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Refugees, 1942.

MEMORANDUM

January 29, 1942.

To: The Office Committee

From: Mr. Arthur Lourie

Messages have reached the JDC and ourselves with reference to the ship "STRUMA" which arrived in Constantinople several weeks ago with 740 refugees from Roumania on board. It appears that the conditions on the ship were extremely bad.

It is not yet clear whether the Turkish authorities have allowed the passengers to land in Turkey. Following a conversation with Mr. Leavitt of the JDC, the latter informed us that they would be willing to pay for the transportation ^{of} these refugees to Palestine if the Executive would provide immigration certificates. We cabled the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem accordingly and have received the following reply:

"YOURS REGARDING 740 AM AWARE FACTS FIRST HAVE NO CERTIFICATES GOVERNMENTS DECISION ON CURRENT QUOTA AWAITED DAILY SECONDLY FAR AS EMIGRANTS ENEMY COUNTRIES ARE INVOLVED YOU KNOW DIFFICULTY APPLIED GOVERNMENT FOR LIFTING BAN THEIR RESPECT CABLEING LONDON SUGGEST YOU DO LIKEWISE ASSIST OTHER WAYS

The ban referred to is that imposed by the British authorities on the grant of certificates to any persons coming from enemy or enemy-occupied territories.

March 3, 1942

MEMORANDUM ON THE SINKING OF THE REFUGEE SHIP "STRUMA"
AND SIMILAR EARLIER INCIDENTS

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Note: This is not an article, but a purely factual presentation.

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1. The sinking of the 200 ton vessel "Struma" in the Black Sea last week with the loss of all but two of the 750 Jewish refugees on board has its origin in the anti-Semitic pogroms in Roumania and Central Europe of the past few years. Terror-stricken Jews seeking to escape the pogroms sometimes managed to reach the Black Sea where they chartered antiquated, leaky and unseaworthy boats in a desperate attempt to reach Palestine. Occasionally, some of these refugees succeeded in reaching the Jewish Homeland. Obviously, they had neither visas nor immigration permits. As a result, they were regarded by the British Administration in Palestine as illegal immigrants and liable to deportation or internment. On many occasions, permission has been sought for such refugees or others wandering on the high seas to enter Palestine in order to end their hopeless and perilous plight. It is against that background that the whole series of disasters must be set.

2. The most recent of these disasters concerns the "Struma", a tiny vessel which reached Istanbul in December with over 750 victims of fascist persecution on board. Because these refugees had no visas for any country, they were refused admission to Turkey and were anchored for weeks in the harbor of Istanbul. Repeated and urgent requests were made to the British Administration, both in Jerusalem and in London, to secure permission for them to proceed to Palestine. Those appeals were rejected. Not until one or two days before the final disaster, too late to be effective, was permission finally granted for the children under 16 to enter Palestine. Only a few days before the final disaster, the Jewish Agency made another appeal to the British Government drawing attention to the precedent of hundreds of non-Jewish refugees from enemy countries who had been admitted to Palestine and offering to make a selection among the refugees if permission to admit the entire group was refused. On at least two occasions during the time the ship was in Istanbul, the Jewish Agency warned the British Administration in Palestine that non-admission of the "Struma" refugees meant either certain death for the latter by sinking or surrender to the enemy. Finally, on February 24th, the ship was ordered to leave Turkish territorial waters, despite the protests of the captain that it was in no condition to put to sea. It was towed out of port by a Turkish tug and went to pieces as soon as it reached open water. All but five of the 750 aboard lost their lives. Three of the five survivors subsequently died in Istanbul.

It is clear that the Turkish Government must bear a considerable share of the responsibility for refusing haven to these refugees and ordering them out of territorial waters under such circumstances. By far the greater share of the responsibility, however, rests with the British Administration in Palestine. It now appears that the administration in Palestine had full

power and discretion to admit the refugees and did not need to refer the matter to London. Responsibility, therefore, must be definitely fixed on the British Administration in Palestine and more particularly on Sir Harold MacMichael, the High Commissioner.

Daily reports arriving from Jerusalem indicate profound indignation throughout the country. No mention of the disaster was permitted for more than a day and a half after the news had been received. There was a half-day general strike throughout the country and flags everywhere were flown at half mast.

