# British Intelligence and the ‘Fifth’ Occupying Power: The Secret Struggle to Prevent Jewish Illegal Immigration to Palestine.

Steven Wagner

*At the end of the Second World War, British Intelligence Struggled to enforce strict limits imposed on Jewish Immigration to Palestine. Holocaust Survivors and Jews wishing to escape communism in Eastern Europe flooded the western Zones of occupation in Germany and Austria, while the Zionist movement worked to bring them to Palestine. Illegal Immigration to Palestine was the key policy dispute between Britain and the Zionist movement, and a focus for British intelligence. Britain sought both overt and covert means to prevent the boarding of ships at European ports which were destined for Palestine, and even to prevent the entry of Jewish refugees into the American zones. This article highlights Britain’s secret intelligence gathering efforts as well as its covert action aimed to prevent this movement. It highlights a peculiar episode in the ‘special relationship’ between Britain and the United States, during which cooperation and partnership was lacking. British intelligence promoted a rumour that Soviet agents were using Jewish escape lines to penetrate Western Europe and the Middle East in order to persuade American authorities to prevent the movement of Jewish refugees. Instead, this article argues, American intelligence secretly cooperated with the Zionist organizers of the escape routes so to expose Soviet agents. Britain’s attempt at deception backfired, and provided effective cover for the movement of hundreds of thousands of Jews during a critical period. Meanwhile its intelligence had dramatically improved, but policymakers failed to reassess Britain’s ability to sustain immigration restrictions and the indefinite detention of tens of thousands of illegal migrants.***Introduction**

The following is a typical example of Jewish ingenuity in crossing frontiers and of the difficulties encountered in controlling their movements. In October and November 46 there was a marked increase in the illegal crossing of the Austrian frontier to Italy. Recently a group of Jews from Central Europe infiltrated past the British authorities in Austria and on reaching the vicinity of the Italian frontier at once purposely attracted attention to their suspicious movements and were stopped by the security authorities. They then claimed to have arrived from Italy and expressed a wish to return to their homes in Central Europe. Consequently they were escorted over the frontier into Italy and warned to make no attempt at re-crossing into Austria. Once in Italy, they were apparently picked up by waiting trucks and taken to Udine.[[1]](#footnote-1)

This MI5 report exemplifies the difficulty which Britain faced in its attempt to control the movement of Jewish refugees in European after 1945. These refugees were destined for Mediterranean ports from whence they would attempt to break the British blockade on Palestine. Jewish immigration to Palestine, in turn, was the most contentious issue between Britain and the Zionist movement, which generally had been a reliable and junior ally. Since 1934, however, the Jewish community of Palestine, or *Yishuv,* had defied British immigration restrictions by smuggling immigrants beyond established quotas. Known in Hebrew as *Aliyah Bet,* ‘illegal’ immigration was a cornerstone of Zionist policy, and an intelligence target for the British. At the end of the Second World War, after 11 years of simultaneous cooperation with British security and subversion of immigration restrictions, the Zionist movement openly challenged Britain through a campaign for mass illegal immigration, alongside a secret paramilitary struggle in Palestine. Concurrently, Britain struggled against Jewish terrorists in Palestine, the United Kingdom, Europe and the wider Middle East.[[2]](#footnote-2) Historians have attributed the end of the British mandate either to terrorism or to the struggle over illegal immigration and the propaganda which accompanied it. Britain lost its grip on security in Palestine when, as the Yishuv turned to armed resistance in 1945, British intelligence failed to comprehend that this long-anticipated threat was materializing. Furthermore, policymakers failed to assess Britain’s will and ability to hold Palestine as compared to the Yishuv’s will and ability to break from Britain.[[3]](#footnote-3) For the first time, this article will demonstrate how Britain lost control over its policy in Palestine by failing to address illegal immigration with a realistic policy and strategy.

Illegal immigration was a problem for British policy and a priority for intelligence. The escape network, known in Hebrew as the *Bricha,* coordinated the mass movement of Jewish refugees and registered Displaced Persons (DPs) across Europe to ports of departure. It negotiated all the details with relief agencies, governments, labour unions, military and intelligence organizations, transport agencies and the rest of the Zionist movement. *Bricha* and *Aliyah Bet*, collectively known as *Ha’apala* or ‘summit climbing’, posed British security with a problem that echoes events of today. *Bricha* existed in a world of porous borders, where information flowed quickly, state security depended on multilateralism, and non-state actors wielded increasing power. Using newly released documents from Britain and the United States, this article will show how Britain confronted this movement, and why efforts to stop it failed. This weakness in strategy did not lead to a reconfiguration of British policy until the decision in early September 1947 to withdraw from Palestine.

**Literature Review**

The evidence for this study is as multinational as the subject itself. Some records of the Security Service or MI5, have been released to the National Archives at Kew. They reveal what Britain knew about the Jewish underground in Palestine, and to some extent, in Europe. Many such records remain unavailable, or have been destroyed. Recent releases from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office fill many of these gaps. These include the records of the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) and its illegal immigration committee, the Allied Commission for Austria (ACA), British Element (ACABRIT), as well as other intelligence reports and correspondence on illegal immigration. Colonial Office files contain intelligence on efforts to interdict illegal immigration. War Office records contain reports on the subject from Field Security Section (FSS) units to the high command. These files reveal important details about the problem, but are too narrow to define it.

During the 1990s, the *Haganah* Archive in Tel Aviv conducted a massive study on *Ha’apala*, drawn from local and international sources. Those records illuminate the functioning of the *Bricha* and contain some intelligence material. Meanwhile, the records of the *Haganah* intelligence service, *Sherut HaYediot,* or *Shai,* reveal the extent of its penetration of the British government in Palestine and how this intelligence was used. Particularly useful are the papers of Ephraim Dekel, who went from *Shai* headquarters in Tel Aviv to help organize *Bricha* (and protect it) in 1945. The records of the Palestine Criminal Investigation Department (CID), a colonial secret police, also contain much intelligence on illegal immigration.

Evidence found at the US National Archives in College Park, MD has changed our understanding of this topic. It reveals what Americans knew about British activity, what material was shared or withheld, and documents two US intelligence operations on the *Bricha*. Project ‘Rummage’ was a secret investigation through *Bricha* of Revisionist Zionists in Europe and their affiliated terrorist groups. Project ‘Symphony’, done in close liaison with the *Bricha*, investigated the infiltration of Soviet agents to the Middle East through *Bricha* and *Aliyah Bet* channels. In order to protect this effort to expose Soviet agents, American intelligence and military officers withheld information on the identity, roles and movements of *Bricha* officers from the British. Symphony was unsuccessful. As indeed, British intelligence distorted the danger of such Soviet penetration so to persuade the Americans to stop *Bricha*. Symphony was first examined by Kevin Ruffner in 2007, in the classified series of CIA publication, *Studies in Intelligence*.[[4]](#footnote-4) The article, accessible only in the ‘Symphony’ file, offers a good survey of the aims and means of US intelligence, and some explanation as to why the project failed. Yet, it does not cover the British or Zionist aspects of the story. Thus, the article does not explain American motivations to support *Bricha*, or the friction it caused with Britain. This article will tell, for the first time, the story of how US intelligence worked with *Bricha* in 1946 and subverted British policy, and of how Britain tried to derail this process. This temporary blip in the ‘special relationship’ is significant since it reveals a previously unknown aspect to British intelligence’s thinking as it underwent reconfiguration in the immediate postwar years.

The memoirs of participants offer clues for investigation and fill the gaps left by the documents. The memoir of the *Bricha* commander in Vienna, Asher Ben Natan, formerly Arthur Pier or Piernikarz, later Israel’s first ambassador to West Germany, and France, is particularly useful, as he was at the centre of “Symphony”. His memoir reveals more than documents could,[[5]](#footnote-5) but to fill gaps in the record, I interviewed him in July 2011. The memoirs of Ehud Avriel (Uberall) and Ephraim Dekel, senior organizers in the *Bricha*, also contributed to this work.[[6]](#footnote-6) Memoirs and interviews have their limits in what they can contribute, but in some cases are the only sources available. The sources used here do not contradict the documentary record, but add detail otherwise not found. Yet such detail is difficult to confirm, and only somewhat relates to this paper’s arguments about intelligence and policy. Since memory is problematic as a source for testimony, these sources have been used to complement documentary evidence.

The first book to describe this struggle at length was *The Secret Roads* by Jon and David Kimche.[[7]](#footnote-7) Jon Kimche was a journalist and historian, while his brother David became an Israeli diplomat and intelligence hand. This book, while not scholarly, adds the insight provided by insider information, which does not exist in the documentary record. This book does not focus on what the British sought to accomplish, but still highlights what they misunderstood about the *Bricha* and the Zionist movement. The Hebrew biography of the secretive Shaul Avigur (Meirov), known only as ‘The Chief’ in the Kimche brothers’ account, provides new details on this story.[[8]](#footnote-8) Avigur, the head of the *Mossad l’Aliyah Bet,* or the ‘institute for illegal immigration’, coordinated the intelligence, diplomacy and logistics behind the operation across Europe, the Mediterranean and the Middle East. Yoav Gelber’s officially-sponsored study of the origins of Israeli intelligence also shapes our understanding of the *Shai*. Several English language studies on *Aliyah Bet* detail the policy conflict between the Yishuv and Britain.[[9]](#footnote-9) Two studies in English assess the British perspective on illegal immigration, though only one addresses intelligence and neither describe its role in Britain’s effort on the European continent.[[10]](#footnote-10) Only been one scholarly book in English addresses *Bricha* – the proceedings of a conference in Austria during 1997.[[11]](#footnote-11) Arieh Kochavi studied diplomacy and policy of Britain, the United States and the Yishuv after the Second World War. None the less, the secret side of the story remains untold.[[12]](#footnote-12)

