

## The first Aircraft - a Rapide

In April 1948 the Aviron Company and the Hagana decided to send me to England to try and purchase another Rapide. The first Rapide owned by the Aviron Company was, at this time, the only twin-engine aircraft in the service of the Hagana (sherut avir). Mr. Kaplan, the treasurer of the Sochnut agreed to finance this purchase provided the aircraft would be in the country within two to three weeks time. This proviso was not told me by Mr. Michaely, the then Director of the Aviron Company until after my return from England.

I was flown from Tel Aviv to Lydda by one of my pupils in the Auster aircraft which I had brought from England two years ago and from Lydda I went by BOAC regular service to London. In London I met a Jew called Bentley who was dealing with second-hand cars. Through him I met a fellow Bill Towel, owner and manager of an export firm. This Towel had a four-seater personal aircraft jointly owned with a pilot Jack Bonner who was flying on charter. Through Bentley I proposed to Towel that his charter company should purchase for me a Rapide aircraft which I would indicate and which his company should fly over to us. Bentley told me that Towel was willing to take the risk provided that I would pay double the price of the aircraft. At this time, the newspapers were full of information about Jewish aeroplanes being confiscated in England, Italy and Greece.

It was obvious to me that Bentley was a crook and Towel not much better. I had no other choice but to deal with such people as the U.K. had imposed a very strict embargo on any aircraft for Palestine. However, the price was too high and I refused the deal. After consulting with Mr. Esterik and Mr. Silverstone, both directors of the Anglo-Palestine Bank in London, I decided to see Towel and speak to him directly without the knowledge of Bentley. In his office I met also his assistant, John Halford, an ex pilot of the R.A.F. and once C.O. at Haifa airport. I asked them straightforward if they would be interested in helping me to purchase and bring a Rapide to Palestine. Towel answered that he had already made a tentative proposal to Bentley but he would be willing to talk about it and come to terms if he had to deal with only one person who could make decisions by himself and pay him. When I was able to satisfy these demands, the deal started. From £2,000 for the "fly over" we came down to £1,000 which included also insurance and petrol carnet.

The aircraft which I wanted to purchase was in the final stages of its renewal of C. of A. I handled the matter as an expert for Towel and requested a number of alterations and the purchase was settled. Mr. Silverstone helped me to control Towel by a charter contract (in the name of a British Jew who put his signature to it for £5. Before leaving Palestine I had prepared a code with Michaely so that I could be kept informed of any changes in the country. I received from him information that uncle Leon had died and I should inform Annon and Tamar of it, i.e. that Lydda had been abandoned by us and I should land at Tel Aviv. The next information was that I should have my licence endorsed for Dakota aircraft. And so until the Rapide was finished I went to Aldermaster Training Centre as a pilot of Towel's company and underwent within four days the necessary flight training and studies and on the fifth day I passed the examinations and got my endorsement. In the meantime, the Rapide was ready at Croydon for the "fly over" to Palestine. I bought a black overcoat and a black homburg hat and so dressed I appeared at the Customs as a passenger and Halford as the pilot of the Rapide aircraft which figured as a private aircraft of Towel's company with Towel as a second passenger. Halford had never flown another aircraft than a Spitfire and did not know what to do with a Rapide. However, he was wearing a cap! After the formalities were over, we entered the aircraft and made a quick job of changing, Halford into my coat and Homburg

and I put on his cap and proceeded into the cockpit. Never have I started the engines so fast as then and spoken so quietly into the microphone. In no time I took off and headed for Paris.

The aircraft was equipped with long range tanks. The flight to Paris - Lyon - Nice - Rome was uneventful. On the way from Rome to Brindisi one of the engines started to cut and I changed heading for Bari. In Bari I had to clean the carburettor jets and petrol pump sumps from the dirt of the extra tanks. We stayed over night. Next day in the morning in the hotel lobby I was introduced to a plain clothes policeman. My mind started to panic when this fellow explained something to the porter-translator. I eventually was told the following: Last night two Englishmen being drunk threw out a coachman from his vehicle and drove away with the coach and horse being chased by a policeman. Finally, they left the coach, climbed a fire ladder and jumped through an open window into the flat of a widow with three children. The policeman climbed after them but he lost them when they run out of the flat and down the staircase and out into the street. I was so relieved by this story that I willingly paid the 6000 lire damages for the coachman and for the broken street lamp and broken windows. I also undertook to take the two Englishmen away from the town. That day we flew only to Athens and there I cleaned again the whole petrol lines for the next day's flight over water. The flight planned from Athens was registered via Nicosia to Beirut. After a flight of 5½ hours we landed at Nicosia. This was the station I feared most as it was British and every one knew me there very well. Despite the warm weather I changed back into the coat and Homburg. Halford went with Towel to the control station as pilot and owner and I remained seated outside close to the aircraft while refuelling was in progress. The Health Department man, a Greek, who knew me very well and who took my passport, was astonished that I neither greeted him nor smiled at him. In my passport was a £5 note and he turned round to give it back to me, but I deliberately kept my back to him. He understood what I wanted and kept the £5 note. The half hour waiting in the sun in my coat and hat was to me ages. Finally, my two fellows arrived accompanied by a policeman. He, too, was a Greek, who also knew me very well but apparently warned by his friend from the Health Department handed me the passport back without a sign of recognition; then he sent away the Shell people and took up a position by the chokes. The clearance was given by a sergeant to Squadron Leader John Halford without any trouble, this time not to Beirut but to Haifa. I took off and two hours later I landed at Tel Aviv and phoned Haifa to clear me with Nicosia. I had a difficult time to assure my two English fellows that the many boys with Tommy guns at the airport were not dangerous to them as they were not Irgun boys. Two days later they departed by ship from Tel Aviv harbour. Mr. Kaplan was pleased as his request for fast action had been met.

