

Lesser Known Heroes of Jewish History

*“Let us now praise famous men” -
Ecclesiastes*

Criteria:

Lesser known heroes:

Those who made important contributions to Jewish history, but are not so famous that they have a street named after them and whose contributions while significant do not justify a whole lecture to describe their exploits.

Collected Unknowns

Baruch Spinoza (1622-1677)

Dutch philosopher

Mendel Beilis (1874-1934)

Czarist victim

Isaac Rosenberg (1890-1918)

British WWI poet

Arthur Schoenberg (1874-1951)

German composer

Mickey "Two Gun" Cohen (1887-1970)

Bodyguard to Pres. Sun Yat Sen of China

Shmuel Zieglboim (1895-1943)

Jewish rep. to the Polish Govt. in WWII

Col. Mickey Marcus (1901-1948)

American officer and Israeli military leader

Osip Mandelstam (1891-1938)

Russian poet

Tuvia Bielsky (1906-1987)

Partisan leader during WWII

George Gershwin (1898-1937)

American composer

Delmore Schwartz (1913-1966)

American poet

Sir Solly Zuckerman (1904-1993)

British science advisor

Zvika Greengold (1952-)

Israeli military hero

Leopold Trepper (1904-1989)

Soviet spy in WWII

Non-Jews who played important roles in Jewish History

Richard Meinertzhagen (1878-1967)

British spy and representative in Palestine

Col. Orde Wingate (1903-1944)

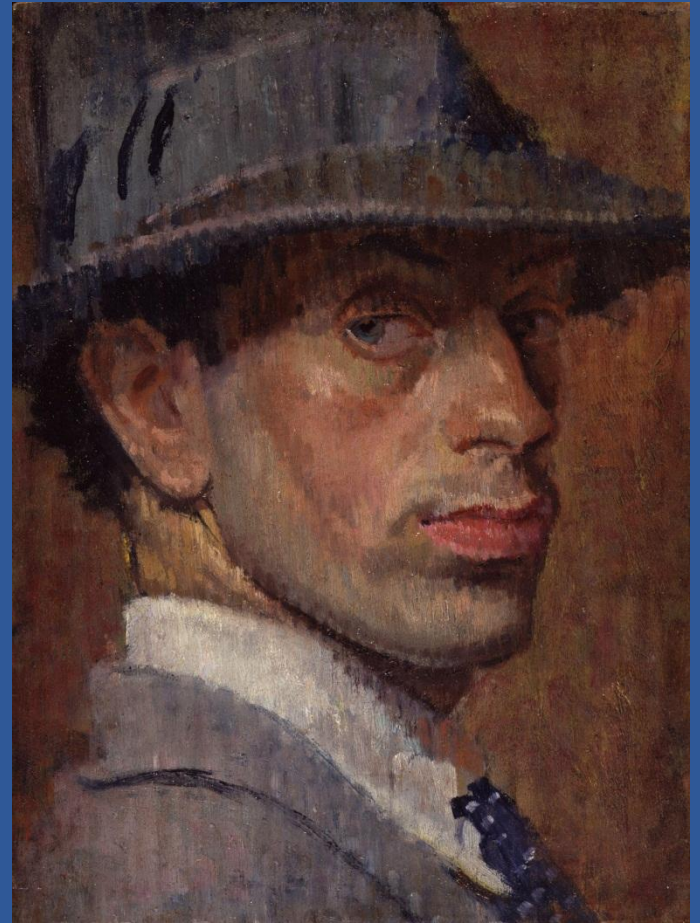
British officer and ardent Zionist

Selected Unknowns

- Isaac Rosenberg (1890-1918)
British WWI poet
- Shmuel Zieglboim (1895-1943)
Jewish representative to the Polish Govt.
in exile in London during WWII
- Sir Solly Zuckerman (1904-1993)
British science advisor
- Richard Meinertzhagen (1878-1967)
British spy and representative in Palestine
- Zvika Greengold (1952-)
Israeli military hero

Isaac Rosenberg

- Born Bristol 1890
- Studied art at Slade School London
- Enlisted in British Army 1914
- Fought in the trenches
- Killed at the age of 28



Self portrait 1915

Examples of his poetry

Marching

*My eyes catch ruddy necks
Sturdily pressed back -
All a red brick moving glint.
Like flaming pendulums, hands
Swing across the khaki -
Mustard-coloured khaki -
To the automatic feet.*

Dead man's dump

*None saw their spirits' shadow shake the grass,
Or stood aside for the half used life to pass
Out of those doomed nostrils and the doomed mouth,
When the swift iron burning bee
Drained the wild honey of their youth.*

Comparison with Owen

- Wilfred Owen is generally considered to be the greatest British poet of WWI. In his study “First World War Poetry” (Penguin 1979) Jon Silken compares Rosenberg with Owen:
- *“One of the principal differences in the Owen /Rosenberg contrast is that Owen’s poems are, in the main, recollected...Rosenberg’s lines do have fierce immediacy not present in Owen’s.”*
- *“Owen’s language narrates or carries the ideas; Rosenberg’s language is them, sensuously enacts them, and experiences them.”*

Why was Rosenberg ignored?

