

Becher, Miko – Avraham

Born 1926 at Mikveh Yisrael

Joined the Palmach in 1945

Joined the Gideonim in 1946

Nickname: Bernard

This is the Way it Was

I was born in Mikveh Yisrael in 1926 and studied at the Alliance Boys School in Tel Aviv. I continued my studies in Holon and then attended the "Haskala" Gymnasium in Tel Aviv. When I was still quite young I joined the Hagana and in 1945. I went to the Palmach and was in B Company of the 2nd Battalion, located at Givat Brenner. At the end of 1945 I participated in the first course in signaling, which was held at Shefayim and after that served as the signalman for my battalion. On the "Night of the Bridges" I participated in the blowing up of the Gaza Bridge.

In the summer of 1946 I was given a fancy suit and a passport of the Mandatory government, and sent to Europe. Zaki Keini and Shimshon Lotan went with me. We were given an address in Prague and told to get there as soon as we could. We met Ephraim Dekel there, and he shipped me off to Paris; a train ride of 32 hours. From Paris I was sent to Marseilles. For a Sabra on his first trip to the Diaspora this entire voyage seemed never-ending.

At this time, In the vicinity of Marseilles there were a number of camps that had been given Hebrew place-names. We Gideonim lived in "Camp Zevulun" where there was a direct radio connection with Palestine, Paris, and with the ships at sea. We gave courses in signaling to volunteers chosen from among the olim so that they could join us in our work on the ships. Some time later we moved the courses to "Camp Mizra". Most of the olim were then in Grand Arenas where they were also trained for boarding ships ("The Exodus-1947" was one of them).

For several weeks I served in the capacity of commander of this camp and of Camp Terz which was somewhat farther away. In Camp Sejera we kept most of the food and other supplies for the ships, most of which was procured with the help of the JDC. In this camp we also had a laboratory in which we assembled radios for use on the ships. Among the technicians that worked there were two Scotsmen from Glasgow, Sam Hillel and Dov Sinclair. In Camp Sejera we also had a laboratory in which we made counterfeit passports that were used for Aliya Daled. Shula Arlosoroff (Chaim's daughter) was in charge of that department.

This was not an easy time for us. We were hardly twenty years old and had to deal with thousands of Holocaust survivors who had problems and difficulties taken with them throughout the years of war and throughout Europe. We had to solve problems for which we had no preparation or any idea how to solve. For instance, there was still a group of German POW's in a corner of the camp and the olim wanted permission to beat them up. Were we supposed to give them

more blankets if we thought that they only wanted them to sell them on the black market?

At the same time we prepared ships to take the olim on board. This meant putting in and arranging all the wooden pallets for the sleeping arrangements and putting aboard all the food and other supplies. "The Exodus" for instance was a passenger ship that had a great deal of fine furniture in it. We had to take all the furniture out in order that it would be able to take the maximum amount of passengers. We also had to prepare it in case of open combat with the British.

I would like to add that although we were in France illegally and doing illegal things there, the French did not often interfere with our work and the local chief of police was on very good terms with us. Once when two representatives of the Mosad for Aliya Bet came to town with false credentials, he told us that he knew who they really were and that it would be wise for them to leave town. It was during this period that I first met Thea, who worked in the secretarial office of Hechalutz and handled the mail for the camp, Six years later we married.

I left Marseilles in October 1948 and Sam Hillel came with me on the "Enzo Sereni". I had hardly started to enjoy my stay in the homeland when I was shipped out again, this time to Rome, Italy where I joined the other Gideonim at the beautiful Villa Cassia, where a radio station was located. Close by, at Monte Mario we had a laboratory for assembling radio equipment. There was a great deal of activity at that time because of the need to buy equipment for the new State and also to prevent equipment of military nature from reaching the Arab States. We learned much and became good friends with a number of the Gideonim who worked there. When the Israeli embassy opened its doors at 2 Via Reno, we moved all our equipment there and took over the top floor of the building. We continued our work from that place but we weren't always on good terms with the people of the Foreign Office. This can be seen in the following telegram sent by a representative of the Foreign Office in Italy to the research department of the Foreign Office in Jerusalem on 10/ 2/ 50:

Subject: The Gideonim

1. Miko, one of the Gideonim and in charge of the station, is not disciplined. He has traveled to Naples twice during the past two weeks and spent several days there each time without even informing us. Upon his return he found all sorts of excuses to justify his behavior.
2. It is the opinion of the people of the Ministry of Defense here that the Gideonim have been away from the State (of Israel) for too long and have become spoiled. Miko has been here for three years. Someone from the Ministry of Defense has recommended to Gad Kozlovski that the Gideonim be returned to Israel and others brought to replace them.

At any rate I left Italy in May 1950 and arrived in Israel on "The Borea" which brought, among other things, cannon and ammunition, and also a motorbike

that I bought in Rome. In Israel Yisrael Dickinstein arranged work for me in the military industry and I remained there until 1955. There was then a need to send a radio operator to the embassy in Moscow so I went there with Thea and our one year old son, Yaron, and remained there as radio operator and chief of security until 1957. Thea worked as the secretary to the ambassador, Yosef Avidar.

In 1959 I went once more on a mission with my family, this time to Paris. Here I was responsible for contact with North African countries during the period of aliya from Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco. Our second son, Dan was born in Paris. I returned to Israel in 1962 and was interviewed for work in a special defense department. I worked there until my retirement in 1983.

Thea Becher (Beinstock)

Joined the Mosad in 1947

Came to Israel in 1949

This is the Way it Was

In contrast to most of the stories in this collection, I was not sent from Palestine to work in the Diaspora for Aliya Bet. I was born in The Hague, Holland. In 1940, when the Nazis closed in on Holland we left and went to France where we hid and fled until we managed to get false papers. When the War was over I attended a school near Paris which trained leaders/teachers to work with orphaned Jewish children, of whom there were very many.

After one year's study I was sent to Marseilles by a Jewish organization called OPEJ and I worked with children in a building which was not far from where the Israelis were working with olim. We would often meet the Israelis as we went to and from our places of work. In 1947 I met an old friend who was in charge of the Hechalutz office and was in charge of all the transit camps in the Marseilles area. He invited me to work as secretary in the Hechalutz offices and I did that until 1949. I kept the list of all the olim scheduled to make aliya, who came through Marseilles. I met Miko in Marseilles and we were married in 1953. in November 1949 I made aliya to Israel.