

The Voyage of the “Peter I”



The vessel, “Pietro” was called the “Peter I” when it carried out its first mission for Ha’Mossad Le’Aliya Bet. She was purchased for the Mossad by Captain Enrico Levi, a Jewish Italian Captain, who had served in the Italian navy. He had been captain of the “Dalin” and helped the Mossad in purchasing vessels and in other ways, as best he could. The vessel was prepared for her voyage in the shipyards of Levanta in southern Italy, with the aid of members of ‘The Gang’ – a group of Jewish soldiers in the British army. The commander of the vessel was Eliezer Armon (Weresh, pictured here), accompanied by Tzvi (Miri) Katzenelson and the Gideoni - Avraham Reis. The captain - Padrone and his crew were Italian.

The vessel sailed on September 12th 1945 from Taranto, Italy, carrying 171 Ma’apilim. She took shelter in the island of Cos, Greece, because of stormy weather, but the local police thought the vessel was engaged in smuggling and fired upon her. She was forced to raise anchor and flee. The vessel arrived off the coast of Shfayim on September 19th, unknown to the British. The Ma’apilim were swiftly brought to shore by launch. The vessel turned and sailed back to Europe on that same day, carrying 11 Palyamnikim to help in the efforts of Aliya Bet.

This vessel continued to bring Ma’apilim to Palestine in subsequent voyages, bearing the name “Peter II” and later – “Aliya” and also participated in instances where two vessels collaborated, under the name “Albertina”.

(Compiled by Tzvi Ben-Tzur)

