

John the Priest

Reverend John Stanley Grauel, the man who helped make Israel possible¹

By Jerry Klinger



1939 ... It is becoming increasingly urgent to completely halt all Jewish immigration to Palestine. But his Majesty's government cannot be resolved to make such a decision that would endanger the entire economic and financial system in Palestine and would at the same time affect the interests of the Jews and of the Arabs. ...Taking into consideration the natural growth rate of the Jewish and Arab populations and the number of immigrants who illegally entered the country, that authorizes the admission of approximately 75,000 (Jewish) immigrants during the next five years beginning in April of this year...

1945 After the war, the British would not change their policy in spite of the protest and the intervention of foreign powers that were discovering to their horror the monstrous dimensions of the Shoah.²

¹ "Golda Meir, in a speech to the Jewish Agency, referred to his testimony as the first appeal by a "priest, a perfectly worthy gentile, a priori, no Jewish witness was to be believed," and because of this, his graphic account became a turning point in the attitudes of the U.N. representatives. ...Incidentally, in Hebrew there is no distinction between Catholic and Protestant clergymen. In Golda Meir's speech she referred to John Grauel as the 'Komer,' the priest. Thus, he is known in Israel as Jochanan Ha Komer, John the Priest, and the title is uniquely his. Grauel, An Autobiography as told to Eleanor Elfenbien, 1982, Ivory House, Freehold, N.J. , forward by Teddy Kollek Mayor of Jerusalem – 1977 Pg. x.

² <http://www.jafi.org.il/education/moriya/carmel/Theillegalmmigration.html>

~~~~~

Dozens of times during my numerous trips to Israel I have walked down Emek Refaim in Jerusalem. Dozens of times I have seen the sign on the high stone walls, *American Christian Missionary Alliance Cemetery*, the heavy solid white sheet metal gates locked so tightly you could not even peer inside through a key hole. I often wondered what was behind those heavy high walls. Year after year I had passed the white gates and they never were open. Today they were slightly ajar – they were open. Perhaps I should not enter but it is easier to ask forgiveness, after all I am only a dumb tourist, than it is to get permission. I pushed the gate open and went inside. The cemetery was crowded with stones, none very prominent, gray and low with the residents' plot outlined in gray concrete stone. I walked around. No one bothered me. I walked among the stones and read names in Hebrew, English, German, Arabic, and Japanese. The middle row, straight back from the gate had a very unusual large vertical white gravestone. Curiosity being what it is, I was drawn to the stone. I stood before the grave stone perplexed, confused. It was clear that this person's stone was different. The grave was more prominent than anything around it.



The gravestone had two large stars of David carved at the top with the symbol of the Israel Defense Forces in the middle of one stone and a Menorah in the middle of the other Star of

David. At the bottom, on either side were two naval anchors. The text at the top read in English and Hebrew the famous Talmudic dictum- *He who saves a single life is as if he has saved the entire world.* A large cross was carved in the middle below the dictum. The name read, Reverend John Stanley Grauel, in Hebrew below the name, a special designation – Yohanan the Priest, 1917-1986; further down in English, *Exodus 47*, in Hebrew *Exodus* and the words at the bottom in Memoriam.

I had no idea who Reverend John Stanley Grauel was. What had he to do with the famous Jewish refugee ship *Exodus* made so well known by the Leon Uris's novel by the same name in 1958 (even though the novel is a fiction that doesn't tell the story of the real Exodus voyage). I had seen the major movie that stirred the sympathy of the world, *Exodus* by Otto Preminger, at least five times. The movie's theme music by Ernest Gold still haunts me. It was hard to forget Paul Newman in the leading role or his non-Jewish love, Eva Marie Saint, who committed herself to the struggle for Israel. Few knew that in reality the blond blue eyed heartthrob of millions of women, Paul Newman, was, in reality, Jewish.

Why were symbols of the Israel Defense Forces carved on Grauel's gravestone? I did not know but I had to find out. Walking back out along Emek Refaim past the Templar Cemetery I did not even bother looking to see if their gate was also open. At the hotel I looked up Reverend John Stanley Grauel on the internet. There was remarkably little about him. A couple of thin sources listed him as a member of the crew of the *Exodus*. Some said he was a volunteer, preacher in training who signed on as a cook. Few had more than a few vague lines about him. It was a mystery. It was something I had to know.

~~~~~

John Stanley Grauel was born December 12, 1917, in Worcester, Mass. His mother was a deeply religious woman, a teetotaler. Grauel remembered her as a "strong advocate of the brotherhood of man...Back in the thirties when a black man and white woman raised a storm in the church by announcing their intentions to marry, my mother offered our home for the wedding. She also had a very mystical feeling about the Jewish community. As I was growing

up, she frequently observed that anyone on the side of the Jews would survive any of life's vicissitudes because the Jews were God's Chosen People. She was convinced Judaism must survive because it was the root of her own faith. It is my own deep conviction that the death of Israel would be the death knell of Western Civilization."³

With the great depression, Grauel's family lost their jobs, their home. They became migrant workers until his father secured employment with the Civil Conservation Corp in Virginia. His parents scraped by helping John enroll in Randolph Macon College as a pre-theological student, a continuation of the educational system of the Methodist church. Not long afterwards his father was diagnosed with a melanoma. Though operated on, the cancer spread. His father died, Thanksgiving day, 1936. John was nineteen years old. He entered into different fields of endeavor shaped by his friendship with the Kennedy family of Hyannis port with low level positions in the Democratic Party and even a stint as a deputy sheriff. In 1941, he agreed to his mother's guidance and the influence of his family pastor to enroll in the Methodist Bangor Theological Seminary. He married during his final seminary year only to lose his wife and son in childbirth. He never remarried.

Assigned as Pastor to a small poor group of communities he worked to salve the hearts and souls of his community. The war raged on. "All during this time I was following the news from Germany and was very distressed by pictures on the papers of Nazi thugs standing over old Jews scrubbing the streets of Berlin. While suffering this abuse and other indignities, the Jews were wearing their Iron Crosses won in defense of Germany during World War I.....Perhaps I was more sensitive to what was happening to the Jewish community because of my friendship with Judge Joseph Goldberg of Worcester. He was of Russian-Jewish background and vice president of a national Zionist organization. In answer to my questions he gave me books to read on Zionism and awakened my interest in the search for a Jewish homeland."⁴

³ Grauel, An autobiography as told to Eleanor Elfenbein, Ivory House, Freehold, N.J. 1982 pg. 2

⁴ Ibid pg. 27

Grael as a Pastor was automatically given an exemption from military service but he personally felt a need to do more especially as the stories poured out of Europe of the Nazi atrocities and the Jews. He approached Judge Goldberg what could he do. "He sent me to see Dr. Carl Herman Voss, of the American-Christian Palestine Committee. Created in 1943, this was a national organization tied in with the Zionist Emergency Council to help create a Jewish State"⁵, Grael recalled that Voss offered him a job as executive director of the Philadelphia office. "Never in my wildest, most unrealistic projections into the future, could I have divined the direction my life would take."⁶

