

The Voyage of the “Dalin”

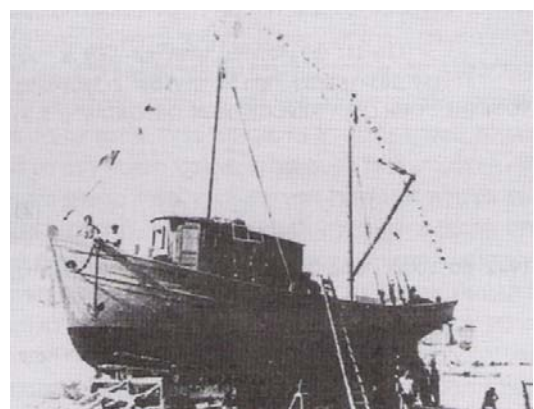
Dalin was the “first swallow” of the Aliya project, following the end of WW II. Although she only carried 37 Ma’apilim, she is remembered in history as the first vessel of a series of 66 that made their way to Palestine. It was also the first of several that managed to sneak past the British blockade of the coast. During 1944, Ha’Mossad Le’Aliyah Bet renewed its activity in various countries of Europe, as they were freed from the repression of the Nazis. As Italy was freed in several stages, the members of Ha’Mossad Le’Aliyah Bet with the aid of members of the Hagana, who were serving within the British Army (they later became known as “The Gang”), were among the first to renew the Aliya project in this country. It was within this framework that in June 1945 a small fishing vessel, which was still in the process of being built, was purchased with the aid of Captain Enrico Levi, a Jewish-Italian naval officer. This 29 meter long, 25 ton dead-weight vessel with a speed of 8 knots – the “Sirius”, was soon renamed the “Dalin” by its operators. (This was the code name of the commander of the Hagana - Eliyahu Golomb, who had died not long before the vessel was purchased).



Captain Enrico Levi

In August 1945 the vessel was christened and on the 21st of that month she left for Palestine. Her commander was Israel Horev, the captain was Enrico Levi and the Gideoni was Arie Haikind. The crew consisted of an Italian mechanic and two Italian sailors. She returned to Italy after depositing the Ma’apilim on the shore of kibbutz Sdot Yam, and served as an ‘errand boy’ for Ha’Mossad Le’Aliyah Bet in Italy. She was also used to free a foreign crew from the Cyprus camps in late 1946. Among the Ma’apilim who arrived on the “Dalin” was Grisha Gurewitz, who had been a tank commander in the Russian Army. About one year after his arrival in Palestine, he joined the Palyam and participated in course number 7 for launch commanders and then course number 4 for naval officers. In 1948 he was one of the founders of the Israeli Armored Corps.

(Compiled by Tzvi Ben-Tzur)



The Dalin being built



Immigrants of the Dalin posing for a group photo