit, arriving in the evening, took over a small building that had served as a hospital. Next day his orderlies scrubbed and a sick bay was again set up. Twenty-four hours later the unit received an order to move south to the Egyptian front. Levin learned, while packing, that the building next to his short-lived hospital and not ten yards away had been used for the storage of the battalion's ammunition, a revealing light on the camp's confusion and want of military organization.



Elliot Rosenberg and Joe Leibowitz were summoned to Air Force headquarters to be briefed for a raid on El Arish, the main Egyptian springboard. Aharon Remez, O.C., indicated that the enemy had 80mm, 40mm and Bofors guns.

The South Africans were astonished. "And you want a Rapide to go into that?"

Kibbutz Yad Mordechai had fallen after a heroic resistance which had stemmed the Egyptian advance on Tel Aviv and the Egyptians were now pressing north towards Tel Aviv. Remez was taking his orders from the Army.

"The position is grave", said Remez. The raid would be suicidal, Leibowitz felt. He gave his passport and other possessions to Titch Isaacson, a fellow South African volunteer at Tel Aviv airfield with the request that he forward them to his family in South Africa. A fabric-covered plane with a ceiling of a little over 5,000 feet against guns with an effective range of 10,000 feet, had no chance at all. Isaacson was a specialist in fitting basic night flying instruments to the early light aircraft and later served as a liaison officer between the IAF and ground forces until the end of the war.


Remez must have made urgent representations to the Army. A phone call to the airfield canceled the raid.

Cyril Steinberg observed one day in Tel Aviv that he was being shadowed by three men in a jeep. Eventually they dismounted and challenged him: "Who are you? What are you doing here?"

"I am a Jew", Steinberg replied. "A volunteer from South Africa." He showed them his passport. Suspicion changed to friendliness. The Stern group men took him to his hotel in their jeep.

A few days later Steinberg and Cyril Katz were invited to a party by a girl of Air Service. They found the address with some difficulty. Apparently they had been followed again. Twenty Stern men demanded to know "Where are the two Englishmen?" All was once again satisfactorily explained.

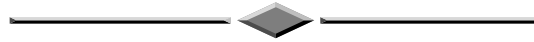
Steinberg's first days were unhappy. He had come to help his people and found himself kicking his heels in idleness. Rootless and seemingly unwanted, he was fathering the thoughts inseparable from the situation. For what had he come? A call to assist in a transport job gave him his vocation. This was in Air Transport Command, an American-Jewish outfit due to airlift Messerschmitts 109s to Israel from Czechoslovakia.



On May 29 the first four Messerschmitts from Czechoslovakia were ready for action. The Egyptians, having overwhelmed kibbutz Yad Mordechai in their path, reached Isdud, thirty kilometres from Tel Aviv, on the same day. The four sakanim (knives), as the Messerschmitts were called, scheduled to bomb El Arish, were diverted to attack the Egyptian column. In this engagement, the South African pilot Eddie Cohen, was lost²⁶.

²⁶ The engagement is fully treated in the chapter, "Six South Africans Fall."

On May 30 an incident occurred which was also to become part of early IAF lore. A Messerschmitt flown by an American Jewish pilot, Milton Rubinfeld, attacking an Arab armoured column in the Tulkarm area, was hit. The pilot ditched in the Mediterranean off the fishing village of Michmoret and swam to the coast. Fearing the settlers of the village might mistake him for an Egyptian, and lacking Hebrew or Yiddish to explain himself, he waded ashore, his hands up, proclaiming his identity with "Gefilte fish! Gefilte fish!"



June 1 (sixteen days after his arrival) brought Dov Judah into the Air force for the first time, and in a dramatic way. The Security Council's call for a truce to become effective at midnight²⁷ that day, suggested to the Haganah Command that a demonstration to the Arabs that the Israelis were able to carry the war to their cities also, would not be amiss. The target chosen for a 3-plane attack was King Abdullah's palace where Arab leaders were to meet that night.

Boris Senior, as commander of the base at Sde Dov received orders to bomb Amman. The operational order was brought to him personally by Ezra Omen, adjutant to General Dori.

At about 7 p.m., Boris Senior sought out Judah at his hotel and closely questioned him on his navigating experience. Then, swearing him to secrecy, Senior took him to Tel Aviv airfield where he briefed him and others for the raid. As the flyers were still wary of flying during daylight hours in their defenceless aircraft they planned a night mission. Senior decided to pilot the Bonanza, accompanied by the twin-engine Dragon Rapide, the IAF's heavy bomber and the Fairchild.

The Bonanza carried incendiaries to pinpoint the target as the Pathfinders had done during the heavy bomber raids on German cities during World War Two. The incendiaries were homemade, like all the IAF bombs, but looked professional - long sticks of shiny metal in hexagonal form. They were not heavy and could be tossed out of the aircraft with ease.

Senior's belief had been that Amman would be wrapped in the darkness of the Transjordan desert. Hence his close questioning of Judah, the navigator. The two South Africans flew the lead plane. Dov Judah later recalled:

We flew past Jerusalem. It was taking a pounding from Arab guns on all sides except a narrow corridor to the west. The Dead Sea shone in the moonlight and was an easy point to fix in the darkness of the desert.

We turned to our pre-determined course and within minutes saw Amman completely lit up. My navigating experience was not needed. I would be the bomb thrower. We circled the city and identified the palace easily enough. We made two runs, trying to hit it with 50-kilo bombs pushed out of the opening of the fuselage. I never saw the bombs burst. What I did see were the lights of Amman going out.

Encountering no flak, Senior flew down low, circling the palace while Judah dropped 2-pound incendiaries. This done Senior climbed away, leaving the two other aircraft to drop their bombs in the ring of light. The palace came through unscathed, but a military base and an airfield close to the city were hit. Senior later recalled:

As we headed back, I was astonished to see in the distance, that the strong beacon light of Lydda Airport, which had been in Transjordanian hands for some weeks, was still in full operation, a mere twenty kilometers from our home base at Sde Dov. It was the best

²⁷ It did not become effective until 10 days later.

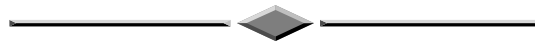
Chapter 5

navigational aid we could have wished for. The irony of our bombing their capital and then returning to base with this splendid navigation aid provided by them was a source of some hilarity as we munched the chocolate bars I always carried on raids.

The attack against Amman provoked an immediate political reaction. In the light of the mutual defence treaty between Britain and Transjordan. The British ambassador announced that the R.A.F. would strike back if any further attacks took place. "The Jewish Authorities in Tel Aviv", rejecting this form of address, returned the communication unopened to the British Consul in Haifa.

There were no further incidents involving the RAF until the engagements in Sinai in January 1949 when the RAF clashed with the IAF, losing five fighter aircraft to Israel's 101 Fighter Squadron as related in chapter 17.

The raid left the RAF, which had some planes on the Amman airfield, with a riddle, namely, the Israeli bombs which had not exploded. Bombs with handles? This was a curiosity. The RAF sent them to London. Perhaps the Air Ministry could work out the mystery, for who, in 1948, after World War 2, could credit an Air Force penury which made bomb-chucking the only way?



Cyril Steinberg's first flight for Transport Command was punctuated by two vivid experiences: the first as witness to a crash of a C-46 Commando from Czechoslovakia, the second, house arrest in Greece.

Steinberg and his fellow crewmen were waiting at Ekron Airfield to take over the C-46 to fly it back to Czechoslovakia. A starry heaven made the summer night beautiful. There is one small hill in the area and there was one single bank of cloud that night. The pilot of the Commando, Norman Moonitz, circled lower and lower in order to see the runway. The plane struck high ground and hit the lone hill. Moses Aaron Rosenbaum, the navigator of the American crew of four was killed, the other three escaped with light injuries. Steinberg and his companions did not leave that night.

The plane on which they flew out the following night was loaded with oranges for the Czechs. Somewhere over the Greek islands an engine packed up and the plane started losing height. Arnold Ilowite, the pilot, ordered the jettisoning of the cargo. Steinberg and the other crewmen started dumping.

Despite this, the plane could not maintain height and Ilowite came down on a military airfield, Araxos, in the Peloponesian Peninsula. As the plane taxied up to a parking bay, the crew hid all Israeli identifications behind the fabric of the aircraft - Hebrew tubed toothpaste, coins and so on.

The military took Steinberg, Ilowite and crew to the Officer Commanding of the station who put them under house arrest. A high officer was sent from Athens to find out what they were up to. The suspicion was they could be Communists - Greece being then torn by internal strife.

The men were detained in the Officers' Mess where they met the Colonel. He had trained during the war in Bloemfontein and when he heard Steinberg was from South Africa, his attitude became one of great cordiality and his hospitality knew no bounds.

He wined and dined them for a week. When the crew was finally released, the Colonel took Steinberg and Ilowite to Patras on the way to Athens, saying goodbye there. Steinberg's immediate need became a South African visa to get to Rome. Athens airport officials were

suspicious and threatened to lock him up. The atmosphere of the time was "jumpy." The South African Embassy rescued Steinberg. The second in charge asked him to come to his home that night. He lifted his glass and said: "Shalom." He knew everything about the South African volunteers.

The three Fairchild's from South Africa were lost - the first in a cruel accident at Sde Dov airfield. It was one of two planes revving up. The other was a Rapide with Arthur Cooper, pilot, and Dov Judah in the cockpit. Their plane, at the edge of the runway, had already been loaded up with bombs and was ready to take off. An Israeli mechanic, carrying a bomb to the Fairchild, walked, in an unaccountable aberration, into its propeller. The bomb exploded. In the Rapide Cooper felt a glancing smack on his cheek. He and Judah were swiftly out of their plane, running. They returned to find nothing left of the mechanic except bits and pieces. The chucker in the Fairchild was burnt to death. His body was naked, his color green. Lionel (Kappy) Kaplan the pilot, was reeling with a lost eye. Cooper started to pick up the bits and pieces of the mechanic but, overtaken by the shock and nausea, gave up. Judah called for medical assistance. There was none.

The second Fairchild was lost on the afternoon of June 4 when three Egyptian ships approached the coast of Tel Aviv. The leading ship, the "Amira Fauzia", carrying troops, was followed by a large landing craft and a corvette. Boris Senior quickly planned an operation of attack. Two of the merciful acquisitions from South Africa, the Bonanza flown by Senior himself and the Fairchild together with a Rapide, engaged the Egyptians.

The planes had no bombsights and six sallies against the ships resulted in only one hit - this from Boris Senior's Bonanza. Fire from the Egyptians sent the Fairchild spinning into the sea, with the loss of Matty Sukenik, brother of Yigal Yadin, and David Sprinzak, son of the Speaker of Israel's first Parliament. The design of the Egyptians, whatever it was, was frustrated. All three ships wheeled around and fled in the direction of the Gaza Strip.

The third Fairchild was "pranged" by Les Chimes, his passenger at the time Eddie Rosenberg. Chimes had been under strain: his sight, he felt, was becoming affected. He did the impossible - he landed the plane upside down. Clearly too much had been asked of him.

In the dying days of May and the first days of June, UN pressures for a cease-fire grew heavier. The mutual slaughter on the ground had been grievous and a breathing space was not unwelcome to the combatants. However, the Syrians showed tardiness. Their capture of Mishmar Hayarden, a key border kibbutz, had given them a gateway into the Galilee and they sought to make deeper penetrations. The Israelis decided on a raid on Damascus.

Cyril Katz:

"The raid was to be with Claude Duval's Dakota. Duval said there were some Christian Arabs in Damascus and he preferred not to take part. The Damascus assignment became mine. My second pilot would be Les Chimes, my navigator Smoky Simon and the bombchuckers some of the young Israelis queuing up for the job. Somehow Geoff Stark also got into the plane.

We took off at 02:15 on June 11, heavily loaded with bombs, in fact over-loaded. The fellows did not know anything about centre of gravity and how to load a bomb. The Israelis see an empty space and load as if with carrots.

I had trouble getting the nose up. The plane was tail-heavy. This was terribly dangerous, but somehow we got away with it. We were very nervous because we suspected the Syrians might be ready for us with everything they had.

The raid, it seemed to me, was no longer a secret. On June 5 we had gone to Ekron to load up with bombs and I had actually told Cyril Steinberg that we would be carrying out the raid

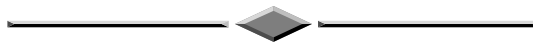
Chapter 5

that night. When he saw me next day he asked how the raid had gone. I had to explain to him that various things had delayed the mission.

Anyway, four nights later, we passed over the Galilee, near Mount Hermon, and there was Damascus, beautifully lit up. We dropped one lot of bombs and blocks of lights went out. Perhaps the power station decided to switch off. There must have been confusion because one block of lights would go off and a little later come on again. Most of the city was in darkness when we left. We dropped all our bombs. Time magazine reported afterwards that "Israeli aircraft flew over Damascus." In fact, there was only one plane, our Dakota, and we weren't over the target for twenty five minutes, it seemed like two hours".

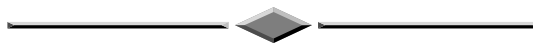
The Syrians understood that night that their capital was not immune from attack. The first truce came into effect next day. It was to last a month.

That, then, was the war from the air as the South Africans experienced it in its first days. They were the main element of the IAF in the period.



What, in the meantime, was happening to the South Africans on the ground? There could not have been more than 100 of them in the country in the May/early June period. The majority poured in, wave after wave, in Dakota loads of twenty and twenty five in late June, July and August, and by DP ship in the same span. Thus the experiences of the first arrivals differed in texture from those that followed.

The differences stemmed not so much from the war situation as from the human scene. Jack Segall attended a concert of the Philharmonic Orchestra on the night of May 13, eve of the State's proclamation and day of the final destruction of the Etzion bloc of kibbutzim near Hebron. The "soul" poured by the orchestra into the national anthem, Hatikvah, he says, can never again be reproduced. Segall served in radar, first at Sarona with fellow South Africans Abe Goldes and Charles Braudo, then at Sarafand with fellow South Africans Reuben Joffe, Syd Suttner, Maurice Ostroff, Ralph Lanesman, Max Kangisser and Eli Isserow.



"What's that!" That was bombs dropping on Tel Aviv's central bus station: forty two dead, many wounded. The day was May 19.

Leib Golan and Faivie Cohen had got off their bus some few minutes earlier and were on their way to the Federation's office in Ahad Ha'am Street when the planes swooped down. The South Africans ran back to the station. Army men, fearing the return of the Egyptians, were shouting to the large crowd to take shelter.

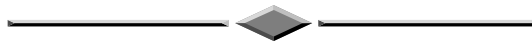
The planes did not come back. The South Africans gave what aid they could. On May 23, they joined Kibbutz Ma'ayan Baruch. Leib Golan is still there.

Ronnie Chaskelson found a dead Arab in a lavatory of the pre-State Tel Litwinsky camp, which the Israelis had just taken. Chaskelson, ex-SAAF radar, wanting action, tied up with Max Rosengarten, a veteran S.A. gunner of the North African desert, and joined a so-called armoured unit which had been hastily formed at Ben Shemen. Composed mainly of new immigrants directly off the ships, it took on the highly trained Arab Legion at Latrun and was half wiped out. The South Africans were not part of this first of the Latrun disasters. Given a week's leave until the unit could be reformed, they found themselves one day in a pavement cafe of Tel Aviv, watching a couple of jeeps pull up and park on the pavement. The men of the jeeps went into the cafe. "That's the unit I'd like to be in", said Chaskelson.

The commander of the jeeps was a French Jew who spoke English. The Frenchman was keen. "I can't take you away from your unit", he said, "but I am leaving for the Negev tomorrow morning at 7.30. If you want a lift, come", "Fine", said the South Africans.

Their kit was at Ben Shemen and they never saw it again. Next morning they moved south, becoming based on kibbutz Ruchama. This was the period when kibbutz Yad Mordechai was taking the last of its five-day hammering from Egyptian armoured and infantry units moving north on Tel Aviv (May 19-23).

Chaskelson, temporarily an ambulance driver, drove out at night to bring in Yad Mordechai's wounded. Joseph Jedeiken also lived through the last hours of Yad Mordechai. Israel Carmi, Palmach commander, had assigned him to take two jeeps and two trucks and rescue as many of the kibbutz's remnant defenders as he could. He left at midnight under instructions not to return enemy fire but to concentrate on rescue. In the darkness he managed to find some survivors, young men and women, all in a pitiful state of shock and exhaustion. The return trip became hazardous when one of the trucks bogged in the sand. Jedeikin ex-S.A. Army driver, managed to get the truck moving again. Bullets whistled round the convoy. At Ruchama, it was found that two of the survivors had been killed in the firing.



Yigal Yadin and Ben Gurion were hotly disputing in the Premier's office in Tel Aviv. The dispute had been going on for hours. Yadin's hand fell hard on the glass covered table. Blood poured out of the cuts. The wounds may have been slight but the reasons for the dispute were heartbreaking.

Israel was without arms. Two 65mm guns of 1870 vintage - called by the Israelis Napoleonchiks - had arrived in the country. Yadin wanted the guns against the Syrians, then poised to attack kibbutz Degania A, the loss of which could spell the loss of the Galilee. Ben Gurion wanted the pitiful weapons for starving and isolated Jerusalem.

Such were the desperations of the time and the situation of which the first post-State volunteers were a part. Cyril Gotsman was sent initially to Tel Litwinsky, then transferred to a small camp at Herzliya where there were about 120 youngsters from the immigrant ships. Plunged into the Latrun battle of May 24, few of these youngsters came back. They were taught to use their arms on the trucks, as they were leaving. The men left behind, including Gotsman and another South African, Ivor Fix, protesting at their omission, were told they would be posted when the time came. Gotsman, ex-South African Navy, went into the Israel Navy and Fix into Navy Signals, proper postings in view of their World War II backgrounds.

In May Dr. Helfet became attached to Yigal Allon's Palmach headquarters at Rosh Pina in the northern Galilee and also to the new 25-bed hospital at Kfar Giladi in the mountains. With Allon at the time was the American general Micky Marcus. Fortunately the Palmach's victories at Safed, Nebi Yusha²⁸ and Canaan had been won with relatively few casualties. "The excessive exuberance of the young Palmachniks trying out captured American-made cars gave us more casualties at that time than the battles", Dr. Helfet later recalled.

Joan Comay, inexhaustible in energy, knowledgeable about Israel and her people, became the doctor's secretary and later secretary of the Orthopaedic unit. She and the doctor were near casualties themselves when an Egyptian Spitfire strafed a street in Tel Aviv. A bullet, fortunately spent, landed on Helfet's shoe.

²⁸ Some days earlier, 28 Palmach youngsters had been killed in an unsuccessful attempt to take Nebi Yusha

Chapter 5

Towards the end of the month, Helfet prepared a comprehensive memorandum for Dr. Sheba and the Medical Committee, suggesting preparations that should be initiated in the event of the war lasting more than six weeks. The recommendations:

Urgent arrangements for rehabilitation of the wounded to enable them to return to their units.

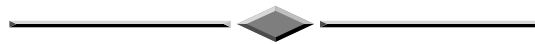
The importance of morale:

Soldiers and civilians should have the assurance of eye and plastic surgery, and artificial limbs should be available when necessary.

It was most desirable to recruit Hebrew-speaking psychiatrists experienced in war.

Required also would be more specialists in plastic, maxillo-facial, eye and neuro-surgery, and all appropriate surgical equipment. Additional general and orthopaedic surgeons should also be recruited.

Dr. Helfet was commissioned to implement this report and left on May 28 for London, his purpose to enlist the aid of Jewish doctors there.



Around June 6th and 7th a few groups including a number of woman landed in Haifa, one of which was a P.A.A.C. Dakota. In terms of roles to be played in the war by some of the arrivals, they have to be ranked as some of the most significant from South Africa. Among them were the nurses Ray Brunton, Sarah Greenspun, Dr. Jack Medalie, his wife June, a physiotherapist, Sydney Basson, Joe Behr, Clive Centner, Abe Cohen of Port Elizabeth, Alec Cooper, Lionel Friedman, Enoch Getz, Monty Goldberg, Hyman Harber, Frank James, Stanley Kark, Leo Karpel, Sydney Levy, Mellville Malkin, Maurice Ostroff, Simon Roberts, Issy Robinson, Dennis Rosenfeld, Les Rosowsky, Fred Sarif, "Mockie" Schachat, Clive Selby, Geoff Stark, Wits University boxer and rugby player, Willie Steingold, Jack Steinhart and Solly Witten . Les Bloch of Potchefstroom, and Arnold Ruch of Cape Town, both fighter pilots parted from these groups in Rome for Messerschmitt training in Czechoslovakia.

The British were still in control of the Haifa enclave. Not sure of the position, the Dakota's pilot, Nobby Clark, had radioed that he was coming in on an emergency landing. A British officer was baffled by the "tourists".

"Whatever makes you want to come to Palestine at this time?" he asked Maurice Ostroff. "It's crazy: " "Just passing through", Ostroff said.

The officer swept a hand in the direction of the bay area. "We're pulling out of here, but it won't be more than two weeks before the bloody Jews will be yelling to us to come back."

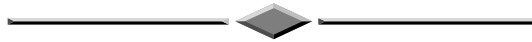
A Haganah man whisked the men away to the Technion which was then being used to house newly arrived D.P's. Ray Brunton's sister Hetta Shapiro, put up the two women for the night. Julia Slonim (Nee Levinson, sister of Shaul Bar-Levav and Uri Aylon) who was then living in Haifa welcomed her fellow South Africans with open arms.

Next morning the group was hustled into a bus for Tel Aviv. At three checkpoints British soldiers boarded the bus. The members of the group, playing dumb, knew no English. "New immigrants", said one soldier.

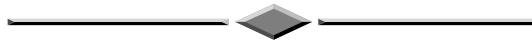
From Tel Litwinsky, where on the first night tracer bullets told of a nearby battle, several of the group quickly fanned out: the medical personnel to Jaffa. Clive Selby began organizing a "tank unit" at the camp and Maurice Ostroff was sent to the Weizmann Institute to find Radar.

Geoff Stark had been one day in the camp when a Palmach man arrived in a jeep seeking volunteers for his Battalion One. Stark was interested. The Palmach man took him and a Russian to the camp at Sarafand and dumped them there.

Melville Malkin was quickly posted, finding himself on jeep patrol in the Negev with Hillel Daleski.

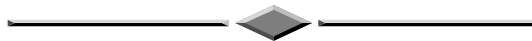


Dr. Jack Medalie was assigned to the Sde Dov airfield on June 4. He noted that the holed Reading Power Station, the airfield and Tel Aviv port, were in a straight line, an easy target for the Egyptians. Fortunately the Egyptian aim was bad and, in the week Medalie was at the airfield, most of the bombs fell into the sea.



David Teperson, who had been sent from South Africa as a kibbutz settler but who had resolved to join the Army once in the Land, was in a unit that attacked Tantura, a hostile Arab village opposite Zichron Ya'acov near Haifa, on May 16. The Arabs abandoned the village and the Israelis went in to collect arms, but found none. Teperson was then drafted to a camp at Dora, near Netanya, where an Anglo-Saxon group was being formed. Here he was joined a week later by a number of South Africans including Clive Centner, Enoch Getz, Alec Cooper, Hyman Harber, Issy Robinson, Fred Sarif, Willie Steingold, Jack Steinhart and Solly Witten. The training there was with a motley assembly of rifles, British, Italian and French.

The platoon, with its several South Africans, was hustled out of the camp three times to repulse attacks by Arab villagers of Beit Lid, Tira and Kula. But the experience that left the deepest mark on Teperson was that of the hostility between Etzel (Irgun and Sternists) and Haganah. Etzel men preparing for an attack on Rosh Ha'ayin, near Petach Tikvah, declined the assistance of Haganah. "You're crazy:" Teperson exploded. "We came here to fight." The Etzel men took Rosh Ha'ayin, then lost it. The village was to be recaptured later.



THE RADAR TEAM

Early South African volunteers included WW2 radar veterans Jack Segall, Reuben Joffe, Max Barlin, Sid Suttner, Abe Goldes and Maurice Ostroff. Together with Machal volunteers from the USA, Canada and Britain, they played a central role in the formation of a hush hush radar unit (505 Squadron) under command of American radar expert and Doctor of Science, Moshe Ettenburg (Eitan) and his second in command, Charles Braudo, originally from South Africa and a researcher at the Weizmann Institute prior to joining 505.

Unlike other units, there was no radar nucleus in Israel. It had to be built from scratch. Nor were there any local personnel experienced in the subject as the British had barred Palestinian Jews from working on radar. Radar had been a carefully guarded secret during WW2 and the radar veterans brought to squadron 505, their disciplined approach to secrecy, to the extent that the very existence of the unit was unknown to many IDF higher ups.

The first radar technician training course was conducted by Reuben Joffe at Sarona (now the Kirya). 15 radio technicians participated including Israelis, Shmuel Reiman (Rimon) later to become a station commander and eventually Commanding Officer of 505, brothers Azriel and Leon Gattenou, Aaron Bukspan (later to take over as commander of station Gefen from Monty Mymin), Moshe Ben Sira and Amos Bruner (Ben Rom) who remained in the permanent force and was sent later for advanced studies with the RAF in England.

Chapter 5

Technicians would, of course, be superfluous without equipment. Barlin was sent to the Weizmann Institute in Rehovot where he found a small group of radar men under command of Charles Braudo. Barlin had brought notes and drawings from a course he, Joffe and Segall had attended on South African radar equipment known as the JB (after Johannesburg). He produced his documents. "Very interesting" everybody said "But where do we get components?" Bits and pieces salvaged from deliberately damaged and abandoned RAF equipment were eventually received and the first rudimentary Israeli radar started taking shape.

A few days later, an Egyptian bomb intended for the institute fell wide.

The team at the Weizmann Institute under command of Braudo included South Africans Max Barlin (later to be appointed commander of the first radar station in Haifa), Eli Isserow and Maurice Ostroff (later to be appointed commander of radar station Gefen), Israelis Aaron Bukspan, Micha Diensfrei and Yosef Halberstadt and Americans Joe Heckelman, Stan Berger, Shaul Levine and Mort Kaplan.

"Build radar" the men had been instructed. None had experience in design. Ostroff and Barlin had served as radar technicians in the S.A. army. Isserow was a fitter and turner, though with his gifted hands, no ordinary one.

The laboratory assigned to the radar group was shared with a few members of Kibbutz Hatzor in the south. When the kibbutz became threatened by the Egyptians, 4 miles away, it evacuated its children and moved its small radio factory, run by a few American electronic experts, to the Weizmann Institute. The kibbutzniks, experienced as they were in electronics, though unfamiliar with radar, were very helpful in discussing possible solutions to complex technical problems. For the South Africans, the kibbutzniks were as interesting as the work challenge.

Ostroff: The kibbutzniks hitchhiked daily from Hatzor to the Weizmann Institute and hurried back after a full day's work - they could not contemplate being away in case the kibbutz was attacked. When night work permitted, I accompanied the men back to the kibbutz, where the pure socialism, in actual practice, fascinated me.

Building equipment would be very well - but it would not be of much use without operators and a Filter Room. Because of his experience in World War 2 Jack Segall was entrusted with the task of setting up this infrastructure.

A large plotting table was constructed with a map of Israel and surrounding countries divided into segments in accordance with a code aptly code named the Segol (Hebrew for Purple), a play on Segall's name. Radar operators, (yet to be recruited and trained) at the as-yet non-existent stations would use the Segol code for maintaining security in reporting positions of ships and aircraft detected by radar.

A training school for operators was established in Haifa, a course was prepared and dummy models of radar sets were constructed for training purposes. Jack Segall assisted by South African Yetta Golombick conducted the courses. The trainee operators were mostly female. Segall's wife, Janie, comments today with a twinkle in her eye, "Over the years I have had to put up with strange women accosting Jack in supermarkets or in the street - having recognised him from their days as his trainees". Among the women on the first operators course were Batya Aboutbul, Zehava Blau, Bella Raizes, Miriam Smith and Erica Walden.

The first radar station constructed at the Weizmann Institute, codenamed Barak, was installed at kibbutz Gilil Yam out in the country in those days. Today Gilil Yam is almost in the centre of Herzliya. We ate well, recalls Segall - tomatoes for three meals a day until the end of the season. Canadian Morry Smith was in charge of the station.

Smith recalls: We were a motley crew: three technicians and about a dozen girls to operate the equipment, about half of them Israelis, the others, recent immigrants - their only qualification that they speak English. So primitive was the equipment that the usual procedure was for two girls to be on duty, one inside watching the radar screen, the other outside watching the skyline so that she could tell the operator where to turn the antenna if she spotted an Egyptian plane approaching. My wife Miriam and her closest friend Erika Walden, now living in New York, were both operators at this station.

Meanwhile the team at Weizmann Institute, were working feverishly on model 2. Authority had brought them bits and pieces of detonated radar equipment recovered from RAF airborne junk. Anxious to produce results as soon as possible, the men developed a routine. The mechanical workshop was not available to them by day as it was then used for the manufacture of light arms. They worked 12 to 14 hours daily in two consecutive shifts, by day in the electronic workshop and after a brief break for a meal, at night in the mechanical workshop where Eli Isserow was to show his genius.

The basic equipment was adapted from a discarded WW 2 air to surface vessel (ASV) unit. Ostroff, a radio ham, knew something about antennas and he designed a large array to extract the last ounce of energy from the low power set.

The big day came for testing. The men carried the set to a roof. The large antenna, dwarfing the set, was erected and the set switched on. An echo came from the Judean hills. The men were learning.

Then came the day to put it into operation. The "Heath-Robinson" equipment was transported to Haifa and installed at a former British camp next to the French Convent. The station under command of Max Barlin assisted by Ostroff and Isserow, Israelis Aaron Bukspan and Micha Diensfrei and Americans Mort Kaplan and Stan Berger, was soon in operation. For lack of a suitable electric motor, a contraption comprising bicycle pedals, sprockets and a chain, had been built enabling the antenna to be rotated by hand.

By the time the Haifa station was successfully installed and left under Barlin's command, the Israelis had gained control of the former British army base at Sarafand (Tsrifim). When some elementary radar equipment, acquired by Moshe Ettenburg arrived in Israel, 505 squadron was allocated premises in the air force technical base there. Reuben Joffe was appointed Chief Technical Officer and Base commander, Jack Segall in charge of operations and Abe Goldes in charge of the E&M workshops responsible for all mechanical and electrical equipment assisted by top-rate South African mechanics Mike Miller and Max Kangisser. The main task of the E&M department in conjunction with the radar department under Reuben Joffe, was to build transportable radar stations. Sam Shaya was in charge of civil engineering for the camp and radar stations and Dorothy Jackson was head of the womens' section. Yetta Golombick was in charge of operator training.

Having completed their task at the Haifa station, Ostroff and Isserow were ordered to report to Sarafand, where, they were told, a surprise awaited them. At Abe Goldes' E&M department they were shown a large crate received from the USA and on opening it, they found an almost complete microwave radar of the type used on US torpedo boats, which had been acquired by Moshe Ettenburg on the open market in the USA as obsolete war stores disposal junk. The men were delighted even though the equipment was less than ideal for ground based operation.

Ostroff and Isserow were told that a mobile radar unit had become an urgent necessity. They were given three ex-British army trailers and charged with adapting the radar, fitting it in the trailers complete with plotting table, portable power plant and mobile workshop as soon as humanly possible. The power plant was a lawn mower motor adapted under the genius of Sid Suttner with the aid of Miller and Kangisser. Working day and night, the station, code

Chapter 5

named "Gefen", was completed and put in operation within a matter of weeks, its first location being at Bat Yam with Ostroff as station commander.

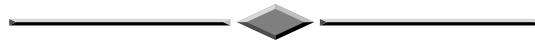
The Haifa station and "Gefen" were later to participate in a much publicized incident relating to the downing of an air intruder, later found to be British, about which more in chapter 17.

Other South Africans to join the unit a little later, included Mishy Fine, Max Kangisser, Ralph Lanesman, Effie Levy, Monty Mymin (later to succeed Ostroff as commander of station Gefen), Abe Berkow, Mendel David Cohen, Barney Dworsky and Lucien Henochowitz.

From the recollection of former members of 505 squadron, other members of 505 included Israelis, Asher Ben-Natan (squadron adjutant), Adam Babitz, Aaron Fass, Gavriel Shutz, Judith Piesenbruner, David Ezrati, Shosh Fisher, sisters Rina and Batya Aboutbul, Shmuel Winik, J. Kevin, E. Ecker, Leo Goldstein, Yoram Boem, Yosef Druch, David Munweis and Al Sheinfeld.

Volunteers from abroad included Americans Joe Heckelman, Max Fishman, Myer Tannenbaum, Joe Ehrlich and Dave Orloff and Canadians Meyer Naturman, Morry Smith, Myer Cohen, Sam Morris and Al Lieberman. Volunteers from Britain included Jack Levy, Zeev Rowe, Jerry Solowitz, Lottie Kosses, Dorothy Jackson, Sam Green, Max Rose, Lou Friedman, Solly Chinn, Esther Tauber, Daphne Cohen, Sylvia Grodentzik and PT instructor Vidal Sasoon. From Australia came Bella Raizes; from Czechoslovakia, Edita Morowcowa (later to marry South African Mishy Fine) and from India came Yehuda Digorkar.

By the end of 1948, radar stations were operating on Mount Carmel in Haifa, Tivon, Safed, Givat Olga and Bat Yam



MAY – JUNE 1948

Sister Ray Brunton mentally reeled at the strangeness of it all. In the apartment of Dr. Barachot, on the Tel Aviv-Jaffa border, the doctor had said to her: "The soldiers are going into Jaffa. Go with them and open a hospital."

The South African girl was unprepared for this. She had imagined when she left Palmietfontein that military hospitals were in existence and that she would simply be assigned her place as a theatre sister. Now, a stranger to the land, with no Hebrew, and only a smattering of Yiddish, she was under orders to find a hospital and open it.

The soldiers went in, she in a jeep with them. The Arabs, their exodus from the town continuing, were assembling at the beach, boarding small boats and lighters. Their chief aim seemed to be to get out.

A soldier told her he knew the French Hospital in Jaffa.

"Take me there."

The building was shattered.

"Any other hospital?" There was a nursing home which had been patronized by wealthy Arab families. This was the Djani.

It stood solid. But there were no lights, no instruments and no beds. Something else also worried Sister Brunton: she had noticed that ground around the building was dug up. "Is it possible they have mined the grounds?" Sappers were summoned. The discovery was that the Arabs had buried the instruments and even the operating table under the soil. Next day,

a German girl named Lily, also a theatre sister was sent to assist Sister Brunton. Get the place ready, she had been told. This will be Military Hospital 2.

How was that possible? Where was she to get beds? Her education in the realities of war proceeded fast. She learned that unlike in South Africa, doctors in Palestine had their consulting rooms in their apartments. Beds were bound to be there. Study of a residential map indicated where the doctors lived, or had lived.

Accompanied by guards on a truck, she went to the addresses, looting all the medication she could find, including penicillin and sulphur. She searched in vain for gut. Fortunately she had brought some crochet cotton with her - it would have to serve instead of gut. The soldiers loaded up mattresses, sheets, blankets and beds from the doctors' homes and other abandoned dwellings.

That day and night she and Lily scrubbed hard. Military Hospital 2 came into existence. Next day the first casualties - they were from Jerusalem - limped or were carried into the hospital. In the days that followed, Sister Brunton thanked God she had no time to think. She worked in those early days twenty hours a day, falling into bed at 11 a.m. and resuming work at 2 p.m. This made it possible for her to still, at times, a ferment of distress caused by inexperienced doctors who, seeing a shattered arm or leg, had only one answer, amputation. The wounded of the third attempt to take Latrun on June 9 and 10 were as much victims of their own doctors as they were of the Arab Legion. Sister Brunton witnessed practices that were an offense to every tenet of her training in South Africa. In her home country the cold surgery of amputation was delayed except in the most obvious cases that did not allow this. Sometimes she would hide the knife, at other times protest angrily, passionate in her requests to the doctors to wait. June Medalie, joining Sister Brunton at this period, was horrified to find the hospital full of amputees.

Not unnaturally the deepest heartbreak for Sister Brunton came from a particular case. He was a lad named Jankelow, a Sabra medical student, a grand fellow, who had worked in the theatre with her. He was called away to the Latrun hills when every man was needed. The news that he was no more racked her. She found herself profoundly involved in Israel's trials, tragedies, mistakes and rawness.



A British presence still being in the land, Irgun leaders remained underground. The last British troops were in the Haifa enclave on the point of departure. Morrie Egdes had a message for Begin to the effect that a bomber bought in Europe by Irgun of South Africa was now available. After his credentials were thoroughly checked, he was told by Irgun men, Major Sam Weiser and Conrad Bekovici, an American author, to be at a specific place in Rothschild Avenue where he would meet Begin.

This he did. The disguised Begin was a rabbi with a beard and skullcap. Egdes gave his message. In turn he was told that Irgun volunteers from abroad were to place themselves at the disposal of the Israel Army. At Tel Litwinsky camp, Egdes, Eddy Magid and Stanley Behr, came into the framework of the Army, as did all subsequent Betar groups from South Africa.

One of Yoel Palgi's first quests on his return to Israel was an interview with Ben Gurion. He wanted an explanation of a cable he had received in South Africa laconically indicating that no more volunteers were to be sent. (The cable was ignored). Ben Gurion was too preoccupied to go into the matter but Palgi managed to get some light shed on the affair. The story narrowed down to some volunteers from the United States and others who were making big money demands on the new State. There had been considerable unpleasantness. It became clear that between the Israelis and some of these American

Chapter 5

volunteers was a gulf of misunderstanding. Ben Gurion had left the issue to an aide, Yosef Yisraeli, who sent out discouraging "hold volunteer" cables.

Back now in Israel, Palgi pointed out to those who would listen that there was a difference between the approach of South African volunteers not raising an eyebrow at the R6 a month that would be paid to them and the Americans demanding 400 to 600 dollars a month. Sharply conscious not only of the 1,500 South African volunteers whom he had marked down to be sent to Israel but of the thousands also whom Leo Kowarsky was still training, Palgi spoke of the talented aliyah that Israel could possibly get from South Africa. True, not all would stay, but some would. He recalled a visit he had paid to Cape Town to meet volunteers. The hall was packed. He could not fail to receive the communication of that gathering, the elation, the sense of something extraordinary, the willingness. They were ready to go next day, that very day.

This was the human material that Yisraeli had attempted to discourage from coming, he stormed. Palgi took his bitterness to Levi Eshkol, then Director-General of the Defence Ministry, but in Palgi's perhaps unfair words "Eshkol was mainly interested at the time in a few shiploads of potatoes and jams and boots which he needed for the Army." Drafted into Israel's first paratroop unit and becoming its commander, Palgi drifted away in the passage of the months from his close South African connections of the preceding six months.

Kibbutz Ma'ayan Baruch was envired by the war throughout the month but spared the ordeal of it. It lived watchful, tense and alert. The Syrians who had four options of penetrating into the Galilee, made their thrust on the Jordan Valley, presumably arguing that once the settlements there were rolled up, those in the finger of the Galilee would be cut off and fall anyway. The Lebanese, on the west were fighting at Malkiya, which changed hands and was to change hands again, and at Kadash Naftali. The possibility of Syrian and Lebanese forces linking up was thwarted on May 16 by Palmach's capture, with the loss of twenty men, of the police fortress of Nebi Yusha which the British had passed on to the Arabs, that fortress which had fired on the bus that had brought the Lionel Hodes trio into northern Galilee

The settlers of Ma'ayan Baruch carried on with their labours. They had a vegetable garden, five cows and cereals in the fields. Working under skies that belonged to the Syrians, they took cover in slit trenches when danger threatened. Eventually they became indifferent to the planes. The Syrians, it became clear, were not interested in them but in the roads, which they were dive-bombing. The flashes of Syrian guns shelling the Jordan Valley settlements were visible and the South Africans and their American chaverim (colleagues) felt the pain of a country which had no artillery with which to reply.

Night at the kibbutz was made eerie by the howls of scores of jackals which sometimes became translated in tense minds to Arab war cries and by the brightly-colored lights of the tracers and flares somewhere further south where an Israeli target was under fire. All the kibbutz's dug-outs were manned, two to a dug-out, one on watch, the other resting. The women, having been taught to shoot, shared in the vigil.

When it seemed safe, some settlers would probe around in abandoned Arab villages in the neighborhood. Articles stolen from the kibbutz were recovered. Lionel Hodes noted in his diary that "some of the friendly Arabs who had remained were armed by the Jews, despite their own meagre armaments. The Arabs sought to protect themselves from reprisals by their fellows. Every night there was a movement back into Palestine by Arabs who regretted having fled"

Lionel Hodes, Horace Milunsky and Jack Fleisch concluding that Ma'ayan Baruch was safe, sought permission to leave the kibbutz to join a regular Army unit.

The kibbutz committee demurred, but the issue was settled by a new turn of events. The Syrians launched an attack on Mishmar Hayarden in the east and from the west the

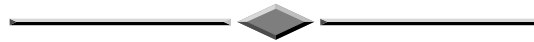
Lebanese recaptured Malkiya. The Arab advance, it was immediately surmised, would be on the key settlement of Rosh Pina, gateway to the northern Galilee. Trained men were collected from every settlement in the region to meet the threat. Ma'ayan Baruch contributed the Hodes trio, who found most interesting at Rosh Pina the flowing-robed and kaffiya-ed Druse Arabs who had thrown in their lot with the Israelis.

Jack Fleisch, a demolition expert, separated from Hodes and Milunsky. Captured a few months later in the Negev, he was taken to a POW camp in Egypt where he suffered grim days that were to shatter his life. Hodes and Milunsky were sent to an artillery training camp at Pardess Katz.

Fleisch was taken prisoner together with a Gedud Tesha Palmach soldier, British deserter known as "Sailor". A misunderstanding of the orders in Hebrew to withdraw caused them to be left behind.

Sailor trying to get a better deal told the Egyptians that he was not Jewish, and that he had forced into the Israeli army, he dropped his pants to prove it. But the Egyptian officer answered "You're a Jew, that is just a bad circumcision".

Down in the south, the friendly relations between the Beduin encampment and the South Africans and their companions at kibbutz Shoval were maintained. Issy Greenberg, of this kibbutz, joined a unit at Mishmar Hanegev. From here it made a nightly foot patrol to Hatzirim, a kibbutz near Beersheba, keeping a watchful eye on the Beersheba-Gaza road. Towards the end of May the patrol unit was taken out of the Negev to Be'er Tuvia. Nearby was Kastina, a former British army base and an airfield, later to be called Hatzor, a subsequent important region of South African participation. The following night the unit took part in the Isdud battle that had been joined with the Egyptians to stop their advance on Tel Aviv. The Israelis (say the historians) lost the battle, but won the war at Isdud. Be that as it may, the Egyptians stopped at Isdud (the Ashdod of today) and were not to advance further.



The United Nations, seeking to end the fighting, announced the appointment on May 20 of Count Bernadotte, a member of the Swedish Royal Family and President of the Swedish Red Cross, as UN Mediator for Palestine. He was to be joined a few days later by Mr. Ralph Bunche, an American Negro, acting as personal representative of Mr. Trygve Lie, Secretary General of the United Nations. Thus organized, the Security Council called on all sides to cease-fire within thirty six hours. Israel decided to obey; the Arabs asked for a delay of forty-eight hours to prepare their reply, and then refused.

Thereafter Bernadotte's pressures increased. First June 2 was ordered as the day of the cease-fire, then June 6 and finally June 11 when it did indeed come into effect, both sides desperately needing it. Both the Irgun and the Stern Group protested against Ben Gurion's acceptance -- "a submission to shame", said Begin.

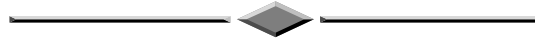
The main truce condition applying to volunteers permitted the movement of men of military age provided that they were not mobilized or trained. This was unacceptable to the Arabs who demanded a complete cessation of Jewish immigration. The British played along with the Arabs, sealing Cyprus's harbours against the departure of young men of the detention camps. In May they had allowed 446 old people, 105 infants and 299 infants' families to leave. Now there was no movement at all. The 24,000 Jews on the island remained frustratedly there.

Bernadotte, claiming that the interpretation of the Security Council's resolution was his task, distinguished between "fighting personnel" (not allowed) and "persons of military age" (allowed). Israel demurred, agreeing only not to train or draft men of military age. In fact, both

Israel and the Arabs were to ignore the condition and to use the truce to prepare for the next round.

Smoky Simon was drafted as Air Force Liaison Officer to the UN. For this he had to have some kind of status. At that time there was no rank in the IAF, if there was an IAF. He was made a "Squadron Leader" with the rank of Major, the emblem of it being a piece of ribbon purchased at a haberdashery shop in Allenby Street.

The first month of the State's life ended with the volunteers still "settling in." There was no general pattern to their absorption into the Army, Air Force or Navy, only individual experiences.



IN SOUTH AFRICA

On May 15, Israel's Foreign Minister, Mr. Moshe Sharett, asked General Smuts for South African recognition of Israel, at the same time paying sincere and respectful tribute on behalf of his Government "to the outstanding and illustrious part played by your Excellency's statesmanship in shaping the original policy of the Balfour declaration and the Palestine Mandate and to your life-long devotion and steadfast championship of the cause of Jewish Palestine and the persecuted Jews of Europe and to the firm support given to the idea of Jewish statehood by your delegation at the United Nations."

Near Election Day, May 28, Smuts accorded South Africa's de facto recognition to Israel. His cable to Sharett said:

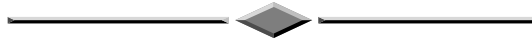
In view of the resolution of the United Nations General Assembly on November 29, 1947, which is based on partition, this recognition is not in respect of any particular boundaries, and the Union Government will be prepared to accord similar recognition to any other Arab state in Palestine, either as a separate state or as incorporated into neighboring Arab states.

The Union Government expresses its cordial wishes to the State of Israel as the fulfillment of the policy of the Jewish national home in Palestine and as a contribution to historic justice and world peace.

Sharett's reply of appreciation hoped for full recognition "soon". On the boundary issue, he went on to make the significant point that the General Assembly's partition resolution made specific provisions for those parts of Palestine not included in the Jewish State and "would point out that any attempt to alter these arrangements opens the way for their revision in more than one direction." In conclusion:

We hope that the Union Government will be able to look with satisfaction upon its share in assisting the Jewish people towards independence and sovereignty in its own country as a free and equal member in the community of nations...

Three English newspapers resented Smuts' recognition of Israel. They were the Natal Mercury ("To say that this recognition has created perturbation in South Africa is to put it mildly") and the Natal Witness ("The decision... cannot fail to have provoked astonishment and dismay among all those who are not so committed to the Zionist cause that they welcome anything that assists it"). The most influential of all, the Johannesburg Star, succeeded in writing an editorial on Palestine without referring to the Prime Minister's recognition. All three papers were supporters of the Smuts regime, but drew the line on the cause of the Jews. Their loyalties were to Britain. In the years that were to follow they have often been handsome and generous in their treatment of Israel's unfolding story.



IN EUROPE

Cecil Wulfohn waited in Paris for Jock Gavshon, wondering what could have happened to him. Jock Gavshon, a former Imperial Airways pilot, had been sent to the U.S. to purchase a Dakota for Israel on behalf of the South African Zionist Federation. He was to fly it to Paris where Wulfohn would take it over and fly it to the Jewish State.

When in doubt in Paris, go to a pub - which is what Wulfohn did, the pub of the California Hotel where he was staying. He was in an unobtrusive corner when he heard the voice of an American Colonel, already known to him, who was selling planes to both Jews and Arabs.

"Go to this address", Col. M. told his two clients, "and say that Col. M sent you."

It was a Sunday. Wulfohn sneaked out, took the first plane to London, and on the following morning presented himself at the address.

"Col. M sent me", he said. "Right", said the top man behind the desk. "Go to this address in St. James."

At this address, Wulfohn said: "Col. M sent me. I have been to the other address, now I'm here."

"We have the planes at Aldermaston", he was told. "Have a look at them, tell us if you're interested and we'll do a deal."

At Aldermaston Wulfohn threw his experienced eye over three former BOAC Dakotas (seatless) which had been used earlier to fly Pakistanis out of troubled India-Pakistan war zones. There was only one snag: they were 12-volt, instead of 24 and very few 12-volt Dakotas had been manufactured. Wulfohn telephoned Kurt Katzenstein, former German World War 1 ace, then flying for PAAC and in London for the weekend. Katzenstein came up to Aldermaston and agreed with Wulfohn that he should take a chance. "Right", said Wulfohn, "we'll take them. I am going back to London to arrange the finance".

At the St. James address that late afternoon he was given time-terms that placed the deal in jeopardy: "£2,000 by 2 p.m. tomorrow as a token of good faith, the rest within a week."

Wulfohn did not have 2,000 pence. He fell back next morning on Herbert Cranko, a former Rustenburg lawyer, then living in London. Cranko did not have that amount. "Won't they wait until the money comes from South Africa?"

They tried to get through telephonically to South Africa but failed. In any case the hours had passed and it was doubtful whether the Zionist Federation could organize a monetary arrangement in time. The inspiration came at midday: Sir Simon Marks, of Marks and Spencer:

Wulfohn and Cranko took a taxi to the Baker Street headquarters of the company.

The girl at reception was doubtful. Sir Simon was about to address a company meeting. Noting Wulfohn's crestfallen expression, she said: "Tell me, are you here about something to do with Palestine?"

"Yes." "Hang on." She lifted the telephone, spoke and then said to Wulfohn: "Go to the sixth floor."

Sir Simon was waiting at the lift entrance, holding his glasses above his forehead. His first words were: "Hello Cecil, what's the problem?"

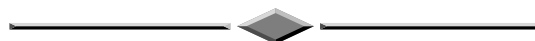
Wulfsohn explained. Sir Simon wrote out a cheque for the required amount. "Don't tell anybody", he said.

Cranko was waiting in the taxi which sped off to the bank where Wulfsohn cashed it. He paid at the St. James address before two.

Were the two men entering the building as he was leaving the two Arabs of the pub of the California Hotel? Wulfsohn liked to believe that they were. In Israel two days later, Wulfsohn announced his acquisition of the three Dakotas.

"We don't need them" said Al Schwimmer, the Machal U.S. aeronautics engineer. "We'll find Liberators. I'm banking on Liberators."

The South African Zionist Federation on whose behalf Wulfsohn was acting and now the unexpected owners of three Dakotas quickly recovered from its dismay at Schwimmer's rejection of the aircraft and a non-scheduled airline, West Air, later renamed Universal Airways and forerunner of El Al, was born. Morris Borsuk, treasurer of the Federation was one its founding directors, Cecil Wulfsohn was appointed London-based General Manager and Herbert Cranko, Managing Director. West Air was to fly up later volunteer groups. As Wulfsohn noted in his Rustenburg home twenty six years later: "Everything fell into place."



In London Dr. Helfet succeeded in his mission. The late Professor Samson Wright called a meeting of a knowledgeable and concerned group of doctors. As a result Dr. I.C. Michelson, a leading Ophthalmic Surgeon, later to become Professor at the Hebrew University, Dr. E. Kaplan, a Hebrew-speaking psychiatrist and Dr. Cyril Kaplan, a South African at that time completing his Orthopaedic training in Great Britain, and several general practitioners, were soon on their way to Israel with £25,000 worth of medical and surgical equipment.

Dr. Helfet left to continue his mission in South Africa.



SUMMARY OF THE FIRST MONTH'S FIGHTING

MAY, 15

Isolated Jordan Valley settlements of Shaar Hagolan and Massada abandoned by its kibbutznik defenders²⁹.

Jerusalem Front: Transjordan's Arab Legion occupy Atarot and Neve Yaacov, Jewish suburbs north of Jerusalem. Both evacuated as indefensible.

Southern Front: Egyptian invasion under way from bases at El Arish and Rafah. Forces pitted against invaders: the poorly armed Negev brigade and Givati Brigade, and twenty seven settlements, only five with more than thirty defenders, all poorly armed. Egyptian plan to initiate collapse of centre of Yishuv, i.e. Tel Aviv and environs after which the whole country will fall like "ripe figs".

²⁹ Veteran Chalutz South African born Bob Damelin would not leave his herd of cow's, and was forcibly removed by the other chaverim of Massada.

Egyptian tanks and infantry repulsed by settlers of Kfar Darom assisted by some soldiers.

Egyptian tanks, armoured cars and infantry attack 40-man settlement of Nirim. Repulsed. Nirim's slogan: "It is not the tank that will win, but the man."

MAY, 16

Northern Front: Syrian artillery bombardment of Ein Gev settlement. Jordan Valley kibbutzim strafed from the air. Syrian units advance on abandoned settlements of Massada and Shaar Hagolan.

Jerusalem Front: Arab Legion units begin assault of Jewish Quarter in Old City (with its ancient synagogues and houses of study) and contiguous to the Western Wall, remnant of King Solomon's temple. Man-to-man fighting in the Yeshiva of Porat Joseph: Jews hopelessly outnumbered but continue fighting. Israeli relief units - Irgun and Haganah - suffer heavy casualties in successive days of fighting in vain relief of the Quarter.

Southern Front: Second Egyptian assault on Nirim repulsed.

MAY, 17

Iraqi Front: (Southern part of the Jordan Valley, from the confluence of the Yarmuk and the Jordan Rivers to Bet Joseph): Iraqi troops renew assault on Gesher settlement and neighboring Israeli-held police fortress. Siege continues for a week, and then peters out.

Jerusalem Front: Arab Legion troops take up positions along the ridge between Latrun and Deir Ayub, directly controlling the Tel Aviv-Jerusalem road.

Southern Front: Evacuation of children and non-combatants from Nitzanim, Negba, Gat, Gal-On and Kfar Menachem accomplished at night.

MAY, 18

Northern Front: Syrians attack village of Zemach, Eastern Galilee, in preparation for massive assault on Degania line of kibbutzim. Severe losses as Israeli units retreat. All Jordan Valley settlements, with nothing to match Syrian armour, in peril.

Reinforcements arrive at Degania from Jezreel Valley settlements. Moshe Dayan, son of Degania A, appointed area commander.

Night: Israeli unit crosses Jordan at ford north of the bridge of the Daughters of Jacob, successfully destroy Syrian base of fuel and ammunition dump intended for Syrian attack on Mishmar Hayarden. Booty taken.

Israeli column retakes Malkiya, locking northern gateway of the Galilee to the Lebanese. Settlement of Manara relieved after months of siege and isolation.

Low-level Egyptian air attack on Tel Aviv Central bus station. Forty two killed.

MAY, 19

Northern Front: Urgent Degania delegation in Tel Aviv with request to Ben Gurion for reinforcements and heavy arms. Ben Gurion's reply: "There are none. All fronts lack men and arms. The whole country is front line."

Continuous shelling by Arab Legion on hungry, thirsty and isolated Jewish Jerusalem.

Southern Front: Egyptians on coastal highway to Tel Aviv, launch major attack on kibbutz Yad Mordechai with two infantry battalions, one armoured battalion, and one artillery regiment. Desperate five-day battle begins.

Chapter 5

MAY, 20

Northern Front: Syrian attack on Degania A beaten off. First two vintage artillery pieces to reach Israel (without gunsights) rushed to Jordan Valley settlement at noon, placed on Yavniel range overlooking Sea of Galilee.

Syrians evacuate Zemach and Israeli units reoccupy.

Southern Front: Yad Mordechai in desperate resistance.

MAY, 21

Northern Front: Syrians destroy, then abandon settlements of Massada and Shaar Hagolan.

Jerusalem Front: Arab Legion attacks settlement of Ramat Rachel, opposite Bethlehem.

Southern Front: Yad Mordechai continues its desperate resistance but now wilting.

Navy: Israel's first ship, a corvette of World War 2, used by U.S. Navy as an icebreaker, later bought by Israeli agents for illegal immigration in pre-state days, made ready for service. Name: Eilat.

MAY, 22

Iraqi Front: Iraqi units frustrated in assault on Belvoir settlement in southern Jordan Valley.

Jerusalem Front: Ramat Rachel falls to Arab Legion troops assisted by units of Moslem Brotherhood of Egypt.

Southern Front: Yad Mordechai still resisting.

MAY, 23

Jerusalem Front: Newly-formed Seventh Brigade deployed in vicinity of Hulda and Na'an preparing, with Alexandroni Brigade, for attack on Latrun. Main objective: to reopen the road to Jerusalem and to bring food and reinforcements there.

Synchronized and concerted attack from north and south by Arab Legion repulsed by Israeli defenders at gates of Notre Dame Monastery. Glubb Pasha, British Commander of the Legion:

"The Legion's worst defeat in the war."

Ramat Rachel recaptured by Israeli units.

Northern Front: Battle for Jordan Valley ends with decisive Israeli victory. Syrians on the retreat.

Southern Front: Yad Mordechai doomed.

MAY, 24

Jerusalem Front: First round in battle for Latrun ends in decisive victory for Arab Legion. Jerusalem's prospects grow bleaker. Ration in Jerusalem: two pieces of bread a day, thin soup and canned vegetables per person. Water: a gallon per day per person for all purposes.

Ramat Rachel changes hands again. Now held by Legion.

Chapter 5

Iraqi units relieve Arab Legion units at Nablus.

Northern Front: Israeli units seize Rosh Hanikra on Lebanese border.

Southern Front: Yad Mordechai's heroic resistance ends.

MAY, 25

Southern Front: Egyptian units operating on the desert road arrive in Beersheba. Moslem Brotherhood entrusted with defence. Egyptian units on the coastal road push north, onwards to Tel Aviv.

Isolated outposts of Ben Shemen, Sdom, Bet Eshel and others supplied by air.

Jerusalem Front: Legion attacks isolated Jewish forces on Mount Scopus.

Fierce battle for Latrun. Israeli forces beaten back.

MAY, 26

Israeli Dakota attacks Ramallah and Biddu.

MAY, 28

Jerusalem Front: Jewish-Quarter of Old City abandons hopeless struggle against Arab Legion and surrenders.

Iraqi Front: Iraqi troops capture settlement of Geulam near Tulkarm. Move on to attack Kfar Javits.

Political: Count Bernadotte, U.N. Mediator, establishes headquarters in Cairo and presses for truce arrangement.

MAY, 29

Egyptian columns reach Ashdod, 30 kilometers from Tel Aviv.

Egyptian Air Force continues attacks on Tel Aviv, and southern settlements of Gan Yavne, Gedera, Negba, Nirim, Gevaram and Dorot.

Iraqi planes attack Kfar Javits and Kfar Yona.

IAF Dakota drops two tons of bombs on Ramallah.

MAY, 30

Jerusalem Front: Israeli forces make second assault on Latrun, repulsed again.

Iraqi Front: Iraqis capture Rosh Ha'ayin, with its important springs of the Yarkon River and pipeline to Jerusalem.

Northern Front: Israeli troops capture Meggido fort, Lajun fortress and Gilboa Bridge.

Air War: Vain Messerschmitt attack on Iraq el Suedan fortress in the south.

JUNE, 1

Political: Security Council calls in vain for truce to become effective at midnight.

Jerusalem Front: First planning to carve out alternative road to Jerusalem - the historical "Burma Road" of Israeli's War of Independence. Completed by hundreds of labourers from

Chapter 5

Jerusalem and the coastal plain working at night to straighten that part of track near Bet Susin to make it negotiable for limited supplies to Jerusalem.

Southern Front: Egyptians make fresh attempt to take settlement of Negba. Surprise attack by Israeli reinforcements force retreat. Israeli attempt to dislodge Egyptians from Isdud repulsed, but latter now permanently pinned down.

JUNE, 2

At Sea: Egyptian warship shells Caesarea, fifteen to twenty shells fired. Little damage.

JUNE, 3

In The Air: Egyptian planes attack military camp at Sarafand and Rishon le-Zion. Number of casualties.

JUNE, 4

Iraqi Front: Israeli attempt to take Jenin fails. Considerable losses.

JUNE, 5

Iraqi Front: Settlers of village of Maapil hold out against Iraqi assault (this among the last Iraqi offensives until the end of the war).

In The Air: Settlers of Ayelet Hashachar in the Northern Galilee bring down Syrian plane.

Jerusalem Front: Arab Legion attack on Abu Tor repulsed.

JUNE, 6

Northern Front: Syrian unit attacks settlement of Mishmar Hayarden. Syrian artillery pounds "Finger settlements" of Dan, Lehavot Habashan, Kfar Szold and others.

Political: Cease-fire date postponed once more - this time to June 11, 6 a.m.

JUNE, 7

Southern Front: Egyptians renew mopping up of centers of resistance left in the rear and on flanks of their coastal communication lines... attack Nitzanim settlement (settler and soldier defenders not more than 150). Egyptians throw in their best infantry battalion, a regiment of twenty five pounders, a battery of anti-aircraft guns, two batteries of anti-tank guns and a squadron of fighter planes. Settlement surrenders after hopeless battle: thirty three dead, rest taken prisoners. Israel learns of settlement's fall from Egyptian broadcasts. Biblical words on Nitzanim sadly recalled: "Lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice."

Second Israeli attempt to dislodge Egyptians from Ashdod fails.

Jerusalem Front: Third attempt by Israelis to take Legion-held Latrun repulsed. Legion destroys neighboring settlement Gezer, taking all the settlers prisoner.

JUNE, 10

Northern Front: Syrians capture Mishmar Hayarden, settlement wiped out. Thrust continues with attacks on Ramat Naftali and Ein Gev on eastern shores of Lake Galilee. Ein Gev settlers repulse Syrians with severe losses on both sides.

Southern Front: Another vain Israeli assault on the Iraq el Suedan Fortress.

Chapter 5

JUNE, 11

Northern Front: Battle for Sejera³⁰ settlement continues.

Jerusalem Front: Col. Marcus, American commander of Jerusalem front, challenged in Hebrew by sentry at 3.50 a.m., does not respond, is shot dead by Israeli sentry. Israel stunned by tragedy.

Southern Front: Negev settlements completely isolated from Israel.

First truce comes into effect but fighting in north continues with Syrians probing and in occupation of Hill 243. Attacks on Ein Gev continue until June 12, truce at Sejera made effective June 13.

³⁰ Sejera, now better known by its Hebrew name, Ilaniya, is where Joe Woolf lives.



Badge of the Palmach

CHAPTER 6 - PART 1

THE ALTALENA AFFAIR: BEWILDERED VOLUNTEERS

The explanation why the Arab invasion armies, equipped with tanks, armoured cars, artillery and the Air Forces of Egypt and Syria, did not overrun the unarmed Jewish State as a Germany overrunning a Belgium is not to be sought in terms of "miracle" - a habitual tendency in regard to things Israeli. The objective facts were certainly alarming. The Arab confrontation states numbered forty million people. Israel little more than half a million. In the first three weeks the Egyptian Air Force was able to bomb Israel's cities, villages and settlements at will. Israel had no navy. The Egyptian Navy of forty-five vessels, with a total capacity of 20,000 tons, theoretically should have had Tel Aviv, Haifa and coastal kibbutzim at its mercy. Israel's Haganah, on the one hand, and the Irgun and Stern group on the other, were still profoundly hostile to one another. The Israelis were woefully short of arms and could only meet armour with light machine guns, 20mm guns, Piat shells and Molotov cocktails.

The Arab invasion miscarried because the Arab states were not united in purpose and could not even form an authoritative High Command. They were riven with internal rivalries and conflicting ambitions. Egypt's King Farouk was persuaded to come into the war to prevent Palestine falling into the hands of his rival King Abdullah of Transjordan. Syrian motives could be traced back to the first Pan-Arab convention on the Palestine problem in 1937 when the Syrian delegate urged that Palestine should be returned to its "mother country" (Syria). King Abdullah lived with his father's dream of a Hashemite kingdom comprising Transjordan, Palestine, Syria and the Lebanon. Iraq sought the incorporation of these countries within her kingdom. She was particularly preoccupied with the oil pipeline to Haifa. King Ibn Saud of Saudi Arabia was against any Hashemite expansion³¹.

There was unity only in rejection of partition and of the Jewish state. Thus, operating under different and mutually suspicious commands, the Arab armies ceded the strength that could have been theirs in unity. Secondly, the pre-State fighting November 29, 1947 to May 14, 1948, between the Israelis and the Palestinian Arabs, yielding to Israel, as it did, vital areas in Upper and Lower Galilee and other important centers as Haifa, Jaffa and Jerusalem, established for Israeli forces, a sounder geo-strategic position than she had had. Thirdly, the Egyptian Air Force was frightened off by a handful of early losses and never became the devastating weapon of destruction it could have been. Fourthly, Haganah's Policy of "active defence" unsettled Arab initiative.

In these circumstances it became possible for Israel's striking force of 30,000 (including a considerable number of women and militia settlers assigned to defence of village and settlement) to stand up to the total of 35,000 combat and irregular troops of the Arab nations, even though the latter's superiority in weaponry was pronounced.

Crucial was Haganah's policy of "active defence". This has been described by Yigal Allon:

Though not ready to embark at once on a full-scale counter-offensive, Haganah still rejected a purely defensive strategy. If it had concentrated solely on defence, the war would have been lost; for in that case the initiative would have remained with the enemy, which was in a position to choose almost freely its time and place for attack, and to concentrate forces sufficient to break the Jewish lines of defence almost everywhere. The Haganah accordingly adopted a combination of defensive methods and offensive actions. There was, of course, no continuous line of defence. Every settlement or adjoining group of settlements was defended for the most part by the settlers themselves. In some places, strategic hills and strongholds were held by regular troops; and a series of night raids, carried out by the Israelis on the

³¹ A condensation from Netanel Lorch's *Edge of the Sword*.

enemy's soil, sometimes deep into his territory, forced the enemy to exercise great vigilance in the defence of bases, high ground and other military objects...³²

There were other reasons why the Arab blitz failed, even more important than those named, the essence contained in four sentences of Yigal Yadin's pre-war survey:

.....evaluation cannot be merely a military consideration of arms against arms and units versus units. The problem is to what extent our men will be able to overcome enemy forces by virtue of their fighting spirit, of our planning and our tactics. It has been found in certain cases that it is not the numbers and the formations which determine the outcome of battle, but something else.

That something else was the decisive factor in blunting the Arab Invasion. Israel's forces fought with courage and spirit; the settlers of kibbutzim and villages resisted enemy attacks with the prowess given to those who defend hearth and home and field and by which one man becomes twenty and a woman equal to the twenty. Kibbutzim overwhelmed by vastly superior forces shone with as great a glory, sometimes greater, than those which repelled the invaders. Kibbutz Yad Mordechai, tragically short of men and arms, ill-equipped against artillery and tanks, held up the Egyptian northern advance on Tel Aviv for five days. To this compound of courage, resourcefulness and sacrifice add the burning Jewish consciousness of the holocaust in Nazi Europe and the imperative to redeem the survivors. This multiplied the defenders of Israel not by twenty but by fifty and 100.

Such was the struggle of the half million against the forty million in the first month of the official war. The battles were bitter and the Yishuv grieved over grave losses: thousands of young men of rare quality, the Jewish quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem, Ramat Rachel and other Jewish settlements in the Jerusalem area, Yad Mordechai and kibbutz Nitzanim in the south, and hosts of newly-arrived young men from the camps of Europe thrust precipitately into the battle against the British trained Arab Legion in the battles of Latrun.

Dark menace still remained on June 11. But the central fact of that day was that unarmed Israel still stood - and stood enlarged, and that arms, planes, airmen, doctors, the displaced Jews of Europe and Jewish volunteer ex-servicemen were now streaming in. The nation of 650,000 had been fighting on four fronts and the pattern was to continue. The fronts were: The Northern Front, that covered the Galilee and the northern border of the Samaritan triangle. The opposing forces were the Syrians, the Lebanese, Iraqis and what was left of Kaukji's Liberation Army.

The Central Front, from Zichron Ya'acov to Petach Tikvah, taking in the western border of the Samaritan front. The opposing forces here were the Iraqis and the Arab Legion.

The Tel Aviv-Jerusalem Front, including the road between the two cities. The opposing forces were the Arab Legion, irregulars and, on the outskirts of Jerusalem, Egyptian units reaching out east.

The Southern Front, from Nes Ziona south and east, includes all Israeli-held territories from the Mediterranean to the Gulf of Aqaba. The opposing force was the Egyptian.



We now follow the South Africans in the first period of silenced guns.

³² The Making of Israel's Army, by Yigal Allon. Sphere Books Ltd., London.

Krugersdorp's Cyril Gotsman was drafted to the Irgun ship, Ben Hecht, in Haifa harbor, one of several 'illegal immigrant' ships seized by the British and now tied to the quayside. To his astonishment, he found himself the only soul aboard. His trained eye took in the details: a yacht, sleek, good-looking, diesel, six cabins, but dead: no water, no sewerage and no light.

Gotsman had no duties. In the evenings he went into Haifa to meet South African cronies. Returning one night at eleven, he found the ship lit up by searchlights and men and guns aboard. He was stopped as he walked up the gang-plank. He reports the following dialogue:

"What do you want?"

"Never mind what I want - what do **you** want? This is my ship. You have no right to be here."

The man took Gotsman to the officer in charge. The dialogue proceeded thus:

"Who are you?"

Gotsman: "I'm on this ship. At the moment I am the only crew. I must be captain of the ship. Now who are you and what do you want?"

They went to the wheelhouse.

Said the officer: "The Haganah has taken this ship from the Irgun. We had news that the Irgun was going to try to take it back."

"Is that what all the guns are about?"

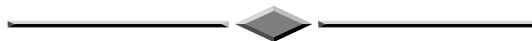
"If necessary we'll have to defend ourselves. We shall not allow them to take the ship."

"But I didn't come here to fight Jews. I came to fight Arabs."

"There's nothing we can do about it. I'll sleep in the wheelhouse and if anything happens, you'll hear or we'll let you know what is what."

Next morning when Gotsman awoke, it all appeared like a dream. Not a soul on board. All had gone.

His summation: "I did not know much about Israeli politics and was not particularly interested in them. I had come to Israel under the impression that it was a country united like no other, then this.



Dr. Jack Medalie was drafted from Tel Aviv airfield to Djani hospital, teaming up with Ray Brunton and his wife June (they had been married a month). Finding little scope for her physiotherapy, June worked with Ray Brunton in the operating theater. Dr. Medalie came in as a surgeon. But he was at Djani for a week only when Dr. Dror, Chief Physician to the Palmach, put the question that was to turn the war into an experience of the profoundest kind for him. "Will you join the Palmach?" Dror indicated that the Palmach units were desperately short of doctors.

This meant separation from June. Medalie asked for a little time to think about the matter. Among those who counseled him against accepting were his young Palmach patients at the hospital. "It's madness," they said, showing solicitude for the twenty-six year old volunteer doctor, which touched Medalie.

But choice was already out of his hands, although he had, in fact, decided to accept Dror's offer. The Palmach sent a car for him and he took leave of June to join the Third Battalion of the Yiftach Brigade, then at Sarafand. There he found the battalion had a doctor, an elderly man, whose role now became diminished, since the unit was reluctant to take him into any forward action.

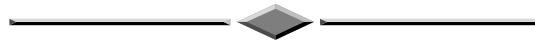
The transfer made for Medalie's swift education into Palmach's arms plight: one Sten gun for every third man, hand grenades for others and knives for the rest.

The standards of Israel's trained nurses appalled Sister Brunton. The biggest shock came on the day she instructed one of them to give penicillin injections to some patients. The nurse's quick passage from bed to bed made Sister Brunton call out: "But I told you to give them injections' ".

"But Ray," said the nurse, "that's what I am doing."

Suspicion flashed into the sister's mind. "You're going from bed to bed with one syringe,"

"Yes." Brunton was horrified. "You don't know that each patient has to have his own syringe and needle?"



At Tel Litwinsky camp there was continuing confusion: Lionel Hodes:

Mike Landshut, the Australian non-Jew who later Hebraised his surname to Amir, needed about 50 men for the artillery unit he was forming and had only 30. Volunteers found no central recruiting committee to direct them into units most suited to them. Commanding officers, impatient at delays, competed with one another in private recruiting. Mike and I went for recruits to the reception camp, the Anglo-Saxon Club and certain cafes and hotels.

An Anglo-Saxon officer wrote bitterly: "... the camps have become markets in flesh and blood, a place where every representative of any brigade whatsoever, comes and takes a person or persons, according to his fancy..."

Shaul Rosenberg, the Scottish Jewish officer in kilts, took a liking to Hyman Harber. "I can use you," he said.

Rosenberg placed Harber in charge of the Anglo-Saxon platoon of battalion 32 of the Alexandroni Brigade. The platoon consisted of men from South Africa, England, Holland, Denmark, Canada and New Zealand. Their uniform was the clothes they were wearing, their arms rifles, Sten guns, two mortars and revolvers.

Harber instructed the platoon in parade ground work, use of weapons, methods of attacking villages and street fighting.

Morrie Egdes, informed by Begin that Irgun existed only in Jerusalem, repaired with Eddy Magid and Stanley Behr to a bungalow at Tel Litwinsky where, he was told, a South African was helping to form a tank corps. This was Clive Selby, of Cape Town, an ex-officer of the South African Army. Other South Africans were also calling at the bungalow.

The rumor of the formation of the corps spread and soon experienced tank men from European Armies, one a veteran of fifty, were knocking at the door. Egdes, Behr and Magid were the youngest members. Having no tanks, the tank corps men spent their first days keeping physically fit.

The British were loading their last arms and men at Haifa to evacuate the Haifa enclave. Three British deserters, one involved with a Jewish girl, brought two Cromwell tanks to the camp and became the corps' instructors.³³

The first days of Alex Rathouse and his wife Evelyn were unhappy. No one at Tel Litwinsky knew what a codes and ciphers man was and the couple spent time aimlessly. Alec was considering returning to South Africa when a man who DID know came on the scene. This was Shaul Bar-Levav (Saul Levinson in South Africa), an arrival of September 1947.

Shaul straightened things out for the couple, but in the meantime something else had happened to take the jaundice out of their eyes. This was acquaintance with a Tel Aviv family named Torum, husband, wife and two children. The story is the not unfamiliar one of an act of kindness leaving a deep mark. The Rathouses had sought a room in Tel Aviv in vain. The Torums, by sleeping four to a room, made their children's room available and also shared their simple diet of bread and jam with the South Africans.

Alec and Evelyn Rathouse decided to stay in the land. These were people you couldn't desert.

Sounds and flashes of guns nearby (some truce!) were Tel Litwinsky's greeting to another South African couple, "Bully" Margolius, ex-S.A. Army Technical Services, and his wife Lily, a nurse. On their own initiative, they left the camp for Tel Aviv's Sde Dov airfield,

"I can't take man and wife," said the O.C. "You'll have to separate."
"We're sticking together," said Lily.

The couple returned to Tel Litwinsky where another volunteer, also kicking his heels, suggested they try 101, the fighter squadron forming at Herzliya.

The Margoliuses hitched a lift to the airfield.
"A nurse?" said the O.C. "A mechanic? Welcome! Welcome! "

That night, the Czech mechanics brought out by agreement with Haganah for the Messerschmitts, decided to quit. A suspicious plane had been over the field that day, This was not their war, they said.



In Tel Aviv, Dr. Jack Penn saw hundreds of casualties. He sought out Dr. Sheba. The two men took to each other immediately and became lifelong friends. They visited all the forward and intermediate medical posts in the country. Whenever possible, Penn operated - sometimes on deal tables, sometimes even on the granolithic floor. He was horrified to find that some of the severest casualties were girls.



In the course of the days, Sister Brunton modified her views about the doctors at Djani. There were two who were great: Dr. Moses, from Poland, and Dr. Spira, from Czechoslovakia.

"Dr. Moses must be the greatest surgeon in the world," the sister told the visiting Dr. Penn. The South African surgeon smiled at the eulogy, but the operation he later observed Dr. Moses doing had him in equal admiration.

³³ See section on Non-Jewish Volunteers.

Dr. Moses had fought with the partisans in the forests of Poland where he operated with a pen knife and had developed quite extraordinary skills, a fine human being also. A few days earlier, an orderly, in distress, had told Sister Brunton that his child was seriously ill. "Bring the child here," said the doctor. He operated on the child for appendicitis. The orderly sought to kiss his hand. "No need for this," said Dr. Moses gently. "This is my job."

Twenty doctors were now in the hospital and all were working under great pressure. But none worked as hard and for such long hours as Sister Brunton. It had been found that the best time to bring in the casualties of Jerusalem and the corridor was at night. Brunton started her preparations for their arrival at 4 p.m. and worked with the doctors through the night. She was the only English-speaking person in the hospital. Dr. Spira spoke French to her. She understood not a word. But she nodded and met his requirements.

Dr. Spira, an orthopaedic surgeon, used sculptors' tools. Sister Brunton lived through the wonder of it all: no drugs, no gut (her sterilized crochet cotton instead), no needles and no clamps to tie off the blood, yet not a single case of septicemia.

The South African girl endured the primitive conditions and the long hours without wilting. It was simple people like Naomi, a Yemenite girl, who gave her perspective. Naomi said, "I'm not a nurse, but I want to work with you in the theater."

"Well," said Sister Brunton, "I'm not supposed to clean up the blood and the mess, perhaps you'll do that?"

"Of course," said the girl, "not a mess, it's our boys' blood".

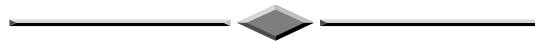
A crisis came to Djani when Brunton accepted an invitation from Dr. Penn to join him in Haifa. On the day she walked downstairs to leave, she found a group of doctors in the lobby in a most unnamable mood. Dr. Spira asked to see her transfer order, and then tore it up. "We're going on strike if you go," he said.

Dr. Sheba visited the hospital to assuage feelings.
"You can't go," said Dr. Sheba. "You see what's happened."

Penn cabled for Sisters Benedict and Marie Roux in Johannesburg.

Not long after, Sister Brunton did indeed leave Djani, for the mountain hospital of Kfar Giladi in the Northern Galilee. When she left (we jump a period of a month), Djani was functioning with three operating theaters with now newly-arrived competent theater sisters.

History requires the re-statement: It was this woman, then in her twenties, who organized and opened Djani hospital.



Psychologically, South Africa's volunteers, "good Jewish boys with one thought, to serve" (as they themselves put it) were quite unprepared for the truce's brief war of Jew against Jew which culminated in the Altalena affair of June 19-22.

The focus was the Irgun ship of this name, carrying men and arms, which Haganah set ablaze on Tel Aviv's beach front with artillery fire. Sixteen Irgun dead, forty wounded and two Haganah dead, was the final toll of two encounters, the first on the beach of the village of Kfar Vitkin then at Tel Aviv.

The Altalena controversy sparks off passionate arguments to this day. The facts and respective view-points, not the passions, will be our concern here. On June 8, a government spokesman, calling attention to appeals abroad by the Irgun and Stern group for financial aid, said that since both organizations had consented voluntarily to dissolve themselves and were about to join, the National Israel Army, those still purporting to raise funds for them as fighting forces were guilty of fraud. He said that all parts of the Army were financed from a central fund and that none could claim separate existence.

The Irgun retorted that it would continue as an armed force in the Jerusalem area until that city, not within the partitioned State, was ruled by Jews. For this and other reasons, it would continue collecting money.

The Altalena sailed from Marseilles for Israel on June 11, the first day of the first truce. She had on board 900 Irgun supporters, young men and women assembled mainly from various camps in Europe. With the tacit consent of the French Government, the ship loaded twenty seven trucks, 5,000 Lee-Enfield rifles, five million rounds of ammunition, several thousand air combat bombs, 300 Bren machine guns, 150 Spandaus, five caterpillar-track armoured cars and other lesser equipment. Most of the 900 men and women were taken ashore in lighters at Kfar Vitkin, thirty kilometers north of Tel Aviv; some arms were unloaded there also.

We shall not go into the gory details, and the charge and countercharge that followed, adequately described in all books written on Israel's War of Independence and in a Niagara of newspaper articles since, but focus on the two main versions, that of Ben Gurion, and that of Begin.

In his outline to the People's Directorate, Ben Gurion opened with the explanation that upon the establishment of the Jewish State, it was resolved to let bygones be bygones and thus enable every member of the Yishuv without exception to open a new chapter of equal partnership and equal rights and responsibilities in the building and defence of the State.

On May 26, 1948, a law was promulgated for the formation of the Defence Army of Israel. This was no routine measure, as in other states, but a matter of life and death for the Yishuv and for the existence of the State and for the hopes of its people. The fourth clause of the Defence Army Ordinance prohibited the formation or maintenance of any other armed force outside the framework of the Army.

In our case (said Ben Gurion). This was particularly necessary as a decisive factor for our defence. The enemy from without could only be repelled by a united military force subject to the authority of a single government and a single command.

The Irgun Zvai Leumi attached several conditions to their incorporation and the Government, intent on achieving the desired result with the least amount of friction, arrived at the following agreement with the head of that organization: the Irgun were to join the Army and swear the oath of allegiance to the State. All their equipment and war material were to be handed over to the High Command of the Army. They were to cease to exist and operate as a military group in the State of Israel. Finally they would no longer purchase or acquire arms or war material as a separate group.

These undertakings by Irgun were only partially fulfilled. They handed over only a small part of their arms and they failed altogether to fulfill the other two principal pledges. The Irgun continued to carry out separate operations and to effect separate arms purchases.

In defiance of the law of the State of Israel and in repudiation of their freely-offered declaration and pledges, the Irgun brought to the State of Israel a ship with an arms cargo. Even if there were not a truce under the auspices of the United Nations this would be a very grave matter, for no state can tolerate individual persons or organizations bringing to the

country, without the permission of the Government; even the smallest quantity of arms, let alone large quantities of rifles and guns, as Irgun did.

When we learned of the approach of the ship (Ben Gurion went on) instructions were given ordering Irgun to place the ship at the disposal of the Government. Irgun refused and submitted conditions to the Government. Again the Government acted leniently, perhaps too leniently. It did not insist on unimportant formalities, but demanded simply that the ship be placed at its disposal unconditionally and that Irgun be prevented from unloading the arms.

Irgun refused and (Mr. Ben Gurion said) my duty was clear. After consulting with the Government it was decided to concentrate the required military forces on the spot in order to prevent Irgun forcibly from unloading the arms.

I regret to say that a number of Irgun soldiers serving in the Army deserted from their ranks and hastened to Kfar Vitkin to fight against the security forces of the State.

Irgun forces at Kfar Vitkin were overcome and they surrendered, handing over their arms and equipment and they undertook in written agreement to obey the demands of the Government. The operation was completed with a maximum of efficiency and a minimum loss of life.

It was agreed that Irgun officers who had given their names and signed the undertaking could return to their bases and the vehicles they used would be returned to the owners. Top prisoners taken by both sides were released. This brought to an end the Irgun incident at Kfar Vitkin.

At the same time, however, the ship slipped away from Kfar Vitkin and approached Tel Aviv. It disobeyed the order of the Navy of Israel to leave Tel Aviv and place itself under the authority of the State.

Again a special meeting of the Government was summoned at which it was decided that the ship with the cargo must be handed over to them. The ship refused the order. A salvo was fired from the artillery of the Army of Israel and hit the vessel, setting it ablaze. Irgun then asked our army to help them take off the wounded from the ship. Our soldiers helped to rescue the men.

The Irgun story is different. It runs like this: On the announcement of the truce, Begin cabled Irgun headquarters in Paris not to send the ship until he had received the consent of the Provisional Government to do so (the ship had in the meantime sailed). Haganah leaders Galili, then Assistant Minister of Security, and Eshkol, gave consent on June 15, informing Begin that the ship should be brought in at full speed and directing its landing at Kfar Vitkin to avoid UN surveillance. The Haganah leaders initially offered Army assistance in the unloading.

Menahem Begin³⁴:

The evilly-disposed whispered that we intended to convey the arms to our underground armouries, but the truth is that by that time we had no more secret armouries. We had given the Army all our arms and equipment, and they had full knowledge of where all our concentration points had been. How on earth, long after we had emerged from the underground and after all our people were known to the Army, could we have hidden arms enough to equip ten infantry battalions?

³⁴ The revolt, by Menachem Begin, Steimatzky.

No less enlightening is the fact that in all our conversations we emphasized that the full supervision of the arms, after they were unloaded, would be handed over to the Army.

...the Israel Army was not established in Jerusalem even after it had been formed... Our Irgun comrades there had few arms for open fighting...(and)... it can readily be understood why we wanted a part of the good arms in the Altalena to be sent to our units in Jerusalem and why we wanted our units in the severely under-equipped Army to get their fair share too.

How, Begin asked, could this be presented as part of "secret preparations" for "a revolt against the Government?" He emphatically denied any intention of staging a coup d'etat to take over the Government.

Arthur Koestler, at that time correspondent of the Manchester Guardian, offered the following assessment:

On the surface, the Israeli Government behaved with exemplary correctness in preventing the landing of arms during the truce period. But "oriental political actions" are not to be judged by their surface appearances. The truce was unfavorable to the Jews. The Arabs had a short and easily-controlled coastline. Urgently-needed arms dropping from heaven without a formal breach of the truce could not have been anything but a source of delight to the Israeli Government.

Why, then, did the Government open battle with the Irgun troops? Koestler's answer:

Their informing the UN Commission that they were being more Catholic than the Pope would seem paradoxical if the long-simmering feud between the Government and the Irgun were not taken into account.

The decision of the Israeli Cabinet was a premeditated desire to use the first opportunity for a showdown with the dissidents. The Government's insistence on an unconditional surrender indicated that their set intention was to bring Irgun to heel while the going was good.

Koestler noted that the popular reaction on the whole was resentful against the Government for giving the order to shoot. Paradoxically, he said, while the Government's action was formally correct and impeccable, it went against the grain of popular feeling.

Finally the account of Yigal Yadin, Acting Chief of Staff:

I was not in the know about the negotiations which led to the Altalena affair: This had been handled by Eshkol, Galili and Ben Gurion. But once the situation had developed, and the Altalena was in Kfar Vitkin, I was called to the Government meeting on the evening of June 20 and told that the Government had decided that everything should be done to prevent the landing of the ship with its arms and that both had to be handed to the Government.

I did not have the slightest hesitation in complying with the orders of the Government and of Ben Gurion. There was just one order which I asked to be given to me in writing because I thought it was a very delicate and decisive one. But I complied. And I think that, historically speaking, Ben Gurion's action on the Altalena - he may have made mistakes here and there - was one of his most courageous, definitely one of his most decisive, after his decision to declare the State. I have never had any problem about the basic decision.

The Altalena affair took place in sight of thousands of Tel Avivians and under the noses of the UN observers at the Kaete Dan hotel. The end was men dying, a ship ablaze, and Begin jumping off the ship, lucky to be alive. Issy Greenberg at the Metropole Hotel, about to join

the Air Force, shuddered. He remembered what Bari³⁵ had looked like after an ammo ship blew up there.

"Nothing doing," said David Teperson at Dora camp. "I'm not going to shoot any fellow Jew." He declined the Piat shells offered him and the bullets for his rifle.

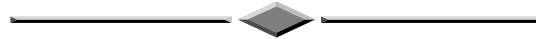
It was early morning. Etzel radio had broadcast that the Altalena had been unloading valuable ammunition for the State only to meet an attack from Haganah.

But Teperson did not refuse to accompany his unit. It was driven to Kfar Vitkin. On the beach he saw ten fully loaded trucks with ammunition and heard reports of the fighting that had taken place.

The fighting had now given way to passionate argument between the two sides. Teperson jumped off his truck and stumbled on a man he thought was wounded. Turning him over, he saw the man was dead - his first dead man of the war, a Jew killed by fellow Jews. He lifted the body on his back to take it away to "a more respectable place" and as he did so shots rang around him. Having placed the dead man, he returned to the raging antagonists only to discover that in the Irgun ranks were young men with whom he had voyaged from Marseilles to Israel. They reproached him bitterly: "Now you fight against us."

Two Yemenite brothers, one Haganah, one Irgun, were pouring venom at each other. "It was ugly," said Teperson. "I didn't understand it."

The Altalena quit Kfar Vitkin with the object of beaching at Tel Aviv and unloading there.

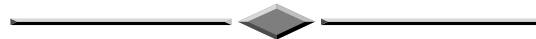


Elliot Rosenberg and Smoky and Myra Simon were in the Cassit restaurant on Tel Aviv's beachfront when a rattle of gun fire came from their left, the target the Altalena. How and why the restaurant had become a firing zone they did not know, but they did know they had to get out quickly. They scrambled over the small wall which surrounded the restaurant and made for Hayarkon Street along which they saw Irgun half-tracks loaded with men speeding to the beach.

"What's happening?" they asked.

This was everybody's question.

"Madness," they said bitterly when they learned of the war of Jew against Jew.



Pilot Tuxie Blau was at Sde Dov airfield which received an Army intelligence report that the Irgun had beached the ship opposite the Kaete Dan Hotel in order to unload arms for themselves. The report said the crew had been ordered to surrender the arms and also ordered a stand-by of aircraft to bomb the vessel if necessary. Blau left the field in a jeep to make his way to headquarters at the Yarden Hotel. Driving to the beach front, he became trapped in an area of gunfire. Jumping from the jeep, he took cover behind the low wall on the beach front. The Altalena was now burning.

³⁵ Italian scene of battle in World War II

Eddy Magid and Morrie Egdes, both Irgun followers, were ordered at Tel Litwinsky to join a unit that was to be rushed to the beach to prevent the arms landing. They heatedly refused.

The situation was particularly painful for Hillel (Billy) Daleski, son of Mr. Joe Daleski, vice-chairman of the South African Zionist Revisionist Party and near in heart to the Irgun. Daleski understood his father's sympathies. He had arrived in April with the first group from South Africa and had been serving with the Negev Brigade, which had been hurriedly pulled out and rushed to Tel Aviv. Anger, outrage, duty, discipline, tore him apart. These mixed feelings had to erupt. Stricken by shots he had fired at the ship, he rebelled against himself and against the situation into which he had been placed and was ready to desert and join the Irgun. He was dissuaded by his friend Melville Malkin.

Geoff Stark, rushed from Sarafand camp with his Palmach fellows to the beachfront, was equally bewildered. He was lying on a pavement corner with his Bren gun at the ready. The Altalena was belching smoke. The atmosphere was tense. The unreality of things struck him again. How was it that he, a volunteer come to serve the Jewish State, now had his finger on a trigger that could mow down fellow Jews? "I don't know whether I would have fired if the order had come," he said twenty seven years later. "I didn't know what it was all about."

Cyril Steinberg, in Transport Command, had an initial "picturesque" view of the Altalena. Coming in on a flight from Corsica, he saw a brilliant blaze in the distance. The Mediterranean summer night, balmy and peaceful, against blacked-out Tel Aviv, served to enhance the quality of the blaze. When he got closer, the fire assumed a more mysterious and disturbing quality. "What's going on in Tel Aviv?" he asked when he landed at Ekron. The answer came from various sources in bits and pieces. No one knew exactly. But there was no mistaking the feeling of disgust at Jew fighting Jew. The volunteers were unacquainted with nuances of the young state's torrid politics.

Air Force headquarters simmered with rebellion. In an atmosphere thick with wild rumor, the South Africans and Americans at Operations made it clear that they had not come for this. Hyman Shamir, deputy O.C., assembled the men to assure them there was no intention to bomb the Altalena.

Boris Senior's testimony offers a contradictory nuance

"My final encounter with the Irgun" he said, Occured in June 1948, some time after the meeting in Tel Aviv with Meridor. The Irgun had spent months in Europe equipping a 5,000 ton ship called the Altalena. The vessel, which during the war had been an LST (Landing Ship Tank) was loaded with arms and ammunition and armoured cars which had been acquired from the French. There were also over eight hundred Irgun Machal volunteers on board.

The ship left in June 1948 from Port du Bouc in France and set course for Israel. It constituted a major part of the war effort of the Irgun and was intended to bring reinforcements and desperately needed weapons to the Irgun in Israel. The Irgun had made a deal with the French government promising France support in its dispute with the North African Arab colonies in exchange for the arms loaded on the Altalena. The French, unhappy at having been ousted from their traditional role in Syria and the Lebanon, were not averse to giving assistance to anti-British forces. Everything was done in absolute secrecy both because discovery of the Altalena project by the Arabs would have been a serious blow and because it was breaking the United Nations embargo on the passage of arms and military personnel to the Middle East, including Israel.

On the night of June 19th the Altalena arrived off the Israel coast and made for Kfar Vitkin, a settlement just to the north of Netanya. The Israeli Prime Minister Ben Gurion had been informed of the pending arrival of the ship and he told the Irgun that the question of

distribution of the arms it carried would be decided only after its arrival. But when the ship arrived at Kfar Vitkin and started unloading the arms into small boats Ben Gurion decided to confiscate them. He mustered a force of six hundred soldiers and informed the Irgun that if they did not hand over the weapons they would be taken by force.

While all this was going on I was asleep in the Yarden hotel in Tel Aviv, exhausted as usual from the endless night-flying. I was woken by someone who told me what was going on and warning me there were rumours that the Irgun was about to make an attempt to take over control of Israel. An armed guard was stationed outside my hotel room to protect me.

Due to misunderstandings which had their roots in the deep antagonism which had existed for years between the Haganah and the Irgun a profoundly sad situation was created. The Irgun wanted to use the arms and the personnel for their comrades fighting desperately against the Arabs in Jerusalem. They refused to hand over control of the ship and its contents to the legitimate government because they had unfounded fears of their intentions towards them. Based on the mutual distrust which existed, Ben Gurion and the army chiefs feared a coup d'état attempt by the Irgun.

Being a secret member of the Irgun, but serving in the air arm of the Haganah, I was in a better position than most at the time to make an impartial judgement. My opinion was that both the Irgun and Prime Minister Ben Gurion were unreasonably paranoid about the whole question which led to the dispute.

Meanwhile the Haganah, backed by government troops, refused to let the Altalena unload its cargo of arms and volunteers at Kfar Vitkin. Shots were fired at the Irgun fighters and Israel Navy vessels fired at the Altalena. The volunteers on board the Altalena returned fire. Ben Gurion decided erroneously that the Irgun was attempting a coup d'état and ordered that all personnel important to the Haganah had to be guarded day and night against capture. The news was so incredible that I believed it only when I saw the armed soldier posted outside my door to protect me, as the commander of the air unit of the Haganah, from the Irgun.

This bizarre situation in which I as a secret member of the Irgun was being guarded and protected from the Irgun by the Haganah was untenable and I sought a way out of the dilemma. My mind in turmoil, I got into my staff car and rushed to the headquarters of the Irgun in the former Freund Hospital in Lilienblum Street in Tel Aviv. As I drove alone through the darkened streets of the city in a state of utmost agitation, I tried desperately to find a solution. Only an occasional military police vehicle could be seen and the dark and deserted streets added to the desolate state of my mind. At the Irgun headquarters I found the place in darkness with no guards at the entrance. It seemed deserted but I found Haim Landau, one of Begin's deputies in the Irgun, seated alone at an old-fashioned switchboard. I turned to him agitatedly, saying "Haim Landau, I am being guarded by the Haganah against a supposed coup d'état by the Irgun, what is going on?" He looked at me in astonishment and said "I don't know anything. It's ridiculous. All I know is that there has been some shooting at Kfar Vitkin and Begin has gone there to clarify matters".

I returned to my quarters at the Yarden Hotel where I was told by the night porter that there was an urgent call for me to telephone GHQ. I drove to Sde Dov and from the operations room got on to GHQ. I was ordered to prepare at once three aircraft to bomb the Altalena. Now my predicament was agonizing, for on the one hand I had to obey orders from my commanders in the Haganah, but on the other hand no force on earth could have made me bomb the Irgun ship with its complement of Jewish volunteers. Later I discovered that in command of the Altalena was my close friend, the former commander of the Irgun forces in Europe 'Benjamin'.

I set about locating two other pilots who also unknown to anyone in the Haganah were former Irgun members. Ezer was in Czechoslovakia on the Messerschmitt course. Fortune smiled for two of them were nearby in Tel Aviv and I brought them to Sde Dov quickly. I was

not clear what I would do when the order come to bomb the ship. I considered various stratagems such as deliberately missing the target or sabotaging the aircraft before take-off.

I consented grudgingly when an hour later an order came to fly over the ship and circle it while flashing navigation lights, without dropping bombs. I took off and made my way along the coastline in the pitch black darkness, the sea and the sky merging into a pervading gloom. I thought of my comrades far below in the dark, surrounded and embattled by Haganah troops, now about to be entombed in their ship at the very moment of their triumph at having finally reached Israel in the Altalena with their desperately needed reinforcements of arms and fighting personnel, and I was in an agony of turmoil. No! I could never bomb my fellow Jews.

I circled the doomed Altalena in an aeroplane belonging to forces on the point of giving me an order to bomb the ship and its Irgun volunteers, some of whom only some months before had been my blood brothers and comrades. GHQ felt that flying over the ship that night while flashing my navigation lights would be an effective warning to the men below. I returned to base and awaited the fateful order to bomb the ship. After some hours of tension GHQ told me that it had been decided not to bomb the ship.

During the confusion at Kfar Vitkin, Begin boarded the ship and remained on it until the end. The Altalena did not unload at Kfar Vitkin and was sailed in an emotional and demonstrative manner by the Irgun and deliberately beached on the shore of Tel Aviv in full view of the population of Tel Aviv, the UN observers and the world media. It was fired upon and destroyed following a direct order from Ben Gurion. For months the rusting blackened hulk of the Altalena on the lovely beachfront of Tel Aviv bore mute testimony to man's folly.

Propitiously for me an order came through to go to Czechoslovakia for a conversion course on the Messerschmitt 109. The order came while the Altalena was sailing from Kfar Vitkin to the Tel Aviv beach and I was spared the necessity of being an unhappy star player in the confrontation between the Haganah/Government forces and the Irgun. I heard later that when they were told to bomb up aircraft for a possible action against the Altalena there was a revolt by the Machal aircrews against being involved in any action against Jews. In the end no order was ever given to bomb the Altalena.

The Altalena became the target of Haganah artillery and Jews were killed by Jews on the burning ship or as they jumped into the sea and sorely needed military equipment was destroyed in the fire which gutted the ship. The pall of smoke from the Altalena was like a funeral pyre in front of where the Dan Hotel now stands in Tel Aviv and put an end to the saddest chapter in Israel's rebirth when Jew fought Jew in the Holy land.

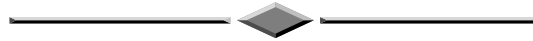
The Altalena affair left a deep and lasting schism between the two opposing factions in Israel. I feel that both Ben Gurion and Begin played their hands badly. Begin's refusal to bow to government authority in Israel was unacceptable and had to be opposed, but Ben Gurion's misreading of Begin's intentions was the main cause of the tragedy which followed in plain view of both Israel's population and the world media.

Lionel Hodes, Mockie Schachat and other volunteers from several countries, were mobilized to patrol areas near war factories, as at Petach Tikvah, and to police streets near Irgun strongholds. This involved searches of vehicles and buses. The passengers did not take kindly to them. "First the British." one man said "now these people..."

The volunteers were rightly aggrieved.

The Boston Hotel in Rome buzzed with the story of the Jewish civil war. A just-arrived South African volunteer group of ten was deeply embarrassed by the questions of the hotel staff. The group consisted of Gordon Mandelzweig, David Susman, Jeff Perlman, Benny Landau,

Lockie Fainman, Sam Tucker, Ernest Esakof, Irene (Lilah) Aronson, Honi Rosenberg and Danny Rosin.



A week after the Altalena affair, at ceremonies all over the country, officers and men took the oath of allegiance to the State. The flag was broken. A roll of honour from the short, bitter conflict was read. Unit by unit responded with an "I swear." Then the units broke up and it was over and there was a unified army, or rather, nearly a unified army, for the Palmach as a separate force with its own headquarters, was dissolved only a few months later. But unity was on the way and towns and settlements went gay that night. There was dancing in the streets and drinks on the house.

Examination of manifests at various Jerusalem archives showed additional Haifa air arrivals for the month of June, not listed in the narrative.

18th June: Joan Comay

27th June: Abraham Axelrod, Rebecca Axelrod, Abe Berger, Helen Berger, Ralph Bernstein, Hymie Goldblatt, Georgie Jamieson, Chone Geffen, Alexander Rathouse, Evelyn Rathouse, Leslie Gershman, Joseph Shlain, Frank Herbstein, Harry Drusinsky, Luba Drusinsky, Meyer Shapiro, Rebecca Harris, Leon Kantey, Reg Sagar, Yocheved Gabai, Leo Caminsky.

Interesting that July passenger manifests for air arrivals have not yet been found, and only one ship arrival of S. African interest. The vessel "Amal" with Audrey Yodaiken, mother of volunteer Ralph arriving Haifa June 29th.

CHAPTER 6 - PART 2

THE DOCTORS

The prayer of Maimonides, the great Jewish religious spirit of the middle Ages and court physician to Saladin in Cairo:

"I begin once more my daily work. Be Thou with me, Almighty Father of Mercy in all my efforts to heal the sick. For without Thee man is but a helpless creature.

Grant that I may be filled with love for my art and for my fellowmen. May the thirst for gain and the desire for fame be far from my heart. For these are the enemies of pity and the ministers of hate. Grant that I may be able to devote myself body and soul, to the children who suffer pain.

...Let me see in the sufferer the man alone. When wiser men teach me, let me be humble to learn; for the mind of man is puny, and the art of healing so vast. But when fools are ready to advise me or to find fault with me, let me not listen to their folly. Let me be intent on one thing, O Father of mercy, to be always merciful to thy suffering children.

May there never arise in me, the notion that I know enough, but give me strength and leisure and zeal to enlarge my knowledge.

Our work is great and the mind of man presses forward forever. Thou has chosen me in Thy grave to watch over the life and death of Thy creatures. I am about to fulfill my duties. Guide me in this immense work so that it may be of avail".

On June 25, an advance guard of South African doctors and other medical personnel flew into Haifa. This advance guard included Dr. Lionel Meltzer, the returning Dr. Arthur Helfet, Dr. Louis Miller, Army psychiatrist, Dr. Jack Wilton, a general surgeon, Mr. S.T. Elion (chemist), Hannah Elion³⁶ (physiotherapist), Zelda Ravid³⁷, who was followed soon after by her dentist husband, Nurse R. Harris and Mr. E.M. Udwin, secretary of the Medical Committee of the South African Zionist Federation.

Early in July, they were joined by Dr. Harry Berelowitz, an anaesthetist from Cape Town, Dr. Victor Resnekow, a Cape Town radiologist, Dr. Cyril Kaplan, an orthopaedic surgeon from Durban, Dr. Gerald Landsman and Dr. Ellis Rosenberg. More followed. Within a few months there were twenty-three³⁸ doctors in the country from South Africa.

The doctors arrived with the blessing of the South African medical authorities and the South African Government. Two days before the Meltzer group left, Meltzer received a message from Army Medical HQ, Pretoria that Brigadier du Plessis wanted to see him. They were to meet inconspicuously at a sports meeting at Roberts Heights. Meltzer was surprised to learn that the Brigadier knew exactly when he was going, with whom and on which plane. "You see," said the Brigadier, "we know everything that is happening with you chaps in Johannesburg." He had called Meltzer to ask him to submit reports of medical services in Israel because; he said, one never knew what could happen in the future in South Africa and he would like to have the benefit of the South Africans' experience in Israel.

³⁶ Hannah Elion actually arrived by air November 12th 1948 with her infant daughter, Elizabeth.

³⁷ Motivated by a great desire to volunteer her services as a qualified nurse, Zelda Ravid left two very young children (aged 4 and 1) in the care of her mother, Esther Naomi Pincus, and dentist husband Hymie who was to join the S. African medical personnel on the 6th of October.

³⁸ Subsequent feed back and research showed that eventually there were at least 45 doctors, over 30 nurses, 14 other medical professions and 15 combat and hospital medics in the Medical Corps.

The group spent their first night at Haifa's Lev Hacarmel Hotel, all six men in one room. In the morning they awoke to a clatter in the street. A British patrol led by a major was marching through the streets, clearly implying "while we are here, we're boss, and don't forget it." It was a strange sensation for doctors who had been in the British Army. As Dr. Louis Miller put it: "the first and only time I was in opposition to the people with whom I had identified so deeply."

Dr. Meltzer, former Lt-Col of the South African 11th Field Ambulance, recipient of the Military Cross and an O.B.E., was to find the medical services of the Army woeful. The doctor in charge of medical personnel could not even supply him with a list of serving doctors and where they were. There was no rank in the Army, every man receiving six rands a month. Thus, if a unit had 200 men, a sum of R1, 200 was sent to it and "it was not necessary to know names."

