

The Voyage of the “Bracha Fuld”

This vessel sailed from a spot near Metaponto, southern Italy, on October 9th 1946, carrying 626 Ma’apilim. While en route she added another 180 Ma’apilim that she took on board from the “Albertina”, another Aliya Bet vessel. The commander of the vessel was Menachem Cohen (commonly known as Churchill). Others who accompanied the Ma’apilim were Shalom Dolitzki and the Gideoni (wireless operator) Chaim Goldis. Chaim later served in the same capacity on one of the “Pans” and was killed in the War of Independence, in a battle near Kibbutz Hulda, while serving as a communications officer of convoys to besieged Jerusalem). Those accompanying the Ma’apilim of the “Albertina” were Avraham Karni (Rikman) and the Gideoni Oved Sadeh.

The engines of the Bracha Fuld failed many times during the voyage and when the vessel encountered a fierce storm as well, many of the passengers and the foreign crew panicked. The cool-headedness of the Palyamnikim saved the day. The vessel was caught by the British on October 20th and towed to Haifa. The Ma’apilim were taken off the vessel by force and deported to Cyprus. The vessel joined the ‘shadow fleet’ near the breakwater of the Haifa port.



This vessel, a small coastal steamer of about 500 tons, was formerly called “Fenice”. It was acquired by Ha’Mossad Le’Aliya Bet in Italy and named after the Palmach fighter Bracha Fuld, (pictured here,) who had been killed by British fire in Tel Aviv on “Wingate Night”. (This was an unsuccessful attempt by the Palmach to offload the Ma’apilim of the vessel “Wingate” at Tel Aviv, on the night of the 25th-26th March 1946, the anniversary of the death of Israel’s very good friend Major Orde Wingate). This had been the second sailing of this vessel for the Hagana; on the first trip it was named the “Eliyahu Golomb”.

Coincidentally, the captain of the Bracha Fuld and the captain of the Wingate were one and the same; Captain Mario Kenda, an Italian who was a very good friend of our cause and helped Ha’Mossad Le’Aliya Bet in Italy tremendously. Mario (pictured here,) was also deported to Cyprus but he was extracted from the camp by a special team formed for that purpose by Ha’Mossad Le’Aliya Bet. (The vessel used for this operation was the “Dalin”, commanded by Dudaleh Ben Horin. The Dalin was the first vessel of Ha’Mossad Le’Aliya Bet that brought Ma’apilim to Palestine after WW II). The paths of Dudaleh and Mario crossed once again in the “Pirate” operation.



(Compiled by Tzvi Ben-Tzur)

