

Ira Hirschman Papers  
Box 3  
Joel Brandt

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION with Mr. Joel Brandt in Jerusalem  
on October 7, 1944.

While in Jerusalem I had been informed that Mr. Joel Brandt had been released by the British from Cairo and was a free agent in Jerusalem. He requested permission of the Jewish Agency to talk with me and I saw him first at the home of Mr. Eleazer Kaplan, an official of the Jewish Agency. In order to talk with him quietly and talk with him in confidence, I invited him to my suite at the Hotel King David. Brandt disclosed the following:

1. He had been held in a prison in solitary confinement by the British since June 5. In the last two weeks he was released to a prison camp, from which he wrote a letter to the Jewish Agency officials (intended for the hands of the British Intelligence), which he read to me. In effect it stated that were he not released by October 5 he would regard himself as an enemy of the British and act accordingly. Brandt had been on two hunger strikes and informed me that he had made arrangements to make a break for freedom or to commit suicide.

Mr. Kaplan of the Jewish Agency had informed me that they were given the choice of sending Brandt back to Hungary or permitting him to go to Palestine. They chose the latter. Apparently Brandt was not aware of this when I talked with him.

2. I asked Brandt why he had chosen to go to Syria while in Turkey, since he should have known that he would be captured by the British. He stated that after the Turks had arrested him, prior to my arrival in Ankara, he was given the choice of returning to Hungary, but had he done so it would have been interpreted as a definite refusal by the Allies of his proposals, and he saw only dangers of additional reprisals from this eventuality. Now Brandt contends that even in spite of the great trials occasioned by his incarceration that he made the right decision; that at least he accomplished something connected with the cessation of the deportations and the 1,500 refugees who did come through Hungary. Brandt believes that the British continued to infer that he was insincere and playing a "double game" in order to keep him in Cairo so that he could not further his project.

3. Brandt, in spite of his arduous experience, is still intent on breaking the ring around Hungary for refugee release. He asked me to propose that someone should directly contact Tito. He would like to see Tito and states that he knows the situation and people in Hungary who could arrange easy access from Hungary through Yugoslavia; that there are peasants who could arrange quick access for messengers through to Budapest. Brandt said he also has friends who can reach Tito.

4. Brandt states his reliable information is such that it is much easier to travel within Germany and outside of Germany to Switzerland than is imagined. He asserts that, with armies and German evacuees on the move constantly, it is constantly possible for groups to slip out of Germany.

5. Brandt is emphatic in his insistence that a deal could have, and can yet be worked out with the Germans. He wishes to return to Hungary and to talk with the German leaders with whom he was conferring--to say that if they will release fifty to a hundred thousand Jews, that as an evidence of their determination to play the game, a meeting could be arranged, probably in Switzerland within three days, and that then they could come to terms. He believes he could have made such a deal, and that it still can be made. He has apparently been informed of the activities of Saly Meyer, who, he claims, is not the man for this type of negotiation; that Meyer is an old man; and that unorthodox methods are needed in dealing with these bandits.

6. I questioned Brandt further regarding the background of his previous activities and negotiations with the German leaders. He states categorically that Eichman had been reaching the "top man", namely, Himmler, who eventually had to contact Hitler; that it was impossible for these men to make any such moves as the kind that were in contemplation without orders from the top. Brandt also insisted that he knew that the Hungarians alone could not make any deal without the Germans, which he interprets as the reason for the failure of release of refugees from Hungary. Brandt wants assistance in being released from Palestine to go to Hungary to continue his proposals. He believes that he can bring out at least fifty thousand Jewish refugees. He would like then to go to Switzerland and asked that he could meet with me or some representative of our Government in Switzerland. He insists that he has connections in Switzerland which will help him to bring out refugees through this area. He asserted that he believes it is necessary now to forget Rumania through Istanbul as an exodus route.

7. The nature of the proposal that Brandt now wishes to make was as follows: That for every week that they will let out X number of Jews that they will be paid X dollars thereafter. He believes such a deal can be made without delay.

-----

It was after some hesitation that I determined to confer with Brandt since he was released and apparently not under British surveillance, in order to secure any additional information that might be of value to the War Refugee Board in its program; also for purposes of the record and confirmation I deemed it desirable to answer any question that may have resulted from the testimony taken with Brandt in my interview, and to determine if any efforts could be made through him or his associates to break the bottleneck in Hungary. While in Istanbul in the last months, there had been several unconfirmed rumors that Brandt had confessed to being a double agent. This was categorically denied by the British Intelligence Officer Colonel Gibson and the release of Brandt by the British demonstrated that he was no longer suspect.

- 3 -

In my conversation with Brandt I was again convinced without reservation of his frankness and integrity; that he was an impassioned young man, ready to risk his life for the sake of his people. His testimony taken in Cairo by me has now been confirmed as having been truthful.

I am not convinced that Brandt can be especially useful at this time since he is a marked man. What impresses me is his zeal and resourcefulness. I am confident now that he represents the leaders of the Hungarian Jewish community; that he has connections in Hungary which could render any possible illicit movement of refugees out of Hungary a feasible operation.

American Legation, Cairo, October 16, 1944.

I. A. Hirschmann

Date: June 22, 1944

Subject: Interview with Joel Brand, Observations and Recommendations.

Acting under your instructions I arrived in Cairo on Wednesday, June 21, 1944, at approximately 5:00 p.m. and repaired at once to the American Legation. When I requested an audience with Minister Tuck I was informed by his secretary that Mr. Doolittle, First Secretary of Legation, had been working during the day on the matter which had brought me from Ankara. Upon presenting the letter from you to Minister Tuck a conference was arranged between the Minister, Mr. Doolittle and myself.