"One day, somewhere late in 1944 or early '45, I had the opportunity to attend my first Zionist conference, which was held in Princeton, N.J. The conference had a profound impact on me....A distinguished rabbi, Stephen Wise, reported that at least seven hundred thousand Jews had been murdered by Hitler. Had he reported that figure anywhere near six million, he would have been carted away as dement....for me the most electrifying portion of that conference was when David Ben Gurion⁷ spoke....later on I was introduced to Ben Gurion and sat around among others just listening to him. I caught an occasional reference to the Haganah, but it had no particular significance for me at the time.... Perhaps it was my discontent that made me notice the activities of others. When I returned to Philadelphia, I began to be aware of the stream of young men going in and out of the next office....I went into the office and asked the man there, who introduced himself as Bucky Karmatz, what business he was in. He said he was interviewing counselors, for a camp. 'If those tough looking guys were counselors, I'd like to meet the campers,'" was my response. Bucky invited me for lunch which in this case meant sandwiches at his desk, and we talked. I found he had been informed about my work next door, even if I had not been told about his. He was running a recruiting office for the Haganah

⁵ Ibid pg. 30

⁶ Ibid pg. 31

⁷ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Ben-Gurion

here in the States.”⁸

“Talking to Bucky, I knew I had found my niche. I would join the Haganah, the underground, to become a part of that organization to rescue those who could be helped to leave Europe. I liked that affirmation of life after the war.”⁹

“During my association with the Haganah in New York, we used to meet every Friday night at a hotel run by a fellow named Barnett. If the Arabs who are so strongly committed to destroying Israel today were organized then, they could have destroyed a good part of the future Israeli leadership by blowing up the Hotel Fourteen dining room every Friday night. One bomb would have killed David Ben Gurion, Golda Meir¹⁰, Teddy Kollek¹¹, Nachum Goldman¹², Meyer Weisgal¹³ and many others who joined us from time to time.

...I discovered that with discretion I could continue to function as executive director of the American –Christian Palestine Committee in public, while in private I was moving around meeting people on Zionist business as discreetly as possible. I was helping to raise funds to buy guns, bullets and ships needed for the creation of a new state. Bucky called me in one day and told me that they had rounded up a great liner called the *President Garfield*. This was the ship the Haganah would take to Europe to pick up refugees for Palestine. With the understanding that every step of this operation from the loading of the refugees to the landing in Palestine would be opposed by the British and would have to be accomplished with as much secrecy as possible, I made my decision to join the crew. It would be a matter of some months before I would discover the ship was not the *Garfield* but the *Warfield*, a ship named after the owner of

⁸ Grauel, An autobiography as told to Eleanor Elfenbein, Ivory House, Freehold, N.J. 1982 38-39

⁹ Ibid pg. 44

¹⁰ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Golda_Meir

¹¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Teddy_Kollek

¹² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nachum_goldman

¹³ <http://www.wisdom.weizmann.ac.il/~oded/weisgal.html>

the Baltimore Bay Line and the uncle of Wallace Warfield Simpson, wife of the Duke of Windsor. This was the ship that would be known historically as the *Exodus- 1947*.”¹⁴

One of the great ironies of the story of the *Exodus* was that she was named the *President Warfield* originally. Wallace Simpson, a divorced American, caught the heart of the Edward the VIII, the unmarried king of England, in the 1930’s. He stepped down as King to marry Simpson, the woman he loved. They became the Duke and Duchess of Windsor. The irony was that the *President Warfield*, the ship that one day would “launch the State of Israel” and help bring down the British mandate, was part of her family’s legacy and hence the once King of England’s legacy as well. Edward the VIII, as king of England, was decidedly an admirer of Adolph Hitler and no friend of Zionism.

Bucky Karmatz did not randomly call in Reverend Grauel for an exciting opportunity to sail on the *President Warfield*. Grauel’s work, as the public face of the American-Christian Palestine Committee and his secret double life as a fund raising agent and Christian voice of the Haganah, was very important. Grauel notes “From 1946 on, I was involved with many of the ships, (of the Aliyah Bet¹⁵) but the *Exodus - '47* changed the direction and focus of my life.”¹⁶

Secrecy was the order of the day, the week, the month and always. “We were presumed to be a group of people working on some sort of project, but in reality, no one individual really knew what the other was doing specifically. We knew that all the pieces would fit into one pattern ultimately. Much of what really went on in those days was never really revealed even in the books that claimed to tell all.”¹⁷

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

¹⁴ Ibid pgs. 45-46

¹⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aliyah_Bet

¹⁶ Grauel, An autobiography as told to Eleanor Elfenbein, Ivory House, Freehold, N.J. 1982 pg. 44

¹⁷ Ibid pg. 45

In April, 1946 an Anglo- American committee on the Jewish refugee problem in Europe prepared a report recommending the immediate granting by the British of 100,000 visas to Palestine. The British refused. The war over, British naval resources were strongly reinforced along the Palestinian Coast to enforce the White Paper, to blockade the Jews. All but few Aliyah Bet ships were intercepted by the British Navy.

“With diminishing chances of successfully running the blockade the Mossad for Aliyah Bet decided to massively flood refugee camps both in Palestine and Cyprus, and thus hopefully forcing the Mandatory authorities to release the refugees and allow them to settle in Palestine.”¹⁸

“Although the volunteers’ activity was clandestine, it was not illegal under United States law. In full legality, the American vessels obtained Panamanian or Honduran registry and sailed from the United States for Europe under their foreign flags. The sailors were duly signed on as crew members. In this regard, the voyages were no different from the large volume of American maritime activity conducted under foreign flags of convenience. The British term ‘illegal immigration’ did not imply that the American volunteers were violating the laws of their own country. When the British labeled Aliyah Bet as ‘illegal immigration,’ they referred to their refusal to permit Jewish immigrants from Europe to enter Palestine legally. Canadian volunteers among the American crews had a special status; as British subjects, they could enter Palestine legally. In the later stages of Aliyah Bet, the British persuaded the United States government to use its law-enforcement apparatus in investigating the American volunteer effort. But this was an empty threat: no volunteer was ever prosecuted under United States law for his Aliyah Bet activities.”¹⁹

“American-manned ships were involved in episodes that helped discredit British policy and eventually broke the British hold on Palestine. The story of the *Exodus-1947* and particularly

¹⁸ The Jews Secret Fleet, Joseph Hochstein, Gefen Press, Jerusalem 1987, Paul Schulman foreword xiv

¹⁹ Ibid pgs. 30-31

the deportation of its refugee passengers back to Germany, rallied world public opinion in favor of a Jewish state.”²⁰

“Each Aliyah Bet vessel [originating from the USA] had Palestinians aboard, serving alongside the Americans.”²¹ They earned the nick name *Shu Shu Boys*. They were forever admonishing the American volunteers on the importance of secrecy and silence. In Yiddish, a person, warning another to be silent or secret, would put an index finger to their lips and blow onto it with a word, *Shu*, which probably came from the Yiddish *Sha* – or even the German *Schtil* – quiet. Normal seagoing activities were the responsibility of the captain, who was a professional sailor, usually recruited in the United States. In addition to the captain, a Haganah representative from Palestine was aboard each vessel as its commander.”²²

“As with buying the ships, the recruiting of crews was complicated by the need for subterfuge.... But the underground was in no position to publicize the needs for Aliyah Bet. Moreover, recruiters had to be highly selective in whom they approached: Aliyah Bet needed crewmen who could be depended upon not only to do their ship board jobs under difficult conditions but to keep secrets. Aliyah Bet had to take care to avoid hiring anyone who might be an informant for the British. The volunteers chosen for Aliyah Bet would work without pay and face a strong possibility of going to jail in Europe or Palestine.”²³

“Veterans of the recruiting effort say that for each volunteer who was accepted, as many as nine or ten were turned down.”²⁴

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

²⁰ Ibid pg. 32

²¹ Ibid pg. 32

²² Ibid pg. 32

²³ Ibid pgs. 38-39

²⁴ Ibid pg. 42

“I arrived in Baltimore after having spent a few days in New York City in Harold Jaffer’s apartment.... I went immediately to see the beautiful ocean liner, the *President Garfield*. What I saw was an old Bay Line steamer, the *President Warfield*, so far past her prime, that the thought of crossing the Atlantic on her seemed unthinkable. I had committed myself, however, so by the Grace of God and a touch of insanity, I passed from the world of Reverend John Stanley Grauel to John Grauel, ordinary seaman.

