

JEWISH SURVIVORS AND DETENTION CAMPS IN CYPRUS AFTER THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Ulvi KESER*

Abstract

The island of Cyprus has always been that of the immigration and the problems throughout the history. Since its geographical and strategic position, it has also been a springing point for almost all the civilizations in the vicinity. During World War II, Cyprus turned to be very centre of the war itself even if it seemed to be out of the war and the battles. Cyprus has had actually very tremendous role in Jewish history unparalleled by any country in the world than Israel herself. Taking such a reality into consideration, as either a stopping-off point located in the very midst of the Mediterranean route to dispersion or a stepping stone to Jewish homeland, Cypriots and the Jewish people due to a good many reasons have enjoyed a unique relationship even if it hasn't always had a happy ending. During the last period of WWII, the Jews who all managed to survive and escape from Nazi tyranny and holocaust have started trying to find out the ways to go to Palestine, then being a British mandate. Taking a voyage to Palestine was not so easy because of the terrific conditions, and mostly of British restrictions. The Jews making mostly use of the very insufficient and primitive transportation means could have arrived firstly in Turkey. Unfortunately their route towards Palestine was not so easy to reach as planned and dreamed, and these unfortunate people were once more stopped by British warships in the open seas and taken to the concentration camps in Cyprus since active steps and measurements were taken against the Jewish immigration, from trying to prevent the acquisition of ships for refugees to deploying naval craft that otherwise could have been used in the war effort to patrol the coast of Palestine. The poor conditions and, terrifying management of British authority there made the life unbearable for these people, causing lots of death.

Keywords: Cyprus, Jews, Second World War, Exodus, Detention Camp.

* Prof. Dr., Atılım Üniversitesi, (ulvi.keser@gmail.com).

İKİNCİ DÜNYA SAVAŞI SONRASINDA KIBRIS'TA TOPLAMA KAMPLARI VE YAHUDİLER

Öz

Kıbrıs adası tarih boyunca hep huzursuzluklar, istikrarsızlıklar ve göçlerle anılmıştır. Coğrafi ve stratejik pozisyonu nedeniyle herkes için bir atlama tahtası halini de almıştır. İkinci Dünya Savaşı sürecinde ise savaş sanki dışarıdaymış gibi görünse de Kıbrıs tam da savaşın ortasında kalmıştır. İsrail dışında Kıbrıs adası Yahudi tarihinde son derece önemli bir rol oynamıştır. Bu durum göz önüne alınınca ister Akdeniz'in ortasında bir atlama tahtası olarak ister Yahudiler için evlerine dönüş yolunda bir duraklama noktası olsun Kıbrıs ve Yahudiler çeşitli nedenlerle sonu iyi bitmese de çok farklı bir iletişim içine girmişlerdir. İkinci Dünya Savaşı'nın son sürecinde Nazi mezaliminden kaçmayı ve hayatta kalabilmeyi başarabilmiş Yahudiler o zamanlar İngiliz yönetiminde olan Filistin'e gitmenin yollarını aramaya başlarlar. O dönemde gemiyle Filistin'e gitmek kötü şartlar ve çoğunlukla İngiliz kısıtlamaları nedeniyle çok da kolay değildir. Yetersiz ve son derece ilkel şartları en iyi şekilde değerlendiren Yahudiler öncelikle Türkiye'ye ulaşmayı başarırlar. Maalesef Filistin'e yönelik rotaları ise planlandığı ve hayal edildiği kadar kolay değildir ve bu şanssız insanlar İngilizler tarafından açık denizde durdurulurlar ve Kıbrıs'taki toplama kamplarına nakledilirler. Kötü hayat şartları, İngiliz idaresinin katı ve acımasız yaklaşımı ve diğer olumsuzluklar bu insanların hayatını katlanılmaz hale getirirken pek çoğunun da hayatını kaybetmesine neden olur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kıbrıs, Yahudiler, İkinci Dünya Savaşı, Büyük Göç, Toplama Kampı.

1. Introduction

As soon as the Second World War has broken out, the Jewish people around the world and especially in some certain countries such as Poland, Greece, and Czechoslovakia started finding a way to keep themselves alive and to survive. Unfortunately no sooner had the war broken out than some 5.100.000 Jewish people lost their lives. Within the process from 1945 summer time to 1946 July, 30.000 Jewish people expatriate and flee from Romania and Hungary. On the other hand, Palestine that all these people want to immigrate is under British administration, but British policy is not so clear whether to accept these people to Palestine or not, and according to the Mandatory Power, "in the summer of 1946 the inflow of illegal immigrants reached such dimensions that it was no longer possible to accommodate them in the camps in Palestine. It was, therefore, decided in August that future shiploads would be transferred on arrival to British ships and taken to camps in Cyprus."¹ So sooner or later, the island of Cyprus was potentially ready to turn to be "a stepping stone to Zion",

1 United Nations General Assembly Report dated 19th April 1948, A/AC.21/W.29 Restricted.

or “a part of the land of Israel”, and “a part of Greater Palestine”, and finally as “a completely Jewish island”.² For example a letter directly addressed to British Prime Minister on 11st March 1939 has almost unbelievable offers such as the entire evacuation of the present population of Cyprus to Salonika, the entire exchange of Salonika Jews with those of Cyprus, the natural immigration of the Jews from all the countries, especially from those suffering Nazi tyranny³. Doing so, “the Greek desire for union with Greece would be fulfilled, the Jews in Cyprus would be loyal to the British empire, the Palestine question would be solved since the Arabs would no longer be subject to the pressure of Jews desiring to enter Palestine, the Jews would have a country of their own, bounded by the sea and protected by the British Navy, the Jewish issue would never be solved by increasing the density of the Jewish elements in any other population.”⁴ Even if the British authorities have had almost no intention to do so, the developments would force them to face with an unexpected harsh tyranny closing the Jewish survivors behind the fences on the island about six years later.

In 1934-1935 period more than 104.539 Jewish people immigrate to Palestine to survive from Nazi invasion that is expressed as “a temporary insane in a civilized country”⁵ and a good many Jewish people are taken to the camps to work⁶. To give the certain figures, throughout the war years, the “illegal and unlawful”⁷ immigration as expressed by the British officials continued towards Palestine, and from April 1939 up to March 1944, the number of the “legal” immigrants was 31.221 in addition to the “illegal” 19.965 Jews⁸.

2. Assistance Activities to Immigrant Jewish People

That British government has a very strict policy not to accept Jewish immigrants to Palestine, expressing the situation as an illegal action gives no alternative way to those people. Shortly, that is better to say that “the British government was strictly determined to block illegal immigration to Palestine, and it was accordingly provided that, after the admission of not more than 75.000 additional immigrants during the five years beginning in April 1939, no further Jewish immigration will be permitted unless the Arabs of Palestine are

2 Stavros Panteli, *A History of The Jews; Place of Refuge*, Elliott and Thomson Publications, London and Bath, p.115.

3 Stavros Panteli, *ibid*, p.114.

4 Stavros Panteli, *ibid*, p.115.

5 Amos Delon, *Çöküşe Tırmanış; Alman Yahudilerinin Öyküsü 1743-1933*, Gözlem Publications, İstanbul, 2002, p.446.

6 Mark Mazower, *Inside Hitler's Greece; The Experience of Occupation 1941-1944*, Yale University Press, London, 1993, p.128.

7 It is completely very interesting that even the United Nations General Assembly prefers to use “illegal” to show the refugees in Cyprus. United Nations General Assembly Report dated 19th April 1948, A/AC.21/W.29 Restricted.

8 Stavros Panteli, *ibid*, p.119.

prepared to acquiesce in it.”⁹ The British government on the other hand takes lots of measures varying from the restrictions of the Jewish transportation ships to the restriction of the ships in the Mediterranean Sea. Another plan considered by British authorities is to sink shiploads of refugees at “the Haganah” ships and to make propaganda that all the ships were attacked by Nazi forces, showing that their policy is right. As a result the number of the immigrants who came off the Black Sea, and who wanted to pass through Turkey especially aboard in Romania and Bulgaria increased gradually¹⁰. Some of the vessels carrying those unfortunate Jewish people were Transylvania with 54 Romanian immigrants on 8th March 1939, Imtı with 600 Romanian persons on 10th March 1939, Atrato with 325 Czech and German Jewish people on 22nd May 1939, Lasparla with 380 German and Czech people on 22nd June 1939, Rim with 450 German and Czech immigrants on 27th June 1939, Frossola with 658 German and Czech immigrants on 1st July 1939, Patya with 700 Romanian persons on 30th July 1939, Parkerhil with 850 Romanian on 9th August 1939, Putniçer with 271 Hungarian on 16th August 1939, Harziyon with 142 British on 7th September 1939, Rudniçer with 210 Bulgarian on 10th September 1939, Neomi Julia with 1.200 Romanian immigrants on 12th September 1939, Salvator with 246 Romanian and Bulgarian immigrants in 1941¹¹, three Jewish ships donated by Turkey with Turkish flag, named Bülbül, Mefküre and Morina carrying totally 4.190 immigrants from Constanta to Istanbul¹².

Apart from British restrictions, that American government has adapted very strict regulations about Jewish immigrants and the refugees, that Portugal has banned the Jewish immigrants to use its territory as a passage to escape, issuing a restrictive law dated 22nd October 1940 was reasoned that the immigrants would have only one way to escape to Palestine, that is to say, Turkey. Similarly, Palestine Mandate administration also described the situation as “attempts to organize the unauthorized entry of large bodies of immigrants.”¹³ Similarly, the Arab Higher Committee appealed to the UN Security Council not to permit the transfer of the 11.000 Jewish refugees in Cyprus on the grounds that such a move “would enrich the Jews in manpower and fighting personnel”¹⁴ in Palestine, and the Jews in Cyprus “must be returned to their country of origin.” Unlike Portugal, Turkey has prepared almost all the facilities about the transit visa for those Jewish immigrants with a law dated 20th February 1941¹⁵. During WWII, one of the most tragic happenings was about the ship named Struma trying to transport 769 Jewish immigrants aboard, two of whom survived after

9 United Nations General Assembly Report dated 19th April 1948, A/AC.21/W.29 Restricted.

10 BA.030.10.206.407.31.

11 BA.030.10.99.641.13

12 BA.030.10.119.814.3

13 United Nations General Assembly Report dated 19th April 1948, A/AC.21/W.29 Restricted.

14 Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 11st August 1948.

