Cooperation with Other Governments: United Nations: Netherlands Govt. in Exile
MEMORANDUM

Re: Jewish Refugees in the Netherlands

Mr. McCormick of the Red Cross recently indicated that the Red Cross has from time to time received cables from individuals in the Netherlands directed to individuals in the United States. Apparently the senders of the cables have been Jewish refugees and their messages have requested that their friends in the United States use all efforts to have their names placed on an exchange list and be given entry permits for Palestine. Some of the documents shown to us by McCormick indicate that the matter has been taken up by persons receiving such messages with the British Embassy in Washington. In one case the British advised the person making the inquiry that there was an arrangement whereby Palestine entry permits were granted to persons in occupied countries. The British stated that this matter was being handled for them by the Swiss.

I spoke with both Mr. Leavitt and Mr. Bergson regarding this matter with a view to getting such information as would enable us to perhaps take up the matter on an over-all basis with the British.

Mr. Bergson was not acquainted with this particular matter and seemed to feel that it was of relatively slight importance. He referred to his present effort to get the British to grant large scale allotments of Palestine permits, indicating that in his opinion this was much more important. He agreed, however, to give me any information he could get regarding this particular problem.

Mr. Leavitt was acquainted with the matter and gave me the following information:

1. About a year ago the British, through the Swiss, made an effort to get word to Jewish refugees in occupied countries that if they escaped to Switzerland they would be given entry permits to Palestine. At that time a small list was made up, principally consisting of certain important people known to be in the Netherlands and other occupied countries. The basis for this action was the indication at that time that the Germans were not deporting from camps Jewish refugees known to have permission to enter Palestine. The Germans were apparently doing this on the theory that they might wish to exchange such persons for Germans interned in Palestine.

2. The private organization principally interested in this matter has been the Jewish agency in Palestine. Various private organizations in the United States, including the J.D.O., have from time to time received requests that certain persons be added to the list and have taken the necessary steps to
have this action carried out. The list, however, still remains very small.

3. The most recent information that Leavitt has seemed to indicate that this procedure is apparently no longer completely effective for preventing deportations, since, according to Leavitt, they have received word of the deportation of certain people known to be on the list and to whom Palestine entry permits are available.
My dear Mr. Ambassador:

I wish to acknowledge and thank you for your letter of December 27, 1944, (No. 8702) expressing the appreciation of the Netherlands Government for the work the War Refugee Board is doing in the interest of Netherlands nationals in Germany.

Very truly yours,

(Signed) J. W. Pehle

J. W. Pehle
Executive Director

His Excellency,
The Netherlands Ambassador,
Netherlands Embassy,
Washington, 9, D. C.
Dear Mr. Pehle:

Through the courtesy of the War Refugee Board I have been able to keep my Government informed concerning the various activities on behalf of Jewish Netherlanders undertaken by the United States Government through the War Refugee Board.

I was particularly gratified to be able to inform my Government that thanks to your continuous efforts, it has finally become possible to send food relief parcels to persons in concentration camps of which already 2,800 have been delivered to Netherlands citizens. My Government has requested me to express its sincere appreciation for the valuable work which the War Refugee Board is doing for Netherlands nationals in Germany.

The Netherlands Government has taken cognizance of the expenditures made on behalf of Netherlands citizens by your organization and will be glad to contribute to this work as much as it is able to do.

Yours very truly,

For the Ambassador

Minister Plenipotentiary

Mr. J.W. Pehle
Acting Executive Director
Executive Office of the President
War Refugee Board
Washington 25, D.C.
December 28, 1944

MEMORANDUM FOR THE FILES

The information contained in the attached informal letter received from H. N. Boom of the Netherlands Embassy has been discussed with the JDO and the Vazd Bahatsala Emergency Committee. Neither organization is involved in a plan such as that set forth in the letter.

[Signature]

P. Hodel
Dear Miss Rodell:

Referring to our discussion of yesterday I beg to inform you of the gist of the information which I received from a reliable informant who has not permitted me to use his name:

The "Joint", the World Jewish Congress and the Wead Hatsalah are planning an exchange of 150,000 Jews against $30,000,000. - to be deposited for the account of the Germans in Switzerland in the form of Swiss Francs. The money would be procured by the above three organizations. As proof that this project is not fantastic, they quote the fact that 1350 Hungarian Jews who would be deported to Poland arrived in St. Gallen, Switzerland on Sunday, December 10, 1944. It is not stated how much was paid for the liberation of these Jews. This plan is developed by representatives in Switzerland of the above groups in the greatest secrecy with money which various wealthy Jews have given.

