



The Cuban Shomrim **The History of Hashomer Hatzair** **Movement**

Irene Stoliar





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This book has been published with the support of friends
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FOREWORD

How did the idea to publish a book about the *Hashomer Hatzair* Movement in Cuba get started?

First of all, thanks to the questions asked by our children relating to our adolescence and youth. How do you explain the experiences in the *Ken of Hashomer Hatzair*? Many of us entered the Movement during World War II, and by the end of it we had been shellshocked by the news from Europe and the knowledge of what had taken place in the concentration and extermination camps - the inhuman Holocaust of the Jewish people. How would we communicate to our children that we would never let that happen to us and the conviction that our home was in Israel, where we could establish strong and unrestricted families and realize the ideals on which we had been brought up: Zionism and the kibbutz?

With this idea in mind, Gedalia Lotan contacted Dr. Margalit Bejarano of the Institute of Contemporary Jewry at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, who expressed considerable interest in the project. She informed us that in the past, she had met with David Roth, Chaim Chayet, Isaac Zilber and Pedro Goldfarb (an Argentinean, and a member of Kibbutz Nir Yitzhak) in order to promote this initiative to put down in writing a narrative that evoked the most beautiful and happy stages in our lives, and the realization for many of us of the idea behind it: Israel and the kibbutz. That idea fell through for a variety of reasons, and later a committee was formed comprising Benzy Cherches and Shoshana and Isaac Zilber, who were subsequently joined by Isaac Chervony, Chaim Chayet and Isaac Percal. Without

the tireless enthusiasm and dedication of all of them, the realization of our aspiration would not have been possible.

This is not a book with an ideological character but rather, a historical narrative of events and experiences of a movement that communicated the ideal of building an independent and fair country where the Jewish people could reestablish itself.

Hashomer Hatzair taught us to love Israel with the conviction of the ideals that still endure today. Many people made aliyah and established their lives in the country while others, for various reasons, could not do so. However, the shared memories remain and the deep friendships born in those years, continue to this day. The seeds then implanted in us made us better Jews and better people. Our ranks have produced some outstanding personalities: professionals, educators, government officials and leaders of the Zionist and kibbutz framework as well as business entrepreneurs. Proud of our past and of our memories, we hope that this book, with its anecdotes, stories and photographs, becomes a testimony to what we were, the values that are at our core and the companionship that brought us together.

The realization of the project was an arduous task, involving countless hours of research in archives and libraries and considerable efforts to raise the necessary funds, and despite initial uncertainty, the response of our colleagues was positive in every way. The enthusiasm and support shown urged us to continue with renewed zeal and after more than three years of work it is with great pride that we can now present you with this book. We hope you enjoy the story and recollections of our past with nostalgia and joy.



Chazak Ve'ematz!

Organizing Committee
Isaac Chervony
Chaim Chayet
Gedalia Lotan
Shoshana Zilber
Isaac Zilber



HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

Dr. Margalit Bejarano

The history of *Hashomer Hatzair* in Cuba covers less than thirty years from the 1933 revolution against the dictatorship of Gerardo Machado to the 1959 revolution against the dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista. During that time the two most important events in modern Jewish history also took place: the Holocaust and the creation of the State of Israel. The story of *Hashomer Hatzair* reflects the reaction of the Jews in Cuba to the reality surrounding those two events. This historical introduction provides a brief reference to the incidents that shaped the fate of the Jews in Cuba at the time and had major influence on the history of the Youth Movement.

The founders of *Hashomer Hatzair* were immigrants from Poland and Lithuania who had suffered the horrors of the First World War and harbored high hopes of emigrating to the United States. The restrictions on immigration to *Di Goldene Medine* (the Golden State) created by the American quota policy, led thousands of Jews to Cuba because they trusted it to serve them as a station from which they could move on. The initial years of the history of the Jews who came from Eastern Europe to Cuba were times of great change with the arrival and departure of immigrants which hindered the establishment of its Jewish institutions. The Jews who had belonged to the Zionist Movement in their countries of origin, in 1924, created the *Tzionistische Fareinikung* (Zionist Union of Cuba), an organization which was the umbrella for all the Zionist parties. The small number of Zionists and the ongoing

migration to the United States led to the decision to unify all of the Zionist groups under one umbrella organization. From its inception, *Hashomer Hatzair* operated under the auspices of the Zionist Union.

Immigrants from Eastern Europe were not the only Jews who had come to Cuba, as they had been preceded by American Jews who arrived there with the US military during its occupation (1898-1902) and businessmen who had come from the United States after Cuban independence (1902). Most belonged to a higher socioeconomic class to that of the Jews who had come from Europe. These immigrants created the first Jewish community, the United Hebrew Congregation, but most were not involved in Zionist activity and had no youth movement.

Sephardi Jews had immigrated to Cuba before the First World War and during the 1920s. Most came from Turkey and spoke Ladino. A large proportion was dispersed in the inner cities and at first almost all of them were street merchants. The *Sephardim* were among the founders of the Zionist Union, which for some years operated from the headquarters of the Sephardi community, *Shevet Achim*. The Theodor Herzl School also operated out of the same building, as an institution under the joint auspices of the Sephardi community and the Zionist Union. The *Ashkenazi* Jews did not feel comfortable with that sharing framework and in 1932 moved to their own premises at 32, Luz Street. This separation of ethnic Jews was also evident in the Zionist Youth Organization: those who spoke Yiddish created *Hechalutz* and later, *Hashomer Hatzair* while the Sephardim created *Maccabi*.

The economic situation of the Jews in Cuba at that time was extremely precarious. Most immigrants from Eastern



Europe took their first steps as small traders or laborers in footwear or clothing workshops. Working in conditions where they were exploited, many of them identified with the class struggle of the anti-Zionist movements of the left. The *Kultur Farein*, an organization led by Communists, was considered the most powerful body in the Jewish community and its most popular activity was when, on Kol Nidrei night the leitizm better (chorus of clowns) mocked the traditions of the holiest day of the Jewish calendar.

The global economic crisis worsened the overall situation of the Cuban people resulting in massive unemployment. At that time, Cuba was ruled by Gerardo Machado, who transformed the presidency into a dictatorship. Many underground movements, the beacon of which was the university student movement, attempted to overthrow the government and the neighborhood of La Habana Vieja, where most of the Jews lived, became the scene of shootings and an area of considerable danger. Machado's government was not anti-Semitic and did not persecute the Jews as such, but communist Jews were persecuted for their political activities. Five Jews were killed by Machado's police while others were expelled from the country and *Kultur Farein* was closed down. In addition Jews who were not political activists were made to feel insecure. Any public meetings, including prayer services in the synagogue, roused the suspicions of the police and any activity in the institutions or Jewish youth movements was considered dangerous.

The year 1933 saw a revolution in Cuba that overthrew the dictator Machado and replaced him with a revolutionary government headed by Ramón Grau San Martín. The slogan of the revolution, which advocated a radical nationalist

ideology was "Cuba for the Cubans". The government passed a labor nationalization law, restricting job opportunities for foreigners. To circumvent the limitations of this law, many Jews created cooperatives in which the workers became partners. Thus began a process of de-proletarianization, thanks to which the Jewish workforce gradually became elevated to middle class status.

The revolutionary government lasted for only one hundred days. The severe economic crisis, internal conflicts and pressure from the United States contributed to the seizure of power by Fulgencio Batista, who became the strongman of Cuban politics. In his role as Chief of Staff (1934-1940) he managed to gradually consolidate and integrate the military government into Cuban politics. Initially, he suppressed the labor movement with an iron fist and the people became fearful that he was adopting fascist methods, but during the Spanish Civil War there was a turning point in his political direction and he began to support the Spanish Republic, legalizing the Communist Party and denouncing fascism and Nazism.

Those years in Cuba saw the arrival of a great deal of antisemitic propaganda from Nazi Germany. There were very few Germans in Cuba, but Goebbels' Ministry of Propaganda received support from the Spanish upper classes that controlled urban commerce. The antisemitism of rich Spaniards was also influenced by the Catholic Church, but mainly by economic competition from Jewish manufacturers and merchants who were selling their goods cheaper, arousing the hostility of the wealthier merchants. Besides this, among the Spanish upper classes there was support for the Spanish nationalists. The *Diario de la Marina*, considered the mouthpiece of the Spanish





community, not only enthusiastically supported Franco, but also Hitler and Mussolini, and provided a platform for the propagation of anti-Semitism, aimed primarily against the immigration of Jewish refugees.

Cuba's immigration laws limited the maximum quota for Jewish refugees. Under the labor nationalization law, only those born in Cuba were entitled to new jobs, meaning that only visa immigrants who had a source of income without financial dependency could obtain them. Those applying for a visa were required to deposit a substantial sum and obtain approvals from various offices in a complex and difficult process. On the other hand, tourists and transiting travelers were able to enter Cuba with a permit issued by the Department of Immigration. Its director, Manuel Benítez González, supported by Batista, began distributing permits costing about \$150 among the Jews who wanted to enter Cuba. The permits promised refugees entry to Cuba on condition that they did not work or become a burden to the public. The Joint (American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, JDC) assisted refugees during their stay in Cuba. These permits helped to save Jews who wanted to escape from Germany and Austria especially in 1938 and 1939, but generated considerable opposition from some Cuban authorities who considered them illegal.

At that time the Germans were pressuring Jews to leave the Reich. The German shipping company HAPAG, Hamburg Amerika Line, cooperated with the Gestapo, which wanted the Jews to leave Germany, but also wanted to spread anti-Semitism in the countries to which they fled. Benitez' permits provided Germany with the documents required to allow for the departure of the Jews, but the Ministry of Propaganda also sent agents to Cuba who distributed

propaganda against the immigration of Jewish refugees in order to generate hostile public opinion to those arriving. The top advocate of pro-Nazi Germany propaganda was Juan Prohias, who also created an organization called the Cuban Nazi Party.

Antisemitic propaganda increased markedly in the first months of 1939, before the arrival of the German ship the Saint Louis, intended to show the world that Germany allowed Jews out but that the free world would not receive them. At the same time it had sparked a political confrontation between Cuban President Federico Laredo Bru and certain ministers who opposed the influx of refugees holding Benitez permits on the one hand, and the director of the Immigration Department, on the other, who enjoyed the support of Batista. By May 1939, 6,000 Jewish refugees had managed to enter Cuba, but in that month the government passed a new immigration law invalidating the possibility to enter Cuba with permits issued by Benitez. Although it was aware of the new law, the German shipping company ignored it and the Saint Louis sailed for Havana with 937 passengers on a cruise that generated a lot of repercussions. The Germans assumed that the ship would be received with an anti-Semitic attack but that the Cuban government would eventually accept the passengers. However, President Laredo Bru refused to allow the refugees to disembark in the port of Havana, on the grounds that the German government was making a mockery of Cuban law. In addition, the United States refused to accept the passengers and the ship was forced to return to Europe. The Joint, which was feverishly working to help the refugees, found them refuge in France, Holland, Belgium and England. However, only those who came to the latter country were saved, while the others were





captured by the Germans after the occupation of Western Europe and many of them perished in the extermination camps.

Following the episode with the Saint Louis, Cuba's doors were closed to the immigration of Jewish refugees from Germany and Austria and those who had found shelter there gradually migrated to the United States. In 1940, after the election of Batista as President, the new director of the Migration Department resumed the sale of permits, but in the difficult conditions of war, the price of each document escalated to \$2,500. The influx of refugees during the war was not accompanied by an anti-Semitic campaign and did not arouse the interest of the public, and at the time some 5,000-6,000 Jewish refugees, entered Cuba, 700 of whom came from Belgium and worked in the diamond business. As the diamond polishing centers in Europe had been occupied by Nazi Germany, the Allies authorized the opening of new centers in Cuba. The Cuban government allowed Jewish diamond merchants to open workshops to provide work for the refugees even though the labor nationalization law forbade them to be employees – on the condition that they would teach the craft to Cuban workers. Many Cuban Jews, both Ashkenaz and Sephardi, found work in the diamond factories and were influenced by the Zionist ideology of the owners of the workshops who had arrived from Belgium.

In December 1941, Cuba declared war on Nazi Germany and joined the line of defense of the Western Hemisphere alongside the United States. In April 1942 Batista announced the prohibition of entry to citizens arriving from countries under the rule of Nazi Germany. Several hundred Jewish refugees on board two boats (the Guine and São Tomé)

were prevented from entering the country. Under pressure from the governments of Britain and the United States, Batista allowed them to disembark, but they spent eight months in detention at Camp Tiscornia (the "Ellis Island" of Cuba). On the other hand, Batista allowed the refugees who were already in Cuba to remain there until the end of the war.

Relations between the refugees from Central Europe and the more veteran Eastern European Jews were not good. The refugees preferred the company of American Jews and the Eastern European Jews felt that Germany and Austria viewed the *ostjuden* (ousted Jews) with condescension. By contrast, there was a rapprochement with the Jews of Belgium (most of whom had been born in Poland) who had a major influence on the development of the Zionist movement in Cuba in general, and *Hashomer Hatzair* in particular. Belgian Jews were accustomed to donating large sums for national fundraising campaigns and significantly increased the level of donations from Jews in Cuba to the *Keren Hayesod* (UJA) and *Keren Kayemet* (JNF).

The willingness of Jews to contribute generously to the establishment of *Eretz Israel* was influenced by the worrying news coming from Europe and fears for the destiny of their families and communities of origin. In December 1942, after the arrival of confirmatory news about the systematic extermination of Jews by Nazi Germany, a massive demonstration was organized in Havana. Many non-Jewish Cubans closed their shops in identification with the Jews and thousands of members of the community marched to the presidential palace, but Batista refused to meet with them, claiming that the rally did not have official authorization. A major portion of public opinion





sympathized with the Jews and the victims of Nazism.

The positive attitude of Cuban public opinion towards the Jews manifested itself with the creation of the Cuban Pro Hebrew Palestine Committee, in which politicians and prominent intellectuals participated. The joint struggle against the Nazis grouped liberals and communists together in support of the creation of a Jewish state in *Eretz Israel*. In the Jewish community there was a major increase in support for the Zionist movement, and in addition, people who identified with the anti-Zionist left gradually changed their ideological positions. The Jewish community in Cuba became dominated by the Zionist movement.

During World War II a significant change occurred in the economic situation of the Jews in Cuba and many of them began to move to more affluent neighborhoods and send their children to universities. During those years the children of immigrants, born in Cuba became teenagers. Although Cuban society did not discriminate, they felt more comfortable in Jewish social settings. Many studied in Jewish schools such as the Colegio Autónomo del Centro Israelita de Cuba and belonged to Jewish youth movements and lived in a Jewish social environment. Cuban identity was linked to their Judaism but first and foremost, they were Cuban Jews.

In times when the world's Jews fought for recognition of their right to establish a Jewish state in their historic homeland, Cuba was ruled by the democratic governments of Grau San Martín (1944-1948) and Prío Socarrás (1948-1952). These were years of freedom and economic growth, but there was also a great deal of corruption and political violence. Cuban Jews tried to stay out of politics. Major corruption in the governing Authentic Party led to the

resignation of Senator Eduardo Chibás and the creation of the Orthodox Party, which stood for morality and integrity. Chibás was one of the main supporters of the creation of a Jewish state, and his opposition to Grau San Martín was one of the factors that prompted the Cuban government to vote on November 29, 1947 in the United Nations Assembly against of the partition of Eretz Israel.

The creation of the State of Israel stirred immense joy among Cuban Jews and strengthened their self-confidence. After Cuba recognized the new state a consulate headed by an honorary consul Sender Kaplan, a veteran Zionist leader and editor of the *Yiddish* language newspaper *Habaner Lebn* (Havana Life), was opened. Diplomatic relations between the two countries were established in 1954, but Israel did not send a resident ambassador to Havana and was represented by its ambassador to Mexico and the honorary consul Kaplan, who continued to run the Israeli delegation until the revolution of Fidel Castro.

Identification with the State of Israel became the most prominent feature of the Jewish community in Cuba. The Jewish press was largely concerned with what was happening in Israel, and Israeli visitors were received with great pomp and a wave of aliyah began, especially among activists of *Hashomer Hatzair*, which strengthened the ties of Jews in Cuba with the State of Israel. Rafael Zilber, the father of Isaac Zilber, was appointed Honorary Consul of Cuba in Israel. The Zionist Union continued to coordinate the overall Zionist endeavor, but not all Zionists accepted its authority. Since 1939 a subsidiary of the Beitar Youth Movement had existed in Cuba, and disputes arose between the revisionists and the leaders of the Zionist Union. With the outbreak of the War of Independence in Israel many





Sephardi Jews enlisted in *Mahal* (Foreign Volunteers) with the support of *Beitar* and two of them died on board the ship *Altalena*. This left a deep imprint on the Sephardi community and influenced its attitude towards Menachem Begin, who, when he visited Cuba, was received by them as the Jewish national hero. After the creation of the new State, youth movements emerged, the first of which was *Hanoar Hatzioni*, a competitor to *Hashomer Hatzair*.

The 1950 was a period in which the Jews in Cuba flourished despite the political upheavals that shook the country. On March 10, 1952 Fulgencio Batista returned to power in a bloodless coup. The revolution was met with indifference, because the Cuban people, weary of corruption and instability, had stopped believing in their political leaders. Batista's position against the Soviet Union and criticism of Stalin's antisemitism were met with approval by the Jewish community and the State of Israel. The bourgeoisie, including many Jews, sympathetically recalled the first presidency of Batista, but among youngsters (especially college students) clandestine groups began to emerge, seeking to overthrow the dictatorship. At the same time Fidel Castro, who gradually became leader of the revolution, began to organize the 26th of July Movement.

The flourishing of Jews in Cuba manifested itself in the construction of public buildings to serve the Jewish community. The Zionist Union created the *Beit Am* Zionist Center in Prado Street, in which all the Zionist activities were held, and religious Jews built a new synagogue for the *Adat Israel* community in Old Havana, but the institution that symbolized the economic prosperity of the Jews more than any other, was the *Patronato* (Board) (The full name was *Patronato de la casa de la comunidad hebrea de Cuba*)

in the Vedado neighborhood. The building was erected by wealthy members of the *Ashkenaz* community to meet the requirement for a large and magnificent community center. The *Patronato* and the Zionist Union had disagreements; the former claiming that the institution should primarily address the social needs of the Jews in Cuba and protect their children from assimilation, while the latter claimed that the most important objective was to support the State of Israel.

The *Patronato* promulgated the desire of the Jews to integrate as a respectable group within Cuban society, but to maintain their identity as part of the Jewish community. At that time the Jews were not integrated in Cuba and although the mother tongue of the young was Spanish and they identified with Cuban culture and its national heroes, they felt primarily that they were Jews. Many young Jews at that time were in college, but only a few entered the clandestine movement against Batista. The general opinion was that "the Poles do not belong."

By the late 1950's, the political and security situation in Cuba became intolerable and everyone expected the fall of Batista. With the victory of Fidel Castro, Jews also participated in the general euphoria, but the nationalization of private businesses and the transition to a communist regime generated massive disappointment. Gradually, most of the Jews left Cuba and the majority of them became concentrated in Miami.

The government of Fidel Castro disparagingly called those who migrated to the island "worms", but the Jews who chose to make aliyah to Israel were positively received. Relations between the revolutionary government and the State of Israel were initially good and Cuba saw the kibbutzim





as a model that could be learned from. The government approved three charter flights by Cuban Airways (Cubana de Aviación) taking olim to Israel, while emigration to the United States was fraught with difficulties. A considerable number of the olim were members of *Hashomer Hatzair* who joined *kibbutzim*, but they represented a small minority of the Jews who left Cuba. The vast majority of Cuban Jews, including all the Zionist leaders, settled in Miami and tried to continue their community life there in a Jewish-Cuban atmosphere.

The mass departure of Jews from Cuba saw a drastic decline in the number of members of Jewish institutions along with a gradual decline in Jewish life on the island. Immediately after the revolution, diplomatic relations between Israel and Cuba were tightened, but the orientation of Fidel Castro to the communist bloc and closer relations with the Arab world led to a deterioration of those relations between the two countries until the final break prompted by Fidel Castro in 1973. Although the Zionist Union continued to exist until 1978, conditions were not suitable for Zionist activity.

The Cuban Jews who went into a second exile retain fond memories of the Cuban paradise of the prerevolutionary era. The 1940s and 1950s were years of vibrant Jewish life, a rise in the standard of living and great optimism about the future of Cuba and the State of Israel. Those were times of building a Jewish-Cuban identity, in which one part was integrated into life in the country and the adoption of its customs and mentality, and the other was a sense of belonging to Judaism and the State of Israel. Activities in the framework of *Hashomer Hatzair* reflected this dual membership, which continued to accompany the

chanichim of the Movement for many years after they had left Cuba.

I congratulate Irene Stoliar for undertaking the task and having written this book about *Hashomer Hatzair* in Cuba, which charts its evolution over 30 years of activity, reviving ideological doubts and social experiences, and recounting the memories of the chanichim, accompanied by numerous archived quotes that have been reproduced here verbatim by members of the Movement.



1948- *Shomrim* marching in a parade in Paseo del Prado







CHAPTER 1: BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION

Somewhere in the Caribbean, whose name I want to remember, not long ago there was a youth movement with noble ideals, Zionist values, tireless activism and creative enthusiasm.

*Some mistook the Young Zionists and others associated them with the Agrupación pro Sionismo Jalutziano (Pro Zionist Pioneering Association), but this matters little. The unusual journey through time and space that begins here, aims to tell **the story of Hashomer Hatzair in Cuba.***

The Caribbean Shomrim

This is a brief and intense story, only three decades long - from a somewhat cautious and vague beginning to a dramatic and seemingly irreversible end. There are easily recognized similarities to the life cycle of *Hashomer Hatzair* in Cuba and sibling movements elsewhere, some very close and others more distant (some full of splendor and others with difficulties; ambivalent relationships with community institutions, publication of magazines, brochures and bulletin boards, organization of cultural, sporting and social activities, teaching of Zionist and chalutzic principles together with universal values, etc., while the characteristics of the country are observed, as its historical and social circumstances were modeling a peculiar idiosyncrasy .

The history of *Hashomer Hatzair* in Cuba will be portrayed, as already mentioned, as a journey through time and space. Its path will not be linear, but sometimes radial and at others, zigzagging. It will begin at various points of the globe and converge on Havana, and from there it will be dispersed to other locations, different from the original ones, to finally come together in these pages in an organized reunion, not only through nostalgia and revived memories, but also through the feeling of belonging to a movement that made history in its home community, and the pride of a defined membership that was strengthened by that identity.

We must ask the reason for this seemingly late desire (in fact, more than half a century has passed since the closure of the Movement) to gather information, anecdotes, memories and reflections, to hear multiple voices with different tones and shades that do not always resonate in unison, but that form a harmonic and polyphonic choir, tracking and diving into personal and libraries and personal and institutional archives, while making contact with former *Shomrim* scattered throughout a dozen countries and trying to bring order to an overflowing, dynamic conglomerate that is multifaceted and as bustling as life itself. The convincing answer is obvious: Why? So that we can realize the biblical injunction "Tell your son" (Exodus 8:13) which is the best way to perpetuate the values of the





past and rewrite them in the present, to ensure continuity in the future.

Diaspora and Diasporas

The Jewish Diaspora is a phenomenon of very long standing. Unlike what we usually think, it did not start with the destruction of the Second Temple, and the subsequent loss of Jewish sovereignty, but it nonetheless goes back to the earliest times. While it is true that this is a feature that captured the existential identity of the Jewish people over two millennia and continues to this day, six decades after the recovery of national sovereignty marked by the creation of the modern State of Israel, - it is not unique to it. The existence of ethnic diasporas which maintain cultural, traditional and economic ties with the country of origin is an established and understood phenomenon in world history. Prof. Gabriel Sheffer, of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, has made an in-depth study of the phenomenon of ethno-cultural minorities which, for various reasons, (persecution, war, famine, expulsions, etc.) migrated from their countries of origin to settle in others, but preserved the original building blocks of their national and cultural identity.

The emergence and evolution of the Jewish community in Cuba reflect this analysis. It should be added that

together with the aforementioned general characteristics, the Jewish community in Cuba developed certain characteristics of their own, and others which related directly to the host country.

The long trip to Havana

Its original inhabitants called it *Cubanacán*, but when Christopher Columbus landed he named it Juana and described it as “the most beautiful land that human eyes have ever seen”. Its first historian, José Martín Arrate (1701-1765) defined it as “the key to the New World “. Spain considered it the “semper fidelis” (always faithful). Cuba, the Pearl of the Antilles, gateway to the unknown region where many conquerors, fugitives, immigrants and travelers sought a more prosperous life and a better future, a safe haven from persecution, an appropriate place to raise their children, and a place where dreams and ideals could become reality.

Also, Jewish immigration to Cuba falls within the general framework described above. The broad and logical constraints of any attempt to generalize about the Jewish presence in Cuba can be divided into three stages, which have been principally studied by three researchers: Mordechai Arbell, Margalit Bejarano and Maritza Corrales Capestany. To these historians one might add, from a





different perspective, the work of anthropologist Ruth Behar, which tracks her own *Sephardi* roots on the island.

1. Although there is little preserved documentation available about Cuban Jewry, we presume that Marranos or “New Christians” of Jewish origin, probably escaped from the clutches of the Inquisition at the time that the Spanish conquest of Cuba occurred, as happened on other islands in the Caribbean . By way of illustration, it should be pointed out that Luis de Torres (? - 1493), an interpreter who accompanied Columbus on his first voyage to America, is credited with the discovery of tobacco, and is considered the first Jew to have arrived and become established in the New World.
2. The most intense stage of active Jewish life in Cuba begins in the late nineteenth century, and covers about six decades and is divided into four phases:
 - a. Several dozen Jewish families arrived from the United States, primarily for commercial reasons, in the first two decades of the twentieth century. These English-speaking Jews with American identity belonged to the upper middle class and remained on the island until the revolution, at which time when they returned to the United States.
 - b. *Sephardi* Jews from the Ottoman Empire, who came during the second and third decades of the twentieth century, and at first worked primarily as merchants, before moving on to industry and, to some extent, into the liberal professions. While some were dispersed in the provincial cities, most settled in the capital, where they organized themselves into a community and were nicknamed “Turks” due to

- c. *Ashkenaz* Jews of Eastern Europe in general and Poland in particular (generically nicknamed “Polacos” (Polish in Spanish)). The majority arrived on the island between the two world wars and established themselves in Havana, engaging in street trading, laboring professions and small industries. Community and institutional organization was varied and covered several aspects of cultural, social, welfare and Zionist life. Those who migrated to the United States after the revolution, created the Miami Cuban Hebrew Congregation of which they are still members to this day.
 - d. Jewish refugees from Central and Western Europe fleeing Nazism, who found temporary shelter on the island, arrived between 1939 and 1942, and remained in Cuba for just a few years. The largest group, composed of Jews from Belgium who were engaged in the diamond industry (not only jewelry, but also industrial applications), continued with these activities in Havana, while also participating in the life of the community . The “Belgians” as they were known on the island, would have a decisive influence on the development of *Hashomer Hatzair* and in boosting its Zionist orientation. After the war, they emigrated to Israel, the United States, Mexico, Venezuela and other countries.
3. Attempts were made to revive Jewish life and community and institutional activities on the island, during the last





decade of the twentieth century, with very different organizational characteristics to those which had been developed in earlier stages. In the early days of this Jewish revival the presence of "the Caribbean *Shomrim*" who had returned to their home community with renewed vigor, was felt, as they attempted to continue propagating the founding values of Zionism, solidarity, and mutual aid, as they had done in Havana in their youth.

For this reason the evolution of *Hashomer Hatzair* belongs to the second stage. The Cuban chapter in the life of this Jewish, Zionist and pioneering global youth movement was relatively short, lasting only three decades from its inception in the early 1930's until its definitive closure in 1961. Despite the predictable difficulties and changing circumstances, those three decades were years full of achievement in which the enthusiasm of a handful of young people prompted intense and productive activity that was projected towards the entire community.

While there is no consensus as to the exact date of the commencement of their work (there are those who trace it to 1929, although all the preserved documents and testimonies mention 1933), we are able to state the date of completion of their activities as being January 1961, when a handful of teenagers aged 15 to 16 years, who were active members of the Movement, unanimously decided to realize the Zionist pioneering dream with their group *aliyah* to *Kibbutz Yechiam*.

One of those youngsters, Aaron Brum, currently residing in Mitzpe Hila in the Upper Galilee, in Israel, enthusiastically remembers and evokes even the minutest details of those crucial days:

"The elders group had already made aliyah and we felt a certain amount of pressure that within in a short time we would not be able to leave. On the other hand we feared the law of compulsory military service, and there was pressure from our parents. They wanted to leave and did not want us to stay, so we made a group decision. Nobody travels anywhere other than Israel. Given this, our parents formed a coalition to put pressure on us and on the shlichim and the Movement, so that we would be taken out of there, no matter where to , as long as it was out of Cuba.

The shaliach agreed with our parents that there was no way we would stay in Cuba. He, and the aliyah shaliach who also belonged to Mapam, assured them that if they wanted to leave they could do so, because we would not stay (none of the parents left before we made aliyah, because they had all hoped that we would go with them to the United States). With that promise we started thinking about when we would go. Every week there were fewer chanichim in the Movement and less Jews in the community.



All the institutions disintegrated and people disappeared. Several agreements were reached, so that an airplane would leave with olim and return with sheep. There was a mother who went to see the shaliach and shouted: 'Take out the boys! Do not make them stay here!' There were struggles and pressure from all directions and at one point it was decided that all the youth movements would make aliyah as a group, and together: Hashomer Hatzair, Hanoar Hatzioni, the Beitar movement and another smaller one. A special plane, the first to bring immigrants from Cuba to Israel, was organized. There was a farewell ceremony in the community and Shoshana Rubinstein spoke on behalf of the Youth Federation: "We are Jews and we are no longer wandering. Israel is our homeland and we want to lead by example. All the youth movements are going together to Israel!"

So we did. Alex was left alone in Cuba, he had the misfortune of becoming ill with polio six months before his aliyah and he remained there guarding the ken.

I remember the last day in the ken. We were downstairs and said: 'Now let's go through all the rooms, take a good look at everything and close the door without looking back.' We went up, walked around, looked, went downstairs, closed the door

and went home.

When we went to the airport, I think all the Jews of Havana were there. It was a kind of farewell. All the youth movements, all the youngsters, and all the children boarded the plane together. The Jewish Agency had rented this old propeller engined airplane, and it got us to Israel.

All the time I have been reminding myself that I should note that I left Cuba at the age of 15. During the last year when we were leading the Movement, we were only 15 and 16 years of age. We simply had to mature at once."



1960-Farewell Mifkad at La Polar park

So it was that those dramatic circumstances marked the beginning of the end of *Hashomer Hatzair* in Cuba. The Movement as such had virtually ceased to exist, but there were still some chanichim, especially groups of children who were witnesses and protagonists of these final and increasingly difficult times. Julia Kotko was only an adolescent at the time, but she vividly remembers those final months. Three girls from that period remember to this day the feeling of emptiness. Shortly after it, they also had to leave the island with their families, in search of new directions. Danya Lindenfeld ended up in Venezuela. Ana Cohen traveled to the United States and Susy Schwartz (today known as Shosh Koren) made aliyah in peculiar circumstances that make her "the last Mohican" of the *Shomrim*. Her moving testimony sheds light on the atmosphere that existed in Havana in mid-1961.

The shock came when my cousins and their families left, and I remained with no close family. Afterwards, the same thing happened in my class. Every few days children suddenly disappeared, and nobody said anything. They were afraid, did everything in secret, and that made it very difficult. We didn't say goodbyes! The class was being reduced and the Movement also had far fewer children. They were leaving, they were leaving, they were leaving. Thus there was a trickle of vacating, without saying goodbye, without any action, words, nothing. People disappeared, vanished, were not ...

Hashomer Hatzair began to disintegrate. The elders had made aliyah a year or two before to Kibbutz Ga'aton, and in the first organized flight a group of madrichim had flown out. Oh, it was so sad! I envied them so, so much.

When we went to have our medical checkups they suspected that my mother had tuberculosis and she could not travel. My parents thought about what to do and decided that I was going to travel first, but I always remained with the feeling that it was I who had decided to make aliyah alone.

In Cuba I collected stamps, and to this day I have a collection of Cuba's first postage stamps, which are very valuable and very special. My parents thought that a girl would be allowed to leave the country with them. We had to carry the suitcase the day before for the review and my parents put an album in it to see what happened. There were no problems. The next day they put the entire collection into the handbag. When they checked it, after I had said farewell to my parents they took it away. When I parted from my parents I did not cry. I was going on a great adventure and that was what mattered to me, but when they took the albums away from me, I began to mourn and cry. Many years later I understood that



it had been the cry of farewell. We came to Israel and we were not received at the airport, but in a field with thorns. I became very excited: 'I'm in Israel! I cannot believe it!' Of course I looked for Yosef and Shifra Ader [Israeli shlichim of the Movement in Cuba], until I found them. My heart was beating hard. I had so wanted to make aliyah, it was so obvious. My madrichim had made aliyah. My whole life I had been raised to aspire to fulfill myself in Israel and on the kibbutz.

However, before we talk about the end, let's go back to the beginning to see how it all started.





The first Cuban *Shomrim*



CHAPTER II: FAR AWAY AND LONG AGO

In describing my time in Cuba I should note that it was a period of continuity and transition towards life in Israel. In Wilkowice, my hometown in Lithuania, I had joined Hashomer Hatzair in 1922, at age 14, and I spent all my scout years in it until deciding to make aliyah, but I could not go through with this due to family reasons.

With these words David Olinsky (Ilan) begins a brief autobiographical text entitled *My long road to the kibbutz*, which evokes different stages of his life, and was included in *Zohar Hayovel* [The Splendor of the Jubilee], published by *Kibbutz Beit Zera*, to review its history from its inception until 1980. With remarkable power of synthesis, he manages - in two sentences - to summarize a long and intense trajectory of life which largely reflects the changes and vicissitudes of the Jewish communities of Eastern Europe during the last century.

The emergence and development of *Hashomer Hatzair* do not differ from the beginnings of other national Jewish youth movements whose initial activities were developed, beginning in the second decade of the 20th century. They were all born and evolved under the prominent ideological and spiritual influence of *Hatechia*, the national revival movement, and organized Zionism. Regarding their educational perceptions and courses of action, all of them adopted the model of *Wandervogel* (wandering birds),

from Germany and the neighboring countries, and the global Scouts Movement founded by Lord Robert Baden-Powell, to which we will refer later. Over time, the Jewish youth movements consolidated their activities around the Diaspora and Israel, and the majority fully identified with the principles of fulfilling Zionism: *aliyah* to Israel, the pioneering spirit (*chalutzit*) and becoming productive through physical labor.

