

Efforts of aid in an unfriendly haven  
Research into the internal cooperation of the committee members of the *Joodse Coördinatie  
Commissie* in Geneva between 1944 and 1945.

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*Max Gans having a phone call in Geneva, June 28, 1944.*

Source: Joods Museum, Familiefoto m.b.t. de familie Gans. Hyperlink:

<https://data.jck.nl/page/aggregation/jhm-foto/F014908>

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## Summary

The depiction of Switzerland as a safe haven in the historiography about so-called Jewish self-help during the Second World War has been a main cause of the lack of scholarly interest in Jewish organizations that in Switzerland tried to help fellow Jews. A good example is the *Joodse Coördinatie Commissie* (JCC). This Jewish organization was created by Dutch Jewish refugees Max Gans, Siegfried Isaac, and Salomon Troostwijk on January 20, 1944. Samuel Van Dantzig was included as a member in March 1944. Between January 1944 and June 1945, the JCC tried to help suffering Dutch Jews via Switzerland. Only Jacques Presser, Lou de Jong, and Katja Happe have studied this Jewish aid organization in detail. In their research about the JCC, they mainly focus on Gans and his difficult relationship with the Dutch authorities in Switzerland and London. Leaving a lack of research into Isaac, Van Dantzig, and Troostwijk.

All three historians have used the JCC as a case study within the Dutch historiography about the role of the Dutch government in exile in the Holocaust. In this debate, these three historians indicate that the Dutch government did too little to help Dutch deported Jews. Presser, Happe, and De Jong use the JCC as an example of this lack of government support toward the Jews during WW2. With this focus on the JCC as a case study, the source material used in the previous research into this organization has been limited. Presser, Happe, and De Jong mainly cite sources that show the problematic relationship between Max Gans and Dutch officials working for the Dutch government in exile or the Dutch embassy in Bern. Due to this limited and specific usage of sources, with a particular focus on the quarrel between Max Gans and the Dutch government, the dynamics and cooperation between the four members of the JCC are not researched by Happe, Presser, and De Jong. A new analysis of the JCC, with attention to the internal dynamics in the JCC, and the cooperation between its four members, is necessary.

I have operated this new research into the internal dynamics, and cooperation of the JCC members by answering the following question: What factors influenced the internal cooperation in the *Joodse Coördinatie Commissie* between committee members Gans, Isaac, Troostwijk, and Van Dantzig, between January 20, 1944, and April 1945? I have chosen this period because on January 20, 1944, the JCC was created, and in April 1945, committee members Troostwijk and Isaac were no longer part of the JCC. I have answered my research question with the use of three dimensions.

These three dimensions narrate the different factors that influenced the workings of the JCC and its members. The belief dimension is set in the minds of the four members and entails their ideas related to the help towards Dutch Jews and cooperation with authorities. These ideas were already formed before the escape of the JCC members to Switzerland. The circumstance dimension refers to the space around the members and the JCC itself, and entails what Gans, Isaac, Troostwijk, and Van Dantzig faced during the JCC's existence, such as the Swiss dealing with Jewish refugees during the Second World War. The social dimension entails the social contacts of the JCC members, such as

friends and family, and how these contacts influenced their work as commission members and the functioning of the JCC itself.

In the first chapter, I describe the lives of the four JCC members before this organization was created in January 1944. This chapter provides insights needed for understanding the believe systems of the four protagonists and a background to their social networks and ties. The focus is on roles and experiences before arrival in Switzerland and pre-existing social contacts: *what similarities and differences can we discern between the four men?* Chapters 2 and 3 deal with the period after arrival in Switzerland. In the second chapter, the focus is merely on the believe dimension: *how did personal ideas about Jewish aid and (non-Jewish) authorities influence the relations between the four men and the internal cooperation in the JCC?* In the last chapter, I examine the circumstance dimension and the social dimension: *how did the personal conditions in Switzerland, and the personal contacts of the JCC members affect the functioning of the JCC?*

After this research into the JCC, it can be concluded that the three used dimensions (believe, circumstance, and social) show that three intertwined factors have majorly influenced the internal cooperation of the Joodse Coördinatie Commissie between January 20, 1944, and April 1945. Firstly, the different lives of Isaac, and Gans, before the creation of the JCC in Switzerland, in which opposite ideas about cooperation with authorities were formed. Secondly, the unfriendly attitude towards refugees in Switzerland decreased the contact between the JCC Members between March 1944 and December 1944. Thirdly, the pre-existing influential contacts of Isaac and Gans positively impacted the work of the JCC members and the functioning of the JCC in general.

## Introduction

According to the Swiss historian Jacques Picard, information about the genocide of the Jews during the Second World War often reached ‘the free world’ via Switzerland, because important foreign services and humanitarian organizations like the Red Cross were active in this neutral country. Picard states that the allied authorities in London and Washington ignored this information about systematic murder but it stimulated Jews in Switzerland to help fellow Jews.<sup>1</sup> During the Second World War, seventeen Jewish organizations were active in Switzerland to help other Jews. As Picard states: ‘They collected money, financed local helpers, and sent parcels with food, clothing and medical supplies, and set up contacts to support those threatened by starvation and death.’<sup>2</sup> About these organizations, little has been written.

