

IN OUR OWN HANDS

FULL TRANSCRIPT
of the documentary film
IN OUR OWN HANDS:
The Hidden Story of The Jewish Brigade in
World War

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[OPENING]

HANOCH BARTOV

We were neither saints nor knights. We were simple Israeli Boys who ... understood that we stand now for the Jewish people.

GABRIEL KNOLLER

You believed in something. You trusted in something that it must succeed...Because if you're going to fail, you don't fail yourself, you fail something much larger than you.

HANOCH BARTOV

Soldiers are supposed to fight, kill or be killed. And what we did as soldiers, we found dead people and we helped them to go back to life.

JOHANAN PELTZ

We broke a taboo. We proved to the world that we can fight. We proved to ourselves that we can fight...that Jews can fight, and they can win.

IN OUR OWN HANDS

The Hidden Story of the Jewish Brigade in World War II

ITALY REUNION:

NARRATOR

April, 1995. A group of World War II veterans arrive in the north of Italy ... from Israel.

UNIDENTIFIED MAN:

We were here 50 years ago. This was our battle.

NARRATOR

They have returned as old men to commemorate the battle of the Senio River, one of the last of the War in Europe.

ERIC FEUER:

Some were 18, 19. I was one of the oldest with about 25.

ADIN TALBAR:

The Germans were on this side.

UNIDENTIFIED MAN:

I remember the actual crossing.

NARRATOR

As little known now as it was then, the Senio is where these men fought the battle of their lives, and still remember those they left behind.

They served in the only all-Jewish fighting unit in World War II...His Majesty's Jewish Brigade...part of the British Army...young volunteers from what was then Palestine, who helped win a war and in a larger way changed history.

Their story begins before the war in the 1930's when most had come to Palestine from a Europe rife with anti-Semitism...had come with a dream of building a homeland of their own. Men like Shlomo Shamir, Chaim Laskov, Meir Zorea, and Avram Silberstein.

AVRAM SILBERSTEIN

I was born in Poland and I came at the age of twenty to Israel to study here. In Poland you were a second rate citizen. The minute I reached Israel I came home actually. Although I'd never been here, the youth was free. There were no old men here, all young men, and they were dancing in the street. Food didn't mean anything. Money didn't mean anything. It was a spiritual elevation. All you wanted is to do something for the country, not for yourself. We came to give, not to take.

NARRATOR

The desire of these young arrivals for a homeland of their own was frustrated both by the British, who ruled Palestine, and the Arabs, who had their own claims to the land.

For the Jews in Europe, Hitler's rise to power in the 1930's made life even more dangerous.

HANOCH BARTOV:

There was no question about it, that the Nazis were the horrible enemies of the Jewish people. My parents were immigrants from Poland. My father left behind his entire family: father, mother, ten brothers. So it was not a foreign thing to speak about Europe, about European Jewry. It was my family.

NARRATOR

Getting as many Jews as possible out of Europe and into Palestine became the urgent task of the Jewish Agency, the political body representing the Yishuv, or Jewish Community, in Palestine. Agency leaders like David Ben-Gurion and Moshe Sharett used this strategy to acquire more prime Arab land, build new settlements and stake an ever stronger claim to a homeland.

To the Haganah--the underground militia of the Jewish Agency--fell the responsibility for defending these new Jewish settlements against anyone who stood in their way. Haganah members would later become the nucleus of the Jewish Brigade.

In 1936, as Jewish numbers swelled to 400,000 (almost a third of the total population in Palestine), the Arabs responded with an uprising against the Yishuv and against the British.

NARRATOR

It took the British three years to crush the revolt. Fearful the Arabs would now side with Germany as Hitler threatened war, in May of 1939 the British stunned the Jewish community by issuing a policy statement, or White Paper, canceling an earlier promise of statehood and severely limiting Jewish immigration to Palestine.

With a single stroke of the pen, the British had cut off the escape route for those fleeing Hitler, dashed hopes for a Jewish homeland, and convinced Agency leaders they would never have a Jewish state unless they fought for it.

HANOCH BARTOV:

I remember when I was thirteen, around thirteen, and I was already a young member of the Haganah. So, how did I think I am going, you know, now to fight all those enemies? We used to go to the orchards, you know, and cut a branch, a lemon branch, because lemon wood is tough. And every one of us prepared a club, and we trained, you know, in fighting.

SHLOMO SHAMIR:

We didn't have a chance to train proper soldiers. It was illegal. You were not supposed to carry weapons. If you wanted to drill yourself even for a simple drill, you had to do it undercover. If you want to teach people to deal with pistols or rifles or machine guns, you dealt it in rooms or somewhere away, keeping guard so that the British don't come and catch you in it.

NARRATOR

As the Yishuv mounted resistance against the British and their new policy, the struggle in Palestine was about to be joined with a far greater one -- World War II. It was a war that would forever change history for the Jewish people, and for those destined to serve in the Brigade. With the onset of war, the Yishuv in Palestine now had to choose between enemies.

NETANEL LORCH:

It was Ben-Gurion's phrase that we would fight against Hitler as if the White Paper did not exist, and we would fight against the White Paper as if Hitler did not exist. Honestly, the fight against Hitler took preference.

NARRATOR

Anxious to join the fight, thousands of Jews in Palestine quickly volunteered for service in the British Army.

In London, Chaim Weizman, leader of the World Zionist Congress, had something else in mind, and appealed to his old friend Winston Churchill to establish a special all-Jewish fighting unit of 15,000 men from Palestine, serving in the British army, as Jews. An opportunity to carry their own flag into battle, and, as Weizman secretly hoped, a symbolic first step toward achieving statehood.

CHANAN GREENWALD

That flag had value what we are fighting for, our independence, to be recognized as a Jewish unit. As there were South African units and Indian units and all kinds of units. So we wanted to fight under our own flag.

NARRATOR

for David Ben Gurion, the goal was more practical than symbolic. An opportunity for the Jews in Palestine to get valuable experience in how to fight a regular war.

NETANEL LORCH

One purpose was to get the training which the British Army was able to provide because we, or some of us, foresaw the necessity of a Jewish Army which would need trained officers.

NARRATOR

The British War Office, suspicious those officers would one day lead the fight against British rule in Palestine, had a more immediate fear: driving the Arabs into the Axis camp. They convinced Churchill to refuse Weizman's request.

MARK HYATT

Their overriding concern was not to offend the Arabs. And the easiest way to upset them is by having Jewish troops with their own identity and their own flag and their own nationhood fighting on behalf of the Allies.