I trust that you will consider the above information which reached me from a private source as entirely unofficial and that you will not use my name or that of the Embassy if you decide to make investigations.

Sincerely yours,

H.N. Boon

Miss P. Rodell
Special Assistant to the Director
War Refugee Board
Main Treasury Bldg.
Washington, DC
subject: Present position of
Netherlands victims
of Nazi persecution
and suggestions for
action to facilitate
rescue.

The Honorable
The Secretary of State,
Washington.

Mr.:

Referring to the Department's instruction No. 934, January 26, 5 p.m., regarding the establishment of the
Netherlands Refugee Board and the general policy in the President's
Executive Order of January 22 as to action for the rescue
and relief of the Jews of Europe and other victims of
enemy persecution, and referring also to our telegram
No. 36, Poland Series, of March 1 summarizing results of
conversations with officials of the Governments to which
this letter is accredited, I have the honor to report
the substance of a conversation with Dr. W. Funder, who
is head of the bureau of postwar problems in the
Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and who was one
of the Netherlands representatives on the Technical
Advisory Committee on Displaced Persons of the Interallied
Committee on Postwar Requirements.

Dr. Funder said that the Dutch authorities concerned
with problems of refugees and displaced persons were in
agreement with the policy of the President's Executive
Order and would be glad to support any action which might
be initiated by the Netherlands Refugee Board. He indicated some
concern as to possible duplication of activities in the
refugee field by the various national and international
organizations, but asked that this be regarded as an "off
the record" expression of opinion. He went on to observe
that so far as avoidance of duplication of effort was
concerned, one of the most useful things would be some
arrangement between the various Jewish relief agencies
for central coordination of their activities, perhaps
through one central world agency. At present, he said,
it sometimes happens that four or five different agencies
start activities on behalf of one individual refugee, some
of which conflict with each other with resulting confusion
and delay.

Dr. Funder stated that of the 130,000 Jews originally
resident in Holland about 110,000 have been deported to
Germany and that there are now only about 8,000 Jews.

Respectfully,
recognized as such, still live in Holland. The remaining 30,000 have just dropped out of sight. Some may have found refuge in France or made their way through to Switzerland, but most of them are probably still living in Holland in connivance with the help of the non-Jewish population.

While a number of engineers and other people with special qualifications have escaped to Switzerland, where they have been well treated and, in a great many cases, given employment, wherever Dutch nationals succeeded in reaching neutral or allied countries, Dr. Haender states adequate assistance is provided for them by the Dutch Government: clothing, food, shelter and pocket money. There possible transfer to places where they can join the armed forces of the Netherlands Government in arms, and in some cases refugees who are not fit for military service are enabled to go to the Dutch West Indies.

With particular reference to Jewish victims, Dr. Haender said that those Jews in Holland who had been provided with a "Elisabeth Certificate" are in a relatively better position than other Jews, since the possession of such a certificate may assist the holder to avoid being sent to a concentration camp. He thought therefore that it would be helpful if it were possible to provide more of these certificates. Likewise, it would assist in keeping some Jews out of the concentration camps if more passports to South American countries could be provided.

Dr. Haender raised the question as to whether there might not be some means of providing more air transport from certain neutral countries, particularly Sweden. He thought that if people in Holland, who are in danger, knew that an escape to Sweden or Switzerland they would be able to go on from these countries and join more actively in the war effort, more of them might endeavor to escape.

Discussing the question as to whether any instances were known where refugees have been turned back at the borders of neutral countries, Dr. Haender said that some instances were known to the Dutch authorities, for example, Switzerland, but for the most part he felt that neutral countries, while they have not actively discouraged escape across their borders, have not put any special obstacles in the way.

Respectfully yours,

Rudolf H. Sonnenfeld
Chargé d'Affaires as Interim

Original and holograph to the Department.
MEMORANDUM FOR THE FILES  
February 24, 1944

No: Jewish Refugees in Dutch Concentration Camps Possessing Palestinian Permits and Rumor Concerning Exchange of Dutch Jews for German Internes.

