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Strictly Personal
and Confidential

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FOREIGN OFFICE
S.W.I.

17th June, 1944

Dear Dr. Weismann,

As promised at our meeting on June 2nd I write to confirm, in the strictest confidence, what I told you about a suggestion reported to us by the Jewish Agency for the evacuation of Jewish victims of Nazi persecution.

On May 19th, Joel Brandt, a trusted and well-known Zionist representative in Hungary, arrived in Istanbul from Vienna in a German aircraft. He was accompanied by a Hungarian Gestapo agent. High German Gestapo chiefs in Budapest sent Brandt to Turkey, with this man as watchdog, to place before High Allied authorities and Jewish leaders in England, America and Palestine the following offer:

Instead of completely annihilating all remaining Jews in Roumania, Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia, the Nazis, it was stated, would agree to evacuate from those countries 1,000,000 Jews to Spain and Portugal (but not to Palestine). The delivery of 10,000 motor ferries and certain quantities of tea, coffee, cocoa and soap was required in return. Once the offer has been accepted in principle, the Germans were prepared, as an earnest of good faith, to release the first batch of 5000 to 10,000 Jews before receiving any corresponding consideration. They would also consider exchanging Jews against German prisoners of war. The programme of wholehearted liquidation will be carried out if the offer is rejected. Brandt must return with a reply to Budapest within two weeks from 19th May.

The Agency has expressed the fear that unless they can be saved in time the fate of these Hungarian, Czechoslovakian and Roumanian Jews is sealed. They hope that high Allied authorities will not be deterred by the seemingly fantastic character and magnitude of the proposition from making every possible effort to save the greatest number possible. While fully realizing the overwhelming difficulties, they believe that if the task is faced with the boldness demanded by such an unprecedented catastrophe these might not prove insurmountable.

Shertok is proposing to proceed to Istanbul, as soon as he can obtain a Turkish visa to discuss the matter with His Majesty's Ambassador.

The Agency stated that they would keep all the foregoing information strictly secret and wished us to do so too, but they requested His Majesty's Government to communicate it to the United States Government, and this has been done.

Yours sincerely,

Signed...G.H. HALL.

Dr. Chaim Weismann.

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6th June, 1944.

The Right Hon. Anthony Eden, P.C., M.P.,
Foreign Office,
Whitehall, S.W.1.

Dear Mr. Eden,

I have first to thank you for causing to be communicated to me the message from Mr. Shertok in Jerusalem about the German suggestions with regard to Jews in Hungary, Poland, Roumania and Czecho-slovakia which Mr. Hall told me of last Friday. The story related in the telegram naturally gave me a great and most painful shock, and I have allowed a short time to elapse in which to think it over with such calm as I can muster. As the upshot of my reflections I write now to ask whether you could possibly spare me a few minutes for a personal talk on the subject? It appears to me that questions of policy in the highest degree critical and delicate may be involved, and I am most anxious that anything to be done by the Jewish Agency should be with the knowledge and approval of H.M. Government. At the same time, it is of course my paramount duty to try and discover the course of action which offers the best hope of saving Jewish lives.

It would therefore be of very great assistance to me at this juncture to have the benefit of your personal advice. Meantime, might I ask you to do me the favour of asking the British Ambassador in Ankara to do all he can to expedite the granting of a Turkish visa to Mr. Shertok, who wants to go immediately from Jerusalem to Istanbul to make further investigations into this extraordinary story?

Yours sincerely,

Cham

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NOTE ON THE PROPOSAL FOR BOMBING THE DEATH CAMPS

According to reports received, most, if not practically all, of the 400,000 Jews deported from Hungary have been or are being sent to the death camps of Birkenau and Oswiecim in Upper Silesia, there to be put to death. A message received via Geneva puts the number of Jews killed in these camps during last year at 1,500,000, and states that the four crematoria at Birkenau have a capacity for gassing and burning 90,000 a day (this may be an error in transmission, the real figure being possibly 4,000). A report which has reached the Polish Government from underground sources speaks of Hungarian Jews being killed by gas in two chambers, each holding 1,000 persons, the corpses being burnt in four crematoria and an incinerator. According to the same report, the deportees believe that they are being taken to Germany eventually to be exchanged against German prisoners of war, and let out into Allied territories; this belief being strengthened by optimistic letters received in Hungary from a group of 2000 Hungarian Jews kept for the time being at Gliwice. All information points to the fact that deportees are put to death immediately on arrival. A detailed description of the two camps, contained in a report submitted to Allied Governments and published by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, is attached. It is understood that this report (received since the original suggestion for bombing was made) emanated from Czech underground sources. Its reading repays the effort.

2. The bombing of the death camps is thus hardly likely to achieve the salvation of the victims to any appreciable extent. Its physical effects can only be the destruction of plant and personnel, and possibly the hastening of the end of those already doomed. The resulting dislocation of the German machinery for systematic wholesale murder may possibly cause delay in the execution of those still in Hungary (over 300,000 in and around Budapest). This, in itself, is valuable as far as it goes, but it may not go very far, as other means of extermination can be quickly improvised. The main purpose of the bombing should be its magnified and far-reaching moral effect.

3. It would mean, in the first instance, that the Allies waged direct war on the extermination of the victims of Nazi oppression - today Jews, tomorrow Poles, Czechs, or whatever race may become the victim of mass murder during the German retreat and collapse. Secondly, it would give the lie to the oft-repeated assertions of Nazi spokesmen that the Allies are not really so displeased with the work of the Nazis in ridding Europe of Jews. Thirdly, it would go far towards dissipating the incredulity which still persists in Allied quarters with regard to the reports of mass extermination perpetrated by the Nazis. Fourthly, it would give weight to the threats of reprisals against the murderers by showing that the Allies are taking the extermination of Jews as seriously as to warrant the allocation of aircraft resources for this particular operation, and thus have a deterrent effect. Lastly, it would convince the German circles still hopeful of Allied mercy of the genuineness of Allied condemnation of the murder of Jews, and possibly result in some internal pressure against a continuation of the massacres. The first report that the R.A.F. or the American Air Force had bombed the death camps in Upper Silesia is bound to have a demonstrative value in all these directions.

4. Special attention may be drawn to the fact (mentioned in the enclosed report) that the Oswiecim camp contains workshops of the German armament concerns Siemens and Krupp.

London,
11.7.44.

R.G.

M

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COPY OF CABLE FROM JERUSALEM, dated 15.6.44. (recd 19.6.44.).

NLT Linton 77 Great Russell Street London

208 Waited Aleppo four days for authority see friend
who arrived Wednesday 7/6 stop interviewed him Sunday six
hours found him onehundred percent reliable was deeply impressed
by his purity character spirit selfsacrifice factual exactness
soberness stop came conclusion active steps now imperative view
possibility
exploring/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
Weizmann gist our evaluation and proposals including first
immediate facilities for my flying London second arrangements for
friends return home stop you will learn our main proposal regarding
line action from Colonial or Foreign stop High Commissioner in-
formed 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

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Copied 26/6/44

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FOREIGN OFFICE, S.W.1.

W 9885/109/G

23rd June, 1944.

