

## The Voyage of “Ha’Portzim” [Those who break through]



This vessel left Bandol, France on November 22<sup>nd</sup> 1947, (Just one week prior to the important vote in the UN, re the ‘Two States Solution’), carrying 123 Ma’apilim on board. The commander of the vessel was Shalom Dolitzki (pictured here), accompanied by Yosef Shachar (Toska). The Gideonim were Marga Goren (a Ma’apila herself, who had attended the communications course of the Hagana in Marseille, France) and Benny Gefen (who came over to the vessel from the vessel He’Chalutz”). Four

Aliya Bet activists from Argentina, who had volunteered for the Palyam in France, joined the team on the vessel. (See Baruch Gelkin’s story).

The vessel sailed for Corsica and joined the “He’Halutz” there. The “He’Halutz” transferred the 44 youngsters that she had managed to pick up at Algiers before its mission was interrupted by the Algerian police. “Ha’Portzim” continued on its way to Palestine. She ran across a British destroyer when she was in the region of Port Sa’id, but the latter did not identify her and she continued on her route northward.

On December 4<sup>th</sup> before dawn, she arrived at the mouth of the Yarkon River in Tel Aviv. Boats of the Ha’Poel Tel Aviv Sports Club were awaiting her there, and the Ma’apilim disembarked quickly and were spread among the population of the city, hosted at private homes. All the Palyamnikim aboard were ordered to return to Europe with the ship, but the French captain refused to take them on. He contended that he had to pull in to a Lebanese port to refuel and did not want to have illegals on board, as it would endanger him. The British knew nothing of the arrival of the vessel but secrecy was breached by the Israeli newspapers, who hailed, the following morning, the successful arrival of the Aliya Bet vessel. In reaction, the British reduced the legal quota of immigration for that month by 167 certificates.

(Compiled by Tzvi Ben-Tzur)