3. There have been many other instances of similar tragedy. In November 1940, more than 1770 Jews who had escaped from nazi-occupied lands, reached Palestine on board two vessels, the "Pacific" and the "Milos". Because they had no visas nor immigration permits, they were ordered deported by the British authorities. On November 25th, the ship to which they had been transferred for deportation to Africa, the "Patria", was destroyed by a mysterious explosion in the harbor at Haifa. More than 250 of these refugees lost their lives. The survivors were ordered deported from Palestine. Not until vigorous protest had come from the United States to the British Government was the deportation order rescinded and these refugees permitted to remain in Palestine.

It is an eloquent commentary on the devotion of these refugees to the democratic cause that, despite their treatment by the British Administration, more than 150 of the "Patria" survivors have since joined the British armed forces in the Near East and have distinguished themselves with gallantry and bravery in the Mediterranean and African campaigns. The first British soldier to fall at Tobruk was a Czech Jew who survived the "Patria" disaster.

4. Another of these refugee vessels, the tiny ship "Salvador", sank in the Sea of Marmora in November 1939 with the loss of between 200 and 300 people, most of them children.

5. Another vessel, the "Atlantic", a 400-ton ship, brought to Palestine some 1800 refugees at about the time the "Patria" disaster occurred. Again the British Colonial Office refused to waive its ruling that such refugees must be deported. Because the ship was in a sinking condition, the refugees were removed to shore and internment. Finally, they were rounded up in the dead of night and after much violence placed on board ship and deported to the little island of Mauritius in the Indian Ocean. There, many of them have since died. The deportation of these refugees from the Jewish National Home, setting a new precedent in British policy, aroused violent indignation throughout Palestine.

6. Another ship, the "Darien", reached Palestine in March 1940 in sinking condition. On board were 800 refugees from the Bucharest pogroms, together with the survivors of the "Salvador". In conformity with the policy of the British Administration in Palestine, these refugees have been interned since their arrival. That they have thus far escaped deportation has been due simply to the fact that no shipping facilities are available to transfer them to Africa or the Indian Ocean.

7. These disasters which have resulted in the wanton destruction of innocent lives have been due largely to the policy of the British Government which has refused to permit entry into Palestine of those Jewish refugees who

have managed to escape from nazi persecution. It is vital to point out that such policy not only violates all considerations of justice and humanity by virtually condemning to death these anti-fascist Jewish refugees, but is in defiance of military necessity. For, many of these refugees who have gone to their deaths or are languishing in internment are able-bodied men with military training or skilled technicians and laborers whose contribution to the military war effort could be an extremely vital one.

8. Attention should be drawn to the fact that while Jewish anti-fascist refugees are denied admission to Palestine, deported from its shores or interned on its soil, Palestine has offered haven in the past few years to thousands of non-Jewish refugees -- Greeks, Czechs, Poles, etc. While most of these non-Jewish refugees are genuine anti-fascists, it is a well-known fact that they include in their midst many who have not always been conspicuous for their loyalty to the democratic ideal.



C
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TURKISH EMBASSY

WASHINGTON, D.C.

March 3, 1942

Mr. Emanuel Neumann
American Emergency Committee for Zionist Affairs
41 East 42nd Street
New York, N.Y.

My dear Mr. Neumann:

Referring to our two conversations I wish to advise you that I have recently obtained some information in answer to my two telegrams about the S.S. Struma, carrying 769 Roumanian Jewish refugees.

I understand that the S.S. Struma flying the Panamanian flag had arrived in Istanbul on December 15th, 1941 from Constanza bound for Palestine. It has stopped its journey purported to be due to certain engine trouble, which seemed to have given the impression that it had not been developed with an outside agency. The fact that no attempt has been made to proceed with repairs was not without indicating a reluctance on the part of the ship and its passengers to leave the port of Istanbul.

The Turkish Authorities have sent their own engineers to effect the required repairs and thus the steamer was made seaworthy.

During the stoppage of the ship in Istanbul no humanitarian assistance has been withheld. Furthermore, repeated actions have been taken with the diplomatic representatives of the countries which were deemed as most receptive to the idea of giving them admittance to their territories. Also necessary steps were taken to ensure their readmission into the country they have left. No result has been obtained from these demarches.