NARRATOR

Throughout 1940 and 41, as Hitler's armies crushed everything in their path, Chaim Weizman in London and the Jewish Agency in Palestine kept the idea of an all-Jewish fighting force alive -- and pressed the British for its formation. The British continued to say no.

In mid-1942, the Germans, under the command of Field Marshall Rommel, advanced across North Africa...reaching ever closer to Palestine.

The British War Office, under pressure to free up more of its own troops to stop Rommel, allowed the formation of the Palestine Regiment: three battalions composed of mixed Jewish and Arab units. The Haganah, sensing an opportunity, encouraged its men to join the Regiment.

MAXIM KAHAN

We were all Haganah; we were sent by the Haganah to join the British Army.

GABRIEL KNOLLER

I joined up in 1942, just a short time before El Alamein, so there was danger here, a real danger of the Germans coming in, and we were sure that we could do much more if we were in uniform and we could get hold of legal arms and fight like soldiers.

MAXIM KAHAN

Turned out though that the British wanted, allowed us to get into the army in order to solve a problem: guard duties...Here we are, volunteering to the British Army, wanting to fight the Germans, prepared to fight the Germans, capable of fighting the Germans, but without the training. That was the thing that hurt us the most.

NARRATOR

In November, 1942, after months of fighting, the British defeated Rommel at El Alamein. The threat to the Yishuv was over.

At the same time, accounts of the Holocaust became more widely known to the Jews in Palestine.

TED ARISON

We started hearing stories about what Hitler is doing. Slaughtering Jews first in Germany and Poland, and so on. And we just said that, and just said that I just have to go out there and kill as many Germans as I can, period!

NARRATOR

But the Jewish soldiers in the Palestine Regiment were forced to remain in the Middle East, far from actual fighting, more frustrated than ever.

CHANAN GREENWALD

What were we doing? Guarding and training. Training and guarding, you know? And in those days we start to fight to establish a fighting, a real fighting force. So the first thing you're fighting for is a flag. So we put our flag on the roof of the barracks. Our British colonel say to put it down. We put a guard around the flag but nobody would take it off and that's mutiny.

NARRATOR

The British reacted quickly, disarming the entire Battalion and sending the rebellious young Jews to a camp farther out in the desert.

CHANAN GREENWALD

Our people sitting there in the desert were so discouraged that they asked to be transferred to different units. And the Haganah didn't want it...because they wanted that we should stay together for the Jewish Brigade.

NARRATOR

In July, 1943, the Allies invaded Italy. A year later, in June, 1944, the D-Day invasion landed Allied troops on French soil for the first time since the war began.

Chaim Weizman in London and leaders of the Jewish Agency in Palestine pressed Churchill for a last chance to have an all-Jewish fighting force to carry their own flag into battle against the Germans. Time was running out and Winston Churchill knew it.

September 20, 1944: Overriding the objections of the War Office and Colonial office, Churchill rose in the House of Commons to make a historic speech at last announcing the formation of His Majesty's Jewish Brigade:

QUOTED FROM WINSTON CHURCHILL:

"It seems to me indeed appropriate that a special Jewish unite, a special unit of that race which has suffered indescribable torments from the Nazis, should be represented as a distinct formation amongst the forces gathered for their final overthrow.

SHLOMO SHAMIR

Churchill, who gave it much importance, did not foresee that this decision created that missing link, physically on the ground, that eventually brought as a major item, the creation of the Jewish state.

NARRATOR

But that was for later. For now, those who had waited the entire length of the war to have their own fighting force seized this moment...and would make the most of it.

PAVEL MOZES

The greatness of the history, to think there is going to be a Jewish army...which goes into the front against Germans. And this was a terrific thing which everyone

wanted to join.

NARRATOR

Hundreds in Palestine quickly signed up to join the Jewish Brigade. The three Battalions of the Palestine Regiment, its ranks filled with Haganah members, became the nucleus of the new five thousand man fighting force.

For its insignia, the Brigade chose not the traditional blue star of David, but the yellow: for years a mark of shame to the Jews in Europe, it would now be worn as a badge of honor.

All Brigade recruits were ordered immediately to Burg El Arab in Egypt.

HANOCH BARTOV

We were all gathered in the western desert, and we had the first parade in which the Zionist flag was flown for the first time, officially. And we all stood there well armed, well equipped. And that flag in front of us, eh, this was something that moved everybody to tears.

TED ARISON

There was an incredible amount of excitement. We started getting prepared. We got all new equipment-: jeeps, machine guns. So we had a feeling that we were going into combat somewhere, but we didn't know where.

NARRATOR

The British War Office appointed Brigadier E.J. Benjamin, a Jewish engineering officer from Canada, as commander of the Brigade.

As for the Jewish officers from Palestine, none were allowed to serve in any senior staff position.

SHLOMO SHAMIR

The British, not only from their political point of view, but from their military point of view, judging us, did not think that we are fit to command people. And in fact they thought, well when it comes to soldiers in the infantry, the Queen of the Battle, as we call it, we'll have to have a British officer or a sergeant to push them and do it.

NARRATOR

The Jewish Agency, meanwhile, appointed a parallel and covert Haganah command structure within the Brigade to deal with things specific to the Agency's political agency. Its senior commander: Shlomo Shamir.

SHLOMO SHAMIR

The appointment was actually done basically for the purpose if there is no contact

with Israel. And decisions have to be taken on the spot. And somebody has to weigh the thing, yes-no, and there is nobody to ask except God.

NARRATOR

In Burg al Arab, a month of preparation passed quickly.

Then, with orders in hand, the Brigade was given an emotional send-off by the Palestine Symphony Orchestra.

AVRAHAM UZIELE

All around, nothing, nothing, and nothing. And all of a sudden you hear this symphony orchestra. And we felt high. And this was the opening to our adventure.

NARRATOR

On October 31, 1944, the Brigade set sail by convoy for the southern tip of Italy.

Upon arrival, the Brigade was ordered up to Fuiggi, a mountain town outside Rome. Other Jewish units already attached to the British Army in Europe soon brought the Brigade to its full strength of 5500.

NARRATOR

In Fiuggi, training began immediately. For these young soldiers from Palestine, British regular army training -- both in combat and logistics -- was unlike anything they had back home. And, it gave them what David Ben Gurion and the Jewish Agency leadership had always wanted.

