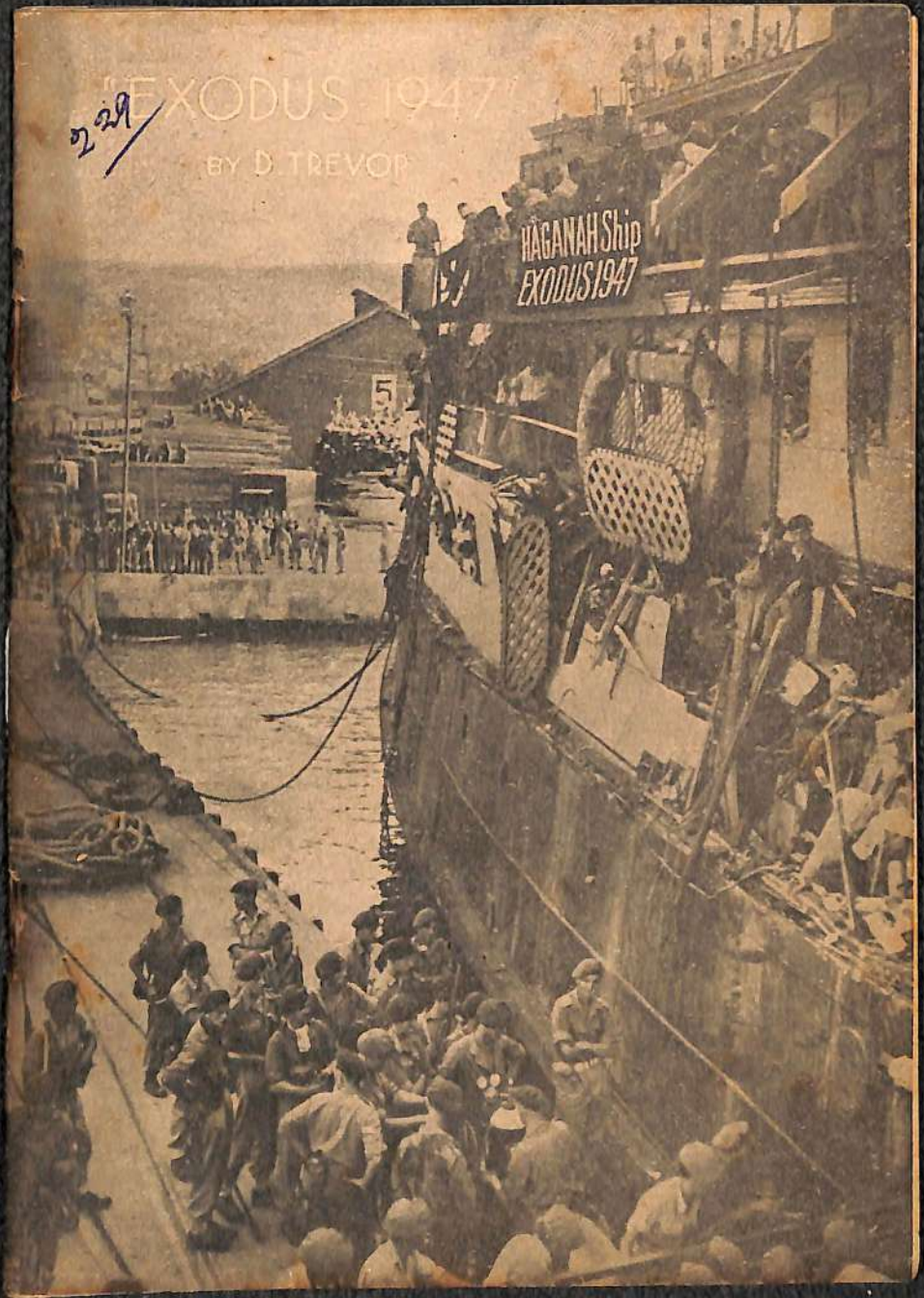


EXODUS 1947

229

BY D. TREVOR

HAGANAH Ship
EXODUS 1947



She had 4,554 passengers — 1,655 children, 1,017 young people, 1,600 men, 1,282 women. The Exodus had been spotted by a British destroyer soon after sailing, and had been shadowed by warships which relieved each other every two days all the way. "At the present moment we have an escort of one cruiser and two destroyers," the announcer said, and went on to address an appeal to the United Nations. The 60-minute transmission closed with the singing in Hebrew of a Hagana song and of the Jewish National anthem, "Hatikva."