When Switzerland is discussed in the historiography about the so-called ‘Jewish self-help’, it is mainly because the authors want to highlight the escape routes to this country, which were made possible by multiple (Jewish) resistance groups in Western Europe. With this focus on escape, Switzerland is depicted as the end destination for Jews after often long and thrilling journeys.<sup>3</sup> The depiction of Switzerland as a safe haven has been a main cause of the lack of scholarly interest for Jewish organizations that in Switzerland tried to help fellow Jews. This is, for example, noticeable in the book *Survivors* by the British historian Bob Moore. In this book, Moore tries to explain how Jews in Western Europe survived the Holocaust. He indicates that large groups of Jews escaped the extermination camps via Jewish help organizations and getaway networks. To show the importance of escape routes, Moore cites the book *Vluchtweg* by the Jewish woman Jenny Premsele-Gans, who in 1942 traveled illegally from Amsterdam to Switzerland with her Jewish husband Mozes Heiman Gans.<sup>4</sup> With the use of *Vluchtweg*, Moore gives insight into the organization of escape routes to Switzerland, however he does not mention that Mozes Heiman (Max) Gans was a founder and committee member of the *Joodse Coördinatie Commissie* (JCC). This Jewish organization tried to help suffering Dutch Jews via Switzerland between January 1944 and June 1945.

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<sup>1</sup> Picard, Jacques. *On the Ambivalence of Being Neutral: Switzerland and Swiss Jewry Facing the Rise and Fall of the Nazi State*. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Research Institute, 1998, 10-11.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 11.

<sup>3</sup> See for example: Moore, Bob. *Survivors: Jewish self-help and rescue in Nazi-occupied Western Europe*. OUP Oxford, 2010, Koreman, Megan. *The Escape Line: How the Ordinary Heroes of Dutch-Paris Resisted the Nazi Occupation of Western Europe*. Oxford University Press, 2018. And Schippers, Hans. *De Westerweelgroep en de Palestijnspioniers: Nonconformistisch verzet in de Tweede Wereldoorlog*. Uitgeverij Verloren, 2015.

<sup>4</sup> Moore. *Survivors*, 68.

## Introduction to the JCC

During a meeting between multiple Dutch Jewish refugees in Hotel *Bonivar* in Montreux, the JCC was created on January 20, 1944. Max Gans, Siegfried Isaac, and Salomon Troostwijk were appointed as committee members of this new organization.<sup>5</sup> Samuel Van Dantzig was included as a member in March 1944. Advisory members Dr. Anselm Polak Daniels and his wife Ariana Margaretha Polak Daniels-Boon Hartsinck supported these four committee members. Dr. Tobias Lewenstein, former chief rabbi in The Hague, Denmark, and Zurich, was the spiritual advisor of the JCC.<sup>6</sup>

During the Second World War, Dutch refugees in Switzerland had to ask permission from the Dutch embassy in Bern to start aid projects for Dutch Jews. Therefore, on January 27, 1944, Max Gans sent a letter to Dr. Joseph Kijzer who was, as an employee of the Dutch embassy in Bern, responsible for the Dutch Jewish refugees in Switzerland. In this letter, Gans officially asked permission to create a Joodse Coördinatie Commissie (Jewish Coordination Commission).<sup>7</sup> From the following correspondence between Gans and the Dutch embassy it does not become clear when the Dutch embassy exactly permitted the creation of the JCC. However, on April 24, 1944, the JCC sent a letter to multiple organizations in the USA, Switzerland, and England in which it announced its official foundation.<sup>8</sup>

In short, the activities of the JCC were threefold. Firstly, the coordination and promotion of relief work for suffering Dutch Jews. These people in need were deported to concentration camps or in hiding in German-occupied territories. To help these individuals, the JCC sent, for example, aid packages to Theresienstadt and transferred money to Dutch Jews who lived in France. Secondly, the JCC made plans for the reconstruction of Dutch Jewry after the war. In particular committee member Frit Isaac has written several reports about how Jews in the post-war Netherlands should be helped to rebuild their lives. Thirdly, the JCC religiously and morally supported the Jewish refugees in Switzerland. For example, the JCC organized Pesach celebrations for Jewish fugitives in Switzerland in 1944.

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<sup>5</sup> Yad Vashem, JCC archive, Reports compiled by the JCC (Joodse Coördinatie Commissie - Jewish Coordination Committee of Dutch Jewry) in Geneva regarding providing social and cultural help to Jewish refugees from the Netherlands in Switzerland, 1942-1945, Report meeting JCC, 20-1-1944.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, Letter Gans about the creation of the JCC, 22-3-1944.

<sup>7</sup> Nationaal Archief, Archief van het Nederlandse Gezantschap in Zwitserland, (1912) 1914-1954 (1955), 405, H.M. Gans 1943-1945, Letter Gans to Kijzer, 27-1-1944.

<sup>8</sup> Yad Vashem, JCC archive, Correspondence between M. Gans, a member of the JCC (Joodsche Coördinatie Commissie - Jewish Coordination Committee of Dutch Jewry) in Geneva with various people, organizations and institutions regarding the situation of the Jews in the Netherlands and of Dutch Jewish refugees in Switzerland, 1942-1945, Letter Gans to Congres Juif Mondial, 24-4-1944.

During its existence, the JCC was accountable to the Dutch government in London and the Dutch embassy in Bern. It was financially dependent on the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC). The JDC is a still-existing Jewish relief organization founded in New York in 1914. The main goal of the JDC is to support Jewish people all over the world who need help.<sup>9</sup> During the Holocaust, the JDC was one of the biggest financial contributors to European aid organizations like the JCC. In Switzerland, Saly Mayer represented the JDC. Mayer was the director of the office of the JDC in Geneva during the Second World War. In this function, Mayer was responsible for the transfer of JDC funds in Europe.<sup>10</sup>

As mentioned above, Gans took the lead during the creation of the JCC by contacting Kijzer about this new Jewish help organization. After the Dutch authorities in Switzerland approved the JCC, Gans would also become the most active committee member. In the archive of the JCC, thousands of letters can be found that were written by, or sent to, Max Gans. When reading these letters, it cannot be denied that Gans did an immense job trying to help Dutch Jews during the Holocaust. After the war, this inexhaustive work by Gans is confirmed by several people who were also involved in the help towards Dutch Jews via Switzerland. For example, the Dutch pastor Willem Visser 't Hooft stated about Gans that: 'he was a man who organized a lot and asked for a lot of help.'<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, the other three commission members Isaac, Troostwijk, and Van Dantzig also frequently wrote letters that are now kept in the JCC archive. However, towards the end of the JCC (it closed its office on June 30, 1945) Gans is the only original member of the JCC who influenced the course of the organization. From April 1945 onwards, Gans was the sole writer of letters sent to authorities to whom the JCC was financially or politically obliged. During this period, Siegfried Isaac and Salomon Troostwijk were no longer part of the JCC.