Later, some of them would be linked to the specific ideologies of different political currents and colonial movements, retaining their independence of action at both theoretical and practical educational levels.

Hashomer Hatzair can be proud of being the oldest Jewish youth movement in the world. Its origins date back to a century ago as noted in the book about *Hashomer Hatzair*. Its formal birth took place in Levov, Galicia (then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, now Lviv, Ukraine). There was already a Jewish scout movement, which in 1913 adopted the name of Hashomer as a sign of its identification with the similar (eponymous) movement in Israel. These initial steps inspired parallel activities in Poland, that gained momentum during World War I until its merger with Ze'irei Zion (groups of young people involved in the study of the Hebrew language, Judaism in general and Zionism in particular) in Vienna. The unified movement was renamed *Shomrim-Ze'irei Zion*, prior to final selection of the name by which it is known today.

The basic principles of its educational concept can be summarized clearly and concisely: "To maintain the pioneering mission of young generations of the Jewish people, whose purpose is to establish a working people



living with social equality in the land of Israel, teaching national values and Zionist consciousness, developing socialist consciousness and training its members for community life; educating individuals and increasing their qualifications and skills, and preparing them for auto-emancipation and life within society."

When the Movement began operating in Israel and founded the first *kibbutzim*, it expressed its ideological principles which no less clarity, defining the *kibbutz* as:

1. The pioneer cell of the new society
2. The construction tool of the Jewish working class
3. The tool to absorb a working Hebrew *aliyah*
4. The supporter of the class struggle



Returning to the beginning, David Olinsky (Wilkowice, Lithuania, 1908 - Beit Zera, Israel, 1996) arrived in Cuba against this backdrop and carrying this ideological baggage, to establish the movement on the island (Cuba). He shared these founding activities with two other young people who had similar, but not identical life stories: Mordechai (Motke) Brill and Wolf (Welfke) Rabinowicz. This group, which left its mark on the Jewish community, could well be called "The Three Musketeers" of *Hashomer Hatzair* in Cuba. Like the protagonists from the famous novel, they were young, enthusiastic, intrepid and determined, with a clear mission and a strong will, friends and companions for whom the phrase "one for all and all for one" was not just a motto but a way of life. Unlike the musketeers, these lads did not put their efforts into serving a king, and did not

face intrigues or guard the honor of a queen, but devoted themselves entirely to a national cause that transcended their individual aspirations and faced many difficulties until they were able to meet their goals and turn their ideals into concrete actions. To them the command voiced in the first page of the book by Dumas was imperative: "You are young and must be brave. Go fearlessly and seek adventure." Obviously, in this case, the adventures were of an ideological, national and social kind, rather than a swashbuckling nature, but nonetheless, they were still adventures.

In the aforementioned autobiographical text, Olinsky recalls his first steps on the island:

I was in Cuba from December 1929 until September 1934. When I arrived in Cuba (where my brother in law had cousins who helped us to settle) I immediately began looking for company, a Zionist association, a youth movement - something. For several weeks I did not find any such movement. I had the address of the Zionist Union and of the Hebrew school, but there was no Zionist activity. I was invited to a Chanukah evening at the school and there I found myself with some youngsters from Lithuania and Poland. The evening was far from reflecting the spirit of the holiday and left me with a very negative impression, but I managed to convince some of the youngsters to get organized and to create a Zionist youth movement. In their





home countries these girls and boys had belonged to either Hashomer Hatzair or Beitar, so I proposed that we merge them, and so it was.

Olinsky, who shortly after his arrival in Cuba became secretary of the Zionist Union, recalled his first steps on the island several times, among them during interview with Dr. Margalit Bejarano in 1983, in which he recalled the "prehistoric" stage of the Movement. His words allow us to track the development of Hashomer Hatzair from the earliest times:

I left my city in November 1929. I arrived in Cuba and then one day I was invited to a Chanukah party at the Zionist Union school. I attended and the entire program was in Spanish. I was not at all interested and there was no Chanukah content, but there were several youngsters of my age there, originally from Lithuania and Poland, and I began to ask them all sorts of questions. They had been in Cuba for some time and already spoke Spanish but had not enjoyed the party either. One of them had been in Beitar, another was from Lithuania, some had been in Maccabi, and several were in Hashomer Hatzair while others had not been affiliated to any movement. I told them that we should get ourselves organized. There was already a

Zionist Union and I proposed to them that we create a Zionist Youth movement. One of our members was Ya'akov. He was also from Lithuania and had been a member of Beitar. Another was Shmuel Levin from Bucowiz, Lithuania. Also present was Yosef Luria who originated from Lithuania but from a different village. Yosef Liberman had come from Poland, Kowilon from Lithuania, and there were others.

These memories accurately enough mark the first attempts to group together former members of Hashomer Hatzair in their new home in Havana at the end of December 1929 or, more likely, early January 1930. However, it is important to point out that this was not yet Hashomer Hatzair but a group that brought together young people from different ideological backgrounds. There is no doubt that this voluntary and agreed cooperation between former Shomrim and Beitar members attracts attention, given the historic rivalry between the two movements, but it is understandable given the circumstances prevailing in the "here and now" of that period, where the primary objective of this Union of Young Zionists was to create a reference framework that would allow them to meet youth of their own ages and interests. We should also note that although the name of this group may be misleading due to the semantic similarity with the Hanoar Hatzioni youth movement, it should not be identified with it.

One of the youngsters already in Cuba was Mordechai Brill (Bircz, Lithuania, 1909 – Beit Zera, Israel, 1990), who was one of the founders of the Movement in its original city.



His family emigrated to Cuba in 1926, where he was also one of the founders of Hashomer Hatzair and an active member of the Zionist Union. He lived in Havana until his aliyah in 1933, using one of the "certificates" received by the Hechalutz movement.

These certificates warrant a digression. They were authorizations issued by the British Mandate, which allowed the legal aliyah of Diaspora Jews to the Palestine of those days. Annual quotas were reduced, and the Zionist Organization assigned them to different communities based on strict criteria, taking into account living conditions, dangers or threats to physical safety or the continuity of Jewish life and of course, concerns related to the parties, currents and settlement movements . At that time, the communities in Latin America did not figure prominently on the list of priorities and the allocation of certificates to such a remote, relatively small community with no imminent risks catching the eye. Welfke Rabinowicz also recalls:

If I remember correctly, David was the secretary of the Zionist Union when we started our Hashomer Hatzair activities . The certificates did not reach Hashomer Hatzair, but the Zionist Union. There were quotas for the entire Jewish world, but Cuba received only three certificates

David Olinsky also retained a vivid memory of the certificates that would change the course of their lives:

We received the first certificates in 1933, and among the first olim was our companion Mordechai Brill, who had been a member of the Movement in Lithuania and since Cuba had kept in touch with the Kibbutz Aliya A of Lithuania.

In order to increase the number of olim, David Olinsky (fictiously) married Chaia Niedzwietzky, so that she could be included on his certificate. The Movement files retain a medical certificate dated July 31, 1934, signed by Dr. M. M. Mitrani (official doctor of the Zionist Union) which confirms his good health "in order to leave for Palestine". More than a decade later, in 1947, the Chilean Hashomer Hatzair would use the same trick for their first olim, purportedly Hebrew teachers participating in a conference held in Jerusalem for Jewish teachers (obviously, none of them returned to Santiago). This was also one of the ways to circumvent the restrictions imposed by the British Mandate on aliyah from Europe after World War II, when more than one young bachelor was traveling from Palestine (with his corresponding English documents) and married a young Holocaust survivor. The newlywed couples began returning to Palestine, divorced, and after a while, the young man returned to Europe to repeat this stratagem.

David was certainly a special oleh. Not only did he manage to expand the possibilities for the certificate, but on September 13, 1934, he formally committed, in a signed statement, not to claim from the Aliyah Department of the Jewish Agency nor from any other institution, any kind of job or financial assistance."



Unfortunately, there is no preserved direct testimony of Mordechai Brill, who, when making aliya joined the original group from Lithuania and was part of that group for almost a year in Petach Tikva, until the final integration with Kibbutz *Beit Zera*, where he lived until his death. What remains is an interesting document of the Zionist Union (with the letter "z", in its letterhead) of Cuba, signed by its directors and bearing the seal of the institution, dated October 16, 1933. In today's terms it could be described as a letter of recommendation, which emphasizes recognition of his work for the communal institutions of Havana and appreciation of his decision to make *aliyah*:

Our esteemed colleague Mr. Mordechai Brill, an active member of our Union, and a veteran manager (menahel) in Hashomer Hatzair, who is also an active member of the Keren Kayemet LeIsrael (JNF) in our country, is leaving the island of Cuba as a chalutz to settle in the Promised Land.

Therefore we enthusiastically state having learned that he is making aliya, and since we consider him a good friend and a Zionist who is devoted to the affairs of Palestine, and in recognition of same, that we hope and ask that any Hebrew and Zionist institution or club that our associate wishes to enter, will

receive him and help him in good faith as they would do for any veteran Zionist.

Not only the Zionist Union but his colleagues also attested to his loyalty to the Movement in a short letter written in Yiddish:

We hereby certify that the our brother Mordechai Brill was one of the founders of this Association, and that he has always been very active and concerned about its existence and progress.

We ask all Hashomer Hatzair associations wherever they are, to welcome him as a brother of the great Shomrim family, and to grant any requests he may make, when necessary.



Welfke Rabinowicz, the third musketeer who had participated in the Cuban movement since its inception, also recalls the distribution of certificates:

Cuba entered the overall distribution of certificates and received three, but they did not arrive with specific names on



them. David, Motke and I said we wanted to travel, and everyone agreed. But what I remember is that there was another meeting and it was decided that the three of us could not go. Someone had to stay. The Movement was new and no one knew what might happen. One of us had to stay, and that was me.

Welfke did not made aliyah with his colleagues, but did make it 40 years later. He had come to Cuba with his family from his native Poland, at the age of seven, and lived there until 1946. That year he traveled to Brazil as a teacher, and remained there until 1964, when he moved to Uruguay. He lived in Montevideo until his aliyah to Israel in 1973. In two long interviews conducted by Shmuel Ma'ayan in 1980, and Margalit Bejarano in 1983, he recalled those founding years, but mentions different dates to those listed by

Olinsky:

In 1934 David Olinsky and Brill, members of Hashomer Hatzair arrived from Lithuania. They are now in Beit Zera. In 1934 we had the first meeting to discuss how we would start Hashomer Hatzair. When we founded Hashomer Hatzair, it was the only movement in Cuba. In 1936, the first three certificates were received and a meeting was held to decide who would make aliyah. After many more meetings it was decided

that David Olinsky, Brill and the girl, Izbecke, would make aliyah.

The other documents that we examined, matching of data and comparison of the events mentioned with their dates, lead us to presume, with little room for doubt, that this story has several inaccuracies, understandably attributable to the time that has elapsed (a little over half a century) since the events reported in the story occurred.

Indeed, a pamphlet written in Yiddish contained a section entitled: *From the Diary of a Shomeret*" containing a text from Bat-Sheva Niedzwietzky dated April 30, 1934, which expressed it unequivocally:

Today marks one year since the creation of Hashomer Hatzair. The same children who were so far away from each other, now call each other brothers and sisters. Today they are already thinking about the question: When will I be among the makers, those who add a brick to the large building, those who shed their sweat and blood for national liberation? When can I be useful for my people and my country? For our Shomrim there no longer exists any difficulty that frightens us. We are continually marching to reach our goal.



Invitation to the first anniversary

Since then and until 1943, the Movement had celebrated its anniversary every year with a solemn, festive ceremony that was open to the entire community, always emphasizing its principles, goals and aspirations.

Due to the lack of an official birth certificate, we cite another letter received from overseas, that was mailed ten months earlier, on June 23, 1933. The *Hanhaga Eliona* (the global leadership of the Movement), located in Warsaw, responded to the announcement concerning the creation of the Movement in Cuba:

We have received with joy the news of the founding of the Hashomer Hatzair organization in your country. We congratulate you on the modest beginnings that you have achieved and hope that your organization will grow and prosper to serve all Jewish children in your country, imbuing them with Zionist consciousness and the eagerness to be among the chalutzim who are building the new Eretz Israel

When the verbal testimony and the preserved documents differ, the natural tendency is to give more credit to the written word. Our memory is associated with subjectivity, selectivity and fragility, and seems less reliable. Therefore, despite the different versions, our almost certain conclusion is that the hypothetical birth certificate establishing the date and place of birth of *Hashomer Hatzair* in Havana, is April 1933. However, some years later, on the occasion of the BatMitzvah of the Zionist Union, a special edition of a Community publication in Yiddish, was unveiled, celebrating "the thirteenth anniversary of the Zionist Union and six years of operation of the Hashomer Hatzair Youth Organization." According to this text, the birth of the Movement appears to date from 1931.

Actually, the exact date is not important. What is really significant is the fact that *Hashomer Hatzair* began to take its first steps, shared with other youth movements such as *Beitar* in the early 1930's. Gradually it expanded its ranks and attracted more youngsters until ideological differences led to a predictable parting of the ways. The ideological belief of its founders, who had come from Europe, was

initially relegated to the background, in the interests of the primary objective of organizing the youth and expanding its ranks.

Growth in those early years was fast and surprising. Welfke Rabinowicz attributed this to two reasons, quoting as the first one:

We started with scouting and sports. It was decided not to start immediately with the ideas of Hashomer Hatzair, but rather to introduce them step by step.

We divided the children into age groups (Bnei Midbar, Tzofim, Bogrim), and each group had a madrich whom we had trained. Each group met twice a week and on Friday nights we made an Oneg Shabbat with songs and games. Twice a month we went on field trips, according to age groups. On Lag Ba'Omer we went out to the suburbs, reluctantly marched through the streets and sang in Hebrew until we reached the bus. Then we sang throughout the trip and organized games and competitions.

Later, looking back reflectively and with the perspective of the time that had elapsed, he added:

There were no other movements and the parents saw that it was a good and safe place to send their children.

The Shomrim musketeers had justifiable reasons to feel satisfied at having accomplished the mission they had taken on. In the coming chapters we will detail these activities and the methods of operation in the early years,

the relations with other communal bodies, the influence of the departure of two of the founder members, the impact of the Second World War on the Cuban community in general and the Movement in particular, followed by the declining years and subsequent revival.



Celebration of the first anniversary

CHAPTER III: THE LONG TRIP FROM BRUSSELS TO HAVANA

The geographic distribution of the Jewish communities of the Diaspora in general, and those of Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean in particular, began to change in the late nineteenth century, when many Jews decided to leave their traditional homes, expelled through persecution, poverty and disease, and driven by hopes of a better life in Western Europe and the New World ("Amerike"). There were also much smaller groups, inspired by the Zionist Movement and its ideal of a return to the ancestral homeland, who chose aliyah to the land of their dreams, which was then a remote province of the dying Ottoman Empire, which, a few decades later, would become part of the British Mandate in the Middle East.

The rise of the Nazi government in Germany and its subsequent spread to other areas of Europe intensified the need to find new destinations. At the same time, several countries imposed restrictions on the entry of Jewish refugees. In her doctoral thesis on Judaism in Cuba 1898-1939, Margalit Bejarano explains how Cuba became involved in this extremely difficult situation.

...awakened a feverish search for temporary solutions and on the map of Jewish immigration it identified countries hitherto unknown to Jewish refugees. Its appeal lay in the ability of its consular representatives to provide immigration

documents which provided legal clearance to leave the Reich and ensured a destination port overseas. This was the framework in which Cuba came to be seen as a port of salvation for the Jews.

It should be noted that not only Jewish but also Spanish refugees, initially affected by poverty and lack of prospects, and later by the civil war that claimed nearly a million victims and left the country mired in distress, found refuge on the island. The Cuban-Spanish journalist and writer Eduardo González González recounts the story of his father in a touching review entitled "My Galician Father":

According to the stories told by my father, our arrival at the port of Havana was in a long line of immigrants, and the immigration authorities only had to rubber-stamp the landing document which immediately decided the fate of these young people who were so full of concerns: "Tiscornia" or "Havana".

The first destination was a field surrounded by barbed wire to which migrants who were denied entry to Cuba were sent. My father could never forget that after printing the seal Havana on his disembarkation document, they immediately began stamping the documents of the next group of migrants with "Tiscornia".

Indeed, the Cuban government, concerned about the difficult economic situation, imposed increasingly severe restrictions limiting the entry of immigrants to those who could fill the already scarce jobs. To grant the much sought "permission", required subsequent legal authorizations, in addition to the usual documents (passport, photos, etc.). These included a monetary deposit the amount of which was rising all the time and letters of recommendation from Cuban citizens or persons who were proven residents of the country. Another possibility to legally enter Cuba was to declare the intention to remain temporarily on the island. For such cases there were three kinds of visas: tourist (short trips without the possibility of working) transit (in effect while the ship was anchored in the harbor) and bystander visas (for passengers with tickets to continue to other countries or enough money to buy them, who were granted a maximum stay of 30 days).

Thanks to these possibilities, there was a relatively large group of immigrants from Belgium among the Jewish refugees who arrived in Cuba, who influenced community life in general, and *Hashomer Hatzair* in particular. Two of them would recall their arrival on the island in interviews four decades later:

The Spanish ship, Marquis of Comillas was traveling to Cuba. It was full of Jewish refugees from Belgium, 90% of whom remained in Cuba. When we arrived we were put in a detention camp called Tiscornia, near Havana. An employee of the Joint, Mr. Gurfinkel, came to visit us and told us: "Be quiet, there are no problems,

everything is fixed. It is a temporary detention and the camp is very nice."

The Cubans treated us very well, but we had to stay in Tiscornia until we had paid a deposit and then more money. Immigrants who came before us opened our eyes, explaining that we could not leave Tiscornia without paying.

Our feeling on reaching Cuba was like resurrection from the dead. (Nahman Solowiejczyk, Israel 1981).

In our boat, Marqués de Comillas, there was a group of Hashomer Hatzair activists from Belgium, together with Dr. Austriak [Austridan], Numa Eisenzweig and Ulu Eder. There were about 106 people from Belgium. Each had to pay \$250 to get out of Tiscornia. We negotiated with the immigration authorities for the release of the few who had no money. Finally we paid for 100 people, and those who could not have disembarked without paying (Chiel Morgenstern, New York 1984).

It is no coincidence that the two interviewees speak of the Jews "of Belgium", not the "Belgian" immigrants although all of them came from that country and almost all were engaged in the diamond industry, most had come to Belgium as immigrants from Eastern Europe, and some had



not obtained citizenship. Despite this clarification of the historical truth, it is obvious that the Jewish community in Cuba identified them first and foremost as "The Belgians".

In the previous chapter we referred to the modest beginnings of *Hashomer Hatzair* in Cuba, sponsored by Eastern European immigrants who had been active members of the Movement in their home country and brought that experience to their new place of residence. After the aliyah of two of the "Three Musketeers" (Mordechai Brill and David Ilan), key figures in those early years who had managed to capture the interest of the young and rapidly expanding ranks of the Movement, the activities lost some of their impetus and moved in the direction of a path less infused with the ideas and principles of *Hashomer Hatzair* and more oriented towards social and sporting elements. Scouting continued to occupy a central place, but pioneering [chalutzit] and Zionism lost some of its prominence which was expressed mainly through participation in community activities such as the celebration of Purim and other holidays, and collaboration with the JNF, which manifested itself primarily in the emptying of the JNF collection boxes. The young Shomrim roamed the Jewish houses, in which the pushke (blue KKL collection boxes) occupied a prominent place, collecting its treasured coins and bringing the money raised to the KKL. The Movement in Cuba maintained written contact with the *Hanhaga Rashit* [general management] in Poland, but the distance and language made it difficult to maintain a fluid relationship. However, it is noteworthy that the Movement did not interrupt its activities at any time and always maintained a continued presence in the life of the community.

Like the musketeers of the early years, the Belgians would get another three (the aforementioned Yeshaiahu Austridan, Numa Eisenzweig and Ulu Eder), who were dedicated to the task of immediately reorganizing and revitalizing the Movement. This time its contribution was of a different kind, combining the experience gained from its active participation in the kenim of Brussels and Antwerp (urban centers but no small villages) with the universal cultural background of Western Europe.

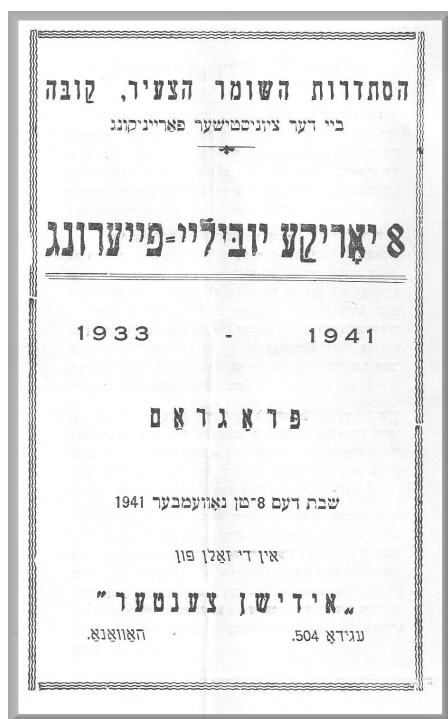
In a lengthy report sent in 1942 to the headquarters of the worldwide Movement (which, with the outbreak of World War II had moved to Israel) written in perfect Hebrew, Yeshayahu Austridan describes the ups and downs of the Movement and its members at the time, as being ill-fated. The journey reflects their displacement (Brussels, Antwerp, Paris, Bilbao) prior to arrival in Cuba, not merely listing the activities and problems, but adding its own findings and conclusions:

Ten days ago in Bilbao I met with two friends from the Antwerp ken. After prolonged efforts and a wait of many months, we left Belgium and then France (the occupied area). We are now waiting for a boat to take us to Cuba (the only country that has given us a transit visa [the bold emphasis is mine - IS] in addition to the visas for China and Siam) and once there we are confident of arriving in the United States. The future of war and its consequences are unclear at an unprecedented level, and our future



is inextricably linked to world events and is twice as unclear.

In the last week of April we crossed the French-Spanish border at Hendaye and arrived in Bilbao, where we took a boat to Havana, Cuba. On June 5 we arrived in Havana, and now we are waiting for a visa to the "chosen land".



Celebration of the eighth anniversary

Austridan (Ostrow Mazowiecki, Poland 1912 – Israel 1992) was a man of letters, a journalist, writer, literary critic, poet and translator (among others, he translated One Hundred Years of Solitude by Gabriel García Márquez into Hebrew), using his pen with ease and the endowment of a keen and critical eye. The report, written over more than a year, also talks about his views on the Movement in Cuba:

Here we found a ken. The concepts of the Movement resemble those of a small Polish village in a ken that suddenly emerged between 1925-1927. Moreover, the young people are empty of Judaism and culture and they do not read books. The streets of Havana destructively influence the character of these girls and boys and

they are not interested in global issues and the problems of the Jewish people. They do not get out and see the suffering of the people. Here they go out dancing, and their dress and outward appearance is Cuban - youngsters with mustaches, girls with painted lips.

Nonetheless, this was a Hashomer Hatzair ken. There were gdudim, there were groups, whose members went out to empty the JNF collection boxes and were the only ones who did this [emphasis added, IS]. The ken struggled against Beitar and kept them away from the Zionist Union for several



weeks prior to our arrival (Here in Cuba, where I have been since June 1941, the Beitar youth movement was linked to the Zionist Union).

There is no doubt that the culture shock was particularly intense. But as we know, the Musketeers are, above all, men of action, perseverance, war, and migration and this uprooting failed to make a dent either in their ideas or in their enthusiasm:

Of course, we got to work. After half a year we could see the buds, but not the fruit. The ken grew and its activities diversified, albeit with great difficulty, bringing people closer to the values of the Movement. After a few weeks (early November) we organized an evening for the eighth anniversary of the Movement, and then we went to a winter camp for three days, and began preparing a great summer camp for two weeks, for the first time in the history of the Movement here.

The fruits of this intense activity were immediate, and the Movement not only regained its past glory, but expanded its scope. The first moshava (camp) in 1942 on the initiative of the Belgians, became a tradition whose memories endure to the present day, and is an issue that needs be

dealt with in a separate chapter. But nothing is perfect. The ideological fervor that made the Movement more rigid and disciplined, and some selected restrictions on Shomrim values, were too severe for some of the youngsters. Shoshana Levin eloquently describes both these facets:

At the time they came to Cuba the Belgian Shomrim, who were escaping from the war, and had been members of the Movement in Belgium, started to become active in the ken of Havana. At that time the Movement had many girls and boys aged between 17-18 who were potential for hachshara and preparing for aliyah, but the Belgians told the girls to stop using makeup and everyone had to stop their "ballroom dancing", so many Shomrim left the ken.

The Belgians began an intense educational activity in the ken, organizing committees and seminars on all sorts of subjects, training some of the youngsters to serve as madrichim for the groups, and teaching Israeli songs. Among them was one who had been at Kibbutz Ein Hahores, knew Hebrew and was a musicologist, who taught us songs in Hebrew.

Abraham Luski also remembers that period, recalling it with enthusiasm and admiration:



The Belgians arrived in Cuba at a time when the Movement was in decline, had lost some of its ideological content and its activities focused more on the social aspect. They brought with them the traditions of Hashomer Hatzair in Belgium and a wealth of universal culture, both of which they transmitted to us. With them we learned to listen to classical music, to discuss European literature, and to watch good theater, but they also emphasized the issues relating to Israel and the kibbutz.



The Movement is going through reorganization

Abraham also recalls the fundraising campaigns, particularly in 1942, when Natan Bistrizky (JNF emissary in Latin America) and Leib Yaffeh (director of *Keren Hayesod* in Jerusalem) arrived in Havana, and still can repeat by heart the poems Leib Yaffe recited in Yiddish at community events. Both of them achieved a significant increase in revenues for both institutions, which tripled in that year. A special affinity united both Bistrizky and Leib Yaffeh who were not only Zionist leaders but also poets and writers. Abraham, a sensitive reader to this day, continues to devote much of his time to disseminating good literature.

Ulu Eder, the coordinator of the legendary moshavot, remained in Cuba for a relatively short time and then moved to Venezuela, where he raised a family and lived until his death. His son Jaime vividly remembers the stories his father told them with humor and nostalgia, during that short but significant stage in his life:

My father was born in Holland, in a city that had become an important commercial center for the Jews, and many Belgian families moved there. He subsequently returned to Belgium and stayed there until the war. An aunt managed to get them all to London, one by one. From there my father (whose name was Isidor, though everyone called him Ulu), his brother Mendel and a sister, emigrated to Cuba.

Although he came from an Orthodox family in Belgium and became an active member of the Movement, when he arrived in Cuba he

discovered Hashomer Hatzair and joined it. I remember a photo of a machane, where he had been put in charge of peeling potatoes because he knew how to do this extremely quickly. Many Cuban families later immigrated to Venezuela, and when my father arrived in Caracas he organized the first Jewish youth movement in the country, which was called Kadima.

Some time ago I discovered something very interesting: My father came to Israel on hachshara only in 1947 (there is a visa that appears in one of his old passports), stayed for a while and returned to Venezuela. But he planted the seeds, because my brother and I are here in Israel. People who have gone through the tnu'ot abroad have a very different attachment to Israel.

Everyone agrees about the impression left by the Belgians during their short time on the island, and different individuals emphasize different aspects. Stanley Silverstein, who left Cuba with his family in 1944, had joined during those years, and remembers the influence from a slightly different perspective:

I was in the Movement when the Belgians arrived, and I was one of those who learned to cut diamonds. It was very interesting.

They brought their traditions with them and got along very well together, but I think that they did not have much in common with the youngsters who were already in Cuba. They brought many things, created an industry and thrived considerably, and I remember that at the time salaries were fabulous, in a way that had never before been seen in Cuba. At that age, 18 years old, one could be a millionaire by the end of a week! Many of my friends, young Cubans, learned to cut diamonds. What I remember is that there was not a Hashomer Hatzair meeting in which there was talk of Beitar. Hashomer Hatzair and Beitar were like oil and water.

Ben Zion (Benzi) Cherches and his wife Mina were active members of *Hashomer Hatzair* from a very young age, but did not make aliyah with their friends from the group until several years later. This stirs memories of the first moshava that remain etched into the collective memory, the framework of the community context, and which are analyzed with reference to it:

When the Belgians arrived in 1942, the first moshava was organized. It was a revolution in conservative thinking of the Jewish society at the time, and the Jewish boys and girls were sent to camp. The



parents were against it, the Jewish press fought against it with the narrowminded ethical mindset that could not conceive of leaving their children alone for three days. Those who participated in the experience, even more than half a century ago, rejoice in its memory. It began to give a distinct character to the Movement, and the summer camps were instituted and conducted annually, lasting for up to two weeks.

With the Belgians, Hashomer Hatzair strengthened ideologically. Its strong Zionist chalutziana orientation was felt in the Jewish community, making it the strongest youth movement.



Mens sana in corpore sano

Belgian influence was felt not only in *Hashomer Hatzair*. Obviously, not everybody identified with the Movement, and some contributed to the development of its eternal rival, *Beitar*. Their activities also went beyond youth frameworks, as already mentioned, and they contributed generously to the fundraising campaigns for Israel and in their early days on the island, created their own association, the Union of Jewish Refugees. But their action was not limited to the social and educational frameworks. They were also the promoters and originators of the diamond industry. Many young Jews were employed in its workshops, cutting and shaping diamonds for industrial use. In this way they could cover their own expenses and contribute to the family budget.

The occurrence of this previously unknown activity in Cuba was as brief as the Belgians' stay on the island and when they left in search of other places (some to Israel, others to Mexico, the United States and Venezuela), the diamond industry went with them. But the impression left on the Movement was profound and lasting. Unlike shooting stars whose brightness is intense but ephemeral, the feelings of identity and belonging that the Belgians had planted, grown and developed, remained solid and their fruits everlasting. In those unlucky years following his arrival in Cuba, Winston Churchill coined a phrase that would later be quoted for eternity, although in less dramatic and critical contexts, and which is also valid in this case: "Never has so much been owed by so many to so few."





Visit to the Ken by the President of the US
Zionist Union, Mr. Stone





CHAPTER IV: OH, THE MOSHAVOT!

How did I get to Hashomer Hatzair? I remember it well because it was traumatic. When it was time for the moshavot, Hashomer Hatzair published advertisements throughout the community so that people would send their children to the moshava, and there were all kinds of stories told about what they did there. In 1943, when I was 10, it was time for me to go to the moshava. I did not know what it was, and had no idea what Hashomer Hatzair was either, but my father, who was very active in the Zionist Federation (and later became chairman of KKL) told me: "Son, you must go to Hashomer Hatzair." Back then it was very common to send children to Hashomer Hatzair, but later this was not the case. Then, one day, my father told me: "You're going to the moshava". When the day came, I got myself as sick as I could and said: "I'm sick, I do not feel well, my stomach aches." I invented all sorts of excuses until they said to me: "Well, if you are sick you cannot travel."

I was glad. I was 'sick' until noon, and then I decided that it was enough and could be healthy. When I said: "I feel good", my father took my backpack, picked me up and we traveled to the moshava. I remember it like it was yesterday. My father had been

given directions, but he could not find the place. We got off the bus and from the pathway we started walking through the fields, until we came to a place near the machane. The farm was surrounded by a fence, and I well remember my father, wearing his town clothes, trying to crawl under the fence. I was young and had no problems doing it, but my father had to crawl. At that moment I thought: "Well, this is an opportunity not to go, because Dad will not get under the wire". But he did, and then he took me to the machane and left me there.

And so began my relationship with Hashomer Hatzair. After the moshava we were invited to go to the Movement on Friday, and we were told stories. Isaac Zilber was my first menahel in B'nei Midbar (at that time, the group was not yet called B'nei Metzada) and every weekend we met in the afternoon and they used to tell us stories chapter by chapter that kept us in suspense, in order for us to want to know what was coming next. Those were my first steps in the movement. Gedalia Loshinsky (Lotan)



There is no doubt that it this was a strange and unconventional way of starting a relationship that would become stronger and extend over an entire lifetime of active and enthusiastic participation, to the present day, a combination that managed to turn a trauma into a lesson for life. This recollection of this cheerful and nostalgic time, along with the many other testimonies collected, raise an inevitable question: What is the enchanting secret of the *moshava* ['colony' in Hebrew] or *machane* ['camp' in Hebrew], whose memories remain unchanged, clear and intense, after more than half a century? But even before this question arises there is another, no less predictable one: What is it and what is the *moshava* all about?

The literal definition of "summer camp" is well understood, but insufficient. Of course, summer camps are places for vacations where recreational, educational and sports activities take place. Since their inception, all the youth movements adopted the same model in which the senior members organized the camp making it operational for the younger members, allowing for the participation of different age groups from the same movement. At the same time, each group incorporated its own distinctive features and objectives.

The first camps that met these characteristics were developed in Europe during the mid-nineteenth century, when there was already a well-established middle class. The urbanization process accelerated as a result of the industrial revolution, generating, among other things, overcrowding and pollution that drove many families to seek opportunities for rural vacations for their children that would bring them together with nature with which they had lost almost all contact. The first of this new kind

of camp to be organized took place in the Swiss Alps, 1875.

Since their inception, all youth movements had adopted the same model in which the major groups organized the camp operations for the youngsters, facilitating the coexistence of different age groups of the same movement. At the same time, each group incorporated its own distinctive features and objectives.

The first Scouts camp was held in England in 1907. In addition, the German *Wandervögel* (wandering birds), youth movement organized trips, picnics and outings for its members who had, from the outset, developed a desire to distance themselves from the bourgeois patterns they considered rigid and conventional, and to get away from the monotony of urban life, looking for a more spiritual goal. The revolt against materialistic society and the romantic attachment to certain "rituals" such as evening meetings around a bonfire, accompanied by stories and songs, attracted Jewish and Zionist youth movements from the earliest days. They managed to combine principles and specific objectives with the already existing structures and patterns. One of the best examples of this is that of the *moshavot*.

Like the 'wandering birds', *Hashomer Hatzair* was born in Europe and went in other directions, When it reached Cuba, it retained its original spirit but was gradually incorporating local features. One of its greatest achievements was the creation of summer camps that lasted for a month, with the addition of shorter *moshavot* in winter (meaning the winter, such as it is, in the Caribbean, where the seasons are more related to the calendar than the weather).

The memories and experiences of the *moshavot* cover all aspects, from the organization and preparations of



the advance team through the transportation, activities, food and mishaps attributable to all sorts of events, not forgetting the visits of parents at the weekends, either to check that everything was running properly or to be with their children (mostly to organise meals). Let's take a look at the memories, in his own words, of one of its protagonists about his participation in the first *moshava*:

We were traveling in the train happy and singing, perhaps more than we would have been had it been time for our departure. One needs to feel the negative side of things in order to know how to enjoy the bright side. Thus it was that we reached Camp Florido very optimistic. Histadrut Hashomer Hatzair, Chazak Ve'ematz!

