

Libertovsky, Yisrael RIP

Born in 1917 in Proskorov, Russia

Made Aliya in 1938

Joined the Palmach in 1941 in Jerusalem

Joined the British Army in 1943

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

Died in Tel Aviv, 15 November 1996

This is the Way it Was

Yisrael was one of the first members of Ha'Chavura ("The Gang"), and one of its commanding officers. He was one of the initiators of the use of false documents in order to remove supplies from British Army warehouses. This included: food, fuel, communication equipment, weapons and ammunition for the use of the Hagana. When there was an encounter with the police at the La Spezia fiasco, he was arrested together with Shalhevet Freier. During the War of Independence he fought on the Southern Front. After his discharge he became manager of the Mekorot Company for the Negev. He became Manager of Israel Shipyards from the day it was built.

Following is the eulogy of Eliezer Biger, at his graveside:

Yisrael, today we meet again, family and friends, but this time it is on your last journey. I had the luck to be with you during several periods in your life, starting with WW II in the British Army, when I joined the 462nd Transport Company, which is where we met.. After that we met in illegal Aliya work, and following that in the War of Independence when you were an officer on the Southern Front. We met even after that, when you were Chief of the Negev District in the Mekorot Company, and you were also the man who built and directed Israel Shipyards. In each of the places where you worked you left a personal signature, a tough boss who demanded much, but who also set an example.

Of all the various stages of your life, I would like to speak specifically of the period of the illegal Aliya from Italy. This period in your life Yisrael, was something special. Perhaps because this was a result of the Shoa, the Holocaust, or perhaps because of the will to bring as many Jews as possible to Eretz Israel, or because of your Zionist background. or because of all of these reasons together.

You managed to gather around you a group of friends, men of the Palmach, members of the Hagana and just "good Jews" who would later be described in the history books as "The Gang". Many of "The Gang" are no longer with us, but those who remain are here today. This period of activity in Italy was best described by Meirke Davidson, your friend and our friend, in the speech that he gave at the Hagana Museum in Tel Aviv one year ago; I quote: "I freely admit that the years that I devoted to "The Gang" were the pinnacle of the many activities in my life". I think that that definition also fits you very well, Yisrael, and it certainly fits all the rest of us who were "The Gang". That period of activity in

Italy, based on initiative, on integrity, courage and single-mindedness, stays with us all along the road.

And may I now add a few words regarding the book. For the past five years we have been trying to publish a book about our activities in Aliya Bet in Italy. Because of our desire that this book deserves to be printed only if it carries a banner of ethical principles for the next generation, it has taken a fairly long time but it is now in its final stages. It also fulfills the aim that we set for ourselves. You Yisrael will not have the opportunity to see it, but the stamp of your character is there for all to see. Rest in Peace, my friend.