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The Test of Maritime Sovereignty: The Establishment of the Zim National Shipping Company and the Purchase of the Kedmah, 1945-1952

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The Test of Maritime Sovereignty: The Establishment of the Zim National Shipping Company and the Purchase of the *Kedmah*, 1945–1952

ABSTRACT

In its quest for statehood, the Jewish settlement (Yishuv) in Palestine established the Zim shipping company in 1945. Zim purchased its first ship, the *Kedmah*, in partnership with a British firm. However, technical setbacks, as well as infighting within the crew, distrust on the administrative level, and critiques by some circles within the Yishuv, ultimately made the Yishuv's first foray into maritime sovereignty a questionable achievement. The ship's success as a symbol of the burgeoning state was, nonetheless, unquestionable; it was viewed as a pioneering effort, heralded by the general public, and ultimately served as a first step on the path to maritime sovereignty.

INTRODUCTION

ZIM'S FLAG IS SIMILAR TO THE ONE CONCEIVED FOR THE STATE OF ISRAEL by Theodor Herzl in his famous treatise, *The Jewish State*: "I would suggest a white flag, with seven golden stars. The white field symbolizes our pure new life; the stars are the seven golden hours of our working-day. For we shall march into the Promised Land carrying the badge of honor."¹ Two blue stripes were added to Herzl's flag above and below; Zim's flag ultimately combined the State of Israel's flag with the one envisioned by Herzl.

The national sentiment invoked by the shipping company's flag was no coincidence. For many at the time, a Jewish shipping company represented far more than transport: it signaled a new dawn in sovereignty for a

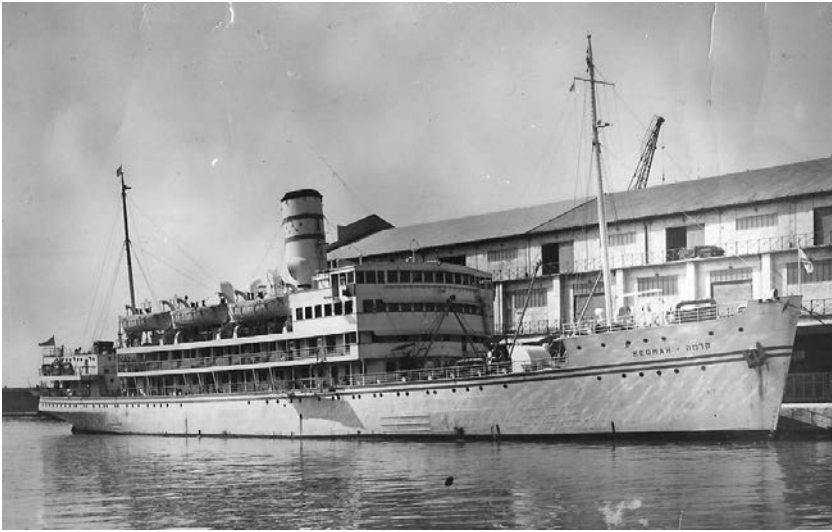


Figure 1: *Kedmah* ship postcard, by E. Nossouf, Marseille, 1947

land on the verge of becoming a country. Thus, its establishment was not merely a technical accomplishment; it was one step in realizing a vision of national proportions.

Zim's establishment at the Jewish Agency's initiative in 1945, following WW II, was meant to create a company that would serve the national interests of the Jewish settlement (Yishuv) in Palestine. A partnership was developed with a British company, Harris and Dixon, and the first ship purchased was the *Kedmah*, which arrived at the Tel-Aviv port on 28 July 1947. Its arrival garnered enthusiasm and newspaper headlines. The *Kedmah* was perceived as an essential and significant element in the national sovereignty of the Yishuv on its way to becoming a Jewish state.

However, from the moment of Zim's birth, its maritime sovereignty and that of the Yishuv were put to the test on planes political, economic, technical, and social. Harsh critiques were voiced regarding the company's choice to partner with a foreign company rather than private Jewish companies, on the price of the ship, and about the total cost that was ultimately paid after an extensive and unexpected period of repair. Further criticism related to the precarious relationship between Zim and the English partners, expressed in the distrust between the Jewish and English crew on board the ship, who continuously blamed one another for the ship's technical failures. All of these led the Jewish Agency to appoint a commission to investigate the *Kedmah* incident in early 1948.

Research on the roots of maritime activity in the Yishuv and Zim's first steps in particular is scant. The purpose of this article is twofold: First, it reconstructs and analyzes the Yishuv's institutions and the purchase of the *Kedmah* within the various hurdles found in the transition from Yishuv to state. This analysis, in turn, demonstrates the Yishuv's nationalization processes in those years; in particular, it looks closely at their expression in the complex relationships regarding national shipping between the leadership and national institutions, on one side, and private entrepreneurs and civil society, on the other. We can thus examine the change that took place in the Jewish Yishuv, looking, among other things, at the leadership's approach to its shores and maritime professions—foremost, shipping—and their place in the new Jewish nationalism.

Maritime activity—shipping in particular—came to life in Palestine after a number of decades of near-complete disregard on the part of the Zionist movement. Vigorous nautical activity had taken place in Europe in the late nineteenth century. In that era, the sea served as the central locus of control for the imperial powers; the development of ports was an integral part of European existence.² But for the Zionist movement, which strove to gather dispersed Jewry, the sea served as a place of transition, a space to be traversed on the way to the Promised Land. The “new Jew” and “Jewish work” as seminal Zionist ideologies directed the Jew to work the land; the sea was absent. This approach is most noticeable in the dearth of literature on the sea, in contrast with the abundance of texts on pioneering by working the soil, conquering the land, and making the desert bloom.³

However, with the development and expansion of the new Jewish settlement in the land, a different perspective began to form: the Mediterranean Sea was now perceived as the Yishuv's wide and open gateway to the world in general, and to the Jewish world in particular.⁴ Jewish settlers began to develop a respect for the land's shores, perceiving them as a place of relaxation and recreation; representing freedom and enjoyment; a space allowing an escape from daily troubles and routines. The shore, Tel-Aviv's in particular, was suddenly seen as a place for vacation, recreation, and convalescence.⁵

The mid-thirties saw a shift in the way the Yishuv's leadership related to the sea and its shores. The Zionist Congress's establishment of a maritime department in 1935, the opening of the Tel-Aviv port in 1936, and the illegal Jewish immigration by sea were all indications of the importance the leadership attributed to maritime sovereignty.⁶

Of the various nautical occupations, the establishment of a national fleet with Jewish sailors became a symbol of the coveted independence and

statehood following the WW II. The formation of the Zim national shipping company and the purchase of the first ship, the *Kedmah*, realized this goal; they were prominent milestones for the Yishuv's nautical ambitions during the period between the World War II and the founding of the State of Israel. But these ultimately undermined the attempts of private shipping companies, as we will see below.⁷

PRIVATE SHIPPING COMPANIES IN THE 1930S AND DURING WW II

In the years leading up to Zim's establishment, the Yishuv's approach to maritime activity had begun to shift. In the first half of the thirties, advances took place in the Jewish shipping sector, linked to factors within the country and to foreign ones. Palestine saw economic prosperity, an increase in the number of tourists and immigrants, and growing activity at the Haifa port, which was completed by the British in 1933. Parallel developments in Europe also led to Jewish attempts at maritime activity. In particular, the Nazi Party's rise to power in 1933 posed a threat to the German Jewish community; the need to emigrate increased. A transfer agreement allowing German Jews to move property and merchandise from Germany to Palestine led, inter alia, to the emergence of the Jewish maritime industry.⁸ German Jews showed interest in investing in shipping in Palestine; a similar interest developed amongst the Romanian Jewish shipping and maritime trade community.