The Minister introduced the subject by asserting that Lord Hoynes, British Minister Resident in the Middle East, had conferred that day with him on the subject under discussion and that Lord Hoynes was acting under instructions from London on the highest levels. He emphasized that any decisions that were to be taken would be centralized by both the British and American Governments in London and that I was being requested by the British Government to proceed at once from Cairo to London.

Here I demurred, asserting that I had instructions from the War Refugee Board, Washington and my superior officer in Turkey, Ambassador Steinhardt to interview Joel Brand at the earliest possible moment and that I had been despatched to Cairo with the express understanding that I would be able to do so. I also stated that I could not accede to the request of the British Government to direct me to proceed thousands of miles to London to interview Brand when Brand was in Cairo at this moment and especially considering the fact that I had come to Cairo for the express purpose of seeing him here.

I informed Mr. Tuck that the British Minister to Turkey, Mr. J. C. Stordale Bennett, had requested me to communicate with a Mr. Hamilton that he had been in communication with Mr. Hamilton that day.

At the conclusion of our conference it was agreed that Mr. Doolittle would impress upon Mr. Hamilton on the following day the necessity of my interview with Joel Brand in Cairo after which I was to return to Ankara to submit my report to Ambassador Steinhardt. Mr. Tuck concluded the conference by stating that it was difficult to move the British once they had developed a program of strategy.

In the

In the meanwhile Mr. Doolittle informed me of the fact that Mr. Joseph Schwartz of the JDC had arrived from Algiers to Cairo and that Schwartz had also requested an interview with Joel Brand, Schwartz having been unaware of my presence in Cairo for that purpose.

At ten o'clock on Thursday, June 22nd, Mr. Doolittle invited me to meet with Joseph Schwartz in the former's office. After disclosing my instructions on the subject of Joel Brand, Schwartz agreed to withdraw from active participation in the matter at this time. In Schwartz's presence Mr. Doolittle informed me that he had discussed the matter with Lord Moyne by telephone that morning and that it was agreed that I was to visit with Lord Moyne at twelve noon, after which arrangements would be made by the British for me to interview Joel Brand.

At the meeting with Lord Moyne there were present, in addition to Lord Moyne, Brigadier R. J. Maunsell, Sir William Croft, First Assistant to Lord Moyne, John Hamilton, Assistant Minister Resident, Mr. Doolittle and myself. Lord Moyne informed me that Shertok had requested of the British Government that he be permitted to proceed at once to London on the subject at hand and Lord Moyne suggested that I prepare to accompany Shertok in order to have the discussions, and possible decisions, centralized in London. I emphasized that I could not make any decision regarding my movements until I had (a) talked with Brand, (b) reported the results of my interview with Brand to Ambassador Steinhardt in Ankara and (c) received instructions for my next steps from Ambassador Steinhardt through Washington.

At the outset of this conference I referred to the interest which was being taken in this matter on the highest level in Washington. I referred to the active interest of Under Secretary of State Stettinius, the interest disclosed by President Roosevelt and the active exploratory efforts towards which I was directed by Ambassador Steinhardt. At the suggestion of Mr. Doolittle I took the occasion to show the letter of President Roosevelt addressed to me to Lord Moyne. I indicated that the War Refugee Board and Ambassador Steinhardt were intent on their desire to explore all the facts with a view to (a) determining the authority from which the offer emanated, (b) possibly "keeping the door open," (c) the remote possibility of saving lives in accordance with the American and British established policy, and (d) the possibility of determining information that might be otherwise helpful. I referred also to the need of keeping the Russians informed.

Lord Moyne asserted that the next steps connected with this proposal could only be taken in London and that the moves would be out of his jurisdiction. He referred to the implications from Brand's interviews conducted by the British Intelligence. He and his associates were clear in indicating that they did not credit Brand with any unworthy motives although there were some slight discrepancies in his stories which they were inclined to believe had sprung from nervousness and apprehension. When the subject of Gross was introduced I maintained that this man was in a different category and that we were not interested in him except for possible additional disclosures which might relate either in our efforts in

behalf of refugees or revelations which might be of value in other aspects of our explorations.

Brigadier Maunsell, who is in charge of intelligence, questioned me on this point and wanted to know what other explorations we had in mind. I referred to the possibilities of other implications in the visit of Brand which might arise from the disclosures and which of course the British Intelligence would be able to ferret out.

It was agreed (1) that I was to meet first with Brigadier Maunsell to be briefed on the background of the British Intelligence investigations to date and the operations of the Gestapo, (2) that I was to meet in a private home by arrangement of Brigadier Maunsell with Mr. Brand, Major Martin Forrest and a stenographer (I suggested the desirability of a transcript), and (3) that I was to meet with Lord Moyne on Friday, June 23 at 11 a.m., (4) I was to return to Ankara to report to Ambassador Steinhardt on June 25.

In view of the emphasis which I had put on the need for returning Brand to Hungary at the first possible moment it was suggested as an alternative that a message could be sent at once through BARLAS in Istanbul to the Hungarians and the Germans referring to "the consideration which is being given the matter". It was determined that this would be decided after my meeting with Brand in the afternoon. Lord Moyne reiterated his fear of the dangers involved in the Germans exposing and exploiting the "offer" and announcing that the Allies had flatly refused by silence and delay. I replied that I thought that we would have to take this chance now until our conclusions had been reached and cleared through Ambassador Steinhardt and London.

