

The Voyage of the “Max Nordau”

This vessel was named in honor of a prominent Zionist personality who had been an important aide to Benyamin Ze'ev Herzl. She was prepared for her voyage to Palestine in the port of Constanta, Rumania. This was the first and last vessel that left from a Rumanian port due to the fluctuating sympathies of the Rumanian government. Rumanians who came later on, usually left from Bulgarian or Yugoslav ports.



In this case all of the Ma'apilim were given collective passports to Mexico and to Costa Rica. They started to board the vessel at Constanta on May 3rd 1946, but this took a very long time, because they had taken too much personal belongings with them and there was not enough room. The port authorities also requested special authorization for the voyage, because the vessel was too crowded and the lives of the passengers were in danger. All these problems were, somehow, resolved and the vessel set out on its voyage on May 7th, carrying 1,666 Ma'apilim. This was the most that any vessel had carried thus far. The commander of this vessel was Eliezer Armon (Veresh, pictured here) and the Gideoni was Chaim Porat (Fratkin).

The vessel was discovered by the British on May 13th and a British destroyer soon showed up to accompany her to the port of Haifa, where she arrived the following day. Abba Hushi, a leader of the workers of Haifa (and future long-term mayor of the city), and Yaakov Dori - former commander of the Hagana, came to the vessel in the harbor by boat and ordered the Ma'apilim not to resist. The Ma'apilim and those accompanying the vessel were interned in the Atlit detention camp.

(Compiled by Tzvi Ben-Tzur)

