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BRITAIN VERSUS ROUMANIA AND THE SOVIET MILITARY
AUTHORITIES, 1945-1947

At the end of the Second World War, the British were most concerned that Palestine might be inundated with many thousands of Jews, with the concomitant effect that this would have on Britain's status in Palestine and in the Middle East. In the eyes of the Arabs, the Jewish immigration formed the crux of the problem in Palestine. Britain mounted an intensive campaign at preventing the renewal of illegal sailings from Roumania, which was regarded as the principal source of danger. From 1939 on, Roumania had been the central base of illegal sailings to Palestine¹. The Roumanian authorities were interested, for economic, political and social reasons, in ridding themselves of some of the 400,000 Jews living there at the end of the war. This aim was paralleled by the desire of some of the Jews to migrate and the interests of the Zionists, who organized the sailings. The worsening in relations between Britain and the Soviet Bloc states and the massive presence of the Red Army in Roumania forced Britain to operate within a very awkward international setting. This paper will trace the British campaign to prevent illegal sailings from Roumania against the background of the increasing severity of the Cold War.

Within the percentage deal which Churchill made with Stalin in Moscow in October 1944 on British and Soviet spheres of influence in south-east Europe, it was determined that the Soviet Union would enjoy 90 percent of the influence in Roumania. On 6 March 1945, on the instructions of the Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister, Andrei Vishinsky, a new coalition government was formed which was headed by Petru Groza and which was controlled by the Communists. The Americans and the British refused to recognize this new government, claiming that it was insufficiently representative. The refusal of the Western allies to recognize the governments of Roumania and Bulgaria

1. Ronald W. Zweig, *Britain and Palestine during the Second World War* (London, 1986), pp. 50-2, 124-5, 133-4, 138-42; Bernard Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews of Europe 1939-1945* (Oxford, 1979), pp. 143-62, 179-81, 339-41.

was among the factors which brought about the failure of the first Foreign Minister's Council, which had met in London in September 1945 and which was supposed to prepare the peace agreements with the former enemy states: Italy, Roumania, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Finland. The Americans and the British conditioned their recognition of the Roumanian and Bulgarian governments on the co-option of representatives from the non-Communist opposition parties to the government; on the Communists' providing free access to the world press, and on a promise to hold free and general elections. In the second session of the Foreign Ministers' Council, held in Moscow in December 1945, the Soviets changed their stance. The co-option of two ministers from the opposition parties to the government paved the way for the recognition of Groza's government by the Western Allies in February 1946².

The British fears that had been aroused in the winter of 1944-45, after the Russian subjugation of Roumania, about the renewal of illegal sailings from that country decreased after it became clear that, at least in the short term, the Soviets were opposed to the exodus of the Jews³. Indeed, a year passed from the end of the war until *Smyrna*, the first illegal immigrant ship from Roumania, arrived at the coast of Palestine. The opposition of the Soviets and Roumanians to the illegal sailings from Roumania until March 1946 was most likely influenced by their efforts to achieve British and American recognition for Groza's government. The British made it very clear that they attached considerable importance to the prevention of a renewal of these illegal sailings. Their recognition of the Groza government in February 1946 apparently led the Soviets and Roumanians to remove their opposition to the sailing of the ship they had confiscated in September 1944.

The voyage of the *Smyrna* did not surprise the British. On 4 April 1946, Adrian Holman, the British Political Representative in Roumania, reported to the Foreign Office in London that a Greek ship was due to sail from Constanza within 48 hours, and that it was intended to load 1,500 illegal im-

2. Alan Bullock, *Ernest Bevin Foreign Secretary 1945-1951* (New York, London, 1983), pp. 17-20, 133-5, 211-2, 345-6; Victor Rothwell, *Britain and the Cold War 1941-1947* (London, 1982), pp. 374-82; Geir Lundestad, *The American Non-Policy Towards Eastern Europe 1943-1947* (New York, 1975), pp. 225-56; Paul D. Quinlan, *Clash over Romania, British and American Policies toward Romania: 1938-1947* (Los Angeles, 1977), pp. 133-8, 152-4; Stephen Fischer-Galati, "The Communist Takeover of Rumania: A Function of Soviet Power", in *The Anatomy of Communist Takeovers*, ed. Thomas T. Hammond (New Haven, London, 1975), pp. 310-20.

