

FALL 2006



# AMERICAN VETERANS OF ISRAEL

VOLUNTEERS IN ISRAEL'S WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

UNITED STATES & CANADA VOLUNTEERS

136 East 39th Street, New York, NY 10016

## Aliya Bet: The View of the British Admiralty

*A review essay of Stewart, Ninian. The Royal Navy and the Palestine Patrol. London: Portland, 2002.*

*This review essay was written by Elihu Bergman a short time before his death a year ago. Elihu was a past president of AVI. He held a PhD in Political Science and had published a number of academic articles on Aliya Bet. We are not aware that this essay has been published elsewhere. The Newsletter offers a slightly abbreviated version. The full version may be obtained by writing to sklausner@ucwphilly.rr.com.*

Historians of the period could justifiably argue that the Jewish illegal immigration campaign following World War II—1945-1948—created a major obstacle to continued British rule in Palestine. The costs of stopping illegal immigration were simply too burdensome for a British economy devastated by the War. In spite of these realities the postwar Labour government ranked the stoppage of illegal immigration among its top priorities -and budgetary investments -

*ALIYA BET continued on pg. 16*

Samuel Z. Klausner, editor of the AVI Newsletter, has announced his retirement from the editorship at the end of 2006.

## The Pans, Paul Shulman and the Perils of Passage

*Part One: A "far-better" shipping company*

By J. Wandres

The story of the Haganah Ship Exodus 47 has been told and retold over the decades and has become part of legend and lore of Israel's founding. The ship's attempt to land more than 4,500 refugees on the shores of Eretz Israel was not initially successful. But

*WANDRES continued on pg. 11*

## Beds for Bananas

*A First-Hand Story of the S.S. Redemption And What Happened Afterwards in Cyprus and in Palestine*

*Laurence Kohlberg published this article in the Autumn 1948 issue of the Menorah Journal after having served on the Paducah, renamed Geula or Redemption. Laurence, after graduating from Phillips Academy in Massachusetts, toward the end of World*

*KOHLBERG continued on pg. 2*

## Machal Veterans to be In- scribed In the Canadian Jewish War Veterans Memorial

The Toronto Post of the Jewish War Veterans of Canada has undertaken the erection of a Memorial to ALL Jewish War Veterans from around the world. This Memorial will be erected in Toronto in Earl Bales Park - in proximity to the Holocaust Memorial, which was erected some years ago. This Memorial was designed by the world-famous Daniel Libeskind and will serve to keep alive the memory of all Jewish veterans of the past two centuries.

The ground breaking took place in October 2005 and it is our hope that all will be ready for the Grand Unveiling in July 2007. At the centre of the Memorial is a 150-200 seat amphitheatre.

Surrounding the stage is a sweeping, angled structure crenellated by eight candles, alluding to a Hanukkah menorah - a theme chosen due to Hanukka's celebration of the fight for the freedom from tyranny. A pointed flame-bearing structure that pierces the wall is the shamash, the main candle used to light all the others. Liebeskind says that the Hanukkiah form is interpreted as a shield of light with the shamash as a guardian asserting the spirit of valour, courage and strength against the forces of evil. Flames of Memory, the designer's title for the memorial cre--ates an enduring memorial dedicated to the

*MEMORIAL continued on pg. 9*



*Libeskind Veterans Memorial*

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**KOHLBERG continued from pg. 1**

*War II, enlisted in the service and was assigned as a Second Engineer on a transport ship. Upon returning from his experience in aliya bet, he attended the University of Chicago where his doctoral dissertation on stages of moral development was accepted in 1958. He taught for several years at Chicago and then appointed professor of education and social psychology at Harvard University. While working in Belize in 1971 he contracted a tropical disease, which caused him significant pain and bouts of depression. In 1987, on a short leave from the hospital he drove to the coast where he drowned, an apparent suicide, at the age of 59. This is a slightly abbreviated version of his original article. It is a testimony written almost immediately after the experience. It is the report of a very bright twenty year old.*

We were the eighth or ninth ship being sent across from America in May 1947 to take refugees to Palestine "illegally." The Hebrew name for this blockade-running was Aliyah Bet, the "Clandestine Immigration." As the name indicates, it was not a matter of conspiracy. Everything had been done legally in America; and American dollars made it legal in Europe. As for keeping it secret from the British-well, we could always hope. But we'd be satisfied just to get the people out of Europe, even if it were only to Cyprus.

I took a launch out to the ship and, being the only passenger on the launch, I began talking to the man at the wheel. "What ship are you on?" he asked. "The Paducah."

"Does she fly the Panamanian flag?" "Yes."

"She isn't running Jews to Palestine?"

"No, we're going to carry bananas."

What was there to give our ship

away? The harbor pilot didn't notice it. He turned to our Jewish second mate with a puzzled look and said, "Christ, there are a lot of Jews on this ship." The vessel was an ex-Navy training ship forty-five years old, speed 10 knots, tonnage 900. Even I couldn't believe she'd hold fifteen hundred passengers, more than the Queen Mary, if we ever got that far.

I used to wonder about that. You would, too, if you'd been aboard as we ploughed across the Atlantic. You might have gone down to the fire room and found me looking up at the boiler gauge glass. No water in it. The engineering regulations would be running through my head. If the fireman loses the water, cut out the fires and secure the boiler. When the boiler is cool, have it inspected for burnt-out or sagging tubes.

"Cut out the fires, Len," I'd shout. "Don't get so excited, Larry. The water will be coming up in a while." I'd shrug my shoulders and walk back into the engine room. Or, perhaps, you'd take a stroll on deck. The bos'n, an ex-Navy boy from Brownsville, New York City, would probably be looking for Buckshot. We called him Buckshot because he had such a load of lead in his tail. He had left college to make this trip, and he still retained the student's horn-rimmed glasses and four-syllable vocabulary. He was a Trotskyite and brought along huge stocks of literature to convert the crew and the refugees.

Six days out, we reached Fayal, in the Azores, where our first hitch developed. We were supposed to get oil and water there, but the British had control of all the oil on the land and tied it up, and the agents demanded cash for the water and stores; so we were held up a week waiting for the money to come through. Finally we left, bound for Lisbon where we were definitely supposed to get oil, and a few days later arrived and anchored in the Tagus River. Again

it was impossible to get oil; so we got orders to proceed to Bayonne, a small port on the Atlantic coast of France, near the Spanish border. By this time the chief engineer's report of the amount of oil left aboard was preceded by a minus sign; but, luckily, his calculations were wrong and we got into Bayonne under our own steam.

There we tied up next to another Haganah ship, the Northland, which was to accompany us until the end. Her crew was in such a confused state that we looked like a model of discipline beside hers. Their attitude was represented by Labal, a writer from Greenwich Village. It was claimed that he had come on the trip because he couldn't keep up the twelve-dollars-a-month rent on his apartment in the Village. Most of his writings were a little too obscure to have a wide popular appeal, however, a story had appeared in Death Magazine. This was a journal of which only the first number had appeared, edited by Labal. Shortly after its publication, he was forced to leave town to escape the printer, who was dunning him for the bill.

Along with most of the other boys on the Northland, Labal had not gotten along with the captain. So with an ultimatum that it was either himself or the captain, he left for Paris, where he continued to receive spending money from Haganah. Eventually, Labal was triumphant. The captain caused too much trouble and was sent back to the United States. While our ship was anchored there we walked the deserted streets. We never guessed how crowded those streets would be a month later when a six-day fête was held, with confetti-throwing, fireworks, bicycle races and dancing on the cobbled pavement. The fête really centered around the bull-fights, held in the stadium, for there were many Spaniards and Basques; and *courses des vaches* were held, wherein cows were let loose in the streets to be faced by the amateur matadors of the town.

At first we seemed to be accepted as a cargo ship by the people of the town, but after a while our real purpose became known and French reporters and photographers began coming around.

They asked us what the wooden shelves were for, and we told them we were going to carry bananas on them. The next day the Bayonne paper was headlined "*Couchettes pour les Bananas*" (Beds for Bananas), with a story that we were going to run refugees to Palestine.

Of course, the French officials had known all along who we were. They now came out with a public statement that we were ordered not to load people aboard at Bayonne, which we never had any intention of doing. This was in July, just after the Exodus had been captured; the French officials "discovered" that it had left with faked visas and clearances from Setres. So they fined the shipping company, which owned it, \$80,000. The same company owned the Northland, and it was to be held pending payment of the fine. We were afraid they might decide to hold us too, so we worked feverishly to finish the new water tanks and put in the air vents and bunks. We left all our good clothes and passports and papers for Haganah to keep in France, and sailed at five one morning for a destination unknown to the crew.

As soon as we left the harbor we turned south, and the bet was it was to be the Black Sea behind the Iron Curtain. We were all tense as we approached the Straits of Gibraltar, since one ship destined to carry refugees had been seized there by the British. We timed it so as to arrive at night, and we hugged the North African Coast as far from the Rock as possible. We weren't challenged and we went to bed, exultant at slipping through the Lion's claws.

But the next morning, as I came off watch, I saw a British destroyer about a quarter of a mile behind us. There was no accident about it; she'd been trailing us since daylight. Soon she began to overtake us and began signaling. The bos'n started playing a record over the P.A. system, the popular song that goes "Welcome, welcome, we've waited and waited and now we're elated to welcome you home." The DE flashed over the question, "Where are you bound?" and we answered, "Leghorn, Italy." But she stayed alongside us while her crew lined the rail to look at us. A couple of our boys, in a playful mood, got out sheets and towels, dressed as Arabs

and salaamed toward Mecca. We were so close we could hear a couple of the English sailors say, "Blimey, they've got bloody Arabs aboard." After a while she fell behind again and followed in our wake. About this time we found our condensers were leaking, which meant that our water would never last until our destination; so we entered Bohn, in Algeria, to take on fresh water. Our British escort waited patiently outside the harbor, like a private detective in a divorce case, and took up the trail when we left the next day. By the time we reached the Greek coast, they seemed a little incredulous when we signaled Leghorn as our destination. We finally left them behind at the Dardanelles, where naval ships couldn't enter, and they flashed us, "Goodbye, see you again."

Soon, however, our oil ran out, and without electricity or running water we awaited the promised oil train. Eventually the oil appeared, diminished from a train to a horse and wagon with a few barrels of Diesel oil. We started up the boilers and had electricity for a few hours until we ran out again and awaited the next load. However, we forgot all about these little inconveniences when John, our" Shu-Shu skipper announced that he had gotten permission for us to go ashore. In a few minutes, the ship was practically deserted and we were all exploring life behind the Iron Curtain.

We were lucky to be in Varna, since it was the leading resort in Bulgaria, and there were many people who could speak French, German or even English. Although they were always whispering about the secret police and the militia, all of them seemed to feel free to gripe to us about the new regime. I think that, eventually, everybody in Varna who talked to us asked if we could smuggle him out on our ship. Even the movie queen of Bulgaria, whom the bos'n used to take around, said she'd give up her career to work as a housemaid in the States. Odd situations used to develop when Rudy, our captain, who was an old Communist Party member, began telling these Bulgarians how wonderful their new regime was and how decadent America really was.

