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Arieh J. Kovachi, *Post-Holocaust Politics. Britain, the United States, & Jewish Refugees, 1945-1948* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 377 pp.

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This thoroughly researched and thoughtful monograph is basically a study of British policy toward the attempts of Jewish refugees to escape the shackles of postwar Europe and ultimately to reach the shores of Palestine. Seeing that effort as part of a Zionist attempt to create a Jewish state, the British Labour government struggled to prevent the migration, organized or otherwise, of European Jews to the British Mandate in the Middle East. Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin was convinced that for Britain to maintain its strategic position in the Middle East, it required the cooperation of the Arab regimes in the area, all of which were implacably opposed to Jewish immigration. For a brief period Prime Minister Clement Attlee had doubts about British military control in the area, but in fairly short order he deferred to Bevin and the strategy of continuing to limit immigration until there could be a solution to the Palestine question.

Part of the Zionist response was the *Ha 'apala* movement—the movement of thousands of illegal immigrants from European ports to Palestine. Another part was the *Bricha* movement in which Jewish refugees from Eastern Europe were aided in reaching Displaced Persons' (DPs) camps in Austria and Germany and finally helped to migrate to Palestine. Neither undertaking, Kovachi demonstrates, would have been nearly so substantial without the assistance the DPs received from American and European officials. It was difficult for the British to deal with that assistance. After the war the DPs became more and more economically and politically dependent upon Washington; relations with the U.S.S.R. and its satellites were soon tense and confrontational; and there were major differences as well with Italy and France.

The British insisted on keeping the issue of Jewish displaced persons separate from the Palestine question. Despite the overwhelming evidence of the special treatment of Jews in the Nazi Holocaust, the British opposed giving Jewish survivors any special consideration. They insisted on dealing with the problem as part of the general refugee issue. That meant, among other things, returning

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Jews wherever possible to their countries of origin, whatever had been their experience there. The Holocaust, in the author's words, played only a marginal role when officials began formulating their policy toward the Jews who remained in Europe. Though Kovachi does not emphasize it, the insensitivity of both Bevin and Attlee to the plight of the remnants of the millions deliberately and efficiently murdered leaps out at the reader.

The main obstacle to the British program, Kovachi argues, was the attitude of America. After President Truman urged that one hundred thousand Jewish DPs be allowed to enter Palestine, the British hoped to be able to involve the Americans in finding an answer to the Palestine riddle. In the end, their policy was a failure. Both in Europe, where Americans were involved in reacting to the movement of people from east to west and toward the various ports of embarkation, and in Washington, where Truman often overrode the views of some of his advisers, American policy often simply ignored the case of the British.

Kovachi is less sure-footed in treading through the minefields of American policy than in dealing with the British. It is an oversimplification to place as much emphasis as he does on the Jewish vote, especially in New York, in determining Truman to take the stance that he did. Like British policy, that of the United States was complicated. It included geopolitical interests in the Middle East, suspicion of British imperialism, and genuine concern for the fate of a decimated people. Kovachi alludes to all of this, but tends to overemphasize American domestic politics.

The motivations of the various governments and occupying administrations were varied and made the British project more difficult to achieve. The Soviet Union and its satellites often facilitated the movement of Jews westward to Austria and Germany. Romania, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary were not loath to see some of their Jews depart. British efforts to combat this movement or the sailing of vessels from Romania by threatening to withhold recognition or slow down peace negotiations with the new regimes were limited by the fear of aggravating relations to Britain's own disadvantage. They came too late, in any case, to prevent the flight of thousands of illegal immigrants to Palestine—or to deportation to Cyprus.

Equally unsuccessful were British attempts to slow or stop the

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illegal movement of Jews into France and Italy. The Italians were less concerned with keeping Jewish refugees from entering the country; since the cost of supporting them did not fall upon the Italian economy, they were not particularly vigilant in the task of prevention. In addition, most of the refugees were expected to leave, since they planned to use Italy as a transient point for transport to Palestine. As for France, from which about one-quarter of the illegal sailing took place after the war, Kovachi notes that the French could live with the paradox of fostering rapprochement with Britain on the one hand and helping the Jewish refugees on the other, because the DP issue was a marginal one in Anglo-French relations.

Post-Holocaust Politics is a rich and generally carefully shaded examination of the interplay of Great Power politics and the efforts of a wounded people to make new lives for themselves away from the killing fields of Europe. It is a major contribution which makes quite clear that, although there was sympathy for survivors of the Holocaust among officials of different countries, it was political considerations that were decisive in the interactions of those Great Powers and that enabled Zionists to establish a Jewish state in Palestine.

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