

WIG DRAFT DOCUMENT

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18 September 1952

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ONI DECLASSIFICATION/RELEASE INSTRUCTIONS ON FILE

Alleged Refuelling of Polish Ships with Iranian Oil

1. There have been numerous reports that two Polish tankers, the KARPATY, 6487 GRT, and the PRACA, 8207 GRT, mentioned in the enclosure to Calcutta Despatch No. 44, 18 July 1952, have been refuelling Polish merchant vessels at sea with Iranian oil on the Far Eastern run since the latter part of 1951. At present, this information is in conflict with verifiable routing and cargo data supplied for both ships by ONI. The investigation of all reports concerning Polish bunkering with Iranian oil is being continued.

2. The movements of the KARPATY and the PRACA during the past year are known. In essence, they consist of Gdynia-Constantza traffic and three China runs (for details, see paras 4 and 5 below). On these runs the tankers have covered all portions of their route in the usual sailing time (except for known breakdowns or repairs), apparently allowing for no unreported intermediate stops. According to ONI, diesels are used predominantly by the Polish Far Eastern Line on the Gdynia-China run. These ships do not require refuelling en route. The black-oilburners which are also in the Far Eastern service, have been stopping at Singapore to top off in order to avoid draining Chinese bunker supplies. If an attempt had been made by any Polish tanker to lift Iranian oil in recent months or to refuel Bloc ships in the relatively narrow waters of the Persian Gulf, this is not likely to have gone unnoticed or unreported by [redacted] naval forces having the area under surveillance. As shown in the recent case of the ROSE MARY, this surveillance is quite close and effective.

3. Informed sources believe that certain parties may be interested in perpetuating rumors about Bloc bunkering in the Persian Gulf area; this may be to divert attention from the fact that Polish vessels are bunkered at Djibouti and at Far Eastern stations and that Polish tankers have lifted oil cargoes at such places. As regards the equipment on the KARPATY when last sighted, it did not appear designed for refuelling other vessels at sea as a routine operation, although the tanker did once refuel early this year a Soviet whaler operating in the Antarctic.

4. Late in 1951, the KARPATY actually made its first China run with Rumanian oil when the tanker was rumored to be "refuelling Polish shipping in the Persian Gulf." It bypassed Singapore on 1 September 1951 en route to Vladivostok. On the return trip, the KARPATY began loading fuel in

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Djibouti on 23 January 1952. In the course of this loading, the tanker struck a jetty and had to be repaired in Aden. Loading was resumed in Djibouti on 2 February 1952 and on 5 February 1952 the tanker sailed for the Antarctic via Durban to refuel the Russian whaler SLAVA. On 28 March 1952, the tanker passed Capetown on the return from the Antarctic bound for Odessa. From the Black Sea, the KARPATY went to Gdynia and it is now en route on its second voyage to China.

5. The PRACA (ex-US SWIFT ARROW, ex-Panamanian ATLANTIC II, ex-Liberian TAVIRA) was sold to Poland by London Greeks. It was towed out of Glasgow by a British tug on 19 May 1951 and reported in Gdynia in June. The tanker passed out of the Baltic again under the Polish flag for the first time on 13 November 1951, declaring for Constantza and thence China. The PRACA passed Gibraltar on 22 November 1951, and Istanbul, in ballast, on 30 November 1951. The tanker now commenced its only known China voyage. It passed Istanbul on 4 January 1952 with a full cargo of kerosene destined for Dalny and calls were reported at Port Said, Colombo, and Taku Bar. On 21 February 1952, the PRACA left Shanghai for Constantza. There was a report that the PRACA bunkered the Polish freighter PULASKI in the Malacca Straits prior to a major breakdown which caused the tanker to spend over two weeks in March 1952 in Singapore for repairs. After another Constantza call, with verified intermediate routing, the PRACA arrived in Antwerp on 7 July 1952 for "long overhaul." It should be noted that the KARPATY also underwent repairs in Antwerp, from June to September 1951, sailing for Gdynia on 16 September 1951. Tanker repair and maintenance facilities in Antwerp have recently been increased by addition of new dry and wet docks and certain shore installations.

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