There were quite a few Jews in

Varna, but they didn't have much to do with us. Our passengers were going to come down from Rumania; no Bulgarian Jews were allowed to leave the country. Unlike the Jews in Rumania, these people are necessary in Bulgaria. They are descendants of Spanish Jews who came in during the Inquisition. There was never much anti-Semitism in Bulgaria; and during the war the Bulgarian Government, as an ally of Germany, was allowed control over its Jews. As a result, they escaped much more lightly than any of the other Jews within the German dominated areas. Since most are well educated, they are useful in peasant Bulgaria. The British had been putting pressure on the Government, through the Allied Control Commission, to make us get out. Finally we were ordered to leave Varna; so early Friday morning we left and landed again twenty miles down the coast at Burgos. The Allied Control Commission didn't meet over the weekend; the next week the Bulgarian peace treaty was signed and we were safe.

Soon we were joined by the Northland, which had finally gotten cleared in France, and we awaited the refugees together. Each day they were supposed to be on their way; but weeks passed before we received word that the freight trains loaded with people would definitely arrive that night. The Northland was to be loaded first, as we still had to take on oil; but all of us were to go over to organize the loading, since it had to be finished before daybreak. It was D-Day for us, and we all shared the excitement of Davy, our fervently religious ex-Hebrew teacher.

At around midnight the train finally arrived and was shunted down to the dock. There were three thousand refugees, old people laden with huge packs containing all their worldly possessions, youth marching to the rhythm of militant Hebrew songs, orphan children, and at the end a woman with her child, born a few hours earlier in a box car. Davey, who was supposed to direct the people, began embracing each one of them. Rudy, our skipper, burst into tears, even though it wasn't the Communist line. A soberer note was maintained by Charlie, our Gentile first

engineer, who turned to me as the first refugee came up the gangplank, and said, "I'm not sure, but that guy looks like a Jew to me."

Soon we were all busy trying to squeeze one more mama or kid into those three-Decker shelves. The people had expected to find Greek or Turkish sailors, so they were really surprised to find Jews, volunteer American Jews. John the Shu Shu said he wished there were fifty more of us, not because we were any good as sailors but because we gave the people a lift. It took us five hours to finish loading, and at six in the morning the Northland pulled out, with the people singing Hatikvah, the Hebrew national anthem. She dropped anchor in the harbor to wait for us to load, but the people thought it was in order not to travel on the next day, which was Yom Kippur. The Northland's deck was thronged with people rocking in prayer, casting the sins of the year into the water. When their skipper, Lewis, appeared on deck with a skull cap and a prayer shawl, rocking-although not because of religious ecstasy—they were sure their fate was in pious hands; meanwhile, the oil train finally arrived, and the next night we loaded our own fifteen hundred passengers and set out. The sea was calm and the people seemed happy. They got two hot meals a day as well as cigarettes and chocolate, and the ventilation wasn't too bad, even if sleeping conditions in the crowded wooden bunks were none too comfortable. Their main complaint was that they couldn't wash except with salt water. There were plenty of doctors and nurses aboard, and we had a hospital set up. One of the boys even had his teeth drilled by a dentist who had brought along his equipment.

Most of the people were Rumanians, although many were survivors of the German camps and others had been in Russia during the war. We even had some ex-Heroes of the Red Army with boxes full of medals. Their attitudes toward the Soviet ranged from lukewarm to cold. All of them complained about anti-Semitism in Russia, particularly in the Ukraine, although some said it wasn't the Government's-fault. Most seemed to take the Russian methods of

government for granted; ten years of suffering had made them a little hard-boiled. They could even joke about being sent to the soap factory. We didn't have any native-born Russian Jews. Apparently, it was impossible for them to get out.

Life took on a more serious note when we got through the Dardanelles, for there was the British destroyer waiting for us, soon joined by several other destroyers and a couple of light cruisers. As we passed between the Aegean Islands with the English behind us, they flashed us a message that the course we were taking would bring us dangerously close to mine fields. It was a terrible problem to the captain: should he take their word? To us it seemed incredible that they'd try to delude us; but the captain decided to continue on the old course, and we passed through safely.

All along we had been hoping to transfer our people to the Northland about a hundred miles off the Palestine shore, so that we could go back for another load. On the sixth night we got orders to stand by to make the shift; but when the crew of the Northland tried to move their people below decks to make room for our people, they found there wasn't enough room. The next morning the Hebrew flag, the blue star of David, flew from our mast, which the bos'n greased so the British wouldn't be able to get it down. A large sign was hung over our side with our new name, the Haganah ship Geulah ("Redemption"). The Northland also carried signs with her new name, Medinah Yehudit ("The Jewish State").

We had large stores of wooden clubs aboard and all the younger people seemed eager to fight off the boarding party, but we received a radio message from Palestine to offer no resistance. Around noon we made a broadcast to the Haganah radio station, which rebroadcast it throughout Palestine. Some of the people sang Hebrew songs; Chaim, our official orator, made a speech in Hebrew; and some of us got together and wrote a speech in English. Or rather, we let Lippy, our ex-social director of the Borough Park Jewish Veterans, write a three-thousand-word speech, which we got down to the required laconic three

hundred words by cutting out some of the clichés.

“By then we could see the coast of Palestine in the distance, and the British marines were lining up on the landing platforms built on the destroyers. Our crew, to disguise themselves, were all busy getting ragged clothes from the refugees, adopting babies and even complete families, and went around muttering Yiddish phrases to themselves. I noticed a young rabbi, complete with a beard, black coat and hat, prayer shawl and a Bible, which he was reading to a group of children. As I approached, without changing his intonation he broke into some profanity known only in Brooklyn. It was Lou the atheist, one of the boys who’d been on the Ben Hecht and been held by the British. Now I knew why he had nursed that beard all the way across.

About ten miles off the Palestine coast, south of Haifa, the British came alongside and told us to turn back. There was no answer to this, so they began throwing tear gas grenades and then boarded. Below, we felt a crash as the destroyer hit our sides. We sabotaged the plant, rushed up the emergency ladder and mixed with the people on deck. The British had gotten control of the wheelhouse without violence, and now they stood and looked at us, a little curious and a little worried.

John and Chaim distributed the remaining food and cigarettes to the people. It was night by the time they towed us into Haifa harbor; Spotlights glared on us as we pulled in. Lou, the “Rabbi,” and myself were among the first to get off and go through the gauntlet of the search and D.D.T. job. The British were “Red Devils,” First Airborne troops, mostly bored boys about my age. They directed us in English, and it was hard not to understand when a sergeant told Eli, “You look just like my stupid cousin.” Another looked at Lou and asked, “What’s that?” and the sergeant answered with an air of wisdom, “Oh, he’s a very religious Jew.” We were worried about Heavy, our three-hundred-pound mate; but we saw him climb onto the English ship with John the Shu Shu, and we knew he was all right so far.

The boats used to take us to Cyprus

were cargo ships with part of the deck caged off and a couple of large rooms with rows of benches. By some ironic twist they were called Empire Rest and Empire Comfort. It was when we got aboard the Empire Rest that we first realized the gratitude our people felt toward us. As soon as we were past the British guards, a score of them ran around trying to make us comfortable, bringing us the crackers and tea the British gave out, making room for us to lie down on the benches, giving us their coats, and even apologizing for the shrew who sat across from us yelling at her husband and accusing him of making a scene whenever he opened his mouth to say “Yes, dear.” I regretted then the harsh answers I’d given some of those people on the ship when they’d asked for favors, or when their manners weren’t too good. It was nice being a hero and part of the legend of their ship, Redemption.

The British guards allowed us to go up for fifteen-minute stretches of air in the caged-off parts of the deck, women and children getting preference. As we waited at the door the English corporal said, “Don’t look at me, it’s that bastard up there who won’t let you out,” pointing to the sergeant at the top of the stairs. As we left the ship at Famagusta, Cyprus, all the soldiers said good-bye to each of us and patted Lou on the back and said, “Take it easy, Pop.”

When we got ashore a major asked in English for four volunteers to watch the baggage. As no one came forward, he picked them out of different parts of the crowd. Purely by chance he chose Lou, Eli, our Spanish steward and myself. He asked us if any of us spoke English and we all looked blank. Then he muttered something about “these Jews only speak English when they want a cigarette.” Finally our Spanish cook said, “I spik a leetle English.” So we listened to the major’s English and pretended to understand when the cook translated into Spanish. We were loaded into trucks and taken to the other side of the island near Lanarca, where the refugee camps were. There we passed through an army and C.L.D. control, which consisted of a search for arms, money, which was deposited by

the British,

As soon as Heavy entered there, a soldier said to him, “What the ‘ell are you doing ‘ere, Yank?” Heavy just looked aloof. But when he stripped and revealed the American eagles, anchors and mermaids tattooed on him from head to foot, they took him aside. All he would say was the Yiddish phrases we’d taught him, but they found a draft card he’d sewn in his pants, so he decided he might as well talk English. He was taken to the Major’s office, where a girl from the camp was working. Later she told us that the Major had asked him what he was doing there. Heavy answered, “I’m going to Palestine.”

“You’re not Jewish, why do you want to go?”

“Everybody’s going.”

“Well, we’ll let you go back to America if you tell us who the other crew members are.” “I’d like to be alone with you, Major”—the Major got up—and I’d knock your block; off.” They put him in the guardhouse overnight and he had another interview with the Major. The Major told him they were going to put him in the camp with the rest of the refugees to see how he’d like it for a couple of years. He is still there, watched by the British. He has filled out deportation papers, but those things seem to go slowly. In the meantime, the refugees wait on him hand and foot, and Haganah gets a bottle of cognac to him every few days, but none of the other. Americans can see him for fear of being identified.

Some of the other boys had close calls, for there was a Rumanian Jew in the control, a member of the British Army, who could speak all the European dialects. He seemed to have worked with the Nazis in Rumania, and the British themselves didn’t have much use for him. After the control, we were driven into the camp, issued a blanket, a plate, knife and fork, and left to our own devices. The British leave the organization of the camps entirely up to the refugees themselves, with the help of the Joint Distribution Committee and the Jewish Agency. We seldom saw any British soldiers except those guarding the barbed-wire fence and driving food trucks.

The camps themselves consist of tents and Quonset huts and a few shower huts. After a refugee has been on the island for ten months he has usually acquired space in a Quonset hut and has probably made himself fairly comfortable. If he is with his wife, they can cook their own food, but must eat in the mess halls and share the kitchen duties. Food consists mainly of dehydrated potatoes and macaroni, with some meat, local vegetables, coffee and margarine. It isn't on a starvation level, but most people's health is fairly low. Most of us got dysentery and boils during our two-months' stay. The starchy diet seems to have a peculiar effect on the women—they all become very well developed in the upper chest. In fact, there isn't a

girl on Cyprus who doesn't put Lana Turner to shame. The boys of the crew lived together in a Quonset hut, easily distinguished by its sloppy interior and the large wipe barrel inside. Haganah bought us one hoghead of the local vintage each week, and the celebration we held when it arrived was our way of keeping track of the time. The refugees amused themselves more constructively, played soccer, practiced Haganah commando tactics, held amateur theatricals, or danced the Palestinian folk dances around a bonfire. We had heard the British claim there were Soviet agents among the refugees. However, up to now, the British haven't revealed how they found this out. One thing is quite certain: they have not identified any Russian agents among the immigrants on the ships captured. They haven't even bothered to look. The British C.I.D. and army "control" of the refugees going to Cyprus and entering Palestine was so inept that the thirty-eight American crewmembers of the

Haganah ship *Redemption*, including myself, passed through it without being identified. Our attempts to disguise ourselves as refugees were definitely amateur. "We were spotted as Americans by the people on Cyprus before we opened our mouths. Did anyone know of any Soviet agents? The answer was "No."