The Captain and the crew having Bulgarian nationality, were on the other hand willing to proceed on their voyage, after due notification having been given to the representatives of the Governments which were supposed to be interested in the matter, the S.S. Struma was asked to leave for the Black Sea on February 3rd. On the following day upon the news of the sinking of the ship after an explosion, about five to ten miles off the Cape Ica, life boats were sent to the spot of the sinking. Until now the rescue organizations have been unable to discover on the wreckage four corpses and an unconscious person whom they have brought to shore. When the person was revived he was identified to be a Roumanian Jew bearing the name of David who informed the authorities that the ship was torpedoed by a submarine. The search for other survivors is still continuing.

With my sincere regrets for the attack which caused the sinking of the S.S. Struma,

Yours truly,

(Signed)

Turkish Ambassador

Editorial in Washington Post -
March 4, 1942.

"STRUMA" TRAGEDY

The recent shakeup in the British Government may have resulted in a badly needed expulsion of certain cabinet members whose competence was very much open to question in Britain. But in some instances the shakeup appears to have been distinctly limited to the top men. The bureaucratic sub-stratum remains untouched, and some of the members are continuing to function with the same complete lack of understanding of what the war is all about. Take, for example, the case of the Colonial Office whose chief, Lord Moyne, was recently replaced by Viscount Cranborne. Soon after that happened there occurred the tragic case of the "Struma" to prove that, as the French proverb has it, the more things change the more they are the same.

The "Struma" was a leaky and unseaworthy ship of 200-tons crowded with 750 Jewish refugees from Nazi-occupied Rumania. It was on its way to Palestine, where the Jewish population was prepared to give the long-suffering passengers a hearty welcome. When it reached Istanbul the Turkish Government refused to allow it to proceed through the Dardanelles because the refugees did not have the necessary certificates of entry into Palestine. Those certificates had been withheld by the Palestine Administration. Accordingly, despite the protests of the "Struma's" captain that the ship was absolutely in no position to put to sea, it was towed out of port by a Turkish tug. Five miles off the Turkish coast it went to pieces, and all but five of its passengers were drowned.

In fighting a war for liberation the United Nations are seeking to end the barbarism which Hitler and the Japanese stand for. But some of the brass hats of Whitehall and their agents in the Near East do not appear to recognize that fact, nor show any disposition to act on it. This entirely discreditable episode suggests that the shakeup in the British Government has by no means gone far enough.

C O P Y

March 5, 1942.

Judge Levinthal

Dear Judge Levinthal:

I hope it will not be long before I get a reply to my telegram about Athlit and fully share your sense of horror at the disaster which happened to the Struma.

I could only wish that the statements put out by the Emergency Committee for Zionist Affairs and others had not made the mistake of saying that "the powers fighting for justice and freedom" are "responsible". It was, after all, the Nazis who drove the unhappy victims from their homes and it was apparently a mine - not British - that sank the ship. I

I mention these things in this letter because my recent speech showed I think it is of the utmost importance that we keep our thoughts and emotions in perspective. It is the Nazis who have ~~been~~ created this problem for us and bad blood between the British Government and the Jews, especially in America, is what they most hope to achieve thereby.

Yours sincerely,

Lord Halifax

C A B L E

JERUSALEM - JUNE 13, 1942

HENRY MONTOR
41 EAST 42ND
NEWYORK

REFERENCE MAGNES CABLE TO WARBURG 1/6 POSITION POLISH JEWISH REFUGEES
TURKESTAN APPALLING TENS THOUSANDS DYING MOST URGENT DESPATCH AMERICAN
DELEGATION RUSSIAN TURKESTAN AND TEHRAN ALSO INTERVENE WITH POLISH
AUTHORITIES USA STOP PLEASE SUPPORT MAGNES SUGGESTION UTILISE DOBKIN
STOP VIEW ENSURING EFFECTIVE AID JEWISH REFUGEES ESSENTIAL JOINT
TRANSMIT LARGE SUMS THROUGH US DISTRIBUTABLE BY OUR REPRESENTATIVE
FURTHERMORE ESSENTIAL INTERVENE SOVIET AUTHORITIES REGARDING DESPATCH
PARCELS FROM PALESTINE NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES AND EXEMPTION FROM
CUSTOMS DUTIES AS PROMISED BY LITVINOFF REGARDING STATES ACCORDING
TARTAKOVERS LETTER 20/4 STOP PLEASE TRANSMIT SILVER AND FRIENDS
CABLE ACTION REGARDS

