

Yariv, Yosef (of blessed memory)

Born 5 December 1923 in Haifa

Joined the Palmach in 1941

Joined the Palyam in 1946

Died 17 December 1998

Written by: Zehava Yariv

This is the Way it Was

Yosef Yariv, (Yoske), was born in Haifa, in Eretz Israel, to Batya and Yitzchak Rivkind who had come to Israel in the third wave of Aliya (the period following the end of WW I,) His life was deeply connected with the security of Israel in the period preceding Statehood, and also after the creation of the State. He became a member of the Hagana when he was only 11 years old, when he was at Kfar Mallal in the Sharon Valley. When the Palmach was formed he was one of the first to join. He was a member of "A" Company (June 1941) and during his service in the Palmach, participated in numerous special operations.

On the night of the 9th October, 1945, in an operation which freed the inmates of the Atlit Detention Camp, Yoske was among the leaders of this operation, and marked the beginning of the fight for the right of immigration. Yoske told about this to Ezra Grinbaum in 1986: "There were about 210-220 Ma'apilim in Atlit at the time. Suddenly there was a rumor that they would not be given certificates but were going to be sent to somewhere outside the country. It was therefore decided to break into the camp and free them. Nachum Sarig was commander of the operation. The plan was to send several men into the camp, prepare the Olim, and to overcome the guards on watch. We, the rest of the company, were to get to Beit Oren from Yagur, and from Beit Oren we would go down the Carmel to the camp. We would break into the camp, free the Ma'apilim and, if necessary by force of arms, bring them back to Beit Oren and Yagur.

The job assigned to my platoon, of which Yitzhak Rabin was commander and I his second-in-command, was to break into the camp, and take up positions opposite the British forces in the huts. When all the Olim had left we would be the rear guard and the last ones out. All went as planned, but when we were still waiting to see if all was clear, a police vehicle came along from the direction of Achuza. It stopped at some distance from us, so I yelled to him to turn around and leave. The vehicle did not move, so I commanded the men to shoot three rounds and I threw a grenade. The vehicle rolled into a wadi, the British driver was killed, an Arab policeman was wounded and the Jewish policeman was unscathed, but scared out of his wits and said nothing. He laid there in the ditch with the dead and wounded. Yitzhak Rabin and Nachum Sarig went with the Ma'apilim to Yagur and I remained as cleanup with the rest of the platoon.

Arabs and Druze from nearby appeared with daylight but we kept them under control. When the last of the Olim had disappeared from sight we also started back to base. When we were on top of the hill and looked toward Yagur, there was a sight that one sees perhaps once in a lifetime: There were about 10,000

people who had come from Haifa and surrounded the kibbutz, to protect it from being searched by the British Army. They formed an inner circle around the kibbutz. A short distance from this circle was another ring of men; these were the soldiers of the British Army surrounding the citizens of Haifa. We came down from the Carmel on the path that led into the kibbutz and hid our arms. This was the conclusion to the 'Atlit Operation'."

Avraham Adan (Bren) said at an evening in Yoske's memory (22.2.99): "With all the tension and excitement that was in the air, I recall so distinctly the coolness with which Yoske gave his orders. As it turns out, whenever I recall the "Atlit Operation", I recall that it was Yoske, the first Palmachnik who shot at a soldier of the British Army, and who coolly led his squad from spearhead position in attack, to cleanup position at the conclusion of the mission"

On 20 February 1946 Yoske was in command of the unit that was to blow up the radar station at Stella Maris, in Haifa. This incident took place about a month after the unsuccessful attempt that had been made by a squad led by the "Rooster", (Rafael Ginzburg 20.1.46); that attempt had been aborted because the camp commander had received a warning phone call. Yoske tells us: "Immediately after the war ended in 1945, the radar of the British Air Force went into action. This was something new at the time. The British brought equipment that had been used against the Nazis during the war and set up a radar station on a cliff of the Carmel Range, near Stella Maris. With this equipment, it was easy for them to know when one of our ships of Ma'apilim was approaching the shore, even if the vessel was a good distance away. They would then send out destroyers to intercept the vessel and take the Ma'apilim to the internment camp at Atlit.

We arrived at the Technion one by one, and Nachum told me upon my arrival: "Listen, this radar operation is very symbolic. We therefore do not want to put this in the same category as police stations or such. That means that the order is to be carried out at any price!" I asked him what 'at any price' meant. He said: "OK, let us think out loud; If you get stuck at an outer fence, then back down. It will be too complicated. If the fence is in the middle then things must be left to your judgment. If it is an inner fence, then nothing else matters, go for it!"

Yigal Alon wrote: ("A History of the Hagana, in Struggle and in War", volume 3 2nd part, page 867): "One month later a Palmach unit went out again to blow up the radar station, under the command of Yoske Rivkind (Yariv)... This was an operation that was carried out without a blemish and without the loss of life, because of the combination of good planning, good execution, and extraordinary bravery".

In 1946 Yoske was appointed commander of the 6th Course of the Palyam (March, April and May). After that, from June to November, he became the 2nd commander of the Palyam, following Avraham Zakai.

Yoske recalls: Meanwhile, the Palmach was being reorganized; Nachum Sarig became commander of the 4th Battalion and he called me. I was already a veteran platoon leader and had been in many operations. He put me in command of the 6th Course of the Palyam. Ordinarily there was a 2 week rotation of sea training for Palmachniks; every two weeks there was another group so that we would have a sufficient number of men on call if a vessel came to shore and help was needed in unloading the Ma'apilim. The courses of the Naval Company, for those who really were seamen, went on for several months. Such was the case with this course, Number 6, that I was supposed to command, and I was not an experienced sailor. Even today I am not an experienced sailor. I don't even care for the sea particularly. I like the sunshine. So I was commander of the course but the instructors were bona fide seamen, as was the head instructor. Let us say that I was the administrative commander and the sea side of the course was dealt with by seamen. When this course ended, Nachum appointed me commander of the Palyam.