The *Warfield* was in disreputable condition as I soon found out. Boarded up on all sides, no heat, and infested with rot and rats, I had had been told it had been sold as junk, and from the time the decision had been made to junk it, no one gave it even the most cursory of care. There were thousands of leaks and what the rats found to eat to keep them so fat and sassy was beyond me. It took the crew days of scrubbing, sanding, polishing, and mending just to make some order out of chaos. Most of the crew was staying at the Lord Baltimore Hotel, which was the ultimate in luxury compared to staying on board the *Warfield*. Unfortunately, for the most part I was confined to the ship because I had been lecturing nationally for the last four years, and there was too much of a chance that someone would recognize me and create some curiosity about the ship.”²⁵

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

“The ship was built in 1928 by Pusey and Jones Corp., Wilmington, Delaware, for the Baltimore Steam Packet Company. Initially named *President Warfield*, for Baltimore Steam Packet Company president S. Davies Warfield (the uncle of the Duchess of Windsor), it carried passengers and freight on the Chesapeake Bay between Baltimore, Maryland and Norfolk, Virginia from 1928 until July 12, 1942, when the ship was acquired by the War Shipping Administration (WSA) and converted to a transport craft for the British Ministry of War Transport.

²⁵ Grauel, an autobiography as told to Eleanor Elfenbein, Ivory House, Freehold, N.J. 1982 pgs. 47-48

Manned by a British merchant crew led by Capt. J. R. Williams, it departed St. John's, Newfoundland, in Canada on September 21, 1942, along with other small passenger steamers bound for the United Kingdom. Attacked by a German submarine 800 nautical miles (1,500 km) west of Ireland on September 25, the ship evaded one torpedo, and, after the scattering of its convoy, reached Belfast, Northern Ireland. In Britain, it served as a barracks and training ship on the River Torridge at Instow.



President Warfield en-route to Europe 1947

Returned by Britain, it joined the U.S. Navy as *President Warfield* on May 21, 1944. In July it served as a station and accommodations ship at Omaha Beach at Normandy. Following duty in England and on the Seine River, it arrived at Norfolk, Virginia, July 25, 1945, and left active Navy service September 13. *President Warfield* was struck from the U.S. Naval Vessel Register on October 11 and returned to the War Shipping Administration on November 14.

On November 9, 1946 the WSA sold *President Warfield* to the Potomac Shipwrecking Co. of Washington, D.C., who were acting as an agent of the Jewish political group Haganah.^[2] The ship eventually ended up with the underground Jewish organization in Palestine intent on helping underground Jewish immigrants enter Palestine."²⁶

²⁶ [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Exodus_\(ship\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Exodus_(ship))

The Aliyah Bet created a series of dummy corporations to hide their operations. The *President Warfield* was eventually sold to the Weston Trading Company, December 17, 1946. The Weston Trading company was a Panamanian shell corporation created by Danny Schind and Captain William C. Ash.

“One of the new faces at Hotel Fourteen in 1946 was Ze’ev Schind. A congenial redhead from Kibbutz Ayelet Hashahar, came to New York to take charge of the Aliyah Bet section. Known as ‘Danny’ the 36 year old Schind had an Aliyah Bet background that went back to 1937 in Europe....the first time he showed up to purchase a ship; Schind was asked whom he represented. His reply: ‘the Jewish people.’....Years later, co-workers would recall him with affection and admiration bordering on awe; they remembered his sense of humor, and his determination to let nothing stand in the way of Aliyah Bet.”²⁷

“Another American Jew who played an important role almost from the beginning of the United States operation was a professional sailor, William C. Ash. Born in Poland, Ash had become a sea captain, a wartime officer in the U.S. Maritime Service.”²⁸

A new Panamanian company, hardly more than a mailing address, came into existence under the name of Arias and Arias. Schind and Ash also set up an American corporation, the Weston Trading Company, and put its name on the door of Captain Ash’s office at 24 Stone Street. (N.Y.). Captain Ash was the company president. American Jews who had come into the Aliyah Bet orbit were listed as the directors of the company. Nowhere did Schind’s name appear on company papers.

The sole stockholder listed on the Weston Trading company’s incorporation papers was Dewey Stone, of Brockton, Mass. A friend of Chaim Weizmann²⁹ and a future national chairman of the

