

# **On Both Sides of the Crypto**

**Uri Goren**



# **On Both Sides of the Crypto**

**Uri Goren**

# **On Both Sides of the Crypto**

By

**Uri Goren**

Translated by Aryeh Malkin, kibbutz Ein Dor

April 2010

**משני צדי הקריpto**

**אורן גורן**

Copyright © 2008

All rights reserved to the author

The material in this book is not to be copied,  
photographed, stored electronically or broadcast by  
any means, optically or electronically. No commercial  
use may be made of any material in the book without  
the express permission in writing from the author.

Originally printed in Hebrew, Israel 2008

## **Table of Contents**

Foreword	7
Chapter 1: Ha'apala - the Illegal Immigration	15
Chapter 2: "Exodus"	59
Chapter 3: Procurement	73
Chapter 4: Childhood and Adolescence	87
Chapter 5: Military Service	99
Chapter 6: Service in the Intelligence	121
Chapter 7: Business	135
Chapter 8: Family	143
Chapter 9: People	159
Chapter 10: Viewpoints & Opinions	185
a personal note from the editor	197
Appendices	199



# **Foreword**

---

I do not presume that I am writing history, but rather, from my own personal point of observation, I endeavor to describe events in which I participated. What I write is meant particularly for my own extended family and for a number of good friends.

## **Who would have believed...**

My generation, “the generation of ‘48”, was something special. I think that there were few generations that had to assume burdens as weighty as those which we had to take upon ourselves. We were the second generation of those who founded small rural settlements, who were field workers and pioneers – but men with ideals and values; they knew travail and bloodshed; from World War II and the Holocaust to the fight for the right of the Jewish people to a Homeland of their own – a fight with the Arab rioters

and with an antagonistic British Mandate, which prevented Jews from entering their Homeland. The British blockade had to be breached and then there was the desperate fight for Independence and the creation of the State of Israel. Since then we have witnessed the influx of our brethren from the four corners of the world; the strengthening of our new country in the fields of politics, economics, science and security.

From my personal point of view I had a privilege, which many fail to get – a singular and special life of activity. My generation, which experienced all these events, lost many of its finest young people. I, a lucky one, have seen the creation of a strong and solid State of Israel. Of course, there have been disappointments and there are many problems and pitfalls, and even at the turn of the twentieth century and the onset of the twenty-first, the fight for the security of the State still continues.

After the creation of the State of Israel and the War of Independence, we hoped that we would be the last generation to know war. To our chagrin, our children and our grandchildren have had to fight also in

fiercely fought conflicts. I have also had to participate in various stages of these struggles; very often I happened to be in the very thick of the fighting. I have lived to see the marvel of the creation of the State of Israel, which had its beginnings in a small settlement of 500,000 and which has now grown to be a full-fledged state of more than six million inhabitants. It has a flourishing industry and is an exciting democracy.

I was, and am an optimist and still believe and am content. I am lucky and perhaps I helped my luck along a bit when I had to make important decisions at crucial stages in my personal and public life. The fate of the State-to-be, which became the State of Israel, determined my path through life from childhood and youth and until my mature old age. My life has been and still is intense and exciting; there have been difficulties and obstacles to overcome, but all in all - my life has been spent in doing things and being active. As an adult, this has been true especially in the field of military security. Friends have often urged me to put my memoirs on paper, but I had refrained from so doing for two main reasons: First, my life has been similar to that of many others of my generation, who

already put their memoirs onto paper. Second, since the Declaration of Independence in 1948 there have been so many great and important events happening in our short but exciting history, that my own private life is tremendously reduced in importance as compared to them.

The celebration of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the “Exodus” had a strong effect upon me and accentuated my need to tell what happened from my angle of view. Considering also how the family has expanded with the addition of grandchildren and great grandchildren, and partners of members of the family; this gives an added incentive to a man my age to want to tell his story to those who did not know it firsthand. My sons, and especially my daughter-in-law Nava, added gentle but firm pressure, but also extended the maximum of support, as always. Now that the work is complete and the results are to my satisfaction, it only remains for me to thank them for their support and encouragement.



To those who despair and complain of what the State and its leaders are doing I wish to say: During those

difficult and decisive years of struggle, I happened to be a part of that wonderful group that brought the survivors of the Holocaust to the Land of Israel. Imagine this conversation in 1946, more than 60 years ago. Picture the survivors and those who were active in Aliya Bet in a camp of the survivors in Southern France. Remember, there were only 500,000 Jews in Palestine at that time. They had to struggle against the attacks of the local Arabs and the Arab countries and an antagonistic British regime.

I can hear myself telling them: “Today our conditions are next to impossible and we are trying to bring to Palestine thousands of hunted and harassed survivors, but in another 60 years we shall have our own strong and independent State of Israel with a population of six million. It will be a developed country with a strong economy and modern technology and science, with progressive medical institutions and health care, a modern and active cultural life and a strong democracy, etc.”

Had I said that in those days I probably would have made a mockery of myself. I didn’t say it and I didn’t even think of it. I was only twenty years old and I had

work to do and didn't have the time or the inclination to think thoughts of that nature.

Regarding this book's title: Crypto in Greek means hidden or placed out of sight. It is also an abbreviation for Cryptography, which deals in codes or disguised messages and their decoding. "The two sides" refer to the sender, who sends a message in code, and the receiver, who has to decode the message received.

In the army and in the communication industry, the expression "on both sides of the crypto" refers to the whole method of correspondence.

As a boy I was a signalman in the Hagana and after that, a "Gid'oni" during the period of Aliya Bet. Following that I was a communications officer in the army, Commander of the Communications Company of the Headquarters Staff and communications officer of the Paratrooper Brigade (established in 1955 under the command of Arik Sharon). Finally, I was in the technological unit of the Intelligence Corps. Even while working in ECI I worked in the field of communication which was based on the hi-tech equipment that this company developed.

These two sides of communication are a mirror of my life.

I hope you enjoy reading,

Uri Goren

Nachlat Yehuda, June 2008



## **Chapter 1:**

### **Ha'apala - the Illegal Immigration**

---

When I was twenty I was mobilized to Aliya Bet and sent to Europe to help in sending survivors of the Holocaust to Palestine. Seven months later I was appointed commander of a vessel of survivors; it was a broken down, unseaworthy old vessel, which carried 1,250 men, women and children. When I look back at that period, I can only assume that my naïveté and that of those above me, coupled with the strong desire to succeed in our undertaking and to answer the needs of those we were trying to help, were the reasons that such a weighty and dangerous mission was placed upon the shoulders of such a young man. The fact that these same 1,250 ma'apilim eventually reached Palestine and merged into the daily life of the Yishuv

(the Jewish settlements) is proof enough that a strong belief in the necessity of what we were doing was sufficient cause for our success. In the excitement of the action there were moments when even I doubted that we would succeed.

One has to imagine what Europe was like at that time, when the Mossad for Aliya Bet (the organization for illegal immigration) was active. It was less than a year since the end of the war; the continent had been wrecked by a war that had lasted six years. The infrastructure of the countries had been destroyed by the bombs and the shells, food was hard to find, as were water and electricity. Millions were homeless as their homes had been destroyed and they had been deported far from their towns and villages by the Nazi conquerors. Among these refugees were hundreds of thousands of Jews; survivors of the extermination camps and forced labor camps, and there were also some partisans. These were the surviving embers of a nation.

The story that I tell here is not only the story of one vessel of which I was the commander, the “Latrun”. This is a story of tens of other young men and women

like me, who brought about 100,000 survivors to Palestine on the decks of other smaller or larger vessels, most of which were in no condition to carry such a precious cargo, as their physical conditions were abominable.

### **The Journey to Europe**

It was February 1946; Shaul Avigur, the chief of the Mosad for Aliya Bet suggested that I go to Europe as part of the Palyam Company of the Palmach and help in the bringing of survivors of the Holocaust to Palestine. The following month found me at kibbutz Naveh Yam, near Atlit. I met six other Palyamnikim there as well as 14 Italian crew members; among them was also Captain Mario. This was the crew that had brought the “Orde Wingate” to Palestine. They were going home to Italy and the Palyamnikim joined them for the trip to Europe. Natan Alterman wrote about this captain who also captained other vessels of ma’apilim. His poem was called: “Thank you Italian Captain”. There is no doubt in my mind that Captain Mario deserved our thanks. When darkness fell we all boarded the vessel “Ada”, a small fishing trawler, and she sailed out to sea for her home port of Genoa in northwest Italy. The Palyamnikim gathered in one of

the small holds and the commander of our unit presented himself, Lova Eliav.

Most of us did not know each other previously, so Lova requested that we introduce ourselves. When my turn came and I had finished speaking, Lova exclaimed in surprise: “So you are Uri Greenblatt from Nachlat Yehuda; ten years ago, when we were still kids I came to your house with my father. He sold cattle feed and we brought a load of feed to your dairy barn! I played with you and with your brother Aharon while my father and yours, who had both studied at Yeshiva in Lithuania, sat and drank tea and ‘talked Torah’.” Since then Lova and I have remained close friends.

The voyage went smoothly for several hours, but then the shaft of the engine broke. With the aid of sails we managed to reach Limasol, Cyprus. Repairs were made and we continued to sail westwards. It did not take too long before the same shaft broke again. We were adrift and quite helpless. When we saw another fishing vessel in the distance we lit a fire on the deck; this was a distress signal. The vessel approached us and we transferred over to her and continued with her

to the port of Bodrum, in southwestern Turkey. En route, Lova tried to convince the captain to take us to Italy. He agreed on condition that we first pull into his home port where he could take on food and fuel and say a word to his family. In port we were questioned by the Turkish police, but with the aid of a few gold coins and a few watches that changed hands, the Turks allowed us to continue on our journey. We had to take shelter in several bays to avoid some storms that came up rather suddenly, but we continued moving forward. We knew we would not arrive when expected, but we had no way of communicating with those who were waiting for us. Captain Mario suggested we pull in to a small fishing village in the boot of Italy, Gallipoli, as he was familiar with some whore houses, and thought we would be able to find shelter there.

### **The Whore Lucia**

The Israelis were indeed taken in to the home of a young and good-looking whore named Lucia. She lived there with her mother and eight year old daughter. The Italians were staying in the home of another whore. Lucia, her mother and their neighbors took excellent care of us. It was only now that I understood the story of the Biblical whore, Rahav!

One can easily understand that for me, a young and inexperienced twenty years old, graduate of HaNoar HaOved youth movement, it was a rather ‘strange’ experience sleeping in a whore’s bed with four other fellows. We were also given food and the protection of the local police. We had no money to give her and she only had Mario’s word that in time she would be duly recompensed. Remember, this was one year after the end of the war and food and fuel were very scarce. The fact that roads were in very poor condition and transportation was slow and expensive, made matters even worse.

Several days later, some of Lucia’s friends suggested that we move to a village nearby, as there was a camp of Jewish refugees there. With the help of the police and several fishermen, we moved to the other village during the night. There we were able to make contact with the Aliya Bet authorities in Milan and a vehicle of the Jewish Brigade was dispatched to take us from the village to Milan. It took us two days to get from the village in the boot of Italy to the Mosad’s main base at Magenta, about 40 kilometers east of Milan.

## המודרף אחורי לוציאיה

של בית, שטחנו לדבגו לאג אמר-היר. דוד  
הוּא רַבָּתִים, וְכֹבֶד־עֲשֵׂה, וְכֹבֶד־עֲשֵׂה,  
לְפָנָיו נָעַמְתָּן — פָּאַת הַשְׁמִיד — כִּי  
חוּזָה לְבַסְתָּלָל צָבָוי בְּרִיחָה לוֹצָאָה  
הַחַדְבָּהָה שְׁלָמָה אַגְּלָל בְּבָת  
וְאַגְּלָל אַגְּלָל אַגְּלָל אַגְּלָל  
בָּוּרָה, שְׁמָתָה לוֹצָאָה עַל־פְּשִׁיטָה יְהִי  
מְשֻׁמְדָה לְבַת־בָּוּרָה, וְבִנְיָה כִּי־  
מְהֻנְדָה גִּישָׁה שְׁמָרִים אַלְמָן וְכֵר

לוביזיה הגערת, אלטמא שבעה שי  
ירד על חוויהם של לילתה קענע — וווחת  
על פרוגנטה וסינטינה את עזחיה בירז'  
לטשל בענין פונתיה הדרתית.  
יעזב קער אל כהן פוליטון, שם  
ונזר קער אל כהן פוליטון, שם  
לא מושפעה, בבי, אלא שפערת  
מי מושפעה על צוות נזבנער על  
ירד המסתורין כל ואוות בל שטבוקע,  
ובבל שטבוקע עיש' עיש' בל תורוות  
הארטיגראם ואבדון ריסטומן.

תצלום ישן

单



לזיהוי צבאיוואר נסנת 1946 — חותמו שנותנה בטעורות לילוח אליאס

שאיט לא יטמא את הולן ביזה אל הסיניטה ווירטום אותה...  
אליאב חילק מון הקבוצה מסתה.  
ונם בגדה נין ב'גאנאָן' גאנרונְן

תא ונקה ונענת, בוגבגתה, טשנה ותולק עין, עוזרת תבשיטים וילם, והור הולכים אל לובץת, הכל גואה ששי, להלחה מוכןן איזבל ליעוד קדר גם מרכז, האסוד" במדלאן, כד בלוייס כוך יהלומים לרגרוטס הזרועי — והוא לסרוב ברכחה צפונה, גם תשביך הקבוצה ברכחה צפונה.

שנה נerro ליליאב כטבון, בזבז בזבז  
חורי חתיריס — ומכל שפהיה מוקה  
שיטרברג.  
אחים רוגז של חודה מבנין דריין  
בכבודו, ואנו מורה למלומדים לאלאי  
טיקון לרודף לשלמה הקדוש ולחולמיה  
את עצבם, הוא אצטן, וכמהו כתן  
מכהרים מוחת לבטהו הטעיר או  
הטעיר או הטעיר או הטעיר או הטעיר או

עד שבר הם מסתתרים בחדלה. לעומת  
הם יוצאים לרחוב וננסים לאחד את  
העיר.

להאפק על ידי אנדי ובוסט לעז  
ב', בעיד הנמל העתונת גליפטול  
לטוקה בעקב המורוח של ה-מ.  
אנדרו, בפצעם בוגר ב-1990.

בנוסף לשלוחת הרכבת מטרומינס לברזיל, שיכלעו  
כמעט חמשה מיליון לירות, נסחפה לא-  
היבשנותם של רוחני וברון, מושגיהם  
הבריטים תרשו לא הוללה כה  
אויה בטהיר ורוחנית לו מכובש  
זרה בצעורו הבהיר בפערתו פערתו  
בנעם התפשטה פיראטיות,

ישראליים, ווותח אליאב בראשם,  
ספאטס לדורותם בספיינית הקפנָה  
לטולסי...  
**עיר עתיקה**

שְׁתִּיקָה

איסלאת של 1946 נמנעה בחלוקת  
של הבריטים, כובשת מזרח האסלאם  
בצ'ק, הבריטים יונקים גיבוב אל-

**פרוצה איטלקיה**  
שהחכיביה את  
שליחי ה „הגנה“  
לפני 35 שנה,  
נמצאה לאחר  
חויפושים ממושכים  
כדי להופיע בשבעו  
הבא בפרק  
ההעפלה שבסדרת  
„עמוד האש“.

ג'ז

אשר הגילה רחוב נה מירון, רת הרכבת  
לטס של תושב, קיוויה  
שהציג את עוזר ובנו  
משמעותם חברות חזקה;

הזרואה לוציאו ובלייארי חותה  
אותה הנטענויות האלמנטים של מבי-  
צוי הנטענויות לארכ' ישראלי, ואחריו  
המחלמת הנעלם שמשתער, ומי שעוזרת  
ברוכחות של הרתקה ונוגעת ללב,  
שאליה נמלעה חברתו צערירם בנה.

ארץ, שביקטו לחזק אל איסלה, כדי להלץ בכם את פלישת הדואות ולהללוותם ארצתן חום ליבך וזריזי בוהה היו שופטים במדינת חכמתך.

לא היו נוכרים בה אילילה סיד-  
רת „עכדי והאט“, אשר החליטה להפ-  
ץ את הכתובים.

One more word about Lucia: We kept contact with her for many years. Once, when Moti Hod (RIP) who was in our group and was at that time the General Director of El Al, we tried to arrange a visit in Israel for her and her daughter. Unfortunately, the visit did not take place because the local priest advised her against

coming. In April 1981, the newspaper *Maariv* published an article by Yaakov HaElyon, in which he described the efforts to locate her for an appearance in the Israeli TV program, “The Pillar of Fire”.

## **Magenta**

In this huge camp the Mosad for Aliya Bet set up its logistic center for Italy. It included a food and clothing depot and a vehicle depot of equipment that belonged to the JDC (Joint Distribution Committee) and to the Jewish forces in the British Army.

The fictitious TTG unit [Telchas Tisi Gescheften]: These trucks were stolen from the British Army and organized into a fictitious transport company which “requisitioned” [stole] supplies from British depots in order to supply the Aliya Bet vessels with food, clothing and fuel, etc. They also transported the survivors from the camps to the ships that were ready to sail. These trucks were operated by men of the Palmach who had been serving in the Jewish Brigade. They left their identity behind and assumed the identity of survivors. Survivors, who suited the physical characteristics of the Palmachniks, took their place in the Jewish Brigade. This switch, which

allowed survivors to make Aliya as Jewish soldiers, was called Aliya Daled.

### The Vessel “Yagur”

The “Yagur” carried 750 ma’apilim and left from La Ciotat, a small town and port on the Western fringe of the French Riviera (about 40 kilometers east of Marseille), on 29<sup>th</sup> July, 1946. The ma’apilim had been sheltered before the voyage in a beautiful villa facing a little bay about one kilometer distant from the pier itself. In order to attract as little attention as possible, the ma’apilim left the villa during the night and walked quietly to the pier.

Everyone managed to board before daylight and the tug that was to pull the vessel out of the port was also ready; the ship was out of port before daylight and we, who had been helping loading the survivors - went into a café that had just opened for business in the early morning for a cup of coffee. An old couple was already seated there and they had in the past been witness to a number of clandestine sailings. They greeted us with Bonjour, and the old man asked in French, “Combien”? I answered nonchalantly, “About 150”. The old Frenchman was overwhelmed, “Oh-la-

la, 150 people in such a small boat!” (The vessel actually carried 750 passengers).



*Gid'onim in Marseille, 1946. Left to right: Miko (Abraham Bechar), Mike Harari and Uri*

The “Yagur” was sighted by a British plane and escorted by two destroyers into the port of Haifa. The

ma'apilim were then transferred to the Deportation Ships and became the first ones to be deported to Cyprus, together with those who had arrived on the "Henrietta Szold".

### The Vessel "Latrun"

In memory of the ma'apilim of the vessel "Latrun" who fought in the War of Independence and were killed in action. (First published in *Maarachot-Yam*, March 1963)

As of October 1946, the "Yagur" was the last vessel to have sailed from France and it had sailed in July. One of the main reasons for this lack of action in France was the pressure that the British government applied upon the higher echelons of the French government. During this period however, thousands of ma'apilim had gathered in the Aliya Bet camps waiting for the right moment. Some of them had been in France for too long and made themselves a bad name with the Marseille police. We found it necessary to strengthen our authority over the ma'apilim and at the same time try to get vessels moving again.

The Mosad for Aliya Bet bought a vessel in Sweden (that had been built in 1870), called the “San Dimitrio”. Its name was altered to Hagana ship “Latrun”, in order to tell the world that we will not be put off by arrests and detentions. (on June 29, 1946, “Black Saturday” all the leaders of the Jewish settlement in Palestine were arrested and imprisoned in Latrun, in an effort to close down the Hagana). Towards the end of September the “San Dimitrio” was on its way from Sweden to a shipyard in La Ciotat, France.

I was appointed to command the vessel. Benyamin (Bob) Strassberg and the Palyamnik Shalom Shwartz, a veteran officer and a volunteer from the USA joined me. It was our job to organize and train the ma’apilim for the journey. At the same time others working in the Mosad for Aliya Bet began to prepare the vessel for the journey. Only those who participated in such a trip can be fully aware of the terrible conditions under which the ma’apilim made this journey. Anyone else who tried to imagine these conditions would surely err, and underestimate the difficulties. Since there was no choice but to do the job as well as we could, we tried to prepare the ma’apilim for what was to come as

well as possible. Although we were not certain as to our port of departure, we nevertheless gathered the ma'apilim in the area around La Ciotat. There was not enough room in the camp in that area so we moved some of the ma'apilim to Saint Jerome. We were not certain as to how many ma'apilim we were to take on board, but we decided to set ourselves some system of priorities. As the conditions in the waiting camps were far from luxurious but much better than they would be aboard ship, we worsened the conditions of the camps and we started to live on shore as they would be living on board the ship. We went over to this sort of regime by easy stages. At the same time, we tried to improve the food they were getting and the clothing they had to wear.

Two weeks prior to the sailing date we declared a state of emergency. Captains were put in command of companies that we had formed. These were the 'pick-of-the-crop' among the ma'apilim. They had been leaders in the youth movements and were intelligent; they had influence over their companions. There was also a unit of guards whose job was to maintain order and they were the largest and the strongest among the ma'apilim. We also had a medical unit which included

a doctor and several women to help him as nurses. There was another group of cooks and kitchen help and a group to clean the toilets.