15 BA.030.10.99.641.7. and BA.030.110.736.5

the ship wreckage in the Black Sea on 24th February 1942¹⁶. The main reason in fact to anchor in İstanbul was that British government has issued a law declaring that all the ship personnel carrying Jewish people would be arrested and the ships would be confiscated as well as the arrest of the illegal immigrants¹⁷. In addition to Struma, Danube in Kladovo with 1.160 deaths (1939), Salvador off the Turkish coast with 230 deaths (1940), Patria off Haifa with some 280 (1940), and Mefkure off Istanbul with 430 deaths (1944) should also be added to the loss of the Jewish refugees. On 18th July 1948, the ship named Exodus 1947¹⁸ with 4.554 extermination camp survivors¹⁹ aboard was intercepted by British naval forces off Palestine, and as soon as the ship refused to stop, it was rammed by a British destroyer, causing the death of three Jews there. In memory of those people who lost their lives, the Jewish refugees gathered 300 Dollars to plant trees, and to record in the Jewish Golden Book.

3. Jewish Camps In Cyprus and The First Comers

British government has firstly started stopping and intervening in those Jewish immigrants who tried to escape from Nazi cruelty and to go to Palestine in 1946, hoping that this deterrent would put an end to Jewish immigration, and has decided to keep those Jewish immigrants temporarily in Cyprus, costing in 1946 and 1947 a sum that may amount to 3 millions pounds.²⁰ The rumors about the arrivals of the would-be immigrants were quickly heard in Cyprus as well, and the newspapers put the headlines about the immigrants.²¹ British government evaluating to stop a rush of immigrants towards Palestine also thought of giving an indirect message to the Arabic world. On the other hand, the situation the Jewish people had already experienced was very disappointing and demoralizing. British Foreign Ministry declared a statement to show how much they were helpful for the Jewish people, and tried to decrease the tension of the reactions;²²

16 BA.030.10.124.881.6.

17 BA.030.10.171.185.21.

18 Years later in 1960 it turned to be a Hollywood movie with Paul Newman and Eva Marie Saint, based on the Leon Uris novel of 1958 that chronicled the fate of the ship carrying the refugees.

19 4.554 refugees aboard Exodus 1947 embrace 1.600 men, 1.282 women, 1.017 young people, and 655 children.

20 It was announced that at least 30.000.000dollars would be required to extend reception assistance to the refugees in Cyprus who would begin to enter Palestine after the expiration of the Mandate, covering the costs of food, clothing, medical care equipment and small loans for the new immigrants. Talking about the expenditure for the British party, this is the amount given and defied by the British authorities in the United Nations, but it seems to be a little bit illogical regarding the conditions in the camps. United Nations General Assembly Report dated 19th April 1948, A/AC.21/W.29 Restricted. See also Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 16th May 1948.

21 Söz, 1 March 1946.

22 FO.PIO Communiqué No.5.13 August 1946.

"a) No country in the world has been a better or more consistent friend of the Jewish people than Britain. Wherever Jews were persecuted, the voice of Britain was lifted in protest and wherever possible action was taken to mitigate their lot.

b) When they were persecuted by Hitler, the British people not only protested most vigorously, but a large body of refugees from Nazi barbarism was received in our country. Even during the war when our people were hard pressed for shelter and supplies, more were allowed in. Altogether 2000.000 refugees-a large proportion of them Jews- landed in Britain.

c) In December 1945, the quota of 75.000 Jewish immigrants permitted to enter Palestine under the provisions of the white paper was exhausted."

Moved by sympathy for the suffering of the Jewish people in Europe, H. M. Government have hitherto allowed illegal immigrants to land in spite of grave embarrassment of the quota and by the necessity for detaining in camps those whose entry was not immediately possible under quota.

Actually such an activity of immigration especially after the war had got realized by some personal groups as well in various times. For example in September 1940, a Jewish group of 3000 persons from Danzig, Prag, and Vienna got aboard the cargo ships named Atlantic, Milos and Pacific in Tulcea of Romania. The worst of the ships was Pacific with 1.875 Jewish immigrants²³. The ship got the fuel and food in İstanbul on 16th October 1940, but was stopped by British warships and compelled to sail in the direction of Cyprus force on 12th November 1940. British authorities, on the other hand, declared that the suitable manner to follow for British interest in the Middle East was to transfer all these immigrants to Mauritius²⁴. Actually the island itself from now on turned to be a clearing area, a temporary reception area and a dumping ground in addition to being a detention camp for years. While the immigrants aboard were transferred to another cargo ship named Patria to Mauritius, an explosion occurred and 267 Jewish people lost their lives. Later on, it was known that the sabotage was carried out by Haganah which tried to stop the ship to go to that above-mentioned island²⁵. That British government declared that these Jewish people would stay in Palestine worried some British officials as if the declaration would encourage the other immigrants and those officials demanded that this exceptional mercy not be valid for the rest of the immigrants²⁶. Even if the Colonial Office declared and stressed that *"interception on the high seas and diversion to Cyprus is not*

23 J.C. Hurewitz, *Struggle for Palestine*, Greenwood Press, New York, 1968, p.140.

24 According to the Mandatory Power in Palestine, *"During the war it was more than ever imperative that the Administration should resist this threat to its authority, since the shiploads of refugees came from inside Axis-controlled Europe and offered an opportunity for the infiltration of enemy agents. In November 1940 it was decided that illegal immigrants would be deported to an alternative place of refuge in the Colonial Empire."* United Nations General Assembly Report dated 19th April 1948, A/AC.21/W.29 Restricted.

25 www.jafiorg.mil/education/100/act/38zion.html.

26 The telegram of Colonial Office dated 11th June 1941, numbered NC/9 Nicosia 30.10.1816.

acceptable.” and the Cabinet has had the opposite thoughts and the plans and on 30th July 1946 the plans to transfer the Jewish immigrants in Palestine waters and remove them to Cyprus was almost complete²⁷. So the British officials running very close to the ships carrying Jewish refugees told them by megaphone as follows;²⁸

“We suspect you are going to Palestine. It is illegal. If you enter Palestine, we will have to board you and arrest you. Please do not put up any resistance. We have overwhelming forces here and in Palestine to accomplish our mission. If necessary, we will use force to board you, but you will have medical attention.”

3.1. The General Position of the Ships

The cargo ships that were used to transfer the immigrants to Palestine within roughly 14 days had negative and tremendous characteristic properties such as insufficient infrastructure, the number of the passengers above the capacity, primitive conditions in regard of nutrition and hygiene, the disgusting manners of the ship crews, awful food, lack of water, unhealthy conditions of the lavatories, sinks and the toilets and epidemic diseases. Each immigrant had to cover a spot enough only for one himself. The flat wooden bunks had no possibility even to sit at. They were all monitored five or six times a day before they could leave for Palestine, and at six o’clock in the evening, without having eaten or drunk all day, they were put on board a prison ship, behind the “squirrel-like”²⁹ prison cage with no bed, no blanket, and no chair. Throughout 14 day-travel, only to lay on the beds and to see nothing but the wooden bunks over made the people very nervous and exhausted as a young boy from an earlier Haganah vessel told;³⁰

“...For us, Cyprus was a new hell altogether. For the refugees, Cyprus was just hell with a new flag. For a month we didn’t sleep in a bed. For a month we lived on Spam and a little gray bread and some colored water called tea. For a month we lived without water. We never knew in America what it meant to live without water. We didn’t know how a man loses his dignity and his self-respect when he has no water. We stole water from each other. We rushed from one compound and one tin hut to another to search for water all day.”

Since most of the ships were very old, unreliable, and stuffed with extra passengers, a good many ships sank and lots of Jewish people lost their lives. Additionally there was no enough food and enough water to drink, so the nerve, the epidemic diseases and psychological problems were unavoidable in the

27 Stavros Panteli, *ibid*, p.120.

28 Ruth Gruber, *Destination Palestine; The Story of the Haganah Ship Exodus 1947*, Current Books, New York, 1948, p.41

29 Ruth Gruber, *ibid*, p.53.

30 Ruth Gruber, *ibid*, p.52.

midst of the sea. As a British officer said *"If the illegal Jewish immigrants realize that they are going to wind up there, they may not be so anxious to crowd aboard their stinking "hell ships" and try to get to Palestine."*³¹

4. The Establishment Of The Immigrant Camps In Cyprus

As soon as the British Government came to conclusion to establish camps in Cyprus, an ordinance published on 13rd August 1946 directly gave the Palestine government authority to send the illegal immigrants arriving in the country in excess of the quota of 1.500 a month to Cyprus³². Such a decision was in fact the beginning of the end for those unfortunate people who were subjected to lots of tyranny both in Europe and Cyprus for years. It is of very interest to know that the majority of Canadians are also opposed to the admission into the country of the Jewish refugees who were barred from Palestine and are now interned in Cyprus. The question put to a number of adults, representing diverse sections of the population was as follows; *"As you know, Britain is interning Jewish refugees who have attempted to enter Palestine without permission. Do you think Canada should allow some of these refugees to settle here or not? 61 percent answered no; 23 percent answered yes; 6 percent gave qualified answers and 10 percent were undecided."*³³

The first camp established for the Jewish immigrants by the British military command was in Caraolos where during the First World War Turkish prisoners of war captured in Gallipoli kept in from 1916 up to 1923³⁴, and opened on 14th August 1946. The main reason why the British government chose *"twentieth-century purgatory"*, and *" a hot hell of desert sand of hell circumscribed by two walls of barbed wire"*³⁵ Cyprus for the camp was due to strategic position of the Mediterranean Sea, its closeness to Lebanon, Syria, and Palestine, as well as Turkish neutral position out of the war. Thus code-named *"Operation Igloo"* was put into effect on the island. Firstly the tents were established in Caraolos in Famagusta, and two walls of barbed wires were set around the camp on 14th August 1946³⁶. The second camp was, some 18 miles apart, located very close to Xylotymbou in the Larnaca district. In addition to the camps above-mentioned, a so-called *"Youth Village"* was also situated in Xylotymbou.

The most terrifying point for British administration was that the ones who could in future back the Jewish terrorists could seize the camps³⁷. The surrounding of the camps were all barbed-wires with the projectors and the armed military personnel with Tommy Guns ready to fire on duty if necessary

31 Ruth Gruber, *ibid*, p.64

32 Stavros Panteli, *ibid*, p.121.

33 Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 9th October 1946.