3. Office of the British Political Representative, Bucharest, to Anthony Eden, 16 June 1945, Public Record Office, Kew, United Kingdom [PRO] Foreign Office Records [FO] 371/51095, WR 1989; Le Rougtel to Ernest Bevin, 2 August 1945, FO 770/85.

migrants. Two additional ships, it was noted, would also load within a short time, a total of some 2,500 illegal immigrants and transport them to Palestine. The British military mission in Roumania was requested to activate the Allied Control Commission, which consisted of Russian, British and American representatives, in order to prevent the sailing⁴. The representatives of the Soviet Army made it clear to the British military mission that without exit visas, which had to be approved by the Allied Control Commission and the Roumanian authorities, nobody would be permitted to sail⁵. Several days later, the *Smyrna* sailed with 1,666 illegal immigrants. The Soviets, in reaction to the protest lodged by the British military mission, claimed that all passengers had Mexican visas, and thus it was impossible to prevent their sailing⁶.

The British puzzled over the motives that caused the Soviets to permit the ship to sail, given Soviet plans for the Middle East. General Sir Alan Cunningham, the British High Commissioner in Palestine, attempted to explain the Soviet move thus:

Possibly this was an example of a tactical mistake in this new field which is attributable to Soviet ignorance of the Arab world ... alternatively the opportunity of causing embarrassment to Great Britain may have proved too tempting to resist⁷.

The British representation in Roumania was of the opinion that the Jewish Agency was making every effort to develop the sailings from Constanza with the active help of the Russians⁸. A. C. Kendall, Head of the British Consular Section in Roumania, claimed that the considerations that led the Russian and the Roumanian authorities to permit the emigration of Jews were political, not economic or humanitarian. The aim was to increase British difficulties in Palestine⁹. It appears that this, indeed, was the Russian aim. The establishment of the Anglo-American Committee of Enquiry regarding the problems of European Jewry and Palestine on 13 November 1945 was interpreted by the Russians as an attempt by the two Western powers to

4. Holman to FO, no. 422, 4 April 1946, PRO, Admiralty Records [ADM] 116/5561; FO to Bucharest, no. 317, 5 April 1946, ADM 116/5561.

5. Holman to FO, no. 500, 13 April 1946, FO 371/52515, E3375.

6. Holman to FO, no. 576, 4 May 1946, ADM 116/5561.

7. Cunningham to George Hall, the Colonial Secretary, 30 May 1946, FO 181/1019; Yaacov Ro'i, *Soviet Decision Making in Practice, The USSR and Israel 1945-1954* (New Brunswick, London, 1980), pp. 15-64.

8. Holman to FO, no. 489, 8 May 1946, FO 371/52522, E4266.

9. Memorandum by Kendall, 18 July 1946, FO 371/59178, R11692.

prevent them from taking part in the shaping of policy for the region, and so forced Moscow to seek alternative ways of influencing events in Palestine¹⁰. The Zionist efforts to bring as many Jews as possible to Palestine and the British opposition to this hinted at the concealed potential for increased levels of emigration to Palestine.

The failure of the British military delegation in Roumania to move the Russian military authorities into preventing the sailing of the *Smyrna* and reports of Jews being sent from all parts of Europe to Constanza and other ports in southern Europe made the Chiefs on Staff conclude that it was insufficient to rely only on local level contacts; that it was necessary to direct requests to the authorities in Moscow and ask them to prevent the illegal sailings from Roumanian ports¹¹. The British Foreign Office had few illusions as to the success of such a request. At the same time, the Foreign Office was of the opinion that because of the sensitivity of the Arabs to Jewish illegal immigration, a simple request to the Russians in itself would strengthen Britain's standing among the Arab states. It was emphasized to Sir Maurice Peterson, the British ambassador in Moscow, that in the opinion of the British diplomats in Roumania, 'the Russians are not only conniving at, but are actively assisting in this traffic'¹². Peterson estimated that the Russian authorities would refuse to respond to the request or to interfere with what was taking place in Roumania and would direct him to the Roumanian authorities. This Soviet policy was designed to create the impression that the Roumanian authorities were sovereign. Peterson recommended that, in the first instance, approaches should be made to the Roumanian authorities and only later should the Russians be requested to exert their influence over the Roumanian government¹³.