NAVAL ACTION

The next day, the 18th July, the Exodus 1947 was stopped by British Naval forces — according to those on board, outside territorial waters. The ship was rammed and three of its crew and passengers were killed during the boarding operations — in the inimitable language of the official communique, they "were found to have died from fractured skulls." The Government statement described this "naval engagement" as follows: "In order to avoid being boarded, the ship took violent evasive action which in the ensuing boarding operation resulted in damage to herself as well as to ships of the Royal Navy. The sides had been planked up and barbed wire had been strung fore and aft. The boarding party met strong resistance, backed by tear-smoke, fire works, smoke bombs, steam jets and various missiles. She also dropped life-rafts from a height onto the decks of the naval vessels. One single shot and one burst of machine-gun fire were used by one of the naval ships against an immigrant who was threatening to decapitate * one of the boarding party with an axe, and another who was about to use a rifle. The shot and the burst missed, but frightened the two men, who dropped their weapons. No other fire was used by naval personnel. Some fifty naval personnel in all were used in the boarding party. The PRESIDENT WARFIELD entered Haifa Port under her own steam on the evening of the 18th.

* In later news bulletins from the Palestine Broadcasting Service this melodramatic word was replaced by "attack."

Two illegal immigrants were found to have died from fractured skulls, and a third has since died in hospital from the same cause. Twenty-seven others were admitted to Haifa hospital; some of these persons, though not all, were suffering from injuries received when the PRESIDENT WARFIELD was boarded. Three naval ratings were injured and admitted to hospital."

An eye-witness account of the fighting was given to newsmen, and later to the U. N. Committee, by John Grauel, a former clergyman and accredited correspondent of an American paper, THE CHURCHMAN, who was on board the ship. "We had intended to beach the ship early in the morning", he said, "but at 3 a. m. British destroyers came up. We were told that we were inside territorial waters, and that they intended to put a boarding party aboard. We turned and headed out to sea. We had travelled two miles and certainly were outside the 3-mile limit, when two destroyers cradled us. Their boarding party carried the bridge on the first assault, but we had rigged up auxiliary steering apparatus from the aft platform and managed to keep the ship under control. The British were never able to reach the engine room." Grauel denied that the immigrants used tear-gas bombs.* Their only weapons, he said, were potatoes, cans of Kosher corned beef, and steam jets, while the British used guns, clubs and tear-gas. They had deliberately fired at the bridge as they came aboard, seeking to cripple the helmsman. Grauel personally assisted in the removal from the hurricane deck of the vessel of two young lads who had been shot, and a third boy had his wounds dressed in his presence — and they were gunshot wounds. After a number of people had been severely injured, and further resistance had become useless, the ship gave in. British injured were treated by doctors aboard the Exodus and medical help for the Jewish injured was also sent from H. M. S. AJAX. Those who lost their lives in resisting the boarding operation were William Bernstein (23), American born,

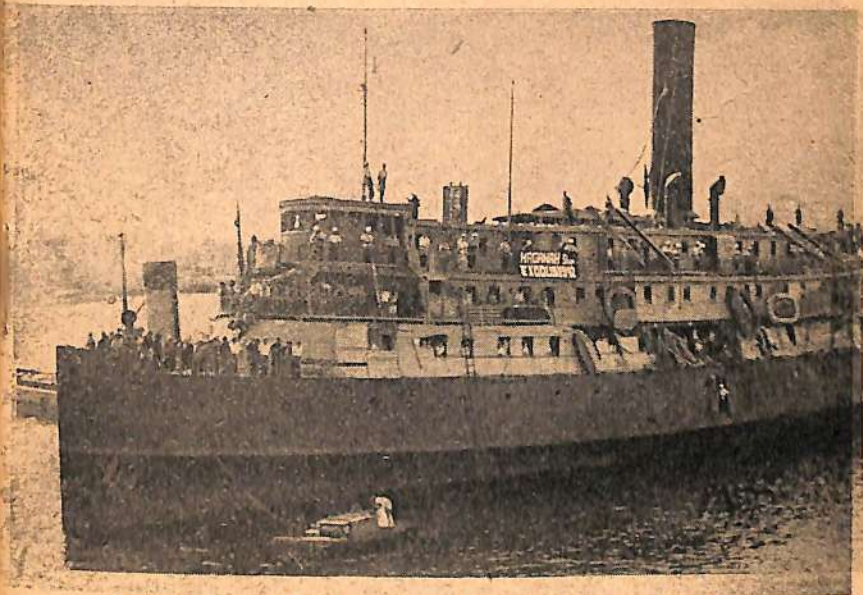
* The Labour daily, Davar, suggested as a possible explanation of the communique that gas shells had overshot the vessel, so that the destroyers cradling the Exodus unwittingly bombarded each other.



After the Battle. Injured and wounded on board the "Exodus".
One of the warships which rammed the ship seen behind.

chief mate on the vessel; Hirsch Yacubovich (15), from Poland; and Mordechai Bunstein (23), from a D. P. camp in Germany, who fought all through the war as a partisan in Poland.