As a result, nine Jewish-owned shipping companies opened in Haifa and Tel-Aviv between 1934 and 1937. These operated eight ships and 136 boats.⁹ Among these privately founded companies, three stood out: Palestine Shipping Co. Ltd., Palestine Maritime Lloyd Ltd., and Atid.¹⁰ In contrast with the years prior to 1934, a five-year stretch of commercial shipping signaled a clear awakening in the world of shipping—until the outbreak of WW II, when commercial shipping stopped short.¹¹

During the war, all merchant ships were seized or leased by the British navy's Ministry of War Transport, conscripted in Britain's service for the war. The cost of the war to Hebrew shipping was great: 50 Jewish seamen lost their lives and most of the ships that went to war did not return: eight ships and twelve sailboats sank during the war, constituting 75% of Jewish shipping's capacity.¹²

THE YISHUV LEADERSHIP: SETTING THE SCENE FOR JEWISH NATIONAL SHIPPING

Only a decade before the end of WW II, a significant institutional shift took place in the Yishuv's approach to the sea. The leadership's interest was clearly evidenced in a number of steps: the 1936 establishment of the Tel-Aviv port in response to the Arab boycott of Jewish activity in the Jaffa port; the formation of fishing communities on the shores of the sea and lakes; the establishment of a public/popular movement of maritime enthusiasts; the establishment of the Eretz-Israel Maritime League (or IML) in 1937;¹³ and the groundwork for maritime education in a school for nautical professions built next to the Technion in Haifa in 1938. The war aborted many of these plans.

All of these attempts were complemented by more direct actions on the part of the leadership to institutionalize Jewish national shipping. One prominent milestone was the meeting of Israeli delegates, members of the 19th Zionist Congress including David Remez, Dov Hoz, Abba Hushi, Berl Katznelson, Golda Meyerson (Meir), Rachel Yanait Ben-Zvi, and Paula Ben-Gurion, who sailed to Lucerne on the ship *Tel-Aviv*. The meeting took place on 13 August 1935, on the deck; a call went out to Yishuv institutions to "create a sea company that will support existing maritime enterprises and create new maritime enterprises."¹⁴ The Zionist Congress in Lucerne resolved to establish a nautical division, the Maritime and Fisheries Department within the Jewish Agency, and a call went out to foster, expand, and establish it firmly.¹⁵

One of the first to promote the idea of a national shipping company to the Jewish Agency institutions was Bar-Kochba Meirovitz, the first director of the maritime division, who raised the subject in early 1937. He reasoned that it was time to realize the earlier decision and establish a national Jewish shipping company primarily for economic reasons, for the shipping of citrus fruits, and in so doing to minimize the community's dependence on foreign ships.¹⁶

However, the Jewish Agency's priorities at the time remained unchanged; Treasurer Eliezer Kaplan turned down the proposal, refusing to provide funds for the undertaking. Nonetheless, an attempt was made at the time to create a national Jewish shipping company: Nachshon, a joint venture of the Jewish Agency and the General Workers' Union (Histadrut), was established in 1937, at the initiative of General Secretary David Remez who had a strong maritime consciousness. Gusta Strumpf-Rechav joined the company's administration.¹⁷ The company was founded using starting

equity raised in the U.S. by Golda Meyerson (Meir), head of the Histadrut's Political Department, who was sent by Remez to raise funds from Jewish communities in the United States. This followed the establishment of the Tel-Aviv port; Remez commented: "If we have a port, we must also have ships." The company served as an investment conduit for the Histadrut in a variety of maritime ventures, such as the building of the Tel-Aviv port, the establishment of the *Ha'ogen* cooperative for transportation between ships anchored in the Haifa port, and the establishment of the *Haprika* company in the Tel-Aviv port.

While all maritime activity was on hold during WW II, the war's end signaled renewed struggles for the Yishuv on two principal fronts: The first was the national struggle between Jews and Arabs. Although the Arab Revolt had ended on the eve of the war, at the war's end it was feared that nationalistic hostilities would be renewed. The second was the battle against the British, allies during the war against the Nazis but masters in the land and fierce opponents of the Yishuv. The primary conflict after 1945 related to the right of Holocaust survivors to immigrate to the country; the British voiced opposition and made immigration near impossible. On both fronts, maritime sovereignty was highly significant. The opening of the Tel-Aviv port, the first independent Jewish port, which had been closed with the onset of the war, was only one element. A renewal in Jewish shipping, this time at the initiative of the Yishuv's leadership, would constitute an essential condition for the Yishuv on its way to political independence.

Now that the war had ended, it appeared that the time was ripe for renewing Jewish seafaring. Building on the experience of those who had served in the British navy, the Yishuv's leadership felt it was time to create an independent national shipping company to lead the way in Jewish shipping.¹⁸ A new core of Jewish sailors was only one reason that the Yishuv felt that conditions were ideal. The primary competition, Italy, Greece, and France, had greatly diminished; a vacuum in commercial Mediterranean shipping was created that the Jewish shipping community hoped to fill. The need to increase import had grown as a result of reduced inventory; travel might be growing with the desire of immigrants to move to the country after the end of the war; and there was a good chance that tourism would increase with the expected peace following the war. A plan to lay new oil pipelines at the eastern Mediterranean shores, primarily in Haifa, and to expand the refineries seemed to be opening a door to Jewish shipping of oil by sea.¹⁹ Moreover, the better trained and bigger network of Jewish sailors was supplemented by graduates of the nautical school in Haifa and

the *Hapoel*, *Tzofei Yam*, and *Zevulun* sailors' unions. Where 200 Jews had served on Jewish ships before the war, by the war's end some 400 Jewish officers and sailors served on Israeli and foreign ships. These constituted a reserve of trained Jewish manpower for the national shipping company when it was finally founded.²⁰

THE YISHUV LEADERSHIP AND THE PRIVATE SHIPPING COMPANIES: CONFLICTING IDEOLOGIES

When the idea of establishing a national shipping company was raised during the war, the possibility of merging the existing private companies into one large one working with the Yishuv institutions was discussed.²¹ Negotiations with the Lloyd and Atid companies focused primarily on the degree of independence the private companies would have in the proposed structure. If the state institutions could not run a company based on state needs, the central Yishuv institutions' aim—creating a company that could act out of national considerations, rather than economic-commercial ones—could not be realized. Approaching the Yishuv and Jews around the world in the name of a national shipping company tied to the Jewish Agency would make it possible to raise money; this would be impossible if the company were not run by national agencies.²² Private companies were being asked, in effect, to relinquish their commercial independence and merge with a national company in which they had no priority in making decisions, something they found difficult to stomach.²³

