

Roumania and "Illegal" Immigration to Palestine

The Facts of the Matter

A GREAT deal of inaccurate and misleading information has lately been given to the public, both overseas and here, in regard to Zionist affairs in Roumania. We refer in particular to two matters—the ban on Zionist propaganda and collections imposed, and shortly afterwards lifted, by the Roumanian Government, and the relationship of Roumanian Zionists to the handling of immigrants for Palestine passing through Roumania.

Students of Zionist affairs are well aware that on two previous occasions, namely, in 1936 and 1937 (not to mention earlier instances) Zionist fund collections were forbidden under the Tatarescu Government. Oddly enough, no such interference took place under the Goga-Cuza anti-Semitic regime.

The recent prohibition was imposed by decree of the Ministry of the Interior in the middle of January. The Roumanian Zionist leaders intervened with the Government, but without success. The decree gave no explanations, but merely stated that Zionist activities (including those of the Revisionists) for fund-raising and for the distribution of propaganda material must cease. Under the term propaganda was expressly included propaganda aimed at the preparation of immigration to Palestine.

About the middle of February, however, or a little earlier in that month, the decree was cancelled. The President of the Union of Jewish communities in Roumania, Dr. Wilhelm Filderman, was informed by the Minister of the Interior, M. Ghelmegeanu, that the Zionist organisations concerned were again authorised to collect funds, but only on condition that the funds were collected for use in Palestine alone and under special permit. A further condition was that emigration to Palestine must be conducted only on the basis of certificates obtained from the British Consulate, and that "no further illegal Palestine immigration should be countenanced by any Zionist body in Roumania."

No Compromise With Principles.

THERE can be no doubt that both the prohibition and its subsequent cancellation were prompted by the circumstances surrounding the passing through Roumania of immigrants for Palestine. It seems clear that the British Government had for a long time been viewing with disfavour the passage through Roumania of immigrants intending to enter Palestine "illegally," i.e., without certificates, and that they had been making representations to the Roumanian Government on the matter.

It is an almost irresistible inference that it was because of the pressure of the British Government upon the Roumanian Government that the latter issued its decree, basing its action on the assumption that the Zionist authorities in Roumania were officially handling "illegal" immigrants, and that by stopping their collections and propaganda they would automatically put a stop also to this other alleged activity. This assumption is the only one which fits in with the subsequent lifting of the ban on condition that the Roumanian Zionist Organisation would not continue this alleged "smuggling" of immigrants.

Following the lifting of the ban, the British United Press circulated an item to the newspapers on February 19 declaring that the Roumanian Zionist Organisation had in fact been participating in these "illegal" transactions and that its agreement to discontinue these activities, and the Government's lifting of its ban, had taken place simultaneously.

The Roumanian Zionist Organisation lost no time in telegraphing to London a categorical denial of this statement of the British United Press, declaring that it had neither previously nor recently had any connection with "illegal" immigration.

It will be seen that the Roumanian Zionists were, throughout, the victims of *force majeure*, but that, despite this fact, they at no time compromised with their principles.

Both allegation and denial are easy to understand. No Zionist Federation or Organisation in any country can do things which in the eyes of the law are forbidden. But the case is very different with the action of people in their individual capacity. Under the stress of the call of humanity and the desire to rescue fellow-Jews from a wretched fate and give them the possibility of a new life and new hope in Palestine, individual Zionists in a country of transit like Roumania would be less than human if they did not assist in one way or another the process of salvaging human lives.

3,417 Danube Refugees Enter Palestine.

