

Dayan, Zohar (Zorick) (of blessed memory)

Joined the British Army in 1944

Joined Ha'Chavura ("The Gang") in 1945

Killed in the Battle for the Defense of Ramat Yochanan, 14 April 1948

Written by Major General Uzi Dayan

This is the Way it Was

Zorick was born in Nahalal on 24 Nissan 5686 (8 April 1926) and fell in battle in the fields of Kibbutz Ramat Yochanan on 14 April 1948. He was only 22 years old when he died. Zorick was the son of Dvora and Shmuel Dayan and the younger brother of Aviva and Moshe. He grew up and matured in the home of his parents in Nahalal. He was an alert and lively child who loved to read, was sensitive, and had a wonderful sense of humor. His youth was full of activity and although he was not overly interested in school, he was a very good student. He worked hard on his parents' farm but also had an active social life. He was a central figure among the youth of his age in the local school, but at the same time there were periods when he enjoyed being alone. He also participated in defense of the Moshav, as did the other youths of the Moshav as was then customary. But even as a youth, distant lands interested him.

When he was only 16 years old, he and his friend Micha ben Barak stole into the car of a freight train and ended up in Ismailia, Egypt. He wanted to visit his sister Aviva who was then serving in the A.T.S. in the British Army. He and his friend were arrested as Italian spies and didn't have a penny between them. After being interrogated and spending a few nights in prison in Gaza, they returned to Nahalal with their fill of interesting adventures. Shortly thereafter he made the acquaintance of Mimi Dopleit, who had come to study at the Hanna Maizel Girls School at Nahalal, and fell in love with her. He was of a romantic nature and also started to write poetry then.

He skipped a term in school and graduated at 17, after which he went to work full time on his father's farm. (His older brother Moshe was active full time in the Hagana, and his sister, as has been mentioned, was in the British Army). He was also anxious to join up and see the world. This came about on 1 November 1944, when he reported to camp at Sarafand and was sent for training to the Jewish Brigade camp at Genife, Egypt. Zorick took army training seriously, as he wrote: "One can be a minimum soldier and do as little as possible, but I want to be as maximum a soldier or as close to that as I can get."

He hated British discipline and the long periods of guard duty.

On 5 May 1945, Zorick and his outfit were sent as reinforcements to the Brigade to Italy and was assigned to "D" Company of the First Battalion. This was immediately before the 'cease fire' went into effect. He was disappointed and wrote that the war was over even before he had reached his battle station. He wrote that he knew when he signed up that they were to be soldiers for 'after the war was over'. The Brigade moved through Austria and Germany to Belgium and his encounters with survivors of the Holocaust made a deep

impression upon him. From then on, he devoted himself to the "Bricha" (bringing survivors of the Holocaust from points in central Europe to ports on the Mediterranean, so that they could be put on ships) to procurement, and T.T.G. (Tilchas Tizi Gesheften – Kiss My Bottom business). This referred to clandestine activities carried out by "The Gang" in stealing supplies from the British Army and using them to feed the survivors of the Holocaust and supply food, fuel, clothing etc. for the ships of the Hagana that brought them to Palestine.

Zorick wrote very little about what he was doing in this work, and when he did mention it, he only referred laconically and in the briefest of terms. For instance, he wrote: "Today we go to the British Army and tonight, Long Live Israel!". The true depth of his attachment to this cause is told by Shmuel Potik, one of the central figures in the "Bricha". "When we collected the Olim from Bergen-Belsen in order to take them to Holland, Zorick, Moshe Dayan's brother was with us, and he wasn't fluent in Yiddish. I remember that when we reached the border, this brave "Sabra" ("native-born Israeli") laid down on the concertina barbed-wire and said: "I want these people to go from Freedom to Redemption over my back". That is a memory that has accompanied me all my life."

