

**Kozlovsky Haya**

Born 1928 in Israel

Joined the Palmach in 1944

Joined the Gid'onim (radio operators) course at Shefayim in 1945

**This is the Way it Was**

After I completed elementary school I went to the Agricultural High School at Nachlat Yehuda. In 1944 we joined the graduates of Mikve Yisrael and together, we joined the Palmach and went for training to Kibbutz Heftzibah. We would work for, two weeks in some branches of work of the kibbutz, and the next two weeks we studied and trained. We practiced with weapons and went on hikes and bivouacs. We climbed Mt Gilboa and had target range practice. I recall the trek that we had to Masada which took 10 days of tough hiking, and then we climbed to the top with the aid of scouts who found the best route. The sight of the dawn as the sun rose was beautiful, the tour of ancient sites was very interesting, and we learned a great deal about the history of our nation.

We descended from Masada via the Roman parapet and headed for the banks of the Dead Sea. There, we took boats and rowed to Kalia. We were unpleasantly surprised upon our arrival to find that the British had arrived there shortly beforehand and were conducting a search. There were some weapons carried by some of our instructors, which they managed to make "disappear". We said that we were all members of the Noar HaOved youth movement and we were given permission to leave. We left and headed for Kibbutz Ramat Rachel in Jerusalem.

In 1945 we established Kibbutz Hakook and were transferred to the 9<sup>th</sup> Company, in the North. We were occupied doing stone clearing and building. Until the first buildings were completed we slept in tents. The dining room and kitchen were in a storehouse of the Solel Boneh Company on the site. The commander of the unit was Efraim (Fema) Kozlovsky and he was in charge of our care and training. He was also responsible for hiding our weapons from the British, and this he did successfully. After "Black Saturday" the British made many searches in the kibbutzim in the North of the country and to our great luck they never managed to find illegal weapons nor our radio transmitter. When their search was over, the British appointed our commander, Fema, muchtar of our settlement.

In 1945 I was sent to a course for radio communication in Morse code at Kibbutz Shefayim. This course was top secret and lasted for 3 months. In addition to the signaling we also had instruction on the technical aspects of building and maintaining radio equipment. The course was very difficult and demanded great concentration, but with the help and devotion of our instructors we successfully completed the course. Most of us were sent to work as Gid'onim for the Mosad for Aliya Bet, in the Diaspora and as radio operators on the ships bringing Olim.

At first, I was sent to be radio operator at Kibbutz Ayelet Hashachar, at the headquarters of "I" Company under the command of Moshe Kelman (of blessed memory) and Oded Messer. At the same time I was also the communications person of the Hagana for the Northern region under the command of Michael Schechter and his adjutant, Tzvi Tzur (Chera). The radio station was located in a small shack in the woods near the house of a family, and only the platoon leader had permission to enter. This was during 1946-1947 and there were many incidents with the Arabs of the area, and the British were also always nosing around. Despite all that, the secret smuggling of Jews across the border from Lebanon continued. I helped take care of those Olim who arrived at Ayelet Hashachar. The first thing we did was to give them false papers. Then we would take them to the check point at Rosh Pina, and from there to Haifa. I also participated in the "Night of the Bridges" as a radio operator from a station at Ramot Naftali.

For a short time I also worked as radio operator for the Naval Company at Hadera and similarly for the Palmach Council in Tel Aviv. The radio station for that event was located in the home of one of the Palmach commanders, the Sinai family. My cover was that I was a seminary student. Every morning I would leave my dwelling and walk to the seminary and go to the house of Carmela and Chaim Ron in north Tel Aviv. One day I was called to meet Yigal Alon. He told me that I was to embark on one of the ships that carried Olim. He took me first to my family so that I could say goodbye, and I told them I was going to study somewhere and would not be home for 3 or 4 months. From there he took me to the Solel Boneh building in Haifa where I was to join to other fellows. They were to go onto the ship (the "Exodus") as stevedores and I as a nurse. The British however, did not allow us onto the ship.

In November of 1947 I was sent by myself to Prague with the aid of a British passport and on a Scandinavian airliner. I was to get to Italy but entrance from Israel was not allowed in those days. While on the plane, I met a couple from Kibbutz Mishmar Haemek who told me that they were going to the spa at Karlsbad. I told them that I was going to meet my grandmother who had survived the Holocaust. At the airport in Prague, it turned out that we were going to the same address, Yozefka 7. This was the center for refugee activities and when we arrived, we were surprised to hear Hebrew songs, and see dances and Jewish flags waving. This was a novel experience. We had arrived on the 29<sup>th</sup> of November, the day the United Nations had voted on the creation of a Jewish State. In Prague I met the people who arranged the papers for others to fly to Israel via Rome, and other documents. I remained at the hotel and did not continue on to Italy immediately. First, I met other Gid'onim (radio operators) and with them we all travelled to the radio station in Milan. I was given the documents of a refugee girl named Elizabeth Pulcsak. My British passport was taken from me so that it could be used again for Aliya Daled.

