

EHRI Online Course in Holocaust Studies

Persecution and Deportation in Western Europe - General Introduction

NIOD collection 207: FO/SD (Foreign Office/State Department), box 63, 5403: E362443–E362447

Translation: Letter on the reactions of Dutch churches to the deportation of Jews

Confidential

To the Foreign Office in Berlin

Reich Commissioner for the Occupied Territory of the Netherlands

On the decree from 30.6.1942

The Hague, 31 July 1942

Re: Deportation of Jews

The deportation of Dutch Jews has proceeded unimpeded this week as well. Including the trains departing today, 6,000 Dutch Jews have been deported up until now. The deportation as such took place undisturbed, and there is no reason to assume that the transports dispatched in the coming weeks will encounter difficulties or disturbances.

Naturally enough, this measure did not go unnoticed in the Dutch population, and a certain disconcertment was clearly discernible for a time, particularly in Amsterdam. The English station intervened and took the opportunity to agitate. The Dutch churches of all denominations felt compelled to go to the Reich Commissioner. The Reich Commissioner took the view that, at most, the churches could stand up for Jews belonging to the Christian churches. It was intended to exempt these so-called Christian Jews from deportation on the condition that the churches would not feel compelled to take steps in support of the rest of the Jews. The Protestant churches have remained open to this line of thinking and have not arranged any demonstrations, prayers etc. in their churches. The Catholic Church however dealt with the deportation of Jews in their churches last Sunday. Allegedly, the standpoint taken by the Reich Commissioner was not known everywhere in time.

I enclose a copy of today's secret report from the commander of the Security Police and Security Service (Sicherheitspolizei und SD) to the Reich Commissioner on the incidents in the churches last Sunday (26 July 1942) and request that it be treated as strictly confidential.

The matter itself is resolved. It is not expected that the churches will cause any further difficulties.

The attitude taken by the General Secretary of the Dutch Ministry of the Interior is interesting, for although not a member of the NSB or a National Socialist, he expressed the view that this was a European problem and its implementation cannot be averted. The Dutch authorities thus, while not agreeing with the deportation of Jews, condone it without officially objecting.

Some families will be sent to the East on the next deportations.

The opinion in Jewish circles is that deportation of Jews capable of work is taking place so that they can prepare the necessary accommodation for Jews in the East.

A statement is being waited upon from the Foreign Office on the question raised in the cablegram report from 17 July 1942 – No. 250 – as to depriving Jews Dutch citizenship.

Besides the intervention of the churches, which – as I have only just heard – has resulted in placing the ca. 4,000 “Christian Jews” henceforth in a camp in Holland where they will be temporarily detained, other circles, presumably incited by the English, have circulated the smear sheet attached as enclosure 2. At present nothing is known of the impact it is having.

Translated by Paul Bowman

Strictly Confidential

Enclosure 1

The following refers to the details from the pulpit proclamation read out on Sunday, 26 July 1942, in every Dutch church of all denominations:

1. The churches declare that they are called upon in the name of law and justice to object to the leading away of Jews and the deportation of workers to Germany.
2. In the pulpit proclamation they reveal to the public a telegram sent to the Reich Commissioner on the 11th of this month, which reads:

“The undersigned Dutch churches, already deeply shaken by the campaign against the Jews in the Netherlands, through which they are excluded from taking part in the normal life of the people, have noted with dismay that new measures are being carried out whereby men, women and children as well as whole families are to be sent to the territory of the German Reich and other territories subordinate to it. The suffering this brings to more than ten thousand, the knowledge that these measures contradict the mostly deeply held moral convictions of the Dutch people, above all the violation of all we are enjoined by God’s will to do that is right and just, force the churches to urgently request you not to carry out these measures. For the Christians among the Jews, this urgent request is further motivated by the consideration that these measures will cut them off from taking part in church life.

The Dutch and Reformed Church
the archbishop and bishops of the Rom. Cath. Church in the Netherlands
the Calvinist Churches in the Netherlands
the Mennonite Community
the Remonstrant Brotherhood
the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands in restored alliance
the Reformed Communities in the Netherlands
the Restored Lutheran Church in the Kingdom of the Netherlands.”

3. Furthermore, the public are told of the concession given by the Reich Commissioner in response to the telegram, namely that all Jews baptised prior to 1 January 1941 are not affected by the operation.

4. The pulpit proclamation declares today to be a day of repentance and prayer for all churches in the Netherlands.

5. The prayer for today was in essence as follows:

Oh dear Lord, we commend specially the people of Israel, who are suffering so much in these days. You shall not outcast them forever, for you had given them the promise of life in the future. Preserve them, bring them to conversion so that they gain the genuine redemption you have given in Christ, your Son. In particular, we ask you to bestow on the children of Israel who are bound to us in the same belief, the strength to bear the cross like He in whom they have found redemption. – We also commend to you with fervent hearts those whose lot it is to have to work and live on foreign soil, separated from their loved ones. Give them strength in body and soul. Save them from embitterment and resentment, from despondency and despair, from disaffection and degeneration. Let them hold on to you and your word in their loneliness. Keep together the families they have left behind and let them be joined in the community of belief. – Show all those being tested and suffering, all those imprisoned and

taken hostage, gracious God, a way out, and all over whom the dark clouds of threat and danger hang. Let your power shine. Turn your judgment so that it now becomes a blessing, so that many who live without you turn to you, so that the wall dividing Israel and other peoples may be torn down, so that all profess your holy name, search and find in you as brothers, and become one flock and shepherd.

6. The pulpit proclamation of the Cath. bishops of the Netherlands also included Jesus's Sermon on the Mount and judgement of Jerusalem, obviously referring to the Reich and thus so understood by the congregation, in particular the following words of Jesus, appropriately freely translated:

“Days will come when your enemy will encircle you with a storm wall; they will surround you and, coming from all sides, drive you into a corner and they will batter you and your children to the ground within your walls, and they will leave no stone unturned, because you have failed to recognise the time to show mercy.”

In response to a prohibition issued by the Reich Commissioner on the 24th of this month, the Protestant synod decided to refrain from reading out the telegram. Based on reports however, this synodic resolution was obviously not observed everywhere. Investigations are ongoing. The measures against the churches are still being considered at the moment. The only group to refuse to take part in the pulpit proclamation and the reading of the telegram from the outset was the small “Protestant-Lutheran Church Community”.