



# Celebrating 80 years ...

On May 15, 1948, thousands of Vancouverites marked the establishment of the state of Israel. Leading up to that moment, various campaign efforts were promoted in the *Jewish Western Bulletin*, including one to recruit Canadian men to defend Israel. Led by Harold Freeman, co-chair of the local United Jewish Appeal, the initiative resulted in almost 50 youth from British Columbia and Alberta heading to the newly re-established Jewish homeland.

There is a plaque at the Jewish Community Centre of Greater Vancouver dedicated to "the young sons of the Jewish community of Vancouver who, as inspired volunteers, heroically fought for the independence of Israel." From what the *Jewish Independent* could determine by press time, most of these volunteers have since passed away, however, Harold Lenett and Sonny Wosk are still living in Vancouver, while Al Gelmon lives in Calgary.

The May 20, 1948, *JWB* covered the Vancouver rally marking the establishment of the state of Israel, and lobbying the Canadian government "for permission to send arms to Palestine and for security from Arab aggression against Israel's Jews." Freeman addressed the 1,400-strong audience at the Vogue Theatre May 16.

"Anyone who class[es] himself as a Jew must do more than just cheer," he told the crowd. The article continued, "He said the Yishuv is in the front line fighting. We must form a rear guard with our money, our resources, our general sacrifice for them."

In his address, Freeman gave a brief history of Jewish oppression, focusing on, of course, the Holocaust, noting that refugees to Israel "may die, but not defencelessly in sealed chambers, crematoriums, mass graves, but firing their way to Jewish freedom."

According to the *JWB*, he said, "We have fled throughout the ages. And in our flight and fear we have taken on the character of the hunted and pursued."

"But today we have a new Jew in Palestine — Jews positive with youth, vigorous, courageous, determined and filled with energetic creativeness.

"Our republic is being born in fight and flame...."

Under the heading "Date with destiny," Freeman added, "And even as I talk to you, our boys from Vancouver are there on baracades protecting Israel.

"They have a date with destiny. No one had to call them. They are rising everywhere without prompting, without urging."

He concluded his remarks with a call to give more to UJA, to help the Haganah buy arms and munitions, then gave the stage to other "leading Vancouver Zionists."

In 1973, in honor of Israel's 25 anniversary of independence, the *JWB* published an extensive feature on "Vancouver's Valiant Volunteers" and "20th-Century Maccabees." Publishers Sam and Mona Kaplan extensively researched the community's contributions to and celebrations of Israel's statehood. They also interviewed many of the men who had fought in the War of Independence, accompanied by an impressive photo spread.

As the *Jewish Independent/JWB* approaches its special 80th birthday issue (May 14), we ask anyone who has stories about people in the community who volunteered in the 1948 war effort, or whose parents did, to let us know. If we can collect enough accounts (and photographs) by the end of April, we would like to publish a story on this important time in our community's history.

## 1400 CROWD THEATRE; PLEDGE ISRAEL SUPPORT

### Jews Here Ask Gov't Recognition Of Israel

Fourteen hundred local Jews joined the rest of Canadian Jewry in their request for recognition of the new State of Israel by Canada.

The rally marking the establishment of Israel Sunday endorsed this in a resolution directed to the Prime Minister of Canada asking also that permission to send arms to Palestine and for security from Arab aggression against Israel's Jews.

The resolution was carried by Jewish communities throughout the country.

a capacity audience filled the Vogue Theatre Sunday to solemnly mark establishment of the State of Israel.

Fourteen hundred men and women were turned away after 1400 had gathered. "But today we have a new Jew in Palestine—Jews positive with youth, vigorous, courageous, determined and filled with energetic creativeness.

"Our republic is being born in fight and flame . . .

DATE WITH DESTINY "And even as I talk to you, our boys from Vancouver are there on baracades protecting Israel.

"They have a date with destiny. No one had to call them. They are rising everywhere without prompting without urging."

He said that they too have taken the pledge with Haganah never allow Israel

And as realization of the help Vancouver UJA quota \$250,000 can give to the fighting heroes.



As noted in the 1973 issue of the *JWB*, the plaque dedicated to Vancouverites who fought for Israel in 1948 has several typos and a few omissions: "Jack Abramson is really Joe Abramson; Michael Morton is Michael Norton; Sol Rudin is Raymond Rudin. Still others have since changed their names: Morley Gorbovitsky is now Moses Gordon; Samuel Shnitka became Sam Shaw; Ephraim Wooll is now Dave Wooll. And a few names did not appear on the plaque: Joe Tunis [who has since been added], Lawrence Sures and Manny Maltin."

Above: The May 20, 1948, *JWB* covered the Vancouver rally marking the establishment of the state of Israel.

Right: The photo of some of the "boys" on the boat and on the French Riviera en route to Palestine, as well as on the Maria Annek (below), were printed in the May 4, 1973, issue of the *JWB* that marked Israel's 25th anniversary.



ABOARD SHIP heading for Palestine, Canadian volunteers from Vancouver, l. to r., Harold Lenett, Hank Goodman, Joe Tunis, Art Goldberg, Yale Joffe.

### Canadians Free to Join Army

OTTAWA.—Canadian citizens have the right to serve in the army of Palestine. There is no legal restriction that will prohibit them from fighting for either the Arab or the Jewish cause. This was declared by persons in circles close to the government.

It was emphasized, however, that in the event of a Canadian offering a pledge of loyalty to a foreign government, that citizen's Canadian rights are automatically lost.

Above: Canadians were welcome to fight for "either the Arab or the Jewish cause" but not "pledge loyalty to a foreign government," according to this item in the Jan. 30, 1948, *JWB*.



SHIP MARIA ANNEK congested beyond belief with 250 people, many of them Canadian volunteers. Top photo, some of the Canadians on board . . . Lower photo, a U.N. launch taking off passengers after 14 days aboard the vessel which was run aground in Sicily by inebriated Italian crew.



ENROUTE TO PALESTINE, stopping point on the French Riviera outside of Marseilles, Vancouver volunteers, l. to r., Yale Joffe, two men in foreground, unidentified, Joe Tunis (behind), Hank Goodman, Harold Lenett, Arthur Goldberg.

### It's Eretz Israeli Now!

The time has come for revision of your geographical vocabulary.

According to delegates at the national convention of the Canadian Zionist Organization in Ottawa last month, Palestine is no longer to go under that name. It is now Eretz Israel-Land of Israel.

A small announcement in the Feb. 6, 1948, *JWB* alerted the local Jewish community that "Palestine is no longer to go under that name. It is now Eretz Israel — Land of Israel."