

Ira Hirschman Papers
Box 3
Report on Sinking of Metkura

REPRODUCED FROM RECORDS OF THE FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT LIBRARY
OFFICE OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Istanbul, September 13, 1944

Dear Mr. Pebley:

I am submitting a detailed report on the McFours disaster covering information from the date when the departure of the boat was first reported to the time of the arrival of the survivors in Istanbul. As exhibits, I am including:

- (a) Copy of a report submitted by an examining commission representing the agencies in Istanbul interested in the rescue of Jews from occupied areas, dated September 9, 1944.
- (b) Copy of the sailing orders, dated August 3, 1944, issued by the German Ministry of Marine, designating the route to be followed by the Merika. The sailing instructions of the McFours, we must assume, are identical.
- (c) Copy of the report of the British Naval Report made available by the British Naval Attaché in Istanbul, dated August 22, 1944.
- (d) Copy of the notice issued by the British Government relating to international signals to be followed by vessels on the high seas in balligerent waters.
- (e) Translation from the Turkish (undated) of a report written by Kasim Turan, the Captain of the McFours.
- (f) Translation of a letter from one of the survivors of the McFours, Ladislav Fualop, dated September 5, 1944, (translated from the Hungarian).
- (g) Copy of a report dated August 31, 1944, of the International Red Cross Delegate, Istanbul, submitted to Monsieur Gilbert Simond, Delegate of the International Red Cross Committee for Turkey.

Cordially yours,

/s/ I. A. Hirschmann

I. A. Hirschmann
Special Attaché

J. W. Pebley, Esquire,
Executive Director,
War Relocation Board,
Treasury Building,
Washington 25, D. C.

Knels.

REPORT ON THE MEFYURA DISASTER

We were originally informed in Istanbul, from sources that were presumed to be informed, that the three ships, Korina, Bulbul and Mefyura, had left Constantin on August 1. On the morning of August 4, we were advised that, according to information received in Istanbul, these ships had left on August 3, and not on August 1.

On Saturday, August 5, we were informed early in the morning by telephons that it had been reported from Buyukdere, a village on the Bosphorus near the Black Sea entrance, that the Bulbul had arrived and was at anchor there. This information was immediately telephoned by Mr. Katski from Istanbul to me in Ankara. Later in the morning, we were advised that the Bulbul had been joined by the Korina and that the two ships were then at Buyukdere. This information likewise was telephoned to me in Ankara. In the meanwhile, one of the Jewish Agency representatives proceeded to Buyukdere, and discovered that only the Korina had arrived; the information concerning the Bulbul was erroneous. This correction likewise was immediately telephoned to Ankara. During this period, however, the Turkish Foreign Office had informed me that all of the three ships had arrived at Buyukdere, and on the basis of this information I sent a telegram to you. In view of the corrected factual information this, of course, was counter-mandated.

The Bulbul was awaited all day on August 5 at Buyukdere. At seven o'clock that evening, a very heavy storm arose, and upon inquiry among people familiar with conditions, it was determined that even if the Bulbul should reach the mouth of the Bosphorus it would be impossible for it to pass into that body of water because of the storm. Accordingly, the group of organization representatives smacking the Bulbul departed at 10 o'clock that evening. During this period, no word at all had been received regarding the Mefyura.

Sunday morning, August 6, the storm on the Black Sea continued, and there was no information concerning the whereabouts of the Bulbul and the Mefyura, although it had been reported from Buyukdere that at one time the Bulbul had been sighted in the Black Sea. Accordingly, efforts were made in Ankara to find a means for searching for the two boats. Maritime tugs stood by in the Bosphorus to assist the two boats to come through, should they make an appearance in the Black Sea. Inquiry was made as to the feasibility of securing an airplane to search for the vessels, such authorization being necessary from the competent Turkish Ministries in Ankara. This did not seem feasible. At about four o'clock on Sunday afternoon, August 6, it was reported that the Bulbul had put in at a small port named Islandere to ride out the storm. It was apparent that nothing could be done about the Bulbul, and it was assumed that the Mefyura, faced by the same storm, had pulled in somewhere for safety.

In the meanwhile, the British sailed from Buyukdere to Istanbul and dropped anchor there about six o'clock in the evening of August 6. About seven o'clock word was received unofficially through police channels that the M. Fours had been torpedoed by German submarines, and that rescue operations were going forward in the Turkish port of Igneada, which is on the Black Sea close to the Bulgarian frontier.

At this point, it might be well to describe communication difficulties with Igneada. This small port is located in a Turkish military zone, and consequently private communication with it, or travel to it by unauthorized persons, especially foreigners, is prohibited. As a matter of fact, the only means of communication, one which we are informed, even the authorities must use, is by telegram to Kirtlarvelli, by messenger from Kirtlarvelli to another town closer to Igneada, and by telephone from that town to Igneada. There are no recognized roads leading out from Igneada, and obviously no transportation by rail.

Mr. Katsuki advised me of the above from Istanbul in Ankara on Sunday, August 6, at 10 p.m. It was decided to take the following steps:

1. To request the Turkish Ministry of Communications to telegraph to Captain Mustafa of the Bulbul which, we had learned, was in Igneada, instructing him to hold his ship in that port.
2. To secure special permission for several representatives of rescue agencies from Istanbul to proceed to the scene of rescue in order to offer assistance.
3. To secure permission and to arrange means to send food, medicine, and other emergency requisites to the scene for the reason. The Turkish Red Crescent or the Turkish Army, it was believed, had a post somewhere in the vicinity of Igneada.
4. To request that arrangements be made to bring the passengers from the Bulbul by train to Istanbul, in order that they would not be subjected to further risks in the dangerous waters of the Black Sea.
5. Permission for the Antalya Agency to send letters to Igneada to remove the people from Igneada to Kirtlarvelli. Acting for the War Refugee Board, in connection with all of the above, I offered to defray the expenses.