**Background**

Britain could not accept the Yishuv’s demands for full control over immigration. The White Paper of 1939 followed a decade of attempts to find a compromise between Arabs and Jews. This policy stemmed from fear that militant anti-British nationalism in Palestine could spread in the Middle East, and threaten its position, which, indeed, was possible.[[13]](#footnote-13) The effect of events in Germany caused tragedy for Jews and dilemmas for Britons. As the Nazis gained power in Germany, an increasing number of Jewish refugees arrived in Palestine. The change of demographic balance contributed to the Arab revolt of 1936-1939, which damaged Britain. Thus, British policy centred on keeping Palestine quiet. The Arabs of Palestine demanded an end to Jewish immigration and rejected the possibility of a Jewish state, as proposed by the 1937 Peel Commission. In any case, a Jewish state never was a British aim. The Government’s solution, the White Paper of 1939, forbade further Jewish settlement and land purchases and restricted immigration to 75,000 people, divided evenly over five years, wherein it would expire. Afterward, a semi-independent Palestine would be governed on the basis of majority rule.[[14]](#footnote-14) This policy emerged in the spring of 1939, on the eve of the greatest disaster the Jewish people ever suffered. When the policy was reviewed in 1944, Britain could not afford to further alienate either Jews or Arabs, so it decided to maintain the status quo, including the restrictions, for the duration of the war. After the assassination of Lord Moyne, all decisions regarding the future of Palestine were deferred until after the war.[[15]](#footnote-15)

When Clement Atlee’s government was elected in the summer of 1945, Zionists waited anxiously for a new Palestine policy. They hoped that Labour would continue the pro-Zionist promises made at its annual conference in 1944, which were simply the sentiments of a few unelected members. This hope was disappointed. Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin approached the new Prime Minister about Palestine, and related that Foreign Office staff had persuaded him to abandon his pro-Zionist stance.[[16]](#footnote-16)

The bureaucrats of the Foreign Office in Cairo had long promoted a pan-Arab and anti-Zionist imperial policy. With a massive economic crisis at hand, political intelligence staff and diplomats based in Cairo offered the government a policy solution which made access to Arab markets for British commerce a high priority.[[17]](#footnote-17) Strategic necessity also highlighted the centrality of Palestine as an alternate base to Egypt, from which Britain would depart by 1956. Bases throughout the Middle East were essential bulwarks to Britain’s global position. Were Britain’s position to weaken, Soviet influence, already pressing in Iran, simply would take its place, with disastrous consequences.[[18]](#footnote-18)

Given the strategic and diplomatic advantages, the Foreign Office and War Office thus agreed that the best policy for British security was to secure the goodwill of Arab peoples. Britain was prepared to confront outrage from the Yishuv, but not the Muslim world, which could hurt its position more. The Chiefs of Staff warned that Britain had ‘to choose between the possibility of localized trouble with Jews in Palestine and the virtual certainty of widespread disturbances among the Arabs throughout the Middle East and possibly among the Moslems in India. *The latter represented a military commitment twice or three times as great as the former.*’[[19]](#footnote-19)

In September 1945, British authorities from the Middle East and the Colonial and the Foreign Offices approved a temporary continuation of the White Paper restrictions on immigration, maintaining an average quota of 1,500-2,000 immigrants per month until a long-term policy was defined. Washington, however, had pressured Britain to allow 100,000 Jewish refugees into Palestine. This pressure gave Britain a reason to further delay a decision, as Bevin sought Truman’s cooperation for a joint policy through the Anglo-American Committee of Enquiry on Palestine (AACE).[[20]](#footnote-20)

As Britain dithered, the Jewish Agency, the semi-autonomous governing body of the Yishuv led by David Ben Gurion, began a secret war in Palestine. The *Haganah* took up arms against its erstwhile ally, and cooperated with its former enemies – the *Irgun*, short for *Irgun* *Zvai Leumi* or *Etzel*, and *Lohmei Herut Israel*, known to the British as the Stern Gang, and by its Hebrew acronym, *Lehi*.[[21]](#footnote-21) The struggle aimed merely to force a change in Britain’s immigration policy by destabilizing British security in Palestine and embarrassing its prestige, by stripping its control over immigration. The intelligence war occurred not just within Palestine, but throughout Europe, at sea, and on the airwaves.

Between 1945 and 1948, 65 ships carrying over 70,000 refugees sailed from Europe to Palestine, all but one sent by the *Mossad l’Aliyah Bet*. Only some 2,500 people actually arrived illegally in Palestine during those years.[[22]](#footnote-22) However, accommodating would-be immigrants in detention camps in Palestine placed great pressure on British policy. So, in August 1946 Britain began to deport detainees to camps in Cyprus. Meanwhile, British strategy focused on stopping illegal traffic at its source in Europe. This was seen as especially critical during the first half of 1947, when the United Nations was investigating the Palestine problem, and Britain needed to appear in control.[[23]](#footnote-23) Yet, this meant either shutting down *Aliyah Bet,* or stopping *Bricha.* Legal challenges made stopping *Aliyah Bet* shipping impractical until ships reached Palestine’s waters. By 1947, as detainees on Cyprus numbered some 50,000, it was understood that every ship which broke the blockade dealt a blow to British prestige and legitimacy in Palestine. To deter uncooperative European states and the Zionists, the policy of *refoulement* was adopted; the countries of departure were held responsible for intercepted ships and their passengers. This process culminated in the infamous *Exodus 1947* incident, when 4,500 passengers were returned to France, which refused to force their disembarkation. Then, they were taken to Hamburg where British military police, before the world press, forcibly removed those who had not voluntarily disembarked.

Arieh Kochavi rightly argued that, since the 1939 White Paper, British policy attempted to dissociate the problem of illegal immigration from the overall Jewish problem.[[24]](#footnote-24) At no point did British policymakers consider that this had become impossible. They still played a game in which the preservation of some British power in Palestine was the ultimate goal, and this depended on pacifying both Arabs and Jews. Hitler’s largely but not completely successful genocide meant that Jews would no longer be satisfied without open immigration to Palestine. Arabs already were dissatisfied with the existing monthly quota of 1,500. British policy placed greater importance on Arab opinion – indeed at every step of the illegal immigration saga, policymakers and bureaucrats reaffirmed the view that Britain must secure Arab goodwill.[[25]](#footnote-25) British intelligence was good enough to manage a stalemate with *Aliyah Bet,* yet at no point was intelligence factored into the formulation of a broader strategy. Very few illegals entered Palestine between 1945 and 1948, but this did not solve Britain’s problems. Migrants captured at sea had to be accommodated, and border control in Europe was a daunting challenge. Thus, this stalemate was expensive and British policy could not devise a solution for illegal immigration nor to the security problems in Palestine which could satisfy the population. Thus, by September 1947, it deferred to the United Nations for a solution.[[26]](#footnote-26)

**Containing Illegal Immigration**

The first British intelligence body to tackle illegal immigration was the Palestine CID, which had faced the problem alone before the war. In May 1945, the CID and the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS or MI6) began to improve their intelligence on the organizers of illegal immigration in Europe. The CID sent an officer to Syria, Turkey, the Balkans and Europe in order to coordinate British intelligence sources against illegal immigration. However, *Shai* soon acquired the document on this matter.[[27]](#footnote-27) By August it also had records of coast guard security, their coordination with the RAF, and preparations for detaining illegal immigrants on the beaches. As illegal immigration renewed in the summer of 1945, the *Haganah* operationalized its wireless interception of police channels, including communication between patrol boats, leading to temporary and minor success in landing ships. It took two days for *Shai* to decipher British signals at this time, too slow for tactical purposes but enough to demonstrate their procedures and exploit them for planning.[[28]](#footnote-28)

The Brothers Kimche provide an informed picture of the machinery of the British effort against *Bricha* and *Aliyah Bet*.

This battle had many headquarters. There was the “shipping room” at the Foreign Office with its wall-map indicating the position of every known illegal ship. These in turn were correlated with reports from intelligence headquarters with the armies in Germany, Austria and Italy, which were passed on from the special operations room at the War Office. On the basis of these, diplomatic steps were taken to intervene along the expected route of the migrants, to stop them at the frontiers if possible, or, if that failed, to prevent their embarkation. Intelligence agents were alerted at all probable transit stations.[[29]](#footnote-29)

This description is accurate, revealing details not found in the documentation, such as the map room, but is incomplete. In particular, the role of the intelligence services has only recently become clear. MI5 was responsible for the collation and dissemination of all data on the illegal movement of Jews.[[30]](#footnote-30) It was the nerve centre, collecting material from SIS, the admiralty, the war office, foreign office, colonial office, and its own offices in the Middle East. Signals intelligence sources played a role in this struggle, but these records are scarce. There was a two week turnaround time for the decryption and translation of *Haganah* signals in Palestine, when they could be successfully intercepted.[[31]](#footnote-31) It is fair to assume that Britain got little tactical intelligence from this source other than material by direction-finding on the location of ships, most of which had wireless crews. One ship was located through use of a spy with wireless equipment.[[32]](#footnote-32) The Foreign Office coordinated military and diplomatic intelligence from the Allied Commissions for Austria and Germany, as the colonial office did with authorities in Palestine.

British intelligence had more success dealing with *Aliyah Bet* than *Bricha.* It was slow to start with both, but over time it tracked the purchase and movement of ships, linking front companies to the Zionist movement.[[33]](#footnote-33) Shipping intelligence was Britain’s most complete part of the picture, but this was not always actionable. Legal and practical considerations meant that ships had to be intercepted in Palestine’s territorial waters.[[34]](#footnote-34) In 1947, SIS attempted to alter that problem. Keith Jeffery’s official history of SIS revealed that its first postwar sabotage operation in peacetime, Operation ‘Embarrass’, sought to wreck *Aliyah Bet* ships before they could embark illegal migrants. Five ships were attacked in Italian ports, with care taken to avoid casualties. The sabotage was attributed to the notional “Defenders of Arab Palestine.” Apparently, Mossad l’Aliyah Bet leaders investigated this group and found that the explosion on the *Pan Crescent* in Venice had been ‘British made’.[[35]](#footnote-35) ‘Embarrass’ agents, if caught, were given the cover that they were hired by ‘international industrialists’ from New York to stop infiltration of Soviet agents into the Middle East through illegal immigration channels. The propaganda arm of “Embarrass” spread the same rumour. So too, in 1948 SIS attempted to provoke the Soviets into stopping illegal border crossings into the west by pretending that Britain was using *Bricha* to exfiltrate its agents from Eastern Europe.[[36]](#footnote-36)

As usual, all that survives about SIS’ work are scraps, scattered throughout the documentation. SIS participated in conferences on the topic, received intelligence reports from other agencies, and passed on information. Both MI5 and SIS were active in France, and struggled to cooperate fully with French security, which was more helpful against terrorism than illegal immigration.[[37]](#footnote-37)

So while intelligence on *Aliyah Bet* became good enough to prevent ships from reaching Palestine, the policy problem of what to do with detainees remained. Furthermore, efforts to stop migrants from reaching ships in Europe were ineffective.