34 ATASE, K.2680, D.210, F.1-37, 1-63, 1-64,1-65, F.1-59,1-60,1-61,1-62.

35 Ruth Gruber, *ibid*, p.61-62.

36 Larchmont Gazette, 24th November 2003

37 Söz, 9th August 1946.

all day long. Even if British administration expressed that the Jewish immigrants were not kept in custody and in prison, Jewish immigrants who were supposed to be illegal were kept under close control. Each camp was administered by a military commander being a Major under the command of a Colonel ruling all the camps on the island with 2.500 military personnel. The responsibility of the camps belonged directly to the British administration in Palestine, and the cost of the camps burdened by them. Meanwhile, the fate of the illegal refugees as accepted so by the British authorities in Cyprus would depend to a large extent on the United Nations decision on Palestine's future.

In Cyprus, British authorities have established totally 12 detention camps for the Jewish survivors, four which were hutted and the remainder tented. In Caraolos, five camps named Camp 55, 60, 61, 62 and 63 were established for the Jewish immigrants and these camps were said to be the summer camps. The life in these camps in comparison to the camps known as winter camps was supposed to be relatively easier. As soon as the population started increasing, the new camps in Dekhelia district of Larnaca, and in Xylotymbou. Seven camps in Dekhelia were all composed of American-type huts unlike the tents in Caraolos camps. The infrastructure was almost none; there was almost no water in Cyprus especially in summer time;³⁸

"...All day long, some twenty thousand adults and two thousand orphaned children stood at the barbed wire and looked at the Mediterranean which creamed their shore, with no water in the camp, causing lots of serious fatal diseases."

Furthermore since there was no private life in the camp, the island itself was expressed as a hell in which privacy was unknown³⁹ with no dignity. Therefore the romantic Cyprus of the travel books, Love Island as expressed by the Greeks, where Aphrodite was believed to be born of foam off its shores turned to be an open air prison with no water and no electricity for the Jewish immigrants who survived and tried to go to Palestine⁴⁰. In such restricted circumstances and under camp conditions naturally the life became irksome and monotonous even if the camp personnel and the British authorities would try to take so-called reasonable measurements for the health of the immigrants and well-being. Water was in those days as in today were very scarce in Cyprus and the camp command had to limit the water to about 4.5 liters a day for each person. Turkish Cypriots also helped the Jewish immigrants to get clean water to drink and to make some meals there. Greek Cypriot media, on the other hand, realizing the insufficiency of the island stated that the camps would embrace no more than 10.000 immigrants, but surprisingly the number would be more than 100.000, and named the opening of the camps in Cyprus as nothing but comedy⁴¹.

38 Ruth Gruber, *ibid*, p.62.

39 Ruth Gruber, *ibid*, p.62.

40 Ruth Gruber, *ibid*, p.65.

41 www.hri.org/news/cyprus/eng/1998 and www.washington-report.org/backissues

Especially the reactions of Greek Cypriot journals focused that the war-torn island would economically get an extra burden due to the immigrants who started coming to the island⁴². Esperini, for example, published an article headed "The Jews" stating that although the official announcement which had been issued regarding the settlement of Jews in Cyprus gave the assurance that no Jews would be allowed to become a resident of Cyprus, it was not possible for this assurance to be fully accepted. Because Cyprus had been selected for an indefinite period of stay of the illegal immigrant Jews to Palestine, amongst other things the island had the means of feeding thousands of Jews. The newspaper also stated that the island was hardly sufficient for the upkeep of its population and while the war ended long ago its people were still facing serious privations in primary essential commodities⁴³. In fact the island itself seemed to be out of the war for along time, nevertheless British government in need of military personnel for various fronts and the battlefields started enlisting both Turkish and Greek Cypriots. The people suffering from poverty, black market, unemployment, cost of living and psychological situation would start getting torn in dilemma whether to enlist or not. British authorities ignoring Cyprus and Cypriots up to that period scorning and calling them black-tanned Cypriots would start enlisting them to be muleteers⁴⁴. Especially subsequent to 1929 world economic crisis, the people living on the island have financially gone bankrupt, and lost almost everything they have had, and dealt with agriculture and farming while some worked in the copper mining facilities named Cyprus Mining Cooperation in Mathiadis, Lefka and Poli. So as to mostly make use of the human sources on the island, England has foreseen everything, and closing down the mining companies forced the workless, pessimistic and moneyless Cypriots to be enlisted⁴⁵. Taking all these realities for granted, Cyprus as the means of feeding thousands of Jewish immigrants on the island frightened the people living on the island.

The mayor of Nicosia, Clerides, on the other hand, opposingly stated that he personally would not raise objection either the duration of the immigrants' stay in Cyprus or about their number, saying "We should sympathize with these unfortunate people whose only hope is now overshadowed by the thought of a further stretch of waiting behind the barbed fence⁴⁶. The newspaper named Kypriakos Typos additionally asked some questions wondering what would happen in future, such as "How long will these illegal immigrants stay in Cyprus? What will be the total number of Jews who will be settled when, for example, the Jews

42 Eleftheria, 15 August 1946.

43 Esperini, 14th August 1946.

44 Jan Assmussen, "The Cyprus Regiment: Greek and Turkish Cypriots in a Joint Military Force, from CO.67/297/9 Notice W. Calder, 3.2.1939", *Journal of Cyprus Studies*, Eastern Mediterranean University, Special Issue 26/27, Volume 10, Year 2004, p. 141.

45 Ulvi Keser, Ulvi, *İkinci Dünya Savaşı'nda İngiliz Ordusunda Katırcılar*, IQ Publications, İstanbul, 2007, p.18-69.

46 Cyprus Mail, 14th August 1946.

will come to a definite agreement with the Arabs and England with America? From what source or sources will the Jews, settled in Cyprus camps, get their supplies such as food stuffs, clothing, and other essentials? In case most of these supplies are to be provided by Cyprus what measures have been taken to meet the requirements of the people of Cyprus and keep the cost of living at least at the present level?"⁴⁷ Eleftheria also stated that although sympathizing with "these unfortunate creatures" expressed grave anxiety, in view of rumors, that the Jewish immigrants would stay permanently in Cyprus where a large number of Jews would worsen the supply position of the island.⁴⁸ Apart from the Jewish immigrants, the island had also another and lasting issue caused by Greek Cypriots, that is to say Enosis. A journalist from Eleftheria visited the Locum Tenens and Etnarch Leontios due to the national and other interests of the island, and got the statements made by the Etnarch as "By right Cyprus belongs to Greece and expects, until the end of the Peace Conference, that the governments of Greece and Britain will, at special conferences in Paris, countersign the union of Cyprus with Greece, and if they do not do so, the people of Cyprus will protest to the Allied Organizations and the free people of our mother Greece will demand the union in such a way that no Greek government will be able to remain in office if union is not realized."⁴⁹ A few days later, the Etnarch stated as well that "As is the Jewish people wish, Britain must take them as soon as possible to Palestine, their fatherland, and that in no circumstances must Jews be settled in Cyprus in Cyprus for over a month, a period which was sufficient practically for their transportation to Palestine."⁵⁰

The immigrants who were given a pair of shoes, some cloth, and sewing materials as soon as they came to the camps started cutting the clothes of the summer camps to make trousers and shirts for themselves since almost all the immigrants had nothing on except some worn-out cloths. The tents and the huts in the camps had only a bed, a pillow and kerosene lamp, and despite the fact that it was forbidden all the immigrants in the camps had a portable radio supplied by a Jewish person named Rivka Kehana⁵¹. Considering the situation that the Jewish refugees experience on the island, it is possible to say that the island itself is no more Aphrodite's romantic love island as a British officer explains there;⁵²

"If the illegal Jewish immigrants realize that they are going to wind up here, they may not be so anxious to crowd aboard their stinking hell ships and try to get to Palestine."

47 Kypriakos Typos, 14th August 1946.

48 Eleftheria, 15th August 1946.

49 Eleftheria, 17th August 1946.

50 Eleftheria, 10th August 1946

51 Similarly, British Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin declared in London on 17th June 1948 that there was an Arab radio station moved to Cyprus "for technical reasons", operating in Cyprus, and the responsibility of the station is not burdened by the Foreign Office or the Cyprus government. Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 17th June 1948.

52 Ruth Gruber, *ibid*, p. 64.

The summer tents were composed of three rooms for generally three married families with no stoves except the holes dug primitively on the earth to be used so. Moreover, the Jewish women in the camps have had to make shirts and the dresses to cover their nakedness. American journalist I. F. Stone described the camps as the ugliest architecture created by the humanity for his newspaper, PM. As well as these Jewish camps, another camp for German POWs was established in Dekhelia, and 1.603 German POWs were transferred to the camp in 1-4th September 1946⁵³.

4.1. The First Arrivals of the Jewish Immigrants to Cyprus

The first Jewish ship which faced with the disaster was Rafiah on the way to Cyprus. The ship headed for Palestine ran into the cliffs off Greece, and crashed into pieces. 8 Jewish immigrants were drowned and 785 immigrants were saved by a British warship towards Cyprus⁵⁴. Therefore the first illegal guests of the camps in Cyprus were those Jewish immigrants whose ships were restricted and sandwiched by British warships in the Mediterranean Sea⁵⁵. On 1st January 1946, the 4.500 ton banana carrying ships the Pan York and the Pan Crescent entered Famagusta harbor with 15.169 passengers and crew on board. Since the British authorities have had a great suspicion on the people aboard, a contingent of examiners was sent to Cyprus to conduct a massive search for communist agents among the passengers, it took just over four days to discharge the human cargo, and the investigations which began at once were fruitless. On the other hand, some turmoil situation also appeared in Haifa as well, and The Empire Lifeguard, British deportation vessel was blown and sunk on 23rd July 1946 in Haifa harbor, and British authorities accused The Hanah of committing such a thing there⁵⁶. The ferry had just discharged all of a group of some 300 Jewish immigrants turning from Cyprus to Palestine to await their release under the regular monthly migration quota from British government. It was believed that the explosive charge was placed under the guards' engine room while the passengers were being embarked in Famagusta. Meanwhile one British transport vessel sailed from Haifa early on 18th August 1946 bearing the second group of Jewish refugees to be deported to Cyprus⁵⁷ while another returned to

53 As explained by the local journals and the official announcement, "a transport of 500 German POWs would arrive in Cyprus on 2nd September 1946 to supplement local labor there in building camps for the Jewish refugees. Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 1st September 1946. See also Hürsöz, 1st September 1946.

54 Morris Laub, *ibid*, p.6.

55 Larchmont Gazette; 24 November 2003.

56 This is the fourth bomb to have been planted on a deportation ship by The Hanah, the first of which was against the Empire Rival in Haifa harbor on 21st August 1946, the second was the Ocean Vigour in Famagusta on 3rd April 1947, and the last one was aboard the Rival the following night as it was proceeding from Haifa to Port Said. Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 23rd July 1946.