The dispute between the national institutions and the private companies did not relate only to the question of shipping; it reflected the ideological conflict between two central worldviews on the social order and the desired market structure in the Yishuv. One perspective was the social-service perspective; the other, the capitalist-bourgeois consumer approach. Each conveyed its view of the goals of Zionist realization in equality, justice, distribution of resources, class relations, and more.²⁴ The bourgeoisie viewed Zim's establishment as a further example of the Socialist left, which led the Yishuv, using the Jewish Agency's funds, to overtake economic sectors while pushing out private enterprise.²⁵ The private shipping companies claimed that they had already laid the foundations for Jewish shipping prior to the war, with ships sailing regularly between Palestine, the Near East, and Europe, serving passengers and merchants with integrity. The percentage of Jewish employees, they said, was gradually growing. Furthermore, their service was national by design and in essence: they provided services to meet

the needs of the Yishuv. They had invested personal fortune without aid from the national coffers; nevertheless, they had allowed the Yishuv leaders to use their achievements for the purposes of national propaganda, despite significant losses. At the end of the war, when the time came to renew the shipping that had existed in peacetime, logic and justice dictated that national assistance was due these private companies, and especially Palestine Maritime Lloyd Ltd. and Atid, who had rights as pioneers in Jewish shipping. They felt that the national institutions had a duty, therefore, to substantiate the existing shipping and expand it rather than prioritize a new and inexperienced company over the other, older ones.²⁶

Unable to bridge the gaps and form a basis for joint activity, the Jewish Agency chose to establish a national shipping company without including the existing companies. The company's job was to work on shipping that would promote development of the Yishuv based on national considerations: the transportation channels of Jewish immigration to Israel and tourism; freight of important raw materials for industry and construction that were lacking in the community's economy; export of citrus fruits and industrial products; on the shorelines; in oil transport. It was resolved that the Jewish Agency must guarantee the national Jewish character of the shipping company and the Jewish ships it owned according to the following principles: (1) Jewish employees, (2) a Jewish flag, (3) Jewish ownership, (4) use of products from the country, and (5) sailing along lines that were crucial to the Yishuv.²⁷

Even within the push for national institutions to take the lead in maritime activity, divergent approaches existed. The Jewish Agency viewed Zim's birth as a necessity in the formation of a new and independent state. The Histadrut, however, agreed regarding the need for maritime sovereignty but also viewed Zim's establishment as essential in order to create the social order that it felt was necessary in the country, one that ensured an equal and just society. It was crucial, the Histadrut believed, that the maritime activity not be based on private enterprise.

While these two approaches were not identical, the two agencies were able to work together toward a common goal. Zim was established on 7 June 1945, and registered with the government as Zim Palestine Navigation Company Limited.²⁸ The company, according to its founders' resolution, was meant to serve as a national tool to develop Jewish shipping according to the needs of Jewish naval transportation and to constitute a body that would unite efforts to revive Jewish shipping. The company's founders were three public bodies: The Jewish Agency, the Israel Maritime League,²⁹ and Nachshon.

The Jewish Agency held special rights to Zim as the representative of Jewish statehood. The company was founded with share capital of 500,000 Palestine pounds. The capital paid was actually 190,000, of which 100,000 came from the Jewish Agency, Nachshon paid 80,000, and the IML paid 10,000. The company's management comprised thirteen, six from the Jewish Agency, six from the Histadrut, and one from the IML. The practical management was made up of four: Hillel Dan, from Solel Boneh; Gusta Strumpf-Rechav, CEO of Nachshon; and two Jewish Agency representatives, David Baharal, the Jewish Agency treasurer, and Dr. Naftali Wydra, Haifa manager of the Jewish Agency's Maritime and Fisheries Department, and Zim's executive director for twenty-one years.³⁰

PARTNERSHIP WITH HARRIS AND DIXON AND THE PURCHASE OF THE *KEDMAH*

It soon became apparent that purchasing ships in postwar conditions would be impossible without direct aid from the British government in Palestine and London. It was also clear that in the first phase, it would be wise to partner with a foreign company, using its experience to overcome the hurdles inherent in founding a shipping company. The assistance of a foreign company was necessary for purchasing a ship, given the lack of ships after the war and their high price.

In the postwar period, it was impossible to buy ships or to build new ones; shipyards around the world were overrun with orders for merchant fleets from veteran maritime countries that had suffered great losses. It was clear to the national institutions, then, that used ships must be bought. In that case, it appeared that the best way to do so was by partnering with a well-connected and reputable British company. In the postwar atmosphere, people who would "risk" becoming involved with a national Jewish shipping company were few and far between.³¹

After a number of attempts to make contact with existing shipping companies, Zim connected with a veteran London company, Harris and Dixon, which dealt with insurance, primarily maritime insurance, and operated a small ship agency.

The main stockholders were the well-respected Lords Wimborne and Kilmarnock. The fact that a British company was willing to enter into a partnership with Zim was especially helpful in its dealings with the Mandate government.³²

Harris and Dixon and Zim agreed to establish a subsidiary with shared equity in the amount of 250,000 Palestine pounds. The subsidiary, “Kedem Palestine Line”, would procure a ship according to the following principles: Both companies would take equal part in the subsidiary’s equity. Each would have the same number of directors. The chairman would either be a neutral figure or be selected on rotation from the two companies’ representatives. However, the management had to relate to the company as a Jewish national one; the practical management of the subsidiary would consist of three people, two of whom were selected by Zim and one of whom was chosen by Harris and Dixon. The director from Harris and Dixon would be responsible primarily for technical elements. The company’s seat and place of work would be in Haifa. Harris and Dixon would act as managing agents for a period of ten years; they took upon themselves the technical and professional responsibility for the joint company during that period. The subsidiary would be registered in Palestine and its ships would fly the Eretz-Israel flag; those working on the ships and the company’s employees would be Jewish, if at all possible.³³ The contract signed between the British partners and Zim on the founding of Kedem stated explicitly that “both partners will use their rights in the company to guarantee a Jewish character as a Jewish line of ships that will employ Jewish employees and work in the service of Eretz-Israel or its interests.”³⁴

In July 1946, after the establishment of Kedem, the new partnership purchased the ship *Kedah*. The partners’ share in the purchase was equal; it was resolved that both companies would invest equally in repair and renovation expenses and that it would be deployed on the Haifa–Marseilles line. They agreed to rename the ship *Kedmah* meaning eastward, to Eretz-Yisrael. The name change that related to the land of the Bible, after 2,000 years of exile where the Zionist dream was materializing, was an attempt to create an etymological connection between the ship and its role in the service of the state.³⁵

Built in 1927 in Vickers shipyard in Britain, the ship initially served on the Singapore–Penang line and was built for quick passenger service at short distances (under 400 miles) in the protected waters of the Far East. *Kedah* came from the northern Malay Peninsula. For twelve years it transported passengers, cargo, and mail. With the outbreak of WW II, the *Kedah* was requisitioned by the British navy for a number of evacuations, including that of Singapore. Though it was never hit during the war, strikes nearby severely rattled the complex and delicate machinery and its speed fell from 18 knots to seven.³⁶ In early 1946 it was returned to the Vickers shipyard and put up for sale.³⁷

The purchase of the *Kedmah*, which had a capacity of 2,500 tons, was conducted on the basis of an examination of the ship performed by experts from Harris and Dixon. The foremost condition for the ship's low price was that the buyer could not open the machinery for inspection; the ship was sold complete, after an external check only. The agreed-upon price was 75,000 Palestine pounds.³⁸ The cost of the necessary repairs to prepare the ship and the amount of time they took were far greater than the original assessment, and put the question of national maritime independence to the test at its very inception.