The question that arises from this observation is; how did the internal cooperation in the JCC develop between the establishment of this organization on January 20, 1944 and April 1945, causing the JCC to change from a committee of four Dutch Jews to the sole enterprise of Max Gans? To find answers to this question, the historiographical debates about the JCC, and Jewish aid in the Second World War will be discussed, and a research question will be created to analyze the internal cooperation in the JCC.

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<sup>9</sup> American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, Our story. Hyperlink: [Our Story | JDC](#).

<sup>10</sup> Bauer, Yehuda. *American Jewry and the Holocaust: The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, 1939-1945*. Wayne State University Press, 2017, chapter 9. "Uncle Saly": The JDC Outpost in Switzerland. Hyperlink: [Project MUSE - American Jewry and the Holocaust \(jhu.edu\)](#)

<sup>11</sup> Parlementaire enquête regeringsbeleid 1940-1945, Zitting Willem Adolf Visser 't Hooft 9-12-1948. Hyperlink: <https://sites.google.com/site/enquetecommissieregering/datum-verhoren/willem-adolf-visser-t-hooft?authuser=0>

## Historiography about the JCC

As mentioned above, about the JCC little has been written in the historiography of Jewish self-help. Bob Moore did not even mention the JCC in his book *Survivors*, and when this organization is discussed, it is brief and often focused on the degree of success. For example, Yehuda Bauer has shortly written about the JCC in his overview of the JDC in the Second World War. In his description of the JCC, Bauer states that Mayer had transferred money to this organization and made clear that the JCC had little success in the help towards Jews: 'The Gans group does not seem to have achieved much through its work (...).' <sup>12</sup>

In the historiography about the destruction of Dutch Jews during the Second World War, the JCC is also not an often-researched topic. Jacques Presser, Lou de Jong, and Katja Happe are three of the few historians who have studied this Jewish aid organization in detail. In their research about the JCC, they mainly focus on Gans and his difficult relationship with the Dutch authorities in Switzerland and London. Leaving a lack of research into Isaac, Van Dantzig, and Troostwijk. Presser, De Jong, and Happe claim that Gans was the dominant voice in this organization. Presser and Happe both states that Gans was the 'pacesetter' of the JCC, while De Jong mentions Gans as the chairman of this committee. As Presser describes it clearly: 'Several documents are available concerning the activity of this JCC by Mr. M.H. Gans, then in Geneva, who, without shorting others, was the great pacesetter of this committee.' <sup>13</sup>

This conclusion was probably reached because of Gans's paper trail in the archives. Another contributing factor must have been Gans's vocality in the immediate postwar years. After his return to the Netherlands, Gans was the only JCC member who expressed himself publicly in the official investigations into the actions of the Dutch authorities during the Second World War. In 1947, Gans sent a long letter to the so-called 'Pakketten commissie', which researched the functioning of the Dutch Red Cross during WW2. In his letter, Gans described his contact with the Dutch representatives of the Red Cross in Switzerland. He also analyzed his difficult relationship with the Dutch embassy in Bern and the Dutch authorities in London. Gans strongly felt that during the time the JCC existed he was not helped enough or even opposed by the employees of the Dutch government. In his opinion, these people did not do enough to save more Dutch Jews during the Holocaust. <sup>14</sup>

The commission Cleveringa in 1949 also interrogated Gans. In 1947, the Dutch government created this parliamentary inquiry into the Dutch governmental policies during the Second World War, because the 'Pakketten commissie' concluded that the Dutch Red Cross and the Dutch authorities in

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<sup>12</sup> Bauer, Yehuda. *American Jewry and the Holocaust: The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, 1939-1945*. Wayne State University Press, 2017, chapter 9. "Uncle Saly": The JDC Outpost in Switzerland. Hyperlink: [Project MUSE - American Jewry and the Holocaust \(jhu.edu\)](https://www.jhu.edu/projects/american-jewry-and-the-holocaust/)

<sup>13</sup> Presser, J. *Ondergang. De vervolging en verdelging van het Nederlandse jodendom 1940-1945, 2 delen*. Staatsuitgeverij Den Haag, 1985, 38.

<sup>14</sup> Gans-Premesela, Jenny. *Vluchtweg*. Bosch & Keuning, 1990, 165.