At 4:00 P.M. I met Mr. Brand at the private apartment at which there were no present Major Martin Forrest, a British agent whose name was not disclosed as well as Brigadier Maunsell's secretary, Miss Read. Attached as Exhibit A is a fairly verbatim report of the interview. After the interview tea was served and Brand disclosed the following which was not reported in the attached notes:

Brand stated that it was of interest and ironical that the representatives of the Jewish organizations who had been dealing illegally with the Germans had now been asked to act in an official capacity by the Germans; that apparently the Germans respected those who resisted or took action against them.

In reply to my question to Brand: "Did you see any evidence on the part of the German leaders that they were becoming fearful or desperate?" Brand replied: "Yes, decidedly, I see it in their talk and protestations; in the fact that a high German officer tells to the Jew, Brand, 'We need things--go and get them.'" This, Brand said, appeared to him to be a great confession of weakness.

Brand asserted that Eichman represents the "top"; that Eichman has the rank of Minister representing the Government for activities against the Jews. Brand also asserted that Hitler's special representatives had been present at one of the four conferences. They were Wesenmeyer and Winckelman. (The British Intelligence Officer confirmed that these men were Hitler's top representatives.) Brand further asserted that the German Minister for Foreign Affairs was not interested in this activity but that the German military and SS all the way up to the head "are in this thing." Brand stated that Wislezeln is next to Himmler.

OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Brand impressed me as honest, clear, incisive, blunt and completely frank. In my talk with him, which occupied over an hour's time, I could find no shadow of evidence to support the reservations contained in the report of Mr. Rueben B. Resnik to Ambassador Steinhart of June 5th which asserted "I had the impression that he was not sincere and straightforward as other observers thought him to be." My impressions were distinctly the reverse. I do not wish to labor this point except that I believe it to be of utmost importance in evaluating the veracity and informative nature of Brand's disclosures.

In spite of the pressure of the British Intelligence's questioning under which he was operating during the last ten days (the questioning ensued some days for ten hours) he was open, clear, affirmative and high minded. His concern with his own family, his relatives and the possibility of reprisals for others, were he not to be able to return, was genuine and moving, in my opinion. In short, Brand's disclosures are to be accepted in my view as truthful, without reservations.

On the above premises I am of the opinion that we can offer a number of conclusions and possibilities: (1) The proposals were made as a result of four separate interviews by Brand with Eichman and the latter's collaborators. They cannot be considered in the realm of fantasy. They are serious, and we must probe for the point of view on which to explore further. (2) In at least one of the conversations with Eichman there appeared two representatives of the Nazi SS who are said and believed by the British Intelligence to be "high up". It seems that the proposals have the sanction of the Nazi officials from somewhere near the top level. (3) Brand's statement that the proposal connected with ten thousand lorries and other commodities was mentioned in an off-hand way and in effect "pulled out of the hat" by one of the German officers is a clear indication that this is not concrete or to be taken seriously. Immunity or some reference to immunity may be considered seriously as a bargaining point. (4) Brand's explanation of the Nazi's recommendation to send the refugees through Spain seems to justify the contentions already established in other quarters that the Nazis, for various reasons, wish to discourage additions to the population of Palestine and do not wish to offend the Arabs. There may be other reasons for this suggestion regarding Spain as

the proposed refuge, which may have military and political connotations which are self evident. (5) Brand's strong conviction that something tangible could result from a skillful manoeuvre in this situation, impress me.

#### Conjectures from the above:

A. A clique is making a bold and desperate attempt to secure large sums of money for itself or to save their skins; or possibly to pull a deal which would impress the top Nazi officials.

B. Under political warfare it may be a device to separate the three Allied Governments and create a misunderstanding between them.

C. It is remotely possible that the proposals have the sanction of some top authorities who were of the opinion that they might succeed in receiving the money, lorries, commodities, et cetera.

D. It is a bold effort to embarrass the Allies by publishing to the world the fact that a bona fide offer has been made through a representative and responsible Jew and had been postponed and finally denied.

E. On the positive side it is possible that some kind of deal might be executed, if the matter is pursued without delay. Brand indicated rather strongly such a possibility and it was my impression that he would not have left on so perilous a mission unless he could see a door which was open even though it may be a small aperture.

F. It is not outside of the realm of possibility that the Nazi rulers really believe their own propaganda and have considered the Jews a soft spot in the armor of the Allies through whom they could engage the Allies in discussions that begin with the refugee subject and lead to proposals of peace. Lord Moyne does not reject this latter.

#### Recommendations

1. I respectfully suggested to Lord Moyne in my second conference today, June 23, at 11:00 a.m. that a message be transmitted at once which would reach the Hungarians and the Germans. To this he responded that a message had already been drafted and was being sent to BARLAS in Istanbul. I approved the despatch of the attached Exhibit B. I further suggested that Brand, for his peace of mind and for constructive purposes in the keeping up of his morale, be informed immediately that a message had been sent through BARLAS.

2. Lord Moyne in his conversation with me referred to Anthony Eden, the British Foreign Minister's alleged interest in "keeping the door open in this situation". It is indicated that the British will collaborate in pursuing this "open door policy". This should be exploited.