We walked in rows along the quaint village streets under the curious eyes of its inhabitants, and soon we arrived at the estate where the camp would be set up. The land where the camp was to be situated was located between small hills and nestled among several huge royal palm trees. A river bordered the estate on three sides, encircling it so that it formed the shape of a tip. In this section of the river there is a small waterfall, with wide sections and deep sections, and there is a continuously strong current that washed away a sports shoe from a boy belonging to shevet Asher, despite all the efforts made to salvage it. On the

banks of the river there are beautiful places including small forests with lofty palm trees, mice and water snakes.

Fifty yards from the camp there is a shack without proper walls, which had two small compartments. The kitchen has a cavity in the ground which is traversed by a few bars. Fire burns inside the cavity and pots are put on top of the bars. Isaac Zilber

The complete landscape description and careful enumeration of all its details paints a vivid and vibrant picture of an experience that for some was to be repeated every year; while for others, on the contrary, it was a one-off experience and perhaps precisely because of this, an indelible one:

In 1942 we had our first machane, that we named moshava in Camp Florido. I remember it as if it was yesterday. Once we kids got permission to travel (we were eleven years old), we were told what we needed to bring because there were no tents or anything organized. It was quite a story: In order to sleep we wrapped our clothes in newspapers and tied them with a rope and that is how we arrived at Camp Florido, which was a very nice place, as were all the camps in Cuba. We set out tarpaulins

to make the floor; everyone brought bales of straw and we made them into campbeds in the Ohel of the girls and boys so they could sleep at night. Then, over the straw, we would put a sheet that we had brought from home, and next to it, the newspapers with our clothes. That was the camp, and in addition we had a dining room.

When the weekend arrived, the committee was coming to see how we were doing. That Saturday there was heavy rainfall (that's what happens when it rains in Cuba) and suddenly the entire machane was flooded. There were no clothes, no straw, nothing. We were all soaked and our visitors were expected. What should we do? Some of the members of the hanhala ran to the nearest town to Camp Florido, where, they found an empty house and we were all driven there - poor souls, we were all soaked - to that roofed house, in order to stop us from getting even more wet. The next day the committee comprising Mr. Zilber, Mr. and Mrs. Luski and my mother was due to visit the machane. One of us, Bentzi Cherches, was burning with fever and another girl, Mita Goldsmidt, while crawling around, had gotten into a nest of fire ants and was bitten all over, but we were very happy. If you talk about Camp Florido to any of us who stayed there, they will tell, and will remember a song in French that was


taught by our madrich Ulu while walking:
"Un kilomètre à pied ça use, ça use, / Un kilomètre à pied ça use les souliers"
[A walking kilometer, wears, wears, / one walking kilometer, wears the shoes].
Clara Cohen (Galila Malchi)

At that time concepts in common use today, such as 'sexism' or 'equality of the sexes' were not yet in vogue, but the principle of equality between girls and boys was evident in the regular activities of the Movement in general, and the moshavot were not an exception to this rule. However, parents of some girls were more reluctant to let them participate in the camps. The separation from their families for such a long period, and coexistence between boys and girls did not seem appropriate to them. Some of the teenagers from those days still remember how, after many pleas and much insistence, their parents agreed to take them to the camp for the weekends, letting them remain there during the day and returning home with them at sunset. Needless to say, those fleeting visits became unforgettable experiences as pointed out by one of the youngsters, Sofia Rosenzwaig:

I wanted to go to the moshava and my parents would not let me. My oldest brother who was overprotective of me, convinced them. The second year my mother agreed to let me go for a weekend, but my brother stepped in at the last minute

and I did not go. Then, they took me on a Sunday to spend a day there. I saw how everything was happening and I found it very interesting and a lot of fun.

• M O S H A V A •



Por más que nos esforcemos sería difícil lograr a través de esta sección, que el lector ajeno a nuestro movimiento comprenda la magnitud de los alcances que se lograron en un Moshava. No queremos extender esta introducción determinando el sentido de esos "alcances"; pero es perfectamente entendible que tienen identificación con nuestra ideología. De ahí que sea más fácil lograr que el lector se vaya adentrando en nuestro campo ideológico, a través de estas páginas, que con el propósito de hacer de fácil lectura hemos fundamentado en material descriptivo.

Nos permitimos recomendar, con el propósito de fijar un punto de partida, que al leerlas, se tenga más bien en cuenta el factor "educación", que el factor "diversión".

PROGRAMA QUE TUVO EFECTO EN LA MAJANE DEL SEMINARIO (31-12-43/2-1-44)

<p>Primer día:</p> <p>Levantamiento de la majané carpa</p> <p>Construcción de la cocina y mesa Del luaj y Asta de la bandera, Servicio, etc.</p> <p>Sija Sobre Bialik</p> <p>Almuerzo</p> <p>Descanso</p> <p>Arreglo y terminación de los trabajos Sija. Sobre los métodos educacionales modernos</p> <p>Dos juegos acróuticos</p> <p>Cena</p> <p>Sija Bialik</p> <p>Programa artístico</p> <p>Oneg shabat</p> <p>Saludo a la bandera</p> <p>Designación de los guardias nocturnos.</p> <p>Segundo día:</p> <p>Gimnasia</p> <p>Lección de hebreo</p> <p>Canto</p> <p>Desayuno</p> <p>Búsqueda de leña</p> <p>Clave de Morse:</p> <p>Sija sobre Clave Morse y Juego acróutico</p> <p>Baño en el río</p> <p>Almuerzo</p> <p>Música de discos</p> <p>Sija sobre historia de la Pedagogía</p> <p>Juego acróutico</p> <p>Medurá Enoender la medurá</p> <p>Lectura</p>	<p>Música</p> <p>Tihul nocturno</p> <p>Saludo a la bandera.</p> <p>Tercer día.</p> <p>Gimnasia</p> <p>Desayuno</p> <p>Clase sobre Jiu-jitsu</p> <p>Primeros auxilios</p> <p>Diatado en clave de Morse</p> <p>Volley Ball</p> <p>Baño en el río</p> <p>Almuerzo</p> <p>Sija: sobre el futuro de la Organización. Proposiciones. Disensiones.</p> <p>Fin de la majané.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">•</p> <p style="text-align: center;">INSTANTANEA DE LA MAJANE DEL SEMINARIO</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Un Oneg Shabat en la Majané</p> <p>Son las siete de la noche. Todo es animación entre los shomrim. Hoy a las ocho, según el programa, dará comienzo el Oneg Shabat. Muchos hemos preparado artículos para darles lectura; y sobre todo tenemos una sorpresa: el periódico "viventente", que esta vez consta de dos secciones, "Apaga la vela" y "Chequedoque", el que mentira mete".</p> <p>Para la base de nuestro Oneg Shabat lo será una espléndida medurá. Todos salimos a buscar leña. Un compañero se encuentra con varias pajas de palma secas, y le ayudamos a recogerlas, pues, arden con facilidad.</p> <p>Se enciende la Medurá y las llamas, formando espirales, parecen alcanzar el cielo. En nues-</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Pasa a la Pag. 28</i></p>
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HASHOMER HATZAIR

The Moshava agenda

Once the *moshava* was organized, there were some jokes that were repeated with the new participants who were not aware of them. Isaac Chervony recalls without hiding the smile, that once everyone had gone to bed, the pranksters took the opportunity to paint some of their faces with coal, some had half their mustache shaved

while others had their pajamas sewed to the fabric of the bed, so that whoever was fast asleep would not be able to move when they awoke. And if we are speaking of sleeping beauties, there was no lack of occasions when they would take advantage of the proximity of the nearby river to take someone, sleeping together with his camp bed, and throw him into shallow waters.

The enthusiasm for the *moshava* was so great that it overcame all the problems and inconveniences, as graphically explained by Esther Crugliac Arber:

I was put to work in the kitchen, cooking for everyone and that helped me a lot in my life when I got married. On the Hershey's moshava the mosquitoes bit us all over, but we did not care. I did not care that my hands were sore and that my legs were all bitten by mosquitoes, because we always had a good time. The bites would disappear in a few days, but the good memories have stayed with me for life.

The lucky ones were "repeat offenders" who passed through the different levels of the organization. How could it be otherwise? Each *moshava* left its mark, whether it was a nostalgic, cheerful or injured one:



My first moshava was memorable. I remember being toran [shift manager] and I must have done it well because at the end of the day they wrote me a parody to the tune of the song 'I have a dairy cow'. I still remember some of the verses:

*To be a good toran
take the example of Bulbank
the great kitchen chef,
You should see how he walks!
Bulbank Bulbank, toran toran*

*These are the adventures
of the great kitchen chef,
who today is remembered
wrapped in mothballs.*

Years later, in another moshava, the chaverim had become tired of Hershey (a place) and found a place in Pinar del Río. The only bad thing was that to get to the river we had to go down about fifteen feet. We, the members of the advance group, arrived, and started to put up the tents and build the dining room, and then it started raining non-stop. Suddenly we didn't have to go down to the river, the river came up to us. I ordered everything

packed up, got on a bike and went into the village, several kilometers away, where I rented a truck, loaded it and left for the gardens at Hershey. As we traveled through Havana we phoned to say that we were not going to Pinar del Río but to Hershey. They thought it was a joke, but we were definitely not in joking mood.

In another moshava we decided to build a new chadar ochel (dining room) that could be assembled and taken apart. An architect who had been a member of the Movement, made the blueprints and I went to get prices for the materials we needed. After making our calculations were realized we were short of money, so we changed the plans of architect to match our budget and proceeded to build it according to my design. The columns were made of single metal bars instead of triple bars, and when the roof was added the columns buckled and we had to run to Santa Cruz del Norte to buy timber for the columns. As I remember it, the dining room continued to be built like that for many years. Israel Bulbank





Up and up....

The culinary aspect warrants a chapter of its own, from the establishment of the kitchen, to the organization of the work, the choice of menu and preparation of the meal. As with all the camps in all the movements, the food was not exactly *gourmet*, the cooks were less than aficionados of their art and the quantity and quality of the dishes that were served left much to be desired. With regard to washing the dishes, I would just mention that it was done in a nearby stream or the river, the same place where we bathed and washed our clothes (when they were washed). Fanny Averbuch recalls with a smile the stories of her late husband Ysrael Seinuk: On one occasion he was in charge of preparing lunch which included rice, but had

no idea how to do it. He only knew he had to cook it in water. Determined to fulfill his duty, he put all the rice in a pot, took the hose and sprayed it with water. Of course, the result was an indescribably sticky mess. Almost on the verge of desperation, he consulted his madrich, who found a quick solution: "Put some sugar on top and we will have rice pudding for dessert." And the milk? From personal experience, we all know that life throws us some questions that must go unanswered forever.

Speaking of desserts, there were certainly no shortages of them in the *moshava*. The father of one of the *Shomrim*, Jorge Stern, had a can processing plant; pineapples were especially popular, and at the weekends he traveled to the machane with a rich cargo of tins of pineapple, and other canned fruits that we all ate eagerly and joyfully, without even thinking of the flagrant contradiction between the principles of "natural" life that inspired the camp and the eating of tinned food. Many thanks for the generous support and bon appetite to one and all!

We should point out that the Parents' Committee aimed at supporting and assisting the young people in their various activities, was something that accompanied *Hashomer Hatzair* for many years. The Committee did not exist from the outset, but its creation was the result of the evolution of the Movement, and its presence in the moshavot, but not only in them, became significant in different ways.

As Jaime Brum said, "*Everything was etched in my memory, because everything we did was a great experience. There was no event, nothing that was not exciting and special.*" But it is hard to review a handful of memories in a few pages and describe those happy and carefree weeks that were so





meaningful to those of us who had the good fortune to live them. It reached its peak, which is undoubtedly the icing on the cake, when it came to the crowning glory of the *moshavot*: stealing the flag. Each group had its flag that flew proudly on its flagpole which was placed in a prominent location, and at night it was jealously guarded by the members of the group, to prevent members of other groups (or from other youth movements camping nearby) from coming stealthily by, grabbing it and exhibiting it as the spoils of war that required rescuing.

The ritual was repeated year after year, *moshava* after *moshava* and never lost its appeal. On the contrary, both sides were continually trying to sharpen their senses and improve the methods to achieve their goals (successful custody or triumphant theft, respectively). In the relatively short, but intense history of the Cuban Shomrim there were two episodes of flag theft that made history. The first took place back in the forties, when a group from the Beitar youth movement - the ancient *Hashomer Hatzair* rival - camping not far away, went out for the night, determined to capture the trophy that was the object of its attention. They had prepared long and hard and everything was meticulously planned and organized, but they went for wool and came back shorn. Or to be more precise, they did not return. The Beitaristas were prepared but the Shomrim were even more, and better prepared. Those who wanted to cause a surprise were surprised, and ended the adventure not only captured, but tied until daybreak, in shame and to the joy of the entire camp. Ah, how sweet is the taste of victory, and for how long do its fond memories last!

The second anecdote relating to the theft of a flag belongs to the later history of the Movement, in the aftermath of its

activity in Cuba. It took place in the last *moshava* and its development and outcome were totally different. Listen to it as recalled by one of the participants:

There was another moshava to which we went to steal the flag. The group of Rafi , Shoshana's brother, was in the machane, and we had come from Havana to steal the flag. It was night time and someone informed the authorities that a group of ten young people had got off a bus in the middle of nowhere. They immediately sent some soldiers to the spot. We went through the grove of trees to reach the camp from the back, not from where we were expected. Rafi, who was ambushed while waiting on the road used by the soldiers, saw shadows in the dark, and thinking that they were us, jumped up and shouted "Stop! You've been caught!" The soldiers opened fire and shot two or three rounds. Rafi surrendered immediately and the soldiers took the whole group to jail. There was a letter that we had sent saying that there would be a camp there, but to be on the safe side, they took us all away.

We were in the grove of trees, and when we heard the shots, everyone shouted: "Drop to ground! Nobody moves!" We were aged fifteen, the group was a little younger and the madrich was our age. We stayed there without moving until dawn. With the





first light of day we went to the machane and saw a camp-fire that was still burning and there were objects scattered around, but there was no one there. We all said: "They've all been killed!" We began to cry and imagine what had happened and think what we could do, when suddenly, we saw them coming, marching along the path and singing loudly. We asked them what had happened and the answer was: "We spent the night locked up until the officer who had our letter, arrived."

In summary, they spent a few hours in jail while we cried all night because we were sure that they had been killed, and the flag stayed in place, because we did not even go near it. Aaron Brum

For all this and much more, despite the precarious logistics, organizational difficulties, poor food and frequent mishaps, everyone joyfully recalls with excitement and gratitude those days of early adolescence, and the imprint they left on their future.



A day in the *Moshava*

To summarize, we go back to the first question: What is the enchanting secret of the moshava? We can look at it from various perspectives, and get different answers. On the one hand it was fun, entertaining, and got us out of the daily routine. We can add the ongoing activity and spirit of adventure. No less important was the development of a sense of responsibility and self-management abilities and independence (relative, but at least independence to a degree) from parental supervision, for at least a few weeks. For the Movement it meant a special opportunity to reinforce the lessons and values taught at the ken about deepening the spirit of brotherhood and coexistence, cooperation and mutual assistance.





CHAPTER V: IN THE SHADOW OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Havana, October 16, 1939

To the *Hanhaga Rashit*

North America

Chazak!

Dear Brothers:

We are writing to you following a period during which we have not been in contact with each other. We do not know the reasons why there has been no correspondence, but we are the first to resume it.

First, we want to know how you are and how your work is progressing. Please write back telling us what happened to the members of the *Hanhaga Eliona* in Warsaw. Where are they now?

Please respond promptly.

Chazak ve'ematz!

Mazkirut Hahanhaga

Jaime Falikson

New York, October 28, 1939

To our Organization in Cuba

Havana

Chazak!

Today we received your letter dated October 16 of this year, and we hasten to answer.

We feel a crucial need to preserve the links between the countries in North and South America and this is why we have always responded. Even now we find it difficult to understand why you mention that you have not received any answers from us.

Unfortunately, we have no news of what is happening to our Movement in Poland. The *Hanhaga* no longer exists there. Apparently there is a section of the *Hanhaga Eliona* in London, which will be run by M. Orenstein, who is going there in the next few days. He is currently in Paris trying to establish contacts with all the countries of the Diaspora.

We would like to maintain contact with the Movement throughout South America. Maybe you can help us by sending their addresses as we have none.

We again request that you write to us more often, not just a few words but give us the whole picture of your working conditions, the work itself and the size of the Movement, etc. We are very interested in all this, and again please let us have all the addresses.

Chazak ve'ematz!

Hahanhaga Harashit



Havana, Tuesday, October 31, 1939

To the *Hanhaga Rashit*

North America

Chazak!

Dear Brothers:

We confirm receipt of your letter, to which we wish to answer as follows:

We have recently received a letter from Orenstein, located in Paris, telling us about his work there.

Our work here in Cuba, is expanding. Many brothers who had left our ranks have returned to them because they could not find a more appropriate place. We conduct our activities in Yiddish because we cannot do so in Hebrew. There are some of us who speak the language but it is a very small percentage.

We have no addresses for the countries in the South.

We await your response,

Greeting from the workers in Eretz Israel,

Mazkirut Hahanhaga

Jaime Falikson

December 13, 1939

To the Management of the ken

Havana

Chazak!

Before the destruction of the Republic of Poland, the Hanhaga Eliona relocated to Eretz Israel. Therefore they had to keep in touch with us. It has been many months since we heard from you or about what it is happening in your ken. The JNF has also received no news about what you are doing on its behalf.

We ask that as soon as you receive this letter, you send us news about your activities, and write to the *KKL* about your work for both funds. From now on we will send you all the material we publish in Israel

Chazak ve'ematz!

Hahanhaga Haeliona

A letter to the Office of the *KKL* in Cuba is attached





The first reading of these letters gives the impression of an almost routine and to some extent, bureaucratic exchange of letters where the conventional phrases seem to occupy a more prominent place than the important and interesting content. However, an approach from another angle allows a second reading of these texts as x-rays, in which the seemingly indefinite shapes appear with different and significant dimensions. Reading them in depth reveals a group of interrelated subjects against the backdrop of the dramatic circumstances of that fateful year.

The movement in Cuba was constantly looking for ways to keep open the lines of communication, both with management in New York (its most direct and closest contact) and the *Hanhaga Eliona* in Warsaw. Today, more than six decades on, it may be surprising that the American *Hanhaga* not only lacked reliable and timely data, but also had to revert to the small movement on the island for more information and maintain contacts the with countries in Latin America. The subtle comments about the letters went unanswered revealing the true desire and the pressing need for an ongoing connection, exchange of opinions and suggestions, and the sending of printed materials, etc. But that's not all. At the same time they are a true reflection of what was happening at the time across the ocean. The uncertainty about what happened to the leaders of the worldwide movement based in Warsaw was a particular concern, based on the obvious difficulties relating to normal functioning of mail and the increasingly distressing restrictions on the Jews trying to leave Nazi occupied Europe.

It should be noted that those who managed to get out did not find many hosting ports. The terrible boat ordeal of the

St. Louis was very fresh in the memory of the Jews in Cuba as they remembered how, at the end of May 1939, the boat had reached the port of Havana with more than 900 Jewish refugees on board, who were not allowed to disembark. Maria Kaplan Papir, who joined the Movement in her teens, vividly recalls the turmoil that rocked the Jewish community in those days. Rafael Kier has not forgotten it either. He was then a child who remembers the following image:

When the St. Louis arrived, my father was an activist in the community and raising money to try to pay the government so that they would let the passengers disembark. For several days I had been taken to the port and there I was able to talk to the passengers.

After many procedures, requests and attempts to find a satisfactory solution, only 29 passengers managed to enter Cuban territory as the ship was ordered to sail again with everyone else still on board. For reasons related to the domestic and foreign policy of Cuba, the United States and Canada, the St. Louis sailed from one port to another until it had no choice and was forced to return to Europe. The sad result was that more than three quarters of its refugees perished in the Holocaust.

The history of the boat, its adventures and the tragic end to its journey was made famous thanks by the novel written by Max Gordon Witts and Gordon Thomas *The Voyage of the Damned*, and even more so by the Oscar-winning film of the same name, in 1976.





The youth of the Cuban movement was aware of what was happening in Europe. Many of its members had first degree relatives in the "Old World" and on top of their personal anguish they were also concerned for the fate that might befall the *Yishuv* in Eretz Israel. In a 1939 issue of the Movement publication *Iton Kovshim*, the Cuban *Shomrim* reviewed a piece from the diary of a Polish *Shomer*, which describes the occupation of Poland, the status of the Movement in particular and Jews in general.

Crossing the Border

"Crossing the border" is a page torn from the diary of the Shomer Jone, from Poland. His diary begins with his entry into the Polish army in 1939. It gives us a detailed portrait of the internal discipline of the Polish Army and the ridicule to which the Jewish soldiers were subjected, and of the invasion of Poland by the Germans in September 1939. The Polish soldiers wanted to continue fighting but were forced to surrender by orders from above after some minor battles. No sooner had they surrendered than the Poles and Germans united in a struggle against the Jews. When he finally left the army and returned to Warsaw the city was in ruins. He returned to his village and found out that the Germans, with impunity, had first taken over the Jewish property, then forced the Jews to work and finally

murdered all of them. After his father was killed in cold blood, the ken was dissolved, the family disbanded and Jone went east with hope but he did not know what that hope was for.

At that time, there were brief glimpses of the underground movement, which is the one Jone finally met up with. We can see how he was assigned an important task and how he did the job. We discovered, through the testimony of Miguel, what happened to the flag of Hashomer Hatzair of Warsaw (the main one from our Movement in the galut) and how Shmuel, who fled with it, perished, while demanding a ransom at that same time...

The diary, dated Lida, November 1939 (a city that under the successive sovereignty of Lithuania, Russia and Poland, and actually Belarus), condensed into a few lines the most significant historical events of the time: the German invasion of Poland and the Polish surrender; and the collaboration between the Germans and the Polish against the Jews; looting, forced labor and killings; the destruction of any existing family and social frameworks and the underground resistance.

Unlike what had happened elsewhere, the Movement's activities in Cuba were not interrupted during the war years. What is more, they were bolstered with the arrival of the Belgian immigrants whose influence was short but deeply significant, and has already been referred to in another



chapter. These activities included the most common ones, such as the *Oneg Shabbat* (traditional meetings on weekends), excursions and *moshavot*, and other less conventional activities, such as the radio program hosted at different times by members of the Movement. The Archive has preserved a letter dated February 02, 1940 (in English), that the Movement in the US sent to a potential sponsor, to advertise its business in the radio program:

Enclosed is a letter sent from our representative in Cuba in reference to the advertising of your products in a radio program broadcast in Yiddish for the Jewish community of Cuba, by the Cuban branch of our Organization

That was not the only letter preserved in English. Nathan Wallach, a former member of the *ken* of the Borough Park neighborhood (whose residents tend to call it "Boro Park"), traveled to Cuba, visited the Havana *ken* and on June 20, 1940 wrote to his fellow Americans to convey his impressions of the *Shomrim* on the island

I cannot explain in detail the exact meaning of this, but my visit to the Cuban ken has prompted and encouraged me enough to write a few words, though I'm pretty sure that I will not be taken seriously. In Havana there is much more than wonderful youth; there are also many older supporters. The ken is rather small

but flourishes as much as anyone could want. The menaholim and the entire ken in general work in harmony, considering the situation they are up against. Anyway, the only purpose of this letter is to ask you to provide them with more help. All have voiced their complaints and I see them as justified.

A Hebrew proverb states that "a casual visitor can always see what is wrong". In this instance, I would introduce a slight modification to make it applicable to the situation described: "An outsider's visit is the first one where what's good will be seen."

But from within the positive aspects were perceived, as explained by Saul Srebnick:

I joined Hashomer Hatzair in 1941, as I was about to turn eight years old, and in Cuba we knew the effects of Nazism in Europe. I went the first time because I was curious, and my madrich was Benzy Cherches. I also remember Bistritzky very well. He had gray, disheveled hair and we sang 'Lebn zol zain Bistritzky mit zain hora!' ('Hail to Bistritzky and his hora!') to him. What attracted me more was being in touch with my friends and my Judaism. Part of my character was formed by Hashomer Hatzair, including helping



others, something I saw much of when we went on tiyulim. There I shared everything and I learned the importance of being part of a movement where everyone was equal.



As we have already noted, in those difficult years the Movement in Cuba managed to integrate its three focal points: current activities in Cuba, concern for the Holocaust of the Jews in Europe and contact with the *Yishuv* in Israel, which fulfilled the Zionists ideals. A short list will clearly illustrate this statement:

- On November 8, 1941 an event celebrating the eighth anniversary of the Movement in Cuba, was held at the headquarters of the Jewish Center. The invitation, written in Spanish and Yiddish, mentions the "huge program" and notes that *Hashomer Hatzair* is the "largest and oldest" national and educational youth organization.

- On March 10, 1943 the tenth anniversary of the movement, a ceremony attended by the writer Leib Yaffeh, director of *Keren Hayesod* in Israel, who was visiting Latin America, was held in the hall located at Prado 609.

- In the same month a new ken of *Hashomer Hatzair* was established in Camagüey (Cuba's third largest city, about 500 km from Havana). The sibling movement in Mexico believes that "our Movement is attracting more followers

every day; youth with the need to fight for a homeland for the future," and sends a warm greeting "on taking this huge step towards Zionism."

- In the copy of *Hashomer Hatzair* magazine dedicated to *Rosh Hashanah* 57Apr (1943-1944), B. Yoine of Gdud Trumpeldor, published a poem entitled "The Dead are looking at Us", whose last verse proclaims:

*To the dead Jews
in Old Europe
we answer thus:
Rest on your
eternal thrones,
that in the green orchards
of the new Eretz Israel
and in all countries
where people are free
there will be happy people
serene and courageous
who together shall contribute
to the return home.*





- On December 10, 1943 Jewish youth were invited to an Oneg Shabbat in the halls of the Zionist Union, which was led by Natan Bistrizky, special emissary of the KKL in Latin America, writer, journalist and charismatic speaker who would leave his mark on the Jewish youth movements and Jewish communities across the continent through the publication of educational and literary material, and the establishment of schools and hachsharot, etc.

- That same month, the Hebrew language magazine of *Hashomer Hatzair* published a welcome to Bistrizky and Tanchum Berman, the "two dear companions who bring greetings from Israel", and a letter in the handwriting of Bistrizky, aimed at the "*Shomrim* of Havana, the youngest of the family" and wishing them, in the purest shómric style, "reinforcement of their self-examination and self-fulfillment."

- At the end of 1943, the magazine *De nosotros* (About Us) published an article by Solomon G. (Gdud Trumpeldor) about the JNF, which he defined as a "powerful weapon to repossess our Land" and, among other ideas, expressed

his position regarding the reality being lived by the Jewish people:

Even in the midst of this bloody war we must move forward, not being intimidated by every obstacle that comes our way, but using all available forces, and each year there are more of them, to fight in order to reach our goal, which is Palestine.

The Jewish People should be more united than each individual's struggle for his own ideals, and American Jewry even more, because they are the most ready to fight, since the Nazi beast has claimed thousands of human souls in Europe.



Cultural film soiree

- The *Moshava* magazine published in March 1944, focuses on the content and activities of the recent camp conducted by the Movement in Cuba, and intersperses some notes on other topics such as the following narrative which speaks for itself:

There remained only a solid four-story building. It housed the last Chalutzim who remained alive. Around it, gathering with stealth and care and in large numbers, was a group of Germans. On the roof we could view the fluttering of a blue and white flag. The Germans fought eight hours for this last building. They paid an exorbitant price for every inch of it. They threw grenades over their own men, and then rushed en-masse over the bodies of their fallen comrades. Inside the building, on the ground floor, the Jewish martyrs fought hand to hand. They had lost all attachment to their own life, they were not fighting for it, but for an ideal that united them - to add dignity to a page in the history of the Jewish People.

- A report (unsigned and in Spanish) posted on November 14, 1944 to the Department of Youth of the World Zionist Organization in Jerusalem, following a brief visit to Cuba, mentions several interesting facts:

The most important active Zionist youth group in Cuba is Hashomer Hatzair. Its program is the same as the Hashomer Hatzair program of other countries, as is its working system.

Hashomer Hatzair is the main arm of the KKL in Havana. The Shomrim are working to raise funds for the JNF at all their parties and events, visiting houses where family events are being held, to empty the charity boxes.

A very important occurrence by Hashomer Hatzair is the one hour daily radio broadcast aired between 19:00 to 20:00 hours, which is very useful for Zionist propaganda in the capital (transmissions are not heard in the provinces).

Another successful initiative of Hashomer Hatzair in Havana has been to try and form Zionist youth groups in some of the towns in which Jews live in Cuba. That is how some of the small youth societies have seen the light thanks to the influence of Hashomer Hatzair, among them Camagüey, Santa Clara, Santiago de Cuba, Guantanamo. These groups have been formed thanks to the visits made by Havana Shomrim to some of the provinces. Those from Havana maintain a degree of contact with the provinces.



I was 12 or 13 years old and remember the people of Hashomer Hatzair who had come from Havana to Camagüey. The youngsters would meet at the Jewish Center in Camagüey [Centro Israelita de Camagüey] and we tried to get the parents to join us. We made a moshava on the farm of one of the members of the synagogue and were taught many things about Hashomer Hatzair. We liked the idea of meeting as it was a social thing. We went to the Jewish Center, played ball and carried out various activities, but it was very brief, lasting one or two years and suddenly it was all over.



At that time, Jack Delaster was a kid, but he recounts his journey through the Movement from a mature and reflective viewpoint :

"The history of the Jews usually has sad overtones, but this was one of the most beautiful times of my life."

To graphically summarize the years of World War II, let us draw an imaginary line joining the three initiatives mentioned above: the activities in Cuba, the situation in Europe and the contact with Israel. This forms a triangle that represents the activities of *Hashomer Hatzair* in Cuba, emphasizing the basic principles of Zionism, fraternity and solidarity, and transforming the biblical statement into solid actions: "If somebody can prevail against a person who acts alone, two will withstand. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken." (Ecclesiastes 4:12). No wonder Solomon, who is credited with having written the Book of Ecclesiastes, and was nicknamed 'the wise king' said that if you are alone you are vulnerable, if there are two of you, you can better defend yourselves, but a group of three make up a strong unit.



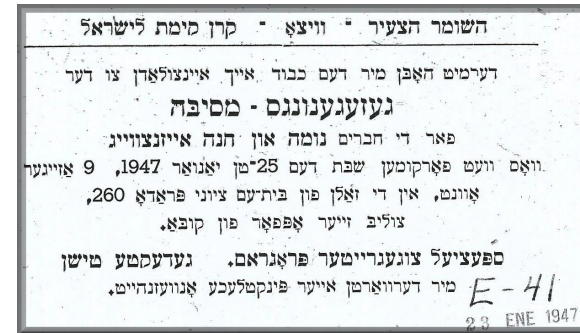


CHAPTER VI: JANUS IN HAVANA

In Roman mythology, Janus was characterized by the uniqueness of having two faces looking in opposite directions. Due to this feature he enjoyed the status of 'the god of doors, beginnings and endings', and that was the reason the first month of the year was named after him (Januarius in Latin, which became January in English). Traditionally, he was credited as being an omen for good endings. This chapter will attempt to demonstrate that oddly enough, Janus traversed time and distance arriving from ancient Rome to the ken at Hashomer Hatzair in Cuba, and remained there for some years effusing his beneficent glow.

The years between the end of World War II and the creation of the State of Israel were a short but intense period for the Jewish People, which can be summarized into a concise and illustrative sentence: From destruction to reconstruction. What is more, the Movement on the island reflected the dramatic events of the time and continued to advance and develop along the same lines of the three points mentioned in the previous chapter: the activities in Cuba, the situation in Europe and contacts with Israel.

Proof of this can be found in the farewell evening organized jointly by *Hashomer Hatzair*, WIZO and KKL, which took place on January 25, 1947 in the hall at 260 Prado, in honor of Jana and Numa Eisenzweig one of the legendary "Belgian couples" who had contributed to the flourishing of the movement and had been the driving force of the Israel Fair, an event held at the Hotel Nacional by *Hashomer Hatzair* which also enjoyed the cooperation of WIZO. As usual, the chanichim of the Movement actively participated in the preparation and running of the fair.



Numa Eisenzweig farewell

Regarding the specific activities of the youth movement, it should be noted that its facets had two characteristics: everyone continued with redoubled vigor, and their drive expanded, deepened and diversified. On the one hand, the ongoing tradition of short trips (the aforementioned *tiyulim*) and camps (the unforgettable *moshavot*) continued, always similar but refreshing the same unique experiences, daring and naive antics and at the same time, the same boundless enthusiasm.

As was traditional in the Movement, the parents of the *chanichim* had an active participation in it, either raising funds or organizing events, as summarized by Oscar Baisman in a few words:

Our parents were very active, and they held meetings, to which they invited many speakers. On the day of the creation of the State everyone went to Beth Am to go out into the streets, to sing and cry together.



On the other hand intellectual development was flourishing . Like many of his colleagues at that time, Ricardo Wilkovski retains vivid memories of the discussions they held, the books they read, and the deep dialogs and lectures about Israel, the *kibbutz*, the Jewish People and other subjects that caught his attention. On the other hand, cultural activities flourished and spread like a fanned flame and included literature soirées, music and film evenings, a series of lectures open to the community, the celebration of Jewish holidays, publication of the *Iton* (newspaper) of the Movement, the staging of plays and so on.

This liking for cultural activities stands out as the legacy mentioned in the previous paragraph due to two "foreign" influences. First, the Belgian immigrants to whom we have already referred, who despite their short time on the island, left a deep imprint on the community and on the Movement, and second, the already mentioned visits of the emissaries Leib Yaffe and Natan Bistrizky, who arrived from Israel.

Bistrizky and his activities in Latin America deserve a separate paragraph.

Born in 1896 in Zvenigorodka, Ukraine, he made aliyah in 1920 and died in Jerusalem in 1980. He made aliyah in 1920 and was among the founders of Beit Alfa, the first *kibbutz* of the Movement, whose experiences are portrayed in the testimonial volume of *Kehiliatenu* ("Our commune") and the autobiographical novel *Yamim Veleilot* (Days and Nights). In his writings, which focused on the heroic pioneers of the first aliyot, he introduced the idea that the individual fulfills himself through the group and the group helps everyone to move away from being small-minded. In addition to novels, plays and essays, his literary output includes the

translation into Hebrew of *The Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote of La Mancha* by Miguel de Cervantes.