Dear Dr. Weizman,

We have received the enclosed telegram for you from Mr. Shertok. In regard to it I should like to explain that we are in favour of Mr. Shertok's coming here, and he should arrive shortly. We are also strongly of opinion that Brandt should not go back until at least we have seen Mr. Shertok. It seems to us unthinkable that retaining Brandt in Cairo should be held to indicate that His Majesty's Government are not giving earnest attention to any practicable scheme for assisting Jews now suffering under German threats. But whether the particular scheme brought by Brandt has any right to consideration is a question on which we may obtain more light during Mr. Shertok's forthcoming visit.

Yours sincerely,

A.W.G. Randall
(in Mr. Hall's
absence)

(A.W.G. Randall)

Dr. Weizman,
The Jewish Agency for Palestine,
77, Great Russell Street,
W.C.1.

Handwritten mark resembling a stylized 'F' or '1'.

SECRET

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MR. SHEPCK'S PRELIMINARY REPORT. TUESDAY, JUNE 27th, 1944, at 6 p.m.
AT THE DORCHESTER HOTEL, LONDON, W.1.

[Travel: I left Jerusalem on Sunday, the 25th, at 11.45 a.m. Took off from the Dead Sea. Arrived Cairo 5 p.m. Left Cairo 9 p.m. Thence to Tripoli, Rabat, and from Rabat direct to England, landing first at St. Mangan and then at Swinson. Paddington about 1 p.m. on Tuesday, the 27th.]

On May 24th a telephone call from Jerusalem reached me in Tel-Aviv. I was informed that an urgent telegram had arrived at the office from our liaison people in Istanbul to the effect that somebody was flying from Istanbul to see me, and that I should come to Lydda to meet him. The telegram mentioned that it was in connection with the Hungarian situation. From the wording it was not clear who was coming. It might be inferred that it was somebody from Hungary. Anyhow I did not go to Lydda, but sent somebody instead. The man returned to Tel-Aviv alone: nobody had come. Later in the day, after returning to Jerusalem, I heard by telephone from Haifa that the messenger had arrived there, having missed the plane in Turkey and travelled by bus. He was one of our people, i.e. a Palestinian, member of our Istanbul group. He reached Jerusalem by midnight, and I saw him then. He told to me that night, and to a specially convened meeting of the Executive next morning, the following story:

As you know, for some time past our people in Istanbul had been in close touch with certain European centres, or late particularly with Budapest. One of their contacts in Budapest was a certain Joel Brandt - a Zionist, a responsible person who had been active in rescue work. He was one of the principal organisers of the smuggling of Jews from Poland into Hungary. Suddenly, the Istanbul people received a wire from Joel Brandt saying that he was on his way to Istanbul, and would arrive without a Turkish visa: would they arrange it for him? They did. He arrived, however, not alone, but accompanied by another man - the dark, sinister, figure in the story. Unfortunately he, too, is a Jew - but that is neither here nor there. He was an agent of the Hungarian police, and was doing odd jobs of work for the Nazis even before Hungary was overrun. He was apparently a Black Market agent for the Germans, and as a result enjoyed travelling facilities, coming from time to time to Istanbul. Our people had occasionally used him to take money into concentration camps. He had once come to Istanbul saying that he had been commissioned by a very important Hungarian group to arrange for them to meet British and Americans - primarily Americans - with whom certain members of the Hungarian General Staff were alleged to wish to make arrangements with the Allies for "resistance" and anti-Nazi activities in Hungary. It was all taken, of course, with a large grain of salt, and turned out to be a Nazi intrigue. But it seemed that the fellow himself was quite genuinely taken in. His name is Andrew Georgy, known to our people as "Bondi (diminutive of Andrew) Gross. Needless to say, we held no brief for him.

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So Joel Brandt arrived in Istanbul accompanied by Sandi. The complication about the Turkish visas was arranged by our people there. Brandt came to a hotel, and told his story to one of our people, and the Istanbul office forthwith decided to send someone to Jerusalem to explain the importance of the matter and to insist that I come to meet Brandt. Brandt's story will be told later, when I come to report on my talk with him. Having heard the story from the messenger, we decided to report it immediately to the Government, and, before making any proposals for action, to ask for facilities for the thorough exploration of the whole business, by enabling me to go to Istanbul, where I would report to the British Embassy at Ankara.

On Friday, May 26th, we saw the High Commissioner. He took the matter quite seriously, and - as we ourselves had suggested - saw in it much more than met the eye. He promptly set it down to Nazi intrigues, based on far other motives than the apparent ones. But he realized at once that nothing must be left undone to explore at any rate - no ground should be given for later accusations that someone had missed the chance of saving people. He agreed to wire at once to the Embassy in Ankara, about my Turkish visa, and to report the matter to London. We asked that a copy should be passed on to you.

Days passed and no visa came. (Last year I was in the same predicament about a Turkish visa while in Cairo. The British Embassy there met the difficulty by putting me on a plane without a visa, and wiring to the British Embassy in Ankara to arrange for my landing. I was duly met at Adana by an official of the British Consulate, and all was well.) In this case I had a warning from our people in Istanbul not to come without a visa. Nevertheless, the Government was prepared to use the same procedure. They really did the impossible to enable me to travel, - going to the length of taking mail off the plane. The High Commissioner had cabled to the Ankara Embassy that unless the visa arrived that day, (Tuesday, May 30th) he would authorize me to travel without it, when/at ten o'clock a wire came from Ankara that I should on no account travel without a visa.

Everything was
set for my flying
the following
morning.

By this time, our people in Istanbul got so worried that they wanted to send Brandt to us in Palestine. Brandt was very hard pressed by the Turks to leave Turkey - either return to Hungary or go to Palestine as an ordinary Jewish refugee. After being free for a day or two, he and Sandi were put under arrest, but this we only learnt later. All we heard at the time was that it was intended, as I could not come to Istanbul, to send Brandt to us. Knowing as we did that he had to return to Budapest, we foresaw serious complications in such a course. He was in neutral territory, from which he was free to return to enemy territory, but if he were to come deep into Allied territory his return would be very difficult. We wired Istanbul that Brandt should on no account come to Palestine. They then wired back that the Turks would not let him stay there. We replied: Cost what it may, keep him in Turkey. But they felt they had no choice. The British officials in Turkey with whom they had kept in touch asked whether he would prefer to return to Hungary or go to Palestine. They said he preferred to come to
/Palestine-

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Palastine - provided that there was a certainty of his return to Hungary. A high British officer assured our people that there would be no difficulty as regards his return. Here was a definite undertaking. On the strength of it, Joel Brandt left Turkey for Palastine. (Afterwards, we learnt that before Joel Brandt left Turkey, Bondi had been taken by the British authorities to Egypt. But of that more later).