- He was *Jewish* in WWI England
- He was *poor*
- He was a *private*, when all the other famous poets were officers
- He died *young* and in obscurity
- But he now has a plaque dedicated to him outside the Whitechapel Library



Shmuel Ziegelboim

Shmuel Ziegelboim (1841-1943) was the “Jewish Bund” representative at the Polish National Council in exile in London. He tried desperately but in vain to awake public opinion to the Nazi atrocities being committed against Polish Jewry in Eastern Europe.



Ziegelboim's letter

- When the news arrived of the extermination of the Warsaw Ghetto, Ziegelboim committed suicide on 12th May 1943 outside the British Parliament, in protest to the passivity with which the world was permitting the Nazis to destroy the Jews of Europe. Before his death he sent a final letter to the President of Poland .
- He wrote: "*..I cannot live while the remnants of the Jewish people in Poland, whose representative I am, are being exterminated*".

Sir Solly Zuckerman

- Born in S. Africa
- Studied Zoology of baboons
- Moved to England in 1926 and was befriended by Anglo-Jewish notables
- Obtained PhD and received grant to study effect of explosions on baboons



(1904-1993)

During WWII

- During WWII Zuckerman was the Head of the **Bombing Survey Unit** and introduced many innovations that helped to improve bombing efficiency (including the effects of **blast**)
- He became an aide to Air Chief Marshall Tedder and proposed the plan to bomb transportation in France before D-Day focusing on **train engines**.
- In that context he probably caused the death of more German soldiers than any other Jew.

Civilian Roles

- After WWII Zuckerman became the Head of the **Anatomy Dept.** at Birmingham University
- He was one of the first to propose protection against environmental pollution
- He was Secretary of the **Royal Zoological Society** and then its President (1977-84) and was in charge of the London Zoo
- He was **Chief Scientific Advisor** to the British Govt. from 1964-71 and was the most powerful scientist in Britain, including involvement in decisions on atomic warfare

Richard Meinertzhagen

- Richard Meinertzhagen was descended on his father's side from Northern Germany, but on his mother's side from British aristocracy
- His family was in banking and was wealthy
- He became an intelligence officer posted to East Africa, where he shot dead a tribal leader who had come to negotiate



(1878 – 1967)

Work in Palestine

- In 1917 he was an intelligence officer on the Staff of Gen. Allenby in Cairo, and he helped to trick the Turks into believing that the attack would be at Gaza, not Beersheva – “the satchel ruse”
- During the Versailles Conference that ended WWI Col. Meinertzhagen was chosen as the representative of the Zionist interests while Col. Lawrence represented the Arabs
- After WWI he was the special representative of the Foreign Office in Palestine, and thru his reports we have some of the few detailed accounts of events there

Meinertzhagen contd.

- He was a convinced Zionist and was highly praised and thanked by Chaim Weizmann
- He was an avid bird watcher and collector and had one of the greatest collections in the world
- There are some questions regarding his violent streak and his veracity

Zvika Greengold

- Zvika was born 1952 and lived on Kibbutz Lohamei Hagetaot
- In 1973 when the Yom Kippur War began Zvika was 21 and training to be a tank commander in the IDF
- He was not assigned to any unit, so he hitchhiked to the Syrian front, and was given two damaged tanks to take out
- They were designated “**Force Zvika**”



“Force Zvika”

- His own tank was damaged in the first shot, so he took over the second tank
- He continued firing at Syrian tanks and almost single handedly stopped a major Syrian incursion (est. 150 tanks) that would have met no resistance before reaching Israel
- Hearing “Force Zvika,” the area commanders assumed that he had a battalion with him, but he was alone
- Eight tanks that were sent to relieve him were all hit by a Syrian ambush

“Force Zvika” contd.

- Zvika was wounded, but took over another tank and was alone again
- Later he was reinforced with 12 tanks and in the morning they stopped a second Syrian advance
- By this time Zvika was being treated as the commander of the tank forces on the central Golan Heights
- Eventually, wounded and exhausted after 20 hours he collapsed and was taken to hospital

Greengold saved Israel

Quote from "*The Yom Kippur War*" by Abraham Rabinovich:

"Some officers involved in the battle would later maintain that Greengold had single-handedly prevented the capture of Nafekh by blocking the Syrian drive ..and in saving Nafekh he had saved the Golan Heights...In any event Greengold's performance would deservedly win him the country's highest medal."

Source of Zvika's Heroism

- Zvika was the child of Holocaust survivors
- He testified that he continued his heroic acts because he felt that they had survived so that he could be there to fight for Israel
- The fact is that individual acts by many Israeli soldiers enabled Israel to recover from the first surprise attacks of the Yom Kippur war and achieve victory

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