3. That Brand be retained in Cairo. There was some question in the British circles of sending Brand to London. I pressed Lord Moyne and he agreed that Brand was to remain in Cairo. Obviously the nearer he is to Hungary and his eventual destination, the better.
4. That Ambassador Steinhardt invite instructions from Washington with regard to the American representative to be despatched to confer with authorities along with Shertok who has been given permission and high priority to proceed to London June 25 arriving on Wednesday June 28.
5. That Brand be given careful verbal instructions to take back to Hungary at the first possible moment, indicating that consideration is being given the proposals in connection with money and possible immunity; if the Germans, as Brand indicated, were prepared to make the first steps in releasing minorities and Jews this would be received by the Allies as an earnest gesture of their good will and would lead to more conclusive negotiations.
6. That no efforts be made on our part with regard to interrogating Giorgy (Gross). He is in a different category, an agent with a perfidious record. He should be kept outside this situation, as the introduction of his testimony or activities can serve no useful purpose.
7. Plans should be considered for a possible meeting between the Nazi representatives and British and Americans at some neutral point as soon as desirable. Brand should attend this meeting.
8. The suggestion made by Ben Gurion and Shertok to the Palestine High Commissioner, which was transmitted to London by the latter, suggesting a committee of the Inter-Governmental Committee, the International Red Cross and other organizations to sit with German representatives contains dangerous features. I informed Shertok and Lord Moyne that nothing expeditious could come of such a large scale organizational group meeting and suggested that any such conversations should be held in the strictest confidence by highly authorized Governmental representatives in a small circle. Lord Moyne concurred.
9. In this connection it is of utmost importance to avoid the disclosure of any of these negotiations, as publicity would explode the entire matter and result in a boomerang effect. I am informed by Mr. Hamilton that an American and a British newspaperman had already asked about the matter.
10. In our recommendations to Washington we should urge silence in the event of a leak.

- 7 -

Both Lord Moyne and I, at our first meeting, were of the opinion that there was only the remotest possibility of something useful emanating from these explorations. On my second meeting with Lord Moyne today, following my talk yesterday with Brand, and his careful reading of the transcript (Exhibit A) he was along with me genuinely enthusiastic regarding possibilities which might develop provided that this matter was handled with care and skill. He again urged me to proceed to London and I repeated I would have to obtain any instructions from Ambassador Steinhardt. He urged that upon the return of Brand it would be desirable for me to talk with him about his proposed conversations with the Germans in view of the fact that it was felt that I had succeeded in obtaining Brand's confidence.

Lord Moyne announced that the transcript of my interview would be established as the basic and accepted report on the Brand case. He asserted that new information had been disclosed in this interview which had heretofore been unknown to the British Intelligence.

Respectfully submitted:

I. A. Hirschmann  
Special Attache to  
Ambassador Steinhardt.

Enclosures:

- 1 - Exhibit A: Text of Interview between Mr. I. A. Hirschmann and Mr. Joel Brandt.
- 2 - Exhibit B: Telegram from Shertok to BARLAS.
- 3 - Exhibit C: Memorandum concerning telegram from the High Commissioner of Palestine to London.
- 4 - Exhibit D: Copies of telegrams left with Mr. I. A. Hirschmann by Shertok:

- (1) Shertok to N. Goldmann.
- (2) Shertok to Dr. Weizman.
- (3) Shertok to Russell.

APPENDIX

Upon returning to the Legation on Saturday, June 24 following the return of the plane en route from Cairo to Adana due to mechanical difficulties I was handed your telegram of June 22. Mr. Doolittle suggested that we transmit the information contained therein to the British which was done through Mr. Kirk of the British Intelligence. It was suggested that efforts be made to question Brand regarding Shroder, whose name was not mentioned in Brand's interview with me but who was mentioned by Brand frequently in testimony to the British Intelligence.

Mr. Hamilton visited Mr. Doolittle and me at the Legation at 5:00 P.m. He requested that in view of my enforced inactivity in Cairo and the new possible developments contained in your telegram from BARLAS of June 22 that Lord Moyne desired a further conference to which I assented.

I met with Lord Moyne at his office at 5:45 p.m. Also in attendance were Mr. Hamilton, Colonel Kirk and Sir William Croft. Lord Moyne informed me that he had received a telegram from London authorizing the telegram from Shroder to BARLAS, Exhibit B. The situation was then explored further in view of the above mentioned telegram from BARLAS. Shroder's real name, it appears, is Laurifer. Laurifer is apparently the leading Gestapo agent in Hungary. I reiterated my view that if it was agreed to send Brand to Hungary it should be done without unnecessary delay and that Brand be deported with no other information in which he would (a) explain that no mutations or material can be considered as part of any discussions, (b) present nothing (c) ask the Kails to make the first step in easing persecutions and deportations, (d) following the above he could return and suggest discussions concerning money or immunity.

To this Lord Moyne replied that he was strongly of the opinion that the British Government would not consent to the offer of money. I emphasized that such money would be put in a block account and not be used in connection with the war but for individuals. On this point he was somewhat open-minded.

Lord Moyne requested if he might impart my views above stated telegraphically to London. Whereupon I requested that he would not do so as they represented only my personal views and not the Ambassador's nor the Government's. I agreed to recommend to Ambassador Steinhardt that the British Ambassador in Ankara be informed of our recommendations to be transmitted to Lord Moyne.

INTERROGATION OF MR. JOEL BRANDT BY MR. IRA HIRSCHMANN.

