

Bill Bernstein – Letter from the Exodus, April 21, 1947

Dear Moe:

Today is our last day in Marseille....we sail tomorrow for Italy.

From what I understand, we'll pull into some small port in Northern Italy and remain there for about five weeks while berthing facilities are put up. We've already loaded the lumber and other materials here in Marseille. Incidentally, the Italian government doesn't permit these "goings on" ever since the British Council was blown up in Rome about 6 months ago. As a consequence, we have to go into port as a "black" ship - - i.e. unregistered, uncleared and unentered. We do it by paying off the local small-time petty custom's officials and politicians. The money for all this graft comes from the black market sales of the strippings of the ship. In other words, we strip the ship of everything that isn't absolutely essential for the functioning of the ship and sell it.

Our people have only one burning desire - - - the second deliverance to Eritz Israel. The first migration was supposedly the handiwork of God; the second one, we fight for!!

Three days ago, the Jews here in Marseille and aboard our ship, celebrated the fourth anniversary of the resistance of the Warsaw Ghetto. Everyone of the 60,000 Jews were massacred there, defending a street with small arms against the Germany Army. We held it for five days.....only five days of resistance in 4000 years of persecution! Something we should be ashamed of. However, the time isn't far off when we'll redeem our honor. Perhaps you and I won't be around when it happens but I can see it taking shape. The base of the pyramid is slow being built but the pinnacle comes quickly.

I was at the refugee camp on the outskirts of Marseille yesterday. I saw practically all young men and women...They all speak Jewish; some speak Hebrew and all will eventually be in Eritz raising "sabras" on good communal farms stolen from the desert. A good many of these kids have numbers tattooed on their arms as proof of the life they lived for four years.

I don't know if I'll be able to mail any letters in my next port so don't worry if you don't hear from e for a few weeks. I'm feeling fine --- say hello to everyone.

Regards,

Bill