The Exodus 1947 sailed into Haifa Harbour on the afternoon of the 18th of July, preceded by H. M. S. AJAX and followed by two destroyers. She was flying the Zionist colours from the masts fore and aft. As she drew up, huge gashes could be seen in the planking that had walled in the middle deck, railings were ripped off, cut cables hung down from the bridge; bedding, blankets, clothing, splinters, broken and dripping water-pipes, were all mixed up. A British soldier climbed up and cut down the Zionist flag, thrusting the trophy into his shirt.



Captured "Exodus" entering Haifa. Gash visible on middle deck.

DEPORTATION FROM HAIFA

The usual procedure was followed. The Army sent men aboard to hand out the routine leaflets printed in Yiddish and German, giving the refugees instructions about disembarkation, what to do with their luggage, telling them they would be taken to Cyprus. Women and children were asked to come off first. Grauel told Judge Sandstroem, Chairman of the U. N. Committee, that the first stretcher to be taken from the ship was a five-hour old corpse. Because of the journalists present, he assumed, orders were given to roll the boy's blanket down to the waist again as if he were still alive.

Disembarkation was watched for some time by Mr. Sandstroem and the Yugoslav delegate on the U. N. Committee, Mr.



Target for Today: Casualty of British Combined Operations against "Exodus" in Haifa Port
(Photo: H. Pinn)

Simitch. It took twelve hours to transfer the people to the deportation ships. The OCEAN VIGOUR sailed before 9 p. m., the RUNNYMEDE PARK was embarked next, and the EMPIRE RIVAL took the last of the passengers and left at 5.40 a. m. on the 19th, over 12 hours after the EXODUS reached Haifa. The sick and injured kept ashore, and their relatives, who were allowed to remain in Athlit, numbered 52 all told. Among the American members of the crew who were arrested was Cyril Weinstein (23) of New York formerly corporal of the 1st Marine Division on Guadalcanal; he and others were charged with aiding and abetting illegal immigrants, and released on £P. 1,000 bail each.* The helmsman, William Millman, was taken to hospital with a bullet wound in his jaw. The rest of the crew had mingled with the refugees. Grauel was also taken into custody, but released after all his papers and documents had been confiscated.

DESTINATION UNKNOWN

The Palestine Broadcasting Service news bulletin at midday on the 19th July reported that the deportation ships had sailed for Cyprus, but a later B. B. C. report said that the destination was the port of embarkation in France, while rumours also spoke of Tobruk. An official spokesman in Jerusalem said on the 20th, "The whole question is one for the London Government." Troops in Cyprus received orders on the 21st to stand by to receive the immigrants. On the 21st it was again reported that the deportation ships were bound for a French port, and it was learnt that H. M. G. was negotiating with the French Government on the subject. It was not till the 22nd, three days after the ships had left Haifa, that the report was officially confirmed. The uncertainty had been bad enough; when the confirmation came, no words were adequate for comment. It was realised that the French were reluctant to agree to the return, and thoughts went back to before the war — groups of Jewish refugees caught between Poland and Germany, or marooned on the Danube — old stories. The

* The charges were dropped on 7th September.

ships stood out to sea or cruised slowly up and down while the French Cabinet argued. It was finally agreed that the French Government would permit the refugees to land, but would use no force to make them land.

Presumably at the British request, there was at first an effort to keep the port of landing a secret. That the destination never-theless leaked out brought another protest from the British Ambassador, Mr. Duff Cooper, to M. Chauvel, the Secretary General of the French Foreign Ministry (on the 28th July). His protest was against the whole tone of the French Press as well as against specific leakages. "Englishmen working in Paris", wrote the ECONOMIST, "can recall nothing since the liberation comperable to the abuse now being hurled at the British by French journalists." Such wilful misunderstanding was bewildering and regrettable. Put it down to Spears and that unfortunate Syrian business, and try to be tolerant. True, a faint touch of misgiving did percolate through in the dispatches of some of the newsmen on the spot. While referring sarcastically to the "lyricism" of the Communist paper, CE SOIR, the MANCHESTER GUARDIAN correspondent wrote: "Whatever the legal or moral justification for deporting the EXODUS 1947 refugees" it had perhaps been an unwise move in view of the effect of concentration camp methods on a still sensitive post-Vichy France.