Precise numbers of refugees are difficult to determine, especially since the populations were transient. By 1948, only half of the approximately 600,000 Jewish refugees had been registered as DPs – many refugees from Eastern Europe were not considered displaced by the war, rather afterwards. In April 1946 the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry (AACE) gave a total of 391,000 Jewish refugees and displaced persons in Europe.[[38]](#footnote-38) This figure grew to about 600,000 by 1948 since it excluded the approximately 150,000 Polish survivors left in the Soviet Union, for whom repatriation to Poland still was thought possible, as well as other populations, especially in Romania. Hostility in Poland culminating with the Kielce Pogrom in July 1946 drove an overwhelming majority of Polish survivors westwards.[[39]](#footnote-39) The flow of people westwards, originally spontaneous, was soon shepherded by *Bricha* to the American zones of occupation in Germany and Austria, which had a policy of accepting any persecuted peoples. Zionist connections in Czechoslovakia made that country a convenient transit point. 130,000 Jews arrived to Austria from Poland using *Bricha* channels.[[40]](#footnote-40)

About two-thirds of about 300,000 total Jewish DPs came to Israel. The remaining third moved to America or the British Commonwealth.[[41]](#footnote-41) Most of the remaining 300,000 Jewish refugees left Europe after the declaration of Israel’s independence. Just over half of Israel’s 700,000 immigrants who arrived between 1948 and 1951 came from Eastern Europe and British detention camps in Cyprus.[[42]](#footnote-42)

**Table 1:** Approximate numbers of Jewish DPs and refugees in Europe

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| YEAR | REGISTERED DPs | NON-REGISTERED JEWISH REFUGEES | TOTAL |
| EARLY 1946 | 98,000 | 293,000 | 391,000 |
| MID 1946 | 133,000 | 408,000 | 541,000[[43]](#footnote-43) |
| LATE 1946/EARLY 1947 | 250,000 | 291,000+ | >541,000[[44]](#footnote-44) |

In January 1946, the Chief of Operations for the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) Lt.-Gen. Frederick Morgan, gave a press conference on the Jewish refugee problem. The general who had planned ‘Overlord’ caused a political storm when he described Jews fleeing Poland as being ‘well dressed, well fed, rosy cheeked…’ and having ‘plenty of money.’ He downplayed stories of new pogroms of Jews who had survived the Nazis in Poland, concluding, ‘they certainly do not look like a persecuted people.’ Insensitive to world and Jewish feeling, Morgan misunderstood the source of support for the refugees, but his description of a ‘secret Jewish organization’ leading a mass exodus of Polish Jews into the American zones of Germany and Austria was correct.[[45]](#footnote-45) It was not even a secret: Yishuv politicians openly spoke of defying British policy, but would not admit that they organized the Jewish exodus within Europe. According to Asher Ben Natan, in retrospect, ‘there were not many secrets about the *Bricha*. There were secrets about the people who were in charge, apart from the movements themselves, because you couldn’t see them.’[[46]](#footnote-46) Yet, there were enough secrets to prevent British intelligence from understanding key elements of *Bricha.* A recently declassified document reveals that even by 19 May, British intelligence received reports that Jews were filling trains designated for operation ‘Swallow’, which brought Germans expelled from Poland to Germany. Intelligence reported these Jews to be ‘well-fed and dressed, and in actual fact, they were not expellees but volunteers for the American Zone, and were surprised to learn on arrival that they were going to be treated as normal refugees.’[[47]](#footnote-47) There were a few other such incidents, but Foreign Office bureaucrats assumed that the practice was more widespread. One infiltrator was found to have been forging documents Jewish refugees. No expert, his false papers read, ‘Captain Baker, Royal Signals, US Army.’ Back in Warsaw, he had supplied refugees with false papers exchange for large sums of money.[[48]](#footnote-48)

British intelligence struggled to understand *Bricha* and, even as the picture improved, there was little that any British body could do to interdict refugee traffic in Europe. Indeed, any intelligence organization would have found *Bricha* difficult to assess, because it used members of at least a dozen Zionist political parties, in and out of the DP camps. This included including religious anti-Zionists, socialists, the labour youth movement and the revisionist youth movement *Betar*. Most of Bricha’s records reveal little about intelligence or operational matters, but instead mostly concerns the distribution amongst the parties of legal immigration certificates and illegal *Bricha*-issued passes to leave the camps. Even worse, British intelligence did not understand the political culture of the Zionist movement or of Palestine’s Jews.[[49]](#footnote-49)

For instance, in March 1946, Security Intelligence Middle East (SIME, an MI5-linked organization based in Cairo) sent two members of the ultra-orthodox, anti-Zionist party Agudat Israel to interfere with illegal immigration. According to SIME’s description of their mission, Markus Benedikt and Yashoon Hurwitz were in the DP camps to offer ‘material and spiritual assistance’. They were to persuade ‘their own people’, meaning religious DPs or Aguda members, to return to their former places of residence, and rebuild their lives. They also were to dissuade Jews from leaving the camps by dangerous, illegal means. Benedikt requested the same facilities available to the Jewish Agency, such as travel documents, and promised to report his findings to the CID.[[50]](#footnote-50) The British army and Allied Commission in Austria supplied him with documents.[[51]](#footnote-51) By January 1947, however, Benedikt came under suspicion and by July 1947 was implicated in illegal immigration.[[52]](#footnote-52) British intelligence paid too much attention to the anti-Zionism of religious Jews, and misunderstood the force of the human problem in DP camps. Their efforts to keep the refugees in Eastern Europe, increasingly dangerous to Jews, helped the Zionists convince most survivors, including religious non-Zionists, that their destiny lay in their own hands, rather than with any Gentile authority.

The backbone of *Bricha* consisted of officers like Ben Natan, who were appointed directly by senior *Haganah* officers in the Mossad l’Aliyah Bet such as Joseph Barpal and Shaul Avigur. These officers, stationed in the major cities of Europe, communicated mostly by courier, and convened irregularly to discuss business in person. It is because of this that *Bricha* was so difficult to penetrate. Letters which planned or referred to past meetings and decisions were written in Hebrew and normally used codenames for cover. Such letters were rare and normally passed by courier. In May 1946, documents belonging to Chaim Barlas of the Jewish Agency’s rescue committee were confiscated when he returned to Palestine from a tour of Europe. The file reveals how little was known about *Bricha* at the time. It contains the first known reference to the name and a short report on what *Bricha* was. The report noted that the Czechoslovak, Hungarian, Romanian and Yugoslav governments facilitated *Bricha* movements by supplying official documents. British intelligence had yet to learn the true names of some of *Bricha*’s key organizers.[[53]](#footnote-53)

Intelligence on Bricha, tough to attain, gradually improved through 1946. By the summer of 1946, SIS in Austria, using a department store chain for cover, was tapping all of *Bricha*’s telephone conversations in Vienna, while FSS units were working with the NKVD to keep the border closed.[[54]](#footnote-54) Fundamentally, humint and surveillance were Britain’s best sources on the critical issues. Yet, Humint was not a perfect source. Asher Ben Natan described one agent which he and his comrades exposed:

One day a group arrived from Budapest, which also included Jews from Romania. The *Bricha* escort who accompanied the group brought me a memo from the [Mossad ‘Aliyah Bet] emissary in Romania, who alerted me that one of the refugees from there was a spy, planted by the British Intelligence Service… he asked that I quickly get rid of him.

…I contacted our friend in the Refugee Section of the American Forces in Salzburg and asked him to arrest the man on his arrival there… There was a special irony in the reason given for his arrest, particularly in view of the fact that it was initiated on the part of the *Bricha* – “he was caught illegally crossing the frontier.”[[55]](#footnote-55)

This story, confirmed in the Symphony file, highlights one of *Bricha*’s advantages, its ability to cut deals with local authorities. In another instance, *Bricha* money was used to repair an important bridge linking Austria and Czechoslovakia, facilitating the influx of Jewish refugees, and gaining favour on both sides of the border.[[56]](#footnote-56) Low ranking army officers in the Russian, American and French armies apparently cut deals with *Bricha* in Austria in order to relieve the pressure of the refugees in their areas of responsibility. Secret diplomacy with these local authorities was the key to *Bricha*’s success.

One Yiddish speaking British source in Prague informed British intelligence how the Czechoslovak government cooperated with illegal immigration by supplying transit visas to fleeing Polish Jews. British protests to Prague caused a brief obstacle in border crossing.[[57]](#footnote-57) A newly released file reveals the details of Czechoslovak contacts with the Zionists in support of *Bricha*.[[58]](#footnote-58) The power of diplomacy, however, was limited. Intelligence remarked that,

It is considered that the movement of Jews through Czechoslovakia has gathered such momentum and that the organisation for dealing with potential illegal immigrants is by now so perfected and comprehensive as to render futile any counter-measures it might be possible to take local [sic]. All the more so since the Czechoslovak government has not attempted to control the movement of individuals...[[59]](#footnote-59)

Rather, the report suggested focusing attention on controlling the Allied Zones of occupation, particularly in potential ports of embarkation in Italy. By then, however, military control if these ports already had been passed to the new Italian government. Italians generally were sympathetic to the Jewish refugees, and had their own interests.[[60]](#footnote-60)

A mysterious example of British humint in Austria highlights Britain’s problem in dealing with the other occupying powers, especially America. Joseph Winninger[[61]](#footnote-61) and Erich Wender[[62]](#footnote-62) were members of a wartime courier chain, known to the Americans by the codename of their Czech agent, ‘Dogwood,’ which moved documents, money and information between Istanbul, Hungary, Austria, Czechoslovakia and the Balkans.[[63]](#footnote-63) The chain was penetrated by the Abwehr and closed in April 1944.