(Information taken from the censorship files of the Visa Division in the State Department)

The American Emergency Committee for Zionist Affairs of New York City cabled the Jewish Agency in Palestine on October 12, 1943 that a report in the New York Times indicated that the German Government is prepared to release a number of Dutch Jews for immigration into Palestine in exchange for German internees. The Committee requested information concerning this report (Station No. NYC 122,012-B).

A reply dated dated November 11, 1943 from Gerard Riegner to Leon Kubowski Arieh Tartakower (NYC 237069-B) states that of the remaining Dutch Jews in the Westerbach concentration camp, 900 have been exempted from deportation because they are in possession of numbered Palestinian immigration certificates. At the request of the Jewish Agency a list of these prospective immigrants was transmitted by the British Government to the German Government, which is treating the Jews on this list as candidates for eventual immigration.

In reply to the specific question relating to the rumored exchange of Netherland Jews for German internees, Riegner states that at present: "** no such negotiations taking place one reason being lack of German subjects for exchange."
MEMORANDUM FOR THE FILES

February 24, 1944

Re: Jewish Refugees in Dutch Concentration Camps Possessing Palestinian Permits and
Letter Concerning Exchange of Dutch Jews for German Internees.

(Information taken from the censorship files of the Visa Division in the State Department)

The American Emergency Committee for Jewish Affairs of New York City cabled the Jewish Agency in Palestine on October 12, 1943 that a report in the New York Times indicated that the German Government is prepared to release a number of Dutch Jews for immigration into Palestine in exchange for German internees. The Committee requested information concerning this report (Station No. NYT 122, GIO-3).

A reply dated dated November 12, 1943 from Gerard Biegner to Leon Kuboczki Arizh Kaufman (NIT 217036-3) states that of the remaining Dutch Jews in the Westerbach concentration camp, 900 have been exempted from deportation because they are in possession of numbered Palestinian immigration certificates. At the request of the Jewish Agency a list of these prospective immigrants was transmitted by the British Government to the German Government, which is treating the Jews on this list as candidates for eventual immigration.

In reply to the specific question relating to the renewed exchange of Netherlands Jews for German internees, Biegner stated that at present: "as long as such negotiations take place one reason being lack of German subjects for exchange."

WM 2/24/44
January 26, 1944

MEMORANDUM

Exchange of Internes (Material obtained from file in Visa Division, State Department)

I. Dutch-German Exchange

1. Congressman Sol Bloom sent a newspaper clipping to Long on November 24, 1943, which reported that the Hebrew Shelter and Aid Society had received information that the Germans proposed to release a number of Dutch Jews for immigration to Palestine in exchange for a corresponding number of Germans now interned in Palestine. This information was supposed to have been received from relatives in Spain, Switzerland, and Portugal. The report stated that the German offer had been conveyed to the Jewish Agency in Palestine with a request to suggest the names of refugees who would be included in the exchange list.

2. On November 24, Long wrote to Bloom that this Government was asking the British Government about the proposal.

3. A letter of November 26, from W. G. Hayter, of the British Embassy, to Brandt states that the foreign office has heard that there is a Palestinian-German exchange scheme which involves repatriation of Palestinian residents now in occupied Europe and Nazi Germans now in Palestine, by arrangement with the Swiss Government. Hayter stated that he was wiring the foreign office for details.

4. On January 11, 1944, Hayter reported that London had stated that the above newspaper rumour was a distorted version of a scheme to exchange Dutch Jews in Holland for German nationals under Dutch control. This plan proved to be impossible because the Dutch wish to reserve the Germans under their control for other exchange purposes.

5. On January 27, the Dutch Ambassador in Sweden informed the Department that the only exchange presently envisaged by the Netherlands Government is a proposed exchange of 4 Jews in the Netherlands against an equal number of German nationals at present under the control of the Netherlands government. (Copy of the Dutch Ambassador's note is attached hereto.)
II. Exchange of Polish Rabbis in Shanghai

On October 4, 1943, a conference was held between Rabbi Goldman, Rabbi Kalmanowitz, and Mr. Tress, of Agudath Youth Council, and Mr. Long respecting the evacuation of 464 Polish rabbis in Shanghai by an exchange with the Japs. Mr. Long expressed deep interest in the case but stated that it would be most difficult to justify the inclusion of non-Americans in an exchange passenger list if they displaced American citizens who would thereby be forced to remain in Far Eastern concentration camps. (Copy of memorandum of conversation is attached hereto.)
The Netherlands Ambassador presents his compliments to the Honorable the Secretary of State and, referring to Mr. Hull's note of January 24, has the honor to inform Mr. Hull that no official information is available concerning the purported exchange of Jews in the Netherlands for German nationals now in Palestine.