Meltzer kept a diary:

June 26

We left Haifa at about 10 a.m. after making a tour of the Arab quarter which is almost completely deserted. The trip to Tel Aviv was interesting. Apart from the beauty of the countryside, we were surprised by the number of hillside Arab villages looking down on the road... the Arabs who did not flee are living perfectly normal lives. We reached Tel Aviv just before lunch, and put up at the Kaete Dan. Shocked by the price of lunch and decided this was not for us.

At 3 p.m. I met the DMS, Dr. Sheba, a man of about forty who looks much younger and who exudes energy. Not the slightest formality about him. He wears a white shirt and shorts, no hat and has no badges of rank. He gave me a picture of the medical services... he started from scratch just about five weeks ago and claims to have quite a good service already. Indeed; after listening to him, I wondered whether there would be anything for me to do. The future will show.

At about 4 p.m. Sheba took Arthur Helfet, Jack Wilton, me and two doctors from Jerusalem on a "little tour of inspection" which lasted until midnight. The first hospital, Djani, was in peace time a private Arab hospital in Jaffa. This is quite a good show, and will house the orthopaedic cases mainly.

Then we went off to Tel Litwinsky hospital a few miles east of Tel Aviv. This is a colossal place, left by the British, which can house about 1,500 beds and was an Allied base hospital during World War 2. It is still unoccupied except for some convalescent cases, the authorities are very wrong in using it while the Arabs are not cleared from the area, it is almost in the front line. We left Tel Litwinsky at 10 p.m., but the late hour did not deter Sheba who decided to go on to Rehovot, about fifteen miles from Tel Aviv, along a road full of road blocks and pitfalls. When we got there, it was much too dark to see anything. We got back near midnight.

The trip was interesting because of what we learned from conversation in the car. We were shown the vinegar factory where the British handed over eight men and a girl to the tender mercies of the Arabs who gouged out their eyes before killing them.

June 27

Had a chat with Col. Herzog³⁹, one of the sons of the Chief Rabbi of Palestine. This lad had been a lieutenant colonel (Intelligence) in the British Army. He told me things were not right in the Israel Army. In the whole of the senior General Staff there is not one ex-serviceman. It

³⁹ Later to become head of Israel's delegation, at the United Nations and subsequently President of Israel.

seems to be a bad mark against a man if he served in a regular army. Herzog says Israel has no Intelligence section worth speaking of. Result: it is not known what troops are against us, how many, and the number and type of the enemy's guns. He thinks that Israel is extremely fortunate that the Arabs are bickering among themselves. Success up to now has been due to three factors: (a) the extreme bravery of the troops (b) want of effective planning by the Arabs (c) the effects of this on the Arab soldier.

Our medical party has been broken up. Zelda has gone off to the Djani hospital in Jaffa, Jack Wilton is for Tiberias, Louis Miller has been posted to a regiment...

Mike Udwin is staying as my personal secretary. I have the choice of two jobs, either ADMS of the Palmach Division or DDMS in charge of operations in the field. I think I shall choose the latter. It means that I'll be able to control the whole front instead of just one sector.

June 28

I was introduced to Mr. Ben Gurion today and had a long chat with him. He inquired about Cecil Margo - would he come?

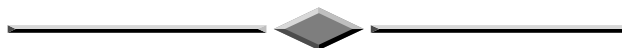
Sheba took me to GHQ where I am to work in future and introduced me to men of the General Staff -- the people who count. GHQ is in Ramat Gan in a series of houses, already once bombed. It seems it will be pleasant to work there once I learn Hebrew...

June 29

Sheba came at 7 a.m. for our tour of Haifa and the Western Galilee. In Haifa, our biggest job was to take over a hospital from the British, a hell of a job done in the Sheba way. He just walked and walked and we were all walked off our feet...

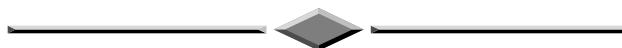
During World War 2, Sheba took over the hospital for the British from the Italians and now he takes it over from the British for the Jews... This is my first acquaintance with a place which the British did not purposely damage when they moved out. In this instance they even issued an order that any willful damage by troops would be punished...

Sheba is a most amusing kind of guy and I am becoming very fond of him. Today he made a senior appointment which I thought was a bit peculiar, so I asked him what guides him in his choices. First impressions, he said. If he takes a liking to a man, he appoints him and vice versa. I asked whether he makes bad choices. His reply was, "I am almost always wrong."



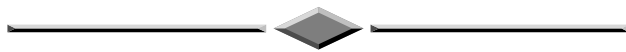
June 30, the day after the oath-taking ceremony, was historic. The men and arms of Britain's Haifa enclave were finally embarked: The last vestige of British power in the land was disappearing. A twenty strong South African group, flying in from Rome, was not to know this. Philip Ozinsky, of Cape Town, making inquiries later about the "bustle" in the harbor he had observed from the sky, digested the news with satisfaction.

There was a strong Cape Town element in this contingent. Ozinsky, Ezra Sakinofsky and Bernard Friedland, all ex-servicemen (Sakinofsky with rank) were members of the Roads and Drainage branch of the Cape Town City Engineers Department. Other Capetonians in the group were Hymie Kurgan, also an ex-sapper, Barry Buirski, Abe Wisenberg, Raymond Salmon, and others, Herzl Genussow, Bill Lehr, Benny Kupferberg and Willie Rubin.



Doctors Helfet and Wilton travelled with a history-making convoy on the "Burma Road", reaching Jerusalem safely. It had been a hard trip for both, standing as they did on that hot mid-summer's day on the back of a farm truck "thick with inches of dust". Helfet recorded. "We had helped to carry the baggage over the hill which separated the bull-dozed road from Tel Aviv from the track which had been cleared from Jerusalem. In Jerusalem we expected to be greeted with a glad welcome, but found some of our brethren dismayed and resentful that we had travelled on the Sabbath. Yet later we came across some of the same young men on duty in outposts such as the Notre Dame, accoutered incongruously with prayer shawls round their shoulders, machine guns under one arm, prayer book under the other, and acquitting themselves well."

The two doctors attended a meeting in the Hadassah Medical Centre. Dr. Eli Davis led the discussion, "How could Hadassah University Hospital best serve the Jewish State?" And when that had been debated, "What could be done to hasten the opening of a Medical School" - this in the heat of the summer amid the privations of a besieged city.



Moshe Dayan was one of the commanders prowling about the tents and barracks of Tel Litwinsky, looking for tough men to join his commando unit, the 89th battalion of Yitzchak Sadeh's 8th Armoured Brigade. His one good eye fell on Reg Sagar, ex-SANF, of Rhodesia. The two men took an instant liking to one another.

Sagar came into the war by an odd circumstance. A stranger approached him in Bulawayo and asked whether he would be interested in fighting in the Middle East - for the Arabs. No, said Sagar, and made inquiries about how he could join his fellow Jews.

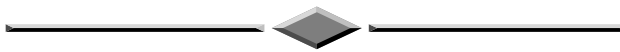
"I'm with you," he told Dayan. Bert Fagin, a Londoner, formerly of Britain's Sixth Airborne Division, was also recruiting for the Dayan unit. He liked the look of a powerful young man in a Rex Trueform suit. "Care to join a long-range desert commando?" he asked Pretoria's Mike Isaacson. "We are training at Ben Shemen". Isaacson jumped at the offer.

Another recruiter for the same unit was South Africa's Jimmy Kantey. The unit filled up with more South Africans, not immediately, but in the passage of the months: Reg Sagar's cousin Bull Bernstein, Leslie Marcus, John Nakan, Ralph Yodaiken, Harold Sher, Ivan Sheinbaum, Arnold Isaacson and Horace Milunsky transferred from the Artillery.

The commandos were hard men. The unit consisted of four groups: the Anglo-Saxons; ex-Stern group fighters; ex-Irgun; and Palmach men. The ideological differences of the last three were forgotten. The captain of the Anglo-Saxons, a mixture of Britons, Americans, Canadians, South African and Europeans who spoke English, was Naftali Arbel, a short blond kibbutznik, a man of granite. The second in command was tall Ephraim, a man of organizational talent. Among the Britons was Bert Fagin and the three non-Jews, sympathisers who had deserted the British army to join us. A devastating character was a Jew, Yochanan Sender, who had seen father, mother, uncles, aunts and other relatives killed in the Nazi camps. Now he lived to kill. His habit was to spend hours in his room polishing the private arsenal he had built up.

There were others, not unlike Yochanan. In the Irgun group was Dibbele, one of the men involved in the hanging of the two British sergeants, and Dov who had been involved in the blowing up of the King David Hotel. Perhaps the fiercest of all was a former Polish-Jewish boxing champion whom the Nazis did not kill, but used as a punching bag for their army boxers. Not quite accurate. To save his life, this Jew allowed himself to be smitten. He, too, had seen his parents and sister killed and in battle he felt he was avenging some of the horrors he had lived through.

The practice by some Arab troops of desecrating the bodies of slaughtered Israelis including cutting off the penis and placing it in the victim's mouth, was for some concentration camp survivors a reappearance of the Nazis. But now the Jews were in a position to strike back. There would be occasions when the South African commando men would come between the killers and their potential victims.



The Israelis were still busy clawing out the "Burma Road" to by-pass Latrun. Geoff Stark left with a group from Sarafand for guard duties in the mountain area leading to Jerusalem. Armed with a Beza medium machine gun, he looked down from his promontory on to the key pumping station at Latrun, then held by the Iraqis. An Israel convoy ploughed along the new-made road. Only later would the South African understand in depth what this lifeline meant to Israel.



On July 1, Dr. Meltzer recorded

We began with an inspection of medical installations in the forward areas. The hygiene officer at Aharon told us of the danger of malaria. Israel is short of paludrin, of nets, of repellent drugs and also of personnel to run the hygiene units.

A list of complaints from the G1 of the brigade:

- (a) No machinery for getting rid of unfit men from the battalions.
- (b) No routine examination and classification of the soldiers.
- (c) Supply problems hopeless. The whole brigade has six ambulances only, one captured from the Egyptians. Six ambulances to serve a brigade of five battalions.

...at Negba we were within 200 yards of the Egyptians. Could see the enemy vehicles and the Egyptian flag. The kibbutz doctor is acting DMO. The usual complaints: not sufficient equipment, no ambulances, no means of evacuation, the doctor himself neglected.

Saw what the Jews can do when they are up against it. This settlement of Negba, some 200 yards from the Iraq el Suedan Fortress held by the Egyptians, has been just about razed to the ground by shells and bombs. On one occasion it was stormed by twenty two tanks, one Sherman actually breaking through. The settlers are still in possession. They know the Egyptians will plaster them with everything they have once the truce ends. However they are now better prepared. Am certain they will give a very good account of themselves.

The medical arrangements at Negba and neighboring settlements are bad. The only doctors available are rusty country fellows who have probably not read a book or touched a scalpel for years - now they may be called upon to perform major operations... evacuation will be extremely difficult by day under Egyptian fire. Medical supplies also very inadequate... so many difficulties I can't resolve... We got back to Tel Aviv near midnight.



Early in July, the South African ZUP work platoon left their temporary farm at Ein Sara to establish the settlement of Timorim on a gentle hill overlooking the settlement of Nahalal and the road to Kibbutz Ein Hachoresh, which had fallen in the Arab partitioned area. The nearest town was Nazareth which, though not visible from Timorim, was not more than ten kilometers

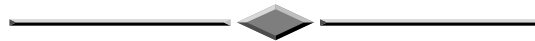
away. Timorim became, in fact, a border settlement and looked immediately to its security by building defensive emplacements.

Timorim was the fruition of a way of thinking that had its origin in Johannesburg some years earlier when seven men, the three brothers Dunsky of Germiston (Israel, David and Zelig), Zundel Segal, Harold Stutzen, Philip Zuckerman and Karl Silberman (all in Israel today), launched the United Zionist Party. They came together as an entity to give non-ideological Zionists a voice in the affairs of the Federation.

The United Zionists grew in strength. The group that founded Timorim were its first pioneers. The reaction of the group to the Altalena affair was characteristic. "We discussed it," said Silberman, "without warmth, without heat. The affair should not have happened. In historical perspective it was an important event, but at the time it did not loom large for us. We were people who could not get warm about any ideology. We could never split on political issues as, a few years later, the Mapai party's Kibbutzim did."

In a matter of a few swift days, the settlers, then numbering about forty, the majority South Africans, put up their pre-fabs and dining room and initiated without delay a small sheet metal factory. The prime initiator was Pretoria's Chaim Chait, of the "Drom Afrika 1" crew. He was joined soon after by his brother Max. The settlement followed the usual pattern of those days, establishing vegetable fields and running a modest dairy.

The settlement had a three-fold significance: first, it protected a part of the Migdal Ha'emek border; secondly, it opened the road to Ein Hachosh; thirdly, it was neighbor to the British built Ramat David airfield now filling up with scores of South African air force personnel who, during the following months, would share in the settlement's eve of Sabbath parties.



Another day full of incident (Dr. Meltzer wrote on July 3).

Our plan was to cover the front of two Palmach brigades. The Palmach is the pride of the Jewish army... made up of youngsters in their teens, both male and female who typify the youth of Palestine. They give me confidence in the future of this country.

At present two Palmach brigades are operating on the Latrun front, and we spent the day visiting their medical posts and determining the sitting of the new ones. Up to now casualties have had to be carried for miles over terrible roads before they can receive any decent medical aid. This was the state of affairs in the sector during the fighting before the truce...

We went along the famous "Burma road" built in order to by-pass Latrun in the hands of the Arabs. It is a marvelous piece of work and shows the desperate initiative of the Jews. It is also extremely difficult and every part of me was painful at the end of the day.

I think we did quite a thorough job. We covered every side road and main road and finally decided to establish three tented medical posts in the field and also to use mules to evacuate casualties from some of the hills. I must now see that our decisions are carried out. I was really profoundly impressed with the Palmach. I'm certain that it has some of the best fighting material in the world.

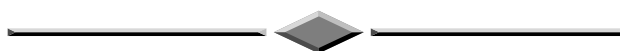
We ended our inspections at Abu Gosh, only about fifteen miles from Jerusalem, so we decided to go through... met the SMO Jerusalem, a man named Werth who took us to the most forward strong point.

July 7

I have never felt more deaf and dumb than I did this evening. With Sheba I attended a meeting of the army group to attack the central front, Lydda, Ramle and Latrun. The supreme commander is Yigal Allon, aged 28. One of his brigadiers, Rabin, is 25. The average age of the senior staff officers could not have been more than 26 or 27. The meeting was in Hebrew and I didn't understand a thing.

The Arabs are expected to attack tonight and, in that case, our tactics will be defensive. If they don't attack, we will - within the next forty-eight hours.

Met members of the executive of the Magen David Adom⁴⁰ this evening and had a tough time with them. I wanted them to lend us some ambulance cars. The president, Dr. Levantine, is a nice old guy...and he was cordial. Not some of the others present who were recently involved in a first class row with Sheba. Apparently Sheba told them he wants nothing from them in future and broke off relations with them. I told them I was not interested in their local quarrels -- I wanted ambulances... I got fifteen...



"They're beauties "

The subject of this praise at an Army camp on the sand dunes of Herzliya seashore were four long-barreled French 75 millimeter anti-aircraft guns converted to low angle firing (manufactured in 1942).

The handbooks were in French. South Africa's Len Karpel, Frank James, Mockie Schachat, Lionel Hodes and Horace Milunsky, joined in the general proffering of advice in the try-out of the gun. No range tables were available. The degree of elevation required for the shells had still to be found out.

Men from the ordinance unit experimented with different charges and fuses.

The barrel poked out seawards. The gun was loaded and everybody was ordered a safe distance away. A gunner in a hole thirty yards away pulled the long cord attached to the firing mechanism.

Bang: No aberrational behavior: The guns were safe.

Gun crews were formed, Len Karpel, ex-S.A. artillery in charge of one, Frank James, ex-South African Navy in charge of the second. James's crew consisted of an American gangster (more later), a Canadian schoolteacher and eighteen Polish youths.

Training continued for a few days. Other South Africans came into the unit, among them Syd Langbart, Elliot Katzenellenbogen, Georgie Jamieson and Joe Shlain⁴¹.

"Eyes?" the Army doctor in Haifa had asked Joe Shlain.

"They're O.K."

"Ears?"

"O. K. "

"You're fit?"

Shlain did not tell the doctor he had been a polio case, that he had been sent as a settler not a soldier and that he could hardly see through one eye.

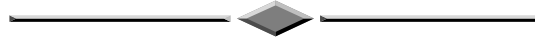
⁴⁰ Israel's equivalent of the Red Cross.

⁴¹ Elliot Katzenellenbogen and Georgie Jamieson eventually transferred to Gedud Tesha, Palmach Hanegev

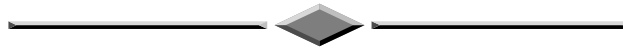
"Very well, you'll be going to Tel Litwinsky for drafting."

At dawn on the last day of the truce, this artillery unit, about 100 strong, moved north into the Galilee. The two guns were kissed by villagers and soldiers at Zichron Ya'acov. They were finally positioned opposite Mishmar Hayarden, the kibbutz then in Syrian hands. The Israelis were resolved to retake the kibbutz. The Syrians, on their part, were resolved to use it as the springboard for a new thrust into the Galilee.

Frank James and his crew were sent with their gun to Jerusalem.



For six weeks David Teperson lost touch with his fellow South Africans. With three others, a Danish, a Norwegian and an English Jew, he was sent to the first corporal's course of the Israel Army, as distinguished from Haganah. This was at Dora Camp, near Netanya, where there was a parallel officer's course. An organized Israel Army was being born.



The truce did not relieve the South African fliers of the Primus⁴² planes from the twilight world of nightmare that was insidiously closing in on them. From the routine of dawn and dusk raids they switched to supply runs, but flying at the same periods. Their sleep by days was troubled by the noise of the traffic of Hayarkon Street and sleep by night could only be after return from the dusk flights and then only until three a.m. when the men would be awakened for the dawn missions. The cumulative strain of completely disordered days and nights, running into weeks, was exacting a toll. The strangest things began to happen. Arthur Cooper, disturbed in sleep by playing children in the street below, angrily emptied his revolver into the sky. Les Chimes landed his Fairchild upside down on the runway. Cooper, a seasoned pilot, and Dov Judah, a seasoned navigator, flying south to Sdom and finding themselves north beyond Haifa, were too weary to digest the message of their compass. For, how else could they fly red on-black without being aware of it with the Mediterranean on their wrong side for half an hour?

Elliott Rosenberg thinned from his 190 lb. to a long stick. The turns of Cyril Katz and Joe Leibowitz were to come.

Syd Cohen and Arnie Ruch, having completed their five-hour course with the Messerschmitts in Czechoslovakia and having seen the sights of Prague, flew into Israel on July 3 in a Constellation that also brought in arms and ammunition. Within a day they were at the fighter squadron's airstrip at Herzliya. The squadron was to be called 101.

Leslie Bloch and two ex-US pilots, Syd Antin and Aaron (Red) Finkel, had left Zatec before Cohen and Ruch, but reached Israel three days after them, their Curtis Commando having developed engine trouble over Northern Italy. The plane had landed in Rome and both crew and passengers had been jailed for a few days.

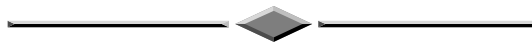
Thus, in the dying days of the first truce, Israel had an assembly of about fifteen Messerschmitts and a group of fighter pilots, Americans, South Africans, two ex-RAFs and three Israelis. The South Africans, to repeat, were Syd Cohen, Boris Senior, Arnold Ruch, Leslie Bloch and Les Shagam. Eddie Cohen was dead, Jack Cohen of Cape Town would arrive in August and Les Shagam would soon transfer to Operations. The three Israelis were

⁴² Primus - nickname given to the light aircraft used by the IAF at the time; after the noisy table-top kerosene pressure cookers used in most Israeli households as the sole means of cooking.

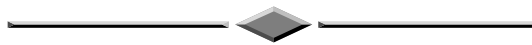
Modi Allon, O.C., Ezer Weizman and Sandy Jacobs. One of the RAFs, Morrie Mann, was a Battle of Britain pilot.

The men were housed in tents in an orange grove near the field but a little later the majority moved into Falk House, a residential hotel in Kfar Shmaryahu. Syd Cohen, Arnie Ruch and an American, Leo Nomis were quartered in the home of an elderly couple named Schiff. The fliers, founders of the Israeli fighter squadron, made a formidable group. But in the first weeks the effectiveness of the men was to be blunted by a very poor airfield and, as it turned out, defective planes also. Brakpan's Dr. Feldman, 101's doctor, agonised every time Messerschmitts took off or prepared to land. The crashes were many and both the doctor and nurse Margolius were kept busy. (Their sick bay was also treating Arab POW's).

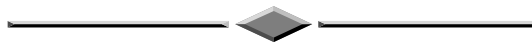
The men thought that proper markings on the field might help because, as Syd Cohen explained, the pilots could not see over the nose of the planes. The men set to and made the markings, but with little effect. Anxious moments became part of the life of a Yemenite village alongside one of the runways.



Dr. Jack Medalie joined battalion 3 of the Palmach's Yiftach Brigade at Sarafand. In this region at that particular time the truce was being honoured more in the breach than in the observance and snipers' bullets were striking the first row of huts. Medalie was hustled into the second row. He knew no Hebrew and a young girl and a young man who both spoke English, were assigned to him. They were to remain with him. She would stand alongside each wounded soldier to note the particulars of his wound and the treatment applied and he, the young man, to act as first-aider and a general-purpose assistant.



The truce period was tricky for Cyril Steinberg and his fellows of Air Transport. When not flying they were billeted at the Park Hotel in Hayarkon Street. United Nations observers were posted round the hotel. Communication had to be discreet. At dinner somebody would quietly come up to the transport crew and ask: "Will you be available tonight?" The men knew what that meant. At midnight they went by car to Ekron to take over the incoming plane from Czechoslovakia. The ground men unloaded the hardware, refueled-the plane and made ready for the new crew who took off before light, usually at two or three in the morning.



Count Bernadotte used the truce period for an earnest attempt to end the war but his proposals were unacceptable to both the Arabs and the Israelis. His first effort sought to annul the United Nations partition of 1947. Instead of a Jewish State and an Arab State, he proposed a union of two autonomous member states, one Jewish, one Arab, in the area of Palestine as defined in the original British Mandate of 1922, that is, including Transjordan.

The terms of the Union would be:

(a) Each member would exercise full control over its own immigration policy, but at the end of two years either member would have the right to demand a review of the other's policy by the Governing Council of the Union. If the Council could not reach a decision, the matter would be submitted to the UN Economic and Social Council.

(b) All or part of the Negev would go to the Arabs, all or part of Western Galilee to the Jews. All of Jerusalem would be Arab, with municipal autonomy for the Jewish community. Haifa would be a free port and Lydda, a free airport.

Not unnaturally, the plan appealed greatly to King Abdullah of Transjordan. Jerusalem and what had been designated as an Arab Palestine state was being handed to him on a platter. But he could not voice his approval publicly. To the other Arab states the plan was monstrous. What, then, would be their share of the cake?

They would have nothing of it. They told Bernadotte they would fight on until the Jewish State was dissolved. They were confident they could do so. On the face of it, their confidence was not baseless. Their forces had not swept to the quick victory they had expected but, on the other hand, none of their armies had suffered a major defeat. The Egyptians had reached as far as Isdud, an arrowhead on Tel Aviv; the Arab Legion had repulsed the Israeli attacks on Latrun; and the Syrians were poised to strike into Israel from the captured kibbutz of Mishmar Hayarden. In the interests of Arab unity, King Abdullah found himself obliged to go along with his Arab colleagues.

As the Jews read it, the Bernadotte Plan was the work of a man blind to everything that had gone before in their 2,000 year history of exile, uncertainty and persecution. Mr. Moshe Sharett's replying document excoriated the plan as one which represented an unauthorized repeal of the partition decision, completely ignored territorial changes achieved by Jewish defenders repulsing Arab aggression, sought to restrict Israel's sovereignty and immigration policies and disastrously pre-figured an Arab-controlled Jerusalem.

Recognizing that renewed hostilities were inevitable, Bernadotte instructed his observers to abandon their posts. The truce ended at 6 a.m. on Friday, July 9 and fighting resumed on that day. Israel's overall objective was to drive the invaders out of the country. Her immediate objectives were:

(a) To force open the road from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, which meant encounter with the Arab Legion at Latrun, the strategy for which would first demand the isolation from Latrun of Arab-held and Arab--populated Ramle and Lydda.

(b) To drive the Syrians from the springboard of Mishmar Hayarden.

(c) To attack Kaukji's Liberation Army then operating in the area of Nazareth and the northern parts of the Galilee.

(d) To launch an offensive against the Old City in Jerusalem, another encounter with the Arab Legion.

CHAPTER 7 - PART 1

TEN-DAY WHIRLWIND

The causes that had brought about the war remaining, the truce inexorably gave way to resumed hostilities. Israel was determined to live, the Arab states resolved she should die.

The purpose of Israel's Operation Dani was to deliver the city Jerusalem from enemy pressure, through the attack and destruction of enemy forces in the area Lydda - Ramle - Ramallah. The operation was to be carried out in two phases, phase one Lydda and Ramle, phase two Latrun and Ramallah⁴³.

Lod (Lydda) and Ramle were thickly populated Arab towns well prepared to defend themselves. "Possibly this was the only locality in the country where the Arabs had established a comprehensive defensive system of trenches and fortifications", says Lorch. The defenders were local and semi-regular fighters, reinforced by only minor detachments of the Arab Legion. To attempt to take such towns by frontal assault would have been suicidal. The decision of the Israeli General Staff, therefore, was to encircle the towns by way of a pincer movement from the north and the south with the largest number of men and weaponry so far mustered. The weaponry included artillery and small arms strengthened by the two Cromwell tanks which had been brought over to the Israeli side by three British tank men when the British were evacuating Haifa.

Lydda and Ramle crumpled before the Israeli attack (July 10-12). The collective South African memory of a series of operations ranges from a neutral key of objective description to a note of triumph at the swift victory and a tone of sadness at the human tragedy that followed.

Inseparably coupled with the story of Lydda and Ramle is that of the Israeli youth village of Ben Shemen, a mile east of Latrun. The young boys and girls of the village had been cut off for seven months from the rest of Israel by the Arab Legion, but since the village was militarily harmless and had maintained good relations with the two towns and since, also, the Arabs feared the reaction of the Israelis should harm befall the youngsters, the Legion contented itself with Ben Shemen's isolation.

The strategic plan of the Israelis for the capture of Lydda-Ramle envisaged, among other things, a feint from the expected direction of Tel Aviv but basically a link-up between forces moving down from the north and those moving up from the south to relieve Ben Shemen and then to use it as a springboard for an attack on the two towns, from the east. By the Israeli calculations, the capture of Lydda would leave Ramle helpless. It was planned to seal off the two towns from Arab Legion aid by diversionary attacks probing on Latrun, the key to the Jerusalem corridor.

This strategy required as a prelude the neutralization of several surrounding Arab villages.

The spirit and morale of the Israeli forces on July 9 was high, one of the few notes of reservation being the medically private one of Dr. Meltzer in his diary:

The Medical Corps is not ready. I really think there has been neglect, and I don't agree with all the praise showered on Sheba. He is a damn nice chap, but he simply hasn't the capacity to organize such an affair as the medical corps of an Army. I shudder to think what will happen once casualties start pouring in. I met all the SMOs of the brigades which will be involved in the fighting and I went over every part of the drill with them.

⁴³ Netanel Lorch

Operation Dani began like this:

July 10: Arab villages surprised and captured by Palmach brigade and infantry moving up from the south.

Same day: Five jeeps reach Ben Shemen, the first Israel convoy to reach the youth village in months.

Same day: Arrival of Moshe Dayan's commando group in Ben Shemen at 4 p.m.

Same day: capture of Lod (Lydda) by an armoured brigade and infantry coming from the North, also of Wilhelmina, a former German settlement, and smaller Arab villages.

As the day wore on, the operation commander who had reached Ben Shemen with the five jeeps, decided on a change in plan. He had been waiting not for the commandos who were only lightly armed, but for the tank brigade moving from the north, but this brigade had been held up by Arab Legion resistance. Improvising swiftly to take advantage of the last hours of daylight, he sent the commandos to Lydda to sow as much confusion as they could against the time he could throw in the tanks and infantry.

About thirty South Africans were in units that participated in various skirmishes of the Operation, the most vivid memories coming from Eddy Magid, Mike Isaacson (commandos), Morrie Egdes, Geoff Stark and Dr. J. Medalie.

Eddy Magid's story starts on the last day of the truce. On this day he left Tel Litwinsky camp to make acquaintance with relatives, by name Altshuler, in Kfar Saba.

"You come from Tel Litwinsky? Batsheva is there."

Batsheva Altshuler was the 18 year old daughter of the family.

Back at the camp, Magid found Batsheva, a trainee nurse.

He was telling her about the family in South Africa when a voice over the public address system ordered everybody to their bungalows.

"Same spot tomorrow night", was their hurried parting arrangement.

An infantry unit was to go into action immediately, objective Lydda airport. Morrie Egdes was given a Sten gun, Magid a clip of ammunition.

"What about my arms?"

"Not enough to go round. You'll find a gun"

The convoy of half-tracks moved out of the camp. In one of the half tracks was Batsheva. On the road a mortar shell struck it, killing several of the occupants, among them Batsheva.

Magid had the mournful task of bringing her clothes back to her parent's home.

Mike Isaacson and other South Africans of the commandos eagerly loaded up their half-tracks with arms and food on July 9. Leaving camp at dawn, the unit took cover in a deserted Arab orange grove. There the men remained in their dugouts for the rest of the day, cleaning their machine guns and rifles over and over again. In the afternoon at a parade, the O.C. addressed the men. Jochanan, a half-German Jew, interpreted to the effect that the commandos were going into battle the following morning.

That night the unit moved cautiously towards Wilhelma, only to find it deserted. The commando's next objective was Kula, a small Arab village in a valley. When the men took up

positions overlooking the village, the Arabs opened small arms fire from the opposite hills. There was an exchange of fire for almost an hour. A volunteer from Britain called for help.

Bert Fagin and Isaacson ran to his assistance, carrying a stretcher, but Fagin suddenly slumped. Blood oozed from a wound in his thigh. The two volunteer Britons were the units first casualties.

The commandos decided to go in and take the village. Speeding down the road in their half-tracks, they then jumped off and ran into the village, firing volley after volley. No Arabs. They had fled into the hills and disappeared.

Leaving a couple of men at Kula, the commandos moved on to the Arab village of Beit Neballa, exchanging fire for the rest of the day and night with legionaires firing 25 pounders. The following morning, after a sharp encounter with Legion units, the commandos captured the village, formerly a British camp. Then they made for Ben Shemen, raising the siege of the village. Isaacson and Rhodesian Reg Sagar stared wide-eyed at the sight of girls and boys, hand grenades in their belts, carrying Sten guns also.

The battalion regrouped and went in immediately to attack Lydda only to surprise itself by ending up in Ramle. On the way to Lydda something happened that haunts Mike Isaacson. He saw a movement behind a cactus bush on the side of the road. Suspecting an ambush, he threw a hand grenade in the direction of the movement, only to see, to his horror, that the victims were women and children.

The time to think about the poignancies of war was to come later. The battle was about to run hot. Isaacson fills in testimony missing from Moshe Dayan's account :

Dayan: The unit advanced in a column headed by a captured Arab Legion armoured vehicle with turret and a two-pounder. A gunner had somehow been found, a wireless-operator, and a name, "The Terrible Tiger," Following "The Tiger" came the half-track and jeep company. When the column was about one kilometer from Lydda, it encountered heavy fire. The Terrible Tiger would halt from time to time, and return fire to the fortified positions. With every shot of The Tiger, sandbags would be observed crumbling into Arab positions, and smoke columns would go up in the air. Arabs were seen escaping from their positions which had been hit.

Mike Isaacson: We dashed through Lydda shooting up everything. The Arabs were fleeing by car, donkey and even on foot. We were not supposed to have gone on to Ramle, but owing to a mistake by Jimmy Kantey at the crossroads we found ourselves in Ramle instead of on the road back to Ben Shemen. When the others saw us going in the direction of Ramle, they thought that the plan had been changed and they followed us...

A police fortress between Lydda and Ramle gave the unit its terrible moments.

Moshe Dayan: The visit to Ramle was brief. The unit was badly hit. There were four dead in the jeeps. The half-tracks had a number wounded, some of them seriously. Most of the tyres were punctured, radiators had fallen off. One jeep had lost its hood and its machine gun; in another, bullets had severed the brakes. Some men were missing; there were wounded who had fallen off jeeps near the police station, the men were bandaging their wounds and replacing the fractured tyres.

Time was precious. The longer the unit delayed, the more difficult would its withdrawal be. Reports were now being received of Arab Legion armoured vehicles on their way to the battle. The Arab Legion unit in the police fortress, which had been taken by complete surprise when the commando unit made its first appearance had indeed mistaken it for the reinforcements it was expecting....It recovered from the shock, realized its mistake and manned its positions. The only withdrawal route ran right outside the police fortress...The

order to retreat was given. The wounded were loaded on to the half tracks. The convoy took off and the battalion returned to Ben Shemen. Its casualties: nine dead and seventeen wounded.

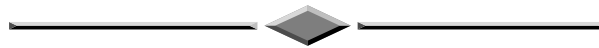
Isaacson: It was on our return trip past the station that the Arabs hit our half track. Jimmy Kantey was very severely wounded. Others were also injured but not so seriously.

We lay on the side of the half-track taking as much cover as possible and waiting... We did not wait for more than a couple of minutes (but it seemed like years) before another half-track came by. This half-track also had a number of wounded and dead on it.

After a journey of about twenty minutes we were back at Ben Shemen. We carried the wounded into the dining hall, which had been turned into a hospital. Jimmy looked very bad and we didn't expect him to pull through. The hospital was full of wounded and dying men. The dead were lying outside covered with blankets. I realized how real was this war. We had suffered casualties but we had inflicted tenfold on the enemy and we had captured quite a number of armoured cars and light artillery.

With the tide of battle going the way of the Israelis, the Operations Command decided to keep up the momentum. The commandos, who had had only fitful sleep in two nights, moved out of Ben Shemen that same night, sleeping uneasily on their bumpy half-tracks. After some time, the half-tracks stopped at the outline of a large building in the distance. This, the commandos guessed, must be Lydda airport which, they now learned, had been captured that afternoon by the tank unit.

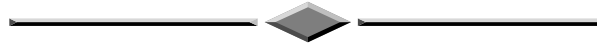
The commandos were inside the airport when suddenly two front jeeps blew up on a minefield. The tank men, startled by the detonations, thought that this was an Arab Legion counter-attack and opened fire on the commandos. More men were lost before the mistake was realized. The troops slept off their weariness that night...



The Arabs of Lydda and Ramle had become swiftly demoralized. There was more to the demoralization than the surprise attacks. Perhaps earlier Israeli air raids had something to do with it, but more likely it was the whole train of events starting with the evacuation of the Arabs of Tiberias in March, the exodus of the 70,000 from Haifa, 9,000 from Safed, the 50,000 from Jaffa and the loss of Acre in the previous months. Whatever the reason, the leadership in Lydda surrendered to the Israelis on the evening of July 10 after fierce skirmishes. The town's leaders were instructed to tell their people that they could continue to live where they were provided they surrendered their arms and accepted the sovereignty of Israel.

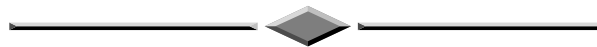
History might not have taken the cruel turn it did had the Arabs not reneged on these conditions next day. The reason for their switch was the sudden appearance in Lydda of two Arab Legion tanks, giving the townsmen the impression that the long-awaited Legion reinforcements were now arriving. They broke the surrender pact and, in a wild rampage, slaughtered the relatively few Israeli guards and patrolmen who had been left in the town.

There were no Arab Legion reinforcements. Israeli units poured into the town. The Israelis took a harder line. They could not accept a fifth column in their midst and hustled thousands of families out of the towns in the next three days. Men, women and children, were put on buses and sent to Transjordan. Some made their way walking, an ordeal in the burning heat of the Middle Eastern summer.



While the commando men were ranging from street to street in Lydda, Dr. Jack Medalie set up his first-aid station in the town in an abandoned hairdresser's shop. Advanced first-aid treatment and attention to fractures were the immediate duties. The shop went up in smoke during the fighting but the medical team escaped without casualty and returned when the fire died down.

A Palmach boy walked in holding his intestines in his hand. He had walked thus for half a mile, collapsing in the station. Medalie gave him a blood transfusion and made him as comfortable as he could, at the same time sending a message to the commander that the boy would die unless operated on immediately. The unit was surrounded by local Arab fighters, the commander said, and he would organize transport when darkness fell. Two hours later -now dark - a jeep arrived to take the patient. It infiltrated through enemy lines and got the boy to Tel Hashomer hospital. He survived.



Ramle surrendered next day. Its booty included arms, artillery pieces, ammunition, fuel, vehicles and food.

Lionel Meltzer's diary, embracing events both in Tel Aviv and Lydda-Ramle, is poignant on these few days.

JULY 13

It wasn't a good day for me - too full of tragedy. At about 11 A.M. I got out of a car at our headquarters in Tel Aviv while an Egyptian plane was bombing a house not 100 yards away and I thought that the whole world had fallen in. A cloud of smoke rose up and I heard the wailing of women. I ran to the scene. The mangled remains of people, two elderly people and two small boys, were horrifying. I should be used to seeing dead people, but I must confess that today's experience upset me very much - they seemed to be so completely dead...

I went to Ramle this afternoon. We had a signal asking what should be done with some hundred wounded Arab prisoners of war found in Ramle, so we went out to investigate. Ramle had fallen to us only yesterday, and we found the Arab people bewildered. They were congregating on the square with their bundles and packets - women, children and old men. They were beginning to walk, the Lord knows where, and others were scrambling into buses. One could read tragedy on the women's faces, and bewilderment on the faces of the children. The women were wondering where the babies would sleep and what they would eat. Dismayed and helpless. I know how Rose and I would feel for Glenda and Charlie if we were ever placed in similar circumstances. I am terribly upset by all this. The war was grim but, thank God, humanity was not dead.



Geoff Stark also writhes in recollecting Lydda and Ramle. His unit supported by "an almost portable" French 1918 gun in charge of an American, had attacked a village overlooking the twin towns:

The arrangement was that we would creep up the rocks before the village and then we'd get supporting fire. After that we'd assault. The supporting fire landed among ourselves. Fortunately nobody was killed. The American came up and apologized: something wrong with the gun.

Then we, Palmach infantry, went into the village. Empty. Abandoned. We kicked open doors and threw in grenades. An old man came out of one door and asked for peace. We stayed there that morning and, from our height, watched the streams of Arabs moving along the road.

The first South African to be wounded in the Negev was Ronnie Chaskelson, operating with his Palmach jeep patrol. The only other Machal men in this particular unit was the South African Max Rosengarten and two Americans. A Canadian Sidney Rubinoff, had been killed. The rest were young soldiers drawn from Haifa and kibbutzim in the Haifa region. Rosengarten, a veteran of the Western desert, became their admired counselor.

Kibbutz Ruchama was the unit's base. The patrol area for the unit took in the settlements of Dorot, Negba, Mishmar Hanegev, Nirim and the South African founded kibbutz of Shoval. The jeeps were armed with Spandau and Beza machine guns. Their targets were Arab irregulars and Egyptian patrols interfering with communications and supplies to the Israeli settlements.

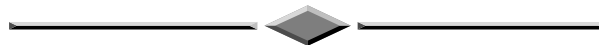
It was a life with little sleep. The routine was to leave on patrol at 5.30 in the afternoon and return at seven in the morning. The morning routine was cleaning the jeeps, collecting ammunition, packing up with food, testing equipment and other odd jobs. This was usually completed by midday, at which time the men would snatch some sleep.

During the first truce the patrol operated near Egyptian-held Gaza. The period threw up the not unfamiliar phenomenon of war - friendly chats with the enemy. It began with a harmless throwing of stones by the Israeli patrol at the Egyptians and the throwing back of the stones by the Egyptians - the crude invitation of men at war to "let's speak." which they did, cordially. The life of ambush and being ambushed which followed had its narrow shaves.

In the last days of the first truce (said Chaskelson telling how he was wounded) the Egyptians began closing in on kibbutz Ruchama, taking occupation of houses a kilometer or so from the kibbutz. We were told to go out with two jeeps and a half-track to get them out before they became a threat. I was the gunner on the half-track. As we approached, the Egyptians in the houses opened fire. I unhitched the gun and covered one of our men who had got near enough to toss a grenade through a window. I was firing through the window to keep the heads of the Egyptians down.

But there came a moment when I had only an oblique view of one window and could not cover our man. I stood up to yell to him to hold it and as I did so, I flew through the air. I don't know exactly what happened. They told me one of the enemy was in a bush fifteen yards away and let fly at me. They got him. I was wounded through the leg and across the hip.

Chaskelson was in hospital for the next six weeks.

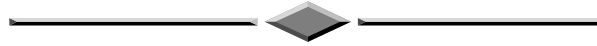


Nazareth fell to the Israelis on the evening of July 16, thankfully with little shedding of blood either on the Israeli or Arab side. The Arabs did not run, but surrendered - and they and their children remain in Nazareth to this day.

None of the South Africans of the nearby settlement of Timorim participated in the convergence on Nazareth. Their task had been to pin down the Arab village of Malun and this they did. The Arab surrender was meaningful to them because, in Karl Silberman's words, "we were now free to get organized."

Lionel Meltzer recorded in his diary the following day:

Nazareth fell last night - much rejoicing. This was the last Arab stronghold in this part of the Galilee. Apart from one or two isolated points, the whole of north-eastern Palestine has been freed. We visited Safed, Merhavia, Kfar Tabor and Sejera, where a volunteer medical officer, Isaiah Morris⁴⁴, from England, was killed in the recent fighting. Kaukji's "liberation" troops cleared out that morning. The fighting had been fierce. In one action alone, twenty Jews were killed. Kaukji staked his reputation on taking Sejera - and failed.



Only a handful of South Africans were involved (and then only marginally) in phase two of Operation Dani, the vain Israeli attempt to take the Legion-held Latrun fortress. The main impression of the few, among them Geoff Stark, Clive Selby and Dr. Jack Medalie, was that of unaccountability for both Israeli and Legion actions in the course of the 4-day off-on battle. Latrun, physically, meant a hill, a vital water pumping station, a monastery, and a police fortress in a setting of hills between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. It was the key to the road linking the two cities. The Legion threw all it had into the defence of the fort, bringing reinforcements from Jerusalem. Glubb Pasha's order to his legionnaires (who proved to be brave fighters) was to hold the position at all costs. Failures in communication disrupted the several Israeli pincer movements to close in on the position. The days between July 14-18 saw fierce attacks, withdrawals and counterattacks by both sides on hills, in villages and outposts. For Geoff Stark things inexplicable took place both in preliminary events on the Israeli clawed-out "Burma Road" and in the battle for Latrun itself. For example:

The enemy attacked the position of our unit with armoured cars and a few trucks. We did not have much in anti-tank weaponry. There were literally hundreds of Arabs and it appeared that we would be mowed down. But when they got to the point of overpowering us, they inexplicably turned round and went off.

I remember the call went out for reinforcements but it was a Friday evening, the eve of Sabbath, and the religious guys refused to come.

This was the Middle East, the place where scruple and savagery mix grotesquely - a fact not appreciated by Stark at the time.

Another oblique light:

We were holding the village of Barfilia and were told to dig slit trenches. The fellows took rocks and formed two rows at a height of a few inches so that they could slip between them. I dug a slit trench about one to one and a half feet as I had been taught and it protected my whole body. There was an inspection and my trench was held up as the proper thing. The fellows gathered round. The incident I am coming to is this: shortly after the inspection some planes came over and everybody shouted, "Ours! Ours!"

They didn't seem ours to me. They were menacing. No the fellows said, ours and waved. The planes swooped lower and I got into my trench. They bombed us and a number of our chaps got hurt.

It was not only a question of failure to identify the planes. This Palmach unit, like others, never concerned itself with safety. Stark found the kibbutzniks without fear of death and was proud to be among their number.

⁴⁴ Morris, like Meltzer, was awarded the Military Cross during WW2.

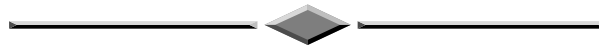
All this, of course, was incidental to the 4-day battle with its high number of Israeli losses. In the years that have followed Israeli military commentators have tried to give the operation the professional gloss of their trade, but the ordinary soldier tears it off. It was war fought amateurishly.

Stark again:

Everybody wanted to be in on the final assault on Latrun. Men were volunteering in droves. The commander was the "Old Man", Yitzchak Sadeh, creator of the Palmach. We led off with a Cromwell tank. I was in the second half-track behind the tank. We went down in a mood of merriment. Buses followed us, the men in them singing. We were sitting ducks. I don't know how near Latrun we got but suddenly the tank went right, the half-tracks left and we started dispersing. There was a little bit of firing... it was ridiculous. A failure of communications somewhere.

The Israelis gained the upper hand in the last hours before the truce was to be renewed. A column reached the pumping station between El Kubab and Latrun and found it unoccupied. A Cromwell opened fire against the fortress, but its guns jammed and infantry were not pressed into a final assault. The truce came into force on July 19, with Latrun and Ramallah, still in Arab hands, remaining so until the Six Day War of 1967.

Summing up on Operation Dani, Lorch makes the following points: "The main road to Jerusalem had not been opened, nor had the danger to the Jerusalem corridor been completely removed; however, the corridor had been broadened to the south; an alternative route to Jerusalem precarious, it is true, had been opened...two towns (Lydda and Ramle) and dozens of villages had fallen into Israeli hands as had Lydda airport and the major part of the Valley of Ono (today's Savyon, Tel Hashomer and Kiryat Ono), with its extensive fertile agricultural land..."



"For seven days the fighting on the Syrian front was reminiscent of that on the Western front in the First World War in which much blood was spilt, much ammunition expended, but little territory gained." - Edgar O'Ballance⁴⁵

The South Africans were spared the blood...

They were, it will be remembered, part of the Anglo-Saxon artillery unit of the Australian non-Jew, Mike Landshut (Amir), and his South African second in command, Len Karpel. The positioning of the two 75 mm French guns, opposite Mishmar Hayarden, was not good, but they had no choice. The Syrians held the heights and since the unit's guns had a low trajectory, the gunners could not shelter behind a hill for their shells would not clear it. To dig in was the only way.

The unit had 170 shells and, initially, only time fuses, suited to anti-personnel fighting. Sunday July 11, passed quietly, the time being used by Mike Landshut (Amir) for the Montgomery practice of explaining to the men the lay-out of the front, and strategic objectives, and in observation for location of the enemy's gun positions. Syrian planes overhead ignored the unit.

On Monday, July 12, came action.

"Enemy tanks approaching":

⁴⁵ The Arab - Israeli war of 1948 (Publisher's name: Faber & Faber Ltd.)

The tanks were clearly aiming to clear the Israelis out of Rosh Pina.

The men rushed to the guns. A gunner at one of them gave the wrong calculation and the barrel, instead of pointing at the enemy, swung round and pointed directly at the command post whence the orders came. Len Karpel was superb in that tense moment. He put up his hands: "O.K. I surrender!"

The delay was only for a few seconds. Lionel Hodes took compass bearings from behind the guns and along the barrels and the gun opened up. The blast echoed throughout the valley.

What a war! The surprised enemy tanks hesitated, then turned back. The Israelis, it seemed to them, had fire power they had not suspected.

That night, the guns rapid-fired at the customs house building which the Syrians used as a headquarters. Behind it was a vehicle park. Percussion fuses (which, unlike time fuses, cause shells to explode on impact) had arrived. One gun was out of action, but the other performed well. The gunners noted with satisfaction the smoke of burning vehicles and a movement out of the park of other vehicles.

However the Syrians were not slow in replying and a few shells fell close by. Then the night fell silent.

Restless days followed, the human detail of them etching cameos. The gun crews lived in little bivouacs and received their rations as a unit. Others had individual bivvies scattered in the fields. In charge of each gun were Canadians, one of them, Dan, an impressive fellow, during World War 2 in an American Ranger outfit. A cool fighter who had fought in the tempestuous pre-state Jerusalem road battles, he stood out as a man who knew his business.

Horace Milunsky led the life of a hermit as befitted his occupation as Bren gunner on a nearby height from which he could view the valley and enjoy unobstructed range for shooting at planes. His instructions however, were, not to shoot unless a plane attacked.

The food-and-water supply drivers of the unit were based at Rosh Pina and the gunners took turns to go back with them for their wash-ups. Once a truck did not arrive. The gunners stumbled home by a round-about route through the fields.

The artillery duels between the unit and the Syrian customs house was not without its comic aspect. Mike Landshut (Amir) worked out on the map that the Syrian guns could not possibly reach the Anglo-Saxon guns, but they did. "What we normally used to do", said Mockie Schachat, "was to fire a shot, run for cover, wait for the Arabs to reply, then run back and shoot again."

Schachat returning to his gun position in one of these scurryings, found his overcoat riddled with shrapnel.

Friday July 16 was the unforgettable day. In the morning a Syrian plane droned overhead. Not far away from the unit the clatter of small arms, furious and fast, told of a battle.

Suddenly Mike Landshut (Amir) called out: "The plane: It's been hit!"

One wing crumpled and the plane spiralled down, crashing near kibbutz Ayelet Hashachar (Morning Star).

"Let's find the wreck," Mike called out to Lionel Hodes.

But their jeep would not start. At that moment a truck came fast towards the jeep. It stopped with a jerk and a man jumped out.

"Could you give us a push?" Mike asked urgently.

The question was ignored. "Do you hear the noise?" the man asked in Hebrew. Hodes translated for Mike.

"Do you realise there is a battle on?" Translation and answer:
"Yes."

"Do you know that the Syrians have close on twenty tanks?"

Mike was taken aback.

"We want your help. You must shoot at the tanks."

"How can we?" Mike wondered. "We have only shrapnel shells and very few at that. They wouldn't even tickle a tank. Besides I don't think we can drag the guns from here. We're under orders not to risk them"

"We can't stand by", Hodes said, though conceding the shells would not even graze a tank.

"Let's go and see", Mike said decisively. The truck gave the jeep a push and the engine started. Mike driving, Hodes next to him, tore down the road, the truck following. Reaching the settlement, the two men bent low and ran, reaching the settlers then manning sandbagged positions and strengthening communication trenches. A first-aid girl was sitting in one of them. Her friendly smile made the situation seem less serious. A Spandau gunner and his loader were too busy to notice the arrival of the newcomers. Here and there, squatting in the trench, settlers worked among the bright, sometimes warm, rejected cartridge cases, filling empty belts with live rounds. The situation was clear. Yarda, down below, a collection of some humble homes, was being occupied by the Syrians. The settlement would be next. Enemy infantry were attempting an outflanking movement. Hodes and Landshut (Amir) counted fifteen Syrian tanks. The settlement had no anti-tank guns.

The two men, moving from trench to trench, were asked whence they came. When Hodes answered, "Artillery", he received unbelieving stares. "Why don't you bring your guns up here and help us?" The technicalities of fuse, percussion and trajectory were not for the settlers. Landshut (Amir) though he knew no Hebrew, could still read the pleading eyes.

Just then Raffie, an Israeli officer, arrived with a 17-pounder, making him and his gun crew angels of mercy. Hodes and Landshut (Amir) went to assist the new arrivals. A youngster of not more than thirteen showed them the minefields. Positioning the 17-pounder proved difficult, since a great deal of the meshek had been mined.

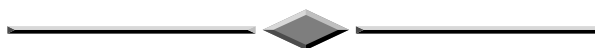
Landshut (Amir) came to a sudden decision. "Let's go back and get our guns into action." Hodes had been waiting for this. They dashed back, stopping once to take cover from a Syrian plane. Ammunition had just arrived at the gun position, but there were only time fuses. The unit's percussion fuses had been used up. The men jumped to the guns. Messages over the air reported the fall of Yarda. The 65 mm guns of other positions had run out of ammunition. Rosh Pina was threatened. If the tanks cut the road, the "finger" of the Galilee would be lost. Landshut (Amir), Schachat, Hodes and a few others scrambled up a hill to observe the tanks. They were moving in the direction of Rosh Pina. Orders were relayed down the hill to the command post and guns.

"Let's pray that we miss", Landshut (Amir) said. "If we hit them, they'll know we can do them no damage."

The tanks moved slowly along the road. "Fire!"

Bursts from the guns. Little puffs of smoke over the tanks. Shrapnel bursting. Shot after shot. No one spoke. Then, cheers. Unbelievably the Syrian tanks halted, turned round and went back.

Rosh Pina did not fall, though the Syrian tanks came back again in the afternoon. The appearance in the air of just-arrived Israeli Flying Fortresses blunted the Syrian thrust. The Fortresses, nicknamed "the hammers", scored direct hits on Syrian concentrations both inside their bridgehead and in the vicinity of the customs station. The situation remained what it had been before the fighting resumed. On July 19 the second truce came into effect.



Basil Herman had arrived together with a full plane of fellow volunteers from Rome two days before the fighting resumed. UN observers were waiting for them at the Haifa airfield and there was some tension as the observers tried returning them to Rome on the same plane. In encounters of this kind, the observers were without real power to affect their will.

The major impact of Israel on Herman was the confidence of the people. He was one of the few South Africans who could speak Hebrew and therefore who could gain insights not open to his companions. He made a point of speaking to people in the street. It, never occurred to any that Israel could fail. The experience was illuminating for Herman because he had left South Africa full of foreboding. Intelligence and assessment had been his job in World War 2 and the facts of Israel's situation, as they had come to him, did not justify confidence.

Kelet 9, the administrative office, still clearly lacked the order and system of an army administration. Outside the office men were disappearing under the wire of the camp. The system was still raw. Palmachniks were going the rounds of the barracks and tents, saying, "Look fellows, do you want to join the Palmach? Do you want to fight tonight? Then come with us." The disappearing men were lost to documentation. The Palmachniks were particularly interested in South Africans.

Herman himself, visualizing a long period of waiting if he did not take the initiative himself, made use of a contact from British Army days who knew his background as a military intelligence officer. Within three day's he was in an appropriate unit.

South African volunteers were now pouring into the land in groups of ten to twenty. A contingent of which we shall hear more was that consisting of Gordon Mandelzweig, David Susman, Jeff Perlman, Benny Landau and "Lockie" Fainman. All five of the newly arrived contingent was later to take part in the skirmish near Tamra described in chapter 12.

They were posted to the newly formed English speaking B Company of the 72nd Infantry Battalion of the 7th Armoured Brigade. This brigade would eventually include about 300 Anglo-Saxon volunteers of whom almost 100 were South Africans, 4 at Brigade headquarters, some 60 in the 72nd Infantry Battalion and some 30 in the 79th Armoured Battalion. O.C. of the 79th was Baruch Friedland (ex-Kenya). The 79th Medical Officer was South African, David Kidron and the Medical Officer of the 72nd was South African, Harry Bank. It is not known how many, if any, Anglo Saxon volunteers served in the 71st Infantry Battalion



Chapter 7 – Part 1

Frank Herbstein was working at the Weizmann Institute with an electronics group concerned with infra-red projects. The group was particularly interested in a "snooperscope", a telescope attached to a soldier's rifle, the soldier carrying a battery on his back and a headlamp on his helmet. This was to illuminate at night an area of about 100 yards in front of him, the soldier himself being invisible.

It was hoped to use the "snooperscope" in Jerusalem and Herbstein went from Rehovot to Ramle, thence via the "Burma Road" in a jeep to Jerusalem, but the violently bumpy trip impaired the electronics and Herbstein returned to Rehovot to do the repair work. By the time the repair was done, the long truce had come into effect.

CHAPTER 7 – PART 2

TEN-DAY WHIRLWIND

IN THE AIR

NIGHTMARE

The air war in the 10-day fighting period opened tragically for the fighter squadron at Herzliya, which mourned the mysterious disappearance of Potchefstroom's Leslie Bloch over Syria⁴⁶.

This was also the period in which the belly-landing of their Dakota at Ramat David indelibly inscribed itself into the memories of Cyril Katz, pilot, Arthur Cooper, co-pilot, Joe Friedman, radio operator, Krugersdorp's Simmy Waks, navigator, and a handful of youthful Israeli bombchuckers.

Given the nightmare that this air crew experienced on return from a bombing raid, a certain amount of confusion belongs to the tale. Different tellers, different angles. No matter. The essential facts are that in Cyril Katz's logbook, the Dakota's raid (July 12, 1948) had been on Syrian-held Mishmar Hayarden, not on Syria itself as believed by Arthur Cooper. The issue belongs to the mists.

Something that sounded like an explosion but was a loud bang occurred at the back of the plane, locus of the bombchuckers.

Katz also had a fleeting impression, true or imaginary he is not sure, of a flash, also of light coming into the plane. He asked Cooper to take over while he went to investigate.

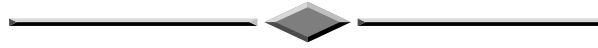
What he found spelt trouble. The Dakota had a flap-style double door from which the bombchuckers did their chucking. One of these half-doors, in processes of chucking mishap, had come to fold on the tail of the plane.

Katz resumed control. Aerodynamic upheaval had set in; the plane was losing height; was spiralling; was misbehaving. "We've bought it this time", Friedman believed.

The crew had been on target but now Katz was essaying the flight back to Ramat David, his mind already made up on a belly landing, wheels retracted. A May 10 experience, "4 days before the state's official birth", dictated that decision. On that day Katz had flown to Be'er Tuvia, a Negev moshav, to pick up 3 Haganah men for a recce flight over their area. Soon after takeoff for the recce, Arab fire must have damaged one of the plane's wheels, leaving it useless. Katz was innocent of this damage. The recce completed, he landed with only one operable wheel, the plane out of control and slithering from off the runway on to a land patch... It was a landing the like of which he did not want to experience again.

The 25-minute flight of the losing-height Dakota to Ramat David made minutes eternities. In one of these eternities Ramat David came into view. Friedman shot off Verey lights for clearance and ambulances. Katz belly-landed as he had resolved, and there they were on the runway; Home. The four South Africans and the Israeli youngsters emerged from the plane, very shaken, disbelieving their good fortune, then believing, In the cases of Friedman and Waks, the nightmare of the experience was not to be so quickly dispelled.

⁴⁶ See Appendix A



Towards the end of the ten-day fighting, the people of Tel Aviv region were startled by the sight and sound of three large bomber planes flying low, the pilots in apparent enjoyment of the spectacle they were putting on for the upturned eyes. The truth, not taking long to dawn, thrilled man, women and child. “Shelanu:” they cried.

“Shelanu: “(Ours! Ours!).

Indeed they were. The story is this:

When the IAF was finally informed that the three Flying Fortress B-17 four-engined bombers, bought in the United States, had arrived in Czechoslovakia where they were being overhauled and equipped, Boris Senior was ordered, as deputy chief of operations to plan a bombing raid on Cairo (to be codenamed Operation Nabut). Unable to locate any good maps of Cairo, Senior made do with tourist maps. Studying these carefully he chose as targets the Defence Ministry, the Abdin Palace and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs which lay in a straight line from southwest to northeast of the city. He planned the approach from the south as if originating in southern Egypt or Sudan, feeling that the Egyptians would not suspect an unidentified aircraft approaching from that direction.

Senior prepared the operational order and flew to Czechoslovakia to deliver it personally and to brief the crews who were to bomb Cairo on their delivery flight to Israel. He flew in an IAF Lockheed Constellation with an American transport captain, Larry Raab. Their course to Czechoslovakia was via Corsica where they refueled. This refueling arrangement in Corsica and the tacit cooperation of the French government made the undercover airlift possible. From Corsica, it was only about three hours to Czechoslovakia. Senior relates

This was my first visit to Czechoslovakia and to the Israeli arms airlift base at Zatec with its cobbled streets. I was astonished to find there, behind the communist iron curtain, an airfield occupied by Israeli liaison men and a boisterous crowd of hard-drinking airmen, mostly American Jews. The leader of the American B-17 crews was a powerfully built former New York policeman called Ray Kurtz⁴⁷.

He was very self-confident, a bit older than me. When we met at the Stalingrad Hotel he said “No one is going to tell me where to fly my aircraft” and ignored me and the written operational order which I had brought with me. Such was discipline at that wild time, there being no ranks and no real command structure in the air force, orders were carried out by persuasion or threats. The fact that I was a fighter pilot did not help much either for these were bomber pilots with their own opinions of fighter pilots. We had very little contact after the initial cold shoulder he gave me, but he eventually obeyed my operational orders designating the targets and the approach to them.

Senior returned to Israel: On a night just before the resumption of fighting, Dov Judah answered a summons from Air Force HQ where Dan Tolkowsky, Smoky Simon and Nat Cohen, told him he had been appointed briefing officer for Operation Nabut, the operational order having already been delivered by Boris Senior. This involved flying with an air crew of gunners and radio operators, most of them South African, including George Meyerson, Joe Leibowitz, Abe Berger, Bert Dinn, Butch Boettger and Eddie Rosenberg, to Zatec in Czechoslovakia, to bring to Israel four B-17 bombers (Flying Fortresses) smuggled out of the U.S. The squadron was to bomb King Farouk’s Abdin Palace on its flight to base at Ramat David. The alternative targets were Gaza and Rafah.

Eighteen hours later Judah and his crew were on their way to Zatec.

⁴⁷ Kurtz was lost over the Atlantic, near Iceland, in May 1951, together with ex Machal navigator Seymour Lerner, while ferrying a Mosquito fighter plane, acquired in Canada, to Israel.

Judah's introduction to the American pilots of the Flying Fortresses was even more thorny than Senior's experience. Ray Kurtz, the leader, was playing gin rummy with Norman Moonitz in the lounge of the Stalingrad Hotel. Both were huge men, Kurtz a New York policeman and Moonitz a New York fireman. Judah's introduction of himself was interrupted by a third American, Sam Lewis, another giant, who came to the table and said to Kurtz: "Chuck don't fly on the mission". Judah did not know who "Chuck" was. Kurtz hardly glanced up. His cigarette hanging from his lips, he played his next card and said, "Chuck flies." An argument followed. Chuck's interceder said with feeling: "Chuck's got a wife and kids." Kurtz played his last card, gathered the lot from the table, lifted himself out of his chair and said with vehemence: "Everybody's got a family - everybody flies".

Judah realized he would not be dealing with easy men. Kurtz and Moonitz were rough and tough, USAF master bomber pilots who had flown many missions from England over Germany.

For five days crewmen went daily to the airfield to fit armament to the three planes - the fourth had crashed en route. Other personnel camouflaged the silver craft with green and brown paint.

The South African gunners, who would be in positions in the tail, waist and mid-up, were surprised to find their guns had no cut-outs. They protested that this was dangerous. Armourers spent some time mending this defect. When the planes, loaded with four tons of 500 H.E. bombs each, were at last preparing to leave, the Czechs withheld consent for their departure. While it was true, they said, that the mission had a permit for the planes, it did not have one for the paint. Such a permit, it seemed, required many green United States dollars. These were obtained much later that day.

The bombers finally took off. Judah had not found Kurtz, Moonitz and Al Raisin, the third pilot, amenable to his briefing. They refused to fly over Cairo at less than 30,000 feet, which was the only height they considered reasonable over a target presumed to be heavily defended with flak. Judah recalled SAAF bombing in Italy at 8-13,000 ft without oxygen, but they would not budge.

Oxygen equipment was obtained for one plane only and it was finally agreed that Kurtz, commanding would fly in this B-17 as co pilot to Bill Katz, and bomb Cairo, the two other aircraft would bomb El Arish and Rafah respectively. The crews of the two planes not scheduled for Cairo seemed relieved.

The bombers flew in formation from Zatec down to the Adriatic, hugging the east coastline. Over Albania there was a moment of drama and crisis. The planes were buffeted by flak. The formation swung out to sea and then on to Crete. With a ceremonial waggling of wings and thumbs-up signs, the wing ships turned east towards the southern Palestine coast while Kurtz flew south to Cairo. The sun was setting when the Palestine-bound planes sighted the bend in the coast north of El Arish. The El Arish-bound bomber found target and the crew saw two Spitfires on the ground go up in flames.

Both Alf Dobrowitz, the bomb-aimer and Dov Judah, in the other plane, were uncertain in the darkening desert which was Rafah and which Gaza. They bombed what they thought was Gaza. It turned out to be Rafah. Flak and searchlights opened up. The bomber wriggled its way through the snare to land at Ekron.

Joe Leibowitz, in the plane that had bombed El Arish⁴⁸, was presumed to have knowledge by this time of the improvised Herzliya field, but he could not find it. The American pilot, who was relying on him, “began performing”.

There was hardly fuel for five more minutes of flying and it seemed that the precious plane would have to be ditched on the Herzliya beach. Then, suddenly, the airfield was exposed (as Leibowitz later learned) by kibbutz youngsters removing the camouflage.

Shortly afterwards, the crew of the leader plane landed at Ramat David. The Fortress had been able to drop only a few 50 kilo bombs and had missed Farouk’s palace in Cairo. The bombsight was makeshift.

That night Judah slept fitfully. The drone of the long flight echoed in his ears. Next day he learned of the loss five days earlier of Les Bloch.

The crew of the Herzliya-landed plane, slept overnight in the children’s quarters of the nearby kibbutz and were driven to Tel Aviv next morning. Meanwhile Israeli roundels (the insignia, the Star of David) were painted on the “hammers”; after which they flew a few hundred feet over Tel Aviv in circling movements.

Many upturned eyes were wet. Tel Aviv had only known enemy planes.

Boris Senior summing up the operation:

“The raid on Cairo was successful, the bombs straddling the targets I had chosen, though there were no direct hits on the Defence Ministry nor the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The raid, demonstrating as it did our ability to retaliate for raids on Tel Aviv by reaching Cairo, caused panic in Egypt and despite the minimal damage it was a big morale booster for us”.

There was no delay in using the Fortresses. They bombed El Arish, Rafah, Gaza, Damascus and Mishmar Hayarden, occasionally with empty mineral bottles, the supply of bombs having run out. These bottles, falling from the sky, made the same eerie, whistling sound of a bomb. Mishmar Hayarden was the final target before the second truce. The night before one of the Fortresses had bombed Damascus and its airfield, the South Africans in the crew being Smoky Simon, navigator, Dov Judah, bombardier and George Meyerson, air gunner and wireless operator.

In this particular period a tradition was born. Dov Judah:

It is the proud claim of today’s Israel Air Force that an aircraft, having landed, can be back in the air for the next operational mission in seven and a half minutes. Something of this came from what we did in 1948 when the Fortresses were turned, round three times a day. In World War 2 it was unheard of for a bomber to do three missions a day. I know of only one exception - in the desert at the time of El Alamein when the line was short and the bombers right up to it. Accordingly the Bostons did several raids a day. But even in this case, air crews were not doing three a day as ours did in 1948.

Cairo retaliated for the attack on Farouk’s palace with several on Tel Aviv. Yet the air picture was changing. In the space of the nine weeks since May 14, Israel had acquired the capacity not only to defend herself but to strike also.



⁴⁸ There are some reports that El Arish could not be found in the dark, and they bombed Gaza or Rafah instead. El Arish was bombed the next day.

"We knew for the first time we were winning and that we would win", said Arthur Cooper. The Fortresses had come. Before this, the whole thing was madness, a nightmare. There were a few of us at Ramat David the last night before the second truce. Somebody in charge said: "Right. Go where you like! Bomb!" I took off in a Dakota with nine young Israelis, no co-pilot. I thought to myself, well, I've done Damascus, I must try some other place. I went to Beirut and I bombed ships in the harbour. I came back and got a blowing-up. "How could you go there?" they asked me.

At that stage the Lebanese were quiescent and that was the way the Israelis wanted them.

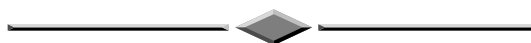
(On August 13, with the second truce three weeks old, Cooper left Israel to return to South Africa. He was followed in September and early October by Cyril Katz, Elliot Rosenberg, Les Chimes and Joe Leibowitz, and it should be repeated: they had been in the thick of it when the going was toughest).



The green-box radios of the Messerschmitts were positioned in the middle of the fuselage. On the day before the 10-day fighting. Issy Greenberg, placed in charge of the radio section of Fighter-Squadron 101, wriggled into the fuselage to test how long it would take to struggle out in an emergency. It was his final task at the field for some time. He had just been assigned to fly to Czechoslovakia to learn more about the radios which were not functioning well. He flew out that night. The radio factory was in Banska Bystryca, Slovakia and after arrival in Prague, while awaiting permission to visit the factory, Greenberg did the next best thing, working for Air Transport Command's Machal outfit in Zatec.

Depending on storm or calm at the United Nations, the Czechs were expelling men of the outfit or acquiescing in their return. Greenberg came into an expulsion period and soon returned to Israel no wiser about the green-box. One of the passengers in the plane was a Czech girl smuggled out by an American pilot. The Czechs were not amused. When the dust of the row settled, Greenberg returned to Czechoslovakia, this time succeeding in getting to the factory.

In Prague Sam Pomerance asked him to service the radios in a covey of Spitfires at Uherska Hradiste. This was for the projected Velveta operation. Mark the name. Velveta was to be THE South African air drama of the war. It involved the bringing into Israel, in relays, fifty Spitfires given to the Free Czech Air Force by Britain in World War 2 and now sold by the Czechs to the Israelis.



THE DOCTORS AND NURSES

July 9: As I write this diary at 10.30 p.m. (says Dr. Meltzer's diary)

I can hear the gun fire... this is the start of the Jewish attack. It started at this hour because the moon has just gone down, and it has become very dark... I wish that I could be out there with them.

I made a tour of the Negev front this morning and reached battalion headquarters at Be'er Tuvia just after it had been bombed and shelled. There has been severe fighting on that front since yesterday, and we collected about thirty casualties. I was pleasantly surprised at the way casualties were evacuated, but the conditions at the main field hospital were pretty bad. Organization is hopeless.

Very depressed today when I found that the two field hospitals at Bilu and Gedera were both completely full, and that no beds are available in Tel Aviv. No provision has been made for adequate hospital accommodation. I spent most of today running around to increase our beds by two hundred. I threatened Sheba that I would not leave his headquarters until all final arrangements were made to clear the field hospitals, and I stayed until they were.

July 14: I was in two bombing raids today, both in Tel Aviv. We actually had three alarms, but one was false. I wasn't afraid, simply because nobody else was. In fact, people did not even take shelter and many even remained sitting in open-air cafes. The raid killed two children and a soldier on leave. I think that it will be better when we live in Jaffa because the Arabs will not bomb Jaffa. At the moment we are living in the most congested part of Tel Aviv, and the bombing has been concentrated since yesterday. Both Ramle and Lydda have fallen, and our forces are pushing forward towards Latrun. The objective of the next phase of the operations is the capture of Latrun to open the road to Jerusalem. I think these victories could shorten the war.

The newspaper reporters looked over the screen into the operating room: a doctor, in bathing trunks, was bending over a wounded man on the operating table. The other person in the room, Yocheved, the nurse, was preparing the instruments and anaesthetics.

The newsmen stared hard. The orderlies had told them that Dr. Stanley Levin had now been on his feet for thirty six hours. This was his fortieth case. (He was to perform 500 operations by the end of the war).

The beginnings of this hospital were as modest as those which Levin had established at Kfar Schmaryahu, then at Tel Litwinsky. He had commandeered a double storey house in the center of the village, which turned out to be inhabited by a senile woman of eighty whose deceased husband farmer had willed the home to the Keren Hayesod provided that the institution would not move the woman out in her lifetime. Levin, conscious of the tragedy of age, put up with the woman's blundering into the rooms and her crawling into every bed, but later he succeeded in placing her elsewhere in the village.

The house had six rooms, a stable and a garden and if its transformation was swift, this was because war, though a desecration of the human spirit, also provides occasion for great dedication and a rising above self to the intangibles of group loyalty. This is what happened as doctor, nurse and ten orderlies fused into a team. With the start of the ten-day fighting, the first batch of the Givati brigade's casualties came in.

The team was not unprepared. The home had been cleaned, the admission and operating rooms and the wards, designated. The untrained orderlies had been transformed: one became cook, another washed up, a third was taught to give injections, a fourth handled admissions, a fifth signed in the cases with the names and numbers. Levin and Yocheved shared the tasks of instruction. Yocheved made herself responsible for the wards, guiding the cook and pressing on him the need for cleanliness.

The casualties were many. Levin, on his own, could not do major thoracic or abdominal surgery. His task narrowed to attending to shrapnel and penetrating wounds, and, when Yocheved became a skilled anaesthetist, amputations. Major surgery cases were sent to Tel Aviv and other base hospitals. In that early period Levin instructed some of his orderlies "to follow the troops" in the hospital's ambulance. The orderlies were thus in the wake of the Israeli units that took Lydda and Ramle and brought back an ice box, old-fashioned operating tables, blankets, sheets and pyjamas. The hospital was to grow to one hundred beds.



On their way to Tiberias, Sheba and Jack Penn by-passed the main road to Afula to avoid a battle raging there. In Afula Penn treated a young soldier riddled with bullets but still alive. He had been in command of a platoon sent to the top of a hill to quieten a machine gun post. The only way up was a single pass in the face of the enemy. He instructed his men to follow him in Indian file so that the man in front would shield those behind and so that even if several were shot down, there would still be some left to take the post. He took the full blast of the machine guns himself, reaching the top with an intact troop. He survived his wounds after a tough convalescence.

Arriving in Tiberias with the temperature at over 100°F, Penn found himself watching the pyrotechnics of a night battle between the Israelis and the Syrians. In the morning, twenty badly-wounded men were waiting to be treated by Jack Wilton, who had come up from South Africa with Meltzer's group and was now coping with very little help and inadequate material. Having no Hawley's orthopaedic table for the treatment of fractures, Wilton had elongated the drawers of a desk and put the patients' legs in them so that the feet were attached to the vertical panel. He manipulated the fractures by pulling out the appropriate drawer and then by applying his plaster of Paris.

None of the patients had morphia, since there was none, but there was no whimpering. Next day, however, a patrol was sent out to capture a field ambulance from the Syrians, which it did. The ambulance was fully equipped.

Among young South African medical newcomers in July were two close friends, Amersfoort-born "Ossie" Treisman and Dr. Boris Senior (a cousin of the fighter pilot); the other two were Ivan Barnett, a surgeon and Dr. B. Sandler. Having reported to Dr. Meltzer, they were passed on to a senior medical posting official who indicated that two postings required to be filled immediately, one for kibbutz Ruchama in the Negev which needed a surgeon and assistant, the other for an artillery unit in Haifa. Dr. Boris Senior and Treisman tossed a coin for the post of assistant to Barnett, with the upshot that Barnett and Treisman became associated in what was to become another of the stirring South African medical dramas of the war.

Of the four, Treisman had been the keenest Zionist, this as a result of the unhappiness of his family in Amersfoort. The Greyshirt movement had been active in the town in the Hitler period and life had become unpleasant for the Jews of the dorp. The family moved to Johannesburg, where Treisman continued his participation in the Habonim movement. He qualified as a doctor in 1945, too late to join the South African Army.

He and Dr. Barnett were flown into the Negev, landing on a barren strip that appeared to be in the middle of nowhere. It was pitch dark. Next morning they found themselves in a kibbutz on which was based airfield personnel, the settlers and passing-through Palmach units. An American doctor named Marcus had preceded the two South Africans but he had left some time before. However his name lingered, for he had done good work in the area under great difficulties. His "hospital" had been a pre-fab hut which he had fitted out with an operating theater. The table was primitive but the essential instruments were there - stacked neatly away. The kibbutzniks, thankful to the South Africans, for they would have on-the-spot medical services once again, helped them to clean up and re-arrange the prefab. In the first weeks things were quiet, the few casualties coming in from the south and the Gaza Strip region. The hectic days of the hospital were still to come.

"Just as we were about to leave Tiberias, (Meltzer wrote in his diary on July 18), Jack Wilton asked me to do an anaesthetic for him and thus delayed us until lunch time. We left at two p.m. instead of eight a.m. At Rosh Pina I was taken round by the SMO Carmeli Brigade, Dr. Wertheim, who knows his work. A fine man. Mike Udwin and I then went off to see Safed, so

historically significant⁴⁹. A ruined city with its Arab inhabitants gone. An ancient city. One could feel even now its character and holiness.

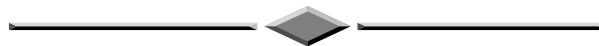
Our next visit was to Kfar Giladi, in the extreme north and close to the Lebanese border. This is one of the richer and older settlements. It has a first-class hospital which can't be used because it is made of wood; and can be set alight, so, instead, the hospital is in a group of houses. In this hospital I saw the South African of Ma'ayan Baruch, Rubin Leizer, who had both his hands taken off by a mine a short while ago. I promised to get artificial limbs for him in the shortest possible time."

The subsequent story of Leizer is unknown except for a few scanty details. Dr. Helfet met him before Meltzer, reporting that Leizer a pianist turned kibbutznik, had lost not only his hands but his eyesight also. There is no other reference to his lost eyesight. He insisted on doing everything himself and always had a ready smile. In a Haifa hospital some months later he was strumming on the piano with the aid of two sticks tied to his forearms. Later he left for the United States for special training. When Dr. Helfet last heard of him, he had married his Israeli nurse and was playing the piano in a night club.

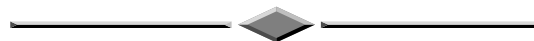
Dr. Meltzer's diary continues:

We spent the night at Ma'ayan Baruch. I liked the settlement from the first moment... the atmosphere is so pleasant. The place is dominated by South Africans, who hold all the key positions and all seem happy, it seems that these people have really found the answer. I met some of the more recent arrivals, they are somewhat bewildered by it all, but the others are quite certain they have chosen right.

Sister Brunton's arrival at the Kfar Giladi Hospital brought the total of trained nurses there to three. She took charge of the hospital and theater and the other two sisters attended to the wounded in the wards. The South African girl was reduced to as primitive a practice of medicine as she had originally seen at Djani. Using three primus stoves (and this gingerly because they "terrified" her), she sterilized everything that had to be sterilized. She made her own local anaesthetics. Arguments about amputations came to be repeated, coming to a climax when a young soldier, Zvi, blown up by a land mine, was brought in. The doctor said there was no alternative to amputation. Fortunately he had no instruments and decided to drive in the hospital's ambulance to Haifa (No. 10 Military Hospital) to get them. At this hospital, Dr. Cyril Kaplan, of Durban, understood the code of a message from Sister Brunton and came back with the other doctor to Kfar Giladi. The Durban surgeon ruled against amputation. Painstakingly he and Sister Brunton put Zvi's leg in plaster. He left the hospital sound and whole.



The Bat Galim Hospital in Haifa, situated on the beach front, was designed and built by the British. Never had an architect made so much use of glass in a hospital. The patients in the long corridor wards had an uninterrupted view of the Mediterranean and the coastline. Sisters Benedict and Marie Roux had presented themselves for operating theater duties the day after their arrival. They worked with surgeons from all over the world, American, British, German, Romanian, Russian and South African. Most had a sound knowledge of English and the nursing staff began teaching the girls Hebrew. The hospital was civilian, though it had some military patients. A typical day's list of operations would include the repair of a cleft palate on a year-old baby, amputation of a soldier's limb and the repair of a hernia. Limited in surgical supplies, doctors and nursing staff worked without wastage, using again and again such items as surgical spirits and bandages which could be washed and sterilized and which normally would have been used once only.



⁴⁹ The "home" of Jewish mysticism.

AT SEA

On July 10, the first day of the ten-day fighting, Charles Mandelstam and two Americans, Al Twersky, of Philadelphia, a naval engineer, and Al Wank, a gunner, were drafted from the naval base near Herzliya to a ship lying off Tel Aviv. She was the Eilat, 1,800 tons, unusual because of her very large afterdeck. The Eilat had formerly been an icebreaker of the American Navy and her large deck had accommodated a seaplane. She had been built for a speed of nine knots, but was now making six. The Jews had first used her as an illegal immigrant ship.

She was carrying a crew of about 180, Israelis and new immigrants. Her spirit was that of a large Jewish family. The three newcomers, the only Anglo-Saxons aboard, were shown their action stations by the Jimmy I (executive officer). They noted that the only armament was on the monkey island above the bridge and consisted of two Czech Beza machine guns. On the afterdeck was a dummy 8 mm gun made of wood.

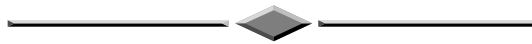
The truce was over. Suddenly the wail of Tel Aviv's air raid sirens shattered the peace of the day and the patrolling Eilat went on hurried alert. Three Egyptian Spitfires were over Tel Aviv. One peeled away and made two runs over the Eilat, killing a man on the monkey island and wounding six others. The dead man had got a bullet through his head.

For Mandelstam, experiencing his first hours on the ship, this was a grim introduction to the war. His worst experience in the South African Navy had been to see a ship in convoy hit and sinking. The Rivers of blood on the Monkey Bridge and deck of the Eilat were a harsher reality for the lad from Standerton who had given a lot of trouble to the recruiting staff of the League of Haganah in Johannesburg. First, the doctors had rejected him on account of his high blood pressure; secondly, his mother had paid secret visits to Phil Zuckerman, one of the recruiting staffers, to underline the warnings of the doctor. Mandelstam would not take "no" for an answer and hung around Zuckerman like a gadfly. He had been good enough for the South African Navy, he said, and there was nothing wrong with his health.

"What am I to do with him?" an exasperated Zuckerman asked Yoel Palgi.

"Send him", said Palgi. "Make him sign a statement relieving the Israeli Government of responsibility..."

Mandelstam was now wondering whether his mother was not right after all:



Other aspects of the 10-day fighting period:

July 10: Israel's Givati units capture Arab villages of Bet Affa, Ibdis and Gat, 10,000 Arabs from these and surrounding villages abandon their homes and trek towards Masmiyah junction.

Negev Brigade units repulsed in assault on Egyptian-held Iraq el Suedan fortress.

Jonathan Brigade (boys of 16 and 17) clear mountain later known as Mount Herzl, Jerusalem. Lechi (Stern group) unit repulsed at Bet Masmil (Kiryat Yovel today).

Seven Egyptian air attacks with incendiaries on kibbutz Ruchama. Nirim settlement bombed.

Chapter 7 – Part 2

Egyptian Air Force bombs Jerusalem in first aerial attack on Holy City. Little damage. Other air attacks by Egyptian Air Force in the south on Negev settlements of Dorot, Gevaram and Nirim.

Arab villagers of Jerusalem's Ein Karem begin to leave.
Again the refugee problem of tomorrow.

July 12: 9th Egyptian Infantry Battalion launch major attack on Negba settlement. Six infantry companies encircle isolated settlement. One hundred and fifty settlers hold out against tanks, armoured vehicles, artillery, assaulting infantry and air attacks. Egyptians accept defeat at sunset and retreat. Negba's resistance a major theme of all histories of the War of Liberation, three of the defenders receiving distinguished service medals.

July 13: Arab village of Tsora, birthplace of Samson, captured and Israel colony of Hartuv liberated in phase two of Operation Dani for relief of Jerusalem.

Tsora later to become site of new South African-founded Kibbutz.

Irgun unit captures village of Maldha.

Givati Brigade launches operation "Death to the Invader". Purpose: to open the road to the Negev and also to cut off Egyptians in the Majdal area from those in the Hebron Mountains.

July 15: Egyptian surprise attack on settlement of Beerot Yitzchak, with armoured cars, assaulting infantry and all-day-aerial attacks. Battle ends with arrival of commando battalion of Negev Brigade, diverting Egyptians from final assault. Upshot: Egyptians retreat at end of day, losses 200, dead and wounded, and considerable equipment. Settlement's losses: Seventeen dead, fifteen wounded.

Egyptians maul units attacking Bet Affa, but Hatta and Kharata fall to Israelis.

July 16: Arab Legion seizes Mandelbaum building and groups of houses along way to Damascus Gate. Counter-attacks force Legion-men out of Mandelbaum building but houses remain in Arab hands.

July 18: Arab Little Triangle villages of Ain G'Azal, Jaba and Igzim fall, thus allowing for first time free movement of traffic between Haifa and Tel Aviv along coastal road.

Eve of truce balance sheet of southern front: Notable Israeli resistances but settlements of Negev still isolated from the rest of Israel and the purpose of operation "Death to the Invader" not realized.

July 19: Second truce begins and continues to October 15.

CHAPTER 8

AS JULY ENDED

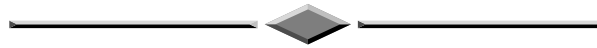
The guns were muted, but not altogether silenced, during the 3-month second truce. Truce or no truce the Negev jeep patrols carried on as usual with the task of observation and scouting. Then again, Kaukji, operating with his Liberation Army in the Central Galilee, did not regard himself as bound by the truce terms, since he was not a party to them. This was to react on the South Africans now filling up the 72nd battalion and joining the 79th battalion of the Seventh Armoured Brigade. But, in the main, the truce terms were observed and the interest of the period centers on four aspects:

Preparations for the next round.

The running story of the new State.

"Adventures" of individuals during the period and.

The signs of growing disunity among the Arab States fighting the war.

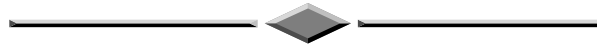


On the morning of the first day of the second truce, Mike Landshut (Amir) burst in on Lionel Hodes taking off the grime of the 10-day fighting under a shower in Rosh Pina. "The Arabs have broken the truce!", he yelled. "They have taken Ma'ayan Baruch:"

The gunners hastily assembled. In the preparations for the relief of the South African settlement were Hodes, Len Karpel, Mockie Schachat, Syd Langbart, Horace Milunsky and other South Africans, some Americans and Canadians and the non-Jews, Peter and Kiwi. There would be no time to set up a command post.

They would improvise. Few spoke during the dash with their 75 mm gun towards the kibbutz. Dismounting from their truck, the men scanned the settlement through binoculars. The kibbutz was at peace.

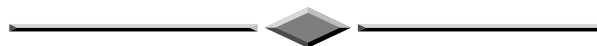
Ahead was the Israeli-held Hula police station to which they hastened for information. There had been no attack on Ma'ayan Baruch, they were told, but the Syrians had broken the truce at Tel el Azaziat, known as hill 289. Mike Landshut (Amir) was sheepish. "These Hebrew names sound so alike", he said.



David Teperson, the Namaqualand farmer, an extrovert if there ever was one, was observed on the Haifa-Tel Aviv road selling chickens. He had already sold a calf to a butcher for ten pounds. The stock had come from the Arab village of Igzim whose inhabitants had fled.

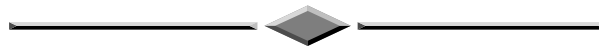
"What the devil are you up to?" Teperson was asked.

"Three pounds a month from the Army and five pounds from the Federation - is that enough for a healthy Jewish boy?"



Lionel Meltzer wrote in his diary on July 23:

Sheba asked me to take over from him at Medical Headquarters so that he can work at GHQ. He asked whether I could handle the business, and I told him I thought I could. This means, I suppose, that I have been made DDMS of the whole medical service, and I feel honoured. I realize I'm going to have a hell of a job. First, the whole organization is a mess. It would have been easier to start from scratch. Secondly, and what is much more important ... the language difficulty. This really is a severe handicap, and one which can easily overwhelm me. Every letter has to be translated before I can deal with it, and I find difficulty in really entering into discussions with senior people. If there had been time, I would have refused to accept any important appointment until I had learned the language, but the medical services won't wait until I learn Hebrew. Anyway, I'll give it a go, and if I fail it won't be from want of trying.



Jack Penn reached Jerusalem in the dead of night in a "Burma Road" convoy.

One smelled the besieged city before coming to it ... the stench of stagnant putrid water. I stayed at the King David Hotel, a hotel with more character in it than any I had ever known before. The architecture, the coloring, the carpets and furniture simulated the atmosphere of the ancient ten tribes of Israel - but it reeked like an attractive woman with B.O. We were allowed a gallon of water a day for drinking, bathing and washing. This was usually finished by nightfall.

In the light of day, Penn took note of his surroundings. Perched on a hill facing the ancient walls of the Old City of Jerusalem, and separated from King David's tower by a valley less than half a mile, the King David hotel overlooked a no man's land which neither side dared to cross. The Israelis were without the artillery or the men to storm the ancient walls and, in any case, did not desire to destroy them, and the Transjordan Army, while possessing the artillery and the men, feared to expose themselves to Israeli small arms fire. Apart from the damage caused by a few desultory shots through the windows, the hotel was unscathed, even though shelling all around had caused many casualties. Yet the hotel was an open target. Penn concluded that among its Arab staff must be a number of enemy agents, a suspicion later confirmed. "A strange state of affairs", he noted, "where the presence of the enemy was a source of comfort."

It was astonishing how quickly the nerves of smell became anaesthetized to the city's stench. "What smell?" people asked and within a day or two Penn could have asked the same question. The city owed its immunity from typhoid to the water shortage.

All patients had been evacuated from the University Hospital on Mount Scopus to an old hospital in the city, but by arrangement with the peacekeeping force of the United Nations, convoys were allowed to pass through Sheik Jarrah to Mount Scopus at intervals so that the professors and lecturers of the medical school could collect material and keep an eye on their laboratories and the hospital itself.

Outside the first hospital he visited, Penn saw an ambulance riddled with bullet holes. This was the ambulance that had been attached to the convoy of seventy Jewish doctors and professors who had been slaughtered on the way to Mount Scopus on April 9. The blood had soaked into the floor and could not be entirely washed out. The ambulance was being used to bring in victims of shelling by the Arab Legion. There had been neither the time nor the personnel to patch up the holes.

Penn, operating on a few of the many, urgent cases, realized he would have to settle in as soon as possible. Two hospitals in Jerusalem were of particular interest and he worked in

them before leaving. The first was the Wallach run by a very orthodox doctor aged over eighty whose house surgeon was over sixty. Emergency operations were permitted on the Sabbath, but even in these cases the outside stitches were left long so that they could be cut out on the following day, not on the Sabbath.

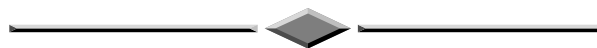
The other hospital had its operating room in the crypts of an institution called "The Christian Mission to the Jews." Penn found Professor Edward Joseph working there in an ill-lit dungeon. Joseph was a tall, strong, good-looking Jewish New Zealander who had settled in Israel fifteen years earlier. He had the appearance of a Viking. Before leaving Jerusalem Penn was invited to become the Honorary Visiting Professor of Plastic Surgery to the Hebrew University.

By now he had visited all the smaller units in the country and was due to see a few of the larger ones - the Beilinson Hospital in Petach Tikva belonging to the Workers' Medical Aid group, the Tel Litwinsky (later called Tel Hashomer), Sarafand and the Ramban Hospital in Haifa. The latter three units were government institutions. The Beilinson was the best equipped and the most comfortable, but as Penn wished to work with Sheba and the doctors of the Army, he did not consider this hospital.

Tel Litwinsky was not yet under way as a fully functioning hospital and Penn had to reject this one also. But it was here that he first met a young man dressed in khaki shirt and grey flannel trousers with a black patch over his left eye, whom everybody called Moshe.

This was Moshe Dayan who looked at me with his twinkling good eye - a wonderful eye - in which one could read humour, courage and a straight-forwardness that was utterly refreshing. He was not as tall as I, but strong in build and the hand that grasped mine was that of a farmer. His personality was electric and it was not long before I realized that I was talking to a born leader, intelligent, forthright and unwavering... his reputation as a fearless leader was already legendary.

Like Tel Litwinsky, the encampment of Sarafand (a lovely name, Penn thought) was not ready for surgical procedures, and Penn went on to Haifa, resting on Mount Carmel. Its similarity to Cape Town struck him as it does all South Africans.

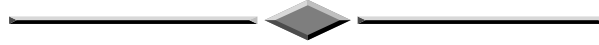


Things were still not right at the Tel Litwinsky reception camp. A bitter document of the period reported that "any person can come to the commander of Machal without informing his battalion or brigade commander, be received there and get a release, and even be on his way back to his country of origin without his direct commander knowing about it ... It is difficult, after cases like this, to keep discipline in a battle unit made up of Machal men." This was a criticism which had little relevance to the South Africans.



Syd Cohen was to do more flying during the war than any other pilot of Fighter Squadron 101. His log book for the period:

July 21 ME 109, test and ferry.
23 Auster, Les Shagam passenger, general flying.
24 Auster, passengers, general flying.
25 ME 109, bombing and strafing mission.
27 ME 109, formation flying.
30 ME 109, patrol over Faluja.



Volunteers Tev Zimmerman and Chaim Grevler expressed surprise that the Air Force was not availing itself of the services of an air force mechanic like Abe Nurick. Within a few days Hugo Alperstein, acting as the message-bearer, came to Ma'ayan Baruch to tell Nurick to report to Al Schwimmer. "What is your rank?" Schwimmer asked.

"I want no rank", Nurick replied. "I am happy to be in Israel at this time. I worked conscientiously on the planes of the SAAF and I am prepared to work as conscientiously on the planes of the IAF". Schwimmer posted Nurick to Ramat David.

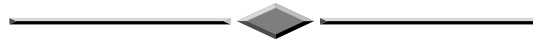
At Ramat David were "2.5 Dakotas", the half being the plane in which Cyril Katz and Arthur Cooper had almost spiraled to their deaths. Nurick introduced himself to mechanics - all "sergeants" - milling around and to the flight mechanic in charge.

"What is your rank?" the flight mechanic asked.

"None", said the fitter, grade 1, of the SAAF, five years in workshops in Kimberley, North Africa and Italy.

"I'll make you a corporal", "Don't make me anything. I want no rank. All I want is to maintain these aircraft."

The kibbutz ideology was speaking loud. Nurick, in the conscientiousness and leadership he was to manifest, became one of the ten thousand human reasons why Israel won the war.



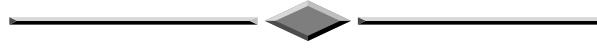
The three Capetonians, Sakinofsky, Ozinzky and Kurgan were summoned to Engineer HQ in Jaffa where Shachar, the officer in charge, instructed them to go to Camp 22, Beit Lid, near Netanya, choose fifty from among the former Nazi camp victims there, and train them into an operational unit.

Camp 22 had not long before been evacuated by the British who had mined the fences either as a parting "gift" to the Jews or as protection against an attack. Two men had been killed ducking through the fences. The mines were anti-tank adjusted to anti-personnel, five kilograms of explosive to kill one man. Nothing was left of the victims.

"You're engineers", the camp commander said. "Clean the fences."

The South African trio having done this, the commander lined up the men of the camp and the South Africans chose forty five for training. Only two were Israelis, one an engineering student at the Technion who was given to them as Hebrew unit clerk, the other a Stern group man with a limp who was made company storeman. The rest were originally from Poland and Romania. Two trucks were summoned and the recruits taken to a camp called Dora, in Netanya. This had been a British convalescent camp and was not far from the warehouse where the Irgun had hanged the two British sergeants, Martin and Plaice, in retaliation for the hanging of their men.

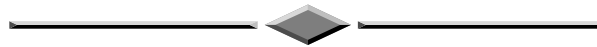
Ozinsky recalls: We were attached to the Alexandroni Brigade for food rations and told we had a month in which to train the unit. This we did in the best military fashion. Probably for the first time in Israel, there was morning parade and inspections and we kept the men busy all day.



The central front had been too quiet for David Teperson and he made his way to the Ritz Hotel, Tel Aviv HQ of the Palmach, still operating then under its own command and resisting Ben Gurion's wish for a fusion of all forces⁵⁰. Israel Carmi, commander of the Negev Brigade, said: "I can't take you. The army is getting organized now. You can't leave one unit for another just like that." Carmi's driver, a man named Yuval, said nothing for a while, then murmured "Tomorrow morning at the Habimah Theater steps, at nine."

That was enough for Teperson. He returned to camp 22 at Beit Lid, packed his kit and rifle, leaving a note: "Have gone to the Palmach". He and a fellow South African, Alan Lipman, slept on the steps of the theater that night. Hungry in the morning, they knocked at the door of the nearest house. "Any chance of a breakfast?" Teperson asked the woman. She invited them in.

At nine Carmi arrived in a jeep. At the time the Negev Brigade was pulling out to base at Sarafand for reorganization. "What I want you to do", said Yuval, "is to collect as many South Africans as you can." Teperson made a point of visiting the office of the S.A. Zionist Federation at intervals for the purpose. He "collected" a number of men.



Other events in July:

1-10th: Kibbutz Kfar Darom in the Negev shelled by Egyptians for four consecutive days.

Security Council adopts British resolution calling for prolongation of truce. Demilitarization of Mount Scopus.

11th-16th: Jerusalem experiences first Arab air raid of the war. Little damage.

Air raids on Tel Aviv.

Heavy Egyptian attack on kibbutz Negba in the Negev.

Kfar Suba (Jerusalem area) captured by Israeli forces.

Malcha, south of Jerusalem, and ShefarAm (near Nazareth) occupied by Israeli forces.

17th-24th: Jews break through to Old city in Jerusalem but withdraw as Jerusalem truce starts on morning of 17th. Hartuv and Ein Karem, strongholds dominating the Latrun-Ramallah road, Lubia in Lower Galilee, captured by Israeli forces.

26th-31st: New Jerusalem declared Israel-occupied territory under a Military Governor.

Mediator arrives in Haifa for talks with Sharett. Consultations on the supervision of the truce; the demilitarization of Jerusalem; return of the Arab refugees; Jewish immigration and the conversion of the "indefinite truce" into an armistice. Israel's Foreign Minister seeks Israel's admission to the United Nations, explains Israel's attitude to Jerusalem.

Announcement: 18,000 Jewish immigrants have been brought into Israel since the end of the Mandate.

⁵⁰ The Palmach was not disbanded until November 7.



Badge of the Armoured Corps

CHAPTER 9

SIX SOUTH AFRICANS FALL

By the end of the ten-day fighting period, South African Jewry was mourning the loss of six of its sons. The seventh and last loss of the year, Louis Hack, of Johannesburg, was to take place four months later in October.

The first to fall were the two young men who had settled at the religious kibbutz of Kfar Etzion, near Hebron, the isolated settlement that served as the southern rampart of Jerusalem. The kibbutz fell on May 13 to the Arab Legion and predatory villagers from surrounding hills. There were only four survivors. The heroic last hours of the kibbutz has a large literature to which must now be added the chapter that had its beginning in a back room of a home in Doornfontein. The room was the "headquarters" of the small Hapoel Hamizrachi movement and here, in the early 1940s, one could meet, among others, Yechezkiel (Chatzi) Berelowitz and Zvi Lipschitz.

There was an "influence" in the room, a dead hero, whose portrait looked down from the wall on the group's small gatherings. This was the portrait of Abraham Katz, the first member of the movement, to settle in Palestine. He had become a legend. He was, as a contemporary described him, "a Trumpeldor type - a man of iron." Born in the Lithuanian village of Polangen on the fringe of the Baltic, Katz grew up a fiery Zionist teenager, arrested once by the Russian police for attending a Zionist gathering. At the age of 18 he came as an immigrant to Johannesburg and worked in a clothing factory. A fire burned in him. He joined the pioneer group of a movement called Hatehiya (Revival) but, longing for a movement with a religious content, he resigned and launched with a few of his friends the religious Young Mizrachi Organization. In 1935 he left to settle in Palestine, identifying himself with the Kvutsat Avraham of Religious Labor. In September 1937, he and his comrades were arrested by the British mandate police and imprisoned in Acre for four months. Throughout this period of detention he maintained contact with his group through visits and correspondence, always with encouragement to continue their idealistic mission.

1938, during the Arab riots of the late 1930's, found him at the settlement of Hanita, in the north western galilee. The Kibbutz was under constant attack and on the night of May 22nd he did not return from his post. His companion's found him bleeding and unconscious.

After a short period in the Kibbutz sick bay he was taken to hospital in Haifa. On regaining consciousness he protested weakly that "My place is at Hanita, not here", he died some five weeks later on July 1st 1938.

"Chatzi" Berelowitz, who was often observed in contemplative study of Katz's portrait, was the first to follow in the steps of his hero. In 1945 the young furniture salesman, then in his early twenties, exchanged his environs of Doornfontein / Yeoville / Bertrams, for the valleys and canyons of the stark Judean hills, a biblical landscape of stones covenanting with the open sky.

A year before his arrival, there had taken place a ceremony at the new settlement about which Chatzi heard much. This was the planting of the first trees in the name of Rabbi Meir Berlin, venerable leader of the Religious Zionist Movement. The Plantation Scroll touched him profoundly:

On this 26th day of Shevat, 5704 (1944), in the fifth year of the Second World War, at the close of the first year of our occupation of this site, we settlers of Hapoel Hamizrachi, are planting fruit and forest trees in Kfar Etzion, observing the injunction of the Torah, "When ye come to the Land, ye shall plant, for He did not create it for chaos; He created it for habitation".

We have taken this oath upon settling in Kfar Etzion: we shall not rest nor know peace until we cast off the shame of barrenness from these highlands, until we shall cover them with fruit and forest trees, which together shall give forth a song of rebirth, which the prophet Ezekiel foresaw: " But ye, O mountains of Israel, ye shall shoot forth your branches and yield your fruit to me people of Israel; for they are at hand to come. For behold I am for you and will turn unto you, and ye shall be tilled and sown. And I will multiply men upon you; all the house of Israel, even all of it; and the cities shall be inherited and the wastes shall be builded".

Blessed be He, (the Scroll concluded) "Who has kept us alive and sustained us and enabled us to see this time".

Berelowitz was to make his own special contribution to the task of casting off the shame of barrenness from the highlands. He started, and became the keeper of, the settlement's ornamental garden. The task consumed him. He was up at dawn and at eventide still lingering amid the stones and earth patches where his saplings and shrubs waged their desperate battles for survival against winter's cold winds, the heat of summer and the inhospitable terrain. Water for the settlement was brought by tanker and there was not much to spare for the garden. Chatzi, a symbolical sapling himself, fought for the life of his plants.

His devotion and that of his fellows could not go unrewarded. In the year 1947 the settlement garnered its first flowers and fruits, among them plums, apples, apricots and olives. Singing children, in biblical ceremony, brought the first baskets to a central place, and then all recited the ancient Shehecheyanu benediction.

Meanwhile other South Africans of the movement had followed Berelowitz. First were Zvi Lipschitz, Meyer Wacks and Rebecca Polon, all of Johannesburg. Six months later they were joined by Yacov Pinini and his wife, and Rebecca Polon's brother, Yudel.

Our study must turn on two of these young people, Zvi Lipschitz and Rebecca Polon. The others were transients who moved on, in some cases, to found the settlement of Ein Hanatziv and, in others, either to establish themselves in fields of activity other than settlement or to return to South Africa. The two who stayed were Rebecca Polon and Zvi Lipschitz. Rebecca Polon married a settler from Poland, David Teitelbaum, and being with child when troubles began brewing in December 1947 and January 1948, was sent by the kibbutz to Jerusalem with others unable to share in its defence. Zvi Lipschitz and Chatzi Berelowitz were thus the only South Africans at the kibbutz when it fell.

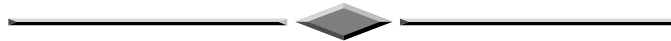
Lipschitz, like Berelowitz, in his twenties, had also gathered into his soul all the strivings of the period. Coming to South Africa as a youth from Russia, he attended the Jewish Government School in Doornfontein, quickly mastering English and sailing through the matriculation. Thereafter he showed a thirst for knowledge that was the hallmark of a potential scholar. But, living with the ideal of joining a settlement in Palestine, he equipped himself as a carpenter and builder and lived by these occupations. He regularly attended service at the Bertrams Synagogue. In Hapoel Hamizrachi he found his true home, becoming the Chief Reader at this group's Sabbath afternoon and daily evening services.

He began to stand out as a spokesman of the Torah-Labour ideology, a forceful speaker at S.A. Zionist youth conferences, then later a member of the executive of the Hapoel Hamizrachi and just before his departure for Palestine in 1946 vice-chairman and madrich (instructor) of its Hashomer Hadati group. In Etzion he continued the passionate study of the Bible which had marked him out in Johannesburg. He was now in his proper setting. Hebron was the city of the patriarchs. Abraham had grazed his flocks on Etzion's ridges. The Valley of Bracha had known King David; and Jehosophat's warriors had heard the words: "Thus spake the Lord unto you, Fear not, neither be dismayed by reason of the great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but the Lord's."