Until then, all the ma'apilim had left from the pier of La Ciotat but we decided to prepare for the worst eventuality and took the ma'apilim out to a lonely bay, to prepare them for boarding the vessel there if need be. Perhaps we were a bit cruel in our demands, but that may have been for their own good and our consciences were clear. We would practice roll-call and have them leave their rooms and line up in a minimum of time. Nothing was to remain in their rooms. If a ma'apil had more equipment than he could carry then he had to turn the surplus in to the central depot, whose job was to see that this would eventually reach the ma'apil in Palestine. This did not always happen and unfortunately, a good deal of a people's personal possessions was lost. At night, the ma'apilim went to sleep with their packs at the ready and by their side, as it was forbidden to strike a light at night.

We trained the men, the women and the children; everyone but pregnant and nursing mothers and babies. From roll-call we would lead them with their

packs over a hill and down into the port area of the town, and then around and back to the camp. While in training, the food was given out the way it would be on board the vessel; the group leader went and got the portions for his squad and he divided them up and distributed it to his squad. All this may sound rather extreme and absurd to the reader but it was real preparation for a real situation. We were very grateful to the ma'apilim for receiving all we threw at them with understanding and cooperation.

While we were busy working with the ma'apilim, our buddies from the Mosad for Aliya Bet in Marseille were hard at work preparing the vessel to receive them. Among them were Rudy - Shmarya Tzameret (RIP) from Beit HaShita, Avi and Avinoam from the Mosad and Bob, the seaman. Joe Baharliya was Rudy's aid, a fellow who was very active in getting things done. Joe was a real 'live wire' and he played a very important role in supplying us with whatever the ships were in need of before sailing. He was of Spanish Jewish descent and he and his brother Albert ran a ship supply company. He knew no Hebrew except how to say "Yihyeh Beseder" (everything will be okay), and everything was always okay. Joe's men

brought us our communications equipment, they brought in the illegal weapons which we brought to Palestine and they supplied false papers when necessary.

As the work of preparation on the vessel moved forward, we saw that we would be able to carry about 1,250 passengers. Extra kitchen equipment, extra toilet facilities and ventilation equipment were installed, and a sickbed corner was prepared. The atmosphere was charged; the D Day of the journey was approaching. Three days before we were supposed to depart I awoke to the sound of noise and bustle. People were already packing. Our camp was located on the top of a hill and had a view of the entrance to the bay of La Ciotat, where there was a rather large shipyard. Wondering what caused all the fuss I looked towards the bay and saw that a huge French ship of about 35,000 tons had entered the harbor (as compared to our little 1,000 ton "Latrun"). There was a large French flag painted on her flank in red, white and blue, but the red had faded and was hardly visible. The ma'apilim had mistakenly thought that this was the ship that they would sail upon. Their mistake was soon obvious; this was a French warship that had been

damaged in a fight with the German navy during WW II, and had pulled in to the shipyard for repairs. I had to work hard to calm our ma'apilim and assured them that we would be leaving shortly. I told them that we also would soon be sending ma'apilim in ships of that size, that would carry 30,000 at one go.

On the 17<sup>th</sup> October we packed everything up at dawn and 1,252 ma'apilim set out in the direction of our vessel in a very orderly manner. They were divided into groups with the group leader at the head of his contingent and each one carried his visa asserting that he could enter Columbia, South America, legally. We could see the little "San Dimitrio" down below as its bow cut through the water at the entrance to the bay. I think that very few of the ma'apilim believed that this little vessel would really carry us to the Land of Israel. As soon as the vessel tied to the pier the company of guards boarded first and with their control of the situation and the training that the ma'apilim had had, we were able to load all of the survivors in a short time and without a hitch. At first the French police delayed us, as they checked every visa but they soon gave up and allowed all of us to board.

## The Journey

The organization of the ma'apilim worked out very well and everyone received a quantity of water to drink and a bag for vomit, if needed. The crew of the ship consisted of a captain and 17 Spanish Republican seamen; all were refugees of the fascist Franco regime. They were on the whole a group of pleasant and brave men. We told them that they were to take the refugees as far as Crete; from there on we would transfer the ma'apilim to another vessel. I am not certain if they believed that promise or not, but when we told them when we were en route that there was a change in plans and we would have to go directly all the way to Haifa, they took this news quite calmly and were not overly upset about it.

A strong wind came up just as the "San Dimitrio" raised its anchor and the wind shoved the vessel onto the rocks at the base of the pier of the port. The journey started off badly, and we needed a tugboat to pull us off and out. We made the open sea and were to proceed presumably at a speed of ten knots. We figured that we would average eight knots and at that rate it would take us eight to nine days to reach Palestine. We had prepared food, water and fuel for 14

days. As soon as we were out to sea and moving along, it became clear that the vessel could not do more than five knots! The sea got a bit rough and people started to throw up. I must admit here and now that I, strictly a landlubber, did not feel like a fish in the water either. I tried to hide that as best I could.

It was at this stage of the game that all our intensive training beforehand now paid off. The ma'apilim were orderly and disciplined and were not overwhelmed by the conditions on board the vessel. One of our biggest problems was water. Water takes up a good deal of space and had to be rationed. At the same time, the crowding and the heat in the hold of the ship made the ma'apilim thirsty. The water was rationed to two liters per person per day, for cooking and drinking. This was the biggest cause of disturbance among the ma'apilim. All the passengers were in the hold below deck, except pregnant women and young children, for whom special quarters had been built on the deck. Some parents did not want to be separated from their children and insisted they keep their children with them in the hold. Some husbands did not want to be separated from their wives and moved themselves into the quarters for the pregnant women. Sometimes we

had to use a firm hand when words alone did not have the desired effect, in order to make them return to the hold.

After being at sea for two days in a rough sea, the vessel started to list to one side. The vessel had had a balanced keel due to the coal and water that it was carrying. As the coal and water were being used up, the vessel was losing its equilibrium. As the vessel listed, she also lost speed. This became a very serious issue. We did have some ventilation in the hold, but the crowding and the stench from the vomiting made prolonged stay below almost impossible. We tried to let the ma'apilim stay on deck so long as we were still not close to the shore and the British were not in sight, but with the list that had developed we could not let many on deck at any one time.

We had tried to take everything into account in our planning and we put the strongest men into the lowest bunks and the weaker ones above them. We had even arranged for cultural programs to occupy the time during the voyage. The list of the vessel changed all that and we could not let more than a bare minimum onto the deck. Bob, Shalom Shwartz and I would

stand on the bridge with a megaphone and yell to the deck in broken Yiddish: “10 people over to the right side of the vessel (or the left, as the situation warranted)”. In that way the vessel was continually listing to starboard or to port as people moved from one side to the other, trying to keep the vessel on an even keel. If we meet some of these ma’apilim today, years after, they recall how we would yell to them.

Our limiting the number of ma’apilim on deck led to breaches of discipline, which increased with time. We had to be more and more strict in our demands. We (the Palyamnikim) also spent most of our time in the holds; this was so that we could be an example for the others and also to keep a watchful eye on them and to encourage them. All in all, the ma’apilim were very cooperative and I can recall only one incident of rebellion.

When we were nearing Crete a storm came up and the vessel rocked heavily; there were waves of gigantic size that hit the vessel. People threw up all over the place and some were in panic. The captain and many of the crew were at a loss and I saw the first mate and a number of sailors down on their knees, praying

fervently. We, I and some of the Palyamnikim, perhaps because of our inexperience, acted with bravado and showed no fear. I radioed a message to headquarters in Palestine: "We are in the midst of a severe storm and the vessel is listing at an angle of 30°. Everything is under control." The captain asked Bob for permission to pull into a bay in Crete for shelter until the storm would blow over. As we had no contact with headquarters that day, we conferred among ourselves and decided that we must keep on going. We feared that if we pulled in to Crete we would have trouble with the authorities in leaving again, or that the crew would jump ship and leave us stranded.

The captain was very dissatisfied with our decision and declared that he would no longer obey us. We had no recourse but to put him and his officers under armed guard. They now used a new tactic; they had befriended a number of the ma'apilim and they encouraged a spirit of defeatism in them, that because of the terrible conditions met with a good measure of success. A group of 'hefties' approached us and demanded that we pull in to a bay in Crete and send out a cry for help. Among these men there was also

one who was a professional radio operator. This revolt did not last long, as our guards overcame the rebels. Shortly before we arrived at Haifa the one who had led this revolt came to us and apologized for his behavior and promised that those who had rebelled would vindicate themselves in their fighting against the British. (This they definitely did do, and fulfilled their promise with honor.)

Now we had reached the point where preparations had to be made to make a dash for the shore. Headquarters on land gave us the particulars on when and where to land, and what we had to prepare. From now on no one was allowed on deck during the day. We took down the Panama flag that we had been flying and put up a Turkish flag. The Turks were not known to be helpful to the Jewish cause then, and their ships were common enough in that part of the Mediterranean. We still had two and a half days of travel to reach Haifa. We had been en route for 11 days and our situation was not easy. We had a lookout on deck at all times whose job was plane-spotting. On 29 October at 8 a.m. we heard the buzz of a light airplane approaching from the direction of the coast. There were very few

people on deck but we were nevertheless quite certain that we had been spotted.

Two conflicting thoughts ran through my mind; on the one hand I was very sorry that our plans to come ashore secretly and at night would not be fulfilled, but on the other hand, I felt a lightening of the load, of being responsible for the welfare of 1,250 ma'apilim, who had been disconnected from the world. The same was true when we spotted a British destroyer following us at a distance that evening. The destroyer followed us for the rest of our voyage.

It was a bright moonlit night and the sea was calm and quiet. The destroyer could be heard approaching us from the stern. A voice shouted at us via loudspeaker: "Who are you and where are you headed?" "We are an empty cargo vessel headed for Beirut", was our reply. Our effort at subterfuge did not fool them; the British had identified us. Perhaps they had identified us even before the plane spotted us. The destroyer now asked directly: "San Dimitrio, are you carrying illegal immigrants on board to Palestine?" Here we changed our act and answered: "The name of our vessel is not San Dimitrio, it is the "Latrun", and so far as we know

we have no illegal immigrants on board; we are carrying citizens back to their homeland.” The destroyer now addressed the captain and the crew in French, Italian and English: “We suggest you head the vessel towards Famagusta, Cyprus; we will send you back to your home countries from there and we will save you a lot of trouble.” Our answer was very simple: “We take orders from our superiors only, please get out of our way.” This exchange went on the whole night and most of the following day.

I was told that two men had jumped into the water and were swimming away. We took count to find out who was missing and discovered that the cook and a sailor were the ones who had jumped the ship. The destroyer picked up the two men immediately. We feared that the sailors would give away our identities (the Palyamnikim) and we would be arrested when we arrived in Haifa. We prepared to disguise ourselves as best we could. Our problem was how we could prevent the ma’apilim from coming out on deck; this would have greatly endangered the stability of the vessel. To our great satisfaction discipline held and despite the terribly crowded conditions below, no one came on deck.

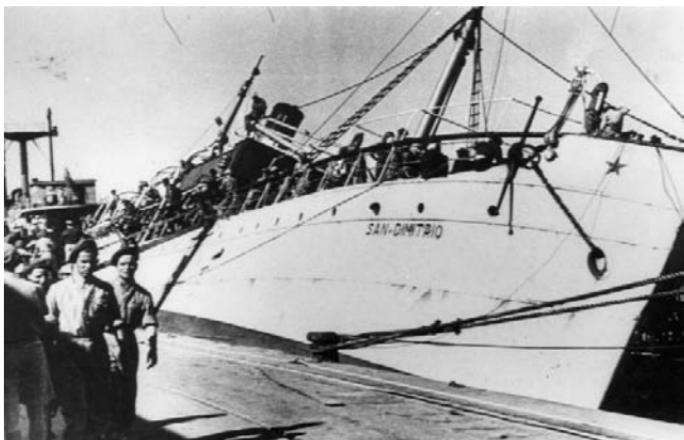
On November 1<sup>st</sup>, at dawn, we sighted the Carmel and the bay of Haifa. The destroyer was joined by its twin and the efforts to convince us turned to dire warning that were we to enter the territorial waters of Palestine it would be necessary to use force against us. Our answer was: "If force is used against us we shall have to reply with force." We continued forward and the destroyers continued alongside us. Suddenly, one of the destroyers turned its bow towards our vessel and we called for our soldier contingent. The destroyer did as we feared it would and jolted our old vessel with its prow. This made a hole on our starboard side and the vessel listed over heavily to port with the deck not far from the water level. The destroyer on the port side came close and held the vessel above water. We were stuck between the destroyers until a tug came and pulled us into port, with the two destroyers holding our vessel above the water line but we were drawing water into the hold because of the hole on the starboard side.

Years later I came across a report which was delivered to the Mosad for Aliya Bet, written by the Gid'oni Yitzchak Golan, of the crew of our vessel: Suddenly I felt a jet of water... and shortly after that a blow on the

head with a baton. This assured me that the enemy had boarded the vessel. I managed to throw the crystal of my radio and the papers of codes into the water. I could smell the tear gas and see armed soldiers wearing gasmasks on deck. There was a short fight; Bob and a group of ma'apilim managed to grab a lieutenant and remove his gasmask. He looked quite miserable. A corporal came to help him and he was thrown into the water. We were no match for the fresh well-fed and well-armed young soldiers after the journey of two weeks that we had endured, so after a few severe skirmishes the soldiers soon managed to break resistance and we had to give in. Had one of the destroyers moved away we would certainly have gone under. The fight was over for now but we would look for the first opportunity to renew it.

Two days later all the ma'apilim of the "Latrun" arrived at Famagusta on board a British deportation ship. We were installed in camp no. 63, a 'summer camp', which was already populated with the ma'apilim of the "Yagur" and the "Henrietta Szold". Although somewhat disappointed that we did not reach Palestine, it was also a relief to know that our dangerous voyage was over and we settled in to the

routine of camp life. This was a cakewalk in comparison to life on our vessel. We spent several months in the camp until we were delivered back to Palestine by devious channels.



*“Latrun” (San Dimitrio) at Haifa, 1 Nov. 1946*

## Cyprus

Aryeh Kaplan (Kippy) – RIP was commander of the camp and along with him were Dr. Shiba and his wonderful gang of assistants, and a group of teachers and group leaders who had accompanied the above-mentioned vessels on their journey. We soon felt quite at home. The ma’apilim themselves were a disciplined and excellently behaved group and they and their leaders organized their daily schedule very well. Soon

there were study groups of all sorts and an active cultural life. I found it amusing that the British soldiers were eating out of mess-tins between the two rows of barbed wire fencing, while we were sitting at tables and eating like kibbutznikim.

From August 1946 and until April 1948 more than 51,000 ma'apilim, who had tried to make Aliya to Palestine by sea, were deported to Cyprus. The detention camps in Cyprus were active until February 10<sup>th</sup> 1949. During this period the British freed small amounts of detainees who were allowed into Palestine under the monthly quota system. The certificates for these quotas were given to the Jewish Agency. Aryeh Kaplan of the Palyam was chosen by his fellow Palyamnikim to be the first commander of the camps. He set up military units of young ma'apilim who were interested in volunteering to the Palmach, within the camps. These young people also helped to keep order within the camps and were to be of assistance to the forces of the Palmach in future battles. They also helped in digging the tunnels in and out of the camps, through which the Palmach maintained a constant stream of contacts, equipment, arms and people. All in all, seven tunnels were dug, of which the British

discovered two. This was a very secret and dangerous operation which was carried out by the Ranks of the Defenders, the group that received military training from the Palmach in the camps and was activated and run by the Palmach. The groups of ma'apilim who received certificates from Cyprus to make Aliya often included more people than certificates, as we helped the British soldiers count those that were leaving. 'Mistakes' in the count were frequent but the British were not too discerning, so long as life in the camps ran smoothly and there was a peaceful atmosphere there.

We received aid from the local Jewish community and we had very good relations with them. I recall particularly the Persitz family who helped in everything that we asked of them. There were other families, but I do not recall all the names. We Palyamnikim had special privileges as we were given certificates stating that we were 'Welfare Officers'. We could leave the camps, accompanied by emissaries from Palestine, as guards. This allowed us a measure of contact with the locals who sometimes invited us as guests to their homes. We were even able to do a bit of

touring in the cities and the mountains of this beautiful country.

In March, 1947, after we had spent about four months in the camps, I was shipped to Palestine for a short vacation. I arrived at night and in the morning Nachlat Yehuda was surrounded by British paratroopers searching for weapons and for suspicious characters. I was rounded up and put in a cage and awaited my turn to be identified. I did not have any sort of identification. When I was called before the questioners I told them that I had lost my ID card. Yehuda Fein, who was the commander of the local police station, swore that I was a local inhabitant and that I did not take part in any unlawful activity. He and others at the station were very surprised by my appearance there that morning. I spent several days at home and then was shipped out again, this time to Marseille, where I was to prepare the ma'apilim of the "Exodus" for their journey.

The journey of the "Latrun" had been a very difficult one; as difficult as any of the vessels of the ma'apilim, and perhaps even more than most. However, from the beginning to the end we, the Palyamnikim and the

ma'apilim were certain beyond doubt that we would make it. Today, as I travel about the country, I meet here or there people who had been on that journey with me and note the active and constructive roles they play in the life of the country. Some of them, alas, also took part in the War of Independence and laid down their lives for the creation of the State. I salute them.

Recently, I received from the veteran Palyamnik - Yehuda Ben Tzur, a translation by Reuven Yatir of a British navy report that deals with the vessel “Latrun”, which had been so close to sinking. The report states: “We do not know of a worse instance in comparison to other ships that were used by Aliya Bet.” It was no wonder that we found the conditions in the rain dripping tents of the camp at Keralos to be those of a five-star hotel in comparison to those we had had on the “Latrun”. As I have grown older and somewhat more conservative in weighing various matters, I have reached the conclusion that only devil-daring youngsters, devoid of a feeling of responsibility, were capable of taking upon themselves the responsibility for the lives of hundreds of survivors on a battered old vessel – and bring them to the land of their dreams, as

we did. Close to 100,000 arrived in Palestine in this way and became involved in the building of the new State of Israel.

### **The Mosad for Aliya Bet**

Jews have come to Eretz Israel throughout history, but the stream became stronger in the 19<sup>th</sup> C. This was a private Aliya of individuals and of groups; some groups were organized on political grounds, like the Revisionist or other political parties. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> C. the Jewish Agency was the leading force in this movement. The extent of illegal immigration increased greatly after the end of World War II, when the true extent of the catastrophe of the Jews of Europe due to the Holocaust became known. This Aliya continued until the creation of the State of Israel.

The Mosad for Aliya Bet, which was the executive arm of the Jewish settlement in Palestine, was founded and went into action in the 1930's, but its activity increased greatly the moment the war came to an end. The soldiers of the Jewish Brigade and other Hebrew units which fought in the framework of the British Army in Europe were the first to organize the

refugees, the survivors of the Holocaust. They were the first ones to help them and take care of their immediate needs and also to organize them into groups. They brought them from the countries of central Europe to the port cities of the Mediterranean. This mass movement was called “Bricha” (to run away) and those that led them and transported them were known as “HaChavura” (the Gang).

The Mosad for Aliya Bet coordinated the work of those in the field from all groups, including the men of the Palyam and the emissaries of the Zionist movements of Palestine. The Mosad also coordinated the working of the Jewish communities in Europe, which had to recover and reorganize after the liberation of Europe. The American Jewish Committee was very active in supplying the funds for all the work that had to be done and gave logistic support, food, fuel and transport, and helped gain support of the governments of Europe for their operation. There were other important forces helping the work of the Mosad; these included the Jewish community leaders in various countries of Europe as well as the governments of some of these countries. This was especially true of France, Italy and the Balkan

countries. They often displayed leniency and understanding despite the pressure applied upon them by the British government. At the same time, the Jewish settlements in Palestine, including the Hagana, the Palmach and Etzel, mobilized to help receive and absorb the ma'apilim when they arrived in the country.

The Mosad was responsible for finding the remnants of our people after the war throughout Europe and North Africa, (and later, in Iraq, Iran and other Islamic countries in the Middle East). The Mosad brought them to camps where they waited for Aliya and while there housed them and fed them, gave them medical care and taught them Hebrew and other subjects. Their Aliya went on despite the British blockade, and at the same time the Mosad was also active in procuring arms for the war that was sure to come. The arms were delivered to Palestine by sea and by air from Europe. The work was done by the people of the Mosad for Aliya Bet quietly and without fanfare, and adroitly. One should not forget that this was all done in a Europe whose infrastructure had been wrecked by years of heavy warfare, and where millions who had

been beaten and broken, had been left with no homes and no future.

### **How in Hell Did It Work?**

For more than two years, from February 1946 until June 1948, I was a volunteer working for the Mosad for Aliya Bet. I had a number of jobs; I was a Gid'oni (wireless operator), I was in charge of communications for the Mosad in Europe, I ran a camp of ma'apilim waiting their turn for Aliya, I was commander of a vessel carrying ma'apilim to Palestine, and more. During this period the Mosad had procured about 90 vessels, which were all converted to carry as many people as possible. They all needed fuel, food supplies and water, and much was involved logistically in handling a fleet of this size. The Mosad gathered over 100,000 survivors of the Holocaust from all over Europe and brought them to the port cities of the Mediterranean, mainly to Italy, France and the Balkans. It gave these survivors food, shelter, clothes, transport, false documents where necessary, and brought them to the Land of Israel.

