

Dutch Hospitality

The 1952 German-Jewish-Israeli Negotiations amid Post-Holocaust and Post-Imperial Tensions

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In March 1952, representatives of the Federal Republic of Germany, Israel and the Conference on Jewish Material Claims against Germany (JCC) met in a secret location in the Netherlands to negotiate about reparations (*Wiedergutmachung / shilumim*). This was the first official meeting between German, Jewish and Israeli representatives in the aftermath of the Holocaust, and it took place in Wassenaar. Based on diplomatic, intelligence and police archival sources, in combination with oral history interviews and news reports, this article examines the Netherlands' involvement in hosting these negotiations. It illuminates the circumstances leading to the Dutch assent to hosting these talks and demonstrates the crucial importance of the Dutch intelligence and police forces in protecting the safety of the negotiators from terror attacks.

In maart 1952 ontmoetten vertegenwoordigers van de Bondsrepubliek Duitsland, Israël en de Conference on Jewish Material Claims against Germany (JCC) elkaar op een geheime locatie in Nederland om te onderhandelen over herstelbetalingen (*Wiedergutmachung / shilumim*). Deze eerste officiële bijeenkomst van Duitse, Joodse en Israëlische vertegenwoordigers in de nasleep van de Holocaust vond plaats in Wassenaar. Op basis van zowel bronnen van diplomatieke, politieke en inlichtingendiensten, als mondelinge getuigenissen en nieuwsberichten wordt in dit artikel de Nederlandse betrokkenheid bij de organisatie van deze onderhandelingen onderzocht. Het licht de context toe waarin Nederland toestemde om het gastland voor deze bijeenkomst te worden en het toont aan dat de Nederlandse inlichtingen- en politiediensten van cruciaal belang waren voor het beveiligen van de onderhandelaars tegen terreuraanvallen.

On the morning of Tuesday 4 March 1952, Israel's Minister to the Netherlands, Michael Amir, entered the office of Middle East expert Cornelis Adriaanse at the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He had a delicate and important question to ask. Could he rely on the 'hospitality' of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, he inquired, to host the negotiations that were about to take place between representatives of the Federal Republic of Germany, of the Jewish Claims Conference (JCC)¹, and of the State of Israel?² Given the sensitive topic, Amir asked that the Dutch authorities would keep the matter 'completely secret', avoiding any communication to 'the public, the press and radio'.³ These talks regarded the amount that Germany should pay to Israel and the JCC in the aftermath of the Holocaust. By the end of the week, after confidential discussions, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs confirmed to Amir's deputy, Daniel Levin, that the Netherlands were indeed willing to host the meetings.⁴ Two weeks later, Israeli, JCC and German representatives met in an official capacity for the first time since the end of the Second World War to begin their round of negotiations. They did so in secret, in the elegant and imposing Kasteel Oud-Wassenaar.

Those negotiations, and the agreement that followed, made history. Legal scholars, historians and international relations experts have crafted a rich and diverse literature unearthing much of what was discussed between the negotiators and chronicling the tortuous path to the signing of the so-called Luxembourg Agreement in September 1952, named after the location of its signature ceremony.⁵ By signing this unprecedented agreement, Germany committed to supply Israel with goods valuing DM 3.5 billion over

1 The Conference on Jewish Material Claims against Germany is a nonprofit organisation created in 1951 by the representatives of 23 Jewish organisations to pursue material compensation for Holocaust survivors. On the history of the JCC see Ronald W. Zweig, *German Reparations and the Jewish World: A History of the Claims Conference* (London 2001 [1987]) and Rachel Blumenthal, *Right to Reparations: The Claims Conference and Holocaust Survivors, 1951-1964* (Lanham 2021).

2 National Archives The Hague (hereafter NA), 2.05.117 inv. nr. 3940, Memorandum: 'onderhandeligen Duitsland-Israël', Hr. Cornelis Adriaanse, 4 March 1952. All translations from Dutch, French, German and Hebrew are my own, unless I refer to sources that have already been published in translation. In the transliteration of names of persons and locations from Arabic, Hebrew and German, I have chosen to use the

transliterations prevalent in common English usage for the sake of clarity.

3 NA 2.05.117 inv. nr. 3940, Memorandum.

4 NA 2.05.117 inv. nr. 20788, Codetelegram, Zeer geheim, Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, 7 March 1952.

5 Poignantly recounted in Dan Diner, *Rituelle Distanz: Israels deutsche Frage* (Munich 2015). A seminal work on the negotiations is: Nana Sagi, *German Reparations: A History of the Negotiations* (Jerusalem 1980). Other works on the consequences of such negotiations, and about German-Jewish-Israeli relations more broadly, include: Inge Deutschkron, *Israel und die Deutschen: Das schwierige Verhältnis* (Cologne 1983); Niels Hansen, *Aus dem Schatten der Katastrophe: Die deutsch-israelischen Beziehungen in der Ära Konrad Adenauer und David Ben Gurion* (Düsseldorf 2002); Yeshayahu Jelinek, *Deutschland*



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Michael Amir (1893-1954), Israel's first representative to the Benelux countries (1949-1950) and later Israel's Minister in the Netherlands (1950-1954). Photograph taken on 31 October 1950 in the Netherlands. © Nationaal Archief/Collectie Spaarnestad Photo/ANP N. SFA004005590.

twelve years, and to pay DM 450 million destined to the Claims Conference. But within such a broad and varied body of works, the Dutch location of that first encounter between German, Jewish, and Israeli representatives is always mentioned just in passing, as if the Netherlands were the most obvious choice of location to organise such a delicate negotiation. This, however, was far from the case.

Why did the Netherlands agree to host these negotiations in the first place and with what consequences? To a surprising degree, this question remains unanswered. New evidence presented in this article allows us to comprehend the Dutch foreign policy considerations prior to hosting the German-Jewish-Israeli negotiations, as well as the measures put in place by the Dutch Foreign Ministry, domestic intelligence services and police authorities while monitoring the safety of the negotiators against the threats that they faced.

These talks would have been complex, ground-breaking, and difficult, regardless of the location in which they were conducted, of course. And flipping the perspective to examine what was happening outside, and around, the negotiations room by no way means to detract from the study of the topic of those talks: the process of negotiating reparations (*Wiedergutmachung / shilumim*) in the aftermath of the Holocaust.⁶ But the evidence available in Dutch diplomatic, intelligence and police archives about them also poignantly illustrates the intricate nexus between the local and global dimensions of those negotiations. In other words, those talks did not take place in a vacuum: the wide web of international diplomatic, police and intelligence cooperation behind the scenes was crucial. Moreover, the efforts of the Dutch Foreign Ministry, intelligence service and police authorities entailed cooperation and information exchange with the Israeli authorities and also with German, British, French, Swiss and Belgian representatives.