For all the comfort of these words, neither Berelowitz nor Lipschitz could have had any illusions. The first attempt to found Etzion was in 1927. In 1929, the Arabs massacred the entire Jewish community of Hebron, obliging the settlers of nearby Etzion to leave. In 1936, settlers went back to the hills and renewed the life of the kibbutz, only to abandon it a few months later with the outbreak of the widespread Arab violence of that year. But these men and women would not break the tie with their forefathers and were now back once again. In January 1948 a strong Arab attack on the kibbutz was repulsed. The kibbutz and all Israel mourned the massacre of an ambushed relief platoon of thirty five Palmach soldiers sent through the mountains to aid the kibbutz.

The United Nations Palestine partition plan had brought both joy and sadness to Etzion: the settlement fell into the Arab area. Some settlers were for leaving but others refused. They had planted their saplings there, they said, and their children had been born there. They were not budging. The Settlers of three new neighboring kibbutzim (the four became known as the Etzion bloc) also stayed where they were.

Ambush and murder continued. On March 27, 1948, Arab villagers fell on a convoy from the block, making the day lurid with shouts, fire and destruction. The bloc paid with eight lives, two from Etzion. In April the only contact between the bloc and the Yishuv was by the Air Service's Piper Cubs. And this was very limited.



Only some years later, when the history books fully unfolded the Etzion tragedy, did Elliot Rosenberg, Cyril Katz, Smoky Simon, Boris Senior and Hugo Alperstein come to full understanding of their various links with Kfar Etzion in its dying days.

Elliot Rosenberg must unwittingly have fed Etzion's vain hope of help from the skies. Dates are important here. On May 4, the Arab Legion commanded by Major Abdullah Tel, moved in on the settlement with two squadrons of armoured cars and infantry units. These were backed by hundreds of armed Arab villagers. The Jewish settlers were forced to retreat from their advance post in the abandoned Russian Orthodox Monastery. The fate of the settlement with its 150 men and women, supported by a handful of men of the Palmach, seemed sealed. The Historians of the period contradict each other on why Major Tel broke off action when he had victory in his grasp. The versions are not relevant here. The isolated kibbutz still lived.

Two days later, a Friday, Elliot Rosenberg landed an Auster plane on a road near Etzion. His mission was to deliver mines to the kibbutz and to fly back to Tel Aviv with two wounded men. Rosenberg, anglicized and assimilated, was unaware of Etzion's profound roots in the past and innocent of its meaning as a complex thing of biblical faith. He was not given any inkling by the settlers of their desperate situation. The settlers asked him to take back three, not two, wounded. Disaster occurred when he took off. The Auster's propeller hit a big stone on the road and was damaged. Rosenberg, back injured, though not seriously, found himself for an hour or two in the kibbutz's hospital. It was the "little things" that stuck in his mind. The settlers insisted that he wear a yarmulke, the head covering worn by religious Jews. It was then about 6 p.m., Sabbath eve. "May I smoke?" he asked.

"Not in the kibbutz", he was told. "If you wish to smoke, you must go outside the kibbutz."

Which he did, Next day the settlers showed him round. "The settlers were very definite people", Rosenberg later recalled. "They were believers. I remember one who had come from Japan. He had traveled half way round the world to get to Etzion."

On the Sunday a Tiger Moth, piloted by an Israeli, came out of the clouds to land at the kibbutz. He had come for Rosenberg, pilots were precious.

The Tiger Moth flew off with Rosenberg that evening.

Six days later, on May 12, Major Tel struck at the kibbutz again. These are not the pages for a recapitulation of the story of the last stand of kibbutz Etzion. The battle lasted two days, until the last handful of survivors, without arms and ammunition, raised their hands in surrender, only to be mowed down by an Arab machine gunner.

Four settlers survived to tell the epic tale of resistance. One of them Yacov Edelstein, saw Chatzi Berelowitz on the morning of May 12. Berelowitz was acting as liaison man between defence outposts and at that particular time was at a post linking southern positions with command headquarters at the kibbutz. Edelstein was hurrying to HQ to get ammunition. The two men exchanged a few brief words, Berelowitz warning that the way to headquarters was dangerous as it was under bombardment. On that same day, as it was darkening, Edelstein again passed Berelowitz's post: The area had been heavily shelled. Berelowitz was lying face downward, his gun at his side.

Edelstein's first thought was that Berelowitz was asleep with exhaustion. He tried to awaken him. The body was heavy and Edelstein then realized that Chatzi was dead. He took his chaver's gun and ammunition and hastened to his post.

Zvi Lipschitz, the bible scholar, was a member of a group that defended Position 8 on the western segment of the kibbutz. He is presumed to have fallen on May 13 when the Arabs, having forced the ever-thinning outpost groups to fall back, broke finally into the kibbutz and turned slaughter into a carnival.

The last radio calls from Kfar Etzion were poignant:

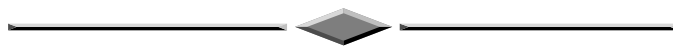
12.10 p.m.: We are heavily shelled. Our situation is very bad. Their armoured cars are 300 yards from the fence. Every minute counts. Hurry the dispatch of planes.

12.52 p.m.: We have many killed and wounded...without immediate aerial support we will be lost...

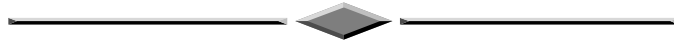
1.45 p.m.: Heavy fire of artillery, mortars and machine guns. The birds (aircraft) have not yet appeared! We have about 100 killed and many wounded.

One "bird" actually did come, making Cyril Katz, a new witness on the last hours of Etzion. "I had a radio operator with me and a bombchucker", he recalled. "We made a series of raids on the Arab forces, but the mission was really hopeless. The Arab armoured cars were lined up as if on parade. The legionnaires watched us with absolute indifference. We dropped our home-made bombs along the road and when I circled back, I saw an armoured car burning. Whether this was due to a lucky strike of our bomb or a strike from Kfar Etzion, I do not know. The picture I have in my mind is one of swarms of Arabs casually pouring fire into Etzion and of the settlement burning. It was pathetic."

Fires and charred hulks of buildings were mute report of a kibbutz that was no more.



Two days before the extinction of the Etzion bloc, that is, on May 11, 1948, fierce skirmishes took place near the Arab village of Beit Machsir (Beit Meir), in the Jerusalem corridor. Here Gideon Rosenberg, aged 25, medical orderly, fell to a bullet while hastening to tend to the wounds of a fallen companion. He died five days later in a Jerusalem hospital without recovering consciousness.



Though Gideon Rosenberg, his elder sister Hadassah, and his younger sister, Ruth, were only transients in South Africa from Danzig, they belong to the South African story by virtue of two facts:

- (a) The influence that flowed from their home at 86 Honey Street, Berea, and
- (b) Their value as a mirror of a vivid phase in the life of a section of South African Jewish Youth.

The Rosenberg children had suffered a cruel blow in Danzig, in 1936, on the death of Bella, their young mother. Always having had the intention, the family left to settle in Palestine. Suffering from asthma their father Zalman, could find no employment there, and yielding to the importunities of his South African uncle, Mr. Harry Izkowitz, industrialist, Zalman faced with an immigration date deadline, considered going there and leaving the children in Palestine. Hadassah, the oldest, decided that they could not let him go on his own, so together with their paternal grandmother Johanna (Izkowitz) Rosenberg, they all traveled to South Africa in 1938. Hadassah, aged 17, Gideon, 15 and Ruth 13, had sojourned in Palestine for 10 months, spending time at the youth village of Kiryat Anavim, which gave them memories of the happiest kind.

Hadassah who had some command of English went to Athlone High where she matriculated and then attended classes at the Tin Temple, predecessor to the present Witwatersrand Technical College, qualifying as a nursery school teacher.

Gideon and Ruth were placed in the same standard 3 class at the Jewish Government School, Doornfontein. Bright children and senior to their classmates, they were held back for want of English. To their aid came Mrs. Amelia Levy⁵¹ who befriended them and gave them private instruction. This enabled Ruth to transfer to Athlone High and Gideon to Houghton High.

In Danzig the three children had belonged to the Habonim youth movement but in South Africa they gave their allegiance to the more passionate movement of Hashomer Hatzair. The difference between the two movements was ideological. Habonim in South Africa required no commitment from its members to settle in Palestine, though it encouraged this. Hashomer Hatzair was afire with the ideal and had no compromise.

In 1942 Hadassah boarded a ship that took her back to Palestine. South Africa had given her a skill and an occupation. Gideon and Ruth stayed to shape the high-flame period of Hashomer Hatzair in South Africa, which was between 1939-45. Ruth matriculated and then spent a year at a chicken farm to acquire a skill that would be useful to the kibbutz which the South African movement planned to found with others.

Gideon shaped his life in obedience to the same ideal. Leaving school after standard 10, he attended night classes at the Tin Temple as an apprentice fitter and turner. His talents could have taken him to a far roomier field of activity, but the main principle of kibbutz ideology, Jewish redemption by self-reliance and self-labor, consumed him.

In this period he became a central personality of Hashomer Hatzair and the Rosenberg home a magnet and a meeting place. There were musical evenings and discussion evenings when the young idealists of the movement would toss ideas about like a football. The widower Rosenberg looked on benevolently. He was in spiritual union with his children. Gideon developed into a rock of a young man whom all made a confidante. As a madrich (instructor), he took under his wing not the customary single group of younger members, but two groups.

⁵¹ Later editor of Jewish Affairs.

Chapter 9

The movement was his life and he gave it everything: his time, his thinking, his earnings as a tradesman and his dreams.

A training farm at Putfontein, near Benoni, established by the South African Zionist Federation for the pioneering youth of all the movements, was his and Ruth's next setting. "Twenty Pioneers Leave for Palestine", the Jewish Press reported on July 27, 1945, Gideon and Ruth were of this group. The destination of these two was, first, kibbutz Mishmar Ha'Emek, a "half-way station", then Shoval, the kibbutz in the Negev which they would help to found.

From Honey Street, to a treeless waste of white sand...Here, in the first year, Gideon was the happiest of young men.

The day came in 1948 when Haganah called him to duty. He took farewell of the sisters and the kibbutz. The wrench from Ruth was particularly hard. The two had shared much together and were bound in a deep, mutually appreciative brother-sister relationship.

Gideon was assigned to a course for medical orderlies at Netanya, which was interrupted by desperate calls for more manpower for the battles of the Jerusalem corridor. The last weeks of Gideon's life were thus given to the frightful skirmishes for possession of the corridor hills.

The costly and bloody Operation Maccabi, by which Haganah succeeded in opening the road for a brief period, took his life. The operation required, among other things, the capture of the promontory Arab village of Beit Machsir which, in turn, required the capture of its nearby "combs" of tiny Arab settlements. It was in this prelude that he fell.

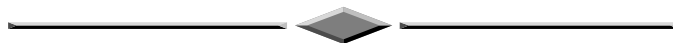
He had had a premonition of ill-fate. It came to expression when the men would talk of friends who had already fallen. Gideon let slip that his name was also probably written on an enemy bullet. "We'll see how it goes tonight", he said on the fatal night. A friend, Aleza, recalls that "he said this as if aware that things would not go the usual way." It must have been a late premonition for his few letters to his girl friend Ruth Seligman, breathed confidence. They were concerned with interrupted postal deliveries ("I haven't heard from you for three weeks now"), with her welfare ("I hope that things have become easier for you") and with assurances ("Ruthie, just don't worry. Soon we shall see each other again and talk about everything").

In his last letter, written on April 21, he told her that "on Saturday I saw the convoy that got through. It was a good feeling to see such a long convoy...even a cyclist among the armoured vehicles..."

It was not to be. Gideon's friend Aleza wrote that "I could not go immediately to the hospital to see him and when Nathan and I managed to get there five days later, they told us he had died the previous night. Great was our sorrow".

Hadassah and Ruth are still at Kibbutz Shoval. They are wives and mothers and workers in a now thriving settlement. Further in the North, not far from Hadera, is another kibbutz, Barkai, with a number of South Africans who, as youths, absorbed the idealism of Gideon, their instructor, at Hashomer Hatzair's backyard club in Johannesburg. They also keep his memory green.

The widower Rosenberg settled in Israel in 1953. Some consolation it was to him to be near the grave.



Matey Silber was the next loss.

In mid-1946, Matey, then a 19-year-old second year student at the University of the Witwatersrand, phoned his father in Port Elizabeth. Mr. Abraham Silber detected a note of desperation in his son's voice. "Dad", said Matey, "you have always told me to tell you the truth. To hide nothing. I have to tell you this: my heart isn't here. I am going to Palestine. I must go."

The conversation continued in desperate terms, the parents of an only child at the one end, the driven son at the other. The parents prevailed, This was the second time Matey's parents succeeded in dissuading him from going. In 1946 he had been selected for the "safari" trip across Africa. Matey's parents said on the second occasion, as on the first, that they were not against his going, "but not yet." The acquiescent son gained one point. He discontinued study and returned to Port Elizabeth a few months later to take charge of the Eastern Province office of the United Zionist Revisionist Party. But the fire in his bones still raged and finally there was no stopping him. He pressed upon his parents his wish to resume his studies, but in Palestine. He left South Africa at the end of 1947 and enrolled at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. He also worked in a clerical capacity for Reuters. He was 21. It wasn't long before he entered the ranks of Irgun, first on a part-time basis and subsequently full time when he was selected to join the Officers' Training Corps. The action in which he fell was a direct consequence of the fall of the Etzion bloc. This catastrophe persuaded Haganah to reconsider the position of various outlying settlements which were, or were likely to be cut off. Thus garrisons were withdrawn from several places, among them Ramat Rachel, a few kilometers south of Jerusalem. The Irgun commander in Jerusalem considered this highly dangerous. He sought and obtained the agreement of the Haganah commander in Jerusalem to send a group of Irgun men to defend the ravaged kibbutz.

In this battle of May 25 the Irgun unit of sixty five men held up a twin drive on the settlement by a company of Moslem Brothers of the Egyptian Army, moving from the south, and Arab Legion forces, moving in from the north. The resistance of the Irgun men wrecked the dream of Egyptian Colonel Ahmed Abd el-Azziz to win immortality as the conqueror of Jerusalem. The battle may have been as significant as that.

Ramat Rachel kibbutz, just off the road to Bethlehem, Hebron and the south, protected the outer Israeli shikunim (neighborhoods) of Arnona and Talpiot. The Arabs, in control of the road, had cut off the settlement from Arnona. Separated by little more than two kilometers, these two Jewish areas, were without radio contact in the decisive hours which were determining the settlement's fate.

The Arab on-off assault on Ramat Rachel began on May 22. By May 25, the settlement had thrice changed hands except for the dining room which remained in Israeli hands. Flags had gone up and down. On this particular day Irgun commander Yehuda Lapidot's sixty five men, which included ten of Haganah, passed through a nightmare of defence that lasted from four p.m. to ten p.m.

Some time in this period, probably in hours of gathering darkness or later, Matey Silber was wounded.

The foci of the battle were, first the southern perimeter from which the settlement's defenders had had to retreat with many wounded, and later, in the darkness, a wood from which Lapidot and some of his men held up an enemy suddenly strangely uncertain of himself when victory would seem apparently to have been within his grasp. This was not unusual. The feature of the war was that the day belonged to the Arabs, the night to the Israelis. The Irgunites, with Arab-speaking Israelis from Arab countries in their ranks, added perplexity and surprise to the Arab fear of the night.

However, completely outnumbered, the Irgun men were finally contracted within the dining room. Their last two machine guns had long been out of action and they were left only with

hand grenades. Despite exhaustion and many wounded, their fighting spirit constantly re-asserted itself and they held out until a Haganah relief unit reached the kibbutz at 10 p.m.

These are the bare facts of a battle which, bizarre and heroic in its many details, retains, for all the subsequent writing on it, a confused texture.

Matey Silber's death belongs to the fog. His body was found two days later (May 27) in the fields between Ramat Rachel and Arnona. Ten wounded men of the southern perimeter, cut off from the dining room, had survived a nightmarish crawl from the kibbutz to reach Arnona safely. There were no eye witnesses to Matey's last hours. Neither Lapidot's immediate report nor an Irgun writer's retrospective account shed further light on the extremity in which he must have fallen. There were many wounded. Matey Silber was the only fatal loss.

"I first met Matey when he was but a child of thirteen", Raphael Kotlowitz, Irgun leader in South Africa, wrote on the day tidings of his death reached Johannesburg. "I was visiting Port Elizabeth and was asked to meet a young group of the Betar movement. One couldn't help marking Matey as a future leader, such was his adult interest in things. He rose in the succeeding years to become a kind of roving ambassador of the movement, at his own expense."

Matey, a product of Greys College, left his mark on non-Jews as well on Jews. One of the letters of consolation received by his parents was from a Mr. G.E. McGrath, of Port Elizabeth, who wrote with a rare compassion and insight:

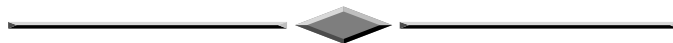
I have just heard of your sad loss I hope you don't mind my writing to you. I am not of your faith but feel so deeply about Matey that I am compelled to write to you. He was such a fine boy and so full of ideals and hopes for the future of the Jewish home that in his own way he is as much a Messiah as any previous human being on earth can claim to be...

You have at least a pride that is given to very few people on earth. No man can ask more than to give his life for the faith and ideals in which he believes. If there is such a thing as an after-life, I am confident that Matey himself is content ... and apart from your grief would not have things changed one iota.

In his sacrifice he has earned the respect of all right-thinking men. While such as he are born into the world, we can all have hopes for the future of mankind. In my heart I feel that you yourselves can look forward with confidence to the future and take your place with pride and courage in the ranks of those who have sacrificed their most precious possessions for the future not only of the Jewish race but of all who love right and justice.

Perhaps in this honest pride and the conviction that Matey's sacrifice was not in vain, you might take a measure of consolation in your loss. In the future when the aspirations for which Matey sacrificed himself have been realized and the Jews of the world have gained in stature and dignity for the blessing such as he, have brought them, you too might be assured that the sacrifice was in truth worth while.

Matey's mother, outwardly brave, but breaking within, survived him by two years. His father settled in the Land for which his son had died. This writer, meeting him twenty five years later, perceived that the wound of loss was still not healed.



Eddie Cohen died in the historic engagement of May 29, fourteen days after the invasion, when an Egyptian column of 500 vehicles and the full establishment of an entire brigade reached Isdud (Ashdod), some 30 kilometers south of Tel Aviv. The morale of the Egyptians

was high and the Egyptian press and people were celebrating: first Gaza, then Majdal (Ashkelon), then Beersheba and now onward and inward. By Egyptian calculations, Israel's ill-equipped Armies and settlements would fall swiftly. The major obstacle to the advance on Tel Aviv, kibbutz Yad Mordechai, had been removed and the Egyptians were now in a position to link up with forces landed from ships at Majdal.

The original plan with four just-arrived and re-assembled Messerschmitts had been to strike at El Arish in order to destroy Egyptian planes on the ground, but the importunities of Shimon Avidan, commander of Israel's Givati Brigade responsible for the southern front, prevailed. The plan was changed to that of strafing the Egyptian column at Isdud. The nightmare that haunted the Israelis was the possible breakthrough of the Egyptians into the Ramle area to link up with the Arab Legion's forces at Latrun. This would have cut the Jewish forces into two.

The pilots chosen for the Messerschmitts attack were Eddie Cohen, Modi Alon, Ezer Weizman and Lou Lenart, an American. Over the target at seven p.m., they strafed both the Egyptian column and vehicles with machine gun fire and 20 mm guns. The Egyptians, though surprised, replied with accurate anti-aircraft fire.

Eddie Cohen was flying wing to Ezer Weizman who, in the heat of the battle, had a fleeting glimpse of Cohen's Messerschmitt losing height and going down.

The rest is wrapped in mystery. Cohen's plane was found by Boris Senior near Kastina months later. After hostilities, the then Chief Army chaplain, Rabbi Shlomo Goren, in exchanges with the Egyptians of the remains of fallen men, was able to identify those of Eddie Cohen. His mother flew from Johannesburg for his re-interment on Mount Herzl in Jerusalem.

In the battle in which he fell, the Messerschmitt of the American, Lenart, was also hit but Lenart managed to make an emergency landing at Ekron, coming through safely but with his plane badly damaged. As Lorch said, "a heavy price was paid for the maiden operation of Israel's fighter squadron."

The sortie in which Eddie Cohen died, finds its place in every book written on the War of Liberation. The attack came as a shock to the Egyptian commanders who had believed Israel was without air defences. Combined with the blasting of the Isdud bridge by Israeli sappers, Israeli artillery attacks and relentless harassment by mobile units of the Givati Brigade, the air attack halted the advance. The Egyptians were not to be in Tel Aviv in forty eight hours as their Press had boasted. They fell on the defensive and Tel Aviv receded from their grasp. Months later they pulled out. Eddie Cohen who had exchanged his comfortable life in Johannesburg for a hut at kibbutz Ma'ayan Baruch, has his niche in the annals of the war.

The memorial literature on him presents a young man in search of himself and his identity. Close to him was Colin Hack who wrote:

From the day Eddie Cohen joined us at Ma'ayan Baruch, he was obviously troubled, restless and uncertain as to his purpose, though too proud to reveal the fact. He was soft-spoken, patrician, well-mannered, though easily aroused to express himself contemptuously of people or things he despised. He had great difficulty in adapting himself to the kibbutz. "Experts" he would say, "everybody is an expert". But his conflict was really not so much with the kibbutz as with life itself. He had been used to wealth and had received everything he wanted. He had difficulty in coming down to earth and in adjusting himself to productive living.

He suffered from insomnia. We shared a room and he often told me that after I had fallen asleep he had gone on smoking and thinking. In those first months at the kibbutz, there were no openings for skilled work and Eddie found the hard, unskilled work almost unbearable. He

Chapter 9

complained of an obscure back complaint which the doctors had been unable to diagnose. Later, when he became a devoted worker in the vegetable garden, he found to his delight and surprise that his back no longer troubled him.

He told me how he had lived in Johannesburg: parties, meetings of political eccentrics, the boredom of his office job in his father's business. His parents were very assimilated, Eddie even more so. His friends thought him crazy when he gave up everything to come to Aretz (the Land). But he had become disgusted with the emptiness, the meaninglessness and the unproductiveness of his life.

All these conflicts became sharper in the kibbutz because here he was deprived of the consolation he had found in good food, smart clothes, good cigarettes and music. He waited longingly for his large, electric gramophone to arrive from South Africa. He described it to me lovingly and often spoke about his records: We did not have a radio in our room but next door someone had and often, lying in bed, we would hear this chaver turning from station to station and Eddie would protest whenever he interrupted a broadcast of classical music. "Some guys don't deserve radios", he would say.

He started reading philosophy and confessed that if he could believe in God, he would find life easier, but philosophy merely deepened the confusion in him.

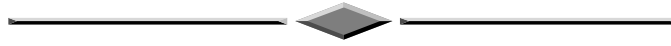
And then one day he came back from Tel Aviv with about a dozen books on archeology and the history of Palestine and, as he showed me these books, he was like a prospector who had struck oil after years of failure. His eyes glowed, his outlook brightened. Palestine became for him the geographic and cultural center of the world. The landscapes around the kibbutz took on a new significance for him, as did the kibbutz itself, the chaverim and the work. He would imagine how the Hula Valley must have looked 2,000 years ago with the villages of the time and the wars of the Jews. He wanted to go exploring around and up the ruins across the Syrian border. From then on he was alert in the fields for pre-historic stone tools, a few of which we had already found. The past, the present, the future of Palestine became the religion he had been seeking. It seemed he had found his place in the kibbutz at last... he worked well and conscientiously. Everyone remarked on the change in him. He even progressed in Hebrew. He took a critical interest in the weekly meetings.

When the fighting broke out, Eddie was one of the first to be mobilized. On the few occasions he came back on leave, he did not talk much about his job. He was critical, though of the way things were being organized. The last time he came home on leave I asked him what he was going to do after the war. He doubted whether he would stay at the kibbutz. He gave me the impression he was finding his job as a pilot sufficiently interesting to make him want to stay on as a civilian pilot. He felt the importance of his work in the war and realized the importance it would have after the war. In that dark period when the future of the country was so uncertain and most people had stopped thinking about private plans for the future, Eddie was already thinking of being a pilot in the service of the State, an implicit confession of faith in a Jewish victory.

He was not a heroic type; he did not fight with enthusiasm. I imagine him a reliable pilot - not a fighter pilot... I can't remember him saying anything in praise of our Army or in deprecation of the Arabs. He was quite unsuited to his role as a soldier of the air. He was contemplative, calm, scholarly, never daring, never reckless or adventurous.

Eddie was liked and widely respected. He had depths full of light and shade, not easily probed, and though not many people understood these depths, I think most people felt that Eddie, perhaps because of his problems, perhaps despite them, stood out from the crowd and in some way was exceptional.

This, then, was the man who was to be the first casualty of the first fighter squadron of the reborn Jewish State - an alienated young Jew from South Africa at last finding himself.



How Leslie Bloch of Potchefstroom died is unknown⁵². The known facts are that he, in one Messerschmitt, and Battle of Britain pilot Morrie Mann in another, were on patrol over Syrian territory on July 10, the opening day of the furious 10-day fighting period before the second truce. Mann last saw Les Bloch going after a Syrian Anson. The presumption is that Bloch crashed in Syrian territory, more likely the victim not of a dog-fight or of anti-aircraft fire but of his malfunctioning Messerschmitt. The theory arose because all the fighter pilots reported idiosyncrasies in their Messerschmitts. Only four, Ezer Weizman and South Africa's Syd Cohen, Arnie Ruch and Boris Senior did not crash one. One Messerschmitt crashed three times. But even more suspicious than the hazards of the plane's take-off and landing, were initial flaws connected with the propeller, not yet suspected when Leslie Bloch disappeared.

What might have happened to Leslie Bloch may well be interpreted by what happened to Syd Cohen the day after Leslie Bloch's ill-fated flight. Cohen flew out to sea for a quick test burst of his guns. Thereafter, the plane behaved badly ("like a three-ton truck") but he completed a patrol mission over Mishmar Hayarden without incident. When he climbed out he noticed that his propeller was full of holes made by his own guns. The Messerschmitts had two guns firing through the propeller and the defect in synchronization was only established later. Syd Cohen's report was that these post-war austerity Messerschmitts were certainly not the Messerschmitts against which he had fought in World War 2. His, and other pilots' experiences, are the basis of the theory of Leslie Bloch's disappearance. It is presumed that Bloch shattered his propeller over Syrian territory and crashed, either to his death or to fall in barbarous hands. UN observers who were active on both sides reported that Leslie Bloch had landed alive. This would have been conclusive had experience not shown UN reports often unreliable. Three months later (Oct. 24), some reconnaissance pictures taken by Syd Cohen flying over the enemy airfield at Mafrak, near Iraq's frontier, showed all kinds of aircraft including what photographic intelligence thought were the remains of a Messerschmitt. This could have been Leslie Bloch's.

Syd Cohen knew Bloch as an able fighter pilot. He, Bloch and Jack Cohen, of Cape Town, had all served in Squadron 4 SAAF in Italy. Bloch was recruited for service in Israel by the League of Haganah.

The cable from Dr. Jack Medalie to Leslie Bloch's parents reporting the sad tidings of his disappearance proved a shattering blow. Neither parent was able to live with the agonizing uncertainties of "missing, presumed killed". The girl to whom he was engaged locked up a never-healed pain.

All things had come easily to Leslie Bloch. He excelled both in study and sport. He passed the matric, at Potchefstroom High with distinction and graduated brilliantly as a chemical engineer from the University of the Witwatersrand before he enlisted in the SAAF.

He was 26 when he died. In family homes of the Bloch clan in Israel and South Africa his face, surmounted on shoulders of a SAAF lieutenant, smiles from photographs of great charm.

His broken mother died 18 months after his death. His father, equally shattered, followed his wife not long after.

The anguish caused by war does not end with the war.

⁵² Leslie Bloch's burial place was found after 46 years. See appendix A



Badge of the Artillery Corps

CHAPTER 10

CECIL MARGO'S AIR FORCE BLUEPRINT

The Israel Air Force had no formal birth. As our pages have indicated, it was preceded by the Air Service of pre-State days, then by the air guerrilla outfit of the immediate weeks after the birth of the State itself. It is the South African claim that the IAF came truly to birth with the arrival from South Africa in July of Cecil Margo, ex-SAAF, a Lieut-Colonel with a D.S.O. and a D.F.C. and Trevor Sussman D.F.C. Sussman, deputy flight commander on bomber operations in the SAAF's 24 squadron, had served under Margo.

Ben Gurion had heard of Margo through Bernard Gering and had let it be known that Margo's presence in the land would be a service.

Seen retrospectively, the history of the Air Force before the advent of Margo and Sussman was far from discouraging, despite the absence of organization. However, it bears repetition that of the early arrivals from South Africa, not one expected to find what he did. The former experience of these men embraced the sophistication of the SAAF in World War II. When the call went out for pilots, air gunners, radio operators and mechanics, the men naturally assumed that there were planes to fly, guns to shoot, radios to operate and workshops with equipment. Syd Cohen got his first inkling of the situation from fellow pilots on the Messerschmitt course in Czechoslovakia. Boris Senior was the main storyteller, his accounts embracing the hair-raising experiences of bomb chucking, the workshop of sorts at the Tel Aviv airfield and the nature of the airfield itself with the wooden box that served as an observation tower. The men were still to learn more about the former RAF base at Ekron (Akir), established by the Israelis as the terminal for the supply flights of the C-46's from Czechoslovakia. The essential fact was that Alex Silone, an Israeli appointed O.C. of the field, had served in the RAF but was without the necessary experience to be in command of a base.

An organizational structure of a kind had come into existence after May 14 at headquarters in Tel Aviv. Dan Tolkowsky, ex-RAF but too freshly enlisted for operational experience in World War 2, was Chief of Air Operations. Smoky Simon became his deputy. Boris Senior's appointment as O.C. of the Tel Aviv airfield was made official. Some weeks later Dov Judah became Director of Operations. There were a number of Palmach pilots individually daring and resourceful, but without operational background.

The ripe experience of Smoky Simon became invaluable to Dan Tolkowsky. Jointly they planned the flights of supplies to isolated kibbutzim, and the daily communication flights to Jerusalem.

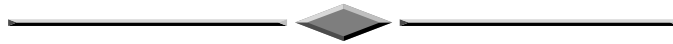
On the eve of World War 2, Simon was a 19-year old accountancy student at the University of the Witwatersrand. The war channeled his energies. Completing his course at the end of 1940, he wrote his final examination for B. Comm and the Chartered Accountants degree, and without waiting for the results, joined the SAAF in which he became a navigator bombardier, Squadron 21, early in 1942. This was before El Alamein, the turning point of the war in the Western Desert. He was with RAF Squadron 223 from May 1943. This squadron, having sustained heavy losses, put in a request for a number of experienced men to be attached to it. Simon's crew, among others, went over. His subsequent experience included service periods in North Africa, Malta, Sicily, Italy, Coastal Command in South Africa, Coastal Command Britain and short spells in Coastal Command, Indian and Pacific oceans.

The origins of this SAAF lieutenant had been in the O.F.S. dorp of Bultfontein, (three Jewish families) and, until 1947, he had no identification with Zionism or the affairs of the Jewish people. He was concerned in the period after the war with his future career and by the end of 1947 had established a modest accountancy practice in Johannesburg. But the partition

resolution fired his imagination. He was profoundly conscious of the Nazi holocaust and urged on by the opportunity given to the Jews to establish their own State. The threats to the as-yet officially unborn infant disturbed him. He knew he had something to contribute. He and his fiancée, Myra Weinberg, had planned to marry in June 1948 but they set the wedding forward to April 22 and arrived in Palestine on May 10. Already in the land were Cyril Katz, Elliot Rosenberg and Cyril Steinberg. Joe Leibowitz was on Simon's flight. Tuxie Blau, Les Chimes, Arthur Cooper and Dov Judah would follow in a matter of days.

Experience crowded in thick and fast on Simon who, with Myra, had been billeted at the Imperial Hotel in Hayarkon Street. He grew by a series of shocks into Israel's war situation. The first was the "hectic disorganization" everywhere encountered. He spent the next few days after his arrival helping to dig slit trenches at Tel Aviv airfield. The second shock came on the day before the invasion, from his already referred-to reconnaissance with Boris Senior over Arab armies converging on the Land.

In the "Spitpiper" raids that followed, Simon relied as much on what he called boere⁵³ wit as on the science of navigation. One Arab village was hardly distinguishable from another, a problem of multiplied bafflement in night attacks over targets in surroundings of rocky terrain.



The pre-Margo period was also marked, as previously indicated, by the presence or arrival of the South African fighter pilots of the first, second and third Messerschmitt courses: Eddie Cohen, Boris Senior, Syd Cohen, Arnold Ruch, Leslie Shagam and Leslie Bloch, who were placed in the infant fighter squadron which moved during the first truce from Ekron to the new field at Herzliya.

A new arrival from South Africa was Dr. Harry Feldman, of Brakpan, who served for a few months as the fighter squadron's Medical Officer before his transfer to the bomber squadrons at Ramat David. A second South African, Phil Hotz, became the IAF's dentist and a third, Dr. Louis Miller, its psychiatrist.

In anticipation of the arrival late in May of the first Messerschmitts, Modi Alon, an ex-RAF Israeli, had been appointed commanding officer of the fighter squadron. Alon, born to the Galilean heights of Safed, was an extraordinary young man. He commanded by character. Veterans of the Pacific War, of North Africa, Britain and Europe; seasoned fliers of P-51 Mustangs, P47 Thunderbolts and Corsairs, could have resented, even scoffed, at a commander whose log book was that of a beginner, albeit a promising one. Yet the secret signs by which men recognize a born leader, were read by all. Alon's authority was accepted. He won respect by presence. "If he dressed us down", said Syd Cohen, "we really felt it".

The most celebrated aerial event of the first weeks of the war was Alon's downing on June 3 of two Egyptian Dakota bombers over Tel Aviv. Surprised by the sudden appearance of the Messerschmitt, the Dakotas attempted flight. Alon made swift work of them. One crashed over Bat Yam, near Tel Aviv, while the second was intercepted trying to make south. It tumbled to its destruction over Rishon le Zion. Modi Alon's success became the talk of the country that was in desperate need of an air victory such as his. From that day the Dakota raids over Tel Aviv - though not the Spitfire raids - became fewer, though they did not cease.

Syd Cohen's over-riding impression was of the quality of his fellow pilots. Modi Alon had the shaping of an "ace". Ezer Weizman, though without operational experience, was a born airman as he had already demonstrated. The six South Africans were all seasoned men. Morrie Mann ("Captain Bligh") was a Battle of Britain pilot. Sandy Jacobs was, like Ezer Weizman and Modi Alon, among the few RAF-trained Palestine Jewish pilots. Then there

⁵³ Boere - Afrikaans for farmers

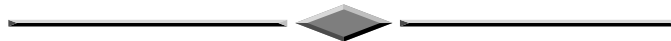
were the Americans and Canadians, most of them as sophisticated as the South Africans, and, as personalities, certainly the most colorful. They included non-Jewish hired professionals who, in time, thawed in their pure commercialism to become interested in what the war was all about.

By June 11, then, when the fighting ceased for the first truce, the Air Force of twenty seven days could look back on helping to halt the Egyptian advance on Tel Aviv, the downing of two Spitfires and two Dakotas, the raid on King Abdullah's palace in Amman, the strike against the three Egyptian ships approaching the city and a raid on Damascus. For a country a month old and starting from scratch, it was a highly creditable achievement.

Ramat David (nearest big town Haifa) was the one airfield in the country that the British did not quit on May 14. An RAF squadron remained to protect the departing British forces from the Haifa enclave. Early one morning in this period, the field was attacked by Egyptian fighters unaware of the continuing RAF presence. Three British Spitfires were damaged. The British commander may have believed the Israelis were responsible. In any case he rightly assumed that the planes would come back and sure enough, an hour later, a formation of four did. The RAF was ready for them and shot down two and damaged the other two. The British handed over a captured Egyptian pilot to the Israelis. When the Egyptians learned of their error, they hastily dispatched a Colonel to apologize to the British.

When the British did finally quit Ramat David towards the end of June, Claude Duval and Del Webb were among those who flew in to take over. For a brief period Duval was O.C. and Del Webb Chief Radio Officer. As piquant as that.

In a matter of days, the Nissen huts, sleeping quarters, revetments and dining room began to buzz with the accents of South Africans and Americans. In the next few months the field housed one of the largest concentrations of South Africans in a single group, their names ranging under all letters of the alphabet from Aronson (Noel) to Wassyng (Aubrey). It included pilots, gunners, radio mechanics, operation officers, flight and ground engineers, administrative personnel, doctor and nurses.



Margo and Sussman left Palmietfontein in mid-July reaching Rome via Tunis. In Rome they spent some time at Haganah's flying school at Urbe and then flew by Aero Czechoslovakia via Athens to Haifa.

Next day they were ushered past girl soldiers armed with machine guns into Mr. Ben Gurion's home off Dizengoff Circle. Margo, tall, self-possessed, confident and knowledgeable, made an immediate impression on the Premier. Sussman, a youngster in his early twenties, had a sense of the strangeness of events which had planted him in the presence of Jewry's most redoubtable personality.

Ben Gurion, never one for small talk, got down to business immediately. He did not know much about an air force but an enforced stay in London when the Luftwaffe was raining its bombs nightly on that city and when he had taken refuge in air raid shelters reading up on the great military men of history and their battles had left an abiding influence on him. The Battle of Britain, of which he had become an involuntary personal eyewitness, had him profoundly contemplative. It was a pre-figuring for him. It filled him with a vision of a Jewish Air Force as courageous and gutsy as the RAF in those supreme days of British destiny. When he was finally able to leave the battered but proud British metropolis, he carried with him a profound regard for the quality of brave men and for professionalism.

It was almost like the play of natural forces that he and Margo should now be closeted together in Israel's hour of destiny.

Margo was a flier with more than a hundred sorties against the enemy to his credit. The official citation reads:

"Lieutenant-Colonel Margo commenced his third operational tour on May 4, 1944, having completed two previous tours in East Africa and the Western Desert, North Africa and Italy. On the conclusion of his second tour Lieut. Col. Margo (then, Major Margo) was awarded the D.F.C. on October 29, 1943, being then a Flight Commander in his squadron.

Lieut.-Col. Margo took over No 24 Squadron at the beginning of his third tour. He led six raids against the enemy landing grounds, harbour installations and shipping in the Aegean Islands. In particular, during two separate raids on targets on the island of Crete enemy anti-aircraft fire was intense and accurate, through which Lieut.-Col. Margo led his squadron with cool courage and determination, straddling the target on both occasions.

On another occasion, during an attack on a landing ground in Crete, the formation was attacked by enemy aircraft, but so skillfully did Lieut.-Col. Margo lead the formation that only one aircraft was slightly damaged and the target was well hit. Just prior to 24 Squadron's return to this theater he was posted to Italy where he served in 3 Wing as S.A.S.O. for a while.

Lieut.-Col. Margo was again appointed Officer Commanding No. 24 Squadron, South African Air Force, on November 24, 1944, and since December 4, 1944, he has personally led the squadron on no fewer than 34 occasions. On each raid, without exception, Lieut. Colonel Margo has displayed outstanding courage, coolness and skill and has proved himself a leader of very considerable ability.

With the concentration of the enemy's A.A. defences in Northern Italy, only a few targets were undefended, and the fierce enemy reaction frequently encountered has in no way affected his proved qualities of skill and leadership, nor deterred him from pressing home his attacks at all times.

Throughout his current tour Lieut.-Col. Margo has been the exemplification of courage and the model of leadership. He has completely devoted himself to his duty and his great ability has been the inspiration not only to all under his command, but also to all with whom he had come into contact".

"I give you an open directive", Ben Gurion said to Margo. "Learn what you can, see what you want to see, talk to whomsoever you wish and let me have your recommendations."

The immediate day-to-day routine for Margo and Sussman became one of inspection and inquiry. Inspection at the airfields confirmed how thorough had been British destruction of usable equipment. The probe involved consultations and talks with Aharon Remez, Boris Senior, Dov Judah, Smoky Simon, the South African fighter and bomber pilots, American volunteers and others in a position to broaden their insights.

Margo could not but be concerned with the want of organization. IAF HQ in Hayarkon Street was a shambles. No effective chain of command or administration existed. The Army directed air operations without the participation of Air Force HQ; air intelligence was conducted in a neglected room in a basement; flying training was in the hands of "Pappy" Green, a seasoned USAF officer with every possible qualification but little or no help from HQ; ground training of pilots was left to a former USAF Colonel (a non-Jew), with no attempt at liaison or supervision from Headquarters; maintenance of aircraft was being organized ad hoc by Danny Shimshoni, with little support from Air Headquarters or the Air Force stations

themselves; procurement of the few obsolete but vitally important B.17s had been left to Al Schwimmer⁵⁴, who, fortunately, had coped.

Within days Margo introduced changes. He confirmed Aharon Remez as A.O.C.; he appointed Dov Judah, who had served under him in Italy, Director of Operations, and Smoky Simon Chief of Air Operations, the senior position being Judah's.

Margo threw himself into the problems of personnel, equipment, aerodromes, armament, maintenance, training, operations, logistics, staff structure, telecommunications, air intelligence and, toughest of all, an air force budget.

He sought strenuously to prise away direct operational control from the Army, but in this he was not successful.

His establishment and operations plan was completed in ten days. Its objective was the rapid establishment of a relatively small fighter-bomber force, trained and operational as a multi-purpose air force in which every pilot would be qualified for instrument and night flying under the most exacting weather conditions, and which would be served by a system of alternate airfields, with abundant coded navigation aids, and underground revetments for the protection of aircraft.

The basic operational aircraft were to be front-line fighters, but adapted to take quick-change variations of armament and equipment. For fighter interception of enemy aircraft, they would be equipped in front with heavy caliber machine guns and 20mm or even 30mm machine cannon; for medium bomber attacks they would carry external wing and belly racks 4 x 250 lb bombs, plus rockets on under-wing rails; and for any variations of bomb loads or rockets, the appropriate racks and rails could be fitted within minutes on the ground. These aircraft would achieve the necessary versatility by being altered by ground crews to carry the requisite armament, ammunition and fuel tanks, and this could be done rapidly and on short notice. The same aircraft would thus provide home defence, medium range-bombing, ground attack and close army support, anti-tank attacks with armour-piercing rockets, anti-shiping strikes, and long-range reconnaissance. Moreover, they would be operational in weather conditions in which all but the most sophisticated air forces would be grounded. Margo believed that suitable types of aircraft were available from Italy, France and Belgium. The production of ammunition, bombs and rockets in Israel was no problem.

The plan also called for a maintenance system based on the then new concept which was coming to be accepted by airlines, of maximum utilization of aircraft; thus, instead of an aircraft being withdrawn from service entirely while major maintenance was being carried out, such maintenance would be done bit by bit in the course of daily inspections, and instead of engine maintenance being done with the engine in the aircraft, the engine would be changed, so that the aircraft would remain operational while the time-expired engine was once again made serviceable in the workshops. This concept has long since become standard procedure all over the world, but at the time it was novel, especially in air force thinking. The plan to have one main type of combat aircraft had the additional advantage of standardizing maintenance, equipment and spares.

Margo included in his plan a major extension of the early warning radar system to give advance notice of the approach of enemy aircraft and the return of the Israeli planes. At that stage Israeli radar was operating with makeshift equipment improvised with great ingenuity by a low profile radar unit (Squadron 505) which included a significant number of South African volunteers. Margo also made provision for the heavy training program's which would be required, and for the establishment of a proper air staff, with due regard to strategic planning and air intelligence.

⁵⁴ Later to become head of the Israel Aircraft Corporation.

Chapter 10

Ben Gurion accepted Margo's plan in principle, but it got hopelessly bogged down in problems of finance and procurement. There were too many priorities in the minds of members of the Cabinet and the Army's basic needs obviously came first. As Margo saw the position it would be a long time before the IAF could be anything more than a third line formation used by the Army on an ad hoc basis from time to time.

Discouraged, and with the feeling that he could contribute little more, Margo decided to return home to South Africa. Sussman returned with him.

On the eve of their departure towards the end of August, the Air Force gave them a party, those present being the newly-appointed heads of departments, with Mr. Moshe Sharett, Foreign Minister, the guest of honour. The party did not warm up immediately. However, clinking glasses began to serve their office. The inhibitions created by the different origins and background of the men dissipated in the alcoholic flow. The South Africans were Margo, Sussman and Judah, the Americans Dov Kinarti, Danny Shimshoni, Al Schwimmer and Nat Cohen, and the Israelis Remez, A.O.C., Heyman Shamir, Deputy A.O.C., Goladi, Rutenberg and Yacov Frank.

As the evening wore on, a comradeship was born, not a little helped by Sharett turned raconteur. He recalled his experiences as an officer in the Turkish Army in World War 1 and sang Turkish army songs. The party finally ending, Margo laid hands on Judah's shoulders.

"Dov", he said, "whatever happens, attack! attack! attack!" The instruction was to become the incantation of the IAF, the psychological property of every O.C. and every airman.

Back in South Africa, Margo and Sussman organized the selection and training by a Commercial Flying School in Germiston of pilot trainees. Of 14 trainees who completed the courses, Solly Kramer, Gerald Kaplan, Nathan Friedman, Reuben Narunsky, Leslie Lazarus, Hymie Schachman and Harry Caganoff left for Israel in January 1949, followed in July 1950 by George Katz, Len Lewis, Basil Sanders, Sam Levinson, Max Sher, Morris Sidlin and Reuben Sher⁵⁵.

It was left to others to equip the IAF and to build and train it into the immensely prestigious and efficient war machine it is today. Margo stands in the record as a frustrated visionary - a man a few years before his time in the infant State. When Ben Gurion visited South Africa in 1969, one of the first men after whom he enquired and whom he desired to meet was Margo, an acknowledgment of the debt the IAF owed to the South African.

Installed now as Director of Air Operations, Judah asked Dan Tolkowsky to remain on as his deputy. Tolkowsky agreed a response greatly to his credit in the light of his earlier superior position. With Remez kept occupied by administrative affairs, Judah now became THE man of the Air Force.

His background was steeped in Zionism. His father, scholar, editor and wit, was a living legend in the South African Jewish community, a man of encyclopedic Jewish knowledge and photographic memory. As other people breathe air, so Jacob Solomon Judelowitz absorbed the contents of books, periodicals and newspapers, Dov Judah was the product of a home in which Jewishness was a spice and a thrill, and his gravitation in his teens to leadership positions in Habonim, largest of the Zionist youth organizations, a natural consequence of the educational influences of his home.

The next few months were to test him as leader in Operations - and he was to succeed brilliantly.

⁵⁵ Only Solly Kramer, Nathan Friedman, Reuben Narunsky, Len Lewis, Basil Sanders, Sam Levinson, Max Sher, Morris Sidlin, George Katz and Reuben Sher were eventually accepted by the IAF.

The second truce changed, but did not diminish, the operations of the nascent Air Force. The Egyptians, in their thrust north towards Tel Aviv, had left behind in their rear a number of southern kibbutzim which had resisted onslaught with astonishing resilience. These kibbutzim, Revivim, Bet Eshel, Dorot, Nirim and others, were dependent on the air for their supplies. This became the task of Cyril Katz, Tuxie Blau, Elliot Rosenberg, Arthur Cooper, Claude Duval and Del Webb, among others Tuxie Blau also flew hospital cases from Ruchama to Tel Aviv, one of the cases being the wounded Ronnie Chaskelson.

The regularity of the flights of the South Africans to Sdom never diminished the warmth with which they were received on every occasion. Perhaps Joe Leibowitz's thoughtfulness in going the round of Tel Aviv cafes for newspapers for the settlement was one of the reasons. The most awkward moment at Sdom in Leibowitz's experience was the unexpected encounter there with Count Bernadotte and a Canadian major. Bernadotte approached the just-landed Rapide, asking what it had brought. Leibowitz knew a handful of Hebrew words. "Ani medaber rak Ivrit" (I only speak Hebrew), he said.

Bernadotte tried German.

"Rak Ivrit". (Only Hebrew)

The Canadian major, clearly more sympathetic to the Israelis than Bernadotte, distracted the Count's attention... Hand grenades among the carrots were certainly a violation of the truce terms but, then, this was a fight for survival.

Purity of Arms - The IDF servicemen and women will use their weapons and force only for the purpose of their mission, only to the necessary extent and will maintain their humanity even during combat. IDF soldiers will not use their weapons and force to harm human beings who are not combatants or prisoners of war, and will do all in their power to avoid causing harm to their lives, bodies, dignity and property.

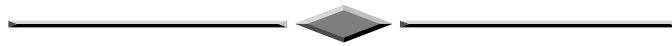
Extract from the IDF Doctrine

CHAPTER 11

THE TRUCE IN AUGUST

S A Machal's theater of operations in August was still South Africa, Europe and Israel. In Cape Town activity centred around the 6,000 ton Danish vessel, Bennyskou, Captain, S. F Kjeldsen. In Europe South African groups were assembling in Naples and in Marseilles to share the experiences of earlier groups in getting to the Land in frail, overcrowded D.P. ships.

In Israel event tumbled upon event. We follow the various trails.....



The Bennyskou, with cabin space for ten to twelve passengers, was to sail for Israel with a special cargo of food and clothing. Early in August the Zionist Federation alerted a group to be ready to sail in her. This group became the first and only one to leave South African shores by sea. Unlike the Drom Afrika 1 of pre-State days, she would go by the west coast of Africa to avoid possible entanglement with the Egyptians. Las Palmas would be the only stopping place before the ship passed Gibraltar and sailed through the Mediterranean.

The volunteers had enlisted some months earlier and on a sunny afternoon boarded the ship relieved that their day of departure had at last come. Five among their number were not South Africans. Menashe Balcha, a Falasha Jew from Ethiopia, had come out of the mists of time to deposit his weary limbs in Johannesburg. He had walked and hitch-hiked all the way. The emaciated black man from whose lips the Hebrew words of the Book fell so easily despite his illiteracy came to the attention of the Zionist Federation which took him under its care. Good food and rest enabled Menashe to recover from his arduous pilgrimage. He had not come to stay. In some way he had learned about the rebirth of Israel and the ingathering of the exiles and expressed his ardent wish to go to the land of his forefathers.

Another non-South African was a sabra, Hillel Rivlin, scion of a long-established Jerusalem family. A member of one of the pre-State underground movements, Rivlin, becoming a marked man, slipped out of Palestine to land in Cape Town in 1946. He earned his livelihood as a Hebrew teacher at the Herzliya School. Foreseeing that one day the Jews of the Yishuv would need pilots, he learned to fly and gained his pilot's license.

The other non-South Africans were a couple named Woolf and their four-year-old daughter. They were returning to their home which was Moshav Beer Tuvia.

Among the South Africans was Harry Bank, today head of a department at Tel Hashomer-Sheba Hospital and Professor of Medicine at Tel Aviv's University Medical School. Then a 24-year-old graduate doctor of Cape Town University, he had volunteered to go, if necessary, as a soldier, not a doctor. With him was his Cape Town bride, Myra, formerly Miss Schweppe. The "presidential suite" of the Bennyskou was allotted to the honeymoon couple. Myra, who had been preceded by a month to Israel by her brother, Issy, had majored in Hebrew at Cape Town University, being among the first graduates of Professor Israel Abraham's newly-instituted Hebrew Department: Her friend, Sheila Lanzkowsky (today Barkunsky), another graduate of the department and a member of the group, would join a kibbutz. Issy and Rhoda Traub, of Worcester, were destined for Ma'ayan Baruch and Morris Kahn, a civil engineer, planned to join a Hashomer Hatzair kibbutz.

The cabin space being limited, three of the volunteers worked their passage. It was not accidental that the three were Boris Rachelovitch, of Johannesburg, Alec Singer of Germiston and Robert Isaacson of Cape Town. During World War 2, Rachelovitch had once

tended mules and horses on the ship, Napuru, sailing from Cape Town to India; Singer and Isaacson were ex-South African Navy.

The volunteers' three weeks aboard the *Bennyskou* before she dropped anchor off Tel Aviv, turned out to be one of those voyages which, though without special event, became a rich and treasured memory for all. The factors that contributed to this were the complete identification of Captain Kjeldsen and his crew with the cause of the Jews and the conviviality that ensued from this. "It belongs to the trivia of the voyage, yet illustrative of it", Harry Bank recalled years later, "That the Danish pastry served as dessert was never a repeat of any served on a previous day. The galley was as much for us as the captain and officers."

Fascinating for the group was Menashe's encounter with civilization which meant his introduction to table habits and acquiring a common tongue with his companions. Modern Hebrew was considered the easiest language for him and the task of teaching it to him was undertaken by Myra Bank and Hillel Rivlin.

Political discussions, musical evenings, chess competitions and games, punctuated by a tour of Las Palmas, filled the days of the group, temporarily muting what was strongest in them - expectation and apprehension of what awaited them in the Land. The young doctor was not without his duties. Captain Kjeldsen broke his arm during the voyage and the first engineer went down with jaundice. Dr. Bank also attended to minor ailments among crew members.

The *Bennyskou* reached Israel on September 9. The Ethiopian joined the Navy and thereafter Dr. Bank, main source of this account, lost touch with him. Bank himself was drafted after four days to the 72nd battalion of the Seventh Brigade. Myra became the first teacher of English at the newly-founded Soldiers' Rehabilitation Center next to the Djani Hospital in Jaffa. Hillel Rivlin was not accepted as an Air Force pilot and enlisted as an infantryman. The settlers went to their kibbutzim.

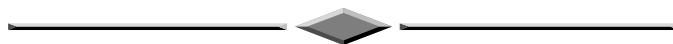
The three who worked their passage fell into place. Rachelovitch joined the Negev jeep patrol, Singer went into the Navy and Isaacson, after a short period with the 72nd battalion, went over to the Air Force's technical services.

The *Bennyskou's* cargo, assembled by voluntary committees of the South African Zionist Federation whose path had been smoothed by government departments in several ways, included several thousand cases of potatoes, donated by Jewish farmers of the Transvaal highveld. The potatoes had been dehydrated in a plant specially organized for the vast order. Other items were 11,500 cases of dehydrated carrots, cabbages and tomatoes; soupmix; thousands of tons of grain, beans, wheat products, canned fish, jams and canned fruit.

There was a special contribution for the DPs who had reached Israel without adequate clothing, personal belongings, domestic appliances or facilities for maintaining the ordinary comforts of life. To be distributed among them were 35,000 blankets, thousands of pairs of boots, 11,000,000 cigarettes, used clothing, 2,000 pairs of slippers, thousands of pairs of shorts, 250,000 pairs of socks, 10,000 tooth brushes and 6,000 shaving brushes.

Other items were 20,000 sleeping bags, 21,000 hand-made garments - the work of women Zionists - and toys for children, the first in their lives.

The medical supplies included 28,000 bandages and urgently-required medicines and ointments. There was equipment also for vocational schools to which thousands of DPs would later flock to become productive people again.



At Marseilles, the m.v. Kedmah was rising gently to the movement of the water, preparing to take on a total of 484 passengers. Of these, 432 were displaced persons. In addition there were 20 members of a volunteer group from South Africa, 24 returning residents and 8, designated as tourists. The South African group comprised: Uri Birnbaum, Bob Burge, Michael Fish, Barney Jaffe, Albert Kaplan, Stanley Kaplan, Jeffrey Katz, Julian Levinsohn, Philip Morcowitz, Abe Sack, Ted Saffer, Meyer Sakinofsky, Ruth Saretsky, Norman Spiro, Colin Traub, Hymie Treisman, Mendi Vons, Simmy Wilk, Wolf Yudelman and Sam Zinn.

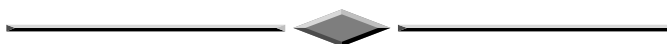
Wolf Yudelman of Cape Town, ex S.A. Navy, fastened his eyes on these former prisoners of the Nazis, "a peculiar feeling" in his stomach coming from his consciousness that these people had passed through an incommunicable nether world.

The South African group had experienced a straightforward passage to Marseilles: Johannesburg-Rome (air); Rome-Genoa (train); Genoa-Marseilles (sea), arriving Haifa Sept. 3rd.

During the Kedmah's voyage, a Sabbath eve service was held on the upper deck. The ancient liturgy, coming full-throated from the hundreds of voices and reaching out to the Mediterranean stars, moved even the most insensitive:

... and let our eyes behold The return in mercy to Zion. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who restorest thy divine presence in Zion...

Colin Traub, of Johannesburg: "Thanksgiving was written on every face."



The two Irgun groups, leaving their respective training camps at Lake Maggiore and Ladispoli, had opposite experiences. The first group (the Joe Woolf / Hymie Josman group) were sent to the well organised Ladispoli camp in the middle of the coastal resort with access to the town, beaches and restaurants. They sailed in the Dolores, a converted yacht. The twenty cabins could normally accomodate fifty people. Instead the ship carried 149 passengers including 24 South Africans (21 men and 3 women). They were Lily Barlin, Evelyn Bernstein, Leslie Brouze, Dov Davis, Geoffrey Fisher, Jules Fisher, Hannah Glazer, David Gross, Hymie Josman, Harry Kopans, Louis Kruger, Gershon Kadushewitz, Benjamin Baynes Levitt, Jack Marcusson, Max Meyerowitz, Archie Nankin, Julian Pearl, Alan Price, Dov Rozowsky, Albert Shorkend, Hymie Toker, Alex Tross, Joe Woolf and Barney Wolf (Josie).

There was adequate food, even some water melon but some of the South Africans never succeeded in getting to the dining room even once during the five day voyage although there were three sittings for each meal - concentration camp survivors returned for one meal after the other. Evelyn Bernstein assisted Dr. Alan Price in delivering a baby⁵⁶, in the captain's cabin. The sea was transformed into a lake and they had a crowded, but comfortable, voyage from Naples, despite the impossibly filthy overused toilet facilities. Washing was expected to be performed with one cup of fresh water. The answer was to lower buckets into the sea for water. "We survived" said Josman. Neither old people nor children were aboard. The South Africans made the most of it, sleeping on deck.

The moment of excitement came on August 23 with the sighting of Haifa's Carmel mountain range and dropping anchor in the Bay. A Betar launch came out and took the South Africans for a tour of the dock area. Next day, after a medical examination at the Technion, most of the party were taken by bus to Tel Litwinsky camp and immediately given a few days' leave.

⁵⁶ At the time of preparing the first edition of this book for publication (January 1998) Alan Price had succeeded in tracing this "baby", Meir Mederer, aged 49 and living in Kiryat Bialik.

Organisation at the camp must have improved for the reports of Woolf and Cape Town's Leslie Marcus⁵⁷ (a direct arrival by plane) invoke a different picture: neatness of layout, good food, parades and lectures. Woolf and most of his companions were posted to the Anglo-Saxon 7th Brigade in the Galilee. Marcus, insisting on a "fighting unit", joined the commandos at Ben Shemen.

Shortly before on Aug. 20th, a smaller group had arrived on the "Kedmah". Charles Berman, Monty Celender, the brothers Joe and Nick Goldstein, Bernard Green, Benny Grusin, Eli Reef, Morrie Ringer, Louis Sack, Lipa Segal, Sara Segal, David Wolf and Ralph Yodaiken

Completely different was the experience of the Shulamith Becker/John Nakan Irgun group who were billeted at Lake Maggiore. Their flight from Palmietfontein had been plagued by delays and engine trouble, resulting in a change of aircraft at Malakal and a final three day delay in Cyprus. Their accommodation at Forraggiana on Lake Maggiore was in a horribly filthy condition - flooded bathrooms, blocked toilets and the like. The South Africans set to cleaning the place up. They were there for three weeks and according to Marcia Silpert, once organised, they were able to make the most of it and have a good time..

Their sea voyage on the vessel Tetti was also very different from that of those on the Dolores. The Irgunites who had lived on bread, onions, potatoes and tea, had looked forward to "a change" aboard the vessel. The change was for the worse. The ship carried some 600 passengers and encountered heavy seas. Meals consisted of thin soup and an apple. The Italian cooks prepared mouth-watering bread, but when the passengers approached the galley, they were chased away. "We survived" said Silpert. John Nakan put it another way: "... vomit all over the deck and meager food. It broke us completely from our South African way of life. After that Israel was paradise".

The Becker-Nakan group, the first to sail after Bernadotte's murder, included Marcia Silpert, Hettie Echilewitz, Frank Fisher, Grisha Golemba, Hymie Green, Riva Pitluck, Jack Ritz, Ivan Sheinbaum, Joe Hart, Harold Sher, Paul Traub, Mendel Cohen, Arnold Isaacson and Mailech Kotlowitz. As most members of this group travelled under assumed names not all are known.

Commenting on his voyage on the vessel Caserta, Barney Dworsky, the eighty percent disability case of World War 2 who had paid his own fare, brought to his contemplation of the DPs the compassion of one who had himself suffered. "One shuddered afresh, men with lost wives and children, wives with lost husbands and children, sisters, brothers, fathers, all gone. Orphaned souls, who would have to start afresh." So they sailed into Haifa, the flotsam of a wrecked continental ship called Western Civilization.

Other South Africans known to have arrived on the Caserta on September 26 1948, were Mike Abel, George Busch, Howard Binder, Barry Chait, Max Chait, Cyril Clouts, Kenny Danker, Zelig Genn, Gerhardt Goldblatt, Victor Harber, Lucien Henochowitz, Max Kangisser, Michael Kruss, Solly Lipshitz, Lionel Narunsky, Jack Patlansky, Essie Shapiro, Percy Sher, Solly Sokolowsky, Zelig Zinn, P. Wolov.

In Tel Aviv Evelyn Bernstein (Brewer) tasted the bitter residues of the Irgun-Haganah conflict. Protesting against "stupid jobs" given to the Revisionists, she and others threatened to return to South Africa. "You should be in Jerusalem with the Irgun, not here in Tel Aviv", a woman clerk snapped before unleashing a furious harangue against the Irgun. But Bernstein's threat worked. She joined Myra Simon in the Air Force's meteorological section

It is worth recording known August Haifa air arrivals.

⁵⁷ The plane on which Marcus arrived had, as passenger a representative of Die Burger, the first non-Jewish newspaperman from South Africa to visit the State.

1st August: "Sonny" Ospovat, Bernard Appel, Gershon Gitlin, Merle Gillis, Irwin Cohen, Dennis Rutowitz, Maish Levy, Harold Hassall, Manny Solarsh, Bernard Sandler, Joe Rosen. Noel Aronson, Max Bentel, Sydney Green, Norman Isaacs, Kenneth Braun

6th August: Lola Greenblatt, Raymond Duchen, Joe Katzew, Alan Lipman, Sydney Lipman, Gerald Landsman, Ruth Landsman, Maurice Mendelowitz, Phillip Kemp, Harry Ruby Kassel, Walter Caspary, Maurice Rosenberg, Lionel Schneider, Roy Schapera, Nina Herstein, Phil Hotz, Lionel Klein.

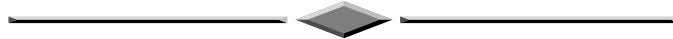
11th August: Norman Lourie.

13th August: Allan George Laver, Joe Lazarus, Leslie Marcus, Colin Marik, Max Krensky, Victor Reznikow.

19th August: Otto Seidman.

24th August: Mishy Fine, Gerry Shaper.

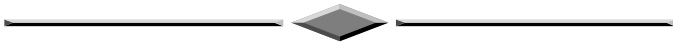
28th and 29th August: Milton Hirsch, Raphael Kotlowitz, Rica Klingman.



It was a dawn raid, but there was no action. The commandos found that the Arabs of a troublesome village near Kibbutz Ramat Yochanan in the western Galilee had fled.

"Take a last look round and see if any perhaps remained," Reg Sagar instructed Mike Isaacson.

In one house Isaacson found a one-armed man and, under a bed in the same house, a boy and an old man. Isaacson took the three to the officer in charge. The commando men were on their half-tracks ready to leave. As they moved off, Isaacson took the three back to their house. "Stay here and don't move," he advised them. He left in the last half-track with Reg Sagar.



Syd (Sydney Isaac) Bellon, Engineer's, of Krugersdorp, sat down one evening to write his regular letter to his parents. As in previous letters, he wrote a Cape Town address and an advanced date. Then he sealed the letter and sent it to a friend's address in Cape Town with the usual instruction to post to his parents. They, good people, were happy to know that Isaac was progressing well in his job in the Mother City.



Lydda airport became the base for training with the two Cromwell tanks and it was here that Morrie Egdes and his fellow South African tank men were transferred. In command was the English Jew, Dan Samuel, grandson of Lord Samuel, the first British High Commissioner for Palestine. Dan Samuel had been the youngest major in the British Army. The actual training of the men was by the Britons who had brought the tanks to Tel Litwinsky weeks before.



1948: "It was the happiest year of my life," said Frank James, the only South African volunteer permanently stationed throughout the war in Jerusalem "We knew what we were fighting for and we were part of the history of a State coming to birth"

James, whom we last met on the Herzliya beach testing French 75mm guns, came to Jerusalem with his gun crew consisting of an American gangster, a Canadian schoolteacher and eighteen young Polish Jews. Their gun, positioned at Bet Hakerem, concentrated mainly on Arab positions at Nebi Samuel and occasionally at targets near Ramallah. James's war was from observation posts and the gun site.

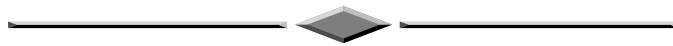
But he also had a private war -- this with the Chicagoan who had drifted into the war for reasons only known to himself and who, from the moment of arrival, bullied the Poles, small men from under-nourishment in the Nazi camps and all loners, their families lost in the gas chambers. What Arnie K, the American, did not know was that Frank James came from a boxing family. His brother Alf was a South African champion and Frank himself was useful also.

The application of the art became necessary when Arnie struck his fourth man. James gave him the hiding of his life, leaving him with two blue eyes and a multiplicity of swellings. The bullying ceased.

The Chicagoan was to break out again. Drunk one day, blood-bespattered, screaming and yelling, flourishing a bayonet, he had a whole square in the city, including military police, wondering how to handle him.

A call went out to James who arrived in a jeep. He jumped out, walked up to the American, took the bayonet from him and said: "Get into the jeep before I kill you." "It's all right, Frank, all right," said the American. "Just giving these guys, a bit of a show."

James was the idol of his platoon.



The game of evading the UN observers continued. Rolfe Futerman's group, put aboard a DC-3 in Rome, was warned by the pilot as the plane flew into Tel Aviv, that he would let the aircraft run to the end of the runway. When he shouted "Jump", the volunteers were to obey immediately and run towards the fence where there was a deep ditch.

The pilot was Nobby Clark, his co-pilot Syd Excell, South African non-Jews.

Approaching the ditch, the volunteers heard voices calling to them in English. A waiting lorry spirited them away. Meanwhile Nobby Clark had taken off for Haifa to offload the men's suitcases.

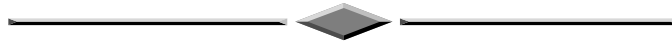
Futerman, ex-SAAF, was posted to Ramat David airfield.

Rightly or wrongly, the Israelis distrusted several of the UN men, including Count Bernadotte who was known to have opposed the idea of a Jewish State and had said so before his appointment. The Jews also believed there were spies in the UN corps, a view to which Basil Herman, now liaison officer to the UN, gave credence. His report: "In general we can say the UN was fair, but most of its observers lived in Arab areas because it was cheaper. Some were passing information to the Arabs. Both Arabs and Jews were playing a double game..."

Herman's suspicions had fastened particularly on a UN warrant officer, P, whom he had known from World War 2 days. It was quite possible, in Herman's view that the UN top command was not itself aware that P. was born and brought up in Cairo and that his father still lived there. P. was recruited into the Belgian Army in the war. He spoke Arabic like an Arab, but never let a single Arab word slip his tongue. Herman believed P. was planted by Belgian Intelligence.

Thus the cat-and-mouse games with the UN observers never ceased. Innocent, at first, of the ploys in the game, Wolfe Yudelman whose naval duties were in the Haifa dock area, became increasingly vexed by the closing of the gates during alarms, allowing neither entry nor exit. He could not understand the folly of having hundreds of people milling around. What better target for an enemy aircraft? Only later did he twig on to what was really taking place.

"Obviously if the gates kept you in, they kept the UN out and war materials could be safely landed and spirited away."



AT SEA

Life aboard the Eilat became the pleasant monotony of the Tel Aviv-Haifa patrol. In the evenings in Haifa the sailors would make their way to the Balfour Cellar off Herzl Street, the main haunt of the seamen. One evening Charles Mandelstam and the two American Als fell into conversation there with an English Jew who had entered carrying a barreled rifle. The Englishman, a good conversationalist, regaled the naval men with stories of jeep patrol in the Negev and encounters with the Egyptians. The Americans bored with the uneventful sea patrol, were fascinated. They had come to fight a war, not to clean bulwarks, and asked the Englishman how they could join his unit.

"Are you serious?"

"Sure."

"And you?"

Mandelstam replied that he was quite happy with the Eilat.

"Well," said the Englishman to the two Als, "come back with me tonight."

The four men left in the Englishman's jeep for the Eilat, tied up against one of the quays in the harbor.

"Where's Jock Epstein?" the Americans asked the Jimmy I. "Gone ashore."

"We're packing our kit-bags. Off to the Negev. Say goodbye to Jock for us."

Al Twersky was minus a leg when Mandelstam met him again. His jeep had gone over a mine.

When Cyril Gotsman awoke in the wheelhouse of the Ben Hecht in Haifa harbor, the Haganah men were gone and once again he was the only soul aboard. But only, for a short while. Slowly a crew came together, fourteen to sixteen nationalities, Greek Jews, Moroccan, French, British, Americans and others. Orders were given in three languages: Hebrew, English and French. An Israeli, Brenner, was captain; the chief engineer was Heller, an elderly man from Haifa, a German Jew who had held rank in the German Navy in World War I, and in the British Navy in World War II.

The engines were overhauled, the ship put into a seaworthy condition and after a month taken out to sea. Armaments: Three revolvers and two rifles. She cruised past Acre towards the Lebanese coast, not meaning anything, but hightailed quickly back to harbor when the wireless operator intercepted a Lebanese message calling for air support because the Israel Navy was about to bombard the coastline. The crew numbered 130, excessively large for a ship of the modest tonnage of the Ben Hecht.

Gotsman naturally gravitated to four British Jews in the crew. Generally the relationship of all the different nationalities was good. The vexations were at sea. Only a handful did not suffer sea-sickness. This meant long watches for the experienced. Instead of four on, four off, Gotsman was on watch on occasion for eight hours, ten and once twelve. The Britons were solid. Two had been torpedoed in action in World War 2 and had lived on rafts for days. The other two were youngsters who had served their time on a Merchant Navy training ship in England. A handful of French-speaking Jews also had naval background. The rest were raw.

After a few trials, Brenner weeded out the unsuitable and the always-seasick and the Ben Hecht was left with a crew of ninety, still excessive. Armament improved to the extent of an artillery piece without a self-recoiling system. When it was fired it left the ship halting and trembling. The best that could be said for it was that it showed face and could work. In addition there were a few Vickers machine guns for anti-aircraft defence.

One day in mid-August a rumor swept the decks that the Ben Hecht would be putting out to sea to pick up "a secret weapon". The rumor was plausible, since the drill of the crew had been in launching a boat and hoisting it back on deck. On this particular day the Ben Hecht was cruising near Jaffa when the crew was ordered to assemble. The Anglo-Saxons were told to pack their bags, a launch from Jaffa would take them ashore and return them to Haifa. Gotsman sought Brenner out after the assembly.

"What gives?" he asked. "You take us off when there is going to be a bit of action?"

"Orders: Volunteers from the Diaspora not to be endangered."

"But this is nonsense."

"What can I do? Orders".

"But we are the experienced ones!"

Brenner reflected for a moment. "I'll put it to higher quarters."

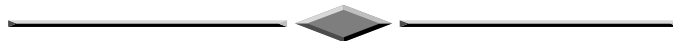
No message came back from "higher quarters". Gotsman, waiting for the launch, fell asleep in the ship's small library, the door of which could not be opened from the outside. When he awoke it was five in the morning and the Ben Hecht was cruising in the Mediterranean far out from shore.

"What are you doing here?" Brenner asked in surprise.

"Nobody called me," Gotsman said and explained what had happened. Brenner smiled and said, "You're on board, you're on board."

The Ben Hecht cruised to an appointed spot, where it hoisted in prepared cradles, an Italian speed boat and three tiny ones. In the next few days the crew launched these while the ship was on the move, a drill that continued until mastery was achieved. The little boats were quasi-human torpedoes to be filled with high explosives for'ard. The pilot, aft, would set it for ramming the enemy target, ejecting himself when he was in line with it.

Back in harbor, the boats were removed. The other Anglo-Saxons were returned to the ship and not taken off again.



THE MEN OF THE AIR

The first caller to congratulate Dov Judah on the day he assumed his position as Director of Air Force Operations was the American Fortress flyer Ray Kurtz, now O.C. of the B-17 squadron. His acknowledgment of seniority was informal, to say the least. He lowered his bulk into the only other chair, placed both feet on the desk and squinted through the gap between his crossed flying boots.

"Who named the squadron 69?" he asked.

"I did," Judah replied.

Kurtz grinned, squinting at Judah again. "H'mmm," he said. "Last week he was a nose gunner on "69", now he's a big wheel...but I like the number."

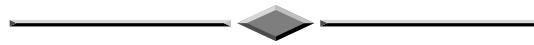
Planning the new Air Force absorbed and enriched Judah. It brought him into liaison with the operations and planning departments of the Army and the young men directing them. Richest

reward of all was his daily morning conferences with Yigal Yadin, Acting Chief of Staff, the fruits of which were to ripen into a new role for the Air Force in Operation Ten Plagues.

The two top-flight American engineers, Shimshoni and Kinarti, outstanding men, busied themselves with tables of organization and plans for lines of communication between staff and command. Judah asked them to draw the T.O.O. of operations and concerned himself with the task of preparing operational plans. His experience in the South African Artillery in East Africa and with the SAAF in Italy became the mainspring of his thinking. This gave him an understanding of Army movement and disposition, of air support to an Army and an insight into what is achieved by destruction of enemy lines of communication.

He spent long hours with Nat Cohen of Intelligence working out planned reconnaissance of the Egyptian Air Force and devising how it could be kept on the ground.

The essential problem was to get fighter planes into Israel before the termination of the truce. The flying-in of one dismantled plane at a time from Czechoslovakia was too slow and cumbersome. The only solution (it came to be realized) was mass flight with a mother ship navigating the planes across the 1,400 miles distance over land and sea. An account of how this was achieved finds its place in the chronological order of this chapter.



Joe Katzew and Cape Town's Roy Schapera, kept back by Dan Agron in Rome for 6 weeks, flew into Israel in the first week of August. They were posted to Ekron, then almost a ghost airfield, the fighter squadron having moved to Herzliya. There they fitted into what became their microcosm of World Machal: At the outset, Philip Marmelstein, a former U.S. Navy transport pilot; Ted Gibson, American non-Jew (son of a Baptist minister) war experience in the Pacific; Abe Nathan, ex-Royal India Air Service; a Russian Jew Grisha renamed Richard Brown; a Texan Jew, Irving Feldstein, a weekend flier at home who combined an astonishing knowledge of aeroplanes with an inability to fly one, crashing twice; a New Yorker, Ralph Rosofsky, no previous war experience; Asher de Leeu, a Dutch Jew, a Sunday afternoon flier; Laszlo Stark, a Hungarian Jew, used mainly as a co-pilot; John (Jan) Thujssen, a Dutch Jew who came via Indonesia; Frank Waterhouse, a non-Jewish university student from America, a good airman; and Mike Flint, a Jew, ex-USAF.

At the disposal of the pilots of Flight 35 were a half dozen Norseman planes recently obtained from Czechoslovakia. In dawn and dusk flights, the pilots assured supplies, equipment, food and other necessities to Sdom at the foot of the Dead Sea where there was a settlement, a potash works and soldiers guarding these places.

The history of 35 Flight is linked with Sdom. Of the thirty-three Israeli settlements cut off by the enemy, Sdom, as we have already noted, was the most isolated. 35 Flight became Sdom's main lifeline. The fifty-minute flights were not without their eeriness, the experience of which Katzew and Schapera were soon having their full share. The missions were at night or early dawn. The pilots alternated in the routes they took. The first was over lonely little Israeli outposts holding out against Beersheba. In the half-light, they dropped supplies which they could only hope the men of the settlements would find. The second was over Massada and the Dead Sea, the top of the first linked in history with Roman legionnaires and Hebrew suicide rather than capture. Spirits inhabited the stillness.

The flights had their dreads. The ears of the fliers had not been closed to horror stories about the fate of captured Jews. The pilots demanded revolvers and got them. ("Revolver and 5 bullets were with me on every flight.") Katzew said.

"Next load on the mind" said Katzew "concerned quality of air control. Who were the people of the control tower? Did they understand their obligations? Our radios were not always

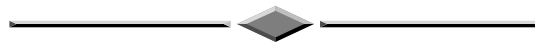
Chapter 11

reliable. I recall somebody assuring us the controllers were Israelis and that we could rely on them, but the very situation of an infant air force nullified assurances. Disorganization was present”.

August...September...October: truce period though it was the flight, in the beyond-language colors of the Negev when day dies or is born, belonged to a strange unreality.

“To jump ahead in time”, Katzew continues, “to the morning of November 10, 1948, when I overturned my Norseman on landing at the Sdom airstrip. Ted Gibson was my co-pilot. We crawled out unscathed. Barrels of paraffin and drums, among other things were our cargo, but fortunately they held fast. Those times the pilots themselves had to do the loading! Gibson and I were innocent of the arithmetic of loading. But that is another story”.

Ted Gibson was to die in an El Al transport crash in Europe in 1950 and my fellow South African Roy Schapera in a road accident in Namaqualand some years after his return to South Africa.



Mannie Solarsh and Sonny Ospovat, too young to have served in World War 2, sought out Dov Judah at Air Operations and pressed for acceptance into the Air Force. Judah, not taken in by their doctored log books of week-end flying, directed them to Sde Dov airfield to await the verdict of a test. Hugo Alperstein tested Solarsh, another pilot Ospovat and, in both cases, the answer was favorable. They were now Air Force men.

Solarsh and Ospovat were sent to join the Galil "Squadron" at Yavniel, a moshava near the Sea of Galilee. Like Schapera and Katzew at Ekron, these two fliers also became detached from the main groups of South African airmen and from South African associates generally.

The two remained as inseparable in Israel as they had been in Johannesburg. Two nicknames were applied to them, "the terrible twins" and "the black dukes", the latter the coinage at Yavniel of Avraham Portugali, son of a famous pioneer of the land.

The Galil squadron, consisting of six patched-up Austers, served as an army reconnaissance and chuck-bomb unit. It was made up of semi-trained Israeli pilots and semi-trained young Jewish pilots from Europe, under the command of an Israeli, Nahum Rappaport. The Johannesburg friends were the only Anglo-Saxons. Within two weeks they were instructing their companions.

Russians, supporters of the Jewish State in order to get the British out of the Middle East, were now shifting attitude, looking with disapproving eye on the awakening of Jewish nationalism in the countries of Eastern Europe and the immigration of Jews from the Communist satellite countries to their homeland. Moscow was also perceiving that her ambitions could be better served by the Arabs than the Jews.

Czechoslovakia bent with the Russians: Sensitive to Moscow's new direction, the Czechs were cool to Pomerance's idea of having the Spits flown non-stop to Israel. To them the idea was folly, even with all the auxiliary fuel tanks proposed by Pomerance. Four thousand miles could not be covered by planes whose range had never exceeded six hundred; secondly, a mishap to any of the planes on the way would expose Czechoslovakia to embarrassments. There could be emergency landings in Greece or Cyprus. No, said the Czechs, despite the good money they were being paid, the aircraft should be crated and shipped. They were in no mood for international scandals.

Pomerance fought back. Shipping the planes could take three months and this, he knew, was in conflict with the need of the Israelis to have the planes, or some of them, ready for the

third round, certain to come and this soon. He was acutely aware of the present Arab superiority in the air. Egypt had at her disposal thirty five Spitfires and nine Sterling bombers, Iraq five Furies and Syria ten Harvards. Against this Israel had her fifteen erratic Messerschmitts, two Spitfires and the three B -17s.

Pomerance, a dynamic man, beat down the Czech opposition thanks to Yugoslavia's consent to place an airfield at Niksic at the disposal of the Israelis. Jack Cohen takes up the story:

The work by Sam and me started in earnest at a place in Moravia called Uherske Hradiste, about eleven kilometers from Zlin, later renamed Gottwaldov. The Czechs would only allow one of us to fly, so Sam attended to the engineering and I did the test flying.

The modifying of the planes took about two to three weeks. From a normal fuel capacity of eighty five gallons, we rigged up the planes to carry three hundred and seventy nine gallons. This included an eighty five gallon main tank, a ninety gallon long-range tank, 2 x 62½ gallon tanks, cigar-shaped slung from the bomb racks under the wings and special seventy nine gallon tanks. All the spare tanks could feed down into the long-range. (This, of course, made the long-range tank a fixture that we would not be able to jettison.)

We also had to remove all guns, armour plating, oxygen cylinders, in fact, everything possible, in order to lighten the weight. Yet, with all this, the center of gravity was thrown out by fourteen inches which didn't make the machines easy to fly until some of the fuel had been used up. I had to test fly each plane, making sure all fuel systems were operating properly and at what speed and height to fly to get the most economical cruising, since at that stage, Yugoslavia hadn't come into the picture and we had to be prepared for a straight-through flight.

Apart from Jack Cohen, the other South Africans immediately involved were Issy Greenberg and Cyril Steinberg. Steinberg had been navigator of the plane that flew in the Israeli mechanics who were to effect the changes in the Spitfires. Drama began with this flight. The landing of the C54 Skymaster became one of hazard. The undercart would not come down. A switch to the emergency system brought only one wheel down. The plane flew round for some time. In the end there was no alternative but to force land. The plane sailed in on one wheel, bounced without disaster, then slowed round on the runway, ploughing one wing into the ground. Crew and passengers came out safely, though the damage to the plane was considerable.

That night, in Prague, the party received an urgent tip that UN observers were coming through to inspect the Zatec airfield. In a swift race against time, crew and technicians succeeded in getting out of sight the single-engined Norsemen destined for Israel, but the damaged C54 could not be eliminated. The long-suffering Czechs put up with the embarrassment.

Greenberg had succeeded during a second visit to Czechoslovakia to get to the factory at Banska Bystrya in Slovakia and had learned what he wanted to learn about the Messerschmitts radio equipment. In Prague Pomerance asked him to service the radios in the six Spitfires and to ensure that the radios were on the same frequencies.

At Air Force headquarters in Tel Aviv, Les Shagam, planning the detail of Velvetta 1, decided to use Drom Africa 1 as one of the vessels to be equipped for emergency patrol in the Mediterranean during the flight.



On August 14, Paltiel Makleff, pilot, and Monty Goldberg, air photographer from Johannesburg, flew out of Tel Aviv in a Fairchild on a rec. mission over the Gulf of Aqaba. A

good afternoon's work done, the plane nosed back to Tel Aviv. Over the Negev, the Fairchild coughed and faltered. It could have been the result of bullet shots or exhaustion of the ill-maintained plane. Paltiel called up the Tel Aviv tower to report where they were and what was happening, but Tel Aviv was out of range. The plane skimmed over the black tents of a Bedouin tribe and came down against a hill, its engine cut out. The men quickly unfastened their safety belts, scrambled out, emerged from the dust cloud, and surveyed each other. Both unhurt.

Goldberg ripped and destroyed his film and camera and the men considered for a moment what to do with the plane. The shots of Bedouin interrupted further debate. Abandoning the aircraft, the two ran over the rise of the hill in the hope of concealing themselves in a wadi. They were near Egyptian-held Beit Guvrin but also near their own lines. Under cover of darkness, Goldberg believes, they would have made it. The hope was in vain. Firing Bedouin horsemen closed in on them.

Too much happened too quickly for terror.

"Put up your hands," Paltiel advised Goldberg, putting up his own. The Bedouin were wolves. They tore off the men's flying suits and stripped them of their flying boots, leaving them in their vests and slacks. Goldberg did not understand their shouting, but their brandished knives and their blows, portended the worst. One of the Bedouin ripped off Goldberg's signet ring. He would have been short of a finger there and then had the ring not yielded easily.

The fate of the men was taken out of the hands of the Bedouin. Out of one of the tents stepped a uniformed lieutenant of the Transjordan Palestine Police, armed with a pistol. He ordered the men to be taken to the house of the Mukhtar.

The next hour was a nightmare as the mounted horsemen ran the men across the desert. A whip, slashed over Paltiel's face, opened his eye. Goldberg, limping from the crash, was lashed on the back.

The men slumped on the floor at the Mukhtar's home. Paltiel listened to the Bedouins' conversation. They mentioned the name of the nearby Israeli settlement of Gat. Paltiel proposed a deal with them; the exchange of Goldberg and himself for 200 Israeli pounds from the settlement. The deal was clinched and runners dispatched to the settlement, but the arrival of some Egyptians killed the hopeful prospect. The Egyptians mounted a two-machine gun guard over the men, roped them up, tossed them into an armoured vehicle and took them to Beit Guvrin.

Here an officer speaking good English said: "You are now prisoners of war. You will be treated in accordance with the Geneva Convention." The wounds of the now utterly exhausted fliers were dressed and they were given black tea and a biscuit. Subsequently, they were locked in a cell with a warning not to speak to each other. The men agreed on their story: Goldberg the South African and Paltiel claiming to be American, had not known one another before their capture. They had been thrown together, strangers, to test the aircraft.

Next day the men were separately put through a long questioning. Later, that same day, they were blindfolded, taken first to Beersheba, then to the jail in Gaza where they were placed in separate cells in solitary confinement.

The quizzing started again. Paltiel and Goldberg each stuck to his story. Goldberg offered a little embroidery. The Israelis had not trusted him and would not take him into their Army. He had stayed in a hotel wondering what to do when he received a telephone call to test the plane with this stranger, Paltiel.

The Egyptian intelligence men pointed on their map to the Yarkon Hotel in Tel Aviv, the headquarters of the I.A.F., and pressed further questions. He did not know the place, said Goldberg.

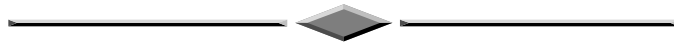
The men were kept in Gaza for ten days and then, together with a captured religious Jew, a medical orderly, put blindfolded on to a train and taken to a jail on the outskirts of Cairo near an airfield. The medical orderly had been given a rough time. The Egyptian thought his phylacteries some kind of receiving set.

At the camp Goldberg met fellow South African Jack Fleisch for the first time. Fleisch, it will be recalled, had been taken prisoner during an abortive attack on the Egyptian-held Iraq el Suedan fortress. Fleisch did not look good. The effects of poor diet and rough treatment were obvious.

Headquarters in Tel Aviv knew early that ill-fate had attended the airmen. Makleff's wife, herself a pilot, had been duty pilot in the control tower when the men had flown off. The associates of Goldberg also missed him early. Boris Senior, assigned to escort the two but prevented by a faulty engine, lent voice to the alarm.

Several planes searched for the men next morning. Smoky Simon, in a Norseman piloted by Philip Marmelstein, recorded: "Landed at Sdom to ascertain if any news of missing men... None... did eight more legs covering an area of 33 x 20 miles...and also parallel track search... received news in the afternoon that boys had crash-landed and were POWs. Bernard Francis, Jewish UN liaison officer, tried to work a local swop at Gaza but no dice. International Red Cross informed immediately".

The Negev Bedouin, fearing the vengeance of the Jews, set the plane alight to remove evidence of their involvement. Syd Cohen, also out in the search, spotted the hulk.

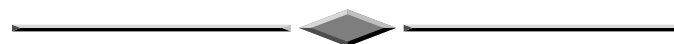


Operation Avak (Dust) was a triumph of the Americans. It made the next Negev campaign possible. The operation began on August 17 with the transport in Curtis Commandos of men, equipment and arms from Ekron to a newly-built airfield near Ruchama. This operation of four hundred and seventeen two-way flights, averaging eight flights a night over a period of fifty nights, delivered to the Negev 2,000 tons of arms and equipment. On the return flights, the planes flew back to base the exhausted soldiers of the Negev Brigade to reorganize. Israel would not be unprepared when the third round opened.

Syd Cohen made fourteen solo flights of various nature this month: patrol, training in close support, and test flights in ME 109s and photo recce. flights.

Elliot Rosenberg, weight 190 lbs. when he had flown into Israel, turned into a rolled cigarette of a man. Flying from Ramat David in a Rapide he knew he was going to prang and could do nothing about it. He turned to Smoky Simon and Ronnie Cohen, his passengers, and said strangely: "Get to the tail and keep down."

He pranged. This was his last flight of the war.



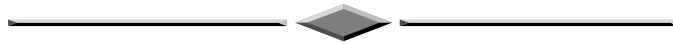
THE DOCTORS

Lionel Meltzer recorded:

AUGUST 6: Had a full day and was exhausted at the end. I have compiled the list of hospital establishments I want. We have still to tackle the question of sick bays and MI rooms. I am always quite exhausted by the time I'm due for my Hebrew lesson.

I had dinner with Zelda Kirschner this evening... met Jan Kimche, the correspondent and writer. Interesting man. He says the rift in the Arab Armies is growing bigger. It seems Abdullah is sorry he got mixed up in the whole business, and would like to get out of it if only he could.

AUGUST 27: A morning at HQ discussing establishments. Quite pathetic how the Army of Israel is trying to become a real army in double-quick time. Up to now they have been fighting a war against the most modern arms and war equipment, without establishments. They simply put new men into batches and fight literally with their hands against tanks and guns. Now they are trying to become a decent army. Given only half the chance, they could. From now on I'm going to have plenty of headaches.



The Government Hospital in Haifa, called the Rambam, was dirty and short of essential equipment, but it met all of Jack Penn's requirements. The superintendent proving uncooperative, Penn operated in the Italian Hospital and in a small hospital on the Carmel from which, one day, he watched a skirmish on the Tel Aviv - Haifa road. He was surprised by the slow trajectory of the mortar bombs that could be watched all the way.

He finally decided to "invade" the Rambam Hospital. He signaled to Meltzer at Army HQ in Tel Aviv to select five bad cases, to put them in an ambulance, and to have them at the hospital at exactly 3.00 pm. He saw the superintendent at 2.30, requesting again to have his unit based in the hospital. The superintendent would not budge. He would like Penn to work there, he said, but the hospital did not have the facilities. The exchanges lasted until 3 o'clock. Penn said: "If you can't take seventy patients, how many can you take?" The superintendent replied, "possibly five." At that moment, it struck three o'clock, Penn said, "Fine, here are the first five patients just pulling up outside your window".

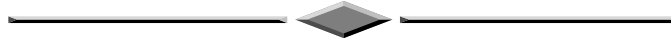
Within a week, half the hospital housed many plastic surgery cases. Penn and his two South African assistants worked devotedly to restore shattered appearances. For a time all three were unpopular with Rambam's nurses who considered Penn's action in calling on his own theater sisters a reflection on their capabilities, which, indeed, it was. But when the South African team settled down and worked without their assistance, doing shifts around the clock until they were almost dropping from exhaustion, the Israeli nurses shamefacedly apologized. Thereafter, they were almost embarrassing in their desire to make good. Both Benedict and Roux were taken to their hearts and made many long-term friendships.

The cable from Johannesburg saying that a plane was on its way to Israel with Di, Penn's wife, Rose Meltzer and Osner Wilton, was good news for Penn. On Di's arrival he gave himself a short break, taking her to Jerusalem at night by way of the "Burma Road." It was an exciting adventure for Di who, fragile though she was, showed no fear.

In Jerusalem the Penns met a friend who was about to visit the Notre Dame monastery and who invited them to accompany him. "Like damn fools we said "yes", Penn wrote later. They found themselves dodging machine gun bursts across streets, flinging themselves on the ground, ducking around corners, hastening through doorless and windowless apertures.

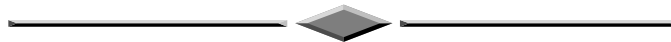
They could plainly see the machine gun nests sniping at them. Penn anxiously scanned his wife's face. Di's cheeks were red, her eyes glowing.

Penn's main purpose in coming to Jerusalem on this occasion was to arrange for the evacuation to Haifa of wounded requiring plastic surgery. He stayed a week, and then returned to Haifa.



Dr. Louis Miller had established himself in a basement in Jaffa and had a shrewd understanding of the services he could render to the Air Force as a psychiatrist. He paid particular attention to the first South African fliers of the war.

The pioneering work he did forms the basis of IAF procedures of testing and selections to this day.



AUGUST DIARY

Information released on sixteen settlements established between May 15 and July 1.

Count Bernadotte and Dr. Joseph, Military Governor of Jerusalem discuss demilitarization of the city.

Israel mission to UN protests to Security Council on Britain's detention of Jewish refugees in Cyprus. Charges Britain with non-neutrality.

Egyptians attack Ramat Rachel (South of Jerusalem).

Arabs blow up Latrun pumping station under UN control.

U.S. Special Representative, Dr. James G. MacDonald, arrives in Israel.

Israel Government asks Security Council to fix early date for peace settlement in Palestine or to be given freedom of action.

Existence of Jerusalem's new water pipeline officially revealed.

Israel pound becomes legal tender.

Fighting in Jerusalem: Mount Zion and Beir Israel quarter.

Col. Dayan meets General Riley, UN aide, to arrange meeting between Jewish and Arab commanders.

Analysis of figures discloses that Arabs in Palestine did not number more than 870,000 – not 1,250,000 contained in the statistics of the Mandatory Government.

Dr. Jessup, U.S. representative, warns Arab Governments and Israel that UN "cannot tolerate any move by either side to break the truce."

Fighting in North Talpiot, Jerusalem. 8,487 immigrants arrive in August.



Badge of the Medical corps

CHAPTER 12

SEPTEMBER 1948

NEW ARRIVALS

The Fabio could easily have been mistaken for one of the snoek boats of Cape Town. She was an oil-burner, not more than 300 tons, a wizened hulk of the sea. The run she was now about to undertake, starting from Gaeta, a little wharf near Naples on this September day, would be in keeping with her hard pressured life. She should reasonably not have taken aboard more than fifty people, but she took exactly 292. Her holds had been converted into dormitories by the simple expedient of bulwark-to-bulwark boards. "You couldn't have put a razor blade between us. If you slept on your back, you had to stay on your back" recalls Morris Smith.

Her passengers were a motley crowd, people of twenty-one nationalities.⁵⁸ They were mainly DPs, but also a handful of ex-Spanish Civil War men, a handful of ex-Jewish Brigade, men and women from Tripoli who had crossed the Mediterranean to reach the ships, a group of stunted concentration camp children in the charge of a Hungarian girl and a South African group. The South Africans⁵⁹ comprised two women, Delyn Kacev and Sarah Witt and 29 men, Ralph Lanesman, Hymie Malbin, Teddy Levin, Eli Herr, Aubrey Angel, Abe Berkow, Chaim Eisenberg, Bernard Etzine, Morris Freeman, Harry Goldstein, Bernard Judelsohn, Ivan Kirschner, Lionel Clingman, Robert Lowenberg, David Solman, Emanuel Shall, Mickey Sher, Manuel Scheiner, Morris Smith, Jesse Weinstein, Jack Kacev, David Fine, Arthur Goldreich, Louis Hack (killed in action six weeks later), Simon Stern, the wrestler, Effie Levy, Stanley Nash, Morris Segal, and Rusty Kirsch. The captain was a Canadian named Willy and the Haganah representative, Yehuda Arazi of Aliyah Bet fame.

There were nine pregnant women aboard, two giving birth on the voyage, one to a boy, the other to a girl. The sea was rough during the major part of the voyage. (On the fourth day rope rails had to be slung across the decks for the safety of the passengers) and many sickened and retched. The diet was hard bread and foul-tasting tinned sardines. The habit of trivia collection formed by the DPs in the concentration camps, had not left them and now they collected the sardines others had pushed away and carefully wrapped up biscuits they would not eat immediately.

The Fabio made Crete on her last gallons of fuel. The hat went round for money to buy more. All gave who could. The day was a furnace and numbers of men found relief by diving into the sea and swimming around the vessel. Eventually, drums of oil were obtained and forty eight hours later the Fabio sailed again.

Haifa's mountain range came into sight on the tenth day. This was a signal for a drama of the times. Down came the Italian flag, up went the Israeli. The name Fabio was covered, the Hebrew name "Ha'Mored"⁶⁰ displayed. Louis Hack smiled broadly: this was something to write home about: the honour of hoisting the Israeli flag had been given to him. Shortly before Gerald Davimes and George Schlachter landed on the "Pan York", Sept 13th, and Harold Cort, David Magid, Leon Rosen, Dennis Rudnick and Joe Rudnick arrived on the "Caserta" Sept 12th.

Other known September air arrivals Haifa:

⁵⁸ "DP's - Displaced Persons".

⁵⁹ The names of the S.A. passengers might not be complete, and might also apply to the other sea arrivals.

⁶⁰ "Ha-Mored" - The Rebel.

3rd September: Naomi Rachel Ben-Nun, Lionel David Hirschowitz, Rose Meltzer, Sender Buksnevsky, Osner Wilton, Di Penn.

9th September: Lionel (Kappy) Kaplan, Ruth Kaplan.

18th September: Itzhak Balkin, Louis Getz, Solly Bental, Abe Novikow, Simon Novikow, Jack Freedman, Chanan Rybko, Abe Palestine, Harry Klass, Dodke Strauss.

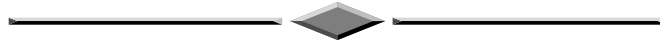
20th September: The nurses, Felicia Phyllis Fisch, Mickey Shapiro, Freda Celia Myers.

Additional known Sept sea arrivals for Haifa were:

“Atid” 9th Sept: Julius Kaplan.

“Nurit” 13th Sept: Albert Rachman & Ethelreda Shapiro.

“Mishmar HaEmek” 20th Sept: Israel Joshua Jacobson.



SKIRMISHES

In the war histories it would be called “a skirmish”. It was a torrid, unforgettable twenty four hours for South Africans Lockie Fainman, a medic, David Susman, Benny Landau, Jeff Perlman, Gordon Mandelzweig, Joe Woolf, Mike Snipper, Ziggy Stein, Max Krensky, Colin Marik, and Kenyans Stanley Medicks, Ian Walters and Jack Banin. The period: September 7 and 8.

On a mountain named Kabul⁶¹, overlooking the Arab village of Tamra in the Central Galilee, the Arab Liberation Army had planted a troublesome group of snipers. Two platoons of the 72nd battalion of the 7th Armoured Brigade were sent to remove them.

The platoons were comprised entirely of English speaking volunteers led by English speaking Sabra commanders, Zacharia Feldman and Aharoni Landman, both much loved and respected by their men. Aged 22 at the time, they had been close lifelong friends in Haifa. Separated in the early period of the fighting they were reunited when posted to the re-organised 72nd. Later, when Feldman was killed in action on November 2, the last day of the Hiram Operation, Landman remained one of the few survivors of their school class to emerge from the war.

Another two lifelong friends in the unit were the South African sergeants of the above mentioned platoons, Jeffrey Perlman and David Susman. Not only had they had been school friends, in WW 2 they had served together in the Royal Natal Carbineers infantry regiment. Two of their grandparents had originated from the same Lithuanian shtetl Rietuva.

At two a.m. the men moved up the hill and succeeded in pushing the enemy off. They had no implements to dig in and used their bayonets. "I remember someone lighting a cigarette", Fainman recorded in his diary, "and then realized that dawn was very near".

The first light was the signal for the Arabs to renew the battle: "Bullets whined over our heads and we lay low in the half-trenches we had built. I must have fallen asleep and was suddenly awakened by the voice of Jeff Perlman, calling "Medic! Medic! Someone has been hit!"

Fainman grabbed his kit and rushed to the forward position where he found a man with a bullet wound through his neck. One of the officers helped the South African to carry the wounded man down to a stretcher at first base.

He dressed the wounds of American Dick Feurman and carried him part of the way down the hill before returning a second time.

⁶¹ South African established Moshav Manof is situated on Mount Kabul.

The volunteers had been surrounded on three sides and were being pushed off the hill. A wounded man was reported to be lying in an advance position, not visible. Fainman hesitated for a moment, then grabbed his kit and ran to the position indicated. A sniper spotted him and started firing. Terrified, as Fainman confessed, he fell behind a rock and waited while the bullets sprayed the rocks and earth around him. A bullet punctured his kitbag. Fainman called to four men to direct him to the wounded man but they were too engaged in fighting back. He ran to the place where he thought the man was and found him. Having dressed his wounds, he dragged him to a safer position.

Another soldier, Max Schmulewitz had got it severely in the back. Schmulewitz, a volunteer from Britain was a survivor of the holocaust, having been born in Romania. Fainman saw a jelly-like mass of blood on Schmulewitz's vest which he thought was a kidney section. He dressed the wound hastily and, assisted by three men, set off with the injured man down the hill. "We had to carry him face downwards and often one or another of us would slip and hurt him. He was groaning and feeling really bad. We rested many times to make it easier for him."

There were more wounded men to attend, Fainman had not completed their dressings when Benny Hershberg, a Belgian, was brought to him⁶². His armpit had been torn completely away. He was dead.

At that stage I nearly collapsed, too, and shouted murder at some of the villagers. Each time we passed through with a casualty, they looked through their windows, staring at this group of tired men bringing in their wounded. I could not help pitying the poor kids who had to see all this.

Returning, Fainman learned of six more casualties, among them David Susman and another medic.

Joe Woolf adds:

I feel sure that I was one of the three men who assisted to carry down the wounded Schmulewitz, as I definitely remember carrying someone face downwards as described by Fainman.

I hardly knew anyone, as I had only been posted to No. 1 Platoon the day before, after about ten days of training.

It happened thus:

Having no entrenching tools, my partner Hershberg and I dug shallow slit trenches in the difficult rocky terrain, using a scout's sheath knife I had, and our British steel helmets. Our section of ten men, five of whom were Canadians, had been positioned on the extreme right of the company, relatively safe from the intense counter-attack fire of the enemy Bren machine guns.

Suddenly our platoon sergeant, David Susman appeared and called on me to assist in the evacuation of a badly wounded man. No stretchers were available on the mountain. Only then did I have to face the hail of fire and ricocheting bullets flying all over.

On returning to my section who had withdrawn behind a stone wall of a now roofless hut, I learnt that Hershberg had been killed. A burst of Bren fire had gone right through the wall. On reflection, if I had not been called out, I could very well have been hit by the same burst. Fate!!!

Fainman returned to the hill once again to help bring in more dead and wounded. ("Even my cigarettes were soaked in blood").

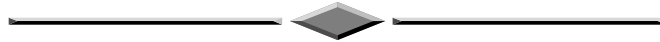
On return to camp Jeff Perlman told Fainman he was to be cited for devotion to duty⁶³. In the same skirmish a small South African group comprising David Susman, Gordon Mandelzweig

⁶² Canadian volunteer, Sydney Leisure and British volunteer Shlomo Bornstein were also killed in the same action

⁶³ Lockie Fainman was killed in a motor accident on the West Rand in the mid-1960s.

and Benny Landau, together with a Canadian and two British volunteers, originally from Eastern Europe (either Kindertransport or holocaust survivors), had been in a small stone-wall enclosure surrounded on three sides by the enemy. A bullet hit Susman from behind as he was crouching down, passing below his shoulder blade and out from his neck⁶⁴. Benny Landau, a first-year medical student, gave him first aid. Despite his wound, Susman managed to assist another wounded man to base. After a period in hospital, he convalesced at the home of Louis and Hetta Shapiro in Haifa. He returned to the Battalion in time to participate in operation Hiram, as an officer.

According to the men whom they led, Platoon sergeants Susman and Perlman deserved to be cited for leadership, coolness, inspiring and setting examples to their men.



Discharged from-hospital in September, Chaskelson rejoined his regiment, then at the Sarafand base. It was unrecognizable from the unit he had left. It had acquired armoured cars, more jeeps, half-tracks for mounted infantry and was almost the equivalent of a regiment. It still went by the old name of battalion 9 and was getting ready for the big Negev push.

The Israeli penetration deeper into the Negev with this regiment and all its armour right through the very heart of an Egyptian army camp had Chaskelson gasping. The convoy moved at night. The instruction to every driver and, indeed, to every man, was "If a truck breaks down, you are to move to the side of the road and not say a word. There is a truck available for any straggler at the end. Jump on it, say nothing. Leave your truck or jeep where it is."

