



AMERICAN VETERANS OF ISRAEL

VOLUNTEERS IN ISRAEL'S WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

UNITED STATES & CANADIAN VOLUNTEERS

136 East 39th St., New York, N.Y. 10016

VALEDICTORY PRESIDENT'S CORNER

"Do We Get Our Money's Worth?"

In a final effort to collect several delinquent 2002 annual dues accounts one of our regional vice presidents encountered a reaction occasionally raised: "What do we get for our AVI dues?"

As we approach the dispatch of 2003 dues invoices it is tempting to respond to that question. As background, we have not increased the annual dues for 2003. But we do anticipate a modest deficit created by the global expansion of the quarterly AVI Newsletter, which has become a major ingredient, and a welcomed one, in the AVI program. Compared to annual dues for other organizations – Jewish communal; veterans; alumni; professional association; and others in which AVI members are involved, which run as high as \$100, our dues are arguably modest.

So what do we receive in return?

Foremost is affiliation in a unique organization of men and women who served as volunteers in Israel's Independence War. We are a band of sisters and brothers who share a precious experience. There is no comparable institution in the global panorama of Jewish organizations outside Israel. And as Bernie Marks (First Mate HAGANA and EXODUS) put it so emotionally: "For most of us, there has been no greater experience in our lives."

Additionally AVI provides periodic opportunities during the year for coming together in the U.S. and Israel to remember together – to share memories of the unique experience – to enjoy

REFERENDUM AND SENTIMENT

Should membership in AVI continue to be restricted to those who served in the War of Independence or should membership be opened to those who served in Israel's subsequent wars? The AVI Planning Committee proposed opening membership to the wider group and the Summer 2002 Newsletter submitted this question to the AVI membership. Pro and con statements on the issue preceded a ballot. Sidney Rabinovich tallied the ballots and he reported that 22 had voted against, 12 voted for and 5 supported tabling the question pending a survey of possible candidates for membership. Thus, the proposal did not carry.

Ballots were accepted through August 30 (through September 3 for those overseas). Some ballots of members who had not paid dues were voided. This did not apply to Israeli members and surviving relatives of deceased members who are dues exempt. In all, fewer than 20% of the eligible members availed themselves of the vote.

Voters were invited to return their ballots along with comments. The comments that were collected reflect a sentiment about the organization. Following are some of the expressed sentiments:

"I was interested to read the AVI Newsletter but saddened by the tone taken by the writers concerning the Referendum. It is flogging a dead horse to remind ourselves that our numbers decrease but to increase them spuriously makes no sense... When I was given the possibility of joining the Israeli army I was conscious that this was a privilege and jumped at the chance. For me there was no other way for a Jew to act. I was only doing my duty and avenging those who died without being able to defend themselves as well as securing a possible future for all Jews... However, just lately when it finally sunk in that the number of volunteers was only 3-4,000, I was chilled at the paucity. This fact made us heroes... Our children are but a small band and they could form, they and their descendants, the most exclusive club in the world: the sons and daughters of Machal..."

Mathilde Strassman, Brussels

PAUL KAYE: AVI PRESIDENT

Following the three-year old presidential sequence arrangement, Paul Kaye will succeed to the AVI presidency for the year 2003. He succeeds Eli Bergman who has held the position during 2002.

The incoming AVI President, Paul Kaye, is a native New Yorker. After serving in the US Navy, he was recruited by Haganah in 1947 and served as an officer on the 'Hatikvah'. He was captured by the British and detained in Cyprus. While being transferred from Cyprus to Haifa, he and other 'Palyam' members sank the British prison ship, 'Empire Lifeguard'.

Transferred to the Athlit internment camp, he escaped and served with the Haganah in France. He returned to the U.S. and sailed on the 'Galila' in 1948. He then joined the Israel Navy as a member of the newly formed 'Seal' unit, 'Shayetet Shlosh Esray'.

Paul served with the Israel Consulate during the Six-Day War and the Israel Defense Ministry during the Yom Kippur War.

He married to Susan Turner in 1997 and, between them they have five children and ten grandchildren.

Paul is a frequent and acclaimed speaker on behalf of Israeli causes.

NATIONAL BOARD

PRESIDENT:

Elihu "Eli" Bergman
 (eli819@aol.com)

NATIONAL VICE PRESIDENT:

David Kaplan*

VICE PRESIDENT ISRAEL:

David Baum

VICE PRESIDENT CANADA:

Jerry Rosenberg

VICE PRESIDENT PUBLIC AFFAIRS:

Sidney Rabinovich

TREASURER:

David Gerard

CHAIR, EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:

Simon Spiegelman
 (spiegelsi@aol.com)

REGIONAL VICE PRESIDENTS U.S.:

Eastern: Arthur Bernstein
 Southern: Irving Meltzer
 Western: Mitchell Flint

PROGRAM DIRECTORS:

Archives: Ralph Lowenstein
 Newsletter and Internet:
 Samuel Klausner
 (sklausner@ucwphilly.rr.com)
 Planning: David Gutmann
 Speakers Bureau: Naomi Kantey
 Local Programming: Bailey Nieder

*Deceased

Visit the AVI Website to read past issues
 of the Newsletter
[www.sas.upenn.edu/~sklausne/
 aviweb.html](http://www.sas.upenn.edu/~sklausne/aviweb.html)

Referendum and Sentiment
 continued from Page 2

"...I oppose the motion to open membership to veterans of other wars to be called Machals. We must not change or confuse history. We came to fight for the Jews to have a Home Land after nearly 2000 years. Among us were non-Jews who also died for the Birth of Israel...Please do send the AVI Newsletter..."

Sidney Jacobs, London

"...I served in the War of Independence from June 1948 until May 1949, no gun in my hand nor action did I see, but was attached to Shin Mem 2 intercepting Arab army messages, an essential but unglamorous part of warfare, our commander was not less than Chaim Hertzog, later, of course, President of Israel.

I read with interest the arguments leading to your ballot. At a meeting of British Machal not long after the Six-day war a similar proposal was made to us by the representative of the Israeli Ambassador in London. I opposed the idea then as I do now. My grounds for opposing were very simple. In 1948 not every Jew in the world was a supportive of the State of Israel as they are today, a few of us believed that this was our final chance to survive as a people and nation, we made a contract (unspoken) between us that we would at least show the world that we could no longer let others decide whether we should live or die. I believe we were special not in a boastful sense, but because we felt we had no other choice. For those that came after us and served Israel in later conflicts, I have the greatest admiration, long may they live and flourish..."

Stanley Summers, Thorpe Bay, Essex

"Who are we? When we arrived in Israel we swore allegiance to the State of Israel. I was Sidney Fersht serial number 76490. Ever since I learned of the acronym Machal mean-

continued on Page 16

WITH FRENCH MACHAL IN A NEGEV BRIGADE

After the invasion of Poland by the German Army on September 1, 1939, the first massacre of Jews in occupied Poland occurred in my hometown Krasnosielc. There, 50 prominent Jews, among them my father Chaim Himelfarb (of blessed memory), were murdered by the SS on the 5th of September 1939, in the town's synagogue. Following this tragic event, my family was expelled by the Germans to the Soviet Zone of occupied Poland. Seven months later we were again expelled, now by the NKVD to a family gulag at the northern region of Russia. While a refugee in Russia, I volunteered and was accepted as a cadet in the Polish Military Academy in exile. At the end of the war I returned to Poland, and from there, after the Kielce pogrom I left for France.

In 1948, while studying at the Ort School for Electronics in Paris, war broke out between Israel and the Arab countries. I felt that I could not live with my conscience at such a crucial time if I did not join the fight for Israel's independence. I got in touch with the representatives of the Haganah in Paris, and was mobilized. As I was a temporary French citizen, I was put into a unit with Machal (Volunteers from Abroad). I was given to understand that after the war I could return to France and continue my studies.

We spent two weeks in a training camp in Marseilles and were then flown to Israel as newspaper correspondents. This was in order to pass inspection by UN personnel. In Haifa we were classified according to our individual skills and know-how. I did not mention my technical background so that I would be classified as a "fighter". I was sent with other volunteers to Kfar Yonah to train with the Palmach which planned to reinforce the Negev Brigade.

Attached to the 8th Battalion of the Palmach, we were smuggled into the blockaded Negev through Beer Yaakov. Our assignment was to guard the water line and protect Negev settlements. In the end we were sent to an army post at Bir Asluj. There were about 80-100 volunteers from France and North Africa in the Negev Battalion, in a combat unit called -"Commando Francais" under the command of French (non Jewish) Colonel Diffre Thadee. (Later he adopted a Hebrew name, Teddy Eytan.) Communi-

Machal
continued from Page 2

cation and combat commands were in French. Some of the men had served in the "Maquis" (the French resistance movement against the German occupation forces) during the World War II. Although I had come from France, at that time, I was not in the "Commando" for a long period, and I joined the 8th Palmach Battalion under the command of Major Chaim Bar Lev (later Lieutenant General Bar Lev – IDF Chief of Staff). Subsequently, we were at army posts ("mishlatim"), where most of the soldiers were Machal and Gachal people. Only the commanders were from the Palmach. As there was no common language between the French speaking soldiers and their Hebrew speaking commanders and, since I knew Hebrew from my home in Poland, and French from my stay in France, I was among the few who could translate.

Subsequently, I went sent to a course for mortar men at Kibbutz Nirim, which had been destroyed during the Egyptian invasion in May 1948. I was responsible for a 3 inch mortar (without sights), one of the few mortars in the Negev. This mortar later contributed significantly in the effort to block the Ouja-Beer Sheba road, blocking Egyptian reinforcement forces during the capture of Beer Sheba.

After the "Ouvdah" campaign (capture of Eilat) which was the last campaign of the Independence War, I was transferred to the Communication Corps and was sent to a refresher course for communication technicians at Sharon near Bnei Braq. At the end of the course, I was put in charge of the communication laboratory of the Negev Brigade at Beer Sheba, until I was demobilized at the end of 1949.