According to information received from the "World Jewish Congress", several lists of names of Jews, who were qualifying for allocation certificates for entry into Palestine, have been communicated to the German government, with a view to prevent the deportation of these individuals into Germany.

The only exchange of Netherlands Jews against German nationals, which is envisaged at present by the Netherlands Government, is a proposed exchange of four Jews in the Netherlands, who were in the possession of Palestine immigration certificates, issued before May 10, 1940, against an equal number of German nationals, at present interned and
interned and under the control of the Netherlands Government.

Should further information concerning the possibility of exchange for Netherlands Jews become available, the Netherlands Ambassador will immediately inform the Secretary of State thereof.

Washington, D.C.

January 27, 1944.

HNB/tv
Copied:VD:RU:BT 2/3/44
MEMORANDUM FOR THE FILES

February 10, 1944

Congressman Geller called me this afternoon and stated that he had just been talking to Paul McCormick of the American Red Cross who had advised him that they had received word that the Nazis in the Netherlands were permitting refugees in the Netherlands to go to Palestine under certain circumstances. He was quite vague on the matter except that his informant at the Red Cross had stated that he thought the information was authentic. Congressman Geller stated that he had attempted to confirm it with Mr. Berle, who stated that they had received the report but were highly skeptical of its authenticity; that the State Department, however, was checking on it.

I inquired of Congressman Geller as to whom I might discuss the matter with at the Red Cross. He stated that the man was Paul McCormick, Extension 136, Red Cross. I spoke to McCormick and he stated that he would like another twenty-four hours to check with the International Red Cross offices as well the Red Cross files. He felt that in that time he could furnish us with a more detailed story. Accordingly, it was arranged that he would call me tomorrow afternoon to furnish me with whatever data was available.

He then stated that he was anxious to meet Mr. Peile, that he was handling refugee work for the American Red Cross and thought it would be a good idea for the two of them to get together. I advised him that I was certain that could be arranged and I would discuss it with him tomorrow at the time he furnishes me with the information.

cc: Messrs. Peile, Friedman, Stewart, Dubois, Bernstein and Miss Model.
AMERICAN RED CROSS
INSULAR AND FOREIGN OPERATIONS

DATE February 18, 1944

REFERRED TO J. W. Fehle,
Acting Executive Director,
War Refugee Board

REMARKS Attached please find a copy of a request to transmit a cable via the International Red Cross Committee to a person detained at Westerbork in the Netherlands. You will note that the sender is an employee of the Netherlands Government in New York. The text of the requested cable and the Chapter's note seem to indicate that an exchange actually takes place in making exits to Palestine.

Paul J. McCormack
Paul J. McCormack
Rev. Sept. 1942
International Red Cross Committee
Geneva, Switzerland
CABLE
CIVILIAN MESSAGE FORM

Sender
Name: GROEN, MAURICE T.
Street: 138 RIDER AVENUE
City: PALMER
State: NEW YORK
Citizen of: NETHERLANDS
Relationship to person sought: SON
Chapter: Nassau County
Date: 2/8/44

Message
"Did you receive Palestine immigration certificates arranged November. You both included preferential veterans list for pending exchange."

Chapter Note: Addressee, Tobie Groen, is father of sender who (sender) is employed by the Netherlands government in Radio City, New York. Sender has arranged for parents to be exchanged with internees in Palestine and is anxious they be notified they have been accepted for exchange.

Sender assumes responsibility for cable charges and for charges of reply cable.

Address
Name: GROEN, TOBIE
Address: CAME WESTBROOK
HOOCHHALEN, DRENTE
Country: Netherlands
Birthplace: Paris, France
Date of birth: 5/17/81
Citizen of: Netherlands

Identifying Data
Name: GROEN, TOBIE
Birthplace: Paris, France
Date of birth: 5/17/81
Citizen of: Netherlands