What "legal justification"? Under the Immigration Ordinances, as amended by successive Defence (Emergency) Regulations the Palestine Government has the power to refuse entry to any immigrant, even one whose papers are in order (to use some phrase to cover the monstrous labyrinth of legal categories),* and, if it chooses, to direct that he be deported to the country he came from. This last concept is the root of the trouble. Such a phrase has a meaning in the normal legal instruments of other countries

* There were immigration certificates available for every man, woman and child aboard the Struma. The adults were nevertheless refused entry into Palestine. (Why the children were not taken off the ship is another story). 764 men, women and children went down on the "Struma".
The Palestine Government before the U. N. Special Committee contended that the Mandate was a 'document' not a law. Who is to judge?

ships stood out to sea or cruised slowly up and down while the French Cabinet argued. It was finally agreed that the French Government would permit the refugees to land, but would use no force to make them land.
Legislators in such countries do not have to think of people who come, as it were, from nowhere, people whose port of embarkation is pure accident, people who come not from their own country, but to their own country. In other words, this "normal" legal concept is inadequate and meaningless ('unreasonable,' to use a legal term) in the unique instance of Jews and Palestine. Its embodiment in the legal system of Palestine is just one manifestation of the gulf between the mandatory rule and the mandatory intention. Jewish D. P.s, refugees, would-be emigrants, migrants — what you will — are not unique today in being "Stateless"; but they are the unique minority among the D. P.s in having a country they believe they have a right to go to. The conflict is between "law" (Emergency Regulations based on Orders-in-Council endorsed by the British Parliament, which may or may not be compatible with the Mandate, which may or may not be the fundamental law of the country,* between "law" then and a complex fact, one that is a fact for all its complexity, subjectivity, imponderability — a belief deposited in the minds of men by the river of historical time, the famous "historical connection", once endorsed by the League of Nations, but a fact independent of that endorsement.

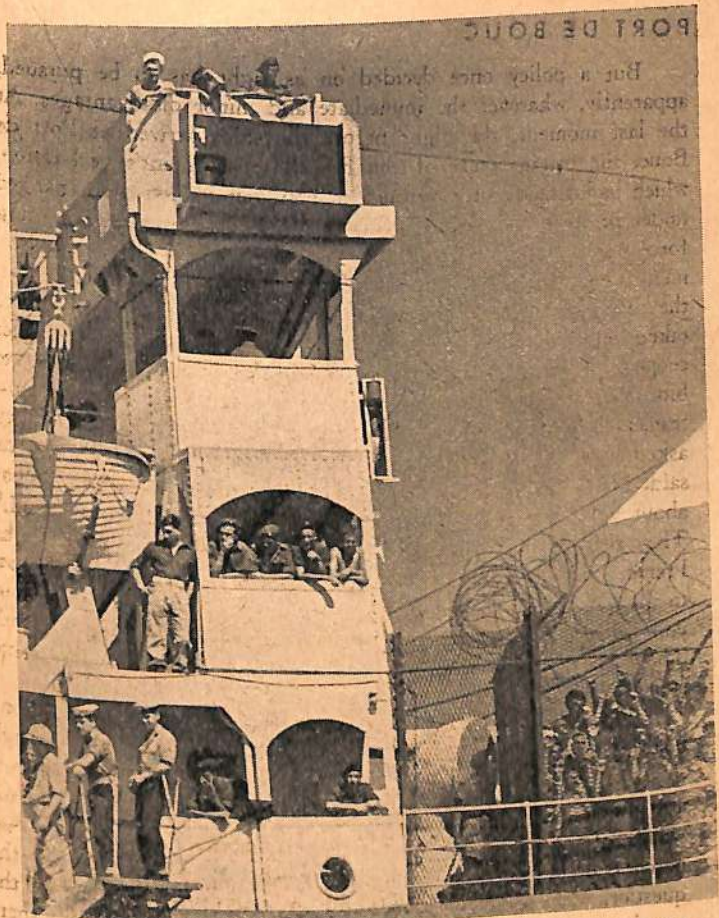
So much for the "law". And the "moral justification"? The English are great moralists, we know, and only have the goods of the refugees at heart. They want to stop this "immoral traffic" to rescue Jews in England's despite. But the English are also empiricists. "The proof of the pudding is in the eating," they say. A policy is judged by results. For all the elaborate justifications in the communiques and statements of all the spokesmen of the Foreign Office and the Palestine Government, it is to be doubted whether the English really feel that they have come very well out of the EXODUS affair.

The Palestine Government before the U. N. Special Committee contended that the Mandate was a 'document, not a law.' Who is to judge?

PORT DE BOUC

But a policy once decided on as right has to be pursued, apparently, whatever the immediate and minor disadvantages. At the last moment, the night before the ships arrived at Port de Bouc, the original text of the French Government's declaration, which had already been printed on hand-out leaflets, was changed under pressure from the British, and the sentence about not using force was deleted. The Prefect of the Bouches du Rhône Department went out to the transports (only one was in the harbour, the other two were anchored 5 miles out). On the first, he was taken onto the bridge to read the declaration to the refugees cooped in the wire cage below the bridge, but they shouted to him to come down. He went down to the hold, read his statement, translated sentence by sentence into Hebrew and Yiddish. They asked him whether force would be used to get them off, and he said, No. The spokesmen told him they would not land. "What about your sick?" he said, "They will get well in Eretz Israel." They all shouted *Vive la France* and then sang *Hatikva*, while the French stood to attention. When the Prefect reported the refusal to the Colonel in charge, he was told, "Come back tomorrow, and you will see that more than a thousand will be willing to land. They are being influenced by scoundrels." It was the same story on all three ships.