#### Two Rapides, One Miles Aerovan, One Gemini

Michaely, in the meantime, was getting demands for planes in Tel Aviv which in our country were fantastic. The Press Association wanted to purchase an aircraft, the Palestine Potash Company wanted an aircraft to be able to land at Kallia, Jerusalem; then another aircraft for Sdom. Gush Etzion wanted an aircraft to be able to bring supplies to their strip at Etzion. Money was not an object but money was not supplied. The money was quasi available in London, but London money was no good for export purchases. I was called by Ben Gurion to Headquarters in the Red House at Hayarkon Street. The Saken gave me a very short interview. "Can you bring some aircraft quickly?" I answered that I will try to have them here in a month's time but that they will cost more than their real value. "So bring them as fast as possible." And so with promises that money will be there, I left on 12th May in a Pan African Dakota from Tel Aviv via Haifa, a night's stop at Nicosia; on to Rome with a terrific delay, a night's stop at Geneva for London.

To Geneva the Dakota was full of all sorts of our people who never said where to and why they travelled. I was in the company of B.C. Meirevitch and Dr. Vidra both bound for Marseille but what for is their story. From Geneva I was the only passenger to London. Landing at Croydon, I underwent a thorough check by customs and migration officers. My story was simple. I came here to seek a job as a pilot because my company had ceased to operate in Palestine. My papers were checked, and I mean all papers; but my little notebook with addresses, names; telephone numbers, clearances for money, recommendations, etc. I kept in my pocket. After an hour's cross examination by the migration officer - all my papers were on his desk in one heap - he asked me to follow him and when I tried to collect my papers first, he said I had better leave them where they were. I had a hunch and quickly slipped my notebook amongst the heap of my papers on the table; and how right I was because I was subjected in the next room to a personal search. When I returned, the heap of papers, licences, log books and my little notebook in between were untouched. I was free and after collecting my papers and my luggage went by car with the Dakota crew into town. On the way I phoned Towel and got my hotel reservation.

Following my principle not to have any deals with money, I made arrangements with Silverstone to accept the money for the aircraft and to pay for them through an account in his bank made in the name of the Airon Company.

I met Mr. Rutenberg at his request; however, my hopes to get money from him were in vain as he wanted to give me only good advice to be careful and informed that Scotland Yard shadows every Elestinian recently arrived. He was right. I fixed my suitcase in a special way and every evening I found out that it had been opened. I spent about 10s. every morning to drive around by several taxis and underground with last minute jumps into buses to get rid of any followers whom I suspected.

After several meetings with Mr. Stolar, the Potash Company representative in London; and their President Lord. Finally, I got from them money advised to my bank for one Rapide and for one Gemini. My several trips to Mr. Shragai for the Etzion aircraft were in vain; once he had not returned from Town; once he was asleep and finally when I succeeded to get him up, he said he had no money and no knowledge of such money and he gave me to understand that I should not see him even in his house. I deliberately did not want to go near the Sochnut office at Russel Street being sure that this place was being watched. On a call from Mr. Esterik I came to the bank and found there a bearded fellow who wanted to know "how much" I wanted. I told him that the purchase was not definite but it would be within £5,000 including transfer to Palestine. He started to bargain and to shout and finally, he asked for an hour's time. After an hour he came with the money and he got a visible shock when I told him to give it to the bank. When he received a receipt for it from Esterik, he almost kissed me and begged to buy it and go at once to Etzion. I never understood for whom he took me.

I started then to locate the aircraft, inspect them, make some changes, repairs; buy spare parts, etc. When I came to Berl Locker on a Saturday afternoon (I came already as an Israelil, I told them that I will be off in another week.

When paying out for my purchases, I found myself with much more money than I needed which gave me the idea that by reducing spare parts, etc. I could manage to buy another Rapide and so I had in the end two Rapides, one Aerovan and one Gemini. Now I needed pilots. I kept myself for one aircraft; John Halford for the second, Jack for the third and interviewed three others for the fourth. I decided on Jack Harvey, an ex ~~xxxxxx~~ path finder.