Mr. Pecker of the American Embassy submitted the above requests to the Turkish Foreign Office, and in due course the captain of the Bulbul received his instructions, permission was granted for the people to come overland, and the Turkish Foreign Office agreed to place the rescue operations exclusively in the hands of the Turkish Red Crescent, which would assume responsibility for assisting the refugees and supervise their onward transportation from Igneada to Istanbul.

During this time, and until the arrival of the Bulbul passengers and the survivors of the McFurns on Monday, August 14, there was no factual information as to precisely what had occurred to the McFurns. It was assumed, on the basis of the unofficial and incomplete information received from the police on August 6, that the sinking had taken place on Sunday, August 6, and that rescue operations were proceeding on that day. Efforts to find someone in the vicinity of Igneada who might immediately proceed to that town to make a first-hand investigation were fruitless.

On Monday morning, August 7, representatives of the Antalya Transportation Agency were dispatched from Istanbul to Igneada, as were several lorries with food which originally had been purchased to give to the passengers in Istanbul. The Turkish Red Crescent at about that time likewise sent representatives to Igneada. Upon the arrival of the Antalya representatives at Kirklareli, the nearest large town with railroad facilities, it was discovered that there were no roads through the hills to Igneada, thus making transportation by truck from Igneada to the railroad impossible. Consequently, 60 or 70 cars were rounded up and sent to Igneada to transport the passengers. The trip from Igneada began on Wednesday, August 9, by start and for part of the way on foot for the men. The people were brought to Vize. From Vize they were brought by truck to Cherchakoy, and by train from Cherchakoy to Istanbul, where the Bulbul passengers and the McFurns survivors, five passengers and three crew, arrived on Monday, August 14. It was only then, when it was possible to speak to the McFurns and Bulbul people, that the facts became known.

The three ships, the Korina, Bulbul and McFurns, had left Constantinople together on August 3, 1944. They sailed under the auspices of the Rumanian Red Cross. The Korina itself, when it arrived in the Dosphorus, bore indications of having had red crosses painted on its hull in various places. The three ships were escorted through Rumanian waters as far as the Bulgarian border by what was described to be two Rumanian mine-sweepers. They traveled in single file, first two refugee boats, followed by a Rumanian boat, then the third refugee boat and a Rumanian boat bringing up the rear. This escort left the refugee boats upon arrival into Bulgarian waters. Thereafter, the three boats sailed on their own, the Korina, being the smallest, first; then the McFurns, and bringing up the rear, the Bulbul. Because of differences in speed, the ships rapidly drew away from each other. One of the Bulbul passengers stated that he saw in the driver of the captain of the ship a permit issued by the German authorities the day before the three boats from Constantina, indicating the route which the three boats were to follow, and indicating a time by which the voyage had to take place. According to this passenger, the timetable had expired by the time the boats were under way.

The McFurns, shortly after midnight, August 6, was approached by three surface craft described to be about the length of two railroad

ears, each with flat shallow-draft bottoms, armed with some small cannon and machine-guns. They were alleged to be German boats similar in appearance to boats which had been seen in Constantin harbor, and the three boats opened fire on the McFurna with cannon shot and machine-guns. One of the earlier shots landed in the machinery of the McFurna and the machinery blew up. The ship itself was set afire by incendiary bullets. A large number of passengers were wounded on the boat itself through machine-gun fire. Others were caught in the flames. There were life-preservers on board, not of very good quality, which some of the passengers damaged and went overboard. The attacking boats continued their machine-gun fire upon the people while they were in the water. The sea was quite stormy, as a result of which, despite the fact that the passengers had life-belts, it was impossible for them to save themselves.

The attack on the McFurna occurred at about 0030 o'clock on the morning of Friday, August 4. Five passengers and three of the crew were rescued. The five passengers included a Hungarian girl, by the name of Herta Velasj, a Hungarian couple by the name of Phillip, and two Polish men, Benk and Amalred. Mrs. Phillip is a pregnant woman. The members of the crew who saved themselves included the captain.

The Bulbul at that time was some distance away from the McFurna and it was not until towards day-break that the survivors could be seen in the water and brought aboard. The Phillip, for example, were in the water for over four hours. (Upon their arrival in Istanbul the two Polish survivors were taken to Balat hospital, one suffering from burns on his body, the other with a leg injury. The other three remained with the Bulbul group.)

The Bulbul had also received a signal to stop, early in the morning of August 4. It was to be when approached, some say by two, others say by three armed boats. The Turkish crew of the Bulbul with the exception of the captain, immediately left the ship in a life-boat. The captain himself was advised by the passengers not to try to take a similar action. The armed boats approached the Bulbul some say to a point 30 meters away, others say 200 meters. The captain told the passengers to keep below decks, and hoisted the flag of a Turkish cargo-carrier. After a short while the armed boats departed as suddenly as they had come.

The Bulbul came within about 300 meters of the Black Sea entrance of the Bosphorus on Saturday, August 5, toward evening. Because of rough weather, it turned up the Turkish coast in order to find a sheltered anchorage. It was now apparent that the McFurna survivors were already on board the Bulbul when it arrived at the entrance of the Bosphorus. (This corrected the impression that the sinking took place on Sunday, August 6, near Igneada.)