MAXIM KAHAN

We were given the discipline of the British Army. The British Army has been in existence for over four hundred years. It served in sixty, seventy, eighty different countries in the world. So the British Army may not be the best army in the world. But one thing I can vouch for, it's a bloody good army.

JOHANAN PELTZ

And we had a few experienced British officers who were lent to the Brigade in order to train the Brigade in actual fighting.

NARRATOR

As good as these British officers were, they couldn't match the intensity of the soldiers of the Jewish Brigade.

MAXIM KAHAN

I remember when we were training in Fiuggi. It was raining like hell. And word came down that the colonel says, 'no need for training this afternoon, the weather is too bad.' That was just the point that I was looking for, I said fine. Boots, socks, nothing on top, we're going for a five mile run. We're going into battle and we're going to sit here on our asses here for two or three hours this afternoon and not do

anything? The Colonel says you can sit on your ass. I can't sit on my ass. He is a Britisher and his relations are not being killed and he's not the Jew being smothered, smoked out and burnt and all the rest of it.

NARRATOR

The Brigade brought that same intensity to life in the camp, where Fiuggi soon took on the appearance of the home they'd left behind. Ignoring British regulations, Hebrew was spoken everywhere and the Star of David flew above.

Where they could, Brigade soldiers made time for Jewish refugees in and around Rome, especially children -- sharing rations, holding weekly Sabbath services and celebrating special Jewish holidays.

DAVID SPECTOR

The main holiday which we celebrated very much was a Hanukah in which we had a terrific Menorah put over a town where it could be seen for miles around. And every soldier dancing with a child on his shoulders. Really wonderful, you could have wept. But every one had a child on his shoulders.

NARRATOR

During the winter of 1944-45, throughout the rest of Europe, the Germans were making their last stand against massive Allied attacks.

In the north of Italy, the American 5th and the British 8th Armies were preparing the Spring Offensive against an entrenched German Army. The Jewish Brigade would be part of that final assault.

NARRATOR

On February 26, 1945, the men of the Brigade were ordered up to the front. As their convoy passed through Rome, the city's residents joined hundreds of Jewish refugees to give them an emotional farewell, sending them off to the battle they had waited so long to fight.

HANOCH BARTOV

Five and a half years after the war began, and all through those years we, Palestinians, Jews in the land of Israel, we wanted to be part of it and we were never allowed, never given the chance. And all of a sudden we are there. We are at the front line.

SHLOMO SHAMIR

We had never experienced movements on such magnitude, and positions taken against an enemy which is not the Arabs of Israel, it's the German army. This you get into a war zone which you smell the air of big war.

NARRATOR

For most of March, 1945, the Brigade held their section of the static front line

against the German 42 Jaeger Division.

SHLOMO SHAMIR

This is your window to the world, and you had to prove yourself in these last few months.

JOHANAN PELTZ

We had our doubts whether we can stand up against the Germans in a face to face fight. They had such a reputation as soldiers, they put down all the armies of the entire world.

NARRATOR

One particular battle would be remembered by the men of B Company, 3rd Battalion, as their severest test, at a place called La Georghetta. A German company had established itself on the high banks of the Fosso Vetro canal, overlooking the Brigade's position.

JOHANAN PELTZ

And it became necessary to scout the area, to find the mine fields and exactly the approach, and how many men are in La Georghetta, and so on.

In one of my patrols I got right up to La Georghetta, and I actually laid on a German bunker. And inside that bunker they had a record of "Lili Marlene." And they played it over and over again in German, and I learned "Lili Marlene" in German and I remember it to this day.

"Bei de laterne,
bei dem grossem Tor,
stehte eine laterne
huh stehte sie nach bevor
Bei de laterne, wir waren uhm-umm,
We were ta-tam ta-ta, ta-tam
Her sweet, Lili Marlene --
We meet Lili Marlene."

NARRATOR

On the following morning, March 19, Peltz's men carried out a daring daylight raid on La Georghetta.

JOHANAN PELTZ

On the starting line we were all laying down and there were bullets whizzing all around us, and sounds of explosions.

I called them up and charged. It's a fantastic feeling. A person loses all fear. It's a sort of communal madness; something grabs you and you just can't stop. I have never felt anything like it in my life.

SHLOMO SHAMIR

When we remind ourselves of the ferocity of the front line, in a static front line where the 200 yards between forces are 200 yards of death and life and you have to pass your examination there whether you are a soldier or not this was very important to us. And we passed it.

JOHANAN PELTZ

We broke into the German Positions and we started sticking the bastards with bayonets. One corporal, his name was Corporal Levy, during the assault [was] standing on the German bunker shouting, "Heraus ihr Schweinen, die Juden sind da." Out with you pigs, the Jews are here.

HANOCH BARTOV

All of a sudden I see a German soldier running and another German soldier and another German and I have the feeling that the Germans are now attacking us. And I am all, you know, cold, and there is a Tommy gun there, and I take this Tommy gun, you know, and I prepare myself, you know, for the final fight. And then I realized they are prisoners...that we took.

GABRIEL KNOLLER

And I saw them coming in, those Nazis, which we have never met face to face and we saw them coming, and then we had the feeling, "Well, here they are." And Peltz wanted to kill them. He was running along with a Tommy gun and yelling, "Verfluchte Jude, Ich verfluchte Jude!" And Uzi stopped him. He said, "You've got an order to bring them alive. You can't kill them here."

HANOCH BARTOV

It was the first time, mind you, the first time that the Jewish formation under its flag went into open battle and came back with a whole squad of German prisoners.

SHLOMO SHAMIR

When you put into perspective, it would have not made a big difference to the British or the American or any other army. What's the big deal about ten prisoners. But to us this was unbelievable.

NARRATOR

In late March the Brigade was ordered to another position along the front where they would face the battle-hardened German 4th Paratroop Division. Their main task: to hold the south bank of the Senio River until the Allied Spring Offensive began.

MAXIM KAHAN

There are steep mountains coming up this way, steep mountains coming up this way. We were on these banks overlooking the Senio River.

ADIN TALBAR

The Senio River is something like the Jordan River. It was very famous with us but no one ever heard of it in the world. But that was a place where the Germans had made their last stand.

ADIN TALBAR

The Germans were shooting from various positions. And then there was of course mortar fire and shells and so on exploding.

NARRATOR

In the middle of the action, on March 26, the holiday of Pesach, or Passover began, celebrating the Jewish Exodus from bondage in Egypt.

MARK HYATT

We brought the boys out from the forward areas in small numbers to give them some kind of makeshift seder. We had some matzos, so at least they could do, say, we've had some kind of a Pesach, some kind of a seder.

