

with respect to Relief and
of Refugees: Evacuations To and
Turkey

Evacuation To and Through Turkey, Vol. 2-B, Folder 2

1040



8

DEPARTMENT
OF
STATE

INCOMING
TELEGRAM

DIVISION OF
COMMUNICATIONS
AND RECORDS

RNG-807
Distribution of true
reading only by special
arrangement. [redacted] W)

Ankara

Dated November 16, 1944

Rec'd 6:44 p.m.

*7-War Ref
Ed. [unclear]
Pehle*

Secretary of State,
Washington.

2195, November 16, noon.

FROM KATZKI TO PEHLE W/R REFUGEE BOARD ANKARA'S

NO. 186.

Many efforts have been made to secure lists (refer
Department's 1015 WRB 126) of the names of people lost
on the NEFKURI. Up to the present it has not been
possible to obtain them from Rumania. As soon as they
are received copies will be forwarded to you.

STEINHARDT

JM

[redacted]
For security reasons the
text of this message must
be closely guarded.

CONTROL COPY

DECLASSIFIED
State Dept. Letter, 1-11-72
By R. H. Parks Date **SEP 18 1972**

DEPARTMENT
OF
STATE

OUTGOING
TELEGRAM

DIVISION OF
COMMUNICATIONS
AND RECORDS

BY
Distribution of true
reading only by special
arrangement. (W)

November 9, 1944

8 p.m.

1- W...
Ref...
...

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
NOV 11 1944
DIVISION OF
COMMUNICATIONS & RECORDS

AMEMBASSY

ANKARA

1015

The following for Katzki is LRB 126.

Board would appreciate having list of names of
people lost on the QUOTE Mefkura UNQUOTE. It is
suggested you forward same through pouch.

STETTINIUS
ACTING
(GLW)

CONTROL COPY

For security reasons the
text of this message must
be closely guarded.

LRB:MMV:KG
11/9/44

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DECLASSIFIED
State Dept. Letter, 1-11-72
By R. H. Parks Date SFP 18-1972

CABLE TO STEINHARDT, ANKARA, FOR KATZKI FROM WAR REFUGEE BOARD

Board would appreciate having list of names of people lost on the "Mefkura." It is suggested you forward same through pouch.

THIS IS WRB ANKARA CABLE NO. 126.

11:00 a.m.
November 9, 1944

Miss Chauncey (for the Sec'y) Abrahamson, Ackermann, Cohn, DuBois, Friedman,
Hedel, Lesser, ~~Gannan~~, McCormack, Files

7/1 *Cladwell*
with Beck
FH:hd 11/8/44

SEP 20 1944

Gentlemen:

I am sending you herewith a report prepared by Mr. Jabotinsky on the sinking of the S.S. "Mefkura" which has been received through the American Embassy in Ankara for transmission to you.

I should like to point out that in forwarding the report, the War Refugee Board representative in Ankara stated that it merely constituted the personal views of Mr. Jabotinsky on the sinking of the "Mefkura," concerning which there are many conflicting rumors and statements. The official investigation of the matter is still pending.

Very truly yours,

(Signed) J. W. Pehle

J. W. Pehle
Executive Director

✓
Emergency Committee to Save
the Jewish People of Europe,
2317 - 15th Street, N.W.,
Washington, D. C.

Enclosure.

*Original signed by
Mr. Pehle*

JW
FHhd 9/19/44

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
WAR REFUGEE BOARD
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.



OFFICE OF THE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

September 15, 1944

TO: Mr. Warren ✓
FROM: J. W. Pehle

Attached hereto is the original of a letter from Ira Hirschmann transmitting a report prepared by Mr. Jabotinsky for transmission to the Emergency Committee.

I should appreciate it if you would have Jabotinsky's report cleared through Censorship and returned to this office for forwarding to the Emergency Committee.

Enclosure.

9/16/44
The Com. was advised that
this was cleared with
Censorship before delivery
to us
JW



EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

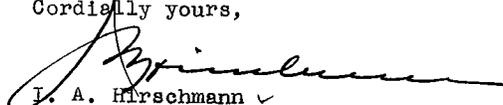
Istanbul, August 24, 1944

Dear John:

Mr. Jabotinsky has asked us to send the enclosed report through the pouch for the Emergency Committee. In forwarding it, I deem it advisable to state that the report constitutes the personal views of Mr. Jabotinsky. There are many conflicting rumors and statements that have no basis for proof connected with the sinking of the Mefkura.

Mr. Katzki and I are making our own explorations, and are now awaiting the official report of the British Naval Attache, who will send us a copy. When this is received, we will forward to you our version of the events leading to this sinking, according to the best information available here.

Cordially yours,


I. A. Hirschmann
Special Attache

Mr. J. W. Pehle, Executive Director
War Refugee Board
Treasury Department
Washington, D. C.

Enclosure: Report as described.

C
O
P
Y

Istanbul,

18th August 1944

Report on the Circumstances of the sinking of the
Turkish motor-boat "MEFKURE".

By Eri Jabotinsky.

The Sources.

The following report is based on evidence given me on August 14th, 15th and 16th by the passengers of the motor-boat "Bulbul", which saved the survivors of the "Mefkure", and also three of the survivors themselves.

I interrogated the passengers of the "Bulbul" on August 14 in Istanbul's Jewish School where they were sheltered during their stay in Istanbul; on August 15 I travelled with them for twelve hours on the train to Eskisehir. While on the train, I also interrogated Miss Vumbrandt, one of the "Mefkure" survivors. On August 16 upon returning to Istanbul I spoke to two other survivors, Mr. Bank and Mr. Axelrod who were recuperating at the Jewish Hospital.

A number of conflicting newspaper reports have been published in the Turkish press. These rumors I have completely discounted.

Conflicting evidence

It should be noted that in many cases the evidence of eye witnesses is conflicting. Thus, for example, I have found a number of people who have seen the captain and the crew of the "Mefkure" reach the "Bulbul" in a life-boat, while other witnesses are certain that the captain and the crew of the "Mefkure" swam to the "Bulbul". I have however, established to my own satisfaction that they arrived in a small skiff which was filled with water, so that they had undressed on the way thus coming on board the "Bulbul" in the nude which gave the impression that they had to swim. The present report sums up my own investigation of the events omitting all credit to individual witnesses.

The departure from Constanza.

The ships that left Constanza on August 2 were the "Morina", "Bulbul" and "Mefkure". They left port at fifteen minutes intervals and were convoyed to the end of Rumanian territorial waters by several vessels of the Rumanian Navy. The three captains had been given instructions (apparently by the Rumanians) to stay together and follow a certain route. It is claimed by some passengers that

the route was not adhered to (anyway, the three boats rapidly dispersed). Before leaving Constantza, the boats were inspected by a German general and a number of officers.

Further, the organizers of the transport in Constantza, maybe at the request of the Rumanian authorities, made a number of last minute changes reshuffling the passengers among the three boats. This was done after the passports of the passengers had already been placed on board the various boats with the result that the "Morina" and the "Bulbul" brought in a number of passports belonging to passengers of the "Mefkure", while some of the passports of the passengers on the "Bulbul" and the "Morina" were lost on the "Mefkure". It may have been a coincidence or a result of deliberate action the majority of the intellectuals in this transport found themselves on board the "Mefkure". This circumstance led some people to believe that the sinking of the "Mefkure" was premeditated and that of the three boats the "Mefkure" was deliberately designated for sinking because it carried intellectuals. Personally, I am not convinced that such is the case.

On leaving Constantza, the boats sighted a number of German submarines but were not molested by them.

The attack as seen from the "Bulbul"

At 12:30 o'clock on the night of August 3rd to 4th, the people on the deck of the "Bulbul" heard gun shots and saw a number of powerful projectors illuminating the sea. They were near enough to see fire break out on the "Mefkure" and to hear the passengers' cries. A short time after, the projectors caught the "Bulbul" itself and flashed a signal ordering it to stop. The actual distance between the "Bulbul" and the "Mefkure" is estimated by most of the witnesses at 1 to 2 klms. However, the fact that they could hear cries would indicate a much shorter distance.

The "Bulbul" stopped and the crew lowered the life-boat and entered it. At that moment there ensued a scuffle between the passengers and the captain. The passengers wanted to prevent the captain from leaving the ship in the life-boat and the captain seems to have thought that the passengers wanted to take the life-boat. As a result, the captain remained on deck during the whole of the alarm. Although cries for help continued to be heard and some of the survivors of the "Mefkure" were even seen struggling in the water, in the light of the projectors, the captain of the "Bulbul" refused to permit any rescue action.

Sometime later, the captain and crew of the "Mefkure" arrived in their skiff which was almost full of water. Later still, the search lights were turned off and the enemy ships departed. At some time during that night rockets were fired by the enemy ships but it has been impossible for me to fix the exact time.

It was only after the departure of the enemy vessels that the captain of the "Bulbul" gave permission to look for survivors. In addition to the crew of the "Mefkure", five of the passengers of the "Mefkure" were picked up. There were three men and two women, one of them in her ninth month of pregnancy.

Evidence of the survivors of the "Mefkure"

The attack was sudden. Before the people realized what had happened, the boat was a flame. There is some evidence to show that five shots had been fired, the first two missing the target while the other three hit the ship and put it on fire. It is estimated that at least 50 of the passengers succeeded to jump into the water. The rest, among them the hundred children who were on board, were apparently trapped in the burning hold. The people in the water were machine gunned by the enemy, (though one of the witnesses Miss Vumbrandt affirms categorically that they were not machine gunned, but the other witnesses claim just emphatically that they were; the "Bulbul" passengers definitely heard machine guns firing).

The enemy ships were very close to the "Mefkure" the distance was estimated by some as 50 metres. The enemy boats were three in number. They were small naval torpedo boats or vedettes. They were not submarines (the submarine story seems to originate because of the submarines sighted at Constantza).

The survivors in the water clearly heard the crew of the enemy boats jeering at them in German. They were shouting things like the following. "Look at the Jews who are now swimming to Palestine".

Miss Vumbrandt says that she was attacked by a large dog which tried to climb on her in the water but believes it was from the "Mefkure". Miss Vumbrandt, on the other hand, is convinced that the dog was one of the several and that it came from the vedettes and was specially trained to attack people in the water.

One of the survivors Mr. Bank had a wrist watch which stopped at 12.35 at the moment he jumped into the water. The five were rescued at 4.30 o'clock. During the first two hours the sea was absolutely calm but later a wind commenced and the sea became rough. At first there were twelve people clinging to a plank with Miss Vumbrandt swimming alongside, holding on to a window frame which was blown out of a cabin constructed on the deck of the "Mefkure". As the night progressed, the people begun dropping off the plank until only two men remained and the girl on the window frame. They were the pregnant woman and her husband, both outstanding swimmers. By the time they were picked up, they were all completely exhausted.

The end of the voyage.

The "Bulbul" continued on its way and reached the Bosphorus in the evening of the 4th. But a sudden storm drove it back into the open sea. It was only 24 hours later that the "Bulbul" managed to make port at Ine Ada and the passengers proceeded from there over land. They travelled over the mountains by a train of 90 carts each drawn by two oxen. Eventually they reached the railway and were brought to Istanbul.

The Seaworthiness of the boats.

Although the catastrophe occurred as a result of enemy action and not as a result of any negligence on the part of the organizers, the following points should still be noted.

The life belts which had been given the passengers were filled with cork shavings and these rapidly absorb water so that one or two of the survivors on the plank who had time to put on their belts, later discarded them because the belts were pulling them down.

There were no instructions given to the passengers as to the use of the belts. Some of the passengers of the "Morina" for instance, did not know that there were belts on board.

The boats were not equipped with any navigation instruments, other than a compass and a radio receiver set. There were for instance no sextants.

There were no interpreters who could talk to the crew with the result that the passengers and captain were unable to understand each other.

The crews were very badly selected. One of the sailors of the "Bulbul" got drunk on the first night and attacked the motor with a cow-bar and had to be overpowered.

The condition of the ship was very bad. The motor of the "Mefkure" stopped after a half hour at sea and had to be repaired. The water tanks of the "Bulbul" leaked creating a shortage of water. The "Bulbul" itself sprang leaks in the storm and the pumps proved inefficient so that it arrived at Ine Ada with a foot of water in its hold.

The condition of the "Mefkure" as a matter of fact was such that the insurance agencies consented to insure it for war risks only and not for sea risks.

The main thing which these boats lacked were life rafts which could easily have been provided.

The responsibility of the crew.

The following is only my personal opinion. I believe that the captain of the "Bulbul" who stopped his ship at the order of the enemy and who refused to undertake rescue operations until the departure of the attackers, acted in the interest of the passengers instructed to his care. Naturally, he was guilty of the gravest breach of naval etiquette by placing the crew in the only life-boat. The same breach of etiquette was of course committed by the captain of the "Mefkure" who more over did not even try to save a single passenger.