London had neglected the deported Jews.<sup>15</sup> In his inquiry for the commission Cleveringa, Gans told a similar story as in his letter to the ‘paketten commissie’. The Dutch government did not help the suffering Dutch Jews enough and the JCC never received financial support from the Dutch authorities in London. ‘Nothing. It is the case that if the refugees had not tried anything, no Dutchman would ever have received a package, (...)’.<sup>16</sup>

Unlike Gans, the other members Troostwijk, Van Dantzig, and Isaac remained silent about the JCC after the Second World War had ended. Isaac already died in 1948, and Troostwijk and Van Dantzig have never talked publicly about their membership of the JCC. This post-war silence might help to explain why Presser, Happe, and De Jong only researched Gans in their analyses of this Jewish help organization. All three historians have used the JCC as a case study within the Dutch historiography about the role of the Dutch government in exile in the Holocaust. In this debate, these three historians indicate that the Dutch government did too little to help Dutch deported Jews. Presser, Happe, and De Jong use the JCC as an example of this lack of government support towards the Jews during WW2. According to these three historians, the relationship between the JCC and the Dutch government was not good, mainly because the Dutch officials working in London and Bern were incompetent or not willing to (financially) support the JCC. As made clear by De Jong: ‘How shameful it has been that the government agencies in London have allowed the Joodse Coördinatie-Commissie in Switzerland, which has not even received the promised grant, to flounder!’<sup>17</sup>

With this focus on the JCC as a case study, the source material used in the previous research into this organization has been limited. Presser, Happe, and De Jong mainly cite sources that show the problematic relationship between Max Gans and Dutch officials working for the Dutch government in exile or the Dutch embassy in Bern. Good examples are the extensive usage of sources like the inquiry of Max Gans for the commission Cleveringa, and the correspondence between Gans and governmental officials like the previously mentioned Dr. Kijzer. Katja Happe is the only of the three previously mentioned historians who, in her analysis of the JCC, uses sources not originated from Max Gans. In her research, Happe cites sources written by advisory members of the JCC Dr. Polak Daniels and his wife Polak Daniels–Boon Harsinck. However, these sources are also used by Happe to describe the problematic relationship between the JCC and the Dutch government in exile, and not to further analyze the working and internal dynamics of the JCC itself, or the relationships between members of this organization: ‘The disappointing experience of Polak Daniels – but also the JCC – seems to have been symptomatic for most of the international relief efforts. In contrast to the successful rescue of a

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<sup>15</sup> Parlementaire enquête regeringsbeleid 1940-1945, Voorwoord. Hyperlink: [enquetecommissieregering \(google.com\)](https://www.google.com)

<sup>16</sup> Parlementaire enquête regeringsbeleid 1940-1945, Zitting Mozes Heiman Gans 22-12-1949. Hyperlink: [Enquetecommissieregering - MOZES HEIMAN GANS \(google.com\)](https://www.google.com).

<sup>17</sup> De Jong, Lou. *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog* - Deel 10b – Het laatste jaar (2e band), 918.

few dozen or a few hundred people, countless rescue attempts ultimately failed due to communication problems, competency disputes, and financing problems.<sup>18</sup>

Due to this limited and specific usage of sources, with a particular focus on the quarrel between Max Gans and the Dutch government, the dynamics and cooperation between the four members of the JCC are not researched by Happe, Presser, and De Jong. A new analysis of the JCC, with attention to the internal dynamics in the JCC, and the cooperation between its four members, is necessary. Not only because new research into this organization will gain insight into the internal relations of the JCC, but also because we will learn more about Jewish self-help and people responsible for the aid towards Dutch Jews during the Second World War.

### Research into Jewish aid

In the 20th century, research into the efforts to help Dutch Jews via neutral and allied countries almost did not exist. De Jong and Presser have written about the efforts in Switzerland to save Dutch Jews during the Holocaust. Until the publishing of the work of Katja Happe and the book of Regina Grüter about the WW2 history of the Dutch Red Cross in 2017, these researches were not followed up. About the Jewish effort in the occupied Netherlands to help Dutch Jews, the so-called 'Jewish resistance', has been written more, but the amount of literature has also been limited. Presser and De Jong give detailed descriptions of Jewish individuals who tried to help Dutch Jews during the Second World War, like Walter Süskind. In these accounts, the lives (and deaths) of these people in the Netherlands are narrated, and their efforts to help fellow-Jews praised.<sup>19</sup> just like De Jong and Presser's focus on the JCC, this research about Jewish people who tried to help fellow Jews did not regain serious interest until the first decade of the 21st century.

In the 2010s, the first studies were written about individuals of the Jewish resistance since the work of De Jong. A good example is the work by Hans Schippers about the Westerweel group published in 2015. In this book, Schippers tries to analyze the motives of Joop Westerveel and the other members of this resistance group, which consisted of Jewish and non-Jewish people. In his analysis, Schippers explains the members of the Westerweel group as people of flesh and blood: 'They were capable of exceptional deeds, but also fallible.'<sup>20</sup>

The attempt of historians like Schippers to analyze the (Jewish) members of the Westerveel Group in detail is a clear continuation of the work by De Jong, but it is also linked to the 2017 initiated research program of the NIOD Instituut voor Oorlogs-, Holocaust- en Genocidestudies into Dutch resistance in general. In this research program, the NIOD states that it wants to promote more research into the personal level of members of the Dutch resistance: 'The NIOD resistance program wants to bridge the gap between then and now with research that focuses on the experiences, expectations, and

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<sup>18</sup> Happe, Katja. *Veel valse hoop: de jodenvervolging in Nederland 1940-1945*. Atlas Contact, 2018, 596.

<sup>19</sup> Presser. *Ondergang*, 615.

