

-TITLE-ARIEH PINCHUK

-I\_DATE-OCTOBER 1981

-SOURCE-INTERNATIONAL LIBERATORS CONFERENCE

-RESTRICTIONS-

-SOUND\_QUALITY-EXCELLENT

-IMAGE\_QUALITY-EXCELLENT

-DURATION-54 MINUTES

-LANGUAGES-ENGLISH

-KEY\_SEGMENT-

-GEOGRAPHIC\_NAME-

-PERSONAL\_NAME-

-CORPORATE\_NAME-

-KEY\_WORDS-

-NOTES-

-CONTENTS-

0:00 October 26, 1981 Washington, D.C. This is an interview for

the USHMC done by Vaffaellia (?) -- director of Holocaust studies.

The interviewees are delegates of the Jewish Brigade to the International Conference of Liberators. Right to left sit Lt. Col.

Arieh Pinchuk, Col. Dan Hiram and Lt. Col. Dan Dagen. The three were Jewish soldiers in World War II, that came from a country under British dominion and incited Nazi Armies.

(AP speaks) Breakout of WWII we became aware of what was happening

in Germany and the other occupied countries and therefore young

Jewish people tried to find ways to help the British Army.  
Being

under British dominion, Palestine was considered a mandate.  
Being

a mandate, we were only allowed to volunteer. There were about  
35,000 volunteers out of a population of 600,000.

2:20 There were first various service units and during the  
first

years we tried to get recognition as a separate fighting unit.  
In

1943 the Jewish Brigade was formed and then went to Italy and  
saw

action in the fall of 1943. After the war was ended in Italy  
and

only after that did we meet with the Holocaust people and when  
we

went to the other low land countries like Belgium and Holland.

3:40 At the time some men were all around Europe, who were  
supposed to meet the people in the camps and to organize their  
transfers from the camps to, what the British thought of as  
illegal, to Palestine. (D.H. speaks) Before the Jewish Brigade  
was formed under Winston Churchill in the summer of '44, we  
served

in different British units for many years, before we had the  
permission to serve under our own flag. We formed our own  
fighting

formations out of the existing battalions of the Palestine  
Regiment.

5:51 (Q: How did you feel on that day you were granted

permission?) (D.H. continued) We were very proud and showed off

our star of David on our shoulders. We wanted to become the nucleus of the future Jewish Israeli fighting force -- to become an

independent army. This was first like the first step -- Jewish formation under it's own flag -- towards an independent army under

an independent state.

7:12 (D.D. speaks) I volunteered late 1941 while we were still unrecognized as a fighting unit but later we were formed under one

battalion. The strive to be recognized as Jews as not part of the

British army was the ultimate because we could walk with our heads

high with the start of David, especially during the Holocaust. it

gave new life to them fighting to save Jews. What of course though what we did now illegal and underground, but that is another

story.

9:05 (Q: What were your feeling as Romel pushed towards the Maine?) (A.H. speaks) Jewish command in Palestine (ESHEV?) got organized when Romel pushed eastward and there was a danger that he

might be successful. The Jewish leadership elaborated a plan in which some people would never the less enter the British army for

training but also so that the war against the Nazi's would not be

won without the Jews being represented as an independent fighting

unit and so that people would know that the people which suffered

most took part against Nazi Germany. This was our main project.

11:29 These soldiers who came back were also the best equipped.

(DH) Women also participated but not in the fighting units only in

the services -- ambulances, hospitals. (D.D). There were about

2-3 thousand women of the 35,000. They were serving in the auxiliary rhetorical forces as ambulance drivers and even some as

lorry drivers and other services. We also had a few hundred in the

auxiliary air force within the Royal Air Force.

14:03 (Q: If the Jewish Brigade had it's own air force, do you think they would have bombed Auschwitz?) (AP) Though it is a speculated question, I am certain that we would have bombed it. Many army generals then have said that they would do it looking back. I think that many military leaders now, are of the opinion

that it was a grave mistake. Had they done it, they would have saved many thousands of lives. (D.D.) Going back to the previous

question of Romel, we had no fear, no desperation, worry? Yes, We

were prepared to fight to end, hopefully their end.

19:06 (Q: For us you were the heroes. What did it mean to you to

see us in stripped shirts, etc) (DD) That question did not arise

at that time. The feeling was that we were finding the reminiscences

of the lost Jewelry. (Q: When you came to the DB campus you were

involved in education. Can you describe some of them?) (AP) what

we did first was to organize their transfer to camps as near to the

Brigade as possible. The biggest camps were around Italy. We would try to take them to Bauri and Brindisi and then further transfer them to Israel. But whilst they were staying we organized

military training for the youngest, and teaching Hebrew and Jewish

History and about the Jewish Community in Palestine to prepare them

for their arrival in Israel. We would help them contact their friends and relatives and people they wanted to find and generally

provided, of course, food, clothing, etc..

21:30 This was a complete job which we had to do apart from our military service. You must appreciate still that some of the units

had British commanders. Even though they knew what was going on,

they were not too harsh with us, and, I might say even generous. Thanks to that we could go on with our operations quite successfully. Although some arrived quite dolorous, I think all of them arrive. (Q: Do you think there was a different attitude in the British soldiers once the ships reached the shores of Palestine?)