THE TECHNICAL TEST: THE REPAIRS IN ANTWERP

The *Kedmah's* preparation for passenger service necessitated repairs, which could only be carried out in Britain or Belgium in the days following the war. Harris and Dixon preferred Antwerp, which would cost less and take less time. At their recommendation the *Kedmah* was delivered to the Guthrie and Morduch shipyard in Antwerp in July 1946. Based on the shipyard's preliminary calculation, the repairs and installation were projected to cost 65,000 Palestine pounds, not including parts that would need to be changed, whose cost was not figured into the projected budget. Installation was projected to take between four and six months.³⁹

Although Antwerp was considered the ideal location in terms of working conditions in Europe at the time, in September of that year, two months after the *Kedmah* arrived, numerous snags appeared and a series of mishaps overshadowed the euphoria. The pace of the work was slower than promised; the repair costs were more than originally quoted. The patience of Zim's board members wore thin. The deadline for the preparation of what would be the national shipping company's first passenger ship was postponed time and again; the end was nowhere in sight.⁴⁰

The relationship between Zim's management and the British partners became strained. Harris and Dixon's representatives in Antwerp and its board members did not give clear answers about the situation. Zim claimed that it did not receive clear information about the work's progress and repair deadlines, and that the bills for repairs greatly exceeded the price originally projected.⁴¹ There was great unrest among the Zim heads, some of whom travelled to Antwerp. Gusta Strumpf-Rechav's report in April 1947, nine months after the ship arrived for repairs, illustrates Zim's despair at the situation:

I found a situation that was not good: deterioration in the relations between our people and the partners' people . . . Alan [the Harris and Dixon foreman] has not been here for more than two weeks. The work is in a discouraging state. They build and demolish, build and demolish . . . The electrical piping hasn't been arranged yet, the stairs are being repaired and created, the rooms are not yet finished, the kitchen arrangements are in complete disarray, the employees' quarters are not finished, there is still no light, there is still no water, there is still no paint . . . There are two hundred workers or more, with no supervision, with no organization . . . but Mr. Austin [the head engineer from Harris and Dixon] stresses, "But a lot of work has been done."⁴²

The British partners countered the allegations citing postwar events in global shipping in general, Antwerp port in particular, and the ship's condition. The harsh winter of 1946 slowed down the work and made it more expensive, delays in the supply of parts from the Vickers shipyard because of manufacturing conditions, the dearth of raw materials, strikes and breaks in manufacturing had taken place—all of which led to ship's overhaul being delayed by many months.⁴³ The ship itself, they claimed, had undergone unforeseen work; an increase in the intended number of passengers meant required changes; and the machinery damaged in the war took a great deal of time to fix.⁴⁴

In order to make it fit for service in the Mediterranean, the ship's gross tonnage was increased from 2,500 tons to 3,500, and it was fitted for 350 passengers (100 more than it had held previously) and 400 tons of cargo. The ship spent a year in the Belgian shipyard, four months of which were waiting for parts and two months of which were strikes, all at a cost of 280,000 Palestine pounds, more than four times that originally quoted.⁴⁵ On 16 July 1947, with the threat of a new strike in Antwerp, the Zim and Harris and Dixon agreed to remove the ship and complete the repairs in Palestine.⁴⁶

THE SOCIAL TEST: THE FIRST JOURNEY AND THE CREW CRISIS

Aside from the objective difficulties caused by global market conditions after the war, tension existed between the crew members aboard the ship on its first journey. According to the agreement with Harris and Dixon, priority was given to Jewish workers. The entire crew on board the ship,

composed by the Seamen's Association in Haifa, was Jewish, save for the key positions on the ship—the chief engineer, his assistant, and the captain who were chosen by the British partners due to a lack of suitable Jewish candidates.

The journey to London en route to Palestine was fraught with distrust and a lack of coordination between the two groups on the crew. In the ship's engine room, a place where strict professionalism and cooperation were essential, the two staffs continually squabbled. Jewish sailors claimed that the ship departing from Antwerp was barely seaworthy and that the British were responsible for its technical conditions. For their part, the British sailors claimed that the ship had departed once it had all of the requisite permits and all that remained were minor repairs.⁴⁷ Conflict and recriminations characterized the *Kedmah* for a long period.

A description of the ship's arrival in London demonstrates the central place the ship had begun to take in the national consciousness in the Jewish world. The ceremony raising the Jewish flag on the mast in London's port created quite a stir:

Thousands crowded onto the shores of the Thames to watch the ceremony of raising the Jewish flag on the ship's mast. This was the first time in history that seamen's orders were given in Hebrew at the Thames dock. The appearance of the lovely Jewish ship with the Jewish crew on the Thames made a strong impression not only on the Jewish groups but also on the British trade and shipping classes.⁴⁸

However, in the shadow of the excitement at the appearance of the first Jewish national ship, the misfortunes that accompanied it from its first voyage and the tension between the crew members did not dissipate.

After four days in London, the ship departed for Palestine. Two days from Tel-Aviv saltwater got into the central machinery system, the ship's lights went out, and the ship stopped moving, the refrigerators and the kitchen ovens ceased to operate. The journey became unpleasant: "In the first days of the journey, in the Mediterranean midsummer heat, there was no water for bathing. There was almost no water left for cooking."⁴⁹ Blame was cast for willful destruction: the British claimed that the saltwater was deliberately introduced into the system by the Jews, while the Jews asserted that the British had done it to cover for the poor quality of the repairs in Antwerp. As the ship neared the shores of Palestine, it was clear that it was in need of technical repair—and, no less, social repair.⁵⁰

A FESTIVAL AT THE SHORE: THE *KEDMAH* ARRIVES IN TEL-AVIV

Expectations for the *Kedmah's* arrival in Palestine ran high. In advance of its coming, Kedem turned to travel agencies to encourage people to sail on it, accentuating the special place accorded to the ship in the establishment of a Jewish merchant fleet:

We are pleased to announce that we have inaugurated our regular bi-weekly service between Palestine and Limassol–Guinea and Marseilles on our ship the *Kedmah* . . . The ship was completely restored . . . We spared no efforts to meet the needs and desires of the Jewish public in *Eretz Yisrael* . . . The ship will hoist the flag of *Eretz Yisrael* and the crew and housekeeping workers are Jewish.⁵¹