²⁷ The Jews Secret Fleet, Joseph Hochstein, Gefen Press, Jerusalem 1987 pg. 36

²⁸ Ibid pg. 38

²⁹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chaim_Weizmann

United Jewish Appeal, Stone provided the clandestine Aliyah Bet mission with another respectable means of access to the above board world. As a prominent businessman, philanthropist, and community leader, Stone was in a position to write checks for large sums without causing inconvenient questions to be asked. When agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation came to see Stone about one of the American ships being fitted out for Haganah service, Stone's involvement in a bona fide textile company gave plausibility to his response that the ship was being readied to transport clothing to refugees in Europe."³⁰

~~~~~

"During this period I was able to get acquainted with the crew. There were 43 men, about a third of whom were seamen and others like myself, who had some measure of boating experience and a healthy respect for the sea. The rest were totally inexperienced but made up for it with dedication to a cause and abundant enthusiasm."<sup>31</sup>

"First there was Itzak (Ike) Aronowitz who became a close friend. He was a Palestinian, a seaman who had served in the British Merchant Marine. As chief mate of the ship, he would one day become its skipper. When the American captain delivered the ship to Marseille, he would return home leaving Ike to resume command from Marseille to Palestine, that part of the trip being in the hands of the Haganah exclusively. At twenty-three he looked about seventeen. Of all the men I have ever known, he was the most fearless, and through the months when there was a tough, dangerous job to do, he elected to do it."<sup>32</sup>

"The chief mate was Bernie Marks of Cincinnati, Ohio, who had been an officer in the United States Merchant Marine and had Master's papers. His knowledge of the sea for all of his

---

<sup>30</sup> The Jews Secret Fleet, Joseph Hochstein, Gefen Press, Jerusalem 1987 pg. 38

<sup>31</sup> Grauel, An autobiography as told to Eleanor Elfenbein, Ivory House, Freehold, N.J. 1982 pg. 48

<sup>32</sup> Ibid pg. 49

twenty-four years could match that of a Master of four years service.”<sup>33</sup>

“Next in command was Bill Bernstein, 23, from San Francisco, a graduate of the United States Merchant Marine Academy at Sandpoint, and second mate on the *Warfield*. As a Marine officer he was in the Normandy invasion in WWII. Not especially committed to his Judaism, when the concentration camps were opened he was at Dachau and could not forget the obscenities he saw there. When he came home after the war he joined the operation to help bring the survivors of the concentration camps to Palestine. He did not regard it as a religious awakening so much as a blow for humanity.”<sup>34</sup>

There were others ... Bill Millman from Chelsea, Massachusetts, CY Weinstein, Harry Leidner and Grauel’s closest friend, Eli Kalm – the chief steward.

“About a week before we did sail, a ceremony took place on board. The crew and some important guests gathered as the crew took the Haganah oath. We were each given a sweater and a bible, Old Testament for everyone else, New Testament for me, which I regarded as very thoughtful.”<sup>35</sup>

The Haganah oath ceremony took place on Sunday, February 16. “Danny Schind presented Itzak Aronowitz with the Haganah flag, the familiar blue Mogen David of Israel. A bottle of champagne appeared – not for consumption at the moment, but for the day in the Mediterranean when the ship would be rechristened, according to custom, with a name appropriate to her mission.... Danny Schind introduced Captain Ash as the man who brought about the culmination of their efforts and desires.” Captain Ash said, “I envy you your opportunity. You are the twentieth- century Maccabees, doing today what they did in the days

---

<sup>33</sup> Ibid pg. 50

<sup>34</sup> Ibid pg. 51

<sup>35</sup> Ibid pg. 53

of the Hasmonaeons. I wish you God-speed and good sailing.”<sup>36</sup>

Grael had volunteered for the Haganah years before and no doubt had taken the oath at that time. He took the oath again in front of his shipmates. Before the others, and to those that knew otherwise, he was on board as a first time Haganah volunteer.

“A few people were asked to say a few words and I thought, when asked, that this was the time to explain my own membership in the crew, which I did in terms of an incident during WWII. ‘Some soldiers were bivouacked somewhere in Italy, near a monastery. One Friday night they decided to hold Sabbath services in the monastery garden. To hold religious services Jews must have a minyan, that is, ten Jewish men. Having only nine, they looked around and spied a statue of Jesus and remembering He was Jewish, they held their services.’”<sup>37</sup>

February 27, 1947, the *President Warfield* pulled up anchor and sailed. A few hours out of Baltimore, just past the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay, a vicious Atlantic storm blew up. The ship began taking on water badly. The hawse pipes, the openings through which the anchor chain runs had never been cemented closed. Tons of water continued crashing into the ship and filling the holds. The watertight doors were ordered closed, the pumps failed. The ship, just out on its mission of mercy, was in serious danger of sinking. The Captain issued an S.O.S...

The U.S. Coast Guard arrived just in time to save the *President Warfield* from disaster. Two days later she was towed into Norfolk, Va. for repairs and refitting. That same night, the night of the terrible storm, nine ships were in danger. One did sink with the loss of many lives.

“The damage to our ship was repairable but it would take time and that commodity was in short supply for us. We had received word before we left that the displaced persons we were to take on to Palestine had already started to move toward our rendezvous point and en route thirty-nine had frozen to death in a freight car. With this bad news, we were prodded into

---

<sup>36</sup> Exodus 1947, by David C. Holly, Little Brown and Co., Boston, 1969 pg. 152

<sup>37</sup> Ibid pg. 54

working as hard as we humanly could.”<sup>38</sup>

While in Norfolk for repairs, “John Grauel attended secret parlor meetings in Norfolk to raise money for repairs and expenses for the voyage.”<sup>39</sup>

March 29, 1947 the *President Warfield* left for Marseille. All aboard were deeply concerned. What sort of reception awaited them by the British?

Friday, April 5, Passover was celebrated on board. “Prayers were said, the traditional questions of the seder were asked and answered, and suddenly I found myself close to tears. The reader has recited the traditional words, ‘Next year in Jerusalem.’ Here I was a, country preacher, a Methodist seated aboard a rolling ship in the mid-Atlantic with a group of Jewish chaverim (friends) in celebration of the self-same festival Jesus celebrated so many years before. What made the moment even more moving for me was that we were on our way as instruments of deliverance in assisting those of the second *Exodus* to return to their land, Eretz Israel.”<sup>40</sup>

The *President Warfield* slipped into the Azores to refuel. The British refused to permit the ship to refuel. A Norwegian Captain in the port asked the crew members if they were from the “Jew Ship.” Grauel resisted an effort to punch the guy in the nose and fortunately so. The Captain told him of a large oil bunker next to the pier they were tied up at. A dispute over ownership of the full oil bunker between Portuguese Premier Salazar and the British meant they were unguarded. The *Warfield* refueled and left before anyone was the wiser heading for Marseille to be cleaned up and restocked.

All the crew aboard the *Warfield* was very aware that the ship could be taken by the British. Each one of them could be subject to possible severe punishment and prison. If the ship was taken some of the crew would hide in secret compartments on board. Others would lose all

---

<sup>38</sup> Ibid pg. 55

<sup>39</sup> Exodus 1947, by David C. Holly, Little Brown and Co., Boston, 1969 pg. 164.

<sup>40</sup> Grauel, An autobiography as told to Eleanor Elfenbein, Ivory House, Freehold, N.J. 1982 pg. 57

their identity papers, blending in with the refugees before being taken to British detention camps in Cyprus. Reverend Grauel, before he had left the States obtained a special cover, a cover that no Jew on board could obtain – legal permission to go to Palestine.

“One of the members of the Board of Directors of the American –Christian Palestine Committee was Guy Emory Sipler, editor of the *Churchman*, an independent Episcopal magazine. My good friend Dr. Carl Voss, Executive Director of the committee, contacted Sipler before I left home, and they created a job for me as foreign correspondent for *The Churchman* with the appropriate credentials. With that in hand, I left Marseille and flew to Paris to get a visa from the British Consulate to enter Palestine legally. That would make it possible for me to go ashore, should the crew of the *Warfield-Exodus* be caught and interned, which was always a possibility with Haganah ships. I would simply be regarded as having been aboard the ship as an observer and as such, not likely to be held with the others. Once on shore I would be available to make a full eyewitness report of the voyage.”<sup>41</sup>

~~~~~

Grauel’s preparations for the voyage involved high level contact, support and collusion from the American-Christian Palestine Committee. They had a very high level of expectation that the ship would be stopped. His role was to get the story out to the world. The *President Warfield/Exodus* was the largest ship, to date, with the largest cargo of desperate Holocaust survivors trying to get to Palestine in the history of the Aliyah Bet.

“What had stirred the British from the beginning and now alarmed them even more was the size of *Warfield* in comparison to the little tubs that had previously served Aliyah Beth. Obviously, this ship, as a former passenger vessel, could be crammed, Mossad-style, with many thousands of immigrants. Moreover from a study of her times of departure and arrival at various ports and from known data from her days in the British merchant marine, a naval

⁴¹ Ibid pg. 59

intelligence analyst could conclude that she was relatively fast. All of these factors boded ill. They seemed to bear out the conclusions of Whitehall that the Zionists were bent on breaking the British back in Palestine with a deluge of immigrants. Instructions went out to all British military units, intelligence services, and diplomatic missions in Europe: *Warfield* must be kept from sailing at all cost."⁴²

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

"Once in Paris I reported to the Haganah leadership that I would be available to them....While in Paris I worked with a truly exceptional woman, Shulamit , daughter of Chaim Arlosoroff⁴³....I also learned to rely on my memory. A good memory can be acquired by frequently exercising those faculties of your brain, and to this day I have almost total recall. I was with the Jewish Defense Ministry in Exile, which is about the only way to describe that facet of leadership, and I carried messages that could not be trusted to ordinary means of communication."⁴⁴

Reverend Grauel was uniquely capable of moving between two worlds. "Before he left, Grauel had to obtain a visa for Palestine. This was one of the initial reasons for his trip to Paris. It required a visit to the British Embassy. When he discovered that the British Embassy and the adjacent streets were surrounded by gendarmes and plainclothesmen, he dressed in his clerical garb as a Methodist minister. Then he walked past the lion-guarded gate of the Embassy, accepting the salutes of the guards and the greetings of the British secret service."⁴⁵

Grauel and Shulamit Arlosoroff arranged for the transport and rescue of 1,200 children to

⁴² Exodus 1947, by David C. Holly, Little Brown and Co., Boston, 1969 pg. 179

⁴³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haim_Arlosoroff states that Arlosoroff was a Jewish underground operative who committed everything to memory. Grauel further states that his murder forced the cancellation of a rescue effort of 17,000 children. Arlosoroff had all the contacts memorized and not written down.