Faced with this situation of Brandt on his way to Palastine, we went to the Government and to G.S.I. Palastine. Both said he should not come - they could not guarantee his return, in all probability the Security Authorities would be against it. The head of the G.S.I. then suggested that I should go to Aleppo to meet Brandt; there would be no objection to his returning to Hungary from Aleppo, which was practically on the border. I went to the Chief Secretary, and he also agreed. So, with the full knowledge and consent of the Chief Secretary and the Chief of the Military Intelligence, I left for Aleppo by car, timing my arrival to synchronize with that of Brandt and one of our own people from Istanbul who was accompanying him, so that I could meet him at the station and take him off the train. We arrived very late - about 2 p.m. on Wednesday, June 7th, having left Haifa on Tuesday morning. Brandt's train was due at 8 a.m. One of my friends went to the station to meet it, and found that a British Security Officer also turned up, and took Brandt into custody. At 8 a.m. I was at the British Security Office, and saw the officer in charge. He said he was very sorry, but he had instructions to keep Brandt under lock and key, but no instructions at all about my seeing him. I asked if he would telephone Jerusalem. But the officer's instructions came from his superiors in Cairo, and he could only telephone there about the matter. In the evening, he came to my hotel and said he had some news for me, though he was afraid it was not very helpful. Cairo said they could give no indication as to whether or when I would be allowed to see Brandt. If I cared to wait, that was up to me, but further news might be expected shortly. I thought the logical thing for me to do would be to go straight back to Jerusalem. I could not hang around indefinitely. But it was evening, and further news was expected. I thought I had better stay overnight. Morning brought the news that the matter of my seeing Brandt had been referred to London, and instructions had to be expected from the Foreign Office. The wording of the message made it certain that they fully realized that time was of the essence, and were doing everything they could to speed up the decision. So I had to resign myself to waiting. I had already waited two days, and stayed on three more. At the time Aleppo seemed, seriously enough, to be a focal point for everybody who was anybody in the Middle East: there was the C. in C. Middle East, the Air C. in C., a very high Naval Officer, and so on - but that is a different story.

On the Saturday evening, June 20th, a message came through that the Foreign Office had agreed that I should see Brandt; also that the order was that Brandt should be taken South. I said: "South" means Cairo, I suppose, and the answer was: Probably. I said this complicated matters rather a lot. The officer said he was simply carrying out his orders. He asked how long my interrogation of Brandt would take, and on hearing that it would certainly be over within the day, said he would make arrangements for his leaving the following evening. He asked if I would object to the presence of a British officer, and I said of course not, but it should be someone who understood German, as I proposed talking to Brandt in German - both because it was his native language, and also because I wanted so far as possible to have a verbatim report of his various conversations, and not his translation of what was said. So it was arranged

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arranged, and we spent practically the whole day, Sunday, together, from 10 to 1 and from 5 to 6.

The British Officer who was present was a decent fellow, but with rather an inadequate knowledge of German - I spent much of the time acting as interpreter. I realized later that I should have taken along a German stenographer, instead of only someone to take notes: as it is, we have no verbatim record of Brandt's story, but only an extensive summary.

He said he had been in touch with certain Gestapo people even before the German entry into Hungary, in connection with the rescue of Jews from Poland. (This means that he had bribed some of them). When the Germans came in, he and his friends had used these connections to meet some of the high-ups in charge of Jewish matters. He said: He had nothing to lose: they could only kill us, and they would kill us anyhow. So a group of Jews went to the high Gestapo chiefs with a very fine programme: Not to kill the Jews; not to deport them; not to put them into concentration camps; allow them to live. In the course of these conversations, one day Brandt was summoned to the Gestapo staff and picked him up and he was taken to see Eichmann - who is the main charge of the extermination proceedings. He had been in charge of Jewish affairs elsewhere before the war - e.g. in Vienna at the time of the Nazi occupation, and afterwards in Prague. Eichmann told Brandt: I am the man who has solved the problem of Polish Jews; I am determined also to solve the problem of Hungarian Jews. Now I am offering you a bargain: "Eint gegen Wert", "We are some two million Jews left alive in Europe: if the Allies want them, let us take them. If Churchill, if Roosevelt, want the Jews, let them have them - for a consideration." Then followed the list of things they wanted in exchange. One item was 10,000 lorries - obviously followed by the provision: "Not for use on the Western Front". On another occasion, a different explanation of the demand for lorries was given. Eichmann is head of the civilian Gestapo. Their lorries were old and unserviceable. He had been pestering the military section of the Gestapo for better lorries (which they had), but they would not part unless they could get better lorries for themselves. So if by this bargain he could get new lorries from outside for the military section, he had some prospects of inheriting their quite good lorries for his own civilian section.Quite a fantastic story. They also wanted tea, coffee, soup, and various other commodities.

There had been other conversations in which a number of people took part, and eventually came a definite proposal to Brandt that he should go out, either to Switzerland or to Turkey, with the "offer". He chose Turkey because it was nearer to Palestine, and he thought that from Istanbul he might get into direct contact with a major Jewish centre, which would be difficult from Switzerland. One of the Nazis had asked him: Would you like Brandt to go with you? Brandt replied that it might be helpful, as he had never been in Istanbul before, while Brandt had, and knew the ropes. "You do not insist on Brandt coming with you?" Brandt said that he did not insist, but it would be useful. The whole conversation struck him as rather odd. Later Brandt asked him why he had not "insisted", and told him that he should insist he would be as useful to him in Istanbul, which he knew well. At the next meeting, Brandt accordingly "insisted", and Brandt came along.

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In Istanbul, after the two were detained by the Turks, Bandi had a talk with one of our people without Brandt, and at this talk revealed a "hidden mission" step by step. The real point of Bandi's mission appeared to me to bring about "a meeting", ostensibly to discuss this bargain over the Hungarian Jews, but really to sound the Allies about peace - and conditions after the war, possibly also security for the particular group.

To repeat, when they arrived in Istanbul, the Turks got hold of them and said: if you want to go to Palestine, you can go; if you want to go back to Hungary, you can go; but you can't stay here. Our friends managed to postpone the actual departure for several days by all sorts of devices, but in the end they had to leave. Brandt insisted throughout that he had to return to Hungary. He knew that in the meantime things might have changed there, and he might be shot out of hand. But he had to go back. He would not leave his family and friends in the lurch, nor would he be guilty of not keeping his side of the bargain - the consequences could only be disastrous for Jews in general. Bandi took a different line: He thought he had better stay out: he had not got into touch with the people he had hoped to reach; he would therefore have to return, - if at all - with his mission unfulfilled. This spelt his doom. He preferred to chance staying away, and gladly went to Egypt.

I asked Brandt what he thought of Bandi's story. He replied that it was quite probable. He himself had suspected that something lurked behind the goods proposal. Not that they did not need the goods - they needed them all right. I asked whether they were really so stupid as to think that the Allies would give them trucks, which were war equipment? He replied that my question betrayed a lack of understanding of the Nazi psychology: they honestly believed that the Jews were all-powerful in the Allied world, that they appointed and dismissed American Senators, and that Churchill and Roosevelt were, so to speak, in their pockets. It would therefore be a mere trifle for the Jews to get the Allies to send 10,000 trucks. But apart from that, they (i.e. Eichmann and his confederates) probably hoped to enter into the good books of the Allies, and obtain sanctuary for themselves - possibly even to ensure as a result better treatment for Germany as a whole. Brandt explained: "You must always remember that we are dealing with thieves and murderers. Supposing you catch a thief red-handed, stealing £100. He will say: 'Here are £20 for you - and keep quiet about the £80'. Similarly, the Nazis believed that by offering to release the remaining 2,000,000 Jews, they might get away with the killing of 6,000,000." I must have looked a little incredulous, for he said: "Please believe me: they have killed six million Jews; there are only two million left alive." (I saw then what he thought of us - of everybody outside: that we are still trying to comfort ourselves with the thought that rumour exaggerates, and so on.) He went on: They came now to the world and says: Take this remaining two million. It is a way of exonerating themselves.