The psychology of the passengers.

It is to be noted that the passengers of the "Bulbul" accepted the catastrophe with an incredible calm. There was no panic on board during the shooting. As one woman told me "Hitler taught us to die without noise".

Two young girls from the "Bulbul" aged 20, explained that they were not shocked by the catastrophe of the "Mefkure", they had become tough, really tough, they said. Violent death has become familiar and therefore, no longer frightening.

The above is an attempt to make a coherent story out of a maze of often conflicting details given by people who were in a state of great stress at the time of the catastrophe.

1894
Official

Istanbul, 18th August 194

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I was by Mr. Hull

ORIGINAL TEXT OF TELEGRAM SENT

FROM: Secretary of State, Washington
TO: American Consul, Istanbul
DATE: September 16, 1944
NUMBER: 378 X

CONTROL COPY

Please deliver the following message to Passman Resnik from M. A. Leavitt, American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee:

QUOTE Your 147 to Lisbon we have asked Saly Mayer pay additional 114,000 Swiss francs account Szynd thus completing full payment 1028 passages including Mefkura group. Regarding other sailings wish again call your attention fact Hirschmann believes no sailings should now take place without safe conduct from all parties. View changed conditions Rumania we question advisability risking lives refugee groups who are now in comparative safety and would be absolutely opposed making any payments this purpose if Hirschmann still believes safe conduct essential. UNQUOTE

HULL

SEP 26 5 11 10

WASHINGTON D.C.
RECEIVED
RECEIVED

DECLASSIFIED
State Dept. Letter, 1-11-72
By R. H. Parks Date SEP 18 1972

142

FROM W. V. TAVELER, DIRECTOR
LISBON OFFICE AND LONDON OFFICE

CONTROL COPY

NUMBER: 287 X
DATE: September 14, 1944
TO: DIRECTOR GENERAL, IMMIGRATION
SECRETARY OF STATE, DEPARTMENT
OF STATE
FROM: OFFICER IN CHARGE, LISBON OFFICE

CABLE TO AMERICAN CONSUL, ISTANBUL, FROM WAR REFUGEE BOARD.

Please deliver the following message to Passman Resnik from M. A. Leavitt, American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee:

QUOTE YOUR 147 TO LISBON WE HAVE ASKED SALT WATER PAY ADDITIONAL 114,000 SWISS FRANS ACCOUNT BEING THIS COMPLETING FULL PAYMENT 1028 PASSAGES INCLUDING MENDELA GROUP STOP REGARDING OTHER SAILINGS WISH AGAIN CALL YOUR ATTENTION FACT HIRSCHMANN BELIEVES NO SAILINGS SHOULD NOW TAKE PLACE WITHOUT SAFE CONSENT FROM ALL PARTIES STOP VIEW CHANGED CONDITIONS ROMANIA WE QUESTION ADVISABILITY RISKING LIVES REFUGEE GROUPS WHO ARE NOW IN COMPARATIVE SAFETY AND WOULD BE ABSOLUTELY OPPOSED MAKING ANY PAYMENTS THIS PURPOSE IF HIRSCHMANN STILL BELIEVES SAFE CONDUCT ESSENTIAL UNQUOTE

5:00 p.m.
September 14, 1944

Mrs. Chauncey (for the Sec'y) Abrahamson, Cohn, DuBois, Friedman, Hugel, Laughlin, Lesser, Mannon, McCormack, Cable Control Files

copy sent to JDC

JH

EDrury 9/14/44



EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Istanbul, September 13, 1944

Dear Mr. Pehle:

I am submitting a detailed report on the Mefkura 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 Morina. The sailing instructions of the Mefkura, we must assume, are identical;

(c) Copy of the report of the British Naval Expert made available by the British Naval Attache in Istanbul, dated August 22, 1944;

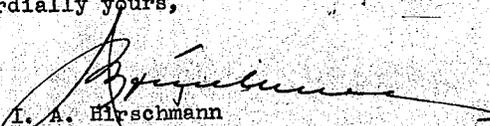
(d) Copy of the notice issued by the British Government relating to international signals to be followed by vessels on the high seas in belligerent waters;

(e) Translation from the Turkish (undated) of a report written by Kazim Turan, the Captain of the Mefkura;

(f) Translation of a letter from one of the survivors of the Mefkura, Ladisloev Fuelop, 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,


I. A. Hirschmann
Special Attache

J. W. Pehle, Esquire
Executive Director
War Refugee Board
Treasury Building
Washington 25, D. C.

Encls.

REPORT ON THE MEFKURA DISASTER

We were originally informed in Istanbul, from sources that were presumed to be informed, that the three ships, Morina, Bülbul and Mefkura, had left Constanza 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 telephone that it had been reported from Büyükdere, a village on the Bosphorus near the Black Sea entrance, that the Bülbul had arrived and was at anchor there. This information was immediately telephoned by Mr. Katzki from Istanbul to me in Ankara. Later in the morning, we were advised that the Bülbul had been joined by the Morina and that the two ships were then at Büyükdere. This information likewise was telephoned to me in Ankara. In the meanwhile, one of the Jewish Agency representatives proceeded to Büyükdere, and discovered that only the Morina had arrived; the information concerning the Bülbul 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 Büyükdere, and on the basis of this information I sent a telegram to you. In view of the corrected factual information this, of course, was countermanded.

The Bülbul was awaited all day on August 5 at Büyükdere. 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 Bülbul 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 awaiting the Bülbuli departed at 10 o'clock that evening. During this period, no word at all had been received regarding the Mefkura.

Sunday morning, August 6, the storm on the Black Sea continued, and there was no information concerning the whereabouts of the Bülbuli and the Mefkura, although it had been reported from Büyükdere that at one time the Bülbuli 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 Bülbuli had put in at a small port named Limandere to ride out the storm. It was apparent that nothing could be done about the Bülbuli, and it was assumed that the Mefkura, faced by the same storm, had pulled in somewhere for safety.

In the meanwhile, the Morina sailed from Büyükdere 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 Mefkura 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 Kirklareli, by messenger from Kirklareli 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. Katzki 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 Bülbül 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, medicines, and other emergency requisites to the scene for the rescued. 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 Bülbül 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 lorries to Igneada to remove the people from Igneada to Kirklareli. Acting for the War Refugee Board, in connection with all of the above, I offered to defray the expenses.

Mr. Packer of the American Embassy submitted the above requests to the Turkish Foreign Office, and in due course the captain of the Bülbül 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 Bdlbdl passengers and the survivors of the Mefkura on Monday, August 14, there was no factual information as to precisely what had occurred to the Mefkura. 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 ox-carts were rounded up and sent to Igneada to transport the passengers. The trip from Igneada began on Wednesday, August 9, by ox-cart 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 Cherkaskoy, and by train from Cherkaskoy to Istanbul, where the Bdlbdl passengers and the Mefkura survivors, five passengers and three crew, arrived on Monday, August 14. It was

only then, when it was possible to speak to the Mefkura and Bdlbdl people, that the facts became known.

The three ships, the Morina, Bdlbdl and Mefkura, had left Constanza together on August 3, 1944. They sailed under the auspices of the Rumanian Red Cross. The Morina itself, when it arrived in the Bosphorus, 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 minesweepers. 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 Morina, being the swiftest, first; then the Mefkura, and bringing up the rear, the Bdlbdl. Because of differences in speed, the ships rapidly drew away from each other. One of the Bdlbdl passengers stated that he saw in the drawer of the captain of the ship a permit issued by the Germans authorizing the departure of the three boats from Constanza, indicating the route which the three boats were to follow, and indicating a time by which the voyages had to take place. According to this passenger, the time-limit had expired by the time the boats were under way.

The Mefkura, shortly after midnight, August 4, was approached by three surface craft described to be about the length of two railroad cars, 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 Constanza harbor, and the three boats opened fire on the Mefkura with cannon shot and machine-guns. One of the earlier shots landed in the machinery of the

Mefkura 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 donned 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 Mefkura 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 Rumanian girl, by the name of Herta Weiss; a Hungarian couple by the name of Phillip; and two Polish men, Bank and Axelrod. Mrs. Phillip is a pregnant woman. The members of the crew who saved themselves included the captain.

The Bülbdül at that time was some distance away from the Mefkura and it was not until towards day-break that the survivors could be seen in the water and brought aboard. The Phillips, 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 Bülbdül group.)

The Bülbdül had also received a signal to stop, early in the morning of August 4. It hove to when approached, some say by two, others say by three armed boats. The Turkish crew of the Bülbdül, 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 similar action. The armed boats approached the Bülbdül, 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 Bdlbdl 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 Mefkura survivors were already on board the Bdlbdl when it arrived at the entrance of the Bosphorus. (This corrected the impression that the sinking took place on Sunday, August 6, near Igneada.)

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 Mefkura and Bdlbdl. There were present during the entire examination Mr. Herbert Katzki 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.

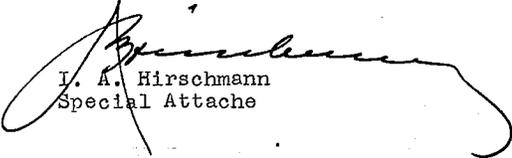
As both captains had been examined previously, the questioning was designed (1) to establish the creditability of the version of the sinking as given by the Mefkura captain; (2) to clarify certain points which seemed to be questionable.

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 Mefkura was requested to repeat the history of the voyage of his vessel from the time of its departure from Constanza up to the moment of his rescue by the Uibdl. 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 Mefkura passengers, on so many fundamental details as to create doubt regarding the creditability of important elements of the Mefkura captain's report. The impression gained by Mr. Katzki 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,



I. A. Hirschmann
Special Attache

September 14, 1944

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Exhibit (a)

R E P O R T

ON THE SINKING OF THE M/V "MEFKURE".

The m/v "MEFKURE" was reported to have been sunk in the Black Sea on August 5, 1944, between Ahtapoli 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. Resnik, 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 "MEFKURE" a wooden motor-caique 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 "MEFKURE" left Turkish waters on May 13, 1944.

2) THE CAPTAIN:

The boat was operated by KAZIM TURAN, Captain, and a crew of six. Kazim 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 "MEFKURE" 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 "MEFKURE" or a similar ship, this rating being the equivalent of a third mate on a larger vessel. Kazim Turan is registered under No. B/1467.

3) STATEMENT OF FACTS:

On August 3, 1944, at 8:30 p.m. the m/v "MEFKURE" along with two other boats, the m/s "MORINA" and the m/s "BULBUL" 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 "MORINA" had 308 passengers, the "BULBUL" 300 and the "MEFKURE" roughly 320 passengers. Before weighing anchor, the captains of the three boats were ordered to visit the harbour-

master of Constanța and were given the sailing orders, a copy of which is appended to this report. The "MEFKURE" and "BULBUL" followed a course set by the "MORINA" but lost the "MORINA" sometime during the second day because of the latter's faster speed.

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 man 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 Constanța 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 "MEFKURE" 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 captain'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 blaze. The British Naval expert identified the larger gun-fire as coming from a 20 m/m automatic cannon using the explosive type of missile. (Attached hereto is copy of a report of the British Naval Expert, loaned to the inquiry committee by the British Naval Attache 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 "MEFKURE" 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 "MEFKURE" lost their lives either by being burned to death or having gone down with the ship.

It is estimated that the "MEFKURE" 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 "BULBUL" 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 "BULBUL" by currents on a rafter which was blown off the m/v "MEFKURE".

All of the survivors claim that the boat was overcrowded and that there was a limited aggresses 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 Constanța not to overload the vessels. The pressure of demands on the part of the refugees, it was reported to him from Constanța, 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 Constanța.

4) SURVIVORS:

There were 5 survivors:

- 1 - Joseph Axelrad, aged 33,
a native of Snietin, Poland,
who received burns and other injuries,
- 2 - Joseph Bank, aged 38,
from Kolomea, Poland,
who also received burns and injuries,
- 3 - Hilda Wurmbbrand, aged 23,
a native of Rumania,
uninjured and a poor swimmer,
- 4 - Ladislav Filop, aged 22,
a native of Hungary,
he was one time a well known amateur swimmer,

his wife :
- 5 - Veronika Vera Filop, aged 18
who was 9 months pregnant, and
who is now in Istanbul expecting her child.

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

".... All evidence shows that "MEFKURE" was sunk on August 5, 1944 about 1:30 local time, about twenty-five 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.

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

- 1) 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.
- 2) 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 "

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

c) It is clear that the "MEFKURE" 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 fate awaiting 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. BARLAS
/s/ S. MEYEROV
/s/ R. B. RESNIK

3 encl.