As one who took part at this end of the line of activity I could feel that everything ran as an efficient and

well-oiled machine. I never heard or saw anything pertaining to organizational protocol or chain of command or system of reporting. Nobody was concerned about the technical order of reporting or accounting; I didn't ask and I wasn't told and it did not interest anyone. Later, when I was in the IDF or other organizations and looked back at this period of activity, I asked myself: "How did it work? How did this potpourri of a complicated organization of inexperienced kids, working in post-war Europe, manage to get things done?"

The only answer that I could come up with was: Everything ran as it did because every small cog in the operation was utterly devoted to his job. No one waited for orders telling him what to do, but did what had to be done when it had to be done; and in a responsible and devoted fashion. I knew, as a result of the jobs that were given to me to do or which I took upon myself to do, as did all my friends, that at the head of the whole organization was the legendary Shaul Avigur, a member of kibbutz Kineret. In Italy was the daring Yehuda Arazi and his right hand man (woman) Ada Sereni, a member of kibbutz Givat Brenner (later on she received the Israel Prize). In

France the work was directed by Shmarya Tzameret of kibbutz Beit HaShita and Avi Shwartz of kibbutz Dafna. In the Balkans there were Shaike Dan of kibbutz Ramat HaKovesh and Ehud Avriel of kibbutz Naot Mordechai. Alongside this wonderful group of people there were many others and I shall name only a few of them: Pinchas Kozlovski (Sapir), Yaakov Eshkoli, Moshe Agami, Munia Meridor (may they all RIP), and Lova Eliav and Levi Argov (may they live long). There were many others whom I have not named.

As I have mentioned, the Mosad for Aliya Bet started working in Europe in the 30's. It continued its efforts while the war was still raging, (the episode of the Israeli paratroopers was publicized and it was as a part of this operation that Chana Senesh met her death). In order to fully understand the secret of success of this group of people, one must understand the spirit in which these people acted. Men of the Jewish Brigade and Jewish soldiers from England and America made contact with the Mosad in Europe and exploited their positions as soldiers, when the war was over, in order to help save Jews. They made contact with the extermination camps and helped the Jews who

survived, organizing them for the journey to Palestine. That is the jist of the story of European Jewry after the war and of how it was aided by the young Israelis from the settlements of Palestine.

One more word to complete the picture: A large sum of money was involved in this whole operation and proper accounting under the conditions then existing was very difficult, if not impossible. However, those leading the operation and everyone else working in the organization regarded that money as holy, and lived a life close to that of a pauper. It later turned out that there were a few who exploited the situation for their own good, but they were the small minority and had no effect on the whole machine. Not long ago I ran into Yisrael Meital (Montowliski) who had been with his family in the Grand Arénas camp in France, when he was 15 years old. I was commander of the camp at that time. He told me how we looked to the ma'apilim. They admired our bearing, our assurance and our decisiveness. We were the prototype of the "New Jew". This admiration can also explain why we succeeded in our mission. We were working with a 'captive audience' that was ready to follow us through

fire and water, without questioning our authority; all this, despite our obvious youth and inexperience.

### **The Vision of the Dry Bones**

Fate smiled on the youth of my generation and we were granted a historical privilege. We had the great honor to live and be active in the fulfillment of the great dream of the prophet Ezekiel, the “Vision of the Dry Bones”. Its realization came at the horrific price of the destruction of a huge portion of our people, who were exterminated during the 30’s and 40’s of the previous century during the Second World War by Hitler, and then also by the attempts of Stalin to eradicate our people. With the rise of the State of Israel we realized the rebirth of our nation; it happened before our eyes. It was as Ezekiel said: “...And I put tendons and flesh upon your bones and put skin over them, and I gave you spirit and you lived. Come wind from the four corners of the world and awaken these dead so that they live...and so a great mass stood on their feet and behold, they were very many.” (Ezekiel, 37)

I served in Aliya Bet from February 1946 until June 1948 and as I look back upon those years I see them as the crowning achievement of my whole life.

### **Another Look at Aliya: Idith Zertal**

Idith Zertal, born at kibbutz Ein Shemer, is a leading historian in the stream of those who deny Zionism and preach a different view of it and of the State of Israel. They are called the "New Historians". I came across her name and her ideas in an article published in the newspaper *Haaretz*, which referred to her book "**The Jews' Gold**"<sup>1</sup> - the result of her research. I learned from that article, that it was the author's opinion that the leadership of the Jewish settlements in Palestine, with Ben Gurion at its head, brought the remnants of the Holocaust to Palestine for the purpose of using them to increase the fighting forces, in preparation for the War of Independence which was bound to come. In other words, they were to be cannon fodder!

I wrote Idith a letter in which I expressed my amazement in a very polite language. I received an answer from her, thanking me for the letter and suggesting that I read the book itself, after which we could meet and discuss it again. I purchased the book and read all of the more than 500 pages, but I ended

---

<sup>1</sup> Translation of the Hebrew title; it was published in English under the title: *From Catastrophe to Power: The Holocaust Survivors and the Emergence of Israel*

up very much angrier than I had been after reading only the article.

The book describes the rescue of the remnants of the Holocaust in a way which would make any anti-Zionist and anti-Semite proud. She ignores the fact that no other country in the world agreed to allow the entry of Jews and that they had been left without homes, without families and without hope. Zertal describes the leaders of the Yishuv as a bunch of cruel individuals working in devious ways and forcing desperate people to come to Palestine. Indeed, having no choice, they are brought on rotting and dangerous ships, under sub-human conditions, they arrive in this foreign country and are thrown into a desperate war, in the course of which many of them are killed. She describes the cruelty of the young Israelis, the Palyam and the soldiers of the Jewish Brigade and other branches of service in bringing these ‘slave ships’ to Palestine.

I did not find in the book any supporting testimonials; not from one ma’apil nor from one Palyamnik such as I. I know how strong the desire of the remnants of the Holocaust was to come to Palestine, and how

disappointed they were if their turn was delayed. The “Exodus” is the best example of this. After arriving in Palestine and then being sent back to France, they were offered refuge there, yet only a few of the weakest individuals took up the offer. Sick people and women with advanced pregnancy were the only ones to leave the vessel. They also found a means to return to Israel at a later date. In a telephone conversation with Zertal I expressed surprise that she did not interview any ma’apilim or any of those who accompanied them. Her peculiar answer was: “History is based on written material and not on interviews.” I said that may be correct as regards ancient history but it is ridiculous when there are many who are still living that experienced an event. Our discussion became more severe and was discontinued. I was cut off by her for some time after that, but I wrote her a letter and detailed my criticism of her book.

A few years later I was invited to participate as a speaker in a seminar on Aliya Bet at kibbutz Ma’ale HaChamisha. Idith Zertal was to lecture at the seminar. The organizer of the seminar asked me if my name could also be included as a speaker and I agreed. I suggested, however, that if my name was published

then Idith was likely to beg to be excused from appearing. That is exactly what happened. In my lecture I told my own personal story after which I expressed my anger at Idith's book and accused her of telling a bunch of lies. I finished my diatribe against her with a very severe sentence: In Zertal's description of the actions of Ben Gurion and the leadership of the Yishuv, the only accusation missing is that Ben Gurion encouraged Hitler to wipe out the Jews so that we would be able to convince the remainder to come with us to Palestine, where they could act as 'cannon fodder'. I admit that I exaggerated, but I was mad!

The letter exchange with Dr. Idith Zertal is enclosed in appendix A.

## **Chapter 2: “Exodus”**

---

The nights are warm and pleasant on the French Riviera in the month of July. A ship carrying 4,500 passengers on its deck is waiting to sail. She is waiting for the pilot who will guide her out of port and into the open sea. The launch did not arrive so someone went to his house to call him. The ship's crew is on edge; dawn has come and the British have spotted the vessel in the port of Sète, west of Marseille, and demanded of the French government to block our exit. The French procrastinated as they were aware of the precarious situation of the passengers, the remnants of the Holocaust. They preferred to cast a blind eye and not to intervene. The hours go by; we must leave tonight. The young captain of the ship, an Israeli, a member of the Hagana - Yitzchak (Ike) Aharonovitz - decides to leave without the pilot, at night, under

cover of darkness. On its way the ship runs into a sandbar and with great effort manages to pull itself off and to continue. This is the beginning of a long journey which became a focal point in modern Jewish history. The story of “Exodus from Europe – 1947”, better known as the “Exodus”, started several months earlier with the preparation of the vessel for its journey.

In June of 1946 I was working in a Camp called “Scout Hill”, located at a villa overlooking the port of La Ciotat, about 40 kilometers east of Marseille, on the French Riviera. This little port has served as a departure point for a number of vessels. Several days after one vessel would depart, another would come in and we would start on her. I and several of my friends went out for a short ride in a motor launch and we visited a neighboring bay. When we returned, we noticed a group of girls swimming in a sheltered spot in makeshift swimming costumes. As we drew closer we realized that these girls were candidates for sailing on the next ship to depart for Palestine. They were part of a group of about twenty young men and women, who had volunteered to set the camp in order and clean it up. This they did quickly, efficiently and with

enthusiasm. They belonged to a group of English Habonim that had been in a training commune before coming to France. One of this group was Marga and as happens between young people, we took a liking to each other. I learned that Marga had arrived in England on a kinder-transport from Germany only months prior to the outbreak of WW II. This transport had brought 10,000 orphans or part-orphans to England in 1939. For a while she wandered about England until she ended up on the Habonim farm in southwestern England, where she did very difficult farm work.

Shortly after the end of the war she arrived in southern France with some of the members of her commune. She was a beautiful girl and she caught my eye (and she has remained so even today)! Her eyes had a look of understanding and we became and have remained firm friends. Directors of the Mosad for Aliya Bet decided to train some of those ma'apilim who knew Hebrew as Gid'onim. Marga and some others of her group and more from other groups participated in this course. When they completed the course they joined the crews of the ships as full-fledged members of the Palyam. Marga worked with me on preparing the

“Exodus” for its journey. Arranging for the organization and care of 4,500 passengers entailed a good deal of work. During the months of May and June hundreds of survivors streamed into Marseille every week.



*Port de Bouc, 1947*

*Right to left: (sitting) Gad Hilf, Shaul Biber,  
(standing) Willi Rostock, Nissan Leviatan, Marga in a  
nurse uniform, (sitting left) Yair Barka*

The Mosad for Aliya Bet and the Hechalutz movement hired the Grand Arénas camp from the French authorities. This had been a camp for prisoners and refugees during the French War against Viet Nam. The bunch that was to direct the camp consisted of

seamen, Gid'onim and other emissaries. The place had to be cleaned up and fixed to handle 3,500 survivors. The other 1,000 were scattered in various other camps in the vicinity. Meanwhile, the ship and its commander arrived at Sète, about 200 kilometers west of Marseille. Yossi Harel had experience as the commander of several vessels that had carried a large number of passengers. He had been in command of the "Knesset Yisrael" which had taken on 4,000 passengers in Yugoslavia at the end of 1946. I was to be in charge of the 4,500 ma'apilim of the "Exodus". This was not a simple job but I did it in close cooperation with Yossi Harel. The ma'apilim were organized into groups the size of which was dependent upon which holds they were to be in and how many would be in those holds. Each group had its leader and we tried to keep these groups as homogenous as possible.

Each group contributed a number of its members to work for the general needs of the vessel, such as guard duty, policing and sanitation. Each group had a number designating on which deck and in which hold it was to be. This system later proved itself, and made the embarkation of the passengers on the ship proceed

smoothly. The Mosad people in Marseille developed excellent relations with the local authorities and were also responsible for the supplies of the ship. The Joint proved very useful in organizing the supplies for the journey. Several days before the ship was to leave, a strike broke out among the truck drivers union of France and there was danger that this would interfere with delivering the ma'apilim to the ship, but due to the good relations with the truck drivers union, 150 drivers were given permission to carry them. Often the roads to the ports were very crowded but due to the strike they were now completely clear.

The ship took on the ma'apilim during the night and on the morning of the 10<sup>th</sup> July the vessel "Exodus" was ready to pull out. That same morning "things started to get hot". The British demanded of the French authorities to delay the sailing of the ship. The crew, with young captain Ike at its head, decided not to take any chances and in a daring maneuver left the port without a pilot or help of any sort. It reached the open sea and kept going. The ship reached the shore of Palestine but was overtaken by the British Navy. The ma'apilim were transferred to three deportation ships

and returned to Port-de-Bouc, France, not far from Sète, the port of embarkation.



*Port-de-Bouc, en route to the deportation vessels,  
August 1947. Right to left: Alfred from Hechalutz, an  
American journalist, Marga, Nahum Hillel*

They arrived back in France on 31<sup>st</sup> July 1947. For three weeks the ma'apilim refused to leave the deportation ships and the French government refused to have them disembark by force. Marga, who had been in one of the camps near Marseille, acted as a nurse and a contact with the Palyam on the ship and on shore during this period. She boarded the ship every day together with the doctor. After three weeks

of stalemate the British government ordered the ships to sail to Hamburg in Germany, which was in the British area of control. The ma'apilim were removed from the ships and again incarcerated in a prison camp in Germany. They were freed after not too long a delay and most of them made their way back to Israel. The "Exodus" was the vessel that had carried the largest number of passengers that had ever left from France.

### **After 60 years: We Were All Exodus**

For many years, Marga and I have been contemplating a journey to visit the places where we met. The opportunity presented itself from an unexpected source, and gave us a chance to see the area and relive the experience. To commemorate 60 years of the departure of "Exodus", the French Second Television Channel (France II) had a full-length documentary film produced, which tells the story of this ship's historical voyage. For the sake of the younger generation, I should point out that the story became quite famous when a book by Leon Uris titled "Exodus", was the base of a feature film by that name made in 1960 by Otto Preminger – a renowned American producer. The film, starring Paul Newman,

told a story based on the ship's voyage, but borrowed facts from other ships and ended in Cyprus, to where the refugees were supposedly deported. To give credit where credit is due, it is important to note the incredible contribution of the novel as well as the movie, to spreading this story of the refugees throughout the world, arousing public opinion, awareness and support to the founding of the State of Israel as the Jewish Homeland.

The documentary film was born in the mind and pen of the French director Jean-Michel Vecchiet, who was fascinated with the tale of "Exodus". He knew the story from the American commercial film. He searched in libraries for additional material and was surprised to discover that no documentary film existed, and that the true story is even more complex and shocking than that portrayed in the movie. He wrote a new script, chose to use testimonials from those who took part in the voyage, immigrants and Palyam activists, as well as news reels from all over the world, who followed – in real time – the evolving drama. The production crew came to our house to interview us, and during several hours listened, recorded and took photos. On their way out, with the

crew already in the car, the director turned to us and asked whether we would be willing to come – as their guests – to the South of France, to continue filming on location. Needless to say we accepted. The production company invited a few immigrants who were on the Exodus and three Palyam members who took part in the odyssey, to film on location in Sète – the port of departure and in Port-de-Bouc – where the deportation ships returned, before continuing to Germany.



*12 July 1947 - Preparing for the departure of Exodus  
in Sète, France, Uri directing the embarkation*

In July 2007 we arrived in Marseille, together with a few of the immigrants. We stayed at a hotel near Port-de-Bouc. We were taken to the port where – 60 years earlier – the three British deportation ships, had

brought the 4,500 immigrants of the “Exodus” back to Europe, in a symbolic, cruel and mean act, and moored for 21 days in July 1947.

We were received by the town’s mayor, a charming woman in her 20’s and a supporting crowd. Only then did we realize that the French people and especially the town’s citizens were very proud of their role in the ordeal, in the help and support they had provided to the refugees at the time.



*60 years later, 12 July 2007, the port of Sète, France.*

*Uri during the documentary filming*

We realized that the “Exodus” ordeal became part of the town’s history. And indeed, the support offered by the town’s citizens to the refugees, who stayed on the ships for 21 days, was crucial to their survival. It included medical help and supplies, food and water, but most of all, it brought moral support to the refugees’ struggle. The survivors refused to disembark from the ships.

An impressive ceremony was held at the town hall plaza, with greetings and moving encounters with the younger generation and some members of the community of 60 years ago, whom we remembered. Among them was the town’s physician who took care of the sick on board the ships. We also met the sailors who sailed the tug boats which brought food and other supplies to the ships, and brought Marga, who was the liaison between our people and the men and women on the ships. Here, 60 years later, we learned that Marga was nicknamed “the Spy”, as they could not explain the role of this refugee-nurse-communications person who spoke Hebrew, English and German fluently.

We were treated to a lunch buffet that was very pleasant. We then left for Marseille, where another reception was held in our honor by the local Jewish community. Here too, we met some old friends who helped the “Exodus” as well as other ships that took off from the South of France. Another day was dedicated to a tour of the comprehensive exhibition laid out by the town, displaying the history of the Jewish communities in Europe and the story of “Exodus”. We then went on to a day of shooting film in Sète, where the “Exodus” sailed from. This visit was extremely meaningful and exciting to both of us, as I am sure it was to the rest of our group.



*Marga and Uri (right) with the film director – Jean-Michel Vecchiet (center) and Michelle Hassoun,*

The film's producer, the director and other members of the crew came to Israel to take part in the pre-opening screening, which was held on 20 November 2007 in a community center in Ashdod, with many recent immigrants from France who live there. It was also screened in the Atlit camp. The film titled "We Were All Exodus" was aired on France II on November 29<sup>th</sup>, to commemorate the UN resolution regarding the establishment of the State of Israel in 1947. The film producers hoped it would be screened on television and in cinemas in Israel.

## **Chapter 3: Procurement**

---

### **Importing Weapons for the State-to-be**

In May 1945, soon after WW II had ended, the Jewish population in Eretz Israel started preparing for the struggle for the establishment of the State. The Hagana, the main clandestine military organization of the Jewish community living in Palestine, started to amass weapons, ammunition and other equipment. The potential enemy, in the eyes of the Hagana commanders, was the local Arab population in Palestine. The type of armament they thought fit for use was light weapons (rifles, pistols, etc.). The sole leader who foresaw and predicted the future, who saw the neighboring Arab states as the potential enemy, was David Ben Gurion. He held the post of Chairman of the Jewish Agency, which acted as the de-facto government of the State-to-be. In the beginning of 1947, Ben-Gurion called in the Hagana's top

commanders and those who handled armament procurement and told them: "Do not concentrate on light weapons; we need tanks, warships, fighter planes, artillery." One of those present at the meeting wrote a quick note which was circulated among the participants: "The old man has gone crazy". Only those who lived in Eretz Israel at the time could appreciate the amazement with which those participating reacted. Only a few could understand the foresight of Ben-Gurion. Thus, the search for advanced weapons started; preparing for the expected war for independence.

All the Western countries, including the United States, imposed a strict embargo on the sale of weapons to the local Jewish population. The only country who was willing to supply us with heavy armament was Czechoslovakia. Ehud Avriel, a member of kibbutz Naot Mordechai, had developed a relationship with the Czech government. In 1947, when the end of the British mandate, as well as the end of the struggle for the foundation of a State were approaching, military hardware deliveries from Czechoslovakia started to arrive. The Mosad for Aliya Bet which handled immigration from Europe to Eretz Israel was put in

charge of the procurement. The Czech government gave us access to the Zatec airport, some 50 kilometers from the capitol, Prague. The air service of the Hagana, which was the nucleus on whose base the IDF Air Force was later built, grew and developed. Jewish pilots as well as air line owners from around the globe volunteered to participate, and soon an air train from Zatec airport to the Tel-Nof airport (as well as other airports in Eretz Israel) had begun. Tens of planes carrying weapon, dismantled air fighters as well as varied equipment created an air train from Czechoslovakia to Eretz Israel. The activity enjoyed the blessing of both the USSR and the Czech governments.

Ehud Avriel headed the operation, and became the first Israeli Ambassador to Czechoslovakia when the State of Israel was founded. Meanwhile, young men from Eretz Israel were sent to train as fighter pilots. Most of the instructors were Czech. These trainees would become the skeleton of the young IDF Air Force, including Motti Hod, who later became the Air Force Commander.

## Transmission Station in Prague

During the years the Mosad for Aliya Bet was active in Europe, following WW II, several transmission stations were operated by the “Gid’onim” in major European cities. There was no such station in Prague when the weapon deliveries started, rendering the communication between the activists in Europe and their commanders in Eretz Israel almost impossible, and highly unsafe. All coordination from Zatec had to be done through Paris, by phone, and then coded and transmitted through the Gid’on Network – to Palestine. Ehud Avriel managed to get the Prague authorities to allow the establishment of a formal communications office on Czech territory. We purchased a powerful transmitter and the necessary equipment, and the engineer Sam Hillel and I left for Prague, to install it.

Following so many years of secretive, underground activity, equipped with home-made faint transmitters (for fear of being discovered), we arrived in Prague, with the designated equipment, where we passed customs with the courteous assistance of the airport police. Setting up the station was an unforgettable experience: climbing up to roofs, setting antennas in

broad daylight, was a novelty... in a day or two, communication was operational and we were able to transmit and receive messages to and from our counterparts in Eretz Israel. For me, having been used to operating underground transmission stations, (maybe this is where my hearing problems started), it was a remarkable sensation to operate the first official communications station of the State-to-be. It set the grounds for the more sophisticated network of foreign stations, which operates today with technologies and scope that are beyond my grasp.

