

OBITUARIES



Al Wank, Israel Navy and Palmach

Al was born in 1926 and was raised in Greenpoint, a particularly rough neighborhood in Brooklyn, NY. He had to fight every day because he was one of the very few Jews in the neighborhood. He left Greenpoint to fight in World War II at the age of 17. After being rejected by the Paratroopers and the submarine service because he was too big for either, he joined the Navy and volunteered for a branch known as the Armed Guard-Navy gun crews on merchant ships. The Armed Guard had the highest rate of fatalities in the Navy. He served on Liberty Ships in the South Pacific and was in on seven invasions for which he received commendations for his service.

Upon return to Brooklyn Al worked several jobs including that of a stevedore on the New York docks, his father's business, etc. He boxed in the PAL League and played Semi-Pro Football. During this time he began to hear about the struggle to establish the State of Israel and he was fascinated with the fact that Jews were fighting for a Homeland. While at a meeting run by Barney Ross, Al overheard some men who were laughing at the procedures-saying that no one there would ever go to fight. He confronted these men and insisted he wanted to go. That encounter was the beginning of several meetings in which he was taken to unknown places (even blind-folded at first), interrogated and investigated until he was approved and told to wait to be

picked up at a comer in New York City. He was then taken to a camp in upper New York State for training.

After the training, he sailed to Marseilles and was put into a DP camp and told to pretend to be mute-since he spoke no language other than English. While there he helped equip the Italian fishing boat that was to take them to Israel. They left in the dead of night from Le Havre with 150 DPs and a small crew. The passengers were carried on shelves, just as we many years later saw reproduced in the Museum of Clandestine Immigration in Haifa. Al was the cook. On the way out the boat hit something that caused a hole in the ship which necessitated bailing water the entire trip. We were told that the name of the ship was the Merrieannic but we were never sure of that.

The ship passed the British Blockade and arrived somewhere near Tel Aviv where it was sunk in the harbor. The passengers were taken to various places within Israel and the crew were questioned about their skills. Since Al had been a gunner's mate in the US Navy, he was assigned to the Hail Hayam. He always liked to say that he was put in charge of all the guns of the Israeli Navy-both of them. He stayed in the Hail Hayam awhile and participated in the raids on Tyre. His departure was prompted by meeting Moshe Dayan in a bar. Dayan said all the action was down in the Negev and so Al and his buddy followed him down to the desert where they joined the *Hayot HaNegev*. They were sent into battle with only a hand grenade and told to get weapons from dead Arabs. He served in the Armored Car and Jeep Company, 9th Battalion, Palmach Hanegev Brigade and is pictured on p. 34 in the book "Machal". One of their duties was to take advantage of every truce declared by the UN by driving all over unclaimed territory in jeeps with Israeli flags. The UN would think that Israel was in control of those areas and declare them to be part of Israel. Al always felt that they had secured much extra land for the State by utilizing those tactics. He was in on the capture of Beersheva and delighted in showing his wife many years later what had become of the tiny two-street town they had captured. He fought in the Ne-

gev until his jeep was blown up on a land mine and his injuries forced him to return home one week before the final truce. He returned with a personal letter nom Lou Harris to Teddy Kollek commending him on his service.

Back in Brooklyn Al worked several jobs until he decided to move to Texas in 1953. Before going there he took time for a vacation in Miami Beach. This latter decision was to determine the rest of his life. It was in Miami Beach that he met his wife--to-be, Betty. After a whirlwind courtship they were married and decided to raise their family in Miami. He went into the uniform rental business, eventually owning his own business, BonMark Uniform Rental Service. He and Betty raised two children, Bonnie and Marc, both of whom are committed Jews and are devoted to the state of Israel. Between them, they gave Al and Betty six wonderful grandchildren.

In 1998 we had a "Reunion" of five of the "Machalniks" in North Carolina. They had not been in touch with each other for 50 years but with internet and other "sleuthing" methods they managed to find each other and arrange for the time together.

They came from Canada, Kansas, Florida, Pittsburgh and North Carolina (until recently from South Africa). It was a wonderful time and many memories were shared. The other men were Harvey (Sarolnikov) Sirlin (now deceased), Al Twersky, Robert "Esky" Klaper, and Jack Benatan. We have a wonderful video of that reunion with two hours' worth of remembrances shared by all.

Al was always very proud of the part he played in the establishment of the State of Israel. He died on Feb. 25, 2004 after a long, valiant fight with pancreatic cancer. His only request was for his coffin to be draped with both the American and Israeli flags.

*Betty Wank
Condolences to
Betty Wank
2603 NW 103rd Ave. #310
Sunrise, FL 33322d*

OBITUARIES



Rochelle and Edward Chinsky

Edward Chinsky: Radio Operator with LAPSA

Edward Chinsky died on April 8, 2004. Ed had served as a radio operator in, as it was known the Lineas Areas de Panama, Israel's Air Transport command. He was a member of the C-46 crew that flew Yigal Yadin to Paris on November 11, 1948. for a meeting of the U.N.

Ed had served with the Royal Canadian Air Force during World War II. After the Israel-Arab war he returned to Canada, trained as an accountant eventually becoming controller of Federal Department Stores in Highland Park, MI. His wife of fifty years, Rochelle, pre-deceased him. A son and daughter-in-law, David and Eva Chinsky, a daughter and son-in-law, Debi and Hartley Harris, survive him. He leaves four grandchildren.

Condolences to

**Mrs. Deborah Harris
4800 Leonard Court
West Bloomfield, MI 48322**



Crew members of ATC C-46 that flew Yigal Yadin, Eddie Chinsky, Ben Sklar, Ray Kurtz, Sy Cohen(sitting), Eli Cohen.

Letters to the Editor

To the Editor-

During the Sar-el, volunteers for Israel, program, in which my wife and I participated recently, they provides some cultural activities. I was very pleased to learn that one program featured Zipporah Porath commenting on her book Letters from Jerusalem, 1947-1948.

Zippy, a member of AVI, gave a moving, funny and, for me, a poignant presentation of her experiences. I was inducted into the Haganah at the same time as she, and we were both members of the Hebrew University Palmach unit and participated in the same or similar missions. I later immensely enjoyed Zippy's book, which had outstanding reviews.

For information on the book: e-mail zip@netvision.net.il. For information on the Sar-El program: e-mail pamela@sar-el.org or the website www.sar-el.org. Pamela is an American living in Tel Aviv. She is the coordinator of the Sar-El program.

Irv Fellner

To the Editor-

Recently I met Shlome Gazit and we were talking about aliyah Bet. He had not heard of our book The Jews Secret Fleet. I sent him one. I have since received from him a book in Hebrew by Reuben Aharoni Leaning Masts: Ships of the Illegal Immigration after World War II. Unfortunately, copies are no longer available. I am offering to photocopy a page on which anyone's ship appears. Please remember that the page is all in Hebrew. Write me by mail, not e-mail. The book was actually published in 1997 and I am sorry that they did not see any reason to let us know or maybe some people do know and I am the one that is out in the cold.

**Murray Greenfield
2 Shamir St.
Tel Aviv 69693**

More on Israel Navy's First Warship



Northland, Eilat

The former U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Northland.

The photo with my article in the Fall 2003 edition of the Newsletter shows the *Northland* being towed, on October 3rd 1947, with her hapless passengers to a British 'delegation' awaiting her at Haifa's 'pier of tears.'

This newly-acquired photo of the *Northland* was taken in WW2 during her US Coast Guard service in the *Greenland Patrol*. She's being towed after her propeller was damaged by ice while chasing a German vessel. The seaplane seen on her fantail was lowered onto the sea via a boom for take-off, and lifted aboard the same way after landing.

In this photo, taken during the 1950s in Haifa Port, she's in her final career as the Israel Navy's *Eilat* A-16.

