

MISHA BECAME A RADICAL ZIONIST

Misha: We were Zionists. We were more than Zionists, we were Revisionists. We were Brit Trumpeldor at one time. This was Jabotinsky, a paramilitary type organization; uniforms. We used to get together and drill. I was probably 21 at the time when I got to be a big macher. We had kids anywhere from my age all the way to 10 to 12. We called them little eagles; it's just like boy scouts with the exception that we did not have guns in this organization.

After that we did. Some of us decided that since our end desire was to go to Israel, we should train ourselves for what will happen in Israel, and we created cells. They were based on the type of cells that the revolutionaries made in Russia: Four people in a cell--a leader--and you didn't know any more than 5 people. And of course there were more cells. In each town we created a cell. In one town we could have 3 or 4 cells, as many people as you could figure were . . . Each group trained separately. Then, after a certain time, I decided that they needed contact with Israel. And I was in a position to get a contact via the underground; and 2 people in the underground, the Irgun, already, came to Torchin. I got in touch with a man that was the spiritual leader of the movement. And this was the budding movement of the Irgun in that town. It was Abbach Meir; And Abbach Meir came to Torchin to see me. A book was written in Israel by the effort of a number of people. Some were the people that I saved when the time came. I got them out of Torchin and sent them over to Vilna, to Lithuania, across the Russian border. And then they went to Israel. It was a clandestine activity, an underground organization.

Misha: We played by ear. For instance, we decided to have a camp, a training camp for military training. I was 21 and I started them out in Volyn. After that we got some other people and we spread it to other places. So, through the connection with a spiritual leader, we got a contact with



partisans

Misha: Very common conditions in those days. When you go to Acco and you see this picture hanging on the wall that says "Who shall not be counted." At that time the British, who were running the government, wanted to have a count, a plebiscite, to see how many Jews and how many Arabs are in Israel. Of course it was a detriment to our activity, because we wanted to bring in some people.

Misha: The Irgun sent out 2 young men to look over the situation. It was ripe. They came, they looked. They went around over Poland trying to get some influential people, some people that we knew had the same ideology; and after they left, I organized, under the disguise of having a summer camp for the Boy Scouts--for the Brit Trumplador. We had 200 kids from the age of 12-14-16 in our summer camp. We had a summer camp which was legal. We had a permit for that. But we moved the camp into the swamps of Palicia, which was just about inaccessible except for frontier roads they didn't watch. It was an abandoned part of Poland. There weren't any farms there because there was just the swamps.

And after this camp was over, the select few from each cell was gathered there. There were about 20-30. And they sent an instructor from the underground in Israel. And they sent guns and grenades, to learn strategy.

Misha: Before that one of our cells, I don't know who, contacted a captain in the Polish army, a Jewish captain, just like the story you have seen in "Exodus." His name was Pornopovski, a Polish name, and apparently the Polish army didn't know he was a Jew. And the captain came to Lutsk and we had a course over there. And he taught us military strategy, and things of that kind.

Q: That fellow who was killed by the British?

Misha: Shlomo ben Yitzhak was a member of one of the cells in Lutsk, which was in the district of Volyn. He is dead and proclaimed a hero, and I don't want to disparage him; he was in one of the cells under my supervision.

He disobeyed orders, and I kicked him out of the organization. He went to Israel on legal Aliyah. And over there he was integrated into the Irgun.

I could detect in the fellow that he was insubordinate. He couldn't take orders. For instance, it was a rule that nobody can carry anything on them, nothing. He came with a dagger.

Misha: Nobody in my family knew what was going on. I was active in the organization. It was a legal organization. It was a little town. There was no culture or activity to speak of. We generated culture within the realm of our organization. We had courses for adults; because outside of the grammar school--it was a little bit higher than the grammar school, like junior high--there was 12 grades that you could make. After that you were on your own. There was no place to go. I wanted to study. I had to go to a town that was 25 km from us. The distant city was the state capital where there was a gymnasium, in order to study.

Misha: I went to public school. I never went to parochial school. We had a parochial school, a Tarbut, and this was a General Zionist Organization which had a day school. They taught Hebrew. It was like an academy, only it was secular. They didn't teach any religious subjects. They taught Hebrew and math and all the other subjects in Hebrew. Around this Tarbut there was a cultural activity.