Brandt said that the seriousness with which the Germans took the matter was indicated by the fact that when the time came for him to leave, one of the Nazi chiefs took him in his own car from Budapest to Vienna, then to the aerodrome, put him on the plane, introduced him to the captain, shook hands

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heads with him in front of the Nazis who stood around - all in broad daylight. All this was unthinkable unless it was done with high speed.

One condition was attached to the offer: the people should not go to Palestine.

The reasons for sending them - as stipulated - to Lisbon, etc. were given as follows:

1. The Turks would not be able to cope with transports of such size, and would therefore not want them.
2. The Jews in question are mostly Hungarians and Rumanians - not, that is to say, German chattels, but chattels of other countries. The Germans cannot say to other Governments what they are to do with their Jews. But they can say: Hand us all your Jews to us. The Jews then become chattels of the Reich. But for this purpose they must be transferred to Reich territory - i.e. in any case must travel west from where they are now. Why, then, send them back east again?
3. There was a desire not to antagonize the Arabs.
4. They did not want a strong Jewish Palestine - Arabs or no Arab - even if Palestine were empty. Because twenty years from when Germany rises again from the ashes, they would again be confronted by their arch-enemy, Jewry, by then consolidated in the Mediterranean.
5. They regard the Jews as a disease: they want to infect their enemies, particularly America and England, with that disease. If the Jews concentrate in Palestine, they don't perform that function.

As regards the mode of execution of the proposal, Brandt was told: As soon as you come back with an acceptance, we are prepared to release, say, 5000 of the people without waiting for any consideration, just to show good faith. Other transports would be quid pro quo. As to the order in which they were to be selected for release, they would begin with children and old people. There would have to be transit camps for them in Germany.

I asked Brandt three questions: What will happen if you go back with a favourable reply? What will happen if you take a negative reply? And what if you don't go back at all?

He said: "At first, I had the conviction that if I brought back a favourable reply it would mean I had brought salvation; now I have heard about Brandt's other mission, I am not so sure. If I go back with a negative reply, it means wholesale extermination will start at once; quite possibly my own family and close friends will not immediately be sent to the slaughter-house; they may want to keep some way open to further negotiations. If I don't go back at all, all my friends will be killed off at once, which will mean that there will be nobody left to speak for the Jews with some courage, nobody to hold something up, to suggest something. Then it is ninety-nine per cent. certain that my wife and children will be killed. I say ninety-


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nine per cent, and not a hundred per cent, because it is just possible that they would leave my family alone to make a show of them. These are the people of the Jew Brant, whom we sent on a mission, and who returned." As I said, Brant's first question to me was: "Am I going back?" I said he seemed doubtful. He said: "I must go back." He became almost hysterical, at the idea that he might not be allowed to go, and it took me some effort to calm him down. Generally, we were all - and this includes the British Officers who spoke to him - very much impressed by his courage and spirit. Every minute of the day in Budapest he was risking his life in conspiring against the Germans. He is a very solid type: squarely built, broad-nosed, peasant-like; a bit slow and heavy, but with a very clear head and a firm grasp of facts. He breathes honesty.

When I came back to Jerusalem with his report (which I have in full separately; it is being translated) we thought there was a possibility of achieving something. Well, it was true, was an irresponsible fellow who would sell his own mother for money. But we thought the way he had been wangled into this trip was suggestive, and it did not follow that by skilful handling, further negotiations might not save, if not tens of thousands, at least thousands, of Jewish lives. If they thought they might get something by it, they might let some of the Jews go; if they felt that important negotiations were impending, they might stop the deportations for a little. We felt we must gain time - not merely by not doing anything, but by taking action.

I returned to Jerusalem on June 15th in the evening, reported to the Executive on the 14th, and went again, with Ben-Gurion, to the High Commissioner on the 16th. I reported on my talk with Brant, and made three main points: (a) Brant must go back; (b) I have to go to London; (c) a meeting to discuss the release of Jews should be arranged between the Germans and somebody suitable - or anyhow, some indication of readiness for such a meeting should be given at once. We put forward some tentative suggestions as to who might meet the Germans: (i) the War Refugee Board of America; (ii) the Inter-Governmental Committee; (iii) the International Red Cross. The idea of the Inter-Governmental Committee particularly appealed to me. To impress the Germans, one must offer a possibility of contact with some sort of official body. But to avoid the news being misinterpreted or misrepresented as a peace feeler, one had to find somebody who would not involve the Government. There was this body, with a prominent recognised status, a distinguished head, entirely non-political, and definitely not representing the British Government, though it would not take action unless asked to do so by the Government, seconded, moreover, by an American and one Swiss (i.e. neutral) assistant. We said that the Foreign Office was more competent than we to choose the proper agency for whatever should be done; it seemed to us that some way could be found; it was up to the Foreign Office to decide on the means if they thought a meeting should take place. We urged that a meeting should be arranged. We said that the "commodities" side of the offer sounded fantastic, but that it might be just an opening gambit - possibly even a device to hoodwink Brant - but that it was not out of the question that once contact was established with that particular group it would result in the salvation of a certain, perhaps considerable, number of Jews. The group might go in for this in the hope of achieving something else. That hope would not materialise. Anyhow, the possibility had to be explored to the full. A way might be found of
/doing



doing it without jeopardising the higher interests of the war.

The High Commissioner then gave us the gist of Dr. Weizmann's conversation with Mr. Eden, the main point of which was Mr. Eden's agreeing "to avoid anything that might look like slamming the door." As regards my points, his replies were:

He did not seem so much impressed by my argument for Brandt's return. He said: Suppose somebody of ours managed to penetrate into Hungary, and the Germans got hold of him? Do you think they would let him go back? The Germans will probably credit us with the same attitude, and not blame it on Brandt. To this I replied that Brandt's not returning would mean a complete rupture. This would be against the policy agreed to by Mr. Eden - according to what we had just heard from the High Commissioner - of gaining time and not slamming the door. The High Commissioner agreed that this was a weighty argument. There were, of course, he added, other considerations which might outweigh it, but if the idea was not to slam the door, Brandt should certainly be allowed to go back. I then said that moreover, Brandt would not have left Turkey for Syria were it not for.....The High Commissioner here interrupted me rather sharply: "I know what you are going to say: you are going to argue that there has been a breach of faith. Don't go on. The answer is very simple: This is war." I had intended to recall the assurance given by a high British officer that Brandt would be able to return.

The High Commissioner promised to transmit our representations to London, including my request for air priority.

We then settled down to wait for it. Cables came from Istanbul enquiring about Brandt's return, to which we replied, intending that this should be transmitted to Budapest, that Brandt had been delayed, and that I was flying to London.