Eddy Kaplansky



Northland, World WarII, Under Tow

OBITUARIES



Boris Senior, Machal Pilot Who Refused to Bomb Altalena

It is reported in the Jerusalem Post, April 11, 2004 that Boris Senior, one of the earliest Mahal volunteer pilots who helped set up the fledgling Israel Air Force, died in his sleep Friday at the age of 82. Senior had been an early Zionist in his native South Africa, but had joined the South African Air Force during World War II. He had been shot down over Italy and was saved in a miraculous rescue by an American Catalina crew.

The Johannesburg native later smuggled a twin-engine Bonanza aircraft to Palestine in 1948. Together with fellow Mahalnick Smoky Simon, today chairman of World Machal, they staged the first ever official flight of the IAF on Independence Day, May 15, 1948. That reconnaissance flight in the Bonanza took them over Transjordan, where they photographed thousands of Arab troops converging on the new state.

The swashbuckling Senior also volunteered to test fly a "Frankenstein" Spitfire, which mechanics had assembled from various scraps, abandoned by the RAF. Later in the War of Independence he flew Spitfires from Czechoslovakia and was a founding member of the famous 101 Squadron. Senior went on to set up the IAF's Anti-aircraft Corps before mustering out of the service. He remained in Israel and became a businessman. He recently moved from his home in Kfar Shmaryahu to a retirement home near Tel Mond.

The English Edition of Ha'aretz also reports that he flew Spitfire from Czechoslovakia. Forced to land in Rhodes, he was arrested. He is credited with shooting down two Egyptian aircraft as part of Israel's first fighter squadron.

An obituary by Uri Dromi recounts

his service in Great Britain's Royal Air Force in World War II. After the war, while studying in London he joined Etzel. Ordered to bomb the Altalena. He was enraged at the prospect and intended to drop his bombs elsewhere. Fortunately the mission was cancelled.

He is survived by his wife, Batya, who bore him Ayelet, Tal and Leon. He has two children, Lana and Tamar, from his first wife, Ruthi. Two sisters also survive him.

Following is an obituary prepared for South African publication by "Smoky Simon":

David Ben-Gurion, Israel's first Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, stated: "Machal (the volunteers from overseas) were the Diaspora's most important single contribution to Israel's survival in the War of Independence". At least 90-95% of the 425 flying crews who served in the Israel Air Force (IAF) and in Air Transport Command (ATC) were Machalniks, and Boris undoubtedly ranked as one of the foremost Machalniks. (Air Transport Command was a separate entity from the Air Force, and had the function of flying-in to Israel vitally-needed weapons and supplies for the Air Force, Army, and Navy).

Boris's Air Force career started in the South African Air Force, where he served as a fighter pilot in World War II. He was shot down in combat over the skies of Italy, and he parachuted into the icy waters of the Adriatic Sea. Boris was saved in a most dramatic rescue by the crew of an American Air Force Catalina flying boat.

After World War II, Boris went to study in London, where he met his life-long friend, Ezer Weizmann. The United Nations Resolution of November 1947 was a turning point in Boris's life. Like many other Jews, Boris felt outraged by the atrocities of the Holocaust, and by the despicable deportation by the British of Holocaust survivors back to Europe, to Cyprus, Madagascar, and Mauritius. Following the U.N. Resolution, Boris realized that a war with the Arabs was inevitable. He immediately became involved in recruiting veteran airmen who had served in the South African Air Force (SAAF) in World War II. He also became actively involved in acquiring aircraft, and he actually purchased 50 Kittyhawks, but unfortunately there was no way of getting these aircraft out of South Africa as there was a U.N. embargo on weapons of any type to the Middle East. However, he did acquire two Bonanza civil airplanes, and he flew one of them across the length of Africa without navigational aids. In fact, on 14th May 1948, the very day on which Ben-Gurion declared Israel as an inde-

pendent Jewish State, Boris as the pilot and I as the navigator carried out the Israel Air Force's first operational mission as a reconnaissance over enemy territory - over Transjordan, which was one of the five invading Arab States.

Boris was indeed both a founder and builder of the Israel Air Force, which man-to-man, is considered to be the finest air force in the world. Boris was involved in almost every important facet of the nascent Air Force. He was responsible for recruiting aircrews and acquiring equipment. He was appointed as the first commander of the Tel Aviv airfield (Sde Dov). He was a founding member of 101 Squadron - the Air Force's first combat squadron. He had the guts to test-fly the IAF's first Spitfire, which was constructed out of scrap which had been abandoned by the RAF. He was an excellent pilot, and one of the few veterans who never crashed an ME-109 aircraft. These ME-109's which were built in Czechoslovakia were far inferior to the German-built type. These aircraft were unreliable and extremely idiosyncratic. On an epic flight in a Spitfire from Yugoslavia to Israel, Boris had to force-land in Rhodes as a result of a mechanical malfunction. He was arrested by the Greeks and detained for 14 days.

Boris carried out an attack on King Abdullah's Palace in Amman, in the Bonanza he had smuggled out of South Africa. He was also involved in planning an attack on Cairo by one of the three B-17s on their epic mission from Czechoslovakia to Israel. During service in 101 Squadron, Boris shot down an Egyptian aircraft, and his crowning success as a fighter pilot was when he shot down an RAF aircraft. This historic aerial battle with the RAF took place on 7th January 1949. The Royal Air Force had ordered a number of armed fighter aircraft to reconnoitre the battle-fields after Yigal Alon's forces had penetrated into Sinai. Even though the IAF was greatly out-numbered by the RAF, our fighters engaged the RAF and 5 of their aircraft were destroyed - 4 Spitfires and one Tempest. Four aircraft were destroyed by Machal pilots, and one aircraft was shot down by a tank, which was also manned by Machalniks. Boris was one of the victorious IAF pilots.

Following the victory of the Israeli Forces in the War of Independence, Boris was given the responsibility of setting-up Israel's Air Defence Command. He was engaged in this assignment from 1949 to 1951. After a brilliant and adventurous career, he ceased operational flying in 1952.

OBITUARIES



Benjamin (Benny) Kubersh: Radio Operator on the Paduka

Benny was born in Tifton, Georgia July 18 1920. He grew up in the Boston area where in addition to the standard schooling he studied Art and Hebrew. He was active in Hashomer Hatzair Zionist Youth Movement. Benny served in the U.S. Army Signal Corps during WWII.

After discharge from service, he was ready for Aliya but there were no certificates available. Like a number of other ex-servicemen, he decided to attempt Aliyah by accompanying the Jewish refugees in Europe. When in Paris he was contacted by the Palyam. He completed its radio operator training course in Southern France. Benny sailed on the GEULA (PADUKA) from Bayonne France to Bulgaria and then to Haifa. He was deported to Cyprus with the passengers. Then he was returned to Palestine as a refugee. His Aliyah trip started in September 1946 and ended in November 1947 when he joined his gureen in Kibbutz Hatzor. There he drove a caterpillar tractor building shelter, trenches and transporting supplies to Negev settlements. During the War of Independence he operated the communications station at Kibbutz Hatzor.

After the War, Benny married his wife Ruchama. They had two daugh-

ters. For ten years he was in charge of field crops and irrigation. When the kibbutz high school was started, he became a teacher having completed studies at Oranim Teachers College. He taught Agriculture. He also taught at the regional high school.

When he retired from teaching, he returned to the kibbutz to work in irrigation after which he organized and ran the kibbutz archives. During all the years, Benny continued his creative art work. Benny died 7 October 2003, at the age of 83, of a heart attack. He is survived by his wife Ruchama and his two daughters, Ruth and Rachel.