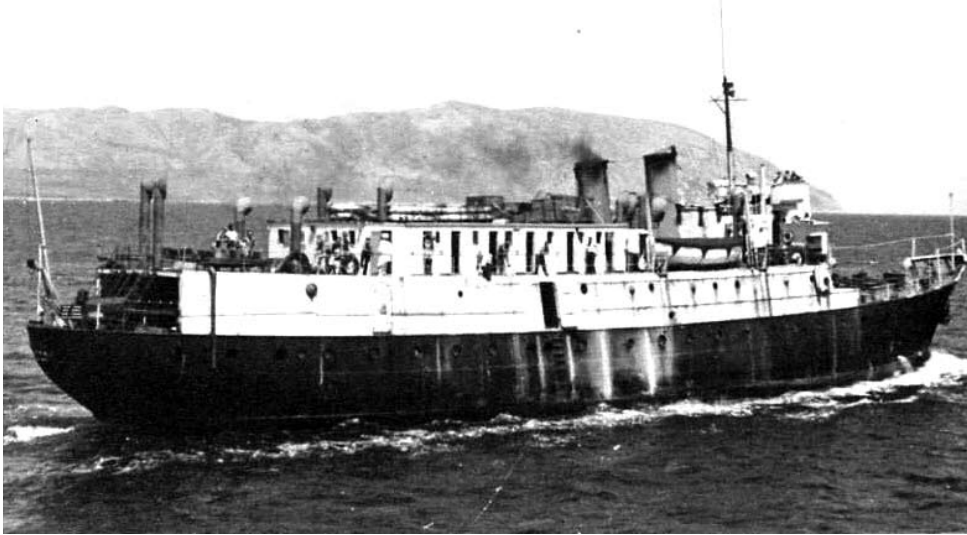
There were many people who had been in Russia; but most shared the opinions of an American Jew, an ex-Wobbly who had jumped ship in

Russia in the early 'thirties. Too independent-minded, he had been put away in Siberia to cool off. He'd been released to work during the war, and got across to Rumania where he'd joined the illegal immigration. He was only forty, but he was completely broken in health and spirit. The people sympathetic toward Stalinism were members of a Zionist political party called Hashomer Hatzair, who numbered perhaps fifteen per cent of the refugees. While we were on Cyprus they celebrated the anniversary of the Russian Revolution by marching around with pictures of Marx and Lenin. But most of the members I knew winked as they marched past me. They took its politics with a grain of salt. They had joined the organization in Rumania because its members were the quickest to leave Europe. The Communists prefer to have sympathizers leave rather than those openly disaffected. And in spite of its sympathy for Stalinism, Hashomer practices real and democratic communism on col-

lective settlements in Palestine. Most of the pro-Russians were young boys and girls who had spent their lives in the German prison camps until the Red Army released them.

The technique of getting us out of Cyprus was simple. The list of the seven hundred and fifty refugees who were allowed to leave each month was made up on the basis of priority of arrival. We were to assume the names of people on that list, who were therefore set back a month. The people who were supposed to leave had already waited about a year, but it was understood that the sailors should leave first. Still there weren't enough places for all of us; so four boys volunteered to stay behind until the next quota. Labal, the Greenwich Village writer, was the first to volunteer. He was getting three square meals a day without working and was a hero to boot.

A few days after we arrived, the crew of a previous ship, the *Despite*, left. It was a small landing craft, which had sailed from Italy flying an Egyptian flag. They had been about fifty miles away from Palestine, still unsuspected by the British, when the captain noticed a light blinking in the aft part of the ship. A few hours later the British boarded the *Despite*. Then a girl, who was recognized as the one flashing the light, stepped forward and proceeded to identify the crewmembers. They were locked in the hold. However, in the mix-up of unloading in Haifa, the crew broke out and mixed with the refugees and the British let it go at that. The girl went to England. Her half-sister, who was in Cyprus, said the traitress's father was a British military attaché in Hungary and their mother was Jewish, but she had never suspected her sister was working with the British. Haganah was of course interested in finding her, although the red-haired young skipper of the *Despite* wouldn't say what would happen to her if they did.



*The Paduca (from Silverstone Collection)*

One of our Gentile volunteers, Dave Blake, also was for staying behind. Dave was a graduate chemist who wanted to live as a farm worker in a communal settlement in Palestine, where he felt life would be more natural and just than in America. He was always a little distant from the rest of us. We couldn't understand a man who studied Hebrew when he could go ashore in France and chase women. Nor could we understand it after we reached Palestine when Dave took the \$100 Haganah gave each of us and went straight to a settlement and gave the money to the communal treasury. When we visited him there he was working hard in the fields and speaking a beautiful Hebrew. He seemed much happier than he'd ever been with us.

As the ship pulled into the dock, we began looking around for methods of escape; but we all found ourselves on the buses going to Athlit. British tanks and motorcyclists were guarding us. There were no guards on the buses, and the drivers were Jewish. We told the driver we were sailors and wanted to make a break. He nodded his head and soon all the buses stopped, one bumping into the next. The door opened and, as I later learned, sixteen of us streamed out. I was the first man out of our bus. I still don't know whether I jumped or was pushed by "Action Jackson" behind me. We walked straight across the street into an Arab garage where we asked for parts to a '38 Ford. When we saw the convoy had passed on, we walked down the street until a car stopped and asked us in Hebrew how to get to some street. Instead of answering, "I'm a stranger here myself," we climbed into the back seat and asked him to take us to an address in the city.

In a few more minutes we were safe in a room in the best hotel in Haifa. There we found eight of the boys. The others had been captured and sent on to Athlit. Everything was new and wonderful to us in the hotel warm water, clean linen, beds, and finally a huge roast beef dinner.

## Comments

*Bailey Nieder also served on the Paducah. Following are his comments*

*on Kohlberg's narrative.*

This article written by Larry Kohlberg when he was 20 before entering college at the University of Chicago gives evidence of his writing skills. My recollections of the Paducah's journey are slightly different. Larry's emphasis on shipmates' political views may have been affected by the influence of his father, Alfred Kohlberg, a leading anti-communist in the 1940's and 50's. He was the leader of the China Lobby, an early supporter of Senator Joseph McCarthy and a founding director of the John Birch Society. (A book is in the works now by Professor Robert Herzstein of the University of South Carolina on the complicated relationship between the father and son.)

A brilliant student, Larry became a professor of psychology at the University of Chicago. His thesis on the moral development of children is considered a classic in the educational psychology world. He became a professor at the Graduate School of Education at Harvard. Larry spent time in Israel comparing the moral development of children raised on Kibbutzim to their counterparts in the regular population.

In summary, Larry's article in the Menorah Journal with its catalog of anecdotal incidents diminishes the real purpose of the journey of the Paducah and the idealism of the 25 unpaid volunteers for whom the trip was one of the main events of their life.

*George Goldman also served on the Paducah with Kohlberg. Here are his comments.*

Beds for Bananas by Larry Kohlberg is a first-rate recounting of his experiences as a volunteer crewmember aboard the Haganah ship Paducah, later renamed the Geula (Redemption). She was staffed by licensed Merchant Marine Officers and manned by a volunteer crew of college students, yeshiva bochers, some WWII vets, Navy and Army, and several professional merchant seamen. What they lacked in experience this motley crew made up in enthusiasm and dedication. Their mission was to carry Holocaust survivors from the DP camps of Europe and try to smuggle them past the British block-

ade of what was then British controlled Palestine.

The voyage, though supposedly clandestine, was not a very successful secret operation. From the very beginning, it was bedeviled by British operatives and interference. We did, however, get over 1300 DPs as far as Cyprus and that was something of a success.

In fourteen or fifteen typewritten pages Larry covered the highs and lows of what turned out to be a ten-month saga. He does a good job especially when recounting the shenanigans of the crew. This, however, is only an appetizer for a fuller and more detailed account. I recommend the book *Running the Palestine Blockade—the Last Voyage of the Paducah* by Captain Rudolph Patzert, Naval Institute Press, 1994.

*George E. Goldman*

## Background for Oct. 22 Meeting of AVI Trustees

Several years ago we appointed twelve AVI Trustees as part of our preparation for the end of our organization. These individuals accepted a responsibility, not for continuing the organization, but for terminating it over some period of time. The Trustees are as follows:

Elizabeth Appley, Esq., Atlanta  
Bryan Fienberg, Marketing, Ramat gan  
Michael Flint, Film Producer, Los Angeles  
Daphne Genyk, Corporate Executive, Philadelphia  
Dr. Arthur Kiron, University Librarian, Philadelphia  
Henry Lowenstein, Esq. Miami Beach  
Jeffrey Margolis, Esq., New York  
Dr. Augusta Gooch, Academic, Huntsville  
Sharon Baldree, Administrator, Calabasas  
Donna Parker, Administrator, Fort Lee  
Amiel Steuerman, Mortgage Broker  
Sahrona BenAmi, Administrator, North Ridge (Liaison with Machal West)

*MEMORIAL continued on pg. 20*

# Letters To The Editor

## *To the Editor:*

David Macarov, who has a most fantastic memory, saw an article about me in the AVI Newsletter and wrote about our being in Jerusalem before and during the siege. It was a most complimentary article, for which I thank him. I can't recall most of the things he wrote about me, the Hebrew class at the Hebrew University where he recalls a certain phrase I used, neither do I recall our assignment to blow up a house and bridge, with our total armaments, being two rifles and three grenades. This must have been unreal. Thank heaven the operation was cancelled. Regarding the farewell party, I may have sung Dixie, instead of the Palmach songs, since I had no training in Zionism or Judaism except for one month preparing for my bar mitzvah. I was born and raised in a small Southern town in North Carolina, with a total of five Jewish families. I do take issue with singing in the nude, as I am a very private person.

I do recall riding in a lorry with other men when I was hit in the finger. This did make an impression. David wasn't certain whether it was a shell fragment or a bullet that hit me. I know it was by a bullet, not a shell fragment. I recall it stung pretty well. I still have the scar to prove it. I had it treated and was indeed proud that I had survived the encounter. I do recall that I was the only one with a beard, which came off that very evening. Thank you David for bringing back bygone memories of another era. I am most grateful.

*Harold Shugar*

## *To the Editor:*

The winter issue of the AVI Newsletter included an article about my early life in Tarboro, N.C. and my family. Included was my military service in both WW II, as an officer in the US navy, with assignment being antisubmarine patrols in the North Atlantic. I was in Jerusalem during the siege and afterwards in the Israeli navy. I am most grateful for this article as my family,

and their descendents, will remember, for all eternity, that we few did not stay on the sidelines but participated.

