



ELIEZER MARGOLIN: JEWISH  
AUSTRALIAN SOLDIER, WHO WAS  
ABLE TO FIGHT FOR WHAT HE TRULY  
BELIEVED IN

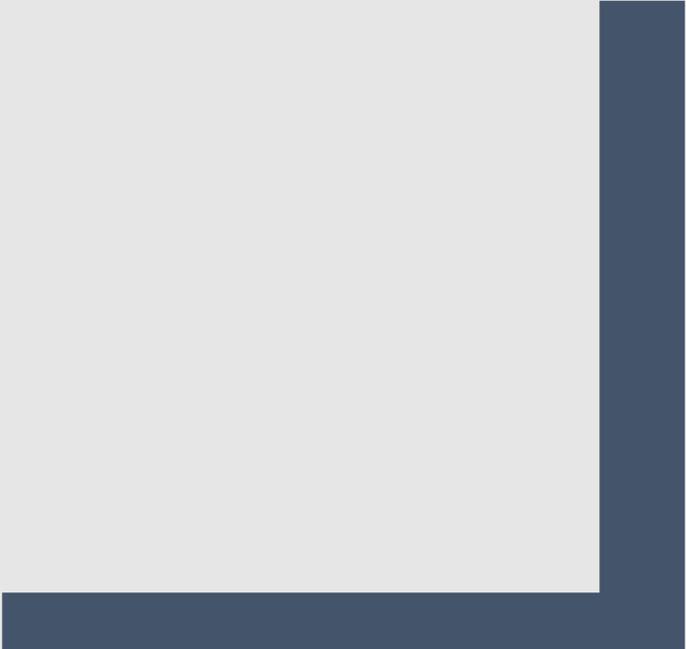
By Aaron Grolman

Birthday: 18<sup>th</sup> October 2000

Contact Number: 0 403 788 320

Address: 41A Malba Crescent, Dianella,  
WA, 6059

School: Carmel School



Throughout the course of history, the impact of The Jewish people has been one of great significance. Although they are small among huge nations, their overall contribution to this world has been greatly powerful. A Jew's courage and intelligence, no matter the circumstance, enables them to address the issue and solve the problem, which is one of the many reasons they are still around today. Even after countless occasions of discrimination and anti-Semitism, that have pushed the Jewish nation to their very limit, almost completely wiping them out, the Jews have been persistent, courageous, and fought for their nation. This why they are able to overcome everything and everyone, build up their numbers, and continue to survive as a people, as well as contribute to The world people more than ever before, like inventing the irrigation system as well as the mobile phone.

Pride in one's homeland and bravery were character traits that were highly requested in history, especially by the army. If a person's will to fight for their country, protect their fellow soldiers and save the lives of civilians was very strong, the likeliness of personal effort and success was higher. Australian Jews often uncovered two points of motivation to fight for: Australia, being the country they took residence in, as well as their Jewish, Zionist ties which made many Jewish Australian's born leaders, with something outside to fight for. During the time period of World War, I, a person's bravery and pride was all they had, as the fear of being attacked, constant exhaustion, and even death of fellow comrades took a huge toll on their minds, placing huge pressure and decreasing their will to keep fighting. Post traumatic stress disorder was a far too common occurrence during the war, as the constant fear and exhaustion was too much for many. By the end of the war Great Britain suffered 80,000 cases of shell shock alone, leaving them with personal problems, they would have to deal with for the rest of their life.<sup>4</sup>

Eliezer Margolin was an extraordinary soldier, colonel, lieutenant and captain. He fought with a clear mind, a brave heart and always supported his fellow soldiers. He was known by his comrades for being a disciplinarian, taciturn, quick-tempered, but fair and courageous, who always showed great concern, ensuring that their health and wellbeing was good.<sup>1</sup> Margolin was natural leader, showing many attributes required to be labelled as that. He made sure all jobs were completed proficiently and, at the same time, always made an effort to ensure his soldiers' safety during battle.<sup>1</sup>

Margolin was born in 1875 to Mr. Murdochy Joseph Margolin, and his wife Mrs. Llata Freida in Belgorod, a small town in Russia.<sup>1</sup> When he was only five years old, large scale pogroms began in Russia.<sup>1</sup> The spark for these pogroms was the assassination of Tsar Alexander II, which was blamed on the Jews. These anti-Jewish riots developed into heavy attacks on Jewish communities, putting more and more pressure on families to leave the country. In May 1882, the new Tsar Alexander III issued "The May Laws", a series of harsh restrictions on Jews.<sup>2</sup> Margolin was 17 when his family decided to finally get out of the country, and they all migrated to Palestine.<sup>1</sup>

The family lived on a farm in the town of Rechovot, which gave Eliezer many opportunities to become an excellent marksman and horse rider. The family lived a good, normal life, until 1900, when the tragic event of both parents passing away within a week of each other

occurred.<sup>1</sup> Eliezer was utterly shocked and devastated by his parents' passing, causing him major grief and depression. He was left as sole breadwinner, for him and his siblings. It became extremely difficult for the family to sustain a good wellbeing. Consequently, in 1902, he was one of many Palestinian Jews who sold their land to seek income somewhere else, in the hope of eventual return to their homeland.<sup>1</sup>

Margolin was able to pick himself up, and found suitable jobs for his brother and sister in Australia, to where they all moved, knowing little to no English. However, they were prepared to take this opportunity and create themselves a new life. He started off working as a navigator and truck driver, learning bits of English along the way. Following that he opened a small medical supplies business in Sydney, before finally moving to and settling in the mining town of Collie, Western Australia, where he ran a cordial factory.<sup>1</sup>