57 Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 19th August 1946.

its pier after an explosion in its hold, and as the tension in Haifa still remained high⁵⁸. British troops' reinforcements have been deployed to the dock area as a precaution against further outbreaks when the new deportations began. The *Empire Rival*⁵⁹ left Haifa after a several-hour battle during which tear gas and fire hoses were used to subdue 800 persons including 40 pregnant women aboard the *Katriel Yaffe*, who refused to be transferred to the transports. After two attempts to move the refugees failed, Indian troop reinforcements were sent to the ship and crushed the resistance.⁶⁰ It was an ironical situation that although unofficial reports declared that one refugee had been killed and a good many were injured in the battle, an official communique by the British authority there issued the same day stated that "no casualties were suffered."

While the refugees were trying to land safely on Palestine territory, over 400 people, wearing black arm bands, carrying placards assailing British policy in Palestine, and chanting "Open the gates of Palestine", demonstrated in front of the British Embassy in Washington DC⁶¹. They were headed by 12 leading rabbis of Washington DC. The black arm bands were worn in memory of the 3 Jews recently killed in Haifa in attempts to prevent deportation of the Jewish refugees from Palestine to Cyprus, and the two Jewish children who died in a ship en route to Cyprus. The demonstrators chanted the traditional Jewish prayer for the dead and the rabbis offered prayers. Placards carried the slogans "*from Dachau to Cyprus*", "*Neither Nazi nor British concentration camps*", "*Fight British tyranny in Palestine*."⁶² The ship named *Shabtai Lozinsky* carrying hundreds of Jewish immigrants headed for Haifa instead of directing towards Cyprus on 13th March 1947, and ran into the cliffs as the previous one did, and they were transferred to Cyprus by British warships. On the other hand, Palestinian Jewish people who tried to help the survivors, swimming off the shores were also taken to Cyprus unfortunately. British authorities who couldn't tell apart the Jewish people of Palestine and the Jewish immigrants assigned a police detective named Captain Marner in the camp. The British deportation ship named *Empire Heywood* also transferred 620 Jewish refugees who arrived in Haifa on the two-masted schooner *La Negev* on 9th February 1947⁶³. Another vessel having some chaos was *Ocean Vigor* which was blown up and damaged, not destroyed while it was docked in Famagusta, and British soldiers were rushed to the vessel on 14th March 1947, where some Jewish refugees refused to disembark, and a

58 Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 16th August 1946.

59 In some sources, the name of this vessel is incorrectly *Empire River*. Since more than 1.500 refugees aboard three vessels in Haifa are restrained to disembark, and their deportation to Cyprus is delayed for a few days, British soldiers in full-battle dress poured into Haifa, and cordoned off the port district ordering all the civilians out. Machine-gun nests surrounded by barbed wire entanglements have been set up and rumbling along the dock area up to the deportation of the Jews by *Empire Rival*.

60 Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 19th August 1946

61 Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 16th August 1946.

62 Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 16th August 1946.

63 Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 12th February 1947.

large number of the passengers insist that they were Palestinian Jews who were rounded up with the immigrants who arrived on the blockade runner Sanarana.⁶⁴ On the other hand, Jewish immigrants and those people from Palestine would study together and would get the answers of the questions together such as “Which newspaper are you reading? How can we go to Ben Yehuda Avenue in Tel Aviv? What is the last movie you have already seen? Where do you enjoy shopping How much is a bottle of milk?” Consequently instead of 140 Jewish people of Palestine who were by force transferred to Cyprus, totally 325 Jewish immigrants would go to Haifa⁶⁵. Following these arrivals, 1.416 illegal Jewish immigrants arrived in Cyprus on the 18th May of 1947. British Colonial Secretary Arthur Creech-Jones announced at the House of Commons that a total of 14.434 Jewish refugees were now interned in camps in Cyprus, and that there were 1.840 visaless immigrants being held in Palestinian camps and that 1.375 were awaiting their release under the regular monthly quotas. 346 of them were women and children who were shipwrecked on the Dodecanese island of Sirina in the Aegean Sea⁶⁶, while the remaining 119 were hospitalized⁶⁷.

As he explained, the Cyprus camps were originally constructed to shelter a maximum of 10.000 persons, and the British administration in Cyprus planned to expand the facilities to house the additional expected immigrants, and the Palestine Government would bear the cost of the construction and maintenance of the installations⁶⁸. Unfortunately none of the promises and the plans was carried out, and the unfortunate Jewish survivors experienced the second detention under such harsh conditions. Unlikely more than 800 visaless Jewish refugees detained aboard the deportation vessel Ocean Vigor⁶⁹ sailed for Cyprus shortly after the Palestine High Court rejected a plea to prevent their deportation. The refugees had been captured aboard the blockade runner Chaim Arlosorof which was intercepted in Palestine waters recently⁷⁰. Ruling against the Jerusalem Jewish Community which initiated the action, the court said that no illegality was involved in detaining the visaless Jews on the high seas, although it admitted that conditions aboard the deportation vessels might be harsh. The court also found that it was not illegal for the government to

64 Three Jewish refugees, captured a week ago after an unsuccessful attempt to escape from Xylotymbou camp on the island, were the same day sentenced to one month's immigrant. The above-mentioned three Jews were said to be planning to sail to Palestine. Two refugees at the camp and two at the Caraolos camp near Famagusta caught fleeing the day before were also arrested by British military personnel. Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 16th March 1947.

65 Morris Laub, *ibid*, p.10.

66 They have arrived in Haifa by the Empire Rival on 20th February 1947.

67 Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 1st May 1947.

68 Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 1st May 1947.

69 There was only one doctor aboard, and the British soldiers were very rude and tough at the beginning, but softened up after several days, expressing sympathy with the refugees. Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 25th December 1946.

70 Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 6th March 1947.

deport the refugees. It upheld the High Commissioner's right to decide that the presence of the passengers in Palestine was a danger to the peace, even if he did not check their individual records. On the other hand, the British administration in Jerusalem were so terrified and shocked that the military HQ issued orders to all the military personnel and the enlisted men not to appear in the streets in groups of less than four and go armed at all times⁷¹ since the authorities apparently feared kidnappings in reprisal for the death sentences.

Disembarkation of the immigration went on smoothly, and there were eight stretcher cases. Half the total number were taken to Xylotymbou camp and the other half to Dekhelia camp. 1125 immigrants, on the other hand, were started to be embarked for Palestine on 19th May 1947.⁷² In addition, it was stated at an emergency conference in New York that a city of Jewish children, about 2.000 in number are imprisoned behind barbed wire, and unless they were removed at once, they would constitute a *"lost generation of Jewish youth as David de Sola Pool, a Haganah leader expressed. Though the British permit Cyprus inmates to run their own services, prepare their food, and arrange for work and recreation, the bitter fact remains that nearly 20.000 Jews who are incarcerated there are literally in prison, surrounded by soldiers with machine guns, and living behind barbed wire enclosures, just as they did in concentration camps. The reception camp in Cyprus is a disgrace to civilization. Overcrowding, squalor, lack of sanitation and even the simplest amenities are filling the new-comers with despair."*⁷³

Within the same days, the government of Palestine, on 21st April 1947, issued a statement that false reports had been circulated to the effect that the government of Palestine had not honored its promises in admitting illegal immigrants from Cyprus, and expressed that the number of immigrants received from Cyprus into Palestine since November 1946 had actually been larger than was provided for in program. As expressed by the government, regular monthly quotas of 300 for November-December 1946, and of 750 for succeeding monthly periods, had arrived in Palestine. In addition, a pool of 1.000 immigrants had been established at Athlist, and departures from Cyprus were in fact one month ahead of schedule. The government of Palestine had also stated that the monthly quota from Cyprus was liable to reduction in proportion to any successful Jewish illegal immigration into Palestine from other sources⁷⁴. Due to the scheduled quotas of the British administration, 200 Jewish internees in addition to the first group of 213 adults, 59 children, and 28 infants⁷⁵ sailed

71 Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 19th August 1946

72 The first Jewish refugee to be given a visa for Cyprus was Zwi Brik, former director of the Palestine Office in Lithuania, who sailed from Naples to become the Jewish Agency's immigration and welfare representative. He was accompanied by his wife and the children in Rome. Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 23rd May 1947.

73 Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 23rd May 1947.

74 P.I.O. Communiqué, No.1, 21st April 1947.

75 Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 4th December 1946.

from the island of Cyprus on 9th December 1946 for Haifa where they would be admitted on the December immigration quota⁷⁶. The former visaless refugees were also aboard Panamanian vessel chartered by the Jewish Agency⁷⁷. The disembarkation of the refugees was always not so easy to carry out, and some unavoidable riots came to the surface both in Cyprus and Palestine as well. For example 550 Jewish refugees staged a sit-down strike in Famagusta on 24th July 1947 after they were herded off two vessels which were to have taken them back to Palestine to await their release under the monthly immigration quota. Those refugees had embarked aboard the *Empire Rest* and the *Empire Comfort*, when the authorities decided to take them off and search the vessels apparently fearing that bombs had been placed on them. On the other hand, the official authorities later made no announcement of the finding of explosives aboard the ships. In the last month of 1947, 851 "illegal" refugees too intercepted aboard the blockade runner "You Can't Frighten Us" brought into Haifa and transshipped to Cyprus, and seven women, one man and one child were hospitalized there, and 18 of their relatives remained with them⁷⁸.

The general security of the camps was on a British Major, and the general responsibility of the camps was on the government in Cyprus, Colonial Office, and British mandate government. British military authorities gave assignment to some liaison workers being expert on various topics such as Tony Aldridge and Sir Godfrey Collins so as to solve the reactions, the protests, the needs, and the demands of the immigrants. The communication between the Jewish people and the official authority was carried out by a six-man Jewish delegation and C. R. C. Donald, Assistant Secretary at the Savoy Hotel in Famagusta.⁷⁹

4.2. Assistance to the Jewish Immigrants

The foundations mostly focusing on the immigrant issue on the island was Jewish associations and the foundations in the United Kingdom and the United States of America such as American Joint Distribution Committee, and Jewish Agency.⁸⁰ Charles Passman of the American Joint Distribution Committee discussed the questions of relief and welfare facilities in some detail, and explained what relief his organization was able to afford to a typical camp of the size of Karaolos. He stated that relief took two main forms. One to be a grant which included the provision of clothing and suggested that a supplementary clothing issue might be made available. As explained by him, the Tel Aviv Municipality had purchased 2.000 pound of the clothing for the three batches of immigrants in Cyprus.

76 Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 9th December 1946.

77 Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 9th December 1946.

78 Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 24th December 1947.