22 June 44

- H. I understand you speak English.
- B. Not very well.
- H. I am delighted to have the opportunity of speaking to you, because I hope that I can be helpful to you - as you know I come from America.
- B. Yes, I heard that just now.
- H. *tel.* My only reason for being here is to try to be helpful in the refugee situation - you understand.
- B. ~~You are not Mr. HIRSCHMAN are you.~~
- H. ~~No - I wanted to talk with you to see if there was not some way that we could be helpful.~~
- B. ~~If there was something you could do for me I should be very pleased. -~~
- H. Because you have had rather a difficult time -
- B. I have had a very difficult time; everyone has been very polite but it is as though I have been put in a prison - but I can understand it is necessary to keep me away from other people - I can quite understand it.
- H. My impression is that you have nothing to fear - you have done a great deal of very valuable philanthropic work in Hungary for many years.
- B. ~~I have done what it was possible to do.~~
- H. ~~You have a reputation for being very helpful.~~
- B. I have done what I could do - it was not easy.
- H. I am sure it was not easy and it is to your credit that you are interested in doing such things. Are conditions in Hungary very bad?
- B. Very bad, yes very bad.
- H. Could you tell me something about them.
- B. Well, what has been done in Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia and Poland in years has been done in Hungary in a few weeks' time - it all came about very quickly, all the laws and oppressions against the Jews came in Hungary in a very short time.

- H. Are the women and children being persecuted as well as the men.
- B. No difference between women and children and men - though children under six years do not have to wear the Ghetto star.
- H. Why did you leave Hungary?
- B. Because I had been sent to come and try to make -
- H. Who sent you??
- B. Two different sources sent me, on the one side the Germans to make a bargain, and on the other side the Jews selected me to be their emissary.
- H. It seems that the Germans made arrangements with the Jewish leaders -
- B. I was taken on first by <sup>to</sup> the Jewish leaders, who <sup>were having discussions</sup> ~~had debates~~ with the Germans that ~~I should~~ keep up the contact between the official German authorities and the Jewish representatives; and if it came out that somebody should be allowed to go and try to come to some arrangement about the persecution of Jews, I should be picked by the Jews as the person to go.
- H. What were the names of the Jewish representatives?
- B. STERN, Philip von FREUDIGER - President of the orthodox Jews - KOMOLY.
- H. You had been active in these organizations for a number of years - with the Zionist movement?
- B. Yes, I was active in the Zionist movement for many years and I have been active in general Jewish charities.
- H. You were a business man?
- B. Yes.
- H. The Germans also picked you -
- B. Yes, because I had been the negotiating link between -
- H. Did you know many of these German leaders?
- B. No -- I did know some of them by name, but I did not know them well.
- H. Who are the German leaders?
- B. EICHMANN, who is in Hungary now - he marched in with the German troops.
- H. Who are some of the other leaders?

- B. KLAGES, KRUMBY, Willi von WISLIZENI. WISLIZENI started to make some negotiations with our friends -
- H. What friends?
- B. Our Jewish friends - about a year ago.
- H. What kind of negotiations?
- B. The same kind as the one I have been doing now, for the Jews in Bratislava. I spoke about these negotiations - I tried this already about a year ago.
- H. Didn't you see any danger in dealing with these people?
- B. I did, but there was no other way outside the illegal way which we were already doing to try to help these people.
- H. So you decided to try.
- B. I did, yes.
- H. What kind of relations did you have with ~~RECHNER~~ <sup>Sichmann</sup> and his party?
- B. ~~RECHNER~~ - I spoke to him in his office, I went at his invitation - or rather at his order!
- H. Who suggested this idea that you should come here - where was it suggested?
- B. EICHMANN called me, that was the first time I was speaking to him and there he suggested that I should go and he would give an offer -
- H. Who suggested the idea of the offer?
- B. The idea of making some arrangement with the Germans - we tried to do the same type of thing - ~~RECHNER~~ did - about a year ago.  
(EICHMANN)
- H. What kind of offer was that - money?
- B. Money. We only offered money.
- H. What kind of offer did you bring from EICHMANN - a written offer?
- B. I did not have a clear offer - he only told me some kind of goods and money which I should bring. He told me that he would be willing to set the Jews free.
- H. <sup>W</sup> Was there any specific offer?
- B. Nothing specific. He did not specify that I should bring any money.

- H. How would you know what to say?
- B. He said I would find out for myself - he did not want to commit himself.
- H. Did he commit himself on things or money?
- B. Both.
- H. What did he suggest to you that he wanted?
- B. The main thing was trucks.
- H. How many?
- B. He once said ten thousand, but -
- H. What else?
- B. He only spoke about trucks. Another gentleman, I did not know his name, who was present - I believe his name was BRISMEYER (?), said once I should ask also for coffee, chocolate and tea and soap. And EICHMANN once mentioned money - dollars, Swiss francs and some South American money.
- H. You felt that you had some basis for an offer to discuss in Istanbul.
- B. Yes, I had for this reason some basis, because a year ago they had already fixed this up on a basis of two million dollars. When I started the negotiations I did not speak with EICHMANN, I spoke with WISLIZENI and I also suggested that this old offer should be accepted now.
- H. What was the old offer -
- B. In Slovakia, Bratislava - we had the same difficulties as we have now. The offer was two million dollars for stopping deportation and punishment for those Jews who are still living in Czechoslovakia and Poland. For my part negotiations were different. No deportation, no concentration and allowing to come to Palestine - and no shooting.
- H. What happened to the original negotiations?
- B. They were accepted on paper but not carried through - neither from them nor from us. For our part because we did not pay - we did not get any amount which we could pay. In Slovakia there are only sixty or eighty thousand Jews, in Hungary there are one million Jews; we wanted to make negotiations not only for the Hungarian Jews, we wanted to make negotiations for all Jews. The original negotiation was only from Slovakia. WISLIZENI -