<sup>20</sup> Schippers. *De Westerweelgroep en de Palestijnapioniers*, 10.

actions of the people of those days for whom the future was just as open as it is for us now.’<sup>21</sup> With the focus on the members of the resistance and their characteristics like political beliefs, experiences, and social networks the NIOD hoped to find answers to overarching questions like which circumstances led to resistance, and what role did social networks play in resistance during the Second World War.<sup>22</sup>

Thus, the work by Schippers and the research program by the NIOD regarding Dutch resistance show that in recent times there is renewed interest in the (Jewish) members of the resistance in the occupied Netherlands, thereby continuing the work started by historians like Presser and the Jong. However, where resistance in the occupied Netherlands regained attention, research into the efforts via neutral and allied countries to help Dutch Jews still almost not existing. This lack of research into the international efforts to help Dutch Jews is also one of the main arguments of Katja Happe in her book *Veel valse hoop*: ‘Many Dutch studies on the occupation period focus on events in the Netherlands itself. But the processes that took place here were closely linked to developments in Germany and they were embedded in an international context.’<sup>23</sup> As Happe argues, help towards Dutch Jews during the Second World War was not ‘just’ a matter of resistance organizations active within the occupied Netherlands, but also allied governments, neutral countries, and Jewish aid organizations like the JCC were very important factors:

‘The attempts of the ‘world’ - the allied governments, aid organizations, and neutral countries - to prevent the murder of European Jews, therefore, play an important role in the course of the persecution of the Jews in the Netherlands. Together with the perspectives of the perpetrators, victims, and bystanders, they are part of the ‘complete history of the persecution of the Jews in the Netherlands.’<sup>24</sup>

In Happe's description of ‘the complete history of the Jews in the Netherlands’, the JCC has a prominent place as an example of a Jewish aid organization that in a neutral country tried to help Dutch Jews. Therefore, Happe is one of the first historians who, after Presser and De Jong, research (Jewish) efforts outside the occupied Netherlands, to help Dutch Jews. However, in Happe’s analyze of the JCC, there is a focus on the conflict between Gans and the Dutch authorities. With my research, I want to complement Happe and study the cooperation between JCC members Gans, Isaac, Troostwijk, and Van Dantzig. In this research, the focus points initiated in the NIOD program on resistance will be the point of departure for my research.

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<sup>21</sup> NIOD. ‘Heel gewoon of juist bijzonder? Nieuwe visies op mensen in verzet tijdens de Duitse bezetting van Nederland 1940-1945. Een onderzoeksprogramma in modulen, onder verantwoordelijkheid van het NIOD Instituut voor Oorlogs-, Holocaust en Genocidestudies’, 2017, 4.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 2.

<sup>23</sup> Happe. *Veel valse hoop*, 22.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 23.

### Research question

I want to operate this new research into the internal dynamics, and cooperation of the JCC members by answering the following question: What factors influenced the internal cooperation in the Joodse Coördinatie Commissie between committee members Gans, Isaac, Troostwijk, and Van Dantzig, between January 20, 1944, and April 1945? I have chosen this period because on January 20, 1944, the JCC was created, and in April 1945, committee members Troostwijk and Isaac were no longer part of the JCC. I will answer my research question with the use of three dimensions. In each of these dimensions, I will use a focal point, which arises from the NIOD research program into Dutch resistance, to analyze the cooperation between the before-mentioned committee members of the JCC. These focal points are a belief dimension, a circumstance dimension, and a social dimension.

These three dimensions narrate the different factors that had influence on the workings of the JCC and its members. The belief dimension is set in the minds of the four members, and entails their ideas related to the help towards Dutch Jews and cooperation with authorities. These ideas were already formed before the escape of the JCC members to Switzerland. The circumstance dimension refers to the space around the members and the JCC itself, and entails what Gans, Isaac, Troostwijk and Van Dantzig faced during the JCC's existence, such as the Swiss dealing with Jewish refugees during the Second World War. The social dimension entails the social contacts of the JCC members, such as friends and family, and how these contacts influenced their work as commission members, and the functioning of the JCC itself.

Although the three dimensions are intertwined, this thesis tries to unravel the knots. In the first chapter, I describe the lives of the four JCC members before this organization was created in January 1944. This chapter will provide insights needed for understanding the belief systems of the four protagonists and a background to their social networks and ties. The focus will be on roles and experiences before arrival in Switzerland and pre-existing social contacts: *what similarities and differences can we discern between the four men?* Chapters 2 and 3 deal with the period after arrival in Switzerland. In the second chapter, the focus is merely on the belief dimension: *how did personal ideas about Jewish aid and (non-Jewish) authorities influence the relations between the four men and the internal cooperation in the JCC?* In the last chapter, I examine the circumstance dimension and the social dimension: *how did the personal conditions in Switzerland, and the personal contacts of the JCC members affect the functioning of the JCC?*

## Method

To analyze these three dimensions, I will use a micro-historical approach as defined by the French historian Claire Zalc. As she states, microhistory in research about the Holocaust means that there is a bigger focus on the personal experiences of people who had to deal with the effects of the persecution of Jews:

‘Without risking a single definition, it should be remembered that this historiographical movement calls into question the certainties of earlier historiographies, notably the grand explanations based on economic or cultural determinations, by granting renewed importance to individual practices and experiences.’<sup>25</sup>

I will use this definition of microhistory, which is also relatable to the research program of the NIOD about resistance, to analyze the personal beliefs and circumstances of Gans, Isaac, Van Dantzig, and Troostwijk during their stay in Switzerland. These personal factors will be traced from the correspondences between the JCC commission members, which are part of the JCC archive.

To further analyze the personal thinking, and the personal networks of the JCC members, I will use the theories about the influence of pre-war lives and social networks on the working of Jewish organizations during the Second World War as explained in the works by Laurien Vastenhout and Bob Moore. In her PHD-thesis about the Jewish Councils in the Netherlands, France, and Belgium, Vastenhout concludes that to understand the differences between these councils, it is important to research the influence of pre-war communities on the thinking and acting of the leaders in these organizations. Vastenhout outlines multiple aspects in which the pre-war lives of these leaders could differ:

‘(...) one needs to be aware of the social structures that predated the establishment of the bodies. Aspects including the level of Jewish integration into non-Jewish communities, the position of immigrant Jews vis-à-vis the longstanding Jewish population, the level of religious adherence, the influence of Zionist thinking, and the traditional organization of the Jewish communities, are all elements that contributed to the different fabric of the Jewish communities in the Netherlands, Belgium, and France before the outbreak of the Second World War.’<sup>26</sup>

These notions used by Vastenhout will be utilized in this thesis, to mark the differences in the pre-war lives of the JCC members, and how these experiences influenced their personal ideas on the help toward suffering Jews via Switzerland, and the cooperation between the JCC and (non-Jewish) authorities.