David Baum

A Eulogy offered at Benny's funeral

I think I came to know Benny by his painting that for many years has hung on the wall opposite my bed. A beautiful picture, like all his paintings, a quiet pastel with tranquil colors that was just pleasant to look at. Beautiful, quiet. Not demanding attention but saying "I am here," and I think that was Benny.

Benny was many things, studied Hebrew in Boston, a farmer in the training farm in Hightstown, a soldier in Communications Corps in the American Army, radio man on the illegal immigration ship, farmer and head of our grain crops in Hatzor, teacher - perhaps I knew him first, before we acquired the painting, when he headed our grain crop branch, and was ill once, and as the only veteran in the branch took his job for a week or two. According to his example I went out to the fields and walked the furrows, but unlike him I didn't know what to see, and if I didn't cause damage, I didn't do much good.

And all this time he was an artist, and, in the course of time, Hatzor's archivist, dividing his time between them. In his artist days he perpetuated and created beauty wherever he found, it around him. In his archives he collected, and gathered, and organized and catalogued and preserved every scrap of the Kibbutz's life, and was

the source for holidays and the days that were sad, and of a veritable treasure for the student who one day will come to study the customs of that marvelous being that turned youthful dreams into a society of dreamers.

And everything quietly. In, quiet he worked on his collections in the archives, quietly worked in his Studio and sometimes arranged an exhibition of his work and in his modest smile greeted all those who came to look at it.

The way he was in everything. Ruchama and Benny were hurt when their daughters went far away, but quietly accepted it, and quietly and lovingly welcomed young families into home as adopted children, and every Sabbath evening their house was filled with light and the laughter of children.

He suffered in his body and was silent, and went up to the dining room every evening, and after every meal sat for a few moments until he could get up. His back was bent but did not give up. In silence, too, he lived our kibbutz life, lived every moment of it, made it part of him the way he collected the light and the shadows, and if he had thoughts or complaints or doubts, he saved them generally in the chambers of his heart or shared them with Ruchama at home, but quietly and with faith.

And so he left one, quietly, and I am sure that if that place where he has gone it were still possible to see, he could continue to see the beauty of the dream and the beauty of the world he found.

Shmuel Bari

*Condolences may be sent to:
Ruchama Kulbersh
Kibbutz Hatzor
60970
Israel*

New Funding for and Progress of Machal Archives and Machal Museum

Archives

Ralph Lowenstein, Director and Archivist of the Aliyah Bet and Machal Archives at the University of Florida Libraries, reported that he has received a total of \$78,743 in pledges and cash in his campaign to raise \$105,000 for archive activities over the next five years. Major pledges came from the Shepard Broad Foundation (\$20,000), the Braman Family Foundation (\$25,000), the Jack Chester Foundation (\$10,000), the Judith Baumgardner Gelbart Foundation (\$10,000) and the B. Milford Gerson Trust (\$5,000). Seven AVI members contributed \$7,375, or about 10 percent of the money raised so far.

These funds will enable Ralph, who receives no pay, and his two undergraduate assistants to pursue the ongoing work of the archives. These include collection of detailed questionnaires from veterans of Aliyah Bet and Machal (more than 400 are now on file), collection and copying of photographs and official documents, continued development of a data base and the Aliyah Bet and Machal Virtual Museum on the Internet (<http://www.israelvets.com>), and continued work on accurate rosters of the individual ships and military units in which Aliyah Betniks and Machalniks served.

After two years of research, Ralph reports, the rosters of 12 American-owned ships have been completed. The crew lists will be listed in Aliyah Bet and Machal Virtual Museum this fall. Ralph and his assistants are now working on the more difficult task of compiling rosters of the American and Canadian volunteers in each one of the Israeli army, navy and air force units in which they served.

The University of Florida Libraries has agreed to be the permanent archive of all the material gathered by Ralph, and also to preserve and update the database and Virtual Museum in perpetuity. (Details of the agreements were published in the last AVI Newsletter.) Ralph has already collected an endowment of \$42,000 at the Libraries to provide for this perpetual

maintenance.

Machal Museum

For the first time in the United States or Canada, Aliyah Bet and Machal will have its own permanent museum. Ralph Lowenstein, director of the Aliyah Bet and Machal Archives, has been asked to construct a mini-museum honoring the veterans of these two groups that played such a significant role in the creation of the state of Israel.

The museum will be located in the main hallway of the new \$8.5 million University of Florida Hillel building in Gainesville, Florida. It will include seven museum display cases and one interactive console, linking museum viewers to other Zionist and veteran Internet sites, such as AVI's Virtual Museum and the Machal West web site.

Ralph has hired a professional museum production director, Dorr Dennis, to help him with the project. The Hillel building will be dedicated in January, and the museum should be completed by mid-2005. Cost to produce the mini-museum will be about \$65,000, not counting the cost of the interactive console. To date, Ralph has already received \$49,500 in cash and pledges for this project.

As planned, the seven display cases will have the following themes:

- I. The historical North American support for Israel.
- II. The purchase and routes of 12 American-owned ships.
- III. Spotlight on ships' crews and rescue of Holocaust survivors.
- IV. Smuggling of arms and recruitment for Machal.
- V. The role of Army and Navy volunteers.
- VI. The role of Air Force volunteers.
- VII. Memorial to the 42 North American volunteers killed during service.

Anyone who has artifacts from the War of Independence that they think

will be of use to Ralph should contact him at (352) 392-6525.

Five-year pledges of \$2,500 or more were contributed to the project by the Shepard Broad Foundation, Phil and Barbara Emmer, Mort and Barbara Levinson, Harold Livingston, Ralph and Bronia Lowenstein, Norman and Helen Schutzman, Simon Spiegelman, Marvin Libow, Marvin Slott and the Vidal Sassoon Foundation.

Other significant gifts were contributed by Arthur Bernstein, Ira Feinberg, Bill Gelberg, Paul Kaye, Adrian Phillips, Gene Blum, Jack and June Medalie, Bailey Nieder, Herbert Friedman, Harold Shugar and Fred Levinson.

Ralph is still short of his goal of \$65,000, so any other AVI members who would like to contribute to the project should call Ralph at (352) 392-6525, or send checks made out to "University of Florida Hillel" at the Aliyah Bet and Machal Archives, PO Box 118400, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611-8400. All gifts are tax-deductible.

The University of Florida has 6,000 Jewish students, one of the largest student Jewish populations in the nation. Enrollment at the university is 48,000. "The building of an Aliyah Bet and Machal museum at the University of Florida does not preclude another one being built somewhere else, perhaps in New York or Los Angeles," Ralph said. "But we are not getting any younger, and the opportunity was presented to us here in Gainesville by the Hillel organization."

Ralph said there are also plans to raise additional money to duplicate much of the mini-museum for display in a national tour that will include other Hillels and Jewish museums throughout the U.S. and Canada.

Major New Work on The War of Independence

Reviewed by AVI Members

continued from Pg 1

Elhanan Oren

Israel was violently attacked by its neighbors the day independence was declared. The nation lost some 6,000 or her sons and daughters in vicious battles but bested all of her enemies and opened her gates to refugees from Hell.

Yitzhak Navon

The citation from Oren lists some immediate outcomes of the Arab-Israel conflict of 1947-49, or more precisely, the gains, since this paragraph does not report the costs in blood and treasure, as does Navon's comment, of the conflict for Israel. In this sense it is the victor's historical narrative. That does not make it inaccurate but it does make it incomplete as an account of a complex engagement between the Yishuv, the regular armies of surrounding Arab states, irregular foreign volunteers organized in Syria and Egypt and the militias of the local Palestinian population.

