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ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION INTO PALESTINE

(Note by the London Controlling Section)

INTRODUCTION:-

In a previous memorandum to the Controlling Officer, the possibilities of assisting the illegal immigration committee in denying Jewish Agencies the use of shipping for purposes of illegal immigration, were reviewed. London Controlling Section were then asked verbally by the Secretary to the Illegal Immigration Committee, to investigate the possibilities of denying ships entrance to the Mediterranean, and, more specifically, preventing them from reaching Southern French Ports. It was decided in the memorandum referred to above, that the courses open to us were to endeavour to lure the ships into British Controlled Ports by local "ruses de guerre", and, when more information was available and a suitable cover story had been prepared, to commence passing false sailing orders to these vessels.

It is understood that the Illegal Immigration Working Party have since examined and rejected the possibility of luring ships into ports by local "ruses de guerre".

The purpose of this paper is therefore to investigate the possibilities of deflecting ships employed on illegal immigration, from the Mediterranean, by the passing of false sailing orders, in the light of the intelligence available to us at the moment.

Britain's position as a Maritime Power.

2. Great Britain as a Maritime power has much to lose by initiating a policy entailing irregular conduct towards ships on the high seas - it is therefore of the utmost importance that any policy adopted should offer a high possibility of success for little risk of establishing a precedent for behaviour which may be harmful to ourselves. It is also important therefore, that no ship be diverted unless it is certain that she is to be employed on illegal immigration. The present system of determining whether a ship is suspect or not, depends to a very large extent on the past reputation of the shipping owners. This system is by no means watertight. Moreover many of the ships are not fitted out for illegal immigration until actually in the Mediterranean, so concrete proof of intended participation is difficult to obtain. It is also quite likely that as our campaign grows more successful a "black" shipping owner will run a completely innocent and legally documented ship with the intention of embarrassing us if she is detained or interfered with.

Availability of Information.

3. The possibility of success of any Plan depends on the intelligence at our disposal. Obvious essentials in this particular case are, a knowledge and example of how the ship obtains her sailing orders, and warning of the ship's intentions, e.g. date of sailing, route and ports of call, with details of the Shipping Companies' agents at those ports. Virtually none of this is available to us at the present moment.

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In the case of three ships only, at the time of writing, have we examples of a sailing order, and even in these cases we have no knowledge of intentions.

A branch of the illegal immigration Committee has been formed in Washington and may well be able to supply us with more information of this type in the future.

#### Plausibility of Story.

4. The plausibility of a cover story will also depend on the intelligence available about our "cover". In this particular case, two possible "covers" exist, one is the revisionist Jewish party, who have not yet indulged in any violent intervention, the other is an Arab underground organisation newly organised to combat illegal immigration.

Any deception which is put across will depend to a large extent on technical means, as for instance interception and despatch of cables and wireless messages. It is unlikely that any foreign powers will believe any of these parties well enough equipped and organised technically to indulge in intervention of this kind.

It is therefore probable that the Jewish National Agency will suspect our intervention regardless of the cover story we may use.

#### Financial Problem:-

5. While a deception policy of diversion of shipping by false sailing orders will be quite in tune with the present policy of the illegal immigration committee (i.e. to delay shipping and inflict financial loss on the owners) it is open to doubt whether so relatively ineffective a policy will warrant the employment of deception methods. It is pointed out that so little is known of the financial organisation of illegal immigration that we cannot be certain of the possibility of running the present shipping companies out of business, and that even if we succeed, the ships will then probably be purchased and operated by the Jewish Agency themselves, a somewhat questionable advantage.

#### Signals Deception:-

6. It should be remembered that any passing of false messages by W/T will almost certainly cause the Jewish Organisations to change their frequencies and codes, with a consequent loss of Signals intelligence to ourselves. Intervention inside the Mediterranean is unlikely therefore to be worth while, as the loss of signals intelligence may jeopardise chances of interception and internment of illegal immigrants. The L.S.I.C. have been consulted regarding this problem and have indicated their unwillingness to "blow" their present "Y" services unless specifically directed to by higher authority.

Shipping Position at the Present Time:-

7. The total number of ships available for illegal immigration is a possible fifty-eight. Fifteen of these only, are in ports outside the Mediterranean, of which no less than seven are in ports in the United Kingdom, where our intervention is presumably superfluous. We have no accurate knowledge of the future intentions of the remaining eight ships, and we have copies of cables containing sailing orders to only two of them. These ships are the "Paducah", at present in Bayonne, and the "Colony Trader", impounded in Gibraltar where intervention is unnecessary.

In the case of the Paducah the owners are already aware that British Authorities are denying her facilities wherever possible, and in the absence of a plausible cover story any intervention will certainly be attributed to ourselves. If the high risk of detection for a comparatively low chance of success is considered warranted by the importance of the case, false sailing orders could be despatched to "Paducah".

Repercussions in U.N.O.

8. As the case for Palestine is under review by the United Nations Organisation at the present time, it is a singularly inappropriate moment for any underhand or illegal conduct on our part to be disclosed.

The disclosure of any actions on our part on a par with those contemplated above may well prejudice our cause at this exceedingly tricky juncture.

CONCLUSIONS.

9. From the above considerations and in view of the present success of the illegal immigration Committee's more legal intervention, it is considered that,

- (a) The advantages to be gained by implementation of this plan are not worth the very high risk of detection.
- (b) The high risk of detection is to a large extent dependent on the lack of intelligence of the particular nature indicated above.
- (c) Should more intelligence of this type become available, or the situation become more serious, the situation should be reviewed again in the light of these changed circumstances.

London Controlling Section,  
Ministry of Defence, S.W.1.

8th JULY, 1947.