

The Voyage of the “Mordei Ha’Getaot”

[The rebels of the ghettos]



This vessel was named in honor of those Jews who rebelled against the Nazi oppressors in the Ghettos, during the Holocaust. She was prepared for her voyage to Palestine in the port of La Spezia, Italy. Her commander was Eliezer Armon (Veresh, pictured here), accompanied by Chaim Cooperman, Shaul Oren (Aharonov) and the Gideoni - Shalom Burstein.

The vessel left port secretly from Metaponto, Italy, the night of May 13th 1947, carrying 1,457 Ma’apilim. She was to rendezvous with the “Yehuda Ha’Levi” at sea and take aboard her 399 Ma’apilim. However, this plan had to be abrogated, because the “Yehuda Ha’Levi” had pulled into the port of Palermo, Sicily to fuel and to care for a sick girl from among the Ma’apilim.

On May 23rd, “Mordei Ha’Ghetaot” was identified by a British plane when it was opposite Rafiach. Several hours later, two British destroyers appeared and rammed the vessel. The British soldiers boarded her quickly, using tear gas and water hoses. The Ma’apilim defended themselves with cans of conserves and whatever else came into their hands. They managed to hold off the invaders for three hours, but had to surrender. The vessel was towed to Haifa and the Ma’apilim were deported to Cyprus the following day. Armon continued with the Ma’apilim to Cyprus, but the other Palyamnikim hid in a hideout that was previously prepared on the boat. They were liberated the following day by the crew of port workers, who came to clean up the vessel.

(Compiled by Tzvi Ben-Tzur)