The news of fighting in Israel was coming in mainly from the Arab

communiques. The victorious capture of Gaza by the Egyptians and Ramallah by the Arab Legion as well as a communique that the Iraqis are 8 km from Tel Aviv were very bad news for my little crowd of Goyim, but I did not let it affect me and I was looked upon by them as an example of a cold-blooded Jew who did not fear for his wife and children left in a village 12 km east of Tel Aviv. It was not good to tell them that Kfar Ono 12 km east of Tel Aviv is safe and that the Arabs at 4 km east of Tel Aviv in Salameh is just normal.

One morning a note in the press revealed that a certain man called uncle was buying up aircraft and transferring them to Israel. At this time I had two Rapides ready at Croydon. Within two hours I got them away to Paris. I was still having lunch at Croydon after their departure when police closed their previous hangar and started to inspect papers and status of the remaining aircraft. The same night I became aware that my room was being watched even during my sleep. I hastened the delivery of the Aerovan and expedited it with one of the pilots to Paris. Locker urged me not to endanger myself and not to fly out any of the aircraft myself. Finally, I decided to leave Towel and Harvey to take delivery of the Gemini leaving myself as a passenger by BEA. To make sure, I engaged another pilot, Calmer, but he got frightened in Paris and returned. After I had already passed the passport control, the Controller came over and chatted with me about Israel. From his remarks and questions it became clear to me that he knew a lot about me. With real pleasure I boarded the aircraft and have never been so pleased with the French control at Le Bourget. I went immediately to Toussus-le-Noble Airport to see whether the Aerovan had arrived in order. All three aircraft were alright only the spare parts for the Aerovan had been taken in custody by the customs as they had not been manifested. This proved to me once more that you can only rely on yourself. Next day I phoned Towel and he told me that Scotland Yard had enquired about the Aerovan sale. Now I forgot to say that this time the purchases had been made under a fictitious company which was engaged in air transport of lobsters from Tunis to France. Lobsters can remain alive in wet canvases provided they are not flown higher than 2,000'. All this study (made once in Corsica with a fisherman) I had to put into the company's papers. So the lobster air transport company was o.k., especially as the Aerovan aircraft was already in France. The Gemini, piloted by Harvey, was scheduled for next day and it arrived with Towel and his wife on board.

From the action of the customs officer at Toussus-le-Noble it was apparent that they suspected me of taking the aircraft to Israel and if they were suspecting me, people at other airports would do likewise. The suspicion was based on that they knew me as a pilot of a Jewish aircraft which was continuously frequenting their airports. Being on good terms with the Chief Controller at Lyon and the pilots there, I could use Lyon. I could also use Ajaccio Airport being a good friend of the airport manager and the owner of the biggest hotel. To use Rome was no good because one side was occupied by the Americans and out of bounds for civil aircraft and the other side operated by the British. Bari and Brindisi had military personnel. Athens was a place where they knew me well but I had no friends there. Araxes was occupied by the Greek air force and no good for me; the same also applied to Rhodes. At Nicosia Airport they not only knew me very well but they knew now Halford and Towel also. So I could fly from Paris to Lyon and Ajaccio. Then I must skip Italy and risk a landing at Athens; then skip Rhodes and Nicosia and go straight to Tel Aviv. For this I had to have greater range, that meant additional tanks.

I went to Fisher, our Ambassador in Paris, and asked him for help and money. Money he could not give me but he gave me an introduction to the French Deuxième Bureau. There I got fixed with a rendez-vous with Mr. Max Hymans, at that time the French Director of Civil Aviation.

At this meeting I asked for assistance by giving me a "workshop where" I could make the installations without making it known what I am doing. At our next meeting he presented me to a Frenchman, Commandant Charles, who was the director of an airline company. Com. Charles agreed to make the installations according to my design and I got a draftsman in his office and after a day's work we came out with a good solution but it should cost half a million francs. I went then to Mr. Litvak of the Palestine Bureau (whom I knew from dealings when in the Aviron Company) and he agreed to give me the money if Persitz agreed. This Persitz was, at that moment, with Fisher. So back to Fisher where I found him. He recognized me and reminded me that he owed me money for two passengers I took from Geneva. Having a common ground, he decided to loan me the half million francs (actually he deducted it from his account with the Aviron Company) and so with a suitcase of francs I went back to Com. Charles. The job started immediately and I had to fly one aircraft by one from Toussus to Bourget to the airline's base.