Wender was recruited as an agent after he was arrested by the British army in Austria in February 1946. He told his interrogators that he had done double agent work for the British since 1940. The Field Security Section said it would investigate this claim, but henceforth no further reference to him is found in British records.[[64]](#footnote-64) Winninger, already in British pay, offered Wender 100,000 Austrian Schillings and freedom from jail in exchange for work as an agent.[[65]](#footnote-65) In May 1946, ignorant to Wender’s British employers, American intelligence’s Strategic Services Unit (SSU) agreed to pay him 750 shillings per month to work for them in Vienna’s black market of false papers, espionage and smuggling. SSU hoped to learn how these activities related to Jewish refugees. All the while, these British agents came close to the *Bricha*, which relied on shady characters such Wender.

The paper trail on Wender and Winninger runs cold by late 1946. The Security Service destroyed its personnel file on Wender.[[66]](#footnote-66) Winninger was de-carded from their registry in 1962.[[67]](#footnote-67) That summer, SSU Washington cross-referenced the pair, revealing their untrustworthiness, and reported that , ‘These individuals were opportunists of the worst kind, praying on Jewish refugees for their own personal gain and were also responsible for a serious penetration of OSS [Office of Strategic Services] through operation DOGWOOD.’[[68]](#footnote-68) Yet, by this time Britain’s intelligence picture of *Bricha* in Austria had improved dramatically.[[69]](#footnote-69) The timing suggests that Wender and Winninger contributed to that improvement.

Never the less, the possession of better intelligence did not enable British diplomacy to close the borders to Jewish migrants. There was little within Europe that could prevent illegal border crossings. In the summer of 1946, in preparation for a government conference on illegal immigration which included the intelligence services, the possibility of threatening European governments was raised, if they failed to prevent the entry of Jewish refugees. The French, ‘because they are susceptible to Arab criticism, will it is hoped give us some cooperation. Their first re-actions have not been very favourable, but we can threaten to create trouble for them with the Arabs in North Africa if they do not play.’[[70]](#footnote-70) At the meeting, the Foreign Office rejected threat tactics, emphasizing that European states were ‘only too eager’ to be rid of stateless Jews, but that threats could invite retaliation and deterioration in relations. ‘Only in the case of ex-enemy countries (e.g. Italy and Roumania (sic)) whose fate were hanging in the balance at the Peace Conference, could we apply effective pressure without undesirable consequences.’[[71]](#footnote-71) Instead, the Foreign Office favoured cooperation with those states, as it was ‘usually much easier on legal grounds to prevent the entry of undesirable persons than to prevent their exit.’ Yet, the meeting concluded that little could be done to stop the movement of Jews, but that they might be able to impede them. To this end, information was to be shared with the United States government and efforts would be made to prove that UNRRA and other relief agencies were complicit with *Bricha.* Their vision for impeding *Bricha,* however, was overoptimistic, and assumed that local governments could control it, even if they wanted to. Meanwhile, the link with relief agencies had yet to be proven despite much effort,[[72]](#footnote-72) and the Foreign Office had also ruled out the use of force to eject incoming migrants.[[73]](#footnote-73) Finally, the reliability of US authorities had already come into question.

**Anglo-American Secret Relations**

Britain had long struggled to deal with Zionist propaganda in the United States, which in the immediate postwar, had become a battleground of growing importance. So, on the suggestion of soviet mole Donald Maclean, MI5 worked with the Foreign Office to prepare a note with which the British Embassy in Washington could influence the US State Department and American journalists.

The American public tends to think of illegal immigration as a spontaneous movement of desperate Jews, fleeing from intolerable conditions and persisting, despite incredible hardships, until they reach the Promised Land. This is the picture the American Zionists paint, and it has just the sort of appeal that Mr. Maclean describes.

We, on the contrary, want to show that the movement is a coldly organised one, starting in the depths of Russia and making use of deceit, forgery and bribery to attain its ends. We should above all put over the fact that American charitable instincts are being abused and that the people running the movement are making suckers out of American officials.[[74]](#footnote-74)

British propaganda was to explain the legal basis to Britain’s position, but went much farther. It told of ‘Storm Troopers and pregnant women’ amongst the illegals, and likened the Zionist movement in the Nazi movement. *Haganah’s* strike force, *Palmach* was likened to the *Hitler Jugend,* the Haganah to the SS and the Irgun to the Brown Shirts. Visits by Zionist leaders to DP camps were compared with the ‘whipping up’ of nationalist feeling, and attention was drawn to the profiteering by agents engaged in illegal traffic.[[75]](#footnote-75) This smear campaign was to take place behind the scenes in Washington and New York, as MI5 had warned that open campaign would not be effective. Maclean warned that,

Although United States opinion in general is not pro-Zionist it is inclined to be apathetic about our difficulties and the Arab point of view. On the other hand there is the ordinary human interest in successful “underground “under-dog” activities. We very much fear that Zionists and their sympathisers… [would turn] our discoveries into tales of heroism…[[76]](#footnote-76)

Indeed, British propaganda had little success with headlines. One news article emphasized the horrid conditions on board for the poor refugees led astray by ‘international criminals’. It is difficult to believe that such reports received much attention, when seen next to ‘tales of heroism.’[[77]](#footnote-77) With no effective way of representing its position, British legitimacy to rule in Palestine was further weakened in international headlines and public opinion.[[78]](#footnote-78)

Tension about Middle East policy in Anglo-American secret relations did not begin in postwar Europe. Despite their alliance, US and British intelligence suspected and competed with each other. In 1943 MI5’s Middle East specialist commented that ‘American commercial interests in the [Middle East] and their strong sympathy for the Jewish case in Palestine will probably cause her to operate an intelligence network in the area which we shall doubtless require to counter...’[[79]](#footnote-79) American and British commercial interests indeed conflicted. Thus, in 1943 the American Steel Export Company complained to OSS about its inability to export steel to Iraq. Incredulous, the OSS officer passed along the letter and a heated memo complaining that American merchants were ‘blocked at every turn’ by British trade policy. When London chose not to exclude American businesses from imperial markets, still it selected which firms could participate.[[80]](#footnote-80) Even in 1947, the JIC, Middle East (JICME) decided not to share economic or even topographical intelligence with Americans which might damage British trading interests.

It should be made clear that economic intelligence could be exchanged so long as it did not disclose the trading activities of British concerns, particularly the oil companies. We were largely dependent on British firms for economic intelligence which might be discontinued if it were thought that there was a danger of this information being used by the Americans to their advantage.[[81]](#footnote-81)

At the same time, American army counterintelligence complained that Britain withheld intelligence, partly because it feared that American personnel would leak it to the Jewish Agency. ‘Without prior official security o.k. from SIME, [we] will never get any valuable information from the British security authorities in Palestine.’[[82]](#footnote-82) Little evidence suggests that the Americans leaked intelligence; rather, they strove to prevent it. However, during the war, the consul in Jerusalem did pass Jewish Agency signals between Jerusalem and Istanbul using OSS ciphers, in order to avoid the censor.[[83]](#footnote-83) British intelligence leaked to the Jewish Agency without outside help. American documents reveal that Asher Ben Natan sometimes acquired British army cables, even in Austria, which helped *Bricha* security.[[84]](#footnote-84)

By 1946, Anglo-American friction around Zionism and Palestine remained high. On May 1st, a Mideast officer of the Strategic Services Unit warned that

… what the British would like very much to obtain as complete information about us as is possible through you as a channel, and I would strongly recommend that you pursue the policy of only telling them what they need to know… the proper policy for us to follow at the present time is the rather cynical one which may be stated somewhat as follows: “With the end of the war we no longer have enemies, but at the same time we have no friends”. I am confident that this is the position of the British and other intelligence services who are at least as cynical as ourselves…[[85]](#footnote-85)

US intelligence would pursue its own interests first. If they clashed with Britain’s interests, so be it. Thus, in early 1946 secret relations with Britain were set aside, and operation ‘Symphony’ began in response to warnings that the Soviets were trying to penetrate *Bricha* in order to slip agents to the Middle East.