The convoy was led by Arabic-speaking Jews from Arab countries. It reached the big gates of the Egyptian camp through which it gained entry with the words: "Reinforcements coming through." The Jews passed masses of Egyptian armour on both sides of the road. Arabs on camels, shouting "Saida" waved at them.

Chaskelson, Philip Navon, Benny Miller, David Teperson, Clive Centner, Irwin Cohen, Alan Lipman, Jack Lipshitz, "Bolly" Malin, Rudy Matz, Georgie Jamieson, other South Africans, a handful of Americans, Canadians and a few English Jews came together in an enlarged platoon which immediately began ranging the desert.

There was one variation in the activities of the Negev unit to which Melville Malkin and Hillel Daleski belonged. The troop owned four "Napoleonchicks", vintage 65 mm guns, which it hauled swiftly from place to place and fired. Psychological warfare. Israeli patrols were made to seem everywhere. The unit's area of patrol was from kibbutz Revivim to near Majdal (Ashkelon) and it also skirmished between Ruchama and the ruins of Yad Mordechai.

On the eve of Operation Ten Plagues, some men of the unit, including Melville Malkin, went to Sarafand to accept delivery of 75 mm guns just landed in the country. They infiltrated these through Egyptian lines to Negba kibbutz, the Israeli position opposite the Egyptian-held Iraq el Suedan fortress.

The dividing line was frail. There was no peace in Jerusalem in any of the truce periods, but mutual harassment: sniping, sabotage, shelling and skirmishing. Every day brought its toll of dead for both sides. Lionel Hodes's September pen picture:

⁶⁴ Later, at the Haifa hospital, Susman discovered that the surgeon who treated him was his brother in law Jack Wilton

A city in a front line, front lines in a city... In some building Jews, in opposite buildings Arabs. On one side of a street Jews, on the other side Arabs. The walled Old City in Arab hands, its Jewish quarter destroyed, the New City in Jewish hands, its Arab quarters occupied. On the one side, Sabras and the returned Jews of the exile; on the other Arab legionnaires with their red keffiyas, the black-coated Palestinian Arabs and at Ramat Rachel, Egypt's Moslem Brothers.

Hodes was a senior mobile "ack" in Jerusalem, sometimes so close to the enemy that he could hear their talk.

In one major respect the situation of Jewish Jerusalem, had improved: food and supplies were flowing in, not escorted along the Latrun Road by UN observers as laid down by the conditions of the truce, but along the carved-out "Burma Road".

Moving with his unit to the "ghost" village of Sara on the "Burma Road", Hodes saw fresh evidence of the refugee tragedy.

The village was a pile of ruins with the gaunt arches of some broken buildings still standing. The remaining rafters were rotting and a musty smell hung in the air where dust and dirt scattered with the wind. There were the remains of shops and a little low drug-store with mortar and pestle and bottles and tins... and an abundance of cases and empty, cold ovens. Books littered the floors of the dilapidated schoolhouse. My friend Dan, in his explorations, found a 1948 edition of Sinclair Lewis's Kingsblood Royal and Bennet Cerf's Joke Book.

A September 11 extract from the diary of Lockie Fainman, mirrors another aspect:

We were sent to Birwa, an occupied Arab village about ten kilometres from Acre in the north. The silent stone houses tempt looters but very little remain. Smashed furniture litters the floors and splinters of mirrors crackle under our hob-nailed boots. The cemetery is an indictment of the unwholesome lives of the villagers - the proportion of young children's graves is immense⁶⁵.

The truce period spawned Machal grievances, engendered by enforced idleness, the people's hostility to the English language, strange Jews, brusque Sabras, high prices, no money, the wearying impact of polyglotism and the indifference to the volunteers of a population wrapped up in its own tragedies and problems.

"We'd sit round for two or three weeks at base", said pilot Issy Noach, and when we got a day off, we'd go to the Cafe Gal Hayam in Hayarkon Street and sit there bitching. They called us the chairborne division."

For ex-servicemen who had known the comforts of soldiers' clubs, easily available beds with white sheets, organized entertainment, often grateful words and admiring glances, and private hospitality, life became one of sharpening irritations. Of all the volunteers, the South Africans were the least affected for three reasons: they had a S.A. Zionist Federation office brooding over them like a mother, they had arrived with the least expectations and, by and large, they had the largest capacity for adjustment.

The home from home provided by the Zionist Federation's office run by Mike Udwin proved important and made the South Africans privileged among the volunteers. Available to them was a service in those little things which loom large in the lives of men and women far away from home: pocket money to supplement a meager pay packet, Federation paid cables to

⁶⁵ The Six Day War in 1967 was to uncover to Israeli eyes the refugee camps of the West Bank and Gaza - hovels of despair - in which their fellow Arabs and the leadership of the Arab world had left the Palestinians to rot since 1948, a pawn for their politics. By 1974 Israel had redeemed these refugees from their poverty.

parents, an address for letters, a distribution center for parcels, use of a telephone and get-togethers.

It could not have happened with any other Zionist Federation that its treasurer should arrive on the scene with two suitcases of polony, five hundred boxes of cigarettes and mail. Israel Dunsky, the bearer of these comforts for S.A. volunteers, was more than a dutiful representative of the South African Zionist Federation. He symbolized the "family" of South African Jewry.

The general disorganization of the new land was the main eroding force of morale. The malaise started with soldiers on leave in Tel Aviv. The fault was in the situation itself: limited accommodation for what could run into 8,000 men a day. The system required the soldier to report, to the Town Major. This meant joining a queue whose tardy progress consumed precious hours. Queue number two rewarded him with "entry of his pass" and a slip for an hotel and queue number three with the slip filled in with the name of the hotel.

Sometimes the queues did not move. Nobody saw it as his obligation to offer the soldiers an explanation. They were left standing, those at the head of the queues staring at vacated clerical seats.

"If no accommodation is available, why don't they tell us?" asked Lionel Hodes.

"We are a young State", apologized his young female Sabra companion.

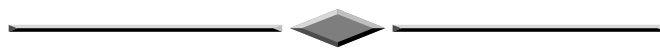
"I am not asking for skyscrapers, only information and courtesy".

The hotels were inferior and packed to capacity: four and five to a room meant for two; no pillows and no sheets; no privacy, the proprietor walking in early in the morning to fold up the beds; Gahal soldiers educated out of ablutions in the Nazi death camps.

The volunteer had to play it cool or wallow in his frustrations.

Joe Woolf's experiences were more positive

I never had any difficulties with the Town Major's offices which were responsible for assisting soldiers on leave with accommodation and simple recreation. Four or five to a room was part of the exigencies of the times. We enjoyed small luxuries too. The soldiers club on Balfour Street, opposite the old Technion in Haifa arranged accommodation for soldiers in private homes. On one occasion, I was put up by a wealthy Hungarian physician, with butler, maid etc. all fluent in English.



A not inconsiderable number of South Africans, particularly those placed in English-speaking units, made little contact with Israel or Israelis. Hayarkon Street was no eyrie for the great drama of the Land and the events unfolding within it. These passed them by. They returned to South Africa hazy about place names and as wise about the country as they would be of any other observed from customary visitors' haunts. Those without a sense of history and an empty Jewish background found little to which to respond.

This is not to say that the cafes, hotels and kiosks of Hayarkon Street were not interesting. They were. The swarm of foreign correspondents, the UN truce observers, and the cosmopolitan soldiery, made a lively buzz. The pranks of the idle men were legion. The newsmen, passing from Israel to the Arab capitals and back, were absorbing conversationalists. Die Burger's man, finding no war, visited settlements which removed his

initial impression that they were all in experimental stage. He had not realized, also, how meager had been the arms possessed by the Jews on May 14.

Machal attracted a few adventurers boasting military merits and rank which the heat of battle soon exposed as fake. On the other hand there were men like the Canadian Ben Dunkelman, later to become commander of the 7th Brigade, who served as number one of a three-mortar crew before his military identity was established. He was a much decorated infantry corps commander of World War 2 and was among those who landed in Normandy on "D" Day.

Lack of Hebrew barred the way of a number of Machal Army men who had filled command and staff posts in military establishments far larger and far more sophisticated than that of the Israel Army. The Israelis coped as best they could with the language problem, sending teachers into the camps.

The language problem of the Army was vividly experienced by Gordon Mandelzweig. Promoted to sergeant of a sapper platoon, he found himself in charge of men who could speak only Hebrew, or only English or Yiddish or an Eastern European language. He coped by splitting the platoon into language units led by corporals who understood English.

The South Africans found easy adjustment with the quiet-speaking and good-humoured British Jews. Friction was sharpest between the Americans and Israelis, but the encounter leaves no room for generalization. Some Americans chose the wrong country for the role of saviours; some came for the adventure; some had families dependent on them and had no alternative but to return home. Some were braggarts and loud in their demands. A few left for monetary reasons: they had expected high salaries and were taken aback by the below subsistence pay in the Israel forces. Melville Malkin recalls an occasion, when nineteen were told to pack their bags and go home. Cyril Steinberg echoed the general South African bewilderment with his recollection that "it never occurred to us to seek pay for our services."

There remained among the Americans a remarkable corps of dedicated men whose contribution was massive. In the Air Force there stood out like giants, Dov Kinarti, Danny Shimshoni and Al Schwimmer, all top flight engineers. Kinarti was a Harvard graduate, Shimshoni from Princeton. Schwimmer, starting as a schoolboy tinkering with flivvers and selected some years later as flight engineer on one of the planes that took President Roosevelt and his party to the Casablanca conference with Churchill and De Gaulle, had aeronautical credentials which testified how fortunate was the Jewish State in capturing the imagination of this young Jew. The trio brought technological expertise to the IAF. Kinarti is today a director of one of the large American aviation companies and Shimshoni is Professor of Philosophy at the Tel Aviv University. Schwimmer, a master of technological improvisation, became the founder and director of Israel's air construction enterprise.

The Canadians too, were formidable soldiers and worthy men. Joe Woolf recalls the group of Canadians in the 72nd and 79th battalions as "a great bunch of guys"

However, a handful of shady adventurers did succeed in slipping into Machal ranks through negligent screening committees. Some chancers passed back home through Israeli jails.

Collectively, the South Africans came to be regarded as amongst the pick of Machal.

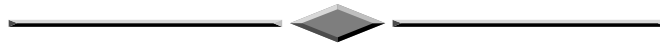
The impact of the Sabra on the volunteers was varied, ranging from admiration to distaste. For some he was an uncouth frontiersman with a feature unknown to the stereotype of the frontiersman, namely, his intense ideologies. Others were magnetized. Melville Malkin found the Sabras of his unit personalities of character and quality. Philip Navon, in another Negev unit, stayed because of the impression they left on him. Dr. Lionel Meltzer noted in his diary: "I came to know the Palmach, male and female ...well ..., and a nicer and tougher bunch of

kids it is difficult to imagine." Dr. Jack Medalie, Palmach doctor, decided he could not separate himself from "this breed of men."

Joe Woolf recalls with admiration the Sabra soldiers his unit encountered:

Our "B" company Sabra platoon commanders were of the finest anywhere. One, Zacharia Feldman was killed in action. I often still see the other, Aharoni Landman, who continues to live in the same house on the Carmel in Haifa.

"A" company of the 72nd comprising former Etzel volunteers also had some fine Sabra officers. Their commander, Luxie Luxemburg, was also loved and respected by his men. One platoon comprised ex-Altalena boys including Dov Shilansky, later to become speaker of the Knesset. Hearing them singing Polish and Russian songs while on the march was really inspiring.



COUNT BERNADOTTE ASSASSINATED

His first proposals rejected by both Israel and the Arab States, Count Bernadotte tried again. His final attempt at a solution contained the following suggestions sent to the UN Secretary General on September 16:

1. The Negev should be defined as an Arab area.
2. Ramle and Lydda towns should be included in the Arab area.
3. All Galilee should be included in the Israel area.
4. Haifa Port and Lydda airport should be free zones open to the use of the Arab states.
5. Jerusalem should be put under effective UN supervision with maximum local autonomy for Jew and Arab.

Bernadotte was assassinated next day, September 17. He was on his way through the Jewish part of Jerusalem to Government House when his car was blocked by a jeep whose four occupants opened fire, killing him and one of his subordinates, French Col. Serat. The assailants escaped. The Fatherland Front, which had never been heard of before and was never heard of again, claimed responsibility for the attack. It had clearly been formed for the purpose of Bernadotte's assassination. Israel's Chief of Police was satisfied that the Fatherland Front was a splinter, and not necessarily a dissident splinter, of the Stern group.

Luck was with Frederick G. Beard, a South African today living in Durban, who had been appointed Finance Officer in charge of the Arab Refugee problem. Mr. Beard should have accompanied Count Bernadotte but was left behind in Beirut with instructions to visit refugees on the border and sort out certain problems there.

The government and people of Israel reeled to the shock of the assassination. A new-born nation, fighting for its survival, claiming rights to international acceptance and membership of the United Nations, could not have been more wickedly injured in its name and its cause by its worst enemies than it was by its own extremist sons.

The South Africans immediately affected by the assassination were Basil Herman and Dov Judah. It fell to Herman as duty liaison officer with the UN on that particular day to convey the news to the head of the UN military mission in Israel, a Swedish colonel who happened to be Bernadotte's uncle. Herman steeled himself for the tormentingly difficult task. He knocked at the Colonel's door, snapped to attention, saluted, apologized for the intrusion and quietly conveyed the sad tidings and the sympathy of Israel's General Staff.

The Colonel heard the news without losing self-possession. After a pause, he expressed his appreciation for the sympathy and sank into himself. "One of the most unpleasant duties I had to perform during the war", Herman observed.

Dov Judah was at the Air Force Mess on the beach front when he received a call from Tolkowsky to return immediately. There he was told the news. He phoned Yadin who ordered a full alert. Judah called the Air Force to emergency stand-to. There was no knowing how the Arabs would exploit this self-inflicted blow to Israel.

Lionel Hodes, newly-joined to an artillery unit just arrived at Abu Gosh in the Jerusalem Hills, picked up the story of the assassination as it swept through the ranks.

"By whom?"

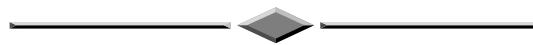
"They say unidentified Jews."

The men fell silent. We prepared for sleep, saying little. No one could confirm the report. Everyone had heard from someone else. Perhaps only a rumour? But no, the following hours brought confirmation. I was at the roadside when the cortege with the ambulance containing the bodies passed on its way to Haifa.

At the Italian Hospital in Haifa, Sisters Benedict and Marie Roux attended the post-mortem on the dead men.

The Fabio, arriving on this day, docked at 4.30 p.m. but its passengers only disembarked six hours later, "Why the delay?" all asked in a consuming impatience. The rumour spread of something untoward that had happened. UN interrogators came aboard. The routine of many questions and dumb answers followed.

The passengers finally stepped down the gangway in muted spirit.



Lechi and the Irgun had continued to operate after the Altalena affair in Jerusalem. Now, under hastily promulgated emergency laws, the Provisional Government declared the Stern group an illegal organization. Israeli forces surrounded the group's bases and arrested hundreds.

Four days later, the Provisional Government delivered an ultimatum to South African born Samuel Katz of the Irgun High Command, in the following terms:

1. The Irgun Zvai Leumi must accept the Law of the State in regard to the Army, enlistment and arms.
2. All Irgun fighters in Jerusalem were to join the Army of Israel and take the oath of every soldier.
3. All arms were to be handed over to the Army.
4. If within twenty four hours the terms were accepted none would suffer for infringements committed against the law of Israel, and would be treated like every other Jew.
5. If within the time stated the demands of the Government were not fulfilled, the Army would act with all the means at its disposal.

"We could have resisted", wrote Katz. "I calculated that it would be enough to hold out for three days in order to achieve a cease fire and to restore the status of the current

negotiations with Yitzchak Gruenbaum, Minister of Interior. But Begin and I and the Irgun as a whole did not want civil war. We decided to accept the terms."⁶⁶

In a Press interview before the final disbanding, Katz declared: "We infringed no laws. This same Government, in earlier negotiations, was told we accept the military and administrative authority of the Military Governor of Jewish Jerusalem and the Government recognized the Irgun Zvai Leumi in Jerusalem as a separate organization. As such it negotiated with us; and as such we have operated."

With this final blast, Irgun passed off the stage of history.

At about the same time that the ultimatum was given, U.S. Secretary of State George Marshall was speaking to the General Assembly of the United Nations in Paris:

The United States considers that the conclusions contained in the final report of Count Bernadotte offer a generally fair basis for settlement of the Palestine question, and strongly urges the parties and the General Assembly to accept them in their entirety as the best possible basis for bringing peace to a distracted land.

This declaration astounded President Truman who had not been consulted. He sent a sharp cable to the U.S. delegation that "no action is taken on the subject of Palestine by any member of our delegation without specific authority by me." The President required that the text of all statements on the subject be cleared by him.

The State Department's declaration had deeply embarrassed the President. It contradicted the Democratic Party's Palestine plank in the presidential election and also a specific promise by Truman to Dr. Weizman, former leader of the World Zionist Movement, that the Negev would not be severed from the Jewish State. Truman forced a dilution of the U.S. statement with a clarification in the name of the State Department, that "the Bernadotte Plan provides a sound basis for the adjustment of Arab-Israeli differences." In an address in New York, President Truman told his largely Jewish audience: "No matter what you read in the newspapers, the United States will never vote to take away any land from the State of Israel...without the consent of the people of Israel." The wide gap on Palestine between the White House and the State Department in these months of a presidential election was now completely exposed.

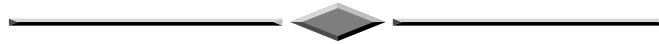
The hitherto little-known Negev desert was now, in fact, a playball in a tangled politics. Britain, fearing rightly that her days of imperial rule over Egypt were coming to an end, strongly supported the Bernadotte Plan. She was particularly interested in the recommendation to hand over the desert to Abdullah's Transjordan. This would enable Britain to transfer her air bases to the region. The U.S. State Department, fearing Russian designs in the Middle East, backed Britain. Also in support were the Pentagon and petroleum and missionary interests. Against these pressures was the Jewish pressure with its insistence that it was in the interests of the west to assign the Negev to Israel as an alternative base should the Suez Canal zone ever become unavailable to the West.

These developments gave an edge to Israel's resolve to drive the Egyptians back whence they came - and quickly. Physical occupation had become of supreme importance if the desert was not to be lost in the chaos of unforeseeable developments. The chaos was best reflected in rivalries now openly welling up in the Arab camp:

September 28: "All-Palestine" Government, established in Gaza by Egypt in connivance with Haj Amin Hussein, Mufti of Jerusalem, requests recognition from all Arab governments.

⁶⁶ "Days of fire", by Samuel Katz

September 29: King Abdullah, of Transjordan, rival of Mufti, rejects call, declaring Gaza government would not be allowed to operate in territory under Jordan control.



THE AIRMEN

On September 25 Danny Rosin was confirmed in the post of O.C. of the 103 (Dakota) squadron at Ramat David. It happened thus: When he was assigned to the airfield on his arrival in July, the two men running the show - it could not be put higher than that - were Claude Duval and an American non-Jew, Jimmy Blackwood. These two were doing most of the flying with the one or two Dakotas at their disposal. In mid-August Claude Duval left and Blackwood took charge. Struck down by illness, Blackwood asked Rosin to assume command. This was the appointment Judah now confirmed.

In a workshop at Sarona, during this period, a group of air mechanics, under the leadership of Ish Shalom, were building a Spitfire using scrounged "bits and pieces". Members of the team had ranged the country looking for parts. One wing was from an Egyptian aircraft shot down over Jaffa. The tailplane was constructed from three sections found at different airfields. Taitz was responsible for welding the airframe parts. Canadian volunteer, Dave Panar, in civilian life a professor of mathematics, was responsible for assembling the engine. Slowly but surely, the plane took shape, a cross between a Mark IX and a Mark V and a bit more that belonged to no text-book.

The man who dared to test the plane was Boris Senior. Louis Taitz and an English Jew were given the task of warning the immediate anti-aircraft not to fire on the plane. The two men left on a motor cycle a half hour before Senior would take off. An agonizing experience awaited them. Neither could speak Hebrew. The guard of the camp refused to let them in. Already they could hear the Spit revving up. After screaming and shouting and thrusting their army identity books under the nose of the guard, they were allowed in.

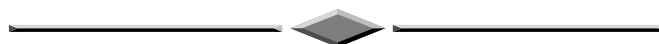
The O C was at lunch but came out at the commotion. Fortunately he understood and spoke English. Taitz saw the crew running to the guns and shouted to the officer, "Don't fire - it's ours!"

"Hold fire!" the officer shouted. In the sudden silence the men heard, then saw, the Spit pass over, flying low.

The Israeli soldiers turned to the officer. "Ours", he said and began explaining. The faces of the soldiers were rapt. Then, the explanation over - "Hurrah! Hurrah!" Hands flung into the air in acclamation. For Louis Taitz, music ("My most moving moment in the war").

The Spitfire was used for photographic reconnaissance in the succeeding months. "Good old number 10" was the endearment by which it became known. The experiment was successful and two additional planes were similarly constructed from discarded scrap.

Part of fighter Squadron 101 moved temporarily to a little airfield near Kibbutz Ma'abarot between Netanya and Gedera, pilots and mechanics scraping out a new runway. The airfield had a brief existence. The squadron would soon move to Hatzor (Kastina of British days) to play its part in the havoc that would be wrought on the Egyptian Air Force.



September also brought some light on the Rapide air ambulance which failed to reach Israel. The story has gaps which research has been unable to fill. Joe Katzew, then later Port

Chapter 12

Elizabeth's Issy Noach, were told they would be flying the plane to, and in, Israel. Finally Alf Lindsay flew it up, as already related. Before this, Dr. Harry Feldman, of Brakpan, had been designated doctor, and Sylvia Sher, nurse, for the plane which, apparently, could not fly as a Shield of David plane and went up as a Red Cross air ambulance.

"You are to be impartial and serve, Jew and Arab alike," Dr. Feldman reports authority in Pretoria telling him.

"But you know I am going over with the blessing of the Jews of South Africa", Feldman replied. "I can't make any promises."

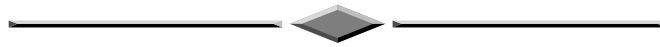
According to Dr. Feldman it was left at that.

The next established fact is that Issy Noach, of Port Elizabeth, ex-SAAF 31 squadron, was sent to Cyprus to wait the arrival of the plane and waited in vain for six weeks. Finally he hitched a lift with a British pilot running supplies in a Tiger Moth to Israel, landing early in August.

In September Cecil Wulfsohn and Colin Legum were in Geneva. "Let's find out what happened to the plane," Legum suggested.

They repaired to Red Cross International, seeing the number one man there. "Yes", he said, "the plane flew under our auspices and we instructed the pilot to fly it to Amman. It was my personal decision." He was not prepared to discuss the matter. "I take full responsibility."

The ambulance, fully-equipped and packed with medicaments, represented a loss of R40, 000.



The UN colonel (a Swede) landed at Ramat David unannounced. This was contrary to agreement. The Air Force, in any case, suspected UN observers of passing information to the Arabs.

On duty at Operations was Ernest Esakof. He phoned Dov Judah. "What shall I do?"

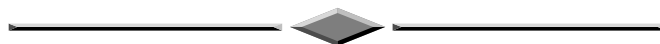
"Arrest him!"

The 21 year-old Yeoville boy, was not comfortable, but he snatched up a Smith and Wesson handgun.

"Follow me," he said to the Colonel. "You're under detention." He ushered the exploding official into the administration building.

Colonel and youth argued hotly. "These are my instructions", said Esakof.

"Let him go" was Tel Aviv's later instruction to Esakof. "Odd, the thing's one remembers", said Esakof, eminent New York doctor, twenty six years later. "There were bigger things in the war than that. But this sticks."



On September 22 four South African fighter pilots, Syd Cohen, Boris Senior, Arnold Ruch and Tuxie Blau, together with Modi Alon, were flown out of Israel to Yugoslavia, thence to Czechoslovakia, to bring in the first covey of six of the fifty purchased Spitfires. Since Jack

Cohen and Sam Pomerance would each be flying one of the planes, there was one pilot too many. It had not yet been decided whether the sixth plane would be flown by Tuxie Blau or Arnold Ruch. The navigation for the pilots would be by Cyril Steinberg in a mother ship, a Skymaster DC4, which would keep company with and direct the Spitfires all the way home.

The pilots disembarked at Niksic in Yugoslavia where two Norseman aircraft, one piloted by Sam Pomerance and the second by Phil Marmelstein, (navigated by Issy Greenberg after a crash lesson in navigation from Cyril Steinberg) were waiting to ferry them to Czechoslovakia. The Skymaster, needing repairs, would wait for them at Niksic.

On the return trip to Czechoslovakia, things went smoothly enough for those in Pomerance's Norseman but Marmelstein lost his way. He had as passengers, Issy Greenberg and five pilots and force-landed on a potato field of a State farm. Note the circumstances: an unmarked plane; foreign men; gathering darkness. It seemed suspicious. Both police and fire brigade were soon on the scene. Ruch and Marmelstein were innocent of any European language. Greenberg could muster a broken German and a crude Yiddish. The men were interrogated for some time. Greenberg confined himself to a few words: "Contact the Israel Embassy in Prague. Ask for Dr. Felix. He will explain." The man most worried was the "boss" of the State farm. He drew Greenberg aside, whispering: "Tell me, why you couldn't pick another place? I am the only Jew in the countryside and you have to land on my farm"

Next morning the plane was allowed to continue its flight and Ruch and Greenberg joined their fellow South Africans who had been anxiously awaiting them.

The Czechs were sour again, expressing the sourness in two ways: first, confining the men to their hotel, then, with a surly impatience, hustling them off to the airfield at Kumovoc, with the order to get out of the country as quickly as possible.

"As quickly as possible" proved to be September 26 four days after the pilots had left Israel. Ruch or Blau for the sixth plane? Ruch was by far the more experienced of the two but the reward went to Blau for his zealous efforts in learning to fly a Spitfire.

So the six planes took off for Niksic, Yugoslavia, where the Skymaster mother ship was waiting for them. Ruch and Greenberg would return in the Skymaster. They were ferried to Niksic.

The weather was bad. The Spits overflew Hungary, but eventually Niksic airfield came into view. Here the flight had its first disaster, the loss of Tuxie Blau's Spitfire. He bellied down with his undercart up, escaping with slight injuries, but the plane was badly damaged and had to be abandoned. "We nearly wept", Jack Cohen recalled. Blau felt very bad.

The South Africans had known more sophisticated airfields than that of Niksic: the area was one of an open field without runways, a number of tents, a river with ice-cold water, a couple of boxes and an American Aerocobra fighter shot down in World War 2 lying upside down in a stream, with its wings used as a bridge.

Here the group stayed for four days.

The delay was caused by two factors. As in Czechoslovakia, so here too, the friends of yesterday were now suddenly cooler. The base was in the charge of the Yugoslav Red Army whose guards were not permitted to fraternize with the men from Israel. All facilities, however, were granted while repair work continued on the DC4 navigator plane. The pilots removed the Yugoslav markings they had painted on the planes with water paint, replacing them with Israel's Shield of David.

Chapter 12

If the men did not feel the chill of open arrest, this was thanks to Syd Cohen and Arnie Ruch, men of irrepressible humour and morale, and to quiet Jack Cohen who filled in the time making clogs - an idea that caught on with the rest.

In this four day period the fliers sat down to sessions on what would be the longest hop ever undertaken by Spitfires. In the time now available, the briefing became thorough. The route would be over Albania, with the turn off to Israel just after Turkey and over Rhodes Island. There was civil war in Greece and the country would be avoided. The mother ship, it was emphasized, carried rescue equipment and Israeli naval patrols would be cruising the Mediterranean waters below.

On the fourth day the Yugoslavs gave the men from Israel exactly one hour to get off the field with all that was theirs. The DC4 took the air first and the Spits, keeping visual contact, followed. The Spitfires were not armed, everything having been sacrificed to fuel space.

The navigating plane and the Spits matched speed. Steinberg armed with his slide rule, did all the calculations of fuel consumption. The "chick" planes would call him up and he would work out how many miles they had done and how much fuel they had left. The main task was that of the Spit pilots throttling back to the Skymaster's speed and remaining with it.

The planes were flying between the islands of Rhodes and Cyprus when Modi Alon called the Skymaster to say his slipper tank supply was exhausted. Steinberg made a swift calculation: total amount of fuel used up to that point, gallons per hour, time still ahead.

"You can't make it", he said. He checked again.

"No option. Go to Rhodes and land - and good luck."

A sad "Shalom" came over the air from the departing Alon.

Two minutes later, a similar dismaying report came from Boris Senior.

Another check. "Join Modi", Steinberg instructed.

A sad moment. The three remaining Spitfires nosed towards Ramat David and the Skymaster to Ekron. Syd Cohen, Jack Cohen and Sam Pomerance made it in six and a half hours, Syd Cohen landing first. At the airfield, amid great excitement, a welcoming ceremony had been prepared. The leading personalities of the new nation and its armed forces were waiting. The tidings of the pilots gave to the occasion the Shakespearean atmosphere of "one auspicious and one dropping eye, in equal scale dole and delight."

What had gone wrong? Sam Pomerance and the two Cohens sat down to probe the misadventure with Senior and Alon⁶⁷. Like the two pilots of mishap, these three had also come up against gauge riddles. Jack Cohen:

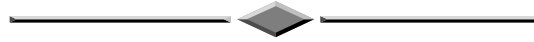
I decided to wait for the engine to cut, start up again on main tank and then pump fuel from the wing tanks to the long-range and then go over to the long-range again.

Eventually I noticed that my long-range tank gauge started registering and when it dropped low enough, I switched on the booster pumps. To my surprise it didn't bring the level up very much. Both Alon and Senior apparently didn't wait and switched on the booster pumps too soon, with the result that they pumped their fuel overboard.

Something learned for Operation Velvetta 2. And this too, that they should be more thorough about the inspection of parachutes. On repacking, it was found that these had not been checked in Czechoslovakia and that the harness had been eaten through by rats.

⁶⁷ Senior and Alon in Rhodes - see Chapter 13,

Jack Cohen and Sam Pomerance would be flown back within days to Czechoslovakia to prepare the flight of twelve more planes.



THE DOCTORS

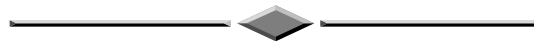
The preparation of the Yiftach Brigade for its infiltration into the Negev was to yield an astonishing experience to Dr. Jack Medalie. Moshe Kalman summoned him. "I want the whole battalion examined", he said. "We shall be cut off in the Negev. I cannot take soldiers who are not fit".

"When are we going?" Medalie asked. "Tomorrow."

"I can't possibly examine 1,000 in that time." (800 men, 200 women).

Kalman was reasonable. Doctor and commander conceived the new plan of calling the battalion together and putting the problem directly to it: "If we had to go into action tonight, who could not go? Who is not fit enough?"

The subsequent screening process brought to light a boy with two artificial legs who had been fighting with the brigade all along, two who had severe arm injuries and two who were blind in one eye. Since they had fought up to then and since they wished to continue, Medalie did not bar them. Of thirty screened, twenty were sick, a few desperately. Of these, many rejoined the unit when they recovered. It took Medalie some time to adjust to the truth that in the ranks of Israel's "crack Palmach troops" were some severely disabled young people. They were carried along by their youth and their spirit.



"I have a patient for you", said Dr. Moses to June Medalie, Jack Medalie's physiotherapist wife.

"Who?" "Paula Ben Gurion: A touch of arthritis."

"But I didn't come..." "That", said Dr. Moses, "is not the right attitude to the wife of the first soldier of the land."

June agreed and had reason to be grateful to Paula Ben Gurion who led her and Harold Osrin, a South African in the Air Force, to an elderly doctor in her street who gave June his ancient, but useful equipment.

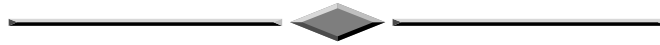
Osrin set up the equipment for June at the Djani hospital in Jaffa. There she continued her work with victims of mine blow-ups, always carrying in mind one of her first patients, a Palmach youth. His shoes were very shiny; an uncommon sight in Israel. They were on stumps, not legs. The memory fed her dedication.



At the end of August Sisters Benedict and Marie Roux were transferred to the Italian Hospital in Haifa. This was entirely military and brought them in close contact with war casualties. The hospital also served as a clearing station for cases from the front, as well as for rehabilitative work and cold surgery.

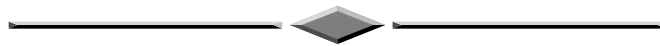
With the truce constantly being broken, the operating theater became extremely busy with emergency work. Surgery carried out with the barest necessities, was no disaster. On the contrary, the patients did amazingly well. The operating theaters had no air conditioning of any type and with the khamsins blowing, the long hours were exhausting. There was, however, a feeling of comradeship and Sister Benedict never lost the feeling that she was involved in important history. It buoyed her up, she was to say later, to the necessary effort.

She was given the Hebrew name of Bracha (Blessing) and Sister Roux the biblical name of Ruth (the Moabite).



After four months, the backlog of soldiers requiring reconstructive surgery had been dealt with. Penn was exhausted. Long hours and the strain had left their mark on him. Somewhere he must also have drunk polluted water. He decided to return home, earn a living and recuperate and, if required, return to Israel to continue his work.

The Penns were making their travel arrangements when Count Bernadotte was assassinated and all exit from the country blocked. However, they heard of a cargo plane leaving for Europe and obtained permission to board it. They had no idea where it was going or how long it would take to get to its destination, there was no food or water aboard. The plane stopped in Athens and then flew through the night in intense cold. The cargo cabin was neither pressurized nor air-conditioned, and when the plane crossed the Alps, the Penns reached the nadir of misery. The plane landed in Geneva, having taken twelve hours to do a flight which today normally takes three. The South African couple dragged their bags to the Beau Rivage Hotel and slept round the clock. After a few days' rest, they returned to South Africa. Penn was to return to Israel in 1949 to broaden his labors for the State.



Dr. Lionel Meltzer's diary jotting on September 16: "It looks as though things are about to happen soon. Operation orders are being written one after the other, and each front becomes the main focus in turn. It isn't quite certain whether the Jews or the Arabs will start first. I'm a bit worried about Rose being here. The Egyptians are likely to bomb Tel Aviv again. I should be running round the forward areas much more than I do now, but I don't like leaving her alone."

IN BRITAIN

"I need an office for West Air", said Cecil Wulfsohn.

"You've got one", replied Major Norman Kark, a former South African, Then a publisher, in London. The office in Grand Buildings, Trafalgar Square, was Kark's donation to the cause.

A senior reporter of the Evening News tracked Wulfsohn down in this office.

Four Beaufighters landing at Ramat David had made a Fleet Street sensation. A "film company" sought, and was granted, the co-operation of the RAF to make a film on New Zealand's participation in World War 2, one sequence of which would be a formation flight of Beaufighters. The Beaufighters flew to Israel and the film company disappeared.

"Those Dakotas you bought a few months ago...?" the reporter began.

Wulfsohn had had them flown to Scottish Aviation, Prestwick, for re-equipment and thence they had been flown by three British pilots to South Africa,

Wulfsohn was uncommunicative. "West Air operates from Johannesburg", he said. "They might know."

There was, in fact, no link between the vanished Dakotas and the vanished Beaufighters. The Beaufighters sequel was in Israel where delight at the acquisitions was tempered by the fact that the planes, lacking armament, could not be used. John Harvey⁶⁸, a non-Jew committed to the Jewish cause, solved the problem. He knew the owner of a Halifax four-engine bomber and arranged for its charter to bring in the armament and spares.

All went smoothly until Israel. Ekron remained dead to the plane's code call. The plane nosed to Tel Aviv. On duty was Ernest Esakof. The bomber was overhead. No one knew anything about it. He phoned Smoky Simon, speaking in Afrikaans. Simon did not know. Esakof anguished whether he should put on the runway lights or not and then, taking a chance, did so. The Halifax, piloted by a Briton, ploughed in, the crash taking its wheels off. The wings were laden. The airfield's night crew spent the hours taking out the arms. Next day a UN observer came to inspect the plane. It was off the runway, seemingly long abandoned.

THE MONTH'S DIARY

September 1-8: Meeting between commanders of Israel Army, Egyptian Army and Arab Legion, under chairmanship of General Riley.

U.N. "real truce" in Jerusalem, shattered by Legion shelling of Beir Israel and Musrara quarter.

Paraguay recognizes Israel.

U.S. Secretary of State announces his country will grant Israel full recognition after the Israeli elections.

September 9-16: Bernadotte in session with Israel Foreign Minister on demilitarization of Jerusalem.

Bernadotte returns to Rhodes to prepare report for UN General Assembly.

Supreme Court of Israel inaugurated in Jerusalem.

Fighting in Jerusalem.

September 17-19: San Salvador recognizes Israel.

UN's Bernadotte assassinated.

Dr. Ralph Bunche appointed Acting Peace Mediator.

Fighting in Jerusalem.

September 23-30: U.S. Secretary of State, George Marshall, calls on UN General Assembly to admit Israel and Transjordan to UN membership.

⁶⁸ See Chapter 19, "The Non-Jews".

Chapter 12

Heavy gun duels in Jerusalem.

Chaim Weizmann, World Zionist leader, arrives in Israel to become State's first President.

First Government budget presented to the Provisional Council of Government.

10,791 immigrants, during the month.

CHAPTER 13

IN A GREEK JAIL

From the four day outdoor detention at Nksic airfield, Boris Senior and Modi Alon came down to a fourteen-day confinement in Rhodes and Athens.

The two men had circled over the airfield of the island before landing, jettisoning their maps and other incriminating material. In this snatch interval they decided on their story, which was that they had flown from Israel on a long-range sea patrol and had run out of fuel.

The story was not believed and they were charged by their interrogators with being Communists. Certainly there was that about Senior which invited suspicion: two revolvers, and the contradiction of his South African passport and an Israeli identity card with a Czech visa in the name Daniel Anam, travel agent. Unknown to the men at the time also, was the fact that the Greeks had found between the elevator and stabilizer of one of the Spitfires a piece of jettisoned map. It showed a course line to an area in Yugoslavia from which the Communists were operating against the Greek Government.

The two men were placed under guard in separate rooms in an old castle in the heart of the island, and after a day or two were grilled separately by officers from Athens. Both youngsters were innocent of the gambits used on occasions like these. The officers told Senior that Modi Alon had confessed they were Communists assisting General Markos. A similar ruse was used to draw Alon. Both stuck to their stories. Though unable to break them down, the officers threatened to put them both before a firing squad.

Boris re-stated the facts. He was an Israeli, born in South Africa of a well-to-do Johannesburg family. He was not a Communist and never had been. These facts, he said, could surely be checked.

"How?" they asked.

Boris remembered an event of 1943. Before joining the SAAF he had tried to join the RAF in Rhodesia and this failing, the Belgian Air Force in the Congo. Both recruiting stations told him to go back to South Africa and join his own country's Air Force. In the train from Bulawayo to Johannesburg Senior fell into conversation with Greek pilots who had completed their training in Rhodesia and were bound for the Middle East. They would have a few hours to spare in Johannesburg before entraining to Durban. Senior took one of the pilots to his Parktown home. They spent the time playing classical records and "talking air force."

"The man's name?" Boris thought hard.

"George Lakadimos. A pilot officer, who got his wings in Rhodesia, in 1943. I don't know what happened to him in the war but if he is alive and can be found, he will confirm my story."

Within two hours George Lakadimos had been traced in Athens and brought to Rhodes, He scanned the bearded, unkempt prisoner brought before him.

"I don't know this man", he said flatly.

"But you do", Boris said and recalled the manner of their meeting and the subsequent hospitality of the Senior family to him. "Yes," he said, "that's true."

Boris Senior continues the story:

Chapter 13

I don't know if this encounter saved our lives. I believe it did. It paved the way for our release, but this was not immediate. Lakadimos sided with the intelligence officers and said to me: "You two had better tell the truth, the whole truth."

That was the last I saw of the man. Next day they brought me from my cell in the castle and said, "Your friend has told the truth and because you haven't, we're taking you to Athens for further questioning and freeing your friend. He is leaving for Israel."

I was young and I believed them. I was disappointed with Modi but what could I do?

A special Greek Air Force Dakota flew Senior to Athens. What he did not know was that Modi Alon was in the plane also. Alon guessed the Greeks were deceiving him because they put him in the cockpit, with the stern warning not to move. He deduced from the severity of the warning that Senior must have been placed aft, a suspicion confirmed when the two men were placed at different times in their cells in Athens, Senior first. The cells were near the prison kitchen and Alon noted that the warder carried two plates of food.

The treatment was not unpleasant, certainly less rigid than at Rhodes. Boris spent the two weeks reading a Reader's Digest "upwards, backwards, upside down, advertisements included." He had no notion that Alon was in a cell in the same row.

They were released. Senior's eyes opened in astonishment when he saw Alon. They fell into each other's arms. A plain-clothes man walked them out of the prison.

"Take us to the best hotel", Senior said. Each had 100 dollars "captain's money". The plain clothes man went with them to the door of the King George Hotel in Constitution Square.

In the street people pointed them out. The story had made a big splash in the Greek newspapers. The Jewish community of Athens rallied to the men. Both chose red pyjamas from one of the gift-offering Jewish stores and Alon a suit also.

Their adventure was not yet over. The Greeks insisting that there was an embargo not only on equipment to Israel but also on men of military age, proposed that the two should go either to Switzerland or South Africa. As luck had it, an Israel-bound PAAC plane landed at Athens Airport and Senior and Alon contrived to slip on to it.

The story has a tailpiece. Senior's parents, having lost their first son Leon in World War 2, had sought assurance from Boris that he would not engage in any dangerous activity. They were unaware that he was with Israel's fighter squadron, believing he was with Haganah in a base job. The veil fell shortly after Velveta when a friend said to them in Johannesburg: "You can be proud of your son." The parents learned for the first time of their son's real role in the war. Mrs. Senior flew off immediately to try to pull Boris out of the fighter squadron but was stranded in Rome, no passenger planes to Israel being available at the time. In Rome was Israel Dunskey who had learned from Dan Agron that Senior had failed to return with the Spitfire flight and was missing in Rhodes, believed to be under detention. For a week he fobbed off the anxious mother with stories ("Boris is going all over the show, you never know where he may be and I understand he is not in Israel and there is no point going there.") He promised to inform her as soon as information became available. It was a painful period both for Dunskey and the distracted mother. Word from Israel announcing Boris's return was the lifting of a great weight off the minds of both. Senior's father in Johannesburg said: "I bred an eagle and tried to clip its wings, but it didn't work."

Alon and Senior were back in Israel on the eve of resumed hostilities, but fate decreed that Alon would not lead his squadron to victory. He died in an accident on October 16. On the afternoon of this day, he and Ezer Weizman took off in a two-Messerschmitt mission from Herzliya. The mission completed, they turned to land at Ramat David. Weizman landed first. It was noted that Alon's plane (its radio was not functioning) was losing height. At that time

Syd Cohen and Battle of Britain pilot, Morrie Mann, were in two Spitfires ready to take off. Cohen thought that Alon was simply "buzzing the airfield". He did not seem to be in trouble. He continued to lose height and hit the tarmac as if he had crash-landed.

Syd Cohen:

The plane started burning; it did not disintegrate. I had no doubt that Modi had got out of the cockpit. I did not think anything had happened to him. Crash-landings frequently took place. Morrie Mann and I took off and completed our mission. Morrie Mann crash-landed on returning. I don't know what influenced this... We were told that Modi had not got out of the plane.

He perished in flames. His pregnant wife was one of the many eye-witnesses of the conflagration. The Margolius couple and Joe Levy, crew chief from South Africa, were among the others.

The news stunned Israel, but none more than the men of the fighter squadron. The nation mourned an air hero of whom it knew from mouth-to-mouth report, the fighter pilots a man whom they knew intimately and for whom they had the deepest respect.

On that night of D-minus one, Aharon Remez and Dov Judah attended a final operations meeting at Army HQ. On the way back in the car, they debated who should command the squadron now. There was no suitable candidate among the Israelis. Morrie Mann was the logical successor but after his crash-landing, he was never to return to operational flying. The choice narrowed to one between the two South Africans, Syd Cohen and Boris Senior. The choice fell on the man with the greater combat experience, Syd Cohen.

Syd Cohen accepted the post with sadness. It is not easy, under any circumstances, to step into the shoes of a fallen commander - and particularly an admired one; secondly he knew no Hebrew; thirdly, he had been a Flight Commander in the SAAF not a Squadron Commander; fourthly his men were a mixed, temperamental bag. Cohen's bulwark was to be Kalman Turin, an Israeli who undertook the administrative work. In the upshot Cohen, with leadership qualities of his own, became the personality after Alon to shape the future of Israel's fighter squadron.



Dov Judah had had his arguments with Yigael Yadin, Israel's Acting Chief of Staff, arguments not of heat but of education. The subject: the most effective use of the Air force in the projected Operation Ten Plagues designed to drive the Egyptians out of the Negev. The men who had grown up in Haganah and its striking force, Palmach, were creatures of guerrilla warfare who had not had air support in the past and had never operated in expectation of such support.

Given an Air Force, they used it naively. Judah was irked by the naivette and sought to apply the lessons of air warfare he and his colleagues had learned in the Western desert and Italy.

In colloquial terms what Judah said to Yadin in their first encounter was the following: "This business of your calling in our Fortresses to bomb two troublesome machine gun nests is nonsense. We are not going to do it. The first duty of the Israel Air Force is to destroy the Egyptian Air Force."

Yadin at that time had little faith that the IAF could drive the Egyptians out of the skies. Judah left him to brood over the essence of their discussions which was this: the Western desert battle was won initially by Allied air superiority, gained by hammering at the Luftwaffe and putting it out on the ground. Judah also summoned his recollections of the strategic and

tactical operations of SAAF squadron 24 under Margo in Italy. He elaborated the elementary principles: first attacks should concentrate on the enemy's marshaling yards, transports and fuel depots, damage to the central distribution and supply sources is damage to the whole system of supply, hangars are a primary target where there were hangars, there were aircraft, installations and mechanics, if two mechanics are knocked out, four pilots are grounded.

Yadin was not a man to close his mind to well-argued representations. Judah's plea that the Army's function was to tell the Air Force what was required of it and that the tactics and methods of implementation of the Air Force were for the Air Force itself to decide, won an attentive ear from him. He respected Judah's plea, despite contrary arguments from his field commanders, particularly Yigal Allon, whose insistence that the Army should have full control of the Air Force remained firm.

Yadin approved in principle the Negev air strategy worked out by Operations against the day the second truce would end, though he rejected Judah's request for the postponement of Operation Ten Plagues to enable the Air Force to bring in more Spitfires. The time table, he said, could not be altered and the Air Force would have to make do with what it had.

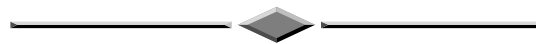
What the Air Force had was not negligible, though quantitatively inferior to what the Egyptians had. The IAF consisted of:

A heavy bombing squadron of three B 17s, based at Ramat David, American commanded, but with South Africans and others serving as gunners, wireless operators, bombardiers and navigators.

A bomber and transport squadron of two Dakotas supplemented by a "visiting" Dakota.

A fighter squadron of eight Messerschmitts, four Mustangs and five Spitfires based at Hatzor.

Six C-46's and five Norseman aircraft. This was 35 Flight based at Ekron.



ON THE GROUND

Although the truce still held officially in the first two weeks of October, there was mutual slaughter on the ground as the Israelis sought to dislodge the Egyptians from a host of strategic hills that controlled both the coastal highway and the road to the Negev. The seven-day battles of Hirbet Mahaz rank as among the most bitter engagements of the entire war. The Israeli units involved contained no South Africans but two, Geoff Stark and Harold Hassall, figure in the marginalia of this ferocious period.

It was made ferocious by the situation: the Israelis were straining at the leash to rid their country of the foreign armies breathing down their necks; the isolation of the Negev settlements could not be allowed to continue; the pretense of truce had to be ended, since the sabotage of water pipelines by the Egyptians carried with it the ever-present danger of thirst for settlers and soldiers alike.

Israel's Southern Command established its headquarters near Gedera on August 25 and began to plan Operation Ten Plagues, the purpose of which was to end the isolation of the Negev and to evict the Egyptian invasion army from the country. In September both the Israelis and the Egyptians intensified their preparations. The political disarray of the Arab confrontation states, now writ large, necessarily influenced Israel's military calculations. Egypt and Transjordan were tearing the Arab Palestinians and refugees apart, Egypt by

sponsoring the National Palestinian Council in Gaza, with the Mufti of Jerusalem at its head (October 1) and Transjordan by summoning a rival assembly of Palestine Arabs and refugees in Amman (October 5). This latter assembly rejected the temporary government of Gaza as "a step which would bring about recognition of partition as an established fact." On October 12, Egypt, Syria and Lebanon recognized the Gaza government.

These events had cast their shadows before them and, as Israel read the signs, both political and military, it seemed to her leaders that the Egyptians were now more vulnerable than they had been. It was a safe assumption that the most highly-trained of the Arab armies, King Abdullah's Arab Legion, would stand by idly if the Egyptian Army were attacked. It was apparent also that the Egyptian Army was hopelessly over-extended. Even her forces as far away as the southern outskirts of Jerusalem drew supplies from the Rafah headquarters base on the Mediterranean - this in a situation in which the Egyptian dispositions were narrow and long and lacking in depth. The Egyptians were a road-bound army, protected by scores of hill strongholds overlooking the roads and junctions. The Egyptian pattern of deployment created three strips. The first extended along the Mediterranean coast from Rafah to Isdud (Ashdod) and was held by six battalions. The second ran on a desert road from Rafah to Auja, thence through Beersheba, to Hebron, Bethlehem and the outskirts of Jerusalem; the third was an isolation belt between the Negev and the North, running from Majdal to Bet Guvrin, west of Hebron. In its later reduced form, it was to become known as the Faluja pocket, housing among others in its high-impregnable fortifications, a young officer named Abdul Nasser.

The Israeli Command saw its first task as that of disrupting Egyptian communications. This meant conquest of the enemy's road strongholds. With these in Israeli hands, the Egyptian Army would be in grave difficulties.

Kibbutz Shoal became one of the main jumping-off grounds for the units now girding their loins. Operation Ten Plagues was to be supported by artillery forces of a size unprecedented in the brief history of the Israel Army. This included four batteries of 75 mm guns, four of 65 mm, six and seven pounder guns and heavy mortars.

The Israelis struck on October 15/16.



A story went the rounds that Geoff Stark saved Harold Hassall's life. "It wasn't quite like that", Stark recalled. They were somewhere in the Negev. A platoon set forth after midnight to attack a strong point held by a Sudanese unit. The only veterans in the platoon, made up mainly of new immigrants, were Stark and Hassall (three years with the S.A. Infantry). In charge, with rank that would be equivalent to a corporal, was a kibbutznik who knew the terrain well. Tramping through a maze of wadis, Stark and Hassall hoped the kibbutznik would live up to his reputation since they seemed hopelessly lost. The kibbutznik did.

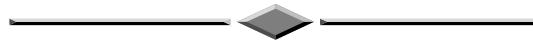
The enemy stronghold was defended by rolls of barbed wire. Sappers went in first with Bangalore torpedoes, destroying the first fence. The Sudanese opened fire. The Israeli platoon dropped to the ground and returned fire. Stark was in the middle of the advancing group and was shaken to note that the newly-arrived immigrants to his left and right were firing into the ground. He yelled to them to aim at the firing.

The Sudanese intensified their reply as the Israelis moved on to the second roll of wire. The immigrants broke rank when the corporal leader was hit. Quickly they retreated. Stark and Hassall found themselves alone with the wounded man. By the rules of the Army, dead and wounded were not allowed to be abandoned. Stark, the strong Wits University boxer, lifted the corporal, a big man, on to his shoulders, starting a nightmare tramp through the wadis

to... they didn't know. The Sudanese did not pursue them, presumably, says Stark, because they feared the darkness and did not know what perils the night might have in store for them.

An hour later a Palmach unit found the two wanderers and their wounded charge and led them to safety. "You carried him all the way?" Dr. Jack Medalie asked Stark. The corporal was dead. "I didn't save Harold Hassall's life", Stark said, putting the record straight. "I simply led the way... blundering to safety."

At kibbutz Shoval, a few days later, Stark met Durban's Basil Levin⁶⁹ for the first time. Levin, a sapper in North Africa with the British Eighth Army and in Italy, was in charge of most of the defences and mine-laying operations in the areas of Revivim, Gvulot and Nirim. He was to be the South African whose role in the coming Beersheba victory was to be perhaps the largest of any of the S.A. volunteers.



There was a major internal military development in this month. On October 7 Ben Gurion gave notice to the much-admired Palmach that it was to disband and fuse into the Army. The Palmach, imbued with socialist doctrines passionately held, was still carrying out three functions of its underground days: mobilizing and absorbing manpower for its three brigades; training private soldiers and N.C.Os; education and indoctrination.

The overall result of this, said Ben Gurion, was lack of clarity in command chains and in the direction of the Army and in economic use of manpower and armament.

The Palmach kicked, appealing to the Supreme Command against the order, giving these reasons: the Palmach's specialization as a commando force; it was the only mobilized force with a tradition that gave it the necessary *esprit de corps* for daring exploits; it included all the pioneer youth movements which combined agricultural training for ultimate settlement with military training.

"I do not believe", said Ben Gurion tartly, "that pioneering is the monopoly of the select few, a special privilege of a spiritual aristocracy. I am a great believer in the common folk, all Israel and every one in Israel, and if the seed of Pioneering is sown in all army units, we shall be privileged to witness a blessed harvest...".

The man never ceased to be great in this war. On October 29, he issued a fresh instruction, setting the date for the disbanding on November 7. Still kicking and with great bitterness, Palmach obeyed, retaining only a welfare department to look after the wounded and maintain contact with relatives of the dead.

Relations between Palmach commander Yigal Allon and Ben Gurion were never again to be cordial.

⁶⁹ Brother of Dr. Stanley Levin

CHAPTER 14

THE STORM UNLEASHED

The truce broke on October 15.

Log books reflect the swelling drama. Smoky Simon's: "Dakota, Captain Paul Orringer. Carrying battle plans and gen for Israel's offensive..."

The Air Force struck first and struck hard. Indeed, it was a situation of many firsts: the first time an Israeli offensive started with an air force attack; the first time the IAF operated on a considerable scale against the Egyptian forces; the first time that the weight of the volunteers was a decisive factor in victory; and the first time that mastery in the skies belonged indisputably to the Israelis.

The South African contribution is contained in the facts: Dov Judah, Smoky Simon and Les Shagam key men in Operations; Syd Cohen commander of the Fighter Squadron at Hatzor; Danny Rosin commander of the Dakota Bomber Squadron 103 at Ramat David; Abe Nurick, Chief Technical Officer at 103 Squadron; Tev Zimmerman and Chaim Grevler key men in keeping the Messerschmitts and Spitfires in the skies; Syd Chalmers⁷⁰, of Durban, Chief Technical Officer of the Beaufighters and a Mosquito.

South African, gunners and wireless operators manning the B-17s.

The following partial list of South Africans at Ramat David at the time (including some who may have arrived later) has been compiled with the assistance of volunteers stationed there.

Aronson Noel, flight engineer; Ahrenson Aubrey w/o; Alperstein Hugo, pilot; Berger Abe, gunner; Braun Kenneth, pilot; Boettger "Butch", gunner; Burge Bob, gunner; Behrman Eric, Administrative Officer; Behrman Jeanne, nurse; Behr Joe, w/o a/g; Chalmers Syd, flight engineer; Chimes Les, pilot; Eisenberg Chaim, a/c electrician; Esakof Ernest, Operations; Dr. Feldman Harry, m/o; Feldman Mannie, navigator; Futerman Rolfe, pilot; Falker "Butch", pilot; Gershman Leslie, gunner; Green Sydney, radio technician; Gochen Dennis, navigator; Harris Shula, codes and ciphers operator; Jacobson Kenneth, navigator; Kemp Philip, gunner; Kirschner Ivan, gunner; Kofsky Wally w/o; Kentridge Sydney, navigator; Kadushewitz Gershon, radio technician; Lazarus Joe, gunner; Leibowitz Joe, gunner; Lipman Sydney, w/o; Meyerson George, gunner; Marcus Edal w/o gunner; Michel Tim, navigator; Miller Sam, gunner; Mazerow Lou w/o; Mankowitz (Manor), w/o gunner; Nash Stanley w/o gunner; Noach Isadore, pilot; Nurick Abe, mechanic; Ospovat Sonny, pilot; Rosen Monty, gunner; Swartzberg Zan; w/o, Segal Morris, navigator; Seftel Sydney, navigator; Solman David, mechanic; Saffer Teddy w/o; Swiel Cyril w/o; Schneider Lionel, ground engineer; Shall Emanuel, electrician; Solarsh Mannie, pilot; Tucker Sam, navigator; Treisman Rubie, a/g; Vons Mendie w/o; Wies Morris (Mockie) a/g; Webb Del w/o; Wassying Aubrey, gunner; Waks Simmy navigator; Weinstein Jesse, navigator.

Provocation for the renewal of hostilities was set up by the Israelis with the opportunity provided by the Egyptians. The Israelis prepared a convoy for the Negev, confidently expecting that the Egyptians would not give it the unhindered passage required by the truce terms. The convoy left Haratiya at noon, threading its way slowly south during the afternoon. When, a few hours later, the convoy came within range of their strongholds, the Egyptians, not disappointing the Israeli expectation, opened fire, hitting one vehicle and setting it on fire.

⁷⁰ Syd Chalmers was the Flight Engineer of the El Al plane shot down by Bulgarian fighters a few years later, an outrage which cost the lives of both crew and passengers.

The rest of the convoy returned to base. Meanwhile reconnaissance had disclosed that the Egyptian Air Force was not dispersing its planes at El Arish and that the planes were clustered around the intersection of the two runways of the field and that, as far as could be ascertained, the Egyptians were not maintaining planes elsewhere. Judah believed, therefore, that if the IAF could dislocate the field, he could administer the hardest blow the Egyptian Air Force had thus far received.

Without waiting for the Egyptian reaction to the Haratiya convoy, Syd Cohen, Jack Cohen and an American Rudy Augarten set off in three Spitfires with bombs up, with the object of attacking El Arish at four p.m. and putting the airfield and its planes out of action. The radios of all three planes failing, the pilots could not receive confirmation that the Egyptians had indeed attacked the convoy. Now they were in a dilemma. Should they proceed with the plan or shouldn't they? Using visual signals among themselves, they went ahead as arranged, dropping their bombs on the runway and strafing everything they could see. The aircraft in the hangars called for some low flying by the three veterans who were equal to all that was required of them. Returning to base, they were relieved to learn that the Egyptians had indeed attacked the convoy.

The Negev was aflame. There was no delay in following up on the Spitfire attack. Strafing Beaufighters came in, swooping low over the hangars, the Fortresses following and damaging or destroying four fighter planes and a Dakota, setting stores ablaze and pitting the runways with craters.

The results were electrifying. The Egyptians were caught on the ground unprepared. Quickly allayed was the anxiety that the Air Forces of the other Arab states might come to the assistance of the Egyptians. Judah's team had worked out a contingency plan against this possibility, but there was no need to invoke it.

The extensive radar early warning system envisaged by Margo was still far from reality. Nevertheless, on that day, the Filter Control Room, receiving its data from the elementary radar network being developed by squadron 505 (the radar unit) and by radio communication from forward spotters and liaison officers with the army, functioned remarkably well.

The attacks continued. The "hammers" were out by day and the Dakotas by night. Dr. Harry Feldman, now transferred to Ramat David, left his sick bay on one occasion to go out with a bomber because the stern demands on the crew seemed to him to require closer observation of the men. The pilots, gunners, navigators, wireless operators, were in raid after raid: El Arish, Guvrin, Faluja, Gaza, Majdal and enemy shipping off the coast.

Abe Nurick reduced the experience to a quip:

New plugs were hard to come by and we used reconditioned ones. We changed them more often than we changed our socks. There was no time to change our socks, we had to find the time to change the plugs.

Operations was aware of the dire penury that afflicted the revetments of Ramat David - there were no workshops - but it had placed its faith in the resourcefulness of Nurick and his men and in Tev Zimmerman, Chaim Grevler and their men at Hatzor. This faith was not misplaced. Not a single plane was lost through bad maintenance.

The Dakotas were out on three missions a night. Danny Rosin returned at 21:00 on October 17 with oil spurting from the engine. Nurick, checking the 22 gallon tank estimated the plane had lost six gallons. "No time now," said Rosin. "Top up."

Rosin returned from his second mission at 12.30 a.m. Nurick and Noel Aronson took off the cowlings, found the leak and reported at 2.45 a.m. that the plane was in order. Nurick sought

to accompany Rosin in case of emergency. "We have plenty of pilots," said Rosin, "only one Nurick." Nurick's own pen picture of himself:

The hops were fortunately short. At nights before I dozed off, I used to go over in my mind the work I had done during the day, the checking and re-checking of the filter locking and cowlings fasteners and such details. I would fall asleep only when I was satisfied. Sometimes I would return to the field if I couldn't recall that a job had been done.

35 Flight, with its two South Africans, Katzew and Schapera among its Norseman pilots, was as active as the other squadrons. Katzew's log book recalls three flights on October 19 as Ted Gibson's co-pilot.

It was a strange operation (Katzew said later). We had Israeli youths throwing out the bombs. The whole affair began with Gibson saying: "We're bombing Beersheba tonight. See how many trips you can get in. Do as much damage as you can." And this is what we did, making Bet Guvrin an additional target on October 20. There was no formation flying. A matter, rather of private little enterprises.

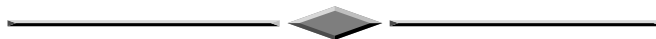
The dry understatement of Syd Cohen's log book shows that he was in the skies every day in the seven decisive days. On October 17, he escorted the "hammers" over Majdal; October 18 photo recce. over Gaza and Majdal; October 19 Messerschmitt escort to bombers over Gaza; October 20, the same; October 21 Spitfire recce, over Hebron, Bira Asluj and Auja; October 22 Spitfire recce. over Majdal and Gaza.

Ramat David mourned on October 20. Two Beaufighters, co-ordinating with the Army on the ground, set out to blast the Iraq el Suedan fortress, the one piloted by Danny Rosin, flying with fellow South African Syd Kentridge, navigator, and the second by Len Fitchett, a Canadian non-Jew who had made the Jewish cause his own. With Fitchett were Dov Sugarman, navigator from London, and a third man, American pilot, Stan Andrews who persuaded Fitchett to take him.

The Egyptian flak was intense. Rosin was unable to drop his bombs. Fitchett overshot the target and made a second pass. His plane was hit and came hurtling down. From the log book of Smoky Simon:

Flight in Rapide with Captain Zvi Treuherz and Morrie Mann in search for the men... Beaufighter burning furiously as we arrived at 18:35 over position four miles from Isdud. Two Egyptian trucks close by fired on us in our first run which was over the aircraft at 100 feet - no sign of life, so did not drop guns and ammo.

Dov Sugarman's wife, working in Operations at the airfield, searched Rosin's face when he came alone into the room....and guessed the answer...



Altogether the Air Force carried out two hundred and thirty nine sorties and dropped one hundred and fifty one tons of bombs on twenty-one enemy targets during the seven days of its Operation Strangle. Very few enemy strongholds escaped the blows. The Egyptian sorties numbered not more than fifty. The losses of the IAF were a Messerschmitt and Fitchett's Beaufighter.

Dov Judah summed up:

We eliminated the Egyptian Air Force as a major factor...but let me go back to the desert war in 1941-42. It was fought, as it were, in isolation. There were no supply points other than

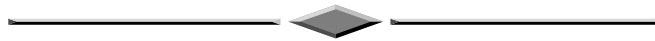
Tobruk or Della and Gaza. In 1948 we combined our experiences of the desert with our experiences in the later campaign in Italy and out of the combination came our operation.

This was the plan that Motti Hod, Commander of the IAF, put into operation in the Six Day War in 1967; put the enemy air force out of action and then your planes are free to wander at will and do what they please.

Every night I had at least one or two planes going to El Arish airfield to bomb and to put road salt out. Road salt is a piece of metal about nine inches long with points sticking out and in the form of a triangle. A vehicle driving round is bound to be punctured. Given three or four punctures, the pilots are not keen on taking off or landing. The idea was to sap the enemy's will to fight.

We hit hard with plenty of low-level stuff at El Arish. We hammered Gaza also, the marshaling yards and stocks of fuel. The fighter planes gave escort support. We couldn't go wrong. The Egyptian supply system faltered. They weren't getting food or fuel.

The result was that the soldiers of Israel's Army, now moving fast on the ground, had no need to cast anxious eyes into the sky. It was theirs. Receding into time were the days when Egyptian bombers lazed over Tel Aviv. And such a day as that on which an Egyptian bomber killed forty two at the crowded bus station was not to return in the life of the new-born State.



ON THE GROUND

Strategies of feint, surprise, diversion, mobility and swift follow-up on the ground rolled up with enemy's hill strongholds one after another. Within five days of the resumption of fighting, the chief obstacle to the capture of Beersheba "capital of the Negev," were enemy forces in the strongholds of Huleikat. The climax was a fierce hilltop bayonet battle. Hill 138, the highest of all, was captured without a battle. Its defenders taking to flight after five others fell. On October 20 the entire Huleikat area was in the hands of Israel's Givati Brigade and the road to the Negev was open. Plans for the capture of Beersheba were put into operation less than twelve hours later.

Basil Levin led the sapper unit charged with making a gap in the minefields the Egyptians had laid in the wadis and the road leading to the town. In quick time the unit blew up the roadblock which included a drum of TNT.

Geoff Stark was amused by a prelude to Beersheba:

Everyone at kibbutz Shoal was asked whether he could drive a jeep or could drive at all. What amazed me was the number of Sabras who offered themselves as drivers although they had never driven a vehicle before. One of them was Shulam, my commander. I took him out on a test. So great was his confidence that after twenty-five minutes he took over the jeep.

Although many South Africans were in the region, not more than thirty participated in the actual conquest of Beersheba, which offered little resistance. The 89th Commando battalion was held back in case the Arab Legion counterattacked in the central region.

The four a.m. attack on October 21 was spearheaded by a French commando company under the command of a non-Jewish French officer and made up of French-speaking Israelis and Machalniks from France and North African countries. Both Cromwell tanks were out of action at the time and by way of substitute the Israelis mounted a six pounder on a half-track, naming it the "Beersheba tank." This "tank" led the infantry into the town. Three South

Africans were in the crew of six: Morrie Egdes, gun loader, Eddy Magid, gunner and Stanley Behr, driver. The Arab citizenry had fled their homes, but the British-built police fortress held out, sniping at any Israeli who made himself visible.

The Israeli Command decided to call on the "tank" to shell the fort. A Palmach officer joined the crew, standing between Egdes and Magid, to direct Behr to a position from which it seemed to the Command that the fort was most vulnerable - the front door. A sniper got in first and the Palmach man fell seriously wounded. Action was delayed until he was removed for transfer to the casualty station. Now, however, the crew members knew where they had to go and what they had to do. Eddy Magid:

If I missed the door, I could not help striking the building. Egdes loaded the round. I aimed over open sights and fired. I did not hit the door, but a big cloud of dust arose. When it cleared, the door opened and women, children and soldiers poured out of the building, the leaders waving a white flag. Had I hit the door, I believe a number of women and children would have been killed. I thank God I missed.

For Magid's brother, David, 88th unit, Mortars and Rifles, Beersheba is a memory of the Arab villagers trekking southwards out of the town. In the town itself he and others entered house after house in search of prisoners. There were the inevitable poignancys, rooms strewn with dolls, other toys and photographs of children.

Dave Magid:

We then caught chickens and ate them raw. After breakfast we were sitting against one of the mud walls of a house when my brother passed by. We did not recognize each other at first. My face was covered with mud from digging in the hills the night before. There were cigarettes and chocolates in my brother's vehicle and our whole unit shared in the feast.

Lorch explains the swift victory:

"...a unique example of swift exploitation of success..." It was later found that the commander of the Egyptian garrison was still unaware that a road to the Negev had been opened. His superiors, who no doubt were well aware of the fact, had obviously under-estimated the speed of planning and execution and the drive of the Israel Army. Beersheba was not prepared and when attacked there was no one to carry out a counter-attack from the north, the direction of Hebron, or from the south, from Bir Asluj. The Israeli diversion from the south had also completely obtained its objective... With the capture of the City of the Fathers, modern Israel extended from "Dan to Beersheba..."

South Africans, mentioned in Chapter 12, of various Negev jeep patrols came into Beersheba from the south, their function to cut off retreating Egyptians. Teperson's unit captured an Egyptian who showed the men where four artillery pieces were hidden. Entering Beersheba, Teperson, Elliot Katzenellenbogen and others, found the town deserted. The men moved into the abandoned homes. (Teperson: "We fixed ourselves up nicely. After the hard life of the desert, it was something to have Persian carpets, plates, knives, forks and all the comforts. We lived like lords.")

The main South African adventure was in sealing off Beersheba from any possibility of counter-attack from the Hebron region. For all his antipathy to the Egyptians, King Abdullah could not but be dismayed by the fall of the Negev capital for he and the British had their own ambitions for the region.

Also involved in the entry into Be'er Sheva, and its eventual surrender a few days later, were the S. Africans in the armoured cars of Gedud Tesha, Harry Goldstein, Eli Herr, Bernard Judelsohn, "Rusty" Kirsch, Barney Meyerson, Jack Patlansky, Max Rosengarten and Chaim Saks who was wounded in the last exchanges of fire.

Report had it that British officers were mustering the Arab Legion and Hebron villagers for a counter-thrust. Eddy Magid takes up the story:

“We were part of a half-track crew told that we were to “volunteer” to go with an armoured car and another half-track with some infantry and a demolition squad along a road that could be used by the counter-attackers. A bridge on the road had to be blown up. Our half-track was to be used as 'a tank.' The terrain, we were warned, was difficult, with large rocks and high mountains alternating on either side of the road. It was made clear that we could meet either the Transjordanians or Egyptians that the road was narrow and that on some sections of it, it was not possible to turn round quickly. We should know what we were letting ourselves in for.

Morrie Egdes was the leader of the half-track. I the gunner. We set out during the night. It was eerie, I suppose any desert at night is eerie, the Negev just more so. As we approached the bridge, fire poured down on us from the mountains. We forged ahead all the same. The road was clear.

We arrived at the bridge under heavy fire and crouched against the armour plating. The demolition men jumped out with their high explosives and began wiring the bridge. Someone was hit in the other half-track. The officer came running up to ours to instruct me where to fire my 6-pounder. In the pitch darkness he pointed to the peak of the mountain and told me to fire four fingers off the right hand side of the peak--a ridiculous instruction because I could see nothing and there was nothing to fire at. I watched for the source of most of the little flashes on the mountain. Morrie Egdes also stood up next to me. He loaded his gun and traversed in that direction. Without taking aim at anything particular I also fired, traversed on the other side of the road and fired again.

I am quite certain in my own mind that I did not hit anything but the firing died down apparently because it had become evident to the enemy that we were firing not armour-piercing but high explosives. At night that is a frightening thing. They must have realized we were firing at their flashes and desisted.

Our men blew up the bridge and our vehicle started turning around, making three or four turns before being able to move off. We suffered two casualties.

There was no counter-attack by the enemy”.



The total effect of Operation Ten plagues was beginning to look impressive. The Egyptian Army, though far from defeated, was reeling. Its grip on the coastal strip from Isdud to the ruins of Yad Mordechai was broken. The units at Isdud were evacuated, removing the threat to Tel Aviv.

On a lateral strip from Bet Guvrin to Majdal, only the Faluja Pocket held out.



The battle for the Negev was also fought in the Jerusalem hills by way of diversions to keep the Egyptian troops in the region pinned down and unable to be deployed for the relief of strongholds around Beersheba and Beersheba itself. Len Karpel, now second in command of artillery in Jerusalem, and Lionel Hodes, were involved. From their hill-tops, the Negev gun flashes were visible and the sounds of battle audible. The diversion began on October 15.

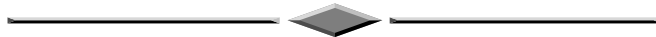
On the night of Monday October 18, three days before the capture of Beersheba, the Harel Brigade extended its diversionary attacks on an even wider front. Len Karpel came from Jerusalem to direct the artillery which included some French 120 mm guns and heavy mortars. Also used in the action were Davidkas, the noisy-unnerving homemade mortar. Before the sweep of the Harel units, Arab villagers and semi-regulars hastily evacuated Bet Jemal which, Hodes recorded (in the manner of a soldier enjoying luxuries) "had water, showers, flush toilets, electricity and beds."

Three kilometers away from Bet Jemal lay Bet Nattif, a name that rankled in Israeli minds. This was the village whose inhabitants had assisted in the massacre of the Thirty-Five. The soldiers of Harel were impatient to get there. Two days later, on the eve of the capture of Beersheba, they took it. The villagers fled. The Israelis found articles looted from Kfar Etzion.

Beit Guvrin and its police fortress belong to the same context. An Israeli attempt on October 26 to capture the fortress was costly and vain. The task was then transferred to the 89th Commandos who would go in next day. This was also in the terrain of the Thirty-Five.

After a brief, sharp fight, the fortress fell to the commandos who immediately followed up with successful assaults on the villages of El Kubeba, Duemma and others. Leslie Marcus relates:

You could identify an Israeli shirt by a little socket for a pencil, quite a neat and tidy arrangement. At one of the villages an Israeli noted that a captured villager was wearing one of these shirts and asked him where he had got it. "I bought it," said the villager. A search brought to light letters in Hebrew written by a settler of the now destroyed Etzion block that he had never had an opportunity to send. Poignantly, it was observed that one of the letters was to the settler's mother.



RESCUE IN BROAD DAYLIGHT

As related by Naftali Arbel, Commander, Company B, 89th Battalion.

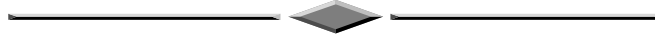
"It happened towards the end of summer 1948. Battalion 89 was a commando unit made up entirely of volunteers including one platoon of English speaking Machal. This battalion was usually entrusted with vitally important tasks. The mission this time was to capture the police station at Beit Jubrin, which was on the road between Majdal on the coast and Hebron which lies south of Jerusalem a vital lateral artery which served the Egyptian and Jordanian armies.

The large reinforced concrete police station was easily captured, but immediately after the capture, a battle commenced with a Jordanian armoured unit, which had, most probably arrived at its destination somewhat late, in order to take over command from the Egyptians. The Jordanians were equipped with mortars and machine guns, and systematically bombarded the police station and the force which met it at a village next to the police station. Not having artillery support to respond with, several members of B Company were wounded by the heavy fire of the Jordanians, and it was vital to remove them from the line of fire in order to render first aid. Whoever tried to reach one of the wounded lying the furthest from the company, and the closest to the Jordanian army, was immediately hit. The wounded soldier at this furthest position was Shlomo Friedrich, the company's medic.

Leslie Marcus, one of my soldiers, a South African volunteer, asked my permission to try and rescue him. Together we worked out the best route, and he set off immediately. It was early afternoon, a time when any movement would immediately be spotted, unless it was in the shadow of the rocks and shrubs. Initially, Leslie's movements went undetected but eventually could not go unnoticed. It was essential to act with great speed and decisiveness. The Jordanians opened fire, Leslie picked up speed and reached Shlomo Friedrich's position unharmed. He hoisted him up onto his shoulders, crawled out of the position, and ran across

the open ground, reaching the collection point for the wounded with Shlomo on his back. Although exhausted from the physical and mental effort, he immediately went back down the hill to join his comrades in defending the command post.

As his commander, I am proud to recount this story of valour.”



Kaukji's Liberation Army was expelled from the central and northern Galilee and sent scurrying into Lebanon, shattered and disintegrated, in a swift sixty-hour campaign known as Operation Hiram. The period was a week after the fall of Beersheba in the south. The Israel brigades involved were the Seventh, Ninth (Oded), Golani and Carmeli. The South Africans of the 72nd battalion were distributed in various companies; Headquarters, Transport, Sappers, Medical Officer and medics, B and D companies and Support Company which included a Beza medium machine gun platoon. In the 79th Battalion South Africans were found in the armoured car and half-track companies, the garage, a medical officer & medic.

There were also a few at 7th Brigade headquarters.

A week in Safed, the ancient town of Jewish mysticism, proved very interesting to the South Africans. Occasionally, as Joe Woolf observed, "we would get a little tipsy and do some Zulu war dances in the streets to the delight of the local residents." Then the order came for return to base which was a camp opposite the ancient Roman aqueducts where Kibbutz Lochamei Hageta'ot now stands. On its return from Safed, the 72nd battalion was augmented by a large group of newly posted South Africans. Louis Hack, Gerald Davimes, Bernard Etzine, George Schlachter, Lionel Clingman, Jeffrey Katz and Phil Morcowitz were among those allocated to B Company. Cyril Clouts, George Busch, Kenny Danker, Max Chait, Solly Sokolowsky, Teddy Levin, Jack Kacev and Smiler Lipshitz joined the newly formed D Company. Before that, after the Tamra skirmish, Solly Bental, Harry Klass and Simon Novikow had joined "B Company".

The prelude to Operation Hiram has some meaningful South African detail. On September 20, Lockie Fainman noted in his diary that "our doctor was replaced by a young South African, Harry Bank" (the honeymoon man of the Bennyskou).

Allow for the passage of three weeks. "Day of Atonement... we are ready for action... we intended fasting but under the circumstances have given up the idea." On October 15, "A", "B" and one platoon of "C" company set off on a march north east of Nahariya to take up positions in a forest opposite an enemy village. "This was the most grueling march of my life," Fainman wrote. "For four and a half hours we carried on through the night, carrying our heavy packs and weapons."

The lights of kibbutz Eilon were the lights of paradise to the weary men who arrived there at about three a.m.

October 16: No man is to leave the forest... the enemy must not spot any movement... success depends on surprise. Tonight we will attack and a full-scale war will be on the go throughout the Holy Land by tomorrow...

This did not prove to be so. Operation Hiram was postponed, an officer telling the men in assembly that "owing to Jewish successes in the Negev and thirty per cent political reasons," the attack had been postponed, though not canceled.

The men spent October 17 and 18 in the forest of Eilon and then returned to base.

On the night of October 22, Joe Woolf was on guard duty at the camp lockup. The men inside were some fellows of B Company "who had gone on strike." From the hall nearby came the thumping of a piano⁷¹, the pianist, Gerald Davimes of Johannesburg.

"Listen fellows" Woolf said to the "strikers", "don't try any tricks. I am going to sit with my friends in the hall."

The hall was echoing with Boeremusiek and volksliedties. The expression on Louis Hack's face impinged itself on Joe Woolf's mind. It was far away, nostalgic. He was in South Africa, not Israel.

Hack lived only another eighteen hours.

A patrol was called out on the night of October 23 to make a lightning deep penetration raid on a Kaukji headquarters on a hill beyond Eilon. Joe Woolf describes the raid:

Orders were to be back before dawn. At about midnight our company commander realised we would never make it and ordered us to spread out on the next hill and open up with everything we had in the general direction of the village for about 10 minutes. This was a period of continuous patrols and raids intended mainly to divert Kaukji's forces to the Western Galilee. The pressure of the heavy fire from these platoons did serve a useful purpose contributing to the low casualty rate in the successful Hiram Operation which followed on October 28

South Africans were in the raiding party including Stanley Medicks (platoon commander), Jeff Perlman, Ian Walters, Jack Banin, Ziggy Stein, Joe Woolf, Harry Klass, Solly Bental, Simon Novikow, Louis Hack, Gerald Davimes, Bernard Etzine, Jeffrey Katz Lockie Fainman, Max Krensky, George Schlachter, Lionel Clingman, Mike Snipper and Phil Morcowitz.

South Africans in the supporting groups positioned in surrounding hills included Cyril Clouts, George Busch, Kenny Danker, Max Chait, Teddy Levin, and Smiler Lipshitz of the newly formed D Company. In the Beza platoon of Support Company were Tookie Levitt, Archie Nankin, Hymie Josman, Albert Shorkend, Geoffrey Fisher, Eli Reef, Hymie Toker and Jack Marcusson.

The raiding platoons were returning in single file through no-man's land when Lockie Fainman heard a cry from Simon Novikow, of Boksburg: "Medic! Medic! Someone's been hit." Fainman ran across the road to find Hack prostrate with a tiny bullet hole just below his heart. He was fully conscious but convinced he would die. Fainman dressed his wound and improvised a stretcher with rifles and jackets. At Eilon Hack was given a blood transfusion.

"Lockie," he said, "Put me to sleep..."

He closed his eyes, and then added: "Tell them. Tell them I died like a soldier. Gerry knows who to write to..."

Hack, perhaps with a premonition of death, had given Gerald Davimes his mother's address in Johannesburg and his fiance's address in Muizenberg. He died in the ambulance taking him to Nahariya Hospital.

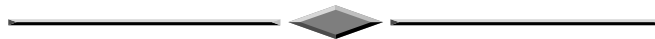
Louis Hack, born to a Jewish immigrant home in Upper Page Street Doornfontein, educated at the Doornfontein Government School and Commercial High School, had been head prefect in 1940. He won his school colors in rugby, tennis, cricket, boxing and athletics. He was treasurer for six years of the Ellis Park Boys' Club, which he represented in various

⁷¹ One week earlier, the famous Pnina Saltzman had given a concert for the 72nd Battalion on the same piano.

sports. He joined the Booyens Amateur Boxing Club and was a finalist in the Transvaal Junior Boxing Championships in 1937.

At the age of 19 he was playing for Balfour Park's first soccer team. He served the club in several capacities, member of the Sports General Purposes Committee, of the Governing Body, and chairman of the hockey section. He assisted in the formation of the club's softball section. For a period of five years he was treasurer of the Municipal Swimming Club and just before his departure for Israel, was made a life-president of the club. He was 25 when an enemy bullet cut off his life.

He was buried next day at the Nahariya Cemetery. The pall-bearers were Lt. Stan Medicks (Kenya) and South Africans Lou Getz, Gerry Davimes, Hymie Malbin, Simon Novikow, Harry Klass, Simon Stern and Jeff Perlman. The firing party consisted of Ian Walters (Kenya), Cliff Epstein (England), Hymie Klein (Canada) and Jack Franses (England). The South African Zionist Federation was represented by the late Issy Rudaitzky.



On the night of October 28/29, Israel's Northern Command launched Operation Hiram. The central Galilee became a cat's back. Operation Hiram had three objectives:

- To destroy the Arab Liberation Army.
- To gain control of the Upper Galilee.
- To establish a defensive line along the northern boundary of Mandatory Palestine.

The South Africans prepared for their first action of Hiram against the Arab stronghold at Meron⁷². The basic plan was for Meron to be taken first, by the English speaking "B" & "D" Companies of the 72nd Infantry battalion supported by the 71st, so that the 79th armoured cars and half tracks could head for Sifsufa and Jish unhindered.

Fainman is our narrator:

We sat in the buses ready to leave Safed at six in the evening, and were thrilled to see two bombers, ours, appear. The crash of their bombs followed soon after. When the planes flew off, we set out, singing loudly. Soon the singing was silenced, cigarettes were stubbed and we proceeded to the objective. Leaving the buses, we set off in a long single file across the hills...

As the "B" Company was approaching their objective through the Wadi of Nahal Amud, Kaukji's men fired a burst into the Wadi hitting Jack Banin. Fainman's diary records "He had an entrance hole just below the right nostril and the exit about one inch from the medial line of the back of the neck...I calmed him by talking".

Fainman's Diary continues:

Captain Norman kept us in the cold valley (the coldest night I've ever experienced) for what seemed a very long time. At about 03:00 hours, we went in for the attack. The Arab Liberation Army opened fire from above... 3" mortars of our sister battalion, the 71st, returned fire to cover our advance. When we reached the top we discovered that, what had appeared to be a huge blockhouse, was in fact the tomb of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai.⁷³

⁷² In the Bible, Meron (called Merom) is the place where Joshua won a decisive battle against the Canaanites. In Roman times it was taken by the Legion in spite of the fortifications erected by commander Josephus Flavius.

⁷³ Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, one of the leaders of the revolt against the Romans in A.D.135

The Arabs poured fire on us through the slit windows of the tomb. The exchange of fire continued until daybreak when No. 2 Platoon, after clearing a small position to the right, broke through a side entrance of the tomb and continued the assault room by room. Shortly afterwards we were in possession.

British volunteer Shmuel Daks⁷⁴ was killed and a number of our men lightly wounded in this action, amongst them two South Africans - Lionel Clingman and George Schlachter.

Joe Woolf, who participated in the action, adds:

Immediately Meron was taken, sappers of the 7th Brigade demolished a bridge close to the village to prevent the enemy's retreat westwards and their bringing in reinforcements. South Africans, Gordon Mandelzweig, Benny Landau and Johny van Heerden participated in this demolition.

The next objective was Jish,⁷⁵ the ancient Gush Halav, captured earlier by the 79th Battalion which had stormed the town at dawn in their half tracks and armoured cars. (Gush Halav had been one of the fortresses that held out against the Romans in the Jewish rebellion in the 2nd Century A.D.). In this speedy decisive battle they decimated an entire company of Syrian volunteer reinforcements disembarking from their buses.

The wounding of Banin and the lengthy stay in the cold valley had thwarted the original intention that the 72nd capture Meron before the 79th would attack Sifsufa and Jish. In the circumstances, Canadian Brigade C.O. Ben Dunkelman had ordered the 79th to move without waiting for Meron to fall. Meron, Sifsufa and Jish were captured practically simultaneously.

The decision, though difficult, was obviously correct, as delaying the action would have enabled the Syrian reinforcements to take up defensive positions resulting in a much more costly battle. B and D Companies of the 72nd arriving at Jish, in the wake of the 79th were immediately ordered to spread out through the town and check every building. They completed this task without having to fire a shot.

In the western sector of the fighting area, Israel's Oded Brigade had failed to capture a number of strongholds dominating the township of Tarshiha. In a swift change of plan, the Israel Command joined a battalion of the Oded to the advancing 72nd with the object of capturing the junction of Sassa and then moving on to take Tarshiha from the rear.

Fainman's diary:

I slept a while at Jish, and at about 2 p.m. we set off to attack Sassa. As we crossed a field into a sparse olive grove we were fired on by artillery. We took cover. No casualties. The only shell that would undoubtedly have got at least three of us, Jeff, Jonathan and me, did not explode.

It was to this position that someone brought mail from South Africa and the boys lay in the field under fire reading letters from home.

Suddenly there was a loud cry. Soon other voices joined in. "Look! Look at the road!" I jumped to my feet...an armoured unit moved in a metal caterpillar of strength. We had never suspected that in all Israel were so many mechanized pieces. They stretched as far as we could see down the road, a moving tower of strength with a man's head and shoulders above each turret.

⁷⁴ Shmuel Daks was born in Vienna and reached England on the 11th hour Kindertransports in the late summer of 1939.

⁷⁵ Jish, Biblical Gush Halav, the birthplace of Yohanan, one of the leaders of the Jewish revolt in AD66

Sas'sa fell without a fight. Tarshiha was subjected to an intense artillery bombardment during the night. At the break of day white flags of surrender were fluttering over the houses. Kaukji's forces had retreated during the night along a dirt track unknown to the Israelis.

After an hour's rest the troops entered buses for the northward push. Shortly before dusk the long convoy entered the Christian Arab village of Baram. ("The first sight was that of a young Arab girl carrying a water canteen and leading a donkey along the road"). The people stood idly at the doors of their homes or carried on with their evening routines. The troops debussed, had their evening meal, and then pushed on towards the Lebanese border in pursuit, as Fainman put it "of the fleeing Kawjis." Kaukjis's reputation among his fellow Arabs was now finally destroyed. The remnants of his Army began deserting and returning to their homes. The Liberation Army was no more.

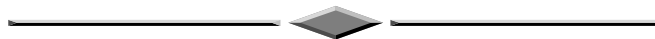
This day was spent in cleaning up and washing clothes," Fainman wrote on November 2 and next day he wrote... on leave...went to Tel Aviv."

South Africans who took part in Operation Hiram, as described in Fainman's diary and not previously mentioned, include six Medical Officers, Harry Bank (72nd), David Rosenberg (Kidron) (79th), Gershon Gitlin (Northern Command), Bank's brother in law Issy Schweppe (22nd), Abe Kessler (23nd) and Mendel Klaff(22nd), the last three serving in the Carmeli Brigade.

Of the 72nd battalion, other South African volunteers known to have taken part in this operation included Solly Bental, Goodman Bloch, George Busch, Max Chait, Cyril Clouts, Norman Cohen, Kenny Danker, Gerald Davimes, Bernard Etzine, Geoffrey Fisher, Hymie Josman, Jeffrey Katz, Harry Klass, Max Krensky, Tookie Levitt, Teddy Levin,⁷⁶ Smiler Lipshitz, Jack Marcusson, Stanley Medicks, Phil Morcowitz, Archie Nankin, Simon Novikow, Jeff Perlman, Eli Reef, Albert Shorkend, Mike Snipper, Ziggy Stein, Simon Stern, David Susman, Hymie Toker, Hymie Treisman, Ian Walters.

With Brigade headquarters were Percy Kanichowsky and Louis Sack.

79th Battalion participants in this operation included the C.O., Baruch Friedman (Erez) ex Kenya, and South African volunteers Mike Abel, Charles Berman, Leslie Brouze, Dave Eliasov, Jules Fisher, Louis Getz, Nick Goldstein, Bernard Green, David Gross, Joe Hart, Milton Hirsch, Lou Kruger, Benjamin Kupferberg, Jack Morris, Abe Novikow, Solly Ossin, Abe Palestine, Morrie Ringer, Jack Ritz, Dov Rosowsky, Norman Spiro, Julie Pearl, Les Brouze, Alec Tross, Simie Wilk and Helman Todes . Serving in another unit was Dave Duchen, who also took part.



THE DOCTORS AND THE NURSES

The doctors and the nurses felt the full impact of the fighting. From Meltzer's diary:

October 9

The war has started to all intents and purposes, and shelling is going on everywhere. I am writing this diary at the headquarters of the southern front while waiting for a plane to take me to the Negev. A report has just come in that the Egyptians have bombed Beer Tuvia and set alight a petrol dump. In the Negev, local incidents have spread, and the fighting is assuming full-scale proportions. It isn't quite the time to be going down, but it serves me right

⁷⁶ Teddy Levin discovered that one of the battalion cooks was married to Teddy's holocaust survivor cousin from Riga

for not having gone down before. I'm looking forward to this visit, and hope to spend at least two days there.

I worked all day - no Sabbath for me. It was one meeting after the other. I am told there was a bit of excitement in Jaffa today when the Stern group suspects broke out of Jail. Apparently they are fully armed, and fought their way out. The authorities immediately closed all the exits from Jaffa and searched every house - I don't know how many of them were caught. This internal trouble isn't nice, coming as it does at the very time when all our energy and strength are required against an enemy trying to destroy us.

Dr. Dreyer, the southern front ADMS, got very panicky this afternoon and demanded a meeting of the heads of department of the HQ. We held it at 2.30. He told us the Negev Brigade would be moving to the Negev this evening, and that he wanted personnel and equipment. He believes the Egyptians will attack at any moment, the most likely time being on Tuesday evening, the night of Yom Kippur. Anyway, the emergency meeting wasn't quite necessary; he could have seen each one individually. Dreyer also brought me a message that his front headquarters decided it wouldn't be advisable for me to go to the Negev. The work had to be done in Tel Aviv. I insisted I should go and left for Gedera at five.

Then began, a night full of unpleasant incidents. I was due to go with Dr. Swartzman, SMO of Yiftach Brigade, and if I had done so, I would have got the plane at 7.30 and been at my destination round about nine. But I was persuaded by my friend Benny Edelman to come with him on a special plane, which would also carry Yigal Allon, the Front Commander. They went off without me... We sat in the mess until 10 p.m. when we boarded a handsome plane with plush seats. But something was wrong with the engine... Mechanics and electricians came and went. We got under way eventually...went smoothly for about 10 minutes and then made a perfect landing. I wondered why we had taken only 10 minutes for a flight of twenty five to thirty minutes. Got out of the plane and found myself back in Tel Aviv. The pilot told us we had nearly had it. Eventually, boarded a transport at one A.M. The plane had no seats and was choc-a-bloc with heavy stuff, not securely fastened. Landed in pitch darkness at Ruchama airfield at 1:30. Then real misery and exhaustion. The hospital is about five miles away from the airfield and there was no transport. Luckily the Yiftach Brigade commander had been aboard and promised to take me. But he had to wait for his jeep, and he talked a lot, so we didn't leave until an hour later. Then we had a mad ride in a mad jeep with a mad driver, and dropped the brigadier at his headquarters. When I eventually got to the hospital, I found it in complete darkness and couldn't raise anybody.

October 10

I got to bed after three this morning, and was awake by seven. My head felt like lead, but I was dressed and ready for work by eight. My first job was to listen to grouses. I was agreeably surprised by the clean and compact hospital which seems to have every convenience. The place is full of Anglo-Saxons, and a little Hebrew is spoken... Ruchama is a treeless settlement right in the desert...

Dorot was very sad today. In one of our air raids, on a neighboring enemy village, three of our own girls, were killed, one of them the daughter of Dr. Bernard Joseph, the Governor of Jerusalem. We had several air raid alarms but no bombs were dropped.

October 11

Left for a long trip, to the southern Negev at about nine this morning. The jeep didn't look so good nor the girl who drove us, but it turned out all right. The places we visited were Shoval, Mishmar Hanegev, Imara, Zayelim, Orim and Geulat, settlements in the south, not far from the Egyptian frontier.

They have all been converted into forward strong points. My object was to see which would be the best spot for an underground hospital in the southern Negev and in my opinion, Zayelim seems to be. The atmosphere is very tense in the forward areas and all kinds of

passwords and pass-signs are used, but one doesn't see the large numbers of guards which one sees guarding hospitals in Tel Aviv. The trip reminded me of the Western Desert. The people are much happier here than they are in Tel Aviv...

October 16

My biggest headache will start if the fighting spreads to other sectors, because we've concentrated all our resources against the Egyptians. That is probably why we've been able to do so well so far.

In order to be in the middle of things and not to have to do the trip from Tel Aviv a couple of times each day, I've decided to take up residence at Bilu Hospital for a couple of days, starting from this evening.

Had supper with Stanley Levin at Gedera and then got back to Bilu. There I found Pedelsky... He is confident Gaza will be in our hands in a few days. Britain is screaming that our attack was entirely unprovoked.

October 17

Not a good night. I was cold; the straw mattress was very hard and I can't sleep without a pillow. They are short of pillows in the hospital.

A Givati brigade unit took Hill 113 at the cost of three killed, thirty wounded.

October 18

Now we wait for tonight, when big things are due to happen. We are going to attack along the whole front, including a fresh attempt to take the Iraq el Suedan Fortress ... there will probably be many casualties.

Actually I'm not doing a lot, my function is being on the spot and giving a hand here and there. It is the preparation for a push like this which counts and if it has been well organized, it runs itself.

The Egyptians are cut up into isolated pockets; it is difficult to see how they can hold out.

October 21

Excitement during the night - Ekron Airfield was bombed. The planes were over the hospital and bombs fell uncomfortably near. The alarm went on for about an hour and I spent the time deciding whether I should go to the shelter or not. I didn't. I really must take greater precautions in future.

This morning we got the great news that Beersheba fell at daybreak to the Jews, but the police station held out a little longer. This is a big victory and the main supply road to the Egyptians fighting in Jerusalem is now cut off.

They can get through via a "Burma road", but it will have to be a pretty long one. Our fighting on the Givati front was not so successful. We had another go at Iraq el Suedan fortress, but failed ... It looks as though the Egyptians don't give in very easily once they are firmly entrenched.

October 22

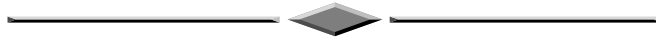
I met Mary Gordon for the first time since she was last in South Africa. I don't agree that she looks better than ever, as they all think. She has lost weight and looks haggard. She must have had a hard and difficult time. She is not enamored with the way they do things in Israel.

There was an air raid alarm at 5.30 this morning, but I was lazy and didn't get up. The war didn't go well for us last night. We had another go at the Iraq el Suedan fortress and failed again. It cost us sixty wounded, several killed. This shows how wrong military commanders

were when they told the Government not to agree to a cease-fire yesterday. Now Dr. Bunche has ordered the cease fire to start from three o'clock this afternoon. According to the papers, the Israeli Government has agreed but in the field order group meetings are being held just as though it had not.

October 24

I have been feeling a bit more satisfied with my work since the fighting began. I don't know whether the increased efficiency of the medical services is due to me, but all the others seem to think so and I feel bucked about it.



The pre-fab hospital at Ruchama had already acquired a history:

Early in September the Egyptians had strafed it while Ivan Barnett and Ossie Treisman were operating on a casualty. That decided them. They had to go underground. An underground shelter, under two meters of soil, was converted into a new hospital with twenty bunks. One room was used as an operating theatre and a small ante-room for the preparation of instruments.

Now the two doctors found themselves doing, medically speaking, "impossible things." Looking back twenty six years later, Dr. Treisman attributed some of the "miracles" to "an incredible good fortune... God seemed to be working with us."

Several South Africans were there: a medical student, Elliot Bader, today practicing in the Transvaal; another medical student, Harry Miller, with some air force experience, today practicing in Durban; and, at different times, nurses Margaret Carruthers, Merle Gillis and Sylvia Sher.

Harry Miller had a special role. The shelter had not been built to the specifications of stretchers in use in Israel and he was the only person who could move them in and out with their patients without difficulty, this by a trick of tilt of which he was the only master.

The two young doctors were ready for the casualties. The essential equipment was there except oxygen, the essential gas for administering anaesthesia. Treisman administered open ether anaesthetics on a mask. Then he ran short of ether and was reduced to the use of sodium pentathol, an induction agent, not an agent for prolonged anaesthesia. It was horrifying.

Barnett rose above himself in rendering first surgical services. The doctors could not rely on a regular evacuation service from the kibbutz. Night planes might or might not arrive. Sometimes a few ambulances were available, sometimes not. In the latter situation, Miller would manipulate the stretchered patients out of the underground to a jeep which would take the casualties one by one to the airfield, lay them on the ground and wait for the promised air cars from Tel Aviv. When and if they did come, it was possible to evacuate some of the casualties. It fell upon the two young doctors to care for the severely wounded for anything up to five days. The kibbutzniks of Ruchama were the blood donors. Fortunately there were ample supplies of plasma, the gift of American Jews.

Margaret Carruthers had as colleague an Israeli theatre sister, Micky, from Germany who, like Miss Carruthers, gave her soul to the work. When Micky left, a Romanian immigrant sister took her place. When the two doctors were hard pressed they called on the services of an Italian doctor, Askerelli, attached to one of the infantry units stationed nearby. He was a physician and, at that time, inexperienced in surgery, but he was able to help, though not in the theatre.

It must be true that the Gods smile on those who, without complaint and with willingness of heart, get on with the labours that fall to their hand. In two ways, they did so at Kibbutz Ruchama, first, in respect of the lighting of the hospital and secondly, in the discovery of a portable X-ray machine at the kibbutz

In the beginning the lighting was by paraffin lamp, quite inadequate for operating. The doctors could not get power from the kibbutz. In a hut in the kibbutz, a crate containing a generator was uncovered. Dr. Treisman:

The knowledge we had of electricity was minimal but we got some men from the airfield to help us. We dug a hole next to the shelter, dropped the generator into it and wired it up. The electrician was Harry Miller. First kick, the engine turned over and we had lights. We had electricity to the end of our period at Ruchama. In fact the plant failed during the last operation when we were operating on the leg of a man. We pushed him to the edge of the theatre where it met the steps and worked by the light of dawn which had just broken. There was enough light to complete the operation. The engine had packed up a few times but we had always managed to repair it. This time we could not. It lasted exactly the right length of time.

The X-ray machine was also found in a hut. The plausible explanation is that the doctors' predecessor, Dr. Marcus, the American, had ordered both machines and, on leaving, had forgotten to leave word about them. The X-ray machine was accompanied by a book of instructions in German and with the help of German Jews on the kibbutz, the doctors managed to assemble it and to set up a dark room above the ground. The usefulness of the machine was limited ("no fancy X-rays") but the doctors could take pictures of fractures. The routine was that of moving the patients out of the shelter to the dark room and then returning them to the shelter. It was cumbersome but there was no alternative.

The drive into the Negev brought casualties in streams - some of the soldiers in pitiable shape. The fighting on the way to Beersheba and in the area around Kibbutz Dorot accounted for some of them, but the largest number were from vehicles going over mines, not only Egyptian but unmapped Israeli mines also - a persisting defect of the times.

Two cases remain unforgettable to the doctors. The first was that of a man from the settlement of Bet Eshel on the outskirts of Beersheba. This settlement under attack for many months, held off numerous Beduin and other Arab attacks, the members spending many of their days underground. The capture of Beersheba ended their ordeal. In the excitement and celebration of the occasion, this man and others careered around in a jeep that struck a mine. He was carried into the hospital at Ruchama with both legs blown off and severe arm and chest injuries. He was dying and knew it, but begged the doctors to keep him alive until his parents arrived. They were displaced persons and he had had word that they were in a ship sailing to the Land. He died a day before they arrived.

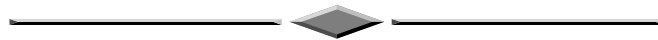
The story of another casualty had a happier ending. He was a young man who received a bullet which entered his face just near his lower jaw, traveled down his neck and injured his larynx. He had extreme difficulty in breathing, indeed, he could only breathe while lying on his abdomen. He could not swallow and was salivating. As a first-aid measure, Treisman administered a pentathol anaesthetic, and then flipped him over on his back for Barnett to do a tracheotomy, which enabled the patient to breathe. The doctors then improved him with plasma and blood. There was no evacuation of casualties that night or the following night and Barnett decided to operate. The young man's larynx, he noted, was severely injured. Missing was the bullet which the primitive X-ray had shown lying in or very near the larynx. It was a perplexed Barnett who stitched the larynx.

When this casualty was evacuated three days later, the two doctors had little hope he would survive. If he did, he would certainly not be able to speak. To their utter astonishment, he

was back at the kibbutz six weeks later to thank them. His speech was normal. What interested the doctors medically was that the Tel Aviv doctors had also not found the bullet. The explanation was that it lay first in his gullet, in his esophagus behind the larynx, and had passed down his alimentary tract and finally out of his body. A little further surgery healed him completely.

A more than an anecdotal story; the narrator Dr. Treisman:

"A soldier had died. I asked where he would be buried and was told at a little cemetery near the kibbutz. We asked who would conduct the service. The kibbutzniks did not understand the question. There would be no service, they said. The man would be buried and that was that. His grave would be marked. The kibbutz had moved away from Jewish tradition. Ivan Barnett, who was O.C. Medical Services in our small unit, an irreligious fellow himself, but brought up in the traditions of the dispersion, was highly indignant and said, "Well, if they won't conduct a burial service, we will." We assembled a number of men from our own group and from the airfield and Ivan Barnett, with a little help all round, conducted the service".



Dr. Jack Medalie set up a casualty station in a wadi between kibbutz Dorot and kibbutz Ruchama. Before the second truce had ended, his main casualties had been victims of mines. "In fact," he recalled, "we reached a stage where you had a lower status if you had not struck a mine. I felt much better when our ambulance hit one."

Medalie, 26 years old, was the oldest soldier in the brigade. Hundreds were not in their twenties. A 16 year-old boy was later to be among the dead of the battle.

Four particular events in the Negev campaign etched themselves in Medalie's memory.

The first was his closest shave with death. This was at Kibbutz Dorot whence he had repaired to examine some of the settlers of this long-pressed and battle-hardened kibbutz near Gaza. In the mornings of early October when the sun rose and in the evenings just before it set, Egyptian Spitfires regularly bombed or machine-gunned the kibbutz. On one of these mornings, Medalie was examining a settler when his nurse outside the little hut called out: "The Spitfires!" At the same time the hand-pressed siren began its eerie warning. The operator could only have managed two turns before a Spitfire was above the kibbutz. Medalie rushed to the door and saw the plane coming in low and the dust rising from its machine-gun fire. He threw himself on to the floor. Part of the hut collapsed, with bullets going through it. Then the plane was gone. The settlers came running to the shattered hut, fearful that both doctor and patient had been killed. Both picked themselves up without a scratch. "I was one of the lucky ones," said Dr. Medalie. "I once shared a tent with two others who did not come back. One was an ambulance driver who had been with us all the time. We were going round the huts of places we had captured and a lurking Arab put a knife in his back."