It is important to remember the names of those who managed the incredible Gid'on Network: Jan (Yaakov) Yanai, who managed the Hagana stations worldwide; Moshe (Zick) Yerushalmi, who managed the Gid'on network and operated as the Gid'oni aboard several refugee vessels on their way to Palestine. Moshe headed the foreign network for many years, a network born in obscure rooms in European cities, in Arab countries and in the communication cabins on vessels of ma'apilim.

## Closing Shop

The air train described here was a necessary source of weapons, without which it is hard to imagine the victory of the IDF in the War of Independence. At the beginning of 1948, the British government applied pressure to halt those shipments, and managed to get the UN to force Czechoslovakia to stop them, and have the operators leave its territory. We were instructed to board the last plane that took off from Zatec to Palestine. I landed in Tel-Nof in the middle of the war. Going north, our vehicles were shelled near the Arab village Mrar, close to Tel-Nof, but I managed to get home safely, to the surprise of my relieved parents.

## The First (?) Smuggler of the State of Israel

With the founding of the State, the gates were open for immigration. Some of the Aliya Bet vessels were converted to carry weapons, war supplies and equipment for the IDF, in the midst of the War of Independence. I sailed on board the Italian vessel Montechiaro (renamed Ha'Har), commanded by Yona Yavin, where I was in charge of communications as Gid'oni. We sailed to Marseille, where we met Yehuda Arazi and his assistant Dani Agronski

(Agron), who loaded some 20 ‘Hispano-Swiss’ anti-aircraft guns, accompanied with travel documents, stating their destination. Arazi and Agronski gave me a present, a small Beretta pistol. We also loaded several tons of onions, “to scare the evil eye”..., to hide the precious cargo from the UN ships, who were enforcing the weapons embargo on the State of Israel. We had two sets of documents for the cargo: one stating the ship was carrying anti-aircraft guns from Marseille to South America, which we used with the French authorities in Marseille; the other stated that the ship was carrying several tons of onions, designated to Haifa...

I remember a conversation I had with Yehuda Arazi, on board the Ha’Har: before leaving Marseille; we were discussing philosophy and arms trade... Arazi came with a Polish arms dealer who, to me, seemed the archetype of an arms dealer, who thrived on war and blood. I asked Arazi, how we, as people with high moral standards could possibly negotiate with that person. He replied: “Theories are always good, but once your life is at risk, you should re-evaluate your conceptions...”



*Uri on the Montechiaro*

We sailed at the end of May 1948, on calm seas. Following voyages in immigrants' vessels, sailing with cargo that did not require tending to, nor food, water or fresh air was refreshing. We arrived in Haifa after seven days. Once we passed the inspection of the UN officials, (expedited, no doubt, thanks to the onion and its poignant odor), the inspectors were treated to a glass of wine and let us go. I was met by a representative of the Mosad who escorted me out. As we were leaving the harbor, he asked if I had anything to declare. This was my first entry to the State of Israel. I was surprised by his question and replied I had nothing to declare, but immediately thought of the pistol hidden in my toiletry case and told him about it. Following his advice, I left it under the seat. When we left the harbor, I thought I should have told the

customs officials: “I brought 20 guns and one small pistol”. Thus, I became the first (maybe) smuggler to the young Israeli state. I had the gun legally licensed and kept it for many years. I guess after 60 years, I am not getting myself in trouble...

### **The Gid'on Network**

The communications network of the Mosad for Aliya Bet, named Gid'on network, held stations in major cities in Europe: Prague and Bucharest in the East, Rome, Milan, Paris and Marseille in the West. The equipment was built, for the most part, by our own engineers and technicians, members of the Hagana and Palmach: Ra'anan (Rani) Rubinstein, Tzvika Beit-Din, Naftali (Nafta) Raz, Yeshayahu (Ishi) Lavi, Sam Hillel who came from Scotland, and many other good guys. The network efficiently served the immigration and procurement operations, thanks to the devotion and zeal of its members, the Gid'onim. Its operation was confidential and only few people knew of it. It transmitted messages, instructions and reports in cipher, which we held to be unbreakable.

In the 60's, I served as an officer in the technology unit of the IDF Intelligence. Based on the excellent

working relationship we had with the Italian Intelligence, we hosted a delegation of their officers, and were invited to reciprocate. While we were in Rome, we arrived at Monte-Mario, where we had operated a clandestine transmission station in 1947, for the Aliya Bet.



*Operators of the Mosad for Aliya Bet in Rome.*

*Right to left: Max Bennet (known as Meir Bint, who was arrested in the '50s in Egypt in "the affair"), a local employee, Uri, Yoch, Mike Harari and Rachel Betzer. Top left: Azriel Einav*

As so many years had elapsed, I allowed myself to mention my service in the area in those years. Our hosts did not react, but the following day, I was

presented with a folder of our decoded secret letters. My escort explained that they knew of our operations, intercepted our transmissions and deciphered them, only to make sure we were not any part of the communist underground or any other risky element, jeopardizing the Italian government.

It is important to mention both the Italian and the French governments, who were very tolerant and positive in regard to immigration operations, as this anecdote demonstrated. It is hard to imagine the success of the Aliya Bet operations in Europe without this active (and passive) help.

### **Back to Marseille**

With the founding of the State, the title for many of the vessels that serviced the immigration and procurement effort was awarded to ZIM, which became the national marine carrier. To show its respect for those who took part in the immigration endeavor, ZIM offered them free tickets to Europe on board its ships. The ticket covered the trip only, and other expenses were the responsibility of the traveler. Our financial situation was dire. Nevertheless, I took a short vacation from the military and boarded the

Kedma, en route to Marseille. Marga was entitled to such a free ticket as well, having served as Gid'onit aboard an immigrants' vessel, but waived the offer, as she did not care for this Mediterranean city as much as I did.

The journey was marvelous. I was the Captain's guest, and was treated to a nice cabin, a pleasant dinner, etc. During a stop-over in Napoli, Italy, the Captain invited me to join him for a tour of the city, which I enjoyed. I could not understand the expression "to see Napoli and die". I admired the beautiful scenery and thought the expression should go – "to see Napoli and live!"

In Marseille I met an old friend – Joe Baharliya. He was Jewish, the owner of a local company that provided all kinds of services to the docking ships. He was of great help to the Mosad for Aliya Bet, and his command of the Hebrew language was limited to two words, which he often used: "yihye beseder", namely – it will be all right. And indeed, things were all right, if "kosher" or less kosher. Joe took me to a modest hotel, and I toured the neighborhoods I used to like. I rented a small car (Citroen Deux-Chevaux), and drove

to the locations of the camps were we worked. I had to survive on limited means, but I refused Joe's offer to take care of the hotel bill for me. I gladly accepted his invitation to a traditional Friday night dinner at his house, and enjoyed meeting his family. We also met in town for lunch, one day, but all in all – I was too proud to take his money, and survived on the little I had, eating cheap sandwiches for lunch. On the last day of my visit, I treated myself to dinner at a small restaurant that my buddies and I used to like when we worked in Marseille. We used to order steak and fries and drink the local cheap but good wine. I did just that, but was skimpy on the wine, for fear I wouldn't have enough cash to pay for it. Only when the bill came, did I realize that the mineral water I ordered cost more than the wine. The taste of that wine I did **not** have stayed with me for a while after returning from this beautiful journey.



## **Chapter 4:**

### **Childhood and Adolescence**

---

I remember a pleasant spring day in 1936. I am ten years old, a fourth grade student at the “Haviv” elementary school in Rishon Lezion, (which is still active today). I walked the one and a half kilometer dirt road, leading from the school to my house, as I did every day. When I entered Nachlat I noticed a gathering near “Abram’s Bench”, at the corner of Hameyasdim [the founders] and Habanim [the sons] street. (This bench was named after Abram Miller, a born cripple, who was a smart and interesting person. The bench where he used to sit became a substitute for the village center.) That day, many of the villagers who were working their farms gathered there, with long faces. This is how the events of the 1936 massacre registered in my memory. In the South of Tel Aviv, in Jaffa, in Haifa and elsewhere around the

country, Arabs had attacked Jewish neighborhoods. Tens of Jews were killed, others fled or were wounded. At the young age of 10 I was recruited to deliver messages and notes from the Hagana activists in our village to Rishon Lezion and back to Nachlat.

I was born in Nachlat Yehuda in February 1926. My mother, Dvora, born Abarbanel, came to Palestine from Odessa via Beirut in 1912. She was a nurse and a midwife and worked at the “Wallach” hospital in Jerusalem, at “Hadassah” hospital in Tel Aviv and later on in Petach Tikva. My father Dov Greenblat came from Lithuania in 1913, “the Second Aliya”, and joined a group of pioneers who founded the village of Karkur (near Hadera). He was trained to be a veterinarian and in 1920 moved to Rishon Lezion, to become the town’s vet. My parents met in Palestine, got married in 1922 and settled in Nachlat Yehuda. Here they labored hard at their farm, which included cows, an orchard and a vegetable garden. In 1924 my father brought his parents to Palestine, to live with them. My older brother Aharon (Aronchick), two years my senior and I grew up in a house that was Zionist and which appreciated culture. We spoke Hebrew at home, my father read Hebrew, which he

learned at the “Heder” in Lithuania and later in the Ponivesh Yeshiva. He read classical Russian literature as well as Hebrew Zionist literature, written by his contemporaries, and read daily the Hebrew paper “Davar”. My father took part in the public activities in Rishon Lezion, as an activist in Mapai (the labor party) and in the Farmers Association. He was also an active member in the “Bnei Brit” organization in Rishon.



*Uri (right) with his parents Dvora and Dov and his Brother Aharon, Nachlat Yehuda, 1943*

My mother was known as a nurse and midwife in and around town. She was often called to assist a woman

having a baby in Rishon Lezion, or in the neighboring “Ezra U’bitzaron”. She was famous for her warm attitude and her help with the families whose babies she delivered. She often collected clothing and toys to bring along on her visits, was interested in their well being and provided help and advice.

I participated in the youth movement of “HaNoar HaOved VeHaLomed” [Hebrew: working and studying youth] and continued with my studies at the “Gymnasia Realit” in Rishon Lezion. Toward the end of my third school year there, in 1943, I joined the Hagana like many of my generation. My brother Aharon joined the Jewish Brigade, which fought with the allies against the Nazis in Europe. At 17 I was recruited to the “Jewish Settlements Police”: a force established by the British Mandate to help protect Jewish settlers from the Arab hooligans. Its headquarters was officially run by the British Police, but in practice it was run by the Hagana and became its strong arm. Training and various operations of the Hagana took place under its roof.



*Uri in guard's uniform, 1943*

At the end of WW II, in May 1945, I was trained as a wireless operator and served in the Hagana communications network. This network was a high-security organization, and except for the top level

Hagana officers, no one was aware of its existence. The Rishon Lezion transmission station was installed at the Pais residence, on the third floor of their apartment building on HaCarmel Street.



*Guards in the Jewish Settlements Police 1943*

*Right to left: Ygal Ben David, Shmuel Bashari, Uri*

David Pais was a high ranking activist at the Hagana, and agreed to host the transmission station and its activity at his home, despite the risk to his family, should the station be discovered by the British. I operated from their house on a daily basis. I always felt welcome and practically became a member of the family.

The British figured out the existence of an underground network and attempted to locate its stations, using electronic monitoring equipment. The transmission station was held in a suitcase, hidden in a closet in one of the bedrooms. One evening, while I was transmitting, we were told that the British were conducting a search of the building, in order to expose the station. I quickly hid the suitcase in the closet and sat with the family for supper at their table, identifying myself as a relative and a guard in the Jewish Settlements Police. The British policemen were served beer and delicacies, the equipment was never discovered and they left the house. I am telling this episode in honor and appreciation to the noble Pais family, who took a risk by hosting this transmission station.

At that time I studied playing the trumpet, and joined the “Hapoel” orchestra in town. The conductor was Shimshon Drori, who was also the conductor of the Maccabi orchestra in Petach Tikva. The orchestra played an important role in the May first holiday – the holiday of the international workers, which was celebrated with fanfare then. Shimshon the conductor used to bring reinforcements from the musicians of the

Petach Tikva orchestra, and they simply wore our uniform and joined us; we did the same when they needed our help in Maccabi's events, like the Maccabia games. It was the symbol of co-existence. Later, the Jewish Brigade orchestra was founded and Shimshon Drori became one of their conductors. He also played for the orchestra of the "HaOhel" [the tent] theatre.



*Trumpet players of the "HaPoel" Rishon Lezion orchestra. Uri- second right*

Occasionally, when he was unable to keep his commitment there, I was chosen to replace him. I have added this to my resumé. I actually enjoyed it. My pay was tiny but it was the first paycheck I ever received

in my life. I also enjoyed mingling with famous actors and actresses like Meir Margalit, Lea Dganit and others. Thanks to my playing in the orchestra I had a chance to attend many performances.



*Uri playing the trumpet in a “Gadna” ceremony, 1943*

During the years I spent with the Illegal Immigration – Aliya Bet, I had the trumpet with me, but did not get to use it much. In November 1946 I arrived at Haifa harbor on board the “Latrun” as the commander of the ship that carried immigrants from “HaBonim” in England, of whom Marga was also a member. Later on, this group founded the kibbutz Kfar HaNasi.

When the ship was captured by the British navy, the immigrants organized resistance. To encourage them I climbed to the ship’s bridge and played the national anthem, Hatikva on my trumpet. Apparently, it wasn’t so effective: the British seized the ship and transferred us all, including the trumpet, to Cyprus.

After many years, the members of Kfar Hanasi organized a party, commemorating 40 years since the event. I was asked to play the national anthem again. I tried to evade it, claiming I was rusty, and haven’t used the trumpet in years, but to no avail.

I played, I wasn’t proud of it, and at the end of the party I approached the organizer, who was one of the immigrants on that ship, apologizing for my poor performance. He told me it wasn’t any worse than

when I played it on that historical moment on the ship...



## **Chapter 5: Military Service**

---

During the several decades of military service, I myself felt, and I believe other officers also thought, that I was a good, disciplined commanding officer. However, I had little or no tolerance for acts of meanness or stupidity, and I certainly encountered those. I did not hesitate to speak my mind, even when it concerned my superiors. I am satisfied with my conduct, and can testify that I did manage to achieve the goals I set forth. At times I risked my career, as the following anecdotes demonstrate.

### **Officers Training Course**

I joined the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) as an officer, following my service in the Aliya Bet and Palyam. Yet, I volunteered to attend the officers training course. It was held in December 1948, a few days after Marga and I were married. I was in platoon A,

where I found several of my old friends. After two weeks of training, we were about to go on our first weekend leave, and for a reason I can't even remember, but which we held to be extremely unjustified, the leave of our whole platoon was cancelled by the course commander. Following a short discussion among ourselves, we decided not to obey and leave as planned. We excluded the one cadet who was on duty that day, who risked being held responsible for our action. As soon as the other platoons boarded the buses on their way home, we started marching in formation toward the gate, and there we took a bus or hitchhiked our way home. I was responsible for notifying headquarters, and so I did. The military police were called to locate us and managed to stop a few of my buddies, but most of us found our way home and spent an enjoyable weekend. We returned to our base on Sunday and we were reprimanded, but the training continued, and the event was practically ignored. I admit I was among those who initiated this act of disobedience. Among those with me were fighters from the Harel unit. Among them, Abram Arnan, who later founded and commanded the famous General Staff Scouting Unit [Hebrew: Sayeret Matkal], who came to the course

from the battlefields of the War of Independence. Needless to say, we were granted some leeway.

While my friends in my platoon knew me and my doings, there were some who treated me with an unexplained animosity. Pinhas Sapir (then – Koslowsky) – who was a member of the government and later became Minister of Industry and Trade, visited us as a guest speaker. He knew me from the operations in Europe in Aliya Bet, and when he recognized me among the cadets, stopped the lecture, hugged me and told the others about our shared operations abroad. After the conference, some of those who had treated me badly approached apologizing, and explained that they took me for one of those deserters, who were sent abroad by their parents, away from the battlefields at home.

### **Training Base 7**

Following the officers course, I was sent to attend special training for communications officers at Training Base 7. There were about 10 officers of various ranks with me. The course was interesting and progressed as planned, when at some point, the base commander (who was a good friend of me and my

family) decided that we should remove our ranks, and eat with cadets rather than enter the officers' dining room. He added some other peculiar limitations. We thought his decision stupid and redundant, and decided to react in a rather original way: to remain silent during the training sessions. We did not reply to the instructors' questions. This continued for a couple of days, and the base commander decided to have us all arrested, and kept together in a small room. The reaction came sooner than he expected: the Chief Communications officer came to the base, released us and set the clock back and revised the orders. Everything was back to normal...The event echoed for a while and the developments that followed were quite surprising: a few months later, the Base Commander was replaced by my friend Moshe (Mussik) Gidron, and when he left to pursue his studies, I replaced him and became the Base Commander.

### **The Paratroopers Division**

In 1952 I moved with my family to live in kibbutz Kfar Hanasi. We were accepted as members of the kibbutz. Soon after, I left the army and worked in the kibbutz. Toward the end of 1955, in preparation for the Kadesh Operation (later known as the Sinai War),

I was approached by the army's Chief Communication Officer and asked to return to the army for one year. Following a turbulent meeting of kibbutz members, my request for a one-year leave was turned down (by a small margin). We left the kibbutz and I rejoined the army. I was appointed Training Officer for the Communications Force, a desk job I was not keen on. During that time, a new Paratroopers Division was being formed, with Ariel Sharon as the Chief Commander. I submitted my candidacy to become Communications Officer for the Division, even though the job required a Captain and I was already a Major. I was interviewed by Arik who chose me for the post.

We founded a communications platoon, based on selected soldiers from the communications department of Battalion 890. In Israel in those years, the Fedayun often penetrated the Egyptian or the Jordanian border, raiding settlements close to the border, killing and terrorizing civilians. The Division retaliated, chasing them away and raiding their villages, in what was called Tagmul [retaliation] operations.



*A meeting at the Paratroopers Division headquarters  
Left to right: Uri, Ariel Sharon*

The communications infrastructure served them well, and the Communications Platoon acquired its status, accordingly. Meanwhile, plans to fight terror on a larger scale were put in gear, resulting eventually in the Kadesh Operation. My relationship with Arik Sharon was good but not close. He treated the communications as a service of inferior level, compared to his attitude to the field fighters. In preparation for one of the drills, I took part in an officers' meeting, where I presented the communications infrastructure. During my presentation, Arik made a comment that was both

hurtful and insulting. I stopped cold, left the room in protest and went home. My friends thought the incident would mark the end of my service in the Division, that Arik would probably expel me. That evening I was called to report to his office immediately. I was sure this was the end of my period with the paratroopers. Arik apologized for the insulting tone he used. The incident actually contributed to bringing us closer and to my status in the Division.

In the Kadesh Operation, Battalion 890 parachuted in the Mitle Pass, and a group of communications technicians from our platoon joined them. I was in the vehicle with Arik on our way to meet the paratroopers. Even though the communications equipment we had was inadequate for the distances required in this operation, we managed to have constant communication thanks to improvisations and various tricks, motivated by the slogan: “there will always be a connection...”



*The Paratroopers Division headquarters team. Left to right: Intelligence officer – Gideon Machanaimi, Operations officer – Mano Shaked, Communications officer – Uri Goren*

Arik started to plan the entry through the pass, a move that had been banned by the Chief of Staff, Lieutenant General Moshe Dayan. Dayan was afraid that Sharon would cross and enter the pass, despite his instructions. He sent Rehavam Zeevi (Ghandi) in a two-engin Piper to “keep an eye” on Arik. I was the only witness to their conversation in the Jeep that day, regarding the orders and the need to obey them. They figured out a solution: it was forbidden to enter and seize the pass, but a surveillance mission was within the power of the commander at hand. This is how the

first battalion entered the pass, was involved in a bloody confrontation and suffered many casualties. Another battalion was sent to rescue the wounded soldiers, and then a third one. This redundant battle took the lives of some thirty paratroopers and many were wounded in its process. The argument about what had happened developed into a bitter controversy, which lasted for many years.

During the battle of the Mitle, I witnessed another quality of Arik: as the surveillance group entered, we saw the reception they encountered and the evacuation of the wounded to the back. The Division's physician, Dr. Shlomo Shibolet, told us that he lacked the proper equipment to treat that many patients, and that it was necessary to evacuate them to hospitals back home. The landing strip that was prepared there could only serve lightweight aircraft, while the evacuation called for the landing of a Dakota. Arik contacted the Air Force, asking to send the planes, but was answered with an absolute refusal, due to the surface conditions. He ordered his units to bring all their heavy engineering equipment to a designated location and then put every available soldier to work, to help prepare an improvised, longer and sturdier runway.

The Air Force sent its officers to verify the conditions and approved the landing of the Dakotas. Thus, many of the wounded soldiers' lives were saved. The discussion regarding the battle at the Mitle Pass developed into a bitter controversy between the Division's staff and the office of the Chief of Staff. My contribution was limited to telling about Arik's quick and resolute decision and his resourceful action to care for the wounded.



*Uri with Arik Sharon, 1956*

*Santa Katarina Monastery – Moses mount*

In 1999, the soldiers of the Communications Platoon in the Paratroopers Division commemorated 40 years of its founding in a ceremony held in Ramat Gan, and

published a special booklet for the event. Gadi Katz, who was a soldier in the Platoon and later became a close friend, wrote about Uri.