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<sup>25</sup> Zalc, Voir Claire, and Tal Brutman. "Toward a Microhistory of the Holocaust." *Microhistories of the Holocaust, New York et Oxford*, Berghahn Books, 2017, 1-16, 2.

<sup>26</sup> Vastenhout, Laurien. *The ‘Jewish Councils’ of Western Europe: A Comparative Analysis*. PhD thesis, University of Sheffield, 2020, 39.

To analyze how the social networks of the JCC member affected the functioning of this organization, I will use the work of historian Bob Moore, who studies Jewish aid organizations in Western Europe during the Second World War. Moore concludes that the success of the people involved in these organizations was highly determined by their ‘pre-war contacts, connections and relationships’<sup>27</sup> ‘(...) this chapter will seek to demonstrate how pre-existing contact between Jewish and non-Jewish individuals and organizations, and their continued cooperation during the occupation period, served to play a positive and possibly crucial role in Jewish survival.’<sup>28</sup>

To show these links between pre-war social networks and the success of Jewish self-help in the Second World War, Moore mostly describes the functioning of the Belgian *Comité de Défense des Juifs* (CDJ). This national commission was created by the Jewish communist Hertz Jospa and his wife Yvonne Jospa-Groisman in September 1942 to help suffering Jews in Belgium. To aid these people the CDJ has, for example, financially supported more than 2000 Jewish children, who needed to be rescued from deportations.<sup>29</sup> To carry out these ventures the CDJ members were helped by non-Jewish and Jewish contacts which already existed before the Second World War. In this regard, Moore mentions the leaders of the Solidarité Juive, who helped the CDJ with the rescue of Jewish children. This organization was created in 1939 to help Jewish refugees from Poland who lived in Belgium, and had the required experience and contacts during the war to aid children.<sup>30</sup> Before the creation of the CDJ, the couple Jospa-Groisman had been members of the Solidarité Juive, hence the connection between the two organizations.

I want to use this emphasis by Moore on social contacts to analyze the influence of pre-existing personal connections on the functioning of the JCC in Geneva. In his work Moore defines pre-existing as people connected before the Second World War. In this thesis, pre-existing is defined as people who have met each other before the creation of the JCC in Geneva in January 1944. My analysis of the social networks is based on three steps. Firstly, I mention the influential pre-existing contacts of the JCC members in chapter one. The concept of influence, I define as having close connections to institutes to which the JCC was politically and economically obliged. Think about organizations like the JDC and the Dutch embassy in Bern. Secondly, I analyze how these contacts had an important impact on the activities of the JCC in chapter three. Thirdly, also in chapter three, I describe how influential contacts have affected the relationship between the JCC members.

For my analysis of the internal cooperation between the committee members of the JCC, I will use sources from multiple archives. To analyze the personal lives in Switzerland and the beliefs of the JCC members, the archive of the JCC, which is part of the Yad Vashem Archive and completely digitized, will be mostly used. Personal documents of Gans, Isaac, Van Dantzig, and Troostwijk,

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<sup>27</sup> Goda, Norman JW, ed. *Jewish Histories of the Holocaust: New Transnational Approaches*. Vol. 19. Berghahn Books, 2014, 9.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, 193.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, 196.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*.

which are part of the National Archive of Switzerland, will also be incorporated. To analyze the pre-existing contacts of the JCC members I will, firstly, use the JCC archive. Secondly, the archive of the Dutch embassy in Switzerland, and the archives of the Dutch authorities in London. These Dutch archives are present in the national archive of the Netherlands. Thirdly, the WW2 archive of the JDC will also provide information about personal relationships of the JCC members.

### Relevance

With my focus on the cooperation between the four JCC members, I will contribute to the historiography of this Jewish aid organization, mainly because Presser, De Jong, and Happe have only used the JCC as a case study within the historiographical debate about the role of the Dutch government in the Holocaust. This has led to a focus on the conflicts between committee member Max Gans and the Dutch authorities in London and Bern. Therefore, with this thesis, the goal will be to gain more insight into the cooperation within the JCC, by analyzing the personal ideas, lives, and social contacts of all four committee members, thereby complementing the previous work about the JCC.

With this analysis of the cooperation in the JCC, more knowledge will be known about the Jewish people responsible for the aid towards Dutch Jews during the Second World War. This is, firstly, important because research into the lives and motives of these people is limited. In the 20th century, only historians like Lou de Jong and Jacques Presser have given detailed descriptions of Jews in Western-Europe, who during the Second World War tried to help Dutch Jews. Just in the last two decades, the research by De Jong and Presser has finally received some follow-up by historians like Happe and Schippers. Secondly, I think it is important to learn about the beliefs, experiences, and social networks of Gans, Isaac, Troostwijk, and Van Dantzig. Mainly because with this knowledge about people responsible for the aid towards Dutch Jews during the Second World War, we can get more insight into overarching questions about the resistance against the deportation and murder of Jews by Nazi-Germany. Think about questions like the influence of social networks in the success of aid organizations during the Second World War.

