

The Boats On Which The Palyam Trained: Dov, Rivka & Tirtza – J.S. 60, 61, 62

(They were built in the Tel Aviv Shipyard during 1938-39. As told by Shmulik Tankus.)

The conflict between the Jewish community in Palestine and the Arabs, in the years preceding the establishment of the State of Israel, took place by and large on land. From that point of view the sea was calm. Therefore, the Hagana did not prepare any military units for sea warfare nor did it have equipment for that purpose. Whatever had to be done at sea, was done by the sport branch of the Histadrut (the labor federation), "Hapoel", "Zevulun" or the "Sea Scouts". One of the largest and most important of the activities became "Illegal immigration", and at the very beginning this work was done by Hapoel. Additional people had to be mobilized and trained to do this work as the sea section of Hapoel was not enough. The Hagana organized two courses in Tel Aviv to fill this need, and most of the participants were members of kibbutzim who had a fishing branch of work, or students of the Haifa Technion.

The boats on which the course participants practiced were those of Hapoel and the Sea Scouts. These were small and did not allow for an adequate number to be trained. It was therefore decided that three new boats should be built, which would be larger, well built, strong and seaworthy. Catriel Yaffe, Shmuel Tankus and Dov Magen (Berchik) decided on the specifications for building the boats, and they were designed and built by Nachum Ticher in the Tel Aviv Shipyards. These same three men also designed the sails for these vessels. These boats were designed for eight oarsmen, had a large area of sail, and were fine for the purpose of training seamen.

On the 29th of November 1940, one of the foremost leaders of the Jewish community in Palestine and a leader of the Hagana, Dov Hoz, his wife Rivka and daughter Tirtza, were killed in an automobile accident. The three new boats were named after them, and became the training vessels of the Hagana. The first course that trained on these boats consisted mostly of the men who later participated in the ill-fated voyage of the 23, who disappeared on the way to Tripoli. After that terrible incident the boats were stored in the Tel Aviv Fairgrounds and Berchik was responsible for their safekeeping. Although these vessels were in reality rather small boats, the trainees developed a high level of skill and when really large vessels came into our possession, they adapted to them very quickly. In general, boats and sea gear were very expensive items in those days and those that had them protected them well.

When the Palyam was established, these boats were still the chief means of training sailors and still later, when the Israeli navy was inaugurated, these boats took their place within its framework. One of the first courses that took place within the framework of the navy, was a course for deck petty officers. While at sea, a strong east wind came up which then turned into a southwesterly gale. One vessel managed to reach the Lebanese shore safely, but the second one

disappeared and was never heard of since. The search for the vessel continued for a long time but no sign of it was ever found. The Lebanese government returned the first boat and crew to Israel intact. The second boat foundered on a rocky coastline and was shattered. The third vessel, Dov, may today be found within the grounds of the Clandestine Immigration and Naval Museum in southern Haifa. During their period as training boats they proved their worth time and time again. They plowed up and down the Israeli coast many times, and there were many incidents and escapades experienced by the sailors. They helped in building a strong navy for Israel, and Dov, a fitting symbol of that navy, is found exactly where it should be. What a sad fate for the other two boats.



ראשיתו של הצי העברי: סירות הפלי"ם 'דב', 'רבקה', ו'תרצה' בנמל קיסריה העתיקה

The beginning of the modern Israeli navy: The Palyam training boats
Dov, Rivka & Tirtza in the old port of Caesarea