

הצהרות שני אנשי צוות ה'אקסודוס' בפני בית משפט בחיפה, ספט' 1947

נמסר לפרסום באתר באדיבות יעקב וימן

A F F I D A V I T

I, STANLEY RITZER, seaman, of 293, Broadway, Brooklyn, New York, U.S.A., at present at Zion Hotel, Hadar Hacarmel, Haifa, hereby make oath and say:-

1. My name, profession and address are as above stated.
2. I was on board the s.s. "President Warfield" otherwise known as "Exodus 1947" (hereinafter referred to as "the Exodus") when it proceeded from France on the voyage which ended at Haifa on the 18th July, 1947. My occupation on the Exodus on the said voyage was chief steward and chief cook.
3. During the voyage I was in constant contact with the master, officers and members of the crew of the Exodus and in particular with Mr. William Bernstein, an officer, who did a great part of the navigation on the voyage, and I was given free access to the bridge, chartroom and master's quarters and I had knowledge of the position of the Exodus from time to time.
4. Between the later part of the afternoon of the 17th July, 1947, when the Exodus proceeded from off Egypt towards Palestine, until about 2 p.m. of the 18th July, 1947, when the Exodus arrived at a point off the Palestine coast, the Exodus was at no time within the territorial waters of Palestine. I ascertained the correctness of the statement contained in this paragraph as follows:-
 - (a) During the said period I saw no land although I was on the lookout at frequent and short intervals;
 - (b) As from the late afternoon of the 17th July, 1947 until about 2.30 a.m. of the 18th July, 1947 I several times ascertained from the said William Bernstein and other navigation officers the position of the Exodus - on some occasions whilst they were actually checking the position.
5. On the 18th July, 1947 at about 2.30 a.m. I was in the wheelhouse. The Exodus was surrounded by a flotilla of British men of war consisting of five destroyers and the cruiser "Ajax". I saw several of the British destroyers converging on the Exodus and saw and felt the Exodus struck violently both port and starboard in a squeezing action by the destroyers. At the same time tear gas and other explosives were discharged at the Exodus. The Exodus was subsequently violently rammed several times by the destroyers. When the Exodus was first struck by the destroyers I ascertained from the said William Bernstein that the position of the Exodus was west of Gaza, about 25 (twenty-five) miles off the Palestine coast.
6. Almost immediately after the Exodus was first struck by the destroyers I saw a party of British sailors armed with pistols and clubs boarding the Exodus. The boarding party burst into the wheelhouse and commenced assailing those of us who were in the wheelhouse, firing shots and using their clubs. Amongst others there was present in the wheelhouse with me the said William Bernstein.

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In my presence and sight the said William Bernstein was clubbed across the forehead and face and he died from his injuries a few hours later.

I myself was hit over the head with a club and dropped down semi-conscious and was thrown by members of the said boarding party out of the wheelhouse on to the starboard wing of the bridge. I was then taken to the hospital of the Exodus by members of the crew and recovered about fifteen minutes later when I went out towards the bridge again. There I found members of the crew and passengers of the Exodus clamouring at the door of the wheelhouse for the British naval boarding party who were standing inside the wheelhouse with drawn pistols to come out. Then in my presence and sight a shot was fired by one of the said boarding party, and William Millman, an American, was hit in the jaw by the bullet.

7. Subsequently more British naval personnel boarded the Exodus and they tried to obtain control and charge of the Exodus against the resistance of the passengers on board; in resisting the British naval personnel, the passengers used potatoes and tins of canned food, but no explosives or firearms of any nature whatsoever, save for a small number of smoke bombs of the usual type used for lifeboats.

During the resistance I saw and heard three separate bursts of machine gun fire directed from a destroyer on the starboard side of the Exodus into the passengers on the Exodus.

The British naval personnel on board the Exodus who were from time to time augmented by further boarding parties from the destroyers finally at about 6.45 a.m. of the 18th July, 1947 obtained complete control and charge of the entire Exodus.

8. Thereupon the British naval personnel on board took the Exodus under its own power towards Palestine and into the territorial waters thereof and at about 2 p.m. of the 18th July, 1947 I for the first time on the said voyage saw the coastline of Palestine, or for that matter, any land since we sighted Egypt the day before.

9. At no time during the said voyage did I see any person on board the Exodus, other than the said boarding parties of British naval personnel, in possession of any rifle, firearm or lethal weapon of any type.

DEPONENT.