Sadly we had casualties that night. We didn't live charmed lives because we were Jewish. The one above, I think, looked out for us as best he could, he had other people to look after as well. And he was very, very busy.

NARRATOR

The situation along the front intensified.

MEIR "ZARRO" ZOREA

We sent patrols every night. The whole terrain was extensively mined and covered with barbed wire.

IZHAK BAR-ON

The no-man's land by day was dominated by a small group of eight or ten snipers. You were sent out very much in front of the lines.

ARIE AMIR

When I saw a chance to fire, I did, and I could hit a target from 600 meters. I just shot and was sure I hit somebody. Because I'm Jewish and I got to the line full of hate, I resolved ahead of time to hurt as many Germans as I could, so when I hit my target, I felt no regret.

NARRATOR

With the men dug in along the front line on April 3rd, the Brigade received a surprise visitor all the way from Palestine: Moshe Sharett of the Jewish Agency. In a formal presentation of the Brigade Colors, he had come at this final moment to honor his men and everything they were fighting for.

MOSHE SHARETT: Quote

"This is a great moment...in the life of every single one of us...We have attained the privilege of hoisting the flag of the Jewish people...in the front-line of the battle for the freeing of Europe, in this world war against the oppressor of the Jewish people...Long live the standard of Israel's war on the battlefield!"

NARRATOR

Just days later, on the morning of April 10th, the Allied offensive began.

MAXIM KAHAN

We got orders, "Move, we are going across the Senio River."

And there were mine fields. And suddenly we heard a loud, a loud bang, and yelling and screaming. One of the fellows had gone up on a shoe mine. And this poor fellow is brought down so that all of us could see his foot completely gone, and he is shouting "Nekama! Nekama!" Revenge. Revenge. Revenge.

And I went to the head of the column and I took them through the mine field, not because I was so bloody clever but because I was so damn lucky. I brought them through it and we came halfway up this thing, near the place called Mount Ghebbio. On the way German snipers let us have it good and proper. There weren't very many of them. But you didn't have to have very many of them in order to hold that line.

MAXIM KAHAN

Then we started left flanking, right flanking until we got to the top of it, and then we carried on. But we lost soldiers on that thing.

NARRATOR

Within days the surrounding hills above the Senio were taken. For the men of the Jewish Brigade, though victory was theirs, something even greater had been won.

JOHANAN PELTZ

After the Holocaust, and after the fact that so many million Jews went to their deaths without fighting, I think that this is the most important facet of the Jewish Brigade. We broke a taboo. We proved to the world that we can fight. We proved to ourselves that we can fight. That Jews can fight and they can win.

NARRATOR

While the Jewish Brigade held its position above the Senio, the main Allied offensive swept on to the north of Italy, quickly overwhelming the enemy forces in its path.

Two weeks later in Germany, with his last defenses crumbling around him, Adolph Hitler committed suicide. On May 2nd, after bitter fighting, Berlin fell.

And on May 8, 1945, the Allies accepted Germany's unconditional surrender. The war in Europe was over.

BEN-DAVID

When the war ended there was big rejoicing among all the fighting armies that fought the Nazis, the Germans. Most soldiers knew that when they finished the war, everybody would go home. But for us, our war was just beginning.

ARIE AMIR

Though we participated in the final defeat of Germany, for us -- with all we were fighting for -- this wasn't enough.

NARRATOR

On May 14th, the Brigade received its new orders.

HANOCH BARTOV

We were heading north, supposedly to Germany. This is what we were told. We were sworn how to behave and so on and so forth. And we had the first encounter with a German division going into prison, and we hit them, we beat them, we did all kinds of things, and we were stopped at the border because of that, and we were never allowed to enter Germany because of that.

NARRATOR

The Brigade was sent instead to Tarvisio, a small Italian town on the Austrian Border. With Europe in chaos, and millions of people moving in every direction, the Brigade was assigned to control those war refugees streaming into Italy from the East. Soon these included survivors of the Holocaust.

PAVEL MOZES

The meeting with the survivors was a shock which is very, very difficult to describe because, first of all, everybody got some kind of information about the fate of his family, and about the story of the Holocaust.

GABRIEL KNOLLER

Many of us when they came in and was morning already, and the news went around there were refugees there, there were remnants of the Holocaust, people started running, looking, maybe there'll be relatives, maybe there'll be somebody who knows something about somebody.

GABRIEL KNOLLER

This was a terrible thing, because most of them didn't find anybody. But some of them find news: this one told yes, I know, I come from this little place, and I know this family, I've had this family, and after that people started to be absent from units. They were going to look for the families.

SHLOMO SHAMIR

There were thousands that had families in Europe. So the urge to come out, search for family, find any remnants from your old little township was there.

NARRATOR

Desperate to learn what happened, increasing numbers of Brigade soldiers found ways to circumvent British Army regulations and set out across Europe in search of family.

CYRIL GOODMAN

I remember one evening, Brigadier Benjamin (who was the Brigadier Commander) chatting to me in the mess over our, whatever it was, whiskey. He said, "Look Benny, what are we going to do? All these soldiers taking leave from Tarvisio, they're not coming back. What do I do?"

And I said, "Well Sir, you have not to worry. Put yourself in their places. The war has been finished, the war's been won. Here they are doing guard duty or what not in Tarvisio. All they are concerned with, and that's why really they joined up, is to see if they can find remnants of their own families in Europe.

HANOCH BARTOV

What we found was just bits and pieces. There were no communities. There were no families. There were individuals out of the horror, a six year horror.

ISRAEL CARMY

When I saw the skeletons, and when I saw the people, that's impossible to explain how you feel when you come into a place like that then. I lost all family.

JOHANAN PELTZ

Well, the feeling of anger built gradually. It didn't come all at once. It came to the culmination when we heard of the extermination camps and when we found out from the survivors of the camps what the, what the Germans actually did. And then it turned not into an anger, but into fury. And everybody began feeling that we owe the Germans something.

NARRATOR

Secret Vengeance squads began to form within the Brigade -- to find, identify, and assassinate Nazi officers in hiding.

GABRIEL KNOLLER

It's something which you couldn't stop. It was not organized especially. I mean, there wasn't the cry out going along around the Brigade: "We are going to form a unit of revenge." This was all secret, very secret.

JOHANAN PELTZ

We didn't keep any record. Any written record. And that was for the purpose, if there is no record, nothing can be discovered. We had a group of people who were

good in collecting intelligence and evaluating it.