On 28 July, the *Kedmah* finally docked at Tel-Aviv port. Its arrival was heralded by great excitement and pride⁵² on a national scale. Yishuv dignitaries were invited, and Tel-Aviv port was decorated with flags. The Hebrew date of the arrival was also symbolic – the ninth of Av, the date of the destructions of the first and second Temples; thus a symbol of consolation and renewal. The first Jewish ship to be owned by Yishuv institutions at the shores of Tel-Aviv, the first modern Jewish city, reflected great hope for the Yishuv in maritime independence. Thousands huddled on the shore from the early morning to see the historic event.⁵³ Five Piper aircraft of the Aviron company flew to greet the ship at sea, with Jewish Agency board members including Gruenbaum, Meyerson, and Remez, and Aviron director Uri Michaeli on board. The symbolism was intense: aerial sovereignty greeted newly established maritime sovereignty. The expressions of “independence without place”—in air and at sea—touched, escalating the sense of imminent national independence.⁵⁴ Journalists covering the event were given guided tours of the ship and the press descriptions reflect their excitement.⁵⁵

DÉJÀ VU: TECHNICAL BREAKDOWNS AND STRIFE

The Yishuv's maritime independence was tested from the very moment the *Kedmah* came to Palestine. Two days after its arrival it was meant to depart for Zurich for a meeting of the Zionist General Council with the Yishuv leadership on its deck. Considerable embarrassment ensued when

the ship's technical supervisor from Harris and Dixon announced that the ship's condition made it impossible to sail; it must be repaired.⁵⁶ Criticism of Zim and the ship was voiced, and echoed in the press at the time.⁵⁷ The critiques from the circles related to the foreign and private companies—that the formation of the Jewish national shipping company would endanger their status and income—arose once again.⁵⁸

The *Kedmah* managed to make two rounds of voyages by mid-September 1947 before it docked at a Haifa shipyard for repairs that took four months, ending mid-January 1948. It became clear that the ship was in trouble: it was consuming far too much water and fuel; the boilers and machinery constantly had sediment, posing a threat to the turbines; the freshwater containers were insufficient for the boilers and passengers; and the pumps and auxiliary machinery on the ship were not working correctly. An engineer who examined the ship in Haifa determined that the repairs in Antwerp had evidently not been completed and that the crew had also not tended to the ship properly while sailing.⁵⁹

Despite the complications that were Zim's lot in *Kedmah's* early days—and perhaps even because of them—the company's heads chose to give the seamen better wages. This, they claimed, was in order to highlight the advantage of employees on a state ship, thus establishing the Jewish naval workforce and the status of Zim as a leading company in the field of shipping. The base selected used the conditions given to British seamen at the time, with additional medical insurance in a health fund subsidized by the company, a family cost-of-living allowance in accordance with the cost of living in Palestine, and a provident fund. These three costs made the company's expenses for wages 25% higher than those of other British ships, 250–300% relative to Italian or Greek ships.⁶⁰ Defining conditions for workers on the state shipping company's first ship was without a doubt an important precedent that accompanied Zim's salaries with the expansion of its activities later on.

Kedmah's arrival in Palestine did not improve relations with the British partners. In fact, it was quite the opposite, certainly in the face of the repeated mishaps on the ship after its arrival.⁶¹ The Zim board blamed Harris and Dixon for the mechanical defects on the ship by virtue of its technical responsibility; the British partners pointed the finger at the inexperienced Jewish crew members who did not know, they claimed, how to care for the machinery in a professional manner and thus caused the ship's shutdown.

After the *Kedmah's* arrival in Palestine the disagreements focused on the supervision for the continued repairs—who the supervisor would answer

to, where the repairs would take place, who was considered a recognized professional who could be trusted to give an unbiased opinion.⁶² Great suspicion led to a strike of the Jewish crew on the *Kedmah*, who declared that they would not work with the British mechanics who were endangering the lives of the crew and passengers.⁶³

Discussions of dismantling the partnership were forthcoming. First it was Zim who wanted to dismantle the partnership, as long as it received the funds it had invested in the ship in return. But Zim slowly backed down when the British partners showed flexibility in their willingness to employ more Jewish workers on the ship. Furthermore, the British bureaucracy's effect was felt less and less.⁶⁴

An important milestone in Zim's growing desire not to relinquish the *Kedmah* came on 14 May 1948, the day the State of Israel's independence was declared. The ship anchored in the Marseilles port was apparently the first ship to lower the Mandate flag and raise the Zim flag, the flag of Israel's merchant fleet.⁶⁵ From that day on, the idea of a Jewish ship, owned by the shipping company of the nascent state, received enormous national significance. That month, Commander Robert Miller, of Zim, was selected as the ship's captain to replace of the British captain, David Morrison, who had first held that position on behalf of Harris and Dixon. Miller was a trustee of Zim and considered a first-rate professional.⁶⁶ The remainder of the ship's British crew was also replaced by Jewish seamen and when the ship returned to full service at the end of January 1948 some improvement was felt on the ship and in its service, though the ship's condition later on was still unsatisfactory and critiques of its condition continued to be voiced.⁶⁷

UNDER SCRUTINY: THE *KEDMAH* REVIEW COMMITTEE

The establishment of a national shipping company and the onset of *Kedmah's* voyages were accompanied at first by great excitement and support, but continued incidents raised a sizeable wave of criticism. Private entrepreneurs claimed that the technical failures and the resulting financial losses demonstrated insufficient professionalism for a business so large and complex. In their opinion, the constant friction between the partners reflected a commercial and administrative failure. Zim's very establishment, they felt, needed to be put to public debate, as the establishment of the national shipping company and the purchase of the *Kedmah* constituted a complete disregard for ten years of private shipping enterprise in the country; the

national shipping company was bound to compete with them.⁶⁸ The crew's strikes, too, pointed to continued conflicts with the English experts, which they felt demanded an external investigation.⁶⁹ The heads of Zim warded off the claims, seeing fit to emphasize the benefits of the ship's purchase rather than the difficulties on the ship and the relationships with the English partners.⁷⁰

Ultimately, the Jewish Agency appointed an investigative committee on the *Kedmah* incident in early 1948. The committee's mandate was thus defined:

The committee is directed to examine the affair of the establishment of the partnership of the Kedem company, the purchase of the ship *Kedmah*, its preparation, and the reasons that caused the complications on its voyages and all that was involved in the administration of said service financially, technically, and corporately.⁷¹

After a number of months of discussion, the committee determined, *inter alia*, that Harris and Dixon's approach to the preparatory work in Antwerp was very suspicious. While they could not be suspected of willful negligence, there was no doubt that the repairs in Antwerp were not conducted properly. Leaving the ship in Antwerp in inadequate condition, after it had remained nearly a year at the shipyard, was unreasonable. Thus the culpability of Harris and Dixon, which was responsible for selecting the shipyard and overseeing the repairs, was indisputable. However, the committee could not determine what the primary reason was for the repeated mishaps in the ship's machinery; it recommended that if the source of the problem could not be identified in a reasonable amount of time, the ship should be sold under the best conditions possible. The committee also expressed regret that the sequence of events described to it resulted in the squandering of much of the trust, enthusiasm, and good will displayed by the general Jewish public in support of Jewish shipping when the enterprise had begun.⁷²

