The Voyage of the "Yagur"

This vessel was named in honor of Kibbutz Yagur, which suffered the hardest blow from the British during the "Black Saturday". The leadership of the Yishuv had been arrested along with thousands of members of kibbutzim, most of them Palmachnikim. Several kibbutzim were literally physically destroyed by heavy bulldozers, which tore down many buildings and tore up all the paved areas of the kibbutzim. Kibbutz Yagur suffered particularly severely, because someone squealed to the British that there was a cache of arms buried in the kibbutz grounds.

The Turkish owned vessel was outfitted for carrying Ma'apilim in Marseilles, France. The commander of the vessel was Moshe Mark - Shaul Avigur's brother-in-law and a member of his kibbutz. He was accompanied by Israel Auerbach and the Gideonim Malka Rofeh and Israel Avidor. The vessel sailed from the port of La Ciotat, near Marseilles, on July 29th 1946, carrying 754 Ma'apilim. The radio failed to work from the outset. A British scout plane discovered the vessel on August 11th and shortly afterwards two British destroyers showed up to accompany her on the rest of her voyage. She cast anchor in the Bay of Haifa not far from the "Henrietta Szold", which had been caught shortly before her.

The British "Igloo" plan (deportation to Cyprus) had become known by then, and the Palyamnikim were instructed to resist deportation and to sabotage the deportation ships. The British inaugurated the deportation procedures on the morning of August 13th. The two aforesaid vessels were towed into the port of Haifa and the British told the Ma'apilim to transfer to their vessel - the "Empire Rival", not disclosing the reason. The Ma'apilim refused and gathered inside the holds of their ships. A confrontation ensued between the Ma'apilim and the British, ending with the former being transferred against their will to the deportation ship headed for Cyprus. The sabotage effort was not carried out due to faulty planning.

(Compiled by Tzvi Ben-Tzur)

The "Yagur" at Haifa