Gadi's letter – translated:

*The Communications Platoon Commander – a Former Wireless Operator*

*When Uri was 30 years old, hardly the typical age for new adventures, he volunteered to join the paratroopers, and to establish the first Communications Platoon of the recently formed 202<sup>nd</sup> Brigade. This was the era of the retaliation operations, (Tagmul), and the Paratroopers were responsible for most of the action. Uri, whom we held as a father figure, thanks to his age and experience, but mostly thanks to his friendly, modest style, cooperated with us, the veterans of the Communications Department of Battalion 890, building the first Paratrooper Communications Platoon, practically from scratch. We knew Uri was a Morse operator, and an experienced Gid'oni from the days of the illegal immigration and the days before the founding of the State, and we held him in the highest esteem, professionally. Uri passed the paratroopers training course much later than we did. He brought*

*along some of his friends, like Zaki Keini and Benni Gefen, his peers. This was a rather unique phenomenon in the paratroopers, but as his friends, we welcomed them with open arms. Uri was our commander in all the retaliation operations, starting with the demolition of the police station in El Rahawa (on the Beer Sheba - Hebron road), through the “Gerandal”, “Hussan” and “Kalkilie” and up to the Sinai Operation.*

*A great quality which we came to appreciate in Uri was that he let his subordinates work. He trusted us and knew how to express his appreciation for a job done well, to reward when it was justified. In return we tried our best to be worthy of him. There was never an episode of loss of communications or a telegram that did not reach its destination, no problem that wasn't tackled before turning to him for help.*

*Even though the Platoon was among the best in the IDF, the equipment was poor and primitive and made us resort to improvisation. We took advantage of some quiet days between operations, to experiment with the equipment we had, like the TRC-7, MK-109, MK-10, etc. We tried to prove to ourselves and to our*

*superiors that we could make use of these tools, way beyond the dreams and expectations of their design-engineers. For example, communicating from Tel-Nof to Beit-Lid with an MK-10, using special antennas we built, based on some radio hobby manuals we found... We knew the communications units were always under the scrutiny of the Operations Branch [Agam]: if our missions were carried out successfully – they would go unnoticed, but if - God forbid – a slight failure occurred, a unit not reached by communications or a telegram delayed – we would have been criticized and shamed. We did our utmost, so that Uri would not have to be in this position, losing face.*

*40 years have passed since then; to the best of my recollection, we managed, so that Uri was held an excellent Communications Commander in the eyes of the Division headquarters. This was a magnificent period with excellent guys, who did a significant and meaningful job under the rule and command of a person, who managed to integrate professionalism and command - with friendship. A great man!*

Following the Sinai War, I left with Arik and a few of the Battalion's officers on a tour of the Sinai

territories. During the tour, which was for the most part, friendly and unofficial, my relationship with Arik grew closer. This friendship lasted for many years. However, when Arik entered Israeli politics and established his Right-wing party, Shlomzion, I refused to join as a party member, and our friendship faded away. My service at the Paratroopers Brigade was, undoubtedly, one of the most exciting periods of my life.

### **Zimmel Resnick**

Following the Kadesh Operation and the occupation of Sinai, Zimmel Resnick, a US citizen, came to Israel as a guest of the Communications Force. The US government had issued a travel warning for the region, banning its citizens from visiting the area, excluding journalists. Zimmel acquired a journalist pass from his small New Jersey town journal, and came to Israel. As the Communications Commander of the Paratroopers, I was charged with entertaining the guest. I took him over Sinai in an Air Force Dakota, to Sharm-Al-Sheich, where I asked a Piper pilot to fly us over the area, to give Zimmel a better view. A Kalashnikov rifle (looted during the war) I gave the pilot as a present persuaded him to take us. Zimmel, who was

very imaginative, was very excited and moved by the flight.



*Zimmel with high ranking officers of the Communications Force. Left to right: Uri Goren, Ishi Lavi, Zimmel Resnick, Ariel Amiad, Zalman Shalev*

A few months later, I received a letter from Motta Gur, who was a Paratroopers Battalion Commander during the war and was sent on a lecture tour to the United States. The letter contained a page from the local paper of Asbury Park, New Jersey, (the town Zimmel came from), dedicated to an imaginary story by Zimmel about his flight over the Sinai Mountain. It

told that Zimmel was annexed to the Paratroopers unit that conquered the Mountain of Moses, Mt. Sinai. He went on describing how he was tied to the “Paratroopers Commander, Colonel Uri Goren” and how, following the conquering of the mountain, he was picked up by a plane, using a rope-ladder which he climbed, to get back to an Air Force base. Motta added three question marks with a red marker. I met him when he returned to Israel and told him the actual story, which was a whole lot less exciting. I kept that paper for years... Unfortunately, I lost that copy and, despite my efforts, could not get hold of another one.



*Zimmel with soldiers in a IAF Dakota, en route to  
Sharm-al-Sheich*

Zimmel Resnick was a soldier in the Hebrew Battalion who participated in WW I. Following the war he moved to New Jersey USA, where he settled with his wife Miriam in Asbury Park. He ran an amusement park there, developed the business and became an affluent, recognized member of the Jewish community. He maintained close ties with his Israeli friends. His house was a warm Zionist Jewish home. Not far from the town where he lived, was the central Communications school of the US Military. When the IDF and the Communications Force were established, Zimmel developed close relations with this excellent school, and initiated its cooperation with the Israeli Communications Force. He often helped transferring training manuals and important professional articles. In addition, his home was open to communications officers from Israel, who were sent to train at the school.

In 1965 I was sent to New York to study. I visited Zimmel in his house, and was received by his friends from Asbury Park as a hero. To my great astonishment, they swallowed his imaginary story and he became the town's hero. To his request, I refused to answer any questions on the subject, claiming "top

security information” and evaded this embarrassing situation.



Zimmel was childless, and following the death of his wife lost his business as well as his social status in his community. He died lonesome and was buried as a poor man in a remote cemetery. Mr. Joseph Harish – judge and former Judicial Advisor to the Government, was a close friend of Zimmel and told me of what had occurred. I approached several ex- communications

officers who had visited Zimmel's house on various occasions; we collected some money to bring his body to be buried in the cemetery of the "Hebrew Battalion Soldiers" in Avihail, (near Natanya). A moving military ceremony was held in his honor, in the place we thought he would have liked to spend his final rest.

### **Military Reserves Service**

In 1958 I graduated from the military Command and Staff College ["PUM"] and was appointed Communications Officer and Commander of the Communications Battalion of the Central Command. Following my time in the paratroopers, this seemed like a less demanding post. Things were calm, in general, and I was happy to assume a different type of service. The Chief Commander of the Central Command was Brigadier General Yosef Geva – a close friend, and his second in command – Rehavam Ze'evi – H.I.D. – whom I knew well. We held an annual command drill, in which all the various systems were used and tested. The Battalion was made of soldiers and officers in their regular service, supplemented by some hundred soldiers and officers in reserves service.



*Uri shaking Prime Minister - David Ben Gurion's hand at the Graduation ceremony of PUM, 1958*

The issue of the reserves service was always an important yet sensitive subject, and the army was right to apply various means and methodologies to maintain the spirit and performance of these troops. Most of our reserves staff was summoned to the Central Command drill. One day, I received a phone call from a clerk in the Foreign Office in Jerusalem, requesting that I release one of their employees, as he was needed for a crucial job at his office. I politely turned him down, to which he replied, threatening: "You will hear from us!" The conversation was over. Few hours later, I was called to the Brigadier General's office, who told

me he received a call from the General Manager of the Foreign Office, reiterating the clerk's request. I explained to the Brigadier General, that among the reservists were soldiers who left their source of income, closing their private businesses for the duration, in order to fulfill their duty. I thought that if anyone deserved a break it was these independent earners, for whom the burden of the service was much more significant financially, than for their peers who worked at government or public offices, who continued to receive their salary despite their absence. I explained that those soldiers had nobody to plea for them, and if we honor such requests we would end up with low level staff only. I added that if ordered to release the clerk, I would first release those soldiers who were independent providers, and as a result - the Battalion would not have been properly staffed to fulfill its missions. Needless to say, the clerk was not released and the Foreign Office managed without him for the duration of the drill. In my view this was an important issue and a matter of principle, regarding equality in sharing the burden.

Years later, while I was already a civilian, I read that the Inspector General approached the military to

release a clerk in her office from reserves duty, claiming he was crucial for a specific activity in her office. I wrote her a letter explaining my view of the matter at hand. A few days passed and I received her reply, in which she praised my standing and the polite letter. She promised to do her best to refrain from such intervening in the military in the future.

The letter exchange with Ms. Miriam Ben-Porat is enclosed in appendix B.

## **Chapter 6:**

### **Service in the Intelligence**

---

In 1962, I was approached by Abram Arnan and Gideon Mahanaimi, on behalf of the IDF Chief of Intelligence – Meir Amit, who offered me the command of the Intelligence Technology Unit.

I found a group of talented, well bonded people. The Unit provided technical services to the various intelligence arms: the Mosad, Shabak [General Security Service], as well as the Intelligence Force. My predecessor was inclined towards serving the Mosad and Shabak, while neglecting the Intelligence Force. My first assignment was to organize the Unit for an innovative and daring mission: some of its senior engineers suggested we build a revolutionary information gathering system, which involved new technologies and entailed a daring and risky

commando operation. Behind the idea was Abram Arnan, the founder and commander of the special General Staff Scouting Unit, who was blessed with a fertile imagination and vision. The groundbreaking innovation told here is a representative example of the Unit's achievements.



*Uri (right) hosting Defense Minister – Levi Eshkol during his visit to the Unit, 1963*

I was commander of the Unit during 1962-1971, with a two year break for advanced studies in the USA. It is my duty and an honor to list here the names of my dedicated, loyal partners in the Central Gathering Unit, who deserve the credit for many of the ideas, as

well as for carrying them out. Unfortunately, after over 50 years, I might not remember all the names: Dr. Yehuda Zuker, David Bronstein, Gabi Fischer and Shimon Slutzki, Shlomo Shifris, Moshe Weinstock, and the entire team of the Engineering and Electronics departments from the Technology Unit. There is no doubt that their daring as well as the professional talent they demonstrated, helped build the trust in the Unit's technological capacity, whose fruits are still evident today.

In mid 1966 I left to study in the US. Abram Arnan replaced me in my position as the Unit's Commander, and continued to advance the Unit's achievements. With the Six Day War approaching, I returned to Israel and joined the Field Security Wing. At the end of the War, I returned to the Unit, and Arnan became Commander of the Intelligence Gathering Department. The technological backbone of the Unit, which relied heavily on computers and electronics, was expanded and continued its outstanding performance. The fruits of this continuous effort were recognized with numerous awards of the Israeli Prize for Security, decorating the walls of the Unit Commander's office.

The Unit continued to thrive, adopting the advent of digital communications successfully. In 1968, we were expected to develop both active and passive means of intercepting enemy communications, and at the same time – protecting ours. A team of the best and the brightest engineers - from the Technology Unit as well as from the Gathering Unit - was formed, to handle the mission.

### **A Breakthrough**

In 1962, soon after I joined the Intelligence Technology Unit as its Commander, we launched the planning and development of a unique and daring project, headed by David Bronstein and Yehuda Zuker. Abram Arnan, the Commander of General Staff Scouting Unit at the time, was excited by the possibilities the project would open, and took it upon himself to promote and advocate the project. It called for an unprecedented cooperation of a sister-unit as well as the Air-Force, and required a hefty budget. It called for technological solution which seemed imaginary and non feasible at the time. Chief of the Intelligence Force then – Major General Meir Amit – supported the project; however, it was soon discovered that the cost was way beyond the military

available budget. Amit managed to recruit the Chief of Staff behind the project, and he, in turn, brought it up with then Defense Minister – Levi Eshkol. Eshkol was convinced of the need and gave his blessing to the project. The leaders of the Intelligence Wing, the Gathering Department Commander and other senior officials – were skeptical and were discouraged by both the prohibitive budget scope and the operational risk. Nevertheless, the initiative went forward and accelerated, thanks to the diligence and imagination of Abram Arnan and the enthusiasm of the Unit's senior staff and that of the General Staff Scouting Unit. Additional help came from Major General – David (Dado) El'azar, who was a close friend of Abram Arnan. They fought together in the Palmach - Harel Division, in the vicious battles to open the road to Jerusalem, during the War of Independence. This is where a close friendship developed. This relationship helped overcome both bureaucratic and logistic obstacles.

The project was completed in 1965, and activated in a risky operation that was based on close cooperation of a selected team from the Commando Unit and Helicopter pilots, led by Uri Yarom. Despite

enormous difficulties, the installation was carried out successfully. Yet, the following morning, it looked like no transmissions were coming in. Abram Arnan, senior officers of the sister unit and I, were called to the Chief of Staff's office, to face a battery of "experts" who were claiming: "We told you this plan was unable to produce the desired results!" While we were there, the Unit's engineers, together with their colleagues in the sister-unit, were busy improving the reception components and before lunch time, precious information started to flow in.

The system provided valuable intelligence before and during the Six Day War. The success of this project contributed to relying on technology based systems, and gave a tremendous boost to the advancement of the Unit, and also to the cooperation of the technological and operational capabilities of the Intelligence Force.



*Posing for a group photo, following a successful operation, 1964. Left to right: Jacob Becker, two members of the helicopter team, Meir Har-Zion, Ehud Brug, Yehuda Zuker, Uri Goren, Avraham Fischer.*

*Top right – Moshe Weinstock*

## **Studies in USA**

In 1966 I left for the US to study technology at the RCA Training Institute in New York. Marga and my sons – Gideon and Avner – joined me. During the briefing before my departure, I was advised by Aharon Yariv, then Deputy Chief of Intelligence: “The studies are important, but it is also important to improve your English, to study the American lifestyle and especially

– the Industrial activity there. You should also get to know and develop relationship with the Jewish community". It was clever and important advice. I was fascinated by school and the new world that opened to me. We lived in Rego-Park, Queens, and developed a new routine: Marga worked at the Israeli Consulate in New York, Gideon attended third grade at Forest Hill High School, and Avner attended Middle School. We lived modestly, as my pay was limited, but it was an interesting period.

In May 1967, a "waiting" period started in Israel, leading to the Six Day War. Tension rose and we were anxiously waiting for any sign from Israel. I was recruited, as were many other representatives from the Security Forces, to promote Israel's cause among the Jewish communities around the USA. I visited new places and met Jews, who were as worried as we were. My studies were interrupted and I requested to return to Israel. I was ordered to leave school and return home just five weeks before the end of the school-year. I left without saying good bye or explaining my departure. Imagine my surprise, when I received a Graduation Diploma with good grades, as well as an encouraging note from the teachers, via mail. Most of

the instructors were Jewish, who identified with our cause.

A few days before my departure to Israel, Colonel Jacob (Yak) Nevo visited us. He was a famous fighter pilot on his way to Israel, leaving his studies in the US Air-Force College. He was one of the officers who prepared the Air Force attack on Egypt. When he noticed our anxiety, he comforted us, explaining: “Don’t worry, we will hit them swiftly.” He demonstrated with his hands how they were going to attack the Egyptian Air Force. The events that evolved in early June closely followed his description. Two days after his departure, I was expected to leave for Israel.

I had to report to the Ministry of Defense Mission in New York, to arrange my flight. Marga and the boys were supposed to stay behind until the end of the school year. My passport was nowhere to be found. I almost gave up, when Avner – our youngest – admitted to having “confiscated” it, and would not return it unless he could go with me. I succumbed to the ultimatum and he flew home to Israel with me. When we came to our house in Nachlat, he quickly

joined his friends, who were busy filling sand sacks. I saw him there and thought of a fish out of water, who was suddenly returned to the water and recuperated fast... I returned to my duties, and when the war started I thought of what Yak had told us in New York.

In 1971, following 28 years of service in the Defense Forces, I found myself - for the first time - in direct conflict with my superior commander, Eli Ze'ira, who – in time – would become the Chief of Intelligence. I thought he was too smart (for his own good), but devious and lacking conscience. The Yom Kippur War provided an affirmation of my observation, when Eli – as Chief of Intelligence was conceived as responsible for the Intelligence failure in the war.

During my years in the Technology Unit, I got to know Eli Ze'ira as an arrogant officer, who was at the time a Colonel, in charge of the Gathering Department, my superior. He did not like (to put it mildly) - the fact that I stood on my own on various matters. The dislike was mutual. Eli was the reason I decided to leave the service after so many years. In retrospect, this was one of the best decisions I made in

my career. Once released from the military, a new active and fruitful chapter of my life started, a blessed time of activity in various domains, including time with my family, activities in the Israeli industrial arena, in agriculture and in social endeavors.

### **The Bronstein Fund**

In 1977 I left ECI, and continued to serve in the reserves service in the Intelligence Technology Unit. That is where I met Colonel Yitzhak (Itzik) Turgeman, with whom I founded the Bronstein Fund, commemorating David Bronstein – a senior engineer in the Unit. The fund awards grants for academic education to outstanding, non-academic soldiers, who complete their service in the Unit. Over the years, the fund has donated over 200 grants. About 150 students have already completed their studies and were successfully absorbed in both civil and military industries. The fund is supported by contributions from the Unit's graduates, many of whom had founded thriving businesses. I served as the chairman of the Fund since its inception. In 2007 I transferred the control to a senior engineer in the Unit, but I continue to help solicit funds from graduates.

## **Atidim**

In the late 90s, the IDF experienced a massive desertion of engineers, lured by the Hi-Tech industry, which offered high salaries and extended benefits. The number of applicants to the Military Academic Reserve dropped substantially. Meanwhile, a thorough survey conducted by the military, analyzed the applicants data to reveal an alarming fact: it turned out that the geographical periphery was not represented in the academic reserve, according to their share in the population. With the blessed initiative of Colonel Tal Dilian – former Commander of the Unit, Colonel Itzik Turgeman, Brigadier General Avner Barazani – who was Chief of Staff & General Corp department [Hebrew: Minhal Ha'segel] at the time, and Lieutenant General Shaul Mofaz - Chief of Staff, the Atidim organization was founded, aimed at recruiting youth from the geographical periphery of Israel to the Military Academic Reserve. The Industrialists Eitan Wertheimer and Benny Landa joined forces to finance the initiative, that help locate talented students in high schools around the country, help them with their studies by organizing soldier volunteers from the

Intelligence Technology Unit as well as the Gathering Unit, to tutor them.

Colonel Itzik Turgeeman founded and managed Atidim with enthusiasm and dedication. The Atidim program [Hebrew: Futures], expanded and became one of the most successful national programs dealing with education. The program was conceived and developed in the Unit, and is still run under its roof, for the Military Academic Reserve.

Sub-programs that have branched from it which are non-military are handled under “Friends of Atidim” - an NGO. It includes a Pre-Atidim sub-program, designed for the junior and high school education, which concentrates on empowering and reinforcing the youth of the periphery, with the aim of encouraging them to pursue an academic career. In addition, there are sub-programs geared for students from the periphery, who have completed a military service: Atidim for Industry and Atidim for the Public Service. The Industry sub-program links students with companies or businesses, which support them financially and employ them in limited capacity during their university years. Having trained them in

the way the company operates, the adopting company can - but is not obligated to - hire them as professionals upon their graduation, or release them from any obligation on their part. The sub-program for the Public Service operates on a similar basis, aiming at preparing a cadre of professionals, which would integrate in government and municipal offices upon their graduation.

Today, the program is also funded by the Jewish Agency and Bank Leumi, as well as by other private funds. Over the years, I have contributed in opening doors to companies who would adopt students under this formula, based on my business relations and connections. I sat on the board of Atidim, and I am proud of their achievements as well as of my modest contribution.

## **Chapter 7: Business**

---

### **The Roots that Developed into a Huge Tree (or even a forest...)**

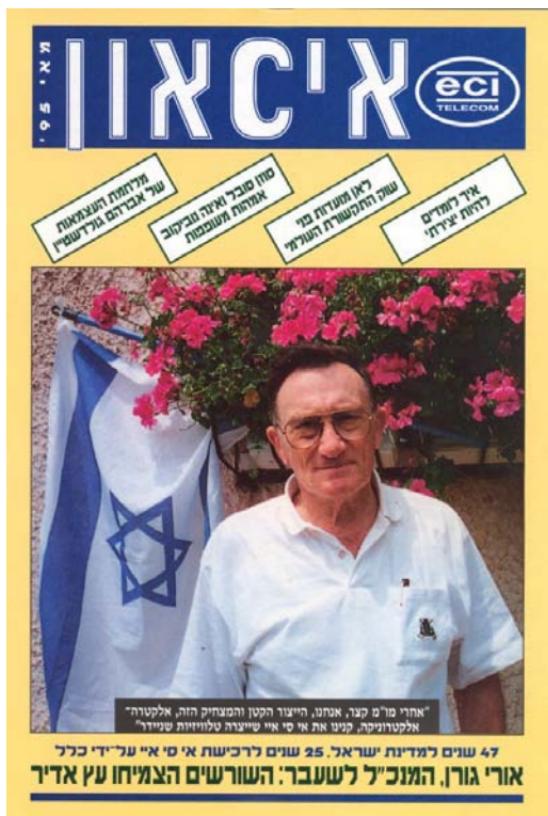
This is the story of two companies, who were started thanks to vision and intuition, even though their economical horizon seemed rather hazy at the time.