OLY GIVON

We are looking for where to see where are the high German high officers and the German Nazis, the real Nazis, SS, the commanders of the camps. It was not easy to find them.

ISRAEL CARMY

We got information that one house in Tarvisio is living a German and they suspect him to be a Gestapo Chief. We went to his house, and then I told him that if we find any weapons in his house he would be shot on the spot.

NARRATOR

Israel Carmy ordered a search which turned up a pistol in the oven. The Nazi officer, fearing for his life, prepared a list of others in hiding.

JOHANAN PELTZ

Then another group came into action, and perhaps its not a nice word, but that's what they were, executioners. A small group went out, found the man, and killed him.

ISRAEL CARMY

One officer, two MP's and two more people. They went into Germany, into Austria with the address, exact address, where to take him out and to liquidate 'em.

NARRATOR

Seeking out other Nazi officers, German-speaking Oly Givon located a popular beer hall across the border in Austria. Posing as a Nazi officer himself, he entered.

OLY GIVON

And I say to them, okay, I'm an SS officer. I am looking for how can I run away from here. Who is connecting people, I am alone, I don't know how.

NARRATOR

Givon's ruse worked, and a secret meeting was arranged with a fugitive Nazi officer.

OLY GIVON

Then I met him, and I said, okay, we are now alone. I am a Jew. You act against the Jews. You kill Jews. And I start to talk with them. And it did take some [time], sometimes it takes a one or two hours. At the moment that I was a hundred percent sure that he, that he was the man who kill Jews, then I took him out. And I said, in the name of the nation of the Jews, I kill you. And I killed him.

NARRATOR

While vengeance squad activities continued, other Brigade soldiers wrestled with their own anger, like the group escorting an army train into Klagenfurt, Austria.

HANOCH BARTOV

And we came to a railway station. All the insignia, the Nazi insignia are still there. The manager of the station has torn this, but you can still see, you know, it's still the shade, the faded part, you can see. And we now, again, we now are going to take revenge. We are now going to do the big thing. But what do you do? We threw him out of his office, and we took over the place. Then we went out to town to see what could we do. And we could do nothing. What could we do? We couldn't, you know, walk the streets and shoot. What we could do is look for Jews.

HANOCH BARTOV

And we arrived at a kind of huge square with cobblestone, paved with cobblestone. And there at the edge of this square stood a young woman. And I can see her dressed in like Marlene Dietrich style. A beret, a raincoat.

As we walk past here, because we had already the Brigade badges on our sleeves and these were very clear badges: white, blue, white blue, and a yellow Star of David. And the yellow Star of David for five and half years in Europe was as if you have a death sentence on your sleeve. And in her eyes we saw a different look. So after we passed her one of us says, "This girl I think is Jewish."

NARRATOR

She was indeed Jewish, and led Bartov's squad to a group of other survivors huddled together in a bombed-out house.

HANOCH BARTOV

And we enter, young Palestinians, and we say, "Shabat Shalom", and they are all shocked and we tell them that we are soldiers from Palestine, from the Jewish Brigade, and this was something which I think if I live a thousand years I will not be able to forget because their reaction was as if they saw the Messiah. And they jumped. First of all they didn't believe, then they started, you know, really physically, physically, to touch us, [to see] if we are real.

JOHANAN PELTZ

You just cannot imagine what it meant to the Jews in Europe to see the Magen David on the sleeve of the Jewish soldiers.

HANOCH BARTOV

A rumor passed all through Europe that there are soldiers from Palestine. And if we go to them, if we reach them or if they reach us, there is a future.

NARRATOR

One of those survivors was a young teenager, Moshe Bejsky, liberated from a camp in Czechoslovakia on May 9, 1945, by a Russian officer, himself a Jew. The

survivors turned to him for help.

MOSHE BEJSKY

"Tell us, where should we go?" And his answer I will not forget until my last day. And he said, "Don't go to the East because they don't like us there. Don't go to the West because they don't like us either." You see, the first day after liberation after five and a half years of being in ghettos and camps. And the man who liberated you, he brings you the message that you have no place to go. And this was terrible.

I decided not to return to Poland anymore because I knew Poland was a big Jewish cemetery. And I had no hope to find anybody of my family. So, we organized a group and decided to make our way to the west.

NARRATOR

The small group joined what was known as the Bricha -- the spontaneous flight of Jewish refugees out of Central Europe. After walking nearly four weeks without a destination, Bejsky's party found themselves at a refugee camp near the Austrian-Italian border. Here they were approached by a man in uniform.

MOSHE BEJSKY

He had a Magen David, a David Star, on his arm. And he said, "Shalom." And he said in Hebrew that he was an officer of the camp. And then he told us that on the other side of the border there is a Jewish Palestinian Brigade. This is the first time that I felt, we felt, that there is a hope, again there is a hope.

HANOCH BARTOV

In this sense, the Brigade kindled the imagination of survivors, and they came running towards it from all over.

LISA DERMAN

We descended from the hill and we noticed that there were trucks standing. And all of a sudden a soldier came out, was standing on the side and he came out and we noticed that he had an insignia with a Star of David. So all of a sudden the excitement started in the group.

LISA DERMAN

We cried! We screamed! We jumped! We kissed one another! Can you imagine, from the ghettos and the fires? To see Jewish soldiers?

NARRATOR

Brigade soldiers quickly set up makeshift camps to care for the growing number of Jewish refugees headed towards Tarvisio.

SHLOMO SHAMIR

The picture of seeing the remnants go through the border, collecting in these

camps, treating them, dealing them, the lists of names published that each one looks for his own name, maybe he'll find his family there. This is a picture that doesn't leave you in your lifetime.

HANOCH BARTOV

The other activities were to provide. Just to provide. To provide food, to provide clothing, to provide dwellings.

BEN DAVID

We became for them the light and hope, we became their fathers and mothers, and the community, the rabbis and providers. Without us, I don't know what would have happened.

RINNA IRMAY

We had a complete crisis that nothing actually existed in the world that is that it's worth to fight for and to live for. Now you meet suddenly with young people who weren't born heroes, or who weren't born extraordinary persons, just simple people, and who go and fight for some, they believe in something. You see, this was what actually all the young people who were still alive needed, we needed something to hang on.

HANOCH BARTOV

We were neither saints nor knights. We were simple Israeli boys who understood that we now stand for the Jewish people, and you have to do something about it. That's it.