Taking stock of the historiography on the role that the Dutch played ‘in the world’⁷, this article also shows just how much, in turn, the world

and Israel, 1945-1965: Ein neurotisches Verhältnis. Studien zur Zeitgeschichte 66 (Munich 2004). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783486594584>; Norbert Frei, José Brunner, and Constantin Goschler (eds.), *Die Praxis der Wiedergutmachung: Geschichte, Erfahrung und Wirkung in Deutschland und Israel*. Beiträge zur Geschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts 8 (Göttingen 2009); Carole Fink, *West Germany and Israel: Foreign Relations, Domestic Politics, and the Cold War, 1965-1974* (Cambridge 2019). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781139871792>; Lorena De Vita,

Israelpolitik: German-Israeli Relations, 1949-1969. Key Studies in Diplomacy (Manchester 2020).

6 In this article I employ the terms ‘reparations’, ‘Wiedergutmachung’ and ‘shilumim’ interchangeably because doing so conveys the language of the contemporaries. These terms, however, are not synonymous. See for instance Alexander Frohn (ed.), *Holocaust and Shilumim: The Policy of Wiedergutmachung in the Early 1950s* (Washington 1991) 2.

7 Duco Hellema, *Nederland in de wereld: De buitenlandse politiek van Nederland* (Houten 2014).

was present in the Netherlands in the early 1950s – including the tensions characterising the post-Holocaust era and the demise of empire. The article begins by analysing the international political context in which the Dutch authorities agreed to hosting the talks in Wassenaar in the first place. It then moves on to examine the precautions put in place by the Dutch diplomatic, intelligence and police authorities, and their efforts to protect the safety of all those involved in the negotiations. These include the investigations into a letter bomb addressed to the negotiators, intercepted just in time thanks to the sharp eye of Ms. Unkel, the secretary of the German delegation. Indeed, as the talks unfolded, intelligence and police cooperation became ever more important.⁸

This article draws upon British, German, Israeli, French and Swiss sources but it relies especially on files of the Dutch diplomatic, intelligence and police archives. It is based on the triangulation of files from national archives and local police archives with sources from the international press of the time and oral history interviews with some of the participants who took part in those difficult negotiations. In the course of the research I have requested, and partially been granted, access to files whose contents remain classified. These files include information that cannot be published, nor referenced directly. Nonetheless, in the course of the research I thought it crucial to consult these documents in order to try and ensure that the findings presented in this article, based on those files that can be accessed and quoted, are not contradicted by documents that are still classified.⁹

The (inter)national context

The meeting of 4 March 1952 between Amir and Adriaanse was not the first time in which the question of the German reparations to Israel was discussed between Israeli and Dutch statesmen. In fact, representatives of the then very young State of Israel had first approached the Dutch authorities in March 1951 to explain why they were seeking ‘reparation’ from the Federal Republic of Germany. By that point, Israel had reached out, twice, to the United States, the United Kingdom, France and the Soviet Union – the four occupying powers of defeated Germany.

The memorandum sent to these countries read: ‘A crime of such vast and fearful dimension [the Holocaust] cannot be expiated by any measure of material reparation. [...] No indemnity, however large, can make good the loss

8 NA 2.05.117 inv. nr. 20788, Moshe Sharett (Hakirya) to Dirk Stikker (The Hague), 29 April 1952.

9 Following the example of Christopher Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm: The Authorized History of MI5* (London 2010) XXI. For relevant

methodological considerations see for instance Gerald Hughes, Peter Jackson and Len Scott (eds.), *Exploring Intelligence Archives: Enquiries into the Secret State* (New York 2008).

of human life and cultural values or atone for the suffering and the agonies of the men, women and children put to death by every inhuman device'. Yet the memorandum also reflected: 'The dead cannot be revived. Their torment cannot be undone. This much, however, can be demanded: that the German people be required to restore the stolen Jewish property and to pay for the rehabilitation of those who survived'.¹⁰

On 29 March 1951, Amir wrote to Dutch Foreign Minister Dirk Stikker to officially inform the Kingdom of the Netherlands of the contents of the memorandum. 'I have the certainty', he stressed, 'that, on the occasion of the elaboration by the four Great Powers of the statute of Germany, the Netherlands will not fail to be consulted'.¹¹ Originally approved in April 1949, the Occupation Statute outlined the 'powers to be retained by the Occupation Authorities' and the responsibilities that fell onto the Germans.¹² Two years on, with the intensification of the Cold War and given the West German demands for greater say in both domestic and international affairs, the Allies planned to revise the statute. This, however, led to fears, in Israeli and Jewish circles, that the question of the reparations that Germany owed to the Jews would be dismissed during the talks on the revision of the Occupation Statute. In particular, Jewish and Israeli representatives demanded that, in any new agreement between Germany and the Allies, the supervision of restitution of property would remain in Allied hands; that Germany be obligated to implement, rapidly, the legislation regarding property restitution, and that the indemnification laws enacted by the Allies would be extended.¹³

The Netherlands had not only suffered under occupation by Nazi Germany, it also spoke with 'a voice of great authority in international politics' stemming from its 'geographical position', its 'social stability' and 'the eminent value of the [Dutch] statesmen', as Amir put it.¹⁴ A few days later, the Dutch Consulate in Manila also received a copy of the Israeli memorandum to the four powers, just as the Philippines were making their case for reparations from Japan. The accompanying Israeli communiqué read: 'Although no monetary compensation will ever bring back to life the brutally murdered citizens of nations which fell victims of aggression, the parallel claims by the State of Israel and the Republic of the Philippines, demonstrate their firm belief that those who have brought so much misery to the world, must not

10 Israel Legation, *The Israel Claim for Reparations from Germany: Identical Note to the Occupying Powers* (London 1951).

11 NA 2.05.117 inv. nr. 3940, Amir (Israel Legation in The Hague) to Stikker (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Hague), 29 March 1951.

12 'Occupation Statute Defining the Powers to Be Retained by the Occupation Authorities. [Washington, 8 April 1949]', in: Charles S.

Sampson (ed.), *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1949, Council of Foreign Ministers; Germany and Austria, Volume III* (Washington 1975) 179. Available at: https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1949v03/pg_179 (accessed in May 2022).

13 Sagi, *German Reparations*, 51.

14 NA 2.05.117 inv. nr. 3940, Amir to Stikker.

be permitted to rebuild their economy at the expense of nations they have treacherously attacked and plundered, without contributing to the recovery of their victims'.¹⁵

The Dutch response to the communication about the Israeli reparations claims against Germany was encouraging enough. The Director General for Political Affairs at the Foreign Ministry replied towards the end of April, confirming that 'the Government of the Netherlands has a keen interest in the subject of the aforementioned Memorandum'.¹⁶ On their part, the three Western powers replied to the memorandum exhorting Israel to enter into a direct dialogue with the Germans.¹⁷ Eight months later, in a speech to the German Parliament (*Bundestag*) in December 1951, West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer signalled his intention to go ahead with talks on the question of reparations, or *Wiedergutmachung*.¹⁸

Once the prospect of direct negotiations between Germany and Israel became concrete, the necessary preparations got under way to lay the grounds for the meeting. These did not just revolve around the fine-tuning of the political, moral and legal grounds on which to base the Israeli request, but they also involved important practical questions, such as: where would be an appropriate place to negotiate?