Assigning blame for *Kedmah's* condition to Harris and Dixon raised objections on the part of Zim's management; it was concerned that publication of the committee's conclusions would damage Kedem's corporate interests by leading to a lawsuit on the part of the English partner, to the termination of the partnership, and to the revoking of their investment in addition to a defamation lawsuit.⁷³ Zim's management claimed that the report was flawed because representatives of Harris and Dixon were not asked to give testimony before the committee. They emphasized that Harris

and Dixon had invested most of the equity in purchasing and repairing the *Kedmah*—roughly 250,000 Palestine pounds of the total of approximately 450,000—and noted that no Jewish shipping company had managed to raise private Jewish equity for a partnership in the sector, while the non-Jewish English company had agreed to do this with substantial capital and while maintaining the Yishuv's national interests in Palestine. Zim's inexperience in repairing used ships and the British company's investment made it clear that Zim could rely on Harris and Dixon. Most importantly, Zim's management emphasized that despite the pitfalls, *Kedmah* was a pioneer in establishing maritime nationalism and sovereignty of the Yishuv, and thus the partnership that made it possible must not be compromised in any fashion:

Despite the mishaps we met with the inception of our enterprise we laid the groundwork for serious progress in the shipping sector. Our ship, *Kedmah*, was the basis for the purchase of the ships *Negba* and *Galila*, all three of which together, constituting a tonnage of 12,800 tons, have created an important national asset and jobs and training for three hundred Jewish seamen.⁷⁴

Ultimately, the management's claims were accepted and the findings of the investigative committee that were published did not include the sections whose content related to the English partner.⁷⁵ As expected, the publication of a partial report led to criticism on the part of the private shipping entrepreneurs and the civilian ranks in general, who continued to dispute the very founding of the national shipping company.⁷⁶

No document summarizing all of the *Kedmah's* activity in the joint company is available. By August 1948, one year after its service began, the ship had conducted twenty rounds of voyages between Palestine/Israel and Europe, with over 11,000 passengers, 9,235 of whom were immigrants.⁷⁷ Chaim Weizmann, Israel's first president, departed for a vacation on the *Kedmah* on 5 July 1950.⁷⁸ In an interview on board he was quoted as saying, "It is a pleasure, a Jewish ship."⁷⁹ The surge in the state's needs forced Zim to add other modern and sophisticated ships to its lines. The *Kedmah* was sold at the end of 1952 to the British partners, who bought out Zim's share. The sale helped replenish the Israeli fleet with more modern ships.⁸⁰ In the following years, it was leased a number of times to Zim for additional trips and in 1957 it was dismantled for scrap in Britain.

CONCLUSION

The idea of a national shipping company belonging to the Yishuv materialized only as a result of circumstances created after WW II. The Yishuv's leadership at the time attributed great significance to an independent shipping company that could act out of national considerations and promote the Yishuv's various maritime goals. Zim's establishment was significant in this field; the purchase of the *Kedmah*, the national shipping company's first ship, was the realization of the company's foremost idea. In its wake many other ships were purchased, making Zim an important component of national resilience and Israel's economy for many years.

Kedmah was the pioneer in the Yishuv's maritime independence immediately before the state. Perhaps because it was a pioneer, its beginnings were difficult. Aside from the objective difficulties caused by global market conditions after the war and the prevailing circumstances in the shipyards, there were also internal-subjective problems: the ship's extensive and unexpected repairs, the lack of experience and technical knowledge needed to operate it, and the untrained and often clashing crew. Criticism was voiced in the Yishuv press primarily by the private sector and the representatives of private enterprise, who felt threatened by the emerging national shipping company, and also from the Yishuv's political departments that were not involved with the development of Jewish shipping. These too contributed to the difficulties in its early days.

From a historical perspective, *Kedmah* was a groundbreaking ship that sailed between the country and Europe during a time when the Yishuv was transitioning into a state and in the early years of the state's existence, transporting thousands of immigrants to the country. Despite its difficult beginning and the many critiques, *Kedmah* laid crucial groundwork, becoming the first flagship of the Jewish Yishuv in the country—and thus had an important role in establishing national maritime sovereignty. *Kedmah's* significance, then, was primarily in its symbolism of the maritime sovereignty possible for the independent state that would soon be built.

NOTES

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light on Zim's early years and its first ship, the *Kedmah*. Nonetheless, the sole responsibility for what is written in the article is mine and mine alone.

1. Theodor Herzl, *The Jewish State* (North Charleston, SC, 2011), 72.
2. Josef W. Konvitz, *Cities and the Sea: Port City Planning in Early Modern Europe* (Baltimore, 1978); David Cesarani and Gemma Romain, eds., *Jews and Port Cities, 1590–1990: Commerce, Community and Cosmopolitanism* (London, 2006).
3. Hannan Hever, *Toward the Longed-for Shore: The Sea in Hebrew Culture and Modern Hebrew Literature* (Jerusalem, 2007), 9–24 [Hebrew].
4. Yaacov Shavit, "Tel Aviv on the Mediterranean—Between a Coastal City and a Port City: A Look at Levantinism and Mediterraneanism from Mandatory-period Tel Aviv," in *Studies in the History of Eretz Israel*, ed. Yehoshua Ben-Arieh and Elchanan Reiner (Jerusalem, 2003), 599–613 [Hebrew].
5. Maoz Azaryahu, *Tel Aviv—The Real City: A Historical Mythography* (Tel-Aviv, 2005), 272–5; Kobi Cohen-Hattab, *Tour the Land—Tourism in Palestine during the British Mandate Period (1917–1948)* (Jerusalem, 2006), 53–61; Anat Helman, *Urban Culture in 1920s and 1930s Tel-Aviv* (Haifa, 2007), 142–8 [all Hebrew]; Maoz Azaryahu, "The Formation of the 'Hebrew Sea' in Pre-State Israel," *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 7.3 (2008): 251–67; Joachim Schlör, "Tel-Aviv: (With Its) Back to the Sea?" *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 8.2 (2009): 215–35.
6. The Zionist Executive, Decisions of the 19th Zionist Congress, Lucerne, 20 June–6 September 1935 (Jerusalem, 1937), 529; Shimon Stern, "Tel-Aviv Port: An Episode in the History of Eretz-Israel," *Cathedra* 25 (1982): 113–34; Anita Shapira, ed., *Haapala: Studies in the History of Illegal Immigration into Palestine 1934–1948* (Tel-Aviv, 1990) [all in Hebrew].
7. Gilbert Herbert, *Symbols of a New Land: Architects and the Design of the Passenger Ships of ZIM* (Haifa, 2006), 4–10 [Hebrew].
8. Yoav Gelber, *New Homeland: Immigration and Absorption of Central European Jews 1933–1948* (Jerusalem, 1990), 23–39, 78–92, 427–8 [Hebrew].
9. David Gurevich, *Jewish Manufacture, Transportation and Commerce* (Jerusalem, 1939), 61.
10. Central Zionist Archives (hereafter: CZA), S11/44, Bar-Kochba Meirovitz to Eliezer Kaplan, 13 January 1937.
11. Daniella Ran, "The Contribution and Effect of the German *Aliya* to the Development of Shipping in *Eretz Yisrael*" (master's thesis, University of Haifa, 1993), 69–71 [Hebrew].
12. CZA, S74/57, Naftali Wydra, "Marine Transportation in *Eretz Yisrael*," n.d. (probably from the second half of 1945); Shaul Kinarsali, "British Shipping towards the Future," *Yam*, November 1945, 4 [Hebrew].
13. The IML's goal was to instill a maritime awareness and to provide material assistance in nautical training for the Jewish population in Eretz Israel.
14. CZA, J1/1872, memo signed by 108 representatives on board the ship, 13 August 1935. The signatories on the letter collected deposits for the first shares account in the amount of 10,660 Palestine pounds for the establishment of a

company for maritime activity, the “Jewish Marine League”, which was the basis for the Israel Maritime League, or IML, two years later. David Remez, “Israel and the Sea,” in *Israel and the Sea: A Collection* (Jerusalem, 1970), 178 [Hebrew].