Medalie's second memory is that of Geoff Stark, bringing in a wounded corporal on his shoulder. The corporal was dead.

The third memory is an insight into the youths of Palmach. One night Medalie left his wadi to call at Kibbutz Ruchama, where he occasionally assisted Barnett and Treisman. He was puzzled by a dust cloud which suggested that a whole brigade had converged on the kibbutz. Not understanding Hebrew, he asked why and where everybody was rushing. The answer was that a symphony orchestra had arrived and was playing on the lawn. He found the soldiers gathered round the orchestra. One or two sudden bombs could have caused havoc.

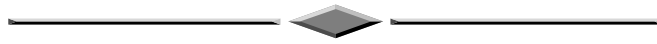
Irresponsibility? Recklessness? Courage? A natural fearlessness? Medalie often wondered - as he did on the occasion when some of these youngsters rushed two Churchill tanks and stopped them with hand grenades.

The number of wounded who died in Medalie's casualty station or later, on evacuation, were few. The explanation: "We were always very close to the fighting. Those who were killed were killed immediately. Those who were not were immediately given morphia against shock by the medical orderlies."

It was a distinction to belong to Palmach and Medalie was a proud man when he was presented with his Palmach badge. This was at a ceremony in the middle of nowhere in the Negev one evening in mid-November, five months after he had joined the unit.

When, at the end of the campaign, he left the unit, Dr. Sheba's assistant said to him: "It is a good thing. You have become too emotionally involved with your patients. For a doctor this is not wise."

Medalie knew this to be true.⁷⁷

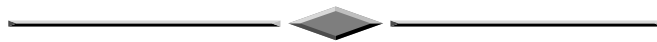


Dr. Stanley Levin's hospital in Gedera now had a hundred beds, located in three different places: the original double-story home, in the people's hall in the heart of the village and in a large tent planted in the settlement's park. Apart from an Australian, a Dr. Bloch, who shared the labours of a month with Levin, the handful of other doctors sent to assist Levin, proved inadequate, being elderly and medically overtaken. Levin put them on to giving anaesthetics, but Yocheved was more competent and he reclaimed her.

A warm human side developed at the hospital, initiated by Yocheved who encouraged the orderlies to have their wives come down for weekends. The women took charge of the kitchen and taught their husbands how to cook. The hospital acquired a culinary as well as a medical reputation, the testimony being the number of southern front officers who found cause to "drop in". Other visitors were South African doctors posted in the region, Jack Medalie, Barnett, Treisman, Charlie Shubitz and Mendel Klaff.

Needless to say, Stanley Levin fell in love with his nurse. Or perhaps the truth was in Yocheved's later account: "I was the first girl he met. I had to keep him, so I married him." The ceremony took place under a canopy on the roof of the double story. The pole holders were four orderlies who held up the canopy with borrowed bayonets.

Dr. Levin performed five hundred operations during the first six months of the war and his hospital handled five thousand cases.⁷⁸



Granted three days leave on the Jewish New Year, Sister Benedict thumbed her way to the north to visit Tiberias on the Sea of Galilee. Dr. Jack Wilton was delighted to see her and showed her his little hospital with pride. Learning that she was keen to visit a collective settlement, he arranged she should go to Degania "A", the kibbutz which had passed through great ordeals in May. Sister Benedict still had time to visit Ma'ayan Baruch, with its many

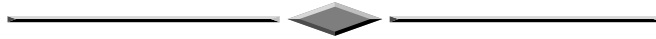
⁷⁷ The Medalies were among the South African Habonim group that founded the settlement of Moshav Habonim in the following year. This venture still awaits its chronicler.

⁷⁸ In the year that followed the Levin's were also part of the group that initiated the South African settlement of Moshav Habonim.

South Africans. Here she met Rubin Leizer⁷⁹ who had lost both his hands in a mine-laying operation.

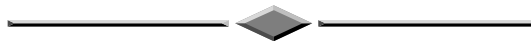
Getting back to Haifa from Ma'ayan Baruch was not easy. Fighting had broken out again in the area. When Sister Benedict reached Tiberias, again thumbing lifts from military vehicles, Dr. Wilton was greatly relieved. Although he was not officially concerned with her visit, he had worried about her.

Sister Benedict⁸⁰ was due to leave for Haifa next morning, but during the night a number of casualties were brought in and she assisted Dr. Wilton in treating them. One young soldier had been shot in the head. The only hope was to get him as quickly as possible to Haifa where intracranial surgery could be done to remove the bullet. So, not waiting for dawn, Sister Benedict accompanied him in an ambulance. It was a nightmarish journey, the jolting vehicle traveling without lights. Sister Benedict tried to keep the young man alive, administering oxygen and drugs and keeping a blood transfusion going with the aid of a flickering torch. At daylight the ambulance reached the Italian Hospital. The patient was still breathing, but his pulse was weak and irregular. Despite the night's vigil, Sister Benedict set about preparing the theatre, for there was not a moment to lose. It was too late. The soldier died as he was being wheeled into the theatre.



Sylvia Sher, emerging from her Negev dug-out after four days, was overwhelmed by the fresh air. The letter she had started writing to her parents remained uncompleted... Two weeks later she added these paragraphs:

The generator often failed and we used torches and flashlights. What I hate most are the amputations. We only do them when there is no alternative... the last three days have been fairly quiet, but we still receive cases caused by land mine explosions... One learns fast owing to the intensity of the work. I can now do work usually performed only by doctors.



AT SEA

After the capture of Beersheba, the Israel Navy had a role about which a strict silence was maintained for some time. Cyril Gotsman in the Ben Hecht, Charles Mandelstam in the Noga and Frank Herbstein have their own particular perspectives on the sinking of the King Farouk, the Egyptian flagship.

The Ben Hecht put out to sea on October 19 with the mother boat and the human torpedo boats. Gotsman was in the engine room in charge of one of the watches. There were two engines, two men in charge and two others greasing. Engine room duties were the usual ones required in ships acting on signals from the bridge.

The engines had been overhauled thoroughly, except for a shaft driving one of the propellers. It had not been possible to replace a worn bearing which, therefore, had to be oiled by hand from the narrow tunnel in which the shaft was turning. On one occasion the man on watch after Gotsman did not make an appearance and Gotsman spent six hours in the tunnel. The water-tight doors were closed to prevent the spread of damage that could be caused by enemy action. Fortunately Gotsman did not suffer from claustrophobia.

⁷⁹ Sister Benedict met him some months later in Haifa, cheerfully picking out tunes on the piano, using his prosthetic hands with great dexterity.

⁸⁰ Sister Benedict is today Mrs. A.M. Goodman, of Johannesburg (1980).

The Ben Hecht was accompanied by a corvette and the Navy's "most modern vessel", a sub-chaser acquired in Canada. Towards evening of October 21 the Ben Hecht sighted two ships off Gaza, the King Farouk and a minesweeper. At nightfall the Israeli vessel launched the mother boat and the human torpedoes, the pilot of the latter wearing the webbing of a steel helmet on their heads. In the webbing was an infra-red light visible only through a pair of special glasses, identifications to enable the Ben Hecht to pick them up after the operation.

The crew was tense as the Ben Hecht cruised round, waiting. The younger brother of one of the pilots was a member of the crew and his anxiety communicated itself. Suddenly loud explosions. Within the hour the Ben Hecht picked up the boat and pilots and headed out to sea. The King Farouk sank in five minutes; the minesweeper was also sunk.

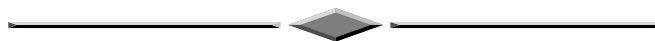
That was the operation as seen by Cyril Gotsman.

The sub-chaser Noga, formerly the Yucatan, had been brought over by a skeleton crew from the United States. It was part of the U.S. "mothball fleet" about which the seamen, first the Americans, later the Israelis, used to say "Don't chip too hard. You might go through the deck."

Stripped of all armament, but equipped with radar, something new in the Israel Navy, she had come into the possession of the Jewish State during the second truce. Her virtue was her speed, 30 knots. She had twin diesel engines and the always-surprising crew comforts of American ships. Jock Epstein was drafted from the Eilat to command the ship and he took along with him some of the Eilat's crew, including Charles Mandelstam whom he made a petty officer.

Epstein, a former merchant marine officer, was replaced after a few weeks by Avram Pizaro, half-Jew, half-Malaysian, ex-Royal Dutch Navy. Pizaro turned her into a fighting ship, having her equipped with a two-inch Italian naval gun and two 20mm guns, not anti-aircraft but anti-tank (and if that is odd, the answer is that is how things were, armament-wise, in those days). On the after deck were two Beza machine guns. Mandelstam talked Pizaro into making him captain of one of the 20mm guns. The gun crew did a considerable amount of training in stripping the gun, but owing to a shortage of ammunition, limited firing practice to three rounds.

The Israelis got 26 knots out of the Noga. Her involvement in the action against the King Farouk began with an announcement by Pizaro over the intercom in the early afternoon that news had been received that the Egyptians were about to break the cease-fire and that the Israelis were going to get in first. The Noga was used to tempt the King Farouk, lying then in Gaza harbour. She approached the Egyptian vessel to invite her guns, but the Egyptians did not respond. Finally she withdrew in order to fulfill her role as radar ship in the action that followed that night, and whose result was that the Egyptians ceased supplying their forces in the Gaza Strip by sea.



The scientists at the Weizmann Institute had been asked to fashion an instrument by which men in the sea could be made distinguishable in order to be picked up at night. The Institute came up with an infra-red lamp attached to a women's bathing cap. The scientists were not told the plan for the lamps. Frank Herbstein was sent with the bathing caps, the lamps and a telescope to Navy HQ in Jaffa. The man in charge there was Yochai Ben-Nun, who won the Valour Medal for what he was destined to achieve in the operation being planned. He was a member of a kibbutz near Rehovot, had been wounded several times serving with the Palmach and had then been transferred to the Navy. In the warehouse were motor boats of the kind the Italians had used in World War 2. They were being loaded with explosives.

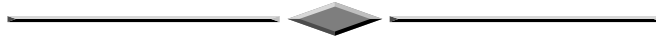
As the project unfolded, Herbstein learned that the explosives were to be used against Egyptian ships in Gaza.

A "flotilla" arriving from Haifa took aboard Ben-Nun and, among others, Herbstein. From Jaffa it nosed towards Gaza. The King Farouk was there and two other vessels. At nightfall the human torpedo men were lowered in motor boats into the sea, the lead boat that of Ben-Nun. Herbstein:

The first attempt was made in the late afternoon. I still remember the grim and set faces of the two motor boat crews as they were launched into the water.

The second attempt was at nightfall. The sea was like a lake. The motor boats chugged off. I wasn't privy to what was going on but I pieced things together. Nobody was speaking much and what was said was in Hebrew, which I didn't understand. The crew was tense. I was the only scientist aboard. Nobody knew me. The infrared lamps did not work. What happened was that the torpedo men put on the bathing caps but omitted to button up. When they jumped into the water the caps were unsettled on their heads and the lamps did not light up. They must have communicated by shouting. They also had torches. There was not sole reliance on the infrared (invisible to the naked eye except at a distance of a yard or two). One can gather the type of people these human torpedo men were from the fact that not only did they send the King Farouk to the bottom but even brought back a couple of prisoners. Everybody was terribly excited and jubilant. The men polished off a bottle of cognac.

Political dilemma followed. On the one hand the Israelis had won what was, in the dimensions of those days, a signal navy victory. On the other hand the action had taken place twenty four hours after a cease-fire. The Egyptians were equally embarrassed because they could not admit that they had been dilatory enough to allow their flagship to be sunk, even if it was during a cease-fire. Both sides kept quiet. Fearing the risk of her sailors talking, the Israeli Command kept them incommunicado for five days sailing up and down between Haifa and Tel Aviv.



POLITICAL

Political highlights of the fateful seven days were the following:

October 19

Security Council, convening at Lake Success at request of Dr. Ralph Bunche, Acting UN mediator, issued a statement saying, inter alia:

...the indispensable condition to a restoration of the situation is an immediate and effective cease-fire. After the cease-fire, the following conditions might well be considered as the basis for further negotiations looking forward towards assurance that similar outbreaks will not occur again and that the truce will be fully observed in this area:

Withdrawal by both parties from positions not occupied at the time of the outbreak.

Acceptance by both parties of the conditions set forth in the Central Truce Supervision Board decision No. 12 affecting convoys.

Agreement by both parties to undertake negotiations through UN intermediaries or directly as regards outstanding problems and the permanent stationing of United Nations observers throughout the area.

October 22

Cease-fire ordered, accepted by both sides, but honoured by both as much in the breach as in the observance.

October 23

Meeting of Arab leaders in Amman, present: Premier Nokrasy Pasha, of Egypt, Premier Jamil Bay of Syria, King Abdullah of Transjordan, the Regent of Iraq and the Iraqi Chief of Staff. Egyptian Premier's bitter remark: ...the Egyptian Government has no need of anyone's assistance...but where are the Royal Transjordan and Iraqi forces...? We all know the Syrian forces are useless...

October 24

Dr. Bunche, impatient with Security Council's mild cease-fire call, demanded a forceful declaration that the parties be required to negotiate either directly or through the Truce Supervision Organization "with a view to achieving a permanent condition of peace in place of the existing truce."

October came to an end with the cease-fire holding uneasily.

CHAPTER 15

NOVEMBER - A FORTRESS FALLS

The eyes of the Israeli Command were fastened on the now-contracted Faluja pocket, the destruction of which would be a greater triumph for the Israelis than even the capture of Beersheba. For several reasons: it contained the Iraq el Suedan fortress. "The monster on the hill." a flank of the pocket; the Egyptians within the fortress had taken severe toll of Israeli and volunteer lives in the seven attempts to take it; secondly, the fortress was neighbor to the Arab village of the same name, in its turn neighbor to the Israeli settlement of Negba, which, therefore, was always under threat. Finally, and perhaps most important of all, while the fortress and the Arab village remained intact, there could be no assurance of security for the Israeli communications to the Negev, for they dominated the road. Even a safe retreat of the Egyptians out of the pocket, if that were possible, would not be satisfactory to the Israeli Command, since the Egyptian brigade, skilled and brave men, would add to the strength, resistance and morale of the Egyptians further south.

The "monster on the hill" had to be taken - and it was. The eighth and final assault is the common memory of twenty to thirty South Africans.

Yitzchak Sadeh, "the old man", founder of the Palmach, was blunt in an address to the commandos before the battle: there was to be no failure this time. Sadeh had shaped a new strategy for the fortress's capture. He dispensed with reliance on surprise, accepting the obvious that height cannot be surprised, or very rarely. He wrote later that "time after time, when the assaulting forces reached the vicinity of the fortress, enemy machine guns in the towers on the corners of the building, poured down defensive fire along its walls and soldiers on the roof dropped hand grenades. And when an attempt was made in the last attack to break into the building by means of a car loaded with explosives, it was hit by Egyptian anti-tank fire."

Reliance was now to be placed on massive firepower, with 75 mm guns firing point blank, light and heavy mortars and medium machine guns. After the softening up, "unrivaled in intensity up to that time" (Lorch), the commandos, acting as an assault force, were to go in.

As Melville Malkin recalls the day, action had been delayed twenty four hours. He was in a unit that set up a 75 mm gun in Negba kibbutz. Hillel Daleski commanded the gun. Malkin was his corporal. The men lay in the sun all day until two p.m. when the signal was given for the barrage to open. A diversionary attack had in the meantime been launched against the Iraq el Suedan village.

Malkin:

We fired at the walls. Next to us was a group shooting their Beza machine guns at the windows. The barrage went on and on from all sides. Two South Africans, Syd Langbart and Elliot Katzenellenbogen, were on a half-track which, with another group, had brought up a 17-pounder in case the enemy brought in tanks to divert the assault. I remember seeing Lou Kotzen in a half-track.

At four p.m., with the sun in the Egyptians eyes, the tanks, manned mostly by Anglo-Saxons and comprising a number of South Africans in the crews, blew a large hole in the wall. Israeli officers and men stood tensely on surrounding elevations. The moment of drama had come: Naphtali Arbel, the "B" Company commander gave the South African section, of his Machal platoon the honour of being the first in. The assault forces, led by section leader Rhodesian Reg. Sagar followed by Mike Isaacson, Bull Bernstein, Bill Lehr, Leslie Marcus, Johny Nakan, Ivan Sheinbaum, Harry Sher and Ralph Yodaiken poured into the three-story building.

Closely behind came the other Machal men, one of them non-Jewish Paddy Cooper a former British soldier turned a captured Vickers machine gun on the retreating Egyptians. The Israelis on the hills heard the crackle of machine-gun fire, then a lull. Three Egyptians fell within the fortress, and then the fighting stopped. The lull was the surrender of the Egyptians.

There were two or three German officers among the enemy and one of them, a tall man, hearing the English of Leslie Marcus, said: "What are you doing among these bloody Jews?" Next to Marcus was Yossele, barely five foot, hardly weighing a hundred pounds, a man out of the concentration camps who had attached himself to Marcus as a kind of batman. This man had seen his family wiped out by the Germans. He asked Marcus in Yiddish: "vos zogt er foon die Yidden?" ("What does he say about the Jews?") and attacked him fiercely.

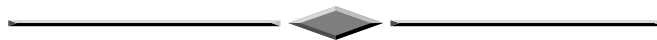
The capture of the fortress was affected without a single Israeli loss. The Egyptians came out hands upraised, stunned and bewildered by the sustained barrage to which they had been subjected.

South Africans had played important roles in this final assault on the fortress. They were with the 88th Battalion heavy mortars, some had manned the 75 mm and 17 pounder guns. They were in the tanks of the 82nd and the first to storm through the gap were the South Africans of the 89th Commandos.

The Anglo-Saxons of the commandos celebrated at Gedera that night before returning to Ben Shemen, their base.

Lionel Meltzer, compressed a world of meaning in his laconic entry:

"Nov. 9; today our troops took the Iraq el Suedan fortress... headway on all fronts."



The next triumph of November took place two weeks later when two convoys set out from Beersheba for isolated Sdom, eighty eight kilometers away. The end of the trail in the desert of Judea was now part of Israeli legend for it was in this location - and only in this one - that the Haganah underground had trained with live ammunition in the days of the British Mandate. Lonely, precarious and mountainous, containing the hazardous Ma'aleh Akrabim (Ascent of the Scorpions), its silences now notched a "first" in history, the first convoys to negotiate the tortuous route.

The jeeps of the Negev Brigade's ninth battalion were the convoy's nose vehicles, thus making a number of South Africans the vanguard men, among them David Teperson, Philip Navon, Irwin Cohen, Benny Miller, Rusty Kirsch, Ronnie Chaskelson, Clive Centner and Georgie Jamieson, and others listed in Chapters 12 and 14.

The entire population of Sdom came out to greet the convoy. Joyous were the celebrations and conviviality of that evening of November 23. Two South Africans at the settlement with whom there was a reunion, were Syd Bellon of Krugersdorp and Hymie Kurgan

The Dead Sea had been effectively joined to the State and the gateway to Eilat was now open.


One of the "sights" of Sdom at the time was an upturned Norseman off the air strip near the foothills of the Sdom mountain range. This was Joe Katzew's crash. Thirteen days earlier two Norsemen had left Ekron for Sdom at five a.m., Katzew, piloting one (Ted Gibson co-pilot) and Capetonian Roy Schapera the other. Schapera landed first. Katzew touched down and then found the plane out of control. It went over on its nose and then on to its back. The two pilots crawled out, shaken but unhurt. Katzew was grounded shortly after.



THE AIR FORCE

The days of bomb-chucking were over by some weeks now. The young Israelis, who "chucked" in the Norsemen raids over Beersheba with Katzew, Gibson, Schapera and others of Flight 35, were perhaps the last practitioners of this type of primitive aerial warfare. The history writers haven't made much of this extraordinary practice - this aerial equivalent in 1948 of the military matchlock and harquebus - apart from whistling a brief astonishment or using it as an illustration of the nursery from which the later redoubtable IAF grew, but it remains, for all that, a central human and military aspect of the war.

We have left in the shadows the Johannesburg "twins", Mannie Solarsh and Sonny Ospovat, to whom the war had become an ever-widening experience since they joined the Galil squadron in the north on their arrival. This squadron, in the passage of time, went over from reconnaissance to bomb-throwing raids in the Galilee. Thereafter the "twins" were transferred to Ramat David, linking up operationally for the first time with fellow South Africans. Later in the year they were drafted to Tel Aviv, first joining the supply run to Sdom, then going to Air Ambulance Service. The prelude to Beersheba, and Beersheba itself, kept them busy. Most of the wounded that they flew to Tel Aviv were Egyptians.



Jack Cohen and Sam Pomerance flew back to Czechoslovakia to prepare thirteen more Spitfires for flight to Israel. They were joined a little later by Arnie Ruch and Issy Greenberg, the radio mechanic. The flight of the latter two to Prague was not without its anxious moments. Their Dakota piloted by Claude Duval, now back on the PAAC Johannesburg-Lydd-London run, lost an engine half way to Athens. After repairs, Duval continued to Geneva where the South Africans boarded an east-bound plane. Arriving finally at Uherske Hradiste, Ruch joined by Jack Cohen performed their test flights while Greenberg began the extraction of the planes radio sets. As with the first six Spits, the thirteen were stripped of all accoutrements, this time, as we have just noted the radios as well. Ruch and Jack Cohen were the only South Africans among the thirteen pilots. Three were bright young Israelis: Mottie Fein (Hod)⁸¹ Sandy Jacobs and Danny Shapiro - men who were in later years to leave their mark on the IAF. These three had not yet completed their training but nevertheless successfully flew this difficult mission. They subsequently completed their training and received their wings with two other Israelis, Shia Swartsman and Tibi Stern under American volunteers Rudy Augarten and Caesar Dangott in the first pilot's training course in Israel.

This time the Yugoslavs refused a renewed Israeli request for the use of Niksic. The fate of Velvetta 2 hung in the balance. "Like a non-stop from Cape to Cairo," Issy Greenberg thought, allowing himself the slight exaggeration. Several Israelis in the technical and engineering team believed that without Niksic the flight would be suicidal. The factors in their minds were not only the perils of distance, but winter, with its snow and winds. Pomerance was adamant. The flight could be made, he insisted, and had to be.

The issue was settled by the Yugoslavs who, relenting, once again opened the airfield to the Israelis. Tito never lost an opportunity to assert his independence of Moscow.

On Dec 18th at 0800 hours, the first flight of six left the secluded and remote Kunowice airfield to maximize secrecy. The pilots were Americans George Lichter, Bill Pomerantz, Aaron Finkel, Israelis Sandy Jacobs, Mottie Fein (Hod), led by American Sam Pomerance. The planes which were without oxygen equipment ran into foul weather. All except

⁸¹ Mottie Hod was later to become chief of the IAF during the Six day War.

Pomerance and Pomerantz rendezvoused over Niksic airfield. Sam Pomerance was lost in the clouds over Yugoslavia. Possibly he tried to climb on top of the weather and flaked out through lack of oxygen. He flew into a mountain. It is not known what happened. He failed to arrive at Niksic. Then the Yugoslav authorities notified them that a plane had crashed into the mountains and it was confirmed that it was Sam's.

It was later learned that Bill Pomerantz had made a forced landing on a beach near Zader. He was given a hard time by the Yugoslav police until the intervention of an Israeli agent.

Elsie Pomerance, Sam's wife, had in the meantime embarked in a Skymaster to Israel.

The weather deteriorated further and the other four returned to Kunowice.

The remaining seven Spitfires plus the four that had returned departed from Kunowice on Dec. 20th in two formations of three followed by one of five. The first three of Mottie Fein, Danny Shapiro were led by George Lichter, followed by the second flight of Arnie Ruch, Caesar Dangott with Canadian John McElroy leading.

In the last formation of five were Jack Cohen, Sandy Jacobs, Aaron Finkel and another American, Bill Schroeder, led by Canadian Lee Sinclair.

All eleven arrived at Niksic 3 hours 45 minutes later.

These eleven Spitfires with the same pilots take off for Ekron in two formations, one of five and one of six each led by a C46 navigating, carrying the spits' armaments and life-rafts in case of ditching. One (McElroy's) had to return to Niksic due to engine problems. The remaining ten planes reach Ekron after a flight of 6 hours 45 minutes, landing in quick succession one after the other.

Jack Cohen had taken the worst Spitfire. She behaved reasonably well at the beginning, but later gave him the most uncomfortable flight he had ever made. The violent vibrations of the panel mystified him. The icy waters of the Mediterranean sent shivers down his spine, but he drew comfort from the fact that he had never heard of a Merlin engine letting anyone down.

This one proved faithful also. All the same he was thankful when his wheels hit the tarmac at Ekron.

Jack Cohen's was the sad task of breaking the news of Sam Pomerance's⁸² death to his wife, a task made all the more difficult from the fact that in Czechoslovakia he had been very close to the couple. Elsie was a down-to-earth woman, a non-Jewess, who embellished life with a rich sense of humour. Now she stood shocked. Recovering her composure, she said if Sam had to go, she was glad it was this way - for a cause in which he passionately believed.

Cohen searched for the cause of his erratic and bumpy flight and found it: he had flown all the way on eight cylinders. Somebody had bungled at Uherske Hradiste.

After another brief stay, Cohen returned to Czechoslovakia, this time with Bob Dawn, an American who had worked with Sam Pomerance on the conversions in Operation Velveta I and now continued with the work. Cohen did the test flying. When the planes were fully serviceable, they were crated and sent by sea. An elderly Czech, with a cordial dislike of the Communist dispensation in the land, pleaded with Cohen to crate him with one of the planes but Cohen, sympathetic though he was, had to refuse, rightly believing that the man would not survive the voyage.

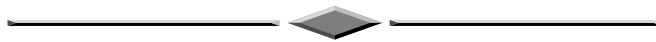
⁸² Sam Pomerance and Bill Pomerantz, were not related.

Bob Dawn married a Czech girl and (said Cohen), "between us all we managed to smuggle her out of the country as a nurse on a refugee train."

Thus ended the third and last of the Velveta operations. Cohen returned to Israel by civilian airline. He had been involved in all three operations.

Syd Cohen's log book, with its record of missions almost every day during the fighting periods, reflects the quieter days of cease-fire in November:

Nov 1st: Patrol Gaza-El Arish Spitfire.
3rd: do El Arish-Gaza-Faluja Spitfire.
4th: Bomber escort Faluja Mustang P-51.
13th: Patrol Faluja-El Arish Mustang P-51.
18th: Escort to photo recce. Spitfire.
26th: Patrol Faluja-El Arish Mustang.
29th: Test flight recce. Hebron ME 109.



POLITICAL

There were major political developments in November, the main one being the re-election on the 3rd of Harry Truman, than whom Israel had no greater friend, as President of the United States. This man had been a rock to the Jews and they were to honour him in future years in stone, in literature and commemorations.

Less satisfactory to Israel was the ambiguous attitude of the Security Council which, the day after Truman's re-election, made a two-fold call on the Israeli and Arab governments:

1. To withdraw those of their forces which had advanced beyond the positions held on October 14, the Mediator being authorized to establish provisional lines beyond which no movement of troops shall take place.
2. To establish through negotiations conducted directly between the parties or, failing that, through the intermediaries in the service of the United Nations, permanent truce lines and such neutral or demilitarized zones... in order to ensure henceforth the full observance of the truce in that area.

"Failing agreement," said the Security Council's call, "the permanent lines and neutral zones shall be established by decision of the Mediator."

Israel protested, noting that this was the first occasion that the Council had ordered withdrawals. Her question: Why no order for withdrawal when Arabs penetrated Israel territory? Israel refused to yield the gains of Operation Ten Plagues.

The debate was carried forward by the General Assembly which, meeting in Geneva three days after the Israeli capture of the Iraq el Suedan fortress, adopted a resolution calling for the establishment of a Conciliation Commission for Palestine. The merit of the resolution in Israel's eyes was that it made no mention of the Bernadotte Plan. The commission would consist of representatives of the United States, France and Turkey, and its task would be to explore ways and means for bringing about permanent peace in Palestine.

At this session, South Africa became the first country of the Commonwealth to oppose the imposition of the plan, which earlier had been strongly pressed by the representative of the United Kingdom. Mr. Eric Louw, South Africa's representative on the Political Committee, argued that "it is difficult to see what can be achieved by trying to force the plan on both or

either of the contending parties". It could only increase confusion and lead to further strife. He urged the two parties to the dispute to meet around a table to test whether their aims were really as irreconcilable as they appeared to be.

Canada and Australia also refused to commit themselves to the plan. Just before Mr. Louw's statement, the Zionist Record had put the case for Israel in the spirit of all Jewish writing on the subject:

"How can the misery and bloodshed be stopped? Obviously not, by giving way to the aggressor. Thus, for example, it is now being suggested that the Negev, comprising more than one half of the area originally assigned to the Jewish State, should be handed over to Egypt as a means of reaching a settlement.

This would deprive the Jewish State of an area which is absolutely essential for the absorption of the displaced persons of Europe and which, apart from Jewish settlements is wasted and desolate today.

The UN commission that drew the boundaries of the State of Israel realized the importance of the Negev to the Jewish State. Shorn of it, Israel would be a ghetto state without possibilities for natural development. If the Negev were ceded to Egypt, it would be a handsome prize for having drawn the sword and for having invaded a neighboring country and, in doing so, flaunting the decision of the United Nations.

On November 16 the Security Council followed up the General Assembly's resolutions with a call to the parties to enter into an agreement forthwith by negotiations conducted directly or through the Acting Mediator. Israel agreed conditionally. One of the conditions: No withdrawal of her forces from the Negev.

By the end of the month Egypt was simmering. Up to that time her newspapers had blazoned headlines of great imaginary victories in Palestine. But since not all the paper in the world can turn a defeat into victory, the impact of vanquished Beersheba filtered into the country. Demonstrations in the streets and slogans of the fanatical Moslem Brotherhood abused Premier Nokrashy Pasha and his government. King Farouk was not without his problems.

Meanwhile the young Israeli democracy was shaping.

President Truman to President Chaim Weizmann:

"Am pleased to learn that the first Israel elections are scheduled, for January 25. That enables us to set a definite target date for extending de jure recognition".

The Israeli Press had up to this stage discreetly muted its voice on the volunteers in the interests of the volunteers themselves. But now, with the prospect of final victory on the horizon, the Palestine Post, broke its silence on November 22 with an editorial entitled Machal. It said:

"The volunteers from abroad have come to fight for Israel, because it is the birthright of every Jew to share in this venture, even if he wishes to return to the country in which he was born and to live there after the fight is ended.

Although the services of some of these men, experts in their own fields, were very desperately needed, no bright inducements could be offered them if their own wish did not bring them here, for the Israeli forces are new and poor, indifferently equipped and very short of all the comforts of life: and the pay is the pittance that a Citizen Army pays when almost every able-bodied man is in the service. They came, and they played an heroic and an invaluable part.

There is not a unit of the Israel Army that is not proud of its Machal men, and there is not a squadron of the Air Force where Machal does not supply a significant part of both fliers and ground engineers. There is no one part of the Army that was indispensable to victory, and that applies also to Machal, but without the aid of these men and women the battle would have been longer and harder, and the losses much greater.

Not all of these volunteers speak Hebrew and that has proved no barrier to their fighting prowess or military skill, but it has proved for some a barrier to the full comradeship of an Army in the field, and to the understanding of all that goes on about them.

As a body, the Yishuv knows and values them, but it is a fact that as individuals many have felt homeless and unrecognized.

It is for the Yishuv to remember that these of her soldiers are in need of a special welcome at all times because they have no homes here to which to return on leave, and to let them see Israel fully so that they may come to know it as a country not just to die for, but to live in."

Of the South African volunteers, some twenty to thirty per cent were to stay or return later. Israel has fought four wars with the Arab nations since 1948 but has never again complicated the life of Diaspora Jewry with calls for military aid. Machal 1948, belonging to a unique period, was part of the uniqueness.

The best footnote on the Palestine Post's editorial was the observation of Hymie Josman: "I returned to South Africa and often wondered how it was that I was prepared to die for Israel, but not live in it." By this time, a medical doctor, Josman returned to settle in Israel in the late 1960s with his family.

Sister Brunton (now Medow) said sadly: "I would have loved to return -- even for a visit. But I have never been able to afford it." Several others said the same thing to this writer. Somewhere there has been a lack of imagination.



Badge of the Israel Defence Force

CHAPTER 16

DECEMBER - JANUARY

THE FINAL BLOWS

The Big Powers recognized the existence of Israel as an established fact, but not her boundaries. The principal subject of dispute remained the Negev. The British Government could not reconcile itself to the desert's incorporation within the new State. The Israel Army had not yet gained complete control and the late Mediator had recommended that it be given to the Arabs in exchange for the Galilee. It was this situation which caused the Government of Israel to decide on an additional operation in the Negev, the immediate objective the destruction of the Egyptian invader and his expulsion from Palestine - (Netanel Lorch).

December's operations were signaled by the following Order of the Day by Yigal Allon, commander of the Southern Front, on Wednesday, December 22:

The invader has been pushed into two narrow defensive lines, one along the coast, between Gaza and Rafah, the second in the south-eastern Negev between Bir Asluj and the Sinai Desert. His forces are far removed from his rear bases and reinforcement centers. The fear of our victorious army is upon the enemy's soldiers.

However, the task has not yet been concluded. The truce imposed on us by the United Nations has slowed the tempo of the war and has held up the disintegration of the enemy. The campaign and its momentous results cannot be summed up yet, because it is not yet completed.

The enemy braces himself, and his aim is to strike a blow at us in order to wipe out his disgrace. We will, therefore, nullify his plot with a crushing blow. We will expel his forces from the boundaries of the State of Israel and liberate the remaining areas of the Negev still in his hands.

This operation is to complete what was begun in previous operations. Just as we prevailed over the enemy then by virtue of the strength and the spirit of our soldiers, of the infantry and other corps and services, merged together into one Army and following one order, so shall we prevail now.

The house of Israel places its trust in our Army. The people believe in the fighters of the Southern Front and look forward to a final and decisive victory over the invaders. For the final defeat of the Egyptian invaders! To bring about peace speedily! To victory! We shall assault the enemy!

South Africans were in the fighting to the very end.

The Israeli Government had given notice that it considered itself free to operate against the Egyptians in the light of their refusal to enter armistice talks. Five brigades were to be deployed for the battle, including "Old Man" Yitzchak Sadeh's armoured brigade, which included the 89th commando unit, the 82nd Tanks, the 88th heavy mortars with its South Africans (increased in number since November) and the now ripely-experienced men of the 9th battalion of the Negev Brigade which included the "Negev beasts" unit of David Teperson and his fellow South Africans.

Allon had spoken in his Order of the Day of two narrow defensive lines into which the invader had been pushed. There were, in fact, four, but two had been immobilized for counter-attack, the besieged and even still more contracted Faluja pocket and the Egyptians of the Hebron

area. The density of the active Egyptian forces was in the coastal Gaza Strip. If these forces could be overwhelmed and the region, source of all supplies to the invaders' strip in the south eastern Negev, taken, the interior forces could fall like a ripe apple.

It made sense to the Israelis therefore to concentrate the greatest weight of their armour and men on the Gaza-Rafa strip. They did the very opposite, although by feint, surprise and preliminary diversionary attacks, they led the Egyptians - and indeed the Israeli Press also - to believe that this was their intention. In fact the Command made the interior Egyptian disposition based along the Ismailia-Beersheba road extending into the central Negev Arab village of Bir Asluj, their primary target.

It was a biting, cold winter in the Negev that year with torrential rains to upset time tables, but there was now to be no holding of the rampant Israeli forces when they bore down on the enemy. The details of the fury of small, intense battles, both those of diversion and those of central purpose, which raged from December 22 to January 7, do not belong to these pages. There was no walk-over. The South Africans recall their toughest battles of the war before the enemy broke and the rout of his ranks set in.

The Egyptians had prepared in the previous four weeks along both of their dispositions, but particularly along the Bir Asluj sector. Apparently they were hoping to strike soon and to recapture Beersheba and thus restore their prestige. As the Israeli Command saw it, the presence of the Egyptians in the central Negev appeared senseless unless they were scheming to use the area as a springboard for a new offensive to carry them back into Palestine.

The operation named "Ayin", being the name of the Hebrew letter of the first letter of a number of place names involved, namely, Asluj, Auja, Arish, Azza, opened early on the morning of Wednesday December 22 when the Israeli Navy made a number of diversionary attacks on Gaza and a number of Egyptian bases along the southern coast. For the next two days these attacks and assaults by ground forces along the Egyptian-held coastal belt increased in intensity.

These attacks, designed to mislead the enemy, achieved their purpose, for the Egyptians rushed all available reinforcements and equipment into the coastal belt.

This was the signal for an Israeli column, ready for offensive duty, to move from its base in the Beersheba area with the aim of reaching the Auja el Hafir area during the night of December 24 in order to capture the locality, cut off Asluj and trap an Egyptian brigade which was strongly entrenched there. The Egyptians at Asluj were based on the only road in the central Negev, believed to be the only passable route between Beersheba and Auja el Hafir. The Israelis, true to their spirit of innovation and surprise, uncovered an old biblical Roman road not used in two thousand years. Basil Levin's engineers went in ahead of the column and removed sand dunes and various other obstacles, using bulldozers and tractors.

The road was in an even worse condition than originally believed, causing considerable delay in the movement of the column. When the sun rose on the Saturday morning, the column was still far from its originally planned destination. The commanders decided to postpone the attack until the next morning. During Saturday, Christmas Day, the engineers continued to prepare the road, almost under the noses of the Egyptians, without being observed. The difficulties surmounted were considerable. The following night the column moved again, the engineers working strenuously in one particular section where the deep sand made the passage of heavy vehicles almost impossible.

The column reached within five miles of Auja el Hafir early on Sunday morning. It was, however, unable to attack Auja because of the breakdown of many vehicles. The same morning the Egyptian garrison in Auja noticed the presence of Israeli units in the neighborhood but, believing that they were only recce patrols, did not treat them seriously.

During Sunday small Israeli detachments occupied the heights around Auja and quick moving jeep patrols hampered communications south of Auja, cutting the Auja-Ismailia road. The same day the IAF attacked Auja, while a column moving from kibbutz Revivim, reached the Auja-Asluj road near Mashrafa, cutting off the Egyptian forces at Asluj from the garrison at Auja.

We break here to follow Mike Isaacson and some of his fellow South Africans of Yitzchak Sadeh's armoured brigade in the thrust to Auja. A few days before Christmas they sensed the preparation for large-scale fighting. The Tank Corps, a large number of infantry and artillery had taken up position. Isaacson took command of his half track in the absence of Paddy, the non-Jewish Irishman who had been given leave for Christmas. Ralph Yodaiken, another South African, was in command of the second half-track and Jochanan, the Israeli, in command of the third. The Rhodesian, Reg Sagar, was in charge of all three half-tracks which formed a platoon in "B" company.

On the day before Christmas a large force of Egyptian armoured vehicles attacked the company, but fled when four were knocked out in as many minutes.

Isaacson was having trouble with the starting mechanism of his half-track which he could not get repaired because the mobile workshop had suffered a direct hit during a bombing raid. (The Egyptian Air Force had partially recovered from the blows delivered it in Operation Ten Plagues and had been strengthened by the acquisition of Italian fighter planes in the preceding weeks). Isaacson's half-track had to be pushed to get it started. The fact becomes relevant later.

On Christmas morning "A" company of the battalion set out to make a direct assault on Auja el Hafir. The Egyptians cut the road and the company only managed to break out after suffering severe losses. The O.C. and his deputy were killed in this battle.

"B" company attacked a little later with, in Isaacson's words, "the feeling of revenge," heightened by the sight of the burned-out half-tracks of "A" company. The Egyptians in the village opened fire. The half-tracks moved off the road and made their assault in a V formation, firing rapidly. The Egyptian reply was no less furious, some of its mortar fire knocking out several half-tracks and killing Phil, an American volunteer. Some of "B" company's vehicles had now stalled, others were retreating in the face of the heavy firing. Ivan Sheinbaum, a youngster of nineteen from Springs, was badly wounded, as were a few others in his half-track. Isaacson shouted that his half-track was disabled but his voice was not heard in the din of firing. He and his men were exposed to the shooting of an enemy troop taking cover in a wadi not more than fifty yards away.

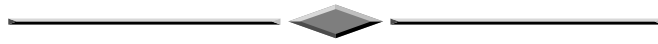
Then came the exploit by the Rhodesian Reg Sagar for which he was later recommended a medal for bravery. He climbed out of his half-track and with superb courage made his way towards the wadi, firing and knocking out the enemy with eight direct hits. The firing from the wadi stopped, but not that from the village. Sagar was hit in the chest; Isaacson's half-track was also hit. Sagar, despite his wound, ran towards the forward half-track of Ralph Yodaiken, escaping the shots fired at him. With the assistance of Yodaiken's half-track, Isaacson got started and the men made for cover where the rest of the company was regrouping for another attack. "B" company's second assault was successful: Isaacson takes up the story:

When we reached the wadi we jumped off and charged into the village. We saw dozens of Egyptians lying where Reg Sagar had blasted them. We captured the village without further incident, taking a large number of prisoners. The fight was out of them. The prisoners told us that a large number of their troops had taken to caves in the hills overlooking the village. Our tanks which had attacked from the other side of the village took up positions. One of the Egyptian officers snatched up a white flag and went to fetch them. He said they were willing to surrender.

Half an hour passed. Then the Egyptians, led by officers, some of them former officers of European armies, came down the hill. The European officers feared they might be shot. They saluted and, speaking English, asked for an Israeli officer. They shook hands and handed over their revolvers.

The hundreds of prisoners were marched off and the battalion took up positions in the village. A large quantity of arms, equipment, food and drink was discovered. Soon after infantry arrived to take over from the battalion which, having mounted their half-tracks, were arrested by the sight of four Spitfires flying towards them. They believed this was an IAF formation.

"Take cover" somebody shouted, realizing the truth. The men dived into a wadi. The enemy planes came in again and again but their aim was bad. Some of the more "chutzpadik" Israelis remained on their half-tracks and fired at the planes with their machine guns. Finally a few IAF fighters appeared and the enemy planes made off. The Israelis were now poised for the main attack on Auja itself.



"There may have been truces and off-on fighting periods", said the Namaqualander David Teperson, "but for Gedud Teisha (battalion nine) the war never stopped." After the capture of Beersheba, his scout-raiding unit of four jeeps, using Beersheba as base, would go out for days. They guarded pipelines, ambushed and raided, inviting Egyptian fire at Bir Asluj for weapon intelligence and the strength of the enemy's artillery posts. The jeeps checked the old Roman road as the engineers prepared it and generally set out to lay false clues for the Egyptians about the directions from which Israeli attacks might come.

The main Egyptian defences of Auja pointed eastward in the direction of Beersheba. But the first thrust at dawn on Monday, December 27, did not come from there. The confusion of the Egyptians was complete. The moment was ripe for Israeli tanks, jeeps and fresh infantry to bear down on the vital road junction with the support of concentrated artillery fire.

Lorch quotes the Egyptian commander's reports to his headquarters in Rafah:

7.15 a.m. Israel tanks and armoured cars attacking from the direction of Abu Aguella.

7.40 a.m. Enemy armour has breached our positions. Reinforcements urgently required, particularly fighter planes.

8.05 a.m. Enemy has captured our positions.

Then silence.

"Auja in our hands", read the Israeli signal to the Front HQ.

The scores of South Africans in the attacking Israeli forces helped to collect the prisoners, among them officers of high rank. Before the day was over the entire Beersheba - Auja road was opened for the movement of the Israeli Army.

Though the men were weary, the Israeli Command decided to press the attack on Abu Aguella to the west in order to exploit the enemy's confusion. The significance of this is that the Israelis would now be leaving the soil of Mandatory Palestine and be fighting in the no man's land of the Sinai desert.

The swiftness of the Israeli drive on Abu Aguella is best conveyed by the marginal story of Syd Cohen:

I flew out alone on the evening of Dec. 27 on a recce. On the road west of Auja, I saw a big column of the enemy. In the convoy were armoured cars. I came as low as I could, established that they were Egyptian vehicles but did not attack them for a reason I cannot now remember. I had just completed a mission. I returned to Hatzor, told HQ about this convoy and was told "First light tomorrow morning go out and look for it". So first light I went out and saw the same column going in the direction of Egypt. I came down fairly low, noted its armoured cars and markings. It appeared to be the same column of the evening before... I didn't doubt the vehicles could be anything but Egyptian because there were the markings and they were firing at me. So this time I thought I'd attack. I strafed the rear of the column. As I swept over, I saw a little Magen David (Shield of David) on a jeep at the back and suddenly I realized what had happened: that our fellows must have captured these vehicles and carried on driving without even having had the time to change the markings.

By midnight the outposts of Abu Aguella were flushed out. At dawn next day the leading troops of the commando battalion entered the town to find it abandoned. A convoy was observed escaping in the direction of El Arish. The main South African memory of Abu Aguella, apart from the former British Governor's house, is of a detention camp where the Egyptians held political prisoners, including Palestinian Arabs wishing to live in peace with the Jews. The Israelis released them.

Commando forces proceeding unchecked on the Abu Aguella - El Arish road reached the outskirts of El Arish on December 29. The Egyptians had retreated, leaving behind Spitfires at the airfield and huge stores of fuel, bombs and ammunition. On January 6 the Israelis were poised to attack Rafah. A raging sandstorm prevented action.

But now grave political complications had arisen. Washington warned Tel Aviv to get its forces out of the territory, and Britain gave the Israelis an ultimatum to quit. "Israel is not interested in returning to Egypt, having left there three thousand years ago" said Yigal Yadin a few days later at a press conference. "Israel also has no desire to hold a single inch of Egyptian territory. We could have reached the Suez Canal had we wished."

On January 6, the Egyptian Government declared its readiness to enter immediately into negotiations for an armistice agreement. Prime Minister Nokrashy Pasha had been assassinated. The guns stopped firing.



The diary of events for the period conveys the drama:

January 13

Armistice negotiations with Egypt opens in the Hotel of Roses on the Island of Rhodes.

January 25, 1949

First Israel general elections.

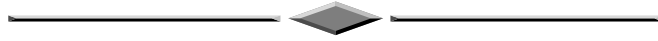
January 31

U.S. extends de jure recognition to Israel.

Truman approves first export-import loan for Israel of 100,000,000 dollars to finance agricultural development.

February 24

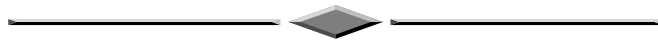
Israel-Egyptian armistice agreement signed. Agreements with Lebanon, Transjordan and Syria follow later in the year:



The Faluja pocket, reduced to an area five miles by three between Faluja and Iraq el Manshiya, refused to surrender and held out until the Armistice agreement. Mannie Solarsh recalled a three-day bombing of the pocket by the IAF, "We went in first", he said, "then the Dakotas, then the BI7s. Non-stop. The effect was nil. We investigated when the Egyptians were evacuated. They had been deep and invulnerable and we couldn't touch them."

Israeli efforts to take the stronghold had proved costly, but, on the other hand, the pocket had been reduced to impotence.

Part of history now. Nasser emerged from the pocket to become, a few years later, the leader of Egypt and to deepen the tone of Arab irreconcilability with the State of Israel.



While the battles raged on the Negev / Sinai border December 1948 to January 1949, the 7th Brigade, supplemented by local Defence units, was deployed on the Lebanese and Syrian borders for some six weeks. The S. Africans in the 79th Armoured were involved in continuous patrols and holding positions on the border roads, Most of the persons in the Hiram operation, plus Sim Mandelzweig and David Navias participated.

"B" Company infantry and part of the Besa platoon of the 72nd, held positions facing the Syrians opposite Mishmar Hayarden, where the truce was being strictly observed.

That particularly hard winter kept the M.O. Dr. Harry Bank busy at his sick bay at Fylon camp, with normal injuries, pneumonia, flu, fevers etc... Two U.K. volunteers were killed. One was Jonathan Balter with his "pukka" British accent who stepped on a mine during an inter platoon patrol on Xmas day; the other, a new arrival Wilfred Sheppard dies in a shooting accident, the next day. Sheppard had arrived in England on the 1939 Kinder-transport. Both are buried at Rosh Pina Military Cemetery with others of "B" Company. Those killed in the Western Galilee are buried at Nahariya.

S. Africans known to be facing Mishmar Hayarden, were Solly Bental, Luther Brand, Dave Brenner, George Busch, Lionel Clingman, Mendel Cohen, Max Chait, Cyril Clouts, Kenny Danker, Gerald Davimes, Bernard Etzine, Frank Fisher, Geoffrey Fisher, Zelig Genn, Grisha Golembo, Hymie Josman, Monty Katz, Martin Kahn, Harry Klass, Max Krensky, Toekie Levitt, Hymie Malbin, Sydney Manoim, Jack Marcusson, Stanley Medicks, Jack Mirwis, Archie Nankin, Simon Novikow, Abe Rachman, Eli Reef, Reuben Sacks, Albert Shorkend, Mike Snipper, Ziggy Stein, Hymie Toker, Solly Taback, Hymie Treisman, Ian Walters and Joe Woolf.

CHAPTER 17

FIVE R.A.F. PLANES DOWNED

On January 7, 1949, the day on which the cease-fire came into effect, five RAF planes overflying Israeli territory were shot down: four by the IAF and one by ground fire⁸³. Dov Judah, Syd Cohen and Boris Senior were close to the event, which had a mysterious prelude starting in October 1948. During the month a reconnaissance plane had flown high almost daily over Israel. It was hardly distinguishable and the IAF men could just make out the plane's vapour trails. The IAF's fighters could not reach above 14,000 feet. Efforts were made to keep up a standing patrol and to intercept the plane, but this proved impossible. The impression was that the plane was Arab. It was enjoying a free run over the country, photographing at will. Nothing could be done about it. Nevertheless Syd Cohen left standing instructions, with Ramat David to keep him immediately informed of its observations.

On November 2, the intruder was detected by the makeshift Israel radar developed with few resources by squadron 505. On watch at the mobile radar station "Gefen". commanded by Maurice Ostroff, were Adam Babitz, an Israeli who had gained his radar experience in the Polish army and South African, Barney Dworsky⁸⁴. They sighted the aircraft at 13:20h, plotted its track and immediately passed the information to the filter room in Tel Aviv, headed by South African Yetta Golombick.

The track was followed by the station in Haifa which had been constructed by the radar group at the Weizmann Institute. All the equipment was makeshift; none of it originally designed for ground controlled aircraft interception. The radar people, continuing to maintain their low profile, were satisfied with the results of their efforts.



An American non-Jewish pilot went up in a Mustang to intercept the plane. Syd Cohen, standing in the Control Tower at Hatzor, watched the closing distance between the two. Wayne Peake, the American, came in from behind the intruder. Both were little dots in the sky. There were bursts of fire and then Control Tower heard Peake on the radio exclaim: "My goddam guns have jammed." What actually happened was that in the short burst he had used up the little ammunition he had. The IAF was short of Mustang ammunition and distributed it sparingly.

The recce plane continued its flight. The Mustang broke away to come down. Suddenly Cohen noticed that the vapour trails of the intruder plane were getting thicker. It turned towards the sea, burst into flames in mid air and fell out of the sky in pieces. Ezer Weizman jumped into an Auster, flew out to the coast but could spot only one piece of wreckage. Identification proved impossible. The exultant Peake insisted that it was a four-engined Halifax. This only deepened the mystery since the surmise had grown stronger that the plane was Syrian and the Syrians were not known to possess Halifaxes. Canadian pilot Eddy Kaplansky believes that Peake⁸⁵ may very likely have been "groggy" from lack of oxygen as

⁸³ The downing of the one plane by ground fire is recorded in Haim Herzog's *The Arab Israeli Wars*, confirmed by Smoky Simon, chief of air operations at the time, and Palestine Post Jan 9th 1948.

⁸⁴ Other South Africans on the station at the time were Ralph Lanesman, Abe Berkow, Mishy Fine, Effie Levy and Lucien Henochowitz.

⁸⁵ The non Jewish American pilot Peake became devoted to the Israeli cause and when dying of cancer many years later, he asked his family to arrange for his burial in Israel. Peake's body rests in the non-Jewish section of the Carmel Military Cemetery in Haifa.

the downed aircraft was confirmed as a Mosquito when the Israel Navy retrieved the remains from the sea.

The identity of the plane was confirmed nine weeks later - thanks to a question put by Mr. Winston Churchill to Prime Minister Clement Attlee in the House of Commons. The plane was a RAF Mosquito. The disclosure was a consequence of a series of events on January 7 when the IAF met intruding RAF Spitfires and Tempests four times during the day and engaged them thrice. Air force documents disclose the following:

In the early morning, two of our planes flown by American "Slick" Goodlin and Canadian John McElroy, both WWII aces, spotted three enemy fighter planes. In the encounter, each of them shot down one.

Later, another group was engaged by Boris Senior and Canadian Jack Doyle, flying Mustang P51 fighters, also believing them to be Egyptian. Senior succeeded in firing a burst and possibly damaged one.

On the third occasion, two of our planes, one flown by Arnie Ruch, ran into eight of theirs, but no contact was made.

In the afternoon twelve were spotted. The encounter was dramatic. Dov Judah at Operations gave the order to tangle. Syd Cohen happened to be at Operations at the time. Four IAF planes led by Ezer Weizman engaged the twelve. The pilots, of the other three Israeli planes, John McElroy, and the Americans, Bill Schroeder and Caesar Dangott. Two of the intruders, whose pilots lacked combat experience, were downed by McElroy and Schroeder, making McElroy's score for the day two.

The fifth RAF plane downed that day fell to a 82nd battalion tank gunner, since identified as British non-Jewish volunteer, Johnny Dawson. This made the events of Jan. 7th almost an entirely non-Jewish affair.

Melville Malkin, then in an artillery unit about 1,000 meters from the Rafah crossroads, was one among the scores of South Africans who saw the British planes hurtling down. Palmach jeeps went out to find the pilots descending with their parachutes. Dr. Barney Sandler, of Rhodesia, joined the interrogation group. The British fliers were surprised to meet this "Englishman." They were taken to a casualty station in charge of Ossie Treisman, thence to Beersheba where the military surgeon was Dr. Wilfred Kark, also of Johannesburg, thence to Tel Aviv for further interrogation and medical treatment. The facial injury of one of them was treated by an English-speaking doctor. "Is the whole English-speaking world in Israel?" the now completely bewildered pilot asked.

Then the political storm broke. What were RAF planes doing over Israeli territory? The London Observer attributed the disaster to the "pathological anti-Israel obsession" of Ernest Bevin, Britain's Foreign Minister, which "makes him persist in his blundering errors..." The paper drew a South African analogy with the reminder that Dr. Jameson, "with his unlawful raid on the Transvaal had set a match to the South African War." UN observers went to the wreckage of the downed planes and found them all within Israeli territory; the British Consul in Haifa handed a note of protest to "The Jewish Authorities" which the Israeli Foreign Office declined to accept; the Consul also requested all British residents to leave the country immediately; the Manchester Guardian wrote that Bevin's policy "is making fools of us and there is every danger of his making matters worse"; and President Truman severely criticized both the air incursion and the reinforcement of British troops at Aqaba.

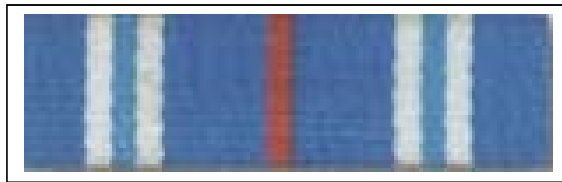
Listening to the BBC, Syd Cohen let out a low whistle at the story that the RAF planes had been attacked "by an overwhelming number of Israeli aircraft". The London Daily Mail found it "hard to imagine that the British who set up Zion should be the first victims of the new aggressor." Then came Churchill's revelatory question in the Commons. He demanded to

know from Attlee why he had kept the British public ignorant of the downing of the Mosquito in November. Thanks to Churchill, therefore, it became possible to establish a link between the November "incident" and the events of January 7.

Three facts belong to the historical record:

- The RAF was not at any time invited by the United Nations Mediator, Dr. Ralph Bunche, to act as an observer for the international body.
- Israel was not given notice on January 7 that British aircraft would be flying over the Sinai frontier.
- The Egyptian Government had not invoked the aid of the RAF.

Bevin accepted the inevitable eleven days later. On January 18, he made his first acknowledgment of the existence of the Jewish State and a Jewish government with an announcement that the detainees in the Cyprus camps would be immediately released. Two weeks later Britain recognized the State of Israel. The Jewish-British feud was over.



War of Independence Service Ribbon

Dark blue background represents the nation,
light blue and white, the flag and red, the spilled
blood

CHAPTER 18

THE WIND-UP

The volunteers drifted back home in groups, in tens, in couples, singly, at different times between 1948 and 1953. It was good to be back, to see South African skies again, to awaken to the country's genial climate and the familiar setting. The majority, not analytical by nature, lived with the consciousness not only of a strengthened Jewishness, but also of a strengthened South Africanism. They picked up the dropped threads of their lives with the peculiar earnestness that generally distinguishes returned soldiers, giving the years that followed to their own particular concerns. They read the news from Israel with an interest backed by knowledge of places and personal memories, but established no strong identification with the South African Zionist Movement in whose fierce party ideological disputes they had a diminishing interest. Scores returned on private visits to Israel and for the reunions of World Machal. Their continued contribution to Israel, as a specific group, is in the form of financial support to the great institution which cares for the disabled soldiers of the wars that followed⁸⁶

Syd Cohen left Israel in April 1949. Looking out of the window of his Universal Airways plane, he swallowed hard to control an emotion. Four fighter planes⁸⁷ were escorting it. They flew for thirty miles, gave a final waggle of "thank you", then turned back home.

Having completed his medical course at the University of the Witwatersrand, Cohen practiced first in Durban, later in Brakpan as partner to Dr. Harry Feldman, and then in Durban again. But Ezer Weizman would not leave him in peace, urging him to settle in Israel. Adeline, Cohen's wife, closely attached to her family, was not keen to transplant her young children, but she joined Syd in response to an invitation from the IAF to visit the Land. The Air Force laid it on in such a way that she was enraptured. Victory went to Ezer Weizman. The Syd Cohens settled in the Land in the mid-1960s. Cohen rendered distinguished service as a helicopter doctor in the War of attrition 1970/71 and in the Yom Kippur War of 1973.

Dov Judah stayed as Director of Operations and also set up a gunnery course for the Air Force Command from June to September 1949. He and Elsie returned in October 1949. He practices law in Johannesburg.

Smoky Simon stayed on as Chief of Air Operations until August 1950 and then he and Myra returned to South Africa, where Simon established himself in insurance in Welkom, O.F.S.⁸⁸, for twelve years, winning membership of the Million Dollar Club several times. He settled in Israel with his family in 1962, carving out a spectacular success in insurance.

Myra, who had served in the SAAF in World War 2 as a meteorologist, initiated the first courses in meteorology for the IAF, counting among her pupils many who were to become senior officers in the Air Force and with El Al. She could hardly have imagined this role for herself a few years earlier.

She had little Jewish background. Durban-born, she lost her father when she was still a small child and passed her youth in boarding schools, including a convent, and at Pretoria Girls High. She had never known an identifiable Jewish life. The immediate post-war years in Palestine and the grim facts of the Nazi camps were to turn her into a firebrand Jewess, living Israel as a great passion, a fact true about her to this day.

⁸⁶ The details are as recorded in 1975

⁸⁷ Joe Woolf, returning home on the same flight, photographed two of these Spitfires through the Dakota's window.

⁸⁸ O.F.S - the Orange Free State.

Editor's Note, February 2003.

There is an "intimate connection" between Machal and the IDF, which Smoky calls "The Machal Generation Link." With the very recent tragic loss of Israeli astronaut Ilan Ramon, it is topical to recall that Smoky' and Myra's oldest son Saul was one of the pilots who participated with Ramon in destroying the Iraqi Osirak reactor in June 1981. Saul was the youngest F-15 pilot in the world. He shot down the first MIG-25 in combat and he commanded the Operational Training School of the IAF. Their younger son Dan was a Phantom pilot. His squadron destroyed 21 missile and radar sites supplied by the Russians to the Syrians, without the loss of a single aircraft. Their daughter Philippa served as an Air Force operations officer in the Sinai during the Yom Kippur War and their younger daughter Aliza served in Nachal for an extra year. Their eldest grandson is an active pilot in the Air Force Reserves. Another grandchild has just completed her service as an operations officer in the IAF. Smoky and Myra have three grandchildren currently serving. One girl is an instructor in the Infantry, and will shortly be a mortar weapons instructor. Another granddaughter is an operations officer attached to a squadron, and a grandson is starting an Officers Course in the Navy.

Jack Cohen took over command of 101 Squadron from Syd Cohen, stayed two years, and then returned to Cape Town where he practices law.

Boris Senior served as Air Defence Commander from 1949 to 1951, giving up operational flying in 1952. He is an industrialist in Israel.

Danny Rosin became El Al's senior pilot.

Some of the others in alphabetical order:

A

Hugo Alperstein (Hagai Agmon) is chief pilot of Arkia, Israel's inland air service.

B

Max Barlin is an architect in Johannesburg.

Tuxie Blau a businessman in that city.

C

Les Chimes is a director of a printing firm in Johannesburg.

Arthur Cooper is in the motor trade.

Ronnie Chaskelson, architect partner of Max Barlin, died of a heart attack a few years ago.

D

Hillel Daleski is a professor of English at the Hebrew University.

Barney Dworsky, the eighty per cent disability case who paid his own fare to Israel, qualified B. Comm at the University of the Witwatersrand in 1949 and was back in Israel during the Sinai War of 1956, doing guard duty at kibbutz Kisufim.

Israel Dunsky is Mayor of the Israel town of Kfar Shmaryahu.

E

Morrie Egdes is a former Mayor of Sandton, a town neighboring Johannesburg and is in business.

Ernest Esakof practices medicine in New York.

F

Jack Fisch helped to build up Israel's naval intelligence service. He is a public relations consultant in Johannesburg.

Jack Fleisch never recovered from his incarceration by the Egyptians.

G

Morris Galp, one of the eight "safari" young men who reached Palestine⁸⁹, is the director of a furniture enterprise in Cape Town and is chairman of the Cape-Israel Philatelic Association.

Monty Goldberg came out of the Egyptian POW camp gaunt from under-nourishment and harsh treatment, but quickly recovered. He had been held from August 1948 to March 1949. He is a leading businessman in Johannesburg.

Cyril Gotsman is a prominent Krugersdorp businessman.

Issy Greenberg (Granoth), of the "Drom Afrika 1" crew and then of several adventures in Czechoslovakia, is an architect in Israel.

H

Professor Frank Herbstein teaches at the Technion in Haifa.

Basil Herman, who served with Moshe Dayan on the Mixed Armistice Commission with Jordan, was Israel Consul in New York between 1954-58 and is today Secretary of the Committee for Higher Education in Israel.

Lionel Hodes, succeeding the writer of this book, became Editor of Jewish Affairs, a monthly journal issued by the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, then went into law, from law to the world Jewish Congress staff in London for several years, then returned to South Africa to become the General Secretary of the S.A. Zionist Federation. He now occupies a high position in Johannesburg's financial world.

I

Norman Isaacs is in the motor trade in Johannesburg.

Mike Isaacson is a businessman in Pretoria.

J

Frank James returned to Johannesburg to found one of the largest construction firms in the city and has been a most generous donor to the cause of Israel and to the cause of Jewish education.

K

Cyril Katz is in business in Johannesburg.

Elliot Katzenellenbogen is a doctor in Israel.

Joe Katzew is a businessman in Virginia, O.F.S. and chairman of that town's Lions International.

⁸⁹ All, except two, of the Safari group described in chapter 1, reached Israel in 1948

Julius (Bill) Kayser, of Johannesburg, became deputy-commander of 101 fighter squadron in 1950, adding another South African name to the early history of the squadron. He is an executive in Johannesburg's industrial world.

Leo Kowarsky won a Parliamentary election contest but did not take his seat in Parliament, yielding it to a defeated United Party leader. He had been a member of the Transvaal Provincial Council for several years. In the mid-1960s he migrated with his family to Israel and was appointed chairman of the S. African Zionist Federation there. He died of a heart attack in Johannesburg in 1971.

Raphael Kotlowitz practises law in Israel.

L

Joe Leibowitz is in the motor trade and is present chairman of the Johannesburg branch of the S.A. Jewish Ex-Service League.

M

Eddy Magid is a businessman and a member of the Johannesburg City Council.

Melville Malkin, an accountant, is at the time of writing, chairman of the South African Machal Association.

Charles Mandelstam, the high blood pressure problem case of 1948, is the professional at Israel's only golf course which is at Caesarea.

Cecil Margo is a judge of the Transvaal Division of the Supreme Court.

Gordon Mandelzweig is a civil engineer in Johannesburg.

Lou Mazerow is an El Al pilot.

Leslie Marcus is the owner of a dress factory in Cape Town.

Maurice Mendelowitz, a businessman in Tel Aviv, is chairman of the Israel-South Africa Chamber of Commerce.

N

Abe Nurick left kibbutz Ma'ayan Baruch to become a building contractor in Israel.

Philip Navon is in the hotel industry.

O

Sonny Ospovat is an industrialist in Johannesburg.

R

Elliot Rosenberg is an accountant in Johannesburg.

Rabbi L.I. Rabinowitz lives in Jerusalem. He is a member of the Jerusalem City Council and a weekly columnist for the Jerusalem Post and for the Jewish Herald, Johannesburg.

Arnold Ruch practises law in Cape Town.

S

Reg Sagar is a director of companies in Rhodesia.

Ezra Sakinofsky practises law in Cape Town.

Roy Schapera is in insurance in Cape Town.

Karl Silberman, one of the founders of the settlement of Timorim, is today in business in Ashkelon, Israel, and a member of the Ashkelon council.

Mannie Solarsh is an industrialist in Johannesburg.

Geoff Stark practices law in Johannesburg and is a member of the Johannesburg City Council.

Cyril Steinberg is a director of a company in Johannesburg.

David Susman is a director of a chain of department stores in Cape Town.

T

David Teperson left Moshav Habonim to become the founder of one of Israel's largest construction companies.

Sammy Tucker is a doctor in London.

V

Mendie Vons became an El Al pilot.

W

Cecil Wulfsohn is a businessman in Rustenburg and serves many causes in that town.

Joe Woolf is a moshavnik (smallholder) near Tiberias (Lower Galilee) and lives with the ambition of encouraging more South Africans to settle in his beautiful region of the Galilee.

Del Webb ("the happiest year of my life was in Israel in 1948") is a director of companies in Cape Town.

Simie Weinstein works for the office of the South African Zionist Federation in Tel Aviv and is secretary both of S.A. Machal in Israel and of World Machal.

Z

Teve Zimmerman is an industrialist in California, U.S.A. Philip Zuckerman is in insurance in Tel Aviv.

Doctors and Nurses:

Dr. Mary Gordon returned to South Africa in the early 1960s and continued her life of service, devoting herself to the treatment of African children. "Life is a battle - not for yourself, but for what you know is right and true and necessary", she is quoted as saying in an article in an official publication, Lantern. She never ceased fighting. She died at the end of the decade full of years. Her light grows with the passage of time.

Dr. Lionel Meltzer is a specialist anaesthetist in Johannesburg.

Dr. Stanley Levin is head of the Pediatrics Post-Graduate Faculty of the Tel Aviv University's Medical School and teaches undergraduate students at the Hebrew University's Medical School. He is also head of the Kupat Cholim's⁹⁰ Pediatrics Committee. He is a member of several European and international research and clinical societies and has seventy publications in research and clinical fields.

Dr. Louis Miller is head of Israel's Psychiatric Services.

Dr. Jack Medalie is a Professor at Tel Aviv University in the Community and Family Health program. He is at present on extended leave in the United States.

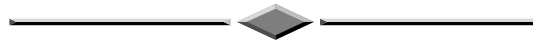
Dr. "Ossie" Treisman and Dr. Ivan Barnett returned to South Africa.

Dr. Arthur Helfet continues his distinguished services as a Consultant and Professor in Cape Town.

Dr. Jack Penn, of Johannesburg, has devoted his life to reconstructive surgery and is the author of a book describing his experiences in several parts of the world.

Sister Benedict is today Mrs. M Sack of Johannesburg.

Sister Marie Roux left South Africa in 1963 to settle in the United States and at present works at the Memorial Hospital in New York City. She hastened to serve Israel again during the Sinai War of 1956 and stayed on for three years, working under Dr. Sheba at the Tel Hashomer Hospital. In 1967, both before and during the Six Day War, she acted as purchaser in New York for medical supplies required by Dr. Sheba.



The overwhelming majority of the hundreds of other volunteers whom research did not cover only because the task would have been too monumental in the circumstances in which this book was written surmounted, like those mentioned, the "lost period" of two wars in a decade, and established themselves on firm foundations, displaying the initiative and enterprise characteristic of their people.

South African training of future Israeli pilots did not end with Urbe. The war over, flying schools were established at various fields in Israel. Danny Rosin assumed command of a flying school for instructors. Trainees in the course were Mannie Solarsh, Sonny Ospovat, Rolfe Futerman, Tuxie Blau, two Sabras and three dispersion-born Jews. Second in command was Kalman Meyers. Johannesburg's Norman Isaacs was Engineering Officer.

After the course, the four South Africans returned home. Futerman, engaged to be married, decided not to go back to Israel. Tuxie Blau married and took his wife to the new State, returning at a later period to South Africa. Solarsh and Ospovat linked up in two capacities with the Zionist Federation's flying school at Germiston as instructors in single-engined planes and as pupils in twin-engined craft.

Early in 1950 Solarsh and Ospovat came back to Israel as fully qualified instructors. The first group they trained at Kfar Sirkin was composed of young Jews from Europe, new citizens of Israel. The second group was composed of Sabras. Solarsh narrowly missed death in his career as an instructor. He was in the air doing a wings check with the most outstanding pupil of his course, Shmueli. Also in the air was a pupil pilot of Sonny Ospovat, Yehoshua

⁹⁰ National Health Service.

Bovetes, whose plane hit the tail of Solarsh's as the latter was landing. In the crash Shmueli was killed and Solarsh injured.

Bovetes' plane landed on its back but Bovetes was unhurt. However, in loosening his girdle, he fell on his head, severing his spinal column. He was to become an eminent advocate - from a wheel chair. Solarsh, recovering after a month in hospital, continued instruction for a while but his days with the IAF were now ending. He married in Tel Aviv in Jan. 14, 1951. The modest cakes of the wedding party provided by the office of the South African Zionist Federation were hardly consumed when he received a cable from Johannesburg summoning him home. His father, critically ill, died a few hours before his son landed at the Rand Airport.

Five South Africans died in tragedies of various kinds in the post-war period of 1949-1951. Four had been connected with the Zionist Federation's flying school at Germiston.

Basil Sanders, pilot, fatally contracted polio a few days after his arrival in 1949. Nathan Friedman, pilot, was killed in a take-off in an open cockpit Steerman bi-plane at Ramat David in 1951.

Sam Levinson, a member of an Air Force group giving an acrobatic display during Israel's Day of Independence celebrations in 1951, looped too low and the wheels of his plane hit the water. He was killed in the sight of thousands on Tel Aviv's beachfront.

Morris Sidlin, instructor, had a pupil pilot in the sky practicing a forced landing and had written, "This pupil turns too I..." when the crash occurred. Both Sidlin and pupil were killed.

Chaim Chait died an agonizing death in September 1951 when, in a jump, his parachute became tangled with the tail of the plane and he hung in the slipstream while Ramat David thought desperately how to rescue him. Finally the Dakota flew low and slow over the waters of Haifa Bay. Chait released himself and was killed in the impact with the water. He had been a pre-State arrival, a member of the original crew of the trawler "Drom Afrika 1".



Badge of the Engineering Corps

CHAPTER 19

THE NON JEWISH VOLUNTEERS

The Jewish cause attracted non-Jews from many countries. In the collective memory of the South African volunteers, these gentiles represented a skein of motive, character and background that is the natural property of cinema and fiction. There would have been hundreds from South Africa had it been policy to accept them. "We were sympathetic", said Philip Zuckerman, "but were worried that there could be enemy 'plants' among them and we had to handle the issue carefully. There is not the slightest doubt that the overwhelming majority were genuine." "They came to the office, a mixed lot, sympathizers, bible believers and adventurers. I gave them forms to fill in, but said frankly their hopes were slight. At the same time I expressed appreciation for their goodwill. Occasionally there were special circumstances in which, without hesitation, we said "Yes".

Claude Duval and "Butch" Boettger, an air gunner from Johannesburg, left indelible memories.

Sky and cloud were natural domain for Duval. Man and plane fused. The air extended to the moods, capers and dare-devilry of this superb flier the tolerance of a loving mother until a fatal day when the limits broke.

The speculations about Duval were several. "He took chances" recounts Cyril Katz. "He played with death as if with dice". After the war, Katz visited Duval's wife and little child.

Duval must have had a premonition of untimely death. "When I die", he said to Elliot Rosenberg, "I want you fellows to get together, go to the nearest pub and drink to my memory."

Del Webb, the nearest of all men to Duval, gets to the heart of his character:

He was a man in his mid-forties, hailing originally from England with a ruddy complexion, black hair and mustache. He had the French habit of smoking a cigarette to within scorching distance of his lips before lighting a new one from the stump of the old. He was widely traveled, very knowledgeable and had a delightful, puckish sense of humour. He was one of the most interesting conversationalists I have ever met. In hazardous circumstances, he was the man to be with. I can honestly say I was never consciously afraid on any flight I made with him, even in the most unpleasant situations. His good humour made it unthinkable to show fear in his presence. It was my privilege to be his best friend. He was a fine man and a gentleman.

Admiration of Duval as a natural of the sky, as unerring as a bird, shines through an abundance of tales. On June 6, 1948, Cyril Katz, Duval and Webb went out on a five-hour flight to find a small ship bringing in arms. It was one of those missions in which the pilot, with scanty information, would have to find the spot in the ocean where the ship would be. Duval did what is known as a square search, a technique based on an estimate of the ship's position, air speed, the ship's speed. The search then became one of irregular but geometrical extensions and contractions of flight that had the shape of a doodle with design. Duval found the ship. For Katz it was a display of great navigational resource. "We safely guided the ship to Tel Aviv", Katz recalled.

Many remember Duval's testing of a new aircraft, a DC-5, a suspect plane, "the only one of its kind in the world", according to report, "a freak".

Nobody would touch it, except Duval. He never ceased to be the master.

Duval died in an aerobatic crash in South Africa a few years later. The obituaries mourned a flier distinctively etched. The funeral expenses were paid by the South African Zionist Federation. The only mourners at the Primrose Cemetery in Germiston were a handful of air force Machalniks, Syd Cohen, Dov Judah, Cyril Katz, Elliot Rosenberg, Les Chimes, Arthur Cooper, Ernest Esakof and a few others, men who had known Duval in his prime. Obedient to Duval's verbal will, they went into a bar and saluted his memory with a quaff.

"Butch" Boettger was an imp of Nature who won back the warmth he gave out. He carried quip in his eye and wit on his tongue, embellishing the days with good humour and cheerfulness. A "lark" picture in a photographic album of 1948 shows a man with a curled-up moustache, a tassel of a beard, and a head crowned with a turban: A friendship of years, starting in a Doornfontein childhood with Phil Kemp, son of a neighbouring Jewish family, brought him into the war. In Israel the two air gunners linked up with Dennis Gochen, a navigator. They became the inseparable three. In response to Ben Gurion's call for Hebraisation of names, Boettger called himself Ben Yok (son of the gentile).

The three were natural spirits of entertainment, who won free meals at their favorite restaurant, the proprietor recognizing crowd-pleasers when he met them. Butch Boettger (Ben Yok) became the supreme favorite. He had not an enemy in the world. The man was lovable. He was among the few whose name, twenty seven years later, no volunteer had difficulty in recalling.

This son of the Gentiles loved Jews. Jewish history knows such as he, occasional men and women who have slipped into effortless identification with the people of history, gathered in by some kind of wordless, spiritual mystery.

The end had surprises. Dennis Gochen fell in love with an Afrikaans girl in South Africa and entered the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk. Phil Kemp lives today in the northern suburbs of Johannesburg, the exuberances of his youth an amusing memory. Butch Boettger made his way to England and was last seen as a ticket-seller at an underground tube station in London.

Margaret Carruthers came to the offices of the South African Zionist Federation to offer her services as a nurse and reached Israel in the tiny DP ship, the Tetti. She served in several hospitals, at the end in the underground hospital of kibbutz Ruchama. She married a wounded Israeli soldier, a chemist by profession, whom she nursed to health. The family lived in an abandoned Arab house in Jerusalem. Margaret had two daughters and a son. Simie Weinstein called on her during a post-war visit to Jerusalem. She was pregnant at the time. Shavuoth, the Jewish holiday celebrating the giving of the Law and also the gathering in of the harvest, was at hand and Weinstein, ever dipping into the Bible, told her the story of Ruth, "Your people will be my people, your God my God." He explained that from Ruth came the House of David. When Margaret's son was born, she wrote to him: "I am glad to inform you the new David has been born." She died of cancer a few years later.

Audrey Benedict and Marie Roux, both highly qualified and experienced operating room nurses, became devoted to the Jewish cause. Their achievements are well chronicled in the pages of this book.

Phyllis Wedderburn, of South Africa, came with her Jewish husband, Ricky Hanreck, of Durban, a flying instructor who operated at St. Jean, an airfield near Haifa. The marriage broke up and Phyllis later married a kibbutznik, the sculptor Portugali. She has been a member of Kibbutz Ma'agen Michael in the Hof Hacarmel area ever since. Her mother, visiting her from South Africa, also joined the kibbutz.

An Afrikaner named Oesscher was, like Claude Duval, a skilled Dakota pilot, though he only stayed a few weeks. He was killed in a road accident in South Africa.

Among the non-Jews from other countries are legendary characters. Spencer Boyd, of New Jersey, U.S.A., was the pilot of a Miles Aerovan that made a forced landing on July 18 on sand west of Rehovot. The Aerovan was bringing in six wounded from the Negev. Two of the passengers able to walk were given the only arms on the plane - a pistol - and sent for help. Spencer Boyd and four of the others were found by Beduin and butchered before help could arrive. One passenger, who was badly injured survived by playing dead.

John Harvey, an English non-Jew, was the man who helped spirit a Mustang fighter plane out of England despite the strict sanctions against any military aid to Israel at the time. He believed in the Jewish cause. In 1950 he became Israel's chief test pilot of French surplus Mosquitoes. During routine flying he crashed into a low hill in France. He is buried in Chateaudun Cemetery, an emblem of the IAF adorning his grave.

The Bible brought the Canadian George (Buzz) Beurling, Victoria Cross medal winner, to the side of the Jews. This "ace" of World War 2 had turned down lucrative offers from a number of countries. He was killed in a crash near Urbe, Rome, with Leonard Cohen, an English Jew, on May 20. They were preparing to fly the Norseman to Israel. Initially buried in a Catholic Cemetery, with the Jews of Rome closing their shops to attend his funeral, Beurling's remains were transferred on November 9, 1950, to the IDF Carmel Military Cemetery in Haifa.

Len Fitchett, as we have already outlined, died in an air attack on the Iraq el Suedan Fortress. His belief in the cause of the Jews was passionate. A lover of poetry and a student of philosophy, this Canadian non-Jew intended to settle in a kibbutz after the war.

George Berliand, D.F.C. and Bar, an Englishman, was another sympathizer with the cause of the Jews. The South African volunteers remember him, particularly, as the test pilot of the Mosquito after an American pilot had crashed it against a pill box at Ramat David, taking off its wing. A ground crew under Durban's Syd Chalmers rebuilt the machine. "The fastest and most maneuverable Mosquito I have ever flown", the South Africans quote Berliand as saying, after the reconstruction. The South Africans were full of admiration for this great pilot.

Another colourful personality in the air force was Gordon Levett, author of the book "Flying under Two Flags". Levett started life with major disadvantages which only tremendous courage and determination enabled him to overcome. His fatherless childhood was spent in the squalor of the British slums of the 1930's. He relates how his mother taught him the 11th commandment of the working class - not to have ideas above his station in life lest he come to a bad end. Yet he rose from air mechanic to Squadron Leader in the RAF. In 1948, Levett volunteered for the fledgling IAF where he distinguished himself as a transport, bomber and fighter pilot. He participated in the epic airlift that brought in critically needed arms and supplies including dismantled Me 109's from Czechoslovakia. As a fighter pilot, he would later remark about the irony of an English Gentile flying Messerschmitt fighter planes in a Jewish Air Force.

William Edmondson, an American non-Jew, grew up in a family whose anti-Semitism was virulent. At college he met Jews. They did not fit into the stereotype his family had planted in his mind. The contacts stimulated a curiosity in him that became overriding. It carried him into Israel and into the war. He died for Israel.

The Englishman, Desmond Rutledge, the Irishman Michael Flanagan and the Scot, Harry MacDonald, who brought in the Cromwell tanks to Tel Litwinsky, were moved to their action by various reasons. Rutledge, a sergeant-major in the British Army in Palestine, had fallen in love with a Jewess of Yemenite background. He and Flanagan (who saw the Jews as underdogs) remained in the country and live today with their families on kibbutzim.

Amongst others involved in acquiring equipment for use in the IDF was Johnny Dawson, remembered by his comrades of the 82nd Battalion Lou Kotzen, Stanley Behr, Hymie

Goldblatt and Eddy Magid. Dawson continued to work for the Israeli government for a period after the war. They were early members of Moshav Habonim. Both Dawson and Watson upon returning to the U.K. with their Jewish wives surrendered to the authorities and served time in British military prisons for desertion.

Another British soldier who deserted was Kit Wilkes-Chase, who had been posted to Palestine as a 19 year old artilleryman. Like Dawson, he too was shocked at the treatment of Jewish immigrants, abandoned his unit and joined the Haganah. He served in both Gedud Tesha and in the Artillery, eventually ending up as a bodyguard to P.M. David Ben Gurion.

Almost all, if not all, British soldiers who joined the IDF did so under assumed names. In 2001, when his son John Burrows Jr. of Sydney, Australia contacted world Machal office in Tel Aviv, searching for his late fathers history in Israel, it was discovered that Dawson's real name was John Burrows,

David Appel is another Gentile with a special place in this history. Joe Woolf recalls:

The boys of the 72nd Battalion will never forget Captain David Appel (*nom de guerre* of Thomas Derek Bowden). At one time he had 30 South Africans under his command. His affinity to our cause, established while serving as a young cavalry soldier in Palestine in 1937, was cemented by his experience as a POW in WW II. A paratroop officer, he had been seriously wounded and taken prisoner at Arnhem. After escape and recapture, the interrogating SS officer initially treated him cordially, even offering him drinks and cigarettes, until he discovered letters in Bowden's pockets from Jewish men and women friends in Palestine. Infuriated, he told Bowden he would show him how the Germans treated Jews and sentenced him to a month at the Bergen Belsen concentration camp. His job there was to cart bodies to the pits, an experience that changed his life. Volunteering for service in Israel in 1948, he served in the 7th Brigade surviving the Latrun battles and continuing through all the battles in the Galilee.

After the armistice in 1949, he started a parachute school at the request of Chaim Laskov and with the assistance of his Jewish secretary, Eva Heilbronner, he wrote Israel's first training manual. For translation of new technical terms he consulted rabbinical scholars. Bowden became commander and chief instructor of Israel's first parachute regiment.

Teddy Eytan (*nom de guerre* of Thadee Difre) commanded the French speaking commando company of the 9th battalion, Palmach HaNegev. He was a French Christian playboy married to a Dior model, who came from one of the richest families in Lyon, France. During WW II, he was a major in General Le Clerc's Free French Forces, involved in action all the way from Chad, Central Africa to Anzio, Italy.

Fleeting glimpses of some others:

Much admired Ted Gibson, leader of 35 Flight, son of a Baptist minister and inspired by the highest motives, was killed in an air crash in Switzerland in 1950. Simon Novikow, of Boksburg, recalls Felix Milton, a deserter from the French Foreign Legion, who married a Jewish girl and stayed in Israel; Solly Ossin had as fellow fighters Johnny Watson and Bob Winters, both Britons. Into the ken of Gordon Mandelzweig swam Johnny van Heerden, an English-speaking Afrikaner from Rhodesia, who jumped ship at Haifa. Lionel Hodes has told of the Australian Mike Landshut⁹¹ (Amir), of Peter from Lancashire and Kiwi from New Zealand and Eddie Stryrack, a Polish non-Jew, who served in the pre-State period on the Ben Hecht ferrying illegal immigrants to Palestine before joining Air Transport as a wireless operator. David Magid woke up one night in a foxhole in the Negev to find an Afrikaner from South Africa beside him; Hymie Josman remembers Jack Harris, an Irishman, on guard duty

⁹¹ Lionel Hodes and other S.Africans under Landshut's command persuaded the Zionist Federation to adopt him (including the 5 Palestine pounds monthly pocket money allotted to all S.African volunteers).

with him on the Lebanese border. Gerald Davimes recalls the half-Jew, Ian Walters, from Kenya and Philip Ozinsky an Irishman, Kelly, of the armoured corps. John Nakan, born of Non-Jewish parents but brought up by his mother's second husband, a Jew, regards himself as Jewish. Another two were Bill Brown of the 82nd and Paddy Cooper of the 89th.

They are a handful among scores not mentioned. Indeed, the role of the non Jewish volunteers deserves its own book. Their history is that of the Jewish volunteers: some stayed, to be gathered into the folds of the new-old people and to help build the State; most left.



Decorative Brooch (“Itur”)
in the form of a lapel badge, awarded to participants in
the War of Independence.

CHAPTER 20

VIGNETTES - BY THE VOLUNTEERS THEMSELVES

(In alphabetical order by surname)

"The war was not won by heroes. It was won by ordinary men and women rising above themselves."
BEN GURION

Cecil Abrams of Johannesburg

There were some real earthy Army types among the South African volunteers and they won't mind my naming them: David Teperson, Zelig Genn, Kenny Danker, Aubrey Angel. David Teperson, six foot three, called Migdal (tower), wore a pair of boots, no socks, a pair of khaki shorts held up by braces, shirt without collar and an Australian slouch hat whose strap he used to chew. And a Sten gun, without which, he said, he did not feel dressed.

Colonel (Res.) Naphtali Arbel

Extracts from an address at the official dedication of Machal Square in Lod (Lydda) in May 1998 by Col. Arbel who had commanded "B" company of the 89th Commando Battalion in 1948. One of the platoons in his company was comprised entirely of Machal volunteers including a squad of ten S. Africans. The 89th played a key role in the capture of Lod..

"I remember well these lads of my Machal platoon, young, strong and perhaps a little crazy. In those days we used to talk about inexperienced people not knowing about war who had thought that it would be a great adventure.

Many of the volunteers had participated in the five years of continuous fighting in W.W.II. Amongst us was the fighting man Reg Sagar who had been a British officer and had been taken prisoner by the Japanese. It was common knowledge how difficult it was to be a prisoner of war, particularly in the hands of the Japanese. On his release at the end of W.W.II Sagar returned to his home in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe)⁹².

These men knew that war was not child's play and were aware of the ultimate price – and still they came to join us. They were exceptional fighters whose heroic deeds we remember well.

The 89th was a battalion of volunteers. The I.D.F. had given orders to permit all who so desired to join our unit. Therefore the Machal men of the 89th were a group of volunteers within a unit of volunteers."

Uri Aylon (Henry Levinson) of Israel

I arrived in Palestine from South Africa in December, 1947. Awaiting enrolment in the Air Force, I served in the pre-state Haganah mainly in convoy duties to outlying posts. Wounded by Arab Legion troopers on Haifa's Rehov Hamelachim, I was involved in the fight against the Syrian troops in their first incursion into Israel at Tirat Zvi and in the liberation of Safed. I drove the lead vehicle in the ill-fated attack on Metzudat Yesha near the Lebanese border (28 dead in the attempt to take this Taggart Fortress turned over by the British to the Arabs and finally abandoned by them.) Subsequently I transferred to the Air Force and graduated from the first Pilot Officers course in the school headed by South African, Jack Weinronk. I was a founder member of Moshav Habonim. My reserve duty culminated in commanding the civilian detachment of the operation called Aviv Neurim.

⁹² At least three others of our "800" had also been prisoners of war in W.W.II: Eli Zagoria of the 79th, the late Harry Goldstein of Gedud Tesha and Jimmy Kantey of the 89th. (Editor)

Shaul Bar- Levav (Saul Levinson) of Israel (brother of Uri Aylon)

I paid my own way to Palestine in September 1947 (money later refunded to me). I was in Jerusalem at the time of the Ben Yehuda Street outrage in which fifty died. We heard a terrific noise and went out and saw smoke in the air and realized something terrible had happened. We went to Kupat Cholim to donate blood. Everybody was doing this.

I was still in Jerusalem when 300 tons of food was brought in by the first convoy to get through. The people of Jerusalem were madly excited to see the loaded trucks. This was in April 1948. The heights of Kastel had been seized and the Arab leader, a relative of the Mufti, killed. I left Jerusalem with the convoy that brought the food in and had a placid career in the war doing staff work and on signals.

The only time I was in the field was towards the end of the year after Abu Agulla had been captured and our men were poised to attack Rafah. I told my superiors I wanted to see a bit of action and I temporarily joined the Negev Brigade. One bitterly cold morning a group of jeeps of the "desert beasts" reached us and a military greatcoat got off from one of them. That is the only way I can describe it. That military greatcoat was Georgie Jamieson, a little fellow who had once been a pupil at my father's college (Hillel College in Johannesburg). There he was climbing down from behind a Browning gun bigger than he. George farms today at Kfar Monash.

After the war I was seconded as communications officer to the Israeli Foreign Office and set up signal stations in the embassies in Moscow, Stockholm and other places.

John Barrard (Jack "Titch" Isaacson) of London

Having served nearly four years in the S.A.A.F. during W.W.II, I was invited to join the embryo future I.A.F. Early in April our group was one of the first sent to Rome as trail blazers for a route to Palestine – all top secret.

Over Uganda one of the Dakota engines seized up and we ended up spending a week in Nissen huts on Entebbe airfield waiting for a replacement. After landing in Rome we made for our rendezvous, by different routes, at the Albergo Rosa, a small hotel in Milan. There in spite of all the secrecy, a truck with a huge Magen David sign came to transport us to Castel Lambro in northern Italy. It was in a dreadful state and we set to cleaning up the place. We were joined by five Danish Jews and two non-Jewish Finns. We had to remove all labels from our clothes, our passports were collected for special uses. Some extremely talented Palestine artists re-created the documents. I only received my passport back in 1949, to return to S. Africa.

Rapidly the Castle was being filled up by refugees to give the place the appearance of an ordinary D.P. camp. Being able to speak, read and write Yiddish, I used to pick up the B.B.C news on a small radio set, and translate it into Yiddish for the inmates. It was here that we got to know and speak to, at length with survivors of the Nazi extermination camps.

We spent Pesach at the Castle, supplies were short. It was a most moving, yet exhilarating experience.

One morning we were suddenly aroused very early, and hustled into buses for Venice. There was no more room on a specific cargo boat, so off we went to Genoa and boarded another.

Anchoring near Tel Aviv, we were taken ashore in small lighters, packed in like sardines, and sent off to various destinations. It was the 10th of May and the mandate not yet ended. I still possess the new olim, and I.A.F identity booklets issued on arrival. We were billeted at the Imperial Hotel on Hayarkon Street.

In a dawn raid of the 15th May, just after the declaration of the state, three Egyptian Spitfires virtually demolished our aircraft clustered at Sde Dov. In any other air force they would have been written off, but here they had to be painstakingly restored, with parts made or cannibalized.

I worked almost continuously at Sde Dov, fitting Venturi tubes and basic night flying instruments into these small civilian aircraft, which were our only attack bombers, until the arrival of the first Messerschmitt's from Czechoslovakia.

Like many others I was a witness to the unfortunate Altalena incident, most disturbing to all of us.

After the first truce, I was transferred to Air Force intelligence, and following a period of training, I served in one of three ground to air liaison units, each one attached to the main area commands. Soon after I sustained a back injury, severe enough to require hospitalization and convalescence.

On recovery, I joined the Central command's liaison unit as Intelligence officer, joining fellow S. African, pilot Arye (Kappy) Kaplan and Leslie Kapuza a Londoner. Here I served until I returned to S. Africa via Europe and London, after the final armistice in 1949. In 1950 I settled in London, to resume my career as a professional actor, after undergoing spinal surgery.

Dr. Maurice (Morrie) Berger as related by his wife Ruth, his sons, Michael and Brian and daughter, Jocelyn Krifcher

Our late Dad, Morrie Berger z"l, interrupted his medical studies at UCT after his first year of studies, to volunteer with the South African Air Force during WW2. He served as a tail-gunner in bombing raids over Northern Italy, and after VE Day, was spared service in the Pacific by the dropping of the atomic bomb. He later became involved with the Haganah in Palestine.

He resumed his studies upon his return, and 18 months later, in his fourth year at medical school, the War of Independence began⁹³. Even though it broke his mother's heart, Morrie signed up once again - this time to fight directly for the Jewish people. After spending a few days in Johannesburg with Machal volunteer, Basil Levin, he flew out of Palmietfontein at 2 a.m in a Dakota, chartered by the S.A. Zionist Federation. Morrie did not talk a lot about his war experiences, and when he died suddenly in 1996, left his family with very few facts about his Machal days. He did share, however, his most vivid impression: the total lack of ammunition and supplies in the early days of the war. "We sat in the few planes we had and dropped home-made bombs until our hands were raw. We had no suitable armaments. We had no equipment. We had nothing but guts and determination. There was no shortage of that."

Bernard and June Bloch of Jerusalem

My wife, June, and I volunteered for the Haganah in May 1948. We left our respective surgical and nursing posts in London, and were sent via Paris to a DP camp, Grande Arenas, near Marseille. After a short time there, we sailed to Israel on a small fishing trawler, the "Marie Annique" in the company of about 250 others from the camp whom we served as doctor and nurse. The boat's captain and crew were French, but there was an Israeli known as Jimmy in charge of the whole operation, who was well experienced in blockade running. The voyage took about two weeks, and we landed at what was probably the port at Jaffa.

Postings included a busy casualty hospital at Kfar Bilu, and a field hospital at Gedera, serving the Givati Brigade. This hospital was under the direction of Dr. Stan Levin, and was particularly busy at the time of the battle of Latrun. Afterwards there were postings to the 101st squadron at Herzliya where we shared a tent with Lily and Bully Margolius, and then the bomber squadron at Ramat David. With the final truce there was a period at the Scottish Hospital in Tiberias, where the less urgent reconstructive procedures were being performed.

With the cessation of fighting, following a visit to Johannesburg, we returned to our careers in London, and later in Australia. At retirement we made aliyah and now live in Jerusalem.

⁹³ Many S. African Machal who had interrupted their university studies and careers to join the South African army in W.W.2, did so again for the Israel war of Independence.

Sister Ray Brunton of Johannesburg

One day Mrs. Zagagi, head of the Nursing Services, said to me: "We're sending you down to Beersheba."

"What have I done to deserve that" I asked.

"They need a theatre sister, somebody to run the hospital."

Eight nurses at the Kfar Giladi hospital said that if I went, they were going with me. Even Dina the housekeeper. Permission was granted to all. Naturally I cherish the memory of this gesture. Some eleven months later I delivered the first Jewish child born in Beersheba⁹⁴ for two thousand years. Government and rabbinical dignitaries came from Jerusalem and Tel Aviv to attend the Brith Mila.

At Djani hospital in Jaffa, a young man, a fifth year medical student from Switzerland, by name Moshe Manny had worked with me as an interpreter. He could speak many languages.

A few years ago in Johannesburg my professor at the Johannesburg General said to me: "Sister, I have somebody from Israel in my office. I'd like you to meet him... he is one of the most important urologists in the world."

When he summoned me to his office, the most important urologist yelled, "Ray:"

"Manny:" Embrace.

Leo Camron (Caminsky) of Israel

I was sent over by Yoel Palgi and Simie Weinstein, in response to a request from Ben-Gurion for someone to found an artillery corps. My experience was much like many other machalniks. When I reported to GHQ I found that "artillery" had been started, in which case I offered my services wherever they could be put to best use. This job (together with David Rebak and Joe Mostyn of the Royal Artillery) was to work with the first Officer's Cadet Course (artillery) in Zahal.

If I had known then, what I soon discovered, (that our Israeli officers were mainly officers in theoretical knowledge but with very little battlefield experience), I'd have thrown up my hands in horror. In the event, together with some of the "locals", we managed to do a good job. Initially artillery consisted of mortars..

As things turned out my father-in-law, when he finally heard that I had "left his daughter with two babes and a third on the way" stranded, had a severe heart attack. This seriously affected my wife who had to travel several times a week from Maritzburg to visit him in hospital in Durban!!! He was near death's door when the Fed, unknown to me, sent an urgent request to have me returned to SA immediately. That was just after the completion of our artillery course .

Jack Cohen of Cape Town

I married in 1953 and it took twenty years before I had an opportunity to revisit Israel. Ezer Weizman, Syd Cohen, Smoky Simon and a lot of other volunteer-settlers (and their wives) were at Ben Gurion Airport to welcome my wife and me. We also had the pleasure of

⁹⁴ During her visit to Israel in 1998 with the S.A. contingent for the 50th anniversary celebrations, Ray Brunton (now Medow) was able to locate and speak telephonically to Yoav (Altman) Avidor, the baby she had delivered in Beersheba in April 1949, now living in Arad.

meeting many of my former Israeli friends proud to show me what they had built on the foundations we had laid in 1948, 1949 and 1950.

Syd Cohen of Israel

I was hit quite a few times by ack-ack fire but never had a dog-fight during the entire war. In one mission my plane was hit by a piece of shrapnel, which went through the bottom of the cockpit, then through my legs, and out. I was hit three times in that mission, which shows that the ack-ack fire was not too bad. This was over El Arish. We were escorting our three Flying Fortresses and they took quite a barrage.

The nearest I came to a dog-flight was one day when Danny Wilson, a Canadian non-Jew, and I, flew to bomb an airfield called El Chama, south of El Arish. I had already committed myself to my dive on the cross of two runways when suddenly I saw a Fiat (a fighter which the Egyptians had got from the Italians) fly right across my path, obviously unaware of our presence. By the time I could drop the bomb and pull out of my dive to get this fellow I was going at some speed - Danny Wilson was on to him and hitting him all the time. Finally this fellow slipped over on to his back and went down next to the airfield. That was the only time I saw a live enemy aircraft during the entire war. Other fellows had the dog-fights.

On March 14, 1949, the first wings parade of the IAF was held. I was Commanding Officer of the base and therefore of the parade. I had no uniform and it was felt that the O.C., at least, should be suitably attired. I borrowed a cap from one man, a tunic from another and additional things from others and fitted myself out. Among those who received their wings on that occasion was Mottie Hod, O.C. of the IAF, in the Six-Day War of 1967.

Gerald Davimes of Transvaal

We had a gramophone and a few records played so often that they drove most of us nuts. One was Harry James' Trumpet Blues which we could whistle note perfect. While holding positions facing the Syrians at Mishmar Hayarden, a Canadian, Hank Meyerowitz,⁹⁵ got himself lost in the wadis between two of the hills we were holding. As he was short-sighted we took our gramophone to the head of the wadi in the hope that Trumpet Blues would guide him back. No luck. He turned up two days later, rescued by a friendly Bedouin.

After demobilization from the 72nd battalion, I worked in Jaffa for the building construction company, Solel Boneh, cleaning abandoned homes and preparing them for new immigrants. I returned to South Africa at the beginning of April 1949 to study for my pharmacy exam in June. I also awaited the return of lieutenant (Miss) Mickey Shapiro, of Kingwilliamstown, whom I had met in Israel. She had been sent as a nurse. We met on the beach in Tel Aviv in September 1948. On her return at the end of April we became engaged and were married in Kingwilliamstown in September 1949.

Israel Dunsky of Israel

It is clearly impossible to build up a comprehensive picture of what took place in 1948 by reference to any single individual because each one sees the period from a particular angle. He experienced something which has to be fitted into the overall pattern. One must allow for contradictions, tricks of memory, degree of individual appreciation and the extent to which the total issue was grasped by the individual. What stands out is that in South Africa, unlike in other counties of the Diaspora, one body, and one body only, saw to the recruiting, the finances, staff and follow-up to the war.

Coordination implied practical work and imagination. At an early stage we had in mind the possibility of providing help to assist those volunteers ready to settle in the Land. Hence our housing project and generous financial assistance for those who stayed. My estimate of the

⁹⁵ Canadian, Hank Meyerowitz and his South African cousin Jack Mirwis met for the first time, while both were serving in "B" company of the 72nd battalion

total percentage of those who settled immediately and later - is between thirty five to forty percent...

Consider the emissaries who came to South Africa: Boris Senior, Palgi, Colin Gluckman, and James MacDonald. They dealt with specific issues which required the cooperation and assistance of the Zionist Federation. Nothing could possibly have been done without the aid of the Federation. If there was no backing from us, a project couldn't succeed.

The spirit of the community was wonderful. One man bought a submarine as scrap. There were all kinds of military material on the heap. People were on the alert; everybody was thinking what he could do to help the State and this man bought the submarine. He came to me saying he wanted to transfer it to Israel. It was not sent. Another man bought five thousand helmets. "What made you buy them?" I asked.

"Good Heavens", he replied, "those chaps can't have helmets yet." He said we could have them for three pence each.

One day I got a frantic call from a man who said the Egyptians were trying to buy up the walkie-talkies that were going. "If you give the word ", said the man, "I'll buy them up to prevent the Egyptians getting them."

Ernest Esakof of New York

I was one of six Yeoville youths of Habonim who formed perhaps the most close-knit group in the movement, comrades in the deepest sense. The others were Hillel Daleski, the Malkin twins, Charles and Melville, Monty Goldberg and the late Syd Langbart, who was killed in a motor accident some years after the war. Every one of us, except Charles Malkin, served in the 1948 war. Charles Malkin had served in World War 2 and family dictate laid down that only Melville could go.

I like Syd Cohen, Tuxie Blau, Sammy Tucker, Lockie Fainman, interrupted medical studies to come. I was once Claude Duval's passenger in a flight from Tel Aviv to Ramat David. He was tight. But even when he was drunk, he could fly. It was as if the plane knew him and would take him to his destination like a faithful flying horse.

George Meyerson was head of the gunners on the B-17's. Abe Berger was another good man as gunner... a fellow, though, with a furious temper... I always spoke Afrikaans to Dov Judah and Smoky Simon on the direct phone line from Ramat David to Ops in Tel Aviv.

Dr. Harry Feldman of Brakpan

I don't know why I was mentioned in dispatches. I didn't deserve anything special. I imagine that Dr. Winter of Britain, who was in charge of Air Force Medical Services was responsible for this. When Dr. Winter decided to return to Britain to specialize in pediatrics, I took over as Chief Medical Officer of the Air Force: this was in November and December 1948, and January 1949. I was asked to take over permanently and was tempted because I felt like an Israeli then, but I knew I had no organizing and administrative gift. They offered to send me over to the U.S. for a year to learn all there was to learn about Air Force medicine, but this meant pen-pushing and I wanted to be purely medical...

I must tell you something about Syd Cohen. He instilled confidence into his fellow fliers and all others. We were all very frightened about the Messerschmitts. Every time a Messerschmitt took off I used to tremble for the fellows. Syd Cohen never showed any fear; he was calm, confident, with a sense of humour - a great pilot. When he took over as O.C. of the Fighter Squadron, I lost touch with him seeing him at a party now and then in Tel Aviv. When I left Israel in February 1949, they threw a party for me. Syd was present and told me then about his problem of not being able to continue with his medical studies if he stayed on. He felt it was his duty to stay as he was mainly responsible for training the first Israeli fighter pilots. I went to the Registrar of the University of the Witwatersrand and said: "Look, Syd

Cohen is doing a very good job in Israel and they want very much that he should stay a little longer. Would you accept him if he came back a year later?" The Registrar said "If it is Syd Cohen, the answer is yes." I cabled Syd it was O.K.