By that point, in the Netherlands, the memory of wartime suffering that had followed the German occupation was only just beginning to fade. The Jewish population of the Netherlands had been exterminated with a thoroughness that outdid the numbers of every other Western European country, with only 27 percent of the population that the Nazi authorities considered to be 'fully Jewish' in 1941 surviving the Holocaust in the Netherlands.¹⁹ At the end of the Second World War, the Dutch were reduced to 40 percent of their pre-war rail, road and canal transport; the country had lost 219,000 hectares of land, as well as the strategic port of Rotterdam. In

15 NA 2.05.117 inv. nr. 3940, Communiqué of the Consulate of Israel, Manila, 3 April 1951; forwarded to the Dutch Foreign Ministry in The Hague on 13 April 1951.

16 NA 2.05.117 inv. nr. 3940, DGPZ to Michael Amir (Israel Legation), 23 April 1951.

17 The Soviet Union did not formally respond to the memorandum. On the Soviet attitude and how this impacted the East German-Israeli relationship in the early years, see Angelika Timm, *Hammer, Zirkel, Davidstern: Das gestörte Verhältnis der DDR zu Zionismus und Staat Israel* (Bonn 1997) 133ff. For relevant primary sources, see: *Documents on Israel-Soviet Relations, 1941-1953*, Vol. II (London 2000).

18 German Parliament, '165. Sitzung', 27 September 1951. Available at: <https://dserver.bundestag.de/btp/01/01165.pdf> (accessed in March 2022).

19 Marnix Croes, 'The Holocaust in the Netherlands and the Rate of Jewish Survival', *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 20:3 (2006) 474-499. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/hgs/dclo22>. For a broad overview, see the dated but still relevant study by Loe de Jong, *The Netherlands and Nazi Germany* (Cambridge 1990). For an assessment of the memory of Jewish persecution in the Netherlands, see Ido de Haan, *Na de ondergang: De herinnering aan de Jodenvervolging in Nederland 1945-1995* (The Hague 1997).

the last year of the war, pervasive hunger had led to the starvation of 16,000 people, and as of 1945 some 60,000 Dutch children remained orphans.²⁰ It is therefore hardly surprising that the Dutch foreign political attitude vis-à-vis Germany in the wake of the war had been in favour of seeing the Germans pay some form of retribution to the Netherlands. Dutch Foreign Minister Eelco Nicolaas van Kleffens, for example, who had carried on through the war with the government-in-exile in London, was an adamant proponent of annexing German territory. This plan was indeed executed in 1949 under the aegis of his successor, Pim van Boetzelaer van Oosterhout. With the onset of the Cold War, however, the reconstruction of West Germany became the paramount Allied priority. In the years of the premiership of Louis Beel (1946-1948), the Federal Republic of Germany and the Kingdom of the Netherlands quietly and slowly moved towards forging closer ties – a process of reconciliation that would turn out to be crucial for both countries.²¹

However, if the relations with Germany – at least at the official level – were gradually improving by the beginning of the 1950s, other areas of the world posed complex political challenges to the Netherlands. The Middle East was certainly one of these. The Hague's main focus should be on maintaining good relations with the Arab states, or at least so insisted Minister Van Boetzelaar at the turn of the decade. The Netherlands had to be especially careful in its dealings with the Israelis.²² The caution advocated by the Foreign Ministry stemmed in particular from the recent blow that the Arab states had given to the Netherlands during the Indonesian War of Independence. While much of the literature on Indonesian independence focuses on the role of the United Nations in supporting the cause, the UN would hardly have taken up Indonesia's case in plenary debates nor created the Committee of Good Offices on the Indonesian Question without the Arab world's early and crucial support for Indonesian self-determination.²³ In November 1946, the Council of the Arab League had recommended that its members 'recognize Indonesia as an independent sovereign state', and so they did.²⁴ On 10 June 1947, Egypt had become the first country to grant *de facto* recognition to Indonesia. Soon thereafter, Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq acknowledged Indonesia as a sovereign state in June and July 1947, with Saudi Arabia and Yemen following suit the next year.²⁵

20 Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (London 2010).

21 Friso Wielenga, *Vom Feind zum Partner: Die Niederlande und Deutschland seit 1945* (Münster 2000).

22 Peter Malcontent, *Een open zenuw: Nederland, Israël en Palestina* (Amsterdam 2018) 44.

23 Contrast Alastair M. Taylor, *Indonesian Independence and the United Nations* (London

1960) with Kevin W. Fogg, *Indonesia's Islamic Revolution* (Cambridge 2020). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108768214>.

24 Fogg, *Indonesia's Islamic Revolution*, 207; See also Rizal Sukma, *Islam in Indonesian Foreign Policy: Domestic Weakness and the Dilemma of Dual Identity* (New York 2003) 27ff.

25 This streak of recognitions marked the success of a diplomatic and public relations strategy that

When the UN Security Council deliberated in 1947 over the Indonesian request to participate in Council discussions on the Indonesian question, the Dutch representative's point that the request could not be admitted as Indonesia was 'not a sovereign and independent state generally recognized as such' was quickly defeated.²⁶ With eight countries in favour and three against, the Council voted otherwise because, after all, 'a number of other states' already 'had extended such [de facto] recognition' to Indonesia.²⁷ In other words, the series of bilateral treaties concluded between Indonesia with countries of the Arab Middle East had led to a visible and painful political defeat of the Netherlands at the UN – one to be remembered and never repeated, given the importance that the Dutch government attached to its presence and prestige in such crucial international fora.²⁸

The episode left a lasting impression to the Dutch Foreign Ministry, and it was also to not further alienate the Arab states, nor the Muslim populations of Southeast Asia, that the Netherlands sought the right moment to recognise the establishment of the State of Israel. Eventually, they did so *de facto* on 29 January 1949, once Egypt and Israel started armistice talks, and *de jure* on 16 January 1950, by which time Israel had signed armistice agreements with all the countries involved in the first Arab-Israeli War (1948-1949).²⁹

Albeit disagreeing on why exactly this was the case, by late 1951 Israel Minister to the Netherlands Amir and Counsellor at the Israel Legation Daniel Levin concurred that the Dutch position vis-à-vis Israel was one of overall 'hesitancy'.³⁰ Amir recounted that Dutch Foreign Ministry personnel manifested their 'clear and open' sympathy for Israel when talking to him in private, but that they also refrained from backing Israel publicly, due to

insisted on pan-Islamism, anticolonialism and Islamic brotherhood as interconnected themes in the Indonesian attempts to reaching out to the Arab League and individual Arab states. See Fogg, *Indonesia's Islamic Revolution*, 214.

26 'Resolution of August 1, 1947, Calling for Cessation of Hostilities', in: *The Yearbook of the United Nations, 1947-1948* (New York 1949) 363-364.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18356/72ee6d65-en>. See also Bart Luttikuis and Anthony Dirk Moses (eds.), *Colonial Counterinsurgency and Mass Violence: The Dutch Empire in Indonesia*. Routledge Studies in the Modern History of Asia (New York 2014).

27 'Participation by non-members of the Council', in: *The Yearbook of the United Nations, 1947-1948*, 365-366. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18356/72ee6d65-en>.

28 On the use(s) of multilateralism as an instrument for small countries, including the Netherlands, see Laurien Crump and Susanna Erlandsson (eds.), *Margins for Manoeuvre in Cold War Europe: The Influence of Small Powers* (London 2021).