15. The Zionist Executive, Decisions of the 19th Zionist Congress, 529.

16. Meirovitz to Kaplan, 13 January 1937.

17. Sara Erez, *One Period in the Life of David Remez, 1934–1945* (Tel-Aviv, 1977), 255–6, 313–14; Hillel Yarkoni, *The Sea, the Ship, and the Jewish People* (Haifa, 2009), 178–9 [both in Hebrew].

18. Bar-Kochba Meirovitz, *Keren Hayesod and the Land of Israel's Seas* (Jerusalem, 1945), 3–5 [Hebrew].

19. CZA, S74/56, F. O. Rogers, Port Manager, memorandum, Present prospects for new steamship lines in Palestine, 21 August 1945; Ran, *Contribution and Effect*, 109–13.

20. CZA, S74/184/1, Zim Israel Navigation Co. Ltd., 1945; Zeev Hayam, *Ships' Tales* (Tel-Aviv, 1968), 137 [Hebrew].

21. Zvi Herman, *Conquering a Route at Sea: Chronicles of Hebrew Shipping* (Tel-Aviv, 1978), 128–34.

22. CZA, S74/184/2, Protocol, Israel Maritime League and the Jewish Agency's Maritime and Fisheries Department and the proxies of the shipping companies, Tel-Aviv, 10 May 1943.

23. *Ibid.*, 18 July 1943. For an analysis of the different approaches to the establishment of the national company see Baruch Howard, “*Kedmah* in the Tumult of Views—A World of Contradictions,” *Davar*, 17 February 1948.

24. The stage for the ideological conflicts was set in the Ottoman period and in the beginning of the British Mandate. See Moshe Lissak, *The History of the Jewish Community in Eretz Israel Since 1882: The Period of The British Mandate*, Vol. II, ed. Moshe Lissak, Anita Shapira, and Gavriel Cohen (Jerusalem, 1994), 173–88. On the conflicts during the Mandate from the perspective of the Manufacturers' Association, see Omri Metzger, “The Politics of the Manufacturers' Association in the 1930s: The Efforts to Block the Income Tax Initiative and to Promote Local Products,” *Iyunim Bitkumat Israel* 22 (2012): 290–324 [both in Hebrew].

25. “Zim—A Tool in the Hands of the Left for Overtaking the Shipping Sector,” *HaMashkif*, 23 May 1945.

26. Moshe Shalosh, “This Is Not the Way to Conquer the Sea,” *HaBoker*, 15 May; Zeev Hayam, “National Whitewash against Private Enterprise,” *HaBoker*, 16 May 1945 [both in Hebrew].

27. CZA, S74/160, Shmuel Tolkowky, chairman of the subcommittee on maritime affairs, to David Ben-Gurion, chairman of the Jewish Agency's planning committee, 13 April 1945.

28. “National Shipping Company Zim Founded,” *Mishmar*, 4 May 1945; for a photocopy of the registration in the company's registry, see Gideon Zelinger and Nechama Douek, *Zim through the Years 1945–1995* (Haifa, 1995), 10 [Hebrew]. The name, meaning “large ships”, was suggested by David Remez. The name comes

from the Bible: “But ships (*tzim*) shall come from the coast of Kittim” (Num. 24:24); “In that day shall messengers go forth from before Me in ships (*tzim*) to make the confident Ethiopians afraid” (Ezek. 30:9).

29. Initial meetings about the national shipping company were convened by the IML; after Zim’s establishment it became clear that its contribution to the company’s continued existence would be minimal. In contrast with the Jewish Agency and the Histadrut, the IML was nearly devoid of money to invest in establishing the company. See Zadok Eshel, *Battling the Sea Frontier: The Story of the Israel Maritime League (I. M. L.)* (Tel-Aviv, 1996), 41–3 [Hebrew].

30. Sources about the chronicles of Zim are few: *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, s.v. “Zim”; Chaim Bar-Tikva, *Zim Israel Navigation Company Ltd.—The Fifty-Year Success Story of a Shipping Company, 1945–1995* (Haifa, 1996); Hillel Yarkoni, *Seventy-five Years of Shipping in Eretz Yisrael* (Haifa, 2005), 14 [both in Hebrew]; Hillel Yarkoni, *The Sea*; Zelinger and Douek, *Zim*.

31. Zeev Hayam, *Sea Routes: Chronicles of Israeli Shipping* (Tel-Aviv, 1972), 14 [Hebrew]; Yarkoni, *Seventy-five Years*, 50–2.

32. CZA S74/153, Bar-Kochba Meirovitz to Zim, 21 July; S74/153, Protocol of Zim’s board, 11 September 1946. Contact with the company was made through Menachem Rivlin, IML secretary who was in London. His friend Yosef Segal, a close friend of Lord Wimborne, connected Harris and Dixon with Meirovitz and Kaplan, Zim’s representatives. See Herman, *Conquering*, 134–8.

33. Israel State Archives (hereafter: ISA), P18/920, F. Kaplan to Viscount Wimborne, director of Harris and Dixon, London, 26 June; Harris and Dixon Ltd. to Kaplan, confirming the agreement, 27 June 1946.

34. Bar-Kochba Meirovitz, “The Deliberations of Jewish Shipping,” *Davar*, 10 September 1947.

35. Meirovitz to Zim, 21 July 1946. See Yigal Zalmona and Tamar Manor-Friedman, *To the East: Orientalism in the Arts in Israel* (Jerusalem, 1998) [Hebrew].

36. A knot is the unit of speed equal to a nautical mile (1.853 km) per hour.

37. Yarkoni, *Seventy-five Years*, 50–2; Herman, *Conquering*, 134–7.

38. “Report of the Committee,” 11 October 1948.

39. Meirovitz to Zim, 21 July 1946; CZA, S30/3143, Bar-Kochba Meirovitz, “The *Kedmah* Ship Affair,” 7 December 1947.

40. Zim Company Archives (hereafter: ZCA), 23164, Gusta Strumpf-Rechav, Nachshon Ltd., to the board of Zim Ltd., “The Chronicles of the Purchase of the *Kedmah*,” 3 August 1947.

41. ZCA, 23164, Bar-Kochba Meirovitz to Dr. B. Yoseph, 15 June 1947; “Kedem’s Response,” *Ha’arets*, 10 September 1947; ZCA “Report of the Committee,” 11 October 1948.

42. ZCA, 23164, Gusta Strumpf-Rechav, Nachshon Ltd., to the board of Zim Ltd., “The Chronicles of the Purchase of the *Kedmah*,” 19 April 1947.

43. ZCA, 23164, Naftali Wydra, speech at the *Yordei HaSira* House, Haifa, 5 September 1947; Herman, *Conquering*, 138–9.