- 5 -

Conclusions

At my suggestion, a special meeting was held in the office of the War Refugee Board, Istanbul on August 23, for the purpose of examining the captains of the Mafkura and Bulbul. There were present during the entire examination Mr. Herbert Katski of the War Refugee Board, and Mr. Ch. Barlas of the Jewish Agency; and for part of the time, Messrs. Charles Passman and Reuben Resnik of the Joint Distribution Committee and Moshe Averbuch of the Jewish Agency. The inquiry was conducted through an interpreter.

As both captains had been examined previously, the questioning was designed (1) to establish the creditability of the version of the sinking as given by the Mafkura captain; (2) to clarify certain points which seemed to be questionable.

The object, from the point of view of the War Refugee Board, was to determine as nearly as possible the circumstances leading to the disaster, and whether or not the disaster was avoidable. This was designed for purposes of formulating its own policy as to the feasibility in principle of further sea-transportation for rescue work. Other matters, relating to the safety provisions for passengers and the organization of the voyages, were not the subject of the present inquiry.

The captain of the Mafkura was requested to repeat the history of the voyage of his vessel from the time of its departure from Konstanz up to the moment of his rescue by the Bulbul. He had related this on a previous occasion, when the War Refugee Board was not represented, but which had subsequently been reported to the Board. In summary, and without entering into particulars, the version now given varied from the first, and from the reports made by surviving Mafkura passengers, on so many fundamental details as to create doubt regarding the creditability of important elements of the Mafkura captain's report. The impression gained by Mr. Katski from this examination was that the captain probably lost his head during the incident, and while one cannot ascertain the extent to which his acts or failure to act were a contributory cause to the sinking, we are not at all convinced, based upon the captain's conflicting testimony and that which the survivors reported, that the disaster was unavoidable.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ I. A. Hirschmann

I. A. Hirschmann
Special Attache

September 14, 1944

C
O
P
Y

Exhibit (a)

R E P O R T

ON THE SINKING OF THE M/V "NEFKURE"

The m/v "NEFKURE" was reported to have been sunk in the Black Sea on August 5, 1944, between Achtopoli and Igneada, at a point variously estimated between 7 and 15 miles off the coast, with roughly 320 passengers on board. This report is being prepared by a commission of three persons designated by agencies interested in the rescue of Jews from occupied areas:

Mr. Chaim Barlas,

Jewish Agency for Palestine

Istanbul

Mr. Saul Meyerov,

Member of the Palestine Rescue

Committee, Istanbul

and Mr. Reuben B. Frenk,

American Joint Distribution
Committee, Istanbul

The report is to be made available to the interested organizations and Government agencies concerned with this matter.

1) THE VESSEL:

The m/v "NEFKURE" a wooden motor-catigue of 120 tons (40 registered net tons) was built in 1929 with a motor of 75 HP. It is claimed that its motor was changed about three years ago. It is registered in the port of Istanbul under No. 694 and in the port of Sile under No. 127. It is stated that its motor was examined on June 21, 1943 and that permission for navigation was effective until June 21, 1944. It is also reported that the "NEFKURE" left Turkish waters on May 13, 1944.

2) THE CAPTAIN:

The boat was operated by KASIM TURAN, Captain, and a crew of six. Kasim is a man in late thirties or early forties. He has been engaged in navigation since 1929 when he entered the maritime service as an ordinary seaman. He worked aboard the "NEFKURE" in 1933, 1934, 1936 and 1939 as a member of the crew. On June 28, 1939 he passed an examination and was licensed to operate the "NEFKURE" or a similar ship, this rating being the equivalent of a third mate on a larger vessel. Kasim Turan is registered under No. 8/1467.

3) STATEMENT OF FACTS:

On August 3, 1944, at 8:30 p.m. the m/v "NEFKURE" along with two other boats, the m/s "MORITIA" and the m/s "SULIBULI" sailed from the Port of Constanta. Each of the boats had aboard it refugees who were to be brought to the Port of Istanbul to proceed from there to Palestine.

The "MORITIA" had 308 passengers, the "SULIBULI" 390 and the "NEFKURE" roughly 320 passengers. Before weighing anchor, the captains of the three boats were ordered to visit the harbour-master of Constanta and were given the sailing orders, a copy of which is appended to this report. The "NEFKURE" and "SULIBULI" followed a course set by the "MORITIA" but lost the "MORITIA" sometime during the second day because of the latter's faster speed.

- 2 -

Aboard the "MORINA" was a pilot ordered there by the Rumanian naval authorities, and the Captain of the "MEFKURE" claims that on his boat were two Rumanian petty-officers. The Captain of the "MEFKURE" claims that the "MORINA" left the harbour first, the "BULBUL" second, and the "MEFKURE" third. All boats sailed at what he estimated to be approximately 5 knots on a north-easterly course.

After being out one hour motor trouble developed on the "MEFKURE" but the boat was not delayed since it was towed by one of the three Rumanian motor torpedo boats which were designated to escort the three motor-ships to Bulgarian waters. The repairs on the motor were completed within one hour.

The captain of the "MEFKURE" claims that the boat continued to sail uneventfully till 5 a.m. of the morning of August 4, 1944, when they sighted a black object about 300 metres off the stern of the m/s "MEFKURE". One of the Rumanian sailors identified this as a German patrol boat. At dawn, the Rumanian naval men aboard the "MEFKURE" and the other boats were taken off by the Rumanian motor torpedo boats. The captain of the "MEFKURE" claims that he continued to follow the course set by the "MORINA"; he continued to follow that course even when the moon rose.