MRB fyi

GCC 8-14-44

1. TAGNS TV28 BEYGLU 30 14 1430

2. ANDREW SOMERS 2317 FIFTEENTH WASHINGTON

3. SURVIVORS MEFKURE ARRIVED TODAY STOP MEFKURE SUNK BY THREE GUNBOATS WHICH MACHINEGUNNED PEOPLE SWIMMING IN WATER STOP SURVIVORS SAVED BY BULBUL AFTER SWIMMING FOUR HOURS ON PLANK STOP BULBUL LATER FORCED BY STORM INTO PORT INEADA STOP THIS MEANS ABSOLUTE END OF SEA RESCUE TILL BLACK SEA CLEARED OF GERMANS STOP HAVE ACCORDINGLY CANCELED MY RESCUE PLAN HAVE CABLED JEREMIAH HELPERN FOR VISA TO DISCUSS PALESTINE SITUATION LONDON GOVERNMENT STOP AWAITING

4. ERI JABOTINSKY

5. MM REFERRED PER GCC 53900

7. RCAC

1915 CNY 184987 WVV

ACTIONS	<input type="checkbox"/>	Information	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Enforce Flexline	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Compliance	<input type="checkbox"/>		

SPECIAL NOTICE - This contains information taken from private communications and reports of confidential character must be preserved. The information must be restricted to those officials whose knowledge of it is necessary to prosecution of the war. It should not be widely distributed, or published, or the information used in legal proceedings or in any other public way without express consent of the Director of Censorship.

DECLASSIFIED
 NN Mem 9, 11, 15, 1978
 RAB

BYRON PRICE, Director.

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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 türk. 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. Auslaufstag 3.8.44. Diese Bescheinigung hat mit dem 8.8.44 um 24.00 Uhr ihre Gültigkeit verloren.

I.A.

Kapitänleutnant (S)

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Exhibit (c)

C o p y

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, 22.8.1944.

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Exhibit (d)

Sayı 1533/7759/8225

8/9/43

A G E L E

S U R E T

16 Beynelmilel İşaretler konundaki (W,C,A) gurubunun
İngiltere hükümeti tarafından.

(Durunuz. Filika mayna etmeyiniz. Geminizi batırmayınız.
Telsiz kullanmayınız. İtaat etmezseniz ateş açacağım manasında
kullanılacağı İngiltere büyük elçilliginin iş'arina atfen
Hariciye Vekaletinden bildirilmiştir.

Keyfiyetin denizcilere ilanı rica ederim.

MUNAKALAT VEKİLİ N.

Copie

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

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

Prière de communiquer aux milieux maritimes.

Le min. des Commun.

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Exhibit (e)

C 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 127 at the port of Sila, deliver the following report on an attack from an unknown submarine which took place between Ahtapoli and Igneada:

On August 3, 1944, at 8.30 p.m., the motor-boats, "Morina", "Bilbül", and "Mefkure", the latter under my command, sailed from the port of Constanza. Before weighing anchor the captains 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 "Bilbül" 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 "Lems" 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 "Bilbül" 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 20 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 machinegun-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 (200 m away from us and 200 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

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 Bülbul, which was behind us would pass us either 500 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 "Bülbul". 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 500 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 "Bülbul" was aware of what had happened and would approach us. So I swam to the Bülbul 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 migrants (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 Gendarmery 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 Limanköy to Igneada, the Kaymakam (administrative head) of Vize, 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 'Mefkire'" to the doctor of Demirköy. The

kaymakam was entrusted with the transport of the Jews. The next day I told the kaymakam 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 Vize. 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 kaymakam went on horseback to Vize after having told me that I was free to go to Istanbul by whatever means I liked. District Official and Gendarmery Commander ordered me to be taken into custody and to be brought to Istanbul under gendarmery 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 judgement, 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 kaymakam 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 Kirklareli, Mr. Kazim explaining the situation in all its details and succeeded in getting us free. On horseback and miles, for which I had to pay myself, we arrived at Vize 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, "Mefkure", belonging to the port of Sile

Kazim Turan

C
O
P
Y

The Committee appointed by the Rescue Moatza 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 intervues 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 miscellaneous 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 16/8/1944

Ch. Barlas

S. Meyerov

Reuben B. Resnik

Exhibit (f)

Copy of translation of letter from one of the survivors of the Mefkura, and addressed to Mr. Reuben Resnik of American Joint Distribution Committee, Istanbul, 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 "Mefkure" 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 Constanza on the 2nd of August, but I must tell, it was a fearful feeling, because I found inconceivable, that such little shaky bars could master the waves of the sea. But let's drop the matter of criticism, We were delighted even of that, because when I escaped from Hungary, I got away from the sure death, therefore I had nothing to lose. We left at 1 o'clock in the evening. The "Mefkure" has taken the lead, behind it the "Bulbul" and in the last place the "Morina". 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 vedettes, following us as long as we were on Roumanian water. Coming to the open sea the "Morina" left us behind and looking backwards, we did not see the "Bulbul" 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 asking the first Officer -- his name was Hasan, poor man, he also perished there -- when will we get to Istanbul. 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 dissolving 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 paralysed us with horror. I ran 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 view, we'll never forget in our life.

Three ships surrounded our little, miserable barc, 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 leg, 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 "Mefkure". The sea brought voices from everywhere: "Hilfe, segitseg, ama jisroel, eja davar, tov Gianum, biad arcem" 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 Slovakian refugee, named Jeremia. 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 lifabelts, we started to search after corpses, / we found plenty of them/ and cut the lifabelts 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 Jeremia was shot off by a ball of a machine gun and his leg was broken. We got a piece of beam for him, with which we dragged him along with difficulty. We were not farer from the ship we saw, as 2 to 300 meters, when he could not continue any more. We gave him all the lifabelts, he remained there with the beam,

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 desparately 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 "Tiszantul" in Debrecen.

Ladisloev Fuelop

September 5, 1944

(Translated from the Hungarian)

Exhibit (g)

Istanbul, August 31, 1944

Dear Sir:

1.) Concerns the shipwreck of the Turkish boat "Mefkure."

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 "Mefkure", the boat which was transporting Jewish refugees from Constanza to Istanbul.

Three ships, as you know already, left Constanza in the following order: the Morina, the Bülbul and the Mefkure. The two latter vessels followed each other closely. In the middle of the night the "Bülbul" received an order to stop; this order was given by three small armed surface boats. The commander of the "Bülbul" obeyed at once; the three surface boats regarded it and then went away. Shortly afterwards, the "Mefkure" received the same order from these three ships which appeared suddenly. The captain of the "Mefkure" 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 Haydarpaşa 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 "Morina" and "Bülbul", plus 4 of the 6 survivors of the ship "Mefkure". At 10:30 the refugees were gathered together in one of the waiting rooms at Haydarpaşa. 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 without 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 convoy, in a half-compartment, were stored the foodstuffs for the duration of the trip. These foodstuffs consisted of bread, melons, cheese and marmalade, all in sufficient quality.

Monsieur Gilbert SIMOND
Delegue du Comité International de la Croix Rouge,

Ankara

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 reçus,
1 note de frais
Ltqs 205.-, solde des
montants reçus.

8124144
Mehmet
Pehle
Akh Turkey

Istanbul, August 24, 1944

Dear Mr. Pehle:

The enclosed clipping from "La Turquie" of August 23, 1944 relates to the recent steps taken by the Turkish Government in connection with their disposal of the remaining German nationals in Turkey. The situation connected with individuals who were ordered to return to Germany against their will seems to have cleared at this writing. The internment of the remaining 500 Germans, we are informed, is the last step that the Turkish Government is taking in connection with this problem unless there are some new developments therein. I am sending this information by pouch inasmuch as it did not seem to warrant a telegram, and in order to make the record complete.

→ You will also be interested in the enclosed clipping covering your statement of August 22 connected with the Mefkura sinking. It is interesting to see the way a story originating from Istanbul goes half way across the world and back and still retains its freshness. You can also see how importantly a story from the War Refugee Board is treated in these parts.

Cordially yours,

I. A. Hirschmann
Special Attache

John W. Pehle, Esquire
Executive Director
War Refugee Board
Treasury Building
Washington, D. C.

Encls.

IAN:VH

9/13/44
Iref: [unclear]
J.A.

Istanbul, September 3, 1944

Dear Mr. Barlas:

Thank you for your letter of September 10 in which you have included a report of the commission set up on behalf of the rescue committees in Istanbul on the sinking of the S.S. Mefkura.

We are considering the inclusion of a copy of this report in my own report which will be submitted to the War Refugee Board in Washington.

Cordially yours,

I. A. Hirschmann
Special Attache

Mr. Chaim Barlas
Misir Apartments
Istanbul

IAH:B:VH

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Examine Telegram to + Plan Turkey

INCOMING TELEGRAM

DIVISION OF COMMUNICATIONS AND RECORDS

*4 - War Ref Bd
1 Mr. Peble*

GEK-11
This telegram must be paraphrased before being communicated to anyone other than a Government Agency. (~~REPLETED~~)

Lisbon
Dated September 5, 1944
Rec'd 1:05 p.m.

Secretary of State,
Washington.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
DIVISION OF COMMUNICATIONS AND RECORDS
CONTROL COPY

2739, September 5, noon
WRB 178 JDC 64. FOR LEAVITT FROM PILPEL.

Following telegram received from Resnik:

(?). For Joseph Schwartz joint fund Lisbon from Resnik.

*Message sent
9/8/44
RS*

147 following are best figures now available: the MEFKURE carried 320 persons only 5 of whom survived. The BULEUL carried 400 persons: the MORINA 308 persons or a total of 1028 persons.

The associates intend to pay the full and regular fee for all passengers who left on MEFKURE on the basis that they do not wish to raise an issue which may antagonize operating company.

I have discussed the matter fully with several persons including Irving Sherman. Some doubt is expressed as to whether full payment should be made for persons who disembarked but did not ultimately arrive. As yet I have reached no conclusion on the matter and am submitting detailed report for your consideration.

Another

-2- #2739, September 5, noon, from Lisbon

Another problem in connection with NEFKURE is a request from the owners for an additional sum of 15,000 Turkish pounds from the associates. The boat was insured for 25,000 and there is a decided willingness on the part of the associates to make a favorable settlement in order not to impair future relationship with the shipowners.

We are being requested for a full payment of 1028 passengers on which there has been an advance of Swiss francs 400,000. As yet there has been no request made of us for the shipowners claims.

Reports indicate that arrangements are being made to have the remaining Turkish boat in Constanza SELAHALDIN leave within the next few weeks. It is estimated that this boat will carry about 400 passengers. This boat was not included in the original scheme. The SIYRNA the Greek boat which was included in the original plan is also being readied. Efforts are being made to send at least two additional Turkish boats from here. In addition there is the ALBA JULIA a Rumanian boat which can carry 4000 passengers and which is said to be available. Contemplate using the boat for Hungarian group. The detailed report of this question will follow

immediately.

-3- #2739, September 5, noon, from Lisbon.

immediately.

If a relaxation in the Bulgarian shipping restrictions occurs there is the possibility of Milca going to Constanza.

The most recent military operations the bombing of Constanza and the Russian campaign in Rumania may seriously affect all these operations.

I am serving as a member of a commission of three to investigate the MEFKURE sinking the our preliminary findings are made on the basis of full interviews with survivors, and indicate that miscellaneous gunfire is the cause of the sinking. Survivors report that there was defective life saving equipment limited means of egress from the boat, inability to communicate with the crew because of language difficulty. It is announced that if the EULBUL had made the effort to assist in the rescue, 20 to 30 more people could have been saved. Detailed report is being made available to interested private and government officials.

NORWEB

WSB

SEP 8 1944

Dear Mr. Leavitt:

The following message for you from Mr. Filpel was received through the American Legation in Lisbon under date of September 5, 1944:

The telegram below was received from Resnik:

For Schwartz joint fund Lisbon. 147 the following are the best figures available at this time: The MEFKURA carried 320 people and only 5 of them survived. 400 persons were carried by the NULBUL. 308 persons by the MORINA. Total 1028 persons.

It is intended by the associates that they will pay the full and regular fee to cover all the passengers who departed on the MEFKURA on the basis that it is desired not to raise issues which might antagonize the operating company.

The matter has been discussed fully by me with a number of persons including Irving Sherman. Regarding the question of whether payment in full should be made for those persons who disembarked but did not arrive ultimately, some doubt is expressed. I have not as yet reached a conclusion regarding the matter and I am submitting a report in detail for your consideration.

There is another problem in connection with the MEFKURA. A request of the owners for a further sum of 15,000 Turkish pounds from the associates. The vessel was insured at 25,000 and on the part of the associates there is a decided willingness to effect a favorable settlement so as not to impair relationship with the owners of the vessel in the future.

A full payment of 1028 passengers is being requested of us, and on this an advance of 400,000 Swiss francs has been made. There has not been any request made of us as yet for the ship-owners claims.