Instead of returning to France to continue my studies, I went to live in Haifa and worked at the Navy's central laboratory for radar, sonar and other electronic equipment. Later, I volunteered to help new immigrants in the northern town of Kiryat Shemona, teaching young people electricity and electronics so as to provide them with the technical knowledge needed to help develop the town. I remained there for seven years, and then joined one of companies of the Israel Aircraft Industries engaged in weapon development ("Gabriel" sea-to-sea missile system). Later, I served in Italy as the representative of the Israel Aircraft Industries.

After a number of years as the direc-

tor of a commercial company I retired but still continued to participate in a variety of volunteer activities. I was the initiator and driving force in helping to establish a memorial on Mount Herzl in Jerusalem for Jewish soldiers who served in the Polish Armies during World War II. For this, I was decorated with a medal and nominated to Officer Rank by the Polish Prime Minister. I served in the IDF Reserve forces until I was 55-years old.

Today, I am engaged in helping the World Machal Committee in its efforts to obtain long overdue official recognition from the Israel Defense Ministry for the significant contribution of Machal volunteers during Israel's War of Independence.

DAVID SHACHAR

116 Uziel Street, Ramat-Gan 52302, ISRAEL
Tel/Fax: 972-3-573-2348
E-mail: sh_david@zahav.net.il

Following are excerpts from Chapter 11 Teddy Eytan's (nom de guerre of Thadée Diffe) book Neguev: L'Héroïque Naissance de L'État D'Israël (Negev: The Heroic Birth of the State of Israel) published in Paris in 1949. Diffe describes himself as a French volunteer heading a commando unit, the 75th Mechanized Infantry battalion. "This was a francophone machal unit consisting a mixture of Jewish volunteers from Metropolitan France and North Africa. Diffe, himself, was a member of the French underground during the Second World War and, though a Christian, was drawn to the cause of the nascent Jewish state in the spring of 1948. Prior to the establishment of the state he served under Yitzhaq Sade, founder of the Palmach. The chapter excerpted is entitled "Taking Beer-Sheba" and was translated by the Newsletter editor.

Zipporah Porath has included his name in the list of "Some Outstanding Officers" in FOCUS on Israel/ MACHAL -Overseas Volunteers, a pamphlet published by the Foreign Ministry's Israel Information Center in May 1999, updated 2000 (appeared in French in July 1999), available at Israel's Diplomatic Missions. (www.mfa.gov.il) In the IDF he was promoted to Sgan Aluf = Lt. Colonel. Here's what it says:

Captain Thadée Diffe (Teddy Eytan), a French Catholic, joined the IDF after a long career as an officer in the French army under Generals De Gaulle and LeClerc. He established the French Commando unit, which took part in the battles in the south



Thadée Diffe (aka Teddy Eytan) in center

of the country during the War of Independence. Among the unit's successes were a battle against the Egyptians on the Rafiah-El Arish road, paving the way for Israel's tanks northeast of Beer Sheba, and the defense of Hill 13 in Jerusalem, now called French Hill in honor of the French Commando unit.

I returned to Tel Aviv on a pressing matter. While there I was invited by machal to join them in celebrating Rosh Hashanah (the Jewish New Year). At Café Ginati there was a large gathering of foreign volunteers. Discussions were in all imaginable languages. What a Tower of Babel! The Sephardim had also organized an event for French speakers and promised wine and cake that assured a large audience. Aspirants to the office of the Chief Rabbi spoke and, to my surprise, I was asked to speak representing the soldiers. There I was representing Jewish volunteers on a platform to the right of the Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv. I didn't hesitate. There were hardly any people here who would know that I was a Christian and I launched into an explanation of OUR effort, OUR achievements, OUR enthusiasm for OUR future. It was a great success! That is to say, since I bore the name of one of the twelve Apostles I would have to admit it...

At Tselim, a major council of war met. Everybody was here including the higher officers of the department of operations and of the Southern front, of the 8th and 11th brigades, everybody was here. Maps
continued on Page 4

Machal
continued from Page 3

were everywhere, on the walls, on the tables, on the floor; piles of half opened boxes. Things were passed around quickly amidst an unbelievable swarming of jeeps, trucks, and feverish activity at every level. Doubtless, an attack was being readied. Another truce was in the offing and Beer-Sheba must be taken before it begins. Beer-Sheba is the capital of the Negev. The city is well-situated to control the routes which allow the Egyptians to maintain contact with the Arab Legion and the Iraqi army; it is a cross-road for all convoys to Hebron, Jerusalem and the Dead Sea; it is a transit center for north-south traffic; it is a base for the bedouin tribes that criss-cross the Negev. Its 4000 inhabitants have been evacuated and a battalion of Egyptians, supported by rebel groups and some artillery, is garrisoned there.

This would not be a small matter since aerial photos showed anti-tank ditches backed by a system of trenches and blockhouses entirely surrounding the city. Besides, at the center of the city was a fortress that could accommodate a major force and on its southern flank a railway station transformed into a citadel forming bastions that would be difficult to dislodge. Finally, the city is modern with large streets at right angles making any house-to-house action dangerous.

The first group would include the mechanized battalion 9, a battalion of infantry, commandos and two canons mounted on armored platforms that had been captured by the Israelis. Other equipment and personnel will be held in reserve for use as needed.

I am ready for the order for the operation to begin. All of the forces have arrived in the south. The reserve units assumed position on the heights which, at a distance of three kilometers to the south and west dominate the town. The first echelon is prepared to begin the attack from the north. The mobile machine guns are stationed on a knoll in a hamlet a kilometer from the tank traps. The plan is for the commandos to infiltrate the outer defenses entering the town and occupying the first two blocks of houses... At the same time three tanks of the 8th brigade will move in front of the minefields to the southeast of the town to create a diversion. When the first objective is obtained and an access cleared of mines opened

mobile machine guns will enter in front of an infantry battalion to relieve the commandos. In this way, reinforced by the mobile machine guns, and, if necessary, by the canons the commandos would proceed toward the two strong points and attack them while the infantry clears the town and assure protection of their rear. At 1800 hours aerial bombardment would begin and would end at 2300 hours. H hour in 23:15.

I was placed in charge of the operation in the interior of Beer-Sheba. I had one extra radio for long distance communication with the General Staff and the mortar detachment that was ready to fire when ordered. The radio arrived on Zeev's back. He was a big read-head with a good sense of humor and imperturbable. I placed Dov in charge of the radio. *(There follows a description of delays in beginning the attack that had been planned for nighttime over a five-hour period. Diffre feared a massacre were they to attack in daylight. At this time only three hours of dark remained.)*

It was 0340. We had been stopped for four minutes with the column taking cover. Nothing was happening. There was no news of our commander (*his name was Israel*). The officers around me were becoming nervous. The mission as planned now seemed impossible to carry out. The men became aware of the problem and insisted on knowing what was going on. I walked by each vehicle and the atmosphere was not good. It was as if they had a hangover and were restless. Fear is not far behind... I decided to present Israel with an ultimatum. I do not want to know what is holding us up and it does not matter. The commandos have received the most dangerous mission. They will be taking the greatest risks which they should not do without some guarantee... At 0350 Israel arrived in a jeep. —Teddy, the hamlet is 800 meters northeast. I place the forces at your disposition. You may leave when you believe you are ready. Good luck..

The breeches of the guns clicked in all of the vehicles. The men shake themselves. The temperature rises. The motors turn over. We leave. We charge directly into the fields, passing a ridge, then another and in four minutes are at the village. Some isolated rifle shots. The forces deployed in perfect order. The half-tracks continued without disturbance on their way with all heads withdrawn inside and

the protective shields down. A dozen burned down houses are on our right and that was all.. In front of us, white in the dark blue was Beer-Sheba... a little ahead on the dark landscape... In an instant six or eight automatic guns opened fire on us. At the beginning they were a bit high but were soon bouncing off the steel plates of our vehicles.. Now the blockhouse was clearly visible with white mounds to our left and right. We approached and dreadful shocks threw us against one another. A dozen grenades fell randomly in front of us.

— —Everybody down. First company to the right, second to the left and into the ditches... The men lunged out of their protective holes flattening themselves under the bullets that whistled on all sides and bounced off the sides of the ditches and they leapt from the ditches and followed the lead vehicle which had already entered the town. I heard Fernand and Weyler assembling their company... The rapid cadence of the machine guns continued and then the grenades. I quickly checked the vehicles. In each vehicle was a driver and a machine gunner. Mission: Neutralize the blockhouse by firing directly into it and then patrolling on our right flank. The bullets continued to whistle by my ears and surprisingly close again. I jumped into the ditch where Dov and Zeev were calling on the radios. It was 0407 hours. I stumbled over Arab bodies. It was not a pretty sight.

(Diffre continues a meticulous moment-to-moment account of the battle and its casualties. Unfortunately space does not allow us to provide this description. Should anyone wish to pursue this engagement and many other significant events in this memoir, he or she should try to obtain a copy of the book. As far as I know there is but one copy in the United States and it is in the library of Ohio State University and is available through inter-library loan. Perhaps more copies are available in the francophone world. Here is the conclusion of the chapter.)

Around 1030 hours I was able to pull myself together. The French (*members of the Israeli force*) were pulling out of the town, having collected their dead and wounded and the arms and ammunition that had been abandoned on all sides. The North Africans, about twenty of the, felt themselves free to pillage.

They arrived one after the other with enormous bundles with all sorts of things:

Machal continued on Page 5

MACHAL FINLAND

continued from Page 4

women's underwear, household linens, civilian clothing, crockery, typewriters, sewing machines, radios (I counted eleven.), foodstuffs, liquor, eiderdown blankets, and so forth. They did not want to listen to anyone and categorically refused to stop their plunder. They were inaccessible to pleas, threats or orders. They were no longer soldiers, not even human beings. They were dogs around a bone. They would rather rebel than release their prey.