The Allied Control Commission in Roumania was, for Britain, the main theatre of the struggle against the illegal sailings. In London, there was no doubt that the Russians, with the aid of the local Communists, were dictating Roumanian government policy. At a meeting of the Allied Control Commis-

10. Ro'i, *Soviet Decision Making in Practice*, pp. 22-5; About the Anglo-American Committee see Amikam Nachmani, *Great Power Discord in Palestine: The Anglo-American Committee for Palestine* (London, 1987); Wm. Roger Louis, *The British Empire in the Middle East 1945-1951* (Oxford, 1984), pp. 397-419.

11. Chiefs of Staff Committee, Note by the War Office, Annex II, C.O.S. (46) 148 (0), 23 May 1946, FO 371/52526, E4514.

12. FO to Moscow, no. 1831, 9 June 1946, ADM 116/5561.

13. Peterson to FO, no. 2064, 12 June 1946, FO 371/52528, E5403.

sion in Roumania on 20 June 1946, the British representative, Air Vice-Marshal Donald Stevenson asked the Soviet representative, Colonel-General Susiakov, to prevent the sailing of the *Agia Anastasia* transports which was expected to take part in the illegal movement. Susiakov claimed that he had no authority to prevent the sailing of ships from Roumania and that his function extended only to the provision of permits to those people whose exit the Roumanian government had requested. Colonel-General Susiakov rejected Stevenson's claims regarding the *Smyrna*; he emphasized that the destination of the ships were of no interest and, from his point of view, 'they might go to the bottom of the sea'. In the case of the *Smyrna*, he had been told that the people were sailing for Mexico. He was not guilty if, in mid-voyage, the ship changed its destination and sailed for Palestine. Susiakov made it clear to Stevenson that all the issues connected with the sailing of Jews should be directed to the Roumanian Foreign Ministry through the political representation¹⁴.

Adrian Holman, the British Minister, objected strongly to Susiakov's recommendation. As he emphasized to the Foreign Office in London:

Ultimate control of all movements in and out of Roumania still rests with Allied Control Commission and therefore proposed approach to the Roumanian Government would not only be ineffective but also serve generally to acknowledge a right which we do not in effect admit and which that Government has so far not attempted to claim in principle¹⁵.

According to Holman, the captain and crew of the *Smyrna* knew that the passengers were illegal immigrants en route to Palestine. Moreover, the captain had passed his destination on to the Russian port authorities. In these circumstances, he recommended, a request should be made for the intervention of the Russian government with the Roumanian government to prevent the sailing of Jews from Roumanian ports¹⁶. At the same time (Spring 1946), the authorities in London preferred not to make representations to Moscow because of the considerable tension that existed between the two countries. The confrontation between the West and the Soviets over the Iran crisis (March-May 1946), at the end of which Stalin was forced to withdraw his

14. Minutes of 27th Meeting of Allied Control Commission, Roumania, 20 June 1946, War Office Records [WO] 178/71.

15. Holman to FO, no. 820, 2 July 1946, FO 371/52534, E6170.

16. Holman to FO, no. 794, 24 June 1946, FO 371/52531, E5839.

troops from that Mid-east state and the month-long break in the discussions of the Council of Foreign Ministers in Paris (26 April 1946 - 17 May 1946) because of the difficulties involved in bridging their differences left little chance for the success of such a request¹⁷.

A surprising change in the stand of the Soviets occurred in the middle of July. Colonel Borisov, the Head of the Soviet Administrative Section of the Allied Control Commission, promised that requests for exit permits for groups of Jews would in the future be put to the British Consulate for comment, and that the validity of 400 exit permits given to Jews who had intended to sail on the *Smyrna*, and who had not sailed, would not be extended. Adrian Holman emphasized to the Foreign Office that 'this is a distinct advance on anything promised by Soviet authorities so far and, if adhered to, will put an end to this traffic'. The delay in the sailing of the *Agia Anastasia* encouraged Adrian Holman's opinion that the Soviets would indeed keep their promise¹⁸. But it quickly became clear that such optimism was exaggerated. Towards the end of July 1946, Borisov informed A. C. Kendall that he had issued 440 exit visas to Jews who were supposed to sail to Costa Rica on the *Agia Anastasia*. Kendall objected forcefully to what he called 'Soviet collusion with the enemy country in illegal measures directed against her ally Great Britain'. Kendall argued that until the approval of the Costa Rican government arrived, the exit visas were without value. Moreover, he had proof that the Jews intended to sail to Palestine. Kendall accused Borisov of aiding and abetting the illegal movement. Borisov rejected the charges and returned to the old Soviet stand, according to which the validity of the transit visas or visas for the destinations were of no interest to him. In light of Borisov's stance, Holman requested the British military delegation to act within the framework of the Control Commission¹⁹. He himself lodged a protest with the Roumanian Ministry for Foreign Affairs and demanded that it verify that all requests to leave Roumania actually pass through the ministry, as the civil servants in the Ministry of the Interior (which was controlled by the Communists) were turning a blind eye to the invalidity of the visas²⁰.