⁴⁴ Grauel, An autobiography as told to Eleanor Elfenbein, Ivory House, Freehold, N.J. 1982 pgs. 59-60

⁴⁵ Exodus 1947, by David C. Holly, Little Brown and Co., Boston, 1969 pgs. 174-175

Palestine; some would sail on the *Exodus*. In spite of every effort at secrecy Grauel and Arlosoroff were under constant British surveillance. In spite of the shadowing British agents, "During 1947, I made many trips to Marseille to help move refugees."⁴⁶

"While still in Paris, I got a hurried call from Shula to meet her at the Place de la Concorde because there was some trouble brewing.... The British, with French help, decided to root out all the Jewish underground operators in Paris. Shula had received word that they were looking for us, and while the police were shaking down every likely corner of Paris, nine of us were sitting all in one row at the Paris Opera listen to Thais. After the performance, we scattered and decided to go back to Marseille and rejoin the *Warfield*."⁴⁷

Grauel was no ordinary volunteer seaman on the *President Warfield*. He was integrally connected to the Haganah at the operational level.

"I arrived in Marseille to be told that the *Warfield* had already sailed, having had to make a quick getaway. The British had three destroyers off shore and were aware of everything we were doing on or off the ship. We had every reason to believe that they would do anything possible to prevent our reaching Palestine."⁴⁸

It was imperative, for the Haganah, Grauel must be on board the *Warfield*. Another Haganah ship was near Marseilles, at Port de Bouc.

"Grauel was literally dumped aboard *Hatikvah* (the Hope) by the Haganah agents in Marseilles."⁴⁹ The ship weighed anchor within the hour and rendezvoused with the *Warfield* in Portovenere, Italy. Bernie Marks rowed over in a dinghy and brought him back to the *Warfield*.

⁴⁶ Grauel, An autobiography as told to Eleanor Elfenbein, Ivory House, Freehold, N.J. 1982 pg. 64

⁴⁷ Ibid pg. 65

⁴⁸ Grauel, An autobiography as told to Eleanor Elfenbein, Ivory House, Freehold, N.J. 1982 pgs. 65-66

⁴⁹ Exodus 1947, by David C. Holly, Little Brown and Co., Boston, 1969 175-176

The British put enormous pressure on the Italian government to prevent the *Warfield* from escaping yet again. An Italian gunboat, with machine guns trained on the *Warfield*, suddenly appeared blocking her way out of the port. “The British authorities in Rome had taken steps in cooperation with the Italian authorities to prevent the sailing of an unnamed vessel, which was to be used to transport ‘escaping criminals and fascists,’”⁵⁰ the newspaper reports ran. “I was enraged to the point of tears many times by the lying statements of British officialdom in their undeclared war against the world’s dispossessed.”⁵¹

For seven weeks the *Warfield* lay trapped in the port, the gunboat sitting on the *Warfield’s* anchors. Heaven and earth were moved to try and free her, to no avail. A modern day Judith rose and answered the call from the Sea.

“In charge of Italian operations was a legendary woman, Ada Sereni, widow of Enzo Sereni who had been tortured to death by the Nazi when he made a parachute jump behind enemy lines in Czechoslovakia during the war. Enzo’s father had been a physician to King Victor Emmanuel III. Ada’s first cousin was an admiral in the Italian navy, a Jewish rarity. Between Enzo’s background and hers, Ada had some excellent contacts in high places when needed.”⁵²

“Suddenly, without prior notice or explanation, the gunboat withdrew, and we immediately made a dash for it.... It was not until many weeks later that we were told Ada Sereni took advantage of her admiralty connections and forged a letter of release on our behalf. Today, Ada is living at Giv’at Brenner in an Israel to which she helped give life.”⁵³

The *Warfield* escaped again.

⁵⁰ Grauel, An autobiography as told to Eleanor Elfenbein, Ivory House, Freehold, N.J. 1982 pg. 69

⁵¹ Ibid pg. 69

⁵² Ibid pg. 71

⁵³ Ibid pg. 73

July 9, 1947, in the very early hours of the morning, two tugs and a harbor pilot guided the *Warfield* into Port du Bouc. One hundred and seventy two trucks were awaiting their arrival. They were loaded to capacity with Holocaust survivors anxiously peering out for a first glimpse of their rescue ship.

“We had moored a large barge alongside the ship so that it would be possible for them to climb the side ladder to board. They moved forward gradually, looking up at the ship, some of them somewhat mystified... A little girl started up the ladder on to the side of the ship, and as she clambered over the top, I reached down to assist her. Under normal circumstances it would have been hard to distinguish her from any other girl her age, but I reached for her left elbow, there on her arm I could see the number, the mark of the concentration camp. She smiled her thanks for my aid and walked on as I stood there, chilled by what I had seen on that child’s arm.”⁵⁴

The refugees filled the old ship from top to bottom. The *Warfield* had been designed to transport 650 people. She had on board over 4,500 people. Just as preparations were complete, to pull up the anchor and get underway, word arrived from the French authorities. The *Warfield* would have to move behind the breakwater and wait. There was a problem.

A committee headed by Yossi Harel⁵⁵, the Haganah commander of the ship, and Captain Ike Aronowitz prepared to go ashore and appeal to the French. The French had not initiated the delay. It was engineered by the British. July 10, British intelligence had informed British Foreign Minister Ernest Bevin meeting Paris with Prime Minister Georges Bidault about the *Warfield*. Bevin, livid with rage, demanded that Bidault and the French stop the ship from sailing. Neither of the men knew that a Haganah sympathizer was at the closed meeting. Immediately he sent word to the *Warfield*. It was too late, French guards were placed on the quay to keep the ship from escaping during the night. .

⁵⁴ Ibid pgs. 74-74

⁵⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yossi_Harel

A decision had to be made, surrender and return the refugees to Displaced Persons Camps, a horrible alternative, or do something else. The commanders of the *Warfield* decided to do so something else.

A French speaking crew member went ashore and invited the French guards and police to come on board for a party. It was night. The ship could not go anywhere; spring lines had been set securing the *Warfield* fast to her moorings, fore and aft. Grauel was placed in charge of the "Party." Lavish amounts of brandy appeared, cigarettes exchanged hands, pillow cases of American goodies, such as the guards had not seen since before the war were given as gifts. Grauel made sure that the guards were thoroughly liquored up and at ease. Bill Bernstein slipped ashore and cut the spring lines holding the *Warfield* prisoner. The guards, drunk and ashore with their "gifts", the *Warfield's* engines came to life. A dash was made for freedom, for the open sea.

Unexpectedly, the propellers of the *Warfield* fouled on the spring lines. It was a desperate situation. The engineer threw the *Warfield's* powerful engines forward and backward until the spring lines severed. The *Warfield* lurched forward. She rammed into the quay and careened into a sand bar getting stuck. The heavily bribed French harbor pilot had taken their money but had not shown up. The crew did not have any local knowledge of the waters in the harbor. Another hour of churning props and horrifically anxious minutes punctuated by almost universal prayers, the *Warfield* broke free.