All this activity had one effect. I got a phone call in my hotel from a Yehuda who wanted to see me and he sent a car to bring me to his office. Before I went I asked Fisher about Yehuda and he told me that he was one of the two boys of the Aliyah B Office. There two fellows from Ramat Rachel wanted desperately to know what I am doing. The same night I got a phone call from Geneva and I recognized immediately the voice of Chai Issachar. He asked me to have faith in the Yehuda outfit in the office at Lido and to cooperate with them. I told him that at the present I did not need any help any more and I was afraid to tell them more than necessary as it might harm my mission. Next day I saw Yehuda again and told him of my phone conversation with Chai. He already knew about it from Chai and was more outspoken and did not press me further for information. He asked if I could help Rahel Bergman from the Palestine Bureau which had a Canadian Tank Expert she wanted to ship urgently to Israel. This fellow I needed badly as in the Aerovan the new tank installation required an extra man to open the corks and Towel had to fly in Halford's plane as Halford was hopeless in navigation. And so after a delay of six days in Paris we went with the four planes to Ajaccio checking the new installations in flight. In Ajaccio the hotel owner told me that the British Consul asked about all the fellows who came with my aircraft. I then decided not to go with the planes and next day despatched the aircraft as on a charter to Australia. Harvey flew one Rapide, Halford the other one following Harvey in a tight formation with Towel and his wife on board; Sinclair in the Aerovan with the Canadian Tank Expert and Bonner in the Gemini. The Gemini with Bonner went as a private aircraft on a flight to Turkey (Bonner had a Turkish Visa). The flight Ajaccio - Athens was nonstop. In Athens a stay overnight and next day a nonstop flight to Beirut with alternate to Haifa. Haifa Airport had not yet been evacuated by the British. Of course, Haifa was aimed at and not Beirut. The flight passed uneventfully and reached Haifa according to schedule. The password at Haifa was my name and upon their landing despite a military parade being held at the Airport by the British, the aircraft were met by Katz and Michaely and whisked away the next day to Tel Aviv. After two sleepless nights spent on the telephone I returned to Paris and flew to Haifa in an Air France Dakota. The next day I came to Tel Aviv Airport and saw my aircraft being stripped off the extra tanks and placed into the Sherut Avir.

The fight for the aircraft started between Sherut Avir and Novomeisky (Etzion had fallen in the meantime to the Arab Legion) whom I went to see in hospital. Neither Aviron's nor Novomeisky offer to fly the aircraft for them could be accepted by me as I had received received the same day a call to the Saken and I knew more or less what would follow.

*E. S. Rosenberg*

### Beaufacturers

This time I went to Ramat Gan on top of a hill to a nice villa. I met Nehama, the Saken's Aide-de-Camp. From him I learnt much about our situation and my resolve to stay home weakened considerably. The interview with the Saken concerned three matters. First, he wanted to know how the aircraft were brought over. Secondly, whether there was a possibility to buy military aircraft. Thirdly, there was the question of organization. When talking to him I forgot about my resolution to stay and my promises given to my wife. There was no question whether I would go again or not. Regarding finances, I was referred to Skolnik (Eshkol). Organizationally I had to be in direct contact with Chai Issachar. As far as the money was concerned I knew only that I will get this from Geneva. The meeting with Skolnik covered the financial arrangements of purchase and the rest was passed into the care of Chair in Geneva.

Three days later I departed from Haifa in an Air France Dakota attached to David Remez (then newly appointed Minister of Transport and Post) With Remez was also going Prihar, the Postmaster General. Once in Paris I contacted Chai in Geneva and my travels started very soon. Three different crooks came to see me. They got my address from Chai and one of them was rather nasty and I had to change my address quickly. On my complaint Chai promised not to send any more to me but with one exception: A fellow, an ex-pilot who wanted to serve us in England for money. He had been recommended to Chai by a prominent Zionist in England. He had to accept him and asked me to use him as much as I could. His name was Farnfield. He had a large red mustache, a Jewish wife and no character whatsoever. I passed him to our recruiting man in London.

Having no valid visa to England I called Towel to Paris. I told him I was interested in Mosquitos and asked him to look around for some stuff on the surplus market. I realized that I shall have to be in England to get things done because it would be very difficult to arrange matters by phone. I asked Chai for a false passport. This was promised but for unknown reasons to me Oscar, the fellow in the Paris office, stalled the matter. And so when Chair phoned me that he wanted another Gemini (to replace the one of Novomeisky which had been smashed in Jerusalem) I had an idea to use it for flights, if necessary illegally, to and from England. The aircraft was purchased after my inspection of it at Toussus-le-Noble.

In the meantime, D. Remez took a lot of my time as I had to be his interpreter and assistant in his negotiations with Air France. I advocated a pool of our company (not yet in being) and Air France. However, Remez seemed to be working under some influence and all my efforts were in vain.

