

The Voyage of "Kadima" [Go for It]



This vessel was prepared for its voyage in the bay near Venice, Italy. She sailed on November 5th 1947 from the island of Palestrina, south of Venice carrying 794 Ma'apilim. Among them were more than 100 babies and children under the age of three. The commander was Ze'ev Rotem (pictured here), accompanied by Ze'ev (Ze'evke) Paz, Chaim Winkler (Winky), Nira Harari and the Gideoni Max Cohen.

This voyage began in an embarrassing manner, when it was discovered after leaving harbor that 10 Palyamnikim who had been working on preparing the ship, had fallen asleep and were still on board. When the vessel approached not far from the port of Ancona, the Palyamnikim were given a launch with which to get back onto Italian soil. However, this launch was intercepted by the Italian police and the Palyamnikim were arrested for illegal entry into the country. When they failed to report back to the headquarters of Ha'Mossad Le'Aliya Bet in Milan, a search was made for them and they were found in the Ancona jailhouse. Ada Sereni pulled a few strings and they were soon released.

According to plan, "Kadima" was to collect the 180 Ma'apilim of the vessel "Albertina", which had left France when "Kadima" had left Italy. This event failed to take place, as "Kadima" was intercepted by a British destroyer. The "Albertina", which had by then renamed "Aliya", continued en route and ended up on the shore of Nahariya, where it had managed to break through the British blockade and deposit her Ma'apilim.

A British scout plane had discovered "Kadima" on November 15th, and several hours later a destroyer showed up to keep her company, until she arrived at Haifa the following day. The vessel was in such a poor state and there were so many youngsters on board, that it was decided not to display any resistance. Chaim Winkler and Nira Harari were deported to Cyprus with the Ma'apilim, but the other Palyamnikim hid in their hideout and were relieved the following day by the good old "Solel Boneh" cleaning squad.

(Compiled by Tzvi Ben-Tzur)