NARRATOR

While the Brigade cared for as many Jewish refugees as they could, the vast majority were living in Allied Displaced Persons camps established after the war. Here, grouped together with all other refugees, Jews had no identity of their own.

CHANAN GREENWALD

You know that after the war in the D.P. Camps there were no Jews. That's what the British and the Americans said. They were all displaced persons, there were no Jews.

SHLOMO SHAMIR

At the beginning, the Jews were not considered a group. They were Poles, Hungarians, Rumanians, whatever it is, by the countries from where they came.

NARRATOR

Burdened with an overwhelming number of war refugees, the Allies enacted their policy of repatriation for all Displaced Persons, including the Jews.

AVRAM SILBERSTEIN

Eisenhower came out with an announcement that every refugee will be sent back

to his country of origin. And that was impossible. That was impossible.

BEN DAVID

They came home, but there were no homes and there was nothing. There were no parents, no brothers, no community, no Rabbi, no teacher, there was nobody to tell them what to do, or how to get a new start.

Many times at their home there stood a gentile neighbor with a knife in his hand who wanted to inherit and keep their home as their own. So they had to leave.

Frequently they waited for days hoping that perhaps somebody would come, perhaps a brother, perhaps another survivor, perhaps somebody who knows something. There was no mail, no telephone, no communication; there was no place to go.

AVRAM SILBERSTEIN

We understood the situation. We understood that Europe for the Jews is finished.

NARRATOR

On June 20, 1945, an official Brigade search party, led by Captain Aharon Hoter Ishay, was sent out on orders to learn more about Jews in the camps: where they were, and how many.

At the first camp, Hoter Ishay was told by the commanding officer that there were no Jews. But searching throughout the camp, his men did find Jews -- hundreds.

HOTER ISHAY

I ran back to the office of the camp commander and I burst out, without paying attention to the difference in our ranks, "Why did you tell me there are no Jews?"

He told me, "We are having the repatriation in full scale. All I have to report: number of in, number of out. So how could I know they are Jews? Here have the names of the countries. You are not a nation, and therefore you do not appear on my board."

NARRATOR

Outraged at the status of Jews in the camps, Hoter Ishay and others involved in refugee work began pressuring the allied command to give Jews their own identity, exempt them from repatriation, and provide them with camps of their own.

But even that, when it happened, would not be enough. For the men of the Brigade the only real answer to the plight of the Jews of Europe was Palestine.

NETANEL LORCH

The Americans when they went into Dachau, and the British when they went into

Bergen Belsen and witnessed with their own eyes what had been done, we expected that from now on the White Paper of 1939 would be canceled and that one way or another a Jewish commonwealth would come into being --at least in as much as free Jewish immigration to Palestine was concerned.

NARRATOR

But the White Paper was not lifted, nor was the British blockade -- put in place to prevent any Jewish refugees from reaching Palestine.

The men of the Brigade were no longer willing to sit back and wait for the British to change their policy. Taking advantage of a continent still in chaos, the Brigade's Haganah leadership -- sometimes acting on their own, sometimes under orders from Palestine -- took matters into their own hands.

SHLOMO SHAMIR

We did not have a formal sovereignty, a country, a president, government, ta-ta-ta, army, the whole structure...This inspired everyone to fall into an authority which [was] actually undefined, but [was] in the air.

NARRATOR

For moving Jews out of Europe, however, the men of the Brigade realized they were the best hope -- and put their clandestine operation to work.

HANOCH BARTOV

So when it started, a kind of freedom train formed itself. And everywhere they used the logistics of the army, the cars, the fuel. If need be we stole whatever we could lay hand on. And the whole machinery was geared to one thing: to bring the Jews to take them south, as near as possible to Palestine.

SHIMON MAZE

The first of our trucks went through Austria to the camps. I left the convoy and went into the camp. And I said, 'Look here, we're here, in a week's time, we are going to pick up one thousand people from you.' The reaction of the inhabitants of the camp to this Yellow Magen David was extraordinary. Finally somebody cared for them. And who cared? Jewish soldiers! For [the] morale of these people, it was something extraordinary.

MAXIM KAHAN

The only way that you could move them, the only way you could organize them, was by utilizing, exploiting, the British Army. We had no alternative. We had to exploit. We cheated, we lied, we stole. We took, what didn't we do?

SHLOMO SHAMIR

If you have to tell a man, your soldier, to do something illegal, you don't order. You tell him that this is what is required. Because in such [a] case, every soldier will think, will consider, will weigh like a general.

GABRIEL KNOLLER

You believed in something. You trusted in something that it must succeed. You can't fail, because if you're going to fail, you don't fail yourself. You fail something much larger than you.

MEIR "ZARRO" ZOREA

We had every facility or every service of life from the womb to the tomb, and we had put it to their disposal. We stole blankets, beds, medicine, milk, chocolate. And we had a net over the whole of Europe which was then about five million people who were moving from place to place of all nations and all denominations, and we directed our streams towards Palestine.

SHLOMO SHAMIR

Let me tell you, to run an operation all through Europe with hundreds of people out of their units, with false passes. This required an organization, a system, a control that really succeeded.

HANOCH BARTOV

It had to be done in a way that the British will not notice it. That the normal, the normal activities of the Brigade would continue. And at the same time underneath there will be so to speak, a second Brigade doing other things. And all this was done illegally and all this was done with forged papers. So they have actually formed an imaginary formation. They called it the "TTG."

TTG was just a combination of dirty words. in Arabic and Yiddish combined. The original name, TTG, meant <I>Tilhas Tizi Gescheften</I>, translated, roughly translated, would be "up my ass business." And this was, all papers were signed, TTG.

NETANEL LORCH

The British, like any other bureaucracy, liked initials. They loved initials. And they loved different colors of inks. If you had to forge a document, you preferably had three or four different colors.

MAXIM KAHAN.

And we used to fill out the work ticket that you're going form wherever it is -- Frankfurt to Rome -- and you've got to give the reason for the journey. And you put down there "TTG," and you sign the signature and after that you put Captain or Lieutenant and all the rest of it. And you stop twenty times on the road. And the fellow asks for your work ticket and you show him the work ticket and you've got to be very sure of yourself. You show it to him with a smile on your face as if you own the bloody world. You and Churchill are chums. And he says, "TTG, what's that?" [You say,] "You don't know what TTG -- heh - he doesn't know what TTG means." That's all you need.

