

IN MEMORIAM
RICHARD M. BARKAY (1918-1985)

Richard M. Barkay, multilingual Israeli economist, statistician, Africanist and national accounting enthusiast, “il dottore” to his friends in Jerusalem of three decades ago, passed away in Jerusalem in February 1985. Born in Russia and brought up in British Palestine, Barkay studied at the Italian School of Colonial Studies in Rome in the late 1930s, but got back to Palestine in time to join up with the British Eighth Army after the outbreak of World War II. As one of the “desert rats,” he was a liaison NCO with a Gurkha unit in the Egyptian desert west of El Alamein. As a UNDP planning expert in Katmandhu in the late 1970s and early 1980s, he was still at home with Nepalese at all levels.

My own acquaintance with Barkay dates from the mid-1950s when we worked together in Jerusalem on the Israeli national accounts with Daniel Creamer, reporting back to Simon Kuznets who was our adviser across the seas. Barkay, who was responsible for producing the public sector accounts, taught me some of the tricks of verbalizing statistical data.

He worked in Africa in the 1960s with the United Nations in Ghana and with what was then the Harvard Advisory Group in Liberia where he began practicing the art of planning development with limited data. He later took assignments with the UNDP in Togo, in the Caribbean, in Centrafrique and in Gabon. He was erudite, cultured, imaginative, diplomatic and above all good-humored.

The profession has lost a dynamic craftsman; his friends have lost a source of intellectual stimulus and personal delight.

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