The captain of the "MEFKURE" claims that on August 5, 1944 at 1:10 Rumanian time (2:10 Turkish time), he observed a rocket explode above the mast of the "MEFKURE". (All the survivors agree that when the rocket exploded, it was between 12:30 and 12:35 Constanta time). After he determined that the rocket was not fired from his own boat, the captain of the "MEFKURE" claims in a report submitted (copy of which is attached hereto) that he ordered a stop signal hoisted and that he stopped his motor immediately. According to previous interviews it is not clear as to whether he indicated by signals or otherwise that he had seen the rockets. He admits, and the survivors confirm it, that the "MEFKURE" was completely blacked out and that it had no navigation lights, but it is reported that in a later interview the captain claimed that the boat had green and red navigation lights. He further states that after the first rocket was fired and the ship stopped, he instructed the crew to put on life belts and gave similar instructions to the passengers: He said ".....I ordered my crew to put on life-belts and made the passengers understand through interpreter and signs..." At that time he also recognized a black object some 300 meters behind the "MEFKURE". Five minutes after the flare had exploded, the

Black object behind the "HEZKUNEP" commenced to fire. The first shell fell into the sea about 15 meters from the stern of the boat to the starboard side, the second shot was fired closer to the boat, but did not strike the boat; the third shot fired immediately afterwards struck the boat on the starboard side and caused considerable damage of the points where it struck. Some of the survivors claim that the boat was struck near the engine's cabin and that the boat began to burn immediately after it was struck. There is agreement that immediately after the gun-fire, machine-gunning began and that the larger gun-fire continued, causing more damage to the boat and increasing the blast. The British Naval expert identified the larger gun-fire as coming from a 20 m/m. automatic cannon using the explosive type of shells. (Attached hereto is copy of a report of the British Naval Expert, loaned to the Inquiry committee by the British Naval Attaché in Istanbul.) It is claimed that the firing continued for roughly fifteen minutes and that the ship was almost entirely ablaze shortly after the first few shots were fired.

The attacking vessels were identified by the British Naval experts as submarines and some of the survivors think that they might have been patrol vessels about thirty metres length. The captain identified the attacking boats as submarines.

It is claimed that the gun-fire continued at a violent rate and that the machine-gunning was even aimed at people who had jumped overboard.

Two of the members of the crew were killed by machine gun-fire. The captain and the remaining four members of the crew left the "HEZKUNEP" in the only life-boat available, and remained there until the captain thought that the dinghy would be attacked by gun-fire.

It is variously estimated that between forty and sixty persons jumped overboard and that the remaining passengers on the "HEZKUNEP" lost their lives either by being burned to death or having gone down with the ship.

It is estimated that the "HEZKUNEP" remained above sea in a burning condition between 20 and 30 minutes.

Most of those who jumped overboard drowned before they had gone very far; about twenty to thirty of those who were in the sea remained there for about four-five hours. Of that group only 5 survivors reached the m/s "WILSON" about 4.30 or 4.45 a.m. The survivors and those who came along with them part of the way, were carried towards the m/s "WILSON" by currents on a raft which was blown off the m/s "HEZKUNEP".

- 4 -

All of the survivors claim that the boat was overcrowded and that there was a limited egress from the boat. Another difficulty was the lack of means of communication between the passengers and the captain and the crew, since the latter two could not speak any of the six or seven languages spoken by the passengers.

In this connection, a representative on behalf of a group arranging for the movement of the vessels handling refugee traffic, indicates that instructions were given to their representative in Constanta not to overload the vessels. The pressure of demands on the part of the refugees, it was reported to him from Constanta, made it necessary to accommodate more than was originally intended.

The attacking vessels were not clearly identified by any of the survivors; all agree that there were three, and some claim that gun-fire came from all of them. Two of the survivors claim that the boats were German. All of the survivors claim that the three boats were photographed by German naval authorities at the time they left Constanta.

A) SURVIVORS:

There were 5 survivors:

- 1 - Joseph Axelrad, aged 33,
a native of Suleikin, Poland,
who received burns and other injuries,
- 2 - Joseph Bank, aged 38,
from Kolosen, Poland,
who also received burns and injuries,
- 3 - Hilda Burbrand, aged 23,
a native of Romania,
uninjured and a poor swimmer,
- 4 - Ladislav Palop, aged 22,
a native of Hungary,
he was one time a well known amateur swimmer,
- 5 - Veronika Vera Palop, aged 18
who was 9 months pregnant, and
who is now in Istanbul expecting her child.

All the survivors reached the m/s "BULIBUL" at roughly 4:45 a.m. on August 5, 1944. After boarding the "BULIBUL", they sailed with it until the mouth of the Dosporos where heavy weather prevented its entrance, and the "BULIBUL" returned to Igneada

on August 6, 1944, where all the passengers were disembarked and then taken overland to Istanbul, where they arrived on August 14, 1944.

5) CONCLUSIONS:

a) Facts do not clearly indicate whether the "HEYDURG" was sunk as a result of a deliberate attack or as a result of the negligence of the captain in failing to a signal from a patrolling ship.

b) A British naval expert, on the basis of interviews with the captain, comes to the following conclusions:

"....All evidence shows that "HEYDURG" was sunk on August 5, 1944 about 11:30 local time, about twenty-five miles N.E. of Igazada by gunfire from one or two (or possibly three) submarines on the surface. The gun used was probably a 20 m/m automatic gunmen with explosive missiles.