The pressures on the Soviet representatives in Roumania and the evidence

17. Bullock, *Ernest Bevin*, pp. 236-7, 259-71; Louis, *The British Empire*, pp. 54-73; Fraser J. Harbut, *The Iron Curtain* (New York, Oxford, 1986), pp. 268-73.

18. Holman to FO, no. 854, 12 July 1946, FO 371/52538, E6563; Holman to FO, no. 901, 25 July 1946, FO 371/52544, E7150.

19. Holman to FO, no. 904, 26 July 1946, FO 371/52544, E7162.

20. Aide Memoire to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bucharest, FO 371/52549, E7515; Holman to FO, no. 913, 27 July 1946, FO 371/52544, E7163.

that the British presented on the false Costa Rican visas²¹ led the Soviets to promise to delay the sailing for a short while²². London was not satisfied with this non-binding promise. Maurice Peterson, the British Ambassador in Moscow, reported to the Soviet Foreign Ministry on the operations of the organizers of the illegal immigration and on the use of forged visas. He told of the official protest presented to the Secretary-General of the Roumanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who admitted that the exit of Jews was being carried out without Ministry permission. Peterson likewise reported on Borisov's objection to taking steps to prevent the sailing of the *Agia Anastasia*. The Soviet government was requested to instruct its representatives in Roumania to prevent those Jews whose documents were not in order, and whose intentions were therefore to break Palestinian laws, from leaving Roumania²³. We can assume that London's decision to approach Moscow was influenced by the progress made at the second session of the Council of Foreign Ministers in Paris (15 June 1946 - 12 July 1946) in connection with the draft peace treaties with the former enemy states. This progress permitted the gathering of the plenary session of the peace convention in Paris on 29 July.

The British representation in Roumania attempted to take advantage of the existing hostility and tension between the Communist and non-Communist ministers in the Roumanian government in order to force the latter to increase their efforts to prevent the illegal sailings. In his talks with Gheorghe Tatarescu, the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, who was an anti-Communist, Holman noted that he was not accusing the Roumanian Foreign Ministry with deceiving Britain. At the same time, he was convinced that certain government officials in the Ministry of the Interior and the Presidency of the Council were cooperating with the Jews, possibly with Soviet agreement. Holman warned Tatarescu that in the event that the *Agia Anastasia* sailed, 'he must not be surprised if he had rather a frigid reception in Paris'. Tatarescu promised to do all that he could to prevent the illegal emigration of Jews²⁴.

Holman's accusations concerning the cooperation of certain bodies in

21. San Jose to FO, no. 55, 28 July 1946, FO 371/52545, E6527. Holman to Brabetianu, Secretary-General of the Roumanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, FO 371/52549, E7554.

22. Notes on a Meeting between Brigadier Greer and Colonel Molohovski, 30 July 1946, WO 178/71; Holman to FO, no. 925, 31 July 1946, FO 371/52548, E7423.

23. Peterson to V. G. Dekanozov, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Moscow, 31 July 1946, FO 371/52549, E7555; Peterson to FO, no. 2668, 14 August 1946, FO 371/52628, E8043.

24. Holman to FO, no. 956, 8 August 1946, FO 371/52627, E7754.

the Administration with the Jews were based on a wide-ranging investigation carried out by Kendall early in August. In his report, Kendall pointed to several senior personalities, headed by Emil Bodnaras, Secretary-General of the Presidency of the Council and Head of the Secret Political Police, who were responsible for providing aid to the Zionists. Bodnaras, who enjoyed Russian support, set out the policy for the Ministry of the Interior, which handled the illegal traffic without reference to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which was the sole competent passport and visa-issuing authority. The Soviet-Zionist connection operated through him. Kendall attributed the delay in the sailing of the *Agia Anastasia* to the protests lodged with the Roumanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which, he felt, was hearing for the first time about what was taking place²⁵. Holman was not satisfied with his contacts with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and in the latter half of August he urged Petru Groza, the Prime Minister, to act to prevent the sailing of the *Agia Anastasia*. In this conversation with the Prime Minister, Holman said 'that he could probably obtain any further details about Roumania and Hungary [involvement] in this illegal traffic from the Ministry of the Interior and Colonel Bodnaras'²⁶.