29 Malcontent, *Een open zenuw*; Edgar Senne, *Een korte geschiedenis van de staat Israël en zijn betrekkingen met Nederland* (Amsterdam 1999); Robert B. Soetendorp, *Pragmatisch of principieel: het Nederlandse beleid ten aanzien van het Arabisch-Israëliësch conflict* (Leiden 1983).

30 On their disagreement, contrast for instance the reports by Michael Amir (Brussels) of 29 August 1951 and Daniel Levin (Brussels) of 4 October 1951, respectively. Both can be found in the Israel State Archives (ISA)/MFA/2537/19/a.

their wish to avoid upsetting the largely Muslim population in Indonesia.³¹ Gershon Avner, head of the Western Europe Department in the Israeli Foreign Ministry considered that the Netherlands ‘wishes to avoid complications with the Arab world’ and explained that it therefore ‘tries to take a public even-handed attitude’ when discussing issues pertaining to Israel and the Arab states.³²

The Dutch knew that the 1951 Israeli reparation claims raised protests from several Arab policy-makers, from Beirut to Damascus, who feared that any German reparations would further strengthen Israel’s military might – a prospect abhorred within Arab quarters given the recent military defeat of Arab states.³³ The question of whether, and if so how much, Israel should pay to Palestinian refugees of the 1948-1949 war – an event that came to be referred to as the *Nakba* (the ‘catastrophe’) in the Arab world and as the ‘War of Independence’ in Israel – rendered Israel’s request for reparations from Germany even more charged from an Arab perspective.³⁴

But resistance to these talks did not come only from Arab quarters. Some Israeli representatives, too, vehemently opposed the upcoming talks, horrified at the prospect that Jewish and Israeli delegations would sit down to negotiate any kind of material compensation with representatives of a country that had aimed at the total extermination of the Jews. In January 1952, when the matter was discussed in the Israeli Parliament, the *Knesset*, all members agreed that no form of atonement for the crimes committed against the Jews under the Nazi regime would ever be enough to compensate for the atrocities. However, the *Knesset* was divided among members who, while recognising that no compensation would ever constitute redress for the violence inflicted to European Jewry, were inclined to negotiate with the Germans and obtain reparations, and those who vehemently opposed the idea of demanding, let alone receiving, any form of material compensation for the Holocaust.³⁵

During the *Knesset* discussion, the leader of the Herut party, Menachem Begin, warned those who intended to vote for ‘eas[ing] the way for a spiritual cleaning’ of the (West) German state. He did so by hinting at the risk to the personal safety of those who would vote in favour of starting negotiations with the Germans – hardly a veiled threat from the former leader of the

31 ISA/MFA/2537/19/a, Michael Amir (Brussels) to the Western European Division of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, 29 August 1951.

32 Yemima Rosenthal (ed.), *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel, Volume 6, 1951* (Jerusalem 1991) Doc. 381, Gershon Avner (Tel Aviv) to Michael Amir (Brussels) and Daniel Levin (The Hague), 12 September 1951.

33 See for example Bundesarchiv-Koblenz (BAK) B126 51545, Memorandum of the Delegation of

Arab States to the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany, 31 October 1952.

34 Shahira Samy, *Reparations to Palestinian Refugees: A Comparative Perspective* (London 2010) especially 64ff. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203857038>.

35 Sagi, *German Reparations*, 29ff; David Witzthum, *Teḥilatah shel yedidiut mufla’ah? Ha-piyus ben Yisra’el le-Germanyah, 1948-1960* (Tel Aviv 2018).



Menachem Begin addresses a crowd of demonstrators protesting the 1952 negotiations with West Germany.

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Alexander Zuskind.

Irgun, who as a commander had led the Revisionist Zionist section of the underground in the violent fight to push the British out of Mandate Palestine and establish the state of Israel in the 1940s.³⁶ As the discussion was under way in the Israeli Parliament, some 15,000 demonstrators gathered around the building in protest. The demonstrations soon turned violent, interrupting the debate inside; the police only managed to regain control of the situation after five hours of rioting, arresting hundreds in the process.³⁷

In the Federal Republic, key German politicians and a large part of public opinion opposed the prospect of paying reparations to the Israelis and the JCC. Finance Minister Fritz Schäffer, among others, vehemently rejected the huge costs that signing a reparations agreement would create for the post-war German economy.³⁸ This was also a matter that worried much of the West German public. Many West German citizens did not see any need to pay restitutions to other countries while their own was still suffering the effects of a devastating war.³⁹ Given how intense and widespread the resistance against the idea of the German-Jewish-Israeli negotiations was at that time across Europe, the Middle East and beyond, the need to choose an appropriate, safe location for those talks was all the more important.

Questions of security

‘The question of security in the choice of the place was [a] very delicate matter’, recalled Morris Boukstein, one of the JCC negotiators.⁴⁰ For the Israeli and Claims Conference negotiators it had long been clear that those talks, if they

36 The Irgun Tzvai Leumi (also known as Etzel) was an underground paramilitary organisation inspired by the thought of Ze’ev Jabotinsky. Between 1931 and 1948, Irgun members carried out violent attacks and assassinations with the aim of pushing the British out of Palestine. See John Bowyer Bell, *Terror Out of Zion: The Fight for Israeli Independence* (New Brunswick 1996), or the account of the Irgun written by Begin himself, Menachem Begin, *The Revolt* (Jerusalem 1951). The quote is from Netanel Lorch (ed.), *Major Knesset Debates, 1948-1981, Volume 3* (Jerusalem 1993) 729 and 724, respectively. On Begin’s political trajectory, see Avi Shilon, *Menachem Begin: A Life* (Yale 2012).

37 Jelinek, *Deutschland und Israel*, 157ff.

38 On the London Debt Conference see Hans Peter Schwarz, *Die Wiederherstellung des deutschen*

Kredits: Das Londoner Schuldenabkommen. Rhöndorfer Gespräche 4 (Stuttgart 1982); Ursula Rombeck-Jaschinski, *Das Londoner Schuldenabkommen: Die Regelung der deutschen Auslandsschulden nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Munich 2005). For a critical assessment see Adam Tooze, ‘Reassessing the Moral Economy of Post-war Reconstruction: The Terms of the West German settlement in 1952’, *Past & Present* 210:6 (2011) 47-70. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/pastj/gtq040>.

39 Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann and Erich Peter Neumann (eds.), *The Germans: Public Opinion Polls, 1947-1966* (Westport 1981) 188.

40 Oral History Division (OHD), Avraham Harman Institute of Contemporary Jewry, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Nana Sagi interview of Morris Boukstein, 28 June 1971, 10.



Kasteel Oud-Wassenaar, where the negotiations between West German, Israeli and JCC representatives took place.

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were to take place at all, could never happen in Germany.⁴¹ It would be good to find ‘an objective location’, as Amir put it, for example in a small country like Belgium, Switzerland or the Netherlands.⁴²

By the time Amir walked into Adriaanse’s office, he had thought of a concrete location too: Kasteel Oud-Wassenaar. The imposing villa dated back to the late 1870s and had morphed into a hotel in 1905. In the early months of the German occupation of the Netherlands, Reichskommissar Arthur Seyss-Inquart himself had moved into the castle, residing there between May and December 1940.⁴³ After the end of the Second World War, the Dutch government used those premises to host prominent foreign guests.