With the focus on the JCC, I also want to expand the scope of the historiography about help towards Dutch Jews during the war. Literature about the help of Jewish aid organizations, based outside Nazi Germany, towards Dutch Jews almost does not exist. Just like Happe, I want to make clear that help towards Dutch Jews was not 'just' a matter of resistance organizations active within the occupied Netherlands, but also Jewish aid organizations like the JCC and the JDC were important actors.

### Overview thesis

To complete this analysis of the cooperation in the JCC, a (short) biographical sketch of the four committee members Gans, Isaac, Van Dantzig, and Troostwijk will be written in chapter one. In this chapter, the activities of the JCC members before the Second World War, their escape to Switzerland, and their lives in this alpine country, before the JCC was created in January 1944, will be described. In the second chapter, the influence of personal ideas about Jewish aid and regarding cooperation with (non-Jewish) authorities will be analyzed (Believe dimension). In the third chapter, I will firstly indicate the impact of personal circumstances in Switzerland on the functioning of the JCC, and secondly how pre-existed friends and acquaintances of the JCC members influenced the course of this organization (Circumstance and social dimensions).



## Chapter 1 Biographic Background

As Laurien Vastenhout indicates to understand the functioning of the Jewish Councils, it is important to understand the pre-war background of its leaders. As stated above, Vastenhout mentions multiple aspects that existed before the creation of the Jewish Council, which could impact the working and cooperation in these bodies. Think about ‘the level of religious adherence’, and ‘the influence of Zionist thinking’.<sup>31</sup> Vastenhout does not further explain these aspects, and mostly focus on the influence of pre-war structures on a macro level. Therefore, in this thesis Vastenhout’s notions about the impact of pre-war structures on Jewish organization in the Second World War will be used to analyze how experiences and ideas, which pre-dated the creation of the JCC in January 1944, impacted the cooperation between Gans, Troostwijk, Isaac, and Van Dantzig. To make this analyze possible, I will describe the lives of the JCC members before they started this organization. In this description, I will, firstly, sketch the personal circumstances of the four JCC members before the Second World War. Secondly, I narrate the travels of Gans, Troostwijk, Isaac, and Van Dantzig to Switzerland, and their lives in this alpine country before the JCC was created in January 1944.

In these biographical backgrounds of the JCC members, the general focus is twofold. Firstly, the pre-existing personal ideas about the help towards fellow Jews and regarding the cooperation with (non-Jewish) authorities. Secondly, the influential pre-existing social contact of the JCC members.

Max Gans was born on May 12, 1917 in Amsterdam. He was the son of Isaac Gans, who was the director of the *Joodsche Invalide* between 1924 and his death in 1938.<sup>32</sup> This organization was created in 1911 to nurse Jewish old and disabled people who lived in poor neighborhoods in Amsterdam. Because of his father's work, Max Gans lived in the *Joodsche Invalide* and became closely involved with this organization as a young man. In an Interview for *De Telegraaf* in 1976, Gans mentioned the following about growing up in this caring home: ‘As a matter of speaking, I had four hundred uncles and aunts in my house, who have lived in the poorest situations. And if you live in that kind of conditions, until about your twenties, it determines your life.’<sup>33</sup>

Gans received an orthodox upbringing: ‘If my parents were asked: ‘What should he become?’ . Then faithfully the answer was ‘a good Jew, then with God's help the rest will take care of itself.’<sup>34</sup> Since a young age, Gans regularly went to the Synagogue, and every Friday he and the rest of the

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<sup>31</sup> Vastenhout. *The ‘Jewish Councils’ of Western Europe*, 39.

<sup>32</sup> Hofmeester, Karin. “Holland’s Greatest Beggar: Fundraising and Public Relations at the *Joodsche Invalide*.” *Studia Rosenthaliana*, vol. 33, no. 1, 1999, 47–59, 49 and 56.

<sup>33</sup> De Telegraaf, Juwelier Gans, nieuwe prof in Leiden, 18-9-1976. Hyperlink: <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:011199327:mpeg21:a0579>

<sup>34</sup> Gans, Mozes Heiman. *Het Nederlandse Jodendom: de sfeer waarin wij leefden*. Ten Have, 1985, 138.

family visited every resident of the Joodse Invalide to pray and prepare the Sabbath.<sup>35</sup> Also, during the JCC existed, Gans respected the Jewish traditions, as he did not work on Saturdays and Jewish feasts.

Despite orthodox beliefs, the father of Max Gans, Isaac Gans, worked with many important non-Jews in the Netherlands to finance the Joodse Invalide. For instance, Prime Minister Hendrik Colijn and the mayor of Amsterdam, Willem de Vlucht. As Van den Ende mentions:

'Isaac Gans said it early in his directorship; the Netherlands was a good country for Jews; 'The Netherlands has never known persecution of the Jews, we have always been regarded here as citizens of the fatherland,' says Mr. Gans, and his voice trembles with pride and gratitude for being a Jew and a Dutchman. The non-Jewish mayors, ministers, and other administrators, famous artists, well-known doctors and businessmen who had warm feelings for the Joodse Invalide, and also expressed this publicly, were too numerous to mention.'<sup>36</sup>

After his father died in 1938, Gans became temporarily the new director of the Joodse Invalide.<sup>37</sup> He was asked by the board to stop his studies, and pursue his father's legacy.<sup>38</sup> What Gans did as director of the Joodse Invalide between 1938 and May 1940, is unclear as not much historical evidence is present anymore. About the life of Gans during the begin of the Second World War is also little known. In 1941, he is no longer connected to the Joodse Invalide and is succeeded as director by the Jewish doctor Jacques Herbert Buzaglo.<sup>39</sup> Gans never publicly addressed his leave from the Jewish nursing home in the Second World War.