It is evident that the skipper of "HEYDURG" lost his head and abandoned ship at the first hit; his statement that he received no warning is therefore discounted in view of the statements of

- 1) the captain of the "SINILU" (a steady witness) that he saw a red rocket fired on his starboard bow at about 22:30 at approximately the point where "HEYDURG" was at the time.
- 2) other survivors of the "HEYDURG" who state that the enemy vessel made lamp signals in the direction of the ship, and fired a red rocket"

We could not establish the identity of the attacking vessels, although some of the survivors are willing to state that the vessels were German.

e) It is clear that the "HEYDURG" was overcrowded. d) It is clear that the captain abandoned the ship before all passengers were given the opportunity to leave or before he made efforts to provide for their safety.

e) The tragedy and the smiting refugees in enemy occupied countries; the difficulties of arranging transports and the obstacles caused by many other circumstances beyond the control of the persons engaged in this enterprise, made it necessary to assume risks that might not otherwise have been undertaken.

Istanbul, 9. 9. 44.

/s/ Ch. BARIAS
/s/ S. MEYDOW
/s/ R. B. RESNIK

Exhibit (b)

A B S C H R I F T

Deutsche Kriegsmarine

O. U., den 3 August 1944

B E S C H E I N I G U N G

Der Turk. Mot-Segler "M o r i n a" darf zur einmaligen Fahrt von Punkt 43 Grad 43 Min. Nord, 29 Grad 08 Min. Ost das freie Seegebiet zum Bosphorus befahren. Die oben angegebene Laenge (29 Grad 08 Min. Ost) darf unter der Gefahr der Versenkung oder Aufbringung nicht nach Westen überschritten werden. Auslauftag 3.8.44. Diese Bescheinigung hat mit dem 8.8.44 um 24.00 Uhr ihre Gultigkeit Verloren.

I.A.

Kapitänleutnant (S)

Exhibit (a)

copy

R e p o r t

of British Naval Expert

made available by British Naval Attache

1. Further interrogation of the captain of "MEFKURE" and "BULBUL" took place today.
2. All evidence shows that "MEFKURE" was sunk on August 5th about 1,30 local time, about 25 miles N.E. of Igneada, by gunfire from one or two (or possibly three) submarines on the surface. The gun used was probably a 20 m/m automatic cannon with explosive missile.
3. It is evident that the skipper of "MEFKURE" lost his head and abandoned ship at the first hit; his statement that he received no warning is therefore discounted in view of the statements of
 - a) the captain of the "BULBUL" (a steady witness) that he saw a red rocket fired on his starboard bow at about 22,30 at approximately the point where "MEFKURE" was at the time.
 - b) other survivors of the "MEFKURE" who state that the enemy vessel made lamp signals in the direction of the ship, and fired a red rocket.
4. According to the captain of the "MEFKURE" that attacking vessel came up from eastern, firing as she came, passed by the stationary vessel to starboard, still firing, and crossed ahead of her. Fire was then opened on the dinghy, in which were the captain and crew of the vessel. They promptly jumped out, and the dinghy was hit three times and smashed.

Istanbul, 22.6.1944.

C
O
P
Y

Exhibit (d)

Sayı 1533/1199/8225

8/9/943

A C E L E

S U R E T

16 Beynelmilel isaretler komundaki (W,C,A) gurubunun
Inglitere hükümeti tarafından.

(Durumu. Filika mayna etmeyiniz. Geminisi batırmayınız.
Telsiz kullanmayınız. İtaat etmeseniz atas acıcağın manasında
kullanılacağı Inglitere büyük elçilliginin is'arına atfen
Hariciye Vekaletinden bildirilmiştir.

Keyfiyetin deniscilere ilanı rica ederim.

MÜNAKALAT VEKİLİ N.

Copie

Code international des signaux, Communication de la
part du gouvernement Britannique:

Les signaux (W,C,A) signifient: Stopes. Ne descendez
pas de chaloupe. Ne coulez pas votre navire. N'utilisez pas
votre T.S.F. Si vous n'obeissez pas nous ferons feu. Communi-
cation faite par l'Ambassade Britannique par voie de notre
Ministere des Aff. Etrangeres.

Priere de communiquer aux milieux maritimes.

Le min. des Commn.

C Exhibit (e)

COPI

O
P
Y

Report

I, as captain of the motor-schooner "Mefkure", of 40 register tons, entered at Istanbul harbour under number 694 and registered under number 137 at the port of Silo, deliver the following report on an attack from an unknown submarine which took place between Ahtepoli and Igneada:

On August 3, 1944, at 8.30 p.m., the motor-boats, "Morina", "Dulbul", and "Mefkure", the latter under my command, sailed from the port of Constanza. Before weighing anchor the captain of all three motor-boats, were ordered to visit the harbour master of Constanza, who told us that sailing orders would be given to us by a captain who would sail with us on the Morina, and that in case we did not keep to these orders, he would not be responsible for the consequences.

The "Morina" ahead, the "Dulbul" second, and I at the rear, sailed at approximately 5 knots on a north-easterly course. After fifteen minutes we detected a minor engine trouble, which we repaired within an hour, but during this time we did not lag behind. One of the Rumanian motor-torpedo boats, which I forgot to mention above, took us into tow, so that we were not left behind the other two boats.

Thus we kept sailing until 5 a.m. With us and our comrades were a Rumanian non-commissioned officer, and three Rumanian privates. Coming on deck after repairing the engine, I saw a black object at a distance of 500 meters from our stern. Asking the Rumanian officer about it, he told me that this was "Leme" i.e. German, and that it was patrolling here. The Rumanian officer and privates had life-belts on, and as it was my duty, I gave orders to my crew and passengers that they should be ready to put on the same at any moment. At dawn the Rumanian officer and the privates embarked on the Rumanian motor-torpedo boat and left us. According to the directions received at Constanza the "Dulbul" and my boat started following the course indicated by the captain on board the "Morina".