79 FO.PIO Communiqué Confidential Press Comment. No.5.16 August 1946.

80 FO.PIO News Item. 29 August 1946.

In addition to the education of the children and the other immigrants in the camps primarily, publishing a newspaper of the native language also got the priority. Additionally American Joint Distribution Committee would take care of the requirements for scrolls of law prayer shawls and other religious articles and books as well as employing two social welfare workers, one who would be extremely experienced in occupational therapy and the other with perhaps less experience to deal with entertainment for the children⁸¹. Then, some efforts were carried out to establish some infrastructure and facility spots such as the kitchen, toilet, mess hall, and the dormitory⁸². Just after then, Mr. Charles Passman of the American Joint Distribution Committee arrived again in Cyprus on 9th September 1946. The supplies which were previously negotiated were due to arrive by a Turkish ship named Foudaieh. The first consignment of the supplies would take the form chiefly of medical supplies and equipment, school books and kindergarten accessories, religious accoutrements.⁸³ There would also be a large amount of clothing which in this first consignment would take the form of underclothing, shirts and shorts for both men and women⁸⁴. Totally 17 political parties from Palestine such as Mapai which was known to be Labor Party, some religious parties such as Hashomer Hatzair, Agudas Israel, Mizrachi, and Hapoel Hamizrachi, and Noar Zioni or Betar had at least one representative or a secretariat. These 17 parties were so organized, and in the very center of the influential activities that the Jewish immigrants who were not the members of these parties were subjected to hunger because all the meals were distributed by these parties, and the parties normally took care of the members only and firstly.⁸⁵ Similarly Jewish internees in Cyprus would take part in the elections for delegates to the following World Zionist Congress in addition to the deportees in Eritrea, and the elections would be held on October 28, 1946⁸⁶. Out of the education and the nutrition in the camp, two official rabbis were assigned⁸⁷ for the religious celebration and the ceremonies, and they were given assistance by the relatively qualified refugees in the camps. It was accepted that some %25 of the Jewish refugees in the camps were genuine orthodox Jews, resulting in some problems especially in the organizations and the committees.

British administration on the other hand restrained from giving information about the camps up to 18th August 1946.⁸⁸ The first reporter to visit the camps was from Cyprus Mail. The reporter and the photographer of that journal were given permission to come into the camp but would get no permission

81 P.I. O. News Item, 18th September 1946.

82 FO.PIO News Item. 29 August 1946.

83 Hürsöz, 14th May 1947.

84 FO. PIO.Communique No.7. 9th September 1946.

85 www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/libkany/lip001.html

86 Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 21st October 1946.

87 Stavros Panteli, *ibid*, p.124.

88 FO.PIO Communiqué. No.3. 16 August 1946.

to talk to the immigrants⁸⁹. On the above-mentioned day in the morning there was a disturbance in the immigrants' camp at Caraolos South. When Press representatives, who were carrying out a conductive tour, entered the camp they were immediately rushed and surrounded by a mob of the immigrants singing "Palestine, Palestine". Part of the mob rushed the main gate and almost succeeded in breaking out. The military guard at the gate were forced to resort to firearms and shot over the heads of the immigrants. The civil police were called in to assist. By twenty past ten peace had been restored. Unfortunately there were two casualties among the military guard but none among the immigrants⁹⁰. BBC and Reuter reporters in addition those from Cyprus newspapers such as Hürsöz, Vakit, Haber and Son Dakika would enter the camp for the first time on 9th September 1946 to visit 2.139 immigrants available in the camp⁹¹.

That the married couples had no privacy and no private tent or hunt, that four family were given only one tent in the successive days, that the pregnant women⁹² were given no extra food and the insufficiency of the food and water all reasoned the complaints and the protests,⁹³ therefore human dignity had already started decaying. Claire Neikind, an American journalist of American News Agency who claimed, on the other hand, that she traveled the entire distance with the illegal immigrants was arrested up to 11th September 1946, and was released from Caraolos then⁹⁴. The mayor of Nicosia on the other hand declared that he had no personal objections against the period and the number of the immigrants⁹⁵. While 3.845 Jewish immigrants aboard Knesset Yisrael stepped on the harbor in Famagusta and they were taken to Caraolos camp, they distributed some booklets with some slogans such as "*Cypriot brothers! Don't let Cyprus turn to be a detention and death camp for us who had experienced Auschwitz, Bucheuwad, and Maidauek detention camps. Cypriot brothers! You can also make some demonstrations so that we can be transferred to Palestine, our homeland.*"⁹⁶ On the other hand, 500 Jewish refugees from Cyprus arrived in Haifa on 11st December 1946, bringing to 1.250 the number of deportees who have been returned from that island in the last 24 hours. Another 500 were due in Haifa. The last arrivals of the refugees were transferred to a Jewish Agency camp at Kiryat Schumel, near Chedera, to await release under the December-January immigration schedule⁹⁷.

89 Hürsöz, 20 August 1946.

90 FO.PIO Communiqué Confidential Press Comment. No.1.18 August 1946.

91 Vakit, 10th September 1946

92 Why these unfortunate women give birth to a baby in such difficult and harsh condition is another irony experienced here, and since the pregnant Jewish women are supposed to be the propagators of their race, and are firstly burnt in Nazi detention camps, they think that having a baby is nothing but just an answer to Hitler.

93 Hürsöz, 11st September 1946

94 Hürsöz; 8 September 1946.

95 FO.PIO Communiqué Confidential Press Comment. No.5.14 August 1946.

96 Hürsöz; 5th December 1946.

97 Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 12nd December 1946.

4.3. The Reactions of the Journals, and the Impressions

All the camps as well as Caraolos were visited on 5th December 1946 by the journalists working in Cyprus⁹⁸ escorted by British Major G. J. Wilson who was supposed to be the planner and the architect of these camps⁹⁹. Firstly the clinic having two parts for women and men with the capacity of 96 patients were visited. The patient having more serious and fatal problems was, on the other hand, hospitalized in Nicosia with no sheets and no blankets. The camp had a 125 person-mess hall, 400 person-meeting rooms, and the 15-person dormitories¹⁰⁰. The huts in which the immigrants lived had a stove and a few broken chairs. One of the songs sung by Jewish immigrants all day long was "*Cyprus is also a Palestine.*" in addition to "*Erev Eretz Yisrael/The doorstep of the Promised Land*"¹⁰¹

The little-roomed huts were given to the married couples, but since the number of the married couples naturally increased in time, the British authority in the camp brought this to an end, and no room was given even to the married ones, so everybody had to share the same huts with no privacy. In addition to the insufficient mess hall and the huts, the camp also had two huts used for taking showers. In spite of the fact that a depot was established to solve the matter of water, scarcity of water was believed to be the first and the most vital problem till the closure of the camps. Out of the Jewish immigrants, some 3.500 Cypriots worked in the camps as well as 800 German prisoners of war. Xylytymbou camp was ruled by Major C. J. Wilson, and the camp had a trainway between the camp and Dekhelia even if it was useless for the kept people. Because the above-mentioned camp was divided into two parts with a highway, camp command built a high covered wooden bridge for the Jewish immigrants over two barbed-wire barricades so that they could pass from one section of the camp to the other. They called this overpass Forty-Second Street. The streets between the tents and the huts had no name, and this situation caused the Jewish immigrants who survived Nazi invasions and death camps to show reactions, protesting that they were given no ID card in the camps in Cyprus but they were given ID cards even in Hitler's detention camps, and they called themselves no-name immigrants in a no-name island. Even if the immigrants were not permitted to go out of the camp and to swim but volleyball field was established¹⁰². Over all, in 1947, several trade unions and associations in Cyprus in a joint plea to the UN Secretary General demanded that the Jewish refugees kept in Cyprus be "immediately liberated and sent home to Palestine."¹⁰³

98 Ateş, 10th December 1946

99 Hürsöz, 6th December 1946.

100 Hürsöz; 6 December 1946.

101 Stavros Panteli, *ibid*, p.126.

102 Hürsöz; 6 December 1946.

103 Stavros Panteli, *ibid*, p.132.

5. Nutrition, Dressing And Sheltering In The Camps

The external order and the command in addition to the administration of the camps was the responsibility of a specially-designated military staff commanded by a British Major. The number of the British soldiers given assignments for the camp areas was some 2.200, and thus the British administration was supposed to be very subtle and careful for the life and the future of the people there, but the reality would be very sarcastic and the refugees would call the camps "open air prisons." Unlike the external administration, the internal administration of the camps was largely given to the Jewish people, and the military personnel detained themselves with minimum amount of supervision in the camps. A civil administration with a senior officer at first was replaced by a Palestine government official, and by the commissioner at last for the Jewish detention camps. British authorities never give permission to the local shop-keepers who demand to sell something to the Jewish immigrants in the camps, and those who want to run the canteen there, saying the number of local purchases for the illegal immigrants confined in Caraolos Camp was likely to be very small, and the letters from the trading community containing quotations for commodities would not be answered. In such instances where local supplies were required they would be obtained from the Controller of Supplies, Transport and Marketing¹⁰⁴. Even on the subject of local purchases made for illegal immigrants detained at Caraolos Camp as were made, such purchases would not be heavy, and would be through the Controller of Supplies. Letters from commercial interests to the Civil Administrative Officer containing quotations would not be answered¹⁰⁵. Actually the immigrants who brought nothing to the camps had no money to purchase something. The total number of the births and deaths in the camps is 1.920 total births, and 120 total deaths¹⁰⁶, and the numbers seem to be the symbol of relatively good conditions but the opposite was the reality;¹⁰⁷

"...Lack of medical facilities is more a disgrace to the Jewish Institutions in Palestine and to the welfare organization which assumed this responsibility than to the British authorities. There is a tragic dearth of doctors, especially dentists and eye-doctors."

On the other hand, the establishment of a coordinating executive body by the major Jewish institutions in Palestine to supply a unified program for meeting the needs of the Cyprus internees when they arrive in Palestine is recommended in a report issued by Jewish refugee organization psychiatric

104 FO.PIO News Item. 30 August 1946.

105 FO. PIO. News Item.17 September 1946.

106 Stavros Panteli, *ibid*, p.123.

107 Stavros Panteli, *ibid*, p.123.

group which studies the visaless Jews on the island for more than two months¹⁰⁸. Meanwhile The Palestine Government plans to admit some 1.000 Jewish deportees from Cyprus under the November-December, and December-January quotas of 1.500 each. It was announced on 12nd November 1946 that 14 quota would allot half of the 1.500 certificates to the deportees from Cyprus and the rest to various other categories¹⁰⁹.