The Press had not been allowed on the ships, though one boat-load had managed to get somewhere near them, near enough to see the wire cages. But there was no way of stopping the Prefect and those accompanying him from themselves telling the Press what they had seen. English correspondents sent pained despatches on the French inability to see the other side of the question. What if there were wire cages and armed sentries? — the people were free to get off. What if there were no bunks? — there was more cubic space on each of the ships than on the *Exodus*. If the refugees didn't get off, it was obviously for the same reason that they had set out in the first place, sinister Zionist machinations, so a few machinations on the other side were quite in order. While



Prison Ship, "Ocean Vigour" at Port de Bouc, with caged-in refugees (left).

French hospitality lay tantalisingly close, the refugees were told that they might be sent far away, but certainly never to Palestine or Cyprus. Rumour equalled geography — North Africa, East Africa... Fuel and food was brought aboard, and then — nothing. Surely in the anti-climax after strain, people would break down. The English were right in feeling that the 'inexplicable' obstinacy shown was not a matter of individual judgment. An offer was being made to 4,500 individuals, as individuals. They were refusing it on behalf of all those who were not generously invited to come and live in France, those who were not wanted in England, in the U. S. A. or in Colombia.

And the war of nerves went on, week after week. Women were giving birth, were about to give birth? Let them land. People were ill, and there were no medical supplies? — let them land; indeed it was the French duty to make them land, because of the danger of infection. It rained and there was no shelter, and you got wet through? — you had only to land. If they had landed, who would have blamed them? And what would it have proved? But only 130 of the old and ill came off, lamenting their own weakness. One man suffering from peritonitis as the result of a kick received during the boarding operations on the *EXODUS* was brought off by the French against his will, for it was a matter of life and death. The rest stayed. They organised "life" on board — teaching the children, issuing a manuscript news bulletin (they called it "*Baderech*" — *En Route*), games, songs... They could wait, they had waited for so long.

Yet after all, they and their guardians were only human. The mutual hostility of the first days of the trip had given way to something more natural and friendly. The passengers shared their fresh food from ashore with the soldiers. But finally their guards passed from tolerant boredom to being 'browned off', alternately attempting to ignore their charges and blaming them for their thankless job. On the 16th August there was a clash, some reports said between the soldiers and the passengers, but, according to the British Consul-General, between the passengers themselves. However, since officers commanding the guards

aboard the three ships came ashore to confer together, the logical deduction would be that the soldiers were involved. There had been other "incidents", when not simple soldiers but officers had lost their tempers;* French representatives had twice been ordered off the ships, and British consular officials ashore had had to apologise. Some books were sent aboard the *EMPIRE RIVAL* on the 16th. Books on Palestine and Jewish subjects** were banned by the O. C., and — to be on the safe side — everything in Hebrew and Yiddish: they were burnt in the galley fire — if this meant burning prayer-books or Bibles, it couldn't be helped.

At last, patience had given out. A day's hunger-strike was declared on all the ships. Pressmen saw the food sent back ashore, the French Ministry of the Interior confirmed the news, but the British Embassy in Paris said there had been no such thing. And if there had been a "partial" fast, it wouldn't do them any harm, spoilt as they were by their friends on land... The Press had at last been permitted to visit the ships, though not to go down into the holds; they had admitted that the ships could not be called "hell ships", but the sight of those wire cages was more than they could stomach.

On the day of the fast, the refugees on the *EMPIRE RIVAL* sent a message to the French Premier, beseeching him to ask England to order the departure of the vessels for Palestine. The message thanked France for her offer of hospitality and manifold kindnesses, but re-affirmed the refusal to disembark on European soil. The message said, "The conditions inside the cages and the holds are unreasonable by any civilised standards and inhuman when forced on us more than two years after the war and after our liberation from Hitler's death camps. We are convinced that our prolonged suffering is the last thing desired by the French

* Perhaps when the 'mistral' was blowing, the Western Mediterranean wind, which is as notoriously trying to the temper as the 'khamsin' in the Eastern.

**The books were: "Collected Speeches," by Chaim Weizmann; Herzl's "Jewish State"; and two handbooks on "Palestine's Communal Settlements" and "The History of Zionism."

Government and people. Yet that is precisely the effect of permitting prison ships to remain indefinitely in French waters." Similar messages stressing the involuntary French complicity in their ordeal came from the other ships.