Military history has a long tradition emerging from cave drawings, biblical accounts and Roman letters. Josephus' *The Wars of the Jews*, written in the first century C.E. and culminating with a description of the Roman victory over Judea, the fall of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. and of Masada in 73 C.E. with a good dose of Josephus' own judgment on the wrong-headedness of the Judean resistance. Carl von Clausewitz' *On War*, published in the early nineteenth century, pro-

jecting a mechanical image of the battlefield, stands at the heart of a torrent of modern work.

The Israel War of Independence was initially described as a complex of military and political history in a penumbra of personal memoirs and fictional accounts. A few of the serious historical works, written mostly from an Israeli perspective, available in English and arranged chronologically by date of publication, include: Netanel Lorch, *Israel's War of Independence: 1947-1949* (1968). Lorch was a young historian in the historical branch of the Israel Defence Forces who resigned frustrated by pressures to treat his work from a public relations point of view; Benny Morris' *The Birth of the Palestine Refugee Problem, 1947-1949*; (1987) was an early criticism of the accepted version of events in 1948. He was dubbed a revisionist "New Historian"; Simha Flapan, *The Birth of Israel: Myths and Realities* (1987) is the work of a leader of the Israeli left, a progressive interpretation of events; Ilan Pappé, author of *Britain and the Arab Israeli Conflict, 1948-1951* (1988) is one of most severe iconoclasts among the New Historians. Issa Khalaf's *Politics in Palestine: Arab Factionalism and Social Disintegration* (1991) describes the disorganization in the Arab community, which contributed to their wartime catastrophe. Shmuel Dothan's *A Land in the Balance: The Struggle for Palestine, 1918-1948* (1993) is a political backgrounder; Ian Lustick (ed.), *Triumph and Catastrophe:*

The War of 1948, Israeli Independence and the Refugee Problem (1994) is an American political scientist who brings together both Israeli and Arab materials. Avraham Sela's *The Decline of the Arab-Israeli Conflict: Middle East Politics and the Quest for Regional Order* (1998) analyzes political sequelae of the conflict. Dan Caspi's *The In/Outsiders: The Media in Israel* (1999) reflects on the Israeli press during the conflict. Benny Morris', *The Birth of the Palestine Refugee Problem Revisited* (2004) introduces new material modifying his earlier "revisionist" views. One is struck by the twenty-year gap between the war and the beginnings of serious military history. Time and distance are required to construct a more veridical and objective narrative. The New Historians were the products of American and British universities. They tried to introduce the scholarly criteria they had learned in interpreting accounts of the war. As might be expected, they generated a traditionalist reaction perceiving them as lacking in patriotism.

The collection under review concludes with an article on the development of Israeli military historiography. (Bar-On, Mordechai, "The Struggle Over Memories of the War: The Beginning of Israeli Historiography of the War of Independence, 1948-1958," Vol. 2, 967-1003.) Bar-On is a scholar at the Yitzhak Ben Zvi Institute and the Yisrael Galili Association for Research in Defensive Capability. He is one of the most expe-

Major New Work on The War of Independence Reviewed by AVI Members

rienced military historians among contributors to this work, having published on the Suez War, on the Six Day War, military education in the Israel Defence Forces and on the Israel peace movement.

Bar-On describes how first records of the war were in the form of diaries, memoirs and newspaper reports. Ben Gurion wrote almost daily in his diary and gave speeches meant to mobilize the people. Most of his diary entries covered events and discussions in his office rather than direct reports from the field. They were, perhaps, notes for a future historian. Newspapers of the period provided direct reports of events in "real time," editorialized interpretations of events, and ran background essays and reports submitted by the fighters themselves from the field. Press reports tend to be incomplete since reporters were ignorant of contextual events, and the reporting on events was truncated to meet press time. Sequels on the following day were rare. Also military and governmental censorship constrained them. Even more analytic writers were conscious of a political task to encourage the people in the battle and assuage their fears. Thus, an article in *Ma'ariv* of March 14, 1948 reflected the public consternation when Fawzi al-Kaukji entered the field of battle they commented that his forces lacked a nationalist commitment, being mostly mercenaries, adventurers and subject to inter-ethnic conflicts among themselves. The journalists also constructed events at which they were not present. As battles multiplied,

some journalists were learning how to report from the battleground.

Eventually, some journalists collected their reports and published them in book form, as a contribution to future historiography. Early ones were by Amos Elon and Yeshurun Keshet who were in Jerusalem under siege. Members of kibbutzim that were attacked wrote memoirs to communicate the experience to their children and grandchildren. Quasi-historical studies were published in the military journal *ma'arakhot*. These authors also kept in mind the need to support troop morale and so were not always objective. Some accounts were examinations of reasons for failure when the enemy occupied the kibbutz. Survivors of Gush Etzion, Gezer and Nitzanim left such narratives. Memorial books on the lives of individuals who fell in battle were published by their communities or by their families.

By the Spring of 1949 research tasks were more likely to be assigned to professional historians, than to officers in IDF lacking that academic perspective. Ben Gurion had integrated both the left wing, Palmach, and the right wing, *atsel* and *lehi*, forces into the Haganah and the IDF. Partisans of these groups struggled to preserve their narratives of the war, their special contributions to the victory. The narratives of the left, of Mapam, were embedded in a larger political canvas of sympathy with the Soviet Union. For the Revisionist right, Menachem Begin and his fighters defined the context. This

tendency was only mitigated when a new generation of young officers entered the field in the 1950s.

The historical branch of the General Staff was established in 1952 under Netanel Lorch, a graduate of the Hebrew University. On account of the emotion and political pressures surrounding recent history he tried to limit his efforts to a Military operational history. Yigal Yadin, his superior cautioned him about writing about abandoned property or conquests during a cease-fire. Shmuel Segev, in 1954, translated publications by Arabs: on the war in Haifa, on the Egyptian attack on Kfar Darom and the battle at Sh'ar Hagai. The Hebrew reader could explore the enemy perspective.

Bar-On fails to discuss use of the archived bureaucratic materials such as recruitment registration records, logistical records of acquisition and allocation of supplies, the minutes of planning and administrative meetings of the various services, correspondence among the various commands, and so forth. That is, he provides an image of the historian composing narratives and the influences and constraints under which he or she works, a kind of history of the historical product. One misses the image of the historian in the data gathering phase, the locations searched and the screening and interpretive criteria for drawing selected materials together.

A concluding sentence in the introduction by Alon Kadish

Major New Work on The War of Independence Reviewed by AVI Members

summarizes this problem of finality and completeness.

The dynamism of historical research and of research methods which contribute to it, with perspectival additions, guarantee that the last word on the War of Independence (or any designated event of similar importance) has not yet been uttered and it is doubtful whether it will ever be uttered. The effort to offer a final and definitive summary is not a matter of the research field but this does not negate the value of intermediate summaries based on data in hand (29).

After this much too lengthy background comment on military history, in general, and Israeli military history, in particular, let us return to this collection. The general editor, Elon Kadish, is a Professor of History at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Kadish, born a couple of years after the War of Independence, had written on the British historian, Arnold Toynbee, the development of the discipline of economics in British universities and on the conquest of Lydda during the War of Independence. This collection is a publication of the Israel Ministry of Defence with the cooperation of the Yisrael Galili Organization for Research into Defense Capability, the National Organization of Members of the "Haganah," The Association of the Palmach Generation and The Tabenkin Institute.

