

## **Al Schwimmer**

Air-related arms procurement activities in the USA were headed by **Al Schwimmer**, a flight engineer and a licensed pilot. He left his job at TWA in 1947 at the express request of David Ben-Gurion to recruit airmen and buy planes for the IAF-in-the-making. Under his leadership, a number of C-46 and other heavy transport planes were bought and secretly flown to an air force base in Czechoslovakia. He played a key role in building the air bridge between that country and Israel, and in the creation of the IAF's Transport Command. Later, he was commander of the IAF's Engineering and Maintenance Wing. After the War of Independence he founded the Bedek Company, which eventually became the Israel Aircraft Industry (IAI) that he headed for many years.