#### **ECI –Telecom**

In early 1971 I decided to leave the military and start my way in the civilian technological industry, which was in its infancy. I left the army not knowing what I would do. At the time, I used to train with a group of officers at the Sheraton Hotel Sport Center in Tel Aviv. At the end of each session we used to go to the hot sauna to recuperate. That day, among those sitting there was Haim Herzog, who later became the sixth

President of the State of Israel. We were friends since my service at the Southern Command. After a while, we were left alone, sitting in the sauna, naked as the day we were born. He was the Chairman of Electra – a Klal Group company. To his question, I responded that I had just left the military and had not decided on what to do. He told me that they had recently recruited a senior electronic engineer, who immigrated to Israel from the United States, where he had worked for Westinghouse, who came with great recommendations. His name was David Rubner. Herzog went on telling me that they were interested in starting an electronics company within Electra and Klal-Industries. I met with David that day, in Herzog's office. At the end of that meeting we agreed on founding the company, under the name Electra-Electronics.

Thanks to my connections in the military, we received a number of orders for installations of various antennas and other communications transmissions systems, but it was not an adequate source of income. We later acquired an existing company – ECI, which produced radio and television sets.



*Uri on the cover of ECI newsletter, 1995*

### **“Telephone Line Doubler”**

The company flourished. In 1972 I was approached by senior officers from the Intelligence Technology Unit, who suggested ECI would develop a revolutionary civilian communications system, much needed by the digital communications domain, based on a certain technology developed by the Unit, which had a non-

classified component. With the approval of the Ministry of Defense, the IDF and the Intelligence Force, ECI put together a team of engineers, who developed a unique system for conducting two conversations over one phone line, named “Telephone Line Doubler”, (later known as DCME technology - Digital Circuit Multiplication Equipment). The system supported transmission of multiple digital tracks over communication lines. This system practically laid the grounds on which digital communication was developed. It was the base on which a number of Israeli hi-tech initiatives started and made it.

ECI marketed the system to the international communications market, and became a leading international company in the digital communications domain. This initiative was one of the first such cooperation, which developed between the secret labs of the security forces and the hi-tech industry in Israel. This type of collaboration had expanded in scope, and contributed, no doubt, to the prominent status and high esteem Israeli companies enjoy on the international hi-tech scene.

While the system was being developed, we offered the Ministry of Communications, (today – Bezeq) to try out the system in order to buy it, and become the first to implement it. In a meeting held with the management of the Minister's office, where we presented the system, we were asked about the target date for completion and the estimated cost. When we replied, the Ministry's engineers told us “We don't believe you. Had it been so inexpensive and fast to develop, the international communications giants would have done it already, beating you to it.” We responded that no other company in the world possessed the know-how developed by the security forces engineers, “on both sides of the crypto”: coding messages by the Technology Unit and deciphering others by the Intercept Unit. They were not convinced. The system was purchased by the German Communications office, and later operated by communications companies in the USA and other countries. This was not the only case of false decisions by Israeli officials, stemming from mistrust and disbelief.

## Scitex and Effi Arazi

Yeshayahu (Ishi) Lavi, who served as the IDF Chief Communications Officer, suggested I meet an Israeli guy, who held a senior position in an Electro-Optic company in Boston. I met Effi Arazi in Boston, and found a charming, brilliant young fellow, who was accepted to study Engineering at MIT, despite the fact that his technological background was that of an Air-Force technician. Effi graduated from MIT with honors and started working in the industry, progressing to senior positions. He came to Israel and volunteered as a consultant to the Technology Unit and was later recruited to reserves service in the Unit.

After several years in USA, Effi decided to come back with a group of Israeli engineers, and start a scientific-technology company within the Weizmann Institute, funded by the investment company of Discount Bank. The company failed and was closed. Effi approached me as CEO of ECI – to found a subsidiary called SciTex, which would develop computerized knitting machines. I turned to Klal-Industries – ECI's holding company. In a heated meeting led by Aharon Dovrat - CEO of Klal and a battery of young economists, I presented the idea and was received with nothing short

of a cold shower: the economists described Effi as an adventurous dreamer “who brought down Discount...” I insisted there was merit to the proposal, and Scitex was indeed founded. It developed and progressed, and became one of the “first swallows” of the Israeli hi-tech companies. With two of my colleagues at ECI – David Rubner and Meir Lazer, we became shareholders in the company. In time, Klal decided to separate Scitex from ECI, and we sold our share for very little.

## **Leaving ECI**

My relationship with Klal-Industries deteriorated and I was contemplating leaving the company. The ‘last straw on the camel’s back’ happened in the midst of the Yom Kippur War, in 1973. As a senior officer in the reserves, I was a great source of information about the progression of the war. My nephew – Erez was wounded during the first day of the war and died several weeks later; my son – Avner participated as a tank fighter in the terrible battles of the Seventh Division in the Golan Heights. The sons of some of my best friends died in battle, and my spirit was low. In one of my conversations with Klal-Industries CEO – Abram Tversky, I described to him some of the

terrible events of the first days of the war. He told me: "Uri, don't worry, this war is going to make the industry flourish; we stand to benefit from it". I left angrily, and refused to speak to him again. This was when I made the decision to leave the industry. Luckily, the man who replaced Tversky as CEO of Klal-Industries was my friend, Major General (Res.) Zvi Zur, and I enjoyed a respectable departure.

## **Chapter 8: Family**

---

### **Marga**

December 2008 would mark our 60<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. Marga arrived in Israel in early December 1947, as Gid'onit on board Ha'Portzim [Hebrew: Invaders] ship, which reached the coast safely, near Tel Aviv. After a short visit to her sister Shlomit, who lived in kibbutz Matzuva and meeting other friends, she came to Nachlat Yehuda, to see my parents and deliver a word from me. My parents, especially my father, took to her at first sight, not knowing anything about her. A warm and friendly relationship was formed between my parents and her. She joined the IDF and served as a communications person in the Golani Division, which fought in the North of Israel, and was later transferred to the General Command headquarters.

We got married in a modest ceremony in Nachlat, in December 1948, with – literally – the alarming sound of war cannons in the background. When Marga was pregnant with our first born she was released from the military service. We lived with our son Gideon in a small room in my parents' house, modestly and happily. Marga's friends from "Hachshara" [Hebrew: training] – arrived in Israel and founded the kibbutz Kfar Ha'Nasi, near Rosh Pina in the Northern Galilee. Marga and I decided to join them as members of the young kibbutz. I was still in the military and retired in 1952. My parents Dov and Dvora decided to join us. Despite the hardships and dire living conditions (primitive toilets, muddy roads in winter, lack of sidewalks, etc.), my parents were well acclimated to living there. My father, used to village life, made himself useful: he scoured the premises with a wooden trailer harnessed to a donkey, collected sacks, irrigation pipes and paraphernalia, boxes and tools that were left by the members. He would take care of them, bring them to working condition and store them conveniently. A mutual fondness and deep appreciation evolved between the kibbutz members and my parents. His will serves as testimony to the

extent of my father's love to the place and the people, detailing his wish to be buried in the kibbutz.

*"With great appreciation and gratitude for assuming the chore, I hereby appoint the dear and honorable lawyer Mr. Rosenbush of Rishon Lezion and my son's wife – my daughter-in-law Marga – as executors of my will, as follows:*

- a. to have my body buried in Kfar Ha'Nasi in the Northern Galilee.*
- b. my son Uri – during the ceremony – would describe the reasons that led me to choose the kibbutz as my resting place, after my death: among people I love, the like of which for beauty of soul, dignity and purity of their ways – I have not met anywhere else.*
- c. the pick-up van (tender) registered to my name will be the sole property of my son Aharon.*
- d. bank notes deposited at Bank Leumi in Rishon Lezion: if a win occur – the entire sum would be handed to my wife Dvora. After her death, the notes would be divided evenly among my beloved sons: Aharon and Uri.*

*Dov Greenblat,*

*Nachlat Yehuda,*

*26 August 1959"*

On a harsh winter day of 1953, our son Avner was born, in the Scottish Hospital in Tiberias. By the end of 1955 I re-joined the military and we relocated to the families' residence in Zrifin – an army base close to Rishon Lezion. Soon after, we purchased the farm in Nachlat Yehuda, (where we live today) and moved there. Marga studied teaching and was employed as an English teacher and Deputy Principal at the “Yadlin” school in Rishon. She later worked as an English teacher at the “Ben Gurion” middle school in town.

Marga was born in Brandenburg Germany in May 1925, to Polish parents. Her father died in December 1932, leaving a widow with three young girls. In October 1938, when she was thirteen years old, she was deported with her mother and sister from their house in Brandenburg to a camp on the Polish border. This was how the Nazis treated Jews of Polish origin, as the Polish government announced it would not renew passports to Jewish citizens who lived out of its territory. After several months, Marga was sent to England, with the Kindertransport, an operation that rescued some 10,000 children from Europe that the British government was willing to let in. Her mother

and sister Paula were left behind, and were sent to the concentration camps, where they both perished.

Marga was a talented and curious girl. Her formal education amounted to seventh grade of elementary school in Germany, but she learned English, read books, and continued to study on her own through her entire life. She was blessed with diligence, thoroughness and uncompromising moral standards. Upon her arrival in Eretz Israel, she was well received by our extended family, and acquired their esteem. She has always been the “glue” holding family ties, sending birthday cards on time and remembering every family member. Today she does it for four generations: parents, sons, grandchildren and even great-grandchildren. For her unique qualities, Marga won the appreciation of our many friends and neighbors, as well as their families. I was lucky to have a wonderful wife, smart, organized and honest beyond reproach. Everything I have accomplished in my life – I feel she has had a significant part in, and I am content for having found a friend and partner for life. She keeps the Jewish tradition and bestows it onto our sons and daughters-in-law and our grandchildren, who accept it and respect her for it.

## Have I Mentioned “Yekit<sup>2</sup>”?

Most years I was an ‘absent’ father: my duties and activities in the military and later in business left the day-to-day education and managing the house to Marga. I do not have any regrets, as I believe I was a dedicated and loving father and involved my family in my doings whenever I could. I can honestly say I gave a positive personal example to my family. But the good things the children got were from their mother, who raised them according to her values. One such value was: “Order must be maintained”. (It sounds better in German...) The following anecdote demonstrates it well.

Over the years, Marga has maintained a strict routine, whereby certain time of the day is dedicated to swimming, others to reading, eating, studying and resting. Between 14:00 and 16:00 is rest time in our house.

In 1995, on a hot summer day, a severe fire erupted in Nachlat Yehuda, and firefighters, police and even a helicopter rushed to the scene. The news broadcast on the radio reported the event. Avner was at work at the

---

<sup>2</sup> A German born Jew, female

plant in Kiryat Ekron. One of the employees told him the news and suggested he called his parents. Avner's response was: "Between 14:00 and 16:00 I do not call home." The fire was taken care of, and Avner called after everything was calm. Even if he wanted to warn us, he would not have reached us, as all telephones and other ringers are set off at these hours.

### **The Jewish Cemetery in Brandenburg**

Avram Gothelf – Marga's father – died in 1932 and was buried in the Jewish cemetery in Brandenburg, where the family resided. In 1984, Marga decided to visit his grave, see her native city, which was then in East Germany, under Soviet rule. The trip was complicated and dangerous, but Marga carried out the mission successfully. She visited the cemetery, where a wall was erected with the names of those buried there, as most of the tombstones were ruined during the war. The area was clean and well maintained. Following the unification of Germany in 1992, we went together to visit the town that was already under western rule. We found a deserted, neglected, rundown cemetery. Marga started corresponding with the Brandenburg town hall, to complain about the neglect and the condition of the area. However, her

efforts to change it failed, until she ran into a young Jewish man, who was trying to revive the Jewish community in town. Marga offered to finance the renovation work at the cemetery. We collected the required sum among the immediate family, and had the memorial wall with the names of the deceased restored. The local municipality promised to maintain the place. During this activity, Marga met three women who were her classmates at school. They renewed their relations and keep in touch through letters and visits.

### **A Letter to Marga's Mother**

The following letter was written by our friend, Tamar Gidron, for Marga's seventieth birthday. In this letter, in her own words, Tamar expressed my sentiments and appreciation to Marga.

*"This is a letter I would like to have written to Marga's mother:*

*Dear Mrs. Gothelf,*

*Now that our generation is approaching old age, and the time for doing is almost over, it is time to reflect; and my thinking wanders to the future and to the past.*

*To the future – with anxiety and hope, and to the past – to memories. Strangely, even though the past – compared to the future – is supposedly known, it evokes wondering and presents us with questions that demand answers, insisting and not letting go. Such thoughts floated to my mind when I was asked to write a few words to Marga on her seventieth birthday. And from those thoughts, your image emerged before my eyes.*

*Even though I have never met you, you are engraved in my heart in an unexplained manner. The ordeal and hardships you have endured, from the moment of the abrupt deportation from your house to no-man's land, and up to the bitter end, have become a symbol to me, the manifestation of the fate of an entire people in one woman's life. And maybe that explains the urge I had, to write to you today. Because someone needs to tell you that your youngest daughter - Marga, who celebrates today the age you had never reached, has accomplished in her lifetime everything you could have wished for her: good life, rich and interesting, with Uri, in the State of Israel.*

*Marga and Uri's marriage may be seen as symbolic, too, as they combine the two extremes: the Diaspora girl and the Eretz Israel "native", East and West, a perfect "Yekit" with the Sabre of the Southern towns. And both of them – Gid'onim, dedicated to their mission. They each have, indeed, chosen the best they could hope for. Had you met Uri – you would have noticed it immediately and gladly give away your daughter to this man, with absolute confidence and trust. And indeed, they have established a beautiful family. Today, when both sons - much like their parents, the best of the best - have matured and started their own families, Marga and Uri are the happy grandparents: Gideon with Nava, Avner with Shoshi; Heela, Erez, Noa, Anat, the twins Eyal and Yoav, all surround them with love and affection. Love and affection are also bestowed on them by their many friends and acquaintances, as well as by the extended family. And Marga and Uri are entitled, after so many years of blessed activities, to appraise their life together with pride and satisfaction.*

*People who know Marga may wonder: those solid principles, the values, and the will and strength to carry them out, where did she get that from? That*

*determination, the confidence in her own way, the crystallized views, the sustainability, living up to her plans and promises. And where did she get that thirst for knowledge, for studying, thanks to which, this girl whose schooling was brutally terminated at thirteen, has become this intelligent woman? And where did this constant thrive for content, for culture, come from? And the loyalty to friends, and the talent to preserve and maintain family ties?*

*You have a significant part in all that, no doubt, because Marga knew to absorb and digest what you gave her. And I would like to ask: did you know you had to hurry and plant in her those basic elements, before it was too late? Did you feel your time was short, the ground shaking under your feet, that you needed to hurry and provide her with that which a mother gives her daughter, to carry her through life? You should know that: Marga does not forget. Whatever happened stayed with her, and she remembers. In her typical precision, every detail that concerns you or things you told her are all kept, nothing was lost. You succeeded in the most important task of your life, in the essence of life: you managed to pass on the principles, the most important things to*

*the future generation. Thus you have set a memorial to yourself, and maybe there is consolation in that.*

*Yours, sincerely,*

*Tamar Gidron*

*Shavuot, June 1995”*

### **The Yom Kippur War, 1973**

The Yom Kippur War was the war of the sons of the 1948 generation. The circumstances and sequence of events were the direct result of folly, hubris and arrogance of the Israeli political and military leadership. They were drunk with the surprising outcome of the Six days War of '67. While Israel considered itself a world-power, rested on its laurels drunk and complacent, the Arab armies, led by Syria and Egypt, were studying and analyzing the results, drawing conclusions and thoroughly preparing the next round. The military and its leaders infected the political leaders and the people with their baseless confidence, blind to their neighbors' efforts.

This was indeed the war of the sons. Many families amongst our friends, including our own, lost their sons in this terrible war. Erez, the son of my brother

Aharon and his wife Neomi, was severely wounded in the first night of the war and died several weeks later. He was a graduate of the Military Academy in Haifa, was recruited to the Armored Force, and following officers training course was on his way up the chain of command. He was a talented young man, pleasant and curious, who was interested in science and music. We all thought he would become a successful scientist.

The sons of our close friends lost their lives in the war: Shlomo – son to Dikla and Uri Baidatz, Ilan – son to Tamar and Mussik Gidron. These are just two of many sons of fighters and commanders in the IDF.

Avner, our youngest, was about to complete his officer training, and was sent to join the Seventh Division. He fought as tank commander in the atrocious battles on the Golan Heights, against the Syrian army. During the first days of the war we had no word from him. I was recruited with the reserves, to the Field Security department of the Intelligence. As part of my job, I came to the Golan Heights, the battlefield of the Seventh Division. On the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the war, still with no word from my son, I came to the Brigade Commander, where I met my friend -

Brigadier General Menachem (Man) Aviram, who was then Depute Brigade Commander. He told me he had met Avner few days earlier, and Avner had told him that his tank was damaged in the fighting. He wanted Man to help him get another tank, so he could go back to the front, to join his friends in the fighting. Man drove me to the gathering spot of Avner's Unit. I can still see him, his face all black, unshaved, his overall soiled with oil and dust. I was happy and relieved to see him. We hugged and kissed each other, I could not hide my tears. Only after the War, I heard – a little from him, more from his commanders and peers – about his courage, his leadership, and how close he came to being hurt. Avner advanced in the military during his reserves service, and became a Tank Division Commander.

Gideon had Polio as an infant. Except for a slight limp, he was a boy, now a man – healthy in body and mind. This is due to both his will and determination and to our support. He grew up with no discounts from us, but at the same time – with no set limits. When he became of age to be recruited, the military refused him because of his handicap. Gideon took advantage of the time to work and study, acquired proficiency and

advanced in his work, all the while, trying to convince the military to draft him.

During the Yom Kippur War, people were recruited for long periods of time, and the issue of uneven sharing of the burden was on everyone's mind. Gideon approached the military in order to be drafted to the reserves, but was turned down again. He asked me to help, using my connections in the army, but the bureaucracy ruled over common sense, and I was turned down, too. My friend Moshe (Mussik) Gidron was asked by Defense Minister Moshe Dayan, to return to the military, as Commander of Human Resources. Gideon, who knew him well, approached him, as Mussik was looking for ways to reduce the burden off the reservists' shoulders. He decided to examine the issue with the medical professionals, and did not accept their explanations. He studied Gideon's case in order to better understand it, and changed the regulation so others in similar predicament could be recruited to the reserves as volunteers. Gideon completed his training and became communications person in an armored unit, where he served for many years.



*The Goren's, Summer 2007. Right to left, standing:  
Erez, Uri, Heela, Boaz, Noa, Shoshi, Avner, Yoav,  
Anat, Shachar (Anat's husband); Sitting Marga, Nava,  
Gideon, Doron (Noa's husband), Eyal.*

## **Chapter 9: People**

---

When I turned eighty, my son Avner wrote<sup>3</sup>:

*There are security people, and there are some who are secure.*

*There are practical people and there are those who make plans.*

*There are naïve people and business people.*

*Some are creative, others simply dream.*

*There are those with the vision, others are smart.*

*Some are warm, others generous.*

*Some just love others.*

*There are those who collect friends, everywhere they go.*

---

<sup>3</sup> The original version was in rhyme. It sounds better in Hebrew...

*There are those who go whenever called,  
Others who have proof,  
And some – without us noticing – who reached Eighty.*

*We celebrate the birthday of a unique and dear man,  
Who is all these, but mostly –  
He has something that is unique, that others don't  
have,  
In essence - he is a people's man.*

*Throughout his life, in eighty years,  
A long way, exciting and rich with achievements,  
Life has written a book, rich in chapters,  
The life of a man, a member of a generation of giants.  
These chapters contain history and stories,  
Which, to the younger generation, seem like fairy  
tales.  
Filled with operations, resistance and salvage,  
missions and fighting.  
Productive, successful, managing, volunteering,  
always leading.*

*In this story, as is often the case, there is a motif  
Which repeats itself:  
At the end of each period, without fail,*

*At the end of a mission, a job, or a trail,  
For him – pay is not in funds,  
He simply collects more friends.*

*There are friends from childhood and the Palyam,  
From the paratroopers or from ECI,  
Some from The Unit, whose name I can't mention,  
And from the Organization whose name is not told,  
There are some from veiled operations,  
Not yet revealed, still protected.  
Others - throughout life he collected,  
A friend of a friend or the lawyer of the opposing side.*

*They say he respects others,  
He treats everyone equally,  
The Queen of England and the lady who serves the  
tea.  
He treats them all with courtesy,  
King or Queen, a server or a public servant,  
All are treated royally.  
He is attractive, charismatic, generous, dignified and  
modest.  
Naïve and patient, tolerant and smart, calm and  
honest  
When you ask for a finger – you get the whole hand,*

*Some insist he is one of the “Lamed Vav”<sup>4</sup>.*

*It is all very simple, he loves people,  
So everyone who meets him wants to be his friend.  
With no regard to religion, gender or race,  
People of all ages fall for him, easily.  
They admire him from Nitzana to the Galilee.*

*But not all is pink, and nobody is perfect,  
He has his faults like every human.  
The man is obsessed, he loses his mind-  
When it comes to his family.  
He is interested, he cares, admires and loves,  
Tries to know the details but “stay out of our lives”,  
With slight manipulations, we can hardly tell,  
He makes sure relationship is maintained well.*

*Happily married now for fifty seven years,  
Two sons, two daughters-in-law and six  
grandchildren.  
The grandkids take the cake, he already has six,  
And now there is a great-grandchild, to change the  
mix.*

---

<sup>4</sup> The 36 pure-hearted men in Jewish tradition. It is because of them that God did not destroy the world in order to do away with all evil.