Pleas and protests of all kinds were reaching the French, the American, the British Governments, and other agencies, the Red Cross, the Trade Unions... An attempt was made to invoke the English law, such as it is. An application for a writ of Habeas Corpus for the release of the eight children born on the Exodus and the deportation ships (and therefore British subjects) was heard in London on the 19th August and rejected on the grounds that Lt. Delange, who applied for the writ, had no standing in the matter. When asked by the Court to name a precedent, Mr. J. F. F. Platt-Mills, a Labour M. P. and a barrister, who appeared on behalf of Lt. Delange, replied that it would mean going back to the days of the slave trade.

THE ULTIMATUM

The scandal was too outrageous, something had to be done. Then came the threat — the destination would be Germany. It is perhaps theoretically possible that whoever thought of this was going on the precedent that the same threat had been applied to recalcitrant Poles in England (who would neither join the Resettlement Corps nor return to Poland) and that he really did not make the mental effort needed to confront the two concepts at the same time: Jews — Germany. But unfortunately it seems far more probable that the macabre threat was deliberately calculated as likely to bring the "deluded" people to their senses.

The French were induced to repeat their offer of hospitality. There was a 24-hour ultimatum. The English wanted the French to deliver that too; the French Foreign Ministry agreed, but the Prefect's actions are in the domain of the Ministry of the Interior, which refused, H. M. G. even tried to bring the Jewish Agency into it, for of course their sole thought was the welfare of the unfortunate passengers; however difficult the task, H. M. G. was prepared to do what it could to help a Jewish Agency re-

representative to reach Port de Bouc so that he might show these people where their real interest lay. This particular communique, with its nauseatingly familiar self-righteous tone, offers a new line in disingenuousness. If read carefully, it does not say, 'Illegal immigration into Palestine is the cause of the recent bloodshed between Jews and Arabs,' but that it is "aggravating... the situation which has led to..." The Jewish Agency, rejecting the invidious invitation, was obliged to give the lie direct to this not so subtle insinuation.* The Palestine Government itself in an official communique on the clashes between Jews and Arabs had said that there was no evidence of any purpose or direction, and had described them as "a series of unconnected incidents..." But the Foreign Office and the Press are hardened to Jewish Agency counter-statements. Who reads them, anyway?

The British Consul-General at Marseilles delivered the ultimatum. Not a Jew landed. And at 6 p. m. on the 22nd August, the three transports sailed for Hamburg.

The next day, the British Ambassador asked the French Government to receive the refugees back by train from the British Zone of Germany. They were being sent to Germany because there it would be a British responsibility to get them to land... (and not, apparently, because of the food and housing facilities available in Germany and nowhere else, referred to in a previous official communique). Had whoever it was in the Foreign Office never believed that the threat would have to be carried out? Or had

* Statement by Jewish Agency Executive, 23rd August, 1947. Para. 2: "In order to justify the expulsion of the refugees in the middle of July, His Majesty's Government cite incidents which took place in Palestine in the middle of August — some attacks by Arab robbers which had no connection whatsoever with immigration. There was not a single Arab in this country who connected these incidents with the problem of immigration, as was done by His Majesty's Government in their Communique. It was during these very incidents that public expression was given of the deep anxiety of the Arab and Jewish masses to preserve peace in Palestine, as shown by the declarations made by leaders of both communities and by the peace-making meetings of Jews and Arabs in the quarters where the incidents took place."

somebody finally been made to see what it really looked like to the non-British sections of the world's newspaper readers, sending Jews back to Germany? Or had the benevolent intention all along been to force the refugees to be happy in France?

The French Government, writhing under the flagrant blackmail, signified its readiness to receive the refugees, on two conditions: that they should come of their own free accord, and that their admission should not constitute a precedent — France had set the number of D. P.s she could receive at 8,000.

DEPORTATION TO GERMANY

The deportation transports put in at Gibraltar. There was a fine display of force in readiness. The passengers were bolted below decks. A Reuter's correspondent had been permitted to make the trip on one of the ships. An Associated Press request for similar permission had been granted by the Foreign Office after long hesitation, and on condition that the correspondent should not be a Jew: the gracious permission was not made use of.

Now H. M. G. made a noble gesture. Pregnant women were invited to land, with the promise that they would be sent to Palestine (and deducted from the sacrosanct quota, of course). The Palestine Press was cynical enough to point out that the absence of pregnant women would make the use of force in the port of Hamburg a shade less awkward. The women refused to land — permission had been refused for their husbands to stay with them, and who knew how many years might elapse before they would be together again. The famous quota was full up to 1950.