Milhemet Ha'atsmaut, in two volumes, includes 30 papers by 24 authors most of whom are

university professors. The coverage of these papers is quite extensive. The articles are divided between four sections: 1. Overview deals with the broad strategies as seen through the diaries and other records of Ben Gurion, the place of quantitative and qualitative measures of the comparative strengths of forces and the institutional organization of the Jewish and Arab societies in preparation for the struggle; 2. Military Perspectives opens with a contrast between the inter-community strife preceding the declaration of the state and the military confrontations following it, the Rescue Army from Syria, the Holy Jihad of the Mufti of Jerusalem and local units of the Muslim Brotherhood, the organization of the invading Arab forces and the fate of local agreements between Jewish and Arab settlements to maintain the status quo. In Tiberias, for instance, the Rescue Army took control of the Arab community and precipitated a strong reaction on the part of the Haganah leading to the fleeing of the Arab population. Another problem for the Arabs was the conflict of political interests among the Arab states. Syria hoped to occupy the Galilee and absorb it in a Greater Syria while the Jordanians and Lebanese opposed this plan. In this climate the local Arab defense forces were ineffective. The editor, Kadish, points out that, especially in the work on Jerusalem, there is a need for a pluralistic view, not simply that of the victorious side, Abdullah's initial tendency was not to fight for Jerusalem until it appeared the Jewish forces would

occupy the Old City. Thereupon, the Arab Legion occupied it. The battle at Latrun also was perceived as defensive on the part of the Legion.

We have a variety of battle aperçus. Jaffa fell when the political and military leadership of the Arabs failed to achieve a united front. The Egyptian invasion of the southern coast was stopped by the Givati Brigade with the help of troops freed from other fronts while it was not clear that the Egyptians intended a deeper incursion, Gahal, foreign recruits, began training in the concentration and DP camps of Europe and in North Africa. They were brought in immediately after the state was declared and sent to battle units where their casualties were higher than those of the more experienced recruits from the Yishuv. Machal, Overseas Volunteers, were recruited for their military specialties and made a vital contribution to the Air Force, tanks and artillery. German and Bosnian volunteers, also military specialists, served in the Arab forces. Early in the war neither side took captives but later there were both Jewish and Arab prisoners of war. The latter provided labor services in Jewish military camps.

3. Civilian Perspectives reports on the organization of government institutions in territories opened by the war, especially for mobilization for the war as well as the dissolution of Arab organizations as a factor in the Naqba, and the extension of civilian political authority over the various units of

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the Haganah. Part of the success of the Yishuv in war was due to its greater economic productivity relative to the Arab sector and to the financial support from Jews in the United States, which circumvented the embargo. This section reports that the political leadership excessively influenced the newspapers and, since they served narrow publics, fail to provide an overall picture of the situation. 4. Aftermath of War is an attempt to analyze the problem of Arab and Jewish refugees in neutral academic terms without attention to current ideologies.

Even this wide net fails to snare a number of issues. Although, the archives of the Israeli Ministry of Defense for the war period were opened in the 1980s, little original research based on their contents appears here. This is the material on which the controversial New Historians relied. With none of the principal New Historians represented in this collection, it is notable that this archival material is little exploited in these papers. Most of the articles are state of the art collections based on secondary sources. This is a good a summary work for the general reader. Also limited, though not absent, are studies dependent on British, American and UN archives. While it is not to be expected that Israeli historians would have access to Arab archives, scholars of other nationalities could have access. The wealth of Arab publications on the war, the flurry of writings to interpret the Naqba, which appeared in the years immediately after the war

and some later secondary works are also neglected. As a military history one might expect more histories of the evolution of the various armed services. This AVI Newsletter has published reviews of an excellent and well-documented history of the *Air Transport Command (Geshet Aviri L'Atsmaut 1947-1949)* by Avi Cohen appeared in the Summer 2002 AVI Newsletter, pages 11-13) An Egyptian work, by Jaber Ali Jaber, an officer of the Egyptian Air Force, *Air Power in the Midst of Egyptian and Israeli Politics* (Arabic) was reviewed in the same Newsletter issue.

There is also a matter of academic format. David Macarov, one of our reviewers, points out, "I am incredulous to find that there is no subject index. If I want to read about Deir Yassin, or the Altalena, or the Etzel, or the attack on San Simeon, there is no way I can find them without paging through the entire book. I think this is a serious lack in such a book." I agree.

Samuel Z. Klausner

Reviews of Selected Chapters

Following are reviews of chapters in the book by AVI veterans Samuel Klausner, David Hanovice, Mordechai Chertoff, Simon Spiegelman and David Macarov.

Elhanan Oren, "The War of Independence: Aims, Stages, Engagements and Results," Volume I, 33-76.

Elhanan Oren, a member of

the Historical Department of the Israel Defence Forces, opens the collection with a political sketch beginning with the preparations for war in mid-1947, well-before the UN partition resolution, and ending with the Rhodes cease fire agreement in mid-1949. He is well-known to Israeli readers as the author of a work on Operation 'Dani' (1976), which cleared Arab villages west of Tel Aviv including the Lydda Airport, Ramle and opening the road to Jerusalem in July 1948, and another on Operation 'Uvda' (2002), which opened the Negev to Israeli forces south of Beer-sheva to Eilat. He has also written on military politics internal to the Yishuv from the mid-thirties to the post-WWII period. In *Settlements in the Years of Struggle--Settlement Strategy in the Years Prior to the State, 1936-1947* (1978), he describes the Hebrew Revolutionary Movement (*tenuat hameri*) established in 1945, which brought together the forces of the Palmach, the *Irgun Zvai Leumi* and *Lohamei Erets Yisrael*. The movement fell apart following the attack on the King David Hotel in 1946. Of course the full history of Jewish defense would go back to the formation of the Shomer during the First World War but it certainly crystallized after the Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin El-Husseini sparked the Arab Rebellion of 1936-1939. In June of 1947 Ben Gurion called upon the Haganah to prepare for war with Palestinian Arabs and for attacks from Arab states. By October, Ben Gurion and appointed the principal officers of the Haganah and ordered organizational prepa-

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rations for a regular army. Programs acquired arms from abroad for introduction when the British left. The foundation was laid for a naval and air arm.

The UN partition resolution of Nov. 29, 1947, calling for a partition of Palestine with an economic union, had the support of the US and the USSR and two thirds of the nation-members of the General Assembly. The Arabs took up arms the morning after and from there the situation deteriorated from civil disturbances to war. The Arab League, founded with British encouragement, was, at first, reluctant to include the Palestinian Arabs since they were still under a British mandate. The British had refused re-entry of the Mufti after he had spent some war years in Axis countries.

The Arab League appointed the Iraqi General Ismael Safwat over the Arab forces. He declared his war aims as (1) absolute destruction of the Jews of Palestine, (2) through battle to force the Jews to accept Arab terms and (3) inflaming riots against the partition plan. They made no effort to form a government for a Palestinian State. In the late winter of 1947 and the spring of 1948 there were attacks on the Hatikva quarter in Tel Aviv, Gush Etzion and destruction of a group attempting to relieve them. The local Arabs were aided by the Rescue army from Syria, formed and financed by the Arab League and led by Fawzi al-Kaukji.

The British withdrawal

was gradual as they continued to try to control conflict in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv/Yaffo. The Haganah was able to occupy abandoned points in such a way as to be able to block invading forces. At the declaration of the state only about a third of the land allocated by the UN to the Jewish state was held by the Israel government. American support for a Jewish state had begun to crumble in early May when the US offered a proposal to place Palestine under a UN trusteeship until a resolution between Arabs and Jews was negotiated. The governing officials of the Yishuv debated this proposal. On 12 May it was decided to go ahead, by a vote of 6:4, with the declaration of the state. Those favoring a declaration anticipated political support from the USSR, arms shipments from Czechoslovakia and evidence that the Jews could hold their own despite the disadvantage in the balance of forces at that time (Gush Etzion fell on May 14), the wide response to calls for recruitment even without governmental authority, the positive response of the diaspora and Machal volunteers and expectation of the arrival of Gahal recruits and the expectation of the arrival of heavy arms from overseas that the Haganah had collected.