ELIEZER KAPLAN



1942 — 60th Anniversary of Jewish Colonization in Palestine

UNITED PALESTINE APPEAL

PALESTINE FOUNDATION FUND (KEREN HAYESOD)
JEWISH NATIONAL FUND (KEREN KAYEMETH)
For the Defense and Upbuilding of the Jewish National Home in Palestine

41 EAST 42nd STREET

NEW YORK CITY

Telephone: MUrray Hill 2-3320

Cable Address—Palfund

June 15, 1942

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AIRMAIL

Dr. Abba Hillel Silver
The Temple
Cleveland, Ohio

Dear Dr. Silver:

Attached hereto is a copy of a cable that has just come from Eliezer Kaplan, Treasurer of the Jewish Agency, asking your action visa vis the JDC which is called upon to make funds available for Polish refugees in Turkestan.

With your permission I am making a copy of this cable available to the Emergency Committee which presumably would be in touch with the problem.

Cordially yours,

Henry Montor
Henry Montor
Executive Director

HM:FE
Enc.

"We in the United States must help strengthen Palestine"

—HON. FRANK KNOX, Secretary of the Navy

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Judge Jacob J. Kaplan, <i>Boston</i>	

C O P Y

Sir Ronald I. Campbell, K.C.M.G., C.B.
HBM Minister
British Embassy
Washington, D. C.

October 23, 1942

Dear Sir Ronald:

Thank you for your letter of October 6th with reference to the refugees in Mauritius, also for the enclosed report on this subject received by Lord Halifax last year. We are grateful to you for informing London that the matter has again been taken up with the Embassy.

Permit me to add a few words with reference to your remark that the persons in this camp made a deliberate effort to circumvent the laws of Palestine and to frustrate the immigration policy laid down by the British Government with full knowledge of the consequences which their illegal action would entail if it were discovered. I know that this statement in justification of the deportation and internment in Mauritius of the refugees was not intended to show any lack of consideration for what they have gone through. But I wonder if you can imagine how it sounds to us, when we read items in the press concerning the communities from which many of these refugees came, such as the following:

" It is estimated that at least 400,000 Jews have been expelled by the Roumanian authorities from various sections of Roumania into Transnistria. Information smuggled out previously from Transnistria indicated that more than 200,000 Jews there have been massacred or died of starvation. Messages have just been received in Palestine from the International Red Cross from relatives of some of the deportees reading, 'Starving, appealing with last strength for help'."

Are these people, who had already experienced the worst pogroms, to be blamed for escaping in any way they could? And where else could they fly, if not to that country which Britain, in common with the other nations of the world, had recognized as their national home? You say that they broke the law, but I cannot believe that this cold remark really reflects your feeling in the matter or the conscience of the British people, nor is it consonant with that noble impulse to help the down-trodden and oppressed which ultimately was the motive of Britain's guarantee of a national home to the Jewish people.

Even if punishment there must be, indefinite incarceration on a tropical island, man separated from wife, father from children, seems a little excessive. I do not know if you are aware that the first months of their stay in Mauritius some fifty of these refugees died. As I indicated in my previous note, we are glad to know and warmly appreciate the efforts of the local authorities to ameliorate the situation of these refugees, but that is hardly an answer.

As for the statement that the British taxpayer is bearing a considerable charge on their behalf, I can only repeat that these refugees are to the last man keenly anxious to do everything in their power for the allied war effort, whether as soldiers or in the factories and fields of Palestine. It is deeply distressing that as a result of the policy of His Majesty's Government in this matter, not merely is the hard-pressed British taxpayer called on to foot an unnecessary bill, but the United Nations is at the same time deprived of available help.

Yours sincerely,

Stephen S. Wise

C O P Y

JEWISH AGENCY EXECUTIVE
77 GREAT RUSSELL STREET
LONDON

JERUSALEM 12/10/42.