Despite the fact that Greek Cypriots had sympathy for these people, the article in Eleftheria headed "*Settlement of Jews and the cost of living*" stated that the start of the immigration of Jews to Cyprus held public opinion in anxiety in case the cost of living would be affected. Then this would be unavoidable if food stuffs and other commodities were supplied to the Jews from the existing stocks of the island¹¹⁰. Bed-steads, mattresses, covers and other materials, intended for the Jewish camp, were surprisingly provided by the military authorities and not from the stocks in possession of the government. Furthermore, it was not known whether Jews would be permitted to move freely at intervals, and to move all over the island. C.R. C. Donald also made a speech to the Jewish immigrants on behalf of the Cyprus government on 16th August 1946, stating that "*No one who has considered the difficulties of displaced people in central Europe, and the sufferings of your race, can fail to sympathize with you, and the government of Cyprus and the military authorities are alike anxious that you should be as comfortable as possible during your temporary stay in Cyprus, for you will understand that you will remain here only until arrangements can be made for your ultimate future.*"¹¹¹ In the camps that exactly kept 52.384 Jewish immigrants, 2.000 babies were born within two years¹¹², and the circumcision ceremonies of the Jewish babies were carried out in the camps in accordance with Jewish traditions. Despite the fact that the camps were all established in the seaside, not only the children but none of the immigrants was given permission to swim. Subsequent to the insistent trials, only the children kept in the camp named Camp 64 were given allowance to swim under the control of armed soldiers. On the other hand, Colonel Dent who couldn't bear such ridiculous manner resigned from his post and left Cyprus, going aboard¹¹³. Meanwhile Pesach Litvak, representative of the Joint Distribution Committee left for Cyprus on 21st January 1947 so as to aid in the liquidation of the Jewish refugee camps on the island¹¹⁴. Harry Viteles, Jewish Middle East Director, voiced the hope that Britain's decision to release the Cyprus Jews would be followed by the release of the thousands of Jews in Aden. Viteles announced in Tel Aviv that they have bought 273 tons of Israel-

108 Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 13rd November 1946.

109 Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 13rd November 1946.

110 Eleftheria, 16th August 1946.

111 P.I.O. Communiqué No. 5, 16th August 1946.

112 www.hri.org/news/cyprus/eng/1998.

113 Morris Laub, Last Barrier to Freedom, Judah L. Magnes Museum Publications, California, 1985, p.100

114 Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 20th November 1947.

made citrus jams, 80 tons of chocolate and 80.000 bottles of wine for shipment to the Jewish displaced persons located in the camps in Germany and Austria¹¹⁵. Meanwhile it was announced in Jerusalem by Palestine Government that all the refugees who arrived in Palestine aboard the Latrun in November 1946, and who were subsequently deported to Cyprus would be returned in near future¹¹⁶. Jewish Agency representative named Morris Laub declared that the Palestine Government has agreed to admit the 375 persons who were barred from entering last month under the April-May quota, because a like number had escaped from the vessel Susanna, and a total of 1.125 detainees would be returned, including 750 under the May-June quota¹¹⁷.

In the very first year of the camp, about 500 babies were born, and 800 couples got married. The journalist named Ruth Gruber who met more than 250 babies aged below 12 months got surprised¹¹⁸. The marriages had mostly realized between the Jewish immigrants with some exceptions such as the marriages between the workers and the immigrants, and the camp authorities. Moreover no sooner had the ship named Chaim Arlosoroff which escaped from Sweden come to the camp with more than 800 women on 28th February 1947 than the number of the marriages surprisingly increased¹¹⁹. On the first anniversary of the establishment of internment camps in Cyprus for visaless Jews apprehended while trying to enter Palestine, camp committees representing some 16.000 Jews still behind wire fences on the island sent an appeal to the United Nations to find a speedy solution to the Palestine issue.¹²⁰ The appeal pointed out that the failure to settle the issue was keeping the Jews imprisoned more than two years after the liberation of Europe.

About 400 immigrants, most of whom were the old lost their lives in the camps due to a good many reasons. The first British soldier on duty on the perimeter who lost his life in the camp met his death during a night rain storm by touching a lamp standard, which had been affected by the wet due to the electrocution at the Caraolos camp on the 9th September of 1946¹²¹. Those who lost their lives in the camps were all buried in a graveyard named Margo, and expressed as *"the forgotten Jewish people of the forgotten island."*¹²² Jewish relief organization try to register to get some doctors and the nurses for the camps,

115 Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 20th November 1947.

116 Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 11st December 1947.

117 Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 11st December 1947.

118 Herald Tribune, 15 August 1948.

119 Morris Laub, *ibid*, p. 91.

120 Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 18th August 1947.

121 Then 4 British soldiers on duty at the Caraolos camp interned Jewish immigrants have also died in an outbreak of typhoid, and 12 of the Jews have been stricken by the disease, isolating the camp. It was also supposed that an acute water shortage contributed to the epidemic. FO.PIO Communiqué Confidential Press Comments. No.5.11 September 1946. See also Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 11th July 1947.

122 FO.PIO Communiqué No.6. 19 April 1947.

and two qualified welfare workers, named Lugton and Adler start working in the camp. As instructed to himself, Mr. Adler's primary attention would be given to the improvement of the baby clinic and to the children's welfare. Miss Ruth Pershitz, a member of the local Jewish community, would teach in the camp school for which three large tents had been provided¹²³. In addition to all these efforts, a start was also made on 29th August 1946 with the qualified optician to provide spectacles to illegal immigrants who had lost their own. In those cases where illegal immigrants were without funds the glasses would be supplied free of charge¹²⁴. Considering the situation, so far only urgent cases had got allocation.¹²⁵ On the other hand, a study of the mental health of Jewish men, women, and children in Cyprus, along with the organization of a mental hygiene clinic there and demonstration and instruction in psychiatric social service techniques were also used, and the program was carried out by a special team consisting of a psychiatric, two psychologists and one psychiatric social worker, leaving New York for a 60-day mission both in Cyprus and Palestine.¹²⁶ An outbreak of scabies in one of the camps infected 500 of 1.800 refugees, and was hardly taken under control.¹²⁷ The spread of the disease was mostly attributed to insufficient bathing facilities and to delayed arrival of the medical supplies.

The Jewish people who survived WWII and Nazi holocaust in Europe were so desperate in Cyprus that The Palestine Government acceded on 19th November 1947 to a Jewish Agency request for the speedy admission¹²⁸ from Cyprus of orphans under 18, and children under two together with their parents;
129

"The immigrants themselves are mostly healthy young adults. The majority has spent a considerable time in enemy concentration camps and is experienced in resistance both passive and active; are very alurgic (sic) to any form of order or authority and utterly lacking in the most elementary principles of camp sanitation or hygiene. They are, in the main, most unco-operative. A great lack of effort has been shown in keeping the camp clean and tidy. Meals are, for the most part, eaten in the tents, and personal ablutions performed there from tins, buckets, etc. Food debris, sanitary towels and dirty water are thrown into the surrounding bushes. Refuse containers are frequently tipped onto the ground."

In May 1947, 240 Jewish orphans also arrived in Haifa from Cyprus camps. Their disembarkation was delayed several hours until a convoy could be organized to escort them to a Jewish Agency reception center near Hadera.¹³⁰

123 FO.PIO News Item. 29 August 1946.

124 Hürsöz, 1st September 1946.

125 FO.PIO News Item. 30th August 1946.

126 Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 16th June 1947.

127 Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 12nd January 1947.

128 Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 28th July 1947.

129 Stavros Panteli, *ibid*, p.123.

130 Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 11st December 1947.

In accordance with this resolution, 500 Jewish orphans more, between the age of six and fifteen, embarked on two British vessels in Famagusta for their return to Palestine on 19th August 1947¹³¹. The children were part of a group of 985 who were being permitted to enter Palestine outside the regular monthly immigration quota. In all, some 3.500 persons would be permitted to enter the country out of turn. Between those who helped the Jewish immigrants in Famagusta was the Turkish Cypriots such as Jeff Ertughrul;¹³²

"I would present the oranges given to me by my mother to the Jewish people through the fences in my childhood. A British soldier, one day, caught me red-handed and hit me. Then my mother going to the camp grasped the soldier on duty and got his rifle. Then getting the rifle of the soldier, he rushed into the room of the commander and furied him a lot. The camp commander apologized from my mother, and ordered the soldier to do so. The following day, the commander gave me a box of chocolate. My mother never answered the questions such as 'Hanife, how did you that? The soldiers could fire you.'"

6. Attempts to Escape From the Camps

The Jewish immigrants kept in these camps proposing there is no difference between the prison, the prison of war camp and these camps try to escape from the camps getting assistance from Mossad, Jewish Relief Organization and the workers in the camps. Experiencing all these in the camps, current rumors that perimeter guards had received instructions to open fire on any vessel approaching the camp from the sea were entirely without foundation, as announced by the British authorities in the camp¹³³. On the other hand, the soldiers firing up during the turmoil and the protest demonstrations are all published in American newspapers¹³⁴. Current rumors in the camps that the immigrants had all escaped by cutting their way through the wire were officially denied. The wire surrounding the camp had at no time been cut and was intact. Therefore it was hardly possible for the immigrants to escape from the camps by cutting the wires, and for example the last three Jewish immigrants who evaded their guards surrendered to the authorities later during the daytime.¹³⁵ The refugees trying to escape from the camps sometimes used even the sweeping searchlights and the floodlights from the watchtowers, and as soon as they got the chance to rush between the lights on themselves, they used to go out of the barbed wires. A car arranged by Haganah before stood there and left the area at once with the new passenger towards an unknown point near the seaside. Then a vessel took the escapee to Palestine. Actually up to 15th May 1948, none of the

131 Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 20th August 1947.