The various invading armies were ill coordinated. Abdullah shifted his forces from the center to Jerusalem in order to resist the Mufti's Holy Jihad forces. Oren documents how, in many cases, the Arab armies failed to follow through on initial advantages and

so bogged down.

The UN mediator, Count Bernadotte, who arrived a few days after the state was declared, proposed a cease-fire. He proposed that the Arabs (i.e. Abdullah) be given the Negev, Israel would receive the Galilee and Jordan would have rights to Jerusalem. In this he was abandoning the UN plan for the internationalization of Jerusalem. The Israel government interpreted this as a danger to the new state. Since Kaukji held the mid-Galilee and the Egyptians had cut off the Negev the Arabs were also unhappy with Bernadotte's proposal. Lehi members assassinated Bernadotte in Jerusalem and his plan became, in the eyes of the UN, his Last Will and Testament. That is, his plan came front and center as UN policy.

Jerusalem had been under siege throughout the spring. Ben Gurion wanted to commit forces to open the road to Jerusalem but his military staff objected. Subsequently Jewish forces lost the battles of Latrun and supplies to besieged Jerusalem awaited the opening of the Burma Road. Ben Gurion disputed with his general staff over appointments and there was conflict between Ben Gurion and the parties of the right around the firing on the Altalena, the ship that had arrived during the first cease-fire with arms for the Irgun Zvai Leumi.

A second cease-fire came into effect in mid-July. Ben Gu-

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tion feared this would be the end of hostilities with some aims not yet achieved. During this period both sides received arms. The Israelis received Messerschmitts from Czechoslovakia, the army received tanks and heavy artillery and some naval equipment became available. By the fall Israel had an advantage in arms. The strength of forces also began to tilt in Israel's favor. The Israel forces at the time of the invasion numbered 36,000 and reached 100,000 by the fall. while Arab forces numbering 65,000 by the end of 1948.

Hostilities continued. After the second cease-fire, the several Arab nations took possession of various areas they had occupied, not in the name of an independent Arab state but as Arab areas under the influence of the established Arab states. The Mufti and Egypt declared a government in Gaza and Jordan and the Iraqis in the west bank and Jerusalem. Kaukji, under the Syrian influence, tried to establish control in the central Galilee. The Arabs of Palestine had little influence in any of the areas.

Beer Sheva had been occupied by the Egyptians and now fell to Israel. Ben Gurion pressed for Operation Yoav to occupy all of the Negev, Beersheva and beyond. Sharet, the Israel Foreign Minister, defended Israel's need to hold the Negev. The Soviet Union supported the Israel position as did Truman in the UN debate. The American Secretary of State was not supportive.

The Arab states were ready

for the Rhodes negotiations, conducted from January to July 1949, after having lost battles. Israel wanted economic relief from the burden of a large standing army and looked forward to a peace treaty. We know now that that peace treaty was not forthcoming.

What is notable about the Oren account is its interweaving of military and political history. Most historical offices of the world's departments of defense or war, attend to military, regimental histories, analyses of field operations and strategic planning. In the Israeli case, the line between civilian and military functions is not clearly drawn. With a continuing national service program for the entire population and with easy movement between military and political leadership roles, one would expect nothing else. The chapter does suffer from the same limitation as most of this work. The roles of all non-Israeli actors are underplayed. We learn little of the military and political conflict from the Arab side and precious little of the diplomatic histories of relations with other states around the war and state formation. Yet, given this, the work serves an important purpose as a summary sketch of where we are in the formation of better narrative of Israel's formative years.

Samuel Z. Klausner

Moshe Ehrenwald, "Military Engagements in Jerusalem During the War of Independence, November 1947-April 1948"

(hamaarakha hatsvait b'milhemet haatsmaut, november 1947-april 1948), pp. 341-388.

This is a most disturbing chapter, for a variety of reasons: it reminds us of bitter memories time was kind enough to soften, and it includes numbers we only guessed at back then.

First, some numbers. In November, 1947, Jerusalem had a total population of between 160-165 thousand residents. Of these, about 100 thousand were Jews and 65 thousand were Arabs (about 33,000 Moslems and 31,000 Christians). There are no figures available on Arab losses, but we know how many Jews died in Jerusalem: 4,544 fighters, and about 1,500 civilians. Those of us who lived through that period knew the casualties were heavy, but we never dreamt the percentage was so high: roughly 6%!

More numbers. While casualty figures were high, weapons figures were pathetically low. In Jerusalem itself we had 1,011 rifles, 502 sub-machine guns, 28 machine guns, 6 large caliber machine guns, 24 2" mortars, 43" mortars, and 2 Davidkas. This tally does not include my Austrian pistol, complete with 6 non-replaceable bullets.

To complete the numbers, it must be noted that there are also 160 footnotes.

The point is made that there were thousands of young people who had not been recruited and

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were wandering around freely, and there were occasional “sweeps” to find them. True, but contrary to another «report,” there was no panic in Jerusalem; none that I was aware of.

With all of the footnotes and the long-winded reports, some very important events are not even mentioned. There is no reference to the ambush of “the thirty-five” who went to re-enforce Gush Etzion; no mention of the attacks in the Commercial Center, nothing about the Ben Yehudah street bombing, nothing about the bombing of the Jewish Agency building or of the Palestine Post. But Ben Gurion does not mention them in his Personal History, either.

It’s all “On the battle,” but not about the actual fighting. One hopes that Tal has more to say about the actual battles for Jerusalem than Ehrenwald does in this chapter.

Mordecai Chertoff

Yonatan Fein, “Organization of the Jewish Homefront Prior to the War of Independence: Basic Problems of Governance and Logistics” (*irgun ha’oref hayehudi l’qrat milhemet haatsmaut: ba’ayot yesod b’memshal u’v’logistika*), pp. 679-710.

As one who grew up to admire the *tushiya* (improvisation) with which Israel faced all problems, this account of how much detailed planning went into preparing the home front for the anticipated

war and State is very revealing. Estimates as to what and how much would be needed were detailed: food, fuel, trucks, trains, water, and more as well as the method(s) by which this was to be distributed to the populace. Perhaps it would be asking too much of a government-published document to indicate how near the mark these estimates were, and which goals were not met (or perhaps this appears elsewhere in the book), but it would be instructive to know. Similarly, there is no mention in this chapter of planning for the mass of refugees from Europe and North Africa who came to Israel as soon as the State was declared. It is not clear whether this was not anticipated, or just could not be planned for under the circumstances, or whether there were plans not detailed here. Neither of these caveats should be seen as detracting from the magnificent job of planning that took place.

Three major problems beset the planning process. One was the uncertainty of the future. Were plans to be made for a short or long period? Or, more directly, would the British actually move out as they promised, and if so, what situation would they leave behind; would the Arabs attack, and if so, what would they capture and/or destroy? Consequently, one basic factor running throughout this chapter was the need to plan for the immediate -- probably critical -- future, while at the same time laying the foundations for the permanent institutions of the State. This tension is referred to many times in this chapter, although individual

instances are not given. However, it is clear that the planners were aware that temporary measures were necessary, but they knew that nothing may be more permanent than a temporary structure.

The second problem is discussed in the context of the makeup of the World Zionist Organization, and this was the existence of the “party key” in which each political party in the Zionist movement was entitled to representation in every office, committee, planning body, etc., in accordance with their strength in the World Zionist Movement. Thus, members of such bodies were not necessarily appointed for their knowledge or experience concerning the work of the organization, but as guardians of their parties’ interests.

The existence of the party key must have been a more severe problem than described in the book, given the plethora of local and national bodies and layers of responsibility. For example, the body given overall responsibility for planning acquisition and distribution of needed items consisted of representatives of twenty-six (!) organizations. The smaller committee charged only with planning for food and feed included representative from sixteen organizations. Given the administrative rubric that nobody wants to be coordinated unless they can be the coordinator, it is indeed surprising that any plans were made at all.