"It is indicated by reports that arrangements are being effected to have **SELAHALDIN**, the remaining Turkish boat in Constanza, leave within the next few weeks. This boat will carry an estimated 400 passengers. This vessel was not included in original scheme. The Greek boat **SMYRNA** which was included in original scheme is being readied also. Efforts also are being made to send two additional Turkish vessels at least from here. Additionally there is a Rumanian vessel **ALBA JULIA** which could carry 4000 passengers and this boat is stated to be available. It is contemplated that the boat will be used for Hungarian group. Immediately will follow detailed report on this question.

"Should a relaxation in the Bulgarian shipping restrictions occur possibility exists that **Milca** will go to Constanza.

"The bombing of Constanza and recent military developments and the campaign of the Russians in Rumania may affect seriously all of these operations.

"An acting as a member of a committee of three investigating the sinking of the **MEVURA** and our preliminary findings are based on full interviews with the survivors, and they indicate that miscellaneous gunfire caused the sinking. It is reported by survivors that life saving equipment was defective and means of exit from the vessel limited, also inability to communicate with the vessel's crew due to language difficulty. It is stated that had the **BULBUL** made an effort to help in the rescue 20 or 30 other people might have been saved. There is being made available to interested private and governmental officials a detailed report."

Very truly yours,

(Signed) J. W. Fehle

J. W. Fehle
Executive Director

Mr. M. A. Leavitt,
Secretary,
American Jewish Joint Distribution
Committee,
270 Madison Avenue,
New York 16, New York

RD
RDury 9/8/44

SEP 1 RECD

ISTANBUL
XXXXXXX

31 août 1944.

9/31/44
Mefkure
9/1/44

Cher Monsieur,

1.) Concerns le naufrage du bateau ture "Mefkure".

Je porte à votre connaissance les renseignements que j'ai pu obtenir à l'Ambassade Britannique, relatifs à la catastrophe du bateau ture "Mefkure", bateau qui transportait des réfugiés juifs de Constanza à Istanbul.

Trois bateaux, comme vous le savez déjà, quittèrent Constanza dans l'ordre suivant: le "Morina", le "Bulbul" et le "Mefkure". Ces deux derniers navires se suivaient de très près. Au milieu de la nuit, le "Bulbul" reçoit l'ordre de stopper; cet ordre est donné par 3 petits navires de surface armés. Le commandant du "Bulbul" obéit immédiatement, les trois navires de surface le surveillent puis s'éloignent. Peu après, le "Mefkure" reçoit le même ordre de ces trois navires apparus brusquement. Le capitaine du "Mefkure" semble avoir perdu son sang-froid, car au lieu d'obéir, il essaye de s'enfuir. Immédiatement, les bateaux patrouilleurs ouvrent le feu avec des canons légers qui, après avoir fait des dégâts, incendièrent le bateau. A noter que l'action se passa

Monsieur Gilbert SIMOND,
Délégué du Comité International de la Croix Rouge.

Ankara.

from files sent from
WRB in Turkey

par une nuit sans lune et par grosse mer.

Je ne vous répète pas les détails relatifs au nombre des réfugiés et autres circonstances que vous connaissez déjà.

2.) Départ de Haydarpaşa des réfugiés juifs pour la Palestine.

J'ai assisté le mardi 15 août 1944 au départ des 381 réfugiés juifs arrivés à Istanbul sur les bateaux turcs "Morina" et "Bilbul" plus 4 des 6 survivants du bateau "Markure". A 10.30, les réfugiés sont rassemblés dans une des salles d'attente de Haydarpaşa. Le train spécial qui les emmènera en Palestine est en gare; il se compose de six wagons de 3ème classe mais confortables et dans lesquels tous les réfugiés pourront trouver facilement place. La police turque a organisé un service d'ordre qui jusqu'au départ des réfugiés ne se relâchera pas. A 10.45, les réfugiés deux par deux sortent de la salle d'attente et prennent place dans leur compartiment. Cela ne va pas sans quelques cris et un peu de désordre, mais le calme se rétablit très rapidement grâce à la bonne organisation et la compréhension de la police turque. En fin de convoi dans un demi compartiment des vivres pour la durée du voyage sont en dépôt. Ces vivres consistent en pains, pâtisseries, fromages et conserves, le tout en quantité suffisante.

Les réfugiés ne paraissent pas mécontents et plusieurs semblent satisfaits de leur séjour à Istanbul. Seuls les malades et blessés resteront en Turquie à l'Hôpital Israé-

lite jusqu'à leur rétablissement complet.

En conclusion, ce sont l'esprit d'entr'aide des Juifs et l'action du Comité Israélite, en faveur de leurs coreligionnaires qui m'ont le plus vivement frappé et je crois que nous n'aurons jamais de difficultés d'organisation dans le cas de nouveaux transport et les Sociétés d'assurances juives seront à même d'entreprendre n'importe quelle tâche de ce genre.

Veuillez agréer, cher Monsieur, l'assurance de ma considération très distinguée.

Annexes 2 reçus,
1 note de frais
Ltqs 205.-, solde des
montants reçus.

813144
Meyhara
Letters (M)

Istanbul, August 31, 1944

Dear Mr. Mares:

Please forgive the belated acknowledgment of your kindness in sending us a copy of your report concerning the sinking of the ill-fated S. S. Mefkura. It is greatly appreciated.

Cordially yours,

I. A. Hirschmann
Special Attache

Lieutenant Commander E. Mares, R.N.D.R.
British Embassy
Istanbul

IAH:VR

*From material sent from
WRB in Turkey.*

*2 w/Ref/Ed
3 w/Ed*

PARAPHRASE OF TELEGRAM RECEIVED

FROM: American Embassy, London
TO: Secretary of State, Washington
DATED: August 24, 1944
NUMBER: 6856
X

CONTROL COPY

Joseph Schwartz sends the following for Moses Leavitt, JDC, for the War Refugee Board:

Since the signing of the MAFKURA Hirschmann has wired that he now considers it essential that all ships leaving Balkan ports for Istanbul have safe-conducts. He presumably has been in consultation with representatives of the Jewish Agency and JDC. Although we must leave the final decision to him and our representatives in Istanbul, you may be sure that the Emigration Committee in Rumania is thoroughly alive to the dangers involved and prospective emigrants have been advised of those dangers.

FINANT

DCR:VAG:MK 8/26/44

*Message sent
8/27/44
R.D.*

DECLASSIFIED
State Dept. Letter, 1-11-72
By R. H. Parks Date SEP 18 1972

046

AUG 28 1944

Dear Mr. Leavitt:

The following message for you from Joseph Schwartz was received through the American Embassy in London under date of August 24, 1944:

"Since the sinking of the MAFKURA Hirschmann has wired that he now considers it essential that all ships leaving Balkan ports for Istanbul have safe conducts. He presumably has been in consultation with representatives of the Jewish Agency and JDC. Although we must leave the final decision to him and our representatives in Istanbul, you may be sure that the Emigration Committee in Rumania is thoroughly alive to the dangers involved and prospective emigrants have been advised of those dangers."

Very truly yours,

(Signed) J. W. Pehle
J. W. Pehle
Executive Director

Mr. M. A. Leavitt,
Secretary,
American Jewish Joint
Distribution Committee,
270 Madison Avenue,
New York, New York.

RJ
EDrury 8/28/44

DEPT. OF STATE

AUG 28 1944

Dear Mr. Leavitt:

The following message for you from Joseph Schwartz was received through the American Embassy in London under date of August 24, 1944:

"Since the sinking of the *MAFKUBA* Hirschmann has wired that he now considers it essential that all ships leaving Balkan ports for Istanbul have safe conducts. He presumably has been in consultation with representatives of the Jewish Agency and JDC. Although we must leave the final decision to him and our representatives in Istanbul, you may be sure that the Emigration Committee in Rumania is thoroughly alive to the dangers involved and prospective emigrants have been advised of those dangers."

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J. W. Pehle
Executive Director

Mr. M. A. Leavitt,
Secretary,
American Jewish Joint
Distribution Committee,
270 Madison Avenue,
New York, New York.

EDrury 8/28/44

10 4 15

Tunish original attached

3124/44
Mefkure

Report of the accident AUG 24 RECD

from Schwedler

I am the Captain of the motor-boat "Mefkure" which is registered at Istanbul harbour with the number 694 and at the harbour of Shile with the number 127 weighing 40 tonilatos. I can give all details referring to accident that happened between Ahtapoli and Igneada by the attack of an unknown submarine.

Accident: On the third of August 1944 at 20,30 these three motor-boats the Morina, Bulbul; and mine Mefkure left the harbour of Constantza full of Jewish refugees.

Before our departure, we three captains summoned by the principal of the dockyards of Constantza's harbour, to follow the instructions of the officers who was in the motor-boat Morina. He made us understand in case we didn't sail the route he had advised us, he would take no responsibility in case of any accident.

After leaving the harbour, Morina the first, Bulbul behind it, and I being the last one, we were sailing at dawn at about five miles an hour by north-east wind. After 15 minutes having some little damage in our machine we took an hour to arrange it, but we didn't stop from our sailing, as one of the two Roumanian attack-boats, which I forgot to mention before, took us tow-ropes and didn't leave me behind my friends.

Till 5,30 in the morning we continued to sail just as I explained at the beginning. In my boat and those of my friends we had one Roumanian petty-officer with three Roumanian soldiers. After arranging the deficiency of our machine, we went upstairs and I found that behind our boat at 500 metres in the direction of our stern there was something like a black object. When asking the Roumanian officer he told me that it was The Lems, meaning German and that he was searching all around the place. The Roumanian officer and soldiers were wearing life-belts. I too according to my duty, said to my friends and passengers to be ready with their belts. At dawn the Roumanian officer with the soldiers went on board the attack-boat which came with us, and they left us. By the directions given to us at Constantza, I with the motor-boat Bulbul began to follow the orders of the officer who was in the Morina. The Morina was in front of me. He was going just with the south wind, I too followed him; the motor-boat Bulbul which was behind me was coming the same way. All day the sea was calm and the wind was blowing lightly from the west; thus we reached evening. After sunset with the moon we were still continuing our route. At 2,10 I saw a rocket bursting at the top of the mast. At first, I asked my friends whether it was thrown from the boat, they answered "no". At this moment as it was my duty, I signaled with the flag to try and stop. I stopped my machine. As I was preparing myself to make another sign with my mirror and the one that lead to the stern. I saw a black object at about 300 metres, that was coming towards us, with the help of the interpreter and with my signs I advised my friends to put the life-belt and to the passengers to be in the same position. It was 2,15 sharp, when a black object burst into fire which was behind us. This was a cannon. The cannon-ball fell in the direction of the stern part of the starboard at about 15 metres beneath the sea. The second cannon-ball fell a little bit nearer in the direction of the main part of the starboard. The pieces of wood then began blowing about. In the meantime with the cannon-balls began a terrible grape-shot. Instantly I told a comrad to put down a boat and to another one to call out everybody to be gathered and ready to leave the ship. In these moments we couldn't miss even a second. The fire was continuing with the same strength, frightening us with

the grape-shots. I saw some of my friends jumping into the boat. I instantly jumped too and with my pocket knife I cut the rope which was tied to the boat.

Two of my comrades Kemal and Hassan were not in sight; I couldn't see them even searching around and I began to shout for them. They didn't come. We thought that they were wounded by some cannon-ball or by the grape-shot that were raining over the ship. If we waited any longer we understood that the same lot will be our and so quickly we left the ship. Being at 20-25 metres out from the ship's ladder we saw the fire stopping; I understood that the goal would change; so I ordered my friends to undress, jump into the sea and be scattered.

I from my part jumped from the right part of the boat. I was not yet at five metres away when I saw that I was dragged all along the water, mounting and descending. I inspected myself whether I had some wound, but I hadn't. I continued to row. At this moment with the firing of our engine I saw a second ball knocking my boat. The firing of the grape-shot was continuing. The sub-marine seeing that our boat was not sinking yet, he continued firing the upper part of the ship. Before five minutes I saw the ship all in flames, the Turkish flag sinking slowly. Our boat was in holes but hadn't sunk. At 15 metres from the boat was the single row left. I took it near us. At this moment I saw the unknown submarine leaving the place, passing the burnt engine at about 500 metres from the ship. I went near five of my friends that were in the sea and asked about their health. From the 300 boats only one was left and even this one was sunk by the sub-marine being 200 metres away. Then he passed between the ship and the bark. He had 2 persons at his side, one down and one ahead the tower, one at the right, and one at the left parts. A man was busy with a telescope, searching all around.

The sub-marine was going towards the north. He stopped firing and went out of sight. We saw two lights making signs one another.

We were buried in the water at the head of our boat. Five of my friends jumped into it. I was undressed.

By the order I knew that 3 motor-boats were running in the same direction. With my great faith in God, I was sure that "Bulbul" will pass at either 500 metres from our right or 300 metres from our left. With all my power I was attempting to raise the moral of my friends. I saw the sub-marine coming once more towards us. We stayed 5 minutes into the sea till the engine went far from us and again we came to our place of abode.