The American worry about Soviet penetration of *Bricha* came from a number of sources, was understandable given the sheer numbers of refugees flowing from the east, but was exaggerated. The first American record of the rumour appears to be a cable from Bern from late 1945, reporting that Russian agents were recruiting Polish Jews to spread propaganda in Palestine.[[86]](#footnote-86) The source, from ‘BG-Land’, code for France, is unknown.[[87]](#footnote-87)

British records from the same time reveal that the origin of the rumour stemmed from Polish army intelligence in Italy. It was never verified, and little evidence supported the claim. An early, MI5-sponsored, investigation by army intelligence sheds light on this issue. *Bricha*, which was not mentioned by name, was said to receive help from personnel in Jewish units of the army, Jewish personnel of British units or HQs, UNRRA, the Red Cross, and the American Joint Distribution Committee (AJDC, a Jewish aid agency), amongst other miscellaneous individual contacts. This information was correct, and visible to any observer in Vienna. On possible Soviet influence, the report stated, rather than aiming to embarrass Britain, Russian authorities simply were trying to relieve themselves of the pressure of Jewish migrants, ‘passing on to us by the line of least resistance a problem which, no doubt, they too found somewhat troublesome…’ However, the report continued:

On the other hand, a report has recently been received from AFHQ which emanates from Polish Intelligence Sources (whose impartiality is doubtful) in Italy and which alleges that the mass migration of Jews is being used by the Russians as a means for infiltrating agents into Palestine. While this allegation is a more probable one… there is little concrete evidence by which the allegation can be supported.[[88]](#footnote-88)

American intelligence also reported on such rumours from Polish sources. In April 1946, James Angleton, the American counterintelligence officer in Rome, repeated to Washington a report from Prague, reporting the desire of Polish Jews to leave Eastern Europe rather than suffer anti-Semitic persecution in their places of origin, and suggesting that Russians agents could be included among the 150,000 Poles wishing to leave.[[89]](#footnote-89) Angleton suggested that the Soviets were trying to destabilize the British by promoting Jewish emigration. American intelligence was far more concerned about Soviet penetration than British prestige. Earlier in 1946, Angleton had provided a far more nuanced approach to the issue. He reported that Soviet policy probably aimed to embarrass Britain, and to this end was supporting the Jewish Agency on emigration. Soviet intelligence, according to Angleton, was provoking the flight of Jews by inciting anti-Semitic violence against Jews in Poland. Its aim was to discredit Polish authorities abroad, force Britain to abandon Palestine, and create ‘internal difficulties in Poland which would justify even greater military oppression.’ Angleton believed the Russians sought to create more hatred for Britain than the USSR.[[90]](#footnote-90)

In April 1946 British intelligence in Austria reported that no further evidence suggested that the Russians were using illegal immigration to infiltrate agents.[[91]](#footnote-91) It also had become apparent that the ease of penetration at Soviet border crossings was due to the ‘susceptibility to bribes’ of the Russian guards.[[92]](#footnote-92) With all this evidence against Soviet support for *Bricha,* it is remarkable how widely believed the rumour became.

An August 1946 British intelligence report remarked on the unusual Soviet support for Zionism, which it normally opposed. It highlighted that mostly young former partisans were being selected first for immigration, and therefore suggested that the Soviets were allowing this manpower to sail to Palestine to embarrass the British authorities there.[[93]](#footnote-93) While security officers debated the infiltration issue, British political intelligence in Cairo concluded that Soviet policy was opportunistic. ‘Although it now appears that Russia will in the long run support the Arabs in Palestine it is quite clear that at present the main object of Russian policy is to secure the withdrawal of the British.’[[94]](#footnote-94) Soviet propaganda, the report pointed out, remained staunchly anti-Zionist.

This well-reasoned conclusion benefited from almost a years’ worth of intelligence collection, and an improvement of humint in Austria in particular. It explained why the Soviets robustly supported the embarkation of illegal migrants on the Black Sea, but attempted to prevent border crossings into Austria. None the less, British intelligence reports both from the field and higher up in the apparatus tended to cast doubt on the issue of Soviet penetration. Yet, the Foreign and Colonial Offices seem to have believed it, or at least it is their papers which contain most references to the issue.[[95]](#footnote-95) In the summer of 1946, MI5 briefed the Prime Minister Atlee on Russian penetration. Citing numerous sources without qualifying whether they were believed reliable, the idea was represented as though it was factual.[[96]](#footnote-96) Furthermore, this story was pressed to the American army and intelligence. Fritz Liebreich dedicated a chapter to this issue in his book, but having dealt mostly with Colonial, Foreign Office and Admiralty papers, concluded that British intelligence genuinely believed the rumour that the Soviet Union was penetrating agents to the Middle East. Britain promoted this view in the American government, military and domestic press. Searches of illegal immigrant ships and detainees produced virtually no evidence of communist sympathies among refugees.[[97]](#footnote-97)

Most likely, in early 1946, British intelligence heard the infiltration rumour and chose to perpetuate it. Considerable evidence supports this view. In 1947, it was the line which SIS agents participating in Embarrass were to take, if caught. An MI5 report on its officer’s tour which surveyed Jewish underground activity in Western Europe sheds more light on this issue. Before the liaison officer approached his American counterpart about ‘Jewish subversive activities’, MI5 instructed him to frame his approach carefully to his cousins. ‘It was agreed that owing to the susceptibility of the American authorities the problem should be represented as one of examining Russian penetration and use of Jewish organizations for anti-Allied purposes.’[[98]](#footnote-98) Since the Americans were likely to believe the rumour, perpetuating it would convince them to cooperate against *Bricha*. Ephraim Dekel highlighted the difference in American cooperation between the mass flight of Polish Jews in 1946, with the Romanian ‘hunger flight’ of 1947. In the latter, Americans in Vienna were less willing to facilitate the transfer of Romanian arrivals in Vienna to other DP camps. He credited British propaganda with this change in behaviour:

The American occupation authorities in Austria… were only too ready to believe the reports circulated by the British and other biased sources to the effect that there were many Communists among the Rumanian Jews – undesirable elements who would spread anti-American propaganda in Austria’s American sector…[[99]](#footnote-99)

The rumour was easy to spread because it was easy to believe. Even David Ben Gurion worried about communist doctrinal penetration of the *Haganah*.[[100]](#footnote-100) This rumour, very likely having been, perpetuated by the British intelligence, had the intended effect. American intelligence believed it. ‘Symphony’ was its initial response.

**Symphony**

An early American intelligence report from a secret source described in detail the route by which Soviet agents infiltrated *Bricha*, so to reach Palestine from Poland. It even gave the Austrian addresses at which these agents received false papers from the Soviets. The trustworthiness of the reports was in doubt, but the variety of corroborating sources, mostly Polish and British, led American counterintelligence to conclude that the basis was correct. Surveillance of Jewish Soviet officers meeting with Jewish organizations, such as the socialist *Jüdischer Bund* in Austria reinforced the effect of the infiltration rumour.[[101]](#footnote-101) American officers in the United Kingdom passed information received from the British to the SSU in Italy, which highlighted the relatively positive attitudes towards the Soviet Union exhibited by Jewish refugees recently arrived in Rome.[[102]](#footnote-102) While displays of solidarity from Italian socialists and communists were common, the influence of communism amongst well-indoctrinated Zionists was minimal. British intelligence was distorting reports on the refugees’ communist sympathies for consumption by the “cousins.”

In March 1946, Washington ordered its intelligence officers in Germany, Austria and Italy to penetrate Jewish escape lines, so to catch communist agitators. They were to recruit Jewish refugees to join local communist parties, and at the same time follow the normal routes to Palestine. Even if they could not make it to Palestine, having a communist agent with Russian intelligence connections was of long-term use. The report emphasized that

This NKGB propaganda activity in Palestine is not so important as the learning of their routes, agents in Germany, Austria, Italy and Palestine, contacts, hideouts, financing, forgery of documents and general modus operandi. The capable agents recruited by the NKGB will no doubt be given tasks other than propaganda activity.[[103]](#footnote-103)

American intelligence believed that Soviet policy was to position itself so to support either Jews or Arabs in Palestine, depending on who was disappointed by a final decision. This operation was designed to expose any Soviet attempt to use *agents provocateurs* to disturb the balance in Palestine, or to capitalize on anti-British sentiment. With this end in mind, Symphony was born.

The project’s overt aims were predictable and sensible: the exposure of Russian agents, Nazis, and the identification of communist agents amongst the refugees. Its immediate covert aims were to find the Jewish Agency emissaries who ran the escape lines, and those privately smuggling people out of the east for money. Identification of the individuals within the aid agencies and repatriation committees who were providing false documents to smugglers also was considered an important immediate aim, so that the traffic could be closed were it to threaten the security of the Allied-occupied zones. This made agents such as Erich Wender all the more attractive, and dangerous. The long term covert aim for the operation was penetration in Western Europe of the organizations through which Russian agents were sent to Palestine.[[104]](#footnote-104)

The case officer for Symphony was Captain Jules Konig, a Belgian Jewish diamond cutter who worked for the OSS in the Middle East and Italy during the war. In 1946 Konig was the station chief in Vienna for the Strategic Services Unit (SSU), OSS’ successor organization. After first posing as a journalist covering the refugees, Konig came clean with Ben Natan, and described the SSU’s interest in *Bricha* and communism. The friendly pair regularly liaised, and Ben Natan received the codename ‘Conductor’. Konig believed that the Russians were using *Bricha* to infiltrate agents into allied zones, and that penetration of *Bricha* could expose communist agents.[[105]](#footnote-105) Vienna was a key stop along the route for eastern European Jews, and a convenient place for Russian, American and even Polish intelligence to manage the clandestine flow of people and information between east and west. Thus it was a logical staging ground for Symphony.

Ben Natan was a native of Vienna. In 1944, he had worked for the Jewish Agency’s cooperative effort with British intelligence to interrogate new immigrants to Palestine about conditions in Europe.[[106]](#footnote-106) Ben Natan’s memoir and the Symphony documents reveal how he used his *Bricha* connections and his own agents to impress Konig and other American officers. In his initial report on Symphony, Konig related that ‘although the official organizers are AJDC people, it is actually Pier [a.k.a. Ben Natan] and his men who coordinate the entire movement. Pier ascribes the ease with which the system works to the complete disorganization of border controls…’[[107]](#footnote-107) Proving the value of cooperation, Ben Natan expressed *Bricha*’s willingness to inform on any group or individual likely to ruin his efforts.[[108]](#footnote-108) In another instance, Ben Natan reportedly wagered an uncooperative American officer in charge of DPs in Salzburg that he could not stop the entry of 350 Jews into his zone that night. Having lost the bet, this American officer had to personally escort another group of refugees across the Austro-German border.[[109]](#footnote-109)

After several months of operations, little useful information had been obtained by the SSU. Symphony did not expose any Soviet operation to slip agents to the Middle East, and it is unclear if the British origin of the rumour was ever discovered. Only Russian records may reveal the degree to which this fear was grounded in truth. According to Ruffner, ‘The balance sheet of Pier’s [Ben Natan’s] gains from X-2 in Vienna far outweighed any benefit to the United States.’[[110]](#footnote-110) Indeed, the assistance provided by SSU helped a few Jewish NKVD officers defect through *Bricha* and gave that organization certain protection just as the massive exodus of Eastern European Jews was beginning.