APPLIED SCHEDULE 5000 STATING THIS UNREPRESENTS TOTAL ABSORPTIVE
CAPACITY BUT ONLY FRACTION STOP IN PRESENT EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES
WE ABSTAINED FROM DETAILED INVESTIGATION EMPLOYMENT PROSPECTS AS
NEED FOR TENS THOUSANDS ADDITIONAL WORKERS PATENT AND LIMITING FACTOR
IS NOT ABSORPTIVE CAPACITY BUT AVAILABILITY IMMIGRANTS AND TRANSPORT
STOP INDICATED PROSPECTS FURTHER EVACUATION FROM RUSSIA AND POSSI -
BILITIES IMMIGRATION FROM ORIENTAL COUNTRIES POSSIBLY ALSO UNOCCUPIED
FRANCE STOP PROPOSED SEPARATELY ALLOCATIONS OTHER CATEGORIES FOR
HALFYEARLY QUOTA



JEWISH DETAINMENT CAMP - BEAU BASSIN

The Camp is situated in one of the most pleasant and healthy districts of the Island and is surrounded by some sixty acres of gardens and parkland. The 1580 detainees are housed in stone buildings and small wooden huts. It has been possible to arrange separate cubicles in the stone buildings for the use of almost half of the total number of detainees; most of the remainder have been accommodated in huts which have been partitioned to enable groups of three or more to live together. Children are, of course, kept with their mothers.

Detainees are allowed to receive and despatch mail without restriction other than that imposed by censorship.

In order to give the detainees as much autonomy as is consistent with good administration, a Detainment Area Committee has been formed to deal with all matters concerning the social, cultural and religious life of the Community. The members of this Committee are elected by the detainees. For this purpose the Camp is divided into four national groups based on their country of origin, i.e., Austria, Danzig, Czechoslovakia, the fourth group consisting of detainees from all other countries. Each of these national groups is further subdivided into units of twenty five who elect their own group leaders; from these group leaders are elected the national leaders (1 man and 1 woman) who represent their national group on the Detainment Area Committee.

One of the many functions of this Committee has been the management of a "Camp Fund" which has been set up to provide comforts for destitute detainees. This fund is maintained partly by voluntary contributions from those detainees who have received money from abroad and partly by donations received from charitable organisations outside the Camp.

The Detainment Area Committee has proved of great assistance to the Camp administration by acting as "agent de liaison" between the detainees and the Camp authorities.

Everything possible is being done to keep the members of the Camp fully occupied. All work connected with the maintenance of the Camp is done by them. Workshops for the manufacture of clothing, boots and shoes, furniture, kitchen utensils, etc., have been established within the precincts of the Camp. There has been no lack of recruits for this kind of work and many unskilled detainees are receiving training in various trades under the supervision of skilled craftsmen. Many detainees are also employed in the growing of vegetables in the Camp gardens.

Detainee doctors, dentists and nurses play a prominent part of ministering to the sick at the Camp Hospital ably assisted by members of the local V.A.D. This body consists of young women resident in the Colony, who spend long hours of duty at the hospital. Through the cooperation of the local Medical authorities many men and women detainees are undergoing a course of training in Nursing.

Elementary and Secondary schools have been equipped for the education of the children, attendance of children from 6 to 16 years of age being compulsory. In addition to tuition in Classics, Science and other subjects, the older children are given two hours' practical training each day in the Camp workshops.

Evening classes for adult detainees in English, Hebrew, Mathematics, Book-keeping, Shorthand, Physics, Chemistry, Hygiene, First Aid, Agricultural Science and gardening are also held. These classes are attended by about 700 scholars of both sexes. Lectures are gratuitously given by prominent members of the Island's British ---Community as well as by Detainee teachers.

The Camp possesses a Library well stocked with English and French books received from charitable institutions. Books in German and Hebrew languages are not available locally and consequently would be greatly appreciated.

A Daily Camp Newspaper is published through which the detainees are kept acquainted with events outside the Colony. The detainees' goods may be purchased. The profits accruing from the sale of these goods revert to the Camp Fund.

Every facility is provided for orthodox Jews to carry out their religious observances. Special provision has been made for the cooking of food for the orthodox group and cases of Mazoth bread for the feast of the Passover were kindly sent by the Jewish community in South Africa.

In the sphere of recreation, no effort has been spared. Musical instruments were either purchased or obtained through charitable institutions and orchestras and jazz bands organized. On four days a week concerts and band performances are arranged. A recreation room has been constructed, in which many good plays and reviews have been produced.

Facilities for sports have been provided and the football field, volley ball and deck tennis courts are very popular, particularly with younger members of the community. A swimming pool for the children has been fitted up and parties of adults and children are taken to the seaside daily.