*Uri, Father, Grandpa,  
I am carrying the blessings,  
On behalf of the entire family,  
We all love you very much,  
And wish you many more years,  
To be filled with happiness and good health,  
So that you can continue to volunteer.*

## About People

In my view, all people are equal. A worker in an orchard, a general in the army or a minister in the government. I have always respected people, as long as they did not give me a reason to think otherwise. Armed with that attitude, I met Holocaust survivors in Europe. I treated them as equals, learned and understood their hardships. I helped them as best I could, not as an instructor or educator but as a friend. Thanks to this attitude, I won their trust and their appreciation. Years after they built their lives in Israel, I was lucky enough to run into some of them, on occasion, often accompanied by their sons or even grandsons, and hear them tell proudly: “This is the man who brought me to Eretz Israel.” I can’t think of anything more gratifying. Some of them, second or

third generation of Generals in the IDF, lawyers, excelling farmers, others with advanced academic degrees. Most of the Aliya Bet immigrants integrated successfully and did well in their new country, in various professions. This is the bright side. The dark side, however, is the fate of those who came as immigrants to Eretz Israel and proceeded straight to the battlefields. They fell together with others who were born here, who gave their lives to their country. Blessed be their memory!

### **Lova Eliav**

Growing up at my parents' house, I learned to be attentive and help others. Friendship was also a key value, and luckily, I was blessed with many friends, who have walked the path with me. One such friend is Arie (Lova) Eliav, whom I met as a child on my father's farm. We later met during our activities in the Mosad for Aliya Bet, (Lova was a Palyam member then), and since our return to Eretz Israel we have not separated.

The following is an excerpt from an article in *Maariv* – an evening newspaper, on the occasion of Lova's election as “Man of the Fortieth Year”, for Israel's

40<sup>th</sup> Independence Day. He was asked to name his own “Men of Forties”, who represented to him forty years of Israel Independence. I was proud to be among them. The article contained an error, probably a misunderstanding of the author. As I saw it only after the article was published, I wrote to the newspaper’s editor, to set the record straight. (See my letter in Appendix C.)

### *“My Forties Men*

*Lova was very excited when we told him he was elected Man of the Year by our newspaper. That was before his receiving the Israel Award [Hebrew: Pras Israel] was made public. Who would he select as his own Men of the Year? “There are many good people; I would select those who are less known, [publicly]. Those who always did the work, even if they were not as diversified as I was.*

- *Gad Hilf, worked with me in Aliya Bet. For five years he served as Captain on board immigrants’ ships. These ships made it to Eretz Israel thanks to him. Later, he was among the founders of ZIM, where he was a senior Captain. During that time he was active in various operations concerning the Security of Israel. He personifies audacity, bravery, and wits.*

*While I was involved in twenty different things at once, he concentrated on one goal... ”*

- **Avram Dar.** *He was the hero of the espionage operations in Egypt, operating behind enemy lines in many dramatic endeavors. He was with me in the Port Sa’id operation. I would never have been able to do my job if it wasn’t for him. He lives on Mt.Carmel today and is involved in commerce.*
- **Uri Goren,** *a farmer from Nachlat Yehuda. He was with me in the Hagana, one of the best communications persons we had during the Ha’apala, [the illegal immigration to Eretz Israel], he commanded more than one of the vessels, he was the Paratroopers Force Communications Commander, parachuted with me in the Mitle Pass<sup>5</sup> and later held various positions in electronics and communications.*

*Lova also mentions two young students of Sephardic origin: Hertzl Ben-Asher, son to immigrants from Persia [Iran], today – the students’ Dean in the Tel-Chai College; Zohar Avitan, in charge of the military graduate students in Sha’ar Ha’negev College. Zohar was born in Sderot to Moroccan Immigrants. From*

---

<sup>5</sup> The Mitle Pass in the Sinai desert, in reference to an operation during the 1956 War with Egypt.

*Lova's words I expect we would hear more of these two.*

*These are Lova's good people. "*



*Visiting Nitzana, 2006. Right to left: Uri, Benny Landa, Lova Eliav, Brig. General Elazar Stern*

The following letter exchange reflects my close ties with Lova. He sent me a letter in 2001, to congratulate me on my promotion to Colonel. At the time, Lova was on Sabbatical in Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut.

*Trinity College, 23 April 2001*

*Dear, Beloved, Uri.*

*Upon receiving the rank of Colonel in the IDF:  
We are proud of you and of our friendship with you  
and Marga.*

*Since we met as young kids, in your parents' farm in Nachlat Yehuda, (Uri & Lova), through sailing on the Ada<sup>6</sup> (Uri & Lova), and up to when we both brought and married our loved ones from the Diaspora (Marga & Tania), through many years of beautiful relationship in Israel, you have been our Champion<sup>7</sup> of friendship. The help you have provided me with, full heartedly and with open arms, in both my social and political ways will not be forgotten. You gave me a shoulder to lean on, a helping hand, with no limits, you were like a brother to me.*

*For all these, my heartfelt gratitude.*

*In Friendship, Love and Peace,*

*Tania and Lova*

The response from Uri to Lova:

*Between Memorial Day and Independence Day,*

*25 April 2001*

---

<sup>6</sup> Ada – a ship on board which Uri and Lova met as young adults. See chapter 1 – Ha’apala.

<sup>7</sup> Play of words: In Hebrew, Champion and Colonel both share the word Aluf.

*Dear Lova,*

*Thank you for your letter that moved us and our family. In all the years of our friendship, you have been a mentor and a leader to me. The abundance of your activities and your creation in so many fields, in spiritual and in written words, through your innovative ideas in the social and political worlds, and your activity in settlements, in teaching. You have dealt with everything, from the idea to the execution, always thriving to perfection.*

*You were to us — and to many others — a role model, to follow in your footsteps, primarily in loving the other, whoever it may be. Naturally, people from all walks of life, of all origins, of all social rungs love you and are willing to follow you.*

*Your friendship, yours and Tania's, since childhood and through Ada, Lucia, Aliya Bet, "Eretz Ha'Zvi" [The Land of the Deer<sup>8</sup>] and Nitzana, and everything in between. This friendship has been, to both Marga and me, a source of pride and happiness; the good things I learned – I learned from you, and I am*

---

<sup>8</sup> A book Lova published in 1972

*grateful, and know not to let you down. I am sure we will continue, Tania and you and Marga and I, in this incomparable friendship for many years. And thanks for everything.*

*With friendship, appreciation and love,*

*Uri. (Marga joins me.)*

### **Ehud Barak**

I first met Ehud (then Brug) in 1962, when I was commander of the Intelligence Technology Unit. He was a young Lieutenant, (later Captain, and so on, rather fast. And the rest is history...) Ehud, together with a group of officers and soldiers from the General Staff Scouting Unit felt rather at home in my Unit. Ehud stood out, being curious and full of life. He was known for his eagerness to learn about the various departments of the Unit. He was adored by the female soldiers, and finally “conquered” Nava, who was a clerk-soldier in the Unit. This liaison lasted for many years. Years later, when Ehud was in the Central Command, he came to our house as a guest speaker, in a traditional gathering we used to hold every Independence Day. In an impressive and structured presentation, he laid out his views about Israel and its

future role in the Middle East. He impressed our guests and some said they could see him elected Prime Minister one day. And so they did.

In an election campaign that started with the foundation of his party “One Israel”, we followed him and helped him get elected Prime Minister. The goal was attained. I congratulated him, and wished him success the like of which he had accomplished on so many occasions, as commander during his military service.

The following letter is his response to my encouraging words, on the occasion of his resignation from the government in 2001.

*14 May 2001*

*Dear Uri,*

*I wanted to thank you for your letter and your encouraging words.*

*I was moved to discover that you wrote me in far-away London, and that during your vacation you found time to warm my heart.*

*As Prime Minister, I did as much as I could to prevent unnecessary bloodshed, and to clearly phrase a plan*

*to resolve the long debacle between us and the Arab world. I believe that in the base of the potential for peaceful secured future in our region, lays the recognition of both parties in the fact that in this small blood-saturated piece of land, there are two national movements, who have to reside side by side, with a definite border between them. Any delay in carrying out this solution will not change its essence, and we risk finding ourselves in the same spot, after both parties have paid a dear, bloody and redundant price. We live in the midst of a complicated period. This is not the time for personal calculations and casting blame. I am a great believer in observing the future with hope, and I trust that the achievements as well as the conclusions of my government will outlive its existence.*

*Yours, with all my heart, (from whenever),*

*Ehud Barak*



**Yossi Harel (1918-2008)**

A few days before the 60<sup>th</sup> Independence Day of the State of Israel, Yossi Harel passed away, at the age of 90. Yossi was a wonderful person: smart, brave and a true leader. I first met him when he was appointed to plan and lead an operation to get some 4,500 Holocaust survivors to Palestine, on board the “Exodus 1947”. I was his right hand. I met him later in life, in the IDF, where he served in a key role in the Intelligence Force. There too, I learned to appreciate and respect his wisdom and his judgment.

In preparation for Israel’s 60<sup>th</sup> Independence Day, my friends and I have submitted a recommendation to the Israel Award Committee, to award the prize to Yossi for his “continuous contribution to the State of Israel”. Unfortunately, the Committee decided to honor organizations that year, rather than individuals.

May his memory be blessed.

Following is the application for the award, detailing Yossi’s personality and his life endeavor.

*It is proposed to grant Yosef (Yossi) Harel the Israel Award for 2008, to honor his life-long achievement and unique contribution to society and to the State.*

*Arguments:*

*a. Curriculum Vitae: Yossi was born in Jerusalem in 1918, to a family who had lived in the city for six generations. At 16 he joined the Hagana, served in the special units under the command of Yitzhak Sade. Among other activities, he took part in the settlement of Hanita and fought with Orde Wingate in the suppression of the Arab uprising in 1936. He was secretary to President Haim Weizmann and assistant to Head of the Hagana – Yaakov Dori. At the end of WW II in 1945, he was sent to Europe to work for the Mosad for Aliya Bet. The proposal to award Yossi Harel the 2008 Israel Award is based on his activity throughout his adult life, and particularly for his work in opening the gates of Eretz Israel to immigrants, most of them Holocaust survivors, and for his unique contribution in penetrating the British blockade to facilitate the entry of Jewish refugees into Eretz Israel. For his brave and outstanding leadership and for his wisdom to recognize the limits of strength, and to stop struggles that could result in futile deaths.*

*b. His activities in Aliya Bet: his first mission in Europe was to organize, train and command over some 3,800 Holocaust survivors, who sailed from a*

*small harbor in former Yugoslavia on 8 November 1946, through the Black Sea to Eretz Israel. Following an adventurous journey and a struggle against the British Navy, who imposed the blockade on entry of Jews into the country, the refugees were led to camps in Cyprus. They were later transferred in various ways to Eretz Israel.*

*Yossi demonstrated leadership and organizational skills. Thanks to those, he was sent back to Europe to prepare and organize the departure of the next big immigrants' ship – "Exodus 1947". This vessel, with 4,500 passengers sailed from Sète in the South of France on 11 July 1947.*

*It is difficult to illustrate today the hardships (crowded dwelling, limited supply of food and water, limited medical care, etc.), that were involved in the sailing of that ship. The ability to win the hearts and trust of the immigrants by treating them humanely, with understanding, attained the impossible. When the ship was close to the shores of Israel, it was approached by five battleships of the British Navy. Two of them banged against it, and tens of soldiers boarded it, using live fire. The immigrants resisted as they had*

*been trained, but after three of them were killed and many others were wounded, Yossi decided – despite harsh criticism from the Captain – Ike Aharonovitch and other militant leaders amongst the immigrants – to terminate the struggle. He asked for and received blood and medical aid, thus preventing more victims.*

*This audacious decision – to stop this doomed struggle – was wise and necessary, and demonstrated his leadership, which was instilled in all the ships' commanders. With the transfer of the immigrants to the deportation ships, (which were expected to go to Cyprus), Yossi got his orders from the Mosad for Aliya Bet commanders to escape and stay in Haifa. At that time, preparations were made to get some 15,000 immigrants from Romania, on board the Pan-York and Pan-Crescent ("the Pans"). It was only natural that Yossi was assigned to this mission, to organize and command these vessels.*

*The story of "Exodus" was complicated when the deportation ships were directed to France, in order to return the immigrants to where they came from. Yossi was on his way to Europe to care for "the Pans", but his spirit and influence encouraged the immigrants to*

*refuse to disembark, and to declare in front of the world's journalists who gathered there, that they will only disembark in Eretz Israel. After three weeks, the ships and their passengers sailed to Hamburg, Germany. After a relatively short period, most immigrants made it to Eretz Israel and settled here.*

*Yossi managed successfully the sailing of "the Pans" and with them, became the organizer and leader of 23,000 immigrants, which make for almost one third of the 75,000 who came to Palestine between 1945-48 by the "shadow navy" of the Mosad for Aliya Bet and the Palyam. Yossi served as an outstanding example to all the Aliya Bet ship commanders and instructors. He may be defined as one "who carried his people on his shoulders". He deserves the greatest appreciation for knowing when to demonstrate resistance to the British Navy during the struggle, but to set limits and prevent loss of lives. In this he fulfilled the Talmudic expression: "Whosoever preserves a single soul of Israel, Scripture ascribes to him as if he had preserved a complete world". Yossi saved many souls. With the founding of the State, Yossi served in many sensitive roles in Military Intelligence, and even when*

*he turned to business life, he often assisted the young [national] security system.*

*For those deeds and for his lifetime story, he deserves the honor of the 2008 Israel Award, for an outstanding contribution to society and to the State.*

*Recommending: Uri Goren*

*P.S.*

*During a significant portion of his service in the illegal immigration, I served next to him and got to know him and admire his outstanding skills and traits, and his personal contribution to opening the gates to free immigration of Jews.*

### **Helping thy Brother**

Saturday morning, we sit for an elaborate brunch with some friends at our home. The phone rings, someone is asking for Uri Goren. The caller excused himself for calling at that time, but explained that he had to see me urgently and asked when he could come. I invited him to come over and gave him our address and directions how to get there. About an hour later, in walked a Jew, outraged. I excused myself from my guests and sat with him. He started telling his story: his son, a soldier in the air force, was arrested by the

military police, charged with rape. His son claimed innocence but the military procedures forbade any intervention. He wanted to help his son refute the blame and wondered if I could intervene on his behalf. He told me where his son was being held, and I promised to do my best to find out more details.

The guy thanked me for seeing him and left. I went back to my guests. Later that day, I called a friend to find out what can be done within the military in this case. My call worked, the misunderstanding was resolved, and the soldier was released. The next day, his father called me to find out what he “owed me”. I explained to him that no fee was in order, I just called a close friend and I was glad the issue was resolved. The man could not hide his surprise: “what do you mean, ‘no charge’? This is your work, isn’t it?” I responded that this was not my work, and wondered what he meant by that. “Aren’t you a lawyer”? He said. I told him I was not. “But I got your telephone number from the Information Service; I was looking for the lawyer Uri Goren”. I explained to him his mistake. “Then why did you help me? You don’t even know me?” he pursued. I told him I saw his anxiety, and since he approached me, I assumed he knew of

my connections in the military, and therefore tried to help. I was glad I could...

### **A Man Alongside the Road**

In the late hours of a weekday morning, I was leaving a central Tel Aviv parking lot, waiting my turn behind five cars. I noticed a sloppy looking man, unshaved, approaching each driver in front of me. The drivers paid him no notice and drove on their way. When he finally approached me, he requested that I drive him urgently to a nearby medical clinic, as he was very sick. He named the clinic and I took him there. I offered to see him in, but he refused, claiming he could manage on his own. He asked for my name and address, which I was reluctant to give him, but when he threatened to stay in the car I ceded. I gave him a business card and a 100 NIS note, so he can get to his home. He left. A few days later, I received the following letter. It turned out, the man was no other than the Holocaust author Di-Nur, also known as K. Tzetenick, who wrote several books, of which I have read a couple. I was moved by the letter and called the man, we met and became closer. Unfortunately, he died shortly after. I maintained the connection with his

son, and received several of his father's authored books, as a gift.

A letter from K. Tzetnick (on letterhead of the K. Tzetnick Award for Shoah Consciousness).

*Dear Mr. Uri Goren, you found me lost on my way to the hospital, I will always remember the way you suddenly appeared, not as an angel and savior but more, much more, as the common man, and you did not know, you would never know the condition I was in when you saw me.*

*The check you sent me, so much like you! It is so dear to me. I call on the heaven of Auschwitz as my witness, if this check was not of 100 NIS but of 100,000 NIS, it would not have been any dearer. Maybe the opposite is true. Your deed is dear to me, and now I can return your check. I simply do not need it, it served its role, warmed my soul.*

*Yours*

*(signed),*

*16 August 1994*





## **Chapter 10:**

### **Viewpoints & Opinions**

---

#### **On Peace and Society**

As a child in my parents' house, as an adolescent and as an adult, I learned to respect any man as a human being, to contribute to society and to believe in peace.

In 1946, at twenty, I was sent by the Hagana organization and the Palmach, to operate with the Mosad for Aliya Bet in Europe. This was a devastated Europe. Millions were killed, among them six million Jews, who died in concentration camps. The German army suffered a blow, not before entire towns were erased off the face of the earth. The relationships between the European nations were sour. In the midst of this chaos, the Jewish settlement in Palestine did its

utmost to assist – together with the world’s Jewry – to save the surviving refugees, and bring those among them who wished to come – to Palestine.

As a young man, I experienced the horror and the devastating results years of war had left behind. And yet, within three years, without me noticing the process, Europe recuperated to an impressive extent. There was still animosity and intolerance among various peoples, but commerce and tourism emerged among people of various nations. The most outstanding resolution was the understanding that everything is possible – but war. Years passed and Europe progressed further. The former Soviet Union disintegrated, the European Union was established and it seemed as if sanity returned. Animosity still exists between countries, but even Britain and Germany, who were ferocious enemies during the war, seem to enjoy a certain harmony. The hatred is still there on personal level, but the idea of using military force seems remote if not impossible.

I returned to Israel from my mission during the War of Independence, and adopted what I have seen in Europe: even after a bloody war, one should and could

aspire for peace, maybe a cold peace, which is still better than a warm war. During the war I was an officer in the IDF. I served as Communication Officer of the Golani Brigade, of the Paratroopers Brigade, and later on in a variety of units and assignments. In my mind, I always saw the picture of Europe after the war. I believed – and still do – that peace, maybe cold peace, between us and the Palestinians and other Islamic countries is essential, possible, even crucial.

Armed with this belief regarding war and peace, I met my long time friend – Lova Eliav. Lova entered the political life in Israel while dealing intensively with immigrants' absorption, founding new settlements and towns, and other good deeds. He became secretary of the Labor party, a job that rendered him quite close to the party's top leadership. But this is when the Six Day War erupted, with its incredible victory, and with it – started the moral, political and military deterioration. Lova presented before the party's leaders the idea of taking advantage of the results of the war, to make up with our Palestinian enemy, as well as with other defeated neighboring countries. Lova, who warned in his writing against the drunkenness of *Eretz Yisrael Ha'Shlema* – Greater

Israel, or literally, the Whole Land of Israel, found himself in conflict with the victory-drunk party's leadership, headed by Golda Meir. Among those who supported the "Complete Eretz Israel" vision were Shimon Peres, Moshe Dayan, Israel Galili and many others. The settlements movement took shape, a wound that did then and does still ferment pus, which endangers not just peace but the actual existence of our State. Lova was expelled from his office and started the hard and grueling road of going it alone. He wrote his prophesying book - *Eretz HaZvi* [The Land of the Deer], and started his long walk, on a tough political track, as a lone fighter for his way and his beliefs. I joined him, and did my best, with my limited resources, to assist him in his social and political path. I am proud of maintaining this long time unique friendship even today.

A few weeks before the Yom Kippur War started, and in preparation for the coming election, two events took place that are worth mentioning: Lova was the guest speaker in a gathering at our house in Nachlat. He criticized the government policy and the security leadership, led by Moshe Dayan and Shimon Peres. One of the guests answered him: "Lova, you are a wonderful person, you have done so much in your life

in immigration, settlement and society; Leave the security issues. Moshe Dayan is experienced and smart, where would you find a more suitable person?!” Lova replied: “You don’t need a military figure to handle security issues; you need a smart person who knows how to use savvy consultants.” In response to the large smile that spread over the audience faces, he said: “You could take a smart person like the Rabbi Verdiger from Po’alei Agudat Israel, and he would evaluate options wisely.” This response evoked short ridiculing laughter. This exchange saw its way to the press, somehow. During the horrible War that followed, when Lova was visiting the soldiers in the South, he was approached by one of the officers: “Lova, where is Verdiger?”

Just before the Yom Kippur War, Lova, who was a talented author, wrote the “*The Seagull Fable*” for the *Davar* newspaper. The fable described a ship that sails on calm seas, its top deck occupied by honorable leaders, who drink and eat happily and leisurely. The middle deck is occupied by the common people, trusting the vessel is sailing on peaceful waters, and that the captains are skilled and qualified. In the bottom deck are the sailors, rowing their oars, working hard, sweating. (These are the Palestinians who work

in Israel in all sorts of menial and hard jobs). Suddenly, a seagull hovers over the boat, warning: “The sea is calm, but just ahead of you the sea gets rough with dangerous reefs. Beware!” The occupants of the upper deck contemptuously dismiss the seagull and chase him away. Shortly after, the ship hits the reef and almost drowns.