Finally came word from Towel that he had located some interesting machines and wanted a meeting with me and the man responsible for them. At this meeting I met an ex-group captain of the R.A.F. (Martin) who had a maintenance workshop not far from London and who was prepared to sell his 12 Beaufacturers which he had purchased from surplus stock. His conditions were £1,500.- for each aircraft and the cost for repairs as necessary. Deliveries were not his business. I requested a five day delay and made arrangements with Towel for my visit at the group captain's base. I phoned Chair and he told me to get the o.k. from Tel-Aviv. A message was sent and next day I received an affirmative answer. After final arrangements by phone with Towel, I flew in the Gemini (British registered) on a late afternoon to England and landed at a club airfield close to Towel's home. This club, as expected, was closed and the hangar guard was told I came from Western-super-Mare. We drove over to the maintenance base and I locked the Beaufacturers over. It was obvious they needed much repair and engine changes as the propellers were not turned over for a long time. I numbered them with Towel and

referred to them as numbers. The aircraft were stripped of radio and armament but armament fittings and controls remained though not on all of the aircraft. The group captain showed me his stock of engines and spare parts and assured me that the Beaufighters could be re-conditioned by him easily. We left the base and staying at Towel's home we were discussing till early in the morning the possibilities of getting the armament. Still before sunrise we went to the Aero Club's airfield and without any interference I took off and landed back at Toussus-le-Noble. At Toussus I had arranged once and for all that if I am not reporting they should consider my flight a local one and this flight to England passed unnoticed. Chai came over to Paris and I have had with him a conference on this matter and it was decided to buy only six, eventually seven, aircraft which, in my opinion, were in good condition, provided they could be repaired within two or three weeks. I called Towel and the group captain to Paris and we agreed that we would buy seven aircraft and pay for each aircraft £1,500 including the cost of reconditioning. I had to make a deposit to cover the expenses of the reconditioning in case I would be unable to fly away the aircraft. The work started immediately and it became obvious that I had been right. The spare parts available were not even sufficient for the seven aircraft and the group captain had to cannibalize the remaining five to be able to carry out the repair on the seven. In the meantime, I started to trust more and more Jack Harvey who in many respects helped me without being asked or paid for and especially with the Mosquitos which I handled in the meantime, but I will treat this subject in the next paragraph.

During one of the visits of Towel and Halford in Paris, Halford made a hit with a pretty New Zealand girl who was or wanted to work in the film industry, and from then on she was running into me from time to time asking about Halford's coming to Paris. And once she told me that she will perhaps get an engagement in a film which was going to be made about the New Zealand war effort. This gave me an idea how to take the aircraft out of England. I needed a man who might be wanted by the British police later. I could not use Towel, Halford or Harvey who were too valuable for me and I made my proposal to Farnfield who had been pestering me since - to become producer of a short film story showing the New Zealand pilots in action. He accepted and we made a nice plan. The New Zealand girl was promised the main part and she gave us all necessary information and connections with the film world in England. However, Farnfield could not organize it properly and I had to ask Towel to join us keeping himself in the shadow and using Farnfield as the real boss. During my next nightly visit to England (about this more in the next paragraph) we agreed on the final parts. This film company looked for pilots to handle the planes. The pilots were chosen with Beaufighter experience by Harvey and they knew the real story behind it and agreed to the job.

Out of the 6 Beaufighters (the 7th had to be abandoned very soon as it had spar corrosion), 5 were ready and the 6th had to be in the workshop for another week. Due to the Halifax affair (sending SOS close to the Israelg shores) the press was full of stories and I was afraid that Scotland Yard will discover very soon the whole truth before the aircraft could leave England and with Chai's agreement decided therefore, to fly out the 5 aircraft at once. Towel returned the money for the 6th aircraft as it was obvious to us that the five aircraft "fly out" would close our possibilities to continue our work in England in future.

The film shooting was in progress and the group captain got a permit to fly them to an airport in Scotland for further scenes (similar to those in New Zealand) and during this flight the aircraft should have been flown over to Ajaccio. However, the day before, one of the pilots the only son of a retired general went into a spin when testing one of the aircraft and killed himself. Of course, the aircraft was a total loss. I was informed about this two hours later and the same night I finished quickly all arrangements on the route and put Towel before a difficult task. He had to collect the pilots and to jump the sequence of the film shots and to start on the second day the shots concerning the squadron take-off (scramble). The whole next day I spent on the phone following all the difficulties. In the last

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moment I decided to take Farnfield away from London as he started to talk too much to the reporters and the investigating committee. I had to promise him to finance his wife's travel to Israel as well. Next day after assurances from Harvey, who had just returned from Israel, that he and the other 3 pilots are resolved no matter what will happen to fly the aircraft out, I left Paris in my Gemini for Ajaccio via Nice. In Nice they refused me permission to fly overseas as I had no appropriate frequency on my radio. I left officially for Marseille but once in the air turned towards Ajaccio and landed there already being expected by one assistant provided by the Paris Office.

