

BRITISH EMBASSY,
THE HAGUE.

18th July, 1950

No. 215

1091/19/50

SECRET

Sir,

I have the honour to refer to my despatch No. 141 of the 13th April 1949, and to your despatch in reply No. 286 of the 24th May 1949 about the reports of the Parliamentary Committee of Enquiry into the conduct of the Netherlands Government during the war. I now have the honour to transmit copies of the fourth part of this report, which was published on Saturday, July 15th.

This section of the report, which comprises three volumes, deals with the secret services of the Netherlands Government in London, and the contacts of that Government with the occupied territories. It therefore includes the enquiry into the circumstances surrounding the "Englandspiel", which was the subject of extensive correspondence ending with Hague Chancery's Top Secret letter 1091/10/50 of May 19th, 1950 regarding the assistance afforded by the Foreign Office to the Chairman of the Parliamentary Commission, Dr. Donker.

In view of the instructions contained in your despatch No. 286 of 1949, I do not propose to have this report translated here, and in the time available since its publication it has not been possible to give it any detailed examination. I enclose a copy of the very brief summary of the report published in the Netherlands Press Agency Bulletin, in which emphasis is placed on the Foreign Office statement of the 14th December, 1949. This is the document which, in its final form, was handed to

/Dr. Donkey

The Honourable

K.G. Younger, M.P.

Dr. Donker on January 28th of this year. The English and Dutch texts will be found as Annex 40 in part 4B of the Report (i.e. the penultimate pages of the volume).

3. Almost without exception the Dutch press, who had the report in their hands for three weeks before publication was authorized, have emphasized the finding of the Commission that there was no treachery, either on the British or Dutch side, among those concerned with the conduct of clandestine operations in the Netherlands, and they have all expressed the utmost satisfaction at this conclusion. The frankness and co-operative spirit of the British authorities concerned have made an excellent impression, and I have every hope that the publication of the Commission's report will put an end to the insinuations of treachery and duplicity which have, ever since the end of the war, been potentially most harmful to Anglo-Dutch relations.

4. Some tribute is, I think, due to the work performed by Dr. Donker in the preparation of this report, which certainly involved considerable intellectual powers and physical effort. In his dealings with me Dr. Donker has at all times shown himself most frank and co-operative, and this, I understand, was also true of his dealings with your Department. If it is your impression after reading this report that Dr. Donker has performed his task in a conscientious and scrupulously fair manner, it is perhaps for consideration whether it would not be appropriate for a word of appreciation to be written to him from London, or alternatively that I should be authorized to convey such a word of appreciation on behalf of His Majesty's Government.

I have the honour to be,

With the highest respect,

Sir,

Your obedient servant,

(Signature) W. G. M. Nicks

Enclosure to The Hague despatch No. 215 of 18th July, 1950

"ENGLAND SPIEL" - REPORT PUBLISHED

The Hague, July 18th. - A three-volume report, weighing twelve kilograms and containing 3,000 pages - which took three months to print - on the "England Spiel" was published here today by the Dutch Parliamentary Enquiry Commission investigating the wartime conduct of the Netherlands Government in London.

The "England Spiel" was a German counter-espionage movement in Holland during World War II, which caused the capture and death of many Dutch and British agents dropped in the Netherlands during the war.

In its report the commission unanimously rejects "the many, often fantastic and speculative theories about treachery, either on the British or on the Dutch side" in the military intelligence service and the military administration in London.

Strong Criticism

But the Dutch as well as the British intelligence services in London and the policy concerning the secret services followed by the Netherlands wartime Government in London are strongly criticised by the commission. Responsibility for the mistakes made on the Dutch side, the report states, is born by the Dutch cabinet at that time, "but especially by some of the individual Ministers."

In this connection the commission's report mentions Holland's wartime Premier Professor P.S. Gerbrandy, former Defence Minister Mr. A.C.H. Dijkhoorn, former Navy Minister Lieutenant-Admiral (ret.) J.T. Fürstner, former Foreign Affairs Minister Dr. B.N. van Kleffens and former Home Affairs Minister Mr. H. van Boeyen.

Foreign Office Report

On the initiative of the British Ambassador in the Netherlands contact was established between the Dutch Parliamentary Commission and the British Foreign Office. The British Government agreed

/that

that the commission could interview some former British secret service officials, members of the S.O.E. and S.I.S.