After 2 to 2,30 hours we heard a sound coming from a motor-boat. It was Bulbul. He stopped at 700-800 metres further just in the same way we had taken. I thought that this stopping meant the finding of a dead body or perhaps some of our ruined boats. The motor-boat started again his machine to sail and he came at 500 metres near us. The wind was so strong that it was leading the machine. After being 5-10 minutes in our boat I told my friends that the motor-boat Bulbul knowing the real facts of the event, will not want to come towards us. So I told them to remain and not stir from their place, that I'll go swimming till the others and once being in I'll come to fetch them. They instantly agreed. I jumped into the sea. I went to the far motor-boat and began to shout. When the seamen and passengers saw me, their excitement deepened. I took my friend from the boat. Two Jewish refugees whom I knew, they were husband and wife, were at sea I took them. Two boys and a girl were at the upper mast of the ship we fetch them too. Only the pieces of wood and the ruins of the barks were visible all around us. The captain

of the motor-boat said that he'll continue to sail and we went at 16 o'clock we were near the channel. The weather was bad, we couldn't enter; we ought to take refuge at Igneada. The 6th of August 1944 in the afternoon, we anchored at Igneada's harbour. I wanted to go out and relate the event with the help of the protect commissioner. I asked the district chief (nahiyé müdürü) and police-corps to let me out; but they told me that I was in the same position of the Jewish. They ought to pass in transit from here and that at every moment they had perhaps to be forbidden of any relation and that I too couldn't go out.

By the order given from the agency, the Jewish passengers had the permission to pass by land and come to Istanbul. Then of course I was allowed to go too, with my friends they got us out. The 9.8.1944 going from the harbour village to Igneada, the kaymakam of Vize, whose name I don't know, came to look after the group he reverently met us, then he acknowledged the representative of Demirköy's kaymakam, the Doctor Eshber Veyder of Demirköy that we were the survivors of the motor-boat Mefkûre. The kaymakam was busy to send the Jews. The next day I asked him to help us, as we too passed a great event and if possible to give us a coach to lead us to Vize. But he answered me that it was impossible. I begged once more not leaving us behind the other passengers in this mournful day and if they were Jewish refugees guests we were as them Turkish citizens and had suffered thousand times more than them. But the reply was "To day I can't send you with any vehicle and to day I consider you less than them."

The vice governor (kaymakam) who told me I was free and might go to Istanbul which way I liked, while he went to Vize on horseback, he ordered the civil chief of the district (nahiyé müdürü) and gendarmery (jandarma) at Igneada, that I was to be watched and sent to Istanbul, as I caused the death of three hundred passengers and the loss of my two friends in the sea. I feel a satisfaction to expose to your Highness the treatment which we Turks received by a Turkish chief, we who have seen disaster and whose death will always survive in our memories. Because I explain to your Highness that I have made this accident of my own will, as I could not have had the courage to do such terrible crimes.

During 3 days according to vice-governor's (kaymakam) order we stayed without food and shelter in so desert a place like Igneada. The well known Haydar Dag helped me. He called the governor of Kirklareli to the telephone explaining him the whole situation and he set us free. We mounted on horses and mules, I payed the journey for all until we reached Vize. We left Vize in the morning on the 14th of August 1944 and came to Sirkedji in the evening at 19,45.

As it is my duty I made the whole report of the event of the many passengers I passed; but giving it to you I recommend that such terrible story might not happen once more and you must do everything to prevent from now.

With all my respects

Captain of the sunken motor-boat Mefkûre
Registered at Shile's harbour
weighing 40 tonilatos.

Kâzım Turan

VUKUAT RAPORU

Istanbul limanının 604 sicil ve Şile limanının 17 başlama sayılarında kayıtlı 40 rusu tonilatoluk "MEFKÜRE" adındaki motorlu bombarda yelkenlisinin kaptanı olduğundan Ahtapoli ile İğneada aralarında meçhul bir denizaltı tarafından vukubulan tanruzun vukuati berveçhi zir arz olunur.

Hadise: I-4.8.944 saat 20.30 da Köstence limanından yahudi muhaciri yüklü olarak Morina, BÜLBÜL, ve ben MEFKÜRE adlı motorlarla hareket ettik hareketimizden evvel Köstence Liman reisinin daveti üzerine üç motor kaptanı bir araya toplanarak gideceğimiz yol hakkında Liman reisinin MORİNA motoruna verilen bir yüzbaşının göstereceği yol üzerine hareketimizi ve bunun emri hilâfına seyrettikimiz takdirde vukua gelecek hadiseden kendilerinin mes'ul olmayacaklarına dair izahat tebellüğ ettik.

Rahatından çıktıktan sonra MORİNA ileride BÜLBÜL onun peşinde benle en geride olarak gün doğuşu, gündoğuşu kerte, gündoğuşu poyruza tahminen beş mil seyreterek devam ediyorduk. 15 dakika sonra makinemizde çıkan ufak bir arızayı bir saat sonra yaptık bu yapma sırasında yolumuzdan kalmadık bizi üst tarafta arz etmeği unuttuğum iki rümen hucum botundan bir tanesi yedeğine olarak arkadaşlarımızla seri bırakmadı.

Sabaha kadar yani 5.30 kadar yolumuza üst tarafta arz ettiğim şekilde devam ettik. Bizde ve arkadaşlarımızda bir rümen küçük zabıt ve üç tane rümen erleri vardı. Makinemizin noksanını ikmal edip yukarıya çıktıktan sonra geminin arka tarafında 500 metre kadar kıç istikametimizde siyah bir cismin olduğunu gördüm. Ve rümen subayına sorduğundan bunun "LEMS" yani Alman olduğunu oralarda devriye dolaştığını söyledi. Rümen subay ve erleri Cankurtaran yelekleriyle sarılıydı. Bende vazifem icabı gerek arkadaşlarıma ve gerekse yolculara yeleklerle her an için sarılmış vaziyette bulunmalarını söyledim. Sabahın alaca karanlığında rümen subay ve erleri bizle beraber gelen hucum botlarına binerek yanımızdan ayrıldılar Köstencede verilen direktif üzerine ben ve BÜLBÜL motorları MORİNA da bulunan ve yolumuzu tesbit edecek yüzbaşının rotaya gitmeye başladık.

MORİNA motoru benim önümde idi. Tam kible rüzgarına gidiyordu benle aynı rüzgar peşinde bulunan BÜLBÜL motorunda benim gittiğim yola geliyordu. Gündüzün hafif deniz ve orta halli esen batı rüzgarı ile akşam ettik. Akşam güneş battıktan sonra ay çıktığı biz yine aynı yolumuza devam ediyorduk. Gece saat 2.10 gece motorun direkleri üstünde bir raket patladığını gördüm. Evvelâ arkadaşlarıma bunun gemiden atılıp atılmadığını sordum, hayır dediler o anda

Vazifem olan Dur filamasını çektirdim. Makinemi stop ettirdim, ikinci bir işarette intizar etmekle iken aynamla ta kiç ayna istikametinde bir siyah cismin 500 metre kadar peşi izde olduğunu gördüm. Arkadaşlarıma can kurtaran yollarına sarılmalarını ve yolculrın da hemen bu vaziyeti yapmalarını gerek terdian gerekse kendi işaretimle bildirdim. Tam saat 2.15 dakika geçe arkamızda bulunan cisimden ateş çıktı bu bir topdu bu top mermisi geminin sancak kiç omuzluğu istikametinin 15 metre denizine düştü ikinci top mermisi bir parça daha yakın üçüncü top geminin bel istikametinde yani sancak bel istikametinden vurdu. Ve tahta parçaları havalarda dolaşmaya başladı bu sırada hem top, top arasında dehşetli makineli atışları başladı ben hemen arkadaş-ıma sandalı çekmemizi ve diğer arkadaşımıza da bir birimizi çağırarak bir yere toplanıp gemiyi terk etmemizi söyledim. Bu sırada benim bir saniye bile boş yere vakit geçirmem doğru değildi çünkü ateş dehşetle devam ediyor makineli ateşi büsbütün bizi şaşırtıyordu.

Arkadaşlarımin bir kısmı denize atliyerek sandala çıktıklarını gördüm. Bende hemen geminin yanında bulunan sandala atladım ve çakı ile bağlı bulunan sandalın halatını kestik bu sırada aramızda bulunmıyan arkadaşlarımdan Kemal ve Hasanı gözlerimle aradım gibi başarılar gelmeleri için çağırıyordum. Gelmeiler bizde bunların ya topla veyahut yağmur gibi yağan makineli ateşle yaralanarak bir tarafta kaldıklarını beklediğimiz takdirde bizim de akibete uğriyacağımızı anliyerek derhal gemiyi terkettik, geminin yanında 20-25 metre kadar geminin iskele omuzluk istikametine açıldığımız bir sırada atışın durduğunu görür görmez arkadaşlarıma hedefin değişeceğini derhal soyunup denize atlamalarını ve dağınık olarak denizde bulunmalarını söyledim. Ben kendim sandalın sağ tarafından denize atladım, ve beş metre gitmeden kendimin sulara mark olduğunu gördüm bir saniye sürmeden beni içine alan deniz bir senbire yine suyun yüzüne fırlattı kendimi yokladım bir tarafında y ra yoktu. Ben yine sandaldan açılmaya çalışıyordum, bu sırada motorumuza yapılan ateş gibi sandala da ikinci topu isabet ettirdiğini gördüm bunun arasında makineli tüfek ateşi de devam etmekte idi. Ben sandalın baş tarafından dolaşarak denize doğru açılmaya başladım bu sırada gemiyi üst tarafından ateşliyen deniz altı geminin batmadığını görünce ateşini yine gemiye çevirerek geminin su kesimine ateş etmeye başladı beş dakika sürmeden gemi ateşler içinde Türk bayrağımızın salganarak denize gömüldüğünü gördüm. Bu sırada sandalımız üç yerinden yara almış olduğu halde batmadığını sandalın yanına sokulduğum zaman gördüm ve sandaldan 15 metre uzakda denize düşen bir tek küreği de sandalın yanına bıraktım. Bu sırada meçhul deniz altı ateş ettiği yerden ayrılarak batan motorumuzun yanık enkazının sağ tarafından takriben 50 metre kadar uzak geçerek geminin ileri tarafına yüz metre kadar geçtiğini gördüm, ben derhal sandalın yanından denizde bulunan beş arkadaşımın yanlarına sokulmağa ve onların sıhhatlerinin yerinde olup olmadıklarını öğrenmek için gittim, bizden 300 sandaldan ise 200 metre uzakta bulunan deniz altı sandalın batmadığını görünce tekrar top ateşi ve makineli ile sandali tamamen batırdı ve geminin yanık enkazile sandalın arasından bizden 150 metre kadar dışarıımızdan olarak geçti.

Deniz altı geçerken kesinde iki, kule dibinde ileride bir sağ ve sollarla yine birer arka tarafta yine bir kişinin bulunduğunu en üst kulede bulunan iki şahsın bir tesisde tanesinde dürbün olduğunu ve dürbünle etrafa bakdığını iyice gördüm.

Deniz altı şımale yol alarak yine ateş açtığı yerde bir parça tevakkuf ettikten sonra kayıp oldu. Bu sefer deniz tarafımızda bir ışığın parladığını başka bir ışıkla lıptırtı halinde işaretleştiklerini gördük.

Biz burada sulara gömülmüş sandalımızın başında idik. Beş arkadaşım sandala girdiler ben sandalın küpeşte anadan doğma çıplak bir vaziyette kendimizi idare ediyordum.