July 11, 1947

"We were not out more than a few hours when we sighted a British Man-O'-War. To have arrived so quickly at the scene she must have been waiting for us. When we finally arrived in Palestine, we were being escorted by a British task force of six ships including the highly prized World War II heroine, the *Ajax*.⁵⁶ Obviously someone in the British government or the

⁵⁶ [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMS_Ajax_\(22\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMS_Ajax_(22)) November 18, 1949, now decommissioned, the *Ajax* famed for her part in destroying the mighty German Battleship the *Admiral Graf Spee*, was broken up for scrap in Newport.

admiralty was deathly afraid of an aging river boat overloaded with homeless, unarmed men, women and children."⁵⁷

"We reached the open sea: it was the first time that a ship succeeded in leaving that small harbor without a pilot. We began to run all over the deck like madmen congratulating each other. As for me, I took the time to mumble a small prayer. We were sailing..... The spirit of these people was marvelous to witness. The mere thought of reaching their beloved land seemed to make them withstand everything."⁵⁸

Conditions on board were terrible. The seas swelled, severe sea sickness, heat, food and water problems, diarrhea, health concerns, soon overloaded the sanitary facilities. More than 400 pregnant women were on board.

"At dawn of the second morning, the loud-speaker announced: "Our first child was born. Mother and child are in excellent health. In the heat of the third day, the ship's first sorrow followed. A couple had been warned in France that the expectant mother was not in a condition to travel by sea. They insisted upon going, never- the less. Now, the mother died in childbirth, though the child lived. In a moonlight ceremony, the body was wrapped in a handmade flag of Zion and the Scriptures were intoned as it was lowered into the sea."⁵⁹

A British destroyer drew up close to observe and photograph the tragedy. The white helmets, the young faces of the naval personnel, waiting, watching, were visible to all on the *Warfield*.

Complaints, overcrowding, difficult circumstances, were not the focus for the refugees. They were going home. "By that time, passengers and crew had been welded into one big family. Grauel, the American minister, was looked upon as an omen of good luck. The American crew

⁵⁷ Grauel, An autobiography as told to Eleanor Elfenbein, Ivory House, Freehold, N.J. 1982 pg. 78

⁵⁸ <http://www.jafi.org.il/education/moriya/carmel/TheillegalImmigration.html>

⁵⁹ The Redeemers, A Saga of the Years 1945-1952, by Leo W. Schwarz, Farrar, Straus, New York, 1953 pg. 248

was dubbed, *con amore*, the *Chocoladniks*.”⁶⁰

July 17, 1947

Radio confirmations were received in the evening, sealed instructions were opened– the *Warfield* officially was given her new name as she sailed well off the Sinai Peninsula coast. She was no longer the *President Warfield* but the *Exodus*. The *Exodus 1947 from Europe*, a ship of the Haganah, was carrying home the people of Israel to their land and freedom. The blue and white flag with the Star of David prominently and proudly stitched in the middle, that was given Captain Ike Aronowitz in Baltimore, was taken and out and elevated to the mast of the *Exodus*. Her new name was painted in huge letters on the port and starboard of her upper deck for the entire world to see.

Joy, pride, hope, tears, and anxiety filled the ship.

The British battle fleet circled.

“Jossi [Yossi Harel, together with the Haganah radio operators on board headed by Azriel Einav] made arrangements for a broadcast to be made from the ship through the Haganah illegal radio facilities to the entire countryside. By now all of Palestine knew of our coming and our dubious race for safety or possible confrontation ahead with a formidable representation of the British fleet.”⁶¹

~~~~~

Reverend John Stanley Grauel’s importance and vital presence on the *Exodus* was coming out. He was a Christian minister, an eye witness to the world. **He was not a Jew.**

“It was the Mosad's intention to mount a huge illegal immigration operation that would draw

---

<sup>60</sup> Ibid pg. 248

<sup>61</sup> Grauel, An autobiography as told to Eleanor Elfenbein, Ivory House, Freehold, N.J. 1982 pg. 84

the attention of the international media and influence the members of the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP), who would then be visiting Palestine on a fact-finding mission.”<sup>62</sup>

UNSCOP had refused to meet with refugees in the camps in Europe. The structure and membership of the committee was already unsympathetically packed against the Jews. Their fact finding trip to Palestine would bring back a crucial recommendation that would weigh heavily on the upcoming Partition Resolution that would determine the fate of Palestine and the Jews.

~~~~~

At 10:00pm a special broadcast, relayed from the *Exodus* to *Kol Yisrael*, the *Voice of Israel*, was carried to the world. Harel arranged a presentation of short speeches of greetings from some of the passengers and a choir of children singing Hebrew songs.

“For the final portion of the program Jossi asked me to add a short appeal directed to the United Nations Committee on Palestine, meeting in Kadimah House, Jerusalem. I gave the following statement:

Gentlemen, at this time we request you, in assembly in Eretz Israel, that you appear to gather testimony from the forty-five hundred Jews who are coming to Palestine in a few hours aboard the *Exodus 1947*. We remind you that no committee was called to witness the death of six million Jews in Europe. This is your opportunity to fulfill the requirements of your declared justice in these matters. Witness if you will the heartache, the sorrow, and the suffering and the utter brutality inflicted on our people by the British. They have acted as the Nazis have acted. They clubbed and shot down in cold blood our women and children. These British are imprisoning our people in the same types of camps on Cyprus as they suffered in Hitler’s

⁶² <http://www.jafi.org.il/education/moriya/carmel/TheillegalImmigration.html>

Europe.

You have declared yourselves to guarantee equal opportunity to all who seek freedom. Bear witness in truth to that declaration and hear our case now. We urge you to come and see our ship and to sit in judgment upon the British who we believe are doing the very thing that the United Nations has pledged itself to destroy.”⁶³

“I must have dropped off into a deep sleep after all, because at 2:30 a.m. the ship’s whistle screamed a signal of distress, and I was jarred awake, slightly befuddled, as I groped for my shoes. I rushed out, snaking my path through the refugees who were beginning to pour on deck, to peer through the darkness beyond the edge of the ship. I had just reached the door to the bridge, when suddenly the night turned to day under the searchlights from the destroyers. A fleet of ships seemed to be running abreast of us as if they planned to converge on us at one point. My eyes were drawn upwards by the lights to see a mammoth poster which someone during the night had secured to the single smoke stack. On it was a picture of a woman holding a baby in her arms, a small child at her side, and an inscription which read, “England, this is your enemy.” Through the blasting whistles I could hear a destroyer addressing us, “We are going to arrest your ship. You are in territorial waters.” The doors of the bridge flew open and Ike, thoroughly enraged his face pale, screamed through a megaphone, ‘you’re a god damned liar,’ and followed that up with a stream of choice abuse.