The situation was that in those days there was no real problem of a chain of command, and my 'higher authority' was not necessary. There was Berchik and Shmuel Tankus and Yochai and others, who could handle any problems that arose. The idea of a Company was more from the organizational side. The Company was scattered between Maabarot and Sdot Yam and Ein Hamifratz, and a few other places adjacent to the sea. Our job was mostly to unload Ma'apilim, and to secure the area of debarkation and to scatter the Ma'apilim among the civilian populace as quickly as possible."

Izzie Rahav spoke at an evening gathering in Yoske's memory (22.2.1999): "In March, 1946, I arrived at Kibbutz Sdot Yam for the 6th Course of the Palyam. I was interviewed by the commander of the course, Yoske Rivkind. I saw before me an older man but one who was good-spirited and an enthusiastic Zionist. (When I now think back to that occasion, it turns out that he was only three years older than I). Yoske himself was no great seaman but the course was excellent and the morale of the men there was very high. That same year, Yochai ben Nun, Moshe Nachshon (Lipson) and I were assigned to blow up the deportation ships in Haifa Bay. The evening before the mission we met at an apartment on the Carmel. Yitzchak Sadeh, Yigal Alon, Nachum Sarig and Yoske, now commander of the Naval Company, were also there. I don't know what the Generals said at that meeting. Yoske and I were the low-ranking foot-soldiers there. We stood on the fringe and Yoske suddenly approached me, grabbed my hand and said in a tone of voice that was commanding, fatherly and friendly: "Izzie, do it and come back, I need you." This short sentence burned into my being. I recalled it the following day as I swam toward the ship, the first real ship that I had seen close-up. Until then I had seen small boats of all kinds but this was a real ship! After all, there was no war raging at this time. There was a battle in which very few people were actually involved, and all the time, that sentence ran through my head; "Izzie, do it and come back, I need you!"

From the beginning of 1947 and until March, 1948, Yoske was shaliach (emissary) of the Palmach in Milan, Italy, where he was active in procurement most of the time, and in Aliya Bet part of the time. He was in on the secret of our obtaining weapons that Ehud Avriel had worked out with the Czechs and was active in purchasing the vessel "Nora" in Venice. This vessel brought a shipment on April 1st 1948 (4,500 Czech rifles, 500 machine guns, 250 Beza heavy machine guns and 5 million bullets) that changed the face of the war and made the "Nachshon Campaign" possible. This led to the breakthrough on the road to Jerusalem. Ben Gurion, in a radio speech commemorating the 20th anniversary of the arrival of the "Nora", declared: "Without these weapons we would not have remained alive."

By the end of March, Yoske returned to Israel in order to take part in the War of Independence and to complete several important projects. He carried on him a "Bill of Lading" of equipment that had been hidden and had to be handed to the proper individuals. He had to report to Yisrael Galilee what Ehud Avriel and Munia Mardor had told him. He had to identify the "Nora" for Pinny Waze, who was responsible for receiving the procurement materiel, as only he could do so. In 1948 Yoske went to Cyprus on a fishing vessel (with David Maimon) for another procurement deal which did not work out. He returned to Israel on one of the Pans which was bringing Ma'apilim from the detention camps to Israel. On 17 May, 1948, he joined the Negev Brigade and was appointed second-in-command to a battalion commander of the 7th Battalion. After several battles in the south (Isdud and others), he was appointed commander of the 8th Battalion. His battalion was responsible for the Negev from the Beer Sheva – Gaza road south. His battalion participated in all the battles that took place in the Negev from the "Yoav" Campaign to the "Uvda" Campaign.

During the war, in October, 1948, Yoske married Zehava Bein, a Tel Aviv-born girl.

From 1949, when the War of Independence ended and until 1952, Yoske served as contact man between the Military Industries and the Ministry of Defense, and then resigned from the IDF, In 1956 Yoske was recalled to the IDF, to a secret Intelligence unit. In 1957 he was made head of this unit in Europe, and went to Zurich with his family. In 1958 he returned to Israel and was chosen as commander of this unit. In 1963 as a result of political changes in the State of Israel, the entire unit, under the command of Colonel Yosef Yariv, together with the chief of Intelligence, Meir Amit, was transferred from Military Intelligence to the "Mosad", and its code name was "Caesarea", the Operations Division of the "Mosad". In 1967 Yoske was made representative of the Chief of the "Mosad" in Europe, with his office in Paris. Between the years 1969-1971 Yoske set up a new department in the "Mosad" whose business was dealing with special problems created by the Six-Day War. At the beginning of 1972 Yoske concluded 30 years of work as an emissary, in intelligence, and in security; he resigned from the "Mosad" and settled into civilian life.

The period that Yoske spent in Intelligence was one of tremendous activity and building of new foundations. More of what he did remains in the realm of the unknown and only very little of it is known. Meir Amit said of him (on the evening to his memory on 22.2.1999): "Yoske was one of those who broke the narrow borders of the State. He did much to widen them, and not only by military confrontation with the enemy. His methods were much more clever. He gave the State sharper eyes and better ears and in this manner we were able to extend our boundaries and have a wider field for maneuvering when badly needed. Yoske's life was not lived in vain. He left his mark deeply imprinted in our modern history, and his example is there for others to follow".

On 17 December 1998 Yoske Yariv (Rivkind) died. He left his wife, Zehava, a daughter, Lihi Yariv-Laor, a son-in-law, Dan Laor, four grandchildren, Avraham, Yitzchak, David, Amos, a sister, Tzviah. and her family, many other members of the family and numerous friends.