

Summer Welles Papers
Box 84 Folder 16
Office Correspondence
Taylor, Myron C. Jan-June 1942

August 24, 1942

Eu - Mr. Atherton:

Mr. Taylor left this with me on Saturday. I think it would be well for him to inform Sir Herbert Emerson of the steps we have already taken at Vichy.

U:SW:GES

To Myron Taylor from Sir Herbert Emerson re deportation of Jews in unoccupied France to Poland & parts of Russia
8-11-42

Telephone: ABBEY 6593.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEE.

Director:

SIR HERBERT EMERSON,
G.C.I.E., K.C.S.I., C.B.E.

110 REGENT STREET,
LONDON, S.W.1.

123/60.

11th August, 1942.

Herbert Emerson

You will no doubt have seen in the Press reports that Laval has accepted the principle of the Nazi Decree by which Jews in unoccupied France are to be deported to Poland and the parts of Russia occupied by the Nazis. This is an extension of the policy which is being systematically pursued in occupied countries. So far as the latter are concerned, it is impracticable to do anything. As regards unoccupied France, there is not, I think, much prospect of either your Government or the British Government being able to give even temporary asylum to the persons concerned, at any rate on a considerable scale and the number involved is at least 10,000 and may be as many as 20,000.

The only other measure appears to be diplomatic pressure on Vichy by your Government since it may deter Laval from this monstrous step if he knows that it will outrage public opinion in America.

I would be very grateful if you could represent the matter to the State Department.

With every good wish to Mrs. Myron Taylor and to yourself,

The Hon. Myron C. Taylor
71 Broadway
New York, N.Y. U.S.A.

J. M. Taylor
H. B. Emerson

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

DIVISION OF NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS
June 29, 1942

~~Eu - Mr. Maney~~

Thank you letting me see this. The British Ambassador recently wrote informally to Mr. Welles about the concession, and in his reply Mr. Welles stated that he had taken careful note of the Ambassador's plea for secrecy. According to an accompaniment to the Ambassador's note, the British Government informed Dr. Weizmann in confidence of the concession and the latter expressed himself as satisfied. Thus, as the Zionists have their reply, it seems unlikely that they will press us for information.

gpm
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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

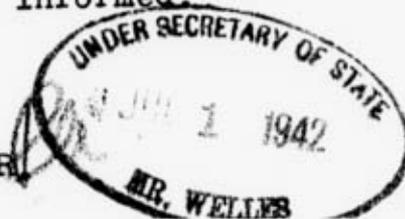
DIVISION OF EUROPEAN AFFAIRS
MEMORANDUM

June 29, 1942.

U -
Mr. Welles:

With reference to the second paragraph of Eu's memorandum of June 26, word has just been received that the Senate has restored the appropriation for the Intergovernmental Committee for the next fiscal year and that the House has concurred. Mr. Myron Taylor has been so informed.

AMR
Eu:Maney:AMR



DEPARTMENT OF STATE
DIVISION OF EUROPEAN AFFAIRS

MEMORANDUM

DIVISION OF CURRENT INFORMATION LIAISON
JUL 4 1942
Department of State

DIVISION OF EUROPEAN AFFAIRS
JUN 27 1942
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

June 26, 1942.

U -
Mr. Welles

I think the President should request it - RW

The principal point in Lord Winterton's letter is the statement that the British Government will not in the future turn away from Palestine refugees who may land on its shores. This in itself is a valuable concession and illustrates the value of the Intergovernmental Committee and of our reference to it of the Struma case. However, since Lord Winterton asked that this be kept in strictest confidence, there appears to be little we can give to interested groups, including Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, at this time. As an ardent and militant Zionist, it would be especially risky to entrust Rabbi Wise with this secret information. If he or others should later press us for information respecting the action taken by the Intergovernmental Committee to take care of possible cases similar to the Struma, we might make some guardedly-worded statement to the effect that we now have a tacit understanding with the British to work together on such problems as they arise, within the limits dictated by the military situation.

Recently the House Appropriation Committee failed to include in its recommendations to the House funds for the continuance of the Intergovernmental Committee for the next fiscal year. The Department has written to the Chairman of the Senate Appropriation Committee asking for the inclusion of this item but it appears problematic whether we will succeed. It is presumably on this point that Mr. Myron Taylor wants to talk with you.