It appears that the British threat, by which Roumania might be damaged in the peace talks because of its policy on illegal immigration, had achieved its aim. In a conversation with Hector McNeil, Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, during the Paris peace talks, the Roumanian Foreign Minister said that before leaving for Paris, he had requested the Minister of the Interior to prevent those people already on the *Agia Anastasia* from sailing. Tatarescu further indicated that even if the documents of those wishing to travel were in order, the government would try to prevent the sailing. About a week later, the Roumanians announced that it had become apparent that the Costa Rican visas held by the immigrants on the *Agia Anastasia* were invalid, but that the passengers had received visas for Ethiopia. It was emphasized that the government had prohibited the ship's sailing even though the visas looked valid²⁷.

The British were not satisfied with the Roumanian promises and trans-

25. Holman to Bevin, no. 184, 8 August 1946, FO 371/52629, E8089; Cabinet Meeting, C.M. 77 (46), PRO Cabinet Records [CAB] 128/6.

26. Holman to FO, no. 985, 15 August 1946, FO 371/52629, E8078.

27. Paris to FO, no. 570, 22 August 1946, FO 371/52630, E8381; Paris to FO, no. 596, 28 August 1946, FO 371/52630, E8381; FO to Adis Ababa, no. 259, 29 August 1946, FO 371/52630, E8533.

ferred their requests to Moscow. The Soviets were in no hurry to show the same measure of good will as the Roumanians even though they adopted the same policy in the end. We can assume that the Roumanian stance had been coordinated with Moscow and that the Russians acted as they did for tactical reasons. Five weeks passed between Peterson's request to the Soviets and their response²⁸. V. G. Dekanozov of the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs claimed that the Soviet government saw no justification in preventing the sailing of the *Agia Anastasia*, provided that the entry visas for Costa Rica had been extended by the competent authorities. Frank Roberts, Minister of the British embassy in Moscow, explained to his Foreign Office that until then, the Soviets had not received an official announcement from the Costa Rican government that the visas had been forged²⁹.

London did not accept the Soviet stand, and Roberts stressed to V. Trunkhanovski, Acting Head of the Second European Department, that

in matters of this kind where unscrupulous and interested parties were clearly out to twist the regulations to their advantage and to deceive the British and Soviet authorities we had expected that the Soviet Government, in view of their professed concern for the interests of the Middle Eastern Peoples would have adopted a co-operative instead of legalistic attitude³⁰.

Roberts' attack, by his own words, brought better results than he had expected. Trunkhanovski promised to prevent the exit of the migrants until the validity of the Costa Rican visas was established and the validity of the ship's registration examined. Towards the end of October, the Soviets were forced to announce that the visas held by the 434 Jews who were to have sailed on the *Agia Anastasia* had indeed been forged and, as a result, they were being prevented from sailing³¹.

There is no doubt that the Soviet decision to prevent the illegal immigrants of the *Agia Anastasia* from sailing was in no way influenced by the fact that the visas had been forged. It is almost certain that the decision was influenced by the discussions at the Paris peace talks (29 July - 15 October 1946) and subsequent discussions at the Council of Foreign Ministers, which met

28. Roberts to Dekanozov, 31 August 1946, FO 371/52632, E9006.

29. Roberts to FO, no. 2911, 6 September 1946, FO 371/52632, E8923.

30. Roberts to FO, no. 2927, 7 September 1946, FO 371/52632, E8923.

31. Trunkhanovski to Roger Allen, British First Secretary at the embassy in Moscow, 25 October 1946, FO 371/52636, E11047.

in New York between 4 November and 12 December 1946. The Soviets and Roumanians, who were dependent on London's agreement on the peace treaties, preferred to avoid creating additional modes of conflict until the signing of the agreements, since the Russians were to be the main beneficiaries of the treaties. The Allied Control Commission in Roumania would be disbanded and the Soviets permitted to keep their army in the country to maintain lines of communication with their troops in Austria³².