Bistrizky worked for 30 years in the headquarters of the Jewish National Fund (*KKL*) in Israel. Before World War II he often visited Europe as an emissary of the institution, primarily to promote its objectives and Zionist ideology in general. When the war broke out and he was unable to continue, he traveled to Latin America and stayed there from December 1941 until June 1946. Although he was operating out of an office in Buenos Aires, he also visited Chile, Mexico, Cuba, Colombia, Peru and other countries.

Bistrizky firmly believed that the *KKL* should not just raise funds, but rather should be integrated so that it could operate inside the communities. Moreover, he stressed the importance of culture and emphasized the centrality of Jewish Zionist education. He demonstrated great energy in all the countries he visited and advocated cooperation between the various community bodies, organizing activities for leaders of all the youth movements, promoting the creation of *hachsharot* (farms for agricultural training) and achieving a significant increase in *KKL* income and generating a positive change in the attitude of many Cuban Jews to Zionism.

He remained in Cuba for several months, promoting the creation of the "pro-Palestine Jewish Committee" which represented all spectrums of the community as well as the strengthening of political relations with the Cuban government. This is evidenced by a letter dated January 29, 1947, sent to Sender Kaplan and Jaime Falikson of the Zionist Union by the Vice President of the Senate of the Republic, Juan Marinello, which states: "I received your letter dated 19th of this month and also the very interesting one from





Mr. Natan Bistrizky, for delivery of which please accept my thanks." Like the charismatic emissary of the KKL, Marinello was also a multifaceted man, an outstanding intellectual and professor, a leader of university reform, communist militant and candidate for the presidency of the Republic, a journalist and editor of several publications, and a member of international organizations such as UNESCO (United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization).

While in Cuba, Bistrizky maintained more contact with adults from the central authorities than with the youth of the Movement and his stay on the island also left its mark on the ken, whose members continued to participate closely in the KKL activities, either in the organization of community events, or in the collection of money placed in the classic blue collection boxes and other events.



In early 1946 Chaya Feigin, a *shlich*a, came to Havana from Eretz Israel to work with the Movement. On March 27 she sent a letter to the *Hanhaga Eliona* detailing her planned activities:

We are planning an evening of remembrance of the ghetto fighters and we have prepared a program of activities for the Tzofim, which I have had to reorganize, working with the menahalim and Tzofim Bogrim. We have to invest much effort in Tzofim Benonim which consist of 30 girls and boys with only one menahel who, for a time have

been banished. Now they are organized into three groups with two menahalim and a menahelet. In addition, we are working with the other Zionist institutions, KKL and the Board of Trustees (Patronato), organizing Hebrew classes and we hope soon to start a seminar before the moshava. Later in the autumn, we will work on another more intensive seminar.

The *Hashomer Hatzair* activities were diversified, but the youngsters were always willing to pursue new horizons and also knew how to set clear limits. A curious and certainly unconventional episode illustrated this, leaving nothing to doubt. That same month, in January 1947, the Zionist Union received another letter. This time it was not from a national entity and not related to the Jews on the island, but from the Sephardi community association "*Shevet Achim Hebrew Union*", which relayed an unusual invitation. The leaders of the institution had been summoned to a meeting of the Tourism Advisory Committee (created by the mayor) to participate in the carnival festivities, which included "parades, floats, marching bands and finally, the Queen of the Carnival". The idea behind these celebrations was that "foreign societies should attend with their traditional dress, music, etc."

What can a Jewish group do in a parade? The recipients of the invitation posed the problem and sought a solution:





Our representative who attended, explained the difficulty of participating in such a festival, since it raised the question of what our costumes are? Which music is our music?, etc.

Given the difficulty this directive brought, it was felt that there was nothing more appropriate in the Jewish sector than for the group of the Zionist Union the prestigious HASHOMER HATZAIR [the added emphasis is mine, I.S.], to represent it in the required typical manner, meaning that the youth sector would be well prepared, since they surely knew how to go about it, provided they took it seriously.

Neither *Hashomer Hatzair* nor the Zionist Union responded to that letter, as is shown by a second letter sent two weeks later:

"We politely request that you inform us whether your Hashomer youth are willing to cooperate in the direction indicated, so that we can respond to the mayor."

It was time for the *Shomrim* to set out their position, which they did, clearly and unequivocally. In a letter dated February 26, 1947, the Zionist Union responded to the request made by Shevet Achim:

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"We have spoken with the leader of Hashomer Hatzair, who informed us that the members of his organization are unable to participate in the carnival festivities."

One might ask to what this inability was due. The *Shomrim*, lovers of world literature, good music and

teaching conferences, did not reject entertainment and traditional dancing. Indeed, the files of the Movement show that *Hashomer Hatzair* held annual holiday costume parties, with music and the selection of pageant queens. But therein lies the crux of the matter: these were not carnival celebrations, but those of Purim. A seemingly small change, but one which made a world of difference.



The postwar years also involved an important new activity for the Movement. In addition to all its noted activities we should add one that involved a step on the path of fulfillment of Zionism; participation in *hachshara*, an agricultural training farm that taught members of the pioneering youth movements to bring Zionist ideals to fruition in a *kibbutz* setting. Aliyah to Palestine was still closed at that time to the Jews of the Diaspora, and the few 'certificates' issued by the British Mandate were distributed mainly among survivors of the Holocaust. However, the young people were preparing for the arrival of the awaited moment that aliyah would become free and unrestricted.





At that time there were no possibilities to create a hachshara program in Cuba (nor would there be in the future), but as we know, the intrepid *Shomrim* were not to be discouraged by adverse circumstances. A well-known proverb states that when one door closes, another opens. Again, the Caribbean *Shomrim* learned to seek an alternative. The magazine *De nuestras actividades* [About Our Activities], published in December 1945 - January 1946, announced it with unconcealed satisfaction and pride:

Hachshara

In the month of February the first group of bogrim will leave for Mexico, in order to complete their hachshara together with the Mexican Shomrim. The remainder will follow them during the next month. Thus we will establish the precedent and tradition needed to effectively consolidate the pioneering character of our Movement.

Mexico was just a station on the way to hachshara of the sibling movement in the United States, which also took in the *Shomrim* from Canada, a passage that was neither easy nor smooth. Difficulties in obtaining US visas delayed the departure of several *Shomrim*, as evidenced in an intense exchange of letters between the Movement in Cuba and the *Hanhaga Rashit* in New York. Due to the delays and bureaucratic problems with this stumbling block, they sometimes resorted to other global Jewish institutions such as the World Jewish Congress, for help (not always

successfully). Another difficulty was the lack of funds to cover the costs of travel, meals, etc. and in these cases letters crossed the seas to reach the headquarters of the *Hanhaga Eliona* at Kibbutz Merhaviva and the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem. Also, in these cases the waiting periods were too long and the answers less than satisfactory. One concludes that during those years the central authorities were fated to solve other more urgent problems, which monopolized most of their attention and preoccupation. On the other hand, the *Hanhaga Rashit* in the United States also appeared somewhat reluctant, as evidenced by a letter (in English) dated January 12, 1947 to Havana from the *hechalutz* farm in Hightstown, New Jersey:

The hachshara group discussed the issue of the 9-10 Cuban Shomrim who wanted to come and do their hachshara. We are not able to receive ten Cubans at the farm at this time, for the following reason: Ten people from a totally different background to the rest of us, who speak Spanish or Yiddish (which is unspoken by some of us and unfamiliar to many) would result in an unsatisfactory collective farm life generating a tendency to segregate into closed groups

However, with their well-known persistence and admirable and well understood perseverance, the *Shomrim* from Havana did not abandon their attempt and their efforts finally bore fruit. We will make further mention of the





young Cubans who came to the *hachshara* in Hightstown in the next chapter.



Another noteworthy point that characterizes *Hashomer Hatzair* in Cuba, was its fluent and permanent interaction with the various echelons of the organized community. Unlike what happened in other countries, where the young *Shomrim* often lived in conflict and confrontation with the institutions of the 'adults', in Havana they managed to find a *modus vivendi* that allowed them to maintain their values and principles without making concessions, and without tiring inter-community confrontations, as demonstrated by the numerous letters exchanged between *Hashomer Hatzair* on the one side, and the Zionist Union, KKL, *Keren Hayesod*, *WIZO*, etc. on the other. While mentioning these other institutions, we will make a minor digression to cite some of the texts appearing on letterheads of these organizations, indicative of the times we were living in (the eve of the creation of the State of Israel) and the identification of Cuban Jewry with Zionist ideals:

The Zionist Union of Cuba stated: "The aim of Zionism is to establish the Jewish National Home in Palestine, recognized as a national right." Meanwhile, the pro-*Histadrut* Committee stated: "Affiliated with the *Histadrut* in *Eretz Israel* (Palestine). They will come, build, and defend". And the KKL stated that: "Redeeming the land ensures the existence of the Jewish national homeland."

Then, there was another no less relevant digression; the KKL issued a series of "postage stamps" with portraits of prominent Jewish personalities in Jewish and Zionist affairs,

such as Menahem Ussishkin (1863-1941, a Zionist leader and member of the BILU and *Hovevei Zion* movements, who was president of KKL in Israel for 17 years); Mordechai Anilevich (Vishkov, Poland 1919 - Warsaw, Poland 1943, a member of *Hashomer Hatzair* in Poland, commander of the Jewish Fighters' Organization in the Warsaw Ghetto and leader of the uprising there); Haviva Reich (Nadabula, Eslovaquia 1914 - Eslovaquia 1944, member of the Jews from Palestine parachutist group sent into occupied Europe) and others. On top of these stamps were added those of the "*Keren Hashomer*" reproducing landscapes and Israeli youth movement-related activities.



The *Hashomer Hatzair* interaction with other entities and organizations was not confined to Cuba. We have already mentioned the flowing contacts with the Movement in the United States, and added to these were relations with the *Hanhaga Eliona* in Merhavia and the Jewish Agency and the *Keren Kayemet* in Jerusalem.

Special mention should be made of contact with the Latin American department of the *Hanhaga Eliona*, which operated for a short time from *Kibbutz Negba*. A large Latin American *garin* came from *Hashomer Hatzair* in Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Mexico. They had joined the *kibbutz* in pre-statehood years, remaining there until 1949, participating in the War of Independence and resisting the prolonged siege and the Egyptians attacks, together with the founding group of the *kibbutz*. In spite of this, they found the time, willingness and interest to maintain contact with the movements in Latin America in general and Cuba in particular. The first letter sent was dated July 10, 1946:





We have been meaning to contact you for a long time, but for reasons beyond our control we have been unable to do so until now. Therefore, in sending you this first letter we do so in the hope that the contact we are establishing today will prove to be the beginning of a fruitful relationship that will benefit our common desire to see a large, strong and productive Shomrim movement on this continent. That's all for now. We await your news, I send you greetings on behalf of the Argentinian Garin. Chazak ve'ematz!

Just over two years later, from the newly established State of Israel, came another significant letter, mentioning the two important elements of the relationship: the difficult reality that existed in Israel in those critical months and the desire to contribute to the activities of the Movement in Cuba:

Negba, October 25, 1948

After a long silence from the Latin American department, due to abnormal conditions caused by the war situation in the country ...

We hope that you are in possession of the latest shipments of materials posted, comprising Iton Chayeinu dedicated to the passing of our colleagues Mordechai

Wajnerman [a member of the garin from Argentina, who traveled in 1945 with the group that received the first 10 aliyah certificates delivered to pioneering olim from Latin America after the war], and Jacob Guenesin [a Chilean group member who died while trying to defuse a mine], and the newsletter Kidma from last September.

The extensive network of relationships established by *Hashomer Hatzair* in Cuba is also evident in the variety of languages used in the letters and documents: Spanish and Yiddish within the Cuban community; English and Hebrew in communications with the *Hanhaga Rashit* in the United States; Spanish, Yiddish and Hebrew with the Latin American Department of the *Hanhaga Eliona*; Yiddish, Hebrew and English for the contacts with non *chalutz* Jewish institutions worldwide. The French philosopher and psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan exhaustively researched and wrote extensively about the relationship between thought and language; the linguistic diversity of the Cuban-*shomrim*, who in those years had not heard of the theories that decades later would dominate Western thinking – and reflected the breadth of his thinking and openness to the Jewish world beyond the confines of their immediate environment.





an example we mention just two of them:

In May 1947, the Youth Committee of the Jewish National Fund, the Youth Club of the Zionist Union and *Hashomer Hatzair* issued a joint invitation to an event on "Clarification on the latest developments in our native home Eretz Israel (Palestine)", which took place on 14th of that month in the Zionist Union hall.

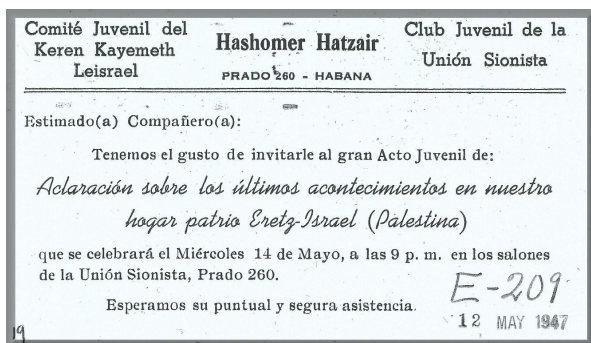
As we have already seen, events in Israel played their part in the thinking and actions of the Movement in Havana. As

we, the youth of America, Eretz Israel and other countries, would continue to chart the path of our history. Here in Hashomer Hatzair, we continue to repay our debt.

During a period where they died heroically, what encouraged our colleagues was that

The review of the proposed activities is extensive:

We learn songs that have been sung for centuries by our ancestors in Palestine. We talk about the history of our nation, its past and present. We have cultural lectures about scouting and general culture. We also restore to our hearts the true meaning of the Sabbath.



COPY OF THE INVITATION

The magazine of the Movement published in November 1947 includes an article by Abel H. (*Shevet Binyamin*), entitled "From a *tzofe* to a young Jew." This open letter addressed to a 'dear friend' is a poignant and moving call to participate in the activities of the Movement, which begins with a rhetorical question: "Of course you will not remember our debt to the Jews of Europe who were killed at different times and in different places?" The unexpected response, appeared several paragraphs later:

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The date of this publication (November 1947) marks the final phase of the transition. On November 29, 1947 the historic vote at the General Assembly of the United Nations took place in New York, in which Resolution No. 181 was approved, sanctioning the resolution of the conflict between Jews and Arabs in Palestine (at that time under the British Mandate) and the partition of the territory into two states, one Jewish and one Arab, with Jerusalem and Bethlehem under international control. At that time, 57 countries were members of the United Nations, and the 20





countries of Latin America constituted the majority bloc. Their votes were distributed as follows: 13 countries in favor of the resolution, with 6 abstentions and only one vote (Cuba) against.

The teenagers of the time recall, to this day, the intense emotion of those historic days. When the outcome of the vote was known, many members of the community spontaneously arrived at the headquarters of the Zionist Union to share the joy, and this was not restricted only to the youngest of them who danced (Israeli dances, of course) in the street, late into the night.

Despite coming from a religious family, the siblings Esther, Israel and Cecilia Bulbank were active members of *Hashomer Hatzair*. Esther remembers it like yesterday when her family gathered around their radio, awaiting the vote. The years that have passed since then have made no impression on the intensity of the memories, and the emotion of that period is revealed in the vivid description of the scenes combined with the familiar intimacy of their historical significance. Six months later, Resolution 181 would lead to the creation of the State of Israel.





End and beginning

As we noted in the opening lines, the years between the end of World War II and the creation of the State of Israel can be described as a transition between two clearly defined parts of the history of the Movement, which can be figuratively defined as 'the hinge for *Hashomer Hatzair* in Cuba'.

The comparison may seem strange, but a brief review shows its parallels. The features and functions of the hinge are well known. This small item facilitates movement of a door, allowing it to be opened or closed, while remaining hidden from view. Without it the door cannot function properly. Likewise, such short and intense years articulate both sides of the 'before' and 'after' - in the history of *Hashomer Hatzair*. The first, revealed in previous chapters, is the formative history of the Movement, its emergence on the island, development with the logical fluctuations of the early years, and its consolidation, both in relation to the global Movement as well as to community life in Cuba. Returning to the analogy of the door, this would be the fixed and stable framework. The second part, not yet started, is the door that when opening, hints at a dramatic and singular change in the life of the Jewish people; the creation of an independent state and the full and final recovery of normality to which the Zionist Movement aspired from its beginning.

As expected, this 'after' that never stopped being part of the ancient dreams and desires, would also deeply affect the subsequent evolution of the movement in Cuba; no more separate aliyah certificates or fictitious marriages,

or illegal immigrants, but aliyah organized in *garinim* (groups), free and open, to participate in the daunting task of literally and metaphorically building an old and rejuvenated country, either by founding new *kibbutzim* or joining the existing ones.

And in that imaginary triangle linking the activities in Cuba, the situation in Europe and contact with Israel, located at the hinge that connects the past with the age to come, is Janus, always two-faced, looking simultaneously into the past and the future to predict a good end and sponsor good principles.

But that 'after' where he addresses one of his looks, that future that becomes a present that was the fulfillment of the Zionist dream (an ideal that was aptly defined as the only Utopia turned into reality), will be the subject of later chapters.



NOMBRE Daniel Kopiel

FECHA Y LUGAR DE NAC. La Habana.
4 de octubre 1932

FECHA DE INSCRIPCION Sept 1943 - 43

CARGOS DESEMPEÑADOS


ד"ר ש"ר
ד"ר ש"ר

DIAS EN MOSHAVOT

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MIKTZAOT
Y SIMANIM

Fotografía



NOMBRE Israel Senitz

FECHA Y LUGAR DE NAC. 31 Diciembre 1931
Monacan Habana

FECHA DE INSCRIPCION Sept 1943

CARGOS DESEMPEÑADOS


ד"ר ש"ר
ד"ר ש"ר
ד"ר ש"ר

DIAS EN MOSHAVOT

7	7	15	29		
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MIKTZAOT
Y SIMANIM

דמינס אנדלס
Cocina.



New members are joining



CHAPTER VII: HACHSHARA AND THE MACHON LEMADRICHEI CHUTZ LA'ARETZ

In 1956, after a year of being a mora, I felt I had nothing to do in the tnua and that becoming a mora was not what I wanted to do most. I didn't attend the moshava and decided instead to go to hachshara, but my parents were terribly opposed: "It's fine to be a socialist and Zionist, but you must stay here," they told me. As I was a minor, my parents went to a lawyer and took out a restraining order so that I could not leave the country. I therefore went to see another lawyer and almost convinced him to make aliyah as well (he was not Jewish, but my ideas were very convincing), but he said he could do nothing. There was no way I could leave. I was 19 and a half years old and I had a long way to go until age 21 and did not know what I was going to do in Cuba for a year and a half. Shmuel helped me and I went to a travel agency owned by Jews, spoke to the children of the owner and convinced them. I was told I could not leave from the airport or the sea port, and that there were charter flights arriving from the U.S. to Varadero Beach but they believed that the departure prohibition order had not yet arrived there. I asked all my ex-chanichot to take turns to come

to my house and to each of them I passed some of my clothes from the window and they took them away. Then I bought a suitcase and prepared everything. My mother had my passport in the closet, and I took it on Friday morning, October 4, 1956, telling my parents that I was going to find a new home for the ken. I left in the morning and went to the ken. Shmuel was waiting there with the suitcase and we took a bus to Varadero. The airport was nothing more than a tiny little hut. None said anything, I just got on the plane and one hour later I was in Miami. There, I looked for a way to send a telegram to my parents and another to the hachshara program because nobody knew I was arriving there. Later I learned that my father had caused a scandal, first with the travel agent and then with the Israeli Embassy, telling them I was a minor and he had forbidden me to travel to Israel (it was at the time of the war in Sinai). The Embassy made a call to the Hanhaga Rashit and asked my father to calm down. Michael, the shaliach who had come to meet me at the airport, traveled to Cuba, and spent a weekend with my parents, calming them down and signing an undertaking to them that I would not travel to Israel until I came of age.

For several months I had no contact with my parents (I wrote to them but they did



not answer me) and in October 1957 I had everything packed to go to Nachshon, with David Roth, Yaffa and the Americans. I called my older sister who worked in the Zionist Union and she told me not to go to Israel because she was getting married: "You're soon going to be 21 years old, and then no one can do anything. Make peace [with our parents]." I really wanted to do that. I was traveling often to New York because I was then the delegate of the hachshara to the Hanhaga Rashit. I bought a ticket (my sister sent me the money) and went back to make peace with my parents. The reunion was good. They had calmed down, and I was able to be present at my sister's wedding. I dressed very well and was maid of honor. I did everything they asked of me.

I tell this story to my grandchildren all the time. At my granddaughter's birthday party, the whole family was there, and we began to recall stories from that time which I recounted for them: "Children, I'll give you a very bad example." When I told them how I had left Cuba (which I had never told them before), the reaction was: "What a cool grandma!"

Even though this episode narrated by Batia (Zycholc) Green - who not only made peace but then enjoyed the active support of her father, who was later to be the chairman of the Movement's support committee - seems as if it was taken from the Adventures of Tom Sawyer, the immortal character of Mark Twain, it did not take place in a remote village in the southern United States but in sunny Havana of the mid-twentieth century. To capture the context in which it occurred and to understand the circumstances that led a young woman to take such a bold decision, it is necessary to go back in time and change the scenery.

In a previous chapter we referred to the moshavot and the prominent place they occupied in the lives of the Shomrim. Their crucial importance answered the concept of education, not just of *Hashomer Hatzair* but of all the youth movements, since their inception. The path that the chanichim started out on, began at the age of ten years (although there were always those who resorted to various tricks to join at an earlier age) and concluded with personal fulfillment, i.e. aliya to Israel and integration into a kibbutz framework. In between lay a series of carefully planned and designed activities to gradually form the spirit of a pioneering *Shomer*. The process began with the tiyul, a short trip, usually during a weekend, involving the first time away or separation from the parental home and marking the first steps towards autonomy and independence. The next step was the *moshava*, about which we have already spoken. The following stage, close to the final phase of active participation in the Movement, was the *hachshara* or agricultural training farm, an institution that requires further explanation.

First, it should be noted that *Hashomer Hatzair* was the





first Zionist and pioneering youth movement from which all the others, one way or another, had split, and *moreover*, the *hachshara* model was conceived by *Hashomer Hatzair* and was later adopted by the other youth movements.

Hachshara was the way to prepare the future pioneers for their aliyah to Israel and their integration into a new society and a new life, occupying their ancestral land with productive work and communal life, which involved a lifestyle very distant from the Jewish reality of Eastern Europe in the early 20th century. In the beginning, the *hachsharot* were in rural towns or farms, but later, they also occurred in city suburbs. The members of the Movement came to them to learn the rudiments of agriculture, engaging in physical work as a daily practice, getting used to communal life, exercising the principles of solidarity and reciprocal assistance, deepening their understanding of Zionism, the *kibbutz* movement and life in Israel, learning Hebrew and participating in social and cultural activities. There, they also established the *garinim* (aliyah groups) that would realize the life in Israel that they had experienced while on *hachshara*.

The *Hashomer Hatzair* convention held in Tarnow, Poland, in 1919, in the shadow of World War I, discussed the critical issue of *hagshama* (fulfillment), and adopted a resolution recognizing the coexistence of three possibilities for its accomplishment: the working *Shomer*, who would remain in the Diaspora and join the working class; the university *Shomer*, who would pursue higher education, and the pioneering *Shomer*, who would make *aliyah* and create a *kibbutz* or be integrated onto an existing one. The first two possibilities already existed in the Movement; the third was a significant and important development, which over

time would become the priority option.

That same convention included a participant who had come especially from Israel: Mordechai Shenhavi (Elfenbein) (Ukraine 1900 - Israel 1983), the first *oleh* from *Hashomer Hatzair*, who would promote numerous educational, social, cultural and economic initiatives, and who was also among the founders of the *Yad Vashem* Holocaust Museum and whose own life was recorded in two biographical volumes. Shenhavi advocated immediate aliyah for the youth and strongly opposed the idea of *hachsharot*, because he maintained that life and work in Israel were completely different from what young people could learn on the farms. What is more, he was convinced that this preliminary stage was simply a waste of time. His arguments were set out with characteristic clarity and fervor. However, his position was not accepted and the *hachsharot* emerged and flourished for more than four decades, until changing circumstances in Israel and the world, and therefore in the youth movements, gradually lessened its importance and eventually led to its final cessation in the 70's.

Like other activities, patterns and characteristics of the youth movements in Europe, the model of *hachsharot* was also reproduced in Latin America. Obviously, after a relatively short time, these began to produce changes and adaptations to the specific characteristics of each community and country. There were several active youth movements in Cuba (*Hashomer Hatzair Beitar*, *Hanoar Hatzioni*, etc.), but there was never a *hachshara* program, among other reasons because of its geographic isolation and the small size of the community. Young people who wanted to prepare for aliyah and life on *kibbutz* were required to seek other locations. For that reason, different





possibilities were examined at different times, in some cases suggested by the shlichim from Israel, and in others, conceived by the *Shomrim* themselves. By way of illustration it should be noted that there were attempts to join existing hachsharot in England and Brazil, but these initiatives did not materialize and finally they found the solution closer to their native country in the United States.

The *hachshara* of the American Movement (Uri Top, who remembers going through it at a formative period in his life, still calls it the "Hechalutz Farm") which operated for some time in New Jersey, was the destination for the Caribbean *Shomrim* who went there heading to a phase which preceded their aliyah. Some did so with the explicit support of their parents while others, as we saw earlier, did so in slightly more complex ways, all of them needing the logistical support of the Movement and the community. It should be noted that the enthusiasm of young people does not always find an answer consistent in the higher echelons, be it of the *Hanhaga Rashit* in New York, the *Hanhaga Eliona*, or the Jewish Agency in Israel. This scenario would also be repeated in the case of the *Shomrim* traveling to the *Machón leMadrichim*.

The *Hashomer Hatzair hachshara* program in the United States had two characteristics that differed clearly from those that existed in other countries on the American continent. In the countries of Latin America, training farms had very poor infrastructure and facilities, sometimes without running water. Unlike them, the living conditions in New Jersey were good. Second, it received members of *Hashomer Hatzair* who came from the United States, Canada, Mexico and Cuba. This coexistence led to conflicting situations: some of the Cubans (who were always a small

minority), felt little affinity with the American *Shomrim*. Others, however, established friendly relations with them and enjoyed a secondary, but not insignificant benefit: every day they were able to practice their English, which markedly improved its dominance and fluency, as recalled by Batia: "The only Cubans that were in the *hachshara* were David Roth and myself. Then David left and Shmuel, Haviva and Shabtai arrived, together with a group of Mexicans. I quickly made friends with the Americans and Canadians, and learned English very well."

Yosef Yagev (Schmukler) not only polished up on his English, but during his stay also acquired a basic knowledge of agricultural work, in which he has been engaged continuously since his aliyah (more than five decades after he went through hachshara), to *Moshav* Kidron. Yosef fondly remembers not only the field work, but also sports activities and the atmosphere of camaraderie that prevailed there.

The coexistence of the Cuban *Shomrim* with their fellow travelers from other countries would produce unintended but predictable additional results. Some friendships born during *hachshara* became "mixed" couples whose members not only fulfilled their aliyah together but also shared their lives afterwards. Such was the case of Batia and David Green of Mexico; Yosef Yagev and Alice from Canada; Moises Perez and Malie Schmeltz from Canada, who met during Malie's brief trip to hachshara and were then reunited in Israel; Batia Zyscholc and David Green; Celia Bulbank and Moses Greenberg from the United States; Yosef Kuperman and Etyy Apelbaum also from the US; David Roth and Yaffa (Shirley Kosov) from the US, who remembers:





I came on hachshara in 1956 and there were Mexicans, Cubans, Americans and Canadians. There I met David, and we fell in love and got married and from there we made aliyah.

Uri Top also acquired his love for farming on *hachshara* and he dedicated during his ten years' of residence in Israel to a *kibbutz* and later served as an agricultural adviser in a number of countries.

For Gedalia Lotan, who remembers those months as a very positive step, the strongest memories are of his travels to New York where he enjoyed the rich cultural life offered in that city. He made regular trips in a vehicle that was not exactly a limo, and attended concerts and plays in the 'Big Apple', that are deeply etched in his memory. He also remembers that he occasionally visited the eminent scientist Albert Einstein (Germany 1879 - US 1955), who lived in Princeton, not far from Hightstown.

There was however, a group, the largest of all, which, during its *hachshara* went through a crisis that led some of its members to leave the Movement. David Pastiner (Pistiner), who belonged to that group but did not travel with it on *hachshara*, mentions this with a hint of amazement: "*To me, the dynamics of the Hachshara problem were never totally clear. Within a few months, the group suffered total disintegration.*" But it should be noted that even though this incident is remembered with sadness to this day, it does not tarnish the memory of the Movement in general, and particularly the legacy that their colleagues left them as pointed out by Philip (Dan) Kreiezmar:

At one point the garin environment began to wane. What was disappearing was not the primary dream of Israel, but the dream of the garin ... Hashomer Hatzair is a part of me when I sleep, when I dream, when I think, when I see things. My mind and my heart are with Hashomer Hatzair. It was a beautiful time in my life, and it helped me grow and mature as a human being, understanding the weaknesses and strengths and limits that exist. These moments left seeds of maturity which today have turned into a very nice tree.

The imprint of *hachshara* can be summarized in the words of Yaffa Roth:

The hachshara was very good, I worked in the kitchen and in the dairy and David worked in the dairy and the field. We had Israeli madrichim. We picked apples and took the cows to graze. The hachshara was profitable. The tnuva invested money and a Jew who lived nearby helped us.





Cubans and Americans at the Hachshara



Another institution that left its mark on all the youth movements was, and still remains, the *Machon Lemadrichei chutz-la'aretz* (Institute for overseas leadership training), which involved another step in the process of group training for *aliya* to Israel and preparation of individuals for a new, independent and meaningful life.

The idea of bringing young people to Israel for a while so that they could become familiar with the realities of the country and inform their peers and chanichim in the movement about them upon their return to their countries of origin, was a pilot project that emerged even before the creation of the State. Indeed, the first group came from South Africa to the then British Mandate Palestine and spent a few months in Ashkelon. The experience was so positive that it quickly became an uninterrupted tradition, which spread to many countries and nearly all the pioneering movements. With the creation of the State

the *Machon* moved to Jerusalem, where it continues to operate to this day.

The year of study for youngsters traveling to the *Machon* (by boat, which in itself was a special experience) was divided into two clearly defined parts: a semester of study in Jerusalem, during which time they took theoretical studies of Judaism (Hebrew, Jewish history, Bible, festivals, etc.) and pedagogical and practical courses to train them as future leaders of their respective movements. The second half was devoted to the *kibbutz*: participants traveled the country, working on *kibbutzim* and acquiring direct knowledge of the pioneering life. And of course, throughout the year they learned Hebrew songs and Israeli dances, meeting youngsters from the sibling movements and other movements by becoming immersed in the Israeli reality of the day and acquiring an enriching and unforgettable life experience.

Representatives from the Latin American countries attended the *Machon* from its inception. Cuba was not exempt from this process, and in 1951 *Hashomer Hatzair* sent Yaffa Crugliac, a charismatic madricha and leading figure in the Movement, as its representative. Yaffa, who left an indelible mark on her *chanichot* was, at that time, only 17. The fact that a young woman traveled alone for an entire year to a remote country, with the support and encouragement of her family, is the best proof of the influence and importance of the Movement on the lives of its members. Since then six decades have passed, and both her sister Esther, who was also an active member of the Movement, and her daughter Miriam and grandson Nathan remember how Yaffa spoke with joy and enthusiasm of that very special year, recalling her contact with people from



other countries and lifestyles, intensive studies, work on the *kibbutz* and travel in a country that was in its formative stages.

Like other Shomrim who traveled in later years, Yaffa returned to Cuba and rejoined the Movement, in which she continued to have a central presence. Her personality left an indelible mark on their *chanichot* such as Ana Fitter, who mentioned the generosity and willingness to help that characterized her and did not disappear over time. What is more, she also became a teacher in the Jewish school, as would Batia Zycholc and Chaim Chayet. Thus, the influence of *Hashomer Hatzair* was not limited to weekend activities, but it was also felt in the context of formal education. Chaim Chayet reveals with a smile that he used not to give homework to the students, so they would have free time to participate in the activities of the *tnua*.

In some cases, the year spent at the *Machon* added another dimension, not related to the influence on the personalities of each of the youngsters, but related to important events in the life of Israel, as vividly described by David Pastiner, who felt totally attuned to the events he witnessed and described vividly:




It was 1955 when Chaim Chayet and I were chosen as emissaries of Hashomer to the Machon Lemadrichei Chutz-la'aretz, to study and work in Israel for one year (1956-57). David Roth and Batia Zycholc had been on the previous occasion and those were times where there was a lot of tension in Israel. The newspapers constantly brought news of the danger of war there. Egypt had received modern jet aircraft from the

Soviet Union (MIGs) and Israel was under an arms embargo supported by the United States. At the same time, Arab infiltrators continued their harassment campaigns with attacks on civilians that continued leaving a death toll in Israel. During our stay in Israel all this continued, but there was an event of historical importance: the Sinai Campaign, the first great war of Israel since the 1948 War of Independence. Everyone in Israel was mobilized and participated in this war, and this included Chaim and me. Nothing in the experiences we had had in our lives in Cuba could be compared to what we experienced there, at that time. I made copious and thorough notes throughout the year to record the precious experiences for the Cuban Shomrim, who had never been exposed to anything like it.

Both David and Chaim returned to Havana with renewed energies to continue their activities in the Movement and to expand its sphere of influence, as David explains:

*Chaim and me, having gone to the Machon, were obligated to work in the *tnua* in Cuba for two years before joining our *garin* that made aliyah. So we remained in Cuba*





working, while the Gdud Hechalutz went on hachshara to Hightstown New Jersey, in the United States.

Chaim worked in the largest Jewish community school, the Centro Israelita de Cuba (Israeli Center of Cuba), which had hundreds of students in its classes, and at the same time, he was active in the most influential circles of the Zionist Union of Cuba. I started working for the JNF. Soon I was producing its weekly radio show on Radio Garcia Serra, which had studios at the Zionist Union of Cuba and was sponsoring that hour. I gladly accepted this mission. I took care of everything I had to do, preparing the spoken material, music, a good introduction to start and end all the programs, which was always repeated in every program.