In one unique case, the defection of one Jewish NKVD officer supplied useful intelligence to both *Bricha* and the SSU. In his memoir, Ben Natan refers to the man as “Bonya.” His true name was Benjamin Schurr, whose brother Yekutiel was a *Bricha* officer representing Ben Natan in Poland. Ben Natan intercepted a letter from Yekutiel to Benjamin, and took action knowing that the latter was a Russian officer. Suspicious of NKVD penetration and realizing the opportunity to help US intelligence expose it, Ben Natan worked with Konig to slowly manage Benjamin. The case revealed that Ben Natan’s organization had been penetrated from another source, so *Bricha* cut loose untrustworthy individuals and went even deeper underground. Benjamin had been gathering intelligence on Americans, British and *Bricha*, but had unwittingly provided his superiors with controlled information. Under increasing pressure and facing orders to be sent back to Russia, Benjamin handed his fate to *Bricha*. US intelligence worked with *Bricha* to draw the case out longer, and to extract intelligence on the soviet order of battle, operations and intentions. Once the US authorities were finished with him, Ben Natan arranged for Benjamin to follow his Soviet travel orders eastwards, ask for demobilization in Poland, where Benjamin joined his father and Brother and eventually made it to Palestine through *Bricha* channels.[[111]](#footnote-111) Benjamin later settled in the United States.

Symphony did not expose Soviet agents on their way to the Middle East but did expose certain Soviet agents working in Austria. This exposure was most helpful to *Bricha*, since it often was the subject of investigation by Soviet and Hungarian intelligence. With Soviet direction, Hungarian police had arrested many agents connected to *Bricha*, and the Russians had closed the borders to control it. For example, Gabor Salzer, who had played both the Jewish Agency and NKVD was killed in Hungarian custody.[[112]](#footnote-112) He finally was brought in when he had helped Nazis obtain refugee papers and circumcisions to help their escape.[[113]](#footnote-113) Konig concluded that the Soviets were interfering because they believed that the AJDC was gathering intelligence for the US. ‘Their reasoning runs as follows: “It is not possible that an American Agency spends hundreds of thousands of dollars in Budapest without wanting something in return and that something is intelligence.”’[[114]](#footnote-114) The key value for US intelligence in assisting *Bricha* this way was the carding and indexing of all the names mentioned in the interrogations.

Frustrated with the lack of progress on Symphony’s stated objectives, the project had come under criticism and was, for all intents and purposes, beginning to wind down by July 1946.[[115]](#footnote-115) By September, Richard Helms reported that Konig had fallen under Ben Natan’s sway. Helms saw the behaviour of Ben Natan’s men as ‘terroristic’, in light of British accusations against the Jewish Agency,[[116]](#footnote-116) but misunderstood the nature of *Bricha*. For example, he incorrectly called every individual connected to *Bricha* as a Jewish Agency member, including Erich Wender. Konig’s wartime work with the Jewish Agency while based in Cairo added to Helms’ suspicions. Konig had been involved with intelligence liaison and negotiations on a possible volunteer parachute mission into Austria with OSS, along the lines of those done with the Special Operations Executive (SOE) in the Balkans in 1944.[[117]](#footnote-117) By June 1946 Konig had returned to the United States. His intelligence career was over.[[118]](#footnote-118)

Symphony ended because Konig’s objectivity was compromised. He protected *Bricha*’s activities and the security of the operation was weak. Most importantly, the project did not produce what it sought to find: evidence of Soviet penetration of the Allied Zones and the Middle East through *Bricha*. US intelligence was willing to tolerate Konig’s behaviour vis-à-vis Britain, as long as the project had value. However, Symphony’s product was not deemed to be worth its risks. Richard Helms correctly believed that Konig’s activities had endangered the otherwise positive liaison between US and British intelligence. Of particular concern was SSU’s inability to inform Britain of instances when its own officers leaked intelligence to *Bricha*. The security classification of the Symphony meant that two of Ben Natan’s sources in the British forces, both known to the SSU, could not be revealed to their allies. The first was a Jew named Mark Breslauer who served in the cypher department of British troops Austria (BTA).[[119]](#footnote-119) His case was never pursued. The second was Betty Thompson O’Donnell, also at BTA headquarters who, during the summer of 1946, showed Ben Natan top secret censorship intercepts. Ostensibly, she was an Irish Catholic with anti-British motivations, who planned to work at the Jewish agency in London. SSU could not share her case with the British because of the classification of Symphony, but also presumed she was a controlled agent.[[120]](#footnote-120) According to Ruffner’s article, the British received the full record of the material sent from Ben Natan to Konig, however British records seem to contradict this claim. A British officer in Austria reported that US intelligence services, ‘with which our own work closely in almost every other matter, have too high a proportion of Jewish officers to be able to give us much help in this. The head, for example, of the G-2 Staff Section in Vienna which would deal with this problem is himself a Jew.’[[121]](#footnote-121)

The SSU officer Vienna who replaced Konig was ordered not to resume Symphony, which was suspended with Konig’s departure. If Symphony were to continue, it should be a covert penetration of *Bricha*, not a collaborative project as with Konig and Ben Natan.[[122]](#footnote-122) Operation ‘Rummage’, handled by the Counter-Intelligence Corps (CIC), was conducted along these lines. Desiring to uphold good relations, CIC allowed a British agent to see the SSU’s file on ‘Rummage,’ which investigated the Zionist organization and terrorist groups in Bavaria. Americans would share results of such investigations, but full cooperation remained prohibited.[[123]](#footnote-123)

Symphony led to the exposure of some Soviet agents, the defection of a few, but revealed nothing about Soviet penetration into Palestine. If a British rumour provoked Symphony’s creation, then it had backfired. Britain’s unreliable agents who penetrated Symphony may have improved the intelligence picture but this did not lead to an improvement in interdiction of migrants on the continent. Little could be done and thus focus was restored to the struggle at sea.

Britain’s use of deceptive information to persuade the US to support Britain’s interdiction of *Bricha*, instead caused American intelligence to forge a closer connection to the underground movement. During the critical period from March to July 1946, when the number of Jewish refugees in Austria was doubling, *Bricha* had effective cover and sanction of the SSU. During those months, the SSU chose not to share information with Britain about *Bricha*, in order to protect its counterintelligence operations in Austria. Ben Natan said that the British, ‘…never succeeded to impede anybody, let’s put it that way. They tried very hard, but they didn’t succeed.’[[124]](#footnote-124)

As late as July 1947, MI5 was falsely confident that it had forced *Aliyah Bet* out of Italy.[[125]](#footnote-125) That same month, it was suggested at a JIC meeting on illegal immigration that intelligence on the subject could not be shared with the Americans, since ‘there was a danger that supporters of the Jews might be able to appreciate the relative effectiveness of their operations, and concentrate on those which held out the greatest promise of success.’[[126]](#footnote-126) Britain conducted diplomacy with France, Italy and other departure points.[[127]](#footnote-127) Yet, it still could not rely on those states, certainly not America. Britain could not talk its way out of this problem, especially when, for countries like France or Italy, the problem of DPs went away on its own by their own inaction.[[128]](#footnote-128) It was known early on that it would be difficult to rely on these governments. British diplomacy attempted to stop the support by AJDC and UNRRA for *Bricha*, but this link could not be proven although it was obvious. One intelligence officer credited the ‘Jewish genius for secrecy’ for this difficulty.[[129]](#footnote-129) An earlier report credited ‘the solidarity and security-mindedness of the Jews encountered who have, almost invariably, been able to attribute their actions [assisting illegal traffic] to humanitarian motives and have consistently avoided implicating any other persons accessible in Austria.’[[130]](#footnote-130) Never the less, British strategy emphasized the need to deal with these governments so to stop all assistance to *Bricha* and *Aliyah Bet*. This failed because British planning could not account for this complex and uncontrollable situation.

Without the support of European states, and facing American intrigue during such a critical part of the struggle, Britain could not stop the illegal movement of Jews on the European continent. There was little to be done. *Bricha* was on top of this game, had a strong rapport with officers of the American and French armies and received the head start provided during Symphony. In fact, a Soviet intelligence officer told Asher Ben Natan later in their careers that he remembered him from postwar Vienna as ‘commander of the *fifth* occupying power.’[[131]](#footnote-131) Hence, British strategy could only focus on pressuring *Aliyah Bet*. Yet, as previously discussed, there were also severe limits to Britain’s success on that front. They could only intercept ships in Palestine waters, and were faced with regular blowback every time British troops were photographed manhandling holocaust survivors.

Yet, as with Palestine security, intelligence gained on *Bricha* was useless while Britain lacked a comprehensive strategy to handle the Palestine problem. British intelligence and policymakers focused on maintaining the immigration restrictions so not to disturb Arab opinion. A sound imperial policy, but throughout the documentation, there does not seem to be any example of anyone questioning whether this was practicable. However, in 1946 MI5 concluded that

…the Jewish Agency and other Zionists have succeeded in building up an organization which leaves hardly a country in Europe untouched… The majority are inspired by Zionist idealism. The machinery thus brought into being must be admitted to have achieved a considerable measure of success in neutralising British immigration policy in Palestine…[[132]](#footnote-132)

This conclusion never translated into a reassessment of British policy, nor had any of the other practical difficulties facing British policy. This represents a break in the feedback phase in the ‘cycle of intelligence.’ While intelligence was good, and the challenges were well-known, the problem ran deeper. Britain failed to conduct an effective net assessment, questioning Britain’s own will and ability to enforce its policy as against those of the Zionists. Intelligence was good enough to identify the stalemate, but policymakers never faced this reality. Britain’s combined strategy of diplomacy, propaganda, covert action and disinformation could not work in the postwar climate. European states had their own interests and sympathies; American intelligence, a true ally and possibly the only occupying power able to stop the movement of Jews, ended up undermining British aims as a consequence of Britain’s own black propaganda.