- H. He now wanted to make a plan for all the Jews?
- B. Yes, not only the Hungarian Jews.
- H. Where did you expect to get this money or these trucks?
- B. The trucks I did not know I would be able to get, but I thought I must try and get them from the English and American governments. The money I thought I would be able to get from the Jewish organizations.
- H. How much money did you have in mind?
- B. I thought that I could get about one million dollars, in payment, not with me but to my credit, somewhere, and that I should be able to open negotiations and it would not be necessary for me to go back with money or with goods because I had the promise from EIGHSMANN that it would be all right if the offer was accepted and I could make some bargain with them; he agreed before I went away that he would make the first move, that he would let out at first a certain number, ten, twenty, fifty thousand Jews, and for this reason alone it would have been a great thing -
- H. That gave you confidence. Did you have confidence in his word?
- B. When he is making the first move -
- H. Did you have confidence that he would keep his word with you?
- B. I did not have the right to question my own conscience. There is no other way besides legal means in which we can help - we cannot wait for that invasion of Budapest -
- H. Then it was a matter of conscience with you, not a matter of confidence - is that correct?
- B. No - there is only one chance, perhaps it is no good, but there is no other chance.
- H. What is your opinion of the chances of this working?
- B. My opinion is that they would keep their word.
- H. Why?
- B. First of all because they need things -
- H. How do you know?
- B. When I left Hungary, I knew that they were needing all kinds of things.
- H. Things or money.

- B. At first I thought, I know they need things. I know from years of work that everyone of them can be bought. I know this from years of work - I am not saying that I have bought EICHMANN or WISLIZENI. In my work very many of them have been bought and I do believe that criminals of such a low sort as these men are always receptive to offers of money. It is natural that people who do such terrible things will not have clean hands where money is concerned, either.
- H. You refer to some of these people having been bought before - in what connections?
- B. Not these people particularly, but German officials, SS and Nazi officials. We had our main work before the Germans came in - bringing men from Poland and from other countries illegally to Hungary.
- H. I would like your opinion Mr. BRANDT on what you think will happen to this money if such money were available - I do not know if it in fact would be, I do not know anything about it - but supposing something should happen and money were available.
- B. Believing that it is done on a very large scale, somebody must go to some official places, I am certain many men will be there who will settle personally and make it their own business.
- H. Do you mean high-up sources?
- B. I have the opinion that there are very many different cliques within the Nazi movement and that there are certain circles who want to make money or more business for themselves or their circle and that they will not get punished or anything like that. I can imagine them saying quite brutally, well you had eight million Jews, we have killed more than six million, we will give you the rest if you do not punish us for killing the others.
- H. How did Mr. GIORGY come into this matter?
- B. Mr. GROSS is his real name. He brought letters from our friends in Istanbul and from us for a year and a half - two years about - that is where I met him. I knew him to be an official of the Hungarian General Staff at the time when the Hungarians' politics were considered to be fairly favourable to the Allies. Though I think he went over to the Germans he had nothing to do with this except that he came with me.
- H. I wonder how you and he got together.
- B. He was bringing letters from Turkey for us for the last year and a half.
- H. Who was he working for really?
- B. I do not understand you - he was working for money.
- H. Are you associated with him this affair of yours?

- B. He has nothing to do with this affair - he says there is some other reason why he has come here, at least I wanted to assume it this way. It is possible that the Germans have sent him for this reason too - but not to my knowledge. He was not sent by the Jews.
- H. He was not working in collaboration with you in this matter?
- B. No. He had nothing to do with my mission, and I had nothing to do with his.
- H. It seems that GEORGY said that you had a paper to show with an actual offer. What is this paper, where is it?
- B. The paper is with me.
- H. No - did you leave it in Istanbul?
- B. What kind of paper - to bring back or did I bring it here - it is not true. I only remember a list of goods which they are needing. I did not bring a written offer for you from them. I remember a list of things they are needing -
- H. Who wrote this paper?
- B. I got it from Mr. SCHROEDER.
- H. Where is it?
- B. When I reached Istanbul I gave it in the first instance to Mr. BARLAS - he has it. It is not an important thing - only a list of things.
- H. I know - I only mentioned it offhand. What do you expect to happen now?
- B. Nothing good. I am very much afraid of it.
- H. Aren't you optimistic?
- B. I have had to leave my wife and family - I am very much afraid - it is not easy to talk about the things they are capable of doing - the Germans. They are my kids and my wife and my mother and I am getting a little nervous -
- H. What is making you nervous -
- B. I cannot speak about these things.
- H. You mean that if this does not work out -
- B. Yes, it is already more than five weeks since I left Germany.
- H. Did they say anything to you about when they expected you to return, the Germans?