The third major problem was the lack of skilled, experi-

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enced experts in various fields -- railroads, telephones, electricity, water and more: In January 1948 the committee charged with planning for the use of railroads was unable to submit a report because, "There was no expert in this field in Israel." Such shortages are noted frequently as one of the factors making planning difficult.

Several interesting, if not important, nuggets are in this chapter. For example, in hiring people who had worked for the Mandatory Power, first choice was for those about whom there was no suspicion of corruption. Second choice, however, was from those whose corruption was minor. As explained, given the Israeli attitude toward the mandatory officials, and toward Arab superiors, some methods of cheating them was expected and accepted. Similarly, many people do not know that the Tel Aviv port, the building of which was the focus of national pride, songs, and films, was never used, since the Hagana captured Haifa and its shipyard.

In summary, the foresight shown by the planners for the War of Independence and for the State was remarkable, and is well documented in this chapter.

David Macarov

Klein, Aharon, "Arab Prisoners of War during the Israeli War of Independence of 1948/49" (*hashvuim haaraviim b'milhemet haatsmaut*), pp. 568 to 586).

ers of war during the Israeli war of Independence has not been studied systematically nor discussed widely by the public in the years since the war. Aharon Klein, currently a researcher on the 1948 Israeli War of Independence at the Galili Center for the Historical Study of Israeli Defense in Tel Aviv. Klein holds a B.A. in Middle East Studies and an M.A. in History from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. He is also, currently, the military/political affairs correspondent at the Jerusalem Bureau of Time Magazine.

Aharon Klein researched this article using Misrad Habita-chon and IDF archives, the repositories of the official historical record of the newly proclaimed State of Israel and its government. Material was also gleaned from David Ben Gurion's war diary, newspaper reports and editorials about the ongoing war. The whole story may never be known. Aharon Klein based this article, a twenty-three-page article with 53 references, on his master's thesis at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem in 2001.

As the State of Israel was proclaimed on May 14th, 1948, after the termination of the British Mandate over Palestine, regular armies of the surrounding Arab States invaded. Fighting was interrupted at various times, seemingly when the IDF was gaining ground, by the UN mediated a truce (*hafugah*). At times, the truce was short-lived before fighting resumed.

member 1947 while the British were still in Palestine. The Hagana, Palmach, along with the Irgun Tzvai Leumi, and LoChamei Herut Yisrael, Jewish underground defense forces, took prisoners of war as they encountered Palestinian armed militias and Jordanian combatants who attacked Jewish communities. These prisoners were interrogated for information about enemy troop size and movements. Prisoners of war, at that time, were mostly kept in safe houses in Jerusalem and other locations. Some were interrogated at the command centers of the units that had apprehended them. While the British were still there, it was not possible to establish internment facilities.

After May 15th 1948, new waves of Arab POWs were detained. The problem of how to manage them had not been fully explored. By order of Israel Galili in mid April 1948 and by orders from IDF General Command in June 1948 rules were established as to who were to be considered prisoners of war, how and where they were to be kept and procedures for interrogating them in the light of their rights. Internment facilities were not available at that time, nor were personnel trained for that task. Initially Arab POWs were housed in tents or in usable houses abandoned in Palestinian Arab Villages. The latter also served as administrative command posts, internment camps were surrounded by barbed wire fences and guarded by IDF soldiers.

The subject of Arab prison-

Fighting erupted in No-

The 1st Arab POW camp

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was established near Herzlia at an abandoned Arab village to facilitate the internment for about 100 to 200 prisoners, mostly of Palestinian Armed Militia bands in May 26th, 1948. As the battles raged and more prisoners of war were taken, a second Arab Prisoners of war camp was established in Athlit south of Haifa in July 1948. These POW internment facilities were placed as far as possible from the battle zones and mostly utilized abandoned Palestinian Arab villages near Jewish townships. As the prisoner of war population increased, a total of five camps were constructed: a third near Nahariya, a fourth in Tel-Litvinski and a fifth camp in Sarafand. At its peak in Feb. 1949, the total number of Arab POWs was 6376. All five detention camps were operated following the British model and in accord with the Geneva Convention of 1929 to which Israel signed on formally only in August 1949. Red Cross representatives visited and inspected all five POW detention facilities about every 2 weeks. POWs could lodge complaint and be represented to their Israeli captors by the Red Cross. The Arab POWs prepared their own food, preferring it to the food issued them by the IDF. Also they were allowed self-governance, electing their own representatives to communicate with the IDF captors.

Former British Officers, who defected their ranks when the British departed, operated the five detention camps. One of these was Major Bron who was appointed *ravseren* and who took charge of all

five POW facilities while the other commanders held the rank of *seren*. Many of the lower echelon of 70 officers and 108 with sergeants' ratings were former Lechi and Atsel members who were integrated into the IDF early in the War of Independence. In all about 973 enlisted soldiers guarded and administered the detention camps. The enlisted soldiers were mostly those rejected for regular service for medical reasons or had been lightly combat wounded and assigned temporarily to the POW guard duty till they were able to return to their former units.

As the POW population increased they were given incentives to join work groups. The POWs were offered an increase of food rations, a daily pay allowance, as well as cigarettes and other selective items from the *shekem*. POW officers and sheikhs were given due recognition and status accommodations.

In Feb. 1948 out of 6376 about 4762 POWs participated in work groups. Some 1400 of these had professional skills, which were selectively utilized. Their work included sanitary and camp maintenance in their own camps and later on as out-side work groups at 131 IDF bases, hospitals and camps. They were engaged as kitchen cleaning help, warehouse labor, and construction and in other mechanical repair facilities, always under guard, guidance and supervision of IDF soldiers.

Most of the POW's re-

mained in detention for periods of seven to twelve months. Some were kept up to two years. After the cease fire with Egypt, Lebanon, Syria and Jordan in March and April of 1949, many POWs were gradually returned to their home countries following the Rhodes cease fire agreements. The Palestinian Arabs too were released and by the early part of 1950 all five POW camps were closed. The Sarafand detention center was the last to be closed.

Concluding statements:

1. In my opinion, the author, Aharon Klein gave a very good account of the Arab POWs with the available reference material he had at hand.

2. The Government of the State of Israel went above and beyond its obligation to gain favorable world public opinion in regard to the Arab POWs. Also it's aimed not to give the Arabs holding IDF-POWs reason for harsher treatment of the IDF prisoners that they were keeping.

3. The author does mention grouping according to the POWs nationalities. There were about 900 Egyptian officers and enlisted men and about 200 Palestinians from armed militias. In April 1948 orders from Haganah HQ were issued to all units to detain Palestinian Arabs who were in the age group of military conscription, and who could become potential enemies of the State of Israel. Great effort was made not to separate family members or prisoners from the same vil-

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lage.

4. In my opinion the Arab POWs were treated more fairly than they deserved, compared to the way IDF POWs were treated by the Arab captors.

5. The firing on the Altalena in the Tel-Aviv harbor area as she arrived with a supply of arms for the Irgun Tzvai Leumi during the first cease fire, by order of David Ben Gurion, caused casualties to its crew members. When merged with the Haganah and the Palmach to form the IDF, mistrust persisted on both sides, which kept the members and leaders of these groups from being integrated into IDF battle units or command positions. As a result many of these group members were assigned or preferred to serve in the Arab POW camp duties.

6. It seems that they managed these camps fairly well and utilized the available POW manpower to help alleviate the shortage of manpower in the IDF at that time, by offering incentives for the POWs to voluntarily join the work groups and making plans for proper utilization of that potential source of manpower and their skills.