It has gone the rounds now that when the late President Weizmann had to go overseas for an eye operation, the authorities asked the fighter boys to give him an escort as a mark of esteem - after all, the first head of a Jewish state in 2,000 years. The Air Force boys said, "We can't spare the petrol." But when Syd left, an escort saluted him out of Israel. Can you imagine a higher tribute?

Mannie Feldman of South Africa

A PROMISE

In a somewhat perverse action I volunteered to go to Israel to counter the horrendous deeds committed by the British against defenseless remnants from the concentration camps, who were looking to build a new life in a new country.

Having gained a certain expertise during the world war as a navigator on heavy bombers, I thought to put this expertise to the new found country's use. We were a real united nation of people from many countries, who had volunteered their services, although we were by no means all volunteers. Mercenaries are no new phenomena. It seems they go back as far as human memory. Many are glorified in literature. They however formed only a small minority in Israel.

I am no believer in miracles, but what transpired in those months in 1948 could well be considered miraculous. This small fragmented army of a country of no more than 650,000 people augmented by volunteers withstood the might of millions of Arabs from surrounding territories.

In the early days of conflict the embryonic air force had consisted of small single engine civilian planes dropping bottles that whistled like bombs when dropped. Eventually planes were acquired and the air force developed. It included three Beaufighters from England and three B17's from America, which constituted the heavy bomber squadron in which I served.

To digress, an anecdote I heard, so to speak, from the horse's mouth. A certain Englishman⁹⁶ from a respected family and married to a Jewish girl was requested to acquire the three Beaufighters and fly them to Israel. He was given a brown paper parcel containing a £100 000 in notes to buy the aircraft. He took a taxi home only to discover that he had left his wallet at home, and could not pay the taxi fare without delving into the hoard he held on his lap wrapped in the brown paper. In great embarrassment he told the taxi driver that he would have to get the fare from his wife at home. The taxi driver, with no alternative, accompanied him in to ensure that he got his payment.

This friend of mine set up a bogus film company to film the "Battle of Britain" and with the cameras rolling flew the planes over and kept on flying to Israel via Crete.

A raid was carried out on Gaza with our three B17's and a few Dakota twin engine passenger planes with their doors removed so the bombs could be manually thrown out. By chance I picked up the BBC news service thirty-six hours later. The item on the Gaza bombing was as follows. "From usually reliable sources it was reported that the Israeli air force blackened the sky over Gaza with heavy bombers estimated to number three hundred". I pondered this blatant exaggeration and the lateness of the report, and then realized, that how else would the authorities explain to the British public that this tuppenny halfpenny airforce could overcome the British trained, and possibly British manned anti aircraft protection.

Our aircrew was from diverse countries. The pilot, second pilot and bomb aimer were from America. The pilot I remember was a likeable fast talking Yank who in civilian life was the marketer for the "Dymaxian" house produced at the end of the world war by the aircraft industry using airplane industry technology in aluminum. He would tell how he would spend his last dollar to have his tie pressed and his shoes shone, before going to see an important client, to discuss a multimillion dollar scheme.

⁹⁶ The London Daily Herald of September 9, 1948 names the man as Anthony Eric Terence Farnfield, described as a six foot ginger-haired South African with a RAF type handlebar moustache

The bomb aimer was a man of quiet disposition with an air of great sincerity. His name was Jules and he was a divorced man with an eleven-year-old daughter. His financial circumstances were dire I remember. In the States he ran a hot dog stall, although to the best of my memory he had a teacher's qualification. After some time in the Israeli airforce he was due to go back to the United States.

I was by coincidence in the office when he came in. "I have come to collect my money" he said. "What money?" said the man in the office. "The money they promised me when I volunteered," he said. "Didn't you get paid every month?" asked the office man. "Yes, I did," said Jules referring to the three pounds a month we got paid, and which we blew on one meal in a restaurant high up the hill in Haifa.

"So what money are you talking about?" asked the office man. "The thousand dollars a month I was promised in the States" said Jules. "That was for the mercenaries" responded the office man. "Aren't you a Jew?" he asked. "Yes" replied Jules. "Then why are you acting like a mercenary?" asked the man. "If you pay that to the mercenaries why won't you pay that to a Jew?" asked Jules "or are you anti-Semitic?"

The argument went back and forth with tempers rising. Finally the office man capitulated and agreed to pay. What followed were calculation on calculation, checking of calculation and more checking until a figure was finally agreed. At this point a cheque was finally written out. Jules checked it carefully and redid his calculation. I knew Jules's circumstances and his support of his daughter, and I gloried in his stubbornness and insistence. Finally, **Jules accepted that the cheque was correct in all respects and then calmly tore it up.**

"What was that all about?" asked the office man. "Do you take me for a mercenary?" asked Jules, "But a promise is a promise!"

Jack Fisch of Johannesburg

I was in charge of a 25-strong flight that left late in October. We were issued tickets "Johannesburg-Tel Aviv", a blunder that came from confidence in the victory then at hand. Another complication was the presence on board the plane of a young politically active Greek sought both by the British and the Greeks for reasons not known to us. The Czechs were interested in this man's safety. Israel, getting favors and other facilities from the Czechs at the time, was prepared to grant him transit through Tel Aviv.

In the Sudan the immigration officer said to me: "You all look like a bunch of Jews. Where are you really going?"

"We're tourists To Europe."

"Show me your tickets."

Having no option, I fetched them from the aircraft.

"Hmm", said the official, his suspicions confirmed. He picked up his phone. Within minutes two lorry loads of infantry took station at the shelter to which our group had been directed and also around the plane.

The official phoned Khartoum for instructions. These were that our plane had to proceed to Khartoum. If the plane did not land there it would be shot down. No doubts were left in our minds about that.

On the flight to Khartoum, the pilot summoned me. "I have blank tickets", he said. "Use them for a re-issue." The ticket's were accordingly marked "Johannesburg, transit Tel Aviv, Paris." I ditched the old ones. At Khartoum the pilot said: "Sit tight. Don't move. I'll be back." In twenty minutes he returned. "I need to spend £100 without accounting difficulties."

"Sure", I said. The pilot returned to the bungalow building, opposite to which the plane was parked. Then there was comedy. The pilot walked into the first office then walked out, with an official following him. Then he went into a second office; the in-out process now making a line of three. It grew into seven or eight from other offices. The crocodile would disappear, then emerge. Finally the pilot returned. "O.K. unload the luggage and then everybody into Khartoum for dinner", he said. "We'll leave at midnight."

Midnight, back at the airport, we began walking to our aircraft. "No, no, not that one", said the pilot. "We've had a little difficulty and done a swop. We'll go in that one."

That one was a four-engined Halton aircraft, the wartime version of the Halifax bomber converted to paratroop carrying. It was austere, with canvas bucket seats, without insulation and without heating.

"I shall not be coming with you", said the pilot. The flight continued with a new crew, the explanation given to me being that security police were sniffing for the whereabouts of the wanted Greek and were waiting for him at El Adem where, possibly, they would arrest him and quite likely impound the plane and quiz us again. So there had been a switch of aircraft. The Halton would fly across Egypt direct to Lydda airport. This is what happened.

Gita Freedman of Johannesburg

The passengers on the Dakota were all volunteers on the way to Israel, to help in the War of Liberation. Near Lake Victoria, the plane suddenly developed engine trouble and made a forced landing in the bush. While waiting to be taken to a nearby air-strip, Robin, one of the volunteers, noticed that a gold charm his parents had given him for luck, had disappeared from his watch strap. He was most perturbed and said it was a bad sign. Nothing we could say put his mind at rest. We searched in the tall grass around the plane and in the plane but to no avail.

For days we sat around at the small hotel making idle conversation, but with an additional heartache for which neither we nor our families had been prepared. Only our parents knew where we were heading and now they could not ask anyone of our whereabouts, not even the authorities. We had vanished - just like that.

On the fourth day during lunch, suddenly without warning and with conviction I said to Robin. "They've found your charm. They're bringing it now". Everyone was dumbstruck, including me, as I didn't know where the information was coming from. It was as if I had witnessed something without being present, so sure was I of the facts. Five minutes later, the pilot and crew approached me in the dining room and asked if I had lost a charm which they had found. I told them that Robin had lost it.

The people in Israel were definitely different from any others I knew. To them everyone is the same. You don't have to have a lot of money or influence. You are accepted on your own merits. I was very surprised at the things that occurred there. I knew Mrs. Chaya Lichtenstein quite well. She came to the hospital every afternoon to see a patient of mine who was a relative of hers. Mrs. Lichtenstein was a charming woman, about 65 years of age, very cultured and clever. I loved her very much.

From the time we met she offered me her home for a meal, a home and companionship. When I had leave I would go to see her in her beautiful and tasteful flat. She had wonderful books and paintings and a very large photograph of Dr. Weizmann, president of Israel. I never remarked on this as many people in Israel had the same picture of the president.

One morning it was arranged that I sleep over at her flat. When I arrived, she asked whether I would mind joining her in the kitchen as she had a great deal of cooking to do. She had only two small Primus paraffin stoves on which to do all her cooking. I really admired her. When I asked why in the middle of the week she had to do so much cooking, she answered that Dr. Weizmann would be coming to lunch next day. I became very excited and said "I didn't know you know him so well that he is coming to lunch with you".

"You silly girl" she said, "don't you know he is my brother?". I was amazed. I had known her for some eight months and never in this period did she ever mention that the president of Israel was her brother. I stared. I was dumbfounded. She even invited me to join them for lunch but unfortunately I had to be back on duty at the hospital. I asked myself, if this could happen anywhere else.

Tova Friedman of Israel (not a South African)

Dr. Mary Gordon habitually wore a skirt and jacket. She was not clothes-conscious but she was always very neat, very simple, the clothes of good quality and appearance.

Morris Galp of Cape Town

After leaving Egypt with an Egyptian passport, I arrived in Haifa, where I was put in quarantine by the mandate authorities until my test for cholera came back negative, (I had Gyppo tummy on the sea crossing).

The Jewish Agency sent me to Kfar Vitkin to pack oranges for export. From there to Ein Sara near Nahariya, pending my transfer to Sde Dov, Tel Aviv where I served in the start-up of the I.A.F (Piper Cubs and one De Havilland Dovo), ending my service as the aircraft inspection section officer, Sarafand with the rank of Captain.

Dr. Miriam Gitlin of Herzliya, Israel

My husband Dr. Gershon Gitlin of Capetown, having served with the South African Medical Corps and the King's own Yorkshire Light Infantry in the Middle East and Europe, landed in Israel on August 1, 1948, joining the Israel Medical Corps as a medical officer serving in the Galilee. Gershon was later chosen by Dr. Chaim Sheba to establish the first anatomy course for the Hebrew University Medical School that was officially opened in Jerusalem's Russian Compound in 1949. He was subsequently appointed a full professor.

I arrived on November 11th landing at Haifa airport with my infant daughter Ruth and son Michael aged 5. On the same flight were physiotherapist Hannah Elion and her infant daughter, Elizabeth. Her husband, Ted, a chemist, had arrived in June. I joined the Department of Social and Community Medicine of the Hadassah Medical School headed by the late Professor Sydney Kark, a pioneer in that field. I was engaged in teaching and research particularly in the field of Maternal and Child Health, and I am proud to have played a significant role in the development of the Community Health Centre at Kiryat HaYovel.

Leib Golan of Israel

You read about people coming to Israel and kissing the earth. Absolutely true. I do not think there was a single DP from our ship who did not kiss the earth. You felt it was theirs. That they had come home.

Dr. Mary Gordon related by Professor Laufer of Israel (not a South African)

I met Dr. Gordon for the first time in 1948, in Cyprus. There was, in her, a quality of character which worked so that the British would not argue with her, we (the other doctors) certainly would not, and no one would. There was respect for her.

Cyril Gotsman of Krugersdorp

There were about ten S. Africans in the navy, but I only met two of them. Ivor Fix, an experienced WW II, signals Petty Officer of the S. African Navy. He was posted to Naval headquarters and was instrumental in organising the naval communications system. I was posted to the "Ben Hecht" and for a short while I was the only crew member.

The "Eilat" with Charles Mandelstam aboard was berthed next to me, and he helped me out with a few meals during that time. During my free time I met up with some of the air force boys at a club on the Hadar-Hacarmel called the "Picadilly".

Our group⁹⁷ of just over twenty left Palmietfontein on the 26th June, but I only remember Simmy Waks and the Margolius couple Lily and "Bully". It took three days to reach Rome, where we were put up at the Boston Hotel for a few days, after which we flew on to Haifa via Athens. We spent two nights at the Technion where over a hundred people slept in the main hall. Then Tel Litwinsky, where we were involved in trench digging, in preparation for the 10 day period of fighting between the first and second truces. I have this recorded on a 8mm Movie, now transferred to a video.

Issy Greenberg (Granoth) of Israel

I was returning from Czechoslovakia on January 2, 1949, in a Skymaster, piloted by an American, Larry Raab. We were due to leave Czechoslovakia in the morning but there were two false starts before we finally took off in the afternoon. Over the Alps the plane lost an engine, but Raab resolved not to return a third time...

Nobody answered our signals in Israel, but there were replies from three Arab countries. We jettisoned the cargo, spare tires and guns. We tailed out on two engines, crossed Gaza, overflew Ekron (not a sign of light) and fired a few flares that didn't seem to concern anybody. One of the engines started burning, but the crew managed to get the flames out. We also succeeded in starting one of the dead engines. Raab decided to try Tel Aviv. We were over it at one thousand feet, coming in from the sea. During our final leg, somebody on the airfield did switch on the runway lights. It was too late. One propeller ran away and the other stopped. We came down in the sea. A number of eager youngsters, I suppose from Tel Aviv field or from Reading Power Station, swam out in the dark to rescue us. The inflatable dinghy could hardly hold us all. In the morning I got a lift with an Auster flying down to the fighter base at Hatzor. My precious corduroy trousers were still wet.

Something should be said about Tev Zimmerman. He was a perfectionist the kind of man we needed. He would drive people; he drove himself harder than anybody else. He set an example and he created standards.

The chief Engineer was a remarkable American named Harry Axelrod. He, Tev Zimmerman and Chaim Grevler kept the aircraft in the air under the most difficult circumstances.

Jack Gross of Israel

It was in 1949, a day or two prior to the planned IDF attack to drive the Egyptians from the Negev. As an officer in the medical corps responsible for medical supplies and personnel for the Southern Command, I was ordered to visit all outposts in the area, to ensure they were supplied with necessary equipment to deal with casualties which might occur during the battle, and also to boost their morale.

The first was at Bir Asluj, near Kibbutz Revivim south of Beersheba. The underground outpost protected the road which ran southwards from Beersheba into Egyptian controlled territory. I was accompanied by a female nurse, a member of the kibbutz attached to the army. We were transported by the deputy commander of the area. On arrival we immediately descended underground to carry out our inspection. Having completed our task, we ascended to ground level and found that having been out of sight we were also out of mind. The deputy commander had driven off leaving us stranded. As I had to carry out further inspections along the line East to West as far as Dir El Balach in the Gaza region, I decided that we walk the few kilometers from Bir Asluj to Kibbutz Revivim.

After 10 or 15 minutes walking, I noticed that the wind had exposed a few trip wires and realised we were in a minefield, laid by the Egyptian army when they controlled the area. I stopped in my tracks and told my companion not to move and stay behind me. Realising that it would be just as dangerous to retreat as it would be to advance, and as we had to inspect

⁹⁷ In addition to the Margolius couple, Ivor Fix and Simmy Waks, research has shown that Maurice Berger, Frank Herbstein, Mike Isaacson, Eli Isserow, Elliot Katzenellenbogen, Syd Langbart and Basil Levin were included in the group.

other places, we decided to advance to the Kibbutz where transport to the other places would be available. I told my companion that we would move forward slowly and she should step only in my footsteps and keeping our eyes peeled to follow the trip wires. Slowly we made our way forward and were lucky to reach our destination safely!! We had managed to negotiate the remaining distance and I'm alive today to tell this tale.

Hyman Harber of Johannesburg

I met a girl in Israel, Hassie Levinson. I took her with me when I visited my O.C. Shaul Rosenberg (the Scottish Jew in Kilts) in hospital. He had been wounded at Kula. When I introduced Hassie, Shaul described me to her as the "the rock he had leaned on." They were to me wonderful words from a wonderful leader. I can only say that going to Israel in 1948 turned out for me the happiest event in my life. I married Hassie.

Dr. Arthur Helfet of Cape Town

It was a bleak, wet evening towards the end of June 1948. The plane carrying our doctors' team from South Africa stopped to refuel at a drab, deserted World War 2 airfield in Athens. Two disconsolate figures were huddled on a bench, the only people in the airport building. They were Sir Leon Simon British Postmaster General and author, and Mr. Norman Bentwich K.C., who had been invited to the new State of Israel, as consultants. Their American plane had decided not to land at Lydda and had dumped them. It was our privilege to bring them in our plane.

In Israel, we found that part of Hadassah Gimmel, the old British Military Hospital, had been allocated to orthopaedic casualties under Dr. Seideman, a British trained Israeli orthopaedic surgeon. Treatment in the hospital was competent, but the doctors were overworked and sepsis was a major problem. Many of the surgeons from parts of Europe under Nazi domination had been prevented from working in hospitals and had missed the many surgical lessons of World War 2. The British hospitals in Palestine had also not given facilities for study or work to local doctors. The few exceptions were volunteers mobilized into the British Army including Drs. Sheba, Seideman, Moses and Jebin, Weitzman from France and Fried of Sweden.

Dr. Goldman, a South African orthopaedic surgeon, was in charge of a hospital in Poriya not far from the Lake of Galilee. He had settled there before the war and was doing splendid work. Discussion and teaching improved techniques became an important part of our hospital rounds.

As members of the South African unit increased, it became essential to have an organized central base. Our efforts were fragmented. After representation to the Minister of Health, I was taken to see Mr. Ben Gurion who immediately directed that a floor of the Rambam (Government) hospital and also the Italian hospital, both in Haifa, should be allocated to our work. It then became possible to organize admissions, ward rounds, operating sessions and rehabilitation. Large numbers of patients were admitted and treated.

The Orthopaedic Unit alone did more than 250 major operations and a comparable number was done by the Plastic Unit. Dr. Penn's two non-Jewish operating theatre sisters, Benedict and Roux, did a magnificent job, and added efficiency and quality to the organization. Within two hours of their arrival at the Rambam, they looked across the bay at the outline of Acre and asked: "Is that ours?"

The Rambam was a beautiful new hospital, designed by Eric Mendelsohn (who also designed the Hadassah of Jerusalem) at the waters' edge, with air conditioning and all modern facilities. Unfortunately in the austerity conditions, the air conditioning did not work. The windows in the wards could be opened but not those of the operating theatres. In the Israeli summer operating in these conditions was indeed "hot work." The staff all but "streaked", but were able to refresh in the evenings in the waters of the bay or at nearby Atlit.

The Italian hospital was used for treatment of patients before and after operation and for non surgical cases: With the arrival of more South African doctors, physiotherapists and nurses, we instituted rehabilitation programs which became an important part of the South African effort. It was possible to link up with a long-term program initiated by an Israeli specialist in Physical Medicine, Dr. Ernst Simon. Mrs. Lorna Wingate, wife of Orde Wingate, one of Britain's World War 2 heroes, raised funds for the physical training school near Tel Aviv which bears her husband's name.

Accommodation in Haifa was a problem solved by the Mayor, Abba Khushy, and by Yacov Salamon. As Custodians of Arab property, they were meticulous in their care of abandoned houses and their contents. Every item was listed and locked away for safe-keeping. A house near the hospital was allocated to our unit.

Soon a convalescent resort for all wounded was established in Nahariya, a seaside town north of Haifa. Rounds were carried out there by members of the Orthopaedic unit one afternoon a week. With either Cyril Kaplan or Jack Wilton spent each week-end in rotation in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv or in the Galilee. In this way most of the wounded were observed and treatment discussed. At times individual Israeli surgeons worked with us. It was gratifying to note the rapid improvement in organization and patient care.

In the months before the Second Truce the spirit in Israel transcended even that of Britain after Dunkirk. The people were indomitable and showed a selfless idealism. Miracles were not only possible, but probable. The terrible trials and losses were borne because there was an overwhelming sense of big history in the making. The times were biblical with the people close to faith.

I left in mid-September after six months in Israel. Some years later the Israeli Ambassador in South Africa called to present me with the Oth Kommemiot, the Liberation medal.

Every three years until 1961, I spent a month in Israel visiting each orthopaedic center and joining in discussions with the rapidly-expanding and increasingly prestigious Israeli Orthopaedic Association, which now holds its place with honour in the international field. I cherish the status of Honorary Member.

Frank Herbstein of Israel

Because of our family background both my sister (today Nina Selbst) and I were convinced members of Zionist youth, she more than I. She went to Palestine in 1946 to study at the Hebrew University. This was not worthwhile at that time and she joined a hachshara group destined for kibbutz Shoval. The kibbutz was one of thirteen established on the night of Yom Kippur 1946 in the Negev and when fighting started in 1948, the kibbutz still had a working group in Netanya, the object of the group to earn some cash for the settlement. South Africans then numbered about twenty per cent of the kibbutz. I myself was not as ideologically convinced about the merits of kibbutz life as I was about the merits of the Zionist solution to the problem of the Jew.

During World War 2 I had interrupted my university career at the end of my second year at the University of Cape Town to join the Special Signal Services of the S.A. Corps of Signals (August 1944). I had a background in physics and this determined my choice. The Corps of Signals had to do with radar and after going through a couple of courses I was posted to a flying boat squadron operating from Zululand. I went back to University at the end of 1945. At the end of 1946 I gained my B.Sc. and at the end of 1947 my M. Sc. I had planned to do my Ph.D. at the Hebrew University. All was organized for this. At the end of November 1947 came the partition decision and the unofficial war started. My plans fell through. At the beginning of 1948 I continued to work at the University of Cape Town. I was waiting to see how things would develop before committing myself.

My involvement with Machal started at the beginning of 1948. I had a friend at the University of Cape Town, Aaron Klug, today a very distinguished scientist at the Medical Research Institute, Cambridge, a fellow of the Royal Society who was finishing his doctorate at the time and I was just starting research work. He was a member of Hashomer Hatzair. We were both keen. Towards the end of May 1948 or the beginning of June, I was told by Machal that my name had come up and I joined a group that went up to Johannesburg by car. I can only remember one of the group; Elliot Katzenellenbogen, an experienced soldier who had served with the S.A. Artillery. Other friends came later: Mishy Fine, of Cape Town; and Gerry Shaper.

I remember going to the Italian Consulate in Pretoria to get a visa. In the reception room, I found myself with half a dozen young South African Jews of military age, each going to Europe on "business". On the plane we behaved according to instructions, not talking to one another. Basil Herman and his wife had come to see us off. He stood on a side, just watching, not acknowledging us.

In Rome we were all billeted in the Bristol Hotel and kept up the pretence of not knowing one another. We didn't know exactly when we would leave; we weren't allowed to leave the hotel for more than a couple of hours. Some of the fellows who had been in Rome in World War 2 must have had a wonderful time. I was still young, bewildered by it all. One night, after three or four days, we were telephoned and told to be ready to leave at four a.m. The period was that in which the Canadian air ace, Buzz Beurling, crashed a Norseman near Urbe airport (May 20).

At four a.m. we all trooped down to the sleepy desk clerk, each acting separately, and asked for our bills. As you can imagine there was a lot of confusion. The clerk knew what was going on and was in a bad temper about the whole business. A bus came and we left at about 5 a.m. got to Rome airport about 6. The pilot took the plane to the edge of the runway to rev up the engines and make sure he could take off. His verdict was that it wasn't worth the risk. He took the plane back to where the mechanics would work on it, we trooped out and sat around in the airport lounge. Facilities were poor: nothing to eat or drink, toilets filthy, what you might expect in Rome in the immediate years after the war. We had nothing to read and were bored stiff. The time was punctuated by false alarms that we were about to leave. At 2 p.m. we trooped back into the plane, went through the same performance as in the early morning. The pilot said, No, he was not satisfied and was not prepared to fly. We returned to the same hotel to be greeted by the manager with - "Gentlemen, if you are leaving tomorrow morning, please let me know now so we can prepare the bill, ONE bill." We were exhausted. Next morning; same performance (except that the bill had been settled): we got to the airport, boarded the plane and took off. We just about made Athens. The most nervous fellows aboard were a few ex-SAAF pilots who detected something wrong. More emergency repairs...

I had never considered myself a radar expert and chose Chemed⁹⁸, the scientific section of the Army, and accordingly was sent to the Weizmann Institute where the Army had taken over a new building. Some of the people involved were the late Amos de-Shalit, Scientific Director of the Weizmann Institute, Yisrael Pelah, Director of the Nuclear Reactor at Nahal Sorek, Yigal Talmi, of the Weizmann Institute, the Katchalsky brothers, Aharon and Ephraim⁹⁹. The late Professor Ernst David Bergmann was in charge of all the military work. We lived in the laboratory of the agricultural school across the road which had been converted to a dormitory. We were in uniform and had some semblance of discipline¹⁰⁰.

⁹⁸ Chemed - Hebrew acronym for "scientific corps".

⁹⁹ Aharon Katchalsky (Katzir) was mowed down at Ben Gurion airport, with many others, by Japanese terrorists working for the Palestine Liberation Organization and Ephraim is today the President of the State of Israel.

¹⁰⁰ Also in chemed was Esther Berelowitz of Capetown who had learned to fly before coming on Aliya intending to serve as a pilot in the IAF

Late in December 1948 in what came to be the final push in the Negev, there was a second emergency call to our unit from the Navy, obviously impressed by what we had contributed the previous time in the way of infra-red devices.

Given time we might really have been able to help on this occasion. Somebody had heard of inter-ship signaling by infra-red. This had the advantage that you could preserve wireless silence. It had been developed by the British, American and Canadian Navies during the war. The idea was to use it at night - a big advantage - like an ordinary Aldis lamp, except that it was visible only to a man who had an infra-red telescope trained in the right direction. For this to work with the small angle of vision of the telescope you had to have a special mounting for the telescope so that despite the buffeting of a ship you could still keep the telescope at the correct angle.

We were called in at the last minute; our device didn't work; it was not a thing you could get to work for the first time under combat conditions. The ships went to El Arish and bombarded it. There was counter-fire from the shore, one of our ships was hit - (not the one I was on) and there were a couple of casualties. In contrast to the idyllic sea of the Gaza episode, the sea this time was violently rough. Most unpleasant. We "captured" an Egyptian fishing vessel that was straying about. Presumably we helped the Army in their push down. This was the time the Air Force downed five R.A.F. aircraft. I had nothing to do during the bombardment; I was very cold and sea-sick and had to sleep in a hammock which I had never done before. Nobody had time for a stranger. It was dark and I was scared, so I tried to find some position which I thought was really well protected, so that I could watch. Next morning I checked where I had been and found what I thought was solid metal protection was actually painted canvas! The ship was the Ben Hecht.

Basil Herman of Israel

Our South African fellows WERE different. They understood from the outset: no arms, no illicit funds, no monkey business, no contravention of South African laws, no IDB.¹⁰¹ We did not have a single case of a man involved in an illicit operation. If I were to give you a profile of the South Africans, I would say that adventurers amounted to no more than five percent. The overwhelming majority came because they had a feeling for the fate of their people...

We could not find enough food for Guri, my dog. I got all I could from the Dan Hotel kitchen and from the pilots' kitchen. Not enough. He was a big dog. I gave him to the Ramat David airfield as a mascot and he became quite a character there. One day one of the men from the airfield was driving a jeep in Tel Aviv, Guri at the back. The jeep passed my mother-in-law's apartment and Guri jumped off and came back to us. I sent him to the Herzliya airfield. He became too interested in a kibbutz's chickens and that was the end of him...

Norman Isaacs of Johannesburg

Early in January 1949, Air Force HQ asked me to go to Athens to fetch some aircraft. My companions were two Durban volunteers, Syd Chalmers, flight engineer, and Rolfe Futerman, pilot, then of Pretoria, today of Durban. After various adventures, we were met by our contact in Athens, one Sammy Cohen, who settled us in a hotel, told us we could have the night off, not to drink too much, no girls and to be ready when he called at eight next morning.

Next day we drove through the private gate of the airport into the military section to a hangar where the aircraft had been parked. We were not challenged by anybody. In the hangar were two aircraft, Avro Ansons, but in what a state! Every piece of equipment that was removable had been removed, the engines were out of the housings, fuel tanks were out, and even the doors were off. We learned that this was sabotage by British agents, also that there were five aircraft in all, the other three on the island of Rhodes.

¹⁰¹ Illicit diamond buying or selling

It would take a long time for the three of us to put things together again. While we were discussing the matter, the Engineering Officer of the Greek Air Force arrived and invited us to his office for coffee. We got round to talking about the troubles the Greek Government was having with rebels in the mountains and he told us the Greek Air Force was bombing the rebels from Dakotas by rolling bombs out of the doors and hoping they would drop on the hide-outs.

"But we had the same problem in Israel", I said.

"We came up with bomb racks for our Dakotas. We stopped chucking in October."

This excited him and he asked what I meant, so I said, "Let's go have a look at your Dakotas." On the way, he called to a few other big shots to accompany us. I suggested that they fit the racks under the wings on the main spars. They started talking at the same time, arguing whether the thing was feasible or not.

"Try one rack first," I said, "and clip in a lightweight sandbag."

The test took place after some hours and the Greek officers were highly satisfied. The Engineering Officer couldn't thank us enough and asked if there was anything he could do for us. I asked for a few mechanics to help us with our Avro-Ansons. He gave us mechanics in such abundance that after a week Rolfe Futerman was able to test flight the first one.

It was about this time that the first El Al passenger flight to Europe came through Athens. Syd, Rolfe and I, with Sammy on the side, watched the plane touch down and the passengers and crew come off. The crew, were fellows from Ramat David whom we knew. Unfortunately we were unable to greet them owing to our secret assignment. Imagine our surprise, and Sammy Cohen's consternation, when we found the crew at the same hotel as ours. Sammy relented and organized a meeting at midnight with the crew in their room. We got to bed at four a.m.

Rolfe Futerman and I shuttled between Athens and Rhodes on several occasions to check the other aircraft. They were in good condition, requiring only fuel, batteries and a service. Finally everything was ready. I flew back to Israel to receive the five aircraft on arrival date. Rolfe and Syd Chalmers stayed on to meet up with the crews who were to fly the Ansons in. It was an exciting day at Ramat David when we got the message that they were on the way.

Cecil Wulfsohn fits in a piece of this jigsaw. Just before the State was proclaimed; three Ansons destined for the Yishuv landed at Rhodes for refueling. One of them was flown in by a chap named van Leer. Now when you fly, you normally have a carnet to collect petrol. Then the account is paid in your own country. Van Leer had a carnet but also a large amount of dollars. Instead of paying by carnet, he gave dollars to the Greek refueller on this out-of-the way field. This Greek had never seen so many dollars before. He rushed into town and the story got about. Had van Leer used the carnet, there would have been no problem. The planes were impounded¹⁰².

Mike Isaacson Pretoria

Our commando unit was poised to attack Gaza when the cease-fire came into effect. We stayed in the Negev for another two months before returning to Ben Shemen. We were on stand-by for another two months as we were expecting trouble in the triangle, but nothing happened. Our commando unit was finally disbanded to the disappointment of our Sabra friends. We had served nearly a year with the Army.

I must say something about a few of my South African and Rhodesian comrades, such as:

¹⁰² These were the planes that Agron planned Joe Katzew and Roy Schapera should smuggle out of Rhodes.

Bill Lehr, who took part in all the actions of the 89th.

Reg Sagar, who in spite of being wounded, knocked out an Egyptian mortar position, then ran more than a mile to alert our men that my half track had stalled in the sand. He was recommended for bravery by his company commander, Akiva Saar

Ralph Yodaiken, who returned with his vehicle to give us a push and get our half track started under heavy fire at Auja el Hafir. (My number two on my machine gun, Phil Balkin was killed and two others were wounded in this action).

Ivan Sheinbaum, one of the S. African Betar boys who was badly wounded at Auja el Hafir.

Jimmy Kantey of Capetown, our platoon leader, who was praised by then battalion commander Moshe Dayan, for exceptional bravery. (In the attack on Lod, a wrong turn took Jimmy to Ramle with the rest of the group following and ending up attacking the Transjordan forces defending Ramle police station. In this action, our half track was knocked out with half our crew wounded. Jimmy was seriously wounded by three bullets).

Leslie Marcus, one of the Betar boys, who under heavy fire at Beit Guvrin, risked his life by running to the aid of badly wounded Shlomo Friedrich and carried him on his back a considerable distance to relative safety - an act of heroism witnessed by "B" company commander Naphtali Arbel

Julian Schragenheim, a veteran of World War 2 who had left Germany in 1933, joined the S.A. Army in 1940. Served in North Africa and Italy and later worked with Eli Wiesenthal, tracing war criminals.

Bull Bernstein, (cousin of Reg Sagar), who had served in an artillery unit of the Rhodesian army in World War 2. He was a driver on one of the halftracks and was involved in all the battles of the unit.

Harold Sher, one of the Betar boys who joined our unit sometime at the end of October. He was on our halftrack when we were knocked out at Auja el Hafir.

Johnny Nakan, also from Betar, a non Jew who converted and joined our unit sometime in October. He was on the halftrack with Ivan Sheinbaum when Ivan was badly wounded at Auja el Hafir.

Horace Milunsky, a World War 2 veteran who joined the artillery when he arrived in Israel but later transferred to our unit.

Arnold Isaacson my cousin, who also joined our unit as one of the Betar boys.

Joseph Jedeiken, of Orkney Transvaal

One of our jobs as a jeep patrol was to prevent arms and supplies reaching Bethlehem from Hebron. These were transported by Egyptian convoys at night. Whenever we were advised of these convoy movements, we attacked and destroyed them. On numerous occasions Yigal Allon, Israel Carmi and I led these attacks.

While driving one night at 2 a.m. we came across a road block and feared an ambush. Allon and Carmi and a few of our men immediately started to clear the boulders from the road while the rest of us covered them with our machine guns. A few moments later we were fired on by snipers in the hills. We returned the fire and silenced the snipers, then carried on with our patrol until 5 a.m. The bravery of Allon, Carmi and the rest of the Sabras was great. We were very proud of them.

Abe Jaffe of London

I arrived in Israel in April 1948 and served until July 1949. During this period in the Israel army I had some interesting experiences. Once, while on leave, I visited some friends in the Air Force at Sde Dov air field. One of the personnel there asked if I would be agreeable to become one of the bomb chuckers described in this book. I agreed but Arthur Cooper insisted on no account would he allow an untrained person to do this. He refused to fly the mission if this were to happen. I relate this incident to show you how unsophisticated the Israeli Air Force was at the time and how much improvisation took place.

The second experience had particular long term meaning for me. I was asked by the Zionist office in Tel Aviv to attend a prisoner exchange in Jerusalem. It held particular meaning to me because Monty Goldberg, was one of the prisoners to be released. I came to Israel

together with Monty. His brother was a partner of my brother in South Africa. As related in detail in this book, Monty, an aerial photographer had been taken prisoner by the Egyptians. This experience had particular significance because many years later I married Monty Golderg's cousin, Hilary Kasrils.

It was also heartrending to see a traumatised Israeli girl Palmachnik who had been captured by the Arab Legion in the old city of Jerusalem and taken to Amman where she was paraded in a cage while people threw oranges and spat at her.

Among others released were three Jewish American pilots who were taken prisoner when they landed their two Norsemen in error near Gaza after a grueling ferry flight from Italy, during which they experienced severe technical problems and exceptional winds.

Bat-Ami Joffe of Israel

Early in 1948 my then fianc'e Reuben Joffe, who had served in South African army radar during WW2, was approached to go to Israel, by Yoel Palgi who was visiting S. Africa on behalf of the Haganah. Reuben and I had planned to marry in September and probably because of the urgent need for radar personnel, Palgi agreed to our request that we go together.

To expedite travel documents in my married name, we arranged an early civil marriage prior to the wedding proper which we brought forward to the 5th May and we left for Palestine on May 12.

We were 10 passengers; our friend Colin Gluckman (later to change his name to Gillon and to become the State Attorney who prepared the Eichman case but who unfortunately died before the trial) and his wife Saada with their two children, Dov and Elsie Judah who married a few days after us, Dr Stanley Levin and a gentleman whose name we don't remember and who kept very much to himself and us. Colin had been in S. Africa on a mission for the Haganah.

On the last leg of the flight, our pilot diverted to Nicosia, Cyprus ostensibly due to technical problems, but next morning we discovered he had been frightened by a story of planes confiscated by the "mad Haganah" and the arrest of non-Jewish Pilots. He refused to fly us to Israel and started drinking until he became completely drunk.

Stranded in Cyprus and surrounded by hostile Cypriot Police we heard BBC news broadcasts about Egyptian air raids doing huge damage to Tel Aviv, Arab Armies inflicting heavy casualties on all fronts, advancing on Haifa and already on the outskirts of Tel Aviv. We began to fear there was no longer any purpose going on to Israel.

Stan Levin located Mary Gordon, the well-known South African physician who was then working in the Jewish refugee camps in Cyprus. She was excited to learn Reuben's name as she had delivered him at birth. She said she could possibly get us on one of the boats taking refugees to Haifa.

Next morning, at the airfield, a piper-cub landed and to my surprise, the pilot was a schoolmate, Tuxie Blau, ostensibly on his way to Rome but really on his way to deliver his plane to Israel. Next day a Rapide brought Golda Meir on her way to the U.S.A. to invite Chaim Weizmann to be the first President of Israel. Gillon knew her well. He introduced us and told her of our predicament.

Golda was flying to Paris and from there on a commercial flight to the U.S.A. She arranged to send the Rapide back to take us to Israel and gave us news of the fighting which greatly improved our morale. We realised how slanted the news was that we were getting in Cyprus.

We all had so many luggages, that when Golda's plane returned we had to decide whether we all would go without our luggage or only the Gillons with their luggage. We decided that the Gillons should go as they had two small children and Colin would inform the "powers-that-be" of our plight and arrange for us to get to Israel.

Next day, an Arab Airways Cessna landed. The British pilot offered to take us to Haifa. He said he knew we were Jews but did not look like Zionists. It turned out he was the mail courier for the Iraq Petroleum Co.

At Haifa, where the British were still in charge, immigration officials were dubious about our credentials but allowed us in after I called my uncle, David Katz, who was postmaster of Haifa. Next morning we were put on a bus to Tel Aviv. The journey took over 4 hours as the regular road was still held by Arabs who were shooting at Jewish vehicles. We traveled via Wadi Milek and then from Zichron Yaakov, Hadera, Petach Tikva and on to Tel Aviv.

Reuben met up with Jack Segall and others who were organising the beginnings of a radar unit to be named squadron 505. Although married women were not required to enlist I joined the Air Force. Because of my qualifications (B.A. Social Studies) I was assigned to the Welfare office. All 505 HQ personnel were billeted there but as the only married couple, Reuben and I did not move to Sarafand. When Machaneh Ariel opened in Jaffa, we shared a flat there with 3 other couples.

I was assigned to the Welfare Officer in the Yarkon Hotel and then to Machaneh Ariel. One memorable experience was attending to 3 British volunteers who arrived on the "Altalena" with only the clothes that they were wearing, having been shot at and almost drowned. Another moving experience involved a Palmach soldier, the only survivor of his platoon from the battle for Latrun. I don't remember how he got to Air Force HQ. I spent a lot of time with him to restore his sanity.

During our service, Reuben and I became active in the formation of Moshav Habonim. Solly Ossin had brought information about the principles and practical workings of a Moshav Shitufi which he had gained from the cultural officer of his unit, a member of Moshav Moledet. The concept was very close to the ideas of communal living which our group had already been planning in South Africa. We approached others and during 1948 we spent many hours discussing our ambitions to form a Moshav after the war. We were pleasantly surprised at the interest we found among all Machal.

With the help of Haim Krispin, Lionel Schwartz and others, the Allenby cinema was made available to us for a meeting on a Saturday afternoon. To our amazement, the hall was almost filled to capacity. The project came to fruition with the establishment of Moshav Habonim on the sea front near Atlit. As the project ran contrary to kibbutz-oriented officialdom, official cooperation was non-existent to the extent that Avraham Hartsfeld, head of the settlement department of the Jewish Agency, did not attend the official opening ceremony of the Moshav in 1949.

Dov Judah of Johannesburg

Syd Cohen never ceased to be the boy from the platteland.¹⁰³ I shall not forget the day at the Hatzor airfield when we were passing the Mustang planes that had been spirited out of Britain despite the sanctions against supplies to Israel. Syd was glum and I asked why. He pointed to the Mustangs. "My perde is siek", he said in Afrikaans¹⁰⁴.

At the morning conference I had with Yigal Yadin, he gave me confidences of his battle plans, his difficulties, procurement and supply problems, with his field commanders, and with

¹⁰³ South Africa's rural areas.

¹⁰⁴ My horses (Mustangs) are sick.

the politicians, all of whom were subjecting him to criticism, defying orders and offering unnecessary and often bad advice.

At times the mask slipped. I saw him dejected by loss and elated at victory, but always he was an intellectual giant, mastering the innumerable problems of fighting a war with a disorderly rabble for an Army. Ben Gurion was the creator of the State, but Yadin was the main architect of its initial victories. He worked against odds, numerical and logistic, and in constant struggle against political superiors and military subordinates who believed they knew more about his job than he did. He surmounted his problems by intellectual strength. He outfought friend and foe. Years later, having built the Army, he retired to become the eminent archeologist, author and lecturer he had always wanted to be.

Cyril Kaplan of Durban

I have been back to Israel on several occasions since 1948 and have twice served there in the Orthopedic Department at Hadassah Hospital, once during the War of Attrition and during the Yom Kippur War. There are things which bring one back.

Stanley Kaplan of Johannesburg

The most colorful man in our unit, literally and metaphorically, was an Abyssinian. He and I were the only ones of the unit (No. 10 Engineers, Carmeli Brigade) to go to the Sephardi Synagogue on Yom Kippur. This fellow black as the ace of spades, was a great one for cleanliness and on his own initiative used to clean up the latrines.

David Katzen of Johannesburg

As an essay in recording the trivialities of war please note that I wore the same pair of trousers for six months. There were no washing facilities at Kibbutz Ruchama where I ran a one-man ciphers department for the Air Force. We lived on olives and green peppers.

Joe Katzew of Virginia, Orange Free State

The PAAC Dakota that brought twenty of us back home in December 1948 landed with engine trouble in Pietersburg. We awaited the local magistrate, an Afrikaner called from his afternoon tennis, with mixed feelings, not to say a little anxiety. There was no need for anxiety. He said, "You chaps have done well." He organized a tea and cake party for us and an extra carriage for the train that would take us to Johannesburg. He delayed the train half an hour for an extra party for us given by the local Women's Zionist Society and the Union of Jewish Women.

Joe Leibowitz of Johannesburg

The start of the Air Force was largely a South African effort. "Bomber Command" of the IAF, such as it was at the beginning, meant Boris Senior, Hugo Alperstein, the late Eddie Cohen, Elliot Rosenberg, Cyril Katz, Arthur Cooper, Tuxie Blau, Les Chimes, Smoky Simon, Dov Judah, a handful of Israeli pilots and many Israeli bomb chuckers.

Dr. Stanley Levin of Israel

Ossie Treisman came to relieve me when Yocheved and I went on honeymoon. I took my bride to her parents' home at Yesod Hama'ala (The Upper Foundation), a beautiful part of Israel. The Huleh Lake was full of birds and wild life. Yoch's father would knock at my door at 5 a.m. and say, "Come along we're going out duck-hunting." We'd bring back ducks for lunch: After six days Yoch decided she had had enough of her honeymoon at home and we went back to our unit at the Gedera hospital. We had fallen in love with our boys and our hospital. However in the beginning of December, we wound up our affairs there. We had experienced great and wonderful days at the hospital, despite the difficulties. I would never have wanted to miss the experience.

I moved on to Djani Hospital where Jack Medalie was then working and for a short period we worked together, planning at the same time to move on to a Moshav shitufi¹⁰⁵ when we were discharged. A few of us set up a group. Jack Medalie, Reuben Joffe, Solly Ossin, my brother Basil, Lionel Schwartz, (and wives) were the original people to look for a place for hachshara (preparation). We found a lovely abandoned Arab village, Kfar Lam, near Atlit and decided to set up there the settlement that eventually became Moshav Habonim, with its initial predominantly South African element.

Preliminary arrangements were made by Solly Ossin for a collection centre at Kfar Blum pending transfer to Kfar Lam. Among the other South Africans in the original group (in alphabetical order), were:

Renee Aronson, Uri Aylon (Henry Levinson), Abe Berkow, Freda Gate, Abe Goldes, Harry Goldstein, Eli Isserow, Leish and Stella Joffe, Max Kangisser, Mike Kruss, Charles Mandelstam, Phil Novesenitz, Max Rosengarten, Sonny Schneider and Jack Segall.

Sam Levin of Israel

I wasn't in on the birth of the South African Zionist Federation's office at 13 Ha'am Street in Tel Aviv. I was then still in South Africa in charge of the Zionist office in Cape Town. I came to Israel in the first week of January 1949, but the facts are these: The volunteers began coming in May, June and July 1948 and by the end of July there were some 150 of them, possibly more, in the country. Where do they leave their luggage? Who looks after them when they are on leave? From where can they book a phone call home? What postal address do they give? The former South African businessmen settled in Israel formed a committee, Janower the chairman, Lazar Braudo, the vice-chairman.

Eli Kirschner, (son of Nicolai Kirschner) a lawyer who had gone into the Army, volunteered his office. The committee engaged a girl named Ruth working in Kirschner's office to spend two hours in the morning and two in the afternoon (ten to twelve and three to five) to attend to the needs of the volunteers.

A storeroom in the building became the lock-up for their suitcases. With the arrival of more volunteers the work increased, so the committee gave old Mr. Rosenberg, long retired as principal of the Jewish Government School in Johannesburg in the 1920's and 1930's, the job of caretaker. He had the lock of the storeroom, kept records and did other odd jobs. That was the beginning: Old Rosenberg and Ruth running a Machal service office.

Then the Federation in Johannesburg began using the office for several services it required done in Israel. The need for appointing a senior official became apparent and the man chosen was Mike Udwin who had come with the Medical team and was serving as Lionel Meltzer's secretary. Udwin had been a Federation official in South Africa and was a good administrative man. Thus Lt. Udwin came to be in charge of the Machal office.

By December the fellows were applying for their discharge as the war was over and many had to be back in South Africa to resume their interrupted studies and work. Then came the question of aliyah. "Instead of going back, why don't you stay?" Janower and his group pioneered the settlement of those who wanted to stay through a newly-formed Settlement Office. They began looking around for another official. Udwin had his hands full handling the discharge and repatriation of the men.

I had arrived in the first week of January hoping to go into government service. Janower offered me the Settlement Office job. I began work on January 15, 1949. Housing for the urban volunteers became a priority. Janower persuaded the Jewish National Fund to give him a piece of land in Tel Aviv. Here on Jan Smuts Boulevard, as this street came to be named, we started building apartments in 1949. One of my jobs was as secretary of the

¹⁰⁵ Smallholders' village whose members work collectively but live privately

company Machal Shikun. Go there today and you will find the Machalniks still there.¹⁰⁶ We were the first territorial unit to build for the servicemen. The Americans followed our example, then the British. On our pattern a uniform resettlement plan was established.

The change-over of the office from military to civilian status took place in June 1949 after the State's first anniversary. Today the South African office is a big enterprise, attending to the needs of some 8,000 settlers and a thriving tourism from South Africa. Until the establishment of the offices of the South African Consulate-General, in 1970, we were THE South African address in Israel.

In South Africa the Federation gave generous financial aid to volunteers seeking to re-establish themselves.

Eddy Magid of Johannesburg

After the war I wanted to settle in Israel but I was not trained for anything. The demob authorities sent me to a German-Hebrew-speaking Moshav near Haifa. I could understand neither language. There were no young people my age there. I was unhappy. In any case, I didn't want to be a farmer, so I left and wandered around on my own. Then I landed a job unloading barges at Tel Aviv "harbour". There was no future in this and I took on another job, but it also had no future. This was carrying pockets of cement up the stairs of a building in construction. I'll not forget the day I stopped, out of breath, on a landing and an elderly Jewish plasterer said to me: "Why do the dirty work?"

"I'm not a plasterer", I said.

"Nor was I - in the first building", he said.

"In this second building, I am!"

I couldn't operate that way and continued as a cement carrier. My friends had left and I was lonely, very lonely. I stayed at the Hotel Metropole at the bottom of Allenby Street on the seashore, the "home" of a number of ex-volunteers. The rent was small. The rest of my money went on food. I scraped along, like scores of others. On a day I was feeling very low, a letter came from my brother who had returned to South Africa, asking me to come back. We had lost our parents and had only each other. I returned in June 1949. On the same flight with me were two other South African Machalniks, Morrie Ringer, today Managing Director of a world-wide computer firm, and Eli Reef.

My first visit as a tourist to Israel was in 1963. By then I was married with two sons, aged twelve and ten. The whole family came. I inquired what had happened to the two Cromwell tanks. Nobody could tell me.

Our second visit was in 1973 and this time I was determined to find where the tanks were. I went to all the war museums but made no headway until I was directed to the Haganah War Museum in Tel Aviv. The very charming gentleman in charge listened to my story and then got busy on the telephone. He must have made fifteen calls before his face brightened. He called a taxi, shepherded me and my wife into it and directed the driver to take us to the tank men's recreation center in Yad Eliyahu in south Tel Aviv. Outside this center was one of the Cromwells mounted ten feet high as a monument to Israel's first tankists. The plaque, underneath lists the actions in which it was used. The taxi driver, like so many of his kind in Israel, had been curious about our mission and when he wormed the story out of me, he became as excited and enthusiastic as I was. I am not ashamed to say that I was overcome when I saw the tank. We took photographs and, as usually happens in Israel, a crowd gathered. The taxi driver satisfied the collective curiosity. Waves of warm fellow-feeling came to me from the people.

¹⁰⁶ The writer conducted interviews for this work in several homes in this attractive boulevard.

In 1974 I paid another visit to Israel this time with my two sons, aged twenty two and twenty. We clambered on to the tank and on this eminence I became story teller of the days of 1948.

Charles Mandelstam of Israel

We were off Gaza. Our bosun, Aaron Cohen, was unimpressed with the gunners and persuaded Pizaro, the captain, to let him take charge of our 2-inch gun. We ran into an Egyptian corvette with a 4-inch gun. In our ship the gun captain sat on a swivel seat behind the gun. The bridge was a meter away. The corvette was firing at us and we, with our 2-inch, were at a disadvantage. The corvette's shells dropped on our left and then our right, and it seemed it would find range on us. Time was passing. The corvette was coming straight at us and we were going straight at it. Pizaro, getting more tense, ordered Cohen to fire, fire, fire. Aaron Cohen, a man without fear, was cool as a cucumber. He swiveled on Pizaro, saying: "Who is firing this bloody gun, you or me?" and he swiveled back. He chose his own times for firing. The corvette had no taste for battle and beat a retreat.

It was that kind of a Navy: Pizaro, the captain, apologized to Cohen, the gunner. For months after Pizaro regretted the lost glory of sinking the corvette. We gave chase but developed engine trouble...

As so often happens with naval men, it was not war against other ships but war against the sea itself that left me with one of my most enduring memories. Seven particular days of the Noga off Crete were frightening. The fury of the sea had the craft (300 tons) helpless and the men sick to death. Our mission as a sub-chaser was to try to find a submarine which the Egyptians were reported to have bought from Italy and were bringing to Egypt. The assumption was that the sub would be on the surface, in which case the Noga would use hand grenades to make the Egyptians believe they were depth charges. No sub was sighted. The Noga, having no alternative, ran with the sea. There was no question of patrol. No man went on deck without a life line, and the crow's nest remained empty.

Gordon Mandelzweig Johannesburg

Dr. Mary Gordon was my aunt. My brother Solomon was also in the war, thus three members of the family involved.

One memory specially remains. We were called out one night before we had had any training and before any arms had been issued to us. This was within two weeks of the time of my arrival. An enemy attack was expected somewhere near the Lebanese border and we had to go and stop them. Rifles and ammunition were then issued. My rifle was brand new, still wrapped in greased paper. I kept my ammunition in a sock - nowhere else to keep it. On the truck with me were some youngsters, refugees from Europe, who had never handled a rifle. Somebody was showing them how to load and fire.

We arrived at our destination early in the morning. I have no idea precisely where it was. We were told to dig in. I cleaned the Czech rifle issued to me as best I could but then found I could not load it because the British .303 rimmed cartridges I had received would not fit the Czech rimless rifle. Fortunately I managed to swap the ammo with someone who had a British rifle and rimless ammo. Thank heaven there was no attack that night. We returned to camp.

During a snipers' course a little later, some of us were sent to Sarafand to investigate the material that had been taken off the Altalena. It was stocked in crates in an orange grove near Sarafand. The Army wanted the material identified and our group knew a bit about explosives. There were artillery charges, powder explosives and granulated explosives which I am sure they could use and did use. Of course a lot of it was messed up by water.

Percy Manham (As related by Maurice Ostroff)

In 1944, Henry Kirsch and other members of the South African Zionist movement formed a public company Palestine Shippers Limited, (Palship) whose objectives included stimulating trade between the Yishuv and South Africa and creating employment in Palestine especially for new immigrants. Percy Manham was entrusted with the formidable task of traveling to Palestine, whilst WWII was raging, to investigate how this could be achieved. Because of wartime travel restrictions Percy and his wife Anne set out on an adventurous overland journey, by rail to Elizabethville via Victoria Falls, then by a pre-war Junkers aircraft to Stanleyville, followed by flying boat to Egypt and at last, by light aircraft to Haifa

On returning to South Africa he presented a comprehensive report analyzing the economic situation in Palestine. His report was accepted and he was asked to return to Palestine with his family to implement his recommendations. Percy accepted the challenge and emigrated to Israel, just as WWII ended, with his wife and daughters Aviva, then aged 12, and Pnina aged 10.

Palship invested in Peltours,¹⁰⁷ an international transport company, with branches in Egypt and other countries. It also invested in the Palestine Africa (Binyan) Insurance Company and Percy formed a local company called Paimex to represent Palship. In addition to his business activities, Percy participated in Hagana duties.

The Manham family lived initially in Ramat Gan, where Percy joined Max Spitz and Jack Raphael in forming the first lawn bowls club in Israel. They later moved to Savyon, where Percy became deeply involved in establishing the first synagogue, of which he later became Life President. When Peltours separated their transport and insurance divisions, Percy remained with the Insurance section and was later to become Joint Managing Director of the Migdal-Binyan Insurance Company.

With the outbreak of the War of Independence postal communication between Israel and the outside world was cut off. At the request of the SA Zionist Federation Peltours organized a private postal service, mainly for the benefit of South African Machalniks. A light plane carried mail from Haifa to Cyprus where it was collected by the local Peltours agent who forwarded the letters by regular mail.

In a book of family letters, Percy related an interesting experience. While driving to Tel Aviv in his Rover car during the period the Irgun was attacking Jaffa, Percy's car was commandeered by an Irgun man waving a gun, who promised the car would be returned when the fighting in Jaffa ended. Percy later learned that the car had been involved in an accident, that spares were awaited from England and that he would receive it when repaired. After the Altalena affair, the Irgun sent a man to tell Percy that the Irgun had gone underground, that his car was at Arditi's Garage in Jaffa and that he had to take it from there before nightfall as by then the garage would be vacated. Percy hired a tow truck and fetched the damaged car which cost Lstg600 to repair.

Colin Marik of Toronto

In the Tamra action while helping to carry a wounded man down to the battalion aid post I slipped and fell on my face on a rock outcrop. I must have picked up the stretcher and continued down. I did not realise it at the time but I had broken my nose. In 1950 or 1951, I had Dr. Penn "fix" my nose as I was having trouble breathing through that projection.

It was not a pleasant experience as we could not move fast and "they" were taking shots at us. Eventually we got him to the medics. Exhausted, I sat on a bench to examine my left boot which was wet inside. I thought that I had stepped into a puddle of water but on turning my boot upside down, nice red blood came out. At this stage I must have passed out and woke

¹⁰⁷ Peltours. Originally Palestine and Egypt Lloyd Limited.

up in bed. It was then that I took a photo of David Susman being treated on the opposite bed. Rock splinters from ricocheting bullets must have hit me. I had not even felt it.

Whether I had passed out from seeing my blood stained foot, or from sheer exhaustion is now academic. After I had been treated, I sat on a bench outside and it was then I realized my rifle had been left on the hill. A sergeant came by and mobilised me to join his Besa medium machine gun group, about 100 meters from the aid post. I spent the rest of the day loading ammunition belts for them.

Returning home on a PAAC Dakota on New Years Eve, 1948, the aircraft developed engine problems, forcing us to land at Khartoum. We finally had to make another forced landing on a strip in the Northern Transvaal, and were sent to Johannesburg by train from Pietersberg. The only time I had entered a country without going through customs (see vignette of Joe Katzew).

Leslie Marcus of Cape Town

I regret that I had to fire and kill, but that is war. For years afterwards I used to wake up at night in terror, the delayed-action of the effects of the war. Yet I was very strong. I once picked up big Mike Isaacson and two others.

At Auja el Hafir the Egyptians were brave and gave us a tough fight. But the best Arab fighters were the Transjordanians.

In the desert I met Sylvia Sher, the nurse. She returned to South Africa and married Francois Krige, the artist, brother of Uys Krige, the Afrikaans poet. The commando men wore a red tab behind their badges and we were recognized by the people of Tel Aviv by this badge. Shopkeepers reduced prices for us, sometimes gave us things for nothing. We served as morale boosters.

Dr. Jack Medalie of Israel

I don't know the exact figures, but about ninety five per cent of the doctors under forty were Machalniks, because no other young doctors were available. A good number of my class at the University of the Witwatersrand and of the class before mine were among these under-forties. Sadly, only a few of us stayed. Had a suggestion of one of the senior South African physicians been accepted, more than twenty would have remained. The suggestion was to put the young doctors on 5-year specialist training, one year abroad. However, the powers-that-be, whoever they were, did not accept the suggestion and the fellows went back to South Africa or to other countries to get this training. Some great chaps were lost to the State.

Maurice Mendelowitz of Israel

I was a lone operator. I came as a radio engineer on August 6, 1948, and spent some two months at the Saron base, checking radios and doing repairs. Disliking Tel Aviv and tiring of the routine work, I applied for transfer to another theatre and was sent to kibbutz Ruchama, my job to maintain the telephone lines between the settlement, which was a strategic one, and the airfield at Ekron and to maintain other regional lines. The area was one of several Egyptians strongholds. I went out alone at night in a jeep, rifle at hand, checking the lines and repairing where necessary. I was never afraid. The night was my protector. The Arabs shunned the night.

I was transferred to Beersheba the day after it was captured. One of my first encounters was with Basil Levin whose unit was pulling up Arab mines and laying our own mines. My next transfer was to Sdom - in December. I spent a lot of time there floating on the Dead Sea reading a book.

Dr. Louis Miller Jerusalem

I had been in the Sixth South African Division as a psychiatrist from 1943 onwards and my ambulance commander was Lionel Meltzer. Before coming up north I had been psychiatrist to a Cape Colored unit.

I came to Palestine three times during World War 2, the first time with Lionel Meltzer to Jerusalem. My thoughts about Zionism began with this first visit and also through my medical orderly, Monty Berman who, with a few others, was planning a group to settle in the Yishuv.

A factor which made the South African contribution so extraordinary and so enviable, both during and after the war, was the fact that the South Africans were good in their human relations. This has been the great South African contribution to Israel generally, be it in running a hotel, the setting up of a business or the South African Zionist Federation's policy here. The mode in which the South Africans have related to their immigrants has been the envy and paradigm for the Americans and Canadians. You may say about the South Africans that human relationships are not set at a low price among them. It is not set below other values which are very important, like subsistence and family.

This has its roots in Lithuania, I have no doubt, but I am more certain of the South African origin because it is true of non-Jewish South Africans also. Paradoxically enough, it is not being fully expressed in relation to the less advantaged people in South Africa, but this will come.

I shall always remember the American Zionist leader who asked me what it was that we South Africans had that Americans hadn't. South African Jewry seems to have taken the good elements of their Jewish Lithuanian village life and have added to this the openness and frankness of the South African European culture.

Question: Did the concentration camp people who poured in 1948 bring particular psychiatric problems with them?

Dr. Miller: The young people went into the Army. Apart from exceptional cases, they integrated so rapidly and their longing to be here was so great, that there was no problem to speak of, so much so that they disappeared from sight into the matrix of the country. It was only years afterwards, after their discharge from the Army, that we became aware of what they had suffered (we knew intellectually, of course) and what they carried within themselves. Only then did we begin to appreciate what tremendous anxiety and depression they had to control and how they had to fight to recover from their loss of faith in human beings.

Much of the experience which I applied I had gained in the South African Army where we learned much about battle exhaustion and things related to it, morale, human relationships, group cohesion and so on, and we applied it here.

Col. Jack Monbaz of Israel, (former Israel Consul-General in South Africa)
(The first man to press for the writing of this book)

Machal played a big role in specialized technical services, especially in the Air Force, Tanks and Army Medical Services. In the Army South Africans were seldom above the rank of Major. But as a group they were the most reliable of the volunteer element and the integration of those who stayed was easier than that of other groups. Their discipline was good, and they were more idealistic and less argumentative. They made their presence felt.

Rona Baram (Moss Morris) of Israel

By the time I was 15, I knew I would make aliyah, knew I would bear a child in the land of Israel with Hebrew as his mother tongue. I grew up in a home that breathed Zionism. The

great Zionist leaders of the day like Sokolov, Brodetsky and Weizmann passed through our home.

From 1937 Habonim started a group called HeChalutz for people planning to make aliyah to a kibbutz, but the outbreak of WW II delayed our plans. By 1940 after completing four years towards a law degree I decided to switch to nursing which I felt would be more useful on a kibbutz. However, in 1945 when I decided to make aliyah, engineers and nurses were included in a special category of vital professions that precluded our leaving South Africa. Undeterred, and armed with a letter from a Durban senator to the then acting Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior, Jan Hofmeyer, I went to his office unannounced. Mr. Hofmeyer responded positively to my appeal to be allowed to go to Palestine to help the Jewish refugees who had survived the war and I left for Palestine on the cargo ship, Chopra.

Harold Osrin of Israel

The Dakota taking us to Israel had engine trouble and was delayed for four days at Entebbe. An elderly rabbi among the passengers recognized us for what we were, not Greeks as we had claimed, but young men on their way to Palestine. "It's written on your faces", he said. He proffered us sweets and goodies.

He emerged at the hotel's swimming pool wearing gatkies¹⁰⁸, debating within himself should he plunge or not. Chazak ve-Ematz¹⁰⁹ I encouraged him. The elderly gentleman was not prepared to be less brave than the men going to war. He squared his shoulders and dived...

The South African volunteers integrated better than those from other countries. They didn't give up so easily. Many stayed and some founded settlements, Moshav Habonim and Kfar Daniel for example. A number came back. The South Africans were popular. What they didn't have in chutzpa¹¹⁰, they learned from the Israelis and taught the Israelis a certain amount of organization.

Dr. Alan Price of Johannesburg

I left Johannesburg with a Betar-group in July 1948. We flew to Rome and from there sailed for Haifa on a small Greek boat named Dolores. On board were mainly refugees from Europe. I was the ship's doctor and during the voyage delivered a baby boy helped by fellow passenger South African Evelyn Bernstein.

In Israel I became the Battalion Medical officer of the 52nd Battalion of the Givati Brigade, a Brigade that fought in the bloody battles for Latrun. I joined them end of August and we were then poised to attack the Egyptian army which cut off the Negev from the rest of Israel. My function was to go with the units into battle. I had 40 chovshim (medical orderlies) who were attached to the companies. We participated in the fiercest battles in the vicinity of Kibbutz Negba. The bloodiest battles were around Irag-El-Manshiya, from where the former British Police in a Taggart fort controlled the road to the Negev. On October 17, the Givati Brigade received an order from Yigal Yadin commander in chief, to open the road to the Negev by attacking Beit Guvrin, Iraq el Suedan and Iraq-el-Manshiya and taking control of Beersheba.

The Givati Brigade together with the Yiftach Brigade and Chativat Hanegev accomplished the task by October 19, 1948 in operation called Yoav. Our battalion, the 52nd, took part in all the battles and destroyed the enemy positions in Chulikat which opened the road to the Negev and was consequently named "Habokim Harishonim" , (The First Penetrators).

In the Givati Brigade museum in the old police station near Negba the whole history of the Brigade is beautifully explained, and has a large photograph of the officers of our unit (I am

¹⁰⁸ Full-length underpants.

¹⁰⁹ Strength and Courage.

¹¹⁰ Impertinence.

proud to say that I am one of them). The legend below says - "The Conquerors of the Road to the Negev".

I remained in the unit which then besieged Faluja until it surrendered, and we were then allowed to go on to Gaza. I subsequently served in the Military hospital in Haifa which was called the Italian hospital. At the end of 1949 I returned to South Africa.

Zelda Ravid of London

In the heat of the moment, on the declaration of the State of Israel, my husband, Hymie, and I went to the Zionist Federation to offer our services. Hymie was a dentist and I was a nurse. Hymie had served in the S.A.M.C. in both Egypt and Italy. I had trained at the Johannesburg General Hospital as an S.R.N.

When Lionel Meltzer telephoned to say that he was arranging a medical team for Israel and that he had no nurse on his list, I had already reconsidered, as I had two young children (aged 4 and 1) to think of.

However, I felt that I could not refuse, so I left my children with my mother and husband. My mother, Esther Naomi Pincus, had lived in Jerusalem between the ages 7 and 12 years, and was an ardent Zionist. Hymie was not called: because of the many dentists from Europe, there was no call for additional dentists at that time.

Our team had to stop over at Tunis to take a flight to Rome and from there to Haifa landing on the 25th of June. I was stationed at the Djani military hospital in Jaffa. It had previously been a private Arab hospital.

At first, I lived in a pre-fab room on the Hospital grounds, but later we nurses were moved to an Arab house in Jaffa proper. I was saddened by the evidence of the previous residents' sudden departure e.g. the dregs of the last tea left cold, abandoned children's toys and torn letters. We were kept very busy as the Jerusalem road had just been opened and casualties from the siege were sent to our hospital. There were many amputees. I was well trained for this work. The only change since I had qualified was the use of antibiotics, but I soon learned the dosages.

I think it was very heartening for staff and patients that we had come from S. Africa to help. Then I was put on night theatre work. Dr. Moses, a survivor from Poland, operated throughout the nights and he had no anaesthetist. I had to pour chloroform over a primitive mask. During my training, I had spent a few months in the operating theatre but knew nothing about giving anaesthetics.

Hymie finally arrived on the 6th of October and operated a mobile dental clinic for the Northern Command over a period of many months.

In retrospect, I think that having come to Israel to help at such a crucial time was encouraging to the people threatened by invasion, and that I had left my children to do so, strengthened their feelings of hope for the future.

Joe Rosen of Johannesburg

My uniform during the entire war was a blue overall.

Danny Rosin of Israel

I shall not forget the bombing of El Arish one night. We got a torrid reception. Imagine a Dakota cruising at 130 M.P.H. over the place in these circumstances. But we came through and not a single Dakota was lost in the October operations.

A Dakota was lost in an accident from which fate saved me. I was to take a flight to Sdom, but the administrative officer intervened, saying I had done enough flying and that there was plenty of organizational work to do. Canadian, Wilfred Canter took my place. The other crew members were Canadian co-pilot Fred Stevenson, Canadian navigator Willy Fisher and British wireless operator Leon Lightman. The solitary passenger was an Israeli, Michael Wimers, widely known as "King of the Negev", an enterprising liaison man responsible for maintaining the supply lines and building the Negev airstrips. The plane exploded in mid-air after taking off from Tel Aviv. Smoky Simon sent a Rapide, to the site to identify what was left of the boys, a terrible loss for Israel...

Len Fitchett's death in the attack on the Iraq el Suedan fortress was another shocking blow. He was so utterly with us.

Louis Sack of Toronto

I arrived in Haifa on August 20, on MV "Kedmah" with hundreds of holocaust survivors. Other S. Africans on this voyage were Joseph Goldstein, his brother Nick, Bernard Green, Ralph Yodaiken (using the passport of Cecil Wolov), Morrie Ringer (using the passport of Bernard Firkser), Monty Celender and Benny Grusin (using the passports of Abraham Karpel and Harold S. Steckoll)¹¹¹, David Wolf, Eli Reef, Charles Berman, Lipa Segal and Sarah Segal.

I was assigned to the signals unit at 7th Brigade Headquarters as a jeep driver. I headed our convoy of the unit to Safed, the stretch from Tiberias being covered at night without lights to avoid detection. That drive up the mountain of winding curves and steep drops without any roadside barriers, was more hazardous than the four sleepless days and nights of operation Hiram which we were involved in later. In this operation our 7th and three other brigades, captured Meron, Jish (Gush Halav), Sasa, Tarshisha, liberating the whole of the upper Galilee to the Lebanese border.

I had some personal experiences with our Brigade commander, Canadian volunteer Ben Dunkelman including attendance at his wedding about one month after Operation Hiram, when I drove some brass to ceremonies at a number of Druze villages in the Western Galilee, to honour his marriage. The event lasted the whole day with meals from early morning to dinner. The tables were laden with English chocolates and Players cigarettes, masses of food and roasted lamb. Although Dunkelman and his bride, Yael, had been escorted to these ceremonies by the brigade's 79th Armoured Battalion, I was probably the only private to participate in the actual feast.

Ezra Sakinofsky of Cape Town

In the plane on which I, Philip Ozinsky, Hymie Kurgan, Bernard Friedland, Barry Buirski, Abe Wisenberg, Raymond Salmon and ten other volunteers left Palmietfontein on June 23, was a brigadier of the Royal Medical Corps going home to Britain. He came up to me and said: "I think I know where you are going and if I am right will you please give my best wishes to Mr. Ben Ami"¹¹².

I had seen service in Abyssinia and North Africa and had held rank. In Israel the Eighth Field Company of the Engineers Corps came under my charge at Beit Lid, which is near the junction of the two main highways, Tel Aviv-Haifa, Netanya-Tulkarm. Then we were transferred to Camp Dora near Netanya. Here a South African doctor, Bernard Appel, who subsequently became a Brigade doctor, arrived and became part of a small group which gathered in my bungalow for Hebrew tuition by a teacher who had taught at Herzliya. Others in the group were my sergeants, Ozinsky and Hymie Kurgan, and an English Jew.

¹¹¹ Their own passports had been given to the Irgun for use in the escape of six detainees from Gil Gil, Kenya on April 4th 1948 (see chapter 2 part 3).

¹¹² Mayor of Netanya

During this period I received instructions to take some of my men to an airfield some twenty kilometers north east of Netanya to construct a barbed wire fence in front of the placements on the eastern border of the field facing the Arab position. Dr. Appel insisted on coming with us. We spent most of the night on the job. Dr. Appel was my coffee carrier!

My unit was transferred to Jerusalem on Yom Kippur and that night I was given the ludicrous instruction to lay a minefield - ludicrous because nobody knew where the mines or detonators were.

We spent the next day locating both. We laid a record 360 anti-tank mines in a demilitarized zone - the first minefield laid by my unit. At three o'clock in the morning the job had been done, and I decided to send the main body of my men back to camp in our 5-ton truck. That truck was to be our one casualty. It had been parked outside an abandoned house. A shell exploded near it and a bit of shrapnel went through the radiator. Five seconds before this two of my sappers who had been sitting on the steps of the house, had gone inside. Two months later I became the only assistant Brigade Engineer in the Israel Army at that time...

Fred Sarif of Sydney, Australia

Our group of about 20 S. Africans landed at Haifa on the 7th of June 1948. Of these, Alec Cooper, Enoch Getz, Issy Robinson, Willie Steingold and I, together with Hyman Harber and Clive Centner who had landed the day before, were posted to the Alexandroni Brigade at camp Dora in Netanya.

There they formed an English speaking platoon of about 40 with Harber in command. I believe I was the youngest of the ten S. Africans in the group. My army number was 71670. Most of the others of the 40 were from England, one from Canada and the others from Holland, Denmark, Norway and Sweden.

Later in June until September we moved to Beit Lid, then to camp Yona opposite Tulkarm, and finally to the Faluja pocket in the Negev.

Other S. Africans in this platoon were David Duchon and Migdal Teperson, but they together with Clive Centner later transferred to other units.

Morris Smith of Israel

We are originally a family from Germiston. My sister (today Rachel Immerman, of Houghton), my brother, Dov Sela, and I all served in the War. During the initial training in South Africa I went on occasion to Bacher's Farm and on occasion to Saffer's Farm, near Germiston...I served right to the end of the war.

I wasn't in the battle that gave us Beersheba. We were told: "You stay here; there is going to be big action." Here, was Wadi Shenik where we guarded ammunition and other equipment. We came to Beersheba after the battle. The fellows were helping themselves to things in the shops -- later they were ordered to return all loot. The Israel Army wanted to be different from other armies.

Louis Shapiro of Israel

Cecil Wulfsohn came to my home in Haifa at midnight sometime late in 1948 and said, "West Air changes to Universal Airways from tomorrow. You're the agent."

Joe Shlain of Israel

Our plane from Rome to Haifa was fantastically overloaded. Georgie Jamieson and I stood all the way. The British were still in Haifa in those early days in June but the two sentries at the gate turned their backs on us to let us slip through.

Some time in August or September Elliot Katzenellenbogen and the late Syd Langbart and I joined an anti-tank unit. The significance is that at the end of the war a few of us from the unit formed the nucleus of Bet Chever, a smallholder's settlement, now called Kfar Daniel. I

stayed there twelve years. Freddy Salant is still there. Another founder member was Honi Rosenberg.

Smoky Simon of Israel

We came into a patchwork set-up. There was no question of men being given jobs for which they were considered suitable. Frankly I was conscious at the beginning of how ill-equipped I was for the job of Chief of Operations and its responsibilities. Whilst I had reasonable operational experience in the SAAF, I had not considered myself capable of staff work. I had never been trained for it. It was really a matter of making the best of the situation. One grew in one's work as one did it.

Cyril Steinberg of Johannesburg

I was appalled by the penury of the State-to-be. The Bonanza we flew in was the best aircraft they had, the most modern piece of equipment, this little thing. It was pathetic. We had thought we were coming to some sort of organization, that we would lead raids into enemy territory, things like that. What impressed me was the common saying, Yiheye tov, things will come right. We used to say, "But how can you meet this challenge? How can you take on Spitfires and invasion armies?" Yiheye tov.

In a leave period from Czechoslovakia, I went deeper into Europe and came across the Bricha. This was the network in Europe organizing the rescue of the survivors of the holocaust. It was a total movement of tens of thousands of people crossing frontiers and reaching transit camps near Mediterranean harbors. Here they waited for the immigrant ships to take them to Israel. On the night I had to get back across the border into Czechoslovakia - it was near the time for Operation Velvetta I and I was to navigate the mother ship - the German guard at the post would not let me through and wanted to make trouble for me. The Bricha came to my aid and planned my re-entry into Czechoslovakia. I was driven to a forest where a friendly German and his son got me across the border.

The spirit of comradeship among the Bricha people was great. They had no motive other than to help their fellow Jews. Wonderful dedicated people. One was meeting human nature at its best.

Ruth Stern nee Saretsky of Israel

A few months before the War of Liberation broke out in Israel, I received word in South Africa that a friend from Kibbutz Revivim in the Negev, Uri Weinhaber, had been killed in an ambush not far from the Kibbutz. That message changed my life. Before I had begun studying biochemistry and dietetics, I had been on a study course for Zionist youth leaders in Palestine, had first-aid training and spoke Hebrew. I decided then and there to volunteer as a nurse in Israel. I was stationed at Tel Litwinsky Hospital (now Tel Hashomer). We roomed in old barracks left behind by the British. At first, there were hardly enough blankets, let alone sheets, to cover the patients. Even sterilization facilities were very primitive. The entire hospital was under equipped, but the spirit of everyone overcame all the drawbacks.

One day Phyllis Fisch and another senior South African sister appeared, attired in starched white uniforms including the white headress of their rank and creating a hush of awe. Most of us were rather slipshod in comparison. Even the most meticulous of us could not match the two, who were quite unaware of the sensation they aroused. It was a standing joke that that when Phyllis Fisch came into a ward, everyone came to attention, even patients in bed. The two set examples that we followed, doing the most menial tasks with the same efficiency as their highly skilled nursing.

One day Leah, one of the locally born nurses who headed our ward, was called to identify the body of her husband. His unit had been captured, killed and mutilated by the Syrians. She said, "Ruth, please come with me." I could not refuse. For me, Leah had always typified

the strength of the nurses and the young fighting "sabara" women. Now suddenly she leaned on me, a volunteer, inexperienced in the tough cruel world of war. I cannot describe what we saw.

One night I came on night duty, and noticed a new patient, a handsome man, whom I was told was one of the officers of the Negev Brigade, "Desert Rats", as they called these fighters in the Negev. To my surprise he was reading Pierre van Paassen's *The Forgotten Ally*. A patient reading English! That piqued my interest. "Hello", he smiled. "Hello", I said. His name was Theodore Herzl Ben-Amar (changed to Hebrew from Blumenfeld). His men had opened the way to Eilat. He was suffering from exposure: nothing serious.

That night he came into the nurses' room and I told him patients were not allowed there. "Yes, I know", he replied, then sat down and started questioning me about myself. The ward doctor entered and as they were family friends, Teddy wasn't rebuked for disobedience.

He was discharged from hospital after two days. We were married a month later.

Marcia Silpert (Wolman) of Connecticut

The girls I came with were Shula Becker, Reeve Pitluk and Hettie Echilewitz.

The Athens Ballet Corps, which had been touring S. Africa, was on our flight from Palmietfontein, and our air hostess was a lovely Greek girl. Count Bernadotte was murdered on the 17th of September. We sailed shortly afterward, all of us under assumed names, on the vessel, "Tetti". I believe it was formerly an American cruise ship. The well-known journalist Colin Legum and his wife were first class passengers on that voyage, and while we were starving, I'm sure they were served the delicious home-baked Greek bread that we savoured at the galley entrance.

I remember one poor girl from North Africa who had only one arm. The weather was terrible and while sea sick, having to support herself on the wall of a cabin, with the one arm trying to keep her skirt from blowing in the fierce wind. The stench in the hold was terrible; kids were allowed to relieve themselves on the deck. There were a few nice chaps from Morocco on board, idealists like us. One of them called Clement turned up in Jaffa to join our meteorological course.

Sydney Suttner of Johannesburg

The Dakota that brought our group into Israel was seatless, being full of arms. In Israel we were sent to a camp full of DPs whose eyes stayed on our suitcases and luggage. "Capitalists from America", they said, enviously or bitterly, I am not sure, but embarrassing us not a little...

At Sarafand a number of Arab POWs worked in the camp. A Romanian, Reuben, used to have long talks with them. He liked them. I remember one day one of the Arabs came running to give him the Sten gun he had forgotten to take with him.

Zan Swartzberg, of Bethlehem O.F.S.

One plane bought by the Zionist Federation, an Avro Anson, never got beyond Nairobi airfield.

This is the story: Some time in the pre-partition period, Mendie Vons and I, then working at Rand Radio in Johannesburg, joined a long queue at the Zionist Federation to be interviewed by Phil Zuckerman. Mendie, ex-SAAF, was a qualified radio operator and gunner. I had been too young for World War 2 but was a licensed radio ham. Zuckerman arranged that I should go to the Witwatersrand Technical College at the Federation's expense for a course. I went to afternoon classes and passed well but the snag was that to get the final PMG certificate

for air radio one had to have 15 hours flying time at least. Zuckerman told me he'd organize the 15 hours for me. A few days later (we're now in July 1948) Zuckerman summoned Vons and me. An Avro Anson which the Fed had just bought was at Wonderboom airfield and he wanted us to go out there to meet the pilot, test the plane, report on it, and then to fly it to Israel.

Wonderboom was then a primitive airfield. There we met Tittlestad, an ex-RAF pilot. The half-hour test flight was one of the most terrifying experiences of my life. The plane was early 1930 vintage and behaved like the frail, battered thing it was. There were tears in its fabric, the wind blew through it like a tornado and the noise and vibration shook the guts out of us. But she had an airworthiness certificate from the Civil Aviation Board. Perhaps the effects were exaggerated for me, since this was my first air flight. The radio equipment was not working and there were many other obvious defects. We reported back to Zuckerman who arranged for mechanics to go to the airfield to put right what was wrong. Thereafter Mendie Vons and I went out every morning to meet up with Tittlestad for more tests. We also pored over maps and decided to fly over the west coast of Africa. What worried us was a long hop over the Sahara. Tittlestad had doubts about the idea of installing long-range tanks. It meant applying for a fresh airworthiness certificate and he feared the result.

We went ahead all the same. Mechanics installed two 44 gallon drums in the fuselage - a dangerous thing, but that's how it was. Later there was a new fear, that the weight of the drums added to that of a three-man crew, could make the flight dangerous. It was decided that Tittlestad and Vons would fly the plane to Israel and that my 15-hour flying time would be organized another way.

Tittlestad and Vons flew off. Some little time later, when I visited Zuckerman, he showed me a telegram he had received from Vons reporting the stranding of the plane in Nairobi. Soon after I received a long letter from Mendie recounting all the trouble he and Tittlestad had encountered on the way. The plane had a small generator with a propeller fitted on the outside of the craft. The propeller turned the generator. One of the troubles was that generator and there were others. The radio packed up. The men had spent a lot of money in Salisbury getting the plane repaired and had then taken off again. But the repairs were patchwork and (said Mendie's letter) engine trouble continued. The two were lucky to make Nairobi where they were now stuck and running out of funds.

Zuckerman called me and said: "We're going to put you on a PAAC DC-3 as a supernumerary radio operator so that you can get your 15 hours. When you reach Nairobi dig out Vons and Tittlestad, give them the funds they need and send me a report. Report the situation also to Israel Air Force." Our Dakota, ZSB RW, left Palmietfontein early in the morning of August 10th, Captain Alf Lindsay, carrying 22 volunteers.

Vons and Tittlestad had been stuck in Nairobi for three weeks when we arrived. Not that Mendie had been idle. He was a tall, dashing extrovert, (a hero to me) who made friends easily and was a wonderful friend. He had met up with influential people, had gone wild game hunting and was the idol of the girls.

I went out to the airfield with him and confirmed what he had reported, that the plane was unserviceable, a write-off. It was parked on the edge of the field and hyenas were ripping the fuselage to pieces. I passed on Zuckerman's instructions to Mendie and Tittlestad to return to South Africa.

We Jews owe a debt to PAAC's pilots, Nobby Clark, Alf Lindsay, Syd Excell, and their non-Jewish crews. They served us beyond the call of duty. They flew night and day. The practice was to leave the Central African airfields at sunrise, but the crews were up long before that to attend to baggage and customs. By the time the men reached the next airfield at the end of the day, they were dead beat. In the particular flight in which I was involved, the absence of direction-finders caused us twice to overfly our destination. Radio communication, given the

background noise, was very difficult and I was lucky when I managed to get a message through to the next airfield of our expected time of arrival.

One of the surprises for me was to meet Joe Friedman at the hotel in Khartoum. He was returning in a home-bound PAAC plane. Joe had worked at Rand Radio with Mendie Vons and me, but had left for Israel months earlier.

He was not himself. That terrible spiral dive over Kuneitra in the Dakota with Cyril Katz and Arthur Cooper had left its mark on him. At El Adem we said our destination was Rome but after an hour's flight we changed direction for Israel, reaching Haifa on August 14. Four days later we were Europe-bound. In a switch of planes in Europe, I came back to Haifa twice with South African volunteers picked up in Rome. I made several flights with PAAC in Europe, once landing in London and once in Prague.

Finally back in South Africa, I presented my log book (200 hours flying time) to the PMG and my license as an air radio operator was confirmed.

My next flight up was as a member of a volunteer group. Our DC-3 reached Haifa some time in September. With the help of Mendie Vons, then with Air Transport Command, I was posted to Ramat David and took the place in a Flying Fortress crew of Joe Behr of Krugersdorp. The period was one of truce and we had intensive air gunnery practice.

My bleeding was over El Arish. We did three or four bombing raids a day. The flak was intense. Our navigator-bombardier was Syd Kentridge of Cape Town. We had in our crew a young Dane, Chris Jurgen Christensen, a hired professional, who used to arm our bombs just before our getting over target. Several times we had "hang-ups", meaning that when our navigator bombardier pulled the trigger, the bombs would not drop. Jurgen would kick away at these recalcitrants and when he had no luck he would call us over and we would all hang from the spars like trapeze artists and join him in the kicking until the bombs dropped.

I stayed on with the IAF until November 1949, becoming one of a group instructing young Israelis in radio telegraphy. At 21, I believe I was the youngest Machalnik to serve in the air with the IAF. Between 1953-1955 I had a rich adventure period abroad, mainly in the United States. The friends I had made in Machal proved wonderfully kind and helpful. I worked for a time in a humble capacity for the Israeli Purchasing Commission in New York, and later joined an Israeli ship which took on four torpedo boats in France. In a period in London I stayed with Butch Boettger. Machal opened doors everywhere for me.

Louis Taitz, Present address unknown, Formerly Springs, Transvaal

On December 2, 1948, three of us, Sam Levin, of England, Cliff Powers, an Australian, and I, left Haifa for Cyprus. On the plane were South African volunteers returning home to register for re-entry to University. We three were detained by the airport authorities, but since we were all British subjects they had to let us go.

Our job was to contact an agent known as Ambrose who would put us in touch with a certain party willing to sell aircraft parts, particularly parts for P-51 Mustangs. We made daily visits to a certain scrap dealer and in this way dismantled two P-51 aircraft which we were to ship to a fictitious South African scrap company. After twelve days I had to leave because I had some top secret papers for Israeli Intelligence.

I left Limassol on board a cargo vessel on December 14. I had a first class cabin and sat at table with UN officials who kept asking me questions. Only when the vessel reached Tel Aviv did I learn that the ship's "cargo" were detainees from Cyprus whom the British were allowing out on quota from the camps.

We had one interesting experience in Nicosia. We asked a taxi driver to take us to a snooker club and he dropped us at a British Officer's Club, where the club steward asked us to sign

the Visitors' Book. We signed Colonel so and so, Lord so and so...That night we received invitations to a civil service ball, but we couldn't take the embarrassing questions and left early.

David Teperson of Israel

After Abu Aguella we were dead tired; we had always been on the move. We went back to Beersheba, had a little rest and then they said, "We're going to take Rafah. In this action we received support from an artillery unit and it was then that I met Melville Malkin for the first time. I lost my jeep on a mine. When the action against Rafah was interrupted by a truce we returned to Tel Nof.

About 70% of the Jeep crews and about 50% of the armoured car crews in the 9th Battalion of the Negev Brigade were Machalniks including about 25 South Africans. Towards the end of February 1949, the battalion moved from Tel Nof to Beersheba and then, cutting across the middle of the Negev desert, we advanced southwards towards Eilat. To enable us to receive supplies and reinforcements for the planned attack on Eilat, the Jeep Company cleared rocks and stones from a flat area in the desert so as to create a makeshift landing strip for Dakotas. Then, advancing through Egyptian territory, the battalion moved on to Eilat, to find that the Jordanian garrison, had retreated to Aqaba. We took possession of Eilat six hours before the Golani Brigade arrived via the Jordanian border.

After Eilat, we returned to Tel Nof and I continued to participate in routine patrols across the desert until my discharge in July 1949. I joined the Moshav Habonim group in September 1949 while it was on hachshara for two months at kibbutz Kfar Blum. I was the first of the Moshav Habonim bachelors to get married.

I have since served in all of Israel's wars, often finding myself in places which I first came to know in 1948.

Del Webb of Cape Town

Duval and I took a taxi to the Tel Aviv airport from the Gat Rimon hotel. At the airport gate, the guard refused us entry as our papers "were not in order." We gained entry by walking along the perimeter fence until we came to a gap wide enough to crawl through. Once in, we had to refuel the aircraft ourselves and only managed to recruit enough men to load the home-made bombs by offering to let them come on the raid to throw out the bombs. We had to promise, further, that they could bring their girl friends on any subsequent raid!

The mission was successful. We hit either an ammunition or petrol dump with one of the two 100 kg bombs we carried. It was on this raid that Duval uttered, or rather shouted, the greatest wisecrack of the war. We were under heavy anti-aircraft fire from a number of Bofors guns. As the tracer shells whipped past our cockpit windows, he took the butt of a cigarette from his lips and growled loudly - "Sheer bloody anti-Semitism!"

The State could not have survived its first weeks and months without the initial success of small, almost medieval military actions fought by tiny groups of dedicated, desperate men and women. They bore the brunt of the first Arab onslaughts on five fronts. They were, to a large extent, untrained and equipped with laughably inadequate weapons.

Practically the only armament available consisted of locally-made Sten guns; home-made bombs (some manufactured in Petach Tikvah backyards) and a few trench mortars and light artillery pieces (begged, "Borrowed" or bought from the departing British Army).

In some-cases, the situation was so desperate that Palmach units were sent to capture heavy artillery pieces, complete with ammunition, on the Egyptian front and these same weapons were in action within hours, on the Iraq front.

It is evident that the State of Israel has survived through the courage and dedication of its people, a people to whom surrender is unthinkable. It is also evident that these attributes are no longer sufficient to ensure survival. If a hostile (or even neutral) regime should take over in Washington, that would be the end of the road for Israel, but, thank God, not for the Jews.

Ezer Weizman, of Israel, (a Former O.C. of the IAF)

The South Africans of the Fighter Squadron were quiet men. With the exception of Arnie Ruch, outward-going and witty, the men from South Africa had an inner reserve that contrasted with the Americans. This is not a value judgment in favour of the South Africans - just an observation on two different types of men - one vivid, colorful and audible, the other soft-voiced, less spontaneous, more reflective. Eddie Cohen, Leslie Bloch, Syd Cohen, Jack Cohen and the others were like this...

The essence of Syd Cohen was skill joined to unflappability and modesty. I have never known a man so truly humble. It was easy to absorb from him. You left his briefing and debriefing sessions enlarged. We few Israelis of the fighter squadron came out of World War 2 without combat experience. We were tail-enders. I learned more than the skills of a fighter pilot from Syd. I was flying with him over El Arish when his Spitfire was hit. I called him on the radio. His imperturbability was impressive, an education. (Later to become President of the State of Israel).

Joe Woolf of Israel

I arrived in Israel with a group of Betar volunteers and came across many exceptional men in the infantry and armoured units. Many South Africans stand out in my memory, as do some outstanding Israelis and volunteers from other countries.

Canadian, Hank Meyerowitz for example could have come straight from a Damon Runyan novel. One could write a whole book about him. He was in his late 30's, with very thick spectacles - he had memorised the chart when submitting to the army eye test. I recall clearly while I was digging in during our attack on Tamra with my partner Benny Hershberg (killed later in this battle), under fierce Bren gun fire from the Arab counterattack, Meyerowitz would stand up every now and then and shout in Yiddish "a Yid ken geharget veren do" (A Jew can get killed here). He also put out a newsletter - the Gazoz Gazette. When we were in camp it would appear on paper on the notice board. When in the field he would write it on toilet paper and see that it was delivered to all the dugouts in our platoon. The platoon runner would do the deliveries for him even when under sniper fire. One of the runners was a Jew from Bombay, fondly nicknamed "Ghandi". Another runner, a 17 year old Holocaust survivor, was quite deaf and often was unable to hear the bullets flying around him. Disappointed at having not being accepted by the Palmach he carried the nickname, "Palmach". He now lives in Chile.

One of our chaps, Harry Klass, had a large nose. Meyerowitz would come up to him and say "Give us a light - oh I'm sorry it's your nose, I thought you were smoking a cigar". Sometimes he would look at me and say, "Gee, you're looking well, Joe. When are they going to bury you?" When I visited him in Winnipeg in 1952, he had a Fox Terrier whom he had named Joe in my honour.

Amusing episodes:

I was not born in S. Africa and had not yet been naturalized as a S. African citizen. I was not entitled to a passport but carried an "emergency travel document". In those days the age of consent was 21. I was not quite twenty and required parents' permission to apply for such a document. I forged my own letter of permission and was sent to a Jewish barber on Main St. in Johannesburg who was also a Commissioner of Oaths. Upon approaching him with my document, he left his customer and turned to me exclaiming in Yiddish "Du vorst zu Palestina? Goot, Goot!" Then without a glance at the document, stamped and signed it with a flourish. My parents were not happy about it but did not object.

As an alien, I had to report any movements – even changes of address to the CID aliens' branch which was also in Main St. almost opposite the barber. I approached the detective sergeant who gave me a form to complete on which I stated I was travelling to Europe for several months for educational purposes. Everything in those days was top secret. On my return from Israel, the same detective sergeant was on duty. He looked me up and down and exclaimed in his strong Afrikaans accent, "So the Arabs didn't get you, hey?"

Another sidelight: many years after the war, in 1999, while searching through Lithuanian archives. I came across documents relating to Solly Genkind, a volunteer from Europe in our "B" Company, a survivor of the Kovno ghetto and the Dachau Labour camp. I learned that his maternal family Strom originated from the "stetl" of my birth, Seta in central Lithuania, and that we were related by marriage, through both of my parent's families. He eventually adopted the Hebrew family name Ganor and now lives in Herzliya Pituah.

Also in 1999, I discovered that another "B" Company comrade, S. African Solly Taback and I share historical roots, his mother, nee Rezz originates from my stetl. Two others of the 800 were also from my stetl, birth place of Sydney Levy and home town of Hymie Schachman's family.

On a military note:

Spring 1949 saw the reorganisation of the IDF. The 7th and 8th were amalgamated into one powerful armoured brigade to be called the 7th. By March, many Machal of our company had left, some S. Africans returning to complete their university studies, others plus many English speaking comrades were arranging to settle in Israel. This left only one platoon of our company which was absorbed into the ex-Etzel "A" company. During this period a new offensive plan was ready, to advance to the Jordan River. "A" Company was attached to one of the battalions of Givati and sent to Kfar Saba to participate in this action.

Our company's mission was to attack and take Kalkilya. Our Sabra platoon commander Aharoni Landman, had just been promoted to captain, therefore we were given the honour to be the point platoon in the attack. Some "*honour*" to be the first casualties!

By then we were experienced, well armed and trained. The whole operation was to be supported by artillery, armour, and the air force. I was given a special squad, armed with two Projectile Infantry Anti-Tank weapons (P.I.A.T.s) each manned by highly experienced WWII veterans, one - Sam Fagen, a Canadian, and the other Herbert Tarnapol, an American. Both had held rank in WWII and either could have handled the squad better than I but they refused any rank. Just having them, as part of the group increased my confidence. In addition I was to have two light machine guns and a number of riflemen.

The plan was, while the rest of the (more than) full strength platoon (for a change), attacked Kalkilya, my unit was to rush in and take position on an adjoining road to prevent any Jordanian armour from breaking through. However, at the last moment the operation was cancelled for political reasons, I believe. In subsequent discussions with other Machalniks, I learned that many units had been in positions to attack in all areas of the West Bank.

I often wonder, as do many others, how different history might have been had we reached the Jordan River then.

Other South Africans still with the platoon at Kfar Saba were Dave Brenner, Kenny Danker, Frank Fisher, Zelig Genn, Martin Kahn, Mo Katz, Harry Klass, Simon Novikow, Mike Snipper, Solly Taback, Ian Walters and Mendel Cohen

Cecil Wulfohn of Rustenburg

The Civil Aviation authorities in Pretoria summoned me because the Egyptians had complained that South African civil aviation Dakotas had been used in Israel for military purposes. The complaint concerned ZS-DAH and ZS-BCJ. Colonel Blamine instructed me to get them out of the country. I flew off on the next plane to Israel.

My plan was to fly ZS-DAH to Cyprus to get its log book stamped to show general activity, not war. I arrived at Ramat David with Norman Isaacs and Simmy Waks of Potchefstroom. Ernest Esakof who had been on duty for twelve hours at Operations, had just handed over control to Tim Michel, navigator and bombardier, newly arrived from South Africa. Michel had not been briefed on my purpose.

I was slowly taxiing the plane, ZS-BCJ, when a jeep blocked my path to stop the "theft" of the plane. The shouting between people in the Jeep and plane went like this:

Jeep: Who gave you permission to take this DAK?
Myself: I have permission.
Jeep: You haven't.
Myself: I'll taxi back.
Jeep: No, follow the jeep.
Myself: No, One of you come aboard. That's proof I won't take off.

One of the people in the Jeep, an American, came in, the runway was clear and tempting. I opened the throttle and sailed off, the American with me. "Now get out the log book", I said to Isaacs. Isaacs had left it at the Park Hotel, Tel Aviv. I changed course. There was no point in going to Cyprus without it. At Sde Dov airfield soldiers armed with Sten guns were waiting for us.

We were under arrest for six hours before the machinery of Government completed the grind for our release. Six or seven weeks later I inquired about ZS-DAH. "The plane crashed at Ekron two nights ago", Dov Judah told me at IAF headquarters. I wanted to see the wreckage which was, in fact, the remains of a Dakota which had burst into flames in mid-air. At the time Duval and Webb were resting for forty eight hours in Cyprus. The pilot of the plane was a Canadian volunteer Wilf Canter. He and his crew, comprising one British and two Canadian volunteers, were killed, as was the single passenger, army liaison officer Michael Wimers, known as King of the Negev.

The engine number of the wrecked plane had been obliterated. Still, I knew it was not ZS-DAH. "How can you say that?" Judah asked, naturally distressed to have lost the West Air plane. "The electrical system of this plane is twenty four volts. Our aircraft are all twelve volt. And this globe (I was holding one that had miraculously remained intact) is twenty four volts."

Louis Pincus, who had been one of the leaders of the Zionist Socialists in South Africa, worked for the Ministry of Transport in his first months in Israel in 1948. On occasion I had need for his services, for example, to find someone who would do Hebrew translations of West Air documents required by the Ministry. Becoming involved in the work connected with West Air and settling deeper in his job, Pincus acquired a mastery of airline detail... not a year later, he became the first Director of El Al...

An interesting thing about the Dakotas: When I bought them in 1948, I was aware that the International Civil Aviation Organization had set a life limit on all Daks for 1952. But there was no experience to say they had to finish in 1952 and it is a fact that today (our interview was October 1974), the Daks are still in use all over the world.

I want to tell you that Universal Airways was a financially successful undertaking. We made money by virtue of the fact that I allowed for a very high sum in depreciation in my costing. It turned out that we didn't need the high sum. I put it to Herbert Cranko and other members of the Board in 1949 that if we intended to carry on with the scheme, we had to get Skymasters. The Board included four non-Jewish businessmen, Len Beyers, Carl Retief, a stockbroker, C.C. Kriel and Moolman. We tried to get permits from Import Control but they were not available. There was a terrific shortage of foreign currency in South Africa at the time

We couldn't get the permits, so I said to Cranko, "Look, we're fighting a losing battle. Let's pack up and give the equipment to El Al." And this is what we did.

Had we got the permits, we would have been today in South Africa as strong a force in civil aviation as UTA was as a second line in France. We had the backing and there was no difficulty about finance. I was on El Al's first flight down south. I had flown up to Israel to arrange good reception at all the points on the route and landing rights. El Al's first Skymaster landed at Palmietfontein.

In its operations Universal Airways was very reliable: only one forced landing. This was at Kosti in the Sudan, a couple of hundred miles south of Khartoum. The Dakota lost an engine. Harry Creed, the pilot, managed a successful forced landing. Among the passengers was Anna Franks, one of our leading women Zionists. At that stage there was no problem in overflying the southern portion of Egypt, transiting through Wadi Halfa, Khartoum, Tabor, and Malaka. In fact after the war we crossed the Red Sea and entered Israel at a point between Eilat and Aqaba. There was no interference whatever from the Sudanese, Egyptians or Jordanians. This came when El Al started to fly. When we took off from Wadi Halfa we never said where we were going, but they knew. Passengers disembarked at Wadi Halfa for breakfast at the airport restaurant.

Yigal Yadin, Acting Chief of Staff during the War

One of the saddest and most serious clashes I had with Ben Gurion was in the realm of strategy over the battle of Latrun. It all really concerned the problem of Jerusalem, on the one hand, and on the other his lack of understanding of actual military tactics.

Jerusalem was under siege and in Jerusalem at that time the civilian leaders - Dov Joseph and the others - bombarded Ben Gurion who was in Tel Aviv with desperate messages that Jerusalem would not hold. And Ben Gurion, of course, like everybody else - but even more so in view of his responsibility was afraid that if Jerusalem fell, then the whole thing was gone. And the key to Jerusalem at that time, of course, was the road to Jerusalem. And the key to the road of Jerusalem was Latrun. So he issued an order to the General Staff that we had to take Latrun by all means and as quickly as possible.

The dispute centered mainly on the fact that we had no forces available for the operation. Our main forces were tied up with the Egyptians in the south, whom, at that time, I considered the greatest threat, and with the Syrians. So we had to create new forces. And these forces were not trained yet. There is the by-now very famous Seventh Armoured Brigade, which had just been formed with new immigrants straight out of the immigrants' camps. And the time-table which Ben Gurion set meant a direct tactical assault on Latrun. I thought such an assault would fail because the Arab Legion was there and knew we were coming. And we failed at Latrun once and twice and thrice - only in my opinion because Ben Gurion had insisted that we attack immediately, and immediately meant direct assault, with no surprise element whatever in terms of time or topography or tactics.

This was one of the great quarrels I had with Ben Gurion. Of course I knew one thing, I either carried out his commands and decisions, or, as happened several times, I submitted my resignation. Of course, except for the final one, all these resignations were patched up afterwards. Ben Gurion has since contended - and he may be right from his point of view, or may be proven right by history - that it is true we failed, but our attacks on Latrun diverted some forces of the Arab Legion from Jerusalem, and therefore we achieved at least that much. I cannot say he is not right on that, but I can say that this was not the object of the operation.

We had another clash over Jerusalem. I think that never in the history of warfare - modern warfare in any case - did a Prime Minister and his Acting Chief of Staff invest so much time and anger as we did arguing about what to do with two 65-millimeter guns of 1870 vintage. When we got our first four 65 mm 'Napoleons', these battles of Latrun were going from bad to

worse. At the same time, the Syrians nearly penetrated Degania; in fact, one tank did penetrate later. And I was afraid that if we lost Kibbutz Degania and the Galilee, it would be a terrible blow to our whole strategy. And I simply knew - maybe because I was born in Jerusalem, maybe because I knew Jerusalem topographically and I grew up in the Haganah of Jerusalem - that it would not be easy for the Legion to capture Jerusalem. And I wanted to bring up the guns against the Syrians, while Ben Gurion insisted that they should go to Jerusalem. And I remember that we argued about this for hours. I couldn't convince him, and of course, he couldn't convince me. But he hadn't given me an order - yet.

In the end we compromised. He agreed that we should send two guns to the North for only twenty four hours, after which they would be promptly sent back to Jerusalem. And I personally think that the guns which were sent to Degania saved the day. They came in the nick of time, bombarded the shocked Syrians, who "knew" we had no guns. These guns were without sights, but the first shells to land in Lake Kinneret sent the Syrians stampeding wildly away¹¹³.

Philip Zuckerman of Israel

I was an organizing secretary of the South African Zionist Youth Council in 1948 and I had a lot to do with the volunteers after they signed up. There were two youngsters raring to go, although circumstances were against them: Charles Mandelstam with his high blood pressure was one of them. The other one bluffed me all the way. His army discharge papers were his father's. A day before he was due to leave, his mother came to me and said, "My conscience won't allow it. The boy has never served in an Army. I don't mind if he goes, but I have to tell you the truth. He is under age."

I was in two minds: Should I throw him out or not. The kid pestered me. He even once came in with a revolver that put me off even more. I consulted with Yoel Palgi, who said "If a man is that keen, send him." We sent him putting him in charge of an air mechanic. I am told he did a good job.¹¹⁴

I came over to Israel in August when the volunteering diminished. The heavy months were May to August. In Israel I became deputy in charge of Air Force Machal. I served later on the Machal Release Board.

¹¹³ Jerusalem Post, October 8, 1971

¹¹⁴ Will the said youngster of 1948 please announce himself! - Zuckerman has forgotten his name.