The intensive British representations over the *Agia Anastasia* and their increased punitive measures against illegal immigrants caught off the coast of Palestine—expulsion to Cyprus instead of incarceration in Palestine—left no doubt as to the importance that the British placed on this issue. Both the Roumanians, who were interested in being rid of some of the Jews in their country, and the Soviets, who were looking for ways of creating problems for Britain in Palestine, were able to achieve their aims by shipping the Jews from another Communist state—Yugoslavia. And, indeed, early in November 1946, the *Lochita* sailed from Split, followed by the *Agia Anastasia*, which was to transfer its 400 passengers to *Lochita* near the coast of Palestine. Engine trouble caused the *Agia Anastasia* to sink a short time after sailing, but all its passengers were safely transferred to the *Lochita*. The *Lochita*, with approximately 4,000 Roumanian Jews aboard, was stopped by the British off the Palestinian coast on 26 November.

In the summer of 1947, the British were forced to renew their contacts with the Roumanians and the Russians over the illegal sailings from Roumania. The circumstances this time were much less favorable to the British. In elections held in Roumania on 19 November 1946, the government bloc 'won', with approximately 90 percent of the votes. Some three months later, the peace agreements were signed with the former enemy states, including Roumania. The process of Communist domination over Roumania was strengthened. The leaders of the non-Communist parties, among them Iuliu Maniu, the leader of the National Peasant Party, were dismissed from the government and arrested. Protests by Britain and America against the persecution of the leaders of the non-Communist parties and breaches of civil rights were rejected by the Roumanian authorities, who complained about interference in their internal affairs. The tension between the Soviet Union and Britain worsened in the second half of 1947. Three events fueled this tension: the Truman Doctrine issued in March, the failure of the Moscow Con-

32. Sir John Wheeler-Bennet and Anthony Nicholls, *The Semblance of Peace* (London, Basingstoke, 1972), pp. 437-8.

ference of Foreign Ministers (March-April), and the breakdown of the talks held in June between the foreign ministers of Britain, France, and the Soviet Union on George Marshall's proposal of a long-term economic aid program for Europe³³.

In mid-August 1947, the British representatives in Roumania and Bulgaria were requested to approach the governments of these two countries about the case of a suspicious ship, *Paducah*, which was about to embark illegal Jewish migrants in one of the two. Should the migrants be in possession of Uruguayan visas, it was noted, it could be assumed that the documents were forged; in any case, this ship was in no condition to carry passengers all the way to South America³⁴. After several quiet months, Adrian Holman was forced to return and make clear to the Roumanian government the importance Britain attached to preventing illegal sailings. He emphasized to the Foreign Office in London that a decision on the question of migration lay with the Soviets and, as a result, their support was absolutely necessary³⁵. And so, on 25 August, Brigadier E. R. Greer, Acting Commissioner, approached his Soviet counterpart on the Allied Control Commission, Colonel-General Susiakov, and on the following day Roberts, the British Minister in Moscow, saw the Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister, Vyshinsky³⁶. An article in the Roumanian paper *Timpul*, according to which 6,000 legal Jewish migrants were about to sail to Palestine on two Panamanian ships from Constanza, and reports from other sources about the large number of Jewish youngsters moving towards the Roumanian Black Sea coast forced Holman once again, however, to request the Roumanian Foreign Ministry to prevent the people from sailing³⁷.

One week later, on 26 September, two ships, carrying more than 4,000

33. Lundestad, *The American Non-Policy*, pp. 251-3; Bullock, *Ernest Bevin*, chap. 9; Rothwell, *Britain and the Cold War*, pp. 379-82; Peter Calvocoressi, *Survey of International Affairs 1947-1948* (London, New York, Toronto, 1952), pp. 193-6.

34. FO to Bucharest, no. 817, 18 August 1947, PRO, FO 371/61847, E7521, FO to Sofia, no. 1072, 18 August 1947, PRO, FO 371/61847, E7521; Note Verbale to the Roumanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, no. 99, 19 August 1947, PRO, FO 371/61847, E7778; Note Verbale to the Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, no. 159, 20 August 1947, PRO, FO 371/61850, E9832.

35. Holman to FO, no. 875, 22 August 1947, FO 371/61847, E7771.

36. Greer to Susiakov, 25 August 1947, FO 371/61848, E8379; Roberts to FO, no. 1907, 26 August 1947, FO 371/61824, E7929; Roberts to FO, no. 1920, 1926, 27 August 1947, FO 371/61824, E 7931.

