

## The Voyages of “Barak” and “He’Halutz”<sup>1</sup> [Lightning, the Pioneer]

In the beginning of October 1947, the vessel “Barak” (originally “Yilderan”,) was sent from La Spezia, Italy, to carry out a mission, to take 600 passengers from the region of Alger, Algeria. This was the third such mission to rescue Jews out of North Africa. Two voyages had been made previously that year, by the vessels “Yehuda Ha’Levi” (a Hebrew poet of the Middle Ages from Toledo, Spain) and “Shivat Tzion” [Hebrew: Return to Zion]. The Palyamnikim who accompanied the “Barak” were Yehuda Ben-Tzur (pictured here, left) as commander of the vessel and Benny Gefen - the Gideoni. A doctor who wanted to make Aliya also came along. At the very outset of its voyage, the “Barak” ran into a terrible storm and its engine died. The vessel “He’Halutz” (originally “Maria Giovanni”,) was called to tow her to safety in Sardinia and to continue on with the mission in Algeria.



The commander of He’Halutz was Nimrod Eshel, pictured here, right). He was accompanied by Yaakov (Kuba) Betzer and the Gideoni - Nachman (Bob) Burstein, (who was later replaced by Benny Gefen). The vessel reached the shore and managed to load 44 children and youngsters, when the local police arrived. The vessel had to beat a quick retreat, leaving family members of the children on the shore. Later, this same vessel was arrested in Sardinia by the Italians. It managed to escape and to find safe harbor in the Bay of Girolata in Corsica.



Another vessel, “Ha’Portzim” [Hebrew: Those who break through] had loaded a group of Ma’apilim in France and was on its way to Palestine. She took on the children of “He’Halutz” from Corsica and continued on her course. This vessel proved worthy of her name and succeeded in penetrating the British blockade, placing the Ma’apilim on the shore of Tel Aviv on December 4<sup>th</sup> 1947. On this third attempt of Aliya from Alger, only 44 youngsters made Aliya.

The “Maria Giovanni” made another voyage under the name of “Kaf Tet BeNovember”, carrying 680 Ma’apilim. The “Barak” with its history of technical failures was not used again by Ha’Mossad Le’Aliya Bet.

(Compiled by Tzvi Ben-Tzur)



*The vessel He’Halutz*

<sup>1</sup> These names were used by Ha’Mossad Le’Aliya Bet as administrative names. The Barak didn’t arrive in Palestine.

389/28/47

SECRET.

My Dear Zoppi,

With reference to our last conversation, I am now sending you six copies of a consolidated list of shipping known or suspected to be engaging in the traffic of illegal immigrants to Palestine. We hope this list will be of use to you and to the other Italian authorities concerned.

We hope to send periodically revised similar lists, brought up to date. We shall of course continue to pass to your Ministry in the normal way any new information of particular interest, as soon as we receive it.

You will no doubt be interested to read item 14 on the list, which certainly justifies the steps taken to control this ship in Italian waters.

I should like to take this opportunity of thanking you for your letters of 1st and 2nd July, informing me of steps taken by the Italian authorities in the cases of the ships YILDERAN, PHOENIX and MARCESA and of the reported concentration of refugees at Bocche di Magra, near La Spezia.

Yours sincerely  
J.G. Ward  
J.G. Ward.

Count Vittorio Zoppi,  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs,  
Palazzo Chigi,  
ROMA.

P. B. - 28.6.47

*1. Conto di  
Mariano  
Stucco delle variazioni  
imputate*

BRITISH EMBASSY,  
ROME.

July 17th 1947.  
2 AUG 1947  
REGISTRATO

The British Intelligence on the tracks of the Barak (Yilderan)