Appendix A

Les Bloch's burial place found after 48 years



By Mavis Wolff

South African Machal pilot Lionel (Les) Morris Bloch disappeared on July 10th 1948 in the battle for control of the bridge near Mishmar Hayarden in the Galilee, but it was not until 1994 that his body was located, to close 46 years of anxious speculation by family members and friends.

My cousin Les and I were always very close and I recall that during his service in the Middle East in World War II, he spent a week's leave in Palestine. Coming from a Zionist family, this first visit made a tremendous impression on him. When the war of Independence broke out and Israel desperately needed pilots, he felt he had to go. I can still clearly remember us talking it over on the veranda. In the end I said: "Are we going to ask someone else's son to do the job for us?" So perhaps I am responsible in some way for his death.

What happened that fateful day is still very much a matter of conjecture. Maurice Mann, who now lives in the UK, was the pilot of the plane that went out with Bloch. The two were confronted by two enemy planes. Says Maurice:

"I gave instruction I'll take this one, you take the other. You start close together but you are flying at about 300 MPH and you concentrate on what you're doing. I fired at the one Harvard and saw him go down. Then I looked to see where my number 2 was. We were over, what was then, the Syrian border and I couldn't see him. Before long I realised that because of fuel limitations he couldn't still be airborne".

"It is possible that a mechanical twist of fate caused Bloch to go down", says Mann:

"He was flying one of the Czech-built Messerschmitt 109's in which the gun was synchronised to fire between the gaps in the propeller blades. Sometimes the Czech workmanship was not as accurate as the German designers meant it to be. Planes often came back with chips out of the propeller, and Bloch could have shot his own propeller off. On the other hand he may simply have run out of fuel and been forced to crash-land".

Fellow pilot, Syd Cohen, says that the following day he searched over Lake Tiberias and the Hula swamp in the hope of finding the wreckage of Bloch's plane. Much later it was discovered that the wreck had been found in Syria and that the plane and pilot had been taken to Damascus. Despite repeated enquiries by Les's brother, the late Bernie Bloch, who came on aliyah in 1962 and lived in Haifa, no definitive information could be obtained about Les' fate until 1994 when his body was traced to an unknown soldier's grave in a military cemetery in Nachlat Yitzhak. This discovery resulted from a review by the IDF of the histories of the various battles of 1948, in particular the battle for Beit Affa and the painstaking work of Yerach Paron, a researcher and historian for the Ministry of Defence office dealing with Commemoration of the Fallen, which searches for fallen and missing soldiers of all the wars.

His research led to the discovery of a discrepancy in the number of fallen of Beit Affa known to be buried in Nachalat Yitzhak and the number of gravestones in the section of the cemetery. Parons research in the archives of the Tel Aviv Hevra Kadisha revealed that one of the bodies buried in the in the Beit Affa section had in fact been returned from Syria in October 1949. The grave had been marked "Unknown Soldier" because of lack of positive identification and confusion as the Syrians had returned the body under the name Chaim Faizal.

Appendix A

The name Chaim Faizal is associated with our grandfather Chaim Sack who always called cousin Cecil, "Fischel". We think that this may have given Les the idea of using a false name which would be recognised by the family so that we would realise he was in captivity. Les probably gave a false name for security reasons. Of the two bodies returned by the Syrians in October 1949, one was that of Zeev Stahl, while the other had been given two names which came with documents of the Red Cross, Chaim Faizal and Daniel Gutman.

As Gutman's body was traced to a cemetery in Degania, the other had to be that of Chaim Faizal, (Les Bloch). Paron is 100 percent certain that Bloch lies in the remaining grave.

On July 22, 1994, Les' gravestone was unveiled in a moving ceremony, in the presence of State President Ezer Weizman, (a 1948 comrade in arms of the late Les in Squadron 101).

Also present were Ronnie Shlomi, then Officer Commanding Squadron 101, senior representatives of the Israeli Defence Force, the heads of the Machal Veterans Association and many of Bloch's air force comrades including Dr. Syd Cohen, "Smoky" Simon and Boris Senior. Family flew in from abroad and Bloch's brother Willie came from South Africa to attend the event.

Said Willie: "I always prayed that I would live to say Kaddish over Les' grave".

Other family members expressed relief that the years of unhappy speculation have been brought to an end.

President Weizman paid a stirring tribute to the South African "Machal" pilots, who, with their combat experience in World War 2, made a contribution to the fledgling Israeli air force way beyond their numbers.

Thanks for information used in this report are due to Dr. Syd Cohen, ex 101 Squadron who made his diary available, to Eli Eyal, archivist and to Yerach Paron, researcher and historian, Ministry of Defence.

"Les, if your spirit is hovering over us, know that to live in the hearts of those who loved you is not to die".

My friendship with Leslie Bloch,

My friendship with Les Bloch spanned just nine years, but in that time I got to know him as a good friend and a fine person. We met in 1939 as out-of-town engineering students at the University of Witwatersrand. Les studied chemical engineering and I civil engineering. On graduating in 1943, Les joined the SAAF and I, the Special Signals Services (radar). We then lost contact with each other until 1948 in Machal. Bat Ami and I were billeted in a room at the Central Hotel, conveniently situated opposite Air Force HQ that became a meeting place and unofficial clearing house for many South African Machal. Les was one of them. Whenever he went off on a mission, he would deposit his bag and picturesque hat with us and then call in to collect them on his return. Until the day in July 1948, when he did not come back. Bat Ami kept his things for a long time in the vain hope that perhaps he would return. Eventually she handed them over to Les' cousin, June Medalie, who took them back to South Africa. Jack and June Medalie, to this day our best friends, often talked about Les and wondered about his fate. Now that the body has been identified and the tombstone unveiled, the chapter is finally closed.

Reuben Joffe, Savyon

APPENDIX B Personnel

The following lists have been compiled by collating names which appear in several documents including records of the Machal Association, army museums, kibbutzim, ships' passenger manifests and responses to a widely distributed questionnaire. In addition, many of the names were checked by personal telephone calls to the persons concerned or to surviving relatives. While every effort has been made to achieve accuracy, spelling differences in the various source documents created special difficulties and the editors apologise if the lists are not yet complete or if they are inaccurate in any respect.

South Africans who served during the War of Independence 1948 - 1949

(Including some members of kibbutzim who joined the forces)

| | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| Abel, Michael Julius | (Boettger) | Buirski, Barry |
| Abramowitz, M | Benadretti, Eli | Buksnevsky, Sender |
| Abrams, Cecil | Benatar, Samuel | (Ben Eliezer), |
| Aftergood, Fred | Benedict, Audrey | Buksnevsky, Sleme |
| Ahrenson, Aubrey (Aran) | Bentel, Max | Burge, Bob |
| Alper, Lionel | Bental, Solly Israel | Burman, Phillip |
| Alperstein, Hugo | Ben-Nun, Naomi Rachel | Busch, George David |
| (Agmon) | Berelowitz, Esther | Caganoff, Harry |
| Angel, Aubrey Lawrence | Berelowitz, Harry | Caminsky(Camron), |
| Appel, Bernard | Berger, Abe | Leopold |
| Aronson, Benzion | Berger, Helen | Capeluto, Yaacov |
| Aronson, Irene (Rubin) | Berger, Maurice | Carruthers, Margaret |
| Aronson, Noel | Bergman, Leo | Caspary, Walter |
| Axelrod, Abraham | Berkman, Hyman Harry | Casper, Abraham |
| Axelrod, Rebecca | Berkow, Abe | Celender, Monty Samuel |
| Henrietta | Berman, Charles Arthur | Centner, Clive (Rusty) |
| Aylon, Uri (Levinson) | (Zadok) | Chait Chaim |
| Bader, Elliot | Bernstein, Evelyn | Chait, Barry |
| Bader, Henrietta | (Brewer) | Chait, Max |
| Balcha, Menashe | Bernstein, Elana | Chalmers, Syd |
| Banin, Jack (Kenya) | Bernstein, Norman | Charney, Sarah |
| Bank, Harry | Bernstein, Ralph (Bull) | (Millman) |
| Bank, Myra (Schweppe) | Birnbaum, Uri | Chaskelson, Ronnie |
| Bar-Levav, Shaul | Blau, Naftali (Tuxie) | Chernick, Issy |
| (Levinson) | Bloch, Bernard | Chimes, Leslie |
| Barlin, Lily | Bloch, Goodman | Clark, Nobby |
| Barlin, Max | Bloch, Harry | Clingman, Lionel |
| Barnett, Ivan | Bloch, June Mitra | Abraham |
| Beagle, Dennis David | Bloch, Leslie | Clouts, Cyril Henry |
| Becker, Shulamith | Brand, Luther | Cohen, Abe |
| (Harris) | Braudo, Charles | Cohen, Barney |
| Behr, Joe | Braudo, Muriel | Cohen, Doreen |
| Behr, Michael Isaac | Braun, Kenneth | Cohen, Irwin |
| Behr, Stanley | Brener, Lily | Cohen, Jack |
| Behrman, Eric | Brenner, Dave Wolf | Cohen, Mendel |
| Behrman, Jeanne | Broomberg, Milly | Cohen, Mendel David |
| Bellon, Sydney Isaac | (Jacobson), | Cohen, Norman Jack |
| Ben-Nun, Naomi Rachel | Brouze, Leslie | Cohen, Ronnie |
| Ben Yok, Butch | Brunton, Ray | Cohen, Syd |

Appendix B

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|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Cohen, Sylvia | Fisher, Julius | Green, Bernard |
| Comay, Joan | Fix, Ivor | Green, Hymie |
| Comay, Michael | Fleisch, Jack | Green, Sydney |
| Cooper, Alec | Francis, James Henry | Greenberg, Issy (Granoth) |
| Cooper, Arthur | Franco, Aaron | Greenblatt, Lola (Oren) |
| Cort, Harold | Franco, Simon | Greenspun, Sarah |
| Daleski, Hillel | Freedman, Jack | Grevler, Chaim |
| Danker, Kenny | Freeman, Morris Max (Monty) | Gross, David |
| Davidson, Alexander | Friedland, Bernard | Gross, Edmond |
| Davidson, Esmond | Friedman (Erez), Baruch (Kenya) | Gross, Jack |
| Davidson, Leah | Friedman, Joe (Shaul) | Grunberg, David (Kenya) |
| Davimes, Gerald | Friedman, Lionel | Grusin, Benny |
| Davis, Dov | Friedman, Nathan | Hack, Louis |
| Dawson, Edwin | Futerman, Rolfe | Hanreck, Phyllis |
| Dinn, Sigmar Bernd | Galp, Morris | Hanreck, Harold (Ricky) |
| Donde, Isaac Louis | Gampel, Leonard | Harber, Hyman |
| Duchen, David | Gamsu, Sonia (Gruber) | Harris, Henry |
| Duchen, Raymond | Gate, Freda (Strachilewitz) | Harris, Ralph |
| Durner, Alfred | Geber, Morris | Harris, Rebecca |
| Duval, Claude | Geffen, Chone | Hart, Joseph Morris |
| Dworsky, Barney | Geffen, Louis | Hassall, Harold |
| Echilewitz, Hettie | Gelb, Gladys | Helfet, Arthur |
| Edelstein, Sonia (Levy) | Genn, Zelig | Helfet, Mrs. M. |
| Egdes, Morrie | Genussow, Herzl | Heller, Charlie |
| Eife, Chana | Gershman, Leslie | Hendler, Phyllis |
| Eisenberg, Gita (Freedman) | Getz, Enoch | Hendler, Rose |
| Eisenberg, Chaim | Getz, Louis | Henochowitz, Lucien |
| Eliasov, Dave | Gillis, Leon | Herbert, Basil Eric |
| Elion, Hannah | Gillis, Merle | Herbstein, Frank |
| Elion, Saul Theodore | Gitlin, Gershon | Herman, Basil |
| Esakof, Ernest | Gitlin, Marcia | Herr, Elijah |
| Etten, Zelig | Gitlin, Miriam | Herrmann, Robert Alfred |
| Etzine, Bernard | Glazer, Hannah | Hersch, Leslie Henry |
| Evian, Harold | Gluckman, Colin (Gillon) | Hertzberg, Jack |
| Excell, Syd | Gluckman, Saada | Herzfeld, Lazlo |
| Ezra, Anne | Gochen, Dennis | Hirsch, Milton |
| Ezra, Vivian | Goldberg, Monty | Hirsch, Otto Paul |
| Fabran, Isaac | Goldblatt, Daniel | Hirschfeld, Hans |
| Fainman, Lockie | Goldblatt, Hymie | Hirschowitz, Bernie |
| Falk, Robert (Ben Ami) | Goldes, Avraham | Hirschowitz, Lionel David |
| Falker, Butch | Goldman, Chaim | Hirschowitz, Ralph Gustaves |
| Fanaroff, Shlem (Sam) | Goldman, Maurice | Hirschowitz, Thelma |
| Fanaroff, Yaffa | Goldman, Sidney | Hodes, Lionel |
| Feitelberg, Lionel (Peitan) | Goldsmid, Julian Harry Walter | Hollander, Walter |
| Feldman, Harry | Goldstein, Harry | Hooper, Bill |
| Feldman, Mannie | Goldstein, Joseph | Horwitch, Lydia |
| Fellows, Naomi | Goldstein, Sidney (Nick) | Hotz, Elias Philip |
| Fellows, Richard | Golembo, Grisha | Hurwitz, Abe |
| Fine, Michael Selig (Mishy) | Golombick, Yetta | Isaacs, Norman |
| Fisch, Felicia Phyllis | Gordon, Dorothy (Elrom) | Isaacson, Arnold |
| Fisch, Jack | Gordon, Mary | Isaacson, Jack (Titch) |
| Fisch, Molly | Gotsman, Cyril | Isaacson, Mike |
| Fish, Michael | Gottlieb, Calelis | Isaacson, Robert |
| Fisher, Geoffrey | | Israel, Albert |
| Fisher, Ivan Frank | | |

Appendix B

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| Israel, Itzac | Kaufman, Max | Levine, Ruth |
| Isserow, Eli | Kaye, Eric | Levinsohn, Julian |
| Jackson, Joe | Kayser, Julius (Bill) | Levinson, Sam |
| Jacobson, Israel Joshua | Kemp, Phillip | Levithan, Harold |
| Jacobson, Kenneth | Kenny, Syd (Kentridge) | Levitt, Benjamin Baynes (Tookie) |
| Jacobson, Monty | Kerbel, George | Levy, Cyril Jeffrey |
| Jaffe, Abe | Kessler, Abraham | Levy, Effie |
| Jaffe, Barney | Kidron, David | Levy, Fred |
| James, Frank | (Rosenberg) | Levy, Jack |
| Jamieson, Georgie | Kidron, Mordechai | Levy, Joe |
| Jedeiken, Joseph | (Rosenberg) | Levy, Maish |
| Jocum, Rose | Kimmel, Joe | Levy, Mary |
| Joffe, Bat-Ami | Kirsch, Rusty | Levy, Sydney |
| Joffe, Harry | Kirschner, Eli | Lewis, Len |
| Joffe, Reuben | Kirschner, Ivan | Lindsay, Alf |
| Josman, Hymie | Klaff, Mendel | Lipman, Alan Robert |
| Judah, Dov | Klass, Harry | Lipman, Robert |
| Judah, Elsie | Klein, Lionel | Lipman, Sydney |
| Judelsohn, Bernard | Klingman, Rica | Lipshitz, Jack |
| Kacev, Delyn | Kofsky, Wally | Lipshitz, Solly Zalman (Smiler) |
| Kacev, Jack | Kopans, Harry | Lourie, Nadia |
| Kadushewitz, Gershon | Kotlowitz, Mailech | Lourie, Norman |
| Kahan, Maxim | Kotlowitz, Raphael | Lowenberg, Robert |
| Kahn, Martin | Kotzen, Louis | Magid, David |
| Kahn, Morris | Kotzen, William Abraham | Magid, Eddy |
| Kangisser, Max | Kramer, Solly | Malbin, Hymie |
| Kanichowsky, Percy | Krensky, Max | Malin, Bolly (Boris) |
| Kantey, Leon (Jimmy) | Krom, Simcha (Gordon) | Malkin, Melville |
| Kaplan, Albert Norman | Kruger, Louis Simon | Mandelstam, Charles |
| Kaplan, Cyril | Kruss, Michael | Mandelzweig, Sim (Manor) |
| Kaplan, Doris (Lankin) | Kupferberg, Benjamin | Mandelzweig, Gordon |
| Kaplan, Gerald | Kurgan, Hyman | Mankowitz, Michael (Manor) |
| Kaplan, Isaac | Lak, Mildred | Mannie, Kathleen |
| Kaplan, Jack | Landau, Benny (Lanir) | Manoim, Sydney |
| Kaplan, Julius | Landshut, Michael (Amir) (ex Australia) | Marcus, Edal |
| Kaplan, Lionel (Kappy) | Landsman, Gerald | Marcus, Leslie |
| Kaplan, Ruth | Landsman, Ruth | Marcuson, Jack Ezra |
| Kaplan, Stanley | Lanesman, Ralph | Margo, Cecil |
| Karanowitz, Baruch | Langbart, Syd | Margolius, Abraham Solomon (Bully) |
| Kark, Mrs. G. | Lawrence, Rina | Margolius, Lily |
| Kark, Stanley | Lazarus, Joe | Marik, Colin |
| Kark, Wilfred | Lazarus, Leslie | Mark, Issy Harold |
| Karpel, Leon | Leftwich, Margalit | Matheson, Isaac |
| Kassel, Harry Ruby | Lehr, Bill | Matz, Rudolph |
| Katz, Abraham Isaac (Mitzy) | Lehr, Lionel Stanley | Matz, Zafrira |
| Katz, Cyril | Leibowitz, Joe | Mazerow, Lou |
| Katz, George | Levin, Basil | Medalie, Jack |
| Katz, Jeffrey | Levin, Harry | Medalie, June |
| Katz, Joseph | Levin, Judy | Medicks, Stan (Kenya) |
| Katz, Montague | Levin, Meyer Joseph (Teddy) | Medow, Siegbert |
| Katz, Shmuel | Levin, Morris | Meltzer, Lionel |
| Katz, Victor | Levin, Phyllis | Meltzer, Rose |
| Katzen, David | Levin, Sam | |
| Katzenellenbogen, Elliot | Levin, Stanley | |
| Katzew, Joe | Levine, Julius | |
| Kaufman, Celia | | |

Appendix B

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| Melzer, Solly | Palestine, Abraham | Rudaitzky, Issy |
| Menache, Rica | Patlansky, Jack | Rudnick, Dennis |
| Mendelowitz, Maurice | Pearl, Julian | Rudnick, Joseph |
| Ment, Maurice | Penn, Di | Russak, Edward |
| Meyer, David Louis | Penn, Jack | Russak, Jane |
| Meyerowitz, Max Aaron | Perk, Rose Anita | Rutovitz, Dennis |
| Meyers, Kalman | Perlman, Jeff | Sachar, Julius |
| (See Myers, Colman) | Pitluk, Reeve (Stolov) | Sachar, Sarah |
| Meyerson, Barney | Policansky, Mr. & Mrs. | Sack, Abe |
| (Blackie) | Politski, Israel | Sack, Louis |
| Meyerson, George | Potel, Joseph | Sacks, Barney |
| Meyerson, Joseph | Price, Alan | Sacks, Reuben |
| Michel, Basil (Tim) | Rabinovitch, Percy Mark | Sacks, Tzvi |
| Miller, Benny | Rachailowitz, Boris | Saffer, Teddy |
| Miller, Harry | Rachman, Abraham | Sagar, Reg |
| Miller, Henry | Rachman, Albert Samuel | Sakinofsky, Ezra |
| Miller, Hyman | Rachman, Chaim | Sakinofsky, Meyer |
| Miller, Leslie | Elimelech | Saks, Chaim |
| Miller, Louis | Rakoff, Vivian Morris | Salant, Freddy |
| Miller, Mike | Rathouse, Alexander | Salmon, Raymond |
| Miller, Joyce. | Rathouse, Evelyn | Sanders, Basil |
| Miller, Sam | Ravid, Hyman | Sandler, Abram |
| Milner, Harry | Ravid, Zelda | Sandler, Bernard Maurice |
| Milunsky, Horace | Reef, Eli | (Barney) |
| Mirwis, Jack | Resnekov, Victor | Saretsky, Ruth (Stern) |
| Morcowitz, Phil | (Bunny) | Sarif, Fred |
| Morris, Jack | Resnick, Polly (Salber) | Sarnak, Leon |
| Mundell, George | Rieback, Issy | Schachat, Mockie |
| Myers, Colman | Ringer, Morrie | Schachman, Hyman |
| (See Meyers) | Ritz, Jack | Schapera, Roy |
| Myers, Freda Celia | Roberts, Colman | Scheiner, Manuel |
| Myers, Michael | Robin, Eli | Schlachter, George |
| Mymin, Monty | Robinson, Issy | Schmidt, David |
| Nakan, John Leslie | Rome, Sydney (Sinai) | Schneider, Lionel Judah |
| Nankin, Archie | Rosen, David | Schneider, Sonny |
| Narunsky, Reuben | Rosen, Joe | Schragenheim, Julian |
| Nash, Stanley | Rosen, Leon | Schwartz, Lionel |
| Navias, Dave | Rosen, Monty | Schweppe, Isidore |
| Navon, Phillip | Rosenberg, Eddie | Seftel, Sydney |
| (Nowesenitz) | Rosenberg, Elliot | Segal, Harry |
| Navon, Edie | Rosenberg, Ellis | Segal, Maurice |
| Nelken, Richard | Rosenberg, Honi | Segal, Morris |
| Neumark, Phyllis | Rosenberg, Joe | Segal, Sally |
| Noach, Issy | Rosenberg, Judy | Segall, Jack |
| Notrica, Jaques | Rosenberg, Masha | Seidman, Otto |
| Novikow, Abram | Rosenberg, Maurice | Seigerkranz, Leo |
| Novikow, Simon | Rosenberg, Miriam | Selby, Clive |
| Nurick, Abe | Rosenberg, Sam | Senior, Boris |
| Nurock, Nava (Lapidot) | Rosenfeld, Dennis | Senior, Dr. Boris |
| Oesschger, | Rosengarten, Max | Shagam, Leslie |
| Ogin, Dot | Rosin, Danny | Shakenovsky, M |
| Oliver, Morris | Rosman, Abraham | Shall, Emanuel |
| Ospovat, Sonny | Roux, Marie | Shall, Harry |
| Osrin, Harold (Ossie) | Rozowsky, David (Dov) | Shaper, Gerald |
| Ossin, Solly | Rozowsky, Leslie | Shapiro, Minnie |
| Ostroff, Maurice | Rubin, Jack | (Davimes) |
| Ozinsky, Phillip | Ruch, Arnold | Shapiro, Ethelreda |

Appendix B

| | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Shapiro, Meyer Hennoch | Steinberg, Cyril | Webb, Del |
| Shapiro, Mike (Meir) | Steingold, Willie | Weigert, Hans |
| Shear, Sylvia Sandra | Steinhart, Jack | Weinberg, Arthur |
| Sheinbaum, Ivan | Stern, Maurice | Weiner, Henoch |
| Shelley, George Thomas | Stern, Simon | Weiner, Samuel |
| Sher, Harold | Susman, David | Weinronk, Jack |
| Sher, Max | Sussman, Trevor | Weinstein, Jesse Manfred |
| Sher, Michael | Suttner, Sydney | Wides, Maurice |
| Sher, Percy | Swartzberg, Zan | Wies, Morris (Mokkie) |
| Sher, Reuben | Swiel, Cyril | Wilk, Shimon (Adar) |
| Sher, Sylvia (See Shear) | Taback, Solomon Joseph | Wilkes, Bernard |
| Shirk, Jack | Taitz, Louis | Wilsker, Mimi |
| Shlain, Joseph | Teitman, Rachel | Wilton, Osner |
| Shorkend, Albert Meyer | Teper, Joseph | Wilton, Jack |
| Shubitz, Charlie | Teperson, David (Migdal) | Wisenberg, Abe |
| Sidlin, Moshe (Morris) | Todes, Helman Meyer | Witkin, Joe |
| Siedner, Gershon | Toker, Hymie | Witt, Sarah |
| Silber, Meir (Matey) | Toker, Lily (Ageyev) | Witten, Solly |
| Silpert, Marcia (Wolman) | Traub, Colin | Wolf, David |
| Silverstein, Peter | Traub, Paul | (Ben Avraham) |
| Simon, Myra | Treisman, Hymie | Wolf, Barney |
| Simon, Smoky | Treisman, Ossie | Woolf, Joe |
| Singer, Alec | Treisman, Rubie | Woolf, Nathan Bernard |
| Skolnik, Norman | Trope, R.A. | Wulfsohn, Cecil |
| Slender, Ronnie | Tross, Alec Arthur | Wulfsohn, Sam |
| Smith (Sela), Barney | Tucker, Sam | Yodaiken, Ralph |
| (Dov) | Udwin, Michael | Yudelman, Sydney |
| Smith, Morris | Van Harn, Ferdinand | (Lossin) |
| Snipper, Leslie (Mike) | Van Heerden, Johnny | Yudelman, Wolfe |
| Sokolowsky, Solly | Vogelnest, Felix | Zagoria, Eli |
| Solarsh, Manny | Vons, Mendie | Zail, Hilda |
| Solman, David | Wainer, Barney | Zimmerman, Tev |
| Spiro, Norman | Wainer, Riva | Zinn, Sam |
| Stark, Geoff | Waks, Simmy | Zinn, Zelig (Jack) |
| Stark, Gerald | Wallace, David | Zuckerman, Philip |
| Stein, Bat-Sheva | Walters, Ian (Kenya) | |
| Stein, Sigmund | Wassying, Aubrey | |

South Africans on Frontline Kibbutzim 1948/49

(Excluding some members of kibbutzim in the forces, whose names appear on the main list above).

Timorim

| | | |
|-------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Berelowitz, Chaim | Goldblatt, Gessie | Levenberg, Molly |
| Braude, Morris | (Golan) | Levy, Abraham (Alf) |
| Egdal, Issy | Halper, Ellis | Lurie, Sam |
| Eisenberg, Abe | Halper, Rosie | Meyer, Solly |
| Eisenberg, Leah | Hodes, Aubrey | Meyer, Tamar |
| Gafanowitz, Max | Israel, Harry | Narunsky, Essie |
| Gafanowitz, Ruth | Israel, Sheba | Narunsky, Lionel |
| Geffen, Chaim | Joffe, Baruch (Barney) | Rabinovitz, Sarah |
| Glazer, Elaine | Kaplan, Cookie | Roberts, Simon (Admoni) |
| Goldblatt, Rochie | Kaplan, Solly | Rosenberg, Barney |
| (Zahavi) | Kobrin, Judah | Ross, Cecil |
| Goldblatt, Chaim | Kruger, Sybil | Schwabsky, Max |
| (Zahavi) | Lan, Judel Joseph | Schwabsky, Zmira |

Appendix B

Segal, Sarah
Senderowitz, Dov
Senderowitz, Fanny

Silberman, Karl
Tooch, Abe
Zagnoev, Isaac

Zagnoev, Maisie

Shoval

Beinart, Abe
Beinart, Sarah
Ben Hayam (Katz),
Rachel
Ben Hayam, Yaacov
Ben-Ami, Hadassah
(Rosenberg)
Ben-Ami, Moshe (Grupel)
Davidoff, Zahava (Golan)
Fried, Dov
Friedstein, Hilda
Friedstein, Kalman
Goldsmidt, Chaim
Herbstein, Nina (Selbst)
Hershon, Yehuda
Joffe, Leish

Joffe, Stella
Joffe, Sydney Charles
Kahan, Arik
Katz, Reuben
Kirschner, Ruth
(Rosenberg)
Levin, Mike
Lifshitz, Moshe (Mufti)
Marcus, Alec
Orlin Zvi
Orlin, Zvia
Ozen, Tuvia
Rachilewitz, Eliezer
Reeb, Meish
Reeb, Ora
Rosenberg, Chani

Rosenberg, Gideon
Rybko, Chanan
Sarid, Meir (Sherman)
Sarid, Isa (Lazar)
Schachar, Ephraim
(Schwarzchild)
Sneh, Henia (Blecher)
Sneh, Nachum (Skikne)
Venson, Shoshana
Werbranchik, Yehudit
(Agassi)
Wolf, Etty (Bay)
Wolf, Shlomo (Barkai)
Zipper, Zvi (Ralph)

Hatzor

Gilat, Arye (Gutelevsky)
Gilat, Rivka (Fanaroff)
Joffe, Mulka

Shur, Shulamit
(Gutelevsky)
Yudelewitz, Beinish

Beit Herut

Silbert, Neville

Kfar Blum

Berman, Max
Brenkel, Yehoshua
Moss Morris, Rona
(Baram)

Shandel, Leslie
(Shanan)
Shandel, Val (Shanan)
Shagam, Yehuda

Sive, Arye

Massada

Damelin, Bob

Kfar Etzion and Mizrahi Youth

Alter, Clara
Berelowitz, Yecheskiel
(Chatzi)

Lipshitz, Zvi (Harry)
Polon, Yehuda
Polon, Rebecca

Pnini, Yacov
Pnini, Mrs
Wachs, Reuben Meyer

Messilot

Goldberg, Fanny

Ma'ayan Baruch

Alperstein, Chava
Basson, Sidney
Ben Ami, Solly (Blecher)
Berger, Chana

Berman (Antonis),
Miriam (Maisie)
Berman, Baruch (Basil)
Bick Leshed, Sarah
Bloom, Issy

Chemel, Moni
Chemel, Lola (Goldin)
Cohen, Edward (Eddie)
Cohen, Feivel
De Jong, Pinchas

Appendix B

| | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Drusinsky, Harry | Judelman, Benzie (Ben-Zion) | Nurick, Riva |
| Drusinsky, Luba | Judelman, Ziona | Roberts, Yishayahu |
| Fine, David | Judelman, Isaac (Ben-Yehuda Freak) | Rosin, Morris |
| Fine, Hillel | Judelman, Beryl | Rubin, Chana (Anita) |
| Gabai, Yocheved | Kaplan, Josef (Haig) | Rubin, Willy (Ze'ev) |
| Gazit, Zalman (Ginsberg) | Krinsky, Josef | Sadowsky, Dots (David) |
| Geiger, Saul | Kroll, Shlomo | Sadowsky, Shulamit |
| Goldberg, Leib Arie (Golan), | Lanzkowsky, Sheila (Bartkunsky) | Salber, Harry (Zvi) |
| Goldin, Shoshana (Efrati) | Leizer, Ray (Losser) | Sandler, Basil |
| Goldin, Chaim | Levinsohn, Aviva (Rubin) | Sandler, Riva |
| Goldreich, Arthur | Levinsohn, Ezra (Bob) | Schwartz, Enid Brode |
| Goodman, Naomi (Rabinowitz) | Levinsohn, Leib | Sender, Colin |
| Goodman, Itzchak | Levitt, Dov | Setekel, Samuel |
| Green, Harry (Zvi) | Lewis, Yehuda (Julie) | Shapiro, Harold |
| Grunwald, Meir (Piet) Ya'ari | Lowenstein, Issy (Lavi) | Sobel, Ron (Shuval) |
| Hack, Kalman (Colin) | Meyer, Wally | Strauss, Dodke |
| Herzberg, Jack | Meyer, Ziona | Tiger, Cyril |
| | | Traub, Issy |
| | | Traub, Rhoda |
| | | Vituli, Avigdor |
| | | Vituli, Rachel |

Unclassified (1948)

The editors have been unable to classify the following names of South Africans which appear on passenger manifests of air and sea arrivals in Haifa, during the period under review. .

| | | |
|-------------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| Alfassi, Mabel | Freinfeld, Anna | Persom, Yitzhak |
| Balkin, Isaac | Ginsberg, Lilva | Sheiner, Beryl |
| Binder, Howard | Harber, Victor | Segal, Lipa |
| Daitz, Raymond | Herschman, Samuel | Wolov, P. |
| Finkel, Frederick | Laver, Alan George | Zessin, Simone |

S.A. Nachal i.e. South African Volunteers who Served in the forces during 1956 to 1972

While this book is about the 1948 volunteers, the following list has been added to honour the spirit of volunteers who followed the examples of their elders who had served in the War of Liberation. More than 100 of these young people have since settled in Israel. Nachal, the Hebrew acronym for "Fighting Pioneer Youth" was formed in 1949 to provide a framework for young soldiers to establish, work on and defend new border kibbutzim. In the early 1950's the scheme was expanded to include several diaspora countries including South Africa.

| | | |
|------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| Aarons, Ronald | Bravo, Bonny | Freeman, Arlene |
| Abel, David Aaron | Bravo, Ida | Freeman, Ivan |
| Abrahams, David | Brenner, Isaac Barney | Fridjohn, Anne |
| Abramowitz, Avraham | Bricker, Ronald | Friedland, Eric |
| Abramowitz, Gerald | Browde, Ian | Friedland, Neville |
| (Jossie) | Buntman, Percy | Friedman, Chaia Masha |
| Alhadeff, Rahamim | Camaroff, Benny | Friedman, Sandra |
| Alperstein, Steve | Cash, Kenny | Gafanowitz, Leib |
| Amdur, Leslie | Chalmers, Richard Lewis | Gaitelband, Yossie |
| Amdur, Mary | Charney, Lennie | Gefen, Ari Leib |
| Amdur, Raymond | Chesler, Norman | Geri, Norman |
| Amler, Selma | Chilchick, Joe | Ginzburg, Ralph |
| Amler, Vernon | Chweidan, Roy | Gladstone, Gordon |
| Amoils, Robert | Cobb, Roy | Glanger, Maurice |
| Aronstam, Cynthia | Cohen, David | Glasser, Leon |
| Aronstam, Ruth | Cohen, Ivan Israel | Glasson, Mervyn |
| Arvan, Avril | Cohen, John Brett | Glazer, Harry Jacob |
| Awerbach, Meyer | Daniel, Robin (Dolev) | Glazer, Itzhak Irving |
| Bartov, Meira | David, Eddie | Goldberg, Justin |
| Beckman, Cecil | Davidoff, Walter | Goldberg, Omrie |
| Beckman, Ivan | Davidson, Derek | Goldberg, Sally |
| Behr, Ada Bella | Dobrin, Ralph | Goldstein, Phillip |
| Benjamin, Roger Warner | Dogen, Gerald | Goldwasser, Betty |
| Berelowitz, Basil | Dubb, Allie | Golombick, Selwyn |
| Berger, Ivan | Dubb, Mark (Harold) | Goodman, Basil Edward |
| Bernstein, David | Dwolatsky, Zippy | Goralsky, Jack |
| Bernstein, Michael | Dworsky, Barney | Gordon, Dottie |
| (Foxie) | Elion, Jeffrey | Gordon, Esther |
| Bernstein, Ralph | Ellenbogen, Julian | Gordon, Lionel |
| Berold, George Norbert | Epstein, Maurice | Gordon, Norman |
| Berold, Jonathan | Fainman, Lester | Gordon, Peter David |
| Bitnun, Maurice | Feinberg, Dov | Gottlieb, Brian |
| Blacher, Solly | Feldman, Barry | Graff, Michael |
| Bloch, Harry | Feldman, Jules | Greenblatt, Neville |
| Bloch, Derek | Finberg, Ernest | Harpaz, Jonathan |
| Bloomberg, Tzemach | Flink, Zalman | Harris, Harold |
| Blumberg, David | Frankenthal, Dov | Heldenmuth, Bobby |
| Boiskin, Stanley | Frankenthal, Sylvia | Vernon |
| Borowitz, Lionel | Franklyn, Rodney | Heller, Solomon Lazar |
| Bowman, Allen | Fraser, Roy | Herberg, Ivan Bernard |
| Brasch, Eli | Freed, Harry | Hertzenberg, Selwyn |
| Brasch, Hedwig Sybil | Freed, Neil | Justin |
| Braude, Israel Meyer | Freedman, Arnold | Heyman, Benzion |
| Braude, Lilian | Freedman, Zvi | Yehuda |

Appendix B

| | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Hirschman, Lewis | Lazarus, Juliette | Oserowitz, Dov Bernard |
| Hirschmann, Herman | Leaf, Michael | Ostroff, Brian |
| Hoffbrand, Neville | Legum, Cyril Phillip | Pass, Zvi |
| Hoffenberg, Meyer | Leibowitz, Harold | Penzik, Benny |
| Hoffman, Alan | Lemkin, Donald | Perling, Michael |
| Hoffman, Errol | Levin, Aubrey | Perloff, Harris |
| Hope, Ronnie | Levin, Danny | Philips, Dave |
| Horwitz, Mervyn Neville | Levin, Pearl | Poliva, Morris |
| Horwitz, Paul | Levin, Robert (Ruby) | Poplack, Raymond |
| Horwitz, Peter | Levinsky, Milton | Porat, Shaul |
| Israel, Harry | Levinson, Shalom | Porter, Michael |
| Israel, Julian | Levithan, Issy | Poswell, Ivor |
| Itzkin, Reuben | Levitz, Henry Solly | Preddy, Corinne |
| Jacobs, Darryl | Lewis, Basil Michael | Preiss, Kenneth |
| Jacobson, Ilana (Lucas) | Lewis, Howard (Zvi) | Prop, Teddy |
| Jacobson, Raymond | Lewkovsky, Luke | Puterman, Benny |
| Stanley | Libner, Joseph | Rabe, Perla |
| Jarzin, Solly | Lichtenstein, Stanley | Rakoff, Brian |
| Joffe, Abe | Lichtenstein, Alan | Raphael, Debbie |
| Joffe, Basil | Lieberman, Julius | Reingold, Hymie |
| Joffe, Ittamar | Liebmann, Yehoshua Joe | Rembach, Eli (Leslie) |
| Kahn, Charlie | Liebman, Brian | Reznick, Morris |
| Kahn, Des | Lief, Jack | Richter, Ronald |
| Kanowitz, Nathan | Lipman, Aubrey (Zvi) | Richters, Joseph |
| (Shlomi) | Lipworth, Peter | Roberts, Paul |
| Kantor, Ada | Lonatz, Eleanor | Robin, Morris |
| Kaplan, Julian | Lopatkin, Louis | Rogow, Ian |
| Kaplan, Teddy | Lotkin, Charles | Romer, Kenneth Nathan |
| Kaplan, Yoram | Lotkin, Sammy | Rosen, Joshua Zelig |
| Kapulsky, Rene | Lotkin, Dorian | Rosenberg, Hilton |
| Katz, Arthur Leonard | Lozinsky, Brian | Rosenberg, Mike |
| Katz, Gideon Clive | Lurie, Joseph | Rosin, Phillip |
| Katz, Harry | Lurie, Leonard Abraham | Ross, Morris |
| Katz, Irving | Lurie, Mavis | Rubin, Barry |
| Katzer, Eric | Lurie, Michael | Rubin, Jack |
| Kaufman, Harold | Lyons, Elliot Lewis | Rubin, Merrick |
| Keet, Danny | Mandel, Meyer | Rudyman, Baruch |
| Kelman, Ronnie | Mann, Barbara | Rushovich, Boris |
| Kemp, Henry | Margolis, Selwyn | Sachs, Gerald |
| Kessel, Martin | Margolis, Asner | Sachs, Basil |
| Klass, Eli | Metzger, Alfred | Sacks, Julian |
| Klingman, Bernard | Meyer, Alec | Sadowsky, Alec |
| Klingman, Leon (Linky) | Meyer, Dennis | Saitowitz, Stanley |
| Kopelewitz, Mark | Miller, Carol | Saks, Ernest Monty |
| Kowarsky, Leo | Milner, Jules | Saks, Seymour Mervyn |
| Kramer, Adriane | Minster, Phil | Salinger, Rolf |
| Kramer, Stanley | Minzer, Alan | Samuelson, Leonard |
| Krausz, Robert | Modlin, Kelvin | Sandler, Patsy |
| Kreser, Abe | Mofsowitz, Solomon | Sandzul, Pinhas (Percy) |
| Kroser, Joseph Gordon | Moss, Derek | Saperson, Monica |
| Krug, Eric | Moss, Max | Schaiowitz, Morris |
| Krut, Hymie | Mosselson, Barry | Schefts, Charles |
| Kruyer, Barry | Musnick, Sarah Gertie | Schneider, Sidney |
| Kwitz, Jeff | Myers, Philip | Schneier, Stanley |
| Lan, Sydney | Naiman, Archie | Schub, Mendel |
| Landberg, Douglas | Nel, Victor | Schultz, Myron Louis |
| Lazarus, Gila Ann | Newman, Albert Richard | Scop, Barry |

Appendix B

Segal, Jules
Senick, Merwyn
Sevel, Gerald
Sevitt, Cecil
Shaer, Harry
Shaer, Max
Shapiro, Jack
Shapiro, Ashner
Shapiro, Harold
Shapiro, Rodney
Shefts, Avri
Shelef, Leon
Sher, Arnold
Sher, Benny
Sher, Philip
Sher, Woolfie
Sher, Zahava
Sher, Mike
Shifrin, Issy
Shirken, Moshe
Shlapobersky, Colin
Shorkend, Leslie
Shorkend, Maureen
Shulman, Les
Siesel, Erica
Silberman, Colin
Silbowitz, Dudi
Simon, Martin
Simons, Barbara

Simons, Harold
Sirin, Harold
Sirkis, Elisheva
Sive, Raymond David
Sluszny, Eli
Sluszny, Ruby
Smolowitz, Jack
Smulian, Jonathan
Snowise, Harold
Sossen, Geoffrey
Stein, Itz
Stein, Leslie
Stern, Richard Henry
Stern, William
Stodel, Warwick
Suskin, Bernard
Susser, Leslie
Swilling, Stanley
Tainon, Leslie
Tobias, Ashley
Tobin, Allan
Tooch, Mookie
Touyz, Benzion
Trey, Charles
Tross, Emanuel
Udwin, Leon
Urdang, Ivan
Valkin, Charles
Vulfson, Benjy

Wainstein, Ivor
Waldman, Ivan
Weinberg, Edward
Weinberg, Martin Ronald
Weiner, Baruch
Weinstein, Simie
Werb, Henry
Wesseik, David
(Dolphie)
Whiteman, Chinky
Whiteman, Buddy
Wilensky, Maurice
Winoker, Meir
Wolf, Aubrey
Wolf, Ivor
Wolpert, Lawrence
Woolf, Ruby
Zackon, Abe
Zagnoev, Barney
Zausmer, Shalom
Zeffert, David
Zinn, Alf
Zinn, Stanley
Zinn, Stuart
Zolkov, Eli
Zuckerman, Harold
Zuckerman, Sammy
(Stanley)

APPENDIX C

S.African 1948 Volunteers Listed by Sector Of Service

General HQ and Government Departments

Comay, Michael
Gluckman, (Gillon) Colin
Goldman, Maurice

Herman, Basil
Kirschner, Eli
Klingman, Rica

Schwartz, Lionel
Wilsker, Mimi

Navy

Balcha, Menashe
Behr, Michael Isaac
Bergman, Leo M.O.
Fisch, Jack
Fix, Ivor
Francis, James Henry

Genussow, Hertzell
Gotsman, Cyril
Grunberg, David
Lehr, Lionel Stanley
Mandelstam, Charles
Rieback, Issy

Russack, Edward
Scheiner, Emanuel
Singer, Alec
Yudelman, Wolfe

Artillery

Caminsky [Camron], Leo
Daleski, Hillel
Hersch, Leslie Henry
Hodes, Lionel
Jaffe, Abe
James, Frank
Kaplan, Albert Norman

Karpel, Leon
Katzenellenbogen, Elliot
Landshut [Amir], Mike
Langbart, Sydney
Malkin, Mellville
Milunsky, Horace
Robin, Eli

Rosenberg, Honi
Salant, Fred
Schachat, Mockie
Schmidt, Dave
Senior, Boris M.O.
Shlain, Joseph
Wolf, David

Medical Corps – Doctors

(Names are repeated as medical officers attached to specific units where applicable)

Appel, Bernard
Aronson, Benzion
Bank, Harry
Barnett, Ivan
Berelowitz, Harry
Birnbaum, Uri
Bloch, Bernard
Bergman, Leo
Davidson, Esmond
Feldman, Harry
Gillis, Leon
Gitlin, Gershon
Gitlin, Miriam
Goldman, Chaim
Gordon, Mary
Gottlieb, Calelis
Helfet, Arthur

Hirshowitz, Bernie
Hirshowitz, Ralph Gustaves
Hotz, Elias Philip
Hurwitz, Abe
Kaplan Cyril
Kaplan, Isaac
Kark, Wilfred
Kassel, Harry Ruby
Kessler, Avraham
Kidron [Rosenberg],
David
Klaff, Mendel
Landsman, Gerald
Levin, Stanley
Levy, Cyril Jeffrey
Medalie, Jack
Meltzer, Lionel

Miller, Louis
Mundell, George
Penn, Jack
Price, Alan
Ravid, Hyman
Resnekov, Victor
Rosenberg, Ellis
Rosenberg, Maurice
Sachar, Michael Julius
Sandler, Bernard Maurice
Schweppe, Isadore
Senior, Boris
Shubitz, Charlie
Treisman, Ossie
Trope, R.A.
Wilton, Jack
Zail, Hilda

Medical Corps – Nurses

Aronson [Rubin], Irene
Bader, Henrietta
Ben-Nun, Naomi Rachel
Behrman, Jeanne
Benedict, Audrey
Bloch, June Mitra
Brunton [Medow], Ray
Carruthers, Margaret
Echilewitz, Hettie
Edelstein [Levy], Sonia
Eisenberg [Freedman],
Ghita
Fisch, Felicia Phyllis
Fellows, Naomi

Gate [Strachilewitz],
Freda
Gillis, Merle
Greenblatt, Lola
Greenspun, Sarah
Harris, Rebecca
Hendler, Phyllis
Kacev, Delyn
Lak, Mildred
Levin, Michael
Levine, Ruth
Levy, Mary
Margolius, Lily
Moss Morris, Rhona

Myers, Freda Celia
Nurock [Lapidot], Nava
Ravid, Zelda
Roux, Marie
Russack, Jane
Saretzky [Stern], Ruth
Shapiro [Davimes],
Minnie
Sher, Sylvia (Shear)
Stein, Bat-Sheva
Tateman, Rachel
Witt, Sarah

Appendix C

Medics (also listed in their units)

| | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Angel, Aubrey | Green, Hymie | Shaper, Gerald |
| Bader, Elliott | Gross, Jack | Treisman, Hymie |
| Fainman, Lawrence (Lockie) | Kruss, Michael | Zagoria, Eli |
| Goldblatt, Hymie | Miller, Harry | Zipper, Tzvi |
| | Rosenberg, Gideon | |

Other Medical Professions and Duties

| | | |
|----------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|
| Bank, Myra | Katz, Avraham Isaac | Oliver, Morris |
| Berkman, Hymie | Landsman, Ruth | Rosenberg, Eddie |
| Brenkel, Yehoshua | Levine, Phyllis Ilana | Rosenberg, Masha |
| Comay, Joan | Levinsohn, Julian | Sack, Abe |
| Davidson, Leah | Medalie, June | Sobel [Shuval], Ron |
| Elion, Hannah | Miller, Joyce | Udwin, Michael |
| Elion, Saul Theodore | Neumark, Ilana [Phyllis] | |

Doctors' Wives (Duties unknown)

| | | |
|----------------|---------------|---------------|
| Helfet, Mrs. | Meltzer, Rose | Sachar, Sarah |
| Kark, Gertrude | Penn, Diana | Wilton, Osner |

Airforce [Advisors and Air Crew on Command and Ground Duties]

| | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Berger, Maurice (Morrie) | Margo, Cecil | Sarnak, Leon |
| Chalmers, Syd | Miller, Sam | Segal, Morris |
| Cohen, Ronnie | Osrin, Harold (Ossie) | Simon, Smoky |
| Esakof, Ernest | Rosen, Monty | Sussman, Trevor |
| Judah, Dov | Rosenberg, Eddie | Wassyng, Aubrey |
| Kofsky, Wally | Saffer, Teddy | Wies, Morris [Mokkie] |

Airforce [Air crew, including late arrivals and participants in pilot course]

| | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Ahrenson [Aran], Aubrey | Hanreck, Harold [Ricky] | Nash, Stanley |
| Alperstein [Agmon], Hugo | Hooper, Bill | Noach, Issy |
| Aronson, Noel | Isaacs, Norman | Oesschger |
| Axelrod, Abraham [Axel] | Jacobson, Kenneth | Ospovat, Sonny |
| Aylon [Levinson], Uri | Kaplan, Gerald | Rosenberg, Elliot |
| Benadretti, Eli | Kaplan, Lionel | Rosin, Danny |
| Bentel, Max | Katz, Cyril | Ruch, Arnold |
| Behr, Joseph | Katz, George | Rutewitz, Dennis |
| Berger, Abe | Kaufman, Max | Sanders, Basil |
| Blau, Naphtali [Tuxie] | Katzew, Joe | Schachman, Hyman |
| Bloch, Morris [Leslie] | Kayser, Julius [Bill] | Schapera, Roy |
| Boettger, Milton [Butch Ben Yok] | Kemp, Philip | Seftel, Sydney |
| Braun, Kenneth | Kentridge [Kenny], Syd | Segal, Maurice |
| Caganoff, Harry | Kirschner, Ivan | Seigerkranz, Leo [Siggy] |
| Chimes, Leslie | Kopans, Harry | Senior, Boris |
| Clark, Nobby | Kramer, Solly | Shagam, Leslie |
| Cohen, Eddie | Lazarus, Joseph | Sher, Max |
| Cohen, Jack | Lazarus, Leslie | Sher, Reuben |
| Cohen, Syd | Leibowitz, Joe | Sidlin, Morris |
| Cooper, Arthur | Levinson, Sam [Shmuel] | Solarsh, Manny |
| Dinn, Sigmar Bernd | Lewis, Len | Steinberg Cyril |
| Duval, Claude | Lindsay, Alf | Swartzberg, Zan |
| Excell, Syd | Lipman, Sidney | Swiel, Cyril |
| Falker, Butch | Lowenberg, Robert | Treisman, Ruby |
| Feldman, Mannie | Mankowitz [Manor], Michael | Tucker, Sam |
| Freeman, Morris | Marcus, Edel | Vons, Mendie |
| Friedman, Joe (Shaul) | Mazerow, Lou | Waks, Simmy |
| Friedman, Nathan | Meyers, Kalman | Webb, Dell |
| Futerman, Rolfe | Meyerson, George | Weinrock, Jack |
| Gochen, Dennis | Meyerson, Joseph | Weinstein, Jesse |
| Goldberg, Monty | Michel, Basil [Tim] | Wolf, Nathan Bernard |
| Green, Harry [Zvi] | Narunsky, Reuben | Wulfsohn, Cecil |

Airforce [Administration]

| | | |
|------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| Behrman, Eric | Hendler, Rose | Rosenberg, Judy |
| Freedman, Jack | Joffe, Bat-Ami | Zuckerman, Philip |
| Hanreck, Phyllis | Ogin, Dot | |

Airforce [Intelligence – Codes and Cyphers]

| | | |
|------------------------|----------------|----------------------------|
| Axelrod, Rebecca | Judah, Elsie | Rathouse, Evelyn |
| Henrietta | Kaplan, Ruth | Rome, Sydney |
| Becker [Harris], Shula | Katzen, David | Rosenberg, Miriam (Mickey) |
| Fisch, Molly | Rathouse, Alex | |

Airforce [Meteorology]

| | | |
|-------------------|--------------------------|-------------|
| Barlin, Lily | Pitluck [Stolov], Reeve | Simon, Myra |
| Bernstein, Evelyn | Silpert [Wolman], Marcia | |

Air Force [Squadron 505 Radar]

| | | |
|---------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| Barlin, Max | Golombick, Yetta | Miller, Mike |
| Berkow, Abe | Henochowitz, Lucien | Mymin, Monty |
| Braudo, Charles | Isserow, Eli | Ostroff, Maurice |
| Cohen, Mendel David | Joffe, Reuben | Segall, Jack |
| Dworsky, Barney | Kangisser, Max | Suttner, Sydney |
| Fine, Mishy | Lanesman, Ralph | |
| Goldes, Abe | Levy, Effie | |

Air Force [Ground Technical Crew]

| | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| Alper, Lionel | Kadushewitz, Gershon | Rosenfeld, Dennis |
| Burge, Bob | Kark, Stanley | Rosowsky, Leslie |
| Cohen, Barney | Katz, Victor | Rosman, Abraham |
| Eisenberg, Chaim | Levine, Julius | Shall, Emanuel |
| Fish, Michael | Levy, Jack | Solman, David |
| Friedman, Lionel | Levy, Joe | Schneider, Lionel |
| Galp, Morris | Margolius, Abe (Bully) | Skolnik, Norman |
| Geffen, Chone | Medow, Ziegbert | Traub, Colin |
| Gershman, Leslie | Meyer, David Louis | Taitz, Louis |
| Green, Sydney | Miller, Hyman | Weiner, Henocho |
| Greenberg (Granoth), Issy | Nurick, Abe | Weiner, Samuel |
| Grevler, Chaim | Roberts, Colman | Wolf, Barney |
| Hirschfield, Hans | Rosen, David | Zimmerman, Tev |
| Isaacson, Robert | Rosen, Joe | Zinn, Sam |
| Isaacson, "Titch" | Rosenberg, Joe | |
| | Rosenberg, Sam | |

Air Force (Unclassified)

| | |
|---------------|------------------|
| Levin, Morris | Schneider, Sonny |
| Rubin, Jack | Wides, Maurice |

Scientific Corps (Chemed)

| | | |
|--------------------|------------------|-------------------------|
| Berelowitz, Esther | Herbstein, Frank | Jacobson, Israel Joshua |
|--------------------|------------------|-------------------------|

Engineering Corps

| | | |
|----------------|--------------------|------------------|
| Bellon, Sydney | Jaffe, Barney | Kurgan, Hymie |
| Fleisch, Jack | Joffe, Baruch | Levin, Basil |
| Harris, Ralph | Kaplan, Stanley | Ozinsky, Philip |
| (Gedud 118) | Kotlowitz, Mailech | Sakinofsky, Ezra |

Signal Corps

| | | |
|------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| Bar-Levav, Shaul | Mendelowitz, Maurice | Shapiro, Meyer Chanoch |
| Caspary, Walter | Sakinofsky, Meyer | |

Sarafand Camp

| | | |
|---------------|----------------|-------------|
| Cohen, Doreen | Kaufman, Celia | Perk, Rose |
| Cohen Sylvia | Levin, Judy | Toker, Lily |

Palmach [Yiftach Brigade]

| | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Medalie, Jack (Med. Officer) | Evian, Harold | Stark, Geoff |
| | Hassall, Harold | |

Palmach [Harel Brigade]

| | |
|---------------------|---------------------------|
| Gross, Jack [Medic] | Rosenberg, Gideon [Medic] |
|---------------------|---------------------------|

Appendix C

Palmach [Unclassified]

| | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|---------------|
| Chait, Chaim (early paratrooper) | Notrica, Jaques Rachailowitz, Boris | Smith, Morris |
|-------------------------------------|--|---------------|

Palmach [Negev Brigade]

Jedeiken, Joe

Palmach [Gedud 8]

| | | |
|--------------------------|----------------|--------------------------|
| Levy, Fred (demolitions) | Myers, Michael | Rachman, Chaim Elimelech |
|--------------------------|----------------|--------------------------|

Palmach [Gedud 9]

| | | |
|------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------|
| Beagle, Denis | Judelsohn, Bernard | Navon (Novesenitz), Phillip |
| Caspar, Abraham | Kirsch, Rusty | Patlansky, Jack |
| Chaskelson, Ronnie | Lipman, Alan | Rosengarten, Max |
| Centner, Clive (Rusty) | Lipshitz, Jack | Saks, Chaim |
| Cohen, Irwin | Malin, Bolly | Teperson, David (Migdal) |
| Goldstein, Harry | Matz, Rudolph | Zipper, Zvi (Medic) |
| Herr, Eli | Meyerson, Barney | |
| Jamieson, George | Miller, Benny | |

No. 2 Brigade (Carmeli)

Kahan, Maxim (Commander)

No.2 Brigade [Carmeli] [medical officers]

| | | |
|------------------|-------------------|---------------------------------|
| Aronson, Benzion | Klaff, Mendel | Greenblatt (Oren), Lola (nurse) |
| Kessler, Abe | Schweppe, Isadore | |

No.3 Brigade (Alexandroni)

| | | |
|------------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| Appel, Bernard (M.O.) | Getz, Enoch | Sarif, Fred |
| Shaper, Gerald (medic) | Harber, Hyman | Steinhart, Jack |
| Cooper, Alec | Kaye, Eric | Steingold, Willie |
| Duchen, David | Robinson, Issy | Witten, Solly |

No.5 Brigade (Givati – medical officers)

| | | |
|------------------------|---------------------|--|
| Levin, Stanley (G. 54) | Price, Alan (G. 52) | |
|------------------------|---------------------|--|

No. 6 Brigade (Etzioni)

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|---------------|
| Gamsu (Gruber), Sonia (G. 183) | Joffe, Harry Menache, Rica (G. Moria) | Teper, Joseph |
|-----------------------------------|---|---------------|

7th Armoured Brigade – Headquarters

| | | |
|--------------------|--------------|--|
| Goldstein, Joseph | Levy, Sydney | |
| Kanichowsky, Percy | Sack, Louis | |

7th – 72nd Infantry – Headquarters Company – medical

| | | |
|--------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| Bank, Harry (M.O.) | Fainman, (Lockie) (medic) | Treisman, Hymie (medic) |
|--------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|

7th – 72nd Infantry – Headquarters Company – Transport & Garage

| | | |
|---------------|------------------------|--|
| Cohen, Norman | Stern, Simon | |
| Kahn, Martin | Sher, Michael (Mickey) | |

7th – 72nd Infantry – Headquarters Company – Intelligence & Sniper platoon

Bloch, Goodman

7th – 72nd Infantry – Headquarters Company – Signals

Stein, Meshulam (Ziggy)

7th – 72nd Infantry – Headquarters Company – Sappers

| | | |
|---------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| Landau, Benny | Mandelzweig, Gordon | Van Heerden, Johny |
|---------------|---------------------|--------------------|

7th – 72nd Infantry – “B” Company – No.1 Platoon

| | | |
|---------------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| Banin, Jack (Kenya) | Katz, Jeff | Snipper, Mike |
| Bental, Solly | Klass, Harry | Susman, David |
| Brand, Luther | Marik, Colin | Walters, Ian (Kenya) |
| Davimes, Gerald | Morcowitz, Phil | Woolf, Joe |
| Etzine, Bernard | Novikow, Simon | |
| Hack, Louis | Perlman, Jeff | |

7th – 72nd Infantry – “B” Company – No.2 Platoon

| | | |
|------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|
| Clingman, Lionel | Manoim, Sydney | Schlachter, George |
| Golembo, Grisha | Medicks, Stanley (Kenya) | Taback, Solly |
| Krensky, Max | Mirwis, Jack | |

7th – 72nd Infantry – “D” Company (absorbed into “B” Coy) as – No.3 Platoon

| | | |
|---------------|--------------------------|-------------------|
| Brenner, Dave | Fisher, Frank | Malbin, Hymie |
| Busch, George | Genn, Zelig | Rachman, Abe |
| Chait, Max | Kacev, Jack | Sacks, Reuben |
| Cohen, Mendel | Katz, Monty | Sokolowsky, Solly |
| Clouts, Cyril | Levin, Teddy | Zinn, Jack |
| Danker, Kenny | Lipshitz, Solly (Smiler) | |

7th – 72nd Infantry – Support Company – Besa Platoon

| | | |
|------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Fisher, Geoffrey | Marcusson, Jack | Shorkend, Albert |
| Josman, Hymie | Nankin, Archie | Toker, Hymie |
| Levitt, Tookie | Reef, Eli | |

7th – 79th Armoured

Erez (Friedman), Baruch
(Gedud Commander) (Kenya)

7th – 79th Armoured – Headquarters Company – medical

| | | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------|--|
| Kidron (Rosenberg), David (M.O.) | Zagoria, Eli (medic) | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------|--|

7th – 79th Armoured – HQ Company – Motor Workshop

| | | |
|-----------------|----------------|---------------|
| Berman, Charles | Brouze, Leslie | Spiro, Norman |
| Arthur (Zadok) | Pearl, Julie | |

7th – 79th Armoured – Armoured Car Company

| | | |
|--------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Abel, Mike | Gross, David | Ossin, Solly |
| Fisher, Jules | Hirsch, Milton | Palestine, Abe |
| Getz, Lou (Shmuel) | Mandelzweig, Sim | Ringer, Morrie |
| Goldstein, Sydney (Nick) | Novikow, Abe | |

7th – 79th Armoured – Half Track Company

| | | |
|----------------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| Eliasov, Dave | Meyerowitz, Max | Todes, Helman |
| Green, Bernard | Morris, Jack | Tross, Alec |
| Hart, Joe | Navias, David | Wilk (Adar), Simie |
| Kruger, Lou | Rosowsky, Dov | |
| Kupferberg, Benjamin | Ritz, Jack | |

8th Armoured Brigade – 82nd Tanks

| | | |
|----------------|--------------------------|----------------|
| Behr, Stanley | Fellows, Richard | Kotzen, Lou |
| Buirski, Barry | Friedland, Bernard | Magid, Eddy |
| Cohen, Abe | Goldblatt, Hymie (medic) | Selby, Clive |
| Egdes, Morrie | Heller, Charlie | Wisenberg, Abe |
| Ezra, Vivian | Klein, Lionel | Wulfsohn, Sam |

8th Armoured Brigade – 88th Heavy Mortars

| | | |
|---------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Cort, Harold | Magid, Dave | Rudnick, Joe |
| Donde, Isaac | Rachman, Albert | Traub, Paul |
| Franco, Aaron | Rosen, Leon | |
| Franco, Simon | Rudnick, Dennis | |

8th Armoured Brigade – 89th Mechanized Commandos

| | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|
| Bernstein, Ralph (Bull) | Kantey, Jimmy | Sagar, Reg |
| Davis, Dov | Kruss, Michael (medic) | Schragenheim, Julian |
| Green, Hymie (medic) | Lehr, Bill | Sheinbaum, Ivan |
| Isaacson, Arnold | Marcus, Leslie | Sher, Harold |
| Isaacson, Mike | Nakan, Johny | Yodaiken, Ralph |

Miscellaneous – Haganah

Falk [Ben-Ami], Robert

Misc – Etzel

| | | |
|--------------|------------------------|----------------------|
| Katz, Shmuel | Kaplan [Lankin], Doris | Silber, Meir [Matey] |
|--------------|------------------------|----------------------|

Appendix C

Kibbutz Postings – Beit Keshet

| | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Fanaroff, Sam [Shlem] | Gordon [Krom], Simcha | Rakoff, Vivian Morris |
| Fanaroff [Katz], Yaffa | Leftwich, Margalit | Shall, Harry |
| Gampel, Leonard | Mannie, Kathleen | Siedner, Gershon |

Kibbutz Postings – Givat Brenner

Chait, Barry

Kibbutz Postings – Ramat Raziël

| | | |
|------------------|----------------|--------------|
| Vogelnest, Felix | Wainer, Barney | Wainer, Riva |
|------------------|----------------|--------------|

Kibbutz Postings – Kfar Darom

Shapiro, Mike [Meir]

Soldiers Canteen Volunteers

| | |
|--------------------------|-------------------|
| Charney [Millman], Sarah | Shapiro Ethelreda |
|--------------------------|-------------------|

Arrived September, 1945 – Activity Unknown

Eife, Chana

Arrived November, 1947 – “Drom Afrika I” (Chapter 1) (These names are repeated under specific units where applicable)

| | | |
|-----------------|---------------------|------------------------|
| Shirk, Jack | Greenberg (Granot), | Chait, Chaim |
| Ozen, Tuvia | Issy | Groenewald,(Grunwald), |
| Hershon, Yehuda | Wulfsohn, Sam | Ernst |

Sailed from S.A. December, 1947– Activity Unknown

Fabran, Isaac

Sailed from S.A. January, 1949 – Activity Unknown (Drom Afrika II)

| | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Abramowitz, M. | Levithan, Harold | Slender, Ronnie |
| Abrams, Cecil | Meltzer, Solly | Silverstein, Peter |
| Ben-Ami [Blecher], Solly | Milner, Harry | Smith, Barney |
| Kaplan, Jack | Shakenovsky, Mike | Witkin, Joe |

Safari Group: December, 1946 (Chapter 1) (These names are repeated under specific units, where applicable)

| | | |
|---------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Bloch, Harry | Magid, Eddy | Rieback, Issy |
| Galp, Morris | Miller, Benny | Zahavi [Goldblatt], Hymie |
| Harris, Henry | Navon, (Nowesenitz), Phillip | |

Jerusalem Siege

| | | |
|-------------------|----------------|-------------------------|
| Gluckman, Saada | Levin, Harry | Policansky, Mr. |
| Gitlin, Marcia | Lourie, Nadia | Pollicansky, Mrs. |
| Jocum, Rose | Lourie, Norman | Reznick [Salber], Polly |
| Kidron, Mordechai | Navon, Edie | |

Zionist Fed & Betar Officials

| | | |
|-------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Kaplan, Julius | Levin, Sam | Sandler, Abram |
| Kotlowitz, Rafael | Rudaitsky, Issy | Seidman, Otto |

Analysis of South African Participation in 1948

| | | |
|--|-----|------------|
| General HQ and Govt. Departments | 8 | |
| Medical Corps | 119 | |
| Navy | 15 | |
| Air force | 205 | |
| All Ground Units (excluding Medical officers and medics) | 239 | |
| Not enumerated elsewhere | 14 | |
| Sub Total | | 600 |
| Kibbutz Members (excluding those listed in military units) | 167 | |
| Sub-total 1 | | 767 |
| Other | 27 | |
| Sub-total 2 | | 794 |
| Unclassified | 90 | |
| Total Per Appendix "B" (not including Nachal) | | 884 |

Notes:

Appendix "C" was compiled from the personal knowledge of committee members and fellow Machalniks, very many telephone calls worldwide, the contents of this book, Eddy Kaplansky's "The First Fliers", and Philip Gillon's "70 Years Of South African Aliyah".

By persistent investigation many uncertainties about names have been resolved and a considerable number of names have been added. Despite extensive enquiries, however, in regard to several persons known to have served in the IDF, the editors still lack details of the units in which they served.

Readers are invited to offer any additional information and suggestions to Joe Woolf by telephone at +972 4 6767678, by email [email abu-safam@bezeqint.net](mailto:abu-safam@bezeqint.net) or care of Telfed at the address shown in the inside cover

The editors apologise for any errors or omissions, which may have defied our best efforts to achieve complete accuracy.

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Manuscript: Lionel Hodes.

Privately Roneoed manuscript: Dr. Jack Penn.

South African Archives: Research by Dr. Gidi Shimoni.

Machal Archives in Israel: Research by Dr. Gidi Shimoni.

Newspapers: Zionist Record, Jewish Times and Jewish Herald, of Johannesburg, and The Jerusalem Post.

Main Sources: Interviews, check interviews, correspondence, replies to questionnaires, log books and volunteers' picture albums.

INDEX

Note. This index does not include all names which appear in appendices B and C.

- 101 Squadron 89, 179, 188, 237, 292, 346
 103 Squadron 237, 251
 35 Flight 92, 219, 248, 253, 302
 505 Squadron 123, 207, 359
 52nd Battalion 331
 72nd Infantry Battalion 173, 185, 212, 228, 233,
 234, 258, 259, 260, 261, 262, 286, 302, 309, 360,
 361
 79th Armoured Battalion 173, 185, 233, 258, 260,
 261, 262, 286, 305, 333, 361
 7th Armoured Brigade 19, 134, 185, 212, 343
 82nd Armoured Battalion . 274, 281, 288, 301, 303,
 361
 88th mortar and infantry battalion 255
 89th Commando Battalion . 156, 254, 257, 274, 281,
 303, 305, 321, 361
 8th Armoured Brigade 156, 361
 9th Battalion (Palmach) 104, 230, 274, 281, 284,
 302, 339
 Aaron, (Israel)..... 381
 Abba Khushy (mayor of Haifa) 317
 Abdullah, King 71, 117, 139, 162, 193, 205, 224,
 236, 237, 249, 255, 272
 Abel, Mike 214, 262
 Aboutbul, Batya 126
 Aboutbul, Rina 126
 Abrahams, Rabbi Israel..... 70
 Abramowitz, M. 35
 Abrams, Cecil 35, 305
 Abu Aguella 284, 285, 306, 339
 Acre fortress..... 57
 Aden..... 15, 29, 30, 31
 Adler, Saul 74
 Aerovan (aircraft) 301
 Afikim (Kibbutz) 45
 Aggassi, Yehudit (see also Werbranchik)..... 352
 Agron, Dan 88, 89, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 219, 246, 320
 Agronsky, Gershon 88
 Ahrenson, Aubrey 251, 347, 358
 Air ambulance..... 52, 73, 237
 Alec, (U.K) 381
 Alexandroni Brigade..... 134, 142, 189, 334, 360
 Aliya Bet 28, 227
 Alkoshi, Mordechai 56, 57
 Allon, Yigal 104, 121, 139, 140, 159, 248, 250, 263,
 281, 321
 Alon, Modi.... 89, 199, 204, 238, 240, 245, 246, 381
 Alperstein, Hugo 32, 99, 106, 114, 188, 193, 220,
 251, 292, 324, 347, 352, 354, 358
 Altalena. 2, 144, 145, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152,
 158, 234, 235, 307, 323, 327, 328
 Alter, Cantor 39
 Alter, Clara 27
 Altman (Avidor), Yoav 308
 Altshuler, Batsheva 164
 Ambrose..... 338
 Amman 61, 71, 83, 117, 118, 205, 238, 249, 272,
 322
 Anam, Daniel 245
 Andrews, Stan..... 253, 381
 Angel, Aubrey 227, 305, 347, 358, 381
 Anglo-Saxons 77, 156, 183, 218, 220, 263, 273, 274
 Antin, Syd..... 160, 381
 Anti-Partition League 40
 Appel, Bernard..... 215, 333, 334
 Appel, David (Derek Bowden) .. 302, 334, 347, 357,
 360
 Aqaba..... 140, 221, 288, 339, 343
 Arab Legion... 42, 71, 108, 109, 113, 120, 127, 132,
 133, 134, 135, 136, 140, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166,
 184, 186, 191, 193, 197, 199, 231, 243, 249, 254,
 256, 305, 322, 343
 Arab Liberation Army 45, 111, 228, 260
 Aranha, Dr. 37
 Arazi, Yehuda..... 227
 Arbel, Naphtali 273, 305, 321
 Armistice 2, 3, 19, 67, 189, 281, 285, 286, 293, 302,
 307
 Aronson, Benny 381
 Aronson, Irene, Renee, Lilah 152, 347, 381
 Aronson, Noel..... 205, 215, 251, 252, 347, 358
 Arsi, Mr. 82, 83
 Arye, (U.K.)..... 381
 Askerelli 265
 Assaf, (Israel)..... 381
 Athens.... 81, 88, 92, 93, 97, 98, 118, 205, 242, 245,
 246, 275, 315, 316, 318, 319, 320, 336
 Atlit..... 316, 323, 325
 Attlee, Clement..... 288, 289
 Augarten, Rudy..... 252, 275, 381
 Auja El Hafir 249, 253, 282, 283, 284, 285, 321,
 329
 Auster (aircraft) 14, 108, 188, 193, 287, 315
 Avidan, Shimon 199
 Avidor (Altman), Yoav..... 308
 Axelrod, Abraham 152, 347, 358
 Axelrod, Harry 315
 Axelrod, Rebecca..... 152, 347, 359
 Aylon, Uri..... 106, 122, 305, 306, 325, 347, 358
 Azaddin, Amin..... 112
 Azzam Pasha..... 111
 B17 (aircraft) 311
 Babitz, Adam 126, 287
 Babrow, Sara 32
 Bacher, Ali..... 63
 Bacher, K. 63
 Bader, Elliot..... 265, 347, 357, 358
 Baker, George..... 381
 Balcha, Menashe..... 211, 347, 357
 Balfour Declaration 22, 38, 68, 69
 Balfour Park..... 17, 22, 39, 40, 51, 260
 Balkin, Itzhak..... 228

Balkin, Phil..... 321, 381
 Banin, Jack 228, 259, 260, 261, 347, 360
 Bank, Harry 173, 211, 212, 258, 262, 286
 Bank, Myra..... 211, 212
 Barachot, Dr. 126
 Barak (Radar station) 124
 Baraka, Flight Lieutenant 108
 Barazani, Moshe..... 56
 Barker, General 55, 56
 Bar-Levav (Levinson), Shaul 33, 106, 122, 143, 347, 359
 Barlin, Lily 213
 Barlin, Max 66, 75, 76, 123, 124, 125, 292, 347, 359, 381
 Barnett, Ivan 181, 265, 266, 267, 268, 296, 347, 357
 Barrard, John (see Titch Isaacson) 306
 Basson, Sydney 122, 352, 381
 Bay, Jamil Premier of Syria 272
 Beard, Frederick, G. 234
 Beasts of the Negev..... 281
 Beaufighter (aircraft)... 80, 242, 243, 251, 252, 253, 311
 Becker, Shulamit (see also Harris, Shula)... 58, 214, 347, 359
 Beersheva ...112, 129, 135, 199, 219, 222, 249, 250, 253, 254, 255, 256, 257, 258, 264, 266, 269, 273, 274, 275, 278, 282, 284, 288, 308, 315, 329, 331, 334, 339
 Begin, Menahem ... 55, 57, 127, 129, 142, 145, 146, 147, 150, 151, 236, 364
 Behr, Joe..... 122, 251, 338
 Behr, Stanley 89, 127, 142, 255, 301
 Behrman, Eric 251
 Behrman, Jeanne 251
 Beilinson Hospital 59, 187
 Beinart, Abe 27, 352, 381
 Beinart, Sarah 27
 Bek, Mohammed 112
 Bekovici, Conrad..... 127
 Bellon, Syd (Sydney Isaac) 215, 274, 347, 359
 Ben Amar, (Blumenfeld) Theodore..... 336
 Ben Ami, Mr. 333
 Ben Gurion 2, 13, 14, 23, 45, 60, 61, 68, 98, 101, 102, 106, 107, 121, 127, 129, 133, 145, 146, 147, 149, 150, 151, 155, 189, 203, 205, 206, 208, 241, 250, 300, 302, 308, 316, 318, 324, 343, 344
 Ben Hayam, Rachel (Katz)..... 352, 381
 Ben Hecht (vessel)34, 141, 217, 218, 269, 270, 302, 314, 319
 Ben Shemen .42, 120, 121, 135, 156, 163, 164, 165, 166, 214, 274, 320
 Ben Sira, Moshe 123
 Ben Yok (see Boettger) 300, 347, 358, 381
 Ben Zvi, Yehuda 381
 Benedict, Sister Audrey. 92, 93, 144, 182, 224, 235, 241, 242, 268, 269, 296, 300, 316, 347, 357
 Ben-Natan, Asher 126
 Ben-Nun, Naomi, Rachel 228
 Bennyskou (vessel) 211, 212, 258
 Bental, Solly 228, 258, 259, 262, 286, 347, 360, 381
 Bentel, Max 85, 86, 87, 215, 347, 358, 381
 Bentwich, Norman 316
 Berelowitz, Chaim..... 351, 381
 Berelowitz, Esther 318
 Berelowitz, Harry 153
 Berelowitz, Yechezkiel (Chatzi) 7, 21, 27, 191, 192, 194, 352, 381
 Berger, Abe 251
 Berger, Helen 152
 Berger, Maurice (Morrie)... 307, 315, 347, 358, 381
 Berger, Stan..... 124, 125, 381
 Bergmann, Ernst David 318
 Bergsen, Peter 53
 Berkow, Abe 126, 227, 287, 325, 347, 359, 381
 Berliand, George 301
 Berlin, Rabbi Meir 191
 Berman (Antonis), Miriam (Maisie) 352
 Berman, Charles Arthur 214, 262, 333, 347, 361, 381
 Berman, Maisie and Basil 27
 Berman, Max..... 27
 Berman, Monty 330
 Bernadotte, Count2, 93, 129, 135, 161, 162, 209, 214, 216, 225, 234, 236, 242, 243, 277, 336
 Bernie, (U.K.)..... 381
 Bernstein, Evelyn (Brewer)..... 213, 214, 331, 347, 359, 381
 Bernstein, Inez 91
 Bernstein, Norman 347, 381
 Bernstein, Ralph (Bull)156, 273, 321, 347, 354, 361
 Bet Chever..... 334
 Bet Eshel 135, 209, 266
 Bet Guvrin...222, 249, 252, 253, 256, 257, 321, 331
 Betar27, 28, 49, 55, 57, 127, 198, 213, 321, 331, 340, 362
 Beurling, George (Buzz) 301, 318
 Bevin, Ernest..... 67, 288, 289
 Beyers, Len 342
 Bilu Hospital 264
 Binder, Howard 214, 353
 Binyan - South African Housing Company 106, 328
 Birnbaum, Uri 213, 347, 357
 Bishop, Mr. 31
 Blackwood, Jimmy 237
 Blamine, Colonel..... 341
 Blau, Naftali (Tuxie) 47, 73, 79, 80, 81, 82, 109, 124, 148, 204, 209, 238, 239, 292, 296, 310, 322, 324, 347, 358
 Blau, Zehava 124
 Blecher, Solly (Israel Ben Ami) 35, 352, 362
 Bloch, Bernard 307, 347, 357
 Bloch, Bobby 22
 Bloch, Dr. (Australia)..... 268
 Bloch, Goodman 262
 Bloch, Harry..... 28, 30
 Bloch, June..... 307, 347, 357
 Bloch, Leslie5, 22, 122, 160, 175, 178, 201, 204, 340, 345, 346
 Bloch, Ray..... 381
 Bloom, Issy 352, 381
 Board of Deputies37, 38, 39, 48, 51, 53, 59, 60, 293
 Boem, Yoram 126
 Boettger (Ben Yok), Butch 176, 251, 299, 300, 338, 347, 358
 Bomb chuckers..... 99, 109, 114, 119, 321, 324

Bonanza (aircraft) 73, 74, 99, 100, 108, 112, 114, 117, 119, 335

Bornstein, Fritz381

Bornstein, Leo, A.....61

Bornstein, Shlomo229

Borsuk, Morris6, 132

Boston Hotel151, 315

Bourghstein.....49

Bovetes, Yehoshua.....297

Bowden, Thomas Derek (Appel David)302, 381

Boyd, Spencer.....301

Brand, Luther.....286, 347, 360, 381

Braudo, Charles 120, 123, 124, 347, 359, 381

Braudo, Lazar325

Braun, Kenneth215, 251, 347, 358

Brenner, Dave.....347, 361, 381

Brenner. Captain of Ben Hecht.....217

Broude, Gerry381

Brouze, Les213, 262, 347, 361

Brown, Bill303

Brown, Richard (Grisha).....219

Bruner (Ben Rom), Amos.....123

Brunton, Ray..... 122, 126, 127, 141, 142, 143, 144, 182, 279, 308, 347, 357

Buirski, Barry 155, 333, 347, 361

Buksnevsky, Sender (Ben Eliezer)228

Bukspan, Aaron 123, 124, 125, 381

Bunche, Dr. Ralph 129, 243, 265, 271, 272, 289

Burge, Bob.....213, 251, 347, 359, 381

Burma Road 14, 135, 156, 157, 169, 174, 186, 224, 231

Burrows, John.....302

Busch, George..... 214, 258, 259, 262, 286, 347, 361, 381

C-46 (aircraft)276

C-54 (aircraft)221

Caganoff, Harry208, 347, 358

Cairo .. 20, 28, 29, 31, 46, 58, 74, 75, 76, 77, 79, 80, 88, 93, 97, 135, 153, 176, 177, 178, 216, 223, 275

Caminsky (Camron), Leo152, 308, 347, 357

Camp 22.....188

Camp Dora.....333

Canter, Wilfred333, 342

Cape Argus69

Cape Times69

Carmeli Brigade..... 181, 258, 262, 324, 360

Carmi 121, 189, 321

Carruthers, Margaret.....265, 300, 347, 357, 381

Cary, Charles80

Caserta (mv).....214, 227

Caspary, Walter215

Castel Lambra.....77, 78

Celender, Monty214, 333, 347

Centner, Clive (Rusty)122, 123, 230, 274, 334, 347, 360, 381

Central Zionist Archives27

Chadouin, Jim.....94

Chait, Barry.....214

Chait, Hymie (Chaim)... 33, 158, 297, 360, 362, 381

Chait, Max . 158, 214, 258, 259, 262, 286, 347, 361, 381

Chalmers, Syd..... 251, 301, 319, 320, 347, 354, 358

Chamberlain, Neville.....23

Chaskelson, Ronnie ... 66, 76, 77, 78, 120, 121, 168, 209, 230, 274, 292, 347, 360, 381

Chemed (Scientific Corps)318, 359

Chemel, Monny (Moni).....109, 352

Chimes, Leslie ... 47, 73, 79, 81, 109, 110, 113, 119, 160, 179, 204, 251, 292, 300, 324, 347, 358

Chinn, Solly126

Chris (I/C Air Force Maps).....381

Christensen, Chris Jurgen338

Churchill, Sir Winston .. 1, 22, 48, 56, 233, 268, 288

Clark, 122, 216, 337, 347, 358, 381

Clarke, Deputy Commander of detention camp....64

Clingman, Lionel227, 258, 259, 261, 286, 347, 361, 381

Clouts, Cyril 214, 258, 259, 262, 286, 347, 361, 381

Cohen, Aaron327

Cohen, Abe122

Cohen, Abraham49

Cohen, Adeline291

Cohen, Barney347, 359

Cohen, Daphne126

Cohen, Eddie ... 21, 32, 89, 116, 160, 198, 199, 204, 324, 340, 358, 381

Cohen, Faive.....77, 120

Cohen, Irwin 215, 230, 274, 347, 360, 381

Cohen, Jack 160, 201, 221, 239, 240, 241, 252, 275, 276, 292, 308, 340, 347, 358, 381

Cohen, Leonard301

Cohen, Mendel.....214, 286, 341

Cohen, Mendel David.....126

Cohen, Myer126

Cohen, Nat.....76, 114, 176, 208, 219

Cohen, Norman.....262

Cohen, Rabbi, Dr. Jack.....21

Cohen, Ronnie223

Cohen, Syd 2, 11, 67, 88, 89, 90, 160, 161, 188, 201, 203, 204, 223, 238, 240, 247, 251, 252, 253, 277, 285, 287, 288, 291, 292, 300, 308, 309, 310, 323, 340, 345, 346, 347, 358, 381

Collins, Major.....13, 55, 364

Comay, Joan121, 152

Comay, Michael.....43, 44, 74

Cooper, Alec63, 122, 123, 334, 348, 360, 381

Cooper, Arthur... 47, 73, 79, 81, 110, 113, 119, 160, 175, 179, 188, 204, 209, 292, 300, 321, 324, 338, 348, 358, 381

Cooper, Paddy274, 283, 303

Coronation Hall41, 51, 64

Cort, Harold.....227, 348, 361, 381

Cossmann, Howard.....381

Council of Jewish Aviation46

Cowan, Aaron. D.381

Cranko, Herbert131, 132, 342

Crech-Jones.....49

Creed, Harry343

Cromwell Tank ... 143, 163, 170, 215, 254, 301, 326

Cunningham, General58

Cyprus.. 19, 30, 34, 62, 67, 81, 82, 84, 85, 105, 129, 214, 220, 225, 238, 240, 289, 314, 322, 328, 338, 342

Czechoslovakia.... 33, 34, 66, 89, 90, 91, 93, 95, 98, 115, 116, 118, 122, 126, 143, 150, 151, 160, 161,

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| 176, 179, 203, 205, 219, 220, 221, 238, 239, 240, 241, 275, 276, 293, 301, 307, 315, 335 | Dunkelman, Ben..... | 233, 261, 333 |
| Dagbreek | Dunsky, David | 64 |
| Daily Dispatch..... | Dunsky, Israel | 63, 232, 246, 292, 309 |
| Daily News..... | Dunsky, Selig | 41 |
| Dakota (aircraft) 75, 87, 88, 89, 92, 93, 97, 98, 101, 107, 112, 119, 120, 122, 131, 135, 175, 179, 204, 237, 246, 248, 251, 252, 275, 291, 297, 300, 306, 307, 311, 313, 324, 329, 331, 332, 333, 336, 337, 338, 342, 343 | Duval, Claude..... | 2, 94, 97, 98, 112, 119, 205, 209, 237, 275, 299, 300, 310, 339, 342, 348, 358 |
| Daks, Shmuel | Dworkin, Alec | 381 |
| Daleski, Hillel 66, 75, 123, 230, 273, 292, 310, 348, 357, 381 | Dworsky, Barney.. | 20, 126, 214, 287, 292, 348, 354, 359, 381 |
| Damascus 42, 119, 120, 178, 179, 184, 205, 345 | Eban, Abba..... | 43 |
| Damelin, Bob | Echilewitz, Hettie..... | 214, 336, 348, 357 |
| Dangott, Caesar | Ecker, E..... | 126 |
| Danker, Kenny .. | Edelman, Benny | 263 |
| 214, 258, 259, 262, 286, 305, 341, 348, 361, 381 | Edelstein, Yacov | 194, 348, 357 |
| Davidka | Eden Hotel..... | 91 |
| 112, 257 | Edmondson, William..... | 301 |
| Dauids, Barnett..... | Egdal, Issy | 351, 381 |
| 381 | Egdes, Morrie...11, 58, 89, 127, 142, 149, 164, 215, 255, 256, 292, 348, 361, 381 | Egyptian Spitfire shot down..... |
| Davidson, Esmond | 108 | Ehrlich, Joe..... |
| 348, 357 | Eife, Chana..... | 126 |
| Davimes, Gerald.. 19, 227, 258, 259, 260, 262, 286, 303, 309, 348, 350, 357, 360, 381 | Eilat..... | 27 |
| Davis, Dov..... | Eilat, the (vessel)..... | 274, 336, 339 |
| 213, 348, 361, 381 | Ein Hanatziv..... | 183, 217, 270 |
| Davis, Eli..... | 192 | Ein Sara |
| 156 | Ein Tzurim | 32, 105, 106, 157, 314 |
| Dawn, Bob..... | Eisenberg, Chaim | 71 |
| 276, 277 | 251, 348, 359, 381 | Ekron 89, 95, 99, 102, 118, 119, 149, 161, 177, 199, 203, 204, 219, 220, 223, 240, 243, 248, 264, 274, 276, 315, 329, 342 |
| Dawson, Johnny (see Burrows).. 288, 301, 302, 348 | El Adem | 80, 313, 338 |
| Dayan, Moshe ... 102, 112, 113, 133, 156, 164, 165, 187, 225, 293, 321 | El Al.2, 85, 132, 178, 203, 220, 251, 291, 292, 294, 295, 320, 342, 343 | El Arish 74, 100, 116, 132, 177, 178, 199, 252, 254, 277, 285, 309, 319, 332, 338, 340 |
| De jure recognition..... | Elandsvlei (Kalabaskraal) | 65 |
| 278, 285 | Elert, Billy | 12 |
| de Lange, David | Eli (Israel), | 381 |
| 53 | Eliasov, Dave | 262, 348, 361 |
| de Leeu, Asher..... | Elion, Hannah..... | 153, 314 |
| 219 | Elion, Saul Theodore..... | 153 |
| Dead Sea..... 91, 101, 108, 109, 117, 219, 274, 329 | Epstein, Cliff | 260, 381 |
| Degania | Epstein, Jock | 217, 270 |
| 112, 121, 133, 134, 268, 344, 346 | Esakof, Ernest | 152, 238, 243, 251, 293, 300, 310, 342, 348, 358 |
| Deir Yassin..... | Eshkol, Levi | 128, 146, 147 |
| 67 | Ettenburg, Moshe (Eitan)..... | 123, 125 |
| de-Shalit, Amos..... | Ettlinger (Adv) | 70 |
| 318 | Etzel see Irgun Zvai Leumi ... 58, 79, 123, 148, 234, 341, 361 | Etzine, Bernard...227, 258, 259, 262, 286, 348, 360, 381 |
| Die Burger | Etzion (Kfar Etzion and Etzion bloc).... 5, 2, 21, 27, 45, 48, 71, 120, 191, 192, 193, 194, 197, 257, 352 | Evening News |
| 68, 214, 232 | 242 | Evian, Harold |
| Die Vaderland | 242 | 76, 78, 348, 359 |
| 70 | Excell, Syd | 216, 337, 348, 358, 381 |
| Diensfrei, Micha..... | Exodus (refugee ship) | 1, 5, 23, 34 |
| 124, 125 | Ezrati, David | 126 |
| Difre, Thadee (Eytan Teddy)..... | Fabio (vessel) | 227, 235 |
| 302 | Fabran, Isaac | 32 |
| Digorkar, Yehuda | | |
| 126 | | |
| Dinn,..... | | |
| 176, 348, 358, 381 | | |
| Displaced Persons 20, 38, 39, 46, 62, 65, 76, 77, 78, 90, 92, 93, 213, 227, 266, 278 | | |
| Djani Hospital ... 126, 141, 143, 144, 154, 155, 182, 212, 308, 325, 332 | | |
| Dobrowitz, Alf | | |
| 177, 381 | | |
| Dolores (vessel)..... | | |
| 93, 213, 214, 331 | | |
| Dora Camp | | |
| 160 | | |
| Dorot | | |
| 135, 168, 184, 209, 263, 266, 267 | | |
| Doyle, Jack..... | | |
| 288, 381 | | |
| DP's..... | | |
| 34, 78, 93, 120, 227, 300, 307, 314 | | |
| Dreyer, Dr. | | |
| 263 | | |
| Drezner, Yechiel..... | | |
| 56, 57 | | |
| Drom Afrika 1 (Vessel). 33, 34, 106, 158, 211, 293, 297 | | |
| Drom Afrika 2 (vessel)..... | | |
| 34, 35 | | |
| Druch, Yosef | | |
| 126 | | |
| Drusinsky, Harry | | |
| 152, 353, 381 | | |
| Drusinsky, Luba | | |
| 152, 353, 381 | | |
| Duboff, Hal | | |
| 381 | | |
| Duchen, Dave | | |
| 262, 381 | | |
| Duchen, Raymond..... | | |
| 215 | | |

| | |
|--|---|
| Fagen, Sam | 341 |
| Fagin, Bert | 156, 165, 381 |
| Fainman, Lockie (Lawrence) | 152, 173, 228, 229, 231, 258, 259, 260, 261, 262, 310, 348, 354, 358, 360, 364, 381 |
| Falker, Butch..... | 251, 348, 358 |
| Faluja. 188, 249, 252, 256, 273, 277, 281, 286, 332, 334 | |
| Fanerov, Slavin | 27 |
| Farnfield, Anthony..... | 311 |
| Farouk, King | 82, 139, 176, 270, 271, 278 |
| Fass, Aaron | 126 |
| Feiner, Dr. Helen | 12 |
| Feinstein..... | 57 |
| Feldman, Arthur..... | 381 |
| Feldman, Harry | 18, 87, 204, 238, 251, 252, 291, 310, 348, 357, 381 |
| Feldman, Mannie | 251, 311, 348, 358 |
| Feldman, Sy | 381 |
| Feldman, Zacharia | 228, 234 |
| Feldstein, Irving..... | 219 |
| Felix, Otto | 89 |
| Feurman, Dick | 228 |
| Fine, David | 227, 353, 381 |
| Fine, Hillel | 27, 353, 381 |
| Fine, Mishy | 126, 215, 287, 318, 359, 381 |
| Finkel, Aaron (Red)..... | 160, 275, 276, 353, 381 |
| Firkser, Bernard | 333 |
| First Jewish baby born in Beersheba in 2,000 years | 308 |
| Fisch, Felicia, Phyllis..... | 228, 335 |
| Fisch, Jack | 63, 293, 312 |
| Fisch, Molly | 63, 64 |
| Fish, Michael | 213 |
| Fisher, Frank | 214, 286, 341, 361, 381 |
| Fisher, Geoffrey .. | 213, 259, 262, 286, 348, 361, 381 |
| Fisher, Jules | 213, 262, 361, 381 |
| Fisher, Shosh..... | 126 |
| Fisher, Willy | 333 |
| Fishman, Max | 126 |
| Fishman, Yehuda | 94 |
| Fitchett, Len | 13, 253, 301, 333 |
| Fix, Ivor | 121, 314, 315, 348, 357, 381 |
| Flanagan, Michael..... | 301 |
| Fleisch, Jack... 66, 77, 102, 128, 129, 223, 293, 348, 359, 381 | |
| Flint, Mike | 219 |
| Flying Fortress (aircraft).... | 173, 176, 177, 178, 179, 247, 252, 309, 338 |
| Francis, Bernard..... | 223 |
| Frank, Yacov..... | 208 |
| Frankel, Dr. | 115 |
| Frankel, Leon..... | 381 |
| Franks, Anna..... | 343 |
| Franses, Jack | 260, 381 |
| Fredman, Mike..... | 6 |
| Freedman (Eisenberg), Gita | 313 |
| Freedman, Jack | 228 |
| Freeman, Morris | 227, 348, 358, 381 |
| French Hospital, Jaffa..... | 126 |
| Fried, Dov | 352, 381 |
| Friedland, Bernard | 155, 173, 333, 348, 354, 361, 381 |
| Friedman (Nurse)..... | 84, 85 |
| Friedman, (Erez), Baruch | 262 |
| Friedman, Bernard | 52, 70 |
| Friedman, Joe..... | 175, 338 |
| Friedman, Lionel | 122 |
| Friedman, Lou | 126 |
| Friedman, Nathan | 208, 297, 348, 358, 381 |
| Friedman, Solly | 106 |
| Friedman, Tova..... | 84, 314 |
| Friedrich, Shlomo | 257, 321 |
| Friedstein, Kalman and Hilda | 352 |
| Friend, the..... | 69 |
| Futerman, Rolfe .. | 216, 251, 296, 319, 320, 348, 358 |
| Gabai, Josie (Yocheved)..... | 152, 353, 381 |
| Gadaffi, President | 15 |
| Galil Squadron..... | 220, 275 |
| Galp, Morris. 28, 29, 30, 31, 34, 293, 314, 348, 359, 362 | |
| Gamsu (Gruber), Sonia..... | 27, 348, 360 |
| Ganor, Tali..... | 6 |
| Ganor.(Genkind), Solly | 341 |
| Garden Synagogue..... | 70 |
| Gate, Freda (Strachilewitz)..... | 325 |
| Gattenou, Azriel..... | 123 |
| Gattenou, Leon | 123 |
| Gavshon, Jock..... | 131 |
| Gay, Captain | 82, 83 |
| Gaza-Rafa strip | 282 |
| Gedalia, (Israel) | 381 |
| Gefen (Radar Station)..... | 123, 124, 126, 287, 354 |
| Geffen, Chaim..... | 351 |
| Geffen, Chone..... | 152 |
| Geffen, Louis | 348 |
| Gefilte fish | 117 |
| General Zionists..... | 27, 28, 37, 105 |
| Genn, Zelig | 214, 286, 305, 341, 348, 361, 381 |
| Genussow, Herzl..... | 155, 348, 357 |
| Geri, Jack | 106 |
| Gering, Bernard ... 19, 38, 43, 51, 52, 63, 68, 70, 87, 88, 203, 381 | |
| Gershman, Leslie | 152, 251, 348, 359 |
| Getz, Enoch | 122, 123, 334, 348, 360, 381 |
| Getz, Louis | 228, 260, 262, 348, 361, 381 |
| Gibson, Ted | 13, 219, 220, 253, 274, 275, 302 |
| Gil-Gil..... | 58, 64, 65, 79 |
| Gillis, Merle..... | 215, 265, 348, 357, 381 |
| Gitlin, Gershon | 215, 262, 314, 348, 357, 381 |
| Gitlin, Marcia..... | 106, 348, 362 |
| Gitlin, Miriam..... | 314, 348, 357 |
| Givati Brigade... 132, 180, 183, 184, 199, 254, 264, 307, 331, 341, 360 | |
| Glazer, Hannah | 213, 348, 351, 354, 381 |
| Gluckman (Gillon), Colin .. | 45, 47, 82, 83, 106, 310, 322 |
| Gluckman, Dr. Henry | 40 |
| Gochen, Dennis | 251, 300, 348, 358, 381 |
| Goladi | 208 |
| Golan, (Goldberg) Leib | 77, 120, 314, 381 |
| Goldberg, Fanny | 27 |
| Goldberg, Jack | 64 |
| Goldberg, Monty | 122, 221, 293, 310, 321 |
| Goldblatt, Gerhardt..... | 214 |

Goldblatt, Hymie..... 30, 31, 77, 152, 302, 348, 358, 361

Goldblatt, Hymie (Zahavi) . 28, 30, 31, 77, 351, 362

Goldes, Abe..... 76, 120, 123, 125, 325, 348, 359

Goldman, Dr..... 316

Goldreich, Arthur 11, 227, 353

Goldstein, Coleman..... 381

Goldstein, Harry . 227, 255, 305, 325, 348, 360, 381

Goldstein, Joseph 214, 333, 348, 360, 381

Goldstein, Leo 126

Goldstein, Sidney (Nick)..... 214, 262

Golembo, Grisha 214, 286, 348, 361, 381

Golombick, Yetta 124, 125, 287, 348, 354, 359

Gonski, D.S. 51

Gonski, J.W..... 51

Goodlin, Slick 288

Gorbovsky, Moshe 214

Gordon, (U.K) 381

Gordon, C.B. 41

Gordon, Gerald..... 63

Gordon, Mary 82, 83, 84, 85, 264, 295, 314, 322, 327, 348, 357, 381

Goren, Rabbi Shlomo..... 199

Gotsman, Cyril 20, 121, 141, 217, 218, 269, 270, 293, 314, 348, 357, 381

Gottlieb, Calelis..... 348, 354, 357

Greece 118, 220, 240

Green, Bernard 214, 262, 333

Green, Hal 93

Green, Hymie 214, 348, 358, 361, 381

Green, Sam 126

Green, Sydney 251

Green, Zvi 109

Greenberg, Issy (Granoth)..... 33, 34, 104, 106, 129, 147, 179, 221, 239, 275, 293, 315

Greenblatt, Lola..... 215

Grevler, Chaim..... 79, 188, 251, 252, 315, 348, 359

Greyshirt movement..... 37, 181

Griffiths 90

Grobler 29

Grodentzik, Sylvia..... 126

Groenewald (See Grunwald) 33, 362

Gross, David..... 213, 262

Gross, Jack 27, 315, 348, 358, 359, 381

Gruenbaum, Yitzchak..... 236

Gruner, Dov..... 55, 56, 57

Grunwald, (Groenewald), Ernst 33, 353, 362

Grusin, Benny 214, 333, 348

Guri, the dog..... 85, 92, 319

Habokim – the Penetrators 331

Habonim...18, 32, 37, 45, 47, 49, 82, 181, 195, 208, 268, 310, 331, 339

Hack, Colin 42, 199

Hack, Louis .. 22, 191, 227, 258, 259, 348, 360, 381

Hadassah University Hospital 156

Haflaga (restraint) 47

Haganah1, 23, 34, 42, 43, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 57, 58, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 70, 74, 75, 77, 83, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 95, 97, 98, 99, 103, 107, 112, 117, 122, 123, 133, 139, 141, 143, 144, 146, 148, 150, 151, 160, 175, 183, 196, 197, 198, 201, 205, 214, 217, 227, 246, 247, 274, 302, 305, 307, 322, 326, 328, 344, 361

Halberstadt, Yosef..... 124, 381

Half-Track vehicles100, 148, 164, 165, 166, 168, 170, 215, 230, 254, 256, 258, 273, 283, 284

Halifax (aircraft)..... 243, 287, 313

Hamilton, Jock 381

Hanreck, Ricky..... 300, 348, 358, 359

Hapoel Hamizrachi..... 191, 192

Harber, Hyman 90, 122, 123, 142, 316, 334

Harber, Victor 214

Harel Brigade 257, 359

Harris, Henry..... 28, 30

Harris, Jack..... 302, 381

Harris, Rebecca 152, 153

Harris, Shulamit (see also Becker)..... 336

Hart, Joe 214, 262

Hartsfeld, Avraham 323

Harvey (owner of the yacht Three Bells) 30

Harvey, John 243, 301

Hashomer Hadati..... 192

Hashomer Hatzair27, 31, 33, 37, 195, 196, 211, 318

Hassall, Harold..... 215, 248, 249, 250, 348, 359

Hatehiya (Revival) movement 191

Hatzor.....5, 124, 129, 237, 248, 251, 252, 285, 287, 315, 323, 352

Haviv..... 57

Hebrew Legion..... 48, 49, 51, 52, 53, 54, 93

Hebron21, 27, 45, 71, 104, 120, 184, 191, 192, 193, 197, 249, 253, 255, 256, 257, 277, 281, 321

Heckelman, Joe 124, 126, 364

Helfet, Arthur11, 74, 75, 98, 102, 121, 122, 132, 153, 154, 156, 182, 296, 316, 348, 357, 358

Heller (Chief engineer on Ben Hecht)..... 217

Henochowitz, Lucien 126, 214, 287, 348, 359

Herbert, L..... 51

Herbstein, Frank..152, 174, 269, 270, 293, 315, 317

Herbstein, Nina 104, 215

Herling, Israel..... 41

Herman, Basil.19, 64, 70, 85, 88, 90, 173, 216, 234, 293, 318, 319, 348, 357, 381

Herman, Simon 43

Herr, Eli..... 227, 255

Hersch, Leslie Henry..... 348, 357, 381

Hershberg, Benny..... 229, 340

Hershon, Yehuda..... 33, 352, 362, 381

Herzliya airfield 319

Herzog, Colonel 154, 287

Hirsch, Milton 262, 348, 361

Hirshowitz, Lionel David..... 228

Hitler12, 17, 23, 38, 44, 48, 77, 181

Hod, (Fein) Mottie 254, 275, 309

Hodes, Lionel41, 76, 77, 78, 102, 128, 129, 142, 151, 159, 171, 172, 185, 230, 231, 232, 235, 256, 257, 293, 302, 348, 351, 357, 364

