

Lif, Eliezer (Lipnitzky) RIP
 Nickname: Gabi
 Born in 1922 in Poland
 Made Aliya in 1925, (3 years old)
 Joined the Palmach in 1941
 Joined the Mossad Le'Aliya Bet in Europe in 1947
 Died 6 December 1993
 Brought for publication by Malka Lif

This is the Way it Was

The School for Boys and Girls – Geulah. The Balfour Elementary School, Gymnasium Gordon and Tsofei Hakehila.

Chronology:

- 1937 – Joined the Hagana (youth group) in Tel Aviv.
- 1939 – Squad leaders course – the Hagana.
- 1941 – Joined the Palmach.
- 1942-43 – Went to a course for platoon leaders, commanded a platoon at Ein Harod , of “D” Company of the Palmach.
- 1943-45 – Was an instructor at a squad leaders’ course (Juara, Ramat Yochanan, Ayelet Hashachar, Hanita, Geva).
- 1945-46 – Discharged from active duty in the Palmach, organized and built the ‘reserve company’ of the Palmach in Tel Aviv.
- 1947 – Sent by the Palmach and the Hagana to work in Eastern Europe for Aliya.
- 1948-72 – Joined the army and served as an officer, a staff officer and instructor: Commanded an infantry battalion, commanded a training camp for the Southern Command, Brigade Intelligence officer in the Southern Command, Staff officer at Staff Headquarters, Chief of Field Intelligence in the Intelligence Branch, Instructor at a course for battalion commanders and senior officers, graduate of the college of national security, Chief of Military Government at General Staff Headquarters, Military Attaché of the IDF for Latin America.
 Discharged from active service in 1972 with the rank of Colonel.
- 1973-93 – Completed a degree in law and received a certificate to practice, which is what was done until his demise in 1993 in an office in Tel Aviv.

Eliezer Lipnitzky wrote in the Hagana archives in 1961:

Romania 1947 – 1948

In 1945, when I received final leave before my discharge from the Palmach, I was given the job of Chief of the Reserve Company of Tel Aviv. While in this position, I was called by Yigal Alon at the end of 1946 and he suggested that I go to Europe as part of a mission of the Hagana. It was not decided beforehand how long I was to be there or where I was to be.

At the beginning of 1947 I was contacted about arranging the matter of travel, and was told that I was on the "Blacklist" of the British police, and would therefore not be able to leave the country legally. I was given a false passport and in June 1947 I flew from Lod to Czechoslovakia with a passport in the name of Dov Ber. I was to receive instructions when I arrived. In Prague we were received by Dov ben Ari (a member of Kibbutz Mesilot) and after a week were told that we would cross the border to Romania and join a group of our people there. Our mission in Romania was: 1) To help the Aliya Bet people there, as this would be a very large undertaking. 2) To organize the local Jewish inhabitants, especially the youth. Working in this field at the time were Tzvi Mahler and his wife, Yael Gafni (Caspi today) and others.

We were supposed to get there in some illegal fashion. We were divided into two groups so that the chance of at least some of us getting through would be better. In Kosice we were met by a Czech who led us to the border. Smugglers then led us safely to Hungary. They left us in a Hungarian village but none of us knew Hungarian. We told them that we were English but to our surprise they contacted a local Jew, who helped us get to Budapest. We stayed there until we were to go to Romania. The Jew who took us to the border, handed us over to a Romanian border patrol officer. He took us to a train that took us to Arad, and from there to Bucharest. We received new Romanian documents. Mine was in the name of Shtrul Korchak*. Our other passports remained in Czechoslovakia. We met Yaakov Salomon, in charge of operations in Romania and Hungary, and he told us that our mission was to organize Aliya that had been very limited until then. In this group, aside from Yaakov Salomon were Tzvi Mahler and his wife, Eliezer (the Gingy), Meir Avraham (a major, today) and Peretz Finkel.

In order to get our job done, we thought that we should organize a group of local people who would provide a framework for managing a mass Aliya; and when the time to sail arrived, this same group would also organize the Ma'apilim on the vessel. The first thing we did was to arrange a course for people chosen from the youth movements and explained to them the importance of knowing and attaining the goal. This short course was to create a group of leaders who could reach out and teach an ever widening circle. We went to San Georgia where the first course was held for two weeks and which included: (1) Physical exercise, (2) Drilling, (3) Zionism, (4) KAPAP (Hand to hand fighting with sticks).

