The Voyage of the "Geula" [Hebrew: Redemption]

This vessel was originally built to be a US Coast Guard Cutter, named "Paducah". The commander of the vessel was Mordechai (Moka) Limon and with him on board was the Palyamnik Chaim Winshelbaum (Rimon). The Gideonim were Menachem Keller and Benyamin (Benny) Kalbersh. As one of the "American" ships of Aliya Bet, the crew comprised mainly of American Jewish volunteers. The Captain was Rudy Patzert (RIP) – an American non-Jew, who saw it as his moral duty to help the Aliya Bet project (Rudy wrote a book about the voyage: Running the Palestine Blockade: Last Voyage of the Paducah – 'Geula'). The First Officer was a Spanish republican named Miguel Buiza, who had been the commander of the Spanish Republican Navy during the Spanish Civil War (accordingly, he was referred to as 'admiral'. According to one source he assumed the Hebrew name Moshe Blum during the voyage).

The vessel sailed from the port of Burgas, Bulgaria on September 28th 1947, carrying 1388 Ma'apilim, despite numerous attempts by the British to prevent its leaving. The "Geula" and another of the vessels purchased in the USA, "Medinat Ha'Yehudim" [Hebrew: The Jewish State"], both left port the same day and made their way towards Palestine, traveling fairly close to each other, as far as the island of Rhodes. As soon as they left the Dardanelles they were picked up by the British fleet. The original plan had been for the Ma'apilim of the "Geula" to transfer to the other vessel, which was larger, opposite the shore of Palestine. This plan was discarded because of the terribly crowded conditions on the "Medinat Ha'Yehudim", so the two ships parted ways: the "Geula" continued on to Haifa and the "Medinat Ha'Yehudim" made for Tel Aviv.

On October 2nd the British overran the "Geula" and towed her into the port of Haifa. Another force overran the "Medinat Ha'Yehudim" and towed her to Haifa as well. Most of the Ma'apilim were deported to Cyprus, but several tens of them were interned in Atlith. The crew members were also deported to Cyprus. Moka Limon evaded going to Cyprus by jumping from the deportation ship and swimming for several hours until he made it to the Haifa Bay area.

(Compiled by Tzvi Ben-Tzur)

The "Geula"

The Captain – Rudi Patzert, RIP