132 The interview made with the late Jeff Ertughrul on 24th April 2006 in London.

133 FO.PIO News Item. 30th August 1946

134 Hürsöz, 24th September 1946.

135 FO.PIO Communiqué Confidential Press Comment. No.2.28 August 1946

trials and the attempts to escape from the camps in Caraolos and Xylotymbou has been regarded to be a dominant problem although some escapes were realized and some arrests were made. Moreover, on 10th May 1948, British Foreign Office declared that after May 1948 the detainees in Cyprus would be free to leave the island since grounds for their detention would no longer be valid. Similarly Jewish Agency in London estimated that they could absorb 10.000 immigrants monthly in Palestine, but it was doubtful that sufficient shipping would be available to transfer the refugees that speedily¹³⁶. During the attempts to escape the refugees, the Haganah that means "Defense", Mossad, Aliya Bet, and Palmach¹³⁷ were very active organizations in regard of self-defense, escapes, disciplines, and immigration. Because one of the escape attempt was resulted with failure due to the packs of the dogs barking around, and the escapee was caught red-handed, the next day the Jewish authority in the camps declared and order so as to kill all the dogs around. A special team was chosen to carry out the unfortunate mission, and the dogs disappeared for a while around the camps. On the other hand, when the camps all closed down completely, hundreds of dogs still remained behind knowing nothing what was happening there. In addition to those who tried to escape from the camps digging tunnels, some Jewish immigrants who were hospitalized in Nicosia also tried to escape off the island. It was, for instance, stated that two illegal immigrants had been taken in custody by the civil police at Limassol. These men had escaped from the military hospital at Nicosia where hospital cases were sent under escort from Caraolos camp¹³⁸. Those two Jewish immigrants who have escaped from Nicosia military hospital were taken into custody by the police in Limassol. This was the first intimation that the two had escaped, and it was thought that others may be at large since the camp authorities have been unable to take a roll call since the immigrants were diverted to Cyprus from Palestine.¹³⁹ The condition in the camps were actually were so unsatisfactory and hard to live that an Israeli camp leader claimed on 9th February 1949 that in last 30 months 1809 Jewish internees had escaped from the Caraolos and Xylotymbou camps in Cyprus and reached Palestine¹⁴⁰. Similarly, British military and civil authorities said that although no official figures were available, there appeared to be a considerable discrepancy between the numbers of incoming and outgoing Jews in Cyprus, and it had been, for them, hardly possible to hold a proper roll-call in the camps since they were opened in 1946¹⁴¹. Subsequent to the final evacuation of the camps, a detailed examination on 11st February 1949 showed lots of tunnels in various stages of construction, one of which is now in the military area named Gülseren in Famagusta. As well as the tunnels, the examination revealed that

136 Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 11st May 1948.

137 Stavros Panteli, *ibid*, p. 125.

138 FO.PIO Communiqué Confidential Press Comment. News Item.11th September 1946

139 Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 13rd September 1946.

140 Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 10th February 1949.

141 Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 10th February 1949.

the cookhouses turned to be the lecture rooms, and battle-training gymnasia, a well-appointed map room showing the vicinity and the countryside so as to make the attempts of the escapes easier¹⁴². Actually Caraolos camp was the only suitable one to escape since it was by the sea, even if Dekhelia camp was also very close to the sea, and the refugees, considering such a facility for them, made mostly use of the camps there. Some friendly persons living in the vicinity of Caraolos camp such as Leibner and Levinsky were another factor to concentrate on the attempts of escape from Caraolos by the help of those helpful persons¹⁴³.

7. Education and Cultural Activities in the Camps

The only motto known by all the Jewish immigrants kept in the camps is "Early come to the camp early go from the camp." and out of this rule the people who are allowed to leave the island earlier than the others are the doctors dealing in the branches mostly as brain surgery, general surgery, and microbiology, who are mostly needed in Palestine, and they are with no lottery and no queue taken to Palestine urgently. Despite the fact that the British authorities expressed to give 750 certificates to the Jews "on the prison island"¹⁴⁴ these restrictions were generally ignored by the British themselves.¹⁴⁵ The first group of Jewish immigrants who were allowed to leave the camps and to go to Palestine get aboard Yagar would be selected from 754 Jewish immigrants who came from Poland on 14th August 1946. The British authorities also permitted the Jewish immigrants aboard Henrietta Szold which arrived in Cyprus on 14th August 1946 with 536 immigrants to join in the lottery to choose those to go to Palestine, at last 300 persons were given granted to go to Palestine. The individual selection of the first 300 Jewish immigrants to receive certificates on the November/December quota had been , as said by British authorities, satisfactorily concluded by the Jewish Agency Team and other authorities concerned. The infants who were with their parents and other children, if any, had first priority, followed by children aged one to four with parents and elder children, if any, and lastly, expectant mothers in the eighth or ninth month of pregnancy.¹⁴⁶ Approximately 270 certificates were involved in this selection; the remaining 30 people go to Palestine, getting selected by ballot from the "Yagur".

Agreements had also been reached for the 750 proceedings on the December/January quota, which would be drawn by ballot from the balance of the "Yagur" and "Henreitta Szold" in proportion to the numbers arriving on each ship. Thereafter the selection would be according to date of arrival of the illegal immigrant ships, giving priority in each ship to the various categories as

142 Stavros Panteli, *ibid*, p. 126.

143 Morris Laub, *ibid*, p. 30.

144 Ruth Gruber, *ibid*, p. 45.

145 FO.PIO Communiqué No.3. 21 April 1947.

146 FO.PIO Communiqué No.2. 29 November 1946.

expressed before. Due to 375 Jewish immigrants transported to the detention camps in Palestine by Susannah, the number and quota of the immigrants to be taken from Cyprus to Palestine is reduced from 750 to 375. Moreover, British authorities thinking that saturating more than 150 Jewish immigrants to Palestine territory in certainly in favor of the quota of the immigrants as 150. Adapting such a reduced quota, the ship headed for Haifa from Cyprus, aboard the P. P. Efthalia which was flying the Panama flag, carrying 100 passengers below the deck and 50 on deck, and no military escort accompanied the party.

Another problem and chaos appeared on 18th April 1947, and 375 immigrants refused to embark for Palestine, defying that the usual quota of 750 should go. Turmoil enlarged and embraced the camps and the military personnel in the camps started firing so as to prevent an attempted break-out, killing a refugee named Moshe Lerer, seriously injuring four, and lightly wounding two¹⁴⁷. The illegal immigrants at Caraolos went on a serious hunger strike for the first time on 18th April 1947 in protest against the non-satisfaction of their demands for an increase in the number of transfers to Palestine. There was no major disturbance in fact during the night, on the other hand, sporadic incidents took place and attempts were made to burn down three main gates¹⁴⁸ and the administration buildings¹⁴⁹. In the meantime, an extra military team was also deployed to the camp, led by a Major, and the body of the Jew named Shlomoh Chaimson who was shot one day before at Caraolos was buried in the Jewish cemetery at Margo. Seventy-five inmates from Caraolos camp attended the funeral. All the Jewish illegal immigrants, except those who had arrived at the camp recently, pregnant women and the women with the babies, were on five-day hunger strike.¹⁵⁰ Later on, it was understood that going on strike was nothing but eye-polishing and the food for the strikers were brought to the camp clandestinely.¹⁵¹ Of the Jewish people who had attended the funeral ceremony of the Jewish person named Shlomoh Chaimson was also Major Wewman who held the funeral on his shoulder¹⁵² The Jewish illegal immigrants in Caraolos and Xylotymbou camps ceased hunger strike the same day afternoon following the decision of the Central Committee to finish their hunger strike which started at noon on Friday. The decision was taken after the Committee had met the Director of the American Joint Distribution Committee in Cyprus and a member of the Jewish Agency Executive. Special arrangements were also being made to bring in food to the camps as all previous offers of rations have been refused by the internees until that day's decision. This made the supply of food for children in the camps during the hunger strike a difficult problem, and many of the children also joined in the hunger strike¹⁵³.

147 Stavros Panteli, *ibid*, p. 125.

148 FO.PIO Communiqué No.6. 19 April 1947

149 Stavros Panteli, *ibid*, p. 125.

150 FO.PIO Communiqué No.3. 21 April 1947.

151 FO.PIO Communiqué No.6. 19 April 1947.

152 FO.PIO Communiqué No.3. 21 April 1947

153 FO.PIO Communiqué No.7. 22 April 1947

The British authorities in the camp terrified by the Jewish strike tried to find out some ways for the immigrants to spend time, and Jewish Relief Organization opened a nursery, kindergarten, and a primary school for the children numbered more than 1.000 in 1947. Most of the children used to be kept in a summer camp named Camp 65, and get the courses from 06.00 to 12.00 at noon.¹⁵⁴ The courses arranged for the adult is mostly composed of Jewish history, traditions, protocol and fine arts and social manners, social life in Palestine, Jewish artists, poets, religious leaders, literary and cultural personalities. The foundations and organizations mostly arrange all these courses, seminars, cultural programs, workshops, art classes, and the other activities for the immigrants in Cyprus camps are Rutenberg Foundation led from Haifa and the Youth Aliya Foundations established by Henrietta Szold for mostly the orphaned Jewish children. The concert and dance groups were also set in the camp, and a concert was also given on the 5th September 1946 to the Jewish illegal immigrants at Caraolos camp by Franz Rosner, violinist, of the Palestine Broadcasting Corporation accompanied by Gerhard Jarecki on the piano. Both musicians were on holiday in Cyprus and volunteered to give up their spare time to entertain the illegal immigrants. The concert and the following ones were all much appreciated and well attended by the people there.

In addition to all these entertaining activities in the camp, the Jewish New year had been celebrated in Caraolos camp during the last three days of September. At Camp 55 Rabbi Dayam, Dr. Grunfeld, a senior member of the Chief Rabbi's Religious Emergency Council who arrived at the island before from London stayed in the camp with the immigrants during his stay and had conducted services. Captain B. Ebstein of the Royal Army Chaplains' Department, Palestine, who was also living in the camp held services at Camp 60 and 61 as well¹⁵⁵. The football teams were also established in the camps as well, and these football teams had got football matches against the British military personnel, and German Prisoners of war kept in the island in the following days.

8. Closing the Camps in Cyprus

Up to the last day of the camp, some 52.649 Jewish refugees, including 1.065 infants born in Cyprus, had been detained in the two camp areas in Caraolos and Xylotymbou; of these 29.071 had left for Palestine before the Palestine Mandate was laid down in May 1948. Similarly, Under-Secretary for Colonial Affairs David Rees-Williams declared on 12nd May 1948 in Parliament that all Jewish detainees in Cyprus must be removed from the island by August 1, 1948. He also added that detailed plans for the visaless immigrants' removal, which will begin after the expiration of the Mandate, were new under discussion. British

154 P.I.O. News Item. 30 August 1946

155 FO.PIO Communiqué No.3. 28 September 1946.

Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin also declared that Jewish refugees interned in Cyprus because they were of military age would currently be permitted to go to Israel whenever the Jews provide transport for them.¹⁵⁶ Bevin also retorted that he had been endeavoring to deal with the Cyprus situation for some time. He also stated that he was not interested in preserving his reputation but in taking all possible actions in behalf of peace. Williams similarly asserted that although he did not believe the removal operation would involve any cost to British taxpayers.¹⁵⁷ He also said that he could not give any assurance that the British vessels would not be used for the task, stating that he was not aware of any Jews on the island who did not wish to leave.¹⁵⁸ It is worth mentioning here that British Commander of Cyprus issued an order on 12nd December 1948 requiring the commander of the Xylotymbou camp to appear before the Cyprus Supreme Court to show the reasons why 5,164 Jews held should not be released. The order followed a hearing at which the detainees' lawyer, Colonel Weston, maintained that these detained persons were held solely as being of military age, adding that the Cyprus laws do not justify the detention of the Jews on such grounds.¹⁵⁹ The situation appeared in Cyprus about the refugees is actually just a dilemma experienced by the British authorities, and due to the sophisticated situation, international pressure, the burden of the increasing expenditure force them to be torn between the dilemmas.