Due to the previous sabotage of a Mustang aircraft I arranged for help in getting a continuous guard for the aircraft (even against the local police). The assistant was one of the leaders of a big Corsican family. The man was an asset to the Paris office. In the afternoon the Beaufighters arrived. One, when being switched off, started a fire in the starboard engine but we extinguished it. Another got a tail wheel punctured. We started to clean the engine after the fire, then vulganized and refitted the tail wheel. After dinner Jack Harvey told me the story of the take-off. The group captain faced with the determination of the pilots and the insistence of Towel got the aircraft ready and promised to send the departure message to the airfield in Scotland only three hours after their departure. This delay in the message as well as the closure for the night of the airport should give us a 20 hour delay until the authorities in England would find out that the 4 aircraft had disappeared. The script of the film required a scene of a scramble, the run to the aircraft to be made by mechanics, the starting of the aircraft by the pilots already in the cockpit; the taxiing was the next scene with the follow-up of a take-off but contrary to the script all our aircraft took off immediately one after the other and not in squadron formation as the script required and headed for Corsica. The flight took  $4\frac{1}{2}$  hours. The aircraft arrived with little difference in time one after the other.

I had pre-arranged with Chai that we would use a small airfield in Yugoslavia which was being maintained by us. Next day we took off for this airfield overflying Italy. I took off in the machine which had had the fire and tried to work out the best cruising setting for the next and longest hop from Yugoslavia to Israel. One of the aircraft developed gills trouble on the port engine. This was temporarily repaired by a very short mechanic from the U.S. who asked us to call him Shortie. The base was under the supervision (and a very good one) of Shochat. After debating our fuel quantities, winds and distances, we assigned to each of the pilots not only a time space but separate routes due to the domestic war in the Peloponose in Greece. However, the aircraft with gills trouble went in formation with another one in case its cruise would be too low and he would have to divert. We stayed overnight in a very small town near the airport; for the British it was a thrill to be behind the Iron Curtain. Next day we took off. My conversion on Beaufighters was too short and I started a swing which luckily I could stop and so I lost my turn and once more was the last to leave Yugoslavia. Five hours later we passed low over Bat Galim and landed at Akron. We went in two jeeps to Tel Aviv. The pilots went to the Park Hotel and I home. But before I came out from the Air Force Headquarters (with a military pass saying that I was a staff officer on leave and permitted to wear sufti) I met Chai who kissed in in front of all the crowd of air force people making me blush with embarrassment as most of them were my pupils. I stayed home for four days. During this time I had a meeting at the Saken's Headquarters. I told him that it will be impossible to use the same outfit any further and suggested that I had better stay home. Chai, who was with me, insisted that I should continue and as a bait he promised to send my wife after me. One evening we had a farewell party for Marco from South Africa. Our departure (mine and the Pilots') was fixed for one evening but when I came to collect them in the hotel I was told they were in the cabaret. Due to some reason the flight had been postponed. They had been informed about it but I with a family at home had not. My taking leave at home had been so hard that I insisted on being sent out and Aron Remez passed me



into the hands of El Sam. They put me on a Skymaster and at midnight I went non-stop to Zebar, an airport near Prague. For two days I stayed in Prague without a visa in a communist city. I left by Cs. airlines. At the passport control I almost landed in jail instead of the plane, but by sheer luck I got away. From Paris I went to Ajaccio, collected my Gemini and returned to Paris. An Air Ministry letter from London awaited me asking explanations why I had disobeyed orders in Nice and flown to Ajaccio without clearance. I answered that it was a misunderstanding due to my bad French and this was accepted. Interesting, the Air Ministry knew about me but Scotland Yard not; or did not they?

### Mosquitos

I have to turn back to the moment when we ordered the Beaufighters. Whilst waiting for them I asked Harvey and Towel to hunt for Mosquitos which I knew were not sold to private people. I read about Air Vice Marshal Bennet becoming the Director of the BSAA and sent Harvey as an ex-path finder to persuade his ex-boss to sell his Mosquito which I hoped he did not need any more. I offered the price of £4,500. I got it. Harvey took off in it for Ajaccio. I got his phone call from Nice. He told me that because of excessive fuel consumption he had to land there and that the authorities impounded the aircraft and that he was under house arrest in the hotel. The same evening I started to run in Paris from one to the other to get it cleared. I landed again at Max Hyman's office who told me to burn the aircraft and he would help me to get the pilot out of the country. We started to shout at each other and finished by his giving me a personal envoy (he refused to phone or to write a word) to accompany me to the Nice Airport Manager. Within two hours of <sup>from</sup> arrival there, we saw from a window of a taxi how Harvey jumped into the cockpit of the Mosi, started the engines and how the Airport Manager himself removed the chocks. This run-away, however only took him as far as Ajaccio. In Ajaccio I was told that the police would come with the British Consul to look for a Mosquito with British registration. We had two hours' notice and in this time we painted new registration marks on the aircraft and made the necessary changes in the airport papers and then Harvey took it into the air for as long as the petrol would last. While he was up there, the two police officers and the Consul arrived, made a tour of the airport, found no Mosquito and no such a registration in any papers. During the whole night we worked on tightening the compressor housings of the engines which were causing the excessive fuel consumption and next day early in the morning, Harvey took off in the aircraft for Tel Aviv. Ten minutes before the Israel coast was in sight, the fuel gauges of the aircraft indicated zero. Harvey turned to Haifa and decided to make a straight-in approach to this small airfield. While his undercarriage was down and he was in his final approach anti-aircraft fire was directed at him by our troops on the Carmel. When he landed and stopped taxiing because one engine had stopped due to fuel starvation, the ex-control officer of Haifa, Reichman, jumped on the aircraft pointing a pistol at Harvey. Next day Harvey took the aircraft over to Ramat David.