As seen in previous chapters, the Movement in Cuba developed certain characteristics that set it apart from its peers in other countries. What we have mentioned here is probably one of the most well-known: in the other movements, the chanichim in the youth movements were usually involved in one of the stages of preparation for aliyah; *hachshara* or *machon*, but not both. And above all, the division between the frameworks of formal (schools) and informal (youth movements and clubs) education was clearly defined. The *madrichim* of the youth movements had difficulty entering schools to invite students to

participate in their activities. Indeed, on more than one occasion they were expressly prohibited from entering a school and having contact with its children. In Cuba, *Hashomer Hatzair* could boast of a singular achievement without compromising its principles and standards, leaving its mark on the community through a fluid and permanent presence in various community organizations such as the Zionist Union, the KKL and the school. This continuous exchange, which certainly enriched both parties continued until the 1960s, when the circumstances of the country led to a profound change in the life of the Jewish community on the island.

But that is another subject to which we will refer in a later chapter.

CHAPTER VIII: A DREAM FULFILLED

We are honored to announce that on Thursday, June 28, 1951 the solemn inauguration of the Latin American kibbutz Ga'ash will take place in Israel. This kibbutz will be home to Latin American chalutzim, among whom is the group of Cuban Shomrim who came to Israel a year ago.

Kibbutz Ga'ash, the first Latin American kibbutz is made up of 150 young people from Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Cuba, Mexico and Uruguay, who belong to the Jewish generation that created the pioneering Zionist youth movement which formed the basis for the fulfillment of Zionism in Latin America.

Today, Kibbutz Ga'ash is self-sufficient, with an active social and cultural life, and 25 children who are its most beautiful and fresh flowers.

The above text is an excerpt from a letter in Yiddish that the acting community leader Sender Kaplan sent in June 1950 to the committees of the various Jewish institutions, announcing the creation of the first Latin American *kibbutz*, whose emergence and characteristics were briefly described.

Both the formation of the Latin American garin as well as the creation of the *kibbutz* were a direct result of the creation

of the State of Israel, a crucial event that would radically change Jewish history and that decisively influenced not only the Jewish *Yishuv* in the Palestine of those days but also all the communities in the Diaspora. *Hashomer Hatzair* in Cuba was no exception and we will refer to these events in the following pages, with a range that brings together a collage of different times, situations and experiences that reflect the tireless strength and tenacity of its members.



From its earliest origins, the Movement had managed to overcome setbacks and did not stop its march. As noted in one of the preceding chapters, even in the thirties, when nobody conceived that Latin American Zionists could possibly realize the ideal of aliyah, two of the founders had achieved it thanks to the three certificates issued by the British Mandate and given to Cuba. What is more, to take advantage of the third certificate, one of the *Shomrim* had entered into a fictitious marriage with a young lady who belonged to the Movement. Just over a decade later, the 'inlaws' of that first *oleh* also made their own *aliyah*, as noted in a letter from the office of the Executive of the Jewish Agency sent to Cuba on September 12, 1947, reporting on the aliyah permits granted to family members of residents in Israel:

We enclose herewith the list of people in your country for whom, at the request of their family in Eretz Israel, the government Department of Aliyah has issued aliyah permits. These were authorized on



July 15, 1947 (as part of the June 15-July 14 1947 quota), and are valid for six months from the date of authorization and have been sent to the British consul in Havana.

If any of the people on the attached list have already embarked, kindly provide us with the following information: port of departure, name of vessel (airplane), date, shipping company, etc.

Names: Niedzwietzky Jacob and Niedzwietzky Etko (inlaws).

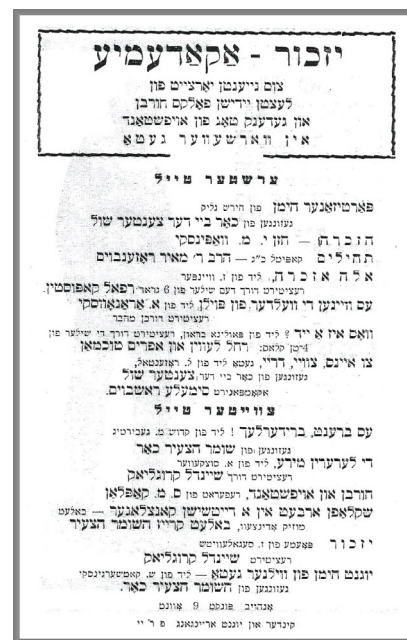
In those early years, the Movement on the island provided ample evidence of its ability to combine continuity with renewal, promoting on the one hand initiatives and innovative projects to maintain the tradition of their regular activities, and on the other, continuing to act at the same time on behalf of the community in Cuba, the Jewish world in general and Israel in particular. For illustration only, we shall list three examples that demonstrate the aforementioned triangle:

The Jewish community in Cuba decided to honor the memory of the victims of the Holocaust with a memorial. As on other occasions, *Hashomer Hatzair* was represented, as noted by Daniel Kokiel:

Hashomer Hatzair influenced the entire community. We were always in the lead in demonstrations and parades for Israel,

such as when we inaugurated a monument to the victims of the Holocaust in the cemetery.

A year before the creation of the State and aware of the post-war situation, the Movement in Cuba responded to a request from the *Hanhaga Eliona* in Israel, expressing solidarity and the desire to help *Hashomer Hatzair* in Poland. On May 17, 1947 they received a letter from the *Hanhaga Eliona* stating:



Remember and not to forget





I enclose material received from the Movement in Poland, indicating that without the help of a global movement we cannot continue. The responsibility to help applies to us all. Your Movement, which already has more than ten years of membership in the global Movement and whose beginnings are related to the Movement in Poland will find a way to accomplish this campaign. I know that you will be able to call upon your links with our friends and colleagues who were once in Hashomer Hatzair

As expected, the Movement in Cuba responded immediately to the request and organized a campaign to collect funds (to be sent periodically to the Movement headquarters), as is clear from another letter from the *Hanhaga Eliona* dated two weeks later, on March 26:

I respond to your letter of March 22. We are very pleased that they have begun to act in the Movement in Poland. The decision to postpone the campaign is right.

Shoshana (Rosita) Rubinstein was at that time the secretary of the Movement, which she recalls fondly. From a young age she had worked in the Zionist Union and the office of the honorary consul of Israel, later in the consulate and then in the Israeli embassy until its closure. A few months

after the emergence of the State of Israel, she sent a letter to Israel advising the following:

Thanks to the Hashomer Hatzair initiative the Cuban Jewish Blood Bank for Israel, was founded with 350 cm3 of dried blood and a \$3,000 campaign that was used to provide medical supplies. The blood bank officials were Solomon Mitrani, president, Isaac Luski, treasurer and Jacob Laufer secretary.

Another report from the same period, reported on activities and listed the achievements of *Hashomer Hatzair* in Cuba:

The shaliach Chaim Reshef, has been a member of kibbutz Kfar Menachem for about four months and has joined us in Cuba, and recently we have noticed some improvement, meaning that the chaverim have begun working with a little more enthusiasm. The bogrim have gone to New York for the hachshara program and have already acclimatized to the job and the environment in general. We are engaged in ongoing correspondence with Mexico and Argentina, from whom we receive educational and political material that is useful for our Movement.



The desire to promote the participation of its members in hachshara in the United States needed special efforts to overcome the problems that arose. The main obstacle lay in the difficulty of obtaining visas to enter the country, as explained in a letter to the Hanhaga Eliona in Israel in May 1949 from the shaliach, Chaim Reshef:

No one is asking himself yes or no about hachshara. In my opinion there should be hachshara and the only place for Cuba to join is the United States because the Cubans should not be left on their own or with other Latin Americans. This is my opinion, but the American consul in Havana does not care at all about these problems. He is not paying me any attention and not granting entry visas to the United States (despite my requests).

From *hachshara* in Hightstown the first garin of *Hashomer Hatzair* in Cuba would leave in trickles, numbering among others, Shoshana Brum-Levin, Jaime Falikson, Abraham Huberman, Jacob Laufer, Jaime Levin, Abraham, Chaim and Mordechai Lojewski, Yosef Shmuckler and Isaac Zilber. The significance of this decisive step in their lives meant that they did not leave anything to chance, as is clear from a letter sent in April 1949 while on *hachshara*, which combines the sending of detailed information in order to receive other information of a less detailed nature, and using a relatively high number of words in Hebrew, directly

related to the core being of the Movement and life in the *kibbutz*:

Although we have not yet received a response to our recent letter dated February 19, we are forced to write again to inform you that two of our chaverim in the hachshara program here, will soon be joining our garin in Negba. The first is Isaac Zilber, who left Cuba on April 7, via Italy. We do not know when he will arrive in Aretz. He will send you a wire from the boat. His anaf is falja. The second is Abraham Huberman, who will leave New York on May 22. His anaf is construction and carpentry. If you answer this letter immediately, we will have time to send a few things with this chaver. What we want to know is the following: Is it worth carrying (a complete set of) woodworking tools. We know that power tools are extremely expensive in Israel. Tell us which ones the garin has and which ones are they are interested in.

Given the difficulties to receive financial aid from world Zionist bodies, in September of that year the group also sent another letter from the *hachshara* program, this time addressed to the Plenary of the Zionist Union and addressed to the *Olim* Relief Fund, another initiative promoted by the Shomrim. Noblesse oblige: this specific and urgent request is accompanied by an effusive expression of gratitude and



an unusual promise:

Our departure from the hachshara program will be by the middle of this month, September, meaning that our aliyah will be towards the end of the month. This means that the money of the Keren Aliyah that you are collecting, should be sent immediately, as soon as possible, so as not to hinder or delay our aliyah. We are very grateful to you for the determined and enthusiastic manner in which you have worked in order to obtain these funds, and our best way to repay it will be with our presence on a new kibbutz which we will establish very soon.



Those who were active in the Movement at the time still remember two key dates when the entire community came spontaneously to the Zionist Union headquarters and went out to celebrate in the streets of Havana. November 29, 1947, the date of the historic vote at the United Nations, and May 14, 1948, the date of the Declaration of Independence of the State of Israel. Unfortunately, there are no written records of these times providing firsthand testimony about the specific attitude of *Hashomer Hatzair* but what has been preserved is a letter sent by the Movement to the Zionist Union on the eve of the first anniversary of the creation of the State, reflecting both the joy of fulfillment of the ideal as well as the commitment to be an active part of it:

On this Independence Day of the State of Israel we send our best blessings to the State of Israel and the Shomrim and chalutzim who, with their ideals and strength have contributed to making a dream of more than 2,000 years come true. We shall continue working and doing everything possible to strengthen our grip and build a country that serves as an example for the entire world.

It is interesting to note that the activities of the Movement, focused on Zionism and were Israel-oriented. They also managed to awaken echoes outside the community and reach other areas of Cuban society. One example was the radio program (which had formally belonged to the Zionist Union, but was in fact conducted by members of *Hashomer Hatzair*), which over time changed its name, duration and hosts, but always retained its sprightly and youthful style. What better proof of this extra-community resonance is there, than this uncommon request from Alfredo Guevara, leader of the Youth Committee for Peace, sent on July 27, 1949:

I am writing to request that on your hourly radio show, we are granted a period of time in order to explain the objectives of the National Congress for Peace and Democracy held on 6 and 7 August in Havana.





Of course, in this multiple voice chorus we did sometimes hear discordant or dissenting voices. The father of a *Hashomer Hatzair* pupil left a questionable but interesting assessment of the Movement's activities in Cuba, which was published in the almanac of 5710 (September 1949), published by *Habaner Lebn* (Life in Havana), the Yiddish magazine edited by Sender Kaplan and A. Dubelman:

It was a big mistake on our part to have tried to adapt the Cuban Jewish youth to the framework of Hashomer Hatzair. The discipline and the willingness of Hashomer Hatzair members to make sacrifices, cannot attract the young Jews of Cuba and therefore this is the reason why Hashomer Hatzair has graduated many youngsters, but few have remained. We must review our attitude to the problems of youth in Cuba. It's not too late, and the young people are not yet completely lost. The Jewish youngsters feel Jewish, and have great interest in everything that is happening in Israel and aspire to contribute in any way they can.

The dissidence went beyond the confines of *Hashomer Hatzair*. In 1950, Menachem Begin (Brest Litovsk, Poland 1913 – Jerusalem, Israel 1992), leader of the revisionist *Herut* party, commander of the *Ezra*, head of the parliamentary opposition and many years later (1979) signatory of the

historic peace agreement with Egypt, came to Cuba. As expected, his supporters and members of the Beitar youth movement (who still had fresh in their memory, the two young Cubans who in 1948 had traveled to Israel as volunteers and who had perished on June 22 on the deck of the *Altalena*) organized a warm welcome, and as was also expected, other areas of the community did not share their enthusiasm. The reluctance was evident in varying degrees of intensity, and may perhaps be attributed to generation differences. The community leader, Sender Kaplan, on May 30, sent a letter sent to the Latin American department in New York saying:

Regarding the position of the Zionist movement, we considered the instruction not to participate officially in the welcoming or the banquet or any other official ceremony organized for Mr. Begin.

Not surprisingly, *Hashomer Hatzair* has interpreted the episode from another point of view. For his part, the then secretary of the youth movement, Archie Brum sent the *Hanhaga Eliona* in *Merhavia* the following report:

The first major event was the arrival in Havana of Menachem Begin on 14 May last. This placed the Movement in an unusual situation, since without Cuba having a Mapam party or other organization willing to come out with us in a united front, we had to stand alone in a campaign against





Herut, which detracted from our strength. On the other hand, the local Zionist Organization maintained a totally passive attitude.

That same lengthy and detailed report includes other remarks that today not only bring at least a smile, but at that time also reflected the ideology of the Movement, whose strictness increased or decreased according to the times, but was never totally absent:

At the forefront our group unity was defined when, after extensive discussions, we decided to expel a chavera who, due to her snobbish behavior and irresponsibility towards the ken and the pluga, brought dishonor to the bogrim and the Movement. Another sensitive instance in the background, was the agreement to expel a chaver who, even though during previous years had been one of our strongest ideological pillars, today due to personal conflicts not connected to our active work and the bourgeois life he led, had changed his attitude, reaching a point where he was in denial of the pioneering values and the destiny of the shomrim Movement.

Oy, what times were these when snobbery and bourgeois life were unacceptable sins! In this post-modern third millennium, in the shadow of the sunset of these ideologies,

there is sometimes a temptation to yearn for the firmness of some of these convictions.

That was not the first confrontation between socialist Zionism and revisionism. In May 1947 the Zionist Union had received three telegrams from the Jewish Agency, exhorting the Jewish community to remain united and express its strong opposition to the activities of the Irgun. One of them was signed by Moshe Shertok [later Sharett] (Kherson, Ukraine 1894 - Jerusalem, Israel 1965), for many years director of the Political Department of the Jewish Agency and later Foreign Minister and Prime Minister of the State of Israel. The second telegram was signed by Moshe Toff (Villa Maria, Argentina 1910 - Jerusalem, Israel 1989), director of the Latin American Department of the Jewish Agency in Washington and after the creation of the State of Israel, director of the Latin American Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The third telegram was not signed.



This brief and intense review of the activities of *Hashomer Hatzair* in the late forties and early fifties resembles a circular path, in which we again approach the point of departure. Undoubtedly, the establishment of Ga'ash is a crucial milestone in the history of the Movement, not only in Cuba but throughout Latin America, and we will dedicate the remaining pages to it. A copy of the *Hashomer Hatzair* magazine devoted a central feature to Ga'ash at the end of 1952.





The meshek has received a boost in recent months, thanks to the transfer of the latest building materials that were in Ali Kassem and have been relocated to the nekuda in Ga'ash. Among the advances that have been achieved in this field and which should be mentioned, are the construction of the water tower on the highest hill of the kibbutz, with a capacity of 100 cubic meters, that will supply the needs of the machane, expansion of the existing lul into three new sections, the enclosure of the communal areas that will be inaugurated later this month, the planting of 50 dunams of pardes which will be commenced in the coming weeks and the creation of a new anaf to receive 200 sheep. In the coming days we will begin the construction of the first children's house made of solid materials.

In terms of the cultural-ideological aspects, the main activities are concentrated around study groups which were created after the moatza of Ein Hamifratz decided on compulsory study. The Tanach course hosts 20 permanent chaverim, and there is the choir, whose work has been reinforced thanks to the help of a chaver conductor from Kibbutz Yakum and the drama class.

It is clear that for a year and a half prior to the foundation

of the *kibbutz* in July 1951, about 6 miles north of Tel Aviv, its members lived temporarily on the farm of Ali Kassem, a wealthy Arab not far from there. He later abandoned it after the War of Independence. Many years later, Isaac Zilber would remember that time with a number of fresh and colorful prints, portraying the founding period with a mixture of nostalgia, humor and subtle irony:

*Ali Kassem times (El bloguito de Saqui)
Ga'ash 2010*

We were poor, very poor, but we were poor by choice, accompanied by pride. The pride of the chalutz who began from scratch to serve the needs of the State: colonization, agriculture, and territorial defense. The kibbutz was a way of life and also a barricade. We wanted to establish ourselves in Um-Rashrash (now Eilat), the most chalutzic place at the time. We did not want to be so close to Tel Aviv (foo!). Today, from the real-estate perspective, we would not have lost, as if anyone cares. However, the State institutions had a very convincing argument favoring the place where we lived - it was in the narrowest part of the country (12 km from the coast to the border).

Abraham Drori was the treasurer and every two weeks he brought a battered briefcase containing the meat rations allocated to the entire kibbutz. He traveled by bus (yes, there was something like that, and



even today, after so many years, many veterans retain the old and strange habit of traveling by bus, see the entry 'bus' in the dictionary). The meat was wrapped in newspaper, as was everything that was sold at the time, and the briefcase also contained the correspondence of the kibbutz brought from a mailbox in Tel Aviv and the bills permeated by the odor of the meat, that for some reason did not bother anyone. On the contrary, it was the meat ration for the entire kibbutz for the next two weeks. I do not remember what the monthly allowance was per person, perhaps 100 grams, but I remember that after removing a generous portion for children, the remainder was used for meatballs with just 5% meat content, not coming close to or even resembling the taste of it.

In the rooms there was no running water. There were water faucets, one for each cabin, that reached up from the ground to knee height. There were shared showers, one for girls and one for boys. Fifty years earlier we had heard stories about the communal showers for both sexes. We had heard them, but evidently we came too late. The showers were in a cubicle made of zinc, with a partition also made of zinc which divided it into two and had been used by the military for target practice. But do not misunderstand me: We were not spying!

At first we lived in barracks and tents, and later we replaced the tents with cubicles made of zinc and I still don't not know what was worse, because those cubicles seemed like ovens in summer and refrigerators in winter, but they were the choices available to the singles, two in a room in a hut, or one in a cubicle. The huts had no stairs, so we had to clamber over the balcony, which was something minor for strong and healthy youngsters, but what were we to do when it came to climbing a height of 40 cm? And what if the youngster was a woman in the final months of pregnancy? One of our colleagues, whose wife met both conditions (40 cm and in the late stages of pregnancy) found a step which solved the problem, or so he thought so, until he was summoned to the kibbutz members' committee, which considered it a flagrant violation of equality and cooperation (or vice-versa). There were several meetings, in which he claimed in his defense that despite living in the last room, he had placed the step ladder in the middle for everyone to use. Finally the criteria "to each according to their need" prevailed.

A few months after the founding of the *kibbutz*, the Pro-Cuban *chalutzim* in Israel Youth Association was established in Havana, promoting a campaign to support Ga'ash. For



this reason we approached the Community institutions:



The first houses in Ga'ash

The Pro-Cuban chalutzim in Israel Youth Association made it its primary objective to send a truck to the first Cuban chalutzim to arrive at Kibbutz Ga'ash, thus contributing directly to the work of national reconstruction.

For the purpose of initiating this campaign in our yishuv we will go out with a broadcast on Thursday January 17 at 12:30 pm from the Zionist Union of Cuba, on 660 kilocycles, from Radio García

Serra, inviting people to a meeting for which we request written support from our community.

The culmination of this intense and enthusiastic period tied the loose ends of the plot of this particular story that emerged in the aura of the reborn State of Israel. The fulfillment of Zionism, the founding of a kibbutz, youthful enthusiasm, ideological fervor, the critical tone and the generation conflict, were all mentioned in a handwritten letter in Yiddish, neatly printed with impeccable handwriting, sent from Kibbutz Ga'ash to the Zionist Union of Cuba:

I write this letter as a Cuban chalutz, a son from the Jewish yishuv in Cuba, who chose Zionism as the way to honor the Jewish people. For me, Zionism is sacred, because it has shown me the light to which I have dedicated my heart and soul in order to help build the country for the thousands of olim who will soon return to their homeland and find it rebuilt and thriving. We are waiting for the dozens of Cuban chalutzim marching along the same Zionist path, who are not content with declarative Zionism but rather wish to bring it to fruition in a practical manner. And to you fellow Cuban Zionists, rather than being the ones to awaken Jewish youth and teach them the duties of Zionism, unfortunately your work is





being done by the youngsters born in Cuba, who see their parents as if they are conspiring against our sacred ideal, and are obligated to remind you [the parents] that Zionism is not what you should be talking about within your organization.

Our colleagues in Cuba will not go in your direction, only in ours.

Signed: **A Cuban chaltz**

Cuban-Israeli Digression: Ricardo Subirana and Lobo (Richard Wolf)

The attempt to tell the story of the Cuban *Shomrim* in Israel would not be complete unless we digress for a moment from the main thread of the story and introduce an unconventional character who was not born in Cuba and had not been a member of *Hashomer Hatzair*, but whose life and career were inextricably linked to Cuba and Israel.

Richard Wolf was a multifaceted Jew born in 1887 in Hanover, Germany, who left his country before the First World War and settled in Cuba, which became his second home. In 1924, he married the tennis player Francisca Subirana and hispanicized his name adopting the surname of his wife, and becoming known as Ricardo Subirana and Lobo.

He was the first ambassador of Cuba in Israel, a position he held from 1961 until the breaking of diplomatic relations between the two countries in 1973. He chose to remain in Israel and retained smooth and ongoing contacts with Cubans in the country, who still attended the meetings organized at his home, and on the neighboring *Kibbutz*

Ga'ash. Both he and his wife died in 1981 and were buried at *Ga'ash*.





CHAPTER IX: UNDER THE SIGN OF DVIR

A TRACTOR FOR DVIR
(KIBBUTZ HASHOMER HATZAIR OF CUBA)

DVIR:
AGRICULTURAL COLONY IN PEACE
A FORTRESS IN WAR

DVIR: VANGUARD OF THE NEGEV

REMEMBER:
THE CHALUTZ WILL CONQUER THE NEGEV

A TRACTOR FOR DVIR
JOIN US



The May 1954 issue of the magazine *Nivenu* published this announcement that would certainly catch the attention of the unsuspecting reader. The Movement used to appeal to the generosity of its supporters to participate in the fundraising campaigns of the JNF, the financing of the traditional *moshavot* which did so much to attract the youngsters, and the organization of festivals and special events; but talking about a tractor was big stuff. In those days it was an extraordinarily disproportionate amount when related to the situation of the country in general and the Jewish community in particular.

Two years earlier, in 1952, a similar idea had been conceived. On January 12 that year, the then *mazkir* of *Hashomer Hatzair* sent a report to Israel in which he mentioned a meeting held by the Zionist Union, in which a community leader Sender Kaplan had talked about the need to send a truck to *Ga'ash*. The proposal generated favorable echoes, as evidenced by a letter three days later by Samuel Papir and Zoila Kozolchik, leaders of the newly created



"*Agrupación Pro Sionismo Jalutziano* (Pro Zionist Pioneering Association)", which indicated its having adopted "as its first objective, the shipping of a truck to the first Cuban *chalutzim* and their *kibbutz*, *Ga'ash*, thereby contributing directly to the work of national reconstruction." A few months later, the shaliach Yehoshua Katzir wrote in one of his periodic reports to Israel, that the money raised to date would be sent to New York. In the end, the project fell through, but the *shomrim* not only didn't abandon the idea, but resumed it with renewed enthusiasm and managed to do it with pride and satisfaction for the Movement in Cuba and to the delight of the young *kibbutz* at receiving such unexpected and invaluable help.

Indeed, back then, *Dvir* - or to use its official name *Dvira*, which literally means "towards Dvir" - was a young *kibbutz*, founded in 1951 in the northern *Negev* near the site now occupied by the *Dvir* Forest but where at the time, as described by Gedalia Lotan "The closest tree to us was in *Gedera*." The *kibbutz*, which got its name from an ancient city in the region, was founded by immigrants from Hungary, who were joined by youngsters from Latin America (Chile and Cuba) and other members of the Movement, who were already in the country.

The *Hashomer Hatzair* magazine of late 1952 devoted a page to "*our kibbutzim*" with *Ga'ash* in first place followed by *Dvir*, which was described as follows:

Dvir is a young Hashomer Hatzair kibbutz which just a few months ago was established in the distant regions of the Negev. The National Kibbutz Movement [HaKibutz

Ha'Artzi] is committed to encouraging the next wave of aliyah from our Movement in Chile and Cuba. Over the coming months, the Latin-American element will become the founding base of the *kibbutz*. This is how in practice *Hashomer Hatzair* will lay the path, with its education towards personal fulfillment, the conquest of inhospitable desert areas, and the guarding of the country's borders. This small group of *chalutzim* who will hold on to a remote corner of the country, provides our clearest and most forceful response.



The *Shlichim* in a field trip





With the passing of time, *Dvir* overcame its difficulties and prospered. Some decades later it again demonstrated its pioneering spirit, this time not simply to make the desert literally bloom but with initiatives that had other features, such as creating *Dolav*, a manufacturer of plastic bins and containers founded in 1976 along with *Kibbutz Lahav*; *Tavlinei Ha-Negev*, a cooperative producer and exporter of spices established in 1986, and the founding in 1988 of a software company that created the then very new word processor QText, allowing the interchangeable use of the Hebrew and Latin alphabets.

To paraphrase the popular song, we could say that "the years go by, time flies, but the *chalutzit* (pioneering) always remains."



But let's not rush ahead and let's go back to the Cuban *Shomrim* who were preparing for their aliyah to *Dvir*. The first members of the group began organizing their *aliyah* in 1951. The *mazkir* of the Movement in those years, Archie (Aharon) Brum, has not forgotten to this day, the *dedication and thoroughness in preparing the reports for the Hanhaga Eliona*, which reported on May 16, 1951 that:

the chaverim Yehudit Shochen and Shaul Altschun have become a zuga (couple) and are making preparations for aliyah. In a letter to chaverim at Ga'ash they advised which would be the appropriate place to conduct the hachshara program and Jacob Laufer said that England was the most

recommended."

In the end, the young couple did not travel to England, whose *hachshara* program could not accept them due to lack of physical accomodation. Nor did they go to Brazil, another alternative they had considered, but instead, to New Jersey (along with Yosef Kuperman, Esther Bulbank and Archie Brum), and from there they made *aliyah* to *Dvir* (except for Joseph, who married Etty Apelbaum, an American *Shomeret* who he met on *hachshara* and with whom he later arrived at *Kibbutz Gal-On*). In his report to the plenary of the Zionist Union in Yiddish, Gedalia Lotan said the following:

We share with you the good news, of the proud satisfaction of an important national achievement in our national Zionist movement in Cuba. We believe that you will also appreciate the aliyah of the second group of Cuban Shomrim as an achievement of the fulfillment of Zionism which both honors and gives prestige to the entire Zionist movement in Cuba."

Today, Yehudit recalls the difficulties of those early days with a mixture of humor and nostalgia and among other stories, recounts the decision that the new Latin-American members would donate their books (obviously, in Spanish) to the library of the *kibbutz*. Needless to say, no one apart from them could read the books as the founders of the *kibbutz* had no mastery of the language of Cervantes,





but the collectivist principles of the Movement were firm and were adhered to without hesitation. To be honest, it should also be made clear that the same was true for other *kibbutzim* sharing these ideological norms.

As we mentioned in earlier chapters, the Movement maintained an ongoing, continuous and simultaneous dialog with various bodies, both in Cuba and beyond. And so, while preparing the next group for *aliyah*, they made sure not to forget the previous *garin* that had already arrived in Israel, and the one which had preceded it. David Olinsky, one of the founders of *Hashomer Hatzair* in Cuba, who had been living for a decade and a half on *Kibbutz Beit Zera*, traveled to Havana in 1951 "in the interests of his *kibbutz*." Before his return to Israel, the Movement arranged a farewell ceremony to honor him. In a report submitted to the plenary of the Zionist Union on November 14, 1951, the *mazkir* Ben Zion Cherches outlined in detail the activities undertaken during that year. The list contained the usual activities, such as collaboration with the KKL (which always distinguished it more than other groups and community institutions), cultural evenings and an *Oneg Shabbat*, lectures on various topics, visits to museums, celebrating Jewish holidays, trips and walks, and not forgetting the remembrance of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, the celebration of another anniversary of the State of Israel and the aforementioned farewell ceremony. The last paragraph of the report summarizes the extraordinary power of synthesis of the past, present and future of the Movement:

We continue the path to realize the pioneering dream in our yishuv, which was initiated by chaverim from our Movement,

preparing new groups that in the near future will leave for hachshara and aliyah. "



The *Shlichim* at the *Ken*



Together with the preparations for the *aliyah* of the elderly, the Movement was still adding new members. One of them, Johnny Schwartzbaum describes joining *Hashomer Hatzair*:

I entered *Hashomer Hatzair* in 1952. A classmate told me it was important to belong to a Zionist organization, took me there and I liked it. I had never heard Jewish music and had never participated in a *Shabbat* activity, and I felt that this was my introduction to Zionism, something I had



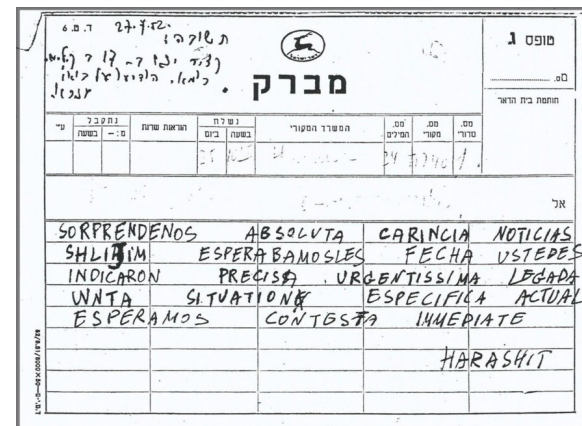


never experienced.

The following year would bring new life to the community in general and the Movement in particular. The Zionist Union decided to bring a shaliach to Havana in order to organize the youth, and the person selected was Ben Gueffen, a young madrich from Mexico who had participated in the annual course of the *Machon Lemadrichim* in Jerusalem. *Hashomer Hatzair* felt that the arrival of their own shaliach, delayed for bureaucratic reasons, was more pressing than ever and this was made clear to the leaders of the worldwide Movement. Subsequently, it would be proven that this feeling was not without foundation and that the youth group created by the Zionist Union would try to compete with *Hashomer Hatzair* and attract young *Shomrim* to its ranks.

But it was not all problems. The new year also led to Havana and to Yaacov (Koba) Vilan, born in Lodz in 1914, who had arrived in Israel in 1935. He was a former leader of the *Haganah* and the legendary commander of the forces that defended *Kibbutz Negba* against an Egyptian attack during Israel's War of Independence. His visit to the *Hashomer Hatzair ken* in Havana was defined as "a new stage for the Movement that leaves a trail of optimism and ideological reaffirmation in its wake."

The new members of the Movement quickly assimilated into the *shomrim* spirit. Esther Kleinhaus, born in Camagüey, arrived in Havana at the age of 12 and soon became an enthusiastic *Shomeret*:



The Movement needs Shlichim

In Havana I was socially isolated and my parents worried. In high school I met Felipe Pistiner, who insisted that I go to Hashomer Hatzair and I was forced by my parents to do so. That is how I started going and then I made aliyah ... I loved it. I made friends quickly and they welcomed me very nicely and I quickly felt at home. It was never just a social thing and what attracted me most was Zionism and the love for Israel, the Jewish history that we learned and, of course the friends I made.

Philip Pistiner was persuaded as the result of his personal experience. Before he had reached the age to join the Movement, his older siblings David and Rita were already





active members. On one occasion he accompanied his siblings to the ken and David Roth found the right way to attract him. Philip then embarked on a 'shomric path' that would intensify over time. Indeed, he was not limited to being an active *Shomer* and someone who convinced his friends and fellow students to join him, but also participated in moshavot, became a *madrich* and also traveled to the legendary *Machon Lemadrachim*, where he acquired technical and practical knowledge that he applied upon his return to Havana.

His sister Rita was also active in the Movement. She lived for a while in Israel and to this day, retains contacts with her friends from that period.

Sergio Gobler retains similar memories from that period:

I was a member for a few years and attended many moshavot. We were experts in stealing flags, but what I want to emphasize is what Hashomer Hatzair did for us. It's like love at first sight. Nobody knows when it started, nor did it finish. It taught us brotherhood, a strong sense of Jewishness and Zionism, and we were very aware of our history and the Holocaust.



Oneg Shabat at the Ken

The ideological reaffirmation was revealed, among other things, in the *hitrajavut* (expansion) attempts relating to the activities of the Movement by opening new kenim in other Havana neighborhoods and nearby towns. A report dated September 27, 1952 described the organized activities, despite the small number of participants, in Miramar and Marianao, where there were small Jewish communities. Three years later, a member of the Movement would travel to Santiago de Cuba, "where there was a fairly large *yishuv*". Efforts to open new shomric groups were made on different occasions and in different places, but despite the efforts of the *madrachim* and the enthusiasm of the youngsters of these communities, the attempts were unsuccessful. Distance, lack of resources and the limited support received, were becoming almost insurmountable obstacles.

As already noted in an earlier chapter, Yaffa Crugliac, one of the leading figures in the Movement in those years, was the first Cuban *shomrit* who traveled to Israel to participate





in the annual course of *Machon LeMadrachim*. From there she sent long letters to her colleagues in Havana, in which she shared with them the experiences she had accumulated and the unique way of life during those months. One such letter, written in November 1952, was published in the *Hashomer Hatzair* magazine of 1953, celebrating the 25th anniversary of *HaKibutz Artzi*. Six decades after it was written, the text continues to transmit enthusiasm and genuine joy, reflecting the core values of the Movement:

Dear Chaverim, chazak: In this short summary, I want to tell you about Israel since my arrival and until now. It was a great thrill to tread on our soil and I thought I was dreaming. I did not know what to say. Finally, after so long, my greatest wish had become reality.

We have a wonderful, intensive course of study in the mornings. Geography, history, economic issues, current affairs, etc. In the afternoon, there is dancing, singing, music, chalil and kishut also tzofiut and sports. The classes are very interesting.

When we were living in the Galut we spoke about the Negev, a kibbutz in the Negev, a desert which, after much sweat, we have managed to revive, but how different and flattering it is to be gazing and looking at it for real. One look at a brief part of it and you see only sand next to it, trees, kibbutzim with chaverim full of life. We are being shown and explained

everything with incredible emotion and pride!