This was also why the Israeli envoy, Michael Amir, knew the location so well – he himself had lodged there during his first official visit to the Netherlands as Israeli representative to the Benelux countries in 1949.⁴⁴ The villa was secluded enough to guarantee discretion and secrecy, while it was spacious enough to allow officers in plain clothes to wander around without being noticed.

‘We [the negotiators] were not permitted to go out [of the villa] except under the protection of the Dutch secret service [and] our mail in Wassenaar was fluoroscoped by the Dutch secret service’, JCC negotiator Boukstein remembered.⁴⁵ The local police forces (*gemeentepolitie*) in The Hague and Wassenaar coordinated most of the day-to-day security measures, including the checking of any post directed to the negotiators.⁴⁶ In a letter to his wife back home, the head of the Israeli delegation Giora Josephthal wrote that the negotiations were marked by the presence of ‘police in front of the castle, plainclothes men outside the conference room, police in the hotel lobby and all over the grounds’.⁴⁷ The Dutch military police (*Koninklijke Marechaussee*)

41 Author’s interview with Benjamin B. Ferencz, 18 February 2021.

42 NA 2.05.117 inv. nr. 3940, Memorandum.

43 R. van Lit, ‘Unsere Gäste’ in: Frederik Hazenberg et al. (eds.), *Wassenaar in de Tweede Wereldoorlog* (Wassenaar 1995) 202. For background on Seyss-Inquart’s time as Reich Commissioner of the Netherlands see the dated, but still relevant book by Henk J. Neuman, *Arthur Seyss-Inquart: Het leven van een Duits onderkoning in Nederland* (Utrecht 1967), and: Johannes Koll, *Arthur Seyß-Inquart und die deutsche Besatzungspolitik in den Niederlanden (1940-1945)* (Vienna 2015) especially 205ff.

44 See the report of the Cabinet and Protocol Division of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs 64321, 6 July 1949, available at: <http://www.stichtingargus.nl/bvd/azie/israel.pdf> (accessed in 29 April 2021).

45 OHD, Boukstein interview, 10. For an overview of the history of the Dutch intelligence and security services, see Eleni Braat, ‘Dutch Intelligence and Security Services’, in: Peter C. Oleson (ed.), *AFIO’s Guide to the Study of Intelligence* (Falls Church 2016) 661-670.

46 A task that the police was in charge of in those years, see: Jos Smeets, *De geschiedenis van de Nederlandse politie: Verdeeldheid en eenheid in het rijkspolitieapparaat* (Amsterdam 2007) 462-471.

47 Reprinted in: Ben Halpern and Shalom Wurm (eds.), *The Responsible Attitude: The Life and Opinions of Giora Josephthal* (New York 1966) 146.



Members of the Israeli and Claims Conference delegations outside Kasteel Oud-Wassenaar, 1952. © Nationaal Archief / Collectie Spaarnestad Photo, N SFA002018059, <https://beeldbank.spaarnestadphoto.com/search.pp?showpicture=165723&page=1&pos=1>.

was involved as well, especially as the negotiations progressed, by monitoring the borders of the country. It alerted the authorities to the passage of any possible suspects and worked in coordination with the domestic intelligence service (*Binnenlandse Veiligheidsdienst*, BVD), which left much of the operations to the local police forces but would keep a watchful eye on any potentially worrisome developments.⁴⁸

The Dutch Foreign Ministry and the Dutch diplomatic representatives abroad played an important role, too. From Jerusalem, on 10 March Dutch envoy Maurits van Karnebeek sent a ‘very secret’ communication which highlighted three key issues. First, the fact that the Netherlands were indeed going to host the negotiations was still ‘completely secret’, with most of the commentators believing that Brussels was going to be the destined location; second, that saboteurs would try and make the talks look ‘ridiculous’ or simply ‘impossible’ by disturbing the peace; third, Van Karnebeek reported that, in his view, such attempts at sabotage were very serious and should ‘not be underestimated’ – in The Hague, these three last words were underlined with a thick green pencil.⁴⁹

Early on 21 March, the day of the very first meeting between German, JCC and Israeli representatives in Wassenaar, the Director of the Police Department (*Bureau Kabinet van de Afdeling Politie*) of the Ministry of Justice circulated a list of potential Israeli suspects ‘who may be expected to take action in connection with the German-Israeli talks on reparations’ to both the BVD and the Foreign Ministry.⁵⁰ The list contained the names of ten men, aged between their late twenties and mid-fifties. Most of them were born in Poland, others were originally from Latvia, Romania or Israel. The majority lived in Israel, others were or had been based in France.⁵¹ In this early Cold War age of anti-communist obsession, these names and profiles were not those of the BVD’s usual suspects.⁵² The Dutch Foreign Ministry then circulated the list to the Dutch embassies and consulates in Brussels, London, Bern, Paris and Rome, asking if they had received visa requests from anyone on the list, as well as requesting the denial of any such visa should these individuals approach the respective Dutch offices abroad.⁵³ The first replies started arriving only in April. By that point, it was already almost too late.

48 Bob de Graaff and Cees Wiebes, *Villa Maarheeze: de geschiedenis van de inlichtingendienst buitenland* (The Hague 1999) 108. See also Cyrille Fijnaut, *De geschiedenis van de Nederlandse politie: Een staatsinstelling in de maalstroom van de geschiedenis* (Amsterdam 2007) 741; on the early postwar rivalry between the Rijkspolitie and KM see Smeets, *Verdeeldheid*, 443.

49 NA 2.05.117 inv. nr. 20788, Maurits van Karnebeek, 10 March 1952.

50 NA 2.05.117 inv. nr. 20788, J.P.G. Goossen (Ministry of Justice) to Herman Lefferstra (Foreign Ministry), 21 March 1952.

51 NA 2.05.117 inv. nr. 20788, ‘Afschrift’, n.d.

52 See for instance Dick Engelen, *Frontdienst: de BVD in de Koude Oorlog* (Amsterdam 2007) 19.

53 NA 2.05.117 inv. nr. 20788, Knegtmans (The Hague) to Brussels, London, Bern, Paris, Rome, 28 March 1952.



German delegation members outside Kasteel Oud-Wassenaar, 1952. © Nationaal Archief / Collectie Spaarnestad
Photo N. SFA008014886, <https://beeldbank.spaarnestadphoto.com/search.pp?showpicture=189755&page=&pos=158>.

At around 16:00 on 31 March 1952, an envelope arrived at the German Embassy in The Hague. It was sent by a certain ‘Prof. Dr. Max der Reeicher, Wittenburgw. 56, Amsterdam’. It was a light envelope, but while only 15 cents would have sufficed some 40 cents worth of stamps accompanied it – a detail which the Dutch police did not fail to notice.⁵⁴ It was addressed to the German delegation in Wassenaar. Having read this, the postal clerk at the German Embassy sent it by messenger to Hotel De Witte Brug, where the members of the delegation were staying and where Ms Unkel, the secretary, picked it up. As she was opening it, she saw a small piece of wire coming out of the envelope. Uncertain about how to handle the parcel, Unkel passed it on to Abraham Frowein, a young Foreign Ministry member of the German delegation. Just that morning, in the early hours, the Dutch police had called him to warn him about possible terror attacks against the German delegates. Frowein called the police, who arrived shortly thereafter. It soon became clear that he and Unkel had done the right thing – the examinations of the Dutch police showed that the envelope was, in fact, a parcel bomb.