I went to the chief officer and asked for orders. . We return to Gevulot where we will rest for several days before returning to Beer-Sheba where billeting has been prepared. Leave there when you are ready. I went to the Chief of Transport and asked him to place his trucks at five-kilometer distances along the route. We will walk. He asked if I was not mad but obeyed my order.

Reassembling the men. I announced to them that there will be a two-hour march so they should travel lightly and the stragglers will into be picked up.

The North Africans fell into the trap and abandoned three-fourths of what they had taken not without furious outbursts and curses. The trucks were awaiting us at fixed points and in two hours were in our rear base.

The conquest of Beer-Sheba coincided with the beginning of the second truce...It gave Israel control of the Negev, relieved the fear weighing on the kibbutzim in the south and protected the route for convoys to Tel Aviv, disorganized the enemy and evidenced the end of the shadow government of Gaza..The Arab Legion, the Iraqi army and the Egyptian brigade at Faluja were cut off from Gaza and from the sea. It created a gulf between them and Abdullah who needed control of Hebron while his ally, Farouk, was unable to maintain his eastern front. The operation cost the enemy 100 dead or gravely wounded and about 400 prisoners of which many were high officers, the others having succeeded in fleeing. For us there was one dead and two wounded in the Palmach unit that took the railway station; seven dead and thirteen seriously wounded and eight lightly wounded among the commandos. It was done. Israel was relieved of his command by the general staff.



Finnish Machal: front row from left Issi Yalowitzsch, Berel Silberstein; behind them from left Jussi Kersch, Theo Salutski, Bertha Leini, Peretz Wardi, Rafael Anker, Mary Davidkin, Harry Millner, Wolf Davidkin, Kaj Anker.

In September 2001, Zacharia Kafka of Karkur, Israel, kafka@netvision.net.il, privately published a history of the Finnish machal. In the preface, he laments that but twelve volunteers from Finland are still alive. At the conclusion he writes, "The above information is far from complete and in some cases may be inaccurate, but it is what has been available. This 'history' ought to have been written 40 years ago, when we were all alive, younger and possessed better memory."

The following is excerpted from Kafka's work. He begins with a sketch of Finnish Jewry. Between the to World Wars when the Jewish population of Finland reached 2000. During the Finnish-Russian War 1939-40, Jews fought alongside the Finns. Finland joined the Germans in WWII to fight the Russians but Field Marshal Mannerheim refused to enforce the German anti-Jewish legislation.

During 1947 some groundwork was made for recruiting volunteers from abroad to fight for Israel in the war that seemed inevitable. In Scandinavia, camps were put up to give volunteers "agricultural training." One of the biggest camps was in Denmark outside of Copenhagen and there were also training camps in Sweden...In the winter of 1948 Mr. Moshe Finkel, teacher and trainer of gymnastics and sports came from Palestine to Finland in order recruit volunteers to fight in the War of Independence....As a result, 28 young people including four girls enlisted. All of the men had been in the Finnish army, most of them had also been fighting in WWII....Thus, they found the "basic training' they were given in the training camps and in Israel rather unnecessary...In Israel most of them had considerable difficulty with the Hebrew language, though they had studied Hebrew at school. However, all of them spoke and understood Yiddish and German as well as some English, and they managed to understand even words of command which sounded very odd in their ears.

The pleasant surprise was the informality in the army and navy and the good relationship between the officers and their soldiers. While the soldiers in the Finnish army marched in organized columns to the dining room and to the shower, in Sarafand all were free to go and eat when they pleased.

Following is a list of Finnish Machalniks along with military occupations:

Kaj David Ancker*	Alexandroni Brigade and Navy
John Anker	artillery officer aboard Kuf 20 and Eilat
Raphael Anker	navy gunner, later with anti-aircraft at Tel Nof
Mary Davidkin	parachute rigger
Wolf Davidkin*	Alexandroni Brigade and artillery
Issi Baran	served on Lebanon front and then aboard Kuf 20.
Peggy Baran	parachute rigger
Rubin Fiedler*	anti-aircraft artillery in Tel Nof and later in Tel Aviv
Mirjam Hurvitsch	nurse in hospital No. 9 in Jaffa
Hirsch Jalowitzsch	navy
Moses Leib Jarden*	Alexandroni Brigade and later aboard Zfonit

Machal
continued from Page 5

Zacharia Shlomo Kafka	anti-aircraft artillery in Tel Nof and Tel Aviv
Bertha Keini*	parachute rigger
Josef Kersch	Alexandroni Brigade and later gunner aboard the Zfoni
Shura Maimon*	antiaircraft artillery in Tel Aviv
Harry Millner	navy aboard Kuf 20
Marcus Rung*	Alexandroni Brigade, later in navy aboard Kuf 20 as cook
Theo Salutski*	navy aboard Kuf 20
Berel Silberstein*	navy aboard Kuf 20 as gunner
Moses Strasch*	Kuf 20 and merchant navy
Jakov Wardi	navy and later antiaircraft artillery
Moses Wardi	navy and later antiaircraft artillery
Peretz Wardi*	navy and later antiaircraft artillery
Shlomo Zabłudowicz*	weapons procurement

*Deceased

SOUTH AFRICAN MACHAL

Little is known world-wide, that in World War I and World War II, South African Defence Forces participating were all made up of volunteers. There was no draft, no conscription. Being part of the British Empire they were hardly heard of, but they did play a vital role. In the Second World War, Jews volunteered as well, roughly in proportion to the general white population. Therefore, the tradition of voluntary military service was not something new. Even before, Jews had served on both sides during the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902). Those serving on the Boer side numbered an estimated 300. Very likely a similar number on the British side. It is known that some Litvaks stranded in England at the turn of the century and anxious to get to South Africa, volunteered for the British Army. If they survived, they could get discharged in South Africa.

On the Boer side, some Jews played a leading role. One Slobodka "Yeshiva Bocher" Chaim David Judelowitz, became a legendary heroic Boer commandant (Colonel). On 28th May 1902, he led his commando in a last ditch stand on the north bank of the Orange River against superior British numbers. He was amongst those found lying dead on the battlefield. He was 24 years of age.

It was therefore not surprising that the highly Zionist Jewish community, never ever numbering more than 120,000, provided proportionately the largest group of Machal. The community started immediately after the November 1947 U.N. Resolution, to mobilize their efforts to assist the Jews of the Yishuv.

It was only between the wars that military service was compulsory for 18 year olds, in what was called the Active Citizen Force. It involved one parade per week, some week-end maneuvers, and one month per year of full-time training, for four years. Most South African Machal were experienced World War veterans, also a good number, like the writer, had received their basic military knowledge as A.C.F. trainees in the post-World War II period.

The first attempt to reach Palestine by volunteers was made on 15th December 1946. Eight young men, one who subsequently became Mayor of Johannesburg, aged 18-24 from different Zionist youth movements including Betar, made a valiant attempt in a secondhand former military 3-ton Dodge truck to carve an overland Aliyah Bet route. They got as far as a town called El-Deum in the Sudan. Shortly after leaving this town for Khartoum, an unfortunate accident knocked two of them off the truck. Luckily, one was not seriously hurt but the other suffered a cracked vertebra and was sent to hospital at Khartoum. When the truck arrived, it was sold to have the funds to pay for the seriously injured person to be flown back to South Africa.

Six of the eight got back to South Africa from Port Sudan, experiencing all sorts of adventures, including working on a sailing yacht. The seventh was the only one to reach Palestine in 1947 via Alexandria, Egypt, but almost a year later. He spent two months working on a gold mine near Port Sudan. The others eventually reached Israel in the Machal groups, serving in various units in 1948.

The second attempt was in May 1947, by sea. Three Cape Town Jewish businessmen, hoping to establish a Jewish Mediterranean fishing fleet, acquired a 500-ton whaler, formerly a S. African Navy minesweeper. It was renamed "Drom Afrika I". Seven young Jewish men, again of various youth movements, were part of the all South African lower deck.

It took two months via the Suez Canal to reach Palestine, and was the first ship to sail into Haifa flying the flag of the future Jewish State, infuriating the British authorities who would not permit the crew to land. The ship spent some frustrating months in the Eastern Mediterranean, a lot of time in dry dock at Alexandria, Egypt. She never made it as a fishing vessel. Shortly after the 29th November resolution, the Jewish sailors were smuggled ashore by men of the Haganah, the first group of South African volunteers to reach the land. Some Jewish and one non-Jewish pilots flew a number of small civilian aircraft from South Africa to Israel arriving the second day of the new State. When recruiting started in earnest, there was no shortage of World War II veterans to command, organize, recruit and train volunteers. Jewish farmers opened up their farms for secret week-end training.

There were three main recruiting organizations. The official South African League for the Haganah, the flamboyant Hebrew Legion which turned out to be a scam, and the South African wing of the Irgun, which had operated in complete secrecy for 12 months, starting about mid-1947.

The writer and many others, who had no Zionist movement background, were early recruits of the Hebrew Legion. When it broke up, the disillusioned volunteers were mostly absorbed by the Irgun, and some by the South African League for the Haganah.

Movements northwards began by small groups and individuals about 6 weeks before the Declaration of the State - experienced Air Force, Artillery, Radar, and Tank men, etc. expanding in the months of June and July, then one Dakota flight per week until about November, when volunteers were no longer required. About 3,000 volunteers still in training were left in South Africa, S. A. League for the Haganah recruiting included Kenya, Rhodesia, and the Belgian Congo.

An Air Force Machal psychiatrist at-
Machal continued on Page 7

Machal
continued from Page 6

tributes the South African Jewish spirit and motivation to the good elements of their Jewish Lithuanian village life, and added to this, the openness and frankness of the South African European culture.