I looked toward the upper deck ahead of me and there stood a group of boys and girls between the ages of about thirteen to sixteen. They were standing at attention, their chins thrust forward defiantly, one fist tightly clenched, the other holding a potato someone must have filched from the galley. They were prepared to defend themselves with the only weapons they could lay their hands on.... I was born and nurtured with the precious milk of freedom. Not yet grown old or cynical, as I watched those youngsters I was momentarily bathed in the aura of Concord and Lexington, and all the words I had ever read about the birth of America and her

⁶³ Grauel, An autobiography as told to Eleanor Elfenbein, Ivory House, Freehold, N.J. 1982 pg. 84

fight for freedom took shape on board that ship. I knew, I just knew I was watching the rebirth of a nation.”⁶⁴

I ran through a passageway and climbed the ladder on the port side of the hurricane deck to take a position directly amidships. At that moment the destroyer rammed the ship, and we were all thrown to the deck. Tear gas grenades were flying and exploding around me, and the acrid stench filled my lungs, and made my eyes sting and tear.”⁶⁵

Grappling hooks flew from the destroyer unto the *Exodus* drawing it closer. Boarding ramps slammed into the upper deck, the British boarded the *Exodus* armed and prepared for the attack. “Four marines had ripped open the door of the bridge, one with pistol firing, then together they clubbed our officers and drove them out. Bill Bernstein dropped with a crushed skull outside the companion way. I went into the chart room aft of the bridge where I was confronted by a British sailor wearing a gas mask. I yelled, “I’m an American correspondent. I must get into the captain’s cabin. There’s a man seriously injured in there.” I heard a muffled response, “Get out or I’ll kill you.” He swung at me with his club, and I ducked falling backward through the port. The last time he threatened me with his pistol so I withdrew, just as the ship rocked again under a second ramming. As I went forward the ship was rammed again and there was a shower of glass.... I heard the chatter of machine guns....⁶⁶

The *Exodus* was attacked 17 miles offshore of Palestine, opposite Gaza in international waters. The British, under maritime law, had committed an attack of piracy. The battle lasted two hours. Casualties were heavy: over two hundred wounded and three dead. William Bernstein of Los Angeles, Zwi Jakubovicz of Indersdorf and Mordecai Baumstein of Bad Reichenall....⁶⁷ Bill Bernstein had been clubbed to death. Zwi Jakubovicz was shot in the head. He was fifteen. He

⁶⁴ Ibid pgs 86-87

⁶⁵ Ibid pg. 87

⁶⁶ Ibid pg. 87

⁶⁷ The Redeemers, A Saga of the Years 1945-1952, by Leo W. Schwarz, Farrar, Straus, New York, 1953 pgs. 251-2

was hiding behind a life raft. Mordecai Baumstein bled to death from a gunshot wound to the stomach. The British did not transfer him to one of their ships for a blood transfusion.

Water began to pour in the holes in the walls, and the entire wooden structure was in jeopardy: the lives of hundreds were threatened. It was a grave moment. Yossi Harel had the choice of asking for cease- fire and surrendering or continuing the struggle and reaching shore with the dead and wounded. In concern for the wounded, several of them facing mortal danger, Yossi decided in favor of a cease-fire.

“The old, disabled ship steamed slowly into Haifa, nosed into place by several tugs. The young people, those still capable of standing, lined up on deck and sang *Hatikvah* (Hymn of Hope) with abundant emotion. Hundreds of British police and soldiers crowded the area. Cameramen took pictures while clinging to an overhead crane. Very much in evidence and obviously people of importance were two men, later identified as Judge Carl Sandstrom of Sweden, Chairman of the United Nations Special committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) and the Committee representative from Czechoslovakia, Dr. Karel Lisicky.”⁶⁸

The docks were filled with people, soldiers and the press. The name *Exodus* was known around the world. The *Exodus* was big news.

~~~~~

“In early 1947 the British announced their intention to abandon the Mandate, and turn the question of the future of Palestine over to the United Nations. At Great Britain’s insistence, the United Nations considered the Palestine question. The General Assembly decided to set up the United Nations Special Commission on Palestine (UNSCOP) to investigate the cause of the conflict in Palestine, and, if possible, devise a solution. The UNSCOP, composed of

---

<sup>68</sup> Grauel, An autobiography as told to Eleanor Elfenbein, Ivory House, Freehold, N.J. 1982 pg. 92

representatives of eleven nations,<sup>69</sup> visited Palestine and heard testimony from the Zionists in Palestine and in the US and took evidence. They were given a ready-made partition program by the well-prepared Zionist representatives, while the Palestinian and other side failed to prepare any coherent alternative. Despite this, the Palestinians' consensual rejection of partition was fully known to the UNSCOP. The strong Palestinian objection prevented a unanimous decision on partition but it was not strong enough to avert a majority one (achieved to a certain extent by American and Russian pressure). The Arab Higher Committee boycotted the Commission but demanded that the UN immediately grant Palestine its independence."<sup>70</sup>

UNSCOP was officially created, May 15, 1947. Much of the committee structure and membership had been negotiated long before its formal creation. There was a clear anti-Zionist bias amongst a significant numbers of its member, especially from India. The commission had until August 31, 1947, to come up with recommendations, at which time the commission's authority expired. UNSCOP had determined not to interview the Holocaust Refugees in the Displaced Persons camps in Europe who were trying to go Palestine. In essence they deliberately were not speaking with the very people who were desperately trying to come to Palestine and around whom the crux of the problem and potential solution laid. Crucial evidence would be deliberately withheld from the decision process.

Mandate Palestine had already been partitioned once by the British in 1922. Approximately 60% of Palestine was separated creating Trans-Jordan as a purely Arab state free of Jewish population and under Hashemite rule. UNSCOP was being asked to further consider dividing the remaining land, approximately 40% either into an independent Arab State of Palestine and a corresponding Jewish State or recommending a federation of the two.

The committee did have members whose minds were not made up. Evidence could be

---

<sup>69</sup> The Committee members represented the following nations: Australia, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Guatemala, India, Iran, The Netherlands, Peru, Sweden, Uruguay, and Yugoslavia.

<sup>70</sup> <http://www.mainstreamweekly.net/article27.html>

presented that would influence their recommendations. The Haganah understood the challenge. They understood that only hard evidence of the necessity of a two state solution, one Jewish, one again Arab, on the remaining land, had to be brought before the commission. UNSCOP's recommendations to the United Nations in September would largely shape the outcome of the Partition Resolution of November 1947 and the fate of a Jewish State.

The Haganah was well aware of the timing of the *Exodus* effort. The sheer audacity and size of the *Exodus's* movement of Holocaust Refugees would demonstrate to the world the focus and irreversibility of Jewish determination to go to Palestine. The 4,554 people on the board the *Exodus* would clearly state that the British White Paper policy was a failure. The Jews wanted what was promised to them in the Balfour Declaration - a homeland.<sup>71</sup> If a Jew made the demand, the world had a hard time hearing it, even after the Holocaust. It was imperative that Grauel be onboard the *Exodus*.

~~~~~

"As I came out on the flying bridge, I noticed a stretcher being carried toward a tent at the end of the wharf. On it was the body of the boy who had died at least six hours ago, Hirsch Yacubovich⁷², with the blanket down around his waist so it would appear as though he were still alive. I yelled, "That is the most goddammed despicable trick I have ever seen pulled."⁷³

Grauel, excited, angry, only succeeded in drawing British attention to him. He was arrested and after interrogation sent to Haifa's Savoy hotel under guard to remain under house arrest. His cover as an American correspondent had succeeded.

At the Savoy, the desk clerk informed Grauel that the bar was full of newspaper reporters. Before the police escort could stop him he virtually dove through the door of the bar. The

⁷¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Balfour_declaration

⁷² Also identified as, Zwi Jakubovicz, by Aronowitz

⁷³ Grauel, An autobiography as told to Eleanor Elfenbein, Ivory House, Freehold, N.J. 1982 Pgs. 92-93

British had been keeping news about the *Exodus* as controlled and limited as possible. Grauel would change that instantly.