Hofmeyer, Jan 331

Hon Kheng, (vessel)..... 27

Horowitz, Cyril 381

Hotz, Elias Phillip. 204, 215, 348, 357, 381

Huleh valley 324

Hurwitz, Harry 58

Hurwitz, Minnie 12

Ilaniya (Moshav) 5, 6, 137

Illegal Immigration..... 28, 54, 67, 134

Ilowite, Arnold 118

Immerman, Rachel.....334
 Immigration 2, 12, 22, 23, 27, 28, 31, 33, 44, 46, 70,
 75, 79, 81, 84, 101, 129, 161, 162, 189, 195, 220,
 312, 323
 Iraq Suedan 104, 135, 136, 157, 183, 223, 230, 253,
 264, 273, 274, 277, 301, 331, 333
 Iraq-el-Manshiya.....286
 Iraqi Front.....133, 134, 135, 136
 Irgun Zvai Leumi. 17, 21, 22, 23, 33, 34, 38, 42, 46,
 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 62, 65, 67, 79, 89, 90, 93,
 97, 98, 106, 112, 123, 127, 129, 133, 139, 141,
 142, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 156,
 184, 188, 197, 198, 213, 214, 235, 236, 328, 333
 Isaacs, Norman 85, 88, 91, 215, 293, 296, 319, 342,
 348, 358, 381
 Isaacson, (Barrard).....76, 116, 381
 Isaacson, Arnold156, 214, 321
 Isaacson, Mike ... 156, 164, 165, 215, 273, 283, 293,
 315, 320, 329, 348, 361, 381
 Isaacson, Robert.....211
 Isdud .. 113, 116, 129, 136, 162, 198, 199, 249, 253,
 256
 Isserow, Eli .. 76, 120, 124, 125, 315, 325, 349, 359,
 381
 Izkowitz, Harry195
 Jabotinsky, Vladimir39
 Jackson, Dorothy125, 126
 Jacobs, Sandy.....161, 204, 275, 276, 381
 Jacobson, Auryt6
 Jacobson, Israel Joshua.....228
 Jaffa ... 42, 45, 62, 67, 112, 122, 126, 139, 154, 155,
 166, 180, 188, 212, 218, 225, 237, 241, 263, 270,
 271, 307, 308, 309, 323, 328, 332, 336
 Jaffe, Abe.....321, 349, 357, 381
 Jaffe, Barney213
 Jaffe, Meyer34
 Jaffe, Salber & Albow (Cape Town)33
 James, Frank 122, 159, 160, 215, 216, 293
 Jamieson, Georgie..... 152, 159, 230, 274, 306, 334,
 349, 360
 Jankelow127
 Janower, J.106, 325
 Jean, Stewardess381
 Jebin, Dr.....316
 Jedeiken, Joseph ... 79, 104, 121, 321, 349, 360, 381
 Jerusalem Front... 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 140
 Jerusalem Post88, 294, 344, 364
 Jewish Agency 23, 28, 38, 40, 43, 46, 49, 54, 56, 58,
 61, 66, 67, 71, 74, 98, 105, 314, 323
 Jewish Brigade.....45, 48, 227
 Jewish Herald.....294, 364
 Jish260, 261, 333
 Jocum, Rose.....106, 349, 362
 Joffe, Barney (Baruch).....27, 351, 359, 381
 Joffe, Bat-Ami76, 81, 322, 349, 359
 Joffe, Harry349, 360
 Joffe, Leish (Eliezer).....27, 325, 352, 381
 Joffe, Reuben 6, 66, 81, 120, 123, 125, 322, 325
 Joffe, Stella325
 Joffe, Sydney352, 381
 Joffe, Sydney Charles352, 381
 Johnson (Stewardess).....381
 Jonathan brigade183
 Josef 103, 353, 381
 Joseph, Dov343
 Joseph, Prof. Edward74, 187
 Josman, Hymie 5, 213, 259, 262, 279, 286, 302,
 349, 361, 381
 Judah, Dov 81, 83, 114, 117, 119, 160, 176, 177,
 178, 203, 204, 206, 207, 208, 218, 220, 234, 235,
 238, 247, 251, 253, 287, 288, 291, 300, 310, 323,
 324, 342, 349, 358, 381
 Judah, Elsie.... 81, 83, 114, 115, 276, 291, 322, 349,
 359
 Judelman, Ben-Zion.....27
 Judelman, Sybil (Ziona).....27
 Judelowitz, Jacob, Solomon208
 Judelsohn, Bernard227, 255
 Judkowski, Mr. and Mrs.32
 Junkers (aircraft).....328
 Kacev, Delyn227
 Kacev, Jack.....227, 258, 349, 361, 381
 Kader El Husseini Abdel67
 Kadushewitz, Gershon.....213, 251, 349, 359, 381
 Kahn, Ira381
 Kahn, Martin.....286, 341, 349, 360, 381
 Kahn, Morris.....211
 Kalabaskraal (Elandsvlei).....65
 Kalman, Moshe.....241
 Kangisser, Max.. 120, 125, 126, 214, 325, 349, 359,
 381
 Kanichowsky, Percy262, 349, 360, 381
 Kantey, Leon (Jimmy)152, 156, 165, 166, 305, 321,
 349, 361
 Kantor, Bill355
 Kaplan, (Lankin), Doris106
 Kaplan, Albert213
 Kaplan, Cyril 132, 153, 182, 317, 324
 Kaplan, David.....6
 Kaplan, Dr. E132
 Kaplan, Dr. Isaac65
 Kaplan, Haig27, 32
 Kaplan, Jack.....35
 Kaplan, Julius65, 228
 Kaplan, Mort.....124, 125, 381
 Kaplan, Ruth.....228
 Kaplan, Solly351, 381
 Kaplan, Stanley.....213, 324, 349, 359, 381
 Kaplan, Gerald.....208
 Kaplansky, Eddy.....6, 287, 363
 Kapuza, Leslie307, 381
 Kark, Mrs. G.349
 Kark, Norman242
 Kark, Stanley122
 Kark, Sydney314
 Kark, Wilfred.....64, 288
 Karpel, Abraham333
 Karpel, Len 122, 159, 170, 171, 185, 256, 257, 349,
 357
 Kashani, Eliezer.....56, 57
 Kasrils, Hilary (Jaffe)322
 Kass, Shlomo381
 Kassel, Harry349, 357, 381
 Kassel, Harry Ruby.....215
 Kastel.....61, 67, 306
 Katchalsky, Aharon and Ephraim318

Katz Monty, Montague..... 286, 361, 381
 Katz, Abraham 191, 349, 381
 Katz, Cyril..... 47, 73, 101, 107, 112, 113, 116, 119,
 160, 175, 179, 188, 193, 194, 204, 209, 293, 299,
 300, 324, 338
 Katz, David 323, 324
 Katz, George 208
 Katz, Hertzal 5, 6
 Katz, Jeffrey 213, 258, 259, 262, 349, 360, 381
 Katz, Reuben 352, 381
 Katz, Samuel 65, 235, 236
 Katz, Victor 76, 79, 108, 115
 Katz, George 208
 Katzen, David..... 324
 Katzenellenbogen, Elliot ... 159, 255, 273, 293, 315,
 318, 334, 349, 357, 381
 Katzenstein, Kurt..... 131
 Katzew, Ethel 12
 Katzew, Henry..... 1, 2, 5, 12
 Katzew, Joe 18, 88, 91, 215, 219, 237, 274, 293,
 320, 324, 329, 349, 358, 381
 Kaufman, Max..... 349, 358, 381
 Kaufman, Saville..... 6
 Kaukji.....49, 67, 111, 112, 140, 162, 169, 185, 258,
 259, 260, 262
 Kaye, Kurt 88
 Kaye, Phil..... 63
 Kayser, Bill 294, 349, 358
 Kedmah (vessel)..... 93, 213, 214, 333
 Kelet 9 113, 173
 Kelly (Armoured Corps) 303
 Kemp, Philip 215, 251, 300, 349, 355, 358
 Kentridge, Morris 52, 70
 Kentridge, Sydney 251, 253, 338, 381
 Kessler, Abe (Abraham)..... 262, 349, 357, 360
 Kevin, J 126
 Kfar Blum..... 5, 325, 339, 352
 Kfar Daniel..... 331, 334
 Kfar Etzion...5, 2, 21, 27, 45, 48, 71, 120, 191, 192,
 193, 194, 197, 257, 352
 Kfar Giladi, Kibbutz..... 42, 103, 121, 144, 182, 308
 Kfar Sirkin..... 296
 Kfar Szold 45, 103, 136
 Kfar Vitkin .144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151,
 314
 Khartoum.28, 29, 30, 79, 80, 93, 312, 329, 338, 343
 Kidron brothers 106
 Kidron, David (Rosenberg) 79, 173, 262
 Kidron, Mordechai 32
 Kieser, Julio..... 381
 Kimche, Jan..... 224
 Kinarti, Dov..... 208, 233
 King David Hotel 22, 55, 156, 186
 King Farouk (flagship)..... 269, 270, 271
 Kirsch, Rusty..... 227, 274, 349, 360, 381
 Kirschner, (Rosenberg) Ruth..... 352, 381
 Kirschner, Eli 106, 325
 Kirschner, Ivan 227, 251, 349, 358, 381
 Kirschner, Nicolai 102, 325
 Kirschner, Zelda 224
 Kittyhawk (aircraft)..... 47
 Kiwi from N. Zealand 185, 302
 Kjeldsen, Captain 212
 Klaff, Mendel 262, 268, 349, 357, 360, 381
 Klass, Harry.....228, 258, 259, 260, 262, 286, 340, 341,
 349, 355, 360, 381
 Klein, Hymie 260, 381
 Klein, Lionel 215
 Kleinman, Morris 63
 Klug, Aaron..... 318
 Kobrin, Judah 351, 381
 Kofsky, Wally 251, 349, 358
 Kolnick, Tefke 27
 Koppel (Taxi owner) 75
 Korff , Rabbi 53
 Kosses, Lottie..... 126
 Kossowsky, Rabbi I 70
 Kotlowitz, Mailech..... 214
 Kotlowitz, Raphael.....54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 65, 93,
 198, 294, 349, 359, 362
 Kotzen, Lou..... 273, 301, 349, 361, 381
 Kowarsky, Leo51, 52, 53, 63, 70, 128, 294, 355,
 381
 Kramer, Solly 208, 349, 358, 381
 Krensky, Max.....215, 228, 259, 262, 286, 349, 361
 Kriel, C.C. 342
 Krige, Francois 329
 Krige, Uys 329
 Krispin, Haim 323
 Kroll, Shlomo 353, 382
 Kruger, Lou 213, 262, 349, 351, 361, 382
 Kruss, Mike 214, 325, 349, 358, 361
 Kuper, S.M. 38, 49
 Kupferberg, Benjamin..... 155, 262, 349, 361
 Kurgan, Hymie155, 188, 274, 333, 349, 359, 382
 Kurtz, Ray 176, 177, 218
 Ladispoli..... 93, 213
 Lahat, Shlomo 382
 Lakadimos, George 245, 246
 Lake Maggiore 93, 213, 214
 Landau, Benny ...151, 173, 228, 230, 261, 349, 360,
 382
 Landman, Aharoni..... 228, 234, 341, 382
 Landshut, Mike (Amir) 142, 170, 171, 172, 185,
 302, 349, 357, 382
 Landsman, Gerald 153, 215
 Landsman, Ruth 215
 Lanesman, Ralph..2, 1, 5, 6, 11, 120, 126, 227, 287,
 349, 359, 382
 Langbart, Syd.....159, 185, 273, 310, 315, 334, 349,
 357, 382
 Lange, Phoebe 12
 Lankin, Doris (Kaplan) 106
 Lanzkowsky, Sheila 211, 353
 Lapidot, Yehuda 197
 Larkin, Margaret 16, 384
 Latrun. 120, 121, 127, 133, 134, 135, 136, 140, 157,
 158, 159, 162, 163, 169, 170, 180, 189, 199, 225,
 231, 302, 307, 323, 331, 343
 Laufer, Professor. 314
 Laver, Allan George..... 215
 Lawrence, Harry..... 37, 347, 349, 356, 358
 Lazarus, Joe..... 215, 251
 Lazarus, Leslie 208, 349, 358
 Le Clerc. General 302
 League of Nations 22, 65

Leah (Nurse at Tel Litwinsky).....335
Leatherborough, Wing Commander79, 80
Lechi (see also Stern Group).....23, 183, 235
Lee, Nat64
Legum, Colin52, 238, 336, 355
Lehr, Bill..... 155, 273, 321, 349, 357, 361
Leibowitz, Joe.. 17, 79, 99, 100, 113, 114, 116, 160,
176, 178, 179, 204, 209, 251, 294, 324, 349, 355,
358
Leipoldt, Jeff.....17
Leisure, Sydney229
Leizer (Losser), Rubin (Ray)..... 182, 269, 353
Lenart, Lou 199, 382
Lerner, Seymour176
Levantine, Dr.159
Levett, Gordon.....2, 301
Levin, Assam (Shalom)88
Levin, Basil.. 81, 250, 254, 282, 307, 315, 325, 329,
349, 359, 382
Levin, Harry.....106
Levin, Sam (England).....338
Levin, Sam (Father of Stanley and Basil).....382
Levin, Sam (Israel) 325, 384
Levin, Stanley.. 81, 82, 83, 115, 180, 250, 264, 268,
296, 322, 324, 349, 357, 360, 382
Levin, Teddy..... 227, 258, 259, 262, 361, 382
Levin, Yocheved..... 115, 152, 180, 268, 324, 353
Levine, Julius.....349, 359, 382
Levine, Shaul 124, 382
Levinsohn, Bob (Ezra).....83
Levinsohn, Julian.....213, 349, 358, 382
Levinson, Hassie.....316
Levinson, Sam208, 297, 349, 358, 382
Levithan, Harold.....35, 349, 355, 362
Levitt, Benjamin Baynes (Tookie).....213, 259, 262,
349, 361
Levitt, Dov353, 382
Levy, Abraham106
Levy, Amelia195
Levy, Cyril Jeffrey.....349, 357
Levy, Effie 126, 227, 287, 349, 359, 382
Levy, Jack (UK).....126
Levy, Joe.....247
Levy, Maish215
Levy, Milly106
Levy, Norman.....382
Levy, Sydney122, 341
Lewis, Len208, 349, 358, 382
Lewis, Sam177
Lewis, sergeant major.....63
Liberators (aircraft).....132
Libow, Marvin382
Libya.....15, 16, 19
Lichtenstein, Chaya313
Lichter, George275, 276, 382
Lichtman, Giddy382
Lieberman, Al.....126
Lifschitz, Max.....27
Lily, (Theater sister)127
Lindsay, Alf 73, 79, 80, 81, 238, 337, 349, 358
Lipman, Alan 189, 215, 230, 349, 360, 382
Lipman, Sydney215, 251
Lipschitz, Zvi.....27, 191, 192, 194
Lipshitz, Jack262, 349, 360, 382
Lipshitz, Solly Zalman (Smiler) 214, 258, 259, 262,
349, 361
Lloyd George38, 328
Lochamei Hageta'ot, Kibbutz.....258
Loewenstein, Issy382
Lorch, Netanel 12, 42, 100, 111, 139, 163, 170, 199,
255, 273, 281, 284, 364
Losser (see Leizer)..... 182, 269, 353
Lourie, Arthur43
Lourie, Norman and Nadia106
Louw, Eric277, 278
Lovell, Leo.....51, 63
Lowenberg, Robert227, 349, 358
Lowenstein, Issy27, 32, 353
Loy, Myrna92
Luxemberg, Luxie234
Lydda. 32, 46, 67, 75, 76, 80, 97, 98, 107, 112, 117,
159, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 170, 180, 215,
234, 275, 305, 313, 316
Ma'abarot (kibbutz)237
Ma'agan, (kibbutz)45, 46
Ma'ayan Baruch (kibbutz). 5, 21, 27, 32, 33, 42, 77,
99, 102, 103, 105, 106, 108, 120, 128, 129, 182,
185, 188, 199, 211, 268, 269, 294, 352
MacDonald, Harry (Mac)301, 382
Macdonald, James .G.....65, 310
Machal Shikun.....326
MacKenzie, Dr.....83
Magen David Adom59, 159
Magid, David227, 255, 302, 349, 382
Magid, Eddy .. 11, 28, 29, 30, 31, 89, 127, 142, 149,
164, 255, 256, 294, 302, 326, 349, 361, 362, 364,
382
Maimonides (prayer)153
Maisels, I.A.....38
Makleff, Paltiel221, 222, 223
Malben98
Malbin, Hymie..... 227, 260, 286, 349, 361, 382
Malin, Bolly.....230, 349, 360, 382
Malkin, Charles310
Malkin, Melville 122, 123, 149, 230, 233, 273, 288,
294, 310, 339, 349, 357, 382
Malkiya..... 108, 128, 129, 133
Mandate 22, 40, 44, 56, 60, 101, 130, 161, 189, 274
Mandela, President Nelson11
Mandelstam, Charles ... 90, 183, 217, 269, 270, 294,
314, 325, 327, 344, 349, 357
Mandelzweig, Gordon . 19, 151, 173, 228, 229, 233,
261, 294, 302, 327, 349, 360, 382
Mandelzweig, Sim286, 349, 361, 382
Mankowitz, (Manor), Michael, ... 251, 349, 358, 382
Mann, Morrie..... 161, 201, 204, 247, 253, 345, 355,
382
Manof228
Manoim, Sydney.....286, 349, 361
Manshiya67, 331
Marcus, Col. Mickey98
Marcus, Dr.266
Marcus, Edal251, 349
Marcus, Leslie 65, 156, 214, 215, 257, 273, 274,
294, 321, 329, 349, 361, 382
Marcus, Leslie and Paula.....6

Marcusson, Jack 213, 259, 262, 286, 361, 382
Mardor, Munya..... 98
Margo, Cecil.... 53, 63, 67, 155, 203, 204, 205, 206,
207, 208, 248, 252, 294, 349, 358, 382
Margolius, Bully 143, 161, 247, 307, 315, 349, 357,
359
Margolius, Lily..... 143
Marik, Colin 215, 228, 328, 349, 360, 382
Markos, General 245
Marks, Sir Simon..... 42, 43, 131, 132
Marmelstein, Phillip 219, 223, 239
Marseilles 78, 145, 148, 211, 213
Marshall, George..... 38, 46, 236, 243
Mary Line to Haifa..... 105
Massada..... 5, 132, 133, 134, 219, 352
Massuot 71
Matz, Rudolph (Rudy)..... 349, 360, 382
Mazerow, Lou 251, 294, 349, 358, 382
McElroy, John 276, 288, 382
McGee, Chris 382
McGrath, G.E. 198
McMillan, General 56
ME 109 (aircraft)..... 188, 223, 277
Medalie, Jack..... 122, 123, 141, 161, 167, 169, 201,
234, 241, 250, 267, 268, 296, 325, 329, 349, 357,
359, 382
Medalie, June 127, 241
Mederer, Meir 213
Medicks, Stanley 228, 259, 260, 262, 286, 349, 361,
382
Meir (Meyerson), Golda..... 71, 82, 102, 322, 323
Meltzer, Lionel 43, 74, 93, 153, 154, 157, 158, 163,
167, 169, 179, 181, 182, 186, 224, 233, 242, 274,
295, 325, 330, 332, 364
Meltzer, Rose 224, 228
Melzer, Solly 35
Memmi, Prof. Albert 15
Menashe (Balcha)..... 211, 212, 347, 357
Mendelowitz, Maurice 6, 20, 39, 215, 294, 329, 350,
359, 382
Meridor, Yacov 58
Merkel, Tzokie and Gillian 6
Meron 260, 261, 333
Messerschmitt (aircraft) .. 89, 91, 98, 116, 117, 122,
135, 143, 150, 151, 160, 161, 179, 199, 201, 203,
204, 221, 246, 248, 251, 253, 301, 307, 310, 345
Meyerowitz, Hank..... 309, 340
Meyerowitz, Max 213, 350, 361, 382
Meyers, Kalman 88, 94, 296
Meyerson, Barney 350, 360, 382
Meyerson, George 176, 178, 251, 310, 350, 358,
382
Michel, Tim..... 251, 342, 350, 358
Michelson, I.C. 132
Michelson, Victor..... 48, 49, 51, 53
Miller, Benny .. 28, 30, 31, 230, 274, 350, 360, 362,
382
Miller, Harry 265, 266
Miller, Joyce..... 350
Miller, Leo..... 382
Miller, Louis..... 153, 154, 155, 204, 225, 296, 330
Miller, Mike 125
Miller, Sam..... 251
Milner, Harry 35
Milos, (the refugee ship) 23
Milton, Felix..... 302
Milunsky, Horace 77, 102, 128, 129, 156, 159, 171,
185, 321, 350, 357
Mintz, Myron 382
Mirwis, Jack 286, 309, 350, 361, 382
Mishmar Ha'Emek..... 67
Mishmar Hanegev 104, 129, 168, 263
Mishmar Hayarden..... 119, 128, 133, 136, 160, 162,
170, 175, 178, 201, 286, 309, 345
Mombasa..... 27, 28, 31, 33, 68
Monbaz, Jack 330
Moolman 342
Moonitz, Norman 118, 177, 382
Morcowitz, Phillip..... 213, 258, 259, 262, 350, 360,
382
Morowcowa, Edita 126
Morris, Isaiah 169
Morris, Jack..... 262
Morris, Sam..... 126
Moses, Dr. 143, 144, 241, 332
Moshav Habonim 268, 295, 302, 305, 323, 325,
331, 339
Moslem Brotherhood 134, 135, 197, 231, 278
Mosquito (aircraft shot down)... 176, 251, 288, 289,
301
Mosquito (ferried) 176, 251, 288, 289, 301
Moss Morris (Baram), Rona..... 27, 330, 352, 357
Mostyn, Joe 308
Mount Hermon 120
Mount Scopus 67, 74, 135, 186, 189
Moyne, Lord..... 23
Munweis, David 126
Mustang (aircraft)..... 277, 287, 288, 301, 323
Myers, Freda Celia 228
Mymin, Monty 123, 126, 350, 359
Nachshon..... 67
Naftali, Kadesh..... 128
Najman, Herbert (U.K) 382
Nakan, John..... 156, 214, 273, 303, 321, 350, 361
Naker 57
Nankin, Archie 213, 259, 262, 286, 350, 361, 382
Napoleonchik (the artillery piece)..... 343
Narunsky, Lionel..... 214
Narunsky, Reuben..... 208, 350, 351, 358, 382
Nash, Stanley 227, 251, 350, 358, 382
Nasser 249, 286
Natal Mercury 68, 130
Natal Witness 68, 130
Nathan, Abe 219, 382
Naturman, Meyer 126
Navias, Dave 286, 350, 361
Navon, Edie..... 106
Navon, Phillip (Novesenitz).. 18, 28, 30, 31, 76, 78,
230, 233, 274, 294, 325, 350, 360, 362
Navy..... 13, 20, 121, 130, 134, 139, 146, 150, 159,
183, 212, 213, 217, 219, 269, 270, 282, 288, 292,
314, 319, 327, 357, 363
Nebi Yusha..... 103, 121, 128
Negba . 133, 135, 136, 157, 168, 184, 189, 230, 273,
331

Negev Brigade 19, 149, 183, 184, 189, 223, 263,
 274, 281, 306, 336, 339, 360
 Netanya.. 42, 57, 104, 123, 149, 160, 188, 196, 237,
 317, 333, 334
 Niksic.....221, 239, 245, 275, 276
 Nimrod, (Israel)382
 Nirim (Kibbutz) ... 73, 133, 135, 168, 183, 184, 209,
 250
 Noach, Issy 89, 231, 238, 251, 350, 358
 Noga (vessel)269, 270, 327
 Nokrasy Pasha (Premier of Egypt)272
 Nomis, Leo 161, 382
 Norseman (aircraft).....92, 219, 220, 221, 223, 239,
 248, 253, 274, 275, 301, 318, 322
 Northern Front 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 140
 Novikow, Abe.....228, 262, 361, 382
 Novikow, Simon .. 19, 228, 258, 259, 260, 262, 286,
 302, 341, 350, 360, 382
 Nowesentz, Phillip (Navon).....28, 350, 362, 382
 Nurick, Abe and Riva ... 32, 106, 188, 251, 252, 294
 Nurick, Riva.....353
 Nurock, Sheinie32
 Oded Brigade261
 Oesschger.....300, 350, 358
 Ogin, Dot27
 Oliver, Morris350, 358
 Operation 3549
 Operation Avak.....223
 Operation Ayin282
 Operation Dani..... 163, 164, 169, 170, 184
 Operation Hiram 228, 230, 258, 259, 260, 262, 286,
 333
 Operation Maccabi.....196
 Operation Magic Carpet.....85
 Operation Nachshon67
 Operation Strangle253
 Operation Ten Plagues.....219, 230, 247, 248, 249,
 277, 283
 Operation Velvetta... 2, 34, 179, 221, 240, 246, 275,
 276, 277, 335
 Operation Yoav.....331
 Oppenheimer, Sir Ernest.....59
 Orloff, Dave.....126
 Orringer, Paul251
 Ospovat, Sonny.. 215, 220, 251, 275, 294, 296, 350,
 358
 Osrin, Harold (Ossie).... 76, 241, 331, 350, 358, 382
 Ossin, Solly... 19, 262, 302, 323, 325, 350, 361, 382
 Ostroff, Marcia6
 Ostroff, Maurice 1, 6, 11, 20, 87, 120, 122, 123,
 124, 287, 328, 350, 359, 382
 Oxford Synagogue94
 Ozen, Tuvia.....33
 Ozinsky, Phillip 20, 155, 189, 303, 333, 350, 359
 Palestine Post 1, 49, 278, 279, 287
 Palestine Post editorial on Machal.....278
 Palestine, Abe228, 262, 361, 382
 Palgi (Rabkin), Phyllis.....45, 46
 Palgi, Yoel43, 45, 46, 47, 51, 59, 66, 67, 68, 89, 90,
 114, 115, 127, 128, 183, 308, 310, 322, 344
 Palmach . 1, 18, 45, 47, 67, 104, 114, 121, 122, 128,
 129, 141, 142, 149, 152, 155, 156, 158, 159, 161,
 164, 167, 168, 169, 170, 173, 181, 189, 193, 203,
 233, 241, 247, 250, 255, 267, 268, 270, 273, 288,
 302, 323, 339, 340, 359, 360
 Palmietfontein 48, 53, 64, 66, 73, 74, 76, 85, 88, 92,
 126, 205, 214, 307, 315, 333, 336, 337, 343
 Pan Africa Air Charter (PAAC)... 73, 80, 87, 89, 92,
 93, 97, 131, 246, 275, 324, 329, 337, 338
 Partition Plan ... 3, 17, 19, 34, 37, 38, 40, 43, 44, 46,
 51, 53, 59, 60, 61, 69, 74, 84, 105, 106, 108, 111,
 130, 139, 161, 162, 193, 203, 249, 317, 336
 Patlansky, Jack.....214, 255, 350, 360, 382
 Patria, (the refugee ship).....23
 Peake, Wayne287, 382
 Pearl, Julie (Julian) 213, 262, 350, 355, 361, 382
 Pelah, Yisrael.....318
 Penn Jack . 11, 74, 90, 106, 143, 181, 186, 224, 296,
 364
 Penn, Di228
 Perlman, Jeff..... 151, 173, 228, 229, 230, 259, 260,
 262, 350, 360, 382
 Peter from Lancashire.....302
 Piesenbruner, Judith.....126
 Pincus, Esther Naomi..... 153, 332
 Pincus, Joel65
 Pincus, Louis 38, 342
 Pincus, Esther Naomi..... 153, 332
 Piper Cub (aircraft) 73, 97, 193, 314
 Pitluck, (Stolov) Riva214, 359
 Pizaro, Avram.....270, 327
 Pnini, Yacov352
 Policansky..... 106, 350, 362
 Polon, Rebecca27, 192
 Polon, Yudel192
 Pomerance, Elsie276
 Pomerance, Sam ... 95, 179, 239, 240, 241, 275, 276
 Pomerantz, Bill 275, 276, 382
 Port Sudan29, 30, 31
 Portugali, Avraham.....220, 300
 Powers, Cliff.....338
 Prague..... 89, 160, 179, 221, 239, 275, 338
 Price, Alan 213, 331, 350, 357, 360, 382
 Primus..... 160, 313
 Prinz, (Holland)382
 Proclamation of the State..... 101
 Quota (immigration certificates)..... 84, 338
 Raab, Larry 176, 315
 Rabin, Yitzchak159
 Rabinowitz, Lenny.....106
 Rabinowitz, Rabbi, Dr. L.I. . 17, 40, 41, 48, 58, 294
 Rabkin, Phyllis.....45, 46
 Rachelovitch, Boris211, 212
 Rachilewitz, Eliezer.....352, 382
 Rachman, Abe (Abraham)286
 Rachman, Albert.....228
 Radar..... 2, 6, 13, 20, 51, 63, 66, 76, 113, 120, 122,
 123, 124, 125, 126, 207, 252, 270, 287, 292, 317,
 318, 322, 323, 359
 Raizes, Bella 124, 126
 Ralph Rosofsky.....219
 Ramat David.. 43, 94, 107, 158, 175, 176, 178, 179,
 188, 204, 205, 216, 223, 237, 238, 240, 242, 246,
 248, 251, 252, 253, 275, 287, 297, 301, 307, 310,
 319, 320, 338, 342
 Ramat Rachel..... 21, 134, 140, 197, 198, 225, 231

Ramat Yochanan 105, 215
Rambam Hospital 224, 316
Ramle .112, 159, 162, 163, 165, 166, 167, 170, 174,
180, 199, 234, 321
Rand Daily Mail 17, 59, 69
Rapide (aircraft) 59, 73, 79, 114, 116, 117, 119,
209, 223, 237, 253, 322, 333
Rappaport, Nahum 220
Rathouse, Alex 143, 152, 350, 359
Rathouse, Evelyn 143
Ravid, Hyman 350, 357
Ravid, Zelda 153, 332
Read, Savage 88
Rebak, David 308
Reeb, Meish 352, 382
Reef, Eli 214, 259, 262, 286, 326, 333, 350, 361,
382
Reiman (Rimon), Shmuel 123
Remez, Aaron 113, 116, 206, 207, 208, 247, 382
Resnekow, Victor (Bunny) 153
Resnick, Polly (Salber) 106, 350
Retief, Carl 342
Reuben Katz 352, 381
Revadim 71
Revisionist party 27
Revivim, Kibbutz . 42, 209, 230, 250, 283, 315, 335
Rhodes 81, 92, 240, 243, 245, 246, 285, 319, 320
Rice, Colonel 64
Rieback, Issy 28, 30, 350, 357, 362
Riesenveldt, Alf (Holland) 382
Rimmer, Zvi (Rutledge Dennis) 382
Ringer, Morrie 214, 262, 326, 333, 350, 361, 382
Ritz Hotel 189
Ritz, Jack 214, 262
Rivlin, Hillel 211, 212
Roberts, Simon 122
Robinson, Issy 122, 123, 125, 334, 350, 360, 382
Rome2, 55, 76, 77, 79, 81, 86, 87, 88, 90, 91, 92,
93, 94, 118, 122, 151, 155, 160, 173, 205, 213,
216, 219, 246, 301, 306, 315, 318, 322, 331, 332,
334, 338, 350, 359
Rome, Sydney 350, 359
Rose, Max 79, 120, 126, 168, 255, 325
Rose, Sam 108
Rosen, Joe 215, 332
Rosen, Leon..18, 227, 251, 350, 355, 358, 359, 361,
382
Rosen, Monty 251
Rosenberg, Barney 77, 351, 382
Rosenberg, David (Kidron) 79, 262
Rosenberg, Eddie 119, 176, 350, 358
Rosenberg, Elliot 47, 66, 75, 99, 100, 108, 113, 114,
116, 148, 179, 193, 204, 209, 223, 294, 299, 300,
324
Rosenberg, Ellis 153
Rosenberg, Gideon 21, 27, 104, 106, 194, 195, 352,
358, 359, 382
Rosenberg, Gideon and family 195
Rosenberg, Gideon, Hadassah and Ruth 195
Rosenberg, Hadassah 195, 382
Rosenberg, Hadassah and Ruth 21, 196
Rosenberg, Honi 152, 335
Rosenberg, Joe 350, 359
Rosenberg, Masha 66, 75, 350, 354, 358
Rosenberg, Maurice 215
Rosenberg, Mr. (Caretaker at Telfed) 32, 325
Rosenberg, Ruth 27, 382
Rosenberg, Shaul 142, 316
Rosenberg, Zalman 195
Rosenfeld, Denis 122, 350, 359, 382
Rosengarten, Max 168, 350, 360, 382
Rosenzweig, Max 382
Rosh Ha'ayin 123, 135
Rosh Pina ... 103, 121, 129, 171, 172, 173, 181, 185,
286
Rosin, Danny88, 94, 95, 152, 237, 251, 252, 253,
292, 296, 332, 350, 353, 355, 358
Rosofsky, Ralph 219
Rosowsky, Dov 262, 361, 382
Rosowsky, Les 122
Roux, Sister Marie .92, 93, 144, 182, 224, 235, 241,
242, 296, 300, 316, 350, 357
Rowe, Zeev 126
Rubinfeld, Milton 117
Rubin, Alec and Zipporah 106
Rubin, Aviva 382
Rubin, Willie 155
Rubinoff, Sidney 168
Ruch, Arnold 122, 160, 161, 201, 204, 238, 239,
240, 275, 276, 288, 294, 340, 350, 358, 382
Ruchama 121, 168, 181, 183, 209, 223, 230, 263,
265, 266, 267, 300, 324, 329, 382
Rudaitzky, Issy 260, 350
Rudnick, Dennis 350, 361, 382
Rudnick, Dennis and Joe 227, 350, 361, 382
Rudnick, Joe 361, 382
Rudnick, Dennis 227
Russack, Jane 357
Russian Monastery 71
Russiya (Vessel) 78
Rutenberg 208
Rutledge, Desmond (see Rimmer) 301
Rutowitz, Dennis 215
Rybko, Chanan 228
S.A. Housing Company 106, 328
Sachar, Julius 350, 357, 358
Sack, Abe 213, 350, 358, 382
Sack, Louis 214, 262, 333, 350, 360, 382
Sacks, Reuben 286
Sadeh, Yitzchak 156, 170, 273, 281, 283
Safed67, 112, 121, 126, 166, 169, 181, 204, 258,
260, 305, 333
Saffer, Teddy 213, 251, 350, 358
Sagar, Reg ..152, 156, 165, 215, 273, 283, 295, 305,
321, 350, 361, 382
Sakinofsky, Ezra 155, 295, 333
Sakinofsky, Meyer 213
Saks, Chaim 255, 350, 360, 382
Salamon, Yacov 317
Salant, Freddy 335, 350, 357
Salber (Capetown) 33
Salber, Harry 32
Salmon, Raymond 155, 333
Saltzman, Pnina 259
Samuel, Dan 215
Sanders, Basil 208, 297, 350, 358, 382

| | | | |
|---|--|---|---|
| Sandler, Abram..... | 65 | Shall, Emanuel..... | 227, 251, 350, 359, 382 |
| Sandler, Barney (Bernard Maurice)..... | 181, 288 | Shamir, Heyman | 208 |
| Sarafand | 120, 122, 125, 136, 142, 149, 157, 161, 187, 189, 230, 314, 323, 327, 336, 359 | Shanan, Val..... | 32 |
| Saretsky, Ruth (Stern)..... | 213, 335, 350, 382 | Shandel, Leslie..... | 27 |
| Sarif, Fred | 122, 123, 334, 350, 360, 382 | Shaper, Gerry | 215, 318 |
| Sarnak, Leon..... | 350, 358, 382 | Shapiro, Danny 88, 94, 95, 152, 206, 208, 233, 237, 251, 252, 253, 275, 276, 292, 296, 309, 332, 350, 355, 358 | 214 |
| Sasoon, Vidal..... | 126 | Shapiro, Ethelreda | 228 |
| Sassa | 261 | Shapiro, Louis and Hetta | 34, 106, 122, 230, 334 |
| Schachat, Mockie..... | 122, 151, 159, 171, 172, 185, 350, 357, 382 | Shapiro, Meyer | 152 |
| Schachman, Hymie..... | 208, 341, 350, 358 | Shapiro, Mickey..... | 228, 309 |
| Schapera, Roy ..88, 91, 92, 215, 219, 220, 253, 274, 275, 295, 320, 350, 358, 382 | | Shapiro, Sidney..... | 6 |
| Scheibher, Jacob | 382 | Sharett, Moshe | 98, 130, 162, 189, 208 |
| Scheiner, Manuel | 227, 350, 357 | Shaya, Sam | 125 |
| Schlachter, George..... | 227, 258, 259, 261, 350, 361, 382 | Sheba, Dr. Chaim... 14, 98, 122, 143, 144, 154, 155, 159, 163, 180, 181, 186, 187, 211, 268, 296, 314, 316, 351, 382 | |
| Schmulewitz, Max | 229 | Sheinbaum, Ivan 156, 214, 273, 283, 321, 351, 361, 382 | |
| Schneider, Lionel..... | 215, 251 | Sheinfeld, Al..... | 126 |
| Schneider, Sonny | 325, 350, 359 | Sher, Harold..... | 156, 214, 321, 351, 361, 382 |
| Schragenheim, Julian | 321, 350, 361 | Sher, Max | 208, 351, 358, 382 |
| Schroeder, Bill | 276, 288 | Sher, Mickey..... | 227, 382 |
| Schumacher, Max | 106 | Sher, Percy..... | 214 |
| Schwartz, Lionel..... | 323, 325 | Sher, Reuben..... | 208, 351, 358, 382 |
| Schweppe, Issy | 211, 262 | Sher, Sylvia..... | 238, 265, 269, 329 |
| Schwimmer, Al..... | 132, 188, 207, 208, 233 | Shilansky, Dov..... | 234 |
| Sde Dov ... 73, 74, 99, 102, 107, 117, 119, 123, 143, 148, 150, 220, 306, 307, 314, 321, 342 | | Shimoni, Dr. Gidi | 11, 364 |
| Sdom.. 108, 109, 135, 160, 209, 219, 220, 223, 274, 275, 329, 333 | | Shimshoni, Danny | 206, 208, 233 |
| Security Council ..67, 117, 129, 135, 189, 225, 271, 272, 277, 278 | | Shirk, Jack | 33, 351, 362 |
| Seftel, Sydney..... | 251, 350, 358 | Shlain, Joseph..... | 19, 152, 159, 334, 351, 357 |
| Segal, Lipa | 214, 333 | Shmueli..... | 296 |
| Segal, Mary..... | 59 | Shneer, Gerald | 59 |
| Segal, Maurice | 350, 358 | Shorkend, Albert 213, 259, 262, 286, 351, 356, 361, 382 | |
| Segal, Morris..... | 85, 86, 87, 227, 251, 350, 358, 382 | Shoval, Kibbutz . 5, 21, 27, 103, 104, 105, 106, 129, 168, 196, 249, 250, 254, 263, 317, 352 | |
| Segal, Sally | 350 | Shtiller, Ruchama | 382 |
| Segal, Sarah | 333 | Shubitz, Charlie | 268, 351, 357 |
| Segall, Jack .. 6, 66, 75, 76, 120, 123, 124, 125, 323, 325, 350, 359 | | Shur, Shulamit | 352, 382 |
| Seidman, Otto | 59, 65, 215 | Shutz, Gavriel..... | 126 |
| Seidman, Syd | 59 | Sidlin, Morris..... | 208, 297, 351, 358, 382 |
| Seigerkranz, Leo | 81, 88, 91, 92, 350, 358 | Sifsufa..... | 260, 261 |
| Sejera | 137, 169 | Silber, Abraham..... | 21, 197 |
| Sela Dov | 334 | Silber, Mately (Meir)..... | 21, 196, 197, 198, 382 |
| Selbst, Nina (Herbstein)..... | 317, 352, 382 | Silberman, Karl..... | 27, 28, 105, 106, 158, 168, 295, 352, 356 |
| Selby, Clive..... | 122, 142, 169, 350, 361 | Silbert, Neville..... | 27, 352 |
| Seligman, Ruth | 196 | Silone, Alex | 203 |
| Sender, Dov | 382 | Silpert (Wolman), Marcia..... | 214, 336, 351, 359 |
| Sender, Fanny | 382 | Silverstein, Peter | 35, 351, 362 |
| Senesh, Hannah..... | 46 | Simon, Ernst | 317 |
| Senior Dr. Boris..... | 181 | Simon, Myra (Weinberg)..... | 79, 148, 204, 214 |
| Senior, Boris 1, 5, 45, 46, 58, 73, 81, 89, 99, 100, 107, 109, 113, 117, 119, 149, 160, 176, 178, 181, 193, 199, 201, 203, 204, 206, 223, 237, 238, 240, 245, 246, 247, 287, 288, 292, 310, 324, 346, 350, 357, 358, 382 | | Simon, Sir Leon..... | 316 |
| Senior, Leon..... | 46 | Simon, Smoky . 11, 79, 81, 100, 104, 113, 119, 130, 148, 176, 178, 193, 203, 206, 207, 223, 243, 251, 253, 287, 291, 292, 308, 310, 324, 333, 335, 346, 351, 358, 382 | |
| Shagam, Leslie..... | 89, 160, 188, 204, 221, 251, 350, 352, 358, 382 | Sinclair, Lee..... | 231, 276, 382 |
| Shakenovsky, Mike..... | 35, 350, 362 | Singer, Alec | 211 |
| | | Skelton, Red..... | 382 |

Skolnik, Norman 66, 75, 107
Skymaster (aircraft)..... 89, 221, 239, 240, 276, 315, 343
Slender, Ronnie 35, 351, 362
Slonim, Julia (nee Levinson)..... 106, 122
Smith, Barney (Dov Sela) 35
Smith, Miriam (Miriam Shamir) 124
Smith, Morry (Moshe Shamir) 227, 334
Smuts, Field Marshall 38, 40, 41, 43, 44, 52, 53, 60, 68, 69, 130, 325
Snipper, Mike.... 228, 259, 262, 286, 341, 351, 360, 382
Sofer, Joyce..... 6
Sokolowsky, Solly (Sockey).. 64, 214, 258, 351, 361
Solarsh, Mannie. 215, 220, 251, 275, 286, 295, 296, 297, 351, 358
Solman, David..... 227, 251, 351, 359, 382
Solomon, Bertha..... 43
Solowitz, Jerry..... 126
Sonnenberg, Max 52
South African Jewish Ex-Service League ` ... 41, 51, 52
South African Zionist Federation ... 5, 6, 11, 14, 17, 18, 19, 20, 28, 37, 38, 39, 41, 43, 45, 47, 48, 49, 51, 52, 53, 54, 58, 59, 64, 65, 77, 78, 85, 94, 102, 106, 131, 132, 153, 189, 196, 211, 212, 231, 232, 260, 293, 294, 295, 296, 297, 300, 302, 307, 310, 325, 328, 330, 332, 336
Southern Front... 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 140, 281
Spira, Dr. 143, 144
Spiro, Norman 6, 213, 262, 351, 361, 382
Spitfire (aircraft).... 1, 107, 108, 121, 204, 220, 237, 239, 240, 246, 252, 253, 267, 275, 276, 277, 340
Spitfire (constructed from bits and pieces)..... 237
Spitpiper 113, 204
Sprinzak, David..... 99, 119
Squadron 505 207, 359
St. Jean airfield..... 300
Star, the 68
Stark, Geoff 119, 122, 149, 157, 164, 167, 169, 170, 248, 249, 250, 254, 267, 295, 351, 359, 382
Stark, Laszlo..... 219
Steckoll, Harold S. 333
Steigman, Michael..... 5
Stein, Hymie..... 27
Stein, Ziggy (Meshulam).... 228, 259, 262, 286, 382
Steinberg, Cyril . 17, 47, 73, 99, 102, 112, 116, 118, 119, 149, 161, 204, 221, 233, 239, 295, 335
Steingold, Willie..... 122, 123, 334, 351, 360, 382
Sten gun..76, 78, 103, 108, 142, 164, 165, 305, 336, 339, 342
Stern Group 45, 49, 53, 67, 129
Stern, Abraham 53
Stern, Bertie..... 63
Stern, Simon..... 227, 260, 262, 351, 360, 382
Stern, Tibi..... 275
Steven,..... 382
Strauss, Dodke..... 228
Strom Family..... 341
Struma, (the refugee ship) 23
Stryrack, Eddie 302
Stutzen, Harold..... 158
Sugarman, Dov..... 253
Sukenic, Matty 99, 119
Susman, David ...151, 173, 228, 229, 230, 262, 295, 329, 351, 360, 382
Sussman, Trevor..203, 205, 206, 208, 351, 358, 382
Suttner, Sydney 120, 123, 125, 336, 351, 359
Sutton, Foster 58
Swartsman, Shia..... 275
Swartzberg, Zan 251, 336, 351, 358
Swartzman, Dr. 263
Swiel, Cyril 251, 351, 358
Syria .2, 10, 16, 18, 45, 47, 100, 111, 112, 139, 149, 175, 221, 249, 286, 345
Taback, Solomon J(Solly) oseph286, 341, 351, 361, 382
Tager, Leo 70
Taggart Forts 75, 305, 331
Taitz, Cecil 6
Taitz, Hayley 6
Taitz, Louis 18, 47, 87, 237, 338, 351, 359, 382
Talmi, Yigal 318
Talpiot 197, 225
Tannenbaum, Myer 126
Tarnapol, Herbert 341
Tarshiha..... 261, 262
Tauber, Esther 126
Taylor, Percy 19
Technion.....81, 122, 188, 213, 232, 293, 315
Tel Aviv central bus station bombed..... 120
Tel Hashomer 167, 170, 187, 211, 296, 335
Tel Litwinsky67, 102, 112, 113, 114, 115, 120, 121, 122, 127, 142, 143, 149, 154, 156, 160, 164, 180, 187, 213, 215, 301, 315, 335
Telfed 5
Teperson, David (Migdal)1, 5, 76, 77, 78, 123, 148, 160, 185, 189, 230, 255, 274, 281, 284, 295, 305, 334, 339, 351, 360, 382
Tetti (vessel)..... 78, 214, 300, 336
Thujssen, John (Jan)..... 219
Tiger Moth (aircraft) 94, 193, 194, 238
Tiger, Cyril..... 27
Tik, Erez..... 79
Timorim5, 27, 32, 105, 157, 158, 168, 295, 351
Tirat Zvi 49, 305
Tittlestad (ex RAF) 337
Tobias, Felix..... 382
Tobias, Joshua..... 65
Tobias, Peggy..... 6
Toker, Hymie213, 259, 262, 286, 351, 359, 361, 382
Toker, Lily (Agayev) 351
Tolchinsky, Pussy 101, 107
Tolkowsky, Dan 176, 203, 208, 235
Tooch, Abe..... 27
Tor, Solly (Turtledove) 106
Torum family 143
Transjordan43, 71, 82, 100, 104, 111, 112, 117, 118, 132, 139, 161, 162, 166, 186, 222, 236, 237, 243, 248, 272, 286, 321
Traub, Colin 213
Traub, Issy and Rhoda..... 211
Traub, Paul 214
Treisman, Hymie.213, 262, 286, 351, 358, 360, 382

Treisman, Ossie 93, 181, 265, 266, 267, 288, 324
Treisman, Rubie.....251
Trehertz, Ursula (nee Sachs).....27
Treuherz, Zvi253
Tross, Alec..... 213, 262, 351, 356, 361, 382
Truce..... 10, 185, 271, 272, 317
Truman, President Harry.....61, 101, 236, 277, 278, 285, 288
Tsora, Kibbutz184
Tucker, Sam.....87, 152, 251
Turin, Kalman.....247, 382
Twersky, Al183, 217
Udwin, Mike153, 155, 181, 231, 325, 351, 356, 358
UN (United Nations)43, 46, 50, 54, 57, 60, 93, 106, 111, 119, 129, 130, 146, 147, 151, 161, 173, 201, 216, 221, 223, 225, 231, 232, 234, 235, 238, 243, 271, 278, 288, 338
Universal Airways 2, 132, 291, 334, 342, 343
Urbe 88, 92, 94, 205, 296, 301, 318
van der Merwe64
van Heerden, Johnny.....261, 302
van Leer, Wim320
Van Paassen, Pierre.....336
Villa Forragiano.....93
Volksblad.....69
Vons, Mendie..... 213, 251, 295, 336, 337, 338, 351, 358
Wachs, Meyer.....27
Wadi Shenik.....334
Waks, Dave.....41
Waks, Simmy..... 175, 251, 315, 342
Walden, Erika124, 125
Wallach, the187
Walters, Ian 228, 259, 260, 262, 286, 303, 341, 351, 360, 382
Wank, Al.....183, 382
Wapnick, Alec6
Wassyng, Aubrey.....205, 251, 351, 358
Waterhouse, Frank.....219
Watson, Johnny.....302
Webb, Del..... 97, 98, 112, 205, 209, 251, 295, 299, 339, 342, 351, 358, 382
Wedderburn, Phyllis (Hanreck)300
Weillner, Max382
Weinberg, Myra (See Simon, Myra).....204
Weinhaber, Uri335
Weinronk, Jack 17, 87, 88, 93, 94, 305, 351
Weinstein, Jesse (Manfred).227, 251, 351, 358, 382
Weinstein, Julius.....6
Weinstein, Simie.....5, 11, 41, 52, 64, 66, 295, 300, 308, 382
Weiser (of Hebrew Legion)53
Weiser, Sam127
Weiss57
Weizman, Ezer. 2, 11, 46, 73, 89, 98, 113, 150, 161, 199, 201, 204, 246, 287, 288, 291, 308, 340, 346, 382
Weizmann Institute 122, 123, 124, 125, 174, 270, 287, 318
Weizmann, Dr. Chaim122, 123, 124, 125, 174, 244, 270, 278, 287, 311, 313, 318, 322, 331, 382
Welles, Orson92
Werbranchik (see also Agassi).....27, 352, 382
Wertheim, Dr.181
West Air..... 2, 132, 242, 243, 334, 342
White Paper23
Wies, Morris (Mockie) 251, 351, 358
Wiesenthal, Eli.....321
Wilhelma164
Wilk (Adar), Simmy (Shimon).. 213, 262, 351, 361, 382
Wilkes-Chase, Kit.....302
Wilson, Danny309, 382
Wilton, Jack 153, 154, 155, 181, 230, 268, 317
Wilton, Osner..... 224, 228
Wimers, Michael333, 342
Windham, Judge Ralph.....56
Wingate, Lorna317
Winik, Shmuel126
Winter, Dr.310
Winters, Bob.....302
Wisenberg, Abe 155, 333, 351, 361, 382
Witkin, Joe.....35
Witt, Sarah227, 351, 357, 382
Witten, Solly 122, 123, 351, 360, 382
Witz, Jack351
Wolf, (Ben Avraham) David 351, 357, 382
Wolf, Barney (Josie).....213, 351, 359, 382
Wolman, Marcia (See Silpert)6
Wolmarans Street Synagogue.....41, 70
Wolov, Cecil333
Wolov, P.214
Wonderboom79, 80, 81, 337
Woolf, (Ze'evi), Shaul5
Woolf, Bernard59, 64
Woolf, Joe 1, 5, 6, 11, 137, 213, 228, 229, 232, 233, 234, 258, 259, 261, 286, 291, 295, 302, 340, 351, 360, 363, 382
Woolf, Galya6
Wulfsohn, Cecil24, 42, 47, 59, 73, 81, 98, 131, 132, 238, 242, 295, 320, 334, 341, 351, 358
Wulfson, Samuel Joshua.....33
Wynberg, Dave.....41
Yad Mordechai .. 116, 121, 133, 134, 135, 140, 199, 230, 256
Yadin, Yigal. 99, 100, 107, 119, 121, 140, 147, 219, 235, 247, 248, 285, 323, 324, 331, 343
Yascsky, Prof.74
Yavniel 134, 220
Yechiam (kibbutz) 61, 62, 105, 106
Yemen..... 15, 16, 85
Yiftach Brigade..... 142, 161, 241, 263, 331, 359
Yishuv 16, 23, 27, 33, 38, 39, 41, 43, 44, 45, 46, 48, 49, 51, 52, 53, 54, 59, 63, 65, 74, 98, 101, 102, 108, 132, 140, 145, 193, 211, 279, 320, 328, 330
Yisraeli, Yosef.....128
Yodaiken, Audrey.....152
Yodaiken, Ralph 156, 214, 273, 283, 321, 333, 351, 361, 382
Yom Kippur War 12, 14, 21, 291, 292, 324
Yossi, (Israel).....382
Young Israel Society.....32
Yudelman, Wolfe..... 213, 216, 351, 357
Zagagi, Mrs. (head of nursing services).....308
Zagnoev, Isaac27, 28, 352, 356, 382
Zagnoev, Maisie352, 382

| | | | |
|-----------------------------|---|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Zagoria, Eli..... | 305 | Zionist Record..... | 278, 364 |
| Zahavi, (Goldblatt) Hymie . | 28, 30, 31, 77, 351, 362 | Zionist Revisionist Party | 40, 55, 58, 59, 65, 70, 149, |
| Zail, Hilda | 351, 357 | | 197 |
| Zatec..... | 89, 91, 95, 160, 176, 177, 179, 221 | Zionist Socialists | 19, 27, 342 |
| Ze'evi (Woolf), Shaul | 5 | Zipper, Zvi | 21, 27, 104, 106, 352, 358, 360, 382 |
| Zimmerman, Tev ... | 79, 95, 188, 251, 252, 295, 315, 351, 359 | Zuckerman, Herzl..... | 106 |
| Zinn, Sam | 213, 351, 359, 382 | Zuckerman, Philip | 17, 41, 64, 158, 295, 299, 344 |
| Zinn, Zelig..... | 214, 351 | Zup | 105, 106 |
| | | Zwilling, Miroslav..... | 382 |

MACHAL PHOTO ALBUM





List of persons in the photographs

| | | |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Aaron, (Israel) | Cowan, Aaron. D. | Golembo, Grisha |
| Alec, (U.K) | Daleski, Hillel | Gordon, (U.K) |
| Alon, Modi (Israel) | Dangott, Caesar | Gordon, Mary |
| Andrews, Stanley (U.S.A) | Danker, Kenny | Gotsman, Cyril |
| Angel, Aubrey | Dauids, Barnett (U.K) | Green, Hymie |
| Antin, Syd (U.S.A) | Davimes, Gerry | Gross, Jack |
| Aronson, Benny | Davis, Dov | Hack, Louis |
| Aronson, Irene (Renee) | Dientsfrei, Micha (Israel) | Halberstadt, Josef (Israel) |
| Arye, (U.K.) | Dinn, Bert | Hamilton, Jock |
| Assaf, (Israel) | Dobrowitz, Al (U.S.A) | Harris, Jack (Ireland) |
| Augarten, Rudy (U.S.A) | Doyle, Jack (U.S.A) | Herman, Basil |
| Baker, George (U.S,A) | Drusinsky, Harry | Hersch, Leslie Henry |
| Balkin, Phil (U.S.A) | Drusinsky, Luba | Hershon, Yehuda |
| Barlin, Max | Duboff, Hal (U.S.A) | Horowitz, Cyril (U.K) |
| Basson, Sydney | Duchen, Dave | Hotz, Elias Phillip |
| Beinart, Abe | Dworkin, Alec (Can) | Isaacs, Norman |
| Beinart, Sarah | Dworsky, Barney | Isaacson, Mike |
| Ben Hayam, Rachel (Katz) | Egdal, Issy | Isaacson, Titch |
| Ben Yok, Butch | Egdes, Morrie | Isserow, Eli |
| Ben Zvi, Yehuda (Israel) | Eisenberg, Chaim | Jacobs, Sandy (Israel) |
| Bental, Solly | Eli (Israel), | Jaffe, Abe |
| Bentel , Max | Epstein, Cliff (U.K) | Jean, Stewardess |
| Berelowitz, Chaim | Etzine, Bernard | Jedeiken, Joe |
| Berelowitz, Yehezkiel | Excell, Syd | Joffe, Baruch |
| Berger, Maurice (Morrie) | Fagin, Bert (U.K) | Joffe, Leish |
| Berger, Stan (U.S.A) | Fainman, Lockie | Joffe, Sydney |
| Berkow, Abe | Feldman, Arthur (U.K) | Johnson, Stewardess |
| Berman, Basil | Feldman, Harry | Josman, Hymie |
| Berman, Charles | Feldman, Sy (U.S.A) | Judah, Dov |
| Bernie, (U.K) | Fine, David | Kacev, Jack |
| Bernstein, Evelyn | Fine, Hillel | Kadushewitz, Gershon |
| Bernstein, Norman | Fine, Mishy | Kahn, Ira (U.S.A) |
| Bloch, Ray (U.K) | Finkel, Aaron (U.S.A) | Kahn, Martin |
| Bloom, Issy | Fish, Michael | Kangisser, Max |
| Bornstein, Fritz (U.K) | Fisher, Frank | Kanichowsky, Percy |
| Bowden, Derek (U.K) | Fisher, Geoff | Kaplan, Mort (U.S.A) |
| Brand, Luther | Fisher, Jules | Kaplan, Solly |
| Braudo, Charles | Fix, Ivor | Kaplan, Stanley |
| Brenner, Dave | Fleisch, Jack | Kapuza, Leslie (U.K) |
| Broude, Gerry (U.S.A) | Frankel, Leon (U.S.A) | Kass, Shlomo (Israel) |
| Bukspan, Aaron (Israel) | Franses, Jack (U.K) | Kassel, Harry |
| Burge, Bob | Freeman, Morris | Katz, Abraham |
| Busch, George | Fried, Dov | Katz, Jeff |
| Carruthers, Margaret | Friedland, Bernie | Katz, Monty |
| Centner, Clive | Friedman, Nathan | Katz, Reuben |
| Chait, Chaim | Gabai, Josie | Katzenellenbogen, Elliot |
| Chait, Max | Gedalia, (Israel) | Katzew, Joe |
| Chaskelson, Ronnie | Genn, Zelig | Kaufman, Max |
| Chris, (Israel) | Gering, Bernard | Kentridge, Syd |
| Clark, "Nobby" | Getz, Enoch | Kieser, Julio |
| Clingman, Lionel | Getz, Lou | Kirsch, Rusty |
| Clouts, Cyril | Gillis, Merle | Kirschner, Ivan |
| Cohen, Eddie | Gitlin, Gershon | Kirschner, Ruth |
| Cohen, Irwin | Glazer, Hannah | Klaff, Mendel |
| Cohen, Jack | Gochen, Denis | Klass, Harry |
| Cohen, Syd | Golan, Leib | Klein, Hymie (Can) |
| Cooper, Alec | Goldstein, Coleman (U.S.A) | Kobrin, Judah |
| Cooper, Arthur | Goldstein, Harry | Kotzen, Lou |
| Cort, Harold | Goldstein, Joseph | Kowarsky, Leo |
| Cossman, Howard (Can) | Goldstein, Sidney (Nick) | Kramer, Solly |

Photo Album

| | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Kroll, Shlomo | Nankin, Archie | Shall, Emanuel |
| Kruger, Lou | Narunsky, Reuben | Sheba, Chaim (Israel) |
| Kurgan, Hymie | Nash, Stanley | Sheinbaum, Ivan |
| Lahat, Shlomo (Israel) | Nathan, Abe (India) | Sher, Harold |
| Landau, Benny | Nimrod, (Israel) | Sher, Max |
| Landman, Aharoni (Israel) | Nomis, Leo (U.S.A) | Sher, Mickey |
| Landshut, Mike (AUS) | Novikow, Abe | Sher, Reuben |
| Lanesman, Ralph | Novikow, Simon | Shorkend, Albert |
| Langbart, Syd | Nowesenitz, Phillip | Shtiller, Ruchama (Israel) |
| Lenart, Lou (U.S.A) | Osrin, Harry | Shur, Shulamit |
| Levin, Basil | Ossin, Solly | Sidlin, Morris |
| Levin, Sam (with sons) | Ostroff, Maurice | Silber, Mately |
| Levin, Stanley | Palestine, Abe | Simon, Smoky |
| Levin, Teddy | Patlansky, Jack | Sinclair, Lee (U.S.A) |
| Levine, Julius | Peake, Wayne (U.S.A) | Skelton, Red (U.S.A) |
| Levine, Shaul (U.S.A) | Pearl, Julie | Snipper, Mike |
| Levinsohn, Julian | Perlman, Jeff | Solman, David |
| Levinson, Sam | Pomerantz, Bill (U.S.A) | Spiro, Norman |
| Levitt, Dov | Price, Alan | Stark, Geoff |
| Levitt, Toekie | Prinz, (Holland) | Stein, Ziggy |
| Levy, Effie | Rachilewitz, Eliezer | Steingold, Willie |
| Levy, Norman (U.K) | Reeb, Meish | Stern, Simon |
| Lewis, Len | Reef, Eli | Steven, (U.S.A) |
| Libow, Marvin (U.S.A) | Remez, Aharon (Israel) | Susman, David |
| Lichter, George (U.S.A) | Riesenveldt, Alf (Holland) | Sussman, Trevor |
| Lichtman, Giddy (U.S.A) | Rimmer, Zvi (U.K) | Taback, Solly |
| Lipman, Alan | Ringer, Morrie | Taitz, Louis |
| Lipshitz, Jack | Robinson, Issy | Teperson, Migdal |
| Lipshitz, Zvi | Rosen, Leon | Tobias, Boykie |
| Loewenstein, Issy | Rosenberg, Barney | Toker, Hymie |
| MacDonald, Harry | Rosenberg, Elliot | Treisman, Hymie |
| Magid, David | Rosenberg, Gideon | Tross, Alec |
| Magid, Eddy | Rosenberg, Hadassah | Turin, Kalman (Israel) |
| Malbin, Hymie | Rosenberg, Ruth | Van Heerden, Johny |
| Malin, Bolly | Rosenfeld, Denis | Vvurm, Ben (Holland) |
| Malkin, Melville | Rosengarten, Max | Waks, Simmy |
| Mandelzweig, Gordon | Rosenzweig, Max (U.S.A) | Walters, Ian |
| Mandelzweig, Sim | Rosowsky, Dov | Wank, Al (U.S.A) |
| Mankowitz, Mike | Rubin, Aviva | Webb, Del |
| Mann, Morrie (U.K) | Ruch, Arnold | Weillner, Max (Czech) |
| Marcus, Leslie | Rudnick, Dennis | Weinstein, Jesse |
| Marcusson, Jack | Rudnick, Joe | Weinstein, Simie |
| Margo, Cecil | Sack, Abe | Weizman, Ezer (Israel) |
| Marik, Colin | Sack, Louis | Weizmann, Chaim (Israel) |
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| Mazerow, Lou | Saks, Chaim | Wilk, Simmie |
| McElroy, John (Can) | Sanders, Basil | Wilson, Danny (Can) |
| McGee, Chris (U.S.A) | Saretsky, Ruth | Wisenberg, Abe |
| Medalie, Jack | Sarid, Meir | Witt, Sarah |
| Medicks, Stanley | Sarif, Fred | Witten, Solly |
| Mendelowitz, Maurice | Sarnak, Leon | Wolf, Barney "Josie" |
| Meyerowitz, Max | Schachat, Mockie | Wolf, David |
| Meyerson, Barney | Schapera, Roy | Woolf, Joe |
| Meyerson, George | Scheibher, Jacob (Czech) | Yodaiken, Ralph |
| Miller, Benny | Schlachter, George | Yossi, (Israel) |
| Miller, Leo (U.S.A) | Segal, Morris | Zagnoev, Maisie |
| Mintz, Myron (U.S.A) | Selbst, Nina | Zinn, Sam |
| Mirwis, Jack | Sender, Dov | Zipper, Zvi |
| Moonitz, Norman (U.S.A) | Sender, Fanny | Zwilling, Miroslav (Czech) |
| Morcowitz, Phil | Senior, Boris | |
| Najman, Herbert (U.K) | Shagam, Leslie | |



Arthur Cooper at Wonderboom airfield, with the Fairchild he flew to Israel leaving April the 19th, arriving Haifa May the 16th, see Chapter 3
(Photo - Smoky Simon)



"Boykie" Tobias of Elandsvlei farm, (sitting on his haunches with hat which he still wears) instructing Cape volunteers at target practice,
(Chapter 2 – Part 3)

(Photo – Myra Kowarsky collection)

S.A. League for Haganah ladies on parade





The owners and crew of a PAAC Dakota which ferried volunteers to Israel from South Africa early June 1948. L to R: In suits Messrs Kieser and Cowan (the owners). In uniform: Dell Webb, Nobby Clark, Jock Hamilton, Stewardess Johnson, Syd Excell.
 (Photo - Maurice Ostroff)



On MV "Teti" arrived Tel Aviv May 14th, Barney Rosenberg & "Migdal Teperson"
 (Photo - Migdal Teperson)



Mid-June group, chapter 6, Part 1.
 Standing in doorway: Irene Aronson & Stewardess Jean. Standing on ground: Benny Landau
 (Photo - Gordon Mandelzweig)



Another June group, L to R, Maurice Berger, Basil Levin, Ivor Fix, Elliot Katzenellenbogen, Syd Langbart. (Photo - Elliot Katzenellenbogen)



August in Rome, "Nick" Goldstein, Charlie Berman, Louis Sack (Photo - Louis Sack)



"Agter die tralies" at Villa Forragiano D.P. camp. L. to R. David Wolf, David Magid, Louis Sack, Ralph Yodaiken, Eli Reef (Photo - Louis Sack)



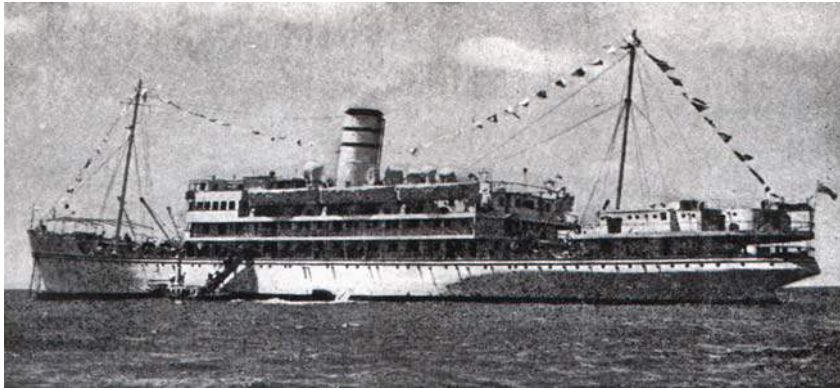
Ladispoli D.P. Camp – Early August 1948. A group of some 24 South Africans.
 (See passenger list of MV “Dolores” in chapter 11). On the right are about 14 members
 of the camp staff
 (Photo Albert Shorkend)



Boarding a railway cattle truck outside of Rome for the trip to Naples en route to Israel by sea.
 L to R
 Back row: Geoff Fisher, Joe Woolf, Julie Pearl
 Second row from back leaning on rail: Hannah Glazer, Hymie Toker, Josie Wolf, Lou Kruger.
 Sitting in middle wearing hat – Dov Davis.
 Bottom row: Gershon Kaduschewitz (half cut off), Unknown, Hymie Josman, Evelyn Bernstein.
 Partly hidden, behind Evelyn: Toekie Levitt. Others have not been identified.
 (Photo Albert Shorkend)



Ready to leave Marseilles on board MV "Kedmah" late August 1948. Standing: Phil Morcowitz, Mike Fish, Norman Spiro, Jeff Katz, "Simie" Wilk, Bob Burge. Kneeling: Julian Levinsohn, Abe Sack, Sam Zinn
(Photo - "Simie" Wilk)



Postcard of the "Kedmah"



Another group at Villa Forragiano with visitors, mid-August, Standing: Hymie Josman, Unknown, Toekie Levitt, David Magid Kneeling: Joe Rudnick, Unknown, Harold Cort, (Photo David Magid)

Volunteers arrive with DP's on overcrowded Ships



On board m.v. "Caserta"
Haifa, Sept. 12
S. Africans in group,
Three on left, bottom to top; Joe
Rudnick, David Magid, Harold Cort.
Centre: Leon Rosen, Denis Rudnick
(Photo - David Magid)



"Fabio" at sea: L. to R. Lionel
Clingman, Lou Hack, Sarah
Witt, Unknown, Bernard
Etzine, David Solman, Morris
Freeman



"Fabio" arrives at Haifa Sept 17.
Louis Hack (killed in action Oct, 23),
raises the Israel Flag,



Top to bottom (L to R):
 Unknown, Lionel Clingman,
 Mickey Sher, Chaim Eisenberg,
 Effie Levy, Unknown, Unknown,
 Sarah Witt, David Solman,
 Harry Goldstein, Hymie Malbin,
 Lou Hack, Ralph Lanesman,
 Jack Kacev

Top to bottom (L to R): Aubrey
 Angel, Effie Levy, Unknown,
 Unknown, Unknown, Mickey
 Sher, Morris Freeman, Sarah
 Witt, David Fine, Unknown



L to R: Unknown, Aubrey Angel,
 Jesse Weinstein, David Fine,
 Morris Freeman, Effie Levy

"Fabio", approaching Haifa,
 17th Sept. S. Africans at bottom
 right corner.





At the recruiting station in Tel Aviv, early June 1948. Taking cover as an air raid alert, which proved to be false, is heard. L to R: Geoff Stark, Mockie Schachat, Dennis Rosenfeld and Jack Medalie
 (Photo - Maurice Ostroff)



S. Africans at Tel Litwinsky, having arrived on the vessels "Pan York" (Sept 13th), "Fabio" (Sept 17th), "Caserta" (Sept 26th), awaiting postings to their units. Those on the "Fabio" were held back for about 10 days at Beit Lid because they had arrived on the day Count Bernadotte was assassinated.

Top row standing: Louis Hack, Ralph Lanesman, Teddy Levin, Bernard Etzine, George Schlachter, Gerry Davimes, head only – unknown, Effie Levy, Simon Stern, "Mickey" Sher, Morris Freeman, Morris Segal.

Middle row sitting: Stanley Nash, David Solman, Emanuel Shall, Unknown, Harry Goldstein, Aubrey Angel.

Second row from bottom: Unknown, Hymie Malbin, Abe Berkow, Chaim Eisenberg, Unknown, Lionel Clingman.

Bottom row, sitting on ground: Unknown, "Rusty" Kirsch, Max Kangisser,

(Photo Morris Freeman)



Abe Sack, Dr. Mendel Klaff,
Dr. Phil Hotz (Photo - Abe Sack)



At Rosh Pina: Abe Sack, Dr. Mendel Klaff,
Unknown Shmuel, Dr. Harry Kassel
(Photo - Abe Sack)



At sea on "Dolores" Dr. Alan Price
(Photo - Joe Woolf)



L to R: Nursing Sister Margaret Carruthers,
David Teperson, Nursing Sister Merle Gillis
(Photo - David Teperson)



Nurse Ruth Saretsky at Tel
Litwinsky Hospital
(Photo - Gordon Mandelzweig)



Driver of Jeep, Dr. Phil Hotz,
Aubrey Angel, Dr. Harry Kassel,
Julian (Yehuda) Hershon
(Photo - Abe Sack)



Dr. Gershon Gitlin (centre) of
Northern Command with his
Medical team
(Photo - Gershon Gitlin)



Dr. Jack Medalie and Dr. Stanley Levin at Military Hospital No. 10.
(Photo – Yochi Levin)



Levin Brothers, Basil (with pipe) and Stanley, with their Father Sam in the middle. (not related to Sam Levin, of this book)
(Photo – Yochi Levin)

Dr. Stanley Levin with members of Givati entertainment troupe
(Photo – Yochi Levin)





Dr. Chaim Sheba and South Africa's
Dr. Bennie Aronson



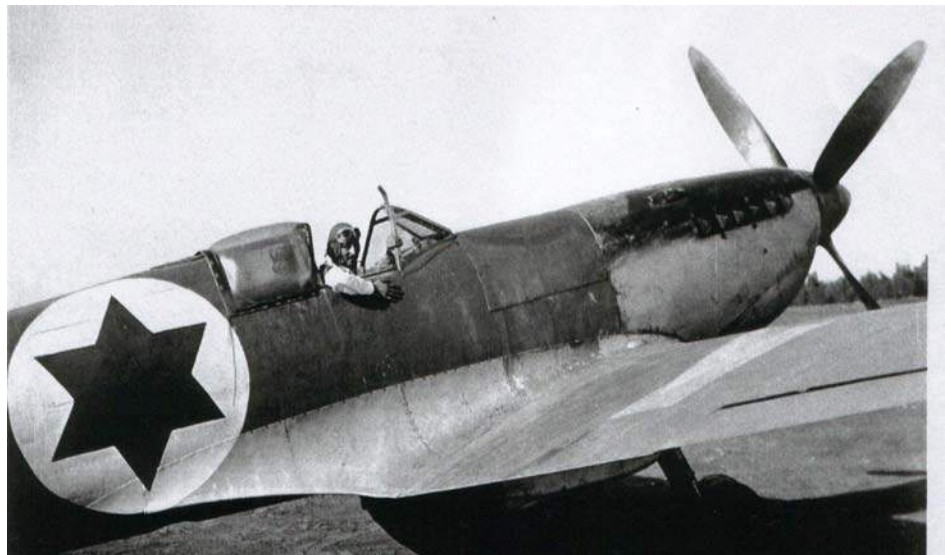
Three members of the same family serving in
1948, left Sim Mandelzweig his brother
Gordon at right with their aunt, Dr. Mary
Gordon centre

(Photo - Gordon Mandelzweig)



I.D.F's first Spitfire being assembled from scrapped aircraft bits and pieces found on former R.A.F. scrap heaps. South African Louis Taitz in center with tool in his right hand. The others are mostly Canadians.

Photo. Louis Taitz



Boris Senior braving himself for the first test flight of "Good Old Number 10" the Spitfire put together by air force mechanics, in the photo above. (Story "The Airmen" in chapter 12)

(Photo - Boris Senior)



Syd Cohen

South African pilots in Czechoslovakia on Messerschmitt training.
Boris Senior, Leslie Shagam, Arnie Ruch, Syd Cohen
(Photo - Syd Cohen)



Members of 101 Squadron (between June and October 1948)
L to R – Standing: George Lichter (USA), Syd Cohen (SA), Morrie Mann (UK), Lou Lenart (USA), Cyril Horowitz (UK), Syd Antin (USA), Modi Alon (Israel OC of the squadron), Ezer Weizman (Israel), Stan Andrews (USA), Leslie Shagam (SA), Rudy Augarten (USA), Security Officer (Israel), Leon Nomis (USA), Harry Feldman (SA squadron Doctor), Bill Pomerantz (USA). Middle row kneeling: Chris Mcgee (USA), Red Finkel (USA), Arnold Ruch (SA). Front row Squatting: Coleman Goldstein (USA), sitting: Giddy Lichtman (USA), Sandy Jacobs (Israel), Kalman Turin
(Photo - Ezer Weizmann)



Aircrew of No. 69 squadron near a B-17 bomber. South Africans are: Denis Gochen 2nd from left, and Stanley Nash 4th from left, others are from U.S.A., U.K., Canada and Israel.
 (Photo: I.D.F. archives)



Aircrew of No. 69 Squadron. South Africans, George Meyerson standing in center, "Butch" Ben Yok 2nd from right sitting, and Syd Kentridge next to him on extreme right. The others are from U.S.A., U.K., Canada and Israel



Aircrew of 103 Squadron. South African Mike Mankewitz 2nd from right, others are from U.S.A. and Israel.



Pilots of 35 Flight. L. to R. Abie Nathan from India (later to become world famous as a peace activist), South African Roy Schapera and (names unknown) volunteers from USA and Canada.

Pilots of 35 Flight South African Joe Katzew 2nd from left. Others are from U.S.A. and a non-Jew from Holland.





B-17 Bomber at Zatec Czechoslovakia with crew (chapter 7, Part 2),
 Left to right, standing: Leo "Dusty" Miller (Pilot, USA): Ray Bloch (Radio Op, UK):
 Norm Moonitz (Pilot, USA): Ira Kahn (Air Gunner, USA): Al Dobrowitz (Navigator,
 USA): unidentified. Kneeling: Hal Duboff (Radio Op, USA): David Judah
 (Navigator, S. Africa): Sigmar "Bert" Dinn (Radio Op, S. Africa): George Meyerson
 (Air Gunner, S. Africa): Looking from Plexiglass nose and open window,
 unidentified.



L. to R. Aharon Remez, chief of the IAF, Smoky
 Simon, Chief of Air operations, Shlomo Lahat, in
 charge bomber operations, and Chris in charge
 of maps. (Photo - Smoky Simon)



South African air crew on leave on the Tel Aviv beachfront. L to R Max Bentel, Elliot Rosenberg, Norman Isaacs, and "Simie" Waks.
 (Photo - Maurice Ostroff)

Pilots of 101 Squadron – approximately July 1948/ L. to R. Top row: Morrie Mann, Ezer Weizman, Red Finkel. Middle row: Bill Pomerantz, Sandy Jacobs, Bottom row: Syd Cohen, Chris McGee, Giddy Lichtman, Leon Frankel, Syd Antin (seated) Leo Nomis.
 (Photo - Syd Cohen)



John Barrard (Tich Isaacson), Intelligence Officer with Leslie Kapuza, Aerial Photographer

Ground/Air liaison team: L. to R. Leslie Kapuza (UK) and "Titch" Isaacson.
 (Photo - "Titch" Isaacson)



Pilots of 101 Squadron, Top trio: John McElroy (Canada), George Baker (U.S.A.) Rudy Augarten (U.S.A.). Standing: Arnie Ruch (SA), Sandy Jacobs (Israel), Caesar Dangott (U.S.A.), "Denny" Wilson (Canada), Jack Doyle (Canada), Ezer Weizman (Israel), Syd Cohen (SA), Morris Mann (U.K.), Sitting and Kneeling: Wayne Peake (U.S.A.), "Lee" Sinclair (Canada), "Sy" Feldman (U.S.A.), Jack Cohen (SA), Bill Pomerantz (U.S.A.) Sitting behind Jack Cohen, Syd Antin (U.S.A.) with eye patch.

(Photo - Syd Cohen)



Organisers and graduates of the Advanced Pilot's training course in South Africa, July 1950. L. to R. back row: Reuben Sher, Reuben Narunsky, Morris Sidlin. Middle row: "Simie" Weinstein, Max Sher, Solly Kramer, Len Lewis, Nathan Friedman, Trevor Sussman. Bottom Row: Basil Sanders, Cecil Margo, Bernard Gering, Leo Kowarsky, Sam Levinson (Story, chapter 10)

(Photo - Reuben Narunsky)



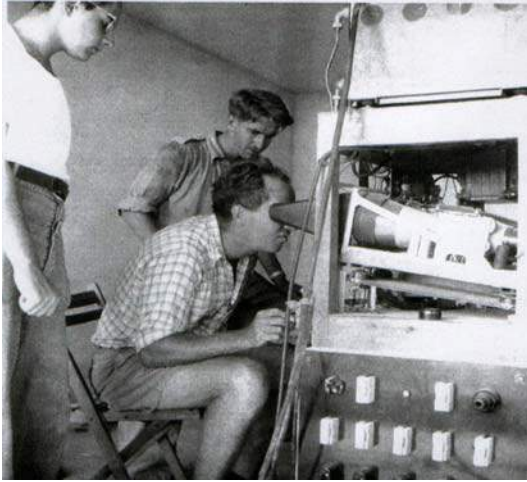
The completed “homebrew” radar ready for transportation to its first site.
 L.to R. Max Barlin (SA), Mort Kaplan (USA), Aaron Bukspan (Israel), Micha Dientsfrei (Israel), Maurice Ostroff (SA), Eli Isserow (SA), Stan Berger (USA), Yosef Halberstad (Israel), and a member of the Hatzor team at the Weizmann Institute.
 (Note the chalked legend on the truck –translated “beware – the driver is asleep”)
 (Story chapter 12 – The Radar Team)

(Photo - Maurice Ostroff)



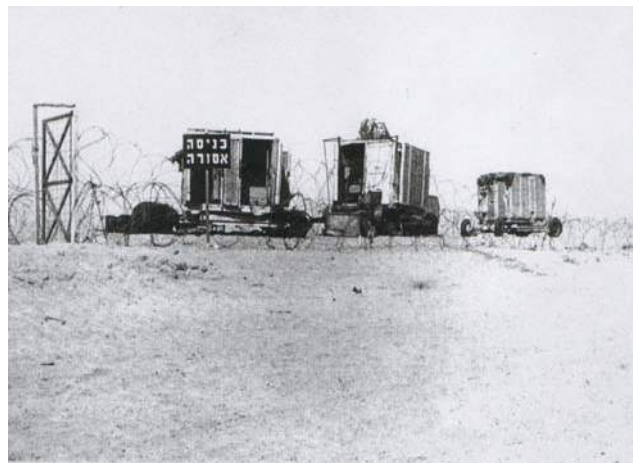
Members of the radar team at the Weizmann Institute. L. to R. Yosef Halberstadt (Israel), Shaul Levine (USA), Maurice Ostroff (SA), Gedalia (Israel), Max Barlin (SA), Aaron Bukspan (Israel). Sitting: Charles Braudo (SA), OC of the unit
 (Story – The Radar Team in chapter 5).

(Photo - Maurice Ostroff)



Max Barlin (centre) demonstrating the "home-brew" radar constructed of airborne Radar scrap, to Shlomo Kass of the Kibbutz Hatzor group at the Weizmann Institute. Another member of the Hatzor group awaits his turn. (Photo - Maurice Ostroff)

Mobile radar station "Gefen" converted from an obsolete torpedo boat radar. (Photo - Maurice Ostroff)



Erecting the antenna for the "homebrew" radar at Haifa. For lack of a suitable electric motor, the antenna was rotated by means of bicycle pedals. (Photo -Maurice Ostroff)



At Kibbutz Hatzor, Myron Mintz, at right (who worked in the laboratory shared with The Radar Team at the Weizmann Institute), and Ruchama Shtiller, standing in front of the kibbutz's "sandwich" vehicle, a typical makeshift armoured car of those days, built on an old truck (Story: The Radar Team in chapter 5)

(Photo - Maurice Ostroff)



Maurice Ostroff, Station Commander,
Radar Station Gefen



Radar man, Mishy Fine at Yad Mordechai two months after its recapture. The damaged water tower remains a landmark at the Kibbutz to this day.
(Photo - Maurice Ostroff)



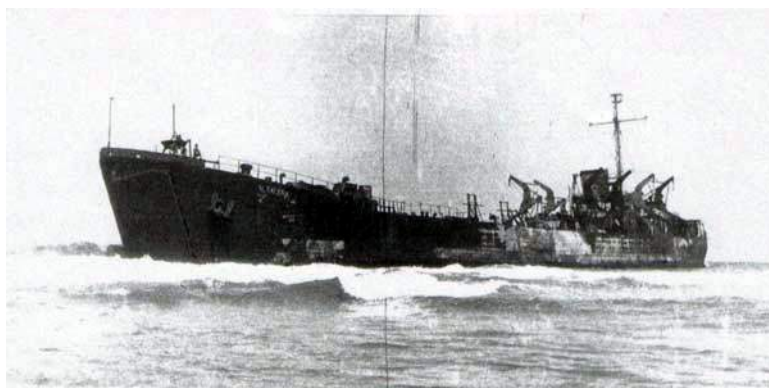
The children's house at Yad Mordechai after it was recaptured by Israeli forces.

(Photo - Maurice Ostroff)



Convoy carrying supplies for besieged Jerusalem awaiting UN inspection before departure.

(Photo - Maurice Ostroff)



The wreck of the Altalena lying off the Tel Aviv beach not far from the present Dan Hotel.

(Photo - Maurice Ostroff)



Melville Malkin and Hillel Daleski at their 75mm gun



Melville Malkin, Basil Levin, Elliott
Katzenellenbogen
(Photo - Elliott Katzenellenbogen)

Front row: Syd Langbart, Leslie
Hersch, Elliott Katzenellenbogen
Back row: two Unknown
(Photo - Elliott Katzenellenbogen)





Mike Landshut, Abe Jaffe, Mockie Schachat & Unknown Photo. Mockie Schachat



One of the four French artillery pieces manufactured during the reign of Napoleon III (1852-1870), used during the successful Mexican revolt against French rule (1860's) and acquired by Haganah agents in Mexico. Hence the nicknames "Napoleonchick" and "Kakuracha". Some South Africans were amongst their early gunners. (Chapters 5 & 20 – personal vignette of Yigal Yadin). Photo. Mockie Schachat



South African chalutzim of Hashomer Hatzair at Kibbutz Shoal Standing L. to R. Sarah Ahlfeld (nee Beinart), Meir Sarid (Sherman), Sydney Joffe, Reuben Katz, Shulamit Shur (nee Gutelevsky), Dovie Fried (Dave Kaffel), Eliezer Rachilewitz, Abe Beinart, Meish Reeb, Zvi Zipper. Sitting L. to R. Hadassah Ben Ami (nee Rosenberg), Ruth Kirschner (nee Rosenberg), Yehudit Agassi (nee Webranchik), Rachel Ben Hayam (nee Katz), Leish Joffe, Nina Selbst (nee Herbstein), Jackie Gross.

Hadassah, Gideon
and Ruth Rosenberg
at their kibbutz



Avraham Katz, the
first S. African to fall
in defense of the
Yishuv, killed 1938



South African members of Kibbutz Ma'ayan Baruch L. to R. Standing Erect: Shlomo Kroll, Issy Lowenstein, Basil Berman, Harry Drusinsky Leon Sarnak, Unknown, Luba Drusinsky, Syd Basson, Issy Bloom. Leaning forward in middle: Hillel Fine. Front row kneeling; Leib Golan, Aviva Rubin, Dov Levitt, Josie (Yocheved) Gabai.

(Photo - from the album of the late Ethel Schwartz)



Eddie Cohen

Eddie Cohen



MEIR SILBER.

S. AFRICAN FALLS AT RAMAT RACHEL

JERUSALEM, Thursday.

THE IRGUN Zvai Leumi has announced the death in action at Ramat Rachel, of Meir ('Matie') Silber, a volunteer from Port Elizabeth, South Africa.

The official Irgun communique says:

"Meir (Matie) Silber fell in glory on the Ramat Rachel battlefield, heroically defending the Holy City, while fighting in the ranks of the Irgun Zvai Leumi."

Matie Silber was a leading Betari from Port Elizabeth, South Africa, who came to Eretz Israel at the beginning of this year and immediately entered the ranks of the Irgun. He assumed the name of "Hillel" and joined an Officers' Course.

"Matey" Silber - from Jewish Herald, May 16th, 1948

Yehezkiel "Chatzi" Berelowitz.



Zvi Lipshitz



Machal volunteers visit Kibbutz Timorim, near Nazareth in June 1948. Back row (heads only) Solly Kaplan, Unknown (with hat), Baruch Joffe, Issy Egdal, Middle row standing L. to R. Unknown, Enoch Getz, Maisie Zagnoev, Dov Sender, Fanny Sender, Issy Robinson. Bottom row, Unknown, Unknown, Chaim Berelowitz, Fred Sarif.

(Photo - David Teperson)



South Africans in Alexandroni – early June. Standing: Solly Witten, Enoch “Porky” Getz, “Migdal” Teperson, Alec Cooper. Kneeling: Fred Sarif, Clive “Rusty” Centner, Issy Robinson, Willie Steingold. (Centner and Teperson later transferred to Gedud Tesha, Palmach)

Jack Fleisch
(Photo - Jack Fleisch)

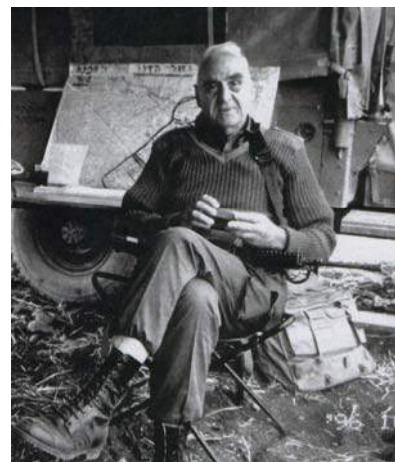


David (Migdal) Teperson
As a young volunteer in
1948
(Photo - Migdal Teperson)



50 years later. "Migdal", now a Colonel,
still serving in the Armoured Corps
Reserves.

(Photo - Migdal Teperson)





Top row: Ze'ev Ravitz (Israeli), Harry Goldstein, Bernard Judelsohn.
Sitting: Unknown American, Barney Meyerson, Jack Patlansky

"The long and the short of it"
"Migdal" Teperson, "Rusty" Kirsch



"Rusty" Kirsch and lady
friend in Tel Aviv





"Palmachnikim" on Eddy Magid's tank "Migdal" Teperson, Eddy Magid, Basil Levin, Phillip Nowesenitz, "Nimrod" (Israel) Benny Miller, and behind Miller Max Rosengarten

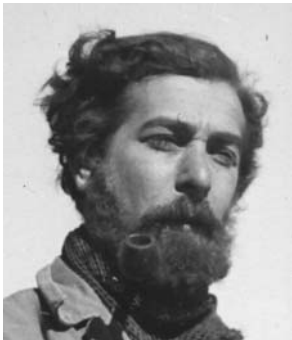


At Beer Yacov, July 1948. Top L. to R. Jack Lipshitz, Max Rosengarten, Rudolph (Rudy) Matz, Alan Lipman. Seated L. to R. Ronnie Chaskelson, Clive (Rusty) Centner, Irwin Cohen.
(Photo – Migdal Teperson)



Standing: Chaim Saks. "Migdal" Teperson, Max Rosengarten, "Al" Wank (USA), Arye (UK), Kneeling: UK unknown, Phillip Nowesenitz, Barney Meyerson, Rudolph "Rudy" Matz, "Rusty" Centner, Jack Lipshitz

(Photo – "Migdal" Teperson)



Jack Lipshitz



Irwin Cohen



Alan Lipman



Rudolph Matz



Max Rosengarten



Phillip Nowesenitz



"Rusty" Kirsch



Chaim Saks



Jack Patlansky



Barney Meyerson



Bernard Judelsohn



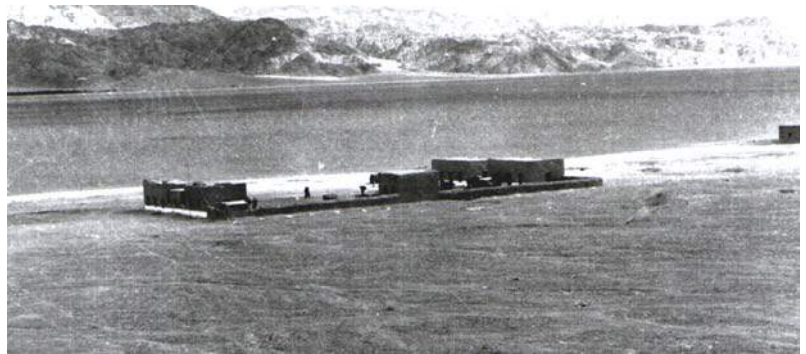
Harry Goldstein

A few S. African Palmach Fighters



David Teperson (left) and Benny Miller of the 9th Commando Battalion, Palmach Negev Brigade, in Eilat, after it was captured (see story related by Teperson in Chapter 20)
(Photo - "Migdal" Teperson)

The Eilat shoreline in 1949
(Photo - "Migdal" Teperson)



One hour after this photo was taken, the column of the 9th Palmach Commando Battalion was mistakenly identified as Egyptian and shot-up by "friendly" fire from an IAF aircraft. About 12 South Africans were in the column at the time
(Story related by Syd Cohen in chapter 16)

The captured Egyptian armoured car, whose presence in the column (above) led to the mistaken identity, David Teperson sitting on top
(Photos - Migdal Teperson)





Percy Kanichowsky
7th Brigade Signals
(Photo - Lou Sack)



Louis Sack and Joe Goldstein
7th Brigade Signals
(Photo - Lou Sack)



72nd Infantry Battalion Early arrivals
Standing: Jeff Perlman, David Susman
Kneeling: Bennie Landau, Barnett Davids
(U.K), Fritz Bornstein (U.K),
Unknown (U.K)

(Photo - Gordon Mandelzweig)

Standing: Jeff Perlman, David
Susman, unknown, Kneeling: Gordon
Mandelzweig, Barnett Davids
(U.K), Fritz Bornstein (U.K)

(Photo - Gordon Mandelzweig)





Summer. South Africans in Besa Platoon of the 72ND. Standing: Hymie Josman, Geoffrey Fisher, Eli Reef, "Toekie" Levitt. Kneeling: Archie Nankin, Julie Pearl, Hymie Toker (Pearl of the 79th was visiting)
(Photo - Albert Shorkend)



Winter - Standing: Jack Harris (Ireland), Jack Marcusson, Prinz (Holland), Geoffrey Fisher Kneeling: Albert Shorkend, Gordon (U.K.), Hymie Toker, Bernie (U.K.)
(Photo - Albert Shorkend)

Physical training exercises. Gordon Mandelzweig in the foreground of picture at right.

(Photo - Gordon Mandelzweig)





L to R Jeff Perlman and David Susman in 1948. Both distinguished themselves for leadership, coolness and inspiring their men under fire. (Story "skirmishes" in Chapter 12)

(Photo - Gordon Mandelzweig)

L to R Jeff Perlman and David Susman meet again in 1993; this time at the Latrun Armoured Corps Memorial on Israel's 45th anniversary remembrance day.

(Photo - Gordon Mandelzweig)



Louis Hack's funeral

Pallbearers: Lou Getz, Stanley Medicks, Gerry Davimes, Hymie Malbin, Simon Novikow, Harry Klass, Simon Stern, Jeff Perlman

(Photo - Gordon Mandelzweig)



Salute by comrades at the late Louis Hack's funeral. The firing party: L to R Jack Franses (U.K.), Hymie Klein (Canada), Cliff Epstein (U.K.), Ian Walters (Kenya). Among those standing in the background are South Africans Joe Woolf and Colin Marik.

(Photo - Gordon Mandelzweig)



(Photo - Gordon Mandelzweig)



Early markers of men in "B" Company (72nd), who fell in the Tamra skirmish and are buried in Nahariya cemetery. L to R: Benjamin Herschberg (Belgium), Shlomo Bornstein (UK), Sydney Leizer (Leisure) (Canada). Photograph taken Oct 24th 1948. See next picture of graves taken 1993.

During the 1993 Machal reunion, ex 7th Brigade members visit graves in Nahariya cemetery of fallen "B" company comrades, including S. African Lou Hack Among those present Gordon Mandelzweig, Harry Klass (bending), Joe Woolf, Stanley Medicks, Benny Landau, Jeff Perlman, David Susman, Abe Novikow, Judah Kobrin. and Derek Bowden, "B" Coy Commander 1948/49



After clearing the hills around Sasa, No. 1 Platoon of "B" company, stop for a meal break at Sasa junction before moving North towards Malkiya. See chapter 14. S. Africans in this group from the left are: David Susman, Solly Bental, Simon Novikow, Jeff Perlman, Stanley Medicks (Plt Commander), "Lockie" Fainman, Jeff Katz, Bernard Etzine, Joe Woolf, Gerry Davimes, Phil Morcowitz, and a few others, not identifiable



Tomb of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai. Some 24 S. Africans participated in its capture, as the opening action of the Hiram Operation, October 29th. (See chapter 14)



Early Dec. 1948, "B" coy ready to board buses at St. Lukes for Syrian front: Identified S. Africans in this group from the left are: Simon Novikow, Jack Mirwis, George Busch, Solly Taback, Cyril Clouts, Joe Woolf, Kenny Danker, Max Chait, Dave Brenner, Bernard Etzine.



Lionel Clingman,
Bernard Etzine
at Samaria camp
(Photo - Joe Woolf)

Ian Walters, Gerry
Davimes, Joe Woolf at
St. Lukes camp.
(Photo - Joe Woolf)



"B": Coy Commander, non-
Jewish Derek Bowden.
See chapter 19.
(Photo - Joe Woolf)

December 1948, S. Africans of the 72nd
Battalion at the ruins of "Yarda" which was
used as an observation post about 100 meters
from the Syrian lines. L to R – Frank Fisher,
Zelig Genn, Monty Katz and Kenny Danker
(Photo - Zelig Genn)





December 1948 – Part of No. 1 section, 3rd Platoon "B" coy at their night position: Zelig Genn, Max Chait, Frank Fisher, Joe Woolf, Cyril Clouts, "Mo" Katz Below – Kenny Danker and Martin Kahn

(Photo - Zelig Genn)

Joe Woolf, Frank Fisher, Zelig Genn, Kenny Danker, "Mo" Katz
Kneeling: Hymie Malbin, Cyril Clouts, George Busch, Hymie Treisman

(Photo - Zelig Genn)



Frank Fisher, "Mo" Katz, Zelig Genn, Kenny Danker. Kneeling: Joe Woolf, Cyril Clouts, George Busch

(Photo - Zelig Genn)





"Keniekie" on the Syrian front. L. to R. Zelig Genn, Joe Woolf, Max Chait, Frank Fisher, Kenny Danker (Batting), "Mo" Katz, Dave Brenner, Cyril Clouts

(Photo - Zelig Genn)



"Lunch is served", L to R Kenny Danker, Zelig Genn, Joe Woolf, Frank Fisher
(Photo - Zelig Genn)



South African Machalniks of the 72nd Battalion opposite the Syrian lines at Mishmar Hayarden. Top row. Left with cigarette Luther Brand, third from left Joe Woolf. Seated: Ziggy Stein. Kneeling in center, Stan Medicks, Kneeling (with spectacles), next to Stan Medicks is the much respected Sabra officer Aharoni Landman. Others are five British Machalniks (of whom 4 were Holocaust survivors), Dutch, Canadian and Indian Machalniks and the Romanian platoon cook. Woolf and Medicks were visiting from their respective no. 3 and no.2 platoon positions.
(Photo - Joe Woolf)

Members of No. 2 platoon on Syrian front.
L to R: Mike Snipper, Max Rosenzweig (USA), Herbert Najman (UK), Unknown, Marvin Libow (USA), Lionel Clingman, Grisha Golembo, Unknown, Jack Mirwis, Sitting: Unknown.





Kfar Saba / Kalkilya positions.
"Mo" Katz & Kenny Danker

Dov Rosowsky, Alec Tross,
Max Meyerowitz of the 79th



Alec Tross, Lou Kruger,
Dov Rosowsky



L. to R. Jules Fisher. Unknown, Unknown, Solly Ossin, Lou Getz



Lou Getz, Abe Novikow



Centre, looking up, Lou Getz Standing on left Solly Ossin, 3rd from left Abe Palestine, extreme right "Nick" Goldstein. Kneeling: 2nd from right Abe Novikow. The rest are mainly Machal from U.S.A., Canada and U.K.
(Photo - Sam Singer)



"Down the Hatch"
Lou Kotzen and Eddy Magid
(Photo - Eddy Magid)

Awaiting the order to advance on Negba Police Station. Machalniks sitting on one of two Cromwell tanks "donated" by three British soldiers. L to R: top row: Red Skelton, Zvi Rimmer, Alf Riesenvelt, Ben Vwurm. Middle row: Lou Kotzen (SA), Eddy Magid (SA), Abe Wisenberg (SA), Jacob Scheibher, Norman Levy, Arthur Feldman, Bernie Friedland (SA). Bottom row: Mac McDonald, Miroslav Zwilling, Max Weillner, (See Chapter 6 part 1)
(Photo - Eddy Magid)





David Magid kneeling next to a 3 inch Mortar. Others on the ground are his Commander and 2nd in Command
(Photo –David Magid)

Standing in middle: 3rd from left Harold Cort, extreme left David Magid. Sitting on left Dennis Rudnick. On the ground, head only and holding rifle Leon Rosen
(Photo – David Magid)



Two of three halftracks of the 89th Battalion destroyed in a minefield near Gaza

(Photo – Mike Isaacson)



At Auja-El-Hafir. The remains of a half-track of the 89th Battalion in which nine men were burned to death

(Photo -Mike Isaacson)

At Auja-El-Hafir. A wounded Egyptian prisoner receives aid from a medic of the 89th Battalion

(Photo - Mike Isaacson)



Ralph Yodaiken accepting white flag of surrender at Auja-el-Hafir

(Photo – Mike Isaacson)



Some of the fatal casualties of the 89th Battalion at Auja-el-Hafir. At extreme right the body of Dov Granek, Officer Commanding "A" Company. Next to him in the dark sweater, his grieving widow, an army nurse

(Photo – Mike Isaacson)



Burial at sunset of the men lost at Auja-el-Hafir - among them Phil Balkin (USA)

(Photo - Mike Isaacson)



Leslie Marcus, Mike Isaacson
(Photo - Mike Isaacson)

Crew of Mike Isaacson's half-track. First two left on top of vehicle: Harold Sher, Ivan Sheinbaum, (Sheinbaum was seriously wounded in midriff shortly after this picture was taken), Mike Isaacson leaning against the vehicle. On top right three Americans, L. to R. Phil Balkin (killed in action later that day), Steven, Gerry Broude

(Photo - Mike Isaacson)





Machal volunteers of the 89th Commando Battalion, who participated in the capture of Auja-el-Hafir. Six of the group are South Africans. The other's are from USA, Canada and Britain
(Photo - Mike Isaacson)



Reg Sagar
(Photo - Mike Isaacson)

Bert Fagin (UK), Barney Meyerson, Jack Patlansky, Elliott Katzenellenbogen
(Photo - Mike Isaacson)



Top Row: L. to R. Mike Isaacson, Jack Marcusson, Norman Bernstein, Hymie Malbin, unknown.
Bottom Row: Eli Reef, Unknown, Morrie Ringer
(Photo - Mike Isaacson)



L. to R. Bolly Malin, Stanley Kaplan and Chaim Chait
(later killed during a parachute jump). Relaxing during a
stop on a journey south. (Photo - Maurice Ostroff)





S. Africans Hymie Malbin, Ralph Lanesman and Abe Berkow meet Israel's first President Chaim Weizmann and his military police escort.



Standing: Gordon Mandelzweig,
"Lockie" Fainman, David Susman
Kneeling: Fred Sarif, Jeff Perlman,
(Photo - Gordon Mandelzweig)



Gordon Mandelzweig, Basil Herman, Geoff Stark
(Photo - Gordon Mandelzweig)



Geoff Fisher, Dov Rosowsky, Hymie
Toker, Alec Tross
In Tel Aviv



Jules Fisher, Dov Rosowsky,
Leslie Marcus at Beit Rutenberg





Guests at Lou Mazerow's wedding, Nov. 16, 1948:
 L. to R. Standing: Kenny Danker, Abe Sack, Leon Sarnak, Harry Osrin, Phil Hotz, Harry Klass, Barney Dworsky
 Kneeling: "Simie" Waks, Cyril Gotsman, Joe Jedeiken, Effy Levy, George Busch (with the exception of Levy and Busch, all were from Krugersdorp)

(Photo - Abe Sack)



Lou Mazerow, Abe Sack, Max Kaufman

(Photo - Abe Sack)

Johny van Heerden's wedding: From left: Hymie Malbin, Johny van Heerden, Bride, Alec Dworkin (Canada), "Mickey" Sher, Howard Cossman (Canada), Simon Stern

(Photo - Gordon Mandelzweig)





Albert Shorkend, Morrie Ringer, Dov Davis, "Toekie" Levitt, Hymie Green, Hymie Josman, Dave Wolf, Basil Herman, Eli Reef, Morrie Egdes, Archie Nankin, Unknown
(Photo - Albert Shorkend)

Stopover at Entebbe, March 1949, Back row: "Porky" Getz, Hymie Josman, Effy Levy, Abe Sack. Front row: Gordon Mandelzweig, Ivan Kirschner, "Toekie" Levitt, Dave Duchen

(Photo - Gordon Mandelzweig)



Spitfire no. 15, one of a flight of four farewell escort planes honouring Syd Cohen. Photo by Syd's fellow passenger Joe Woolf. See Chapter 18 and Dr. Harry Feldman's personal vignette Chapter 20



Stopover at Entebbe, mid-April 1949, Syd Cohen's fellow passengers; Hymie Kurgan, Maurice Mendelowitz, Harold Sher, Mike Isaacson, Leon Rosen, Joe Woolf, Julius Levine.

(Photo - Joe Woolf)





Pasting up election posters in Allenby Street, Tel Aviv, for the first ever Knesset elections in the new-born state
 (Photo - Maurice Ostroff)

Jubilee stamp, issued by the Israel Postal Authority, commemorating Machal (Volunteers from Overseas). The legend under the old cannon is a quote from late Prime Minister, Yitzchak Rabin:

“They came to us when we most needed them”



From the Author's Introduction

However, I would wish this to be a book of healing, not one of controversy and rancour. I cannot forget what Margaret Larkin wrote in introducing her book, *The Hand of Mordechai*, the story of a kibbutz that resisted an armoured Egyptian onslaught for days in May 1948: The veterans of the kibbutz showed keen interest in my work and were generous with criticism and advice. In an initial meeting some of them took exception to my reference to their heroism. They warned me against glorifying their deeds; they made me understand that they do not think of the battle as an example of man's courage in the face of great odds - they think of it as a tragedy. They pointed out they became front line soldiers by an accident of geography. They did their duty and killed when they had to, but they are men of peace.

Tell how we fought but let every page call out for peace, they demanded at our final meeting.



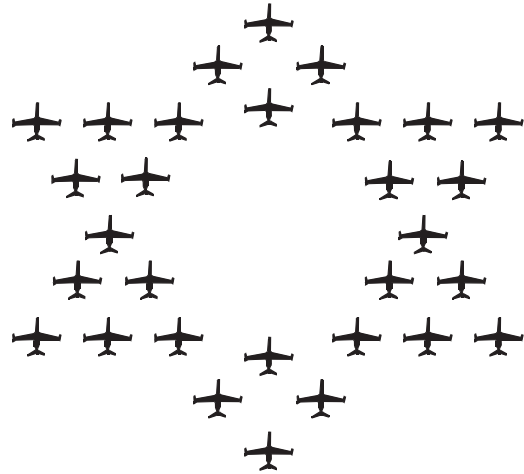
Extracts from a review by Sam Levin in the "TelFed magazine:

"The outcome of this combined effort is a remarkable story of daring exploits, superhuman perseverance and the revelation of countless episodes which have hitherto been known only to a limited few. An entire community – even those with only marginal contact with Zionist Affairs – cannot fail to be impressed and thrilled by this historic saga."

"The book presents an outstanding enthralling and most comprehensive study."

"It is a remarkable chronicle of a remarkable effort made by members of a remarkable community. In order to appreciate its all-embracing significance, one must read the entire book – nothing short of that will suffice. Within these pages an unforgettable story unfolds."

"This is a book that should be on everyone's bookshelf."





הודפס בדפוס תל יוסף