The rule to be used in the camps for the people was the first in-the first out. Thus, the final evacuation in the camps took place on 11st February 1949. In February 1949, the camps in Cyprus were closed down and the last immigrants there numbering some 10,000 were all transported to Israel by the ships from that country. Some 360 Jewish refugees also arrived in Haifa from Cyprus on 13rd May 1948, and this first group would be followed by an estimated 10,000 aboard the recently released *Pan Crescent*¹⁶⁰, and some more Jewish immigrants were also expected to land from Europe in near future¹⁶¹. It was reported on 3rd February 1949 that some 5,000 Jews still remained on the island of Cyprus, following the arrival of another contingent of 1,500 immigrants from the Greek island.¹⁶² To close the camps and to transfer the refugees the vessels successively head for the destined ports, and for example the 3,900-ton steamer *Galila* embarked 1,469 Jews in Famagusta, another installment of the 11,000 to be moved from Cyprus detention camps to Israel¹⁶³. She arrived from Haifa,

156 Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 19th January 1949.

157 Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 13th May 1948.

158 Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 13th May 1948.

159 Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 13rd December 1948.

160 *Pan Crescent* continues to transfer the refugees especially during the transition period of the closure of the camps, and for example transfers a group of 820 immigrants to Haifa on July, 22, 1948. Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 23rd July 1948.

161 Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 14th May 1948.

162 Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 4th February 1949.

163 The Israeli warship, *Haganah*, went out to meet *Galila* while she was still on the high seas, and when *Galila* entered Israeli territorial waters, *Haganah* fired three salvos in honor of the

where she had taken a previous contingent, and sailed the same night. The SS Atzmauth (Independence) also sailed for Haifa on 3rd February 1949 with nearly 2.200 refugees aboard, the largest single contingent of Cyprus detainees yet evacuated from the island to Israel since the release of the detainees was first announced by the British¹⁶⁴. Due to the foundation of Israel, the refugees were planned to be transferred from Cyprus to newly-established country, and Israeli Immigration Minister Moshe Shapira would leave for Cyprus in January 1949 to make and to supervise arrangements for the early transfer of approximately 12.000 interned Jewish refugees from the island to Israel, and a 4.500 ton vessel would arrive from Haifa to take on the first 2.000 refugees.¹⁶⁵ In this way, the first group would be transported to Haifa and clear the camps completely within 10 days or two weeks. The Jewish Agency announced that it has allocated its most luxurious ships to bring 1.200 Cyprus Jews to Israel on each trip. The first such voyage would probably be made in the end of January 1949¹⁶⁶. After British Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin's announcement that the detained Jews in Cyprus would be permitted to go to Israel as soon as the Jews provided for them, Some 11.000 refugees cheered, and danced, notwithstanding the heavy seasonal rainfall, in the mud throughout the night¹⁶⁷. On the other hand, the scheduled program was not always in order, and the non-arrival of the vessels arranged to transfer the refugees to Haifa and the unexpected delays caused the detainees to reach a stage of tenseness, and the Jewish camp leaders demanded that increased shipping facilities be made available right away.¹⁶⁸ To complete the deportation of the refugees, three physicians including a gynecologist, three nurses and all the necessary medical equipment would be taken to Cyprus on the first available vessel to accompany the detainees back to Israel. The number of the refugees were also announces as 11.000 including 800 infants and 275 pregnant women¹⁶⁹. The journalist Morris Laub explained in New York on 8th April 1949 that "the feat of settling the Cyprus refugees can be appreciated all the more, when one knows that in the last three weeks alone the number of persons living in Israel transit camps jumped by 12.000 because of the great lack of dwelling space. Despite the horrible physical facilities of the Cyprus detention camps, they became the most effective possible staging area for Jewish agencies going to Israel. The emigrants who left Mr. Bevin's camps after long months of internment were fully prepared to live in Israel by virtue of the extensive healthy, educational and vocational training program which the Joint Distribution Committee sponsored for them on Cyprus."¹⁷⁰

new arrivals. Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 2nd February 1949, and 26th January 1949.

- 164 Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 6th February 1949.
 165 Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 21st January 1949.
 166 Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 21st January 1949.
 167 Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 20th January 1949.
 168 Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 30th January 1949.
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 170 Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 10th April 1949.

The number of the immigrants, the ships, where they came from, and when they left Europe during the period of 29th July 1946-14th April 1948 were all kept track.¹⁷¹ 52.384 Jewish people are transported to the island in totally 39 actions, but some more ships are also available. For example Empire Rival with 544 men and 153 women on 15th March 1946, Empire Rest with 390 people on 5th October 1947, Empire Comfort with 398 immigrants, Snow Smith with 829 Jewish immigrants, and Empire Shelter with 402 immigrants on 4th October 1947 are out of the official record. As soon as the Jewish refugees started getting transferred to Israel, it was announced that an Israeli consulate would be opened soon in Nicosia, and Yerachmiel Yaron, a high-ranking police official, was appointed Israel Consul for Cyprus¹⁷². During this transition period, more than 100.000 Jewish refugees are transferred to Palestine by totally 120 vessels from Europe, starting from 1934 July up to 11st July 1948 in 158 voyages. The vessels carrying those refugees are Velos, Union, Kosta, Artemisia, Poseidon, Af Al Pi, Panormitis, Draga, Atrato, Elli, Chepo, Delpa, Katina, Sandu, Aghios Nicolaos, Astir, Asimsi, Panagia Conasterio, Aghia Zoni, Liesel, Dimitrios, Kralitsa Maria, Colorado, Marsis, Las Perlas, Niko, Rim, Dora, Rudnihar, Osiris, Parita, Krotova, Tripoli, Tiger Hill, Noemijulia, Rudnihar, Uranus, Hilda (Orion) Sakarya, Libertad, Pencho, unidentified and unknown four vessels, Pacific, Milos, Atlantic, Salvador, Darien, Hainarul, Crai Nou, Struma, Mihai, Mircea, Dor de Val, Euxenia, Vitorul, Dora, Europa, Lily, Milka, Maritza, Bela Citta, Kazbek, Bülbül, Mefküre, Selahaddin, Tauris, Dalin, Natan I (Nettuno), Gabriela, Peter I, Natan II, Peter II, Berl Katznelson, Hannah Senesh, Enzo Sereni, Wingate, Tel Hai, Max Nordau, Dov Hos, Eliahu Golomb, Haviva Reik, Josiah Wedgwood, Briah, Haganah, Hachayal Haivri, Assipa, SS Yagur, Henrietta Szold, Katriel Jaffe, Twenty-Three, Amiram Shochat, Arba Cheruyot, Palmach, Bracha Fuld, Latrun, Abba Berditchev, Knesset Israel, Rafa, Lanegev, Hamapil Haalmoni, Chaim Arlosoroff, Ben Hecht, Shabtai Luzinsky, Moledeth¹⁷³, Theodor Herzl, Shear Yishuv, Hatikva, Mered Hagetaot, Yehuda Halevi, Exodus 1947, Shivat Zion, Heroes of Aziv, Af Al Pi Ken, Medinat Yehudim, Geulah, Aliyah, Kadima, Haportzim, Lo Tafchidunu, 29-Nov, Kibbutz Galuyot, Atzmaut, United Nations, 35 Heroes of Etzion, Yerushalayim Hanezero, Lekommemyut, Bonim v'Lochamim, Yehiam, Tirat Zvi, Mishmar Haemek, Nakhshon, Lanitzachon, Medinat Yisroel, Krav Emek Ayalon, Altalen, and Mala¹⁷⁴.

171 Hürsöz, 7th October 1947.

172 Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 24th August 1950.

173 A very harsh and sharp clash between British soldiers and some 750 refugees aboard Moledeth had occurred following the refugees' refusal to be transferred to the Ocean Vigor and the Empire Rival. Then the military security forces started using the tear gas, smoke bombs and the clubs to force the refugees out of the ship's hold and over the side. Many soldiers and refugees were injured. On the other hand there was no clash aboard the two destroyers to which over 700 other Moledeth passengers had been transferred when it was feared that the blockade runner would capsized and sink in the mid-ocean on 31st March 1947.

174 See detailed information on the above-mentioned ships; Ulvi Keser, 1945-1948 Sürecinde

CONCLUSION

The war period especially in Europe passed away within Nazi horror, starvation, torture, and thousands of Jewish civilian people taken to the death camps lost their lives in the gas chambers. The survivors tried to escape from those countries towards Palestine; unfortunately almost no country except Turkey helped and backed them. British government unlike the reluctant countries to help the immigrants started using some restrictions against these immigrants leading them firstly to Mauritius, then to Cyprus. The unfortunate Jewish refugees headed for Cyprus and were kept behind the fence there not as the survivors, or the alive people towards Palestine but like the prisoners under very harsh conditions. Actually after the WWII, the conditions in Cyprus itself were not sufficient even for the local people, and the unrest had no intention to decrease. The military precautions and the burden of the expenditure, recession, black market, inflation, lack of employment, shortage of currency, and gloomy future behind the horizons all gathered and blackened Cyprus thoroughly. The local people, especially the Greek Cypriots had fears that the temporary sheltering of the refugees might turn to be permanent resulting the proportion of Greek population in addition to the cost of life. Detainees were supposed to be the burden on the island, and the British authorities were very reluctant to keep them not only in Cyprus but also in Palestine as well. While Aphrodite's realm, the island named Cyprus turned to be a prison, city of Jewish children behind barbed wire, a no-name island, a hell with no privacy, and the ugliest architecture, the Jewish immigrants were named to be mass, illegal, unlawful, refugees by British authorities. Therefore, the forgotten Jews of the forgotten island had to live with no infrastructure, no water, no bed, no privacy, and no social activity under the military authority. A new state all of a sudden came to the surface, and the detainees were transferred to Israel then. Forgotten people of the forgotten island left no mark behind except the fears, hunger, torture, psychological pressure, and death.

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