In 1904 he was granted citizenship and now found the opportunity to indulge his adventurous passion for soldiering. In 1911 he was appointed as a second lieutenant and later, founded the Collie Company of the 1st Battalion, Western Australian Infantry Regiment, Australian Military Forces. Even though in 1914 he was already 39, he still belonged in spirit, to that generation that welcomed war as a once in a lifetime chance, using his brave, adventurous, and caring nature to grasp at every opportunity thrown at him. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of October he joined the 16th Battalion, Australian Imperial Force, as a lieutenant and was promoted to the rank of captain in the short time of only two months.<sup>1</sup>

On April 25, 1915, Margolin was among the first of his battalion to lead his troops to land on Gallipoli. Initially, what was meant to be a short mission, turned into months and months of fighting. Eventually, on September 18, 1915, Major Margolin took temporary command of the battalion and directed its rear party out of the war safely during the evacuation. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Order for his works during the evacuations.<sup>1</sup>

Some time after Margolin's Gallipoli campaign, he was directed to go to the Western Front where he fought many battles that took place in France as well as surrounding areas.<sup>1</sup> Injury was not a seldom occurrence for him, as he was wounded several times, and was even dispatched to take time to rest and heal. While recovering from a knee injury in a London hospital, he accepted control over the 39th Battalion, Royal Fusiliers, one of three volunteer Jewish battalions of the British Army formed to fight the Turks in Palestine. On the 18<sup>th</sup> of March 1918, as a lieutenant-colonel, he took command of his battalion. The words he spoke to his soldiers are an example of Margolin's Jewish and Zionistic motivation to fight. He told his troops that "our aim is to participate in the fighting on the front of Eretz Israel and the liberation of our homeland".<sup>1</sup>

His strong belief in the freedom of Israel and willingness to fight for his homeland and his people, later persuaded friends to organise another fighting unit in Rechovot, which within a few weeks became the 40th Battalion, Royal Fusiliers.<sup>1</sup> In September these inexperienced and incompetent Jewish battalions under General Allenby joined the Anzac light horse, finally succeeding in driving the Turks from northern Palestine.<sup>1</sup>

Following the Ceasefire, most Jewish volunteers had left for their homes, however Margolin remained in Palestine.<sup>1</sup> During the summer of 1919 he prepared a new division, 'The First Jewish Battalion of Judea', with its own uniform and emblem. Hebrew was the language of command but the unit remained part of and were funded by the British Army. In May 1920 without British authority, Margolin interfered – with around 300 of his soldiers – in Arab-Jewish riots in Tel-Aviv. British commanders threatened to court-martial him but after hearing his case, they discharged him honourably and ordered him to leave the country.<sup>1</sup>

On leaving Palestine he did not feel regret. He believed that Jews had to fight for Israel with their own army forces. He was remembered as a hero of the Palestinian where he was known as the first commander of Judea and appointed him governor of Jerusalem. Once he returned to Australia in 1921 he purchased a gas station in Nedlands, Perth. He became the vice-president of the local Returned Sailors' and Soldiers' Imperial League of Australia, a foundation member of the Perth Legacy Club and the president of the Naval and Military Club as well as the 16th Battalion Association. He later married Hilda Myrtle England on July the 24<sup>th</sup> 1926. Unfortunately, they did not have any children.<sup>1</sup>

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of June, 1944, Margolin passed away of a cerebral haemorrhage and was cremated after a non-religious service at Karrakatta cemetery.<sup>1</sup> In December 1949, as wished for in his will, his widow took his ashes, his ceremonial sword, his medals and decorations to his true homeland, Israel. A military guard of honour met her at Haifa and ran a march through the village of the Jewish Legion, Avichail, including the Eliezer Margolin Square, to Tel-Aviv, Sarafand, and finally to Rechovot, where his ashes were buried next to his parents' graves. Israel's first prime minister, David Ben Gurion, a former officer in Margolin's Jewish battalion, was amongst the mourners at the ceremony. A memorial to Lieutenant-Colonel Margolin was unveiled at Rechovot in 1956.<sup>1</sup>

As displayed in Margolin's story, Jews from all over the world will do all they can to resolve a problem. Whether it means packing up their entire life and move away, or sticking up for what they believe is right. In his life Eliezer had always been courageous, adventurous and proud, allowing him to have the right mind set to fight for Australia, the country he resided in, in World War I. The fact that he was Jewish, and had a strong Zionistic identity, affected his life as a soldier in a way, that he had the motivation of not only protecting Australia, but also fighting for Israel and Jews as a whole. He also ended up actually going to Israel, and standing up for what he believed in, battling it out, for the freedom of his true homeland.

## **References:**

1. Suzanne Welborn, 'Margolin, Eliezer (Lazar) (1875–1944)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/margolin-eliezer-lazar-7484/text13009>
2. Anti-Jewish pogroms in the Russian Empire. (2016). Wikipedia. Retrieved 22 March 2016, from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anti\\_Jewish\\_pogroms\\_in\\_the\\_Russian\\_Empire#1881.E2.80.9384](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anti_Jewish_pogroms_in_the_Russian_Empire#1881.E2.80.9384)
3. BBC - History - World Wars: Shell Shock during World War One. (2016). Bbc.co.uk. Retrieved 22 March 2016, from [http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwone/shellshock\\_01.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwone/shellshock_01.shtml)