3 motorun aynı rota üzerine seyrettiğini bildiğim için ve allahımın mucizesinin hiç bir zaman için eksiklik kalmadığına iman ettiğim için peşimizle bulunan BÜBÜL motorunun bizim ya 500 metre sağımızdan veya 300 metre solumuzdan geçeceğine iyice kani idim. Arkadaşlarıma teker teker elim en kaldığı kadar maneviyatlarını yükseltme kabilinden sözler söyleyerek avuyordum. Denizde bulunan teniz altının bir aralık gine yanımıza yaklaştığını gördüm. Evvelki söylediğim gibi arkadaşlarımin hemen denize atlıyarak dağılmalarını söyledim ve denize atlatıp beş dakika durduktan sonra deniz altı bizde yine uzaklaştı biz yine olduğumuz yere geldik. Tahminen iki veya iki buçuk saat sonra bir motor sesi duyduk bu BÜBÜL motoru idi. Bizim bir parça yani yedi sekiz yüz metre kadar geldiğimiz yol üzerinde durdu. Ben bu druşun bizden bir ya leş, veya enkazın görülerek durulduğunu zan ediyordum. Motor bir parça daha makinesini çalıştırarak bizim beş yüz metre uzarımızda durdu. Buğzar motoru bize getirmek için kolay esiyordu. Biz sandalda beş on dakika daha durduktan sonra ben arkadaşlarıma BÜBÜL motorunun bu hadisenin hakikatini anladıktan sonra bizim tarafa gelmesini ümid edemediğimi anlayınca benim motora yüzerek gitmemi ve onların da yerlerinden kimlidamamalarını motora girdikten sonra hemen bunları gelip alacağını söyledim razı oldular ve denize atladım ve uzakta bulunan motora gittim ve eslendim. Beni gören gerek gemi mürettebatı ve gerekse içinde bulunan yolcuların heyecanlarının bir kat daha arttığını gördüm. Arkadaşlarımin sandaldan aldım. Denizde bulunan bir karı bir koca bildiğim iki yahudi muhacirini de bunlardan başka geminin boy kalası üzerinde bulunan bir kız iki erkeği de denizden alılık etrafımız da bizim batan geminin ufak tefek enkaz veya parçalarından başka birşey göremiyorduk motor kaptanı yoluna devam eteceğini söyleli ve devam ettik. Saat 16 raddelerinde boğaza yaklaştık havanın muhalefetiyle boğaza giremedik tekrar işneadaya sığınmamız mecburiyeti hasil olarak 6.8.944 öğleden sonra işneadanın liman önünde demirledik. Ben dışarı çıkmama İstanbulda ve diğer taraflarda bizim başımızdan geçen hadiselerden doğacak merki bir dereceye kadar izah etmek bakımından motorde bulunan muhafaza memuru delaletiyle Nahiye Müdürlüğünden ve Janitoria komutanlığından rica ettiğim halde benim de yahudiler meyanında bulunduğumu tranzit olarak geçen bu yah yahudilerin her an için ihtilâtdan men olarak buldukları bakımından dolayı benimde dışarı çıkmama imkân olmadığını söylediler.

Yahudilerin vekaletten gelen emir üzerine dışarı çıkma ve dışarıdan kara yoluyla İstanbula gelmeleri emri geldikten sonra bittabi beni de arkadaşlarımla beraber dışarı çıkarttılar. 9.8.944 günü yolda liman köyünden işneadaya giderken ismini bilmediğim Vize kaymakamı kafileye riyaset etmek üzere gelmiş onları kemali ihtiram ve nezaketle karşıladıktan sonra bizim batık MEFKÜRE motoru felaketzedelerinden olduğumuzu demirköyü kaymakamlığına vekalet eden Demirköy doktoru bay Eşber Keyder takdim etti. Kaymakam yahudilerin sevkile meşguldu. Ertesi günü kaymakam beye müracaat ederek bizim de felaket geçirdiğimizi bize de elden gelirse yardım kabilinden bir araba bularak vizeye naklimizi rica ettiğim sırada bunun imkânı olmadığını, ikinci bir rica ederek bu acılı günümüzde bizi bu yolculardan gerimi tutuyorsunuz bunlar yahudi muhacir misafirleri ise bizde bu vatanın evladı olduğumuz gibi onlarla beraber leşil onların gördüğü felaketin binlerce fazlasını görüp geçirdik dediğim zaman bu gün için sizi hiç bir vasıta ile savk edemem ve bugün de sizi onlardan aşağı tutarım diye söylemiştir .

Benim serbest olduğumu ve istediğim taraftan İstanbul'a gidebileceğimi söyleyen Kaymakam bey atın üzerinde Vizeye giderken İğneada'da Nahiye müdürü ve Jandarma komutanına benim üyüz yolcunun ölümüne ve iki arkadaşımın denizde kaybolmasına sebebiyet verdiğim bakımdan nezaret altında bulundurulmamı ve Janlarca ile İstanbul'a gitmemi emretmiş ve gitmiştir. Bir Türk amirinin felaket gören ve öldüğü her an için gözü önünden geçiren biz türk evlatlarına karşı yaptığını bu muamelele n takdirini Yüksek Huzurlarınıza arzetaem de kendimde bir rahatlık his ediyorum.

Çünkü ben bu hadiseyi kendi isteğimle yapmadım ve bu gibi acılı bir vak'ın insanlar tarafından yapıp yapılmıyacağını takdirımı yine Yüksek huzurunuz'a arz ediyorum.

Üç gün Kaymakam beyin emrini infaz bakımından kendimizin aç ve açık nerede yatacağımızın tesin edilmediği İğneada'da gibi ıssız bir yerde kaldıktan sonra İğneada'da eşrafından ve ailece tanınan Haruf Haydar Doz bana elinden geleni insanlığı ve insanlığın her türlü icapettiği büyüklüğü bir baba gibi yaptı. Kırklareli valisi Kazım beyi telefona çağırarak vaziyeti bütün açıklığı ile anlattı ve bizi serbest bıraktırdı. Bizde ücreti kendim tarafından verilerek bayrak ve kurtlana baktık. Vizeye geldik Vizeden 14.8.944 sabahı hareket ederek Akşam saat 10.45 de Sirkeci istasyonuna çıktık. Bu günde vazifem olan Şu Vak'ın raporunu Yüksek huzurlarınıza derin saygılarımla sunarken bu felaket içinde geçirdiğim bazı acı hallerin diğer arkadaşlarıma yapılmaması için lâzım gelen makamatı aliye nezdinde teşebbüsatta bulunulmasını en derin saygı ve hürmetlerle rica ederim.

Şile limanına bağlı 40 rusum tonluk

batan MEFKÜRE motoru kaptanı

Kazım Turan

8/24/44
Confidential

Dear Mr. Hirschmann,

I learned with regret that a mistake was made yesterday in connection with the interrogation of the two captains.

Although the meeting took place in my flat I was not responsible for calling it, but nevertheless I am sorry, that neither yourself nor Mr. Katzky were invited to participate.

We shall arrange another interview with the captains for you.

I'll be grateful if you will communicate this to Mr. Katzky too.

Sincerely yours
E. G. Heberall.

23.8.44.

From file sent from
WAB that in Turkey

MINUTES

of a Meeting
of the Operating Group of Relief Organizations
at the Office of the War Refugee Board, Istanbul
August 21, 1944, 4:45 p.m.

Those present: I. A. Hirschmann, Herbert Katzki, Heuben
Mesnik, Charles Passman, Zeev Schind, Shud Ueberall, Chaim
Barlas.

Prior to the meeting, Mr. Schweitzer telephoned to say
that because of other engagements which he had made and which
he was not able to cancel, he could not be present.

Mr. Hirschmann opened the meeting by requesting informa-
tion concerning the investigation of the Mefkura sinking.
He reported that the United States Naval Attache's office
was not able to make anyone available to attend the examina-
tion which would be made of the respective captains of the
Mefkura and the Bdlbdil. He reported, however, that the
British Naval Attache agreed to make available to him a copy
of their report when it has been prepared.

Mr. Barlas stated that the examination of the two captains
was expected to take place within the next few days. Such
examination should not be made solely from the technical
point of view, which might be that of the Naval Attache, but
from the point of view of the rescue organizations, in order
to determine the feasibility of continued rescue work by sea.
He stated that he had cabled to Mr. Zissu in Bucharest ^{requesting} the
names of the passengers on the Mefkura. His own view was
that because of the last-minute redistribution of the passen-
gers among the three boats, such lists might not be available
in Rumania. He himself is sending to Bucharest the names of
the Bdlbdil and Morina passengers, so that through a process
of elimination the names of those on the Mefkura might be
determined.

Inquiry had been made by members of the Istanbul Jewish
community regarding reports that 130 bodies had been washed

from WRB material
sent from Turkey

1047

ashore along the Black Sea coast. It appears that this report is not true.

Although Mr. Simond of the International Red Cross seems to question the report that the Mefkura was sunk by gun-fire, discussions with the five surviving passengers definitely indicate that this is true.

Mr. Schind stated that one of the British naval officers said that he would make an assistant available to talk to the captains of the Bilodi and the Mefkura.

Mr. Hirschmann introduced the subject of the telegram received by Mr. Simond from the International Red Cross delegate, Kolb, in Bucharest, by reading the telegram of August 16 to the meeting (copy attached to these minutes), with reference to the status of Mr. Zissu in emigration work and the proposed sailing of the Alba Julia. Simond wanted to reply on the preceding Friday or Saturday, August 18 or 19, but he had dissuaded him from doing so until the matter could be discussed among the representatives of the relief organizations. Mr. Barlas reported that he had cabled Zissu confirming that he was the representative of the Jewish Agency and that he has plein pouvoir to do whatever is necessary with regard to the Rubin situation. He thinks that Zissu required a strengthening of his position in his relationships with the Government and that he is quite capable of handling the Rubin matter. He had advised Mr. Simond to inform Kolb to the effect that Zissu is the representative of the Jewish Agency in emigration matters. Mr. Schind explained the status of the Orat for the benefit of Mr. Passman. In his view, if Zissu is to represent the Jewish Agency, Barlas should instruct him specifically as to what to do and that he should not be given entire

discretion, but he should be informed that the Orat is not to be eliminated until another organization has been established through which ships can be sent. It is this function, namely, which Orat now serves. Mr. Barlas stated that he is sending a second cable to Zissu ordering the prompt dispatch of the ships now in Constanza. He agreed to make copies of both wires available to Mr. Hirschmann.

Mr. Rosnik stated that the JEC had received complaints about the Orat, but nevertheless had advised Mr. Fildermann that the Orat should go ahead with its work. However, if complaints continue, and the flow of people is impeded because of the differences in leadership, the question should be reviewed.

Mr. Passman reported that upon the eve of his departure from Palestine to Istanbul wires were received by Mr. Kaplan from Zissu via Switzerland to the effect that if Zissu is not given full control of emigration work, the flow of refugees will stop.

Mr. Schind was of the opinion that if Mr. Zissu represents the Jewish Agency, and is doing his work properly, he is obliged to work with the Orat and to make every effort to send to Istanbul those ships which are now ready and available in Constanza. Mr. Zissu apparently desires to eliminate the Orat.

Mr. Hirschmann emphasized that internal questions involving the status of various Jewish Agency people or their respective organizations is not one in which he can interfere, but that the interests of the War Refugee Board can only arise if such disputes result in a blocking of emigration work. He asked that these differences be composed outside the meeting, and the final steps taken be reported at the next meeting.

Mr. Barlas analyzed the telegrams he had received from Zissu concerning the proposed voyage of the Alba Julia. The proposals were based upon the transportation of 4000 passengers. This would cost, according to the proposals, two hundred million lei, plus 20 million lei for insurance of the equiPAGE, plus 30 million lei for other internal costs. This would aggregate 56,000 lei per person, or 13 pounds. The insurance of the boat would cost additionally 12 pounds per person. If the number of passengers were reduced to 3,000, the costs per passengers would be 17 pounds plus 12 pounds.

^{Zissu}
~~It was~~ proposed that five million Swiss francs be deposited as an insurance guarantee for the value of the vessel, in the event that it is lost, or alternatively that insurance be purchased with insurance companies. According to Mr. Barlas, the premium rate would be 12 per cent. According to the telegram, it would be possible for the Alba Julia to leave within ten days, if financing details and necessary authorizations could be given immediately.

Mr. Hirschmann was of the opinion that this question of financing ought to be determined by the Jewish Agency and the JDC together, and suggested that this be done subject to report at the next meeting.

Mr. Peind reported that the Salahaldin and Smyrnie are in Constanza, and the Milca will be departing shortly from Varna to Constanza. In addition, it is contemplated that two additional boats be sent from Istanbul for the embarkation of refugees in Rumania. Mr. Hirschmann emphasized the importance of moving the people from Rumania at the earliest possible moment, so that the way would be clear for the refugees from Hungary in the event that the several proposed projects be realized. Although he will propose that the

Hungarian refugees be permitted to remain in Rumania until their onward voyage is possible, it will be necessary for the good of the work in general to move them promptly. Under such circumstances the way ^{must} would be cleared and boats available.

Mr. Hirschmann read a memorandum dated August 14 concerning railroad transportation from Bulgaria. He reported that according to this memorandum movement from Bulgaria may take place via railroad should it become apparent that the Vita and the Pirin are unable to engage in a shuttle service between Burgas and Istanbul.

Mr. Barlas reported that he had received telegrams to the effect that 140 children were ready to come from Rumania but that the Turkish Consul had refused the necessary visas, interpreting his instructions as meaning that he is permitted to grant visas only for sea travel. This matter has now been clarified.

Mr. Barlas reported further that he had sent 1,000 Palestine certificate confirmations to Bulgaria, to be used as a basis for Turkish transit visa applications for overland travel, and that both Bucharest and Budapest had been advised of the general overall agreement concerning Turkish transit visas which had been made by the Turkish Foreign Office.