In April 1946 it was suggested to a number of men in the Jewish Brigade that they go AWOL from the British Army and volunteer for "The Gang". Among them were Uri Barpal, Yoske Lambarsky, Yaakov Arnon, Uri Horowitz, Moti Fain (Hod), Amos Fink and Zorick. Zorick explained his reasons for doing so in a letter to his folks: "Volunteers are needed to skip out of the British Army but stay in Europe for another half-year to work in Aliya etc. I was asked to agree and did. That's the essence of the whole story. Just know that I did not ask for this or push myself into it, They came to me and I ran everything through my mind; Mom, Dad, the farm, the girl, and Nahalal, Also, the familiar and the not so dangerous, and the not so difficult. I decided that I must do it. If I don't, it is like running away from a fight. It is not like Zorick and not like any Dayan and not like any Nahalalnik, nor like any Sabra, and not like any Jew. It is a half-year of difficulties and of no contact with home. It is the life of a person in hiding and loneliness. And it is the most marvelous way to complete the most gratifying period of my service, and I am positive that you all give your consent. Yours, Zorick."

Zorick did as was then customary and gave his uniform and identity to a refugee who would make Aliya as a soldier in his stead. He remained in Italy and worked with "The Gang" until the end of 1946. He then returned to Palestine and to his family, his farm and his beloved Mimi, who had studied and worked in metal craft at Bezalel in Jerusalem. They were married at a triple wedding at Nahalal in March, 1947, (together with Dina and Yonatan Tzur and Nana and Avremale Slutzki) and lived for a time in Jerusalem until Mimi concluded her studies. During that time Zorick worked in a quarry wielding a jack-hammer. They then moved for a short time to Nesher and from there to Kiryat Chaim. This is where their son, Uzi was born (on 4 January 1948).

During this period Zorick threw his energy into the formation of the 21st Battalion of the Carmeli Brigade under the Battalion Commander, Ben Ami Pachter. Within this framework he was sent to the first course for platoon leaders of the Hagana, held at Dora, near Natanya. During the course, he took part in the Battle of the Kastel. Two weeks before the end of the course, Ben Ami fell in the Yechiam Convoy Battle, in which a convoy tried to bring supplies and weapons to the beleaguered settlement near the Arab village of Cabri. The convoy was ambushed by hundreds of Arabs and during the battle which lasted 10 hours, 42 defenders in the convoy, and the commander Ben Ami among them, fell, as well as many other friends of Zorick and Mimi from Kiryat Chaim. Ben Ami was not just a beloved commander, but also a frequent guest in Zorick's home and they had both planned their future together. His demise was a severe blow to Zorick.

Zorick went from the course, to leading "A" Company, in the short time they had to prepare for the Battle of Ramat Yochanan. He had time for a short visit at home between the two. "A" Company assembled on 13th April in the afternoon. The men received their weapons and ammunition, which had just arrived in Israel, and had a short practice session with the new weapons. This was followed by some field training and the company went into battle that same afternoon with Zorick leading the First Platoon at the head of the whole Company. The aim of the operation was to capture Tel Shar'a – a low hill that overlooked Usha and Ramat Yochanan (today it is a neighborhood of Kiryat Ata). This was the northernmost point on the front held by the Druze battalion that had arrived from Syria and camped in Shafa -Amer (Shfaram today). This battalion was now attacking Ramat Yochanan and threatening all the settlements of the Zvulun Valley. In the fight that took place between the Israelis and the Druze forces, Zorick and five men from his platoon were killed, while they covered the withdrawal of the rest of the platoon and its wounded. Zorick was laid to rest in the cemetery of Nahalal and on the 30th day of his passing came the announcement of the independence of the State of Israel.

His poetry and his letters were gathered in the book, "Yearning". Dvora, Zorick's mother, wrote in the introduction as follows: ".When they went to identify his body I told them: "It is not difficult to find identifying marks on his body. He has scars in several places and also on his face. He received some of them from careless play and some from his boldness. Once there was a competition of jumping over a high iron gate and he was badly injured. I was angry with him for doing that and told him that he knew that he could not jump over the gate. "So why did he try again?" He answered in childish seriousness: "I couldn't, I didn't want to give up." This not wanting to give up was something that stayed with him for all of his short life; even then, when he knew he would fail. This not being able to retreat, stayed with him until his last moments in the fields of Ramat Yochanan."