South African Machal served in all branches of the Israel Defence Forces and the known breakdown is as follows:

General headquarters	6
Navy	10
Artillery	21
Medical Corps	47 doctors,
38 nurses, 18 other medical professions and duties, 13 hospital	and
	c o m b a t
medics 116	
Air Force	49 pilots in-
cluding 14 trainees on a pilots course started in S. Africa, 62	cluding
other aircrew	advisors and those on command duties, 19 radar, 19 admin-
istration and 34	g r o u n d
crew technicians 183	
Scientific Corps	3
Engineering and Signals Corps	14
Woman Corps	6
Various Palmach Brigades	30
Carmeli	1
Alexandroni	10
Etzioni	5
7th Armoured and Infantry Brigade	95
8th Armoured Brigade	36
Etzel	3
Miscellaneous, including Kibbutz posting,	
Drom Africa I and II and the overland safari attempt	30
Subtotal	569
Kibbutz members, about two-thirds being earlier	
Chalutzim and one-third coming with general Machal	
Arrivals	176
Subtotal	745
Plus about 100 whose units are still unknown	100
Total	845

Hence the title of Henry Katzew's book on South African Machal South Africa's 800.

Different to the movement of the American volunteers who were hounded by the F.B.I all the way, S. Africans had no problems with the authorities, who provided everything was kept in a low profile, turned a blind eye to the movements.

About 30 South African married couples were amongst the 800. Some already engaged brought forward their weddings. One qualified nurse, determined to serve, left behind her one year old and five year old children with her mother and husband. Her dentist husband arrived a month later. Another South African nurse delivered the first

Jewish baby, a boy, born in Be'er Sheva for 2000 years.

Some South Africans held important command positions. So important was the role of a Fighter Squadron Commander that he received the honour of a send-off of four Spitfires, as he left Israel to continue with his medical studies in South Africa.

Many South African Machal interrupted their university studies and it is known of at least three who had interrupted their medical studies twice to serve in World War II, and again in 1948. They qualified, being about 10 years older than the others in their classes.

Seven South Africans died in battle:

Yehezkiel "Chatzi" Berelowitz and Zvi Lipschitz fell in Kfar Etzion's last days, 12th and 13th May. Shoval Kibbutz member Gideon Rosenberg fell in the Jerusalem Corridor on 16th May serving in the Palmach Harel Brigade.

Meir "Matey" Silber, Etzel fighter, fell on 25th May defending Kibbutz Ramat Rachel.

Pilot Eddie Cohen in the historic engagement of 29th May, shot down by AA fire as one of a flight of four Messerschmitts which halted the Egyptian advance towards Tel Aviv.

Pilot Leslie Bloch, also flying a Messerschmitt, downed over the Syrian border on 10th July.

The seventh South African Lou Hack, serving in the 72nd Infantry Battalion, fell on 23rd October during a deep penetration raid in the Western Galilee hills.

Joe Woolf,
Ilaniya, Israel

Joe Woolf, in an addendum to his account of South African machal, provided a general accounting of machal in medical services. His numbers are based on a publication Kol Hayyal Hazit (Every Soldier is a Frontline).

Serving in the Medical corps were 79 medical doctors, 3 dentists and 1 psychologist. Classified by country of origin we have South Africa 43, England 14, United States 7, Chile 4, Argentine 3, Holland 2, Canada 2, Belgium 1, Denmark 1, India 1, Morocco 1, France 1, Rhodesia 1, Switzerland 1 unknown 1. In addition there were 87 volunteers including 58 nurses and 29 allied medical professions such as physiotherapists, medics, pharma-

cists, teachers, medical secretaries, occupational therapists, laboratory technicians and others. By country of origin we have South Africa 56, France 9, England 7, United States 7, Switzerland 3, Canada 2, Argentina 1, Colombia 1, unknown 1.

As a reference for further reading on South African Machal, Joe Woolf recommends South Africa's 800 by Henry Katzew. An edition is available edited by Joe Woolf and may be ordered from Ralph Lanesman, POB 12084 Herzlia 46000 for \$40 plus \$15 for packaging and shipping. lanesman@barak-online.net

THE CANADIAN MACHAL STORY

"Dedicated to the volunteers for showing us that we are all capable of making the world a better place" stands on the title page of The Canadian Machal Story, a booklet published by the Canada Israel Experience with the support of the UIA Federations of Canada and Birthright Israel. The CIE is the agency that arranges trips to Israel for Canadian Jewish youth. The Spring 2002 Newsletter carried a front-page story of Canadian Machal who accompanied youth on one such trip. Their story is treated emblematically as a model for Jewish volunteerism. One should keep in mind that this is not material researched by professional historians and so may be lacking in precision or accuracy. The individual memoirs are, of course, clouded by the passing years. Following are some excerpts from the booklet.

The Story

When does a person truly know they are living through a great moment of history? In 1789, did the people of Paris really know they were living through the French Revolution? Or men marching off to fight in 1941-did they know that this would be the 'Great War'? Furthermore, if people did comprehend the significance of the events unfolding around them, the question would have to be asked, would this affect the way they acted at the time? In essence it is these two questions that are the foci of this publication, told through the experiences of seven people who voluntarily chose to play roles at one such dramatic moment of history. Why Ben Ocopnik, Lou Laurie, Abe Levine, Sam Wasser, Harold Kates, Jerry Rosenberg and Joe Warner chose to leave the comfort of

Machal
continued from Page 7

life in post war Canada to fight in Israel's War of Independence is fascinating, particularly because with hindsight we now know the 1948 war did turn out to be a turning point of history. Their responses and actions reflect great fortitude, courage and commitment. As men now slightly more advanced in years they are entitled to enjoy the reflected glory of past achievements. Yet, for the present day reader, these stories should also be a little troublesome since they are presented partially to act as mirrors, challenging the reader to see themselves confronting the challenge of any future moment of history, big or small...

The text goes on to recount the events of 1947-48, the nature of volunteerism, a brief history of Palestine and the Yishuv in the 1940's, the Holocaust, displaced persons camps and illegal immigration and the story of Canadian Jewry during the 1930's and 40's. This is followed by brief discussions of Canadian and the plight of Jewish refugees, Canadian Jews and the Second World War and the history of the War of Independence 1948. A chapter on Machal: Its Formation and its Legacy opens with an "Oath of Machal Volunteers." No source is given for the text of the oath nor do we know how many volunteers took this oath. Its text (American spelling in the original) is, "As long as I assist as a volunteer in the War of Liberation of the National of Israel—I hereby swear on my word of honor to accept unconditionally and without reservations the rules and discipline of the Israeli Defense Forces, to obey all its orders and instructions given by the authorized commanders and to do all in my power, and even to sacrifice my life in he defense of the freedom of Israel."

The Formation of Machal

As early as May 27, 1947, David Ben Gurion had recorded in his diary that the Jews needed fully trained foreign volunteers to assist in converting the Haganah and Palmach forces into a fully-fledged army. The key was training so this could include British trained Palestinian Jews, but it could certainly mean Jews from overseas... This would appear to mark the beginning of the Machal idea. However, the idea had already been in operation for some time, since the end of the war, with the Haganah recruiting foreign Jews to assist in running the illegal immigration

routes from Europe...

Initially Ben Gurion dispatched Moshe Shertok, the head of the Jewish Agency Political Department, to the United States to meet with sympathetic contacts in the American military. This eventually led him to Colonel David (Mickey) Marcus, a West Point trained World War I veteran, who agreed to give up his new law practice and sign on as a military advisor in Palestine. This coincided with the establishment of the body that would be critical for the promotion of the Machal idea, the Jewish Agency Committee for Overseas Mobilization. It was this body that brought together the elements and ideas expressed so far and gave them tangible form.

By January 1948 guidelines had been drawn up of the volunteer program, coordinated between local Zionist executives in the Diaspora. They would be involved in the recruitment and financing of the local operation yet always answerable to the committee in Jerusalem. This line of command was also designed to insure that the other Jewish underground groups in Palestine, the Irgun and the Lehi, did not interfere... By the spring of 1948, the recruiters were hard at work in most countries where there was a Zionist movement: USA, Canada, South American countries; Britain; South Africa and Australia. The recruits came from unexpected quarters, including a considerable number of non-Jews who were motivated by a mixture of Christian idealism, compassion and desire for solidarity with the Jews after the Holocaust and in some cases simply a spirit of adventure...

(In Canada Ben Dunkelman, a businessman assisting in the purchase of weapons for the Haganah) received a visit from Colonel David 'Mickey' Marcus... Since Dunkelman was already prepared to leave Canada and join the fight in Palestine, Marcus asked him to stay a while longer and recruit skilled ex-servicemen with combat experience. The plan was for Dunkelman to lead an English-speaking infantry brigade... Known Jewish veterans were approached and meetings were held in private homes. At this stage the effort was to find ready trained men. However, Dunkelman soon received permission to leave for Palestine where he was to play a major role in the Haganah and then in the Israel Defense Forces... There were restrictions such as only single men were taken, but the insis-

tence on only ready trained ex-servicemen was dropped. Once the recruits were registered, they applied for passports, had medical examinations and prepared themselves to leave. The route was invariably via New York and then onto France where the ships to Palestine left.

Most of the remainder of the work deals with the volunteers' own stories. Because of space limitations only excerpts from the story of Louis Laurie will be offered here. Copies of the booklet are available through CIE 1-800-567-4772; iackerman@ujafed.org

Louis Laurie

For the first eight years of his life, Louis Laurie thought he was a Catholic. He had a Catholic nanny and living in the small community in Quebec City, there was only a limited amount of Jewishness conveyed in his French speaking acculturated Jewish family... For a man who would later volunteer to fight in a distinctively Jewish army, his identity would have to be augmented elsewhere. Most likely, this came through his encounter with the strong and violent anti-Semitism of the times. He would walk to school with a bag full of stones to defend himself when attacked by anti-Semites. This coupled with the effects of Jewish friendships, plus a Bar-Mitzvah, all helped developed his sense of who he was as a Jew...

When the (2nd World War) was over Louis moved to Montreal, using his newly acquired skill from the forces, but, now in civilian life, as a news photographer. Certainly things would have continued happily with the new career when he received a phone call from two friends to come to one of the Machal recruitment meetings organized by the Toronto Jewish businessman Sam Zaks. By this stage he was back in Quebec City and the meeting was a small one... How the recruiters knew that Louis had been on the combined operations training course was never revealed, but it was clear he was seen as a useful recruit. For Louis, however important this was, there was also a spirit of adventure in the plan, strong enough to make him agree to drop the work as a news photographer and sign up to be a fighter in a still being formed army thousands of miles away. Interesting, claims Louis, Quebec City provided the highest proportion of volunteers for any Jewish community in the world. Three people went from a total of thirty families...