(AP) There is nothing to compare the Br. commander was Jewish minded -- Israeli minded. Even the Br. officers were pro-Jewish in women way. This I can't say about the British officers or British polish in Palestine. Those officers were given all sorts of explanations and they were given a different job -- they were anti-Jewish.

23:46 I remember returning in British uniform and being taken by a British sergeant and officer. I would say, not in a very polite manner, (DD) We should distinguish their political official attitude which was anti -- they were against all we did.

25:20 (Q: We may discuss the taking of the Jews to Palestine. At the time you come into contact with Americans.) (AP) Not with many. We were neighboring the American zone but we didn't meet many. (Q: During the Brigah (?). One of the first projects of the US. Did you experience such an encounter?) I had several

occasions when I met an American officer. They were helpful and open-minded. They were not really acting as soldiers, but they were very helpful. (DH) Since we were in a British formation the

American's help was very limited.

27:33 I want to comment on your comment on our relationship to Britain. This was a very ambivalent relationship. We will fight

the British mandate as if Hitler didn't exist. So these were actually two wars -- one against Hitler and one against the British.

(Q: What happened when the illegal immigrants arrived on the shores

of Israel?) It was a different organization which helped them.. We were in Europe.

29:00 (Q: I do recall some individual members of the Jewish Brigade who worked on their own initiative?) The Jewish Brigade was highly organized. They weren't volunteers but members of the

organization. Amongst us hidden were commanders of the operations.

Organizations of ships to shores of Palestine and in Palestine there were men in uniform. The Jewish Brigade was not in Cyprus.

We took 50 to 60 people of the BD camps on. They went to Cyprus or

other DB camps. Instead of them we returned some of the people to

Palestine, using their names and cards.

32:20 (Q: did the men marry some of the women in the DB camps?)

Yes, we had quite a number of cases because these camps were near

us. We used to have social meeting with these people. Some came

home married men. (DH) Sometimes they got married fictionally just to bring them into Palestine legally.

34:40 (AP) The French were at that time cooperative. La Division

Duiv(?) was well known. We crossed almost the whole of southern France. They were very cooperative especially when one of the lorries turned over. Without their help we couldn't of done it. We had camps, convoys, training camps throughout France.

Considering this being right after the war and their hatred towards

the Germans, we met them with enthusiasm, we did not feel any anti-

semitism at that time on the part of the French or the French Army.

36:20 (Q: How did the Germans react when they saw you Star of David on you military uniform?) (DD) I think they were shocked.

(AP) When we took our first prisoners and they found out that we were the Jewish Brigade, they were sure that they were going to be

shot right away. I think they were shocked at not being shot and

not being maltreated. In Germany we met various people. At that

state of war then, they could not be pro-Nazi. I think they saw



the war as over so I think that this was the reason. I don't think

that they could have changed their mind. I don't think the change

in mind could take place so rapidly, but they behaved well and they

tried to treat us well. We met the simpler people, not the SS or

the SA. They were taken by the Americans into prison camps or other camps.

38:06 (DH) I would like to say something regarding the Germans.

I knew hundreds of Germans -- civilians and prisoners of war. Without exception all the Germans in 1945 their first sentence was

that they knew nothing. They never took part in anything. They didn't know what a concentration camp is. They didn't do anything

against the Jews. The always liked them. The question was where

did all the millions of people who supported Hitler go. Everyone

was completely detached and no one took part in it. (Q: What did

it mean to you to go back to Europe with a Jewish Uniform?) (DH continued). You see we were very young at that time. We were dealing with a great matter of facts with a situation and we had a

job to do and we did our job. The depth and size of the tragedy we

realized only later -- when the books and articles came out. In

the first meetings we dealt with it in a very matter of the fact way. We had a job.

40:40 (Q: I would like you to sum up the Jewish Brigade on three

levels: on a personal level, what it meant to the Jewish State and

what it means on a national level.) (DD) personal issue, I am 3rd

generation Israeli, so it came naturally, but also you must understand that each of us had connections in the military, so it

was more than natural to want to fight the main enemy of the nation. Along with the years we served in the army and then finally encountering the Germans, we had a feeling that we had finally reached our goal as a person and as a community.

42:30 It had great importance. 35,000 volunteered out of a population of 600,000 into the army. That is a very high percentage. it meant that the nation had a feeling that it's sons

should be a part of the world struggle not only against the Nazis

but for a new and a free world. Coming back as a formation and immediately the war o independence broke without the military knowledge of those who came back it would have been impossible.

44:12 (DH) I was a refugee. I had to run from Hitler. For me to

return 5 years later as a soldier of the Jewish Brigade made me feel very proud. On the national level one must remember that the

main issue was free immigration into Palestine. To open up Palestine for all the Jews to come in was a feeling of dedication

of the part we are playing establishing a Jewish independent state

and opening Palestine's borders to Jews.

46:01 (AP) We are three people and each will have a different story. I came to Palestine from Poland voluntarily in '37. Under

the law I could bring my parents in after 2 years but months before

war broke out and my parents were destroyed. In 1944 I know that

my parents were dead. I felt something that I had to do. I was more than satisfied to join the British army and the Jewish Brigade.

48:03 On the Jewish side that in that kind of war in WWII was regarded as a different war. Nazi Germany decided to annihilate the Jews as a race. historically speaking the Jewish Brigade formed an important mission by recording for history in an organized fashion, stood up that enemy as Jews and not just as soldiers in the army. The second aspect has another side, the universal aspect which means in my view (get's cut

here )

.END.