WITH regard to the refugees themselves, there has been much confusion and misrepresentation in certain quarters. The actual facts, as obtained from the most reliable sources, are that round about the beginning of this year there were concentrated in various ports of Roumania and Yugo-Slavia a total of just over 4,000 persons

awaiting transportation to Palestine. Of this number 2,250 were assured of reaching their destination, their transportation having been undertaken by responsible and adequately financed bodies; the remainder, 1,800 in number, including very many persons physically ill-fitted to withstand the hardships of winter travel, were brought to the Danube by various groups and private speculators, who exacted sums of money from them with the promise that they would be carried to Palestine, though not in possession of certificates. The people who made these promises, however, could not for some time fulfil them, and these luckless people remained stranded under wintry conditions; for besides the difficulties just mentioned, all, even those properly provided for, were marooned by the ice-jam at the Danube mouth for many weeks.

We are now able to inform our readers that, by the end of February, 3,417 of these refugees who had been held up on the Danube had reached Palestine, some possessing certificates for valid entry, the majority not in that position. As usual they were on arrival temporarily detained by the Palestine Government; but, also as usual, they were quickly released and placed in the care of the Jewish Agency for Palestine (in other words the Zionist Organisation).

We are further able to report that the care for all these refugees—housing, feeding and the preparatory work connected with their ultimate absorption into the life of the country—was borne completely and exclusively by the Jewish Agency without the help or assistance of any other organisation whatever.

GERMAN APPEAL TO DUTCH JEWS?

Goebbels' Latest Inspiration

London, February 27th.

AN Amsterdam despatch to the "Daily Telegraph and Morning Post" contains the report of an appeal to Dutch Jews by the German Ministry of Propaganda to help Germany in overthrowing the British Empire.

"The editor of the 'Centraalblad,' the weekly organ of the Jewish community in Holland," states the despatch, "recently received a pile of propaganda material. He was astonished to find that it contained an appeal to his paper to lead a Jewish campaign against Britain, on behalf of Germany.

"At first sight the propaganda material seemed to have been put together by a Jew, with extensive acquaintance of Hebrew literature. On closer study it was plain, however, that the author of the pamphlet had made mistakes of which no Jew would be guilty.

"By extensive quotations from Hebrew prophetic writings, the pamphlets sought to prove that the British Empire was on the verge of disaster, and that the Jews would do well to leave the sinking ship. The appeal was addressed: 'Israelites in the Netherlands, Britain and the World.'"

I.P.C. BEGINS WORK IN BEERSHEBA

Jerusalem, February 26th.

IT is officially stated that the Iraq Petroleum Company is starting work on the exploration of petroleum in the Beersheba district.

Mrs. S. G. Millin Talks on Palestine Orchestra

THE part played by Huberman in the creation of the Palestine Symphony Orchestra, and the place of the Orchestra in the life of the Yishuv, were discussed by Mrs. S. G. Millin in the course of an address delivered by her to a gathering of the South African Friends of the Palestine Orchestra at the residence of Mr. and Mrs. N. E. Rosenberg, Lower Houghton, on Sunday night last.

THE occasion was the first function in a series of musical evenings arranged by the South African Palestine Orchestra Society with the object of familiarising music-lovers with the work of Huberman, the celebrated violinist and founder of the Palestine Orchestra, whose forthcoming visit to this country is being eagerly awaited.

Mrs. Millin, who is the Hon. President of the Society, stressed the spiritual value of the Orchestra, apart from its cultural and material aspects, particularly in these troubled times when the Jewish people as a whole are so sorely harassed on all sides. In dealing with the role that Huberman had taken in the development of the Orchestra, she pointed out that not only was he one of the leading violinists in the world and a staunch Zionist, but he was also a great hu-

manitarian. He had travelled through Europe to select from the centres of persecution Jewish musicians whom he had taken to Palestine. There they had found a home and become members of an orchestra for which Huberman himself—from the proceeds of his playing—had established the nucleus of a Fund.

A recital of gramophone records of Huberman, Toscanini—who had twice visited Palestine to conduct the orchestra—and Arthur Rubinstein followed Mrs. Millin's talk. A series of songs by Cantor Alter, whose fine voice was heard to great advantage, brought to a close a delightful evening.

The next function will be held at the home of Mr. and Mrs. H. L. Karnovsky, on Sunday, the 17th instant.