Machal
continued from Page 8

He then describes his experience in a DP camp where he took the identity of a Polish woman. He accompanied the DPs to Palestine arriving shortly after the state was declared. Ben Gurion awaited them on the dock.

Within a short while, he had been put on a bus and taken to the army base at Sameria, close to Netanya, and suddenly discovered he was in the army! Here he was with one nave man and two from the air force, yet suddenly he was in the army. To be precise, he was in Company B in the 72nd unit of the 7th brigade, often know as the Anglo-Saxons. To cap it all they had absolutely no training. The Sergeant Major was a fellow Canadian by the name of Julie Lewis, an impressive and well-respected commander. Most of the 72nd brigade were Americans and many of them were too young to have served, and were therefore also untrained.

Four days after he arrived, Louis saw action at a hilltop village ten kilometers from Acre, called Tamra. Quite apart from the fact that it was, in a rather abrupt way, the moment the reality of the war set in, it was also the most remarkable and unconventional type of action for that time, a bayonet attack! Indeed, it was the only one in the whole of the war. The mission was being conducted to neutralize the hilltop from where Arab volunteers from the Arab Liberation Army were refusing to honor the truce and cease their sniper firing. Company B was sent to take the hilltop. After being held down by enemy fire, they were eventually given the order to go up with fixed bayonets, both to frighten the Arabs at the top of the hill and to ensure some sort of protection if the need arose. Fourteen men went up the hilltop the village, of which five men were wounded and one killed. Despite these significant losses, it was a successful mission. Louis Laurie had seen his first piece of action in the War of Independence. In many ways this moment represented the end of the pure adventure experience and the beginning of confrontation with real war. "There was bravado, of course because you just go, but the sense when it was something really bad was when Sidney Lazar was hit. He was standing up. I told him to keep his head down and all of a sudden he fell in front of me and I had to jump over him. I know I didn't think of

it because I knew I had to go forward. And after I found out he was dead, and we buried him the next morning in a grave... It was so sad, this kid was only eighteen years old, had never seen service of any kind, was just a kid looking for something... On the way up, on the bus, he was sitting between Lenny Fine and myself and Saul Freeman. The kid was really nervous. We were all rather nervous because we had no idea of what we were going into. Nobody told us. No such thing as were are going to this point or that, just, 'we are going to take the hill.'... "The early trauma aside, this did not lead Louis to any doubts about whether it had been a wrong course of action. There was one member of the unit who did leave, but the others remained resolved. For some reason, a returning soldier, Harry Eisner, told Lou's parents their son was missing, and it took some quick action by the Jewish agency to contact them and reassure them he was fine...

The following is a poem submitted by Dr. Jacob Ghitis, a South American machal volunteer who is resident in Israel. He writes, "Please subscribe me to the excellent Newsletter. Of course I'll be delighted to have the poem published. In fact, since actually the original, in 1949, I wrote in Spanish, perhaps you would be willing to have it read for possible simultaneous publication. As I told Zippi, it was the poetic part of a trio, which included the Mahalnik and the Israeli. Just as a curiosity: The whole work was written in about half an hour, almost automatically, and I was amazed to realize that it included a poem. When the whole was published in a local newspaper several years later, a quite literate colleague said that it was the most beautiful composition in Spanish he had ever read."

THE FURROWS YOU WETTED

You, pitiful remain of history, ragged and wizened you came,
Fleeing away from miserable ghettos of diabolic memories.
In your pouch, dry crumbs of bread, but of bitterness the dough was fresh.
You were sad, you despaired... For working clothes you changed your rags,
And the sadness and the bitterness withered away...
Deep furrows had been hewn on your brow,
And now you learned to hew deep furrows on the earth.
You had cried, you were spent,
But now your eyes with tears the earth did not wet,
'Cause a covenant of toil, and sweat
Had been vowed between your brow and the earth!
Joyous songs of work sprouted from your lips,
Which were like seeds... And the taste of the fruit was the taste of liberty!
You were happy, you were free, to work, to enjoy and also to love deep.
But... Came the war, again the pillage!
The enemy was envious of your tillage
And there he was, in all his might
And of lead were his insults, and his shouts were dynamite!
To you the furrows were like cubs, and you were like a lion,
And your roar was louder than the roar of the cannon!
Defending Israel you fell at last, yet in vain was not your death
For from the furrow that a bullet traced in your chest
A source sprang up... And the furrows you wetted with your blood!

President's Corner
continued from Page 1

one-another as persons who have experienced together. These platforms range from the annual Chanukah party in New York through the Marcus Memorial at West Point to organized reunions from Las Vegas to Jerusalem. Most recent was the Tribute to U.S. and Canadian Aliya Bet sailors by the PALYAM Veterans Association at Sdot Yam in June 2002. And as we advance in age, these opportunities to bond become all the more precious.

AVI organizes forums and programs that showcase our experiences, accomplishments, and interests. They have included our appearance at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington to introduce the late Captain Rudy Patzert's memoir: *RUNNING THE PALESTINE BLOCKADE*; the Memorial Service for Paul Shulman at the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis; the Memorial Tribute to Hank Greenspun in Las Vegas; and the dedication of the *EXODUS MEMORIAL* at the Inner Harbor in Baltimore.

And despite our declining membership imposed by demographic realities AVI has embarked on new and exciting programs designed to reach out to the World Machal fellowship of which we are the largest member in an effort to come closer in our declining years, and to showcase and preserve the legacy of all of us.

Under Ralph Lowenstein's direction and the University of Florida's hospitality, we are creating an AVI archive as a repository for documents and other items that provide a resource for research on the AVI experience; and a Virtual Museum on a web site that provides a "roving" museum designed to capture the AVI experience in visual format, and link up with comparable activities of Machal units in Israel and other countries in contributing to a global panorama of the total Machal experience.

Sam Klausner as Newsletter editor and publisher has expanded the AVI Newsletter to include coverage of activities, vital statistics, events, and contributions of Machal units throughout

the world. This is the second edition of AVI's version of an "International USA TODAY." The purpose of the expanded Newsletter is to provide information on Machal-related interests in places where a publication does not exist; and for an interchange in countries that do publish Machal newsletters or the like. And it can contribute to an obvious acknowledgment that though our memberships are declining, we want to know more about one-another. AVI has been characterizing these activities as the AVI Legacy, which now is the major ingredient of our program.

For Machal veterans who are not AVI members and do not receive the Newsletter included in AVI annual dues, we are offering the opportunity to subscribe at a one year introductory rate of \$20.00 equivalent. We wish we could supply the Newsletter gratis; but we simply cannot afford to do so. The subscription covers publication and mailing costs; and in most places it represents no more than the cost of an evening at Starbucks, or our favorite(S) bistro.

So this is what AVI delivers for annual dues payments.

A happy Thanksgiving and Chanukah to you and yours!

Eli Bergman

Comment...to the Newsletter Editor

I have just finished reading the online version of the Summer Newsletter. Again you have produced a first rate product. I am particularly pleased that the "international" coverage is announced and previewed. Hopefully as this coverage is established and expanded, it will compensate for the ever-expanding obits, which though well written, are gradually and naturally moving to a dominant position in the Newsletter.

In the piece on Latin American membership the names of the late Reuben Margolis and Schmuell Schiller (MEXICO - EXODUS) do not appear. However they are included in the Latin American roster compiled for the Newsletter. In Reuben's

case it is his widow Dora. Jaime Lechtman of San Jose, COSTA RICA (Infantry) was not included in either list. The last time we corresponded he was in San Jose, Costa Rica.

That was a nice piece on the HAGANA sailor. She did not know for sure, but the HAGANA contingent was not consigned to Cyprus. They were one of the last that were admitted to Palestine.

There was one major flaw in the Newsletter about which I am particularly concerned: On the ballot for the Gutmann proposal a third option that crept out of nowhere providing the choice of what in effect is a market survey. In our Executive Committee motion authorizing the referendum we approved an up and down "yes" or "no" vote. There was no option for other choices. The goal was to determine sentiment on the concept itself, without any qualifications or procedural issues. And we did not characterize the vote as a "motion" but as a "vote." Those of us who supported the referendum call were looking for a clear expression of preference. The insertion of the third option provides an opportunity for more waffling on the issue. It flaws the process because the outcome, whatever it may be, cannot provide the clear-cut up or down expression of preference we were seeking. And it was inserted without any prior consultation, nor most important, approval of the Executive Committee.

At this point my suggestion is that we drop the whole project for the time being with the suggestion that those who wish to pursue it do so at a later date, and move on with our other business.

Eli Bergman

We are saddened to announce
the death of

Anstiss Nadler

wife of Nat Nadler of the Exodus
September 2002

*20 Courier Place
Rutherford, NJ 07070*

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

On parachute rigging... letter and comments

To the Editor:

I enjoyed another surprise in the published communication from Stanley Medicks, Coordinator, British & European Machal Association. Mr. Medicks stated "The man who commanded and who wrote its first training manual was Tom Bowden, known in Israel as Captain Appel. He was not Jewish and as an ex U.K. First Airborne Division he gave Israel his expertise," Tom Bowden now becomes the third man who started the Israeli Paratroops. It kind of reminds me of the stories about who shot down that airplane...

At the AVI convention in Las Vegas the two representatives of Israel spoke of the "Russian" who first trained and commanded the Israeli Paratroops. I then produced for them dated official Israeli Air Force photographs showing Ben Foreman, Bernard Marks, and myself standing in the doorway, about to make the first "mass" paratroop jump. At that time I must have been suffering from delusions, because I thought I was commanding the Israel's First Airborne unit. Let me take you through the events I thought I participated in.