After consultations with Mr. C.P. Mayhew, British Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, the British Foreign Office submitted a report on December 14th, 1949, protesting against the allegation that British authorities would have knowingly sacrificed the lives of Dutch patriots for other purposes, in or outside of Holland.

In a number of points the Foreign Office report explains that - at an early stage of the war - the Germans succeeded in penetrating into the transmission system used between secret service agents in occupied Holland and the intelligence officials in Britain. Finally, the British report continues, the Germans succeeded in obtaining complete control over the system.

"Errors of Judgment"

The Foreign Office report states that one of the main causes of the penetration and of its long duration has been the failure on the British side to pay attention to the omission of security checks in the reports transmitted by some of the agents.

It has later been realized, the British report says, that the continuation of operations under those circumstances was a mistake.

In its report the Dutch Parliamentary Commission states that the only difference in opinion between the commission and the British authorities is that the British call their failures "errors of judgment", while the Dutch commission considers them "mistakes, and very serious mistakes in some cases."

Although the Dutch intelligence service in London was very much dependent on the British one, which lessened its own responsibility, the commission has found it guilty of many failures, the report says.

/s Vola. Interviews

2 Vols. Interviews

The report contains a large amount of material collected in interviews - which are given in full in two volumes - about the activities and fate of secret service agents sent from Britain to Holland during the German occupation.

The report also contains a survey of the organisation of the Dutch secret service in London and it describes in detail the two routes to and from Holland during the war, one via Sweden and one via Switzerland.

In July 1943 the Dutch secret service was reorganised and an information service was established under Major J.M. Smer. Through this organisation much better contact was established between the authorities in London and the resistance movement in Holland, the report notes.

"Highly Admirable" Work

The commission believes that the Dutch service in general succeeded in recruiting "the right type of agents" and, in the later years of the war, the Dutch resistance movement, aided by the information service in London, did "highly admirable" work.

In its conclusions the commission states that, whatever information the Germans may have obtained during the "England Spiel", they still failed in obtaining an answer to the question of Allied military invasion plans in Western Europe in general and in Holland in particular - which was the main purpose of the German counter-espionage.

BRITISH EMBASSY,
THE HAGUE.

18th July, 1950

No. 815

1091/10/50

SECRET

Sir,

I have the honour to refer to my despatch No. 141 of the 18th April 1949, and to your despatch in reply No. 286 of the 24th May 1949 about the reports of the Parliamentary Committee of Enquiry into the conduct of the Netherlands Government during the war. I now have the honour to transmit copies of the fourth part of this report, which was published on Saturday, July 15th. This section of the report, which comprises three volumes, deals with the secret services of the Netherlands Government in London, and the contacts of that Government with the occupied territories. It therefore includes the enquiry into the circumstances surrounding the "Englandspiel", which was the subject of extensive correspondence ending with Hague Chancery's Top Secret letter 1091/10/50 of May 19th, 1950 regarding the assistance afforded by the Foreign Office to the Chairman of the Parliamentary Commission, Dr. Donker.

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/Dr. Donker

The Honourable

K.G. Younger, M.P.

Dr. Donker on January 25th of this year. The English and Dutch texts will be found as Annex 40 in part 43 of the Report (i.e. the penultimate pages of the volume).

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I have the honour to be,

With the highest respect,

Sir,

Your obedient servant,

(Signed) Philip Nichols

Enclosure to The Hague despatch No. 916 of 18th July, 1950

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Registry No. WN 1051/84

TOX XXXXXX
Secret.
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OUTFILE

15th August 1950

Sir,

To: Sir P. Nichols,
The Hague.

No. 291

I was glad to see from your Despatch No. 215 (1091/12/50) of 18th July that the publication of the passage concerning the Englandspiel in the report of the Netherlands Parliamentary Commission of Enquiry had been so favourably received by the local press.

2. Presumably since the report was available to newspaper reporters for 3 weeks before its publication, it can be assumed that it contains ^{Disclosures} no startling statements other than those mentioned in the enclosure to your Despatch.

~~With these conclusions I would not wish to quarrel, and I have consequently written~~
the enclosed letter to Dr. Donker in accordance with your suggestion. I would be grateful if you would arrange for its delivery to him. I shall inform the press here that I have written an appreciative letter to the President of the Parliamentary Commission, but shall make no other comment on the matter.

I am etc.