Sworn before me, S. Rosenberg, Acting Registrar, District Court, Haifa, at the District Court, Haifa, this 12th day of September, 1947, by Mr. Stanley Ritzer, who was identified to me to my satisfaction.

(-) S. Rosenberg
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ACTING REGISTRAR
DISTRICT COURT, HAIFA.

A F F I D A V I T

I, CYRIL WEINSTEIN, seaman and photographer, of 1611, Carroll Street, Brooklyn, New York, U.S.A., at present at Pension Koch, Haifa, hereby make oath and say:-

1. My name, profession and address are as above stated.
2. I was on board the s.s. "President Warfield", otherwise known as "Exodus 1947" (hereinafter referred to as "the Exodus") as an officer thereof when it proceeded from France on a voyage which ended at Haifa on the 18th July, 1947.
3. As an officer I did the navigation of the voyage during my watches.
4. I was in charge of the watch from 20 hours to 24 hours of the 17th July, 1947. Before handing over the watch to William Bernstein, another officer of the Exodus, at 24 hours I had reckoned the position of the Exodus as being about 45 miles off Palestine, almost due west of Gaza. At 24 hours the said William Bernstein took over the watch from me and I stressed to him the night orders to check the speed of the Exodus frequently and on no account to exceed 8 knots, since it was desired that the Exodus by daybreak should still be well outside the territorial waters of Palestine.
5. After I had handed over the watch to William Bernstein, I went down to my cabin to sleep. About 2.15 a.m. of the 18th July, 1947 I was awakened by a searchlight from a destroyer coming through the window of my cabin and by shouts through megaphones from the destroyer. The shouts from the destroyer seemed to be orders directed to the Exodus to stop the engines and to heave to. I wondered whether I had heard correctly since I calculated that if, as I imagined, the speed of the Exodus during the last two hours had not exceeded 8 knots, we should not be nearer Palestine than about 27 miles and I could not imagine that the British would actively interfere with us on the high seas outside the territorial waters..
I therefore dressed and went up to the chartroom where William Bernstein confirmed that the speed of the Exodus since I had handed over the watch to him had not exceeded 8 knots and we had reckoned the position of the Exodus to be about 25 miles off Palestine, almost due west of Gaza.
6. I then went up to the hurricane deck. This was about 2.30 a.m. I saw two British destroyers converging on the Exodus and saw and felt the Exodus being struck violently both port and starboard alternately by the two destroyers. At the same time I observed an onslaught of tear gas and other explosives discharged at the Exodus.
The Exodus was surrounded by a flotilla of British men of war consisting of five destroyers and the cruiser "Ajax".
The Exodus was subsequently violently rammed several times by British destroyers.
7. Almost immediately after the Exodus was first struck by the destroyers I saw a party of British sailors armed with pistols and clubs boarding the Exodus. As they landed on the bridge I saw and heard them firing shots and I saw them bursting and disappearing into the wheelhouse.

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I went down to the port side of the bridge and found that the British naval boarding party were in control of the wheelhouse. I took a compass from the chartroom went down to the steering engine room of the main deck aft and uncoupled the control cable that led to the wheelhouse, thus obtaining control of the steering of the ship. I steered the ship, continuously changing course, zigzagging all the time, in order to try and prevent the landing of further boarding parties from the destroyers on to the Exodus, until about 6.45 a.m. of the 18th July, 1947, when the engines of the Exodus stopped and the British naval boarding parties on board obtained complete control and charge of the Exodus, including the steering engine room where I was.

8. Thereupon the British naval personnel on board and in charge of the Exodus took the Exodus under its own power towards Palestine and into the territorial waters thereof, and at about 2 p.m. of the 18th July, 1947 I for the first time on the said voyage saw the coastline of Palestine, or, for that matter, any land since we sighted Egypt the day before.

9. At no time during the said voyage did I see any person on board the Exodus, other than the said boarding parties of British naval personnel, in possession of any rifle, firearm or other lethal weapon of any nature.

10. I solemnly say that at no time during the said voyage until the afternoon of the 18th July, 1947 did the Exodus come into the territorial waters of Palestine.

DEPONENT.

Cyril Weinstein

Sworn before me *Simon Aggarat*
Magistrate of Haifa, at the Magistrate's
Court of Haifa this *14th* day of September,
1947, by Mr. Cyril Weinstein, who was
identified to me to my satisfaction, by

*Advocate Friedman**Simon Aggarat*
MAGISTRATE