In Israel's first "International Event" (check the stories and pictures in the Israeli newspapers of July 4, 1948) I married a Finnish volunteer (Peggy Baran). At that time I had been given a school and was training parachute packers during the day while flying with the Primo Squadron out of Tel Aviv, as a bomb chucker at night.

On or about July 7th I was summoned to Army Headquarters and interviewed about the values of Israel having Paratroops. I presented a strong presentation for such a force.

Because of the Arab's lack of good training, I felt then that a special paratroop force would be the most effective resource Israel could have. I made my points and then left.

Three or four

days after my wedding, I was ordered to fly to Czechoslovakia with three or four other candidates to take special courses in sabotage, espionage, guerilla warfare, and paratroop tactics. (Keep in mind that I already had over 150 parachute jumps at that time.) Among my companions was Ben Foreman (from the Exodus), an English Paratroop veteran,

and two or three Israelis, including Shimshone Nuemon (a singer), Don Avni, and Guri Gurfinkle, a politician's son, (Don't hold me responsible for the spelling of their names!) I have excellent photographs of our group taken at a former Nazi SS camp in the Sudetenland. You should be able to verify the occasion because we were on the Lockheed Constellation that crashed at Zatec in July 1948.

Our "trainees" turned out to be 16, 17 and 18 year old survivors of Europe's concentration camps. Upon completing the training, Israel's First Airborn Brigade (size being a joke among us) was transported back to Israel where we set up on top of Mt. Carmel in Haifa. Ben Foreman and I went to Jerusalem and to some other locations to recruit paratroop volunteers. I think that is where we recruited Bernard Marks (You can also validate this story with Bernard. I believe he is still living in Cincinnati.) After getting the training camp functioning, I was ordered to divorce myself from the day-to-day operations and to prepare a training manual. I

did this and as far as I know, it was the first training manual of the Israeli Airborne. I think I still have my original notes for the manual. As for the



Guests at wedding of Robert Leeds and Peggy Baran, Tel Aviv, July 1948

"first airborne parachute jump", if Eddy Kaplansky was the pilot, he will confirm that there were only three paratroopers on that historic occasion, i.e., Ben Foreman, Bernard Marks, and myself.

After the fall of Beersheba, strange people began showing up at the base and there seem to be no chain-of-command. I think at that time we suddenly had more officers than enlisted men. My status was changed from "Air force" to "Army" with an appropriate (and substantial) wage decrease. After an additional month my name disappeared from the payroll entirely. It seemed apparent that no major conflicts would occur and I requested my release and for Peggy & I to be returned to America. In December 1948, we were moved to a special section in a prisoner-of-war camp to await our transportation. I was in that camp when I heard that the Israeli Airborne was conducting a mass parachute jump and one paratrooper's parachute had snagged on the plane's rear wheel. They landed with him hanging there. So much for their subsequent training. As for the Russian Commander the Israeli consul says was first, or Tom Bowden alias Captain Appel (wait. . are they sure it wasn't Captain Marvel?), I'll match dated data with any of them and if I didn't write the first training manual and command the first Parachute Israeli Regiment and training school, I'll be the first to take my name off the long list!

Regards,

Robert X. Leeds



First Graduating class of Israeli parachute packers trained b Robert Leeds, Bet HaPoel, Tel Aviv, 1948

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR CONTINUED

P.S. My new book, *Love Is A 4 Legged Word* has just received its second nomination as "Best Book of the Year."

Robert Leeds enclosed a number of photographs, including one of him exiting a Dakota for a parachute jump. Two of the photographs are reproduced here. He also sent a training syllabus for a parachute training course and a manual for a parachute technicians' school both prepared by himself in Israel in 1948. He also included certificates of flight training at the Gromov Flight Research Institute at the Zhukovsky Test base in Russia. The certificates attest to his training in the SU-30 fighter jet, MIG-25 strategic interceptor and MIG-23 fighter jet. Space prevents presentation of these documents here but they will be available from the AVI archive at the University of Florida.

To the Editor:

Everything that I read in Leeds' letter to you is true to my knowledge. Both Leeds and Foreman trained in Czechoslovakia and Leeds set up the first parachute loft for airing, packing and repacking parachutes. Leeds was an expert parachute man. Leeds and Foreman set up the the paratrooper school.

Leeds arranged for a DC 3 so that Robert Leeds, Ben Foreman and myself could make the first Israeli "mass" jump. Photographs were taken of that incident.

The Israelis must have been anxious to make it an all Israeli outfit so they made it unbearable for Leeds and Foreman to stay. Naturally their pride was tested and they resigned.

A short time later the Israelis conducted a mass jump and managed to screw it up--getting one trooper snagged on the rear wheel. They also got him killed! (So much for Israeli expertise)

Yes, I would say that Robert Leeds is the father of Israel's airborne.

Respectfully,
Bernard Marks
August 10, 2002

DF PARACHUTING ACTIVITIES in 1948/49
Inspired by Robert X. Leeds' account.
By Eddy Kaplansky, Haifa
© September ?2002

The story of efforts to establish a fighting Israeli paratroop unit in the War of Independence is one of false starts, hasty decisions, mistakes and poor judgement. It is anything but a success story. The account of Robert X. Leeds in his three-part article in 1999 and 2000 AVI Newsletters, combined with his indignant reaction to Stanley Medicks' letter, is only part of the overall story and less than a pillar of historical accuracy.

Leeds was then known as Robert "Bob" Levy, and so named in archival documents I've referred to. As we shall see, he was indeed actively involved in parachuting during his Israel Air Force (IAF) career and apparently did jump from a C-46 with Ben Foreman and Bernard Marks. Some of his other assertions, however, are certainly not beyond dispute.

On June 3rd 1948, over a month before he and Ben Foreman left for the course in Czechoslovakia, they and 13 other IAF personnel were ordered transferred to Ramat David to organize a parachuting school. Appointed "responsible for the school" was Arthur Landman, an obvious inappropriate choice as he was later reportedly expelled from the Czech course for refusing to jump. Ironically, his was the first appointment to a 'command' position in an Israeli parachuting project.

The decision for the Ramat David project was obviously a hasty one, as it was soon shelved in deference to the course in Czechoslovakia. The Czech course began on July 15th with eight officers, among them Ben Foreman and Bob Levy, and five others from Israel plus "28 local volunteers." Instruction and training was given by Czech Army officers and NCOs. Parachuting was only one of the course's comprehensive 15-item curriculum.

The course was soon divided into two parts, the Israeli officers and the 34 other ranks, at the request of the officers "so as to enable them to receive speedier and more advanced training." Bob Levy and Ben Foreman "are specializing in the technical part of parachuting; parachute packing, and dropping of equipment and supplies and their packing and stowing in aircraft." Dan Avni was appointed "officer in charge" of the 34 other ranks.

This and more is detailed in a report

to GHQ Israel Army" dated August 23rd 1948, by three officers participating in the course; Shimshon Neuman, Yaacov Vidislavsky and Shmuel Kreiner. An appended roster giving age, nationality and number of jumps for each of those still with the course then, credits 21-year-old Bob Levy with 69 jumps; not 150 as Leeds now claims. Next comes 48-year-old Chaim Cahane, the oldest of the group by far, with 19 jumps. Ben Foreman, a 20-year-old veteran of the US Army's 82nd Paratroop Division, is credited with nine jumps. Some of the Israelis were WW2 British Army veterans, who had been trained to be parachuted behind German lines.

The same trio submitted two more related reports on August 23rd, one proposing the establishment of an "Independent Parachute Battalion" and the other the establishment of a "Parachute School in Israel." Neuman, Vidislavsky and Kreiner likely prepared the reports on their own initiative, as the IDF apparently forgot to appoint anyone as officer in-charge of the course.

In the wake of the Czech course came the establishment of a new parachute unit on Haifa's Mount Carmel, as Leeds tells us. Veterans of the unit, who refer to it a Battalion, Brigade or Division, have it that its Officer Commanding was Yoel Palgi - then a local folk hero of sorts. This is supported by documentary evidence, but contradicted by Leeds; in the final part of his AVI Newsletter article (January 2002, page 11), he states in no uncertain terms that "I was appointed (its) Commanding Officer."

A memo dated September 11th 1948, ostensibly by the "Officer Commanding Israeli Airborne Unit," authorizes a parachute jump on the 13th by "Robert Levy, Ben Foreman and Bernard Marks." It is not signed by the un-named "Officer Commanding," but rather on his behalf in these words; "by Ben Foreman, Bob Levy TRAINING COMMAND." If Levy was indeed O/C og the "Israel Airborne Unit," surely he would have signed the memo as such.

In any event, the memo was apparently promptly acted upon by the powers-that-be in their haste and anxiety to create a fighting paratroop unit. On the same day IAF commander Aharon Remez issued a corresponding jump order to IAF

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR CONTINUED

Operations. The next day saw a message from Yigal Yadin, IDF Operations head, authorizing a drop "today" by Levy, Foreman and Marks. There was also a memo from IAF Operations to Air Transport Command (ATC) stating that the jump has to take place "today, September 13th, between 0700 and 0900 hours."

When the three arrived for the jump, however, ATC seemed unaware of the order, probably due to its preoccupation with Operation Dust - the airlift to Ruchama behind enemy lines. Thanks to the intervention of Harold Green (USA), O/C of IAF Training and Instruction Branch, it appears that the jump took place the next day; presumably from one of ATC's C-46 cargo planes. The apparent 'one-off' event was very likely Israel's first parachute jump, and Bob Levy was undoubtedly 'in command' of the trio.

'Exodus-1947' veteran Avi Livney, a crewmate of Marks and Foreman at that legendary Aliya-Bet ship, recalls his friend Foreman telling him in the early 1950s that he and Levy recruited Bernie Marks - actually "talked him into it," although he had no prior parachuting experience.

There is no record of further jumps until October, when the airborne unit held a "mass" jump. French Machalnik Fernand Beyrard, then the unit's Operations Officer, states unequivocally that its school at Ramat David was "managed by a group of ex-Soviet Parachutists." It seems that Leeds may have been rather hasty in dismissing out of hand what the Israel Consul said about a Russian having been the "first" to train Israeli paratroops.