3. ~~The above report~~ that the outcome of this affair should have been as satisfactory as it is, must, I think, be due largely to Dr Donker's ^{work} ~~work~~. I shall therefore be glad if you will let him know, from me, how glad I am that the facts of this tragic affair have been put in their true light in the report of the Commission of Enquiry, & if you will express to him my appreciation of the trouble he has taken to investigate the charges that were made, charges which, if not so fully investigated, might have

NOTHING TO BE WRITTEN IN THIS MARGIN.

Handwritten notes:
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Private Secy
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RECEIVED IN DIVISION
15 AUG 1950
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have the great harm to the relations
between the Netherlands & his country.

4. I shall let it be known here that
I am sending this message to Dr
Donker but please to make no other
comment on the report.

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NOTHING TO BE WRITTEN IN THIS MARGIN.

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OUTFILE.

No. 291
(WH 1051/8G)

FOREIGN OFFICE, S.W.1.
15th August, 1950.

SECRET

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4. I shall let it be known here that I am sending this
/message...

His Excellency

Sir Philip Nichols, K.C.M.G., M.C.,
etc., etc., etc.,
The Hague.

W

message to Dr. Donker but propose to make no other comment
on the report.

I am, with great truth and respect,

Sir,

Your Excellency's obedient Servant,

(For the Secretary of State)

St. P. Paris.

W

[This telegram is of particular secrecy and should be retained by the authorised recipient and not passed on] Cypher/OTP

FILES WN 1051/8*

FROM THE HAGUE TO FOREIGN OFFICE

Sir P. Nicholls

No.170

D.5. 9 p.m. 28th August, 1950.

28th August, 1950.

R.7. 3 p.m. 28th August, 1950.

SECRET

WN 1051 186. W (green) (Records)
Your despatch No.291: Englandspiel.

I gave your message to Dr. Donker today who asked me to express to you his appreciation.

2. Despatch follows.

B B B



WESTERN

WN1051/9/G

1950

NETHERLANDS

FROM FO minute
M. Lohand

Request by Sir Willem Strang
for a note on the background
of "Englandspiel"

No.

Dated 15. 7. 50

Received in
Registry— 11. 8. 50

REFERENCES

MINUTES

See within.
N Extract "The Times" 15/7/50

M. D. B.
29/8

(Print)

(How disposed of)

(Action
completed)

(Index)

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[Handwritten signature]

PW

Minutes

WN1051, 9

Sir William Strang has drawn attention to the report in today's "Times of the findings of the Dutch 'Committee of Enquiry' which has been investigating the conduct of the war-time Netherlands Government in London and, inter alia, of the activities of S.O.E. in Holland. He would like a note on the background to all this and our views on the findings of the Committee, etc.

2. As I understand you have been dealing with this, perhaps you would provide the note?

J.G. Tahourdin

(J.G. Tahourdin)
15th July, 1950.

Western Department.

backed Sept 17 July

A note for Sir W. Strang is

attached below

Done 18/7

Mr Campbell

Nothing to be Written in this Margin.

used only one wireless station to keep in touch with agents throughout Europe. Instead of being able to contact the home stations at any time agents were tied down to three fixed transmission periods weekly and a small number of unchangeable wavelengths which made tracing them easy.

INVASION SECRET

The committee strongly criticized the policy followed by the Dutch Government in exile. Responsibility for the mistakes made was borne by its Cabinet, but especially by Mr. Gerbrandy, the Prime Minister, Vice-Admiral Forstner, and Lieutenant-General Dijkstra, the Defence Minister, Dr. Van Kliefens, the Foreign Minister, and the Minister of Home Affairs, Mr. Van Boeyen.

The report states that after November 28, 1942, when the Dutch central information bureau was replaced by the information bureau, improvements in the service could be noted, and from that time onward most of the agents operated "very successfully." Whatever information the Germans obtained through "England Seal" in 1942 and 1943 they failed to obtain information about the invasion plans for western Europe in general and Holland in particular—the main task of German counter-espionage.—*Reuter*

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WN 1051/9 G

Imperial and Foreign

SECRET AGENTS TRAPPED

REPORT ON WAR-TIME MISTAKES

From Our Correspondent

THE HAGUE, July 14

The committee of inquiry which has been investigating the conduct of the Dutch war-time Government in London is to-morrow publishing its report on the circumstances in which a German counter-espionage organization known as the "England Spiel" succeeded in penetrating the activities of the British Special Operations Executive and thus for a time frustrated the operations of British-trained Dutch agents parachuted into Holland.