- B. No. They said I could take my time if I saw that I had possibilities of success.
- H. Then you should not be certain. ?
- B. You asked me ten minutes ago if I believed everything they said. I know that I have had no contact with my wife for three or four weeks and I know what they are capable of doing.
- H. You are afraid they will do something because you are delayed?
- B. Very much afraid that they will. They always take their revenge on others. I beg your pardon for getting nervous. I know what they are like. We had problems to solve. If we did steal one man away from a camp - if one man got away they would shoot ten or twenty or fifty. We had many discussions about it, whether we should try to stop getting men away. We decided that we should go on, because we knew that they were shooting and killing them anyway.
- H. Were the Germans definite in saying that they would release these people through Spain?
- B. Yes...there are things which I know through years of work, and other things which I am only guessing, and I believe that they want to do something legal. I think perhaps they want to do some big propaganda. To say that they wanted to set the Jews free and the Allies did not want it, and so there was no other way but for them to kill them off. Understand?
- H. Yes, Now what about Spain?
- B. That is one of the reasons. It is very hard to get people over to Germany when there is an invasion going on. The mass of the Jews have to go to Spain. That is one of the reasons why I say that they are making a bargain which it would be very hard for us to fulfil, and they will have in their propaganda one more reason for killing the Jews: "Well we wanted to give you this and you did not want to take it".
- H. They might do that anyhow.
- B. There is one other reason for Spain. That is that of the Arab question - they do not want to have the Arabs against them if they sent Jews to Palestine. They did mention that to me.
- H. Did they mention any connection with Spain?
- B. Not in connection with Spain but in connection with an argument against Palestine.
- H. How often did you see EICHMANN?

- B. I saw him four times in his office. The other officers I saw very many times.
- H. I have just one or two more questions. If you were in a position now to ask and to get what you wanted to make this a successful venture, what would you ask?
- B. Nothing. I only ask permission to offer, not to give, and I would ask my Jewish authorities for money for the Jews in Hungary and in Poland to help them there. But I would not ask anything much from the Germans. I would go back and ask RICHMANN, will you release, as you said once, a hundred men for one truck, send the first transport to Spain; then you would get these things. That would be logical.
- H. Do you think that you could get what you want with money without any of these trucks or goods?
- B. I do not know. Perhaps I can -
- H. And that some suggestion of the possibility of this might secure immunity?
- B. Immunity I have got for myself.
- H. I do not want you to think that these things could be done, I have no reason to know about it - I do not want you to have any false hopes. What do you think would be the best thing to do?
- B. The best thing I think would be that one, two or three officers from Hungary should come to a neutral country, say Spain; or Turkey or Switzerland, and English and American people, and myself too, and we should try to come to some sort of bargain. That is my recommendation.
- H. You feel that if you went back with such a recommendation -
- B. I believe I could stop persecutions - the worst persecutions - that are going on at once.
- H. Are these persecutions still going on?
- B. I am sorry to say that they were going on.
- H. What number of people have been deported?
- B. Until the week I went away, the week I went away they started deporting about 12,000 every day.
- H. Where?
- B. Kaschau, Klausenburg, Munkacs, Hust.
- H. Where they in camps.

- B. They were concentrated in places in such terrible conditions that they have never been known before.
- H. What kind of transportation - trucks?
- B. No, railway lorries, 60 and 80 men in a lorry, the lorry sealed down.
- H. Did any die on the way?
- B. I am certain of it.
- H. Where were they taken to?
- B. Auschwitz and Birkenau.
- H. What other Germans were implicated?
- B. Some of the highest representatives of the German military command as well as EICHMANN - the military and the SS are in this thing. WISLIZENI is a near relative of HIMMLER's.
- H. Is there any evidence of desperation amongst them?
- B. There is an indication of some change of attitude.
- H. Does persecution of other minorities go on besides the Jews?
- B. Yes - they have persecuted and have arrested all the Socialist leaders and little political leaders. The Socialist and the Liberals are feeling it as much as we are feeling it and being sent into concentration camps. They are not concentrating only on the Jews. Prisoners-of-war in Hungary who had run away from Germany, English, French prisoners-of-war have been treated pretty well. They have only to register and are allowed to live quite freely.
- H. If you were detained here for a long time - though I have no reason to think that you would be - what do you think would happen?
- B. I am afraid that in the first place my family will get persecuted in the most terrible way. Secondly, my friends will get punished. Thirdly, I fear that they will have executions and deportations. If for some reason or other I personally should not be allowed to be sent back, then at least somebody else should be sent.
- H. You think it would be necessary to send someone, or could a message be sent?
- B. Perhaps a message on the radio or in a letter - it is terrible for me with my family there - they will take it that I have run away.
- H. Your family will?
- B. No, my family know - my wife knows pretty well what I am doing.

EXHIBIT "B"

C O P Y

TO: BARLAS ISTANBUL  
FROM: SHERTOK JERUSALEM

Am summoned to London on high Government priority (.)  
HIRSCHMANN may follow (.) Meanwhile BRANDT is detained  
by British authorities in MIDDLE EAST (.)

EXHIBIT "C"

COPY

NOTE

During his conversation with the High Commissioner for Palestine, subsequent to his interview with Brandt at Aleppo, Mr. Shertok, after reporting his talk, stressed the vital need to explore every avenue to help these Jews in Hungary. He thought that it was most important to arrange a meeting with German representatives, it being understood that political discussions were completely barred. He suggested that these discussions might take place on the Allied side thro' the head of the refugee organization or the Red Cross authorities, or the U. S. A. War Refugee Board.