On Wednesday, June 21st, I was rung up by the American Consul-General who said that he had received an urgent wire from Ankara to the effect that Mr. Ira Hirschmann, the representative of the American War Refugee Board in Turkey, who had just returned from Washington, was flying to Cairo, and wanted very much to see me there. Fortunately I had a valid Egyptian visa, and managed to scrounge a seat on the plane. On Thursday afternoon I met Mr. Hirschmann at the American Legation in Cairo. He had already seen Brandt in detention. He told me that the report about Brandt's mission had created a great stir in the State Department; he himself had been at the time in Cincinnati. He was immediately sent for and told by Mr. Stettinius, who was dealing with the matter, to fly post-haste to Ankara to investigate the case. He had been given top priority, and had reached Ankara within about five days, only to find that Brandt was no longer in Turkey, whereupon he flew back to Cairo.

Hirschmann was very much impressed by Brandt's integrity and character. He was determined to move heaven and earth to send Brandt back, and to explore every possibility of using the opening provided by the Germans for saving Jews. Incidentally, he was full of praise for our "boys" in Istanbul, who, he thought, were simply marvellous types; they were the only ones, he repeated, who had really achieved something by way of saving people. As this

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was hammered in in the presence of Joseph Schwartz, the representative of the J.D.C., the inference was obvious. 97

Hirschmann was to return to Ankara on Saturday, from there - probably after conferring with Ambassador Steinhardt - to cable his report to Washington. He seemed very anxious to be called to London, to bring his first-hand impressions to bear on the decisions to be taken here, but his coming depended, of course, on the U.S. Government.

On Friday morning, I went to see Lord Moyne, from whom I learnt that my priority had been granted; in fact I was offered a seat to London for that evening, but as I had not put my affairs in order in Jerusalem, I could not take it. I learnt in Cairo that the Security Authorities had no objection to Brandt's return, but Lord Moyne said that the decision must be taken by the Foreign Office. He thought there was no question of M.E.S. agreeing to enter into any transaction that carried with it the delivery of military equipment. My request to see Brandt in Cairo for a short talk was turned down. Lord Moyne seemed to think it would be a very good idea if Hirschmann came to London.

I flew back to Jerusalem on Saturday, returned to Cairo on Sunday, and took off for London the same evening.

London,
27.6.44.

30.6.44. 67

BEN-GURION JEWISH AGENCY JERUSALEM

WEIZMANN MYSELF SAW TODAY FOREIGN UNDERSECRETARY HALL STOP WE URGED FIRST
IMMEDIATE INTIMATION TO OTHER SIDE THROUGH APPROPRIATE CHANNELS OF ALLIES
READINESS MEET THEIR REPRESENTATIVES TO DISCUSS RELEASE LA ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~
NUMBER JEWS SECOND VIEW MEETING POSSIBILITY THAT PROPOSAL MAY EMANATE FROM
CERTAIN NAZI ORGAN INDEPENDENT WILHELMSTRASSE PROPOSAL SHOULD BE TRANSMITTED
REGARDING MEETING AT ISTANBUL OF REPRESENTATIVE OF WAR REFUGEE BOARD WITH
MEMBER OF BUDAPEST GROUP THIRD BRANDT SHOULD BE ENABLED TO RETURN IMMEDIATELY
ALSO IF ONLY POSSIBLE BRANDT IF ONLY IN ORDER NOT TO GIVE UNNECESSARY EXCUSE
TO ENEMY STOP ASKED WHETHER WE WOULD PREFER BRANDT'S RETURNING IMMEDIATELY
OR WAITING TILL MAJOR DECISION HAS BEEN REACHED WE REPLIED BEST COURSE WOULD
BEEN REACH DECISION WITHIN NEXT DAY OR TWO AND AUTHORISE BRANDT REFER TO IT
OTHERWISE BRANDT SHOULD BE SENT WITHOUT DELAY AND INSTRUCTED REPORT THAT
MESSAGE BEEN DELIVERED IS UNDER CONSIDERATION HIGHEST QUARTERS EARLY ACTION
WILL FOLLOW STOP SUGGEST THAT ANYHOW PROPOSAL TWO SHOULD PREFERABLY BE
TRANSMITTED BY BRANDT STOP HALL STATED MATTER IS BEFORE WAR CABINET OUR
SUGGESTIONS WILL BE TRANSMITTED IMMEDIATELY DECISION WILL BE REACHED AS SOON
AS POSSIBLE IN CONJUNCTION WITH AMERICAN GOVERNMENT STOP WE MENTIONED
GRUENBAUM'S LAST SUGGESTION AND ARE DEALING SEPARATELY WITH PROCEDURE TRANS-
MISSION LISTS STOP WE ALSO SUGGESTED WARNING RAILWAYMEN HUNGARY THAT
WHOEVER OPERATES DEPORTATION TRAINS WILL BE CONSIDERED WAR CRIMINAL STOP
WE LEFT WITH HALL COPIES GRUENBAUM'S TWO TELEGRAMS.

SHERTOK.

57

6.7.44.