6-23-42 Let from Myron C. Taylor enclosing Let from Lord Winterton, Intergovernmental Committee, re sinking of M/S. SPURMA

Eu:ES:arj:AMR

MYRON C. TAYLOR
71 BROADWAY
NEW YORK

June 23 1942

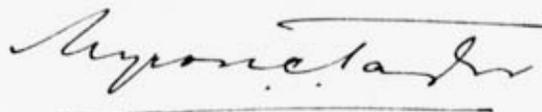
Hon. Sumner Welles,
Under Secretary of State,
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Secretary,

With further reference to your favor of March 30 1942, I communicated with Lord Winterton in regard to the situation of which the SS "Struma" incident was an example, in order that it might be brought to the member Governments of the Steering Committee of the Intergovernmental Committee.

This raises a question in my mind as to the future of the Intergovernmental Committee, concerning which I would like to have a brief discussion with you on my next visit to Washington.

Sincerely yours,



Telephone: ABBEY 6593.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEE.

Director:

SIR HERBERT EMERSON,
G.C.I.E., K.C.S.I., C.B.E.

110 REGENT STREET,
LONDON, S.W.1.

28th May, 1942.

PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL.

Dear Sir: Myron Taylor.

Thank you very much indeed for your letter of the 31st March regarding the tragic incident of the s.s. "Struma". This disaster caused, as you may well imagine, the greatest distress to my Government, and on receiving your letter I at once consulted the authorities concerned, from whom I learned that they had already answered an enquiry on the subject received from the State Department. This was in addition to the public explanations given in Parliament by the Secretary of State and the Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies on the 10th and 11th March. I enclose copies of all three documents for your information.

So much for the past. Your letter deals mainly with the future, and I should like to say first how cordially I, as Chairman of the Intergovernmental Committee, welcome your interest and assistance in finding a solution to a problem of which the "Struma" affair was so ghastly an illustration. You speak of member Governments of the Intergovernmental Committee considering a concerted plan to avoid similar disasters. After consultation with Sir Herbert Emerson and the appropriate British Government Departments, I would venture to suggest that in present circumstances the only two member Governments who would be capable of taking effective action, or at least drawing up practicable suggestions, would be the United States Government and my own Government. The problem (which is incidentally one of disorderly emigration as contrasted with the orderly migration which the Intergovernmental Committee was formed to promote) has its humanitarian and political aspects,

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The Honourable
Myron C. Taylor,
Intergovernmental Committee,
New York.

complex enough in peace time, but complicated even more in time of war by questions of military security. As you say, the exodus of the Jews from German-controlled Europe is instigated by the Nazi régime which has at least two motives: first to cause political embarrassment in the Middle East, and second to introduce enemy agents, or persons capable of being used as such, into territory under Allied control. The number of the latter may be extremely small in comparison with the number of people who have every compelling human reason for wishing to escape, but the fact must obviously be taken into the most serious consideration by the authorities responsible for security in Palestine and the Middle East generally. The political embarrassment, too, is of the greatest importance. We know from experience that no country to which these unhappy shipments proceed is willing to admit them. Indiscriminate reception of them in Palestine would, the British Authorities are convinced, result in ever-increasing German instigation to other parties of Jews to leave, and apart from questions of security involved in the reception of unlimited numbers of persons coming from enemy territory, and with relations still under enemy control, there is the disturbing effect on the Arab world, at a critical moment of the war, if it could be plausibly represented that the White Paper policy in respect of Palestine was being substantially modified. Under the stress of war both your country and mine have found it necessary to tighten up immigration restrictions against people who, whatever may be their personal views and claims, are, in fact, enemy aliens, and a contradiction is to a certain extent unavoidable between what feelings of humanity would prescribe and vital conditions of security and military prudence allow.