7. The lessons learned from the IDF Arab POW experience was that by capturing and interrogating them, as ordered by Yigal Yadin on Jan.1948, vital information was obtained which reduced Israeli casualties and saved lives. Also it became a tool for exchange, during cease-fire negotiations, of Arab POWs for Jewish POWs held by

the Arab Armies.

8. Even though when the hostilities began and the IDF Command at that time was not prepared to handle a great influx of thousands of Arab Prisoners of War, the problem was shortly brought under reasonable control and management. This provided the POW population ample and reasonable living conditions in the internment camps, which improved as time went on. Also, the management of POWs evaluated, on their own initiative, and presented to Misrad Habitchon and IDF HQ Command plans for the utilization of this potential available manpower. The utilization of the skills of this manpower enabled the IDF to divert and use the IDF manpower for more essential duties as the POWs relived the IDF members from their work positions.

9. In Jan.1949, before the Rhodes Cease Fire agreement had progressed, when it seemed that the Arab POWs would be detained by Israel for a long time, plans were submitted by the POW administering command to Misrad Habitchon and IDF HQ Command plans to further utilize the available POW manpower for national infrastructure, road construction, railroad maintenance, and harbor expansion works as well as two new cement product factories, and reopening the old Athlit quarries which had been idle for a long time. These plans were shelved due to the start of the POWs releases in March and April 1949.

10. Having said all of this, I believe

that the management and personnel who participated in the five POW detention facilities deserved a lot of credit and gratitude.

David Hanovice

Khalaf, Issa. The Breakdown of Arab Palestine--A New Assessment: Internal Factors in the 1948 Social Crumbling of the Society (*Qrisat falastine ha'aravit--'iyun mehudash: bhinat hagormim hapnemiim l;hitporrut hahevratit 1948*), pp 661-678. This article is also available in English under the title, "The Effect of Socio-economic Change on Arab Societal Collapse in Mandate Palestine," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 29:1, 93-112.

Issa Khalaf wrote this essay when he was Assistant Professor at Loras College, Dubuque, Iowa. His thesis is that widespread socio-economic dislocation among Arab peasants and workers eroded the foundation of Palestinian Arab society and "severely weakened this lower stratum's defense against Zionist settlement, colonial state policies and military pressures". He suggests that this factor needs to be recognized as one of the causes of the Arab collapse and the exodus in 1947-48. Other factors he mentions are characterized as political, military or diplomatic. Among these he cites Zionist expansion through military action and terrorism; the incompetence, corruption and political ambitions of the Arab states; Arab collaboration with the British; Arab determination to destroy the new State of Israel; and Hashemite-

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British-Zionist complicity in denying the Palestinian Arabs a state of their own.

Among the socioeconomic causes of the Arab collapse, Khalaf highlights the displacement of Arab tenant farmers and the small holders as a result land purchases by Zionist organizations from Arab landowners. The displaced, he suggests now joined the “ranks of the landless and urban poor”. Other factors he mentions as causes of societal dislocation are the peasants’ perennial indebtedness caused by usury, dispossession and burdensome taxation; enforcement of Islamic inheritance laws (i.e., equal shares for the sons) at a time the Arab families were multiplying rapidly, failing crops and rising prices. The result was the transformation of the now landless fellahin into migrant workers dependent on the Arab Labor Unions who in turn were unable to absorb them and compete effectively with Jewish workers organized by the Histadrut. This “weakened the Palestinian Arab social structure at the very moment, in 1947, when it faced its first military challenge from an organized, determined foe”.

Comments:

The dislocations in Palestinian Arab society would have happened even if there was no Jewish presence in Palestine if we consider the socioeconomic conditions prevailing in Arab villages. Even before large-scale Jewish immigration, Arab landowners, merchants and urban notables placed heavy

burdens on the fellahin. As to the impact of Jewish land purchases on the Arab social structure, it is inconceivable that it had the widespread deleterious effect suggested by Khalaf. Citing some of the statistics put forward by Khalaf himself in his essay:

1. By 1945, land in Jewish possession was 1.4 million dunam (including land that heretofore was uncultivable). The total land surface of Palestine was 26 million dunam of which 8 million dunam was considered cultivable. The modest ratio of Jewish owned land to the total cultivable land in Palestine does not support Khalaf’s inference.

2. Khalaf cites statistics indicating that between 1933 and 1942, 92 per cent of the Palestine land transactions involved sales of less than 100 dunams (25 acres). The owners receiving payment “at inflated prices” were certainly not forced to live in the cities under squalid conditions as he claims and the money paid for the land by Jewish buyers filtered into the Arab economy. In addition, jobs were created in the Jewish economy that benefited the Arab population.

In the view of many observers, the major cause of the Arab collapse in 1948 was the lack of a national consciousness. The Palestinian Arab’s allegiance was to the extended family, clan, village head and religious authority. Other than their desire to be “rid” of the Jews, no common aspiration or expressed “national” vision bound the Palestinian Arabs into a cohesive mass

with a central, recognized political authority. The Palestinian Jews, on the other hand, functioned as an autonomous, quasi-national entity; the ‘Yishuv’ that in due course led to the creation of the State of Israel, defended by a unified, dedicated army. The notion of an “Arab Palestine” as a national entity that existed during and before the British mandate is a contemporary invention and a political ploy exploited by Arab leaders and their supporters. Khalaf’s notion of a “Hashemite-British-Zionist” conspiracy to deny the Palestinian Arabs a state is baseless and runs against all historical evidence. It is more fitting to have come from the streets of Ramalla then from a U.S. college professor.

Si Spiegelman



"CLANDESTINE IMMIGRATION" MEDAL

70 years have gone by since the start of the "clandestine immigration" to Israel, one of the most important and heroic endeavors of the Jewish people just before the establishment of the State of Israel. Between 1934 and the founding of the State of Israel in 1948, over 120,000 immigrants managed to arrive in the Land of Israel on board small ships, despite the consistent and forceful efforts of the British to stop them.

This medal commemorating the 70th Anniversary of the "Clandestine Immigration" also has a unique numismatic value as it contains a replica of another historical medal. The original medal was especially ordered in 1946 by Yehuda Arazi, one of the most prominent personalities of the "Haganah" (the underground military organization in the pre-state). Yehuda Arazi, who worked for years in secret assignments, purchasing enormous quantities of arms and ammunition for the Jewish Defense Forces, became head of the clandestine operations in Italy, in 1945 after World War II.

Arazi and his devoted assistants, were relentless in their struggle against the British policy to prevent free immigration to the Land of Israel. Secretly, ships were acquired and renovated. One after another, they

were sent on their way to the Land of Israel, each with thousands of "illegal" immigrants on board. In April 1946, in the small Italian Port of La Spezia, 1014 survivors from the Concentration Camps prepared to sail to the Land of Israel. When this was discovered by the British, the boat was detained and efforts were made to force the "illegal immigrants" to a Refugee Camp. Yehuda Arazi, disguised as a Jewish refugee, led a revolt that caused a major reaction around the world against what was regarded as the cruelty and lack of humanity of the British. The bitter struggle lasted over a month and reached its peak when Yehuda Arazi declared a hunger strike on board. Leaders of the Jewish Community in the Land of Israel joined the strike in solidarity.

Finally, after 75 dramatic hours of hunger strike, the British army gave in to the pressures of international public opinion and allowed the immigrants to

sail to the Land of Israel, legally.

The designs of each side of the medal chosen by Yehuda Arazi consist of biblical phrases and images - on the medal face, "Your Children will return to their Land (Jeremiah), over a ship on a stormy sea and the Hebrew dates 5705-5706, and on the reverse, the words "Judaea Restituta ("Judaea Restituted"), with the Tower of David opposite Titus Gate in the background and the dates MCMXLV - MCMXLVI (1945-1946). The design of this historical medal of Israel is reproduced today on the new State Medal of Israel.

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