TO BENGURION JEWISH AGENCY JERUSALEM
HARUM GOLDMANN JEWISH AGENCY 342 MADISON AVENUE NEWYORKCITY

WEIZMANN MYSELF SAW EDEN URGED SPEEDIEST DECISION ON SERIES OF PROPOSALS OF WHICH LEFT WRITTEN SUMMARY AS FOLLOWS - ONE ACCORDING BUDAPEST REPORTS REACHING ISTANBUL GENEVA LISBON 400,000 ALREADY SENT DEATHCAMPS. GENEVA STATES MOST TRANSPORTS GONE TO BIRKENAU WHERE FOUR CREMATORIA OPERATING TOTAL CAPACITY 60,000 DAILY. OVER 800,000 STILL IN AND AROUND BUDAPEST ACCORDING ISTANBUL THEIR DEPORTATION DUE BEGIN THIS WEEK TWO STAGE OF TEMPORISING THUS OVER AND DEFINITE STEPS IMPERATIVE IF REMOTE CHANCE OF SAVING REMNANTS IS NOT TO BE MISSED. WE REALISE OUR PROPOSALS ARE UNORTHODOX AND UNPRECEDENTED BUT THEY ARE WARRANTED BY TRAGEDY WHICH IS WITHOUT PARALLEL OR PRECEDENT THREE RECAPITULATES FIRST SECOND FOURTH PROPOSALS SUBMITTED TO HALL AND REPORTED IN OUR TELEGRAM SO.6. FIVE / SINCE SUBMISSION ABOVE ONE OF OUR REPRESENTATIVES IN ISTANBUL RECEIVED MESSAGE FROM JEWISH CENTRE BUDAPEST URGING HIM TO COME TO BUDAPEST FOR DISCUSSIONS AND INFORMING THAT SAFE RETURN GUARANTEED. WHILE REALISING RISKS INVOLVED WE SUBMIT HE SHOULD BE ALLOWED PROCEED PREFERABLY TOGETHER WITH BRANDT FIVE WE FULLY APPRECIATE GESTAPO OFFERS RELEASE JEWS MUST HAVE ULTRIOR MOTIVES BUT CONSIDER NOT IMPROBABLE THAT IN FALSE HOPE ACHIEVING THOSE ENDS THEY WOULD BE PREPARED LET OUT CERTAIN NUMBER OF JEWS LARGE OR SMALL. WHOLE THING MAY BOIL DOWN TO QUESTION OF MONEY. WE BELIEVE RANSOM SHOULD BE WAIVED. SIX APART FROM QUESTION OF BRANDT'S MISSION WE URGE FOLLOWING (A) ALLIES SHOULD PUBLISH DECLARATION EXPRESSING READINESS ADMIT JEWISH FUGITIVES TO ALL THEIR TERRITORIES STATING THEY HAVE IN THIS SUPPORT OF NEUTRALS WHO PREPARED GIVE TEMPORARY SHELTER (B) SWISS GOVERNMENT SHOULD BE ASKED TO INSTRUCT REPRESENTATIVES IN HUNGARY TO INFORM LOCAL AUTHORITIES OF SUCH READINESS AND ISSUE SUCH DOCUMENTS TO LARGEST POSSIBLE NUMBER AS MIGHT IN INTERIM AFFORD PROTECTION (C) STERN WARNING SHOULD BE BROADCAST TO HUNGARIAN OFFICIALS RATHER THAN GENERAL POPULATION THAT ANYONE TAKING PART IN ROUNDUP AND DEPORTATION WILL BE TREATED AS WAR CRIMINAL (D) STALIN SHOULD BE APPROACHED TO ISSUE SIMILAR WARNING TO HUNGARY (E) DEATHCAMPS AND RAILWAYLINE LEADING TO BIRKENAU SHOULD BE BOMBED. SUMMARY ENDS SECRETARY OF STATE HAVE US VERY SYMPATHETIC HEARING. EXPRESSED SERIOUS MISGIVINGS REGARDING ANY PROPOSAL OR NEGOTIATIONS. WAR CABINET'S SUGGESTIONS REGARDING BRANDT MISSION AND OTHER PROPOSALS FOR ACTION HAVE BEEN COMMUNICATED MOSCOW WASHINGTON REPLIES OUTSTANDING. PROPOSAL REGARDING BADER'S GOING BUDAPEST WILL HAVE TO BE SUBMITTED TO CABINET. PROMISED RECOMMEND APPROACH TO STALIN ALREADY ASKED AIRMINISTRY EXPLORE POSSIBILITY BOMBING CAMPS WILL NOW ADD RAILWAYS. ALL OTHER POINTS WOULD BE CONSIDERED

SHERTOK.

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TO A.E. 43

6/7/44

AIDE-MEMOIRE.

1) According to messages from the responsible Jewish group in Budapest which have reached representatives of the Jewish Agency in Istanbul, Geneva and Lisbon, 400,000 Hungarian Jews have already been deported to the death-camps. The Geneva message states that most transports have gone to Birkenau in Upper Silesia, where there are four crematoriums with a capacity for gassing and burning 60,000 a day, and where, in the course of the last year, over 1,500,000 Jews from all over Europe are reported to have been killed. In and around Budapest there are still over 300,000 Jews, awaiting their doom. According to the Istanbul message their deportation was to have started this week.

2) It would thus appear that the stage of temporising, in the hope of prolonging the victims' lives, is over, and some definite steps must immediately be taken if the admittedly remote chances of saving the remnants of Hungarian Jewry is not to be missed. We realize that our proposals for action are unorthodox, and perhaps unprecedented. But we consider them warranted by the present tragedy, which is also without its parallel or precedent.

3) We have already proposed that

- (a) an intimation should be given to Germany that some appropriate body is ready to meet for discussing the rescue of Jews.
- (b) a representative of the American War Refugee Board, if necessary seconded by a British official, should be ready to meet at Istanbul a member of the Nazi group in Budapest, to explore possibilities of rescue.
- (c) Joel Brandt, and if only possible, his former escort, should be allowed to return to Hungary; Brandt being authorized to inform the other side of the course that will have been decided upon.

4) Since the submission of these proposals, one of our friends in Istanbul, a Palestinian, has received a message from the Jewish centre in Budapest urging him to come to Budapest for a discussion, and informing him that his safe return would be guaranteed. While fully realizing the risks involved, we would submit that he should be allowed to proceed, preferably together with Joel Brandt.

5) That any Gestapo offer to release Jews must have ulterior motives - avowed or hidden - is fully appreciated. It is not, however, improbable that in the false hope of achieving those ends, they would be prepared to let out a certain number of Jews - large or small. The whole thing may
/bell

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...2..

boil down to a question of money, and we believe that the ransom should be paid.

6) Apart from the question of Joel Brandt's mission, we would make the following urgent suggestions:

- (a) that the Allies should publish a declaration expressing their readiness to admit Jewish fugitives to all their territories, and stating that they have in this the support of neutrals (Switzerland, Sweden, Spain, and possibly Turkey), who are prepared to give temporary shelter to Jewish refugees from massacres.
- (b) that the Swiss Government in particular should be asked to instruct its representatives in Hungary to inform the local authorities of such readiness, and to issue such documents to the largest possible number of people as might in the interim afford them some protection.
- (c) that a stern warning to Hungarian officials, railwaymen, and the population in general, be published and broadcast, to the effect that anyone convicted of having taken part in the rounding-up, deportation and extermination of Jews will be considered to be a war criminal and treated accordingly.
- (d) that Marshal Stalin be approached to issue a similar warning to Hungary on the part of the USSR.
- (e) that the railway-line leading from Budapest to Birkenau, and the death-camps at Birkenau and other places, should be bombed.

London,
6.7.44.



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NOTE OF CONVERSATION WITH MR. A.W.G. RANDALL, FOREIGN OFFICE, 5, CLEVELAND ROW, S.W.1. ON WEDNESDAY, JULY 12th, 1944. (Mr. Henderson present during latter part of conversation).

Mr. Randall asked whether I had any fresh news, and I replied that we had no fresh news - only fresh anxiety, or rather permanent anxiety, mounting as time went on. It looked as if the whole business connected with Joel Brandt was going to fizzle out by default.

Mr. Randall said that the matter was not fizzling out; they were in consultation about it with Russia and America; they could not possibly do anything without Russia's agreement. I said that my impression of Mr. Eden's attitude was that so far as H.M.G. were concerned they agreed that Brandt should go back, but..... Mr. Randall interrupted me to say that the attitude was that while they might have no objection to Brandt's returning, the question seemed to be what Brandt could say when he did return. I said this was precisely the question I was about to raise; I had to put it to Mr. Eden. If Brandt had gone back straight from Istanbul, or even after seeing me in Aleppo, he might at that stage have reported that he had delivered his message, had seen important people about it, that the message had been transmitted to very high quarters, and the reaction would be forthcoming in due course. At the time this might have had a delaying effect. Mr. Randall expressed doubt as to whether this would have changed anything. I replied that of course this was mere assumption and it would be unwarrantable to rule out the possibility of achieving something by delaying tactics. Now, however, something very definite had to be forthcoming to have any effect at all. Mr. Randall said that what was now under consultation with Russia and America was certain démarches vis a vis the German Government through the Protecting Power, and if Brandt went back he would be authorized to say that an approach through that channel should be expected. I tried to elicit whether what the Russian Government was expected to agree to was merely the act of Brandt's return, or also the proposals to be made. Mr. Randall explained that the Russians - he apparently meant as distinct from the Americans - were not interested in the details of the proposal, but their agreement had to be obtained to the general line.