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

Regarding the article by Raphael ben Yosef, referring to the AVI as a relic, that we did nothing extraordinary for a young Jew and, to really contribute, we should live in Israel. I could not disagree more strongly. Out of five million American Jews, some 1200 of us chose to volunteer, put our lives on the line, and witness a prophesy of the Bible fulfilled before our very eyes. A few items of note about Americans should be mentioned. Some twelve cargo aircraft, purchased by American Jews and flown by American pilots ferried weaponry from Czechoslovakia, which was a lifesaver for Israel. Two years after the creation of Israel, the language of the air force was English. Aliyah Bet ships, overflowing with DPs, brought the attention and sympathy of the world for the Jewish people and Israel. American Jews purchased these ships. An American Jew, who was a partner of President Harry Truman, is the man who persuaded Truman to see Weizmann. Harry Truman remarked, "you Jews beat me and I'm glad you did." What a mensch! From that meeting, the US then supported Israel's passage of Statehood through the UN. And, what about American political support for Israel!

Some 39 of our comrades paid the ultimate sacrifice. AVI is no relic. While we are still on this good earth, and time is taking its toll, we are telling our children and future generations that we few proudly served. This is living history and Americans Jews should take note

that we simply did not send over money but put our lives on the line.

Many units of the armed forces from WW II have annual reunions. Are they relics? Is history itself a relic? About my not making Aliyah, I went to Palestine (now Israel) in 1947 because I felt that a struggle would ensue and I wanted to contribute as much as possible. I served with the Haganah in Jerusalem during the siege and after the siege with the Navy. My life was endangered many times. My compound at Yemin Moshe, opposite the Old City, was car bombed and demolished. Even though I was 100 yards away, the force of the blast threw me on the ground; my 81 mm. mortar imploded on the one occasion an alternate crew manned the weapon, killing the entire crew; a sniper wounded me requiring medical attention and my ship was strafed by an Egyptian spitfire. As gunnery officer of the Eilat, I directed gunfire from the roof of the pilothouse. Bullets hit the deck between my legs, with paint chips penetrating my trousers into my legs. There were other instances but those come readily to mind.

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

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

*Harold Shugar*

## *To the Editor:*

*The following letter was written on the stationery of The International Lawn Tennis Club of Israel. Lee Silverman is treasurer of the Club.*

I'd like to thank Sam Klausner and



Zippy Porath for the article about me that appeared in the Spring 2006 AVI Newsletter. I hope that Al Schwimmer enjoyed his picture with my name.

When I read the letter to the editor from Max Rifkin I was disappointed and annoyed that it had been selected for publication. It is obvious that he does not drive in Israel and is not aware of the politics and politicians whose utterances are always amazing. This is a much different society than that which we knew in 1948. However, there has been a tremendous improvement in many areas of living in the twenty-one and a half years I have lived here. The first that comes to mind is service in restaurants. Another is the reduction in smoking in public places. There are many others, which may be small by themselves, but contribute to a more pleasant quality of life.

A last word on Rafi Ben Yosef. Rafi has done remarkable things here in the field of business and helping the economy. He is one of the few who say and do—which is fairly unique here. I have a great deal of respect for Rafi and feel he is certainly entitled to his opinion no matter how wrong he is. When I think back to 1948 I remember very few Machalniks who had been active Zionists. Very few of the *farbrente tsionisten* came here to put their lives on the line for their Zionist ideals. I respect and admire those who stayed after 1949 but feel just as proud of those who returned to wherever they came from.

My decision to make aliya was purely personal and I have never tried to influence anyone to follow my example. I have seen too many who came and returned.

Thanks again for the article. I am glad it is not an obituary.

*Lee Silverman*

#### **To the Editor:**

I recently found a message on my answering machine a message from JASA asking me to call Adrian. The only Adrian I know was Adrian Phillips. So I called him and left a message on his machine. A few days later his son in law called and told me that

Adrian had passed away.

Adrian was one of the stalwarts of AVI. He was active in the organization through good times and bad and was on the executive board for more than fifty years. I remember at the nadir over the fifties we had a Yom HaAtzmaut affair and the only ones that showed were Adrian Shmuel Alexander, Harry Eisner, Sidney Rabinowitz and myself. The AVI did not have enough in the treasury to pay for the hall so the five of us chipped in to meet the tab.

Adrian always felt that we should admit American veterans of subsequent wars into the AVI. He thought it important that the American Jewish community be aware that American Jewry helped the fledgling state not only with money but also by supplying critical personnel. He believed that if we did not admit younger American Israeli veterans the organization would eventually disappear and leave no trace. As the Spring 2006 Newsletter reports, he was correct. However, thanks to Ralph Lowenstein and his Machal Museum future generation of American Jewry will be made aware of American participation in the War of Independence.

Inasmuch as I have named several members let me say a sentence or two about them. Shmuel (Sam) Alexander was AVI's liaison with the Israeli Consulate for many years. There were periods when they wanted to sweep us under the rug and pretend that we never existed, but Shmuel was always there to remind them about us. Harry Eisner was President for many years. He organized a half dozen AVI trips to Israel in which many of our members participated. On the 1973 trip Adrian and I were hotel roommates. Harry also arranged in 1949 that returning volunteers be granted \$100 from a foundation. (I believe it was the Lehman Foundation, but I am not certain.) I particularly appreciated the \$100 because in 1949, upon return from Israel, my plane landed in Laguardia Airport and I did not have cab fare home. I had to take a bus and a subway to my parent's home in the Bronx. The \$100 tided me over until I could find work. Sidney Rabinowitz has been a pillar of the organization for many years. For fifty years he was

the editor of the Newsletter. He kept the membership informed of the members' and AVI's activities. He did it practically single handedly (except for the Missus) writing, printing and addressing, and so forth. Without the Newsletter many of the members would have disappeared.

Keep up the good work. I still think we should have accepted subsequent Israel/American veterans.

*Henry (Chaim) Mandel*

#### **MEMORIAL continued from pg. 1**

light of remembrance which inscribes a place of honour for these heroes into the Book of Life.

The rear of the amphitheatre is flanked by the Wall of Remembrance (on which will be inscribed the names of all those who died in past conflicts) and the Wall of Honour (on which will be inscribed the names of those that served). Encircling these Walls will be the flags of 30 countries that participated in the war against the Axis forces, as well as the insignia of several Canadian armed service branches.

It is the responsibility of each veteran - or his/her family - to inform us of the name they wish entered on this Memorial. We already have names of a number of veterans from various countries as the Jewish Veterans organizations in many nations have already been in touch with us and expressed interest in participating. In order to receive an application form to register a veteran, please send your E-mail request to me and I will see that the form is sent out to you. Please make sure we have your full mailing address. You can contact me at [joewarner@sympatico.ca](mailto:joewarner@sympatico.ca).

Space is available in the Memorial for us to establish a Mahal Museum. The date for the Grand Opening is July 1st, 2007. The actual construction will start in a few weeks.

We will have adequate space in the Memorial Museum to hang the panels of our museum. I hope all of my Machal colleagues will participate and make this a venture a great success.

*Joe Warner*

# Obituaries

## A Non-Jewish Supporter of the Air Force



*Evie Dahms*

Evelyn Fay McDaniel Dahms died May 7, 2006 at the age of 94. Evelyn was the widow of Fred Dahms who served as an aircraft mechanic with Lineas Areas de Panama (LAPSA) in support of Israel during the War of Independence and continued working for Al Schwimmer in the early days of the Israel Aircraft Industry. During this period she developed a deep affection for Israel and its people. During her time in Israel she held various secretarial and administrative positions. After their return to the United States she wrote a weekly column for a weekly paper in Antelope Valley, CA. She published a book entitled *Goyim*, a tale of non-Jews serving in Israel's War of Independence. An updated version under the title *Gutsy Guys and Rattletrap Planes* was published in 2005.

In the Preface of *Gutsy Guys* she writes, "This is the story of eight non-Jewish Americans who inadvertently became involved in a top-secret operation to smuggle airplanes out of the United States a time when America had an embargo on exporting war materials to the Middle East." The context is Al Schwimmer's efforts to acquire and ship three Constellations and a number

of C-46s from the United States to Israel by way of an airbase in Czechoslovakia. It was Fred Dahms task to remilitarize the aircraft and bring them up to an airworthy level. Fred worked along with Mike Ondra and saw that the planes, on which they flew, made it from Burbank to Tijuana, Nicaragua, Panama, Brazil, Dakar, Rome and then to Zatec, Czechoslovakia. Wile Dahms and Ondra combated technical problems Schwimmer and his group dealt with political hurdles along the route. Both Dahms and Ondra criticized the Israelis for purchasing Messerschmitts which, they argued were suited for landing in grass rather than concrete and with their struts out of alignment. The wives, initially left behind received \$200 a month from their husbands' pay. Disputes arose among them whether to insist that their husbands come home or join them in Europe and Israel. Evie was a in the latter group.

In reaching her decision, Evie reports a dream, "I am part of a crowd of people arriving in the Promised Land and Fred, wearing a beard like Jesus, is holding out his hand."

For this work, Evie received the San Diego Book Award. At the time she was terminally ill. Her niece Salene Javernick accepted the award in her name, posthumously. She said, "While on her death bed and paralyzed, unable to

speak, An e-mail came from Brad saying that the San Diego Book Club listed her as a finalist in history for Gutsy Guys. I read it to her and then, with her usable left hand she grabbed it to read for herself. It took her a few minutes to read the three lines. When she finished she got the smuggest look that you can imagine on her face. Her published autobiography concludes with a statement from Colette: It has been a great life. I only wished I'd realized it sooner.

I would substitute the following as more fitting: Life is not a journey to the grave with the intention of arriving safely, but rather to skid in broadside, thoroughly used up, totally worn out and loudly proclaiming, "Wow, what a ride.

Condolences to be sent to  
*Salene Javernick*  
*1739 Sherman Ave.*  
*Canyon City, CO 81212*

### Seeking Information About Irv Ehrlich

Fred Ehrlich is seeking information about his brother Irv Ehrlich who arrived in Palestine in September 1947 and left Israel in April 1949. Irv had served in the airborne infantry during the Battle of the Bulge. He was probably enlisted in Jerusalem in the fall of 1947 (either in Haganah, Etzel or Lehi). Perhaps, later he was transferred to the IDF. (*See his photo to right.*). If you have information please relay it to Fred at 702-456-7920 or [ehrllich@earthlink.net](mailto:ehrllich@earthlink.net).



to David Ben Gurion and the Jewish Agency for Palestine the calculated attempt was a major political and public relations victory. Great Britain was held up to worldwide condemnation for forcibly transferring the refugees onto board British prison ships, and returning them to France and even Germany where the British confined the “illegal” refugees in former German concentration camps. The Exodus incident convinced Ben Gurion and the Haganah that Aliyah Bet in a few large ships - even if the refugees wound up in the Cyprus internment camps, would overwhelm the British camp administration - which would hasten the departure of the British Mandatory governance from Eretz Israel and pave the way for the new state of Israel.