Another Mosquito was located by Calmar. It was in perfect order and had just received a C.Of A. The purchase was made and Calmar flew it to Ajaccio. The next day he took off for Tel Aviv but at the take-off one engine cut and the aircraft swung and after the undercarriage collapsed, it disintegrated. Inspecting the debris we found that the starboard tanks were empty of petrol and that the fuel pipes were cut. Whose job it was I never found out. This Mosquito was purchased from a "gentle crook", a fellow named White who had money but no one knew how he got it. But about him later.

*E. B. ...*

Two Nords

A Jewish family in Paris consisting of two brothers and two cousins decided to give us an ambulance aircraft but they wanted to be sure that not a franc was wasted on other things. Rahel directed them to me. After a fight with the Palestine Office for the money I got it eventually and I purchased 2 Nords equipped as ambulance planes; stocked them with spare parts and dispatched them with two French pilots to Israel. One of them was a good friend of mine and as he left his wife in my care I was sure that he would not misbehave. The aircraft were registered in the name of the Israeli Consul in Paris and were in Tel Aviv after a four day flight. These were the only legally purchased aircraft which flew with correct clearances.

Halifax

The Mosquito delivered to Tel Aviv was without guns or even gun cradles. The Beaufighters were also without guns although with gun cradles and pneumatic control system.

Halford had a friend in the depot, a flight officer who needed money. He was paid £150 by Halford and promised to get drunk together with his guards whenever we were ready. Again I flew over to England, landed on a Saturday evening at the club's airfield near Towel's house and we went out in two cars and one lorry, Towel, Halford, Harvey and I, to the depot. The sixty 20 mm guns and a lot of ammunition were already put aside and the drunken officer helped us load it on the lorry and into the cars. Towel happened to be in an evening suit and soon he was smeared with grease. I and Halford remained clean as we were dealing with the wooden boxes of ammunition. We started home. A little accident between Halford's car (in front) and an oncoming car could have ended for us very badly had the fellow in the other car not been too eager to leave us without showing himself and his woman passenger. He accepted £6.- for his dented fender and not we but he ran away. This material was stored in Towel's house on the top in the attic. Next day I met White, the gentle crook. He was willing to load all this material and four spare engines for the Beaufighters on his little smuggling boat and bring it to Haifa for £2,500. After a few days Towel phoned me that White was in Marseille and he himself would come with an aircraft and a few fellows to Paris. I met them at Le Bourget. There were Towel, Harvey, a radio operator and six young fellows with nothing on but pyjamas and pistols as luggage. Harvey was ill and I had to take over the aircraft and the next day to fly them to Marseille. In Marseille White met us with two cars and we went to town. The Towel-White outfit wanted to get rid of the captain and the radio operator of the boat and to take the boat to England and load my equipment. I contacted our fellows in town and within an hour had information on the boat. The facts were that the captain of the boat was in jail and the boat confiscated as it had smuggled ~~xxxxxxx~~ American cigarettes "made in Italy" into France. I told Towel about it and after washing White's head with dirty words we called the business off. Next day we flew back to Paris but not without a mishap. The tanks of the aircraft were filled under the supervision of the wireless officer. However, past Lyon, when I wanted to transfer fuel from the auxiliary tanks to the main, no fuel came out. Due to a thunderstorm in Lyon and strong headwinds I had to land at Chalon Airport. The weather closed in and anyway, I could not get petrol until the next day. Working as an interpreter for the hotel porter I found out that the 6 fellows with pistols were ex-British constables in Palestine, recently evacuated from Haifa.

Back in Paris I talked with Harvey and learnt that he had been flying Halifaxes during the War. The group captain, who was supplying me with Beaufighters, had a Halifax working for him as a charter aircraft.