**Acknowledgements**

This research was supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council*.* My other sources of funding include the Alberta Heritage Scholarship Trust, The University College Old Members’ Trust, and the History Faculty at Oxford’s Arnold Fund. I would like to thank the staff at the National Archives and Records Administration at College Park, MD, for their advice and direction. I am indebted to Dorit Hermann, Orly Levy, and their staff at the Haganah Archives, Tel Aviv for their guidance and hard work. I must also acknowledge the service and assistance provided at the Central Zionist Archive in Jerusalem, and the National Archives at Kew. I appreciate the opportunity to present this research given by the Centre for Intelligence and International Security Studies at the University of Aberystwyth at their 2011 conference. I extend my warmest and deepest thanks to the Steinitz family of Herzliyah, who kindly accommodated me and provided a ‘home away from home’ during my research in Israel. My most heartfelt thanks go to Robert Johnson, Yoav Gelber, and John Ferris for their advice and mentorship in this project. My family’s support and encouragement has made this project possible. Finally, eternal gratitude belongs to Kira Blumer for her enthusiasm, belief in me, and her kind patience during my time abroad.

1. The National Archives at Kew, London (TNA), KV 3/56 96c. *Jewish Illegal Immigration to Palestine, Summary no.9. covering period 16 October 46 – 17 February 1947*. p.10 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. On the domestic struggle, see C. Walton, “British Intelligence and the Mandate of Palestine: Threats to British National Security Immediately After the Second World War,” *Intelligence and National Security* 23, no. 4 (2008): 435–462. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Steven Wagner, “Britain and the Jewish Underground, 1944-46: Intelligence, Policy and Resistance” (M.A. Thesis, UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY, 2010); Steven Wagner, “British Intelligence and the Jewish Resistance Movement in the Palestine Mandate, 1945–46,” *Intelligence and National Security* 23, no. 5 (2008): 629–657. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. NARA RG 263 entry zz-19 box 61. Kevin C. Ruffner, “Project SYMPHONY: US Intelligence and the Jewish *Bricha* in Post-war Ausria.,” *Studies in Intelligence* 51, no. 1 (2007): 33–46. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Asher Ben Natan, *The Audacity To Live* (Jerusalem: Mazo Publishers, 2007). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Ehud Avriel, *Open the Gates!: A Personal Story of “Illegal” Immigration to Israel* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1975); Ephraim Dekel, *B’riha: Flight to the Homeland* (New York: Herzl Press, 1973). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Jon Kimche and David Kimche, *The Secret Roads, the “Illegal” Migration of a People, 1938-1948.* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1954). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Arieh Boaz, *ʻAlum ṿe-nokheaḥ ba-kol : sipur ḥayaṿ shel Shaʼul Avigur* (Tel Aviv: Miśrad ha-biṭaḥon, 2001). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Yoav Gelber, *Shorshe ha-ḥavatselet : ha-modiʻin ba-yishuv, 1918-1947*, 2 vols. (Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defence Publications, 1992); Aviva Halamish, *The Exodus Affair: Holocaust Survivors and the Struggle For* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1998); Idith Zertal, *From Catastrophe to Power: Holocaust Survivors and the Emergence of Israel* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Dalia Ofer, *Escaping the Holocaust: Illegal Immigration to the Land of Israel, 1939-1944* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Fritz Liebreich, *Britain’s Naval and Political Reaction to the Illegal Immigration of Jews to Palestine, 1945-1948* (London ; New York: Routledge, 2005); Ninian Stewart, *The Royal Navy and the Palestine Patrol* (London: F. Cass, 2002). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Thomas Albrich and Ronald W. Zweig, *Escape Through Austria : Jewish Refugees and the Austrian Route to Palestine* (London; Portland: Frank Cass, 2002). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Arieh Kochavi, *Post-Holocaust Politics : Britain, the United States & Jewish Refugees, 1945-1948* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2001). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Michael Joseph Cohen, *Palestine to Israel: From Mandate to Independence* (London: Cass, 1988), 101. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. David Cesarani, *Major Farran’s Hat: Murder, Scandal and Britain’s War Against Jewish Terrorism, 1945-1948* (William Heinemann, 2009), 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Wagner, “Britain and the Jewish Underground,” 66–69, 87. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Christopher Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm: The Authorized History of MI5* (Allen Lane, 2009), 354. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. For more on policy, see Wagner, “Britain and the Jewish Underground,” 125–129. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Cesarani, *Major Farran’s Hat*, 4–5; David R. Devereux, *The Formulation of British Defence Policy Towards the Middle East, 1948-56* (London: Macmillan, 1990). [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. TNA, CP(45)156. 8.9.45. CAB 129/1. taken from Cohen, Palestine to Israel, 179. Cohen’s emphasis. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Sela, “Britain and the Palestine Question, 1945-48: The Dialectic of Regional and International Constraints,” in *Demise of the British Empire in the Middle East: Britain’s Responses to Nationalist Movements, 1943-55*, ed. Michael Joseph Cohen and Martin Kolinsky (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 1998), 223–226. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Wagner, “Britain and the Jewish Underground,” 129–133; Wagner, “British Intelligence and the Jewish Resistance Movement in the Palestine Mandate, 1945–46.” [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Boaz, *ʻAlum ṿe-nokheaḥ ba-kol*, 223. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. TNA, CAB 130/20. *Palestine: Illegal Immigration, 2nd meeting.* p.4 [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Kochavi, *Post-Holocaust Politics*, 59. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. TNA, CO 537/1805. 37. Hall to Atlee. 15.4.1946. also see WO 191/76 26a., memo by JVW Shaw 2.12.1945. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Halamish, *The Exodus Affair*; Liebreich, *Britain’s Naval and Political Reaction to the Illegal Immigration of Jews to Palestine, 1945-1948*, 250. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Central Zionist Archive (CZA), S25/22396 includes various copies of CID reports on illegal immigration, as well as several unaddressed and unsigned reports (typical of MI6) titled mission to Greece and mission to Turkey, ca. April 1945. Yoav Gelber describes how these timely attained files supported operations (see below). [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Gelber, Growing a Fleur-de-Lis, 569-70. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Kimche and Kimche, *The Secret Roads*, 160. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Among many examples of MI5’s handling of this intelligence, see TNA, FO 945/372. 7a. *Crawford to Kellar.* 13.4.46. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Wagner, “Britain and the Jewish Underground,” 119. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. See Y. Rabid’s account at “The Story of the Voyage of the ‘Af Al Pi Chen’ (Never the Less),” accessed June 5, 2012, http://www.palyam.org/Hahapala/Teur\_haflagot/hf\_AAPH. accessed 05/06/2012. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. See TNA, KV 3/56 throughout. Specifically “List of Firms known or suspected to be involved in Jewish illegal immigration to Palestine.” N.D. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. For details see Liebreich, *Britain’s Naval and Political Reaction to the Illegal Immigration of Jews to Palestine, 1945-1948*, 112–115. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Keith Jeffery, *MI6: The History of the Secret Intelligence Service 1909-1949* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing PLC, 2010), 689–694; Kimche and Kimche, *The Secret Roads*, 196. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Jeffery, *MI6*, 693. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. TNA, KV 3/56. 69b. *Report on tour of MI5 Liaison Officer in France, Germany Austria and Italy between 5th September, 1946 and 8th October 1946*. pp2-3. Examples of SIS surveillance in Paris of the Zionist movement are found throughout TNA, KV 2/2261, and KV 2/1389. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. “Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry,” *The Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy*, April 20, 1946, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\_century/angcov.asp Appendix III. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Kochavi, *Post-Holocaust Politics*, 140, 174–178. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Christine Oertel, “Vienna: A Gateway to Freedom?,” in *Escape Through Austria : Jewish Refugees and the Austrian Route to Palestine*, ed. Ronald W. Zweig and Thomas Albrich (London; Portland: Frank Cass, 2002), 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. This is according to the Yad Vashem, Israel’s Holocaust memorial and a leading research institute. “שארית הפליטה,” *יד ושם*, 8., http://www1.yadvashem.org/yv/he/holocaust/about/10/aftermath.asp. accessed 26.05.2012. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Moshe Lissak, “Ha’Aliya HaGdolah shel Shanot HaKhamishim: Kama Hirhurim B’Perspektiva Historit.,” *HaTzionut* 14 (1989): 203–217. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Above number plus the 150,000 Polish refugees. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Data on the number of Romanian refugees is weak. The total number of Jewish DPs and refugees by 1948 probably was not larger than 600,000. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. “UNRRA AIDE SCENTS JEWS’ EXODUS PLOT,” *New York Times*, January 3, 1946, 1, http://search.proquest.com/docview/107601968?accountid=13042; Kochavi, *Post-Holocaust Politics*, 163–164. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Asher Ben Natan, Interview between Steven Wagner and Asher Ben Natan at his home in Ramat HaSharon, July 12, 2011. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. TNA, FO 945/400. 2B. *Report on Train no.165.* n.d. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. TNA, FO 945/400. 2e. *400 UNNRA Admin HQ to various.* 2.7.1946. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. For details, see Wagner, “Britain and the Jewish Underground,” 46. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. *Haganah* Archives, Tel Aviv (HA). 47/447. *Isham, DSO Jerusalem to Oldfield, SIME.* 14.2.1946. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. TNA, FO 1020/2412. 124A and. *From ‘A Mideast’ to ‘Freedom’ info ACABRIT Vienna EXFOR USFET MAIN.* 4 March 1946*.*; 127A, *From ‘Mideast’ to ‘Freedom’ info ACABRIT Vienna.* 6 March 1946. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. TNA. CO 537/1705. 12. *Trafford Smith to Cunningham.* 27.9.1946. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. TNA, FO 945/372. 17a, b, and c. *Baxter, FO to Nichols, Prague*. 19.8.46. and enclosed documents. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. NARA RG 226 Entry 210 box 314. *SSU counter-intelligence summary no. 12 series 2.* 1.8.1946. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Ben Natan, *The Audacity To Live*, 34. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Dekel, *B’riha*, 17. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. TNA, FO 817/25. 70/21/46. Baxter, FO to Nichols, Prague. 5.8.1946 and attached report; 70/29/46 draft reply. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. TNA, FO 945/400. 13a. *Organization in Prague for the despatch of illegal polish immigrants to Palestine.* n.d. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. TNA, FO 817/25. 70/23/46. *Poland-Czechoslovakia, Political: Exodus of Jews from Poland.* 8.8.1946. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Kochavi, *Post-Holocaust Politics*, 246. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Also spelled Wieninger, Wienninger, Weinninger and Weininger. Alias Joseph Durst. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Aka Erich Popescu, Wehner, Werner, Berchtold, Buchholz, Berger, Reitmayer and more. He also used Charles or Karol – the name given to him by Abwehr in 1940. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. TNA, KV 2/132. 1A Interrogation of Joel Brand. 16-30 June 1944; 9a. report no. 2. 29.7.44. KV 2/1311 9b. telegram to DSO Cairo. 25.2.43. NARA RG 263, Entry zz-19, box 61. LVX-207:Interrogation of Erich Wender. 12.4.46. Shlomo Aronson, Hitler, the Allies, and the Jews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 222; Tuvia Friling, Arrows in the Dark: David Ben-Gurion, the Yishuv Leadership, and Rescue Attempts During the Holocaust (Madison, Wisconsin: Univ of Wisconsin Press, 2005), 1:115–117, 300–304; 2:ch.8; Richard Breitman, U.S. Intelligence and the Nazis, 1. publ. (Cambridge [u.a.]: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2005), 49–70. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. TNA, WO 170/8941. 310 Field Security Section Summary no 14. February 1946. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. NARA, RG 263, Entry zz-19, box 61. Erich Wender registry card. Reference LSX-295 10 June 46. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Author’s correspondence with the security service, ref PF112795. 8.8.2011. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Indicated throughout references to Winninger in TNA KV 2/129-132. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. NARA, RG 263, Entry zz-19, box 61. Review ofo Symphony Project: From Acting Chief FBM and DH136 to Commanding Officer SSU mission Austria. 19 September 1946.p3 of attached report. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. See TNA KV 3/56 throughout; HA 47/733 slides 197-203. HA 47/734 slides 257-266. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. TNA, FO 945/400. 5A, Appendix C section V. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. TNA, FO 945/400. 8a. *record of meeting.* 7.8.1946. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. TNA, FO 945/400. 5A, Appendix C section IV. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. TNA, FO 945/400. 21a *bercomb to confolk.*; 25a. *policy in British zone of Germany.* 17.8.1946. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. TNA, FO 371/52633. E9438. Note by F.B.A. Rundall 27.9.1946. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. Note by Beith 8.10.1946 in Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. Note by Maclean 16.9.1946 in Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. J.L. Hays, *Warships Save Immigrant Ship.* The Daily Dispatch. 2.11.1946. in TNA CO 537/1804 190. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. Kochavi, *Post-Holocaust Politics*, 85–86. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. TNA, KV 4/384. Appendix B. Note on Future Security Problems in Mid-East. AJ Kellar. to DDB Dick White. Nov 1943. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. NARA. RG 226 Entry 215 box 7. *Walter to Steve and Gordon*. n.d. and *Dayton to Henderson* 30.1.1944. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. TNA, CAB 159/1. *JIC (47) 39th meeting.* 25.6.1947. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. NARA RG 165, entry 77, box 758. *General Security information in Syria, Palestine & Egypt.* G-2, USAFIME report no 336. 9.1.43. p4. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. For details see Wagner, “Britain and the Jewish Underground.” On the passing of Agency signals, further proof has been found at NARA, RG 165, Entry 215 Box 3. *Lewis Leary, Cairo to Whitney Shepardson, Washington..* 6.3.1945. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. NARA, RG 263, zz-19, box 61. *Russian Interest in Jewish Emigration.* DD110 (Jules Konig). 22.4.46. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. NARA RG 226 Entry 210, Box 455. *209 to Isaiah.* 1.5.1946. WN#25926 [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. NARA, RG 263, zz-19, box 61. *Bern 1817.* n.d. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. BG-Land was France. Je-Land was Russia, BB-Land Britain, and CH-Land Poland. My warm thanks to Timothy Naftali for his expert help. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. TNA, FO 371/57687. *The Unauthorized and Clandestine Movement of Jewish DPs in Austria.* Brigadier General Staff (BGS). 19 Jan 1946. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. NARA, RG 263, zz-19, box 61. *From SAINT JJ1 to Saint, AB2; Saint DD101; Saint BBS.* 29.4.46. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. NARA, RG 263, Entry ZZ-19, Box 61. JZX 6085. *The Jewish Problem in Poland.* JK1, Rome. 6.1.46. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. TNA, FO 945/372. 5a. *The Unauthorized and Clandestine Movement of Jewish DPs in Austria.* BGS.8 April 1946. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. TNA, FO 1020/428 11a. *BMM Hungary to ACABRIT GSI.* 23 sept 46. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. TNA, FO 817/25. 70/23/46. *Poland-Czechoslovakia, Political: Exodus of Jews from Poland.* 8.8.1946. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. TNA KV 3/370. 67?. *PICME report*  1 Aug 1946 issued 11 sept 1946. P11. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. For one example see TNA, FO 945/372. 5B. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. TNA, KV 3/41. 1a. p3. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. Liebreich, *Britain’s Naval and Political Reaction to the Illegal Immigration of Jews to Palestine, 1945-1948*, 47–62. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. TNA KV 3/56. 69B. *Report on tour of MI5 Liaison Officer.* 5 Sept – 8 Oct 1946. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. Dekel, *B’riha*, 229. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. Liebreich, *Britain’s Naval and Political Reaction to the Illegal Immigration of Jews to Palestine, 1945-1948*, 52. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. NARA, RG 263, zz-19, box 61. *NKGB Recruiting of Jewish Agents for Palestine.* C-2. Dec. 1945. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. NARA, RG 263, zz-19, box 61. *From BB8 to JJ1 re Jewish escape routes.* 28.5.46. The prefix BB indicates that the officer was based in the UK. JJ may be Italy. [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. NARA, RG 263, zz-19, box 61. *Saint to Saint Austria AMZON Rome.*12.3.1946. [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. NARA, RG 263, zz-19, box 61. *Original Project Report, Symphony.* DD 110 (Jules Konig). 17.4.46. p1. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. NARA, RG 263, zz-19, box 61. Original Project Report, Symphony. DD 110 (Jules Konig). 17.4.46.p9. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. See Wagner, “Britain and the Jewish Underground,” 27; Ben Natan, The Audacity To Live, 21–22. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. NARA, RG 263, zz-19, box 61. Original Project Report, Symphony. DD 110 (Jules Konig). 17.4.46.p5. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. NARA, RG 263, zz-19, box 61. Original Project Report, Symphony. DD 110 (Jules Konig). 17.4.46. p11. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. This story has many versions. This one derives from Ben Natan, The Audacity To Live, 45–46. [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. Ruffner, “Project SYMPHONY: US Intelligence and the Jewish *Bricha* in Post-war Ausria.,” 43. [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. NARA, RG 263, zz-19, box 61. Benjamin Schurr. 20.11.46 covering June 46. The story matches account in Ben Natan, The Audacity To Live, 65–67. [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. NARA, RG 263, zz-19, box 61. LSX 218 18.4.46 Konig. [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. NARA, RG 263, zz-19, box 61. LSX 217 18.4.46 Konig [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. NARA, RG 263, zz-19, box 61. LSX 257. DD110 (Konig). 15.5.46 [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
115. See margin notes in NARA RG 226 Entry 210 box 314. *Austria to Washington.* 31.7.1946. [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
116. Ruffner’s article describes this briefly. For details on British action against the Jewish Agency see Wagner, “Britain and the Jewish Underground,” 160–167. [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
117. NARA RG 226, Entry 215, box 3. Konig to Chief, SICE. 3.16.1945 [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
118. Ruffner, “Project SYMPHONY: US Intelligence and the Jewish *Bricha* in Post-war Ausria.,” 42–44. [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
119. NARA, RG 263, zz-19, box 61. *Benjamin Schurr.* 20.11.46 covering June 46. [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
120. NARA, RG 263, Entry zz-19, box 61. *From Acting Chief, FBM and DH136 to 1098 and DD111 or DD120.* 19.9.1946. See attached 16 page report. [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
121. TNA, FO 1020/428. 10A. *ACABRIT to Control office, St James square, London.* 14.9.1946. [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
122. NARA, RG 263, Entry zz-19, box 61. *From Acting Chief, FBM and DH136 to 1098 and DD111 or DD120.* 19.9.1946. [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
123. TNA, KV 3/56. 69b. *Report on Tour of MI5 Liaison Officer in France, Germany, Austria and Italy between 5th September, 1946 and 8th October, 1946.* Par. 22 and 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
124. Ben Natan, Interview between Steven Wagner and Asher Ben Natan at his home in Ramat HaSharon. [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
125. TNA, KV 3/56. *Estimated scale of Jewish Illegal immigration to Palestine during remainder of 1947.* 18.7.1947. [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
126. TNA, CAB 159/1. *JIC (47) 49th Meeting.* 30 July 1947. [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
127. See throughout TNA, FO 1020/427; FO 945/494. [↑](#footnote-ref-127)
128. On Italy, see above. On France, also see James Barr, *A Line in the Sand: Britain, France and the Struggle That Shaped the Middle East* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2011), 328. [↑](#footnote-ref-128)
129. TNA, FO 1020/427. 11a. [↑](#footnote-ref-129)
130. TNA, FO 371/57690. ACABRIT to FO, The Unauthorised Movement and Clandestine

     Activity of Jewish DPs in AUSTRIA, 8.4.1946. [↑](#footnote-ref-130)
131. Ben Natan, *The Audacity To Live*, 75. My emphasis. [↑](#footnote-ref-131)
132. TNA, KV 3/56 1a. *Jewish Illegal Immigration From Europe to Palestine.* p10. [↑](#footnote-ref-132)