The transmitting station was located in a village, Avieta, about 30 km from Milan, It wa near a large camp which housed survivors of the Holocaust waiting to go to Palestine. We were not allowed to have any contact with these people.

When I would travel from Milan to Avieta, I sometimes heard Yiddish being spoken. I never spoke to them so they didn't know who I was or what I was doing. We made radio contact with all the other stations in Europe, and with Israel, and with the Hagana ships at sea. We would give commanders of the ships instructions, and would report on the ships whereabouts. All the material was sent in code.

I was then sent to work in Paris during a period when the future State of Israel was frequently being discussed in the UN. We would report to our official organizations about these discussions. From Paris I was sent to Rome and from Rome to the ship "Lo Tafchidunu"("The Unafraid"), and then to the "Kefalos"("Dromit"), which brought Olim from Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. When I returned from my work overseas at the end of 1948 I continued to work as a radio operator for the IDF at the Army "Center for Special Operations".

This was the most meaningful period of my life; the devotion of everyone involved, the special relations that developed between us, and the tasks that we accomplished. This has remained with me my entire life. I married my commander of the Hakook outpost, Fema Kozlovsky, and we raised a family of 3 children and 8 grandchildren. I went on to study education and worked as a kindergarten teacher until 1997. I am now retired and enjoy courses at a college for senior citizens in Givataim, and busy myself in artwork and volunteer work.

#### **Some of my experiences on the ships of the Olim.**

At the end of May 1948 I was sent to be the Gid'onit on the vessel, "Lo Tafchidunu" – "Yardena" when it sailed with Olim for the second time. The loading was carried out at one of the small bays in the Marseilles area and we took on about 500 passengers. The ship, a small merchant vessel, was terribly crowded and it would have been better suited to taking no more than 300 Olim. The planks on which they were to rest/sleep were narrow. The passengers were mostly from Poland and some from Morocco. The conditions were cause enough for all of the passengers to be in a bad temper. During the day they all had to stay below deck because British planes were circling overhead in the vicinity. Only after dusk were they able to go on deck. The food and water were rationed carefully.

The engine of the vessel did not run properly and we had to stop and fix it several times while we were at sea. The Italian captain and crew tried their best to keep the ship going. The trip lasted for 12 days and we reached Haifa during a break in the hostilities. We were received by soldiers of the UN and when I saw the Israeli soldiers in their stocking caps I was very exited. The Olim were sent to various camps in different parts of the country, and after a 48 hour break I was sent back to Italy. There was still very much to do for Aliya Bet and there were not sufficient Gid'onim.

At the end of November,1948 I was sent as Gid'onit for the ship "Kafelos HaDromit". This was a merchant vessel that had been bought from Mexico for carrying arms and had been converted to carry passengers. The crew was

American, and the captain was an American whose wife was Norwegian. She worked as a nurse on the ship. We left Naples and headed for our pickup point at a bay near the town of Bakar in Yugoslavia. When we neared the pickup point I saw a sight that has remained indelible in my memory; thousands of people who had arrived by train stood waving at the shore. The Olim were taken aboard in exemplary order and each was assigned his bunk. There were no complaints and many gave thanks. About 4500 of them were from Bulgaria; some of them spoke some Hebrew, and about 300 were from Hungary. Food and water were rationed out and during daylight hours all stayed below deck. Only in the evening were the Olim allowed on deck. The Olim organized their own program of singing and dancing and I was impressed by their cooperation.

One day I was called to help a young woman who had recently given birth, and the following day another woman gave birth to twins. Shortly after that there was a third birth and all the women and their children were given the very best care possible. While still busy with the births, we received the good news that there were also weddings in store for us; three Bulgarian couples had decided that they wanted to enter Israel as married couples. The captain and a cantor conducted the marriage ceremony and we, the Israelis on the ship were the "givers away" of the brides; a choir sang songs and there was a songfest. I stood there with tears in my eyes.

I was so young and I had been burdened with such a heavy responsibility, Gid'onit (radio operator) or as the captain called it: ship's communications officer. I was also responsible for the women who had given birth and their babies. There were also some children with fever, for whom I had to care as well. Except for sea sickness which affected me sometimes, all went well and I made contact with the radio stations in Italy and received the weather report from Greenwich. The voyage lasted eight days.

In Haifa we were received by soldiers and by many Israeli officials and there was general rejoicing and singing. I had left Palestine with a mandatory passport and returned to Israel as a soldier of the IDF. The others accompanying this ship were Meir Falik (of blessed memory), David Shtern and Willie Rostoker.