I said that the proposals were probably those mentioned by Mr. Randall the first time I saw him on the morning of my arrival, and he said it would be something on those lines. I said that we had all the time tried to meet the possibility of the German governmental machine operating on two levels: (a) the Wilhelmstrasse and (b) the Gestapo. It was quite possible that while the Gestapo was prepared to strike a bargain, the formal attitude of the Wilhelmstrasse would be a stiff negative - by agreement between them or otherwise. The whole mission of Joel Brandt, and the new suggestion that one of our men should go from Istanbul to Budapest, was definitely suggestive of this possibility. I said that though Mr. Randall had not been present at our interview with Mr. Eden, I took it that he knew of the proposal that Mr. Eder should go to Budapest. Mr. Eden had said that the matter would have to be referred to the War Cabinet. Mr. Randall said that he knew all about it, and could tell me straight away that they were definitely against it. He thought, in fact, that Mr. Eden had indicated that he did not think they could authorize anything of the sort. Since then the matter had been further considered, and a negative conclusion reached.

I said that, having felt that such would be the attitude, we wanted now to make a new suggestion, which was actually one of the two things which I had come to discuss with him. It was that Mr. Kullmann of the Inter-Governmental Committee should be asked to go to Budapest to explore the position. As his function was to deal



with the refugee problem, the objections which arose in the case of Bader's visit would not apply to him. Moreover, he had already been in parts of East Europe during the present war. If this idea were accepted, I would suggest that we should send a message to our friends in Istanbul, for communication to Budapest, to the effect that as H.M.G. was opposed to Bader's going he could not go, but that instead the competent authorities were prepared to authorize Mr. Kullmann's journey. If the reaction to that were favourable, he would proceed. I made it clear that I had not discussed this with Mr. Kullmann himself. Mr. Randall said that this was a new idea. Mr. Kullmann was personally unexceptionable, but one had to be very careful. It might after all look like "negotiating". I said it would certainly mean negotiating about saving people. Mr. Randall remarked that Mr. Kullmann was an official of the League of Nations, and this aspect of the matter had to be borne in mind. He would certainly put the suggestion up. But he did not like the idea of Kullmann's visit - if it came off - being tied up with the proposal about Bader. He thought the best course would be first to take the step that was in contemplation through the Swiss Government, and await the reaction, leaving the proposal about Kullmann's visit for a later stage. I replied that this might be all right if there were plenty of time, but the trouble was that time was desperately short. Even if there were now some lull with regard to deportations of Budapest Jews, as the lack of positive reports that that deportation had started might seem to indicate, they might be resumed any day if they had not already begun again in the meantime. Therefore all the things should be done simultaneously: the approach to the Germans through the Swiss, the notification - again through the Protecting Power - of Mr. Kullmann's readiness to come, and the message from Istanbul. With regard to the last, we need not say that Kullmann was coming instead of Bader, but simply that Bader's going was out of the question, and that the Inter-Governmental Committee was sending Kullmann.

Mr. Randall said that it might also be tied up with Brandt's return. I said that of course if Brandt could report that a man like Kullmann was ready to come, and was applying for a visa in the usual way, that would be an important card for him to play.

Mr. Randall mentioned this stage of the discussion that the Swiss Government was also very much concerned about the rescue of Jews - meaning probably that as Mr. Kullmann's Government they would not object to his going. He entered, however, a caveat against Kullmann's negotiating with the Gestapo, which I countered by again referring to the two levels theory. Mr. Randall asked with whom I thought he should get into touch? Mr. Randall asked with whom I thought he should get into touch? I said in the first instance he should meet the Jews in Hungary Budapest, and then apply to the Hungarian authorities, who would probably refer him to the Germans, whom he would then meet. Anyhow, it should be made quite clear that he was going to Budapest to concern himself with the problem of Hungarian Jewry. Mr. Randall said he could not, of course, give me any answer off-hand, but would put the matter up straight away. (He had asked me by telephone to come a little earlier than the appointed time, because he had been summoned to the Secretary of State, whom he would see immediately after our meeting).

I said that the next point I wanted to raise was the question of some "legal fiction" which would offer protection to the greatest possible number of

Jews. A suggestion had been advanced on many occasions in the past, and we now wanted to make a definite proposal that all Jews in Nazi-occupied countries should be declared to be British-protected, or Anglo-American-protected persons. Mr. Randall replied straight away that this had already been considered and rejected. I said that we fully realized the unorthodoxy of the proposal, but our people on the other side were insisting that this was the only effective way of saving them. Also we were encouraged in putting it up by the agreement of the Spanish Government to afford protection to, and admit to Spain, all Sephardi Jews who might apply for Spanish nationality in view of their Spanish origin. This went back 450 years or so. It was obviously a fiction; yet they were prepared to do it. Mr. Henderson thought that the case of the Sephardi Jews was different, because they were considered Spanish all the time. I explained that this was not so; the Jews of Bulgaria, for instance, were all Sephardim, but they had been Bulgarian citizens for generations past. The Sephardi Jews of Turkey, for instance, had been Turkish or Ottoman subjects for centuries past, and the same applied to Sephardim in other countries. Mr. Randall said that all the same the decision of the Spanish Government did not constitute a precedent, because first they were neutrals, and secondly it applied only to a very limited number. As to the proposal that the Allies should do the same, the objections were: first, that such a step would be treated with contempt by the other side; second, that to make it appear serious they would have to accompany it with an offer of exchange, for which they had no Germans available; third, that giving asylum to hundreds of thousands of people was a practical impossibility; and fourth, that it might show that the Allies were so much pre-occupied with the Jewish problem as to make the Germans feel that this was an extremely important and vulnerable point, so far as the Allies are concerned, with the result that they would put the screw on even harder. I said I found it difficult to see how much harder the Germans could put on the screw, after all that had happened, and added that I quite saw that the Allies had many things to consider, but that from the point of view of Jewish lives, there was absolutely nothing to lose.

Mr. Randall said that he would not, of course, take upon himself to give me an official answer, but I could take it from him that the matter had been considered, and decided in the negative.

As he had then to leave for the Secretary of State's office, the discussion terminated. He again said he would put up the suggestion about Kullmann, and would let us know.

I said we were also anxiously awaiting the decision about Joel Brandt, and pointed out that if it were decided to let him go back, we would have to meet and see on what terms, after which it would be for us to decide whether, in the circumstances, we could advise him to return.

The conversation lasted twenty minutes.

M.S.

London,
13.7.44.

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FOREIGN OFFICE, S.W.1.

(NR 102/10/9)

15th July, 1944.

Dear Mr. Shertok,

Please refer to Mr. Linton's letter to Walker, JL/284 of 5th July about the invitation to Mr. Bader to visit Hungary.