SHLOMO SHAMIR

We were very careful to disguise everything possible. If there was an inspection in the unit, everybody was present there. Cover up proper. If transport was involved, cover up proper. In that sense, I think we played it very well. Reasonably safe. Reasonably, not all the time. For the cases where we didn't play safe, we very much required God's help and He did help.

NARRATOR

Divine intervention or not, what made these deceptions even more disturbing to the British High Command were individual British Jewish officers within the Brigade who, by turning a blind eye, allowed these capers to continue.

EDMUND DE ROTHSCHILD

So many of my men were away that when we inspected it was quite difficult to produce the requisite number. And there was one occasion where there was a man called Heller. He was a sergeant. And he had his cap on one way, like that, and he spoke to the General, and then when he went down to the cookhouse, there was him again with his hat on that [the other] side. And he [the General] said, "haven't I seen you before?" "No sir, you've seen my twin brother."

DAVID SPECTOR

We carried out our military duties correctly, our other duties we did as you know best as we can to reconcile them. I don't regret any of the things. I mean, I remember that when they gave a party for me when I was being demobilized, they said to me, "David, we're sorry you're going. Your signature was so easy to copy."

NARRATOR

Some officers, like Shaul Ramati, actually took part in covert operations -- putting themselves and their careers on the line.

SHAUL RAMATI

And one day, [the] Special Investigations Branch Captain came to see me and told me indignantly that they had caught two of our trucks with people on board and I was signed on the work ticket.

So I said, "Yes, that's my signature, all right." He said, "Well, this is no behavior, the kind of behavior we expect from a British officer." I was in the British Highlanders, attached to the Brigade.

And I said, "Well, you should expect something like this, because my mother was murdered in the Warsaw Ghetto, and nearly all my family was destroyed there and you can't expect me to sit here with folded arms, not even to try and do something to save those who have survived.

NARRATOR

Desperate to reach more survivors, the men of the brigade took greater and greater

risks. One of their boldest operations targeted more than a thousand Jewish refugees in a holding center in Graz, a town in central Austria under Russian military control.

ISRAEL CARMY

I got information through our people that are working there, that the Russian Army is withdrawing, and the British Army is coming into Austria.

NARRATOR

Sensing an opportunity to transport more Jews than ever, Israel Carmy and a few others arranged for a convoy of thirty Brigade trucks to slip into Graz after the Russians had left, but ahead of the British.

ISRAEL CARMY

We met the first scout advance troop of the British forming near the road to advance into Graz

NARRATOR

Hiding their trucks in a nearby forest, the Brigade soldiers headed into town. With little time to spare, they located the refugees, and quickly got them together.

ISRAEL CARMY

When they were told that we were taking them out to Italy, they, you know they were shocked. Absolutely.

NARRATOR

The thousand refugees were led into the forest and onto the waiting trucks. At nightfall, the Brigade convoy carefully picked its way south, back towards the Italian border.

SHLOMO SHAMIR

If the British would have been more sensible, stopped the trucks and arrested the whole lot, there would have been a scandal of, all the way to, God knows, the sky. Thanks God, God kept us in good spirit; it was a very daring move. Thanks God, achieved.

NARRATOR

Throughout the chaotic summer of 1945, taking full advantage of their unique position as soldiers, the Brigade managed to transport thousands of Jewish refugees to ports in the south of Italy and France. There they boarded ships that would attempt to run the British blockade of Palestine. Most were unsuccessful, either turned back or their passengers sent to detention camps in Cyprus.

Increasingly aware of the Brigade's activities -- and their flaunting of authority -- the British War Office took action. On July 27, 1945, the Brigade was removed from its strategic position on the Italian border.

JOHANAN PELTZ

They took the Jewish Brigade away from Italy mainly because of the Bricha. They sent us over to the Western Front to the Netherlands because they reasoned that from there we would not be able to do so much involved in the Bricha and in the organizing of the Jewish underground in Europe.

NARRATOR

Traveling north out of Italy, the Brigade convoy first had to pass through occupied Germany.

MARK HYATT

For the Brigade to be going through the territory of the conqueror and the people who were going to wipe out the Jewish race completely, wipe us out. People who came out of the ruins in Mannheim looked unbelievably at us: "Jews --- there aren't any left." We were able to disprove that quite quickly.

NARRATOR

The Brigade arrived in Belgium on August 1, 1945; some units moved on to Holland.

Now under greater scrutiny by British command, the Brigade was forced for the moment to curtail its covert activities.

In the meantime, the men took relish in performing their official duties: guarding German Prisoners of War and sending them out daily to clear the minefields planted by their own army.

GABRIEL KNOLLER

This was another feeling to you. Suddenly they were the ones who took orders from us.

Each one of them and all of them would say, "We were never Nazis. We were made to serve in the army. We had to obey orders. We never killed the Jews. We fought against the Allies, we didn't fight against the Jews."

We didn't believe them. We didn't trust them. We knew that they had to say this because they were afraid.

NARRATOR

Angry at what they heard, these young Jewish soldiers designed as special punishment for the POWs.

GABRIEL KNOLLER

We took a detachment of German prisoners under guard to clean the main synagogue in Harlem. And they cleaned it tip top, like what we call bullshit

cleaning of the British Army, till it shone, the whole thing. We put them to work for the Jewish community to clean all those synagogues that they made dirty and closed. Some of them they destroyed.

NARRATOR

Meanwhile, Brigade leaders worked out the logistics of running their covert operation from this new location in the North.

MEIR DE SHALIT

Nothing could be done without transportation. I mean, when we had to supply the survivors with food, we needed transportation. When we moved the survivors from one place to another, or to our camps, we needed transportation.

NARRATOR

Further than ever from the main refugee escape routes to the south, additional trucks had to be found. For this, Avram Silberstein and his men developed a plan.

AVRAM SILBERSTEIN

I saw that the British were forming a new Dutch Army. And they gave them the same trucks as we had. Same type. I went back to my unit, I said, "we are going to steal thirty-four trucks. And we shall give them the same numbers as our trucks. And we shall make a separate unit. And we shall have two units with the same numbers, the same markings, in two separate places."

Within two weeks, there was panic in Holland. Thirty-four trucks were stolen from them. And we kept them separately. They had the same papers, everything was correct. And the British couldn't find us.

We were shifting daily, our trucks, to Germany, on false papers. The refugees were dressed up like soldiers, and as soldiers they were coming back from the concentration camps. I had Belgian friends that gave me a farm. In that farm, we reloaded our men. They came from the camps as soldiers. In that farm, we changed their dress; they became civilians. And from now on, over the French border, we shifted them as workers, laborers.