This is the negative aspect of the case, and I think you will appreciate the reasons why my Government has been unable, in war-time, in spite of the very strong humanitarian

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aspect, to give any cover of legality to illegal immigration directed towards Palestine. It is entirely contrary to my Government's declared policy to assist enemy-owned ships to reach British ports or to assist enemy subjects by the grant of residence visas which would facilitate their entry into British-controlled territory. This does not, however, mean that these wretched victims of Nazi persecution would be turned back. Even in the case of the "Struma" messages were sent to the Turkish Government not to return the ship until arrangements could be made for receiving the children. Unfortunately these messages failed in their effect, but steps have now been taken which should result in preventing any recurrence of such a tragedy as the "Struma"; that is to say the Turkish Government, when they require future parties of illegal immigrants to leave their territorial waters, will not prevent them from continuing their voyage onwards. This, of course, will be into a zone of war with its peculiar risks, against which the British Government can obviously give no guarantee. But the ships will at least have the opportunity of making for some shore with a reasonable hope of being received, and I can inform you in strict confidence that should that shore be Palestine, there would be no question of expelling the ship or passengers. In other words, the British authorities cannot in any way modify their attitude towards illegal immigration and so cannot facilitate the entry of visa-less persons into Palestine; but those who succeed in reaching that country will, if they have no alternative destination and no choice between admission to Palestine and return to Nazi domination, be allowed to land. They will then be placed in detention camps and those who pass the security and economic check will gradually be released against the current quotas. I should emphasise that this statement of my Government's policy is extremely confidential; were it made public the Germans would be only too ready to break it down by shipping off from the Balkans every kind of unwanted person. You will appreciate that, in this event, the Allied war-effort in the Middle East would be most seriously

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threatened, and my Government would be compelled to reconsider its position. In fact, in its anxiety to relieve distress in this particular matter, it appears to me that the British authorities are taking a certain risk.

Further than this, in any case, my Government does not feel able to go. Their difficulties would of course be greatly eased if destinations other than Palestine could be made available. Some of the passengers have been found to be ex-employees of the United States Legations or Consulates in enemy-controlled countries. Would it not be possible for these to be granted United States visas? If so, temporary refuge in Palestine could, I am sure, be arranged. Again, it may be assumed that many of the immigrants will not fit into the economy of Palestine, but might well be absorbed in more spacious countries further from the zone of actual operations, for example, Latin American countries. Could not the intake of immigrants into San Domingo, for example, be substantially increased? It would be an extremely delicate matter for the British Government to suggest the reception of such persons, especially in countries which have laid such emphasis on their unwillingness to receive Jewish immigrants. But I should be grateful to know your view on the possibility of a joint move by our respective authorities. The "Struma" case, as you say, has caused comprehensible indignation, and a demand for preventive action. But, as you also point out, this is only part of the whole great problem of the deliberate German extrusion of unwanted Jews from territories under their control. In time of peace this called for international action; in time of war it is a burden which can only be taken up in the first instance, so it seems to us here, by your country and ours. I have explained our difficulties, and I have told you of action which the British Authorities earnestly hope will afford at least some relief, but a radical solution which would give satisfaction to the conscience

of all civilised countries demands the most careful preparation and if, after reading this, I fear, lengthy letter and its enclosures, you have any other proposal to make, I should be most grateful to receive it, and can promise to take it up immediately and actively with the authorities concerned.

Siuckh G.
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Copy.

(W 3401/652/48)

SINKING OF M/S "STRUMA".

All material facts relating to the sinking of the M/S "Struma" on February 24th with such deplorable loss of life have now, after investigation, been stated in Parliament by the Secretary for the Colonies on March 10th and by the Under-Secretary in reply to a question on March 11th. It may, however, be added that, although all the immigrants on board this ship were, so far as is known, of enemy nationality, while the ship's captain and crew themselves were also enemy (Bulgarian), it was not only on this account that it was found impossible to grant permission to enter Palestine to any of the immigrants except the children. The regularised admission of Jewish immigrants is fundamental to His Majesty's Government's policy and to reverse it at a critical moment of the war would involve a risk of dangerous repercussions on the non-Jewish populations of the Middle East which might affect the whole conduct of the War.

2. His Majesty's Government have been by no means insensible to the terrible persecution in Germany and German-controlled countries, and have given many practical demonstrations of their anxiety to assist the victims of racial and religious persecution. Illegal immigrants who have reached Palestine have been and will continue to be treated with every regard for humanity, but indiscriminate and substantial additions to their number cannot but be regarded with the greatest misgiving by the authorities responsible for the military and political security of the Middle East. The United States Government, are, of course, aware that His Majesty's Government are not alone in finding it vitally necessary, under the stress of war, to place restrictions on emigration from enemy countries.