The unit's first jump, on October 23rd, was a festive event. The attending dignitaries included David Ben-Gurion, then Prime Minister and Minister of Defense. Having been a flight of over two hours duration, some 20 parachutists probably jumped from the Dakota. Levy, Foreman and Marks may well have been among them, although there is no indication that such was the case.

There were two more drops on November 5th, one with 32 parachutists, and another the next day - all from C-46 aircraft. The jump Leeds tells us he heard about before returning to the USA sounds like the one that occurred on November 16th when a parachutist was killed after his parachute snagged on the tail of a C-

46. However, the plane didn't land "with him hanging there" as Leeds states. What happened is that after a number of unsuccessful attempts to untangle the chute, the pilot flew low over Haifa Bay at minimum safe-flying speed to allow the parachutist to release himself and drop into the sea. This he did, but was never seen again.

Leeds may have already left Israel by December 18th, when another parachutist, the last to jump in a stick of 10, was killed after his chute failed to open because the release line had come loose from the snap hook attached to the Dakota's static cable. This seems to have put a damper on further parachute training drops, as only a few sporadic jumps occurred during the weeks following the end of Operation Horev on January 7th 1949.

By April 1949 a decision was taken to create a completely reorganized parachute unit and school, which in due course was established at Ekron. By mid-August it was actively training for its first live jump. This occurred on September 4th 1949, when 14 trainees and instructors jumped from a Dakota piloted by me. It was my only flight of its kind ever.

In command of the new unit was Gershon Yuval, a WW2 veteran of a British S.A.S. parachute unit. His deputy was Thomas Derek Bowden - better known at the time as David Appel. It is noteworthy that only one of its nine officers, Chaim Cahane, had participated in an earlier parachuting unit or course. It was indeed Bowden who wrote its training manual, as Stanley Medicks wrote in his recent letter. It apparently supplanted the manual Leeds says he wrote earlier. From the reorganized unit at Ekron finally emerged Israel's first battle-ready parachute unit, unfortunately much too late for the War of Independence.

Certainly no credit to Leeds is his unseemly reference to Bowden, whose incredible WW2 record as an officer in the British Army's First Airborne Division is well documented. Machal veterans who served under him in the 7th Brigade, fondly remember 'David Appel' as an inspiring commander of the 'follow-me' kind.

Much less known is that on July 4th 1948, not long after he returned to Israel

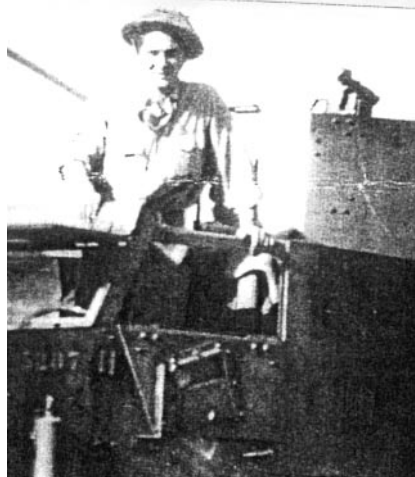
as a Machalnik, 'Appel' made a written detailed proposal to the IAF's Chief of Staff to create a "small efficient paratroop force of section or platoon strength." Although eminently qualified to implement his proposal, it was apparently shelved due to the imminence of the already decided upon course in Czechoslovakia. That was most unfortunate, as otherwise a proper IDF paratroop unit would very likely have been created in ample time to have seen action in the War of Independence.

The "English Paratroop veteran" mentioned by Leeds was probably Bert Faigin. Another possible reference to Faigin appears in a pilot's log-book entry for December 13th 1948, which records that the "English instructor" had been in the British Army's 2nd Airborne Division.

So who has exclusive right to the title "Commander of Israel's First Parachute something," and of what value is it? Nobody but Robert X. Leeds seems to think it's worth claiming, whatever its value.

A former RCAF and IAF pilot, Eddy Kaplansky also served on the Hagana's Aliya-Bet ship "Jewish State" (Northland). He is a long-time resident of Israel and an active researcher of Machal-related aspects of the War of Independence. His e-mail address is; Kaplansk@shani.net.





When an armored truck served as a tank

SAM PIVNIK, ENGLISH MACHAL: FROM AUSCHWITZ TO TANK COMMANDER

Sam Pivnik was deported to Auschwitz in 1943 from Benzdin, Poland along with his family. He and one brother survived and worked for the occupation forces in the French zone of Germany after which he joined relatives in England. This is his story.

In the spring of 1948 I left to fight for a Jewish home in Palestine...I saw a good deal of action and we liberated Zish and Safed in the Galilee. One day my tank was hit by a cannon on the right side...One South African comrade was killed and another of our crew had his leg blown off. We all suffered minor injuries but had the satisfaction of knowing that the Syrian army was defeated...I was in an Anglo-Saxon brigade and remember the names of two of my comrades, Hershel Margulies and Max Wolinski. When the other soldiers in the brigade wanted to return to England the cry was, 'we're going home.' I also returned to England but I carried with me the pride of having fought for the country of my own people.

THE MUSEUM OF THE JEWISH SOLDIER IN WW2: NEW WW2 MUSEUM IN ISRAEL

September 4, Latrun

From every corner of Israel they came - surviving Jewish warriors of the war against the Nazis; veterans of the Allied forces and of underground resistance movements and the partisans who fought in the forests behind the German lines. They came to witness the ground-breaking ceremony of yet another museum, this one, the Museum of the Jewish Soldier in W.W.II, to be amidst the vast IDF Armored Corps' collection of battle tanks, armor and memorabilia at Latrun, reputed to be the largest exhibit of its kind in existence.

The Yad Lashirion (IDF Armored Corps) Memorial, established 20 years ago, initiated the move to establish a museum to honor the Jewish soldiers of WWII and named it accordingly. It offered space in its own Latrun complex in the Ayalon Valley about half-way between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. It will oversee building of the museum. While the project is supported by the government contributions are solicited from Jews everywhere. The site itself symbolises the heroism of the Jewish people.

A choir of WW2 veterans under Vladimir Krasnitzki rendered nostalgic songs of the War and the Russian immigrant attendees, conspicuous - bedecked with their profusion of campaign medals, appeared to be the majority. Short speeches given by some, including cabinet minister Natan Sharansky, chairman of the Ministerial Committee for the Museum and others, were delivered in both Russian and Ivrit. Sharansky charged official Soviet anti-Semitism fueled the canard that Jews were cowards who didn't participate in the war. "...On the other hand the reality of statistics published later, showed that Jews were among the most heroic of nations, in the number who died relative to the population. So it is natural that this should be part of Jewish history and pride." The museum will be dedicated to teaching the true story of Jewish valor in that terrible war. The President, Moshe Katzav paid tribute to the one-and-a-half million Jews who served in all the Allies fighting forces and in particular to the 250,000 who died in combat. "No other people gave such a

proportionally large number of fallen.combatants" he said.

"The memory of the WWII Jewish soldier has been lost." said Dr Melvin Polk, American representative on the museum's board, "...I never realized that there were 41 Jewish admirals and generals. There's a loss of memory of what Jews did for the United States."

The museum will highlight decisive battles of the war and the part played by Jewish commanders and soldiers. Included will be the defense of Moscow, the North African campaign, the battles for Stalingrad and Kursk, the Normandy landings, the Ardennes and the battle for Berlin. The victory in the Battle of Britain and the air - war of the R.A.F. and United States Air Forces in which many Jews served and gave their lives is not mentioned in the literature of the planned museum. Considering that these veteran aviators contributed their vital experience - some gave their lives - in Israel's War of Independence, should ensure the omission not be permanent. Not mentioned too, the Pacific theater will no doubt be given appropriate exposure.

The Ayalon Valley since time immemorial has seen many fateful battles of ancient history. Here Joshua Ben-Nun waged war against the Amorite kings; at nearby Emmaus Judah the Maccabi defeated the Antiochus general Gorgias driving his army to the sea and here the IDF's 7th Brigade battled to relieve besieged Jerusalem in the Independence War. The area was recaptured from the Jordanian army in the Six Day War.

The IDF's Armored Corps fought decisively here and in all of Israel's wars and this site was chosen to commemorate its fallen comrades. The fact that Jews including the Jewish Brigade of Palestinian Jewish volunteers, had served in all the fighting services of the Allies and in the Merchant Marines was a decisive asset in the establishment and defence of the State of Israel from 1947 until the present day. In this, the idea - long in gestation - of the museum and a monument, had its genesis.

The monument is to be in the form of a World War Two underground bunker inside of which the story of the heritage and acts of bravery of the Jewish fighters will be shown. A visual panorama of WWII is to greet the visitor upon entering. It will house sophisticated equipment to present and illustrate the story of this

continued on Page 15

Museum
continued from Page 14

chapter of our history and data bases for those who wish to study it in depth. The museum will be built alongside the bunker.

Before the stone-laying ceremony began the leaders of all the WWII veterans associations assembled in the armored corps memorial auditorium to sign a scroll. This would be buried beside the corner-stone of the new building, somewhat analogous to a time-capsule for the edification of future generations. Smokey Simon, chairman of World Machal, was one of the signatories.

Building is expected to take two years, ultimately cover an area of 1400 square meters and cost approximately six million U.S. dollars. Minister Sharansky said the government is committed to contributing 16 million shekels (\$3.4 m) over the next four years. Chairman of the museum, Zwi Kantor, commenting on the purpose of the museum, said. "We were always taught the basic knowledge of the Holocaust focusing on the victims 'who went like sheep to the slaughter', but they didn't teach us that from a small nation of 18 million, one-and-a-half million fought against the Nazis. It's important that there be one place in the world that can reveal the true story of the Jews between 1939 and 1945."

