

Mahal – The Third International Brigade When Israel Was the Darling of the Left

by Norman Berdichevsky (June 2015)



American pilots who volunteered to fight for Israel's independence

For the third time in the mid-twentieth-century, an international cohort of idealistic volunteers without thought of personal compensation, or safety formed an International Brigade in an unequal battle. These were the volunteers of those who rushed to the aid of the embattled State of Israel in the face of seven invading Arab armies in 1948-49. Known as Mahal [Hebrew: מְחַל, an acronym for Mitnadvei Hutz LaAretz (Hebrew: מִתְנַדְּוֵי חוּצַ לְאֶרֶץ), literally, Volunteers from Outside the Land of Israel].

They were both Jews and Christians who participated in combat or had earlier helped in breaking the British naval blockade preventing the arrival of Jewish immigrants to Mandatory Palestine. About 4,000 volunteers from all over the world came to fight on the Israeli side and helped stem and reverse the tide of battle and secure Israeli independence. They followed the noble ideals of the two previous International Brigades of Volunteers for Republican Spain (1936-39) and Finland (1939-40); (See Berdichevsky *NER*, [May 2015](#) and Capshaw, *NER*, [The Left is Seldom Right](#) and [here](#)).

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