Early in 1945 the Haganah sent Ze'ev “Danny” Schind to New York City to set up an office of the Mossad le Aliyah Bet. His mission was to find and purchase the vessels that the Mossad would use in the so-called clandestine immigration project. Many of the surplus warships and commercial vessels available were little more than floating rust buckets. But a year later, in early 1946 Danny was told about a pair of two-year old surplus Canadian submarine chasers, the former HMCS Beauharnois and HMCS Norsyd. They were at a private boat yard at City Island, off the New York City borough of The Bronx. Both were being converted to civilian use, and had been stripped of their armaments and radar. That was fine with the Mossad: as refugee-carrying vessels, they wouldn't need cannons. The vessels, which cost about \$350,000 each to build, were purchased for about \$75,000 each.

In March 1947 the U.S. government embargoed the sale and shipment to the Middle East of any items - including ships -- that could be used for military purposes. This forced the Mossad to go even more underground to accomplish its mission. It was Schind who helped to set up legal but essentially “paper” companies through which each of the vessels could be purchased. And as crafty and clever as he was, Schind

was a product of the Kibbutz movement in Eretz Israel. He didn't know beans about boats.

Paul Shulman did. Shulman had graduated from the Naval Academy in June 1944 and was commissioned an Ensign. (See “From Middie to Machal” Newsletter, Winter 2005 Page 7). He served for two years with the U.S. Pacific fleet. As assistant engineering officer on board the destroyer USS Hunt he had been in charge of the ship's electrical systems. He and his crew helped to keep the juice flowing during a typhoon that capsized two other ships and, later, after the destroyer was hit by a Japanese suicide kami-kaze plane.

After the war in the Pacific was over Shulman transferred to another destroyer, the USS Massey. The good news was that Massey was being re-assigned to the Atlantic fleet. The bad news was that the ship was designated as a sea-going training platform for new officers and crew. It was underway almost constantly on training cruises. By mid-1946 Shulman knew that he was not cut out for a long career in the U.S. Navy. On erev Rosh Hashanah 1946, Massey was serving as plane guard for an aircraft carrier. The plane guard ship follows the carrier in order to pick up pilots that miss their landing on the deck. Shulman was watch officer on Massey's bridge when a plane attempting to land missed, and crashed into the sea, killing the pilot. Shulman had to write in Massey's deck log, “Pilot dismembered. Chute weighted and sunk.” Soon after, Shulman's request to resign his commission was approved.

By February 1947 he walked out of the Brooklyn Navy Yard, a civilian again. The former naval officer lost no time finding what he felt was his true calling: helping to bring about the long-promised Jewish National Homeland in Israel.

Of the estimated 200 U.S. military veterans that volunteered to serve the Haganah, scores were recruited through an organization called Land and Labor for Palestine. The volunteers were told they were needed to perform agricultural and farm work in Palestine. Many of the veterans understood, however, that they might be called on

for military duties. Shulman's entry into the world of the Haganah was different. It is likely that his mother, Rebecca Shulman, put in a word here and there to introduce her son to the sub-rosa world of the Haganah. Rebecca Shulman was a high-ranking executive of Hadassah, the Zionist Women's Organization of America. She could count David Ben Gurion, Golda Meyerson (Meir) and Aubrey Abba Eban among her friends. They and American Zionist leaders would often gather at the Shulman apartment along New York City's trendy Central Park West or at the Shulman summer home in Connecticut, where they could work out their plans and strategies without fear of being under the eye of the FBI.

Shulman was sent to Hotel Fourteen, the Haganah's operational offices in New York City. (See “Club Copa Haganah at the Hotel Fourteen,” Newsletter, Summer 2005, Page 17). There he was introduced to Shlomo Rabinovitch. Even at their first meeting Shulman asked if the Haganah had started planning for a naval force. Rabinovitch (who in Israel would take the name Shlomo Shamir) would recall much later, “With all due respect to ourselves, at that time we were not thinking so big.” Rabinovitch passed Shulman onto Danny Schind.

To make it more difficult for the FBI, the CIA or the British Foreign Office's special “IJI” (Illegal Jewish Immigration) investigators in the U.S. to track the Mossad's activities, each ship was purchased by a different company. For instance, when the Mossad acquired the former US Coast Guard cutter Northland, the purchase was so secretive that the New York Times could report only that the ship “suddenly became a mystery,” and whose “whereabouts was unknown.” The Times' intrepid reporter initially was unable to find a telephone listing for a Weston Trading Company. Even after he used his pull with the telephone company to get a number, he wrote: “A spokesman, who refused to be identified, said that [Weston] was virtually out of business, and that Nautical Shipping and Servicing Company was winding up Weston's affairs.”

After each ship was purchased and

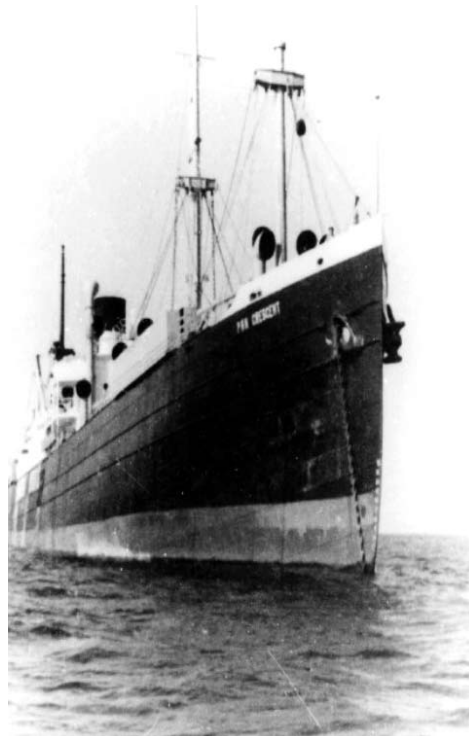
registered the company was dissolved. Danny helped to set up several companies. These included Caribbean Atlantic Shipping, Montrose Shipping, Pine Tree Industries, Ships & Vessels, and Weston Trading Co., which was incorporated in Connecticut. The last name may have been contributed by Shulman. In the 1930s he and his family had rented a summer house in Weston, Connecticut, along the country road a few doors away from where the actor Paul Newman would live. (Newman starred as “Ari Ben Canaan” in the movie version of “Exodus 47.”)

But Shulman’s contribution was more than just coming up with clever names. He was called on to inspect ships to determine whether they were seaworthy enough to make a trans-Atlantic crossing. He was in on the planning for the Mossad’s most ambitious acquisition ever. Danny had sent a cablegram to Mossad headquarters in Paris that he was negotiating for the purchase of two huge ships, the 4,570-ton, 360-foot-long reefer (refrigerator) ships Pan Crescent and Pan York. Both had been used by the United Fruit Company to ship bananas from South America to the United States. Though more than 40 years old the ships’ engines were in good shape. Better still, each vessel’s huge, climate controlled cargo holds could be converted into refugee dormitories, each capable of holding thousands of refugees who would be crammed into floor-to-ceiling sleeping shelves.

Because of the U.S. embargo the two freighters had to be registered under another maritime nation and its “flag of convenience.” Such procedures did not come cheap. The Mossad had to pay out thousands of dollars in bribes to foreign governmental officials, in addition to the ships’ purchase price of around \$400,000. Converting the ships would cost another half-million dollars. In March 1947, two weeks before his 25th birthday, Danny named Shulman president of yet another Mossad front company, which Paul promptly christened F. B. Shipping Co. If asked publicly what “F.B. Shipping” stood for Shulman would say with a straight face that it meant “Far Better Shipping.” To the Mossad the letters were a call to

“Fuck Britain.”

Shulman helped to secure a volunteer crew to sail the ships to Philadelphia to be readied for the cross-Atlantic voyage to Europe. To disguise their true mission (and to recover some of the purchase price) the Pan Crescent and Pan York advertised that they would accept cargoes for Europe. Phosphates



*Pan Crescent*  
(Photo from Silverstone Collection)

were loaded into the holds, while the main deck of the Pan York was filled with cast off municipal buses, to be sold in Europe.

The two ships’ real mission was supposed to be cloaked in secrecy; yet, a few nights before the ships’ departure for Europe, Schind, Shulman and others working for the Mossad drove to Philadelphia for a monumental send off. As recalled in Voyage to Freedom, “(by Venia Hadari and Ze’ev Tsahor) The Jewish Community...put on a gala entertainment in a magnificent ballroom.” The event featured a high-stakes tombola or fund-raising lottery. From time to time the master of ceremonies would joyously announce, Mr. X has donated 30,000 cans of meat for the refugees... and Mr. Y has pledged to equip an operating theater on the ship.”

*J. Wandres is writing a biography of Paul Shulman. He welcomes ques-*

*tions, comments and recollections. Send e-mails to [jperiod@optonline.net](mailto:jperiod@optonline.net).*

## BOOK REVIEW

Porath, Zipporah. Letters from Jerusalem, 1947-1948. Jerusalem: Association of Americans and Canadians in Israel, 2005, paper.

When we seek good authentic history there is nothing quite as genuine as “on the spot” letters or diaries. They are a valuable source of data for the historian. Letters from Jerusalem, 1947-48 by Zipporah Porath, one our very own Machalniks, may be colored by a personal lens but certainly conveys a sense of being there on the spot.

The discovery of these letters that follow along in close continuity replay for the reader the drama of the birth of the State of Israel. The word pictures of “early” pioneers remind us that in modern times there are very real struggling pioneers.

Many of us will recognize places, events and even people we knew. The author’s fine, unflagging idealism is a message for today.

*Arthur Bernstein*

## CHRISTIAN MACHAL

Every Israeli schoolchild knows the name “Mickey” Marcus. Marcus was part of a special group of some 3,500 men and women, including a number of gentile Christians, who came from 37 different countries in 1948 to help defend the newborn Jewish state from Arab invasion.

Now living in Pennsylvania, Mike Ondra, a bomber in the U.S. Army Air Corps during WWII, found himself working for Schwimmer after the war. “Many of us didn’t know at first what Al Schwimmer was up to. We thought it was a legitimate business. When we found out the truth, many of the boys quit. But I stayed on because I wanted to help the People of the Bible and I believed it was God’s Will. I was proud to serve with the Israelis, and I believed God would give us the victory,” Ondra said.

Evi Dahms, who recently published

a book about her late husband Fred and his Machal comrades entitled Gutsy Guys and the airlift that helped save a nation, voiced similar sentiments. "Fred was very sympathetic to the Holocaust survivors. Even after he found out what Al Schwimmer was really doing he stuck with it because he believed it was the right thing to do. I believe that most of us were aware we were participating in a history-making event – a biblical prediction coming true. This gave a cause, a purpose, a motivation to do all we could to help."

Although many of the Christians volunteered for theological reasons, there was no proselytizing and few organized religious services for Jews or Christians. The foreign volunteers and native Israelis mixed easily and for most there was no distinction made between Jew and Christian. "The Jews were rather proud of the fact that these Christians had joined them, and were proud to be associated with them," recalls Elias "Ellie" Isserow, a Jewish volunteer from South Africa. On Jewish holidays the Christian and Jewish volunteers celebrated together and shared traditional meals. There was also a Christmas party at Tel Nof airbase south of Rehovot in 1950.