37. Note Verbale to the Roumanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 17 September 1947, FO 371/61828, E8831; Holman to FO, no. 973, 17 September 1947, FO 371/61827, E8633.

illegal Roumanian immigrants, sailed from Burgas in Bulgaria; one of the vessels was the *Paducah*. On the same day, the Roumanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs informed the British in Bucharest that it was 'not aware of the presence in Roumanian territorial waters of a vessel named '*Paducah*' or any other vessel intending to embark illegal Jewish emigrants'. Likewise, it did not know of any illegal movement being organized in Roumania³⁸. There is no doubt, though, that without the agreement of the Roumanian authorities, the crossing of the border to Bulgaria by 4,000 Jews could not have materialized. This was a joint, coordinated action by the two states. Roumania provided the manpower while Bulgaria provided the port from which the ships sailed. In this way the Roumanians managed to shake off responsibility for the illegal sailings.

In London, there was some hesitation over whether the illegal immigrants should be returned to Roumania. Holman rejected their forced "repatriation" for these reasons:

Apart from complete unco-operative attitude of the Roumanian Government Sulina and Constanza, only seaports to which these transports could be sent are the main arteries of Russian lines of communication and there is no doubt the Soviet High Command would oppose both entry of military manned ship into these ports and would not permit forcible disembarkation by British or Roumanian troops of these immigrants. Serious incidents would accordingly be more than likely³⁹.

Meanwhile the British now had to contend with a new problem: two large illegal immigrant ships had arrived at Constanza—the *Pan Crescent* and *Pan York*; each was capable of carrying approximately 7,500 passengers. The Foreign Office in London had received reports of extensive carpentry work that was being carried out on the *Pan Crescent*, which was anchored in Constanza, and of the aid that the port authorities were extending to the ship. Holman lodged a sharp protest with the Roumanian authorities but was dubious about its effect⁴⁰. The British were informed by the Roumanian

38. Note Verbale to the British Legation, Bucharest, 26 September 1947, FO 371/61828, E 9333.

39. Holman to FO, no. 1055, 2 October 1947, FO 371/61829, E9149; Holman to FO, no. 1063, 3 October 1947, FO 371/61830, E9256.

40. Bucharest to FO, no. 1067, 3 October 1947, FO 371/61829, E9149; Holman to FO, no. 1072, 4 October 1947, ADM 1/20793; British Legation, Bucharest to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 17 October 1947, FO 371/61831, E10080.

Foreign Ministry that it was applying pressure on the Ministry of the Interior to prevent Jews from boarding the ships in Roumania⁴¹. At the beginning of November 1947, however, Kendall reported as follows:

The Roumanian Communist Party wants to get rid of the majority of the Jews now in Roumania. It considers them to be non-assimilable, inadaptatable, and incorrigible racketeers and individualists. If by assisting their departure they can also present the West with yet another problem and lay hands on the very important Jewish assets in Roumania, then they will encourage the migration by every means in their power⁴².

Nevertheless, Kendall also reported differences of opinion among members of the Central Committee of the Communist Party over the exit of Jews. Those who felt that Roumanian participation in this traffic would cause such a deterioration in Anglo-Roumanian relations that all hope of the resumption of trade between the two countries would be wrecked opposed those who demanded the active Roumanian support of this traffic as a demonstration of Roumania's indifference to British opinion. Kendall stressed that the repeated British protests had some temporary influence.

The *Pan York* and *Pan Cresscent* sailed, respectively, on 22 and 23 December 1947 without passengers for an unknown destination. J. E. Cable of the British Foreign Office argued that if Jews were to board in Bulgaria, as had been the case with the two ships that sailed at the end of September, then

we shall know that the changed attitude of the Roumanian Government is of purely local significance. If, on the other hand, they leave the Black Sea empty and are forced to try their luck in Italy or some other non-Communist country, we shall have to revise our ideas about the Communist policy towards Jewish illegal immigration⁴³.

It became clear very quickly that there had been no change in Communist

41. Holman to FO, no. 1137, 11 October 1947, FO 371/61850, E948.

42. Report by Kendall, 3 November 1947, FO 371/61831, E10584; Kendall to FO, 9 December 1947, FO 371/61833, E11968; Holman to FO, no. 1052, 1057, 12 December 1947, ADM 1/20793.