The Dutch police quickly realised that the address was fabricated. In Amsterdam, there was no Wittenburgweg or Wittenburgwal, nor did any Professor Der Reeicher seem to exist in the Netherlands or elsewhere. Upon closer inspection, it appeared that the name was meant to suggest something – perhaps it was an allusion to the German word *der Rächer*, the avenger?⁵⁵

Much was unclear and the Dutch authorities were reticent in sharing details with the press. The newspapers reporting on the incident noted how ‘in German circles in The Hague people are very reserved about this matter’ and that ‘the Dutch police refuse [to provide any] information pending the investigation’.⁵⁶ Whereas the Dutch authorities wanted to keep silent about the events in public, behind the scenes the Dutch police, BVD, and Foreign Ministry had mobilised their personnel to trace and stop the attackers. Who were they? Where were they based? Would they strike again?

The parcel bomb had come accompanied by a piece of paper bearing the signature of a hitherto unknown *Organisation des Partisans Juifs* (OPJ, Jewish Partisans Association), information that the Dutch authorities did not communicate to the press. But on 1 April, the day after the Dutch police intercepted the parcel bomb, the Paris office of the North American news

54 ‘Brief met vermoedelijk explosieve inhoud in Den Haag ontvangen’, *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 1 April 1952.

55 Henning Sietz, *Attentat auf Adenauer: Die geheime Geschichte eines politischen Anschlags* (Berlin 2003) 43.

56 ‘Bompakket voor leider Duitse delegatie’, *De Tijd*, 1 April 1952.

agencies Associated Press and United Press International received a letter posted from Switzerland and signed, again, by the OPJ. It was a manifesto, written in French, stressing that the Germans should know that reparations for their crimes simply could not exist:

We are at war ... A war to the end of generations, a war that German fathers and sons will feel in their own flesh. [...] Reparations? Yes, we will pay them to you ... We have just sent you the first instalment and more will follow...⁵⁷

The OPJ's letter to the news agencies, importantly, claimed another attack. On 27 March the Munich police had obtained a parcel addressed to Adenauer, and one explosives expert, Karl Reichert, had been killed while trying to open it and three other policemen were wounded. Some four thousand people attended Reichert's funeral, which took place just as the other explosive parcel was on its way to the German delegation in the Netherlands.

(Inter)national investigations

The news of the attempted attack in Wassenaar, following the one against the Chancellor in Munich, as well as the claim of responsibility by the OPJ caused an international uproar. The Swiss Federation of Jewish Communities stressed that an Association like the OPJ did not exist in Switzerland nor, as far as they could tell, in any other country.⁵⁸ Swiss police followed the matter closely – after all, the letter had been posted to Paris from Geneva and it had apparently been written in Zurich.⁵⁹

In Germany, the editor-in-chief of the *Allgemeine Wochenzeitung der Juden in Deutschland*, Karl Marx, pointed to possible detractors of the German-Israeli talks. He highlighted the dense network of former Nazi officials now residing in Switzerland who may have staged the attack, aiming to spread false news and anti-Semitic feelings at such a delicate moment in history. He also pointed to the wealth of propaganda materials that Swedish editor Einar Åberg, a renowned anti-Semite, had recently circulated to key news agencies based in Western Europe.⁶⁰ Marx accused Åberg of holding the Jews responsible for the attempted attack on the Chancellor, in order to exacerbate the feelings of hatred towards the Jews and to sabotage the German-Jewish-Israeli negotiations.⁶¹ The *Jewish*

57 Reprinted in Sietz, *Attentat auf Adenauer*, 39.

58 'Après l'attentat contre Adenauer: Précisions de la Fédération suisse des communautés israélites', *La Suisse Libérale*, 2 April 1952.

59 'Une organisation de partisans juifs revendique dans un communiqué daté de Zurich la

responsabilité de l'attentat contre Adenauer', *La Sentinelle*, 1 April 1952.

60 'S'agit-il d'une manoeuvre antisémite?', *La Liberté*, 1 April 1952.

61 *Allgemeine Wochenzeitung der Juden in Deutschland*, 4 April 1952 and 11 April 1952.

Telegraphic Agency confirmed that international ‘Jewish organizations have no knowledge of any organizations purporting to call itself the “Jewish Partisans Association”’ and, in London, the spokesman of the Israel Legation described the dispatch of the manifesto to the news agencies as ‘the act of provocateurs, probably Nazis’.⁶² Whoever was behind the attack, it was clear that this was not the work of a lone wolf, as Dutch Attorney (*Procureur-generaal*) D.J. van Gilse emphasised. In fact, there seemed to be a concerted effort among a group of people working in different countries with the aim of stopping the talks going on in the Netherlands.⁶³

Van Gilse, at the head of the Dutch investigation into the matter, oversaw a team comprising members of the National Department of Criminal Investigation (*Rijksrecherche*) and of the municipal police of The Hague.⁶⁴ Given that the parcel bomb had not exploded, it was possible for the police to conduct investigations into how it was manufactured, and how the terrorist(s) planned it to go off when activated. Their analysis showed that the bomb was made of 30 grams of highly explosive trinitrotoluene (TNT), which was connected to a battery attached to a squib glued to the piece of wire and to some pieces of paper. Had Unkel pulled the wire or attempted to take the papers out of the envelope, she and the persons next to her would have suffered potentially mortal blows.⁶⁵

It soon became clear to the Dutch authorities that international cooperation was necessary in order to understand where those envelopes may have come from and how to prevent possible future attacks against the negotiators. In fact, the packages seemed to resemble some that the Dutch intelligence services had studied closely, just a few years prior, in 1947. That summer had been a particularly difficult one for London, marked by the series of explosive envelopes which came on the back of other violent attacks aimed at pushing the British out of Palestine.⁶⁶ What the addressees of the 1947 explosive letters all had in common was that they had held high administrative positions in Mandatory Palestine.⁶⁷

Evidence in the files of the Dutch intelligence services show that, back in the late 1940s, the Dutch had studied these devices carefully.⁶⁸ In April

62 ‘Ascribe Jewish Bombing Claim to Provocateurs’, *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, 1 April 1952.

63 ‘Politie van vijf landen speurt naar bompakket-bende’, *Overijsselsch Dagblad*, 2 April 1952.

64 ‘Ook bompakket in Den Haag’, *De Telegraaf*, 2 April 1952.