3. His Majesty's Government have no confirmation

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of the report mentioned in the last paragraph of the State Department's memorandum. According to their information the Turkish Government, who had already expressed their inability to allow the children from the "Struma" to be landed and taken across Turkey to Palestine, were apprehensive of an attempt to force them to accept all the immigrants in their territory, and so decided to return the ship to the port from which it sailed.

FOREIGN OFFICE, S.W.1.

14th March, 1942.

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EXTRACT FROM
HOUSE OF LORDS DEBATES

10 MAR 1942

PALESTINE.

LORD DAVIES rose to direct attention to the situation in Palestine; and to move for Papers. The noble Lord said: My Lords, I beg to move the Motion standing in my name. I confess I do so with a considerable amount of reluctance. Obviously the last thing any of us want to do in these critical days is to embarrass the Government in any way. The second reason is that my noble friend who has so recently taken up his duties at the Colonial Office obviously has had very little time and, therefore, I imagine, none of us will expect him to give a very long or reasoned reply to-day. At the same time, one feels it one's duty to draw attention to the policy that has been pursued, and is still being pursued, with regard to Palestine, and to register a protest, because some of us, at any rate, believe that it is not calculated to help in winning this war. After all, that is the main and chief consideration. The third reason which induced me to put this Motion on the Order Paper was the urgency of the matter, because I do not believe there is any time to be lost in reversing the policy we have hitherto pursued in regard to our treatment of the Jews and our treatment of this difficult problem.

There are two recent events to which I should like to draw attention which demonstrate the need for urgency. First of all, there was the unfortunate loss of the steamer "Struma" in the Black Sea, which we read about a few days ago. Secondly, we have been informed in another place that a certain number of the followers of the Mufti have been readmitted into Palestine. With regard to the "Struma," this is, as your Lordships are aware, the second case of a ship bringing Jewish refugees to Palestine being sunk. On the first occasion, about a year ago, the "Patria" was sunk at Haifa, and at least one hundred of the refugees were drowned. My noble friend Lord Wedgwood on February 26 asked a question in this House with regard to the

"Struma," and in his reply the noble Viscount said that he understood the "Struma" was a converted yacht of about 200 tons, and that it left Constanza in October with some 750 Jews on board with the object of effecting their entry illegally into Palestine. I have been wondering what precisely was the illegality, because under the provisions of the White Paper there is a quota due for the present half year of 3,400, which is applicable to Jews who wish to go to Palestine, and I imagine that these unfortunate refugees were anxious to be taken in as part of the quota for the current half year. Therefore I fail to see where the illegality of these proceedings comes in, and perhaps the noble Viscount will be able to explain to us more fully what he meant when he described it as an illegal act.

We all know the facts with regard to the loss of the "Struma." Here were a lot of refugees fleeing from the Nazi tyranny in Rumania and in other Balkan countries, men, women and children who otherwise would have found themselves in concentration camps subject to all the tortures and sufferings which they would have had to undergo in those camps. For ten weeks they remained at Istanbul under the most horrible conditions of overcrowding on this very small steamer. One can imagine what they had to undergo. Then there was the refusal of the Palestinian authorities, who, I suppose, had received their instructions from Whitehall, to allow these unfortunate refugees, flying from the Nazi terrors, to enter into Palestine and join their co-nationalists in that country. I do not suppose there is any other country to which they could have gone. Obviously they could not have gone to Greece, where a large part of the population is on the verge of starvation. It is difficult to imagine where they could have found any refuge or asylum other than in Palestine. As your Lordships are aware, there were a considerable number of children on board this steamer. After ten weeks of negotiating the authorities apparently did relent so far as to be prepared to allow the children under sixteen to be admitted.

LORD WEDGWOOD: Over eleven and under sixteen.

LORD DAVIES: To allow children over eleven and under sixteen to be admitted into Palestine. Unfortunately that instruc-

tion arrived too late, and when this ship went down all persons on board, men, women and children, were drowned. I have tried to imagine what were the reasons that induced the Palestinian authorities to refuse admission to these unfortunate refugees. Were they spies? Did the authorities think that enemy agents or spies might have been included in this ship load of refugees? If they did, then the obvious answer to that was the one which I think the Jewish Agency suggested to them, that all these people should first of all be interned, and that then they should be very carefully sifted and weeded out. No doubt the Jews in Palestine would have assisted the authorities in this weeding-out process. Clearly it is not a superhuman performance to carry out such sifting and to place under arrest any person who could not give a satisfactory account of himself.