There is nothing more pleasing and exciting than to slowly learn every inch of our Land of Israel, nor anything more wonderful than to see our kibbutzim one by one on our travels. What pride there is to see the statue of Mordechai Anilevich, who symbolizes our struggle and entire perception of life, and to see the great work done by our chalutzim in Eretz Israel!



Returning to the ken in Havana, in his letter to the *Hanhaga Eliona* sent on March 1, 1953, the *shaliach* Yehoshua (Shika) Katzir mentions two important facts:

In the general meeting of parents held yesterday we created a Parent Committee for the Movement. Its role will be limited to providing financial and moral support for the ken, in the hope that we can slowly expand its scope. The first activity of the Committee will be to organize a farewell for Plugat Aliyah Gimmel a group of five Shomrim who are traveling to attend hachshara in the United States and from there will go on aliyah to Israel.





Parent's Committee

Indeed, the group was getting ready for its aliyah and once again, the Parent Committee was involved. It should be noted, as is clear from the abovementioned letter, that the Parents' Committee was not confined to cooperating with the youngsters but was involved in the task of assisting *Shlichim* (who in those days did not receive financial support from the World Zionist Organization or the Jewish Agency) who were helped their early days in a country whose language they did not know and did not have command of.

The preparations came to an end and the group was preparing to leave for hachshara for its agricultural training period and once this stage was completed, would proceed from there to make *aliyah*. As with the previous garin not everyone traveled on the same date. They went in stages and in small groups. Thus, the third group that reached *Dvir* consisted of Celia Bulbank, Dov Fligelman, Gedalia Loshinsky (Lotan), Josef Perelis, Moische Pérez, Batia Schniadoski and Eliezer Warsager. The fourth group

consisted of Bela Lev, David Roth, Uri Topp and Batia Zyscholc. Clara Altchun, who had been a member of the Movement, and her husband Rafael Angel also reached *Dvir* at a later stage, in one of the Cuban Airways flights to which we shall refer later.

The departure of the first group went beyond the framework of the Movement and involved the entire community. At the farewell evening, which took place on March 20, 1953 in the *Beit Am* Zionist Hall which was attended by more than 200 people, with letters and telegrams sent from numerous levels of the community membership, like *B'nei Zion*, the Youth Organization of the Zionist Union of Cuba; the KKL Youth Committee, both sections of the JNF, the Zionist Union of Cuba and the Hebrew Union *Shevet Achim* (Sephardi community); the Youth Section of the Israel Club; *WIZO's Aleph* Group and the Hannah Senesh *WIZO* Youth Group.

The in-house Movement farewell took place the next day at its headquarters, with the traditional mifkad and a special mesiba. As pointed out in the publication 'News of the Movement in Cuba' it certainly was a very special evening, which enjoyed "the presence of a group representing troop No. 10 of the Boy Scouts, and Mr. Esperon, contributing to the enhancement to the mesiba where we would play and dance together late into the night." While all youth movements were inspired by the scouts idea and adopted many of its characteristics, the joint activities of the Cuban Jewish pioneers and scouts was without doubt, an unusual event and additional proof of the capacity of *Hashomer Hatzair* to go beyond the community framework.

Sunday 22nd was the day of departure, at which time they said their farewells to their families, friends and the older



chaverim from the *ken*. The finale of that transcendent moment was reflected in the aforementioned publication:

Feelings at the time were such that the chaverim started dancing the hora in the middle of the airport lounge and singing the Hatikva while they were going up to the plane.

The *moshava* that summer in San Cristobal (Pinar del Rio) took place 'under the sign of *Dvir*'. A month later, in September, another farewell evening was held for the *mazkir* of the Movement, Gedalia Loshinsky, who departed for *hachshara* in New Jersey and from there, like his predecessors, for *aliyah* to Israel. Bela Ternar published in the community newspaper *Habaner Lebn* a long farewell note (in Yiddish), which quotes Gedalia:



A boy scout among the *Shomrim*

I am a man of few words. I never liked to talk much, but when there was something to do, I knew it was my duty. With my aliyah it's the same. I hope I will know how to fulfill my duty to Israel.



Time was passing and the activities of the Movement did not cease, as it followed its unbroken tradition of working simultaneously on several fronts spread geographically across the capital and other smaller cities, and oriented towards Israel, and also to reinforce the principles of the past, enhance the work of the present and look toward to the future.

Also, as in previous periods, the participation of the Parent Committee was recognized and permanent; to support youth activities by financing them, organizing cultural events and coordinating with other community institutions. In these years it was headed by the father of Celia, Esther and Israel Bulbank.

It should be pointed out that even though it was a small community compared to other countries, the Zionist Union of Cuba received frequent visits from prominent figures in the Zionist and kibbutz movements. The Movement was always present, whether actively participating in events organized by community institutions or promoting its own activities so as to make the most of those visits. In early 1954 Isaac Zilber, a member of the first *garin* who had made *aliyah* to *Ga'ash*, came to Cuba and "was officially received at the *ken* in a *mifkad*" and participated in various activities organized by the Movement. Shortly





afterwards, the community was visited by Eliahu Dobkin (Bobroisk, Byelorussia 1898 - Israel 1976), leader of the Zionist movement and one of the signatories of Israel's Declaration of Independence, who held several positions in the World Zionist Organization, the Jewish Agency and *Keren Hayesod*, and who traveled to the island to promote the fundraising campaign of the latter institution. Again, the *Shomrim* became involved in the overall effort and on the cover of the March 1954 issue of its publication, *Nivenu (Iton Bogrim)* called on its readers to contribute to this campaign.

The aforementioned activities of *hitrachavut* constituted a new dimension, which sought, in this case, not only to reach other towns but also a different age group of young people who had already exceeded the age of the Movement. Many of them were college students, who in spite of not fulfilling the principle of *aliyah* did not want to be disassociated from the Zionist idea. In his report to the *Hanhaga Eliona* dated March 1954, the then *mazkir* Israel Bulbank declared:

The Agrupación pro Sionismo Jalutziano (Pro Zionism Pionnering Association) group was formed and called itself Mordechai Anilevich. This group was made up largely of former Shomrim and also supporters whose average age was between that of the educational movement and the Hashomer Hatzair Committee of Parents and Friends. This group would have political goals that the Parents' Committee has not.





Yaffa Crugliac and her future husband Gedalio Grinberg formed part of it, as did Ana Schub, who retains a happy memory of those events and the intense cultural life that they developed.

Several former Shomrim created the 'Chalutzian pro Zionism Group'. They were youngsters who had not made aliyah but were Zionists. All had in common the ideal of Zionism and participated in activities to raise funds to send to Israel: a play, a concert of classical music etc. It was very interesting. We all had similar ideas and ideals in common.

As an example, it is enough to mention its editorial activities, which included the translation into Spanish and publication in 1953 of the famous essay 'Auto-Emancipation' by the medical pioneer and activist Lev Pinsker (Odessa, Russia 1891 - Tomaszów Lubelski, Poland 1821) who was among the founders of the *Hovevei Tzion* group. The end of the translation contained the signatures of the promoters of the initiative: Yitzhak Bar-Levav, Benzy and Mina Cherches, Jaime and Eva Derechinsky, Moses and Maña Derechinsky, Aron and Cachi Drachman, Morris and Sara Greszes, Abraham Huberman, James Laufer, Shoshana Laufer, Abraham and Rosa Luski, Arie and Yaffa Luski, Samuel and Mary Papir, Quito and Mary Waxman, and Luis and Saluna Zechariah.

We should also mention the bilingual (Hebrew - Spanish) Passover *Haggadah* that the Association published in 1955,

which combined traditional texts with others taken from different sources, and included illustrations on every page, in the style of the modern *kibbutz* versions of the *Haggadah* that Zionists who had *chalutzic* elements, intertwined with the overall idea of freedom.

In those days the political situation in the country became agitated and the unrest was also perceived in the universities. Two students of architecture and engineering, respectively, Isaac Percal and Ephraim Kier, formerly associated with the Movement, were forced to leave the country but retained their ties to the Movement and friends from their adolescence and youth.



Ephraim established himself in Puerto Rico and to this day he is in direct contact with Israel. Isaac settled in Italy and sought contact with youngsters and Hashomer Hatzair, and resumed his unintentionally interrupted studies in architecture at the University of Venice.





Someone told me there was a group that met regularly with the shaliach Zeev Havatzelet, a choreographer and filmmaker who studied film at that time in Italy and traveled to Venice every so often to try to form a branch of the Movement, which in the end, did not happen. I had a great affinity with him and in my spare time began to participate in the Movement in Milan and Rome. So it was that in 1960 I arrived at Kibbutz Nir David with a group of French, Swiss and Austrian olim.

The Movement did not remain static and while some of its members moved away from it for various reasons, others came for the first time and immediately integrated into it, as illustrated by some teenage memories from those times. Bertha Plutt recalls their participation in the different activities:

What I remember most about the early days were Fridays when we played ping-pong, sang and danced. In summer, we went on trip camping to Central Hershey and we I enjoyed it very much. We swam in the river and washed our clothes there. The boys did a great job preparing the picnic area and it was all very nice. At night we did guard duty to prevent other groups from coming to steal the flag.

Pnina Zagovalov, reached to the capital from inside the country, and discovered a new world:

When we arrived in Havana my father wanted me to meet Jewish youngsters and decided that my sister and I should attend Hashomer Hatzair. When we went to the ken, we were stunned to see everyone dressed the same way and sharing everything. My sister did not like the experience but it fascinated me and I was there all the time, until we made aliyah.

Tamar Apel (Parma Campos), a member of the Movement, had not completed high school when her family moved to Venezuela. Shortly after arriving in Caracas, on her own initiative and almost spontaneously, Parmita, as her friends and acquaintances called her, put into practice the principle of "hitrachavut" and began to bring together the children from the Jewish community in order to organize recreational activities for them. The idea was welcomed by parents and the group grew as the young *madricha* gradually introduced the *shomric* principles. Without being aware of it, this original way of exporting the Zionist revolution repeated the process of the emergence of *Hashomer Hatzair* in Cuba, when the founders who had arrived from Lithuania came to Havana and reproduced the experience gained following the years of activism in their hometowns. Like them, she would make aliyah a few years after having arrived in her new country. Parmita the first *Hashomer Hatzair* ola from Venezuela, reestablished contacts with her former Cuban colleagues from the





Movement, in Israel.

A leap in time allows us to verify that this was not the only case in which the indestructibility of the connections generated by the Movement became apparent. Clara Cohen also traveled to another country (in this case, Mexico) for family reasons, but returned every summer to spend holidays in Havana, Cuba and participate in the unforgettable *moshavot*.

What better proof is there than this, of the sixth of the ten commandments of *Hashomer Hatzair*? "The *Shomer* is active in the community and maintains friendly relations with his peers."



The year was 1955 and it was the middle of the decade. The first two *garinim* were already in Israel and the Movement continued with its day-to-day activities in Cuba. In a magazine published in May 1955 an item entitled 'Why? Dear Mother' was published, setting out a monolog from a son containing the convictions of young Zionists sometimes confronted with the positions of parents who were not as excited as they were, as they faced the prospect of aliyah:

Dear Mother, how many times have you asked me why am I going to Israel - not realizing that if I go to Eretz, I am not sacrificing myself. No, it's quite the opposite: I go in search of my own happiness, not only as a Jew but also as a man.

Therefore, Mother, I repeat: I consider myself proud to be a chalutz, a pioneer who is going to build a safe and happy workplace, not only for himself but also for his people, that perhaps someday, will serve as a refuge for our brothers who today understand us less well.

Two months later, a report sent to the *Hanhaga Eliona* described the activities undertaken in the *moshava* and mentioned a project in which considerable time and no less effort should be invested: the making of a film:

They are being filmed by two colleagues from CMQ Television (the best television station in the country) and we have taken the opportunity of being in the moshava to shoot several short scenes.

A month later, they went back to the *Hanhaga Eliona* with the same project, to point out that "shooting of the film would be the biggest propaganda bonus for our tnuva" and requested the assistance of the worldwide Movement to shoot a short scene with Yaacov Hazan (Brest Litovsk 1899 - Israel 1992, one of the founders of *Hashomer Hatzair*, a member of the *Knesset*, educator, outstanding and leading figure of the *Kibbutz Artzi* movement and one of the founders of the *Mapam* Party whose leadership he shared for decades with Meir Ya'ari). The request ended with the most convincing argument: "The expenses will be paid by us."





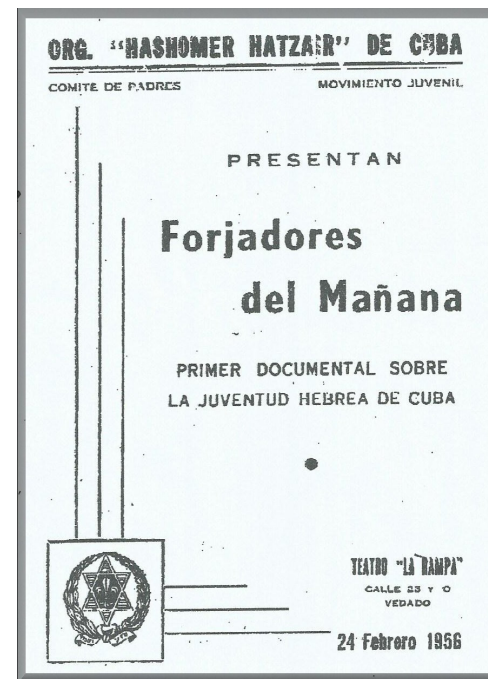
Unlike other times, on this occasion, Israel's response was immediate. A letter dated September 19 of that same year and written in Spanish informed them: "We have begun to take the necessary steps to film the scene with Hazan, as requested, but at this time due to changes in the movies machlaka of *Kibbutz Artzi* we cannot finish it."

We will ignore the changes to which were they referring and we cannot accurately determine how long "at this time" was for, but the film was finally shot with the title "Tomorrow's Builders". Unfortunately, no copy of it is available today, but what still remains is an outline of the script, set in four scenes:

1. Session of the *mazkirut* in *Beit Am* located at Prado 260.
2. Saturday afternoon activities on the flat roof of Egido 5Apr.
3. *Moshava* in Hershey, 1955.
4. Bonfire, awarding of *simanim*, singing *Od lo nutka hasharsheret* [the chain has not yet been disconnected].



A huge bonfire



Filming the night scene in the moshava required technical items and resources that we obviously did not have. Again, the Shomrim found a way to solve the problem by using their ingenuity, as vividly described by Chaim Chayet:

At nightfall, Willy the shaliach appeared in the moshava together with the cameraman José Szejerman, and informed us that they had come to film the mifkad scene and hora dancing around the medura. As they needed





light, they asked us to make a huge bonfire. The order was given and everyone applied themselves to the task of collecting tree branches in the dark, helped by moonlight and lanterns. Finally we got a pyramidal fire several meters high, which gave them enough light to shoot.

Even though it is true that the film got lost, the chain was not actually cut, and the allusion to a famous poem by Yaacov Orland would be repeated more than once, as will be seen in the following chapter.





CHAPTER X: HARD TIMES

The development of all youth movements, regardless of their location or orientation, is an up and down activity that has periods of peak and decline. As we have seen in previous chapters, *Hashomer Hatzair* in Cuba was no exception and its journey indicates that there was alternation between periods of intense activity and others where the pace was slower.

Regarding the reasons that give rise to this pendulum movement, its existence cannot be attributed to a single cause, but to a combination of a number of varying circumstances. For example, the decay that occurred in the late thirties was primarily due to an internal reason, the aliyah of two of its founders, a fact that left the Movement practically leaderless. On the other hand, the sharp increase of activities during the late 1940s was closely associated with the creation of the State of Israel and the possibility of organizing *garinei aliyah*, that for the first time, could become a reality as a group, which was the central objective for all of the Zionist Movement. Moreover, the creation of another Zionist youth movement, *Noar Hatzioni*, was the cause of some decline in the number of *Shomrim*.

Then, in the middle of the 1950's, the Movement entered a new period of weakening that this time resulted from two reasons, one internal and the other external. The *garin* that made aliyah to *Kibbutz Dvir*, which as we have already seen, had operated during a period that was characterized by the variety and diversity of its activities - had already completed the process of aliyah, so it was foreseeable that their departure from the island in search

of Zionist fulfillment, and the the accompanying moments of euphoria, would be followed by a phase of relative recession.

The arrival of a shaliach from Israel, Willy Tjornitzky (Zeev Tzoran) and the return of Yaffa Crugliac from the *Machon Lemadrachim* breathed new life to the Movement. Willy was operating simultaneously in different areas and there are those who define his actions as being truly revolutionary in the work of *Hashomer Hatzair*. He and Yaffa also worked in the Hebrew school and this fact, which deserves to be highlighted because it was so rare, allowed them to extend the influence of the Movement and introduce Zionist ideals into the classroom.

Willy managed to convey his enthusiasm and dedication to the *Shomrim*. Some, like Bela Lev, dedicated all her time to the Movement and worked tirelessly to expand and extend its coverage. The number of students who joined the ranks of *Hashomer Hatzair* grew, as did the number of *Shomrim* who traveled to the *Machon Lemadrachim*. These include, among others, David Roth and Batia Zyscholc, and Uri Topp and Philip Kreiezmar, David Pastiner and Chaim Chayet, Felipe Pistiner; Chaim Brum, Yosi Debesa (Dvir) and Jorge Kirshenfeld (Yechezkel Koren), the last group to which we will refer later.

In a report sent to Israel on January 23, 1954, Willy stated:

[Yaffa] is in charge of the Kovshim and B'nei Metzada groups, and I am in charge of the Tzofim Beinoni'im and Bogrim. Furthermore, she organizes a dance group which, in the future will perform at public

functions and she is also the host of the Movement's radio hour. A week ago we started with another hour devoted to children. The first program was very successful (the theme was Tu Bishvat) and we have received all kinds of congratulations and thanks from children and adults.

Movement activity was intense, and it should be noted that there were numerous publications translated from Hebrew for internal use and for external distribution, such as *Hashavui* (The Prisoner) and *Khirbet Jiza* (The Ruins of Jiza) by the famous Israeli writer S. Yzhar (Rehovot 1916-2006), and participation in presenting *Be'arvot Ha-Negev* (In the Wilderness of the Negev), a play by Yigal Mossinson (1917-1994) which debuted in 1949, at the *Habima* Theatre in Tel Aviv and centered around Israel's War of Independence. This production was promoted by the Agrupación pro Sionismo Jalutziano (Pro Zionism Pionnering Association) and had the active support of the Parents Committee of *Hashomer Hatzair*.

At the same time, the overall situation in the country was becoming increasingly difficult. Uncertainty was rife and violence was on the increase. These circumstances did not have direct relevance to the Movement, but certainly influenced it and its usual activities, which were limited and restricted. This was mainly due to the reluctance of the parents, who had hitherto been willing to let their children leave their homes at night and participate in camps outside the city. The consequences came swiftly. Activities were reduced and the number of chanichim decreased.

These difficulties were stated clearly in a letter sent by Pnina Zagovalov, *mazkira* of the Movement, to the *Hanhaga Eliona* in Israel, in which she detailed the difficulties impeding the normal development of activities:

Over the past two years the nightlife in Havana has become completely impossible. All of this means that we have been prevented from carrying out peulot at night (as you may know, for good reasons, many of our peulot have always taken place during the evening due to the school and work timetables of our chaverim) concentrating them into two days, Saturday and Sunday. You will be able to deduce the disadvantages of this for yourselves. In addition to all the peulot we should add the fatigue of the chaverim, who, on the same day, would go through a peula of the moatzá with their chanichim, their gdud, chugim, and so forth.

Another area in which we were severely affected was the absolute impossibility to go on tiyulim, linot bamoshavot and even the smallest tiyul or trip within the city because the parents feared for the safety of their children, and the only thing we were allowed to do was to bring the chanichim to the ken, and from the ken take them directly to their homes.



However, as already mentioned, like the musketeers they did not let the many difficulties get them down, nor were the *Shomrim* left defeated by the pitfalls that awaited them on their path and went forward in confidence that would there would be more auspicious times in the future. Carlos Don remembers his experiences at that time:

What I liked most were the Friday meetings and moshavot. They were nice conversations and often questions were asked and we amused ourselves in activities of this kind. Hashomer Hatzair provided me with good experiences taught me a lot about Israel.



Sicha (conversation)

During those years the ken had left the building of the Zionist Union move to another location in Santos Suarez, near the Hebrew school. The opening ceremony was attended by the Israeli Consul and representatives of the Zionist Union, KKL and Parents Committee. As usual for this

kind of event, the artistic element was entrusted entirely to the *Shomrim*.

Opening this ken was a milestone in the history of the Movement and at the same time an adventure, since the departure from the community center hinted at the obligation to pay rent with their own funds. As political instability was growing in the country, the difficulties in maintaining the normal rhythm of activities increased. However, it is worth noting some successes, such as the sending of bogrim to the community of Santiago de Cuba to resume activities with the youth of that city, and the participation of representatives of the Cuban Movement in a meeting with their Mexican counterparts, in December 1957.

Another fact worthy of note was the participation of Isaac Chervony and Shoshana Perelis as delegates of Cuba (on behalf of *Hashomer Hatzair* and *HaNoar Hatzioni*, respectively) at the First World Congress of Jewish Youth held in Israel in July 1958, the size of which is reason for amazement: 333 delegates from Israel and 35 participating countries, representing 150 organizations and movements of different ideologies. Upon his return to Havana, Isaac prepared a detailed report which was published in the May 1959 issue of the Havana Life community newspaper, the conclusions of which state:

The presence of the non-Zionist delegates in Israel and their contact with representatives of various Zionist and *chalutzic* movements, who were the ones who most got to express their opinions, as well as the many trips that we made all over the country, where every delegate saw with his own eyes the reality of Israel, its wonderful





reconstruction, the great works that are transforming deserts and mountains, thousands and thousands of young people that simply have an objective - to reconstruct their ancient homeland, the Jewish homeland, their faith in it and in the work they do, may lead to a favorable change in the organizations represented by them. Hopefully time will have the last word, but remember - If you will it, it is no dream!

Immediately after this meeting, the World Congress of *Hashomer Hatzair* Youth Movement took place in *Givat Haviva*. Isaac Chervony and Felipe Pistiner represented the Cuban branch of the Movement and upon their return, report their impressions to their peers in Havana.

New winds began to blow with the change in the political situation in the country, which revived the hopes that had been silenced for many long years, and awakened widespread optimism. Although it is true that *Hashomer Hatzair* maintained its independent course, it was active at a specific time and place (situation that could be illustrated with a play of words (pun): being active on an island but not isolated) and since it was expected, reacted immediately with an intensification and diversification of its activities, as reflected in a report sent to Israel by Pnina Zagovalov on February 15, 1959:

Luckily all this is over. The horizons that are being opened for Cuba and for us in particular are very bright. Our next *mifalim* should be a deepening of ideology and the creation of a highly cultural environment in the *ken*, an immediate reorganization and normalization of the *peulot*,

the presence of the *chanichim* and the general life of the *ken*. We will immediately commence preparing a *mesibá* marking the 25 years of the *tnuá* in Cuba, which we could not previously carry out due to the above mentioned reasons, and as a highlight of the *mifal*, we will organize the *moshava* that we missed, which we hope will take place this year, and be held on a grand scale.

The chain has not yet been broken, despite everything that has happened, and we are sure that it will never break while there is a single Jew left in the *galut* of Cuba.

This last phrase echoes the refrain of the renewed *Hora* of Israeli poet Yaacov Orland (Ukraine 1914 - Israel 2002), massively popular in Israel and in the Diaspora, particularly in the Israeli youth movements so fond of dancing: "Come back, *Hora* and let's dance in circles / because our path is endless, / because the chain continues".

What better example of the continuation of the chain than the celebration of 25 years of the Movement? The celebration of the anniversary was a long-standing tradition of *Hashomer Hatzair*, and the commemoration of the quarter century should have happened in 1958, which was a particularly difficult year that prevented the holding of such events. The celebration was postponed, but not canceled, because there was certainly cause for celebration given the achievements of that period. Indeed, the aforementioned review, which lists the activities planned, reflects the unintentionally interrupted tradition of the Movement, to organize events covering a broad spectrum: social, ideological, cultural, sports, and educational. As an example, we would like to mention the putting on of plays, in which all aspects (adaptation, direction, set design, etc.)





were run by members of the Movement, with the active participation of the Parents' Committee. There were also meetings in the homes of *chanichim* to enjoy classical music, in which we listened to selected compositions to gain basic knowledge ('beginners' or 'advanced'), participation in choirs that in the early days of the Movement performed not only in the events organized by the Movement (Jewish festivals, events for the anniversary of the establishment of the Movement in Cuba, etc.) but also in the wider community (events organized by the Zionist Union, KKL and other institutions); contact with Jewish and world literature and encouragement of the reading of theoretical texts and fiction, including repeated requests to Israel to send books and other activities, and the list goes on. All these activities, and others that were an inseparable part of life in the Movement, along with the teaching of Jewish history and holidays, Zionist and *chalutzic* principles and universal values such as solidarity, justice, fellowship and truth, not only broadened the horizons of the *chanichim* but, as noted at the time by the poet, philosopher, journalist and Cuban national hero José Martí (1853-1895), were the essence of life, based on freedom, morality and justice.



Last years in the movement



Yosef Ader, *shaliach* of the Movement at the time, regularly updated the requests from the chaluatians in Israel on the situation on the island and fluctuations in the development of the Movement. The *Hanhaga Eliona* was aware of the events, as expressed in February 1959 in a letter responding to these periodic reports: "You have done well to call a meeting of the *moatza* of the Movement as the first important step before the next stage in the life of the community in Cuba." Three months afterwards they sent repeated expressions of satisfaction: "It is our great pleasure to note the fact that due to the changes in your country, you have been able, to restore the normal rhythm of regular activities after an unstable period."

Yosef Ader was not always so satisfied, and his letters were not limited only to sending information, but also to suggesting ideas and solutions for the benefit of the Movement. In a letter sent to the *Hanhaga Eliona* in May 1959, he insisted on repeating a request previously expressed, with the accompanying persuasive arguments:

I repeat my proposal to send Bela Lew to work with the movement. a) She is a senior chaverá who has authority within the Movement. b) To teach in the Hebrew school, a key position for the Movement, that has become vacant with the departure of Chaim Chayet. c) To expand our influence to circles outside the Movement.





The general changes that immediately affected what was happening in the Movement involved a fundamental change in the attitude of *Hashomer Hatzair*, which warrants a mention simply because of the novelty it involved.

Traditionally and since their creation, the *chalutzic* youth movements operated in different countries without getting involved in national events and directed all their efforts towards aliyah, the supreme goal for the fulfillment of Zionism. The development of *Hashomer Hatzair* in Cuba took place within a similar framework, but the new era that was beginning was also sensed within it.

This change in attitude towards the surrounding reality was perceived in two directions - from the Movement to the wider community and vice versa. A few months after the change of government and as the consequence of a mass rally of farmers in the capital, the Zionist Union took the initiative to host several dozens of farmers in the hall of its headquarters at 260 Prado. As on previous occasions, the *Shomrim* immediately agreed to the request for collaboration and offered campbeds and other items of equipment used in the *moshavot*. To this day Pnina Zagovalov Chervony remembers how the *shomrim* busily toured the homes and shops of relatives and acquaintances to collect mattresses, crockery and other essentials in order to provide them with minimal comforts for a few days in the city. It should be pointed out that the relief effort was organized and carried out with the knowledge of the parents and other community agencies. The spirit of solidarity and mutual assistance was also as close to Jewish origins as it was to Cuban traditions, once again expressed in a quote from Martí: "Helping those who need it is not only part of the duty, but of happiness."

Moreover, we should also mention the publication in the official weekly gazette *Semana* of a series of articles on the *kibbutz*, which aroused great interest.

Yet another interesting result is the reverse side of this new relationship with the overall non-Jewish environment. In all Diaspora communities it was common for the traditional scouting movements to be self-educating; Cuban *Shomrim* realized this principle in their daily work and in particular, during the periods when they lacked the presence of *shlichim* on the island. We should also point out that there were occasions that required the support of adults, be they their own parents organizing themselves in groups or the community institutions. This time, *Hashomer Hatzair* received help from an unexpected source. As they had repeatedly expressed, their greatest desire was for the resumption of "our missing *moshava*". From their inception, back in 1942, the *moshavot* had taken place in various locations: Pinar del Río, Campo Florido, Guanabacoa, Hershey (a sugar plant installed on the island during World War I to supply sugar to their production facilities in Pennsylvania) and others. In 1960, the news was twofold: the interrupted tradition was to be revived, but this time it would be held in a different place, hitherto unimaginable. The informative weekly newspaper of the Movement, *Batnua* dated July 1960, published a detailed invitation to participate in it:

We have already started in our ken preparations for the moshava of 1960 which is approaching. This moshava will be held at the "Las Margaritas" farm located next to the village of Guayabal,





on the road to Pinar del Rio, just 40 minutes from the city of Havana. This farm has its own swimming pool, as well as an amusement park, open spaces for games and also indoor games and other activities. The chanichim of the ken will sleep in rooms on the farm and some, in small kvutzot in the huts next to the main house. The moshava, as always, will be in a healthy and comfortable Israeli kibbutz environment. Don't miss it!

The farm had been allocated to the Movement by the government, so that young people could participate in the educational, sporting, cultural and recreational activities appropriate for summer camps. As is clear from the advertisement, the property had comforts and luxuries never before seen in any *moshava*, a fact that certainly created some contradiction with the austerity, simplicity and direct contact with nature that were basic principles of any educational camp. The problem was not lost on the leaders of the Movement, who managed to overcome it with their usual creativity. The solution found was described in the report sent to Israel in September of that same year, in which Shoshana Rubinstein explained the difficulties mentioned, the solutions, and summarized the conclusions after the camp had ended:

This moshava took place on a farm that had been allocated to us by a government agency and which included all kinds of amenities. But despite that, the tzofí

environment was not missing at any time, because we established the machane using ohalim, although the chanichim did not sleep in them. The kvutzot also arranged activities dedicated to tzofíut as well as games and other peulot about which we will inform you immediately. There was also a mifkad held for parents. In summary, it can be said that we were left with stimulus and encouragement for the development of the tnuá, as were the madrichim and chanichim, and this was achieved in full. Here, we must emphasize the experience acquired by the Nir-Oz gdud regarding their responsibility to work and provide hadrachá, which served as a great basis for its future in the management of the ken.



The last Moshava





Neither the *madrichim* nor the *chanichim* knew then that this would be the last moshava and that the gdud was to feature in a crucial moment in the life of the Movement in Cuba, which we shall detail in the next chapter. That was not all that they were ignorant about regarding their immediate future; but let us not go ahead of ourselves and go back a while in time to pick up the thread of events and return to another crucial activity in the life of the Movement: participation in the *hachshara* program.

As in previous years, the garin that was to make *aliyah* to *Kibbutz Ga'aton* had traveled to attend the *hachshara* program in New Jersey in order to prepare themselves for *kibbutz* life. Shortly after arriving there and unexpectedly, an internal crisis led to their disintegration. Saul Gordon, who for personal reasons had not traveled with them to the United States, never managed to understand what had actually happened, and to this day remembers this episode as particularly painful. Some of his colleagues prefer not to talk about it while others explain it giving different reasons. The truth is that given the bad experience that left a bitter taste, not only among those involved in the crisis but also among the members of the Movement, even the *shaliach* Yosef Ader considered the possibility of never sending any more groups to Hightstown. The answer he received from Israel left no room for doubt:

"I understand your fear of sending the bogrim to the hachshara program in the U.S. after the bitter experience with the gdud that disintegrated there, and that the Movement must guard against failures that may affect their educational efforts.

On the other hand, experience shows that in recent years one of the reasons for the crises affecting the magshimim when meeting the reality of the kibbutz, was an insufficient hachshara program and a scarcity of knowledge of the problems facing the kibbutz. I therefore think it is essential for them to spend some time on hachshara.

In this regard, and from a positive point of view, it is interesting to look at the same issue from another angle. As already noted, *Hashomer Hatzair* groups in Cuba and Mexico lacked *hachsharot* programs in their respective countries and they therefore sent their *chanichim* to the US in order for the young people to have the opportunity to receive training for farm life in Israel. Obviously, the Movement in North America (not just in the US but also in Canada) was larger and had more resources than in Latin America. However, what is surprising-and in this case it is a pleasant surprise, is that when we are able to have a 'mirror view'. We are able to verify that the different perspectives can produce not only different images but also different conclusions.

The Book of *Hashomer Hatzair*, which outlines the history of the global Movement since its inception in 1913, in different times and different countries, mentions the participation of Latin American youth in the American *hachshara* program and reaches surprising conclusions, as shown in the following paragraph:



The shómric hachshara program in Hightstown (New Jersey) was the only one in North America. The struggle for livelihood and economic and social strengthening had been one of the toughest tests in recent years. The official institutions did not provide assistance and more than once threatened to cut their budgets. But to tell the truth, the general atmosphere in the country and declining pioneering prestige had also infiltrated the ranks of the Movement, and the number of participants in the hachshara program was reduced. The members of the movement in Mexico and Cuba came to the rescue: not only had the hachshara program survived, but it developed new branches of activity and became an important center of the Movement that attracted friends and supporters with chalutzian thought "[emphasis added, IS]

The interpretation of reality depends not only on 'the eye of the beholder', as noted by the Spanish poet Ramón de Campoamor (1817-1901), but also the angle from which you look, the moment you look and the position of beholder. After so many years and miles along the way, our empathic and affectionate look reaches similar conclusions.



La Histadrut Hashomer Hatzair B'Cuba
Invita a todos los Hebreos para el gran

ACTO de DESPEDIDA
del grupo de 15 Javerim del Hashomer que hacen Aliah a Israel
que se efectuará el

Sábado 8 de Marzo de 1958, 9 p. m.
en los Salones del Patronato, 13 e I, Vedado

GRANDIOSO FESTIVAL FOLKLORICO ISRAELI
Participación de renombrados Artistas de la Farandula Cubana
NADIE DEBE FALTAR A ESTE MAGNO ACTO

IMPRESOS VIDA HARANERA—DOL. 153. TELEFONO 44-9332

The Jewish community in Cuba continued to receive regular visits from prominent Israeli personalities. One was Zvi Lurie (Poland 1906 - Israel 1968), a member of Kibbutz Ein Shemer and a well-known figure in the Zionist Movement. A brief review of its long history shows that he joined the founding group of the kibbutz movement Hakibutz Haartzi, was one of the signatories of the Declaration of Independence of the State of Israel, was among the founders and first director of the "Voice of Israel" and held various positions at the World Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency. In October 1959, the Zionist Union held a ceremony to honor this outstanding visitor during which the president of the Zionist plenary, Moshe Levin, delivered welcoming remarks and noted that "we must recognize that Hashomer Hatzair should always take the most active part in the Zionist Movement worldwide". As expected, Zvi Lurie was the keynote speaker, and said that "parents who have children in Israel should be proud and happy, because that's the best investment we can make in

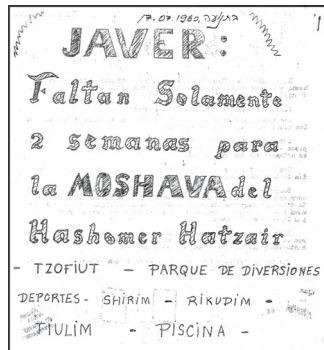


our State of Israel."