Sol Jacobs

Ramat Gan



ADRIAN PHILLIPS: "BLOCKADE BUSTER"

Adrian Phillips, a graduate of the City College of New York and veteran of the U.S. Merchant Marine volunteered for the 'secret fleet' in 1947. He would be assigned to run the British blockade of Palestine. In Baltimore, he joined the crew of the President Warfield which set sail for Europe. Like other volunteers, he was cautioned; "if the British catch you, they'll hang you".

Recalling the neglected condition of the future "Exodus," he says "I grabbed a handrail on entering the ship and it came off in my hand; and as I kicked to check the steel boiler support, my foot went through it." They attempted to sail the ship out, but they almost sank off Cap Hatteras and they returned to port. Phillips was reassigned to another ship before the President Warfield left for its fateful voyage.

Phillips' new ship was another U.S. Coast Guard veteran; "Trade Winds" renamed "Hatikvah". The ship picked up 1500 Holocaust survivors in Europe and was captured by the British off the coast of Palestine. The passengers and crewmembers were imprisoned on Cyprus for three months, during which Phillips escaped from the camp, but was recaptured. The prisoners were transferred to a prison ship, the Empire Life Guard sailing for Haifa. As the vessel sailed into the Haifa Harbor, explosives, which had been smuggled aboard, were used to sink the ship. The refugees barely had time to make a run for the pier before the explosives went off. Along with several other American crewmen, Phillips was held responsible for the sabotage by the British.

Adrian Phillips was interned in the Athlit Camp along with other crew members; of whom 26 were Americans. Most of the crewmembers were released early soon after, including the skipper, Sidney Yellin, in the British attempt to avoid an international incident over the American prisoners.

Adrian and two other New Yorkers (Herman Braverman and Michael Weiss) continued to be held in Athlit without being charged.

Adrian's mother, Rose Phillips, launched a one-woman campaign from her home in the Bronx, New York. She contacted newspapers, State Department officials, and congressmen and fought intrepidly for the prisoners' freedom. After a lengthy battle, in Palestine and in the US, her son returned home. Adrian had met a young woman among the holocaust survivors in Athlit, Gerda Gottesman. Seven years later they married.

During his imprisonment, Adrian Phillips wrote to his mother "Please keep up your courage; the worst is behind us, and that goes for all the Jews."

Note: Some 300 American and Canadian Volunteers served with Palestinian Jews who came as part of the "Palyam" to bring "illegal" Holocaust survivors to the shores of Palestine. The 10 largest ships originated in Baltimore, USA.

Si Spiegelman

SONG OF THE VOLUNTEERS

THE TEXT OF THE SONG OF THE VOLUNTEERS WAS PRINTED IN THE AVI NEWSLETTER WINTER 2001. AT THE TIME NEITHER THE AUTHORSHIP NOR THE TEXT WERE CLEAR. WE HAVE SINCE DETERMINED THAT THE LYRICS WERE WRITTEN IN AUGUST 1948 BY AARON BARANAN, LOUIS COHEN, BRENNER FROM ENGLAND AND MAX KAMPLER. BARANAN CAN BE REACHED AT 5030 REBEL TRAIL, N.W., ATLANTA, GA 30327.

ALL YOU SONS OF MOSES,
WITH YOUR CROOKED NOSES,
FIGHT, FIGHT, FIGHT FOR ISRAEL.
ALL YOU SONS OF JACOB,
JOIN THE STAR OF DAVID,
FIGHT, FIGHT, FIGHT FOR ISRAEL
BROTHERS, BROTHERS, VICTORY IS
IN SIGHT.
FORWARD, FORWARD, ONWARD WITH
THE FIGHT.
YEARS AND YEARS WE'VE WAITED,
NOW OUR STATE'S CREATED,
FIGHT, FIGHT, FIGHT FOR ISRAEL

ON THE DESERT SAND,
FIGHTERS, HAND IN HAND,
BUILD, BUILD, BUILD FOR ISRAEL.
WITH OUR SWEAT AND TOIL,
WE RECLAIM OUR SOIL,
BUILD, BUILD, BUILD FOR ISRAEL.
BROTHERS, BROTHERS, WHEREVER YOU
MAY BE,
COME UP. JOIN US, IN OUR LIBERTY.
YEARS AND YEARS WE'VE WAITED
NOW OUR STATE'S CREATED.
BUILD, BUILD, BUILD FOR ISRAEL.

ONCE AGAIN OUR OWN,
OUR LONG FORSAKEN HOME,
LIVE, LIVE, LIVE FOR ISRAEL.
HERE AT LAST WE'RE FREE
TO FORGE OUR DESTINY
LIVE, LIVE, LIVE FOR ISRAEL.
BROTHERS IN COURAGE HELPED CREATE
OUR STATE.
BROTHERS IN FREEDOM WILL ALWAYS
KEEP IT GREAT.
YEARS AND YEARS WE'VE WAITED.
NOW OUR STATE'S CREATED
LIVE, LIVE, LIVE FOR ISRAEL.

SUNG TO THE TUNE OF 'SONG OF THE VAGABONDS' FROM 'THE VAGABOND KING' BY R. FRIML

ing volunteers from abroad, and then seeing American Veterans of Israel heading our organization, I have been disturbed.

I feel as Jews and some gentiles, not only did we defy our nation of birth by taking up arms for Israel, we were considered traitors to our respective countries. May I say, as a British subject, arriving at Dover Customs enroute to Israel June 1948, I was humiliated, searched and threatened, and told we will get you when you return referring to Israel as Palestine... So why are we so proud to include the nation of our birth in our organization heading? Simply, we are nothing more than World Machal from the Diaspora..."

Sidney Firth, Plymouth Meeting, PA

"...in the unlikely event that the younger veterans would be interested in joining AVI, I would favor expanding the membership but retaining a distinct Machal group under the umbrella of the AVI."

Leon Reinharth, New York

"All things have a normal cycle and life span including AVI. Instead of perpetuation memorialization through the archives and Israeli government recognition and remembrance."

Ellis Robins, Wellington, FL

"...if subsequent IDF volunteers want to join, it is OK with me. Perhaps they can help Israel in future years."

Aaron Baranan, Atlanta

"Volunteers or not. Participants in Israel's wars are worthy. They risked their lives and fought bravely... Let them in!"

Marvin Weiss, Branford, CT

"...I feel that 54 years after, the AVI need not seek self-preservation and that we should fade into history..."

Mort Levinson, Hillsborough, CA



REPORT FROM RALPH LOWENSTEIN, AVI ARCHIVIST

These are the pertinent facts about our AVI archive and Machal Virtual Museum.

-- The University of Florida Libraries is the official host for the Aliyah Bet and Machal Archives. The archives are located in my office and in Special Collections at the University of Florida Libraries in Library East. Carla Summers of the library staff and I are archivists.

-- The University of Florida Foundation, a 501 (c) 3 organization, is the repository for the Machal Fund, which supports all our archival activities. This fund now has approximately \$9,000 in it, with copies of wills assuring the Machal Fund of an eventual \$70,000 endowment, which should support the maintenance of the archives after we are all gone. We estimate that it will cost \$200,000 to complete our proposed projects.

These include:

1. The building of an Aliyah Bet and Machal Virtual Museum on the Internet. Phase I of this project has now been completed. Phase two will include the fleshing out of all areas, the completion of rosters, scanning of all photos, links, bibliography, etc.
2. The filming and taping of about 25 select oral histories. These oral histories will become part of the archives and will also be incorporated in the virtual museum.
3. The completion of a data base, including all the information from about 400 detailed questionnaires that I have collected from Aliyah Bet and Machal veterans over the last 15 years. There are 52 questions in each questionnaire, including place of birth, parents' religious and Zionist affiliation, dates of service, units, etc. Design and construction of the data base was completed in the last two weeks, and my student assistant is already beginning to type information from the questionnaires into it. This material will be invaluable for future historians.
4. Proper identification and storage of hundreds of photos and documents. Each photo must be placed in its own acetate folder and clearly identified. This is an expensive task, and I am still collecting and copying photographs, another expensive project.
5. The proper storage and identification of AVI organizational documents, minutes, newsletters, etc.
6. Working with the Price Library of Judaica (almost 100,000 volumes) in the UF Libraries to see that we have all books related to Aliyah Bet and Machal.

Thus, our project has two main arms: a) The virtual museum that can be seen all over the world and represent the link between American and Canadian Jewry as well as Machal volunteers from other countries and the State of Israel from its birth, and b) the Library archives, which will preserve detailed information, photos and documents about Aliyah Bet and Machal veterans for future historians. If AVI is successful in its fund-raising campaign, it hopes to expand the virtual museum to include all elements of World Machal, so it is truly a museum memorializing the worldwide volunteer effort to serve on Aliyah Bet ships and serve in the Israeli military forces during the War of Independence.

Foundations and individual donors should understand that we have a very narrow window of opportunity to get material from the veterans themselves. I am 72 years old, and I am the second-youngest American.

All contributions are fully tax deductible. The UF Foundation, an official fund-raising arm of the University of Florida, will acknowledge contributions, and major contributors will be listed prominently in our virtual museum.

They might want to know something about me, since I am officially listed as archivist and director of the virtual museum, in addition to being chairman of the AVI Research and Archives Committee, and also administrator of the Machal Fund: Ralph Lowenstein is a native of Danville, Virginia. He volunteered for the Israeli when he was 18 years old, seeing combat with the 79th Armored Battalion only 10 days after arriving in Israel in 1948. He holds B.A. and M.S. degrees from Columbia University and a Ph.D. from the University of Missouri. Lowenstein also served in the U.S. Army during the Korean War, from 1952 to 1954. He was a prize-winning reporter for the El Paso Times, and has taught at the University of Texas-El Paso, Tel Aviv University, the University of Missouri and the University of Florida. He was chairman of the News-Editorial Department at the University for Missouri, and was dean of the College of Journalism and Communications at the University of Florida for 18 years. He was president of the organizations of American and Canadian journalism educators 1990-91 and was named Journalism Administrator of the Year by the Freedom Forum in 1994. He retired from the University of Florida in 1995. He has been listed in Who's Who in America since 1974.