44. Strumpf-Rechav to Zim, "Chronicles," 3 August; Bar-Kochba Meirovitz, "The Deliberations of Jewish Shipping," *Davar*, 10 September 1947.
45. "Report of the Committee," 11 October 1948; Yarkoni, *Seventy-five Years*, 51.
46. Wydra, Yordei *HaSira* Speech, 5 September 1947. On departure, the ship's refrigerator did not work; the meat went bad on the way and was thrown into the sea outside London. See "Report of the Committee," 11 October 1948.
47. Meirovitz, "The *Kedmah* Affair," 7 December 1947.
48. No author, *Yam*, July 1947, 18.
49. Herman, *Conquering*, 139.
50. Meirovitz, "The *Kedmah* Affair," 7 December 1947.
51. CZA, S30/3143, Dr. Naftali Wydra, "Kedem Maritime Service *Eretz Yisrael* Ltd.," 13 July 1947, circular 1 to all travel and tourist agencies.
52. Chanan Yoseph, "A Big Day for the Yishuv's Shipping with the Arrival of *Kedmah*—The Jewish Passenger Ship Arrives at the Tel-Aviv Port," *Mishmar*, 28 July; "We Will Happily Greet the *Kedmah*," *Yam*, July 1947, 2.
53. "*Kedmah* Anchored Yesterday in Tel-Aviv for the First Time," *Ha'aretz*, 28 July 1947. The ship brought 190 passengers, 110 of whom were immigrants who had survived the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp.
54. In July 1936, at the height of the Arab Revolt in Palestine, the Jewish Agency, the National Committee, and the Histadrut established *Aviron*, which was the first Jewish airline. See "Aviron," <http://iaf.org.il/3012-4400-en/IAF.aspx>.
55. "We Are Deficient at Sea and We Must Win at Sea," *Davar*, 28 July 1947.
56. "The machinery did not work properly. The 'heart' of the ship needed emergency surgery." See Herman, *Conquering*, 140; the passengers to the Zionist Congress in Zurich travelled by air at the last minute. See V. Groman, "What Came Before the *Kedmah*," *HaBoker*, 2 November 1947.
57. "How *Kedmah*'s Company Works," *Ha'aretz*, 27 August; K. Hilb, "*Kedmah* in Murky Waters," *HaBoker*, 1 September 1947.
58. K. Hilb, "The Ship That Bears Their Crime," *HaBoker*, 12 November 1948.
59. "Report of the Committee," 11 October 1948.
60. Wydra, *Yordei HaSira* speech, 5 September 1947. The contract was signed by 100 employees of the *Kedmah*. Wydra noted that the Jewish ship supported 100 Jewish families, a number that was, in his opinion, proof that the sea, and shipping in particular, could support and help sustain a large settlement, a response to those wondering whether the sea could support families.
61. ZCA, 23164, Bar-Kochba Meirovitz, Maritime and Fisheries Department, to Segel, 10 December; unsigned (most probably Naftali Wydra) to David Hacohen, 16 December 1947.
62. Meirovitz, "The *Kedmah* Affair," 7 December 1947; ZCA, 23164, Naftali Wydra to David Hacohen, 16 February 1948.
63. ZCA, 23164, K. Arkin, Haifa Workers' Council, Association of Jewish Captains, Officers, and Sailors, Haifa, to Zim Ltd. management, 14 November; "The *Kedmah* Crew Is on Strike," *Kol HaAm*, 30 November 1947.

64. Herman, *Conquering*, 143–5.
65. Hayam, *Ships*, 22–3; Zeev Hayam, “*Kedmah*: Zim’s First Ship,” *Zim* 1, 1971, 34.
66. The non-Jewish Cmdr. Robert Stevenson Miller (1907–66) served as the first director of the Shipping Division of Haifa’s nautical school. Between 1945 and 1948 British citizens were evacuated from Palestine; he secretly returned in the summer of 1947 to take part in building the Jewish fleet in the emerging state, joining Zim and appointed captain of the *Kedmah*. See Yarkoni, *The Sea*, 167–8.
67. “Report of the Committee,” 11 October 1948, CZA.
68. V. Groman, “What Came before the *Kedmah*,” *HaBoker*, 9 November 1947; K. Hilb, “Next to the *Kedmah*’s Deathbed,” *BeTerem*, 1 November 1947.
69. “Four-and-a-half-hour Strike on the *Kedmah*,” *Ha’aretz*, 27 November 1947; “The *Kedmah*’s Workers’ Demand Is Justified,” *Davar*, 3 December 1947.
70. Wydra, *Yordei HaSira* speech, 5 September 1947.
71. CZA, S30/3143, Protocol, Jewish Agency’s Executive, decision on the establishment of the committee investigating the *Kedmah* affair, Jerusalem, 21 December 1947; Eliahu Dobkin to Eric Muller, Y. Nathanson, and Shlomo Kaplansky, 8 January 1948. The committee members were Eric Muller, director of the Ata company, member of the Atid board; Menachem Margolin, lawyer, alderman in the Haifa municipality; and Shlomo Kaplansky, engineer, head of the Technion in Haifa. Lawyer G. Cherniak was appointed committee secretary. The committee heard testimony from 22 people and visited the ship twice.
72. “Report of the Committee,” 11 October 1948.
73. CZA, S30/3143, Dr. Naftali Wydra, Zim Israel Navigation Co., to Secretary General, Jewish Agency Executive, 21 October 1948.
74. CZA, S30/3143, Zim Israel Navigation Co. Ltd., Haifa, to secretary general, Jewish Agency Executive, 28 November 1948, S30/3143.
75. CZA, S30/3143, Jewish Agency Press Office, 28 November 1948; Publication of the report investigating the *Kedmah* affair, Protocol of the meeting of the Jewish Agency Executive, Jerusalem, 29 November. For criticism on the report not being published, see for example: *HaBoker* staff, “Secrets of the *Kedmah* Report,” *HaBoker*, 19 November 1948.
76. See “The Investigative Committee in the *Kedmah* Scandal Determines: Much Trust, Enthusiasm, Goodwill, and Money Was Wasted,” *HaCherut*; “*Kedmah* Squandered the Faith in Jewish Shipping,” *HaMashkif*, 27 January 1949.
77. The net income in the first year was 115,000 Palestine pounds. See: “*Kedmah* Has Brought 9,000 Immigrants until Now,” *Davar*, 22 August 1948.
78. ISA G15/5382, M. Maimon, head of the ceremony, 5 July 1950.
79. A. Telmi, “With the President on the *Kedmah*,” *Yam*, August–September 1950, 17–18.
80. Our reporter in Haifa, “Two New Cargo Ships,” *Davar*, 21 October, 1952. The value of the ship at the time of sale was estimated at between 200,000 and 250,000 Palestine pounds; both partners agreed to sell because problems had once again been found in the turbines. The English offer to buy Zim’s portion in the

partnership of 325,000 Israeli lira was considered an outstanding opportunity. After deducting all of the investments and expenses on repairs, Zim made 31,000 Israeli lira from the English partner. ZCA, 23164, Dr. Naftali Wydra, Shoham Maritime Services Ltd., to Dr. A. Konikoff, Commissioner of Foreign Currency, 25 October 1952.