The committee firmly rejects all suggestions of treachery or other improper motives on the part of the British or the Netherlands authorities. Such theories were threatening seriously to undermine confidence both in the Netherlands and the British authorities. But the committee criticized the Netherlands secret service, the British S.O.E., and the Netherlands Government for serious mistakes. These, it says, may have been partly due to the exceptional circumstances prevailing when the services charged with the sending of agents started their activities. The committee had ample discussions in London with several officers of the British services, and there was great frankness on the British side.

The committee dismisses as unfounded the allegation that Christian Lindemann, also known as "King Kong," a resistance worker who went over to the Germans, gave them information about the Arnhem operation two days in advance.

FAKED CODE MESSAGES

THE HAGUE, July 14.—Of 60 British and Dutch agents who were parachuted into occupied Holland, 50 died in Nazi concentration camps. They were trapped by faked code messages sent to England by the "England Spiel." The committee considered as mistakes, and sometimes very serious mistakes, failures which British operatives described as errors of judgment. German counter-espionage began in March, 1942, and weaknesses in communications simplified the Germans' task. The Dutch side of "joint operations" never knew what codes agents used, and was unable to ensure that British methods were the most efficient and offered the greatest security. The S.O.E. used only one wireless station to keep in touch with agents throughout Europe. Instead of being able to contact the same station at any time agents were tied down to three fixed transmission periods weekly and a small number of unchangeable wavelengths which made tracing them easy.

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SECRET

The Englandspiel

After the war a Parliamentary Commission of ⁶Inquiry was set up in the Netherlands to investigate the activities of the Netherlands Government in London during the war. Amongst other aspects of their investigations the Commission decided to enquire into war-time sabotage and intelligence activities in the Netherlands.

2. The section of the Commission's report which has ^{just} first been published concerns S.O.E. operations up to and including 1943. These were unfortunately almost entirely unsuccessful owing to the fact that the Germans penetrated the organisation at an early date and that this was not realised in London. The Germans managed to capture some agents together with their wireless operators and "persuade" them to continue to send messages to the Headquarters in London. By this means they were able to capture agents who were landed subsequently.

3. As a result a number of Dutch patriots lost their lives and allegations have been made that although S.O.E. realised that their organisation had been penetrated they nevertheless decided, for reasons of their own, to continue sending Dutch patriots to their death.


4. The Commission itself dis-believed this fantastic theory, but various books and newspaper articles in the Netherlands kept on repeating the charge. At one time consideration was given in the F.O. to the possibility that H.M.G. might issue a public denial but on the advice of H.M.Ambassador at The Hague the idea has been left in abeyance up to now.

5. In 1948, however, a statement of the British attitude prepared by former members of S.O.E. at the request of ^{Attaché} Mr. Reilly's friends was passed unofficially by our Military at The Hague to the Commission; and early in 1949 the President, Dr. Donker, was shown a copy of Lord Selbourne's secret report of his enquiries into S.O.E. activities in Holland.

6. On 25th July 1949 Dr. Donker came to London and called at the Foreign Office at our request. He stated that he would like to meet personally various British Officers whose names had been mentioned to the Commission in the course of their enquiries and it was agreed that this would be arranged.

7. On 3rd October Dr. Donker, together with the Secretary to the Dutch Commission, again arrived in London, and between 3rd and 10th October they interviewed 10 members of the organisations concerned and were received twice by the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, {then Mr. Mayhew}. Dr. Donker was well satisfied with these interviews but asked a few supplementary questions the answers to which were sent to him via the Embassy in The Hague. A revised version of

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the Statement referred to in paragraph 5 above, amended so as to make it suitable for publication, should the Commission decide to publish it in their report, was likewise transmitted to H.M. Ambassador for delivery to Dr. Donker - see Flag A.²

8. The Commission's report has now appeared, but it is understood to be over 3,000 pages long and we have not yet received a copy from The Hague. At present, therefore, the only information we have about it is contained in various newspaper articles which are based on a brief summary of the Commission's conclusions issued by Reuters on 15th July, but we have been told by H.M. Embassy at The Hague that we may expect a report on the subject about the end of this week.

Conclusions

9. Unless the report itself differs materially from the Reuter message the result of the enquiry can be considered satisfactory from the point of view of H.M.G. The suggestion that we were knowingly handing over Dutch patriots to the Germans has been categorically refuted by the whole of the Commission. Moreover, the Commission specifically pays tribute to the help they received from H.M.G. over the enquiry and to the fact that all their questions were answered frankly.