I have to inform you that after the most careful consideration His Majesty's Government have decided that they could not agree to Mr. Bader's proposed journey to Hungary which, it is felt, would have no practical value but on the contrary would be open to the most undesirable interpretations.

I am to add, with reference to Dr. Weizmann's latest appeal to the Secretary of State, that his suggestions regarding bombing are receiving attention with the appropriate authorities, and that the suggestion of a special approach to the Soviet Government has been accepted, and that a personal appeal has been made from Mr. Eden to Mr. Molotov.

I should be grateful if you would inform Dr. Weizmann accordingly.

Yours sincerely,

Signed.....A.W.G. RANDALL.

M. Shertok, Esq.,
The Jewish Agency for Palestine,
77, Great Russell Street, W.C.1.

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SECRET

NOTE OF INTERVIEW WITH THE RIGHT HON. ANTHONY EDEN, FOREIGN OFFICE,
THURSDAY, JULY 6th, 1944, at 5.15 p.m.

Present: The Right Hon. Anthony Eden, F.O., M.P.,
Mr. A.E. Walker (Refugee Department),
Mr. Dickson (Private Secretary).

Dr. Weismann,
Mr. Shertok.

Note: This minute falls to
be read in conjunction with
the Aide Memoire of even
date, copies of which were
left with Mr. Eden and Mr.
Walker.

Dr. Weismann opened by expressing appreciation of the tenor of Mr. Eden's statement in the House of Commons the day before on the Hungarian-Jewish massacres and of the reaction to it in the leading organs of the press, with which, he assumed, the F.O. had had something to do.

He said that what was going on now in Hungary did not stand repetition. When he saw Mr. Eden for the first time they thought that time might still be gained. Now the catastrophe was right on them.

Mr. Eden had before him the proposals which they had made in their interview with Mr. Hall. Since then, something new had happened. An offer had been made from the other side to one of their friends in Istanbul, Mr. Bader, to go to Budapest, guaranteeing his safe return. They hoped that Joel Brandt would be allowed to go back, and thought that it would be a good thing if Bader went with him.

Mr. Eden expressed his profound sympathy. He added that they had to be extremely careful. The enemy was obviously playing a devilish game. When he made his proposals to the Cabinet, the feeling was that he had gone too far. Moreover, they had to carry America and Russia along with them. They had been acting in unison with America throughout on this problem, but they had also to have the agreement of the Soviet Government. After the Cabinet had considered the matter, they had cabled to Moscow and were waiting for a reply.

Mr. Shertok said that the significant fact about the Bader proposal was that the matter was still alive, and that the Germans seemed prepared to strike a bargain. Of course, the question was whether it was an admissible bargain. He hoped, however, that H.M.G. fully agreed that
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all chances of rescue had to be explored. They thought that even if Joel Brandt could not return, Mr. Bader should be allowed to proceed. It might be a trap. He was prepared to take the risk. On the other hand, all it might boil down to might be a question of money. They believed that if that was so, the ransom should be paid.

Mr. Eden doubted whether that was a possible course. As to Mr. Bader's going in general, it was very questionable. His courage was to be admired, but how could they allow a British national to go into enemy territory?

Dr. Weismann interjected that Mr. Bader was a Palestinian.

Mr. Eden said that this meant an allied subject. They could not possibly agree to anything that looked like negotiating with the enemy. It was too dangerous. Anyhow, the question of Bader's going would have to be referred to the War Cabinet. As to Brandt, she intimated that H.M.G. would be prepared to let him go back, but Soviet consent was essential.

Mr. Shertok said the question was what Brandt would take with him if he went back. He feared that unless he could report that there would be a meeting, there was little point in his returning. The Germans - at any rate that particular group - seemed anxious to meet, and the whole question was whether that desire of theirs could not be used as a lever for saving Jews.

Mr. Eden referred to certain proposals which it was intended to put through the Protecting Power. (These obviously referred to the proposals mentioned by Mr. Randall in his interview with Mr. Shertok on June 28th; namely, enumeration of various rescue schemes proposed by Allies and neutrals in the past, such as admission of 20,000 Jewish children into Switzerland, a similar proposal regarding Sweden, admission of persons on "approved lists" to Palestine, etc).

Dr. Weismann ran briefly through the other items of the aide-memoire, not connected with Joel Brandt's mission.

Mr. Eden promised consideration. He was particularly impressed by the proposal that Marshal Stalin should be approached with a view to his issuing a warning to the Hungarians. He thought it was a very good idea and promised to take it up with the P.M. at once. He said that as regards bombing he had already got into touch with the Air Ministry about the bombing of death camps. He would now add the suggestion about bombing the railway.

In parting, Mr. Shertok referred to the extreme urgency of the whole matter. Mr. Eden said that they were fully alive to it, but they had to have the Russians with them. They would cable again to Moscow.

/Dr.




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Dr. Weismann said, in conclusion, that there was one conclusion to be drawn from the whole tragedy: to create a state of things which would make its recurrence impossible. He hoped that an opportunity would soon present itself of discussing this aspect of the problem with Mr. Eden.

Mr. Eden said he hoped so, too. He intimated that he fully appreciated the import of the problem.

London,
17.7.44.

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Foreign Office,
S.W.1.

40

September 1st, 1944.

My dear Dr. Weizmann,

You will remember that on the 6th of July you discussed with the Foreign Secretary the camp at Birkenau in Upper Silesia, and the atrocities that were being committed there by the Germans against Hungarian and other Jews. You enquired whether any steps could be taken to put a stop to, or even to mitigate, these massacres, and you suggested that something might be achieved by bombing the camps, and also, if it was possible, the railway lines leading to them.

As he promised, Mr. Eden immediately put the proposal to the Secretary of State for Air. The matter received the most careful consideration of the Air Staff, but I am sorry to have to tell you that, in view of the very great technical difficulties involved, we have no option but to refrain from pursuing the proposal in present circumstances.

I /

Dr. Weizmann.

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UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE



I realize that this decision will prove
disappointment to you, but you may feel fully assured
that the matter was most thoroughly investigated.

Yours sincerely,
Richard A. [Signature]

In the beginning of 1944, when there were over 700,000 Jews alive in Hungary, the Jewish Agency had put up a scheme to the British authorities which involved the dropping of hundreds of Palestinian Jews by parachute into Hungary and which, in the ^{considered} view of high British military authorities, would have been ~~instruct~~ advantageous to the Allies militarily and would have been helpful in preventing the massacre of many of the Hungarian Jews alive then. When this scheme was approved by all military authorities concerned and arrangements were initiated to carry out the scheme, the foreign colonial office interfered and for political considerations, instructed the military authorities to drop it.

[November, 1945]

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10, Downing Street,
Whitehall.

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30 October, 1944.

Dear Dr Weizmann.

I do not think that in the altered circumstances you now expect a reply to the telegram you sent me when we were in Moscow (which I mentioned the other day) about the dangers threatening the Jews in Hungary. I did however make enquiries in Moscow and have renewed them since our return home and can assure you that both His Majesty's Government and the Soviet Government have in mind the danger of new persecution in Hungary and are doing what they can to avert it.

Yours sincerely,

J. R. Jackson

Dr. C. Weizmann.

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