The motivations of the Jewish volunteers consisted of equal parts Zionism and adventure. However, these were seldom, if ever, discussed. Jews and Christians "just sort of homogenized", according to Ellie. Off duty, they would swap war stories and jokes. They would also talk about their plans for the future, including a few who planned to stay in Israel after the war. Ellie has fond memories of the Christian 'Machalniks' he knew, saying, "They were good people, and interesting people."

One was John Harvey, who came from Cyprus, where he had been operating a small private airline. He brought several De Havilland Rapide aircraft, which he put at the disposal of the embryonic Israeli air force. A test pilot, he also flew aircraft illegally from England.

Another, Milton Royce Boettger, was a WWII veteran who had grown up in a Jewish quarter of Johannesburg. He had associated with Jews all his life and

later married a Jewish girl. Boettger arrived with his best friend, a Jew named Dennis Gochen. Boettger became a B-17 gunner. In the IAF, Gochen a navigator.

Robert Leeds, an adventurous atheist, had several experiences that changed him forever. It all started when he was assigned to an Israeli 'bomber squadron.'

"I thought I'd be trained to use a Norden bombsight in a B-17 or B-24. This was a very complicated device, and I wondered how long it would take me to learn," Leeds recounted recently. "But the first night I was to be trained, they took me to a four-seater Beechcraft Bonanza aircraft and told me to get in the back seat. They handed me several homemade 25 lb. concussion bombs and a 50 lb. Swedish 'bunker buster' that I had to arm myself by hand, as well as a packet of magnesium flares, and taught me how to hold each different device over the side of the plane and release them as we flew over the target. In less than an hour, I was a fully trained and operational IAF bombardier!"

It was on a mission to bomb the Lydda air base (near Lod) that Leeds had a revelation.

"We were flying very low and all of a sudden the searchlights came up and we were illuminated. The tracers were so thick, I thought I could get out of the aircraft and walk on it. We flew through this metal storm and completed our bombing run. When we got back to the base, I got out and ran my hand over the entire fuselage. There was not one single bullet hole in the skin of the aircraft. That night in my room I went from being an atheist to an agnostic. I knew it was a miracle I was still alive."

Leeds married Peggy, a Jewish Machal volunteer from Finland whom he met at a hotel in Rome en route to Israel. They served together at the parachute packing plant Leeds established in Tel Aviv and on the day they were married, aside from embryonic Hebrew, they could not speak a common language. But they were united by a love of Israel that they still share as they prepare to celebrate their 58th anniversary this summer.

*Aaron Hecht*

## **LOWENSTEIN ON THE ARCHIVE**

Ralph Lowenstein, former dean of the University of Florida College of Journalism has published an article on "Ailya Bet & Machal Archive in HaTanin (September 2006, page 20), newsletter of the Judaic studies program there. Following is an excerpt.

Al Schwimmer is the main hero, the indispensable man of the emerging picture of Israel. A flight engineer for TWA and native of Bridgeport, CT, Schwimmer had the genius for seeing that Israel would need long-range transports to acquire war materiel. He directed the purchase and transfer of thirteen World War II surplus planes to Czechoslovakia, the only country willing to sell arms to Israel. He organized Israel's Air Transport Command, and recruited most of the pilots, engineers and mechanics for Israel's new air force. The planes acquired by Schwimmer made ninety-five flights to Israel from land-locked Czechoslovakia, bringing to the Israeli armed forces 25 ME109s and thirty-five tons of arms and ammunition, including 15,000 rifles, 4000 machine guns and three million rounds of ammunition. Schwimmer became second-in-command of Israel's English-speaking air force. He later organized and became head of Israel Aircraft Industries, today Israel's largest employer, with more than 20,000 personnel

## **MACHAL EXHIBIT OPENED BY MACHAL WEST AT THE UNIVERSITY OF JUDAISM**

Sharona Benami reports that on Sunday, Sept. 10 at 11:00 am, after many months of research, artistic creativity and hard work, Machal West opened its permanent exhibit. The exhibit replicates the Machal Exhibit created in Gainesville by Ralph Lowenstein. Machal West members, University of Judaism staff and community members, AVI members, and many children and grandchildren spent the first hour viewing the seven double panels sent from Florida, and the new eighth dou-

### Meltzer Honored

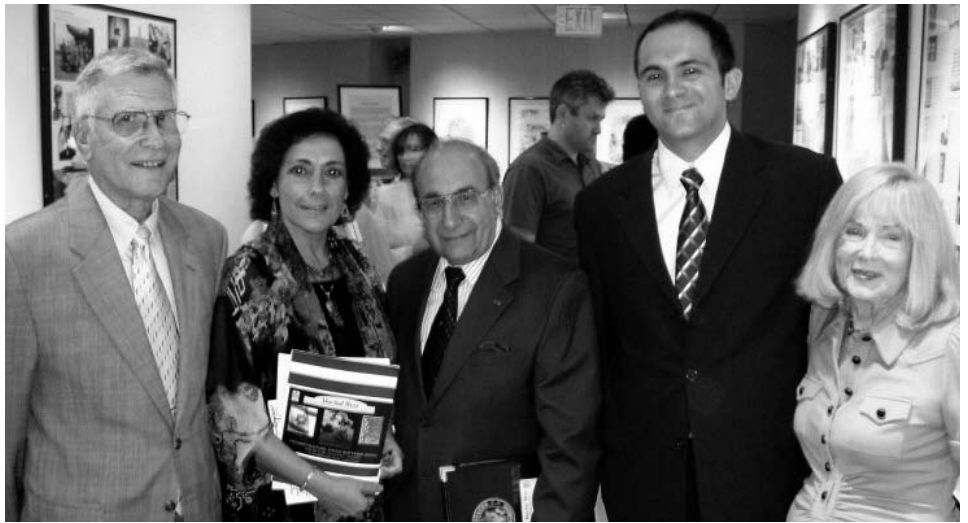
At an Israel Independence Day celebration held on May 3, 2005 in Delray Beach, FL, AVI veteran Irving Meltzer was honored. The principal speaker was Morton Klein, President of the ZOA

ble panel created in Los Angeles.

The new top panel includes photos and stories of Machal West members from all countries and all of Israel's wars. Pilot and Machal West founding president Mitchell Flint in a 1948 photo stands beside his plane in the center of the panel surrounded by aviators and the other Machal West members. Among them are two sets of first and second generation Machal: Nesim Bouskilla (1948) and son Rabbi Daniel Bouskilla (1984 Lebanon War), and Norm Zimmerman (1948) and daughter Sharon Benami (1973 Yom Kippur War).

Current president Max Barchichat from Morocco and treasurer Jules Kraut from Belgium represent some of the diversity in the countries of origin. There are original photos from Jerusalem, Tiberius, and Kfar Blum, and both color and black and white individual photos representing the different historic periods.

The new lower panel is called "The UJ Connection." It tells the stories of founding members of the UJ who or-



*L-R: Ralph Lowenstein, Sharona Benami, Max Barchichat, Deputy Consul Genral Yaron Gamburg, Esther Friedman*

ganized "Materials For Palestine" at the request of David Ben Gurion, raising funds and sending ambulances, blood donations, financial aid and other desperately needed supplies to Israel.

Machal West Board members contributed their own and other members' stories and photos. UJ Director of Communications Iris Waskow and Machal West Community Relations Chair Sharona Benami worked together to coordinate all aspects of the exhibit and program. Graphic Artist Rina Queller designed the panels and Machal West member Yehuda Bock provided invaluable technical assistance.

The UJ provided brunch for all attending. UJ president Dr. Robert Wexler welcomed everyone and spoke

about his own personal experiences in Israel, and introduced Deputy Consul General Yaron Gamburg, Machal West president Max Barchichat, and Director of Machal Archives and Museum Ralph Lowenstein. Ralph spoke about the history of Machal and his twenty-five years archiving and creating the original panels in Florida. Max told about his personal journey to Israel from Casablanca ("not the movie") and thanked everyone involved in the exhibit project, and Deputy Consul Yaron spoke of the spirit of volunteering still present today, as demonstrated during the recent war with Hezbollah.

Between the speeches we were treated to beautiful music by singer Ayan Haviv and pianist Amir Efrat, with



*L-R Dr. Wexler, Stanley Epstein, Ira Feinberg, Iris Waskow, Ralph Lowenstein, Sharona Benami, Deputy Consul Yaron Gamburg, Esther Friedman, Phil Yankowsky, Jules Kraut, Michael Flint, Mitchell Flint, Mort Levinson*

songs from 1948, '67, and '73. Their rendition of Bab El Wad brought tears to many eyes, followed by the melodious Kalaniot and upbeat Hafinjan. After all the speeches and more songs, Dr. Wexler spoke about those who had died defending our homeland, and we ended with "Oseh Shalom.

The permanent exhibit is now open to the public at the University of Judaism in Los Angeles.

*Sharona Benami*

**WEST POINT  
MEMORIAL SERVICE 2006:  
General Cohen Speaks**

The annual "Mickey Marcus" memorial service at the West Point Jewish Chapel took place this year on Sunday May 21, 2006. The event, organized by AVI, memorialized Colonel Marcus among the forty volunteers who gave their lives in Israel's War of Independence. The service was conducted in the presence of Israel's Deputy Consul General in New York, Benjamin Krasna, AVI members, family and guests. A number of USMA Cadets were present. The memorial service was conducted by Major Carlos Huerta, Chaplain at the U.S.M.A. and Rabbis Daniel Kramer and Nisson Shulman, VA Chaplains of Hudson Valley and New York City respectively.

The highlights of the event included the lighting of memorial candles by USMA cadets in memory of Col. Marcus and all the Fallen. The names of the members lost in the year were remembered by Naomi Kantey and Paul Kaye followed by recitation of psalms and the mourners' Kaddish (see table below for list of names).

A touching musical medley by the Shapiro Family choir was followed with words of greeting and tribute by Mr. Krasna and a spirited talk by the guest speaker, Ma-

yor General William A. Cohen, USAFR (ret.). General Cohen is a West Point graduate who flew missions with the U.S. and Israel Air Forces. His address touched on the Jews' love for freedom spanning thousands of years "loving freedom and liberty above life itself in the ancient homeland". In America, Jews fought shoulder to shoulder with their countrymen since the birth of this nation. Machal was another expression of the fight for liberty "in the best tradition of the American people".