The transports put back to Gibraltar. "Boiler trouble", said the "communiqué". "The Parliament in recess..." The skeleton Cabinet ordered the return," said a press story. The journalists were wrong, and the hope that had flickered into life for a second went out. The dismissal of the second *habeas corpus* application was no surprise: the Exodus 1947 deportees had been free to land in France and they had refused. It was precisely their refusal that was the heroic affirmation of their people's will to be free — they refused one version of freedom, limited to them-

elves, in the name of another freedom not known but believed in, and not only theirs but that of all Jews, that is to say — and we dare not shrink from saying it — the freedom of all men.

And so events drew to their lamentable climax. As the convoy steamed slowly round the western coasts of Europe and into the English Channel, last-minute appeals were made by the Chief Rabbis of Palestine and England to divert the transports. Even the State Department ventured to hint that H. M. G. (then in the throes of the 'dollar crisis') would suffer in American esteem if the landings were carried out — it appeared that H. M. G. could not have cared less. The UNSCOP report, signed on 31st August, unanimously recommended increased immigration into Palestine; here was a last-minute chance to back down without losing face, while at the same time the sheer malignant unreason of persisting became clear, as the phrase goes, to the meaneast intelligence. But no, incredibly, preparations at the Hamburg docks went ahead, and the newspapers recounted in detail the preparing of water-jets and tear-gas bombs. The press was promised every facility for viewing the affair, and then it occurred to someone that the people might land quietly if there were no witnesses to their humiliation — a logical enough idea by itself but worse than the ill it attempted to forestall. At the newsmen's outcry over the attempted secrecy, the wretched compromise was devised of barriers to keep them at a distance. And Germans would be instructed to turn their backs to the proceedings.

As the ships neared the German coast, the grotesquely mean campaign of vilification multiplied its inventions. There is no denying that the Rabbi Korff story was brilliantly handled — it held the headlines over the whole period of the landings. For more than a week the American and French press had been reporting the projects of the absurd Rabbi Korff — amongst other things he was preparing a mass parachute "invasion" of Palestine by illegal immigrants. On the night of 5th to 6th September the news that he had been arrested as he was stepping into a plane to drop leaflets on London was linked with reports of discoveries of homemade bombs, assumed also to be intended for London. What sub-

editor would hesitate? By the time the bombs had dwindled to blue-prints, possibly for leaflet releasing devices, the Exodus people had been got ashore and safely behind barbed wire with really much less fuss than might have been feared.

HAMBURG

On the 7th September the first transport, the OCEAN VIGOUR, sailed slowly up the Elbe and docked at Hamburg in a dense fog which would delay a landing for another 24 hours. The wharf was lined with cages constructed of perpendicular iron bars and was sealed off at both ends by barbed wire. At either end of the wharf fire hoses were coiled discreetly in readiness for possible trouble. The whole dock area was cordoned off by large numbers of German police. In addition to the 1,500 men on duty in Hamburg itself, there were an additional 1,500 "on call" ready to protect military buildings, a British official said. There were over 1,000 troops ready to carry out the disembarkation.

At 6 a. m. on the 8th September the deportees were told that they had an hour in which to make up their minds whether they would get off of their own accord. At five minutes to 7, women and children and a few men came wearily down the gangway. When about a third of the 1,400 aboard had landed, there was a break. Reporters were too far off to see what was happening, but they heard continued cheers, shouting and singing — some said of hymns. Apparently young men in the hold were refusing to come up. Military police and tin-helmeted troops went aboard. German workers put up a covered gangway. The reporters wrote that men and some women and children clung to the ship's rails, and that the troops used their truncheons; a group of about 30 young men struggled for half-an-hour before they could be overcome and dragged down the gangway. One press story before the landings had been the discovery of a plot to fake injuries, with stage-property blood and all, to impress newsmen. However, the reporters were given no chance to make sure whether the injuries were real or not — one man whose head was bleeding and who tried to show his wounds to the journalists was hustled off the

quayside by soldiers who rushed to surround him. The resistance of the younger men overcome, the rest landed quietly, disembarkation being completed by 10.35. Some of the soldiers helped women across, led children by the hand and assisted with the refugees' packages. In a number of instances the offer of assistance was refused.

On the dock loudspeakers blared out dance music as the Jews, after being searched, filed to the waiting trains. About 25 sick people were placed in ambulances and a child with measles was taken to Hamburg hospital. The entraining was not carried out quietly. Shouting defiance, over 100 had to be carried bodily to the coaches, while from the trains a hail of food, rained suddenly through the barred windows at the guards.

The next morning, the refugees on the second ship, the EMPIRE RIVAL, disembarked quietly. It was later officially announced that a home-made time bomb was found on the ship. One of the refugees said the next day, "We wanted to destroy the ship which brought us back to this hated land of so much sorrow for the Jews, and to make a noise which would be heard round the world."