It might be said that these refugees did not come under the quota. As I understand it, under the quota of the present half-year, which as I have already said amounted to 3,400 there was plenty of margin to allow them to be included, and therefore that could not possibly have been the reason. Then there is the expense of transporting them from Istanbul to Palestine, but that I understand was guaranteed by the Jewish Agency. Moreover, a society in America was prepared to put up £6,000 in order to provide training facilities so that these people could be properly employed when they reached their destination. The last possible explanation is that if these people had been allowed into Palestine we should have incurred the hostility of the Arabs. I want to ask, what Arabs? Obviously we should have incurred the hostility of the Mufti and his followers, but that does not mean we were going to incur the hostility of the vast majority of the Arabs, who, after all, I believe are decent people and not entirely without human feelings. I cannot help thinking that the refusal on the part of the authorities to allow these refugees to enter the country can only be characterized as a stupid, callous and inhuman act, and that the only reason for the refusal was the wish to curry favour with the Arab recalcitrants.

What can we imagine are some of the repercussions which have followed this most callous behaviour on our part? I wonder what the Arabs think about it?

LOSS OF STEAMSHIP "STRUMA."

29. **Mr. Lipson** asked the Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies whether he can now make a statement concerning the sinking of the "Struma" with 769 passengers on board, including 270 women and 70 children?

Mr. Harold Macmillan: The "Struma" was a converted yacht of about 200 tons. Flying the Panamanian flag, she left Constanza last October with some 769 Jews on board with the intention of effecting their entry illegally into Palestine. She reached Istanbul about mid-December, when she was described as being badly overcrowded, and thereafter considerable repairs to her engines had to be effected. While she was lying at Istanbul, the Turkish authorities intimated that the passengers could not be allowed to remain in Turkey. The Palestine Government also made it clear, with the support of His Majesty's Government, that they could not be admitted to Palestine. This action was in conformity with the policy consistently followed since the establishment of the mandatory régime and publicly confirmed by His Majesty's Government in November, 1940.

When the Turkish authorities found that the passengers would not be admitted to Palestine, they decided on 23rd February to send the vessel back to the Black Sea. On 24th February news was received that she had sunk as a result of an explosion four or five miles from the entrance to the Bosphorus. The cause of the disaster is not definitely established. She may have struck a mine, but the possibility of her having been torpedoed is not excluded as a Turkish vessel was torpedoed in the vicinity about the time.

His Majesty's Government greatly deplore the tragic loss of life which occurred

in this disaster. They had hoped that effect might have been given to the offer of the Palestine Government to admit to Palestine the children on board between the ages of 11 and 16, but this proved impracticable as the Turkish authorities did not feel themselves able to give the necessary permission to land. His Majesty's Government earnestly hope that such a tragedy will not occur again. It does not lie in their power, however, amid the dangers and uncertainties of war, to give any guarantee, nor can they be party to any measures which would undermine the existing policy regarding illegal immigration into Palestine, in view of the wider issues involved. Subject to these reservations, however, I can say that His Majesty's Government will endeavour, so far as lies in their power, to ensure that there is no recurrence of such a disaster as that which befell the "Struma."

Mr. Lipson: Is my hon. Friend aware that a great many people, both in this and other countries, have been shocked by this tragedy? Is he aware that this is the second ship containing unfortunate refugees which has been blown up within a year? May I ask whether he will consult with his Noble Friend to see whether it is possible to make such modifications in the practical application of the policy of His Majesty's Government in regard to Palestine as may make tragedies of this kind impossible to occur again?

Mr. Macmillan: I will consult my Noble Friend, but, if my hon. Friend will read the statement I have made, he will see that, subject to the reservation of the general wider policy not being affected, the Government will do everything possible.

Mr. Lipson: Will my hon. Friend bear in mind in those consultations that if the ship had been an enemy ship, German, Italian or Japanese, those on board would have been interned, and will he not consider whether a policy of that kind is not better than exposing them to danger?

Mr. Macmillan: I will convey all those points to my Noble Friend.