With the "Morina" ahead all three of us sailed with a southerly wind. During the day there was a slight sea and moderate westerly wind. When the moon rose after sun-set, we still followed our course. At 2.10 a.m. I saw a rocket explode above our masts, and asked my crew whether this had been fired from our boat; but they answered in the negative. As was my duty, I immediately ordered the stop-signal to be flown and stopped my engines. While waiting for a second signal, I saw astern a black object about 300 m behind us. I ordered my crew to put on the life-belts and made the passengers understand through

interpreters and signs. At 2.15 sharp the object behind us started firing. The first shell fell into the sea 15 m from our stern, to starboard; the second one advancing nearer, the third hitting our ship to starboard and pieces of wood flew up. At the same moment, gun, and machine-gun bombardment started. I at once ordered my crew to lower the life-boat, and told the rest to assemble and abandon ship. It is untrue that I wasted even a second, but the firing continued violently and the machine-gun-fire confused us entirely. I saw that part of my crew had jumped into the water, boarded the life-boat, and I, too, jumped into the water, boarded the boat that was alongside the ship, and cut the ropes by which it was attached, with a knife. At the same time I looked everywhere for my shipmates Kemal and Hasan who were not among us; I called out to them to join us, but they did not appear.

Since it was understood that they had been wounded either by shells or by the rain of machine-gun-fire, and therefore left behind, and that if we tarried any longer to find out about them, we also would succumb to a similar fate; so we took off from the ship at once. When we were about 30 to 25 m. from the drop ladder, I saw that the fire had ceased, whereupon I told my crew that the enemy would change their target. I ordered them to undress, jump into the sea, and scatter. I myself jumped into the water from the starboard-side of the life-boat and found myself submerged before I had gone five meters, but within a second the waves hurled me to the surface again. Upon examination I found that I was without wounds. Trying to reboard the life-boat I saw that a second shell was aimed at our life-boat, and machine-gun-fire started at the same time. Twisting round the bow of the life-boat, I swam away and saw that the firing submarine had not dived but was shooting at our ship, aiming at the water-line. Five minutes had passed before our ship, flying the Turkish flag, sank. Re-approaching the life-boat I saw that it had been hit in three places, but had not sunk, so I brought back to it an oar which was floating about fifteen meters away. Now the submarine left the place from which she had fired passing the side of the burning wreck at a distance of 50 m and went on about 100 ahead of her. I at once left the boat and swam to my five shipmates to find out whether they were all right. On seeing that the life-boat had not sunk, the submarine (300 m away from us and 300 m from the life-boat) again opened cannon and machine-gun-fire. It sank the life-boat and passed between the burning wreck and the life-boat at a distance of 150 m from us. As it passed us, I could see clearly that there were two people on deck, one aft, one person fore-head, and one at each side of the turret, and one person astern of the turret; one of the two in the turret was looking through field-glasses.

The submarine sailed on northward, and after stopping a mile from where she had fired, disappeared. Then we observed a light on the water around us, and saw that light-signals had

- 3 -

been given. We were now at the bow of our life-boat which was floating in a submerged state, then five of my shipmates boarded it, and I clung to its railing naked, as God had made me. As I knew that all three motorboats had sailed in each others wake, and in my firm belief that Allah never failed in his miracles, I was convinced that the Bulbul, which was behind us would pass us either 200 meters to starboard or port. I comforted my comrades to the best of my ability by saying to each of them words that were meant to raise their spirits. Eventually I saw that the submarine was again approaching us and as before, I told my crew to jump into the water. After I had stayed in the water for five minutes the submarine withdrew and we returned. After some two hours we heard the engines of a motor which proved to be the "Bulbul". She stopped about 700-800 m away from us, and I thought that her stopping was due either to her seeing us or the wreck, but yet again she started her engines and again approached another 300 m. The wind was favorable for her approach.

When we had stayed by the life-boat another 10 to 15 minutes I told my crew that we should not expect that the "Bulbul" was aware of what had happened and would approach us. So I swam to the Bulbul to tell them that they should stay where they were and I would, after boarding her, have shipmates brought on board. They agreed and I jumped into the water and swam to the far-off boat shouting. On seeing me the crew and passengers became even more excited. They brought my shipmates from the life-boat, pulled two Jewish emigrants (whom I knew to be husband and wife) out of the water and rescued two men and a girl who were hanging onto a floating boom. Around us we could see nothing except a few pieces of wreckage from our ship. About 4 p.m. we approached the Bosphorus but could not enter because of the unfavorable weather, consequently we were obliged to take refuge at Igneada where we anchored on the afternoon of August 6. I applied to the District Official and to the Gendarmerie chief, referring to the presence of a "custody-official" on my boat, and asked for permission to go ashore in order to relieve to a certain extent, the anxiety that was bound to have arisen in Istanbul and other places concerning our fate.

But I was told that it was strictly forbidden for these Jews who were in transit, to go ashore at any time or place, and that since I belonged to that Jewish transport, therefore my going ashore was completely out of the question.