On the other hand the Commission find that there is a certain amount of truth in the allegations that the operations were negligently and inefficiently handled; but in view of paragraphs 8 - 10 of the Statement at Flag A we can hardly take exception to this criticism. The point that the press seem to have seized upon is that the S.O.E. officers in their evidence ascribe the failure of the operations to errors of judgment, whereas the Dutch Commission ascribe the failure to grave mistakes.

10. It is recommended that before giving guidance to the press here, who have already been making enquiries of the News Department, we should await the report promised by H.M. Embassy at The Hague which will doubtless contain some indication, which would be useful to us, about the reception which the

Commission's report has had in Holland.

Sir W. Stans

P. Pares

(P. Pares)
18th July, 1950.

Malver
18.7

Thank you.

W.S.
19/7

WESTERN

WN1051/G
/10

10. 1950

NETHERLANDS

FROM Sir P. Nichols
The Hague

No. 263
Dated 1091/17/50
Received in Registry— 28-8
30-8

Comments on a conversation with Dr Donker who expressed his thanks for the message of appreciation for the help given to him during enquiries into 'Englandspiel'.

REFERENCES

WN1051/86

MINUTES

On receipt of telegram no 107 (entered WN 1051/4/5) News Department informed the Press Agency that the report had now been examined and that a message from the Secy. of State had been sent thanking Dr. Donker for the trouble he had taken in examining the false allegations made against H.M.S.

(Print)

(How disposed of)

The present message from Dr. Donker should be passed on to the Ritz's hands who were largely responsible for arranging Donker's interview. Perhaps S.D.S. could do this.

(Action completed)

LR
6/9

(Index)

WJ

Mason
7/9

P.O.S. Dept.

38679

→ The

The S/S may like to see para 2
of the despatch in which the Ambassador records
that Dr. Bonkers asked him to let the S/S
know how much he (Dr. Bonkers) appreciated the
S/S's message.

Paris 2/9

My dear General

S/S

Englandspiel.

Sir Philip Nichols was instructed on the 15th August (Flag A) to express to Dr. Donker the Secretary of State's appreciation of the part he played in this matter.

Sir Philip did so on the 28th August (Flag B). Dr. Donker expressed his sincere thanks, and asked Sir Philip to let the Secretary of State know how much he had appreciated his message.

G.P. Young

(G.P. Young)
5th September, 1950.

*Private Secretary
JWS 5/9*

*M. A. C. H.
5/5*

of dealing with the various charges of weakness etc.
made in connection with the Englandspiel, was by means
of a straightforward and thorough enquiry, and that
the results achieved seemed to justify this view. He

/also

The Right Honourable

Ernest Bevin, M.P.,

etc., etc., etc.



BRITISH EMBASSY,
THE HAGUE.

28th August, 1950

No. 263 ✓

1091/17/50

SECRET

WN 1051
10

WN 1051/8G

Sir,

As reported in my telegram No. 170 of today's date I gave Dr. Donker this afternoon the message contained in paragraph 3 of your despatch No. 291 (WN 1051/8G) of the 15th August.

2. When I had given him this message Dr. Donker expressed his sincere thanks and asked that I should let you, Sir, know how much he had appreciated its contents. He added that in his view the publication of the passage in the Parliamentary Commission's report on the Englandspiel had effectively quietened all rumours on this subject in the Press of both countries. I replied that that too was my own impression, and that it was a very satisfactory conclusion to his labours.

3. In the course of conversation Dr. Donker stated that it had always been his opinion that the only method of dealing with the various charges of treachery etc. made in connection with the Englandspiel, was by means of a straightforward and thorough enquiry, and that the results achieved seemed to justify this view. He

/also

The Right Honourable

Ernest Bevin, M.P.,

etc., etc., etc.



also stated that he had been much impressed by the frank and helpful attitude which had been adopted by those British officers and officials with whom he had been put into contact in London. One and all had answered the questions he had put to them in a most straightforward and candid manner, and this had been a great help to him in his enquiries. I told Dr. Donker that I would pass this tribute on and that I was sure it would be appreciated.

4. Finally, I told Dr. Donker that you would let it be known that you had sent this message, but that you did not propose to make any other comment on the report of the Parliamentary Commission of Enquiry.

I have the honour to be,

With the highest respect,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

Philip Nichols