The Jewish War Veterans-Rockland Orange District carried the colors and the Shapiro Family Choir sang inspirational cantorial and Israeli musical renditions. Following the chapel ceremony, wreaths were laid at the graves of Mickey and Emma Marcus and the names of the forty fallen were called out by AVI members. The recitation of Psalms and Ke'l Maleh Rachamim followed the reading of a tribute to Col. David Marcus by Ben Gurion. The letter was read at the graveside by Louis



*Benjamin Krasna*



*Major General William Cohen*

**AVI members who passed away in the last year**

(May 2005-May 2006)

*Zichronam Livracha*

Ben Yisrael Bergman	Yaacov Elihu	Aliyah Bet ship Hatikvah
Blevis	David	Aliya Bet ship Geulah; Past AVI President
Dlin	Norman	Israel Air Force
Doneson	Jules	IDF, 72nd and 79th Battalions
Finkel	Aaron (Red)	IDF
Greene	Harold	Israel Air Force, 101 Squadron
Halperin	Sid	Israel Air Force, Pilot Training
Imber	Isaac	IDF, Signals
Kessilof	Ed	Haganah Procurement
Phillips	Adrian	IDF, 72nd Battalion
Plen	Sarah	Aliyah Bet ship Hatikvah, 2nd engineer, AVI Board
Postell	William	IDF, Wireless Operator
Ray	Eric	Israel Air Force, Aircraft Maintenance
Shlam	Izzy	Haganah and IDF
Weiss	Julius	IDF
Witenoff	Yehuda	Aliyah Bet
		Aliyah Bet ship Mala and Israel Air Force

**NON-AVI**

Levin	Louis	Died at age 90. Scrap metal dealer who sold an old, rusting excursion boat-called the President Warfield for \$10,000. It became the Exodus '47 carrying 4500 Holocaust survivors to Palestine.
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Lola Sprinzeles



Color Guard

Laurie, AVI-Canada. The USMA cadets then concluded the ceremony with the Salute by the ceremonial rifle squad and the bugler's sounding of Taps. After the discharge of the colors many, AVI members and their guests met for brunch and time together at the West Point Academy restaurant.

This year's event was very special as it marked the 40th annual Marcus Memorial conducted at West Point. The chapel was filled to capacity, but many of the faces of friends who habitually attended the annual event are sadly gone. With fewer AVI members attending, it is now relevant to ask how many more annual assemblies are in store. It is up to a younger generation to participate actively in perpetuating the sense of remembrance and history this memorial evokes. Who will pick up the baton and carry on? The question weighed heavily on the "old-timers" present at West Point that day as the 40th Marcus memorial day came to a close.

*Si Spiegelman*

### **FADING AWAY IS NOT FOR THESE OLD SOLDIERS**

On Sunday, May 21, starting about 10 a.m. the security posts at the U.S. Military Academy overlooking the Hudson will begin encountering cars headed for the West Point Jewish Chapel. The autos will arrive at irregular intervals, most individually but a few in caravans of two or three vehicles. The young sentries will peer into each car to check on its occupants and their identifications. The security officers will soon notice that virtually all the cars with that destination include octogenarians among their occupants. That's because

the war in which these aging veterans fought took place nearly six decades ago. The U.S. wasn't in it but these Americans were. It was Israel's War for Independence in 1947-49.

The American Veterans of Israel will reassemble, though their ranks be depleted by the toll of years, for their 40th annual West Point memorial services honoring all their comrades-in-arms no longer among the living. They will especially honor the only West Pointer ever buried in the academy cemetery having been killed fighting under a foreign flag. He was U.S. Army Colonel David "Mickey" Marcus, also known as Israeli General "Michael Stone," the cover name under which he trained and led Jewish troops in the Jerusalem sector of the conflict.

Even before WWII broke out, Marcus re-entered active U.S. Army service as Lt. Colonel and Judge Advocate. Marcus was promoted to Colonel in 1943. His legal and political skills were put to use negotiating several important international treaties, some related to the emerging United Nations. Though not a trained paratrooper, he wrote himself orders that enabled him to parachute into Normandy in 1944 as part of the D-Day airborne assault and saw action. He also saw first hand the horrors of the Holocaust in still smoldering but liberated Dachau, and he headed up the Army's war crimes division setting up the Nuremberg trials.

His return to civilian life in 1947 was brief; a matter of months. Ben-Gurion's representatives in America asked Marcus to help bring professional military organization, discipline and strategy to the forces fighting for a Jewish state. Because of his recent high level of international involvements, particularly

in UN matters, use of another name while in Israeli service was deemed advisable. Thus he became "Michael Stone."

On May 28, 1948, Ben-Gurion signed the order that began, "Brigadier General Stone is hereby appointed Commander of the Jerusalem front . . ." That is said to have made Marcus the first Jewish soldier to hold that rank in 2,100 years since Judas Maccabeus. Within a month Marcus was dead but not before his masterminding and leading a road building, blockade-busting breakthrough giving strategic support to Israeli claims for Jerusalem.

Watching these particular visitors' cars depart the academy, the young West Point sentries may wonder what drew these octogenarians out of the comfort of their homes. The sentries' wondering would be historically appropriate. Part of the answer was a fatal miscommunication nearly 60 years ago between a nervous young Jewish sentry who spoke little English and an American who was his Commander but spoke little Hebrew.

*Tom McCarthy,*  
NY Correction History Society

*ALIYA BET continued from pg. 1*

- and assigned the task of implementing the campaign to the Royal Navy, whose command was less than pleased with the assignment. The historians and analysts of the British departure from Palestine in May 1948 have long awaited a historical work that would provide a Royal Navy perspective on the operation. A project conducted by the Naval Historical Branch (NHB) of the Ministry of Defense provides this



contribution in a newly released study by Commander RN Ninian Stewart entitled *The Royal Navy and the Palestine Patrol*.

A career officer, Commander Stewart left the Active List in 1985 and worked for the Naval Staff in the Ministry of Defense on a variety of assignments. He provides an admirable and responsible version of the history of illegal immigration episode as viewed in a Royal Navy perspective, not an easy task considering the adversarial outlook of the participants who clashed during the campaign's 2 year duration from 1945-1948.

By providing the missing links, more than a half-century-old, Stewart's contribution closes the circle on the history of illegal immigration, which had been predominantly covered by Israeli historical sources. Among the historic linkages he discretely discloses findings on the reservations and objections of one of the two key players - the Royal Navy -- to its unwanted mission.

### **A Prescient Warning**

The British assessment of the immigration issue as the most critical one was expressed in a final report by the senior British official in Palestine from 1936-44, Sir Harold MacMichael, the outgoing High Commissioner, who lived through the "Arab Revolt," in a Top Secret "valedictory" dispatched to the Colonial Office upon his departure:

The problem of Jewish immigration has ... been recognized as most important under any dispensation ... the future political status of Palestine can only be answered when a clear decision has been reached upon ... the policy to be followed in respect of immigration ... and that policy should not be reached until we are sure whether or not mass immigration is more conducive to our imperial interests than a system of strict and close control.

It is my own belief that the continuance of Jewish immigration on any considerable scale into an undivided Palestine would be disastrous to our imperial interests, to the security of the Middle East, to the

Arabs whose fear of a Jewish deluge is not without justification, and to the Jews themselves, for whom a process of gradual percolation in an atmosphere of qualified receptivity offers a far brighter future than does the attempt to obtain by force what is not theirs to take nor ours to give.

But MacMichael with some prescience in acknowledging likely British weakness in the face of continuing Jewish determination, reluctantly backed into an ultimate option for resolution:

... being doubtful whether His Majesty's Government has in any case the actual power to counter the determination of the Jews to immigrate in mass, I have felt constrained to advocate partition as offering the only remaining hope of localizing the trouble to come without inflicting grave injustice upon either of the rival claimants to domination.

The outgoing High Commissioner links his case for partition to its ultimate value in sustaining historic and continuing British interests:

... I see no alternative to partition, whereby Jewish immigration would lose most of its terror for the Arab -- and much of its attraction for the Jew... By partition it may be possible to save the Middle East from major disturbances and prevent our name being blackened for generations from India to Egypt and from Aden to Aleppo. I do not deny that it will involve riots and some bloodshed, protests and speeches galore from both sides, but I am convinced that the situation, firmly handled, can be restored with no great damage done and no permanent detriment to our essential interests.

As things stand, with fanatical extremism growing daily, partition has come to provide the only road out of an impossible impasse.

MacMichael concluded his case on the primacy of immigration as the key to any resolution:

... the prerequisite of restoring peace and, eventually, goodwill in the Middle East is either the stoppage of mass immigration into Palestine or its confinement to a defined area. The former involves two elements on the part

of His Majesty's Government, intention and ability... The matter of ability, as we know from the bitter experience of dealing with illegal immigration in the past, presents a difficulty, which, in the face of Jewish determination, may seem almost insurmountable for His Majesty's Government..

It would be fanciful to contemplate that the Jewish leadership in Palestine were taking cues from MacMichael's "valedictory" in the summer of 1944 for designing their final thrust to independence. And there were significant differences within the leadership on the major issues including partition as a model for independence, relations with the British regime, and illegal immigration as a key tactic in the independence strategy. But as an ingredient in their ultimate decision to enlarge illegal immigration and ratchet up the pressure involved, it is reasonable to assume they were privy to Mac Michael's assessment in their decision making process.

At the same time, MacMichael's views, however valued, were not incorporated into the political design of his superiors in London who were not yet prepared to adopt a partition option, though eventually they would be. Neither were they ready to acknowledge their limitations for coping with Jewish illegal immigration. Nor were they inclined as yet to give up in Palestine. So as the war wound down, the British and the Jews were positioned as adversaries on a collision course which was to dominate their relationship in the final phase of British rule in Palestine. And illegal immigration became the principal point of collision.

Jewish illegal immigration resumed promptly after the end of the European war and with a vengeance. It was no matter that most of the Jewish population in Europe had been wiped-out. There were survivors who would be transported to Palestine whatever British policy preferences. Commander Stewart records the initial attempts by the Jewish authorities to renew immigration in the fall of 1945, its persistence and growth, the inability of Britain to stop it by both diplomatic means and sea power, and Whitehall's

early decision to assign the Royal Navy to create an anti-immigration unit, which was activated on October 20, 1945.

### **The Palestine Patrol**

For both antagonists the stakes were high. On the Jewish side the global Jewish leadership along with the shadow government in Palestine had made a decision that an independent Jewish state would be created, and that resources to accomplish the objective would be acquired. These included the survivors in Europe who escaped the Holocaust and wanted out, who in addition to the rescue objective would provide manpower for the inevitable struggle to create the independent Jewish state. On the British side continuing Suez Canal access, continuing influence in whatever inevitable settlement was reached on the Indian subcontinent including access to it, and continuing access to oil for the fleet were critical objectives of the postwar priorities. And stakes would be sought within the environment of the postwar economic distress Britain was enduring. In this encounter the Palestine Patrol was an unaffordable "luxury" for Britain, and a daunting obstacle for Jewish objectives.

Commander Stewart inventories the composition of the Palestine Patrol during its tenure, including the details of ships, officers, tactics, and deployment. Juxtaposed against the Jewish "fleet" which he likewise has inventoried, the comparison in maritime resources alone is daunting, and the respective inventories comprise fascinating reading for historians and others interested in the period. Despite inevitable minor flaws in identification of some of the Jewish vessels, the data is carefully researched and presented. The Palestine Patrol was composed of units from the Mediterranean Fleet, a historic and traditional unit of British sea power. The ships included destroyers and smaller naval vessels most of which saw service during World War II. There were some famous ones as well, including the cruiser HMS AJAX, which participated in the first British naval victory of World War II,

the destruction of the German pocket battleship GRAF SPEE in the winter of 1939 in the estuary of the River Platte off the coast of Uruguay.