After receiving orders from the Ministry that the Jews might go ashore and should be transported by land to Istanbul, I and my shipmates were, of course, also permitted to land. When on August 9, we were on our way from Limnkey to Igneada, the Kaymakam (administrative head) of Vise, whose name I did not know, came, to superintend our transportation. After greeting the Jews with perfect respect and politeness, he presented us as the "shipwrecked from the "Mekure" to the doctor of Demirkoy. The

- 4 -

kaymakan was entrusted with the transport of the Jews. The next day I told the kaymakan that we, too, had gone through this disaster, and asked him to give us all help possible by supplying us with a carriage with which we could go to Vise. But I was told that this was impossible. Demanding a second time, I asked whether he was preferring these travellers to us in our plight; they were Jewish emigrants and, as such our guests; but we, not only children of this country, having shared the same fate but gone through things a thousand times worse than they. Upon this he answered that he had no means of transport for us on that day and that we would have to stand back because of them.

While the kaymakan went on horseback to Vise after having told me that I was free to go to Istanbul by whatever means I liked, District Official and Gendarmary Commander ordered me to be taken into custody and to be brought to Istanbul under gendarmary supervision. All because I was responsible for the death of 300 passengers and two of my crew.

I feel relieved in being able to place before your Excellency for your judgment, the treatment that is levied by Turkish officials to the children of this country. We have gone through disaster during which we faced death at every moment. I can leave it to your Excellency to understand that I have not willingly brought about this event and to decide if such terrible things could be purposely brought about on human beings.

Under the order of the kaymakan we stayed for three days, hungry, unsheltered, at such a lonely place as Igneada. Then Mr. Haydar Dog, one of the notabilities of Igneada known all over the world, did his uttermost to extend to me all possible help, acting like a father. He phoned to the Vali of Kirkisireli, Mr. Kasim explaining the situation in all its details and succeeded in getting us free. On horseback and mules, for which I had to pay myself, we arrived at Vise from where we moved on in the morning of August 14, and arrived at Sirkeci Station at 7:45 P.M. Today when delivering to your Excellency this report, as is my duty, I request, at the same time, that measures should be taken at necessary quarters to prevent such similar treatment as I and my shipmates had to undergo during this misfortune.

Captain of the 40 tons motor-schooner, "Nefkure", belonging to the port of Sile

Kasim Turan

The Committee appointed by the Rescue Montna
resident in Istanbul to determine the nature and causes
of the sinking of the m/s "Mefkure" makes the following
interim report on the basis of interviews with all the
5 survivors of the ship:

That on or about 12.30 a.m., August 5th, the m/s
"Mefkure" was attacked by a boat or boats with miscelle-
neous gun-fire as a result of which the m/s "Mefkure" was
sunk.

Further investigations are proceeding and all
facts are being fully explored. In due course the final
report will be submitted.

This interim-report has the unanimous concurrence
of all members of the Committee.

Istanbul 16/8/44

Ch. Harlas

S. Meyerov

Reuben H. Resnik

MSA 9546 (2)

Copy of translation of letter from one of the survivors of the Makruva, and addressed to Mr. Nathan Benarik of American Joint Distribution Committee, Jerusalem, Turkey.

My dear friend:

don't mind for this addressing, and you, my unknown brother, who is going to translate these lines, don't be surprised at, don't consider it as a Middle or South East European sentimentalism, but do understand, that he was the first man whom I have spoken to frankly after six months of suffering, effort and hiding and he was the first man, who made me relate our little tragedy, between so many great Jewish tragedies. It is about the "Makruva" and now I won't keep time any more and I'll start in media res.

We caught sight of the three little ships at Constanta on the 2nd of August, but I must tell, it was a fearful feeling, because I found inconceivable, that such little shaly bars could master the waves of the sea. But let's drop the matter of criticism. We were delighted even at that, because when I escaped from Hungary, I got away from the sure death, therefore I had nothing to lose. We left at 9 o'clock in the evening. The "Makruva" has taken the land, behind it the "Galbul" and in the last place the "Horlam". Besides the crew of the ship a Roumanian officer and a sailor, who accompanied us as far as Varna, were on the deck of the ship. Round of us some Roumanian redlets, following us as long as we were on Roumanian water. Coming to the open sea the "Horlam" left us behind and looking backward, we did not see the "Galbul" either. Towards dawn I was sea sick. I was lying the whole day on the deck. My wife, who was pregnant, the 9th month, -- now, during I am writing these lines, the doctors are busy; we are waiting for the bearing in minutes -- was lying with her mother and my little brother in law in the cabin of the captain. On Friday evening I was seeing the first Officer -- his name was Hassan, poor man, he also perished there -- when will we get to Jerusalem. He looked up to the sky and said: "Allah".

It was just midnight, when I looked at my watch for the last time. Soon I heard a detonation and saw a red rocket disassembling above my head. We did not notice what it was, but we even could not meditate too much on it, because may be 2 minutes after the clattering of a machine gun paralyzed us with horror. I run to my wife into the cabin, I lied in the bed next to her and wanted to cover each other with our body. The machine gun's fire became always stronger. My wife pushed me to jump into the sea. I was afraid of doing so because of my wife, who might not be able to swim in her present state and I also hoped they only would fusillade the deck. In the next second a stronger detonation

the cabin is full of gunpowder, the atmospheric pressure makes us shudder, my little brother in law cries aloud: "a hole is in the floor", my wife rushed out of the cabin, so did I and jumped into the sea. While running we shouted to the family "come, come do not remain". Emerging from the sea and looking up to the ship, keeping on shouting "come, come", a flame comes to the front from the cabin. The machine exploded underneath it. My mother in law, my little brother in law perished in that place. I took off my shoes in the sea, we stripped ourselves naked. They continuously fired the ship, we swam far away. This dreadful spectacle, which appeared then to our eyes, we'll never forget in our life.