The RUNNYMEDE PARK was a different story. It took an hour's fighting to get the people off with clubs and fire-hoses, and the official statement recorded 33 injured, 13 of them women. An English Jewish observer said he counted 67 injured. Before the struggle began, some of the Jews prayed, and all through the fighting they sang HATIKVA. When the refugees refused to obey the order to disembark, streams of water from high-pressure hoses were turned on them, so powerful that they were flattened against the sides of the holds, but the only effect of this was to bring up a few crying women and a handful of men carrying children. Below, the Jews ripped out the starboard companion way, forcing the troops to leap down into their midst. Officers would point to men believed to be leaders and order the soldiers to "get them." Batons were used, wrote Norman Clark (NEWS CHRONICLE), not only on the back but in obstreperous cases also about the head. He added that at times the force used exceeded what was necessary,



After the Battle of Hamburg. "Exodus" refugees landed in Germany

and occasionally an officer would remove a soldier for this to some other job. Practically all the refugees had to be dragged up on deck and many of them were clubbed. They showered tin cans, bottles and pieces of glass on the troops, used sticks fitted with barbed wire, clung to rails and stairs, clawed and kicked. The NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE reporter described a savage battle towards the very end, with the soldiers driven back, but the refugees were finally defeated by the powerful jets of water directed on them. A high proportion of girls held out to the last. Once dragged up on deck, Jews with blood streaming from head, neck, arms and body were passed on to the dock from one party of soldiers to another forming a chain like firemen handling a bucket line.



Victim of Peace Crime. An "Exodus" survivor of Nazi persecution forced back by the Mandatory Government to D. P. camps in Germany.



25 Back to D. P. Camps. "Exodus" refugee brought back to Nazi soil

and were carried to the waiting trains and dumped on the floors of the coaches.

An apparently unconscious young woman, dripping wet from the fire hoses, was carried down by four soldiers and wrapped in a stretcher on the quay. Five soldiers carried a struggling young man and all of them fell in a heap on the gangplank. Immediately following them came six soldiers carrying another resisting Jew. A woman carried off the ship was followed by a child of five. A boy of about ten punched the nose of the soldier carrying him. A Jewish girl was carried off fighting, then a man, shouting, then two more unconscious Jews, then another still kicking although borne on a stretcher. One soldier brought a truncheon down across a boy's wrist and he let go and was carried still struggling feebly to the ladder. As his limp body was hauled on to the deck, another shower of vegetable tins was hurled at the troops. The very last to be dragged on deck was a young blonde girl, still singing the Jewish anthem. She fought on until she lost consciousness.

At 12.20 the ship was declared empty. Ten of the wounded were sent to hospital, while the others were "patched up" on the docks and taken to the trains, five of them on stretchers. Some of them had broken wrists. About 400 British troops were engaged, three of whom were injured.

Two vans with some 50 refugees believed to have led the fight were taken to Hamburg prison, escorted by two military police jeeps and a lorry of about 40 German police. Even on the dockside the fight was carried on. A sharp crack sounding like a blow, followed by screams and sounds of struggle, was heard from the pen leading to the trains, though pressmen could not see what was happening. A heavy barrier in the pen was torn down. The refugees shouted all the way to the trains, though some, carried face down and silent, had obviously been badly beaten and were unable to make a sound.

While the struggle on the ship was going on, a demonstration by 1,300 Jewish D.P.'s in a Hamburg square was broken up by 500 German police led by a British colonel.

The very least that we owe to the people of the Exodus 1947 is to record their resistance. But what matters is not so much the degree of force that was used, nor even the fact that force was used — what is accomplished without force anywhere in the world today? — but what the force was used for. The brute fact of the return of Jews to Germany was what mattered; that England sent Jews to Germany in 1947 is what will be remembered. Because they were steadfast, the people of the Exodus forced to the surface, to the light, this dark and startling reaction to their stiff-necked Zionism, a reaction henceforth not to be rationalised or explained away; they made irretrievably clear the true intent of English policy toward the Jews. It was implicit in every major incident since 1939, before the STRUMA and after. Since the end of the war, many a small group of refugees, including some of those on the EXODUS, had been stopped at the French frontier and turned back into Germany. But all this was only known to "those concerned," to the "specialist" in the subject, to Jews. But the Exodus story was big enough to break through the scum of indifference on the surface of public opinion; there was no major war on to distract attention; and there is still daylight in the world. Will this self-revelation at last work a cure? The Jews of the 1947 EXODUS may have broken the cold heart of the Foreign Office's loyalty to Mr. Bevin, exhausted at last the English capacity for self-righteous self-deception, shown the very age and body of the time its form and pressure.

"Where do you come from?" the interrogation officers and the spies asked in Poppendorf camp. "From Palestine", they replied. "I am here, or there or elsewhere. In my beginning".



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"Exodus 1947" in
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