In those days, on the occasion of the celebration of *Rosh Hashanah*, Isaac Chervony sent a greeting to the world management in Israel on behalf of the leadership of the Movement in Cuba:

Let us hope that in this time of rushing around and the distancing of our youth from any chaltuzian ideals, the New Year will mark the continued strengthening and enlargement of the Tnua so that this year the hopes of a true and lasting peace in Eretz Israel and for all the peoples of the world, will finally come to fruition.

A few days later, Chaim Chayet published an open letter in Yiddish in the 'Free Tribune' section of the community newspaper *Habaner Leb'n* (Havana Life), addressed to the parents of the youngsters and containing an urgent request:



The last *Moshava*

Financial support is very important to us, but even more important is the moral support. You don't live only off money. In life there are more important things than money, that give meaning to an honest and useful existence. Fathers and mothers of the Cuban yishuv, listen to our call for help and save us from assimilation. Help us in our education in the spirit of the State of Israel!"

Times were changing, circumstances varied and personal styles differed, but the rational ideas and the *shomric* spirit remained unchanged. Nevertheless, despite the enthusiasm and renewed vigor, the most prominent feature in the activities of *Hashomer Hatzair* in Cuba in those crucial years, was ambivalence. The initial optimism and enthusiasm that had breathed new life into the Movement would have to face a change that would have a decisive influence on its subsequent development in the months to come.

With the implementation of new laws in the country, the community began to witness a process of emigration that had begun gradually but soon increased its pace. The number of *chanichim* fell once more, while the garin preparing for aliyah to *Ga'aton* (a *kibbutz* located in the Western Galilee, founded in 1948 by *Hashomer Hatzair* members from Hungary, who had come to Israel as *ma'apilim*) began to fulfill it and delegated its responsibilities to the group that was to succeed it in performing these tasks. Both *Batnua*, the weekly publication that reviewed the aforementioned activities of the Movement, and the reports sent to Israel



gave detailed reviews of the most significant events, among which we will mention just a few, as examples:

Yitzhak Chervony, chaver of the tnuá has arrived back in Havana. On his arrival the moatzá was convened to implement the decisions made by the veida. Currently, Yitzhak is a madrich in tzofim as well as rosh haken and gizbar. His work has developed in a positive manner. (1959)



Kvutzat Hechalutz

At the last yeshiva of the Hanhaga Rashit it was agreed that the chaver Jorge Kirshenfeld of gdud Nir-Oz would carry the degel of the tnuá of Cuba to Israel. He deserves it, and we hope he will know to carry it with honor. (1959)

Shortly thereafter, the flag holder traveled to Machon Lemadrichei Chutz La'aretz together with Yosi Debesa (Dvir) and Chaim Brum, another 'Three Musketeers' who did not return to Cuba but remained in Israel awaiting the arrival of gdud Nir-Oz, so they could join it.

"LEHITRAOT BA'ARETZ (See you in Israel)

After years of hard work for the Tnuá in Cuba, our beloved javer Chaim Chayet with his family is leaving for Israel, and will settle at Kibbutz Ga'aton. We wish you a safe journey and a pleasant and enjoyable life within the Israeli kibbutz framework." (1960)

"MIFKAD LICHVOD (in honor of) ESTHER VETZVI

In honor of the chaverim yekarim (our dear friends) Esther [Kleinhaus] and Tzvi [Litvin], who are about to realize the hagshama chalutzit, we are holding a mifkad ken, as the small but heartfelt tribute that the ken grants to those who



have served selflessly, giving to it the best of their youth, this coming December 19. We know that this recognition is minor relative to what they do with pride and the example they set for our tnuá in Cuba." (1960)

Tzvi recalls his journey through the Movement as a very pleasant experience:

I remember the camaraderie and the atmosphere. It was very important to have a framework. I always went to everything I could, and my parents never objected. During my hachshara I worked with laying hens, it was a very interesting experience."

Today, Esther recalls that shortly after her arrival at the *kibbutz* she joined the Yehudit Arnon Dance Studio, an experience filled with satisfaction and unforgettable experiences. Over time, the studio would evolve into the Contemporary *Kibbutz* Dance Company, whose headquarters remains on the *kibbutz* to this day.

Isaac Chervony and Pnina Zagovalov also married a few days before their aliyah. The celebration, which was naturally attended by all their colleagues in the Movement, would become a symbolic event for Jewish life in Cuba. Nobody knew it, but that was the last Jewish wedding in Havana. It would take more than three decades until a similar event occurred, but that's another story.

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So, once again, the brief but intense history of Hashomer Hatzair in Cuba is intertwined inextricably with the vicissitudes of the whole community on the island. The flourishing moments alternate with the declining stages, but the Shomrim did not bow to the difficulties and moved forward, perhaps more slowly but with no less determination. Like the national poet, they also knew that:

*Everything is beautiful and constant,
everything is music and right,
and all, like the diamond,
before light is carbon.*



CHAPTER XI: SUDDEN GROWTH

Since the arrival of the Cubans, rice has become our daily bread. We have found that a meal is not a meal unless it is accompanied by a generous portion of rice, whose grains must be 'free' (i.e. separated and not stuck together). This is where the name of the Cuban garin: Nir Orez is derived. [Orez means rice in Hebrew IS].

Those who expressed it this way were the Israeli members of *Kibbutz Yechiam*, to which the last *garin of Hashomer Hatzair* in Cuba, had arrived after making aliyah in 1961 and joining the *chevrat noar* of the *kibbutz*. This concept, as well as the peculiar circumstances of that *aliyah*, require not only a separate paragraph, but a look back in time and space.



"*Chevrat noar*" was the name given to a group of teenagers of the same age who made aliyah without their parents or their biological families as part of an educational, colonizing, social program etc., and who were to be integrated in an already existing *kibbutz*. It was a framework created by *Aliyat Hanoar* in the thirties, to extract children and young Jews from areas under Nazi rule and send them to Israel. The first group naturally, arrived in 1934, at *Kibbutz Ein*

Harod, from Germany. With the passing of time and due to changing circumstances, both the mission of *Aliyat Hanoar* and the characteristics of *chevrat noar* changed.

Why did this group of Cuban *Shomrim* make aliyah without their parents? First of all, we should remember that the events that had taken place in Cuba directly influenced the Jewish community in general and the Movement in particular. Being faithful to its principles and its history, they continued to develop their regular activities, if not with the same strength as in the past, then certainly with the same enthusiasm. Janus, the Roman god with two faces looking simultaneously in opposite directions, had not abandoned the *Hashomer Hatzair ken*, which did not forget its Zionist tradition of the past and continued to observe with concern, the uncertain future that lay ahead.

Moreover, despite the difficulties, the Movement continued not only with its own activities but also with its active participation in community life in the larger sense. What better proof was there than what happened in late 1960? In December of that year, the XXV Zionist Congress in Israel would take place, for which the Jewish community on the island was about to choose the delegates who would to represent it there. As on previous occasions, *Hashomer Hatzair* became involved in the election campaign and the work of the young people and their *madrichim* resulted in the election of its candidate Samuel Zyscholc (father of Batia, an ex-shomeret who was already in Israel). The results were sent to the *Hanhaga Eliona* in a detailed report dated November 8, 1960:



"XXV Zionist Congress: Regarding this matter, we should say that the work was done mostly by the chaverim of gdud Nir Oz with the help of Isaac Chervony, the only currently active boger here with us. The work relating to the elections, propaganda, etc., was carried out by gdud Nir Oz, and despite their inexperience in this kind of work, first due to the short time they had been members of the tnua and second being of such young age, they were nonetheless able to bring about the successful candidacy of Mapam [Socialist Party] which won first place with 215 votes, against 175 for Mapai [Labor Party], 173 for Herut [Revisionist Party] and 135 votes for the General Zionists and Progressivism [Liberal Party], 135 votes.

No doubt it was a doubly meritorious win, given the existing difficulties. It should also be noted that the energy put into this campaign that required a monitoring eye on Israel, did not leave unnoticed the situation that was being lived in Cuba, as reflected in the same report:

The operation 'One hundred and twenty chanichim for Chanukah' is still proceeding but we cannot currently say it will be accomplished, as each day more families from the yishuv are emigrating to the United States and logically, these

families are taking many chanichim with them. Hopefully, you are aware of the matzav leumi from Nissan [Israel's emissary in Cuba]. Notwithstanding this, the ken continues its normal activity, although the work morale has declined somewhat in the kvutzot and in the chanichim because they can see that sooner or later, every Jewish family will leave the country.

A few days later a community event was held, sponsored by the Zionist Union, and involving all the youth movements. The topic under discussion was 'The present and future of our youth in Cuba', and responded to the needs of the time. The organizers asked all youth movements to prepare a presentation of their ideas and opinions. *Hashomer Hatzair* developed a brief account of the vicissitudes of Jewish history and made its positions clear, precise and unambiguous in a text that those who participated in that meeting remember to this day, and which would be read again at more than one meeting:

There is only one possible solution to the Jewish problem: aliyah to Israel. All other concepts are nothing more than a utopia. In our yishuv in Cuba the same laws as in other areas of Jewish dispersion are applicable. This means that given certain historical factors that are still being repeated today, it is impossible to settle roots in the galut for a lasting and harmonious life.



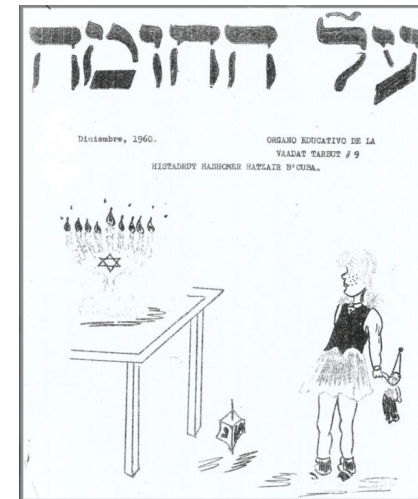
The Jewish Youth of Cuba must take as its line to follow the basics established by Dr. Theodor Herzl, founder of the modern Zionist Political Movement. He stated: "If you will it, it is no dream", referring to the Jewish State.

Those young men seemed not to settle for a mere declaration of principles, important as they were, but followed the advice of *Shammai*: "Speak little and do much" (Ethics of the Fathers 1:15). Therefore, the conclusion was at the same time a rallying call:

We propose that the Jewish youth of Cuba should organize itself for Aliyah. The youth should be positioned as the first element of the solution to the Jewish question. Let us not dream that the process passing through the yishuv in Cuba will change. We do not seek solutions, nor assimilation, or migration to any country other than Israel, because first, this would be suicide as a nation and second it is only a temporary palliative. We should unite on the road to Israel, and be the chalutzim of our community and repeat the epic journey of the builders of the State. Remember, aliyah is a duty and a historical imperative!

After that crucial evening, the Movement activities continued although the decrease in the number of *chanichim* was increasingly evident. As noted by the report, the festivity of *Chanukah* was organized in the usual manner, in traditional spirit, with music, games and Israeli dances, but instead of the expected 120 participants, only 30 attended. Indeed, the feeling was unanimous: "The mesiba was technically a success."

Events unfolded at a dizzying pace, and in early 1961 the decision was made: the garin was to prepare for its *aliyah*. Its members did so in an organized manner, without their families and with the destination being *Yechiam*, a relatively new *kibbutz* (established in 1946) located in the Western Galilee, near the town of Nahariya.



The last publication



This aliyah was part of a carefully crafted plan that also included other youth movements and the community in general, although *Hashomer Hatzair* occupied a prominent place. Despite the dramatic circumstances, we could define it with a hint of humor as 'Operation Zionist Sheep'.

In Israel they were aware of the course of events in Cuba and the difficulties that the community in general and the youth movement in particular were facing. The sources of information were diverse: the *Ga'aton garin*, which had come to Israel a short time ago, knew what was happening. So did the three young men who were studying that year at the *machon lemadrichim* and maintained contact with their families, who were still on the island. Also, Nahum Sharon and Nissan Yoeli, the two *shlichim* sent to Havana, sent frequent letters to various authorities in Israel, describing the situation and requesting responses.

For its part, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Israel decided that Yoel Bar-Romi, at that time serving in the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires, would travel to Cuba to open a diplomatic legation for Israel in the country. During his stay in Havana, Bar-Romi also made contact with the Jewish community. He studied the situation thoroughly and produced detailed reports that were regularly sent to Jerusalem.

It should be noted that the Israeli authorities did not immediately accept the idea that everyone would fulfill their aliyah and close the ken in Havana. This issue was the focus of many meetings and debates until finally the decision was made at a meeting attended by, among others, prominent representatives of *Hakibutz Artzi*, the Social Department, the *Hanhaga Eliona* and Chaim Chayet, an active member of the Movement on the island, who had

made *aliyah* to *Ga'aton* a little while earlier.

Thus, due to the urgency of the case and sharing of concerns, exchanging of ideas and combining of efforts, a "symphonic" plan was developed, like an orchestra in which each instrument played its part and together achieved a coordinated and harmonious effect. The Israeli government, through its Foreign Affairs and Agriculture ministries, offered the Cuban government agricultural advice and a donation of 160 sheep (all of which came from *kibbutzim* and were noted for their higher milk production) which, in turn, made an aircraft of Cuban Airlines available to Israel, and it flew to Israel with lots of new *olim* and returned to Cuba with the sheep. Isaac Zilber, acting leader in Cuba's *Hashomer Hatzair*, having made *aliyah* with the first *garin* which founded *Ga'ash*, went back to Cuba with the sheep and remained there for some months, until the departure of the last plane.

The plan envisaged the completion of four flights: the first left Cuba in January 1961, the second the following month, the third in July of the same year, while the fourth trip fell through. The *Shomrim* made aliyah on the second flight, as is clear from a letter sent to Israel about three weeks prior to departure:

Regarding the fate of the tnuva, we have decided together with Nissan to keep it standing (active) until the departure of the last chaver of the seven who are left because two are in the hachshara program in New Jersey. Nissan will write with more details and in Ivrit, about our aliyah. All we know is that the date on which we



leave is between 20 and 22 February.

The letter also detailed the names of the members of *gdud* Nir Oz: Yael Balkowski, Aaron Brum, Shmuel Dubelman, Isaac Duchner, Dov Kravicas, Rodolfo Rubinstein, Shoshana Rubinstein, Chaim Schumacher and Alexander Akselrot (convalescing from polio, who traveled a few months later); Chaim Brum, Jose Debesa and Jorge Kirshenfeld, who were already in Israel at the *Machon Lemadrachim* and Jana Debesa, who traveled through *Aliyat Hanoar*. Reiterating the words of Aaron Brum already mentioned: *"Last year, when we were heading the Movement, we were only 15 and 16 years old. We simply matured at once."*

After the *aliyah* of this group, the Movement virtually ceased to exist. The cessation of activities was not due to any prohibition or closure order, but rather to the gradual departure of its members, whether members of the larger group, *madrachim* or *chanichim*. Alex, who as already mentioned, had to postpone the trip for health reasons, was in charge of the ken and was, literally and metaphorically, 'handed the keys' to it.

So this is how it ended the presence of *Hashomer Hatzair* in the Pearl of the Antilles. Three intense, successful and vital decades which were a significant milestone in the history of the Jewish community in Cuba and which left an indelible mark on those who participated in th



The activities of the Movement ceased, but in Havana there were still several thousand Jews and the two Israeli emissaries, who were fulfilling their tasks as had been foreseen. Three short documents testify to these difficult times:

In April 1961, Nissan Yoeli received a letter from Israel with certain clarifications and directions:

Dear Nissan: Yesterday we sent the following telegram to Nahum Sharon: 'Zilber preparing flight. Secure place in airplane. Confirm Telegraph'. This means that Isaac Zilber was released by the kibbutz for a short mission of two or three months in the hope that by the time of the departure of the plane back to Cuba on April 23, the papers will be in his possession (Israeli passport and a secure ticket booked by you). We have been warned that they must secure a place on the plane in advance and from Cuba. This is why the telegram was sent. [Emphasis in the original]

Two months later, Nahum Sharon informed the *Hanhaga Eliona*:

With regard to the yishuv today, it is estimated that more than half of the Jews have left the country. The Jewish Havana



has become a small village. Surprisingly, all the public institutions still exist, but there are almost no young people. The parents are still here but the kids are already on the other shore. The process continues every day, with Jews departing on every aircraft.

The following month, Isaac Zilber sent updated information about the situation in Cuba to the *Hanhaga Eliona*:

A few days ago a contingent of olim from here arrived in Israel. When speaking about aliyah to Israel the official reports over the past two years are not clear about the movement of people leaving the country. In fact, some 5,000 Jews have left from here, but only 10% of them to Israel. The percentage varies from time to time, and has grown a lot recently. I will be returning in the next charter. For personal and family reasons, and others, my visit has come to an end. However, I am convinced that we must continue with what I started.



A stage had been completed, but that story did not disappear completely. The ideals and values taught by the Movement would continue to be important, not only in the Caribbean but also in the Mediterranean and elsewhere.

Indeed, a year later, *Kibbutz Yechiam* had a party to hand over the crests of the Movement to the *bogrim*, at which the first anniversary of the Cuban aliyah of the *garin* who had joined the chevrat noar was also held. Although it was made up of young people from different Latin American countries (Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay, among others), the Cuban group was the largest.

As usual in all the festivities of the youth Movement, the mifkad, could not be left out, together with an entertainment section which included a play, Israeli dancing, a choir, a film, an exhibition on the Movement in Cuba and a Havana-style carnival.

On that occasion there was also an interesting counterpoint [*Translator's note: In music, counterpoint is the relationship between voices that are interdependent harmonically (polyphony) and yet are independent in rhythm and contour.*] between the different views of the new immigrants on the one hand and the "veterans" of the *kibbutz* on the other. Somehow, these differences reflect the interactions between two groups as idiosyncrasies and different life experiences. Referring to the receipt of the crests, the young Cubans expressed their feelings and their beliefs seriously and in a most solemn tone:

The chalutzim of Cuba who are found on kibbutzim have always been our example and encouragement. We, the Nir Oz group, were the last group to make aliyah and, apparently, there will be no further aliyah from Cuba. Therefore, the reception of the crests by the bogrim has special meaning for us. We want the kibbutz members to





know that the hashlamá they received will show them how to follow the path, which is our path. (Isi Duchner).

In fact, the *Hashomer Hatzair* Movement in Cuba was the movement that demonstrated with certainty that our educational path was the best. (Chaim Brum).

The veterans for their part, caught the joyful and playful spirit of the young Caribbeans. Proof of this is the reference to rice mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, and another reference is the contact between two worlds:

In the first encounter with authentic Indians, we al Yechiam suddenly saw what there is another side to the planet.

Undoubtedly, the welcome at the *kibbutz* was warm and generous, but the concept of cultural diversity had not yet been internalized by the hosts.



The history of *Hashomer Hatzair* in Cuba ends, like all good concerts, with a final piece by the entire orchestra. When the crescendo reaches its peak, all voices and instruments join together as the intensity increases and the music not only resonates in our ears but thrills the innermost fibers of the soul.

From the initial musketeers to the *gdud Nir Oz*, from the Caribbean to the Mediterranean and beyond, this is the story of all those who passed through the Movement, assimilated their ideals, disagreed and cooperated with institutions and community elements and above all, retained the values acquired in those early years, set down in the "Decalogue of the *Shomer*" which were part of the membership card and accreditation to the Movement:

1. *The Shomer is an honest man and always keeps his word.*
2. *The Shomer is a pioneer of national and social liberation of his people and his country.*
3. *The Shomer is a worker and fulfills himself on a shomric kibbutz.*
4. *The Shomer is a doer and fights for a life of equality, peace and the brotherhood of the people.*
5. *The Shomer is a brother in the shomric society and carries out the instructions of his madrichim.*
6. *The Shomer is active in society and maintains friendly relations with his peers.*
7. *The Shomer loves nature, learns to understand it and is familiar with the landscape of his homeland.*
8. *The Shomer is brave, independent and full of the joys of youth.*





9. The Shomer adjusts his character and aspires to spiritual and bodily wholeness.

10. The Shomer is righteous and pure in thought, creating and establishing a style of pioneering life (does not smoke, does not drink alcohol and maintains sexual purity).

Righteousness, friendship, independence, diligence, joy, brotherhood... How much better would it be to live in a world truly governed by these principles!





CHAPTER XII: FROM THE CARIBBEAN TO THE MEDITERRANEAN

The changes that occurred in Cuba at that time also generated drastic and irreversible changes in the Jewish community and in the lives of its members. Institutions such as the Zionist Union and the Hebrew school were so severely affected by the emigration of the Jewish families that they finally stopped operating, although they were never formally closed. In fact, the Hebrew school continued to exist, but the nationalization of private schools and the imposition of a unified curriculum made it a completely different institution whose only connection to the original school was the building in which it operated.

The youth movements and other associations suffered a similar fate. The previous chapter described the last months of activity of *Hashomer Hatzair*, the moments of hesitation and the decision to make a group aliyah of a handful of teenagers who decided to take their destiny into their own hands and start a new life. To tell the truth, it was the fulfillment and continuation of the values and principles taught by the Movement and its madrichim whom they would meet again in Israel.

With the perspective of the five decades that have elapsed since then, the courage relating to that decision and how it was implemented still arouse wonder and admiration. But no less surprising is the fact that although the Movement ceased its activities on the island, its presence was still felt in the lives of those who had passed through its ranks. This influence can be summarized basically in three aspects.

The Cuban *Shomrim* in Israel and Abroad

The exit of the *Shomrim* from the island, which was due to different reasons, dispersed to all four corners of the earth. First we should mention those who fulfilled the ideal of aliyah, either by being pioneers who received "certificates" from the British Mandate in the early years of activity of the Movement, or as the four groups who traveled in a more organized manner to *kibbutzim* and those who, for personal and family or other reasons, came to Israel at different times.

The reference to the Cuban *Shomrim* who made aliyah to the *kibbutzim* cannot be limited to statistical data, but must take into account its specific significance. Its importance should not be measured in quantitative terms but it must be examined from a qualitative perspective.

The listing of the *kibbutzim* who received Cuban groups (*Ga'ash*, *Dvir*, *Ga'aton*, *Yechiam*) and the characteristics of each of them, allow us to draw a clear picture of this *aliya*: *Ga'ash* is located in the center of Israel, on the coastal plain of the Mediterranean; *Dvir* is located in the south of the country, north of the Negev desert, a region characterized by drought, low rainfall and low population density; *Ga'aton* and *Yechiam* are within a short distance of each other and are located in the north of Israel in Western Galilee, whose varied landscapes include picturesque mountains and fertile valleys, evergreen forests and noisy rivers. Thus, the distribution of the Cuban *chalutzim* contours and covers the map of the country, from the desert to the forest and from the valley to the mountain.

From another point of view, each group represents not





only landscapes that usually conjure up activities in Havana but illustrates different forms of colonization. The group that made *aliyah* to *Ga'ash* founded a new *kibbutz*, made up entirely of Latin-American *Shomrim* (Cuba, Argentina, etc.). In the case of *Dvir* and *Ga'aton*, the Cuban olim joined existing *kibbutzim* in a process that was defined as *hashlama* (completion). The last group, consisting of youngsters who had not yet completed high school, were received in Yechiam and joined the chevrat noar which, as already mentioned, was made up of teenage boys and girls who came to the *kibbutz* without their families

So without trying beforehand, the Cuban *Shomrim* went on to form a microcosm representing on a small-scale, the broad spectrum of pioneering aliya and Israeli reality. With the passage of time and their entry into adulthood, many of them left the *kibbutz* to settle in cities, *moshavim* and small towns. Some formed families while others studied in college (which the strict principles of the youth movement did not allow) and entered the various branches of the liberal professions, entrepreneurship, industry, commerce and agriculture; in short, all facets of life in a much younger country which was no less dynamic than themselves.

However, not all Caribbean *Shomrim* arrived on the shores of the Mediterranean. As already mentioned, the vicissitudes of Cuban history in the mid-twentieth century led to mass emigration that went primarily, but not only to the United States. Most settled in Miami and in 1961 they created their own community, the Cuban Hebrew Congregation, colloquially nicknamed 'the Circle'. Others chose New York and some dispersed to more distant cities such as Clara (Jaike) Gurman, who despite residing in El Paso has not lost touch with her friends and companions

from those happy days that are etched in her memory and heart.

The contact between the *Shomrim* in Israel and other countries was maintained, first, because of the healthy family relationships, and no less than this, because the ties of friendship forged in the Movement were preserved over time and expressed through mutual visits and regular meetings that have taken place to this day. To cite just a few examples, we should mention a meeting held at *Kibbutz Ramot Menashe* in April 1987, another at *Ga'ash* held in May 1988 and an event organized in Miami in November 1986 and attended by several former *Shomrim* who traveled from Israel and at which, Isaac Zilber said:

We have so much in common. The days at the ken, the youthful fraternity, transparency, apathy, the nights singing around the medura. That cannot be removed. That is something that no one can take away.

The former foreign *Shomrim* expressed their unwavering affection for Israel, as transmitted by the Movement and nurtured throughout their adult lives, in generous contributions to *kibbutzim*, universities, hospitals, etc. in the country of their youthful dreams. As an example of such symbolic ties to Israel, it is worthy of note that Ysrael Seinuk, a structural engineer who achieved international fame and who received numerous awards and acknowledgments with the planning of buildings such as the "Lipstick" by Philip Johnson and the Trump Tower in New York, asked to





be buried in Israel, a wish that was complied with by his family.

The Cuban Shomrim and the Youth Movements in Latin America

The ties of the Cuban *Shomrim* with the youth Movement that defined their individual and collective identity, were also cemented in educational missions carried out by many of them abroad, in the name of *Hashomer Hatzair* and on its behalf. The involvement and active participation in organizational and ideological tasks that had characterized both during these crucial years was again evident in other stages of their lives, not as a youthful enthusiasm that the time had failed to satisfy, but as an almost genetic fingerprint that had marked their lives with an indelible imprint.

Isaac Zilber, a member of the first group that completed aliyah to *Ga'ash*, traveled to Brazil in the 1950s as an emissary of the Movement, and in the early 1960s returned to his native Cuba as part of the aforementioned "Zionist sheep" project. In this context he did not merely carry out his work with the national authorities, but also maintained close contact with the community institutions and the local *Hashomer Hatzair*.

Sometime later in the same decade, Chaim Brum and Shoshana Rubinstein, one of the many couples, emerged from the ken of Havana having made their home in *Yechiam* and were sent to Brazil. A few years later, Shoshana (whose fervent plea for collective *aliyah* of all youth movements in the island still resonates in the ears of her family, friends

and acquaintances) fell ill and died at the height of her youth.

Gedalia Lotan arrived in Caracas in the 1960s to fulfill his duties with the local Movement. This was not the first contact *Hashomer Hatzair* of Venezuela had with its brothers in Cuba. As already noted, Parmita Campos had created the movement in Venezuela, her adopted country, where she brought to it her personal experience in Cuba, her country of origin. In addition, Ulu Eder, one of the legendary Belgians who had also contributed to the flourishing of the Cuban Movement, had finally become established in Caracas, and his children, then teenagers, continued the family tradition of active participation in the Movement.

In the early 1970s Chaim Chayet, a *Kibbutz Ga'aton* member who had not only been an active participant in the youth movement but also teacher in the Hebrew school in Havana, arrived in Chile. Far away from the Caribbean, between the Andes and the Pacific Ocean, the winds seemed to be blowing auspiciously for the Movement, which attempted to show a different facet of the State of Israel and Zionism. His mission was interrupted in an untimely manner shortly after the coup, when he had to leave the country and return to Israel.

Aaron Brum, a member of the last group to complete *aliyah* in an organized manner, during the 1980s, traveled to Uruguay, "the Switzerland of South America", to work with the youth movement. These were hard times, because despite the unblemished democratic tradition in the country, behind the facade of a civilian government lay the fact that the real power was in military hands.

Ana Debesa Meirav who was also one of the youngest





shomrot who came to Israel through *Aliyat Hanoar* and joined *Kibbutz Rosh Hanikra*, traveled to Uruguay as a *shlichah* of the youth movement.

A decade earlier, Alex Axelrod had also come to Uruguay on an educational mission. In this regard it should be noted that following the custom of the *Shomrim* in Cuba, his task was not limited to working with the youth movement but also involved teaching in one of the Jewish schools in Montevideo.

Cuban Shomrim Resume Contact with Cuba

Many years passed from the time the Cuban *Shomrim* left the island in search of new horizons until they began to return there, either as tourists in search of their personal and family roots or to try to revive the community life, which had been reduced to a minimum.

The fall of the Berlin Wall and the breakup of the Soviet Union were two historical events that marked the beginning of a new era. The great changes that occurred in the world created an opening to examine the possibility of resuming interrupted contact.

David Roth, a former Cuban *Shomer* who had made *aliyah* during the 1950s and lived in Dvir, returned to the island after many years and came back to Israel deeply shocked by what he had seen. Following that first trip he worked tirelessly for a way to restore the links that were unintentionally cut and devoted all his time and efforts to this in his later years. His wife Yaffa recalls this with intense emotion:

The project to bring Cubans to Israel was the greatest thing that David did in his life. He loved Cuba, I think partly because of what he had lived through in the Movement. Thanks to Hashomer Hatzair he loved the people, and thanks to Zionism he wanted to bring them to Israel.

The ways to realize this aspiration were varied, and in the first stage David had the support of Sheva Friedmann, secretary of the World Union of *Meretz-Mapam*. Sheva did not participate in meetings but followed closely the developments, and the World Union funded some of David's trips to Cuba. The task was not easy. The community he found in Havana bore no resemblance to the one he had known in his youth. The youth movements and Hebrew schools were nonexistent, and most of the once so active institutions had disappeared without a trace.

What certainly had not disappeared was the tenacity and perseverance of the *Shomrim*. In 1992, four young Cubans obtained visas to study in Israel and David devoted himself to helping them adapt to the country, inviting them on more than one occasion to his home in the *kibbutz*. Shortly afterwards he met Margarita Zapata, granddaughter of the legendary Mexican Revolution leader Emiliano Zapata (1879-1919) at the home of Monica Pollac, Secretary of International Affairs of the Meretz Party (*ex-Mapam*). Margarita had direct and close dealings with the Cuban government, which is why she was asked to help some Cuban families to make *aliyah*.

Chaim Chayet, another Shomer who had also been very active in the Cuban Movement, lived in Jerusalem and the





organization secretary of the *Mapam-Meretz* party. Driven by the same spirit of solidarity created in the Movement, he was actively involved in the project and participated in other meetings with David, Margarita, Monica and various government agencies until a meeting held in Jerusalem came to an agreement on how to proceed.

The *aliyah* from Cuba in the 1990s, dubbed "Operation Cigar" was the result of hard work developed with perseverance and discretion. Chaim, a member of the Zionist Executive and head of the Department of *Hagshama* of the World Zionist Organization, joined forces with David and interceded with Zionist bodies such as the Knesset, to make public the existence of the Cuban aliyah, which, until then, had been kept anonymous. They also interceded with the Ministry of Absorption to ensure that subsidized public housing rights for immigrants from Cuba would be the same as those of other olim from disadvantaged countries.

The olim arrived from Cuba at that time amounted to several hundred in number.

Some integrated satisfactorily to life in Israel while others failed to overcome the difficulties and not everyone remained in Israel, but that is already part of another story.

Conclusions

The history of *Hashomer Hatzair* in Cuba can be summarized by three decisive dates: 1933 (emergence of the movement in Havana), 1949 (*aliyah* of the first group of Cuban *Shomrim*) and 1961 (cessation of activities of the Movement on the island). Three decades which summarize

a path of life, with its successes and frustrations, ups and downs, but always full of vitality, energy and creativity.

In those thirty years, the Caribbean Shomrim adopted the principles and values of the global Movement established in Lvov in 1913, adapted to the reality of living in Cuba and shaped in the "Ten Commandments of a *Shomer*". It is no coincidence that such a decalogue, which emphasizes the pioneering attitude, work, the Zionist conscience, communal living and self-fulfillment was part of the identity card that accredited membership of the Movement.

Indeed, identity and belonging are the key concepts that describe the quintessential Movement in its three decades of existence. The dictionary defines identity as "the set of features of an individual or a community that characterize them in front of others, the awareness that a person has to be himself and different from others". Certainly the Shomrim knew who they were, how they were and had a clear awareness that they were different. Membership is explained as "the fact of being part of a group, as a class, a group, a community, an institution or social group that the individual subscribes to in order to share behaviors, values, beliefs, etc." There is no doubt that the different facets of the Movement reflect the fact of having been part of a group whose values and principles were shared.

What better way to conclude the story of *Hashomer Hatzair* in Cuba by quoting Alejo Carpentier, the world-renowned Cuban writer who coined the concept of magical realism, and whose words seem inspired by the Caribbean Shomrim:





"But the greatness of man is precisely in that he tries to improve what he is, by imposing tasks upon himself."





CHAPTER XIII: EPILOG: ONCE A SHOMER, ALWAYS A SHOMER

The story of the adventures and vicissitudes of this group of young people has come to an end. It is the end of the story, but not the end of the adventures. In the case of the ingenious gentleman of La Mancha, who graciously ceded the opening sentences of his story to start our own, the story ends with his homecoming, dejected by the blows of fate and the failures of his noble attempts to help the weak and helpless. Like him, the Cuban *Shomrim* fully believed in the possibilities of improving the world and making it a better, more just, open and supportive place. Unlike him, their achievements were more concrete, immediate and obvious. It is likely that this was possible, because, among other reasons, they did not act individually, but were inspired by team spirit, and the will to overcome the difficulties together and the decision to join forces for the common good, which was the bedrock of their everyday actions and a principle of long-standing and universal validity: "Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up." (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10).

Another opportunity to examine the history of the *Shomrim* who made history in their home community, is to interpret it not through a literary symbol, but through the prism of research. Two scholars of universal myths - the American, Joseph Campbell (19Apr-1987) and the Russian, Vladimir Propp (1895-1970) - discussed the importance of myths in individual and collective behavior, and discovered the existence of common issues in different cultures and

religions, and similar cycles in the life and work of the heroes or protagonists of these myths.