Again at a conference with the business-like group captain we agreed to hire his Halifax with a crew consisting of Harvey as Captain, the group captain's wireless officer and another man of mine, for taking the guns, cradles and ammunition to Israel. The third man of the crew was an ex-officer of the R.A.F., an armament expert who was to instal the armament in the Mosquito and the Beaufighters. I had to give the group captain a deposit for the aircraft in case Israel would not release the aircraft back to him. Chai decided to pay and so four days later the aircraft took-off loaded with all this equipment for a flight via Ajaccio to Israel. In the evening I got the departure message of the Halifax from Ajaccio. At midnight I got a phone call from the group captain saying that he had just received information from the Ministry of Civil Aviation that his aircraft had sent out SOS messages close to the Israel coast. I sent immediately a message to Israel and got an answer the next day stating "aircraft, goods and crew arrived". Only two days later when Harvey returned did I hear the story. Due to difficulties of transferring fuel the aircraft holding time was reduced. He came over Akron but despite calls on all of our frequencies the airfield did not answer or light up. He then started to fly with lights on but this was also to no avail. One engine stopped for lack of fuel. The wireless officer without a word to Harvey started to send SOS on all frequencies available. Harvey turned towards Tel Aviv in the hope that the Headquarters there would do something hearing him overhead; but in vain. The second engine stopped and so he decided to land at Tel Aviv airport (too small for a Halifax but the only one familiar to him) with the moonlight as the only guide. As the whole cargo was loaded in a belly canoe and he wanted to save it, he decided against a belly landing and landed with the undercarriage down. Before the end of the runway (too short for a normal landing) he swung the aircraft into the sand. The aircraft needed much repair to be flown again and so Chai decided it should remain there as a war monument and we shall bear the cost of the entire aircraft. Harvey got from Chai a golden watch with a chronometer instead of an order of merit. Of course, the British press was full with the Halifax story differently interpreted.

### Three Rapides

When I had returned from Israel to Paris after the delivery of the Beaufighters Chai together with Ginsburg flew over to me from Geneva. He wanted me in Brussels for a deal in tanks. In Brussels I met my ex-pupil Federman who was operating for us there. There I realized for the first time that Chai was seriously ill mentally as he did not remember many things discussed between us. I went with all of them to Geneva where we had a conference with Teddy Kollek and Schwimmer also participating. I told them about the possibility of buying 10 Spitfires and 6 Halifaxes still without conversion. Although I was pessimistic, it was decided to go ahead with the purchase and I was ordered to do so. The money, it was decided, would not be paid out any more in England but in Geneva. I had from then on to get the fellows to Geneva for payment.

After a visit to England to look at the Spitfires which I found without elevators, I declined the offer. From Israel pressure was brought on me about the Halifaxes and the deal was made again via Towel. I was unhappy about it as all the Beaufighter pilots were called to court and I suspected that the Towel outfit would blow up. On orders from Geneva, however, I flew Towel to Geneva and he got money in Swiss francs for the Halifaxes. In the meantime, an order for a Rapide came in and this after an inspection in Paris was sent over to Israel like the previous ones. An additional order for a further two Rapides was dealt with in a similar way.

*E. S. Ginsburg*  
My wife came over in the meantime. Chai was replaced in Geneva by Gad (Koslovsky).

The Court in England fined my Beaufighter pilots £300 each and Towel paid for them.

One night the porter rang me up and told me that two fellows (English) wanted to see me. I went down and found Towel completely drunk with another fellow whom he presented to me as Mr. Cook, a journalist. I send them to a hotel and told Towel to come over next day. A few moments later Towel was back in my hotel, this time alone, and told me that this fellow Cook knows everything and he wants a story for his paper otherwise he will tell Scotland Yard about Towel. I phoned Oscar, asking for our intelligence fellows. I was promised they would appear at my hotel in the morning, two hours before my rendez-vous with Towel and Cook. No one came and I had to face the journalist by myself. He had more or less the story of the Beaufighters right and my denials were in vain. Next day he published everything in the Daily Express with a photograph of some fellow stating that this is I. Oscar presented me with an order to go immediately to Israel. This I did the same day. In Israel I found out that Oscar had not received such orders. At the meeting with the Saken I had to tell him the whole story again. A few weeks later, upon my insistence, Chai invited Towel to Tel Aviv. Towel came over and at a meeting in Cafe Noga at which the Air Force Legal Adviser, Moyal, presided, Towel offered to give the money back which he had received for the Halifaxes. However, the Air Force decided that the deal should stand and he should try to bring them in.

Gad called ~~xxx~~ me and Chai to the Air Force Headquarters and accused me of giving the story to the press. Chai admitted that he told Towel that in case of trouble he should put everything on me. It was agreed that the revelation of the story in the press was due to the Halifax incident. The Air Force said they knew nothing about the aircraft's arrival. However, on the spot during the meeting I found in the file of the Paris messages my two messages concerning the arrival of the Halifax and their two messages to me giving time and frequencies. This led to a reconciliation between me and Gad and till today we are good friends. However, I am afraid the discovery of the messages in the files of the Air Force made me very unpopular with some of their high officers.

Towel, finally, was caught by the Income Tax and the Customs people. He lost his fortune and went to Ireland.

White, the gentle crook, went to jail and wrote letters from there, one to me and one to Zevi Dinstein, asking for help.

Harvey ran away from England and came over to Israel. For 6 months he was living with me until I finally succeeded in getting him a job with our Air Force. He was killed in a flight accident in France after a brilliant service with our Air Force for two years.

Chai died soon after as a result of a tumor operation.

I myself had to join the civil service a month after my return from Paris.

The Gemini aircraft was sold by Zevi Dinstein in Paris back to England with a nice profit, as Novomeisky's aircraft had been repaired in the meantime.

In all, I transferred 18 aircraft to Israel.

*E. Dinstein*