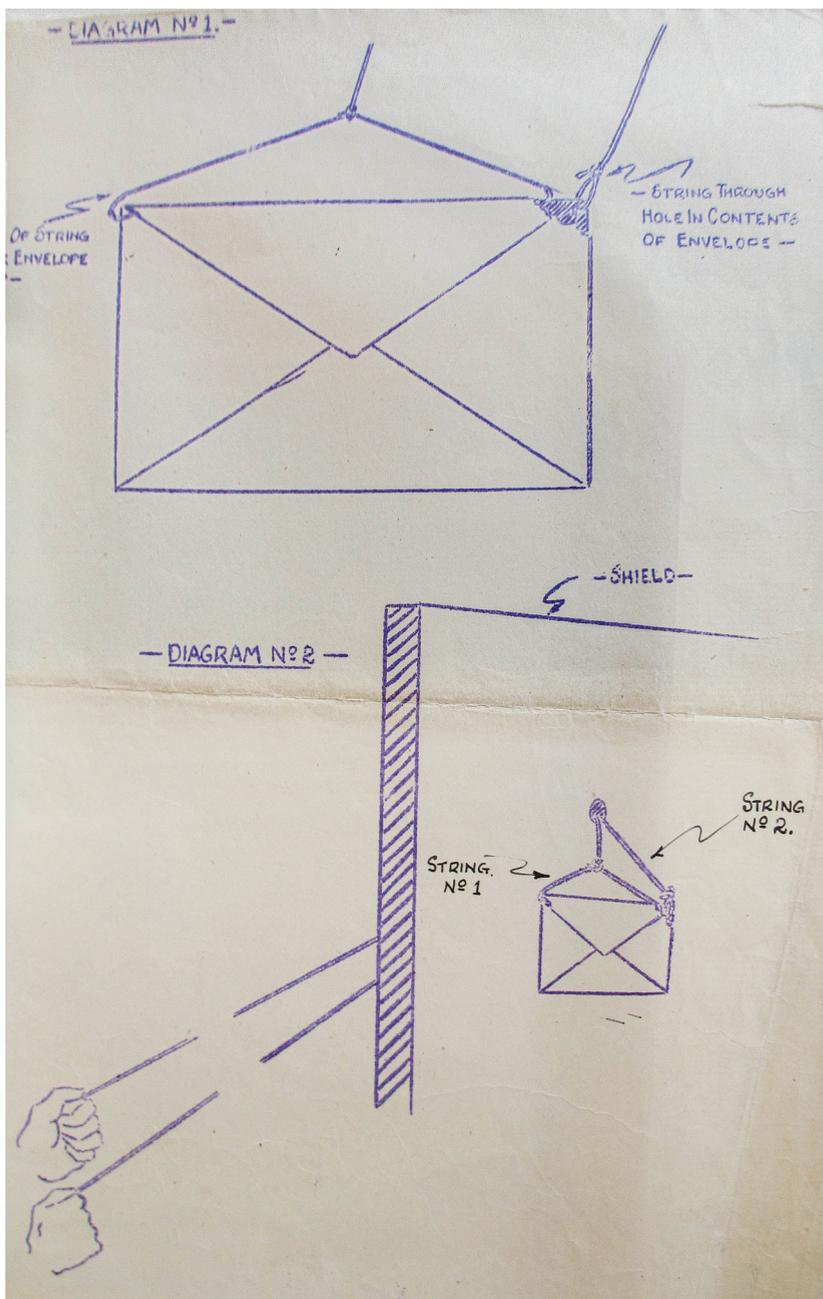
65 ‘Ook bompakket in Den Haag’, *De Telegraaf*.

66 Rory Miller (ed.), *Britain, Palestine and Empire: The Mandate Years* (London 2016 [2010]); Bowyer Bell, *Terror Out of Zion: The Fight for Israeli Independence*

(New Brunswick 1996). For the perspective of the British security service, see Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm*, 350-364.

67 See the relevant files in the British National Archives’ (PRO) Records of the Security Services: (kv) 3/67 on ‘Zionist activities’ and kv 3/440 on ‘Jewish terrorist activities in the UK’.

68 NA 2.04.127 inv. nr. 1326, ‘Gegevens betreffende de “ontploffbare brieven” welke door Joodse terroristen werden verzonden aan



▲ Instructions of the Special Branch of the London Metropolitan Police Office for the Dutch police about how to open explosive letter bombs. © Haags Gemeentearchief (The Hague City Archives), BNR 0432-01 inv. nr. 5666.

1952, they turned to the British and asked for more information. Three days after the interception of the explosive envelope, the Criminal Investigation Department (*Bureau Criminele Voorlichting*) of the Dutch Ministry of Justice sent out a request to the Special Branch of the Metropolitan Police Office in London asking ‘for a comparative survey of ... incidents of a similar character’, as well as ‘the result of [any relevant] investigations’, a list of ‘names of any suspects’, and ‘the supply of any available photographic material’.⁶⁹

The Special Branch’s response arrived two weeks later, in the form of a lengthy report including photographic materials and hand-drawn illustrations. It confirmed that the explosive envelope intercepted by the Dutch ‘appears to have contained an explosive device constructed on lines similar to those found in letters received by various persons in England in 1947’.⁷⁰ The reply also highlighted other similarities between those envelopes and ‘the current instance reported from Holland’, which seemed to point to ‘a person or persons acting on behalf of Jewish terrorists’.⁷¹ Furthermore, they included explanations about how to open such an envelope safely – ‘feel[ing] the postal packet with finger and thumb’ or with the help of a ‘wooden pencil’ or ‘string’, depending on the model and any variations of the ‘infernal machine’.⁷²

In the meantime, from Germany, the President of the then-recently created Federal Criminal Police Office (*Bundeskriminalamt*, ВКА) Hans Jess personally wrote to Dutch Police Commissioner C. van Abbenbroek asking for an ‘immediate response’ to his request for a comparative investigation of the materials gathered by the Dutch and German authorities.⁷³ Two German investigators from the ВКА’s ranks soon arrived in the Netherlands, travelling from Munich to The Hague for the first case of German-Dutch police cooperation in the post-war era. And their efforts brought about interesting results. As it quickly became clear, the typewriter used to write the address on the envelope sent to the German negotiators in Wassenaar was the same one that had been used in Munich in the attack against Adenauer, which had killed Reichert.⁷⁴

vooraanstaande personen in Engeland’, 31 May 1948, drafted at a time in which the contacts between the British and Dutch intelligence services were particularly close: Dick Engelen, *De BVD in de twintigste eeuw: Institutionele geschiedenis van de binnenlandse veiligheidsdienst 1945-2000* (The Hague 2000) 51.

69 Haags Gemeentearchief (The Hague City Archives) (HG), Gemeentepolitie Den Haag (GDH) 0432-01 inv. nr. 5666, Metropolitan Police Special Branch Report, 21 April 1952.