Misha: This was a Zionist party and had nothing to do with local politics. It was just which Zionist party you belonged to. The Zionist party was the official party. The Revisionist Party was in opposition to the Zionist party. They required members not just to buy out the land, but to take it back by armed force when the time will come. And this was our objective, to prepare ourselves for this. So we did take the best ones, those that were selected from the cells; we didn't take everyone, just those who showed dedication and ability. We took them to this camp. There were 32 who were trained as leaders, madrichim. And we had 4 weeks of very intensive training. This was in the 1930's.

Misha: There were political fights. Nothing physical. The Zionists used to talk against the Revisionists; and we talked against them; One interrupted the other. There were boos and hoos and all this.

When a prominent speaker came (to town) I said "We'll put him out of business. He isn't going to speak. So we short circuited the power lines and blew out the electricity in the whole town and put it in the dark. I was an electrician, among other things. While I was going to school, what else could I do? I didn't know what I was doing. But I was doing installation. I was making some money. But destruction isn't hard. You take a big 2X4, and you take some barbed wire. You nail it on the end of the 2X4. And then you go over to the 2 wires. And you just hit the wires together, tie this thing around, and this blew out all the fuses in the power station. That night there was no electricity, and there was no speaker. Kids of 16 and 17 were doing it. Of course they were watching the streets. They made sure that nobody will see us. They knew, but nobody is going to snitch. and besides that, it could have been an accident. The wind did it. It was the beginning, and was something that developed later into a big organization; because when the organization got too big, I felt it was too big for me; I couldn't handle it. Besides that, I had to leave.

Q: What do you remember of Misha as a kid?

Fay: He used to beat me. up and scratch my face. I used to cry. My mother used to have a...there came fights over that because he used to scratch me. He was a mean child (as a little kid.) He used



to scratch my face and my mother was afraid it'll leave marks on my face. So that came the biggest fight over that. But they lived in our house for a long time, Misha and his mother.

As a child I was close to Misha, of course he was in our house and I was close to Uncle Elyah. Elyah---they had 5 girls. They lived on the other side of the wall. So there I used to lay day and night.

There was Jose's mother Bluma; and Esther's mother Baila; One was Ester, one Gitel, one Malka. And I was in with all the girls. I laid there day and night. Esther went to school with your father. Gitel went with me. And the younger girl was in a younger class.

I was an average student, but I was good at math.

Fay: When I was young I used to work at Surca's store for nothing.

GITEL FAY



Q: describe it.

Fay: What was going one a lot of sewing. Here you buy a suit. There you buy your material and you take it to a tailor.

We didn't have material. But (we had) all the equipment: We had buttons, zippers, thread, and all kinds of things for (sewing).

We had a little bit of shoes, children's shoes and ladies shoes not too much. We had mens' shirts and ties; ladies underwear; blanket covers; feathers; soaps, perfumes; a veil for brides. Decorations for caskets. In Europe we didn't bury people in caskets. It was against the law. Just a plain grave. You made white clothes out of material. You called it achareecha. Those men who do the rites for the dead they knew how to sew. The Goyim had wooden caskets. The Jews they put plain in the grave. We sold to Goyim and Jews, and Germans ...you name it. You had to speak German, Ukranish, some Russian, some spoke Polish. You had to speak all those languages. I wasn't able to speak Russian, but I was able to understand. Sara`s was the second biggest store. Kopman's was bigger. Fay: Every Saturday I and my. girl friends used to walk in the woods. Sometimes we took lunch along. It was a government wood.

A picture of her 1924 5th grade class. In the beginning they taught Hebrew in school. Later it was only Polish. We learned to read, write and do arithmetic.

Fay: I was always a Zionist. Misha belonged to the Betar.

I belonged to the workers group. I saw Jabotinsky when he came to Lutsk. I didn't agree with his philosophy. But a bunch of boys and girls hired a horse and wagon. We drove all night long to Lutsk. to listen to Jabotinsky. I saw him. I had a ticket to go in the big theatre and he was talking there. He was a very educated man.

In fact, he was right. He said. the only way Israel will become a state is with force, if we train ourselves and use force. At the time I was a kid, I was young. I didn't agree with him. Jabotinsky was in the Russian Duma. He was a good speaker. He was a very educated man. He knew exactly what the Jews should do.

VLADIMIR JABOTINSKY