EXHIBIT "D"  
(1)

19.6.1944

Copy

For Nahum Goldmann from Shertok

You have probably been informed by British Embassy of Nazi offer evacuate remnants European Jewry primarily from Hungary. Message was brought by Joel Brandt trusted Hungarian Zionist who was sent on Wehrmacht plane to Istanbul May 19th, view returning with reply within two three weeks. Ostensibly offer was exchange Jews for goods specified kinds quantities. Evacuees to proceed Spain. First substantial transport to be sent out without consideration on receipt favourable reply regarding whole scheme. Exchange conditions sounded fantastic but we decided explore. Informed immediately High Commissioner who reported fully London with request inform Washington and you. High Commissioner did everything help me proceed Turkey view interviewing Brandt. Visa difficulties delayed my departure. Eventually met Brandt Aleppo. Originally it was agreed by British authorities Istanbul Jerusalem that Brandt should return Turkey view proceeding thence Hungary but higher quarters ordered his transportation Cairo where he is detained. Our friends Budapest now informing Istanbul unless Brandt returns immediately everything will be lost. Executives conclusions after my report are that though exchange proposition may be more eyewash and possibility ulterior motives must be assumed it is not improbable that even preliminary negotiations might result in salvation substantial number. We are informed Eden in conversation with Weizmann agreed policy should be gain time avoid other side getting impression Allies are slamming door refusing even consider matter. Whilst appreciating helpfulness this attitude we consider more is warranted. Have proposed steps should immediately be taken view exploring possibility meeting with German representatives say in Lisbon or Madrid to discuss rescue Jews urging same time immediate discontinuation deportations and slaughter pending meeting. Body appearing behalf Allies might be intergovernmental Refugee Committee or War Refugee Board or Red Cross or any other suitable agency. Have also urged Brandt's immediate return to report that message has been delivered is under active consideration. Also asked for urgent priority for me to fly London. Please act accordingly.

EXHIBIT "D"

(2)

19.6.1944

Following for Dr. Weismann from Shertok

According text telegram from friends in Budapest transmitted by Istanbul unless Brandt and other person who accompanied him to Istanbul return to Hungary immediately everything will be lost. Both Brandt and other person are now in Cairo. We hold no brief for tother person and must leave his fate to be decided by competent British authorities. But Brandt came as emissary remnant European Jewry who in interests its rescue accepted mission from enemies on clear understanding that he return with reply. Although realising that his return alone and with definite answer may cause his death immediately he is desparately anxious carry out bargain and return in hope that his report about delivery message and its consideration in high quarters will help gain time and prevent precipitation calamity. We consider his return most imperative if slightest chance rescue is to be preserved. We regard this as first indispensable step giving effect to line agreed by Mr. Eden of gaining time and not closing door. For same reason we consider it equally essential that some immediate indication be given to other side of readiness negotiate regarding rescue Jews urging same time immediate discontinuation deportations and slaughter pending meeting. Please do utmost regarding both matters also about my quickest return London as we all believe my first hand contact with Brandt will help clarify matters more than any telegraphic report. Cable.

EXHIBIT "D"

107

15.6.1944

C O P Y

NLE LINTON 77 Greatrussell London

208 Waited Aleppo four days for authority see friend who arrived  
Wednesday 7/8 stop Interviewed him Sunday six hours found him  
one hundred percent reliable was deeply impressed by his purity  
character spirit selfsacrifice factual exactness soberness stop  
Came conclusion active steps now imperative view exploring  
possibility achieving practical results stop After interview  
friend transported Cairo myself returned Jerusalem Tuesday night  
reported Executive Wednesday saw High Commissioner with Bengurion  
today stop High Commissioner cabling London we asked him for  
transmission Weismann gist our evaluation and proposals including  
first immediate facilities for my flying London second arrange-  
ments for friends return home stop You will learn our main proposal  
regarding line action from Colonial or Foreign stop High Commissioner  
informed us regarding Charles interview stop Agreed line of keeping  
door open makes friends return absolutely imperative please do utmost  
your part expedite my journey stop Inform Nahum

Shertok

(D)  
(Cover letter)

C O P Y

TELEGRAM SENT

To: Department of State

Date: June 22, 5 p.m. 1944

No. 1746

Charge: Legation

P A R A P H R A S E

MOST IMMEDIATE - US URGENT

REPEATED TO ANKARA.

Ira Hirschmann of War Refugee Board was presented today by the Legation to Lord Moyne, British Minister Resident through whom at the request of Steinhardt arrangements were made to interview Joel Brandt. In regard to the same matter Shertok of the Jewish Agency arrived Cairo today also en route London. Hirschmann acting on instructions from Steinhardt feels that it is essential to return to Ankara first in spite of Lord Moyne's suggestion that Hirschmann should also proceed to London, but he was willing to go there at a future date if necessary.

It was pointed out by Lord Moyne that London was place where complete coordination could be most quickly obtained as any decisions in this matter are for highest levels.

The twenty-fourth is the date arranged for Hirschmann's return to Ankara.

TUCK

HAD:lw

THE FOREIGN SERVICE  
OF THE  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

AMERICAN EMBASSY

Ankara -- July 3, 1944.

Dear Mr. Pehle:

In pursuance of instructions from Ambassador Steinhardt, on June 21st I left Ankara for Cairo for the express purpose of interviewing Joel Brandt following the instructions you gave me in Washington.

Enclosed is the report which I submitted to Ambassador Steinhardt upon my return from Cairo to Ankara on June 25th.

At that time I was informed by Ambassador Steinhardt of the Department's telegram No. 557, of June 21st, to take no further action in the matter pending further instructions. We are taking no further steps whatever in this matter unless and until we receive further instructions from you. May I add that I consider it of utmost importance that Brandt be returned to Hungary without delay.

With kind personal regards,

Cordially yours,

/s/ I. A. Hirschmann,

I. A. HIRSCHMANN,  
Special Attache.

Mr. John W. Pehle,  
Executive Director,  
War Refugee Board,  
Treasury Building,  
Washington, D. C.

Warren has  
copy

JWF