

The Voyage of the “Nachshon-Ha’Castel”

This vessel was named to commemorate the fierce battle that took place at the Citadel, on the outskirts of Jerusalem, during the Nachshon Operation in the War of Independence, aimed at breaking the siege of Jerusalem. This battle took place at about the time when this vessel was ready to sail. She had formerly been a French fishing boat named “Tadorne” and was prepared for her voyage at La Rochelle, France, and later in Bonifacio, Corsica, under code name “Tamar”. Her commander was Yosef (Yoske) Almog, accompanied by the American volunteer - Israel Shankman the Ma’apil who later joined the ranks of the Palyam - Michael (Mike) Gal and the Gideoni - Shalom Burstein.

This vessel had gone on an earlier voyage in the beginning of March 1948, but it developed a serious problem with the boiler that forced her to transfer her passengers to the vessel “Yechiam” near the island of Monte Christo, from where she sailed onto the port of Bastia, Corsica, for repairs. When she was once again considered fit to sail, the “Nachshon-Ha’Castel” set out from the port of La Ciotat, France, on April 14th 1948, carrying 550 Ma’apilim on board.

Once again she ran into engine trouble and it was considered transferring her passengers to the vessel “Mishmar Ha’Emek”. This proved to be unfeasible, so she continued to sail towards Palestine at a very slow speed. On April 24th two British destroyers tagged on to her, and on April 26th, when she was only about 30 miles from Tel Aviv, she was boarded by British soldiers using clubs, tear gas and water hoses, and towed to Haifa. At Haifa port they witnessed thousands of Arabs who had congregated there and were waiting for passage to Lebanon after the downtown city had been captured by the Jews. The Ma’apilim were deported to Cyprus, while the Palyamnikim hid and were freed the following day by the “Solel Boneh” cleaning squad. This was the last vessel to arrive prior to the declaration of the State of Israel, and its Ma’apilim were the last to be sent to Cyprus.

(Compiled by Tzvi Ben-Tzur)



“Tadorne” (aka “Tamar”)



*"Tadorne" leaving the shipyard at Bastia, Corsica
On the bridge, (right to left): the navigator, the captain
and Yoske Almog*



*"Nachshon-Ha'Castel" at Haifa,
before her deportation to Cyprus*