“Here was my opportunity to give the newsmen my story. The room was full of people, some of whom I knew, Gerold Frank of the “Overseas News Service,”... Homer Bigart of the Herald-Tribune ...Clifton Daniels of the New York Times, Vic Bernstein of the New City P.M. and Art Holtzman of the Radio Service.” Grauel knew them all. His connections to the American media were proving invaluable. He knew them and they knew him. “I collapsed into the nearest chair and announced I was from the *Exodus* and would answer all questions. Immediately flash bulbs began to pop, and I was hemmed in all around by reporters.”⁷⁴

“After awhile a reporter edged in closer to me on my right, whispered the Haganah code word for the day, and advised me to make my way to the men’s rooms while the police were back at the doorway...Waiting for me were Gerold Frank and Vic Bernstein who immediately rushed me out the back door and into a waiting car that bore American Press signs. I crouched down in the back of the press car as we made our way through police lines and checkpoints.....I found out later on that my escape from the British had been planned by Teddy Kollek and the Haganah for the purpose of bringing my testimony before the Committee (UNSCOP).”⁷⁵

An all alerts to arrest John Grauel was put out by the British. A harrowing ride, past checkpoints manned by tanks, the car with the American Press identification, climbed its way past the final hills to Jerusalem.

“I was taken immediately to Kadimah House to the apartment of the Ambassador from Guatemala, Jorge Garcia-Granados. I was introduced as a Haganah volunteer from the *Exodus* and while I sat down to catch my breath, Sr. Garcia-Granados called Dr. Victor Hoo, assistant Secretary General of the United Nations who was also in Kadimah House, and an appointment

⁷⁴ ibid pgs. 93-94

⁷⁵ ibid pg. 94

was made for me to tell my story the next morning.... I told the Guatemalan Ambassador about the voyage rather briefly.....I had been without sleep for sixty hours.”⁷⁶

UNSCOP Ambassador Jorge Garcia-Granados described that first meeting with Grauel in his book, *The Birth of Israel, the Drama as I saw it*.

“I was at home when the doorbell rang. Two American journalists stood at the entrance, accompanied by a stranger, tall and blond, in his thirties, with blue eyes, who appeared to be tense and anxious, wearing clothes that were obviously borrowed from someone else since they were not his size: “I would like to introduce the Reverend John Grauel of Worcester, Massachusetts”, said one of the journalists as he propelled the pastor inside and closed the door behind him. “He was a volunteer on the *Exodus*”, continued the journalist, “and we have rushed him here from Haifa - the British have been trying to jail him”. We would like you to hear his account before he places himself under the protection of the American Consulate.”⁷⁷

The next morning, after Grauel had managed to sleep awhile, “I kept my appointment to meet with the U.N. Committee members in Dr. Sandstrom’s quarters in the presence of Dr. Hoo, Dr. Ralph Bunche, Dr. Garcia Robles, all members of the U.N. Secretariat, and Committee members Ivan Rand, Canada, Enrique Rodriguez Fabregat, Uruguay, and Nicolas Blom, Netherlands. They questioned me close about my contention that we were not in territorial waters at the time the British attacked, and I assured them that I had the ship’s log to verify my statement. I gave them a full account of the battle emphasizing the fact that there was not a single weapon aboard our ship.”⁷⁸

“I made one closing statement, ‘I have watched these people. I know what they are. And I tell you, the Jews in the European Displaced Persons camps insist on coming to Palestine, they will

⁷⁶ ibid pg. 97

⁷⁷ <http://www.jafi.org.il/education/moriya/CARMEL/Theillegalmmigration.html>

⁷⁸ Grauel, An autobiography as told to Eleanor Elfenbein, Ivory House, Freehold, N.J. 1982 pg. 97

come to Palestine, and nothing short of open warfare and complete destruction will halt them.’ There was great gratification for me in knowing that my eyewitness report was now a matter of record. ***Inherent in the nature of the relationship between Christians and Jews was the fact that because I was a Christian, in this situation my testimony would be given greater credence than that of a Jewish crew member.***⁷⁹

The Haganah’s effort, deliberately placing Reverend John Stanley Grauel on the *Exodus*, was wildly successful. They had cynically acknowledged reality – a Jew’s word was not as good as a Christian’s. Sadly, they were correct.

“I was elated at having completed my mission”.... Gerry Frank had one more stop for Grauel. “He took me to an apartment house, told me to go up to the second floor and push the button, then left me. I did as I was told and Golda Meir⁸⁰ answered the door. It was her apartment. A meeting was being held there of the entire Jewish Agency, the leadership of the Palestinian Jewish community, except for Ben Gurion who was seeing Dr. Chaim Weizman⁸¹ off to Switzerland... They asked me for a full detailed report of the *Exodus* trip from beginning to end and when I was finished, Golda was in tears. So was I... We all sat in silence for a few moments and then Moshe Sharett⁸² led me out on the balcony where we talked for two hours and began a close friendship that lasted until his death in 1965.”⁸³

Reverend Grauel returned to the United States after only nine days in Palestine.

“In the port of Haifa the illegal immigrants were transferred by force to three British vessels-- the *Ocean Vigour*, *Runnymede Park*, and *Empire Rival*-- to be taken back to France. This marked

⁷⁹ Ibid pg. 98

⁸⁰ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Golda_Meir

⁸¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chaim_Weizmann

⁸² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moshe_Sharett

⁸³ Ibid pg. 99

a significant change in British policy from what had been the standard procedure since August 1946, namely, the deportation of all apprehended illegal immigrants to detention camps in Cyprus. When the ships arrived in France on July 28, most of the passengers chose to remain on board. The French refused to accede to the British demand to force them out. For a month the three ships remained anchored near Port-de-Bouc. The refugee passengers suffered under grueling conditions. Finally, after a hunger strike, the British decided to return the refugees to DP camps in Germany. The ships arrived in Hamburg on September 8 and their passengers were forcibly removed by British soldiers. From Hamburg, they were taken by prisoner trains with barred windows to the Poppendorf and Amstau DP camps in the British zone. Most of the *Exodus* refugees remained in the DP camps for over a year, reaching Israel only after the state was established in May 1948. In 1951 the Mayor of Haifa announced that the *Exodus 1947* was to become "a floating museum, a symbol of the desperate attempts by Jewish refugees to find asylum in the Holy Land." The project was put on hold while attention was focused on issues of national security. However, on August 26, 1952, the ship caught fire and burned to the waterline. It was towed out of the shipping area and abandoned on Shemen beach. On August 23, 1964, an attempt was made to salvage the *Exodus 1947* for scrap, but during the process, the hulk broke loose and sank. It remains on the bottom of Shemen beach near Haifa."⁸⁴

Golda Meir, a later Prime Minister of Israel, acknowledged the contribution of Reverend Grauel's testimony and advocacy to the United Nations' decision in favor of the creation of Israel. Throughout his life he maintained close associations with Jewish concerns. In the 1950's and 1960's, he led investigations into the terrible conditions of Jews living in Morocco and Algeria. In 1975 he led one of the first Jewish youth tours of the Nazi Concentration camps in Europe. Reverend Grauel was drawn to numerous humanitarian efforts including the American Civil Rights and Native American struggles. The State of Israel recognized Rev. Grauel through the Humanity Medal, the Fighter for Israel Medal and the Medal of Jerusalem. He died in

⁸⁴ U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum – "Poppendorf statt Palastina" (The Haganah Ship Exodus 1947), an online exhibition by Henrik Jan Fahlbusch et al. (25 November 2002)]

Roosevelt, New Jersey in 1986. He was buried in the *American Christian Missionary Alliance Cemetery* on Emek Refaim Street in Jerusalem, on September 16, 1986. The burial was not an official State of Israel ceremony, yet an Israel Navy guard of honor was present, as well as representatives of B'nai B'rith, the American Jewish Committee, and many veterans of Aliya Bet.

Jerry Klinger is President of the Jewish American Society for Historic Preservation

www.JASHP.org