43. Memorandum by Cable 'Communist Policy Towards Jewish Illegal Immigration', 23 December 1947, FO 371/61855, E12403; Bucharest to FO, no. 1546, 22 December 1947, FO 371/61854, E121401; Bucharest to FO, no. 1555, 23 December 1947, FO 371/61855, E12225.

policy, that the ships had sailed for Bulgaria, and that simultaneously some 12,000 Jews were heading out of Roumania in eight trainloads towards Bulgarian ports. Amongst this group were some 2,000 who had been selected by the Soviet authorities⁴⁴. British attempts to move the Bulgarian authorities into preventing the sailing of the two ships came to nought, and on 27 December they sailed from Burgas with 15,236 illegal migrants, the vast majority of them Roumanian Jews⁴⁵.

Britain had nevertheless succeeded in preventing the sailing of illegal immigrant ships, with the exception of the *Smyrna*, from Roumanian ports, but it did not succeed in preventing many thousands of Roumanian Jews from sailing to Palestine. About 40 percent of the approximately 70,000 illegal immigrants who went to Palestine after the War were Roumanian Jews. Most sailed from Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. The Roumanian authorities, who on the one hand were interested in ridding themselves of some of the country's Jews while on the other hand were afraid of British countermeasures, took advantage of the new international conditions that had come into play after the war. During the peace treaty discussions, the base for the illegal sailings moved from Roumania to Yugoslavia, which was not a former enemy state and which thus could afford to ignore British pressure. After the signing of the peace treaties, the center of the sailings passed to Bulgaria, a former enemy state, which because of its lack of economic and other ties with Britain was not afraid of taking anti-British steps⁴⁶. The hostility towards Britain was mutual on the part of all three states. The Roumanians and Bulgarians, furthermore, received generous payments in much-needed hard currency from the Zionists, who organized the sailings, whereas the Yugoslavs did not demand any compensation. Their main aim in striking at Britain was revenge over the British stand concerning the Yugoslav-Italian border (in the Venezia Giulia region)⁴⁷.

The intensive Soviet involvement in Roumania, including its contacts with the British on the question of the illegal sailings from that country and Moscow's great influence on Bulgaria and its close ties with Yugoslavia (in

44. Bucharest to FO, no. 1559, 25 December 1947, FO 371/61855, E12245.

45. J. C. Sterndale Bennet, British Minister in Sofia to Vassil Kolarov, Vice President of the Council of Ministers and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Sofia, 24 December 1947, FO 371/68513, E88; Sterndale Bennet to Kolarov, 27 December 1947, FO 371/68513, E418; Sterndale Bennet to FO, no. 1602, 29 December 1947, ADM 1/20793.

46. Rothwell, *Britain and the Cold War*, pp. 382-8.

47. Bullock, *Ernest Bevin*, pp. 42-3, 129, 138, 307-8, 346; Wheeler-Bennet, *The Semblance of Peace*, pp. 446-50; Rothwell, *Britain and the Cold War*, pp. 388-95.

the second half of 1946) indicate that the illegal sailings had been carried out at least with the tacet consent, if not the explicit encouragement of the Russians. The Soviet Union was aiming at weakening Britain's standing in the Middle East in general and in Palestine in particular. The strategic importance of Palestine for Great Britain intensified Soviet interest in a British withdrawal from their bases there. The more time that passed since the end of the World War, the clearer it became to Moscow that it was possible to exploit the conflict in Palestine to further its own goals. The illegal sailings were a means of convenient and effective pressure for Moscow. Hundreds of thousands of Jews who lived in the Communist bloc nations, particularly Roumania, constituted a weighty potential threat to the British because of the serious effect that this Jewish ingress into Palestine would have on the Arabs and because of Britain's failure to find detention places for these Jews.

The Soviet Union almost certainly did not initiate the illegal sailings. It did exploit the wishes of the Roumanian authorities to be rid of some of the Jews who lived in their country and the aspiration of the Jews themselves to get out. The embarkation of close to 16,000 Roumanian Jews from Bulgaria at the end of 1947 was intended, among others, to signal to the British, who had already announced their intention to pull out of Palestine, what would await them should they decide to change their minds and remain. The escalation of the cold war in the latter half of 1947 and the deepening of the Communist hold on Roumania and Bulgaria minimized London's ability to influence either Moscow or these two countries. The battle to prevent illegal sailings was yet another aspect in the cold war between Great Britain and the Communist bloc nations.

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