About 40 – 50 young fellows from the youth movements participated in this course, which achieved its aims in every respect. It was our first test and we gained experience which proved useful for the future. We returned to Bucharest elated by this success and started to organize more courses. We organized the leaders into three groups according to the three large geographic areas of Romania. Our plan was to spread the courses over several regions of the country. Each team had to prepare a course from a book. I was appointed to be in charge of the Bucharest and Galiti region team; Meir Avraham was my assistant. We traveled from place to place to gather material for the course. All this had to be done secretly. The Romanian Government knew what we were

doing and supported us because the Communist regime was interested in causing trouble to the British in Palestine. On the other hand, they feared that this would become known to the English. We called these courses "Training Leaders for Aliya", and we interviewed candidates individually. The characteristic that was most desired was capability of leadership.

We set up a camp in Borsa, in the Carpathian Mountains, and chose the site and set up the tents in a little valley. I had 10 local leaders. A course ran for two weeks, and was followed by another group. There were members of various youth movements and a constant feeling of antagonism between the movements, but the course proved that cooperation was possible and made a good name for itself. Despite the secrecy there were many who volunteered to take part in them. After several courses, the venue was changed to a castle in the vicinity of Galati in the Carpathians. We wanted to give the participants a feeling of being on a ship, and of the ship being very crowded, so we did not use all the space given us. I received Karl and he helped with the administrative work.

There was a severe regime on the course. Wake up call was at 05:30. There was morning exercise in the winter, with bodies bare to the waist. Everything was done at a run and there were standing orders, judo practice and a tough military regime. Girls also took part in these courses, did not do worse than the boys, and showed courage and resilience. This was the first time that there was any sort of contact between the various youth movements. Our cover story for the government was that we were a youth sport organization. Actually, the authorities knew the truth but if the police harried us the matter was hushed at the higher ranks. At the end of every course there was a demonstration and each group would display a special part of what had been done. The conclusion would be a drill by torchlight and ending with the slogan "We Shall Rise and Go Up". After a few such courses we went back to Bucharest to arrange the Aliya.

Several small vessels left with Ma'apilim and our students, now leaders, did their jobs very well. Now we wanted a mass-Aliyah and for this, two large ships were chosen, the "Pan York" and the "Pan Crescent". Their names became the "Atzmaut" (Independence) and the "Kibbutz Galuyot" (the Ingathering of the Exiles). They were to take 20 000 Ma'apilim in all. It was impossible to keep such a large undertaking secret. There had to be cooperation with the Romanian Government and with the Romanian Secret Service. They gave us railroad trains for our use and a combined team issued us documents. This was done in order to prevent fascists and war criminals from infiltrating our ranks. Even in the organization of Aliya there were geographic divides.

I was in charge of the Bucharest region and this included 5000 to 6000 Ma'apilim. We had to bring the people to some central place and to the Bulgarian border at Rushtshukat. We were to sail from Bulgaria and not from Romania. This was in the interests of secrecy, as much as possible at any rate. The signal to move was to be given 24 hours before hand, and we were to gather all the Olim. There now began a spectacle that was difficult to imagine.

People who were not on the lists tried to push their way in and when they were turned back, they became hysterical. People prostrated themselves at our feet and cried like babies. Although this broke our hearts we had to be tough and keep order. If we were to weaken it would have created pandemonium. There was the case of Dr Ashkenazi who appeared at the last moment with his wife and a small suitcase. The Romanians did not let experts leave the country. After checking the people waiting, they were moved to the railway cars. On the way to the Bulgarian border the train was halted in an open space and papers were checked once again. Those who did not have documents and did not appear on the lists, were moved to the last three cars, which had been drawn empty and which were to be returned to Romania. Here too there were terrible scenes. People would not enter those three cars and force had to be used. I remember there was one man who ran to the woods, and when we found him he had climbed a tree and would not come down. We had to stop the train and worked hard to separate him from that tree. At the border we turned the Ma'apilim over to those accompanying the ships, and headed back to Bucharest.

Abba Naor (from Kibbutz Naan) who was our chief, joined us and we started to organize groups in the youth movements. We thought that since there were still many Jews left in Romania, we should start organizing the community for self defense. That would better allow them to protect themselves. We started to pick and choose people and this had to be done secretly. We felt that we were being watched and that the authorities had decided that it was time for us to leave. In the middle of 1948 some of us did leave, and they started to be more severe in border checks. We were taken to the border and left there, without contact with anyone. We decided on our own to contact a local Jew, Berko Feldman. We described our predicament and asked him to obtain our passports from Prague.

The passports arrived by regular mail, we gave them to him, and he spoke to a secret service man in our presence. Several days later we were called to the police station and met the commissar Strankolsko. He stamped our passports as "exiled from Romania". We were allowed to leave Romania and enter Czechoslovakia. I left Czechoslovakia by myself, traveled to Paris, and from there to Marseilles. I thought I would be going back to Israel on a vessel of Olim, but took a plane instead and arrived in Israel after the Declaration of Independence. I joined the IDF and went to the Southern Command.

This article was dictated to Chaim Nagel, 3/ 12/ 1961.