

Opinion/Editorial

The View from Israel

English Classes in the Army

By Carl Alpert

Haifa - Israel's armed forces (Zahal) have an international reputation for their skill. Through the years they have executed daring exploits on land, air and sea, which have resulted in remarkable achievements. Many, for obvious reasons, have never been publicized. Usually, it is only when something goes wrong that stories appear in the press. The otherwise remarkable record is no accident. It is the result of diligent and intensive training on many levels.

Not long ago the army's house organ, *Bamachaneh*, provided a glimpse into one of those training programs in an unusual field. On frequent occasions army officers are called upon to engage in operations on an international level. They serve as hosts to visiting delegations from other countries. Alongside Knesset members they engage in negotiations with friendly powers. They play a vital role in important commercial transactions involving the sale of armaments. Some are interviewed on television. Many of the officers serve as military attaches at Israel's diplomatic posts abroad. In all of these functions a sound knowledge of English is not only desirable; it is a basic necessity.

While English is a required subject in the public school system, the pupils who emerge are

not always comfortable in that subject, in part because classes are too large, and because of the quality of some of the teachers. Many of the pupils avow that they learn more English from the movies, from television and from the Internet.

And so, in 1978 Zahal set up an English Language Institute. In this school, perhaps unusual for an army, officers from the rank of major and up are being subjected to an intensive, even pressure cooker program, to provide them with a fluent command of the English language.

This is no Ulpan, such as is frequented by new immigrants. The atmosphere is one of total immersion. For a period of six weeks, attendance is compulsory daily from eight in the morning to four in the afternoon. Evening hours are spent on homework centered on follow-up of the day's assignments. No uniforms; even dress is civilian, to reduce the military influence and to help provide a civilian mood.

One of the participants told the *Bamachaneh* correspondent, Uri Ettinger, that he is subjected to English all day long. "I breathe, eat and even dream in English," he said. The influence is so great that even out of class he finds himself (as per instructions) speaking only English to all with whom he

comes in contact. While grammar is obviously part of the program, the emphasis is on fluent English conversation. It is important to understand English and to read English, but most important is to be able to speak English freely.

The subject matter is not necessarily military. Recent topics for conversation, for example, included nutrition, sex in advertising and conformism. The goal is to give the participants complete self-con-

fidence and fluency in any subject. Obviously, those selected to take part in the course must have some basic knowledge of the language to begin with.

Humor plays a role, and even helps intensify command of the tongue. For example, the buffet dining room displays a sign over the food offerings which reads: "Please take yourself to anything you like," as reminder of the way some of them used to talk when they began the course, and learned to say, simply, "Help yourself."

Japanese difficulties with English are another source of humor - and learning. A classic

Japanese direction to the rest rooms, "For rest rooms go back to your behind," drew a howl of laughter. None would admit that at the beginning of the course some of them could have been guilty of similar malapropisms.

The example set by Zahal could well be followed by other agencies in Israel, not least by the Knesset. Some Knesset members who find themselves overseas on official missions, sometimes make a disgraceful spectacle of themselves with their sub-standard English. ☆

A Special Tribute to Irving Mond

By Lloyd Scher

When I was a child and was crying over the death of my father, my grandmother told me "When great and good men die, the world cries, but the angels sing a sweet song." A great man, Irving Mond, died on Thursday, January 8. He quietly slipped away. His passing left a gap behind him that will be hard to fill. Irving's life was filled with sorrow, joy and love.

I first met Irving as a young student at Temple Israel Sunday School where he would greet the kids after school with pockets full of candy. All the children knew him as the candy man. My son, Heath, remembered him as well as the candy man at the Hebrew School at the JCC. So as the Torah teaches us from generation to generation you shall pass out wisdom, love and compassion, such was the life of Irving Mond; he maintained that tradition of passing out candy and love to all the children.

We judge people by how they are remembered. Rita, his wife for 42 years, loved him so tenderly. His sons Darren and his wife Staci, Jered and his wife Elizabeth along



Irving Mond saying Kaddish at Birkenau in 1999.

Sara; they gave him an enthusiasm for life and great joy.

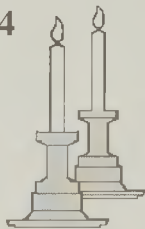
Irving earned respect and understood the traditions of Judaism, because of things he learned and faced after escaping the Nazis of Belgium. Unfortunately his sister was unable to escape the Holocaust of World War II. He represented to the world the truth of the horror some of his family faced in the concentration camps of Germany. He stood up strong to say never again - we must never ever forget. He lost several members of his family in Auschwitz but he survived to tell the story of shame and horror, which was the Holocaust. When my mother, Celia Scher, taught the Holocaust in the community, she would call on Irving to speak to schools, universities, synagogues, churches and civic groups; he would tell his story of survival to everyone so they could

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with his daughter Jodi and son-in-law Gary Michel, gave Irving his greatest joy in his grandchildren Allie, Mara, Lauren, David and

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