The adversary to AJAX, and the other components vessels in the life of the Patrol consisted of a rag-tag "fleet" of approximately 65 vessels consisting of everything from sailing vessels which were late 19th century relics, through retired U.S. Naval and Coast Guard ships built in the first decade of the 20th century, through a pair of Royal Canadian Navy corvettes built for World War II service in 1944. Stewart provides a detailed inventory of the ships and their missions. Most of them originated from European ports, most from Italy and France, and the others from Greece, Yugoslavia, Rumania, Bulgaria, Sweden, and Belgium. Ten of the vessels sailed from the United States, manned by volunteer American and Canadian crews. U.S. naval historian Paul Silverstone compiles another definitive and detailed record of this "fleet" in a monograph.

During the two-and-a-half year duration of the illegal immigration campaign, which ended the day Israel came into existence - May 15, 1948 - the ships transported approximately 65,000 passengers. This level of passengers in terms of the existing Jewish population of Palestine would have been the equivalent of transporting 28 million immigrants to the U.S. during the same interval. Here again Commander Stewart provides an accurate and vivid picture of each vessel, including number of passengers, port of departure, and the capture of the ship and associated clash with units of the Palestine Patrol, and where they occurred, casualties on each side.

Neither the operational activities of the Patrol nor the intelligence and political efforts of the British government to reduce the momentum of illegal immigration, let alone turn it around and stop it, succeeded. The resumption after the tragic wartime efforts by the Jewish side gained momentum during 1946 and peaked in 1947 with the arrival of the American ships with their larger carrying capacity. Commander Stewart vividly

describes the episodes of PRESIDENT WARFIELD/EXODUS and the two PANs - YORK and CRESCENT, the largest in the operation, with their respective carrying capacity of 7500 passengers each, alone transporting nearly 25% of the passengers in the two year operation.

The historical literature and official records provide an account of an ultimate tactic to halt the illegal immigration, or at least slow it down, discussed and carefully considered by the government in Whitehall. It was called *refoulement*, a concept of international law, which provides the right of a maritime nation to return a vessel it has flagged performing illegal actions to the port from which the offending vessel originated. If adopted as a legitimate right of international law, the concept would have provided the prerogative and legitimized the right of the Palestine Patrol to return vessels and their passengers to the ports from which they originated.

The *refoulement* proposal was energetically debated in the British government, and supported by the Colonial Office, the agency responsible for administering the Palestine Mandate. But on the advice of the Attorney General the concept was not adopted because of concern about its possible violation of international law, and the consequences Britain might experience, not just in efforts to halt illegal immigration, but in other areas as well.

Commander Stewart provides a detailed account of the PRESIDENT WARFIELD/EXODUS operation, including how the Palestine Patrol was exempted from the strictures of *refoulement*. From its first appearance in the U.S. as an illegal immigrant vessel, British intelligence and naval personnel in the U.S. with a particular interest in its size, capacity, architecture and potential speed carefully monitored the WARFIELD. They were well informed on the particulars because WARFIELD had served the Royal Navy for a temporary period as a depot ship during World War II. For the Palestine Patrol the principal concern was the ability of their boarding parties to capture the

ship because of its height contrasted to the lower deck heights of the warship available to the boarding parties. The potential speed of WARFIELD presented another deterrent to safe and secure boarding.

It was clear that the vessels of Palestine Patrol would require more time and space to capture WARFIELD than conventional rules allowed them. The issue was handled at Whitehall, and the Admiralty authorized a "premature" boarding, an action they attempted unsuccessfully to conceal from the American government and media. After a fierce premature encounter starting in international waters 28 miles off the coast of Palestine, lasting more than four hours after several boarding attempts, and numerous casualties on both sides including the American Second Mate killed by the boarding party, WARFIELD renamed EXODUS was subdued and taken into the port of Haifa.

The expectation was that the passengers would be transported to internment camps in Cyprus, as had been the practice since the summer of 1946. But the 4500 EXODUS passengers did not appear on Cyprus during the overnight interval the trip normally required. The battle at sea itself provided dramatic copy for the global media covering a United Nations Commission in Palestine to produce recommendations for the country's future. The mysterious disappearance of the EXODUS passengers created increasing global interest in the episode. After a week three British transport ships carrying the missing EXODUS passengers appeared in the French Mediterranean port of Port de Bouc, the original embarkation point for the EXODUS passengers. The arrival of the British convoy provided the ultimate expression of refolement. More significant in the British effort to stop illegal immigration once-and-for-all, the action triggered a chain of events that created an irretrievable blunder for Britain, which forfeited the capacity to do anything more about illegal immigration. Commander Stewart provides a vivid and detailed account of the Palestine Patrol action.

And it is coincidental that fellow maritime historian the late Commander David Holly, USN provided an account of the encounter from the other side in his book EXODUS. (Annapolis. Naval Institute Press. 1995.)

The concept of refolement was set aside as a device for dealing with final four American ships that sailed from Bulgaria in the fall: PADUCAH and NORTHLAND in late September 1947; and PAN YORK and PAN CRESCENT at the end of the year. The British naval authorities faced architectural concerns with the PANs similar to those of the WARFIELD: Decks too high for effective boarding on vessels carrying 7500 passengers each. But the issue was settled between the British and Jewish authorities while the ships were underway. Commander Stewart describes the solution, which was a non-stop voyage for the PANs to Cyprus, free from Palestine Patrol interference.

During the first five months of 1948 before British departure from Palestine and termination of the Mandate, illegal immigration continued with the buildup of a fleet of smaller ships originating in Italian and French ports. The UN recommendation for opening of Palestine ports to Jewish immigration was not accepted by Whitehall, and the passengers were transported to Cyprus in accordance with the customary British practice until May 15, 1948, the date of Israel independence, which was also the date Britain relinquished the Mandate, and the last illegal immigrant ship named STATE OF ISRAEL arrived unmolested by the Palestine Patrol.

Any account of an adversarial enterprise such as Commander Stewart covers in his work not only contains historical value, especially since it provides the "missing link" - roughly 50 years late - in an episode that has produced a profusion of historical study, commentary, fiction, and memoir with a variety of quality, but mostly from Israeli and Jewish sources. This British perspective, backed by an increasing amount of official archival material which has been made available over the years, has yielded an outlook that both corrects some historical flaws -

and contributes some - and expands the understanding of a unique combination of events and ambitions, some of which still prevail. On the Jewish side there was the rescue of survivors of the Holocaust and the creation of a Jewish state. On the British side there was the travail of economic and political aftermath created by World War II, including the dismantling of the British Empire. Clearly all of these components were factors in the illegal immigration campaign, which on both sides were treated with varying degrees of understanding and skill, and on the Jewish side, luck.

Unlike other adversary encounters, there were humanitarian episodes with humanitarian motivations. Commander Stewart recounts the rescue operations conducted by the Palestine Patrol in saving lives on foundering and sinking illegal immigrant vessels. However despite their actions and motives in saving lives many of the officers and sailors in the Patrol did not understand the motives on the other side. There was little if any attempt to orient them to the background of their mission - why they were there. Stewart records the expressions of contempt for passengers and raw anti-Semitism aimed at alleged irresponsibility and corruption of counterpart personnel manning the adversary vessels; shipboard conditions on the ships - dirt; crowding; filth; and the like - and the precarious and lethal sailing condition on the admittedly overloaded ships.

But with the hostile attitudes and limited understanding, there were parallel episodes of compassion for the passengers when vessels of the ramshackle illegal fleet encountered unforeseen trouble with lethal consequences because of rough weather, overloading, and lack of sufficient food and medical supplies. The Palestine Patrol came to the rescue, invited or not. And it should be noted that with World War II hostilities over for more than a year, a significant number of the British sailors in vessels of the Patrol who provided the humanitarian aid to illegal immigrants had not yet been granted Home Leave.

From the start of the Palestine Patrol

mission in the autumn of 1945 there were increasing reservations to it in the Royal Navy, which grew more vocal in the Admiralty and the command of the Mediterranean fleet as the illegal immigration traffic did not respond to deterrence; rather continued to grow. Commander Stewart provides the most complete account of the increasing adversary discourse within the British government. The Admiralty and Navy position might best be summarized as: Why are we here as our resources are declining, the Nation suffering the most severe economic privation since the prewar depression, and our efforts are accomplishing nothing of value?

But these reservations came to naught. The Government prevailed in the argument; the Navy was slapped on the wrist and ordered to carry on with the job. And despite a premature exhaustion of the Mediterranean Fleet's fuel allocation for 1947 - six months early - and the recommendation of the CinC Mediterranean Fleet that the tracking of illegal immigrant vessels should be suspended to conserve fuel, the Whitehall position remained.

As a poignant postscript to the EXODUS episode that originated with the crew of OCEAN VIGOUR, a Fleet auxiliary transport used for moving passengers from captured illegal immigrations ships to Cyprus, and one of the three vessels that carried EXODUS passengers to France and Germany, the crew communicated openly with the Admiralty in the Fall

of 1947:

... to protest strongly against the use of our services for the transport of illegal Jewish immigrants from Haifa ... we dislike intensely the general atmosphere aboard when we carry the immigrants, the ship at those times resembling more of a military prison or floating concentration camp ...

*Elihu Bergman*

*AVI TRUSTEES continued from pg. 7*

Following is an opening statement for a Briefing Book prepared for a meeting of the Trustees on October 22. We thought we would share it with the members of AVI.

**NORTH AMERICAN  
VOLUNTEERS IN ISRAEL'S WAR  
OF INDEPENDENCE (  
ALIYAH BET AND MACHAL)**

Few people in North America are aware that over one thousand volunteers from USA and Canada served in the creation and defense of the State of Israel. They served along with over two thousand volunteers from 41 other countries including Great Britain, South Africa, and France. Known as Machal, they were instrumental in the creation of the Israel Defense Forces and engaged in combat on all fronts. Forty Americans and Canadians are among the 119 overseas volunteers who

gave their lives in Israel's 1948 War of Independence. Among them were the American Colonel, David "Mickey" Marcus.

The Zatec airlift from Czechoslovakia to Israel in 1948 ferried disassembled fighter planes, weapons and supplies critically needed by the fledgling defense forces in countering the massive attacks by the Arab armies on all the borders. The planes were flown by Machal Volunteers, mostly U.S, Canadian, English and South Africans, all veterans of the World War II campaigns.

The Americans were involved in the clandestine immigration that ran the British blockade (1946-48) bringing Holocaust survivors to Israel. 250 sailors engaged in this operation known as Aliyah Bet. The larger ships were purchased in the U.S. and sailed from the East Coast. The best known was the "Exodus". This action was an important factor in ending British rule in Mandate Palestine opening the way to the creation of the State of Israel in May 1948.

Concerning Machal the late Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion said: "The Machal volunteers from abroad were the Diaspora's single most important contribution to the survival of the Jewish State".

In 1993, on the occasion of the dedication of the Memorial to the Machal Volunteers who fell in the War of Independence, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin declared: "You came to us when we needed you most, during those dark and uncertain days in our War of Independence. You gave us not only your experience, but your lives as well. The State of Israel will never forget and will always cherish this unique contribution made by you - the Volunteers of Machal".

American Veterans of Israel is a fraternal organization composed of the volunteers who served in Aliyah Bet and Machal during that historic period of Jewish history.



*New York Israel Independence Day 2006*

*L-R: Lola Sprinzeles, Marvin Lebow, David Gerard, Harry Bieber, Marcel Berkowitz, Unidentified, Ira Feinberg, Unidentified*