Mr. Schind had received a cable that Bulgarian authorities would not permit the Vita and Pirin to leave Bulgaria because of the Mefkura disaster. A recent arrival from Bulgaria brought a message from Joseph Levy of the Russe community saying that the passengers are ready for the Pirin and he thinks that they will be able to depart shortly. In his opinion, people in Bulgaria are still prepared to leave that country, despite reported prospects that the

condition of Jewish people in that country will be ameliorated.

Mr. Hirschmann advised the meeting that the order on the part of the Bulgarians which had been holding up the departure of the Vita and Airin has been cancelled.

Mr. Hirschmann reported briefly on the political situation in Bulgaria, insofar as the Jewish people there are concerned. He had let it be known to the Bulgarian authorities that as far as the United States Government is concerned they desire that emigration from Bulgaria take place on a voluntary basis, and that it should not be a forced emigration, because of the failure on the part of the Bulgarian authorities to eliminate the anti-Jewish laws. In his opinion, the number of people who will want to emigrate from Bulgaria will be substantially reduced, should representations concerning the elimination of the anti-Jewish laws be carried out. Quite possibly, however, the young people may still want to emigrate. In the meanwhile, the United States Government has requested Ambassador Harriman in Moscow to make such representations as might be feasible to enlist the support of the Russian Government in persuading the Bulgarians to take ameliorating steps in its relationships towards the Jews.

Mr. Barlas suggested that since the Allied Governments had criticized the actions of the satellite countries in oppressing the Jews, and had broadcast warnings to them, they ought now to approve the action taken by the Bulgarian Government, should it change its policy in that connection. In this connection Mr. Hirschmann indicated that the War Refugee Board had already been informed of the advisability of doing just that thing.

Mr. Barlas stated that he had received a telegram to the effect that 2195 persons are ready to leave Hungary and are in possession of Hungarian exit and Rumanian transit visas, but that German consent for the departure of these people is still required. The organizations in Hungary are pursuing this matter further.

Mr. Passman presented the offer made by Palestinian transportation companies to make available 400 lorries for transporting refugees. This was discussed in the meeting, and the general impression was that complexities arising out of the shortage of gasoline, the necessity for crossing military zones, travelling through Axis countries, might make such a proposal unfeasible. It was decided that this offer should be investigated further as to its practicability.

Mr. Schind, who expected to be departing for Palestine on August 24, took occasion to express his thanks for the assistance and cooperation which he had received from the War Refugee Board in connection with that part of the transportation of refugees in which he and his associates are interested. He expressed the hope that the War Refugee Board would continue its friendly efforts in collaboration with his associates who will remain in Istanbul to carry on the work.

Mr. Hirschmann, in acknowledging Mr. Schind's request, assured him of the continuing assistance of the War Refugee Board and asked him to tell his colleagues in Palestine that despite all obstacles the agencies in Istanbul were working harder than before.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:15 p.m.

Herbert Katzki

Telegram attached

1148

Attachment to Minutes

TELEGRAMME REÇU DE KOLB, le 16 AOÛT

Les correspondants des institutions juives, qui ont ma confiance, m'ont montré le télégramme qu'ils ont adressé à Istanbul, et me demandent de l'appuyer énergiquement.

Je vous prie de vouloir bien faire comprendre à Istanbul, que l'ORAT doit être définitivement écarté, et que RUBIN, contre lequel existent des griefs sérieux, doit être congédié; sans de telles mesures, l'émigration juive sera gravement compromise.

La question doit être entre les mains de M. ZISSU, qui est un homme intègre et appuyé par le Gouvernement roumain. Ceci d'autant que l'on prévoit le prochain passage d'un grand nombre d'émigrés hongrois.

L'affrètement du bateau ALBAJULIA se prépare et sera utilisé pour l'émigration jusqu'à Istanbul. La capacité de transport est de quatre mille personnes.

La question de l'achat des deux bateaux roumains stationnés dans le port d'Istanbul est de nouveau à l'ordre du jour. Veuillez me câbler d'urgence si M. Hirschman ou autre organisme juif peuvent garantir une somme de 5 millions (?) pour le voyage aller et retour de l'ALBAJULIA.

Votre message 666 ne m'est parvenu que ce jour. ORAT est responsable du nombre des passagers ayant pris place sur les bateaux qui furent envoyés par ses soins.

Je suis dans l'attente de vos renseignements au sujet du naufrage du MEFKURE.

Kolb

8/27/44
Mefancy
Intern

AUG 25 1944

B

1. Further interrogation of the captains of U-2008 and U-2009, took place to day.
2. All evidence shows that U-2008 was sunk on August 8th about 0130 local time, about 85 miles N. E. of ICER, by gunfire from one or two (or possibly three) submarines on the surface. The gun used was probably a 20 mm automatic cannon with explosive missile.
3. It is evident that the skipper of U-2008 lost his nerve when one of his ships 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 U-2009, (a steady witness) that he saw a red rocket fired on his starboard bow at about 0130/4th at approximately the point where U-2008 was at the time.
 - (b) other survivors of the U-2008, 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 U-2008, the attacking vessel came up from astern, firing as she came, passed by the stationary vessel to starboard, still firing, and crossed ahead of her. Fire was then opened on the dingy, in which were the captain and crew of the vessel. They promptly jumped out, as the dingy was hit three times and crashed.

22.8.44.

*From U-2008 files sent
from Turkey*

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 Mekura and Bilibli. There were present during the entire examination Mr. Herbert Katzki of the War Refugee Board, and Mr. Ch. Barlas of the Jewish Agency; and for part of the time, Messrs. Charles Passman and Reuben Mesnik 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 Mekura 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 Mekura was requested to repeat the history of the voyage of his vessel from the time of its departure from Constanza up to the moment of his rescue by the Bilibli. 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 Mekura passengers, on so many fundamental details as to create a doubt regarding the creditability of

important elements of the Mefkura captain's report. The impression gained by Mr. Katzki from this examination was that the captain probably lost his head during the incident, and while one cannot ascertain as to what extent his acts or failure to act were a contributory cause, we are not at all convinced, based upon the captain's conflicting testimony and that which survivors reported, that the disaster was unavoidable.

The captain of the Bulbdl, it seems, made a much better impression. He appeared objective in reporting events to the extent of his personal knowledge. While some of the Bulbdl passengers reported adversely regarding his conduct during certain stages of the interception of his vessel, he apparently acted in a much more responsible manner than did the Mefkura captain, when confronted by the same emergency. In the final analysis, he brought his vessel through a situation similar to that which resulted in the Mefkura disaster.

MINUTES

of a Meeting
of the Operating Group of Relief Organizations
in the Office of Mr. Barlas, August 17, 1944, 7:00 p.m.

Those present: I. A. Hirschmann, Herbert Katzki, Zeev Schind,
Reuben Resnik, David Schweitzer, Chaim Barlas.

Mr. Hirschmann opened the meeting by suggesting that it would be advisable at this time to review the projects for evacuating refugees from Rumania by sea, in view of the Mefkura disaster. In this connection, he alluded to WRB cable No. 97. Mr. Barlas reported that a small committee, consisting of Messrs. Barlas, Resnik, and Meyerhoff, is investigating all the facts, as far as they can be ascertained, regarding the sinking, and that a full report will be made upon the conclusion of their investigations. In the meanwhile, it is his opinion that evacuation by sea from Rumania must continue, and he has already written Mr. Zissu to that effect.

Mr. Resnik stated that the Mefkura survivors and the Bilbuli passengers with whom he spoke felt that the dangers of sea transportation were pretty strong, and that something more ought to be done in terms of safety if movement by sea is to continue. If Rumanian naval escorts of the boats up to Bulgarian waters could be secured, why could not similar safety measures be taken for the voyage beyond that point? Telegrams which he had seen and which were being sent to Rumania to relatives in Rumania by Bilbuli passengers advised against leaving Constanza by boat for the voyage to Istanbul.

Mr. Schind pointed out that investigations of the disaster are not yet complete. Information thus far to hand was that the Mefkura travelled without lights and that warnings from the attacking boats that the Mefkura stop its engines and stand by were disregarded. It is important to know whether

From WRB material sent from Turkey

similar signals to stop, were received by the Bilbul and exactly what the circumstances were under which it did stop and subsequently continue its voyage.

The three refugee boats were escorted by Rumanian vessels and sailed under German permission, under specific instructions as to route. These are factors which have a bearing upon the investigation. The insurance companies are also checking up on the facts.

Mr. Barlas suggested that an effort be made to secure the assistance of members of the American and British Attaches offices in conducting the inquiry. Mr. Scind was of the opinion that until the investigation was finished there should be no change in policy regarding movement by ship. Perhaps people in Rumania will be unwilling to travel by sea, but this would be their decision and not ours. It is only by moving people from Rumania that it will be possible to assist refugees from Hungary who will be dependent upon Rumanian transit facilities. It should be noted that the Mefkura was the first ship which was a casualty after eight others had successfully completed their trips to Istanbul. Mr. Schweitzer felt that people in Rumania are in possession of all the facts, and they will decide as to whether or not they wish to travel by sea. In the meanwhile, they must be given the opportunity to make their own decision in this regard.

Mr. Hirschmann summarized the position by stating that it was agreed by all present in principle as to the need for continuing sea transportation. However, this leads to several questions: first, what safety provisions can be taken for future voyages; secondly, for whom shall the ships be made available, for Rumanians, Bulgarians, or Hungarians; and thirdly, what delayed the departure of the Moring, Bilbul and Mefkura.

Mr. Schind stated that it was impossible to answer the last question definitely, but it was the opinion of his group in the absence of other information that the delay was the result of internal politics. He can only hope that, because of various steps which have been taken, such discord will not arise in the future. Zissu, Fildermann, and Petrusca all were involved in the dissensions. Some of the delays may have occurred because of the methods of financing transportation, which involved the choosing of people who are in a position to pay sufficient sums for their passages to cover internal expenditures which must be made in Rumania.

If the Bellacita or other Bulgarian boat can be sent at once to Constanza, this should be done. This will have a good moral effect even if it must sail with a small number of people. Indeed, orders have already been dispatched to Constanza that the Salahaldin be sent off, carrying any number of persons, however small, who are willing to make the trip at this time. In a cable from Bucharest, dated August 14, Mr. Schind's group was advised that arrangements for the rebuilding of the Salahaldin are going on, and it will be ready to make the trip within the next few days. With the Smyrnie, likewise, preparations for accomodating passengers are going forward. In his opinion, the work must go on because at this moment there is no other solution to the transportation question.

Mr. Resnik was of the opinion that up to the present time there was no factor in the situation which should cause the stoppage of sea transport. However, maximum efforts for safety must be taken. Some survivors reported to him that life-saving equipment was not satisfactory. They were sufficient in number, but deficient in quality. There were language difficulties, inasmuch as none of the passengers

could speak Turkish, and neither the captain nor the crew members knew any other language. Means of egress from the boat were likewise inadequate.

According to Mr. Schweitzer, the version of some of the people was that it was impossible for the mefkura passengers below decks to get out of the hold. In his opinion, clarification should likewise be secured of a current report that 15 per cent of the passengers must pay for the voyage in order to cover internal expenses, or the departure of boats is delayed.

Mr. Barles stated that any refugee can leave Rumania without paying transportation, and that up to the present time no refugee has been required to pay for his voyage.

Mr. Hirschmann thought it advisable to withhold judgment until the full report of the investigating committee be received, but that in the meanwhile all efforts for sea transport should continue. The possibilities that escorts be sent with the boats who are able to interpret languages should likewise be checked. Mr. Schind stated that orders have been sent to Constanza that better life-belts must be found, that all passengers must wear their life-belts at all times, that not more than one ship should be en route at any one time, that people able to act as interpreters be provided for the ships, and that the number of persons embarked on the vessels should be reduced in order to avoid over-crowding. In this connection, instructions have already been sent to Bucharest to embark no more than 400 passengers on the Salahaldin, on which it was originally planned to send 600.

Mr. Hirschmann ~~introduced~~ introduced for discussion the manner in which the Bulbul passengers were received and sheltered in Istanbul. He stated that according to reports received by him, there was substantial room for improvement

in the matter of organization. Mr. Barlas thought that the refugees were satisfied and that everything went all right. It must be taken into account that the local people who assisted in the work at the Jewish school where the people were sheltered were without experience in the matter. Mr. Resnik pointed out that the school facilities were not set up for the kind of service which was expected of them, and that in his opinion the matter was handled satisfactorily.

Mr. Schweitzer stated that on the whole the work was done satisfactorily, but was of the opinion that there was substantial room for improvement in terms of the organization of the work in providing medical assistance and other types of aid. Although the dining-room was well organized, there was substantial room for improvement in other aspects of the work.

Mr. Hirschmann, to sum up, felt that it was important that the representatives of the other organizations in Istanbul many of whom have had experience in the movement of refugees ought to be given some responsibility where emergencies of the present kind arose, all in the interest of the task to be performed.