NARRATOR

The Brigade continued operations like these throughout the summer of 1945, moving groups of Jewish refugees whenever and wherever they could. But with tens of thousands spread throughout the DP camps in Europe, they were in far greater numbers than the Brigade could ever hope to reach.

In September, under mounting pressure from Jewish leaders everywhere, the Allies agreed to establish separate camps for the Jewish refugees, and granted them their own status as a unique group.

Sensing an opportunity, David Ben-Gurion, newly arrived in Europe, joined the

Brigade leadership in developing a bold new plan. First, pack 100,000 refugees into these new camps; and then, to further pressure the Allies for a Jewish homeland, send Brigade soldiers into the camps to transform the refugees into a single Jewish voice demanding entry to Palestine.

ARIE PINCHUK

We sent our people to the camps to organize the younger and the older to teach them Hebrew, to teach them how to use a rifle and a gun and a revolver. To teach Jewish history. Israeli geography. To get to know the country. To get them closer and closer to the idea of choosing Israel as the aim where he should go.

SHLOMO SHAMIR

We call it indoctrinate, but tell the story, tell the story about the Yishuv, what there is in Israel, that there is a population here, there are towns, there are villages.

PAVEL MOZES

They were proud of us that we are the representative of a future Jewish state. They met us as Jews who are going to give them a real life.

ALEX SHORE

When the members of the Brigade came, as emissaries of the Haganah to organize us into the movement, we immediately took a liking to them...when they started singing with us and when they started dancing with us it felt that my God they're different, they're singing the same songs, they're somehow taller than us. We straightened up and we started singing like them with more gusto, with more real Hebrew. We felt suddenly we belonged to our own people, belonged to our own kind but with pride.

NARRATOR

Despite the hopes of the refugees, the door to Palestine remained shut. And the British blockade remained in place.

For the leaders of the Jewish Agency, it was time to accept the inevitable: there would be no Jewish homeland unless they fought for it.

Knowing they lacked sufficient arms and ammunition for this confrontation, the Jewish Agency used whatever methods necessary to secure what they needed. For special help, they turned to the men of the Brigade.

HANOCH BARTOV

You have to visualize, Europe '45: it's a huge military depot. There are millions of soldiers there. Americans, British, and others. And the amount of equipment and food and everything that is being shipped to Europe is endless. For soldiers who are organized in transport companies and engineering companies and all kinds of military organizations [which] enabled them to move around and have access to these huge depots., it was easy to do.

MAXIM KAHAN

You're like asking a child who is in a toy shop, "You didn't touch any of the toys? How can you take a child into a toy shop and you don't want him to touch the toys? You take a Jewish soldier from Palestine into Europe and you guard stores with then all the arms apart from the man, the many was carrying, were all in stores, who looked after those stores? We looked after those stores. Snipers rifles and rifles and da da da. Of course we guarded them; we stole them.

JOHANAN PELTZ

We had, of course, links with the Haganah, and the arms and the ammunition taken away from the British were very valuable later on.

SHLOMO SHAMIR

Now, the British intelligence knew a lot, but not enough. This is the great secret. They knew that we are smuggling arms, they knew that we are dealing with the immigrants, moving here, there. But they never dreamt the magnitude of the operation. Because in their interpretation, they couldn't grasp it this way, with all due respect. They couldn't grasp how the thing really was managed.

NARRATOR

The British were also unable to stop it, and after nearly a year of trying, took the only action they could. In April, 1946, the Jewish Brigade was ordered out of Europe.

ARIE PINCHUK

When the order for the disbandment came the British authorities acted very quickly because the disbanding of the Brigade was a political move. It wasn't a military move. The Brigade was the force that kept the Jewish refugees then close to the idea of Zionism. And therefore they decided to disband it.

NARRATOR

Knowing their days in Europe were numbered, Haganah leaders within the Brigade hatched a daring plot to leave behind more than a hundred soldiers to continue their covert activities with Jewish refugees.

To camouflage this final deception -- and in the process smuggle more refugees into Palestine, survivors were chosen to take the place of the soldiers and assume their identities.

BEN ISRAEL

Each one of us got a double and we were sitting with the doubles for many many hours to tell them about our family and the address and all the small details that they will be able to pass through a simple checking of the military police.

GABRIEL KNOLLER

So we had to train them to look like soldiers, to salute, to know a few words in English. They wore British uniforms. They were looking like soldiers, like us.

NARRATOR

Those Brigade soldiers who stayed behind continued the work with survivors and strengthened the link between the ruined world of Europe and hope for a new life in Palestine -- while in July of 1946, the last contingent of Brigade soldiers set sail for home.

HANOCH BARTOV

What we did in terms of presenting a new hope to the survivors was a tremendous thing. It changed, in a way, the direction of Jewish history.

MEIR "ZARRO" ZOREA

We are very proud of what we did in Europe. But my main feeling is that we did too little too late. But who could cope with such a magnitude of the Holocaust. We did our best, that's all.

NARRATOR

Two years later, in 1948, Israel fought its War of Independence.

As David Ben-Gurion had anticipated years earlier, the former officers and men of the Jewish Brigade, with their unique military experience fighting a large-scale war, were called upon to help organize, train and lead Israel's fledgling defense forces against armies of the five surrounding Arab nations.

GABRIEL KNOLLER

Ben-Gurion was very much for the Brigade. He said, he realized that unless you get the experience of a regular army, you'll look like partisans and, if there's a real war going on, the war against the armies of Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, who were trained by the British, you had to have somebody who knows how to fight an army.

JOHANAN PELTZ

It was the Jewish servicemen of the British Army who had the know-how, how to run an army, how to build an army, how to organize it.

NARRATOR

With the British blockade now lifted and the hated White Paper no longer in force, Jewish refugees poured into Israel and soon swelled the ranks of the new army. Many were trained by and fought alongside the very same former Brigade officers and men who had earlier, in Europe, made them a solemn promise of a homeland of their own. That promise would now be kept -- for the new arrivals and for the men of the Brigade themselves -- fighting the war that would bring them a new nation.

SHLOMO SHAMIR

If there is a claim for the meeting of the remnants, the claim is survival. Survival of the people as people, survival as a group in terms of a state, of a homeland of their own. Survival.

HANOCH BARTOV

We had the inner feeling that we are able to do it, that we are able to defend ourselves, that we are able to acquire this piece of land for ourselves and the remnants.

Could it not have happened? It could not have happened. But it did happen, and we are here.

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