70 HG GDH 0432-01 inv. nr. 5666, Metropolitan Police Special Branch Report.

71 HG GDH 0432-01 inv. nr. 5666, Metropolitan Police Special Branch Report.

72 HG GDH 0432-01 inv. nr. 5666, Metropolitan Police Special Branch Report.

73 HG GDH 0432-01 inv. nr. 5666, Dr. Hans Jess to Commissaris Abbenbroek, 28 April 1952.

74 Sietz, *Attentat auf Adenauer*, 43.

The Dutch police strongly suspected the attackers to have moved from the Netherlands on to Brussels or Paris and sent off the information to both capitals.⁷⁵ Dutch frontier officers stationed along the borders with Belgium and Germany received the instruction to watch for Israeli citizens applying to enter the Netherlands via land. In addition, the Dutch General Consul in Tel Aviv suspended the issuing of all visas.⁷⁶ One week after the discovery of the explosive envelope, the French police raided the Paris headquarters of the Israeli *Ḥerut* party, as well as the apartments of several of its members, confiscating records and taking into custody five Israeli nationals. All had been members of the *Irgun* and most of them were now affiliated with *Ḥerut*. At the time, the party was headed by Begin, who had vehemently attacked the ideas of both German-Israeli negotiations and West German reparations with fierce speeches in and outside the Knesset earlier that year. On the very same day of the Paris raid, Begin presented his remonstrations to the French ambassador in Israel.⁷⁷

In the end, the only 27-year-old former *Irgun* member Eliezer Sudit was charged. Though at that time he did not admit to this, Sudit later published a diary in which he wrote that it had indeed been him who had crafted the explosive parcels sent to Germany and the Netherlands. ‘I had been a bomb-maker ... since I was fourteen’, Sudit recalled, and Begin’s passionate denunciation of the German-Israeli talks had pushed him into action.⁷⁸ Sudit spent five months in a French prison before being allowed to go back to Israel.

Meanwhile, the talks in Kasteel Oud-Wassenaar continued, on and off, well into the summer of 1952. The efforts of the Dutch authorities, maintaining an eye on the security arrangements, were recognised as being crucial to the eventual success of these deeply complicated talks. In a letter to the Dutch Foreign Minister Stikker, written towards the end of April 1952, Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Sharett reported that the Israeli delegation members had spoken to him very ‘warmly’ about the assistance that the Dutch authorities had provided them with, in particular praising the efforts of the Dutch ‘security services’, as well as the functionaries of the Dutch Foreign Ministry. ‘I know’, Sharett wrote, ‘that dozens of people have been occupied day and night with this task, not only in The Hague, but also along the country’s borders and at the General Headquarters of the Security Services, and I would be very happy if the expression of our special recognition could be passed on to them’.⁷⁹ Sharett expressed his thankfulness for ‘the way in

75 HG GDH 0432-01 inv. nr. 5666, Politie telexbericht, Hanken, 2 April 1952.

76 ‘Terrorists Balked in Israeli Parley’, *The New York Times*, 21 September 1952.

77 ‘Begin confers with French minister on expulsion of *Herut* members’, *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, 8 April 1952.

78 Eliezer Sudit, *Be-shliḥut matzpunit* (Jerusalem 1994).

79 NA 2.05.117 inv. nr. 20788, Moshe Sharett (Hakirya) to Dirk Stikker (The Hague), 29 April 1952.

which the Dutch security authorities made themselves available to the Israeli delegation and to representatives of the Israeli police, while taking extensive measures to ensure the security of our delegation and the conference itself – all of this while displaying endless ‘efficiency’ and ‘friendly courtesy’.⁸⁰

The head of the JCC delegation, Moses Leavitt, also penned his gratitude to the Dutch authorities, in a letter which expressed the ‘deep appreciation to the Netherland’s [sic] Ministry of Foreign Affairs and, through this Ministry, to the Government of your country, for the hospitality and facilities granted to the members of our Delegation’.⁸¹ He did so from Kasteel Oud-Wassenaar on 9 September 1952. The next day, in Luxembourg. Adenauer and Sharett met in the palace, le Cercle Municipal, to sign the agreement that the delegations had worked so hard to finalise.⁸²

It was only after the agreement was signed that some of the details about the wide international cooperation between diplomatic and security services leaked to the international press. Some two weeks later, a short column buried on the fourteenth page of *The New York Times* mentioned, among others, that the reporters who had been misled about the allegedly Belgian location of the negotiations had duly received an apology.⁸³

Conclusion

The German, Jewish, and Israeli negotiators who met in Wassenaar in 1952 concluded one of the most striking agreements in the history of international reconciliation in the wake of genocide and mass victimisation. Understandably, the unique and unprecedented nature of the agreement signed by Adenauer and Sharett in September 1952 has been the object of scholarly and public attention ever since. Yet the role played by the Dutch Foreign Ministry, border patrol guards, police forces, and intelligence services in safeguarding the security of the participants involved in the negotiations between German, JCC, and Israeli representatives in the Netherlands seems to have landed in the dustbin of history.

This article analysed why the talks about German-Jewish-Israeli reparations in the aftermath of the Holocaust happened to take place in the Netherlands and what consequences this had for the Dutch authorities. Besides exploring the arrangements set up at that time, this study also traced the dynamics and relations between the countries involved.

The diplomatic and security arrangements put in place in and around Wassenaar are telling of a period which was marked, at the local and global

80 NA 2.05.117 inv. nr. 20788, Sharett to Stikker.

81 NA 2.05.117 inv. nr. 3940, Moses A. Leavitt (Wassenaar) to Naboth van Dijl (The Hague), 9 September 1952.

82 Diner, *Rituelle Distanz*.

83 ‘Terrorists Balked in Israeli Parley’, *The New York Times*.

level, by tensions stemming from the aftermath of the Holocaust and the geopolitical pressures connected to the demise of empire both in the Middle East and in Southeast Asia. The Dutch hospitality and the efforts that this required in the fields of security and counter-terrorism did not go unnoticed and messages stressing the gratitude of all international parties involved kept coming in through 1952 and 1953.⁸⁴ A crucial component of such ‘hospitality’ necessitated the cooperation and communication with the Israeli police, as well as the exchange of information and materials with French, Belgian, British, Swiss and German counterparts – years before any formalisation of coordinated counter-terrorism operations.⁸⁵

The Dutch played a hitherto largely unknown role in the history of these first German-Jewish-Israeli negotiations. On so doing, they also accrued a number of advantages. These included gaining international respect for their discretion and professionalism, the view of the country as a safe location for international consultations, and experience with international collaboration in countering transnational terrorist threats.

Yet, the interpretations presented in this study are, inevitably, partial. Several sources that could shed light on these events are still classified. Further research into the diplomatic, intelligence and police archives of the countries involved is necessary to fully map a picture of the dynamics of trust and power relations between the key players presented here. Nevertheless, the fragmentary evidence available does add one piece to the complex puzzle of the post-war and post-Holocaust history, just as the explosive envelope intercepted by the Dutch with the support of the Israeli police is indicative of the feelings of rage and revenge that marked those difficult years of transition, reparation and eventual reconciliation.

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84 See for example NA 2.05.117 inv. nr. 3940, Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany to the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2 April 1952; NA 2.05.117 inv. nr. 3940, Memorandum, Schiff to Luns, 20 March 1953.

85 Beatrice de Graaf, ‘Terrorism in the Netherlands’, in: Richard English (ed.), *The Cambridge*

History of Terrorism (Cambridge 2021) 333-360.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108556248.014>;

Aviva Guttman, *The Origins of International Counterterrorism: Switzerland at the Forefront of Crisis Negotiations, Multilateral Diplomacy, and Intelligence Cooperation (1969-1977)* (Leiden 2018).

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