Three weeks later, the Yom Kippur War started.

The editor of *Davar* – Hana Zemer, advised by Shimon Peres, refused to publish the fable, claiming it would demoralize the readers. The fable was published by other papers.

One more thing about that War: the political and military leadership was drunk and arrogant, following the outcome of the Six Day War. Moshe Dayan quoted from the bible: “So do not fear, Oh Jacob, my servant”. Planting new settlements in the midst of densely populated Palestinian areas picked up speed, and the people of Israel was intoxicated. Before and during the War, the IDF Intelligence Force was led by Major General Eli Ze’ira, who was considered a brilliant officer who knew it all. Eli adhered to his conviction that there was no danger of war, and

pacified the leaders and the people. This was named the “Concept”. Even when there were clear signs of preparations and intentions for a military action against Israel by both Syria and Egypt, Eli dismissed them disdainfully. He also lied to the Chief of Staff and the Defense Minister, practically veiling crucial information about the preparations for war. And the rest is history.

### **Letters to the Editor**

Ever since the kids bought me a computer, the lives of the government offices and the newspapers have changed. I do not keep my opinions to myself, and react and complain when the situation calls for it. The examples speak for themselves.

### **The March of Folly, '67-'97**

(a letter to the editor of ***Haaretz***, 14 August 1997)

*In paraphrase on the words heard these days regarding the “Next Agranat Report”, one could say that the continuation of Barbara Tuchman’s book **The March of Folly** – is already written, referring to the State of Israel. This march started following the Six Day War, when the state was given a historical*

*opportunity to achieve peace with the Palestinians and the region's nations, demonstrating wise generosity from a position of power. But the governments of Israel, drunk with victory and power, committed all possible mistakes. Rather than foresee the obvious and grant the Palestinians the right to a State of their own, (which will eventually be founded - like it or not), encouraged the extreme religious nationalists.*

*The Arab nations, wounded and humiliated in 1967, prepared the following war, but the arrogance of the Israeli leadership caused them to ignore the writing on the wall. This was when the Yom Kippur War happened upon us. Only then, with a substantial delay, the peace with Egypt began to bud. The impossible control over the lives of some two million Palestinians continued, and it wasn't until a barrage of stones thrown by the Intifada [Arabic: uprising] kids, that the IDF troops withdrew from the densely populated areas in the West Bank and the Gaza strip. But the leaders of Israel, under the labor party as well as the Likud, continued our rule on Hebron, Joseph's Tomb, the Gaza strip and Gush Katif.*

*As for Jerusalem, the world, Muslim and Christian alike, would never accept a “unified Jerusalem - the eternal capital of Israel for ever and ever”. This slogan is cited by politicians from the Right and the Left, but it is impractical and unnecessary. It is possible to get to a solution that would leave Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, but would allow Palestinian control over certain areas, and would render the city open for all, with its citizens living in co-existence. Israel today is strong, and could afford to stop surrendering to the extreme nationalism and the religious false Messiah movements. However, under the Likud in power, Netanyahu continues its strategy of arrogance: the Wall Tunnels, Har Homa [Arabic: jabel Abu Ganim], Ras-el-Amud and the thickening of the settlements demand their victims and delay Peace.*

*Uri Goren,*

*Rishon Lezion*

And on agriculture, a subject close to my heart:

**Expensive and Harmful Control** – a letter to *Haaretz*, 1 December 1991

*I read in the section “People and Business” of 24 November, a report regarding Hai Biniamini, who*

*heads the Authority for Agriculture Control, who suggested “to take severe action against infiltration of Agricultural products”. I suggest, eliminating entirely this type of control, an archaic left-over from the school of the agricultural bureaucracy, who are interested in guarding their posts and the organization they had formed, which causes devastation to agriculture and harms the consumers as well as the national economy.*

*The citrus grower Naftali Maor succeeded in a stubborn struggle to eliminate those parasites that milked the growers. There is no reason why the same actions would not be taken in other areas. Regarding avocado, for example, there are set quotas for picking. As a result – the fruit stays on the tree, unsuitable for export, and is destroyed. Free selling by growers to an efficient exporter or to a local wholesaler would have rendered the fruit cheaper to the consumer, improve its quality and bring fair return to the producer.*

*We haven’t heard of control on commerce in ladies’ underwear, shoes or electric kettles; why do we need one on avocado and apples? Maybe we should import*

*some Soviet economists to teach us a lesson in free markets?*

*Signed A.A. (name & address with the Editor)*

**Audacity – a letter to *Yediot Aharonot*, 30 June 1998**

*Frequent appearances by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, portraying himself as concerned with bringing peace and security, while claiming his predecessors - including President Ezer Weizmann - have practically neglected the State security - are both Chutzpa and arrogance!*

*Yitzhak Rabin and Ezer Weizmann fought in the wars for Israel, and dedicated their lives to its security; they are responsible for the amazing prowess of the IDF and the State. Shimon Peres is responsible – to a crucial extent – for the technological prowess of Israel. He is the one who initiated the foundation of the security industry and established a nuclear plant in Dimona. Based on his vision, the infrastructure for the hi-tech industry – of which Netanyahu is so proud, though he had no part in developing it – was laid out. They, and a great number of high ranking military officers, both in regular and reserves service, are*

*blamed by Netanyahu of lack of understanding and harming State security.*

*The purposefully feeble applause Netanyahu received in a recent gathering of over 1,000 security and intelligence personnel that was held last week, proved what they think of his policies (and as much – of his personality). It is important that the people of Israel know that the security of which Netanyahu speaks with such distinct rhetoric – is primarily the security of his survival as Prime Minister. His words and deeds have no bearing on State security.*

*Uri Goren,  
Nachlat Yehuda*

## **a personal note from the editor**

I met Uri long before I joined the family.

My best friend in high school was Ofra – Uri’s niece, and we studied together for a matriculation exam in a subject titled: “the History of the People of Israel in Recent Years”. We were reclining on the mattresses which covered the floor of her room, when her uncle peeped in the door, and inquired about what we were doing. He was shocked by the notion of us studying about the “White Paper” and the illegal immigration – from books. “There are people around you who lived through that time, and could tell you their personal story of that period”, he scolded us. He joined us on the floor, and charmed us with his personal recount of struggle and bravery, from a personal-human angle.

Those stories I heard then in Ofra’s room as well as many others came up and were repeated on many

occasions, in family gatherings, near the Friday night dinner table. They are part of the basic foundation of this family. I am grateful for having had the opportunity to help with the gathering and selection, as well as with editing these stories to create this book. It is an honor. Uri's story is not just the "History of the People of Israel in Recent Years" – told from a personal angle; He actually acted and participated in events in intersections that *made* that history.

Nava Goren

## **Appendices**



## **Appendix A: Letter to Dr. Idith Zertal and her reply**

June 17, 1996

Dr. Idith Zertal

Editorial Board of “Times” [Hebrew: Zmanim]

Department for the Study of Zionism

Tel Aviv University, Chaim Levanon Street, Tel Aviv

Shalom Idith;

I read and reread an article by Dalia Karpel dealing with your book, and among other subjects, with the matter of the Aliya movement (1945 – 1948) and the role played by the leaders of the Yishuv (the Jewish settlement in Palestine), the Mosad for Aliya Bet and the Palyam in its organization. I tend to believe that the author (Karpel) misquoted you or did not interpret you correctly. If otherwise, then I am completely confused and my request is that you give me a private lesson in the history of the Holocaust and “illegal immigration”. I am willing to pay any price you name for such a lesson, if it will clear up the confusion in which I find myself.

I am a Sabra born in 1926 and when I became 19 and was a communications person in the Hagana, I was called to the offices of the “Mosad” in Tel Aviv, where they offered me to join their operation and to go to Europe, to work together with other Aliya Bet delegates. Although my parents had a farm to take care of and my older brother was already in Europe, as a member of the Jewish Brigade, my parents urged me to accept the challenge. That is how it came about that I left Palestine by a devious route, (described by Lova Eliav in his book, “The Vessel Ulua”), arrived in Italy and continued from there to Southern France.

From a wireless operator I became the manager of a camp, where immigrants were being prepared and trained for Aliya. Following that, I was commander of the immigrant vessel “Latrun”, which ended up with the immigrants and I being sent to the Cyprus detention camps. I returned to Europe and once again was appointed to take charge of the immigrant camp “Grand Arénas”. It was here that the immigrants, who later sailed on the “Exodus” were gathered; I met these same immigrants again when they arrived at Port de Bouc, on the deportation ships.

You can understand from the short review of this chapter in my life, that I have had the opportunity to meet thousands of the survivors of the Holocaust, and as a young Sabra I was appalled and deeply affected by what I saw. I heard many of their stories during days and nights that I spent with them and tried to ease their paths as best I could. As a result I earned the thanks and the good will of many of them and have maintained contact with some until the present.

This in brief, is part of my story, which is similar to that of many of my friends in the Palyam, the Machal, the Jewish Brigade and other groups of volunteers, who had contact with the survivors. I would now be extremely grateful to you if you explained your view to me. I shall present my questions as concisely as possible: If I understood correctly (perhaps I did not), in your research you criticize the actions of the leaders of the Yishuv, the Mosad for Aliya Bet and the one who stood at its head, Shaul Avigur, and the men of the Palyam, (I was one of them during a part of my career). At the end of WW II hundreds of thousands of survivors found themselves destitute and homeless and there was no country in the whole world that was willing to take them or to assist them in their hour of

need. On the contrary; they closed their gates before them (including of course, those of Palestine).

A colorless man (as Karpel says you describe him), Shaul Avigur, answered the call of the leadership of the Yishuv, and created the Mosad for Aliya Bet, an amazing organization which spread its branches through many of the countries of ravaged Europe, and took the survivors of the Holocaust under its wing. It did its best to rehabilitate them and brought them from inland Europe to the shores of the Mediterranean, supplied them with their basic needs, bought ships and brought them safely to the shores of Palestine. About 140,000 refugees were brought to Palestine in this manner and this – in no small way – contributed to the establishment of the State of Israel, in which you and I live today.

I lived with the survivors of the Holocaust for three years and I can truthfully say that their greatest wish and their greatest hope was to be able to come to Palestine, the Land of Israel. To attain this goal they were ready to face the most extreme hardships. The physical conditions on the immigrant vessels were atrocious. But I bear witness that I and my friends,

who worked with me in preparing the vessels, did everything possible on our part to ease the suffering of the passengers. When I was commander of the "Latrun", I spent hours in the hold of the vessel and tried to encourage the survivors and make their journey a bit more comfortable. My Palyam friends on other vessels did the very same thing.

Moreover, before every voyage we explained to the survivors exactly what the conditions of the voyage would be like. We knew from experience though, that no difficulty would convince them to forego the trip. If, for some reason we would refuse to take on a passenger because of that person's state of health or some other reason, the person would plead and beg and sometimes even threaten us, trying to convince us not to strike him from the list of passengers.

The case of the "Exodus" can serve as a model for research. 4,500 passengers were returned to Port de Bouc by the deportation ships. The French authorities, under the pressure of the British, invited them to come ashore, where they would be granted asylum. Nevertheless, none but a few who were very sick agreed to leave the ships. The rest went back to

Hamburg, in Germany, to another detention camp. I was amazed when, not long after, I met a goodly number of them in a transition camp of ours in southern France. These survivors who had been through all that they had been through, were ready to make the terrible journey once again on a Hagana vessel. Forty years later, in 1986 I believe, the survivors of the "Exodus" had a convention in the "Culture Hall" of Tel Aviv. I was overwrought with emotion to see so many healthy and happy people with their families and offspring who came to be present at that meeting. They and the Palyamnikim who brought them are ingredients in a typical cross-section of the present Israeli population. Their children are successful farmers, scientists, businessmen and industrialists. Almost all of them have made their way and found their niche and are proud members of the Israeli community. Those that recognize me point me out to their children and say: "He brought me to Palestine." That is my reward.

Idith, if I understood you correctly, you claim in your research that the men of the Mosad and the Palyam used the ma'apilim (the immigrants) for their own political and other purposes. I just cannot understand

such a statement. First and most important: because I know how strongly the ma'apilim felt about coming to Palestine. You might say that those that fought and fell in the War of Independence were also merely pawns in the hands of the leadership of the Yishuv. Among those who fell was Gur, the son of that 'colorless man', Shaul Avigur. What I have written here is merely a smattering, which I will sum up with a few thoughts: What would historians have said if the leadership of the Yishuv had not mobilized to save the lives of the remnants of the Holocaust?

I and my friends are really hurt and insulted by the thoughts expressed in your research. Most of us volunteered to do what we did, and did our jobs with the utmost devotion. I went to Europe with a suitcase of clothes from my closet and returned in a shirt and a pair of short pants. I did not think that I was doing something outstanding, but to present us as exploiters?!? What would have happened to the remnants of the Holocaust if the Yishuv in Palestine had not opened its arms to take them in? The real heroes of this mass immigration were the ma'apilim themselves. No one knows that better than we, the ones who accompanied them.

Shaul Avigur was a wise and well-balanced leader. I would hate to have seen someone who pulled weighty decisions ‘out of his sleeve’ in his place. If he was calculating and careful in making a decision, then that is paying him a compliment. Where did you get your inside information from, by the way? Might I suggest that you take a poll; that is a popular thing to do nowadays. Question the ma’apilim living in Israel today and ask them, what they think of the whole Aliya Bet operation. Best do this quickly because time is running out and the biological clock is ticking away. I shall be grateful to you if you would study these pages and react. I would be more than happy to discuss this with you personally. I am of course willing to pay for the time you devote to this subject.

Thank you, and cordial greetings,

Uri Goren

**Dr. Idith Zertal's letter of reply**

June 19<sup>th</sup>, 1996

Shalom Uri Goren,

Firstly, thank you for your letter. It is easy to see that you wrote it from your heart, with emotion and even with pain. I do not wish, nor can I remain inattentive to it. At any rate, the style and the gentlemanliness of your letter is very much better than those of the vulgar type that appeared in the supplement of "Haaretz", following an interview with me. I will try to answer your questions within the limits of this letter.

The interview was really terrible and left me feeling frustrated. I tried to prevent it from being published but could not. As it had been readied for publishing for the weekend before election day, the editors had nothing suitable with which to replace it. All I can say to you is that much that was said was abbreviated or removed from its context, and many quotes were actually misquotes. For every ten sentences of written material, only one sentence appeared, leaving only the extreme impression, a vulgar condensation of a complicated subject. This is not my style or my way of expressing myself. However, having agreed to an

interview, I decided not to voice my complaint about the result in public, nor to complain of the injustice that had been done me. I have heard politicians complain about their having been misunderstood and having their words taken out of context; I preferred to let it pass in silence.

You may have noticed that I have not reacted to the vulgar letters that were published. I haven't because:  
a) I believe that everyone has the right to his own opinion, and the right to express it; b) I cannot argue about feelings, or with memories or what people think they remember; c) Most important, no one bothered to read my book before they expressed their reaction to it.

Now I address you and your reaction. You say that you are ready to pay any price for a lesson in history from me. Uri Goren, you are not serious. For seventy shekels you can purchase my book which has 674 pages and more than one hundred more pages of notes and bibliography. Had you read the book, a good number of your questions would have been answered, and you might have also learned that my knowledge of the subject is extensive. (Allow me to mention that the

work on my doctorate received the designation, “cum laude”). You would have found that a good deal of what you pointed out appears in the book.

I must assume that there may be some errors in the book, and there is room for some argument relating to my interpretation of some events, but I assure you that it was written only after thorough research and also after I developed a personal proximity and involvement with the subject. I tried to maintain a high standard of intellectual honesty. I am certain that had you read the book - you would have found that many things are even more complicated than you imagined. You might even found some facts and material that were not known to you and you might even agreed with some of my conclusions. What surprises me about the book is how little people are ready to learn more about the past, and think that they already ‘know it all’. I am surprised at the aggressiveness expressed in the letters and the inability to be ready to listen and perhaps learn something new. Is it really too much of an intellectual effort to ask of you to read my book? I would then be happy to discuss it with you and even to debate it.

As a rule, historical research is not a copy of what people recall, or the retelling of what people were once told and recall. Decent historical research involves critical analysis, sometimes painful analysis of texts and documents of the related period. This of course includes protocols of the period dealt with; decisions taken at that time as well as correspondence. Such critical analysis applied years after the event itself, when compared to the memories of those who were there at the time, usually leads to a problematic situation, at least, and sometimes to outright confrontation. Those who were present at an event of the past usually do not have all the information and the background to the particular event, and they are bound to be biased by a personal attitude to the people or to the matter involved.

What I have written here is also only ‘the tip of the iceberg’. My thoughts on historical discipline and on writing history are topics upon which numerous books have been written, and this subject is the main focus of my academic and intellectual endeavor today. Nothing I wrote was off-handed, everything has been done only after deep thought and consideration of all the

material that I have on hand. My book stands on its own merits; read it and then judge it.

Until then, I wish you all the best, and I thank you once again for your letter.

Dr. Idith Zertal



## **Appendix B: Letter to the State Comptroller - Miriam Ben Porat and her reply**

February 24<sup>th</sup> 1991

To Her Honor  
Ms. Miriam Ben Porat  
State Comptroller

Dear Honorable Ms. Ben Porat, Shalom  
I read in this morning's ***Haaretz*** that your office has requested to have one of the leading officials in your department be excused from his reserve duty, detailing the relevant reasons.

As a retired officer in the army and as one who highly respects you and your personality and all that you do, I found it necessary to react to your actions in this matter. Reserve duty is a very heavy, but necessary burden for most Israeli citizens. There is a somewhat unpleasant occurrence, which I have witnessed personally in my many years of duty in the IDF; that

of government agencies appealing for the release of their employees from reserve duty. Since these agencies often have personal contact with officials of the IDF, their requests are usually granted. It usually seems that the duties of government officials are almost invariably more important than reserve duty.

The problem is that, whereas for the government agencies there is always the opportunity to ask for a delay of reserve duty, this is not usually the case for the 'simple citizen'. He may be an independent small shopkeeper or a farmer or a small tradesman. Since the men in government agencies usually are relieved of reserve duty, this narrows the chance of those others that I mention to be relieved, even though this may be equally important for them, and equally justified.

One can usually assume that the committees that judge requests for delay of reserve duty grant the requests of government agencies more frequently than they do for the private citizen (this is something that can be easily checked). It is important that the burden of reserve duty be spread equally on the shoulders of the maximum number of citizens; it is therefore important

that citizens working in government departments bear their share of the burden, and not turn to the committee for release from duty.

I found it important to bring this matter to your attention and have complete confidence in your consideration and judgment in this matter.

With warm and respectful greetings,

Uri Goren, Lt Col. (reserves)

**The Reply of the State Comptroller, Ms. Miriam Ben Porat**

Jerusalem, March 1 1991

Honorable Mr. Goren

Thank you for your letter of February 24 1991, dealing with the release of Mr. Singer from reserve duty. The State Comptroller's office is busy at the moment in completing the yearly report. We have a deadline on which the report must appear, and because of the emergency situation we find ourselves in, the report will appear in two stages this year: the first half will appear on the 14<sup>th</sup> of February 1991 as required by law, and the second half will appear on the 13<sup>th</sup> March 1991.

Prior to the first date, one of my important helpers was on unlimited reserve duty for more than one month. Under these circumstances, when the second assistant was called up before the first returned, and only a few days remained for us to prepare the first half of the report, I did agree that a senior officer of my department would go through the regular channels of the IDF and ask for the release from duty of this important assistant. The authorities in the IDF

examined the case and agreed to release the person from duty. I refrained from applying myself for the person's release, so that it would not be interpreted as pressure.

Be it well understood that the release was not requested in order to benefit my assistant, but rather in order to assure that we get our report out on schedule. The report incidentally, deals with matters of security, some of which need urgent attention. May I also add that in the report in the newspaper "Haaretz", some of the reasons for asking for the deferral were missing, and they were to my mind the most important ones. Finally, allow me to thank you for your letter which bears witness to your alertness regarding public affairs, and for the polite and careful manner in which you broached the subject.

With due respect,

Miriam Ben Porat



## **Appendix C:**

### **Letter to the Editor of *Maariv***

Regarding the article about “the 40 men” of Lova Eliav

November 30<sup>th</sup> 1987

To the Editor of *Maariv*

Tel Aviv

Dear Editor,

In your very imposing supplement in honor of 40 years of the State of Israel which was added to the issue of 29<sup>th</sup> November, you chose – wisely – Lova Eliav as the man of the fortieth year. I am very proud that Lova chose me as one of his forty men.

I am however, very sorry that Ricky Rivlin added to the article about the forty men some information that she certainly did not get from Lova and which is incorrect. Neither Lova nor I parachuted to the Mitle Pass and that jump exists in the mind of Ricky Rivlin alone. Lova certainly did more than enough and he does not need to be a paratrooper to be honored for all he has accomplished. As for me, I am proud of what I managed to accomplish in my youth and I find no

need to adorn myself with another person's feathers.  
As mentioned in the Hebrew traditional sources: "he  
who adds – subtracts". Please find a way to recall that  
superfluous jump of ours.

With due respect,

Uri Goren