Three ships surrounded our little, miserable boat, the top of which was already burning. The not even human cries of our unfortunate, hopeless brothers on the front of the deck, the sounds of the permanent fire of machine guns were to be heard. One of the ship goes quite near to the stem of the ship and keeps firing. The whole ship is already on fire. Its mast breaks into flames and the fire illuminates the sea, marked with the red cross.

The waves dragged us away from the proximity of the ship and we saw always less and less. Finally only points remained from the "Maritime". The sea brought voices from everywhere: "Hilfe, segt'seeg, sam Jirreol, ejs daver, tov Claum, blod areem" and I with my wife tried to maintain ourselves side by side.

Shortly we caught a glimpse of a swimming head. It was a young man, a Slavonian refugee, named Jeremla. He also recognized us, we swam side by side, and discussed stuttering, what we could do. He had a knife, which he pressed hard in his hand. As we had no lifeboats, we started to search after corpses, we found plenty of them/ and out the lifeboats off, which were good at least to keep warm, because the sea was very very cold. So came the night slowly to an end. We agreed should we not be able to stand the sea any longer, we'll open our veins, because for a person, who knows how to swim, the most horrible death is to get drowned for an absolute exhaustion.

In the small hours of the morning we caught sight at once of a dark mass, being in a certain distance. My wife who is very sharp sighted distinguished that it was the Bulbul. We made despairing an effort to get in that direction. One eye of Jeremla was shot off by a ball of a machine gun and his leg was broken. We got a piece of beer for him, with which we dined him along with difficulty. We were not far from the ship we saw, as 2 to 300 meters, when he could not continue any more. We gave him all the lifeboats, he remained there with the beer,

- 3 -

waiting for the boat, which we were supposed to bring for him. After a miserable quarter or half an hour we reached the ship. We were drawn upstairs, but they refused sending a boat for anybody, though there were at least 10 to 15 persons more, swimming in the proximity of 200 meters. They were frightened for the three ships had stopped them too, only they did not fire on them. So they were not willing to remain on this place. We weeped and cried desperately on the ship, but partly because of the panic, partly because nobody spoke Turkish, / the crew did not know but Turkish/ we were not able to attain our object in anything. We could not make understand what we wanted. Besides that strong waves came into being and the dark points, which were probably living or dead persons, disappeared from the horizon. Recovering our senses I asked how many persons were saved out of the sea, I came to know only then the sad reality, that we are altogether 5 Jews, saved out of 350 unfortunate brothers.

To day we are already rather quiet, for the human being can forget every shudder and because, after all I am waiting in a happy excitement for the birth of my boy or girl, who I guess, will be a champion of swimming, as he swam during 4 hours and a half in the sea, 10 to 12 days before his birth.

Brother, don't mind my illegible writing and excuse also my confused sentences. I feel ashamed to confess, that I finished my studies as a lawyer and that I have written once, long ago, the short Sunday stories in the paper "Tiszental" in Debrecen.

Ladislav Fuclov

September 5, 1944

(Translated from the Hungarian)

C
O
P
Y

Exhibit (8)

Istanbul, August 31, 1944

Dear Sir:

1.) Concerning the shipwreck of the Turkish boat "Makrura."

I am bringing to your knowledge the information which I have been able to obtain from the British Embassy relative to the catastrophe of the Turkish boat "Makrura", the boat which was transporting Jewish refugees from Constanta to Istanbul.

Three ships, as you know already, left Constanta in the following order: the Horlin, the Balbul and the Makrura. The two latter vessels followed each other closely. In the middle of the night the "Balbul" received an order to stop; this order was given by three small armed surface boats. The commander of the "Balbul" obeyed at once; the three surface boats regarded it and then went away. Shortly afterwards, the "Makrura" received the same order from these three ships which appeared suddenly. The captain of the "Makrura" seemed to have lost his presence of mind, because instead of obeying, he tried to escape. Immediately the patrol boats opened fire with light cannon, which after having caused some destruction, set the boat afire. It is noteworthy that this occurrence took place during a moonless night and in a heavy sea.

I am not repeating to you the details relative to the number of refugees and other circumstances which you already know.

2.) Departure from Ilydarpassa of the Jewish refugees for Palestine.

I was present on Tuesday, the 15th of August, 1944, at the departure of the 381 Jewish refugees who had arrived in Istanbul upon the Turkish boats "Horlin" and "Balbul", plus 4 of the 6 survivors of the ship "Makrura". At 10:30 the refugees were gathered together in one of the waiting rooms at Ilydarpassa. The special train which took them to Palestine was at the station; it was composed of six coaches, third class but comfortable, and in which all the refugees were easily able to find places. The Turkish police had organized protection which up until the departure of the refugees was not relaxed. At 10:45 the refugees, two by two, left the waiting room and took their places in their compartments. This was not accomplished with much some crying and a little disorder but calm was quickly established, thanks to the good organization and the understanding of the Turkish police. At the end of the convey, in a half-compartment, were stored the foodstuffs for the duration of the trip. These foodstuffs consisted of bread, marmos, cheese and marmalade, all in sufficient quality.

- 2 -

The refugees did not appear unhappy, and many appeared satisfied with their stay in Istanbul. The ill and the wounded alone will remain in Turkey at the Israelite Hospital until their complete recovery.

In conclusion, it was the spirit of helpfulness of the Jews and the action of the Israelite Committee, in favor of their co-religionists, which struck me the most forcefully, and I believe we will never have any organization difficulties in the case of new transports, and the Jewish charitable societies will be in a position to undertake no matter what task of this nature.

Please accept, Dear Sir, the assurance of my warmest regards.

Annexes: 2 recus,
1 note de frais
Lfrs 205.-, solde des
montants recus.