Mr. Hirschmann requested information regarding the status of the SS Vita and Pirin. Mr. Schind reported that he had sent orders to Burgas to prepare these boats for departure but was without reply. Mr. Barlas' experience in communicating with the official Jewish Agency representative in Bulgaria likewise remained without response. The reason for the absence of replies is not known. Perhaps Bulgarian Jewish people, because of the Mefkura disaster, were unwilling to take the risk of the sea voyage, as perhaps they did not feel the urgent pressure to leave as did ~~the~~

for example the refugees who had entered Rumania. In any event, this matter is being followed up closely, and if no response is received within the next three or four days, other steps will be taken.

Mr. Barlas then read to the meeting a letter dated August 12, 1944, which he had received from the British Embassy in Ankara, summarizing the terms of an agreement which has been made by the Turkish Foreign Office with reference to the issuance of Turkish transit visas to applicants therefor in Hungary, Rumania and Bulgaria, and who were in possession of certain documents as a basis for supporting their requests.

In the above connection, Mr. Hirschmann read in full the entire text of the telegram which was sent by the British Embassy in Ankara to the Foreign Office, London, and which gave in detail the terms of the agreement. He reported that he had asked Mr. Simond of the International Red Cross to inform Intercross delegates in Hungary, Rumania and Bulgaria of the Turkish transit visa facilities now made possible under the agreement.

Mr. Barlas reported that he had sent a test group of 100 confirmations to the Jewish agency representative in Bulgaria, to determine whether or not it will be possible for the holders thereof to cross the Turkish border without further ado, as a test of the possibilities under the agreement. Instructions had been dispatched by cable and letter to Budapest to send a first group of 600 refugees to Rumania or Bulgaria as a further test.

Discussion then ensued as to the manner in which people from Hungary can be transported, with particular reference to rail traffic difficulties. It was pointed out that, under

the agreement, apparently movement from the satellite countries was to be confined to sea voyages, on the Pirin and Vita, and that on these grounds rail entry into Turkey was to cease.

Mr. Barlas reported that this part of the agreement has since been amended, and that land traffic is to be kept open. The British Embassy agreed to send a special memorandum to the Foreign Office on the subject.

Mr. Barlas reported further that he had a message from Switzerland that two groups of children should be leaving shortly from Bulgaria. He expected to investigate this matter further in Ankara within the next few days.

With regard to Hungary, Mr. Barlas reported that word had been received from Kraus and Komly, a Jewish Agency leader in Budapest, by letter, which left ten days ago, which indicated that, first: Kraus is optimistic as to possibilities for emigration from Hungary; second: Komly reports that although the Hungarians agreed in principle, they have taken no steps to put these principles into action.

Mr. Barlas has received definite information that Rumanian transit visas for Hungarian refugees have been arranged, but has no information up to the present time regarding Bulgarian transit. He thought it advisable that steps be taken to secure free passage through Bulgaria in behalf of Hungarian Jews. Should this facility be secured, it would then be possible to bring further pressure in Hungary for release of refugees from that country.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:30.

WALTER KATZKI

WAR REFUGEE BOARD

Executive Office of the President

Washington

FOR RELEASE MORNING NEWSPAPERS
Tuesday, August 22, 1944.

RELEASE NO. 13

Details of the midnight attack and subsequent sinking in the Black Sea of the S. S. Mefkura, 200-ton Turkish motor ship carrying refugees from Constanza, Roumania, to Turkey were revealed today by John W. Pehle, executive director of the War Refugee Board.

Reports from the five survivors indicate that the ill-fated Mefkura went down under German shell fire. More than 250 passengers perished.

"If anyone had any doubts about the German attitude toward refugee rescue operations, or anticipated a lessening in the Nazi program of extermination, he now knows the ugly truth," Mr. Pehle declared.

According to a cable received by Mr. Pehle from Ira Hirschmann, War Refugee Board representative in Turkey, survivors of the Mefkura stated that the ship was approached by three surface craft near midnight August 5. The boats were barges, about the length of two railroad cars, and armed with machine guns and cannons. The boats fired both cannons and machine guns at the Mefkura. One of the first shots exploded the machinery in the machine room and the ship was set aflame by incendiary bullets.

The survivors said that many of their number were wounded by shell fire; others were caught in the flames or injured by flying machinery. The machine guns continued to fire upon many of the passengers after they had donned life preservers and jumped into the water.

The five Mefkura survivors and 395 passengers from the S. S. Bulbul, which made the trip a few hours behind the Mefkura, are now en route to Palestine by rail, Mr. Pehle said. The Bulbul passengers reported that their ship was not on the scene during the attack on the Mefkura. Later the armed boats approached the Bulbul and its engines were shut down. At daylight it picked up the five Mefkura survivors, who were all that could be found. A storm was raging, otherwise it was thought that more might have been rescued. For some reason, the armed boats did not fire upon the Bulbul, which continued its voyage carrying the Mefkura survivors to Ignaeda, Turkey.

Mr. Pehle stated that the emergency rescue operation which included bringing both the Mefkura survivors and the Bulbul passengers by oxcart from Ignaeda to Vize, by truck to Cherkaskoy, and by train to Istanbul, was conducted under the supervision of the Turkish Red Crescent.

7:049

AUG 22 1944

Refugees Indicate Nazis Sank Ship

Washington, Aug. 21 (AP)—The War Refugee Board said today reports from five survivors indicated that the Turkish motor ship, *Mefkura*, carrying refugees from Rumania to Turkey, was shelled and sunk by German surface craft on August 5 in the Black Sea.

More than 250 passengers perished in the sinking. The survivors, John W. Pehle, executive director of the board, said, are now en route to Palestine.

DEPARTMENT
OF
STATE

INCOMING
TELEGRAM

DIVISION OF
COMMUNICATIONS
AND RECORDS

CONTROL COPY

LFG-496
Distribution of true
reading only by special
arrangement. [REDACTED]

Lisbon
Dated August 21, 1944
Rec'd 1:50 p.m.
[REDACTED]

Secretary of State,
Washington

2500, August 21, 3 p.m.

*Message sent
8/25/44
RE*

" X
Following is substance of telegram from Resnick
Dated August 16. 391 BULBUL passengers and 5 survivors
of LAFKURA arrived Galata August 14. 372 left for
Palestine August 15. Interviewed passengers state
following; first, all survivors LAFKURA certain ship sunk
by incendiary bombing and gun fire August 5 at 12:05 p.m.
Most survivors identified attackers. Second, only possible
for 40 or 50 to leave ship, all others wounded or burned
to death. Of those who left only 5 were saved, a Hungarian
couple, 2 Polish men and a Rumanian woman. Third, those
struggling in water were machine-gunned by 3 patrol boats
which attacked LAFKURA. Fourth, others, perhaps 20 or 25
might have been rescued if captain of BULBUL had been
willing to help. Fifth, loss of life in part due to
insufficient exits to deck from hold and defective life
saving apparatus.

[This is WRD 160 JDC 55 from Pilpel for Leavitt.]

DECLASSIFIED
State Dept. Letter, 1-11-72 Sending
By R. H. Parks Date SEP 18 1972

049

-2- #2580, August 21, 3 p.m., from Lisbon

Sending detailed report and financial information later. Resnick thinks traffic from Constanza will either cease or at best be very small; this is end of Resnick's information.

Have advised Joseph Schwartz and also told him Barlas has notified Dobkin that Barlas considers further transports possible."

NORWEB

DU MRM

August 19, 1944

MEMORANDUM

TO: Secretary Morgenthau
FROM: J. W. Pehle

The attached cable from Hirschmann gives the details of the sinking off the coast of Turkey on August 5 of the Turkish vessel METKURA, with the loss of 246 refugees. There were only five survivors.

If anyone needed further proof as to the German attitude toward rescue operations, here it is. We are making the facts public.


JWP:dg 8/19/44

Une déposition troublante

Qui a coulé le "Mefkouré" ?

Le capitaine du motor-boat « Mefkouré » qui a été coulé en Mer Noire a fait avant-hier sa déposition à la Capitainerie du Port. Selon ce capitaine, au moment où le motor-boat allait appareiller de Constantza, quelques officiers roumains montèrent à bord et indiquèrent au capitaine la route à suivre. Deux destroyers roumains suivirent de loin le motor-boat lorsqu'il quitta le port.

Avant l'appareillage, les officiers roumains placèrent les femmes et les enfants à bord du « Bulbul » et du « Morina ». Les hommes en pos-

session d'une profession libérale, tels que médecins, techniciens, etc., furent installés à bord du « Mefkouré ». Lorsque les trois petits navires eurent quitté les eaux territoriales roumaines, les officiers roumains retournèrent à bord de leurs destroyers.

Peu de temps après que les navires de guerre se furent éloignés, les sous-marins firent leur apparition et prirent directement le « Mefkouré » comme cible de leurs attaques, sans se préoccuper des deux autres motor-boats.

Le Journal d'Orient
8/17/44

*Donnez plus d'attention
à Turkey*

00049

The Washington Post
AUG 17 1944

**Turkish Ship Sunk
By Nazis, Say Survivors**

Istanbul, Aug. 15 (delayed) (AP).—
Five survivors of the Turkish ship
Mektur, previously reported sunk
Aug. 6, while en route from Ro-
mania to Turkey with 250 Jewish
refugees, said today the ship was
sent to the bottom by shellfire from
three German patrol boats.
The German craft attacked with-
out warning and machinegunned
the struggling passengers in the
water when they abandoned ship,
said the survivors.

1 1 0 4 9 2

AUG 16 1944

NAZIS SANK SHIP WITH 250 REFUGEES

Istanbul, Aug. 15 (Delayed) (A. P.).—Five survivors of the Turkish ship Mefkure, previously reported sunk on August 6 while en route from Romania to Turkey with 250 Jewish refugees, said today the ship was sent to the bottom by shellfire from three German patrol boats. The German craft attacked without warning and machine-gunned the struggling passengers in the water when they abandoned ship, said the survivors.

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Le récit des rescapés sur la fin tragique du "Mefkûre"

Des chiens, jetés à la mer par les hommes des sous-marins, attaquèrent les sinistrés qui voulaient sauver leur vie

Les réfugiés juifs dont la randonnée dramatique a été relatée par tous les journaux, sont enfin arrivés hier matin par train en notre ville. Ils sont au nombre de 303 en dehors des 310 qui sont arrivés par le moteur «Morina».

Les rescapés du «Mefkûre» nous ont fait le récit suivant : «Nous avons échappé à une mort certaine. C'était pour nous délivrer des supplices et des calamités indescriptibles que les Nazis faisaient pleuvoir sur nos têtes que nous avons risqué nos vies en nous embarquant en si grand nombre sur de pareils petits moteurs.

Nous n'en avons pas le choix.

(Suite en page 4 col. 6)

L'ATLANTIQUE - Aug. 15, 1944

Le récit des rescapés du "Mefkûre"

(Suite de la 1ère page)

du «Mefkûre». Je ne peux pas vous décrire l'effroyable scène. Tous cherchaient à se jeter à l'eau et aller à une mort presque certaine. Tous les efforts des capitaines des deux autres moteurs, le «Bülbul», et le «Morina» pour nous envoyer des aides, étaient empêchés par les mitrailleuses des sous-marins. Ceux qui purent sauter à la mer commencèrent à lutter contre les vagues mais ceux qui ne savaient pas nager ont coulé avec le navire.

Tant que le «Mefkûre» brûlait nous pouvions nous voir grâce aux flammes. Mais une fois le moteur coulé, les alentours furent plongés dans une profonde obscurité et nous n'entendions plus que les cris et les gémissements de ceux qui se noyaient. Les sous-marins voyant le «Mefkûre», couler tournèrent le feu de leurs mitrailleuses contre nous et non contents de cela ils jetèrent à la mer quelques chiens qui vinrent attaquer ceux qui luttèrent contre les vagues pour sauver leur vie. Une dizaine de personnes ont été noyées en luttant contre ses chiens. On ne voyait plus les deux autres moteurs que les sous-marins avaient commencé à attaquer. Ce drame a duré quatre heures environ car après on n'entendait plus aucune voix. Tous, sauf nous cinq, s'étaient noyés. A l'aube nous avons pu pager vers la côte. C'est alors que le moteur «Bülbul» qui avait réussi à se réfugier à la côte est venu nous sauver et nous avons pu atteindre la côte d'Ineada. Nous étions 293 à Ineada.

La générosité du gouvernement Turc et les sentiments humanitaires manifestés par son Croissant-Rouge sont les seuls héritages de valeur que nous transmettrons à nos enfants.

Les naufragés israélites du motor-boat «Mefkûre» et les réfugiés juifs du «Bülbul», arrivés hier partiront aujourd'hui à 11 h. 15, par train spécial également, pour la frontière syrienne. Leurs frais de voyage sont assumés par le Croissant-Rouge.