Campbell explored comparative mythology studies and defined the path of the hero (or, in his words, the 'mythological journey'), a pattern that repeats with remarkable constancy in different times and cultures. Propp was devoted to the analysis of the basic components of Russian folk tales, where he found a number of 'functions' or recurring elements that created a constant structure that was also applicable to other literary expressions.

In summary, the main steps summarized by both may be included in the triangle: departure - tests - return. In the initial stage, the hero feels the call of adventure and leaves home; on the road, he encounters a series of tests to be overcome (enemies, dangers, difficulties). His mettle and tenacity allow him to confront the challenges and emerge unscathed from this battle. Victory makes him worthy of a prize as a reward for his efforts, courage and determination, finally returning (home, homeland, family, etc.) safe and victorious.

Hashomer Hatzair in Cuba also answers to this analysis. The young guard felt the collective urge to leave home and its familiar environment to go out in search of the ideal acquired and cultivated following years of activity in the Movement. The abandonment of the known and familiar environment imposed tests and obstacles on them which they faced without the help of supernatural characters, miracle potions or enchanted swords. Tenacity and effort were also demanded to overcome them and reach a safe haven that gave them the opportunity to master their own destiny and build their lives, not to mention those of their fellow travelers, that circumstances had scattered





in all directions, without giving up their shared values, among which friendship, solidarity and love for Israel were prominent.

But neither the Greek myths, nor the Sumerians or Egyptians can be analyzed from this perspective. Jewish history also supports a similar comparison. Its beginnings date from the patriarch Abraham, the father of the nation, who left his family homeland following the biblical injunction: "Go out from your country and your homeland and your father's house, unto a land that I will show you" (Genesis 12:1). Abram left his house, crossed the desert and was subjected to severe tests, to be finally decorated with a name change that made him Abraham "father of many nations", and blessed with the promise that "your seed will multiply as the stars in heaven and as the sand on the seashore" (Genesis 17:5, 22:17).

Similar to what happened with the sibling movements in other countries, the history of *Hashomer Hatzair* in Cuba went through ups and downs, enjoying halcyon moments and others of crisis. There were periods of intensive activity and situations of lesser effervescence. However, its presence in the Jewish community on the island never stopped being felt and its influence was projected far beyond those who passed through its ranks. Throughout its entire existence we should include mention of the dedication of the madrichim who indulged in this work with boundless enthusiasm and total conviction, and whose influence left an everlasting impression on their *chanichim*. Also, the parent groups and supporters were always present and ready to support the youngsters, helping them to develop their activities and achieve their ideals. As already noted, several of its members taught at the school, unlike what

happened in other youth movements and other countries, where clashes between representatives of formal and non-formal education were a common fact of community life. Nor should we forget the former *Shomrim* who were no longer adolescents, who, even after moving away from the Movement for various reasons, found the way to maintain connections with those ideas, principles and values that had become and inseparable part of their being.

Those who made aliyah and integrated into life in Israel, continued practicing and spreading the same message of their youth, spent on that unmistakable Havana pier and the beautiful sunsets described by Guillermo Cabrera Infante (1929-2005) in his book, *Three Sad Tigers*:



With "the euphoria of the day is at its best when, with the summer sun turns red in a sea of indigo, between clouds that sometimes spoil everything. Although sometimes the city is cream, amber, or pink on top, while below the blue sea is darker, it becomes purplish, crimson and reaches the pier and begins to penetrate the streets and houses..."





Because the Caribbean *Shomrim* managed to inextricably and naturally merge their love for the country of their birth with their love for the ancestral homeland, their identity was not split, but was enriched by the contribution made from both sides.

Let us return for a moment to Cabrera Infante, the writer who managed to capture the atmosphere in Cuba and Havana in his unforgettable, innovative, metaphorical and incomparably beautiful pages. Although he spent more than half his life outside Cuba, his books, as he himself pointed out on more than one occasion, are written "in Cuban." In *Mea Cuba*, a collection of essays and newspaper articles published in 1991, he defined what it meant to him to be Cuban. Surprisingly, these short and forceful sentences also reflect the profound meaning of "to be a Shomer". What better way to put an end to the beautiful story of *Hashomer Hatzair* in Cuba than with a little poetic license illustrating the aforementioned similarity:

Being Cuban is being born in Cuba.

Being Cuban is going everywhere with Cuba.

Being Cuban is having Cuba constantly in the memory.

We all carry Cuba within us like unheard music, an unusual vision that we know by heart.

Cuba is a paradise from which we fled trying to return.



Being a Shomer is being born in Hashomer Hatzair.

Being a Shomer is going everywhere with Hashomer Hatzair.

Being a Shomer is carrying Hashomer Hatzair constantly in the memory.

We all carry Hashomer Hatzair within us like unheard music, an unusual vision that we know by heart.

Hashomer Hatzair is a paradise from which we fled trying to return.





The attempt to briefly review the story told in the previous chapters requires a careful but different observation of scientific rigor and the objectivity of an impartial researcher. The nostalgia and empathy that accompany the examination of this singular path, do not tarnish the critical view, but instead represent constructive criticism, of its many successes and some of its setbacks. To facilitate this vision, this book has tried to look through a kind of reverse window, which opens inwards to see the most intimate corners of the *shomric* being. In situations like this, the eyes of the soul are often more penetrating than the most sophisticated microscopes.

What then is the *shomric* spirit materialized in Cuba for three decades, which left such an indelible imprint? The definition is succinct and can be summarized in two words: identity and belonging. Because the Movement embodied Jewish and Zionist identity, solidarity and encouraged participation that would not leave the *Shomrim* for the rest of their lives; because they inherited the pride of belonging to a group of idealists, which to postmodern cynical eyes may seem naïve. However, the eyes of the soul certainly perceived things differently. This is because of their aspiration to live in a better world and the decision to do something to achieve it, their vision of the centrality of Israel as the hub of contemporary Jewish life and the act of friendship as a greater value than the differences and distances. All of the above are summarized and brought together in these pages about the Cuban *Shomrim* of all periods, combined with the emotion that rekindled the memories and joy of reunion after more than half a century.

Because that is the *shomric* spirit:



Once a Shomer, always a Shomer.







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González González, Eduardo: "My father, Gallego", in Galicia única, revista digital independiente, <http://www.galiciaunica.es/cronicas/?page_id=944>, 2010

Hashomer Hatzair: <<http://www.hashomer-hatzair.org>> , 2013.

Lezijro shel David Roth (In memory of David Roth): <http://www.davidrot.com> , 2013.

Nizkor et kulam (We will remember them all), commemorative site of the Ministry of Defense of the State of Israel) <<http://www.izkor.gov.il>> , 2013.

Ysrael Seinuk, 78; Made Tall, Sleek Buildings Possible
<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/01/nyregion/01seinuk.html?_r=0> , 2013.

1.5. Archives

Central Zionist Archives, World Zionist Organization, Jerusalem.





Yad Ya'ari Archive of the Hashomer Hatzair World Movement, Givat Haviva.

Archives of the kibbutzim: Beit Zera, Dvir, Ga'ash, Ga'aton, Kfar Menachem, Ramot Menasheh, Sasa, Shamir, Yad Mordechai, Yechiam.





2. SPOKEN TESTIMONY

2. 1. Israel

1. Apel Tamara (Campos Parma), Binyamina 05.Sep 2010
2. Brum Aaron, Mitzpe Hila 29.Apr.2010
3. Brum Archie-Aaron, Jerusalem 16.Nov.2010
4. Brum Jaime, Mitzpe Hila 29.Apr.2010
5. Brum Levin Rose (Shoshana), Ga'ash 18.Jan.2011
6. Bulbank Brum Ester, Jerusalem 16.Nov.2010
7. Chervony Isaac, Yokneam Ilit 09.Feb.2011
8. Clara Cohen (Malchi Galila), Ramat Hasharon 26.Oct.2010
9. Duchner Isaac, Nahariya 21.Mar.2011
10. Eder Jaime, Ra'anana 13.Jan.2011
11. Friedmann Sheva, Tel Aviv 23/Apr/2013
12. Heiblum Cherches Mina, Tel Aviv 29.Mar.2011
13. Chayet Chaim, Modi'in 27.Aug.2010
14. Kier Efraín, Tel Aviv 14.Jun.2010
15. Koren Yehezkel (Kirshenfeld Jorge), Gedera 21.Mar.2011
16. Lev Bela, Lod 07.Feb.2011
17. Lotan Gedalia, Dvir 22.Dec.2011
18. Luski Abraham, Tel Aviv 10.Mar.2010
19. Percal Isaac, Tel Aviv, 10.Feb.2011
20. Rabin Ezra, Ga'ash 18.Jan.2011
21. Rosen Felipe (Topp Uri), Beer Sheva 07.Jun.2010

22. Roth Yaffa (Kosoff Shirley), Dvir 22.Dec.2011
23. Schwartz Susy (Koren Shosh), Evron 08.Dec.2011
24. Shojen Eilat (Altchun) Yehudit, Dvir 22.Dec.2011
25. Yagev (Schmukler) Yosef, Moshav Kidron 31.Oct.2011
26. Zagovalov Pilar (Chervony Pnina), Yokneam Ilit 09.Feb.2011
27. Zilber Isaac, Ga'ash 04.Jan.2011
28. Zyscholc Bela (Green Batia), Tel Aviv 06.Dec.2011

2.2. U.S.A.

New York

1. Awerbuch Seinuk Fanny, 15.May.2011
2. Borenstein Cohen Ana, 17.May.2011
3. Fitter Ana, 14.May.2011
4. Gordon Saul, 14.May.2011
5. Phalen Miriam Grinberg, 17.May.2011
6. Kotko Julia, 16.May.2011
7. Levy Clara (Gurman Jaike), 15.May.2011
8. Pastiner David, 17.May.2011
9. Pistiner Felipe, 16.May.2011
10. Pistiner Felipe, 15.May.2011
11. Silverstein Stanley, 14.May.2011
12. Wilkovski Ricardo, 15.May.2011



Miami

1. Baisman Oscar, 20.May.2011
2. Bulbank Israel, 22.May.2011
3. Crugliac Arber Esther, 25.Jan.2012
4. Delaster Jack, 24.May.2011
5. Don Carlos, 25.May.2011
6. Gojer Schub Ana, 23.May.2011
7. Goldstein Jacobo, 24.May.2011
8. Grobler Sergio, 23.May.2011
9. Kaplan Papir María, 20.May.2011
10. Kier Rafael, 20.May.2011
11. Kleinhaus Litvin Ester, 25.May.2011
12. Kokiell Daniel, 18.May.2011
13. Kreiezmar Felipe (Dan), 25.May.2011
14. Litvinovski (Litvin) Tzvi, 25.May.2011
15. Lyndenfeld, Danya, 18.May.2011
16. Plutt Bertha, 25.May.2011
17. Rosenzwaig Garmizo Sofía, 23.May.2011
18. Rubinstein Rosa Goldstein, 24.May.2011
19. Schniadoski Julio, 23.May.2011
20. Schwartzbaum Johnny, 19.May.2011
21. Srebnick Saúl, 25.May.2011



3. ISRAELI SHLICHIM IN CUBA

3.1. CHAYA FEIGIN

Born in 1914 in Cleveland (Ohio), United States, to where her parents had emigrated from Czarist Russia. She was educated in a traditionalist, Zionist and Jewish environment. Learned Jewish studies in parallel with general studies and graduated as a teacher.

From a young age she was active in the youth movement of *Hashomer Hatzair*, and studied for two years at the University of Cleveland before spending a year in the New Jersey *hachshara* program. Made *aliyah* to Israel in September 1939, despite her family's fears about the war, and was part of the group that founded *Kibbutz Kfar Menachem*, as part of the "Choma Umigdal" (tower and stockade) settlement.

After the Second World War, the Movement in Israel decided to resume contacts with the Movement branches in the Diaspora, and Chaia, who had an American passport, was sent to the United States, Canada and Cuba, where she arrived in late 1946.

She returned to *Kfar Menachem* in 1949 and in 1950 married Tzvi Yerucham a veteran *kibbutz* member, with whom she had two daughters, Ziva and Dafna.



3.2. CHAIM RESHEF (ANCHEKOWSKI)

Chaim was born in Grajewo, Poland, into an active Zionist family. His father was a watchmaker.

He studied in cheder, primary school and later in high school in Bialystok, where he joined *Hashomer Hatzair*. In order to prepare himself for *aliyah* he traveled to Czechoslovakia to study botany at university.

Chaim made aliyah at age 22 to *kibbutz Karit* and worked in the orange groves; at *Kfar Menachem* he devoted himself to a variety of activities.

In 1936, he married Hanke. Later, he traveled to the US to visit family and from there, they went to Cuba as *shlichim* of the Movement, where they remained from 1948 to 1950.

Chaim studied at the Seminar *Hakibutzim* (*Kibbutzim* College), was a high school teacher in Negba and in Kfar Menachem he organized Bible, Mishnah and Aggadah groups.

In his later years he translated and edited books from the *Moreshet* Institute and the *Yad Vashem* Museum. In 1984 he published his last novel, 'Flowering Hibiscus'.



Hanke Glazer was born in Vilna, Lithuania, and joined *Hashomer Hatzair* at the age of 15. She arrived in Israel in 1933 and joined *Kibbutz Karit*.

She was a member of the *Haganah* and participated in night security operations.

Her son Nadav was born in 1942 and her daughter Shoshana, in 1951.

She was very active in the *kibbutz*.





3.3. YEHOASHUA KATZIR (SHIKA KATZENBLIT)

Born on June 15, 1915 in Ostra, Wolinia (then Russia). His parents were Sara Korman, who was killed by the Nazis during the war, and Shlomo Zalman Katzenblit. His father was a learned man, with a sense of social justice; a socialist Zionist activist, with liberal ideas but traditionally religious. He earned his living as a locksmith.

At the end of primary school he joined *Hashomer Hatzair*, and later all the children in the family also joined the Movement. At that time the activities of *Hashomer Hatzair* were banned and his house became a central location for the Movement, since letters that arrived from other kenim in Poland, were sent to his address.

He did not attend high school and from the age of 14 he devoted himself completely to the Movement. In the late summer of 1935 he traveled to *hachshara* in Lublin. He made *aliyah* in 1938, came to Mitzpe Hayam and worked in the *Zichron Ya'akov* vineyard and with the guards of the *Haganah*.

In September 1940 he enlisted in the British Infantry Jewish Battalion and served in the British Army for six years.

During his military service came to Vienna where he met Niunka Berlinski, who was preparing to make her *aliyah*. When they married she joined the group in *Mitzpe Hayam*, which in 1943, founded the *kibbutz Yad Mordechai*. They adopted a son, Miki. Niunka died in 1989.

Katzir was very active in different areas: *kibbutz* secretary, agricultural coordinator, in the Youth Movement and the *Mapam* party, shaliach of *Hashomer Hatzair* in Cuba in the early fifties, etc.

He spoke several languages and translated and wrote many articles. In his last twenty years he worked in the *kibbutz* museum.

He died on January 6, 2013.





3.4. ZEEV TZORAN (WILLY TJORNITZKY)

Born in the village of Ostryna, Lithuania on August 7, 1922. His father sent his sons to the United States and South America. When World War II broke out, Willy was the only one who was still at home with his mother because his father had died. When the Jews almost could not get out of Lithuania he was granted a visa to Japan, where he arrived after wandering through Siberia. In the port of Kobe he waited for a visa to Mexico that a sister and brother who were already there were to have sent him.

In Mexico he was an active member and *madrach* in *Hashomer Hatzair*. With the creation of the State of Israel he made aliyah and settled in *Kibbutz Ein Hashofet*, before joining the group that founded *Kibbutz Sasa*.

In 1953, he was sent to Cuba with his wife Ma'anit and daughter Nina as a shaliach of the Jewish Agency. In Havana he worked in the Hebrew school and the *Hashomer Hatzair* ken. Upon completion of his mission, he returned to *Kibbutz Sasa*, where he his twin sons David and Yehonatan were born in 1958, and where he continued his educational work.

Zeev Tzoran died in an accident on September 1, 1967, while on night guard duty.



Ma'anit (Jean Ann) was born on July 27, 1927 in Minneapolis, United States, into a Zionist family.

On the eve of the creation of the State of Israel she identified with the Zionist idea, and felt very attracted to the concept of the *kibbutz* and joined the fifth group of

Hashomer Hatzair that made aliyah from the United States.

At first, the group settled on *Kibbutz Ein Hashofet* until it founded *Kibbutz Sasa* where she met Willy.

Returning from Cuba she devoted herself to working in the gardens of the *kibbutz*, where she died on December 9, 2000.





3.5. YOSEF ADER

Born in the village of Kamenez, Ukraine, on October 24, 1927.

The family arrived in Israel in 1935 and settled in the city of Haifa. He was educated at *Kibbutz Mizra* and was part of a group of teenagers who studied at the *Ben Shemen* Youth Village.

For three years (1946-1949) he directed the *Hashomer Hatzair's ken* in Hadera. At that time he was living with "*Bonei Ha-Negev*" (builders of the Negev) group that would settle on the mountains of *Menashe*. There he met Savka (Shifra), with whom he established his family.

He was a member of *Kibbutz Ramot Menashe* from its inception in 1948. He worked in the Arad-Dalia factory and held several positions in the *kibbutz*.

In January 1958 he traveled to Cuba with his wife and their daughter Smadar, then five years old as a *shaliach* of the youth movement. They remained there for two years.

He died in *Ramot Menashe* on October 29, 1992.



Savka was born in Sosnowiec, Poland in 1927. At 15 she was deported to a labor camp, where she was released on the last day of the war.

She arrived in Israel in 1946 and was part of the "*Bonei Ha-Negev*" group.

In the *kibbutz* she was devoted to the care of the children for 40 years.





3.6. NISSAN YOELI (KUSMINSKY)

Nissan Yoeli was born in Lipkany, Bessarabia in 1915. His father, the rabbi of the community, died when he was a small child. He studied in a *yeshiva* and received rabbinic ordination, but at the age of 15 he joined the youth movement, *Hashomer Hatzair*.

After spending two years in *hachshara* in 1939 he arrived as a *ma'apil* in Israel and joined the *Gazit* group in *Magdiel*. Subsequently, the group adopted the name of *Yasur* and moved to the area of Haifa Bay. In 1942 he joined *Kibbutz Shamir*.

Nissan worked with sheep and in the plantations and also held several positions in the *Kibbutz* Movement and the party. In the *kibbutz* he was a member of many committees: secretariat, economy, culture, integration of new members, festivals, politics, etc.

He was also treasurer of the *kibbutz*, editor of its newspaper, and director of *ulpanim* for teaching Hebrew in *Shamir* and neighboring *kibbutzim* and taught at the high school at *Tel Hai*.

In the early 1960s he traveled to Cuba with his wife Rosa and their children Shulamit and Yoel, as shaliach of the youth movement and teacher in the Hebrew school in Havana.

He was a warm and open person, full of Jewish wisdom and a good jokes and story teller.

He spent his last years in Savyon.



4. CUBAN SHOMRIM WHO FELL IN ISRAEL

4.1. SERGEANT ALON (ALTCHUN) JAIME

Son of Mela and Moshe was born on April 9, 1953 (24 Nissan 5713) in Havana, Cuba. The family made aliyah in 1957 and settled in *Kibbutz Shoval*. Chaim, whom everyone called Jaimito, adapted quickly and soon one could no longer tell that he had not been born in Israel.

He attended primary and secondary studies at the *Mevo'ot Ha-Negev* school on his *kibbutz*. From an early age he became interested in classic music and learned the violin. He went on to play the trombone and joined his school orchestra, besides being a member of the *kibbutz* orchestra.

He was a young man of great sensibility and an introverted character. He raised and cared for dogs, cats, rabbits, etc. and his love for animals made him to choose to work in the stable. While studying at high school he also excelled in sports. In 1970 he was junior champion of shooting in the southern part of the country and participated in various swimming competitions.

He was a madrich on his *kibbutz* and on nearby *kibbutzim*. All his chanichim loved him for his frankness and for the creative and interesting activities that he used to plan and organize. He had great technical skill, wrote, and was interested in photography and filming. The many photos and letters he left provide testimony of his sensitivity and aesthetic sense.

He enlisted in the Army in February 1972 and volunteered for the armored patrol. He was sent to Sinai where he was

to participate in an officers' course just as the *Yom Kippur* War broke out. His unit was ordered to stop the advance of the Egyptian forces that had crossed the Suez Canal.

On the first day of the war (October 6) his armored vehicle was involved in combat in the *Mitla* Pass. The vehicle commander and two soldiers were killed and Jaime was seriously injured. His companions tried to save him for hours under hellish fire and afterwards he was taken to hospital, where he died on October 7, 1973 (11 *Tishrei* 5734). He is buried in the cemetery of *Kibbutz Shoval* and was posthumously promoted to first sergeant.

In a meeting organized by his comrades after the burial, the unit commander said: "I am new to the unit and I personally did not know Chaim. When I had to call six soldiers to carry his coffin, many wanted to, but they were scattered throughout the country. Now, after hearing what they said about him, I understand why so many made such a major effort to come to *Shoval*."

His parents and the *kibbutz* published a brochure in his memory.



4.2. CORPORAL ALEXANDER ARAD (ALEX AXELROT)

Son of Rivka and Kalman, born on October 3, 1944 (23 *Tishrei* 5705) in Matanzas, Cuba. He attended primary and secondary school in Havana. From the age of nine years he was a member of *Hashomer Hatzair*, where he was noted for his sense of camaraderie and willingness to accomplish any mission assigned to him. His group made aliyah in 1961 as part of Youth *Aliyah* and joined *Kibbutz Yechiam*.

Alex could not travel with his teammates because he fell ill to polio and was therefore left behind in charge of the ken. He traveled to Israel a few months later and joined his group in *Yechiam*. Due to his illness he could not join the army, but occupied positions in regional defense.

At the same time he enrolled at the University of Haifa, where he studied Political Science and in also gained a teaching degree. He also studied accounting at the Ruppin Academic College and at the Academic College of Business Administration at Haifa.

In 1969-1970 he was sent by his Movement to Uruguay. Besides his work in *Hashomer Hatzair*, he taught at the Jewish school in Montevideo. Despite his health problems, upon his returning to Israel he returned to perform physical labor in the *kibbutz*.

In 1981, he moved to *Kibbutz Ramot Menashe*, where he married Mabel and fathered two children. He worked in the water meters factory and contributed his knowledge to the use of computer programs.

He fell in the line of duty on September 24, 1987 (1 *Tishrei* 5748) while on reserve duty. He was stabbed by a terrorist at the *Megiddo* junction, while waiting for a bus. He is considered to have been one of the first victims of the first

Intifada.

He was buried in the military section of the cemetery at *Kibbutz Ramot Menashe*.

The letter of condolence sent by the Minister for Defense to his family says:

"Alex was a soldier who stood in the front row of the regional defense fighters. Disciplined, he always volunteered for every action, was a very calm character and much loved by his commanding officers."

At the funeral, one of his colleagues farewelled him with the following words: "We have lost a colleague and friend. We have lost a unique childhood friend. His dedication to his family and friends, the warmth and love that he possessed inside were manifested and captivated those who surrounded him."



4.3. CAPTAIN ITZIK CHAYET

Son of Nora and Chaim, was born on December 2, 1969 (22 *Kislev* 5730) at Kibbutz *Ga'aton*, a few months after the fall in the War of Attrition of his uncle Itzik Goldenberg, after whom he was named. He was a boisterous and talkative child, focus of the attention of those around him, whose sensitivity was demonstrated by the pictures he took while out walking and in his conversations with family and friends.

He spent part of his childhood in Chile and Panama, where his father served as shaliach, but did not lost contact with his friends on the *kibbutz* and from Jerusalem, the city where he started high school, which he completed in Panama . He was an active member of the *Tzofim* youth movement.

After finishing high school he studied for a year at the University of Florida and later toured several countries in Latin America. A sea lover, he enjoyed swimming and diving and thought of doing his military service in the navy.

He returned to Israel in early 1988 and enlisted in the army. He participated in an aviation course and upon graduation was sent to join the combat helicopters squadron. In discussions with his family he expressed concern about the possibility of participating in operations in which the civilian population were likely to be affected.

During his military service, Itzik maintained close contacts with his childhood friends, with whom he met often. A few months before his death he began a relationship with Dana, also a member of the group.

In the course of a vacation from the army he went on a trip to Sinai with three friends. He fell on active service on July

3, 1991 (21 *Tammuz* 5751) with his friend Doron Hirshman, while diving in the "Blue Hole" in Dahab.

He was buried in the military cemetery on Mount Herzl.



4.4. SERGEANT NADAV KUPERMAN

Son of Ety and Joseph, he was born on January 2, 1954 (25 *Shevat* 5714) in *Kibbutz Gal-On*, where he grew up and completed his primary and secondary education.

He was a shy and withdrawn child, who lived surrounded by books, whether encyclopedias or adventure stories. He was pleased to share with his friends the extensive knowledge he had acquired in his readings, which occupied most of his free time.

Recalling his childhood years, his friends said: "During the field trips Nadav used to get left behind, examining plants and interested throughout everything with the depth that characterized him. He was never boastful of his knowledge. It was amazing and he had an amazing memory. Sometimes he appeared indifferent because he did not share his feelings with others, but that was only an apparent indifference. He had very strong and original ideas."

He joined the army in November 1971 and was assigned to the artillery corps. His colleagues described him as a simple, young, quiet, friendly, responsible, good partner who was always willing to help. While living in the world of books, disconnected from the outside world, he was loved by all and admired for his vast knowledge.

In the *Yom Kippur* War he fought with courage and composure in the *Golan* Heights and fell in battle against the Syrian army on October 12, 1973 (16 *Tishrei* 5713).

He was buried in the cemetery of his *kibbutz* and posthumously promoted to the rank of sergeant.

His commanding officer sent the family a letter of

condolence in which he said: "Nadav was a devoted and loyal soldier, loved by his superiors and fellow soldiers, who fought with resilience and courage."

The family issued a publication in his memory.





5. GLOSSARY OF HEBREW AND OTHER TERMS

Aggadah (legend, story): Talmudic narrative that does not address regulatory issues and includes stories, fables, cliches, comments, etc.

Jewish Agency: Jewish Organization with Zionist orientation and global outreach, created in 1929 as the executive arm of the World Zionist Organization.

Aliyah (ascension): Jewish immigration to Israel.

Aliyat Hanoar (Youth Immigration): Department of the Jewish Agency in charge of immigration to Israel of children and youth up to age 18.

Anaf (branch): Name used in the kibbutzim to designate the various types of agricultural activities, such as growing fruit, breeding poultry, orchards, etc.

Aretz [Eretz, land or country]: By comparison, specific reference to Israel.

Bar / Bat Mitzvah: Religious ceremony of entering the world of Jewish precepts that is done by Jewish boys at age 13 and girls at age 12.

Beit Am: Headquarters of an institution in which social and cultural events are held.

Beitar (acronym for "Yosef Trumpeldor Covenant"): Zionist Jewish youth movement, of revisionist orientation, established in Latvia in 1923.

BILU (acronym for "House of Jacob Let us go [up]", Isaiah 2:5): Jewish Zionist youth movement founded in 1882 in Ukraine, whose objectives were political, economic, spiritual and national renewal of the Jewish people in Israel

and the revival of the Hebrew language.

Bloie pushke (in Yiddish): Blue box – charity box that was used by the JNF and other Jewish institutions to raise funds for the purchase of land in Israel.

Boger / bogrim (adult, adults): Member/s of the senior group of a youth movement.

Degel: Flag.

Dunam: Measurement of area used in Israel, equivalent to 1,000 m².

Eretz Israel: The Land of Israel in a broader sense, regardless of the established boundaries or political definition.

Falja (Arabic): Crops.

Galut: Diaspora, specifically the Jewish people since the destruction of the Second Temple.

Garin / garinim (core/s): Group of members of a youth movement that together make aliyah to Israel.

Gdud (battalion): In a youth movement, the joining of two or more same age groups to form a ken.

Gola: See "galut".

Gizbar: Treasurer.

Hadracha: Teaching, training.

Haggadah: Text read on the night of Passover.

Haganah (defense): Jewish defense organization in Israel established in 1920, which laid the foundations of the Israel Defense Forces.

Hagshama: Fulfillment, realization.

Hachshara: Agricultural training farm in the Diaspora,



designed to prepare members of youth movements for agricultural activities and life on kibbutz

Hakibutz Artzi: Federation of Hashomer Hatzair kibbutzim in Israel, founded in 1927.

Hanhaga Eliona: Central management of the global youth Movement.

Hanhaga Rashit: Central management of a youth movement in a given country.

Hanhala: Management, leadership of the movement.

Hanoar Hatzioni (Zionist Youth): Jewish youth movement of Zionist pioneering and liberal orientation, established in Poland in 1927.

Harchava (expansion): Activities of a youth movement aimed to attract new members.

Hashlama (complement): Group members of a youth movement that integrate into an existing kibbutz.

Hashomer Hatzair (Young Guard): Jewish youth movement of Zionist socialist orientation, established in Poland in 1913.

Hatikvah (The Hope) Poem by Naftali Herz Imber adapted to music and later adopted as the anthem of the Zionist movement and the State of Israel.

Histadrut: Israeli Workers' Federation, founded in December 1920.

Hitrachavut: See harchava.

Hora: Circular dancing of Balkan origin, identified with Zionism and Israel.

Iton: Newspaper.

Ivrit: Hebrew

Chalil: Flute.

Chalutz /chalutzim: Pioneer/s.

Chanich / chanicha / chanichim / chanichot: member/s of youth group.

Chanukah: Festival of Lights on 25 Kislev, commemorating the victory of Judah the Maccabee over the Greeks and the restoration of the Temple in Jerusalem.

Chaver / Chavera / Chaverim / chaverot: Member/s.

Chazak ve'ematz (Be strong and courageous): Usual greeting in the Youth Movement.

Cheder: Jewish religious primary school level institution.

Herut (Freedom): Zionist Revisionist Party founded by Ze'ev Jabotinsky.

Chevrat noar: Teenagers on a kibbutz.

Homa Umigdal (tower and stockade): Series of operations creating a fortified agricultural settlements between 1936 and 1939.

Hovevei Tzion (Lovers of Zion) Zionist Organization founded in Russia in 1881 in order to encourage Jewish settlement in Israel.

Chug / chugim (circle/s): Study group/s or socio-cultural activities.

Ken / kenim (nest/s): Headquarters of the youth movement (The correct form of the Hebrew plural is kinim, but in all youth movements were called kenim).

Keren Aliyah: Fund to help immigration to Israel.





Keren Hashomer: Fund to help Hashomer Hatzair.

Keren Hayesod: United pro-Israel Campaign. The financial arm of the Zionist movement created in 1920 to raise funds for Israel.

Keren Kayemet Lelsrael (KKL): Jewish National Fund, established in 1901 at the fifth Zionist Congress to purchase land in Israel and rehabilitate them for agriculture.

Kibutz/ kibutzim: Collective farm/s; lifestyle created by the socialist Zionist youth in the Land of Israel in the early twentieth century.

Kishut / kishutim: Ornament/s, decoration/s.

Knesset: Israeli parliament.

Kvutza / kvutzot: Group/s; in the movement, its members are of the same age.

Lehitraot (goodbye): Farewell.

Lina/ linot: Overnight stay/s.

Lul: Enclosure for breeding poultry.

Maapil/im: Illegal immigrant/s to Israel between World War II and the creation of the State of Israel.

Maccabi: Zionist sports movement inspired by Max Nordau and created by a group of young Jews in Constantinople (Istanbul) in 1895.

Madrach / madricha / madrichim / madrichot: Leader/s of a youth group.

Magshim / Magshimim (fulfiller/s): Who cemented the ideal of immigration to Israel.

Machane / machanot: Outdoor camp/s held out of town, for recreational and educational purposes.

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Machlaka: Division or department of an institution.

Machon Lemadrichim: Leadership Training Institute of Zionist youth movements, created in 1947 and based in Jerusalem.

Matzav leumi: National situation.

Medura: Bonfire.

Menahel / menahelet / menahalim / menahalot (director/s): See "madrach"

Meshek: All economic activities, especially on a kibbutz.

Mesiba: Party, soiree.

Mifal: Campaign.

Mifkad: Formation of members of the youth movement.

Mishnah: First compilation of Jewish oral tradition, including rabbinic rulings, interpretations, commentaries, etc.

Moatza: Council assembly

More / mora / morim / morot: Teacher/s

Moshav/im: Form of rural settlement, whose inhabitants are engaged in agricultural work in a cooperative economic framework.

Moshava / moshavot: Farm/s / vacation camp/s outside the city

Nekuda: Point (of colonization)

Nivenu (niv): Linguistic turn, expression.

Ohel / ohalim: Tent/s

Oleh / olah, olim / Olot: Immigrant/s to Israel





Oneg Shabbat: Festive Gathering to celebrate the Sabbath with songs, cultural activities, shared meals, etc.

World Zionist Organization: Institution created in the first World Zionist Congress (1897) to fulfill the goals of the Zionist movement.

Pardes: Citrus orchard, especially oranges.

Pesach: Jewish holiday celebrated on Nissan 15, which commemorates the Exodus from Egypt.

Peula / peulot: Activity/activities

Plugá (military company): Group of children of the youth movement.

Purim: Jewish holiday celebrated on 14 Adar, commemorating the salvation of the Persian Jews from the evil vizier Haman.

Rosh (ha)ken: Youngster in charge of the ken of a youth movement.

Shabbat: Saturday, the day of rest as determined by Judaism for physical and spiritual gratification.

Shaliach / Shila / Shlichim / shlichot: Emissary/emissaries of Israel serving a Zionist mission in the Diaspora.

Shevet (tribe): Group of chanichim of a youth movement.

Shoah: Holocaust.

Shomer / Shomrim / shomric / Shomeret / Shomrot: Guard or guards / guardian or guardians

Siman / simanim: Signs, signals

Tanakh: Hebrew Acronym for the Bible.

Tiyul: Walk, hike.

Tnua: Movement (young).

Toran: Individual charged with a duty that is carried out in shifts.

Tu Bishvat: New Year of Trees, holiday celebrated on 15 Shvat when it is customary to plant trees.

Tzofe / Tzofim (scout/w): Teenage member of the youth movement

Tzofim tzeirim: younger chanichim

Tzofim benonim: chanichim of early teen's age

Tzofim bogrim: chanichim of late teen's age

Tzofut: Scouting.

Ulpan, ulpanim: Class/es for the study of the Hebrew language

Veida: Convention

WIZO: Women's World Zionist Organization, founded in England in 1920

Yakar / yekarim: Dear, appreciated

Yeshiva: Session Meeting / academy of rabbinical studies.

Yishuv (population): Term for both the Jews of the Diaspora community, and those who lived in Israel before the creation of the State.

Zuga; zug: Couple who came together in the youth movement.





6. DONORS

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