

Minutes of a meeting on the problem of Dutch refugees in the South East Asia Command (1 February 1946)


Caption: At a meeting on 1 February 1946, the leaders of the South East Asia Command (SEAC) discuss the problem of Dutch refugees in Indonesia who are supposed to be evacuated by British troops.

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MINUTES

Minutes of a Meeting, held in Room 114, Hotel Victoria at 1000 hours, Friday
1st February, 1946, to discuss Refugee Problems in S.E.A.C.

Present:-

Maj. General R.S.F. Denning,	H.Q. SACSEA (P.A.O.)
Lt. Col. F. Hodson,	H.Q. SACSEA (A.Q.M.G.)
Brigadier K.N. Simmer,	Inspector of Transportation
Lt. Col. V.M. Hammer,	C.A. (D.P.)
Major P. Monahan,	C.A. (D.P.) <u>In the chair</u>
Colonel Skeen,	D.D.P.W.
Lt. Col. E.L.H. Smith,	P.W.2.
Colonel D. Ball,	I.D.P. Mov(O)
Major N.R.G. Bosanquet,	S.D.2
Captain M.C. Alexander,	C.A. (D.P.) (Secretary)
Mr. F.D. Webber,	Colonial Office, Ceylon Dept.
Mr. G. Savage,	" " " "
Mr. C.M. Anderson,	Foreign Office (F.E. Dept.)

1) Major-General Denning explained that the Dutch nationals in SEAC fell into three categories:-

- (i) RAPWI
- (ii) Refugees
- (iii) IFTU

Many of these were of mixed Dutch and Indonesian descent and some Indonesian IFTU, whom it might not be safe to leave in a hostile area. Major-General Denning said that arrangements had been made for the accommodation of 34,000 of Dutch Nationals in Singapore, Siam and Ceylon, but it was desirable for economic and other reasons to leave them there for as short a time as possible. Ceylon had accepted 5,000 Dutch Nationals for six months only.

2) Major-General Denning emphasised the difficulties of co-ordinating the evacuation of these Dutch Nationals, and stated that HQ SACSEA considered the present position to be as follows:-

- (a) Australian Government had agreed to accept 10,000 Dutch refugees.
- (b) Dutch Government were prepared to accept up to 50/60,000 in Holland, and
- (c) An informal request had been made to the Union of South Africa to accept others, but so far no answer had been received.

Major-General Denning said it was most important that 10,000 Dutch Nationals now on SINGAPORE Island should be evacuated at the earliest possible date.

3) Major-General Denning continuing stated that if the situation deteriorated in Netherland East Indies it was possible that there might be an urgent call to move an additional 210,000 Dutch personnel. They would only be moved if their lives were likely to become endangered. It was however necessary to consider this additional problem. HQ SACSEA had already contemplated increasing the perimeter of the Allied Area in BATAVIA and this might have to be undertaken, but the larger problem of the evacuation of those 210,000 personnel, Major-General Denning felt, should be known to and studied by the authorities in London.

4) Continuing Major-General Denning said he would welcome suggestions to assist in co-ordinating the whole problem of evacuation of Europeans from N.E.I., and in particular asked the chairman if HQ SACSEA could communicate direct with Dominion Governments concerning acceptance of Dutch nationals and what arrangements could be made to provide the additional shipping space from S.E. Asia to Europe?

5) Mr. Anderson, Foreign Office, stated that he understood the situation to be:-

(a) The Governments of New Zealand and Australia were prepared to accept 15,000 Dutch Nationals between them.

(b) The Dutch Government were prepared to receive in Holland about 60,000.

(c) The Dominions Office had already communicated with the South African Government on the question of reception in South Africa but no arrangements had yet been made.

(d) In the foregoing territories some 33,000 had already been disposed of. He added there were no Foreign Office objections to HQ SACSEA dealing direct with the Dutch on shipping and personnel matters.

6) Colonel Ball, D.D.P.Mov(0) stated that the American Government were releasing Dutch ships from U.M.A. to the Dutch authorities. The total lift of these ships was approx. 24,000 personnel, of which 21,000 would be released now and a further 3,000 in March. He felt it was also possible that Dutch shipping now held by the British in U.M.A. pool might be released to the Dutch, but he could give no positive assurance on the outcome of the present negotiations. On present indications, it appeared however, that the Dutch would have control of up to 24,000 personnel lift by the end of next month.

The availability of shipping other than Dutch shipping for February and March, was negligible, but any demands that HQ SACSEA put in would be referred to the Chiefs of Staff for rating on priority. This also applied to the further question of the 210,000 Dutch nationals.

7) In thanking Colonel Ball for this useful information Major-General Denning stated that HQ SACSEA would take up immediately with the Dutch the question of their providing Dutch shipping to evacuate European nationals from N.E.I. Any shortfall in lift provided by the Dutch would then be referred to London.

8) Colonel Skeen, D.P.W., then raised the question of German P.Ws. and internees that HQ SACSEA wished to evacuate as soon as possible from Java. He said that as far as German P.Ws. were concerned, they should be sent to the Middle East.

The Chairman stated that in regard to German D.Ps., they could not at present be accepted in Germany; it was a matter of priorities, other countries as well as the Dominions and Colonies, all had German internees they wished to evacuate. The priority question for their return to Germany could only be decided in London.

General Denning agreed that German P.Ws. should be evacuated to the Middle East and said that German internees should be sent direct to Germany on an agreed priority later.

9) In conclusion General Denning summed up as follows:-

(a) HQ SACSEA had been able to move approx. 1,500 Europeans to Holland, and evacuation was continuing to Australia and New Zealand.

(b) HQ SACSEA would now draw up tentative plans based on actual and expected shipping releases for further evacuation of Europeans and nationals.

(c) HQ SACSEA would negotiate direct with the Dutch on these matters, and would inform London of the final arrangements made.

(d) The Dominions Office should be asked if HQ SACSEA could negotiate with the New Zealand, Australian and South African Governments direct on reception matters.

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/Note 1...

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1. After the meeting, at which the Dominions Office were not represented, the following intimation was received from them.

Australia had agreed to accept 10,000 and New Zealand 6,000. They suggested that the final arrangements and actual numbers to be received by these two Governments, should be the outcome of direct negotiations by HQ SACSEA.

No reply from South Africa had been received and it was suggested that HQ SACSEA should make a direct approach.

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Distribution:

Those present.

D.D.C.A. (M.G.)

Q.Ops.1.

M.I.L.

Dominions Office (V.R.Macleod Esq.)

Colonial Office (Lt.-Col. Cole)

Foreign Office (I.L.Henderson Esq.)