In 1942, Max Gans married Jenny Premsele who was born on January 25, 1919, and a goldsmith by profession. Jenny was part of a famous Jewish jewelry-making family in Amsterdam. Her father Meijer Jacob Premsele had a jewelry shop, Premsele and Hamburger, which has existed since 1823. Her mother Sientje Premsele was the daughter of diamond merchant Isaac Lamon who was known as the 'roosjeskoning' in Amsterdam, as he was famous for his way of cutting diamonds.<sup>40</sup> For Max Gans and Jenny Premsele's wedding on the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 1942, their families came together in the *Hollandsche Schouwburg* in Amsterdam. This festivity would be the last reunion between these two families, as not long after, in July 1942, Jenny and Max fled Amsterdam. By that time, the Nazi-persecution of Dutch Jews was well underway: after the German assault on the Netherlands and the establishment of the occupation regime in May 1940 Jews had been gradually stripped of their rights and goods. Mid-July 1942, the mass deportations to extermination camps in Eastern Europe commenced. In the years that followed all of Gans's direct family was deported.<sup>41</sup> From the direct

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<sup>35</sup> Van den Ende, Hannah. *De Joodsche Invalide. Bloei en ondergang van een Amsterdams verpleeghuis*. Boom, 2023, 144.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, 202-203.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 222.

<sup>40</sup> Joodsamsterdam, 'Izaak Lamon'. Hyperlink: [Izaak Lamon - joodsamsterdam](#)

<sup>41</sup> NIOD, Zwitserse weg A, 5, stukken B2 t/m B11, Letter Max Gans to S. Gans, 21-2-1944.

family of Jenny Premsele, only her uncle Hartog Lamon and his wife and children successfully escaped the Holocaust. Lamon had already left the Netherlands in 1939 and had migrated to the USA.<sup>42</sup> During his stay in Switzerland, Gans had a lot of contact with Lamon. Firstly, Lamon assisted Gans and his niece Jenny Gans-Premsele financially. ‘(...) Max and Jenny Gans were not permitted to work, and therefore were dependent while in Switzerland upon the financial assistance that they received from a person named Hartog J. Lamon, who resided in New York, the United States, and who regularly transferred United state dollars (us \$), from the Chase National Bank of the City of New York to Max and Jenny Gans.’<sup>43</sup> Secondly, Gans had much contact with the uncle of his wife, because Lamon was the direct intermediary between Gans and the JDC in New York.

Before their final escape to Switzerland, the newly married couple Gans-Premsele tried to evade deportation by obtaining a so-called *Sperre*. A *Sperre* was a document, provided by the German authorities, which gave a provisional exemption for deportation. Gans and Premsele received a *Sperre* because both were members of the Jewish Council of Amsterdam. During the war, Max Gans worked very hard in the jewelry shop of his father-in-law, but also received a *Sperre*. Why Gans was temporarily exempt from transports in 1942, is unclear as he was no longer connected to the Joods Invalide.<sup>44</sup> His index card, present in the Arolsen archives, shows that Gans had a function in the Jewish Council, but it does not give more information about the exact work Gans did for this organization.<sup>45</sup>

The reasons why Jenny Premsele had a *Sperre* are clear. She worked as a goldsmith teacher for the *Joodse Kunstnijverheidsschool W.A. van Leer*.<sup>46</sup> This school was created in the autumn of 1941 after Jewish students were no longer allowed to study at regular institutions. Just like the other created ‘Jewish’ schools, W.A. van Leer was supervised by the Jewish Council, until the school closed its doors on June 20, 1943 after most of the Jews in Amsterdam had been deported.

Thanks to the *Sperre*, the couple Gans-Premsele had ‘extra time’ to escape to Switzerland. About their traveling to the alpine country, Jenny Premsele mentioned the following: ‘Fleeing was not a matter of mind, money or skill. Success or failure was luck or bad luck. The best helpers wanted no money, the untrustworthy demanded everything of value.’<sup>47</sup> The couple Gans-Premsele themselves also experienced luck and misfortune during their escape to Switzerland. In their journey to Switzerland, via Belgium and France, they were scammed by a Belgian passeur, but also freely helped by a French railway man to reach the Swiss border. The couple Gans-Premsele did bring some money

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<sup>42</sup> Collections.ushmm, Lisette Lamon and Benjamin Soep papers, File 4: “Lisette Lamon was a teenager...” Approximate 1980.

<sup>43</sup> Claims Resolution Tribunal, In re Accounts of Jenny Gans and Max (Moses) Gans, 2009.

<sup>44</sup> Van den Ende. *De Joodsche Invalide*, 222.

<sup>45</sup> Arolsen archives, Dokumente mit Namen ab GANS, Coenraad. Hyperlink:<https://collections.arolsen-archives.org/de/document/130290633>

<sup>46</sup> More information about WA van Leer see: Amerongen, N. van. *Kunstnijverheidsonderwijs als vrijhaven. De Middelbare Joodsche Kunstnijverheidsschool ‘WA van Leer’ (1941-1943)*. MS-thesis. 2014, 32,36,40.

<sup>47</sup> Gans-Premsele, *Vluchtweg*. 42.

during their escape, to pay for the smugglers, but nothing more of value as they only possessed two suitcases with clothes. Eventually, after a journey of 20 days, they arrived in the alpine country on 19 July 1942. After this moment of joy, Max and Jenny Gans-Premsele praised God: ‘Blessed are you, Lord, our God, king of the world, who has given us life and saved us and brought us to this time.’<sup>48</sup>

Upon their arrival in Switzerland, the couple Gans-Premsele did not get a warm welcome. They were investigated by the Swiss police and spent a few days in the prison of Neuchâtel. According to Max Gans, this was because he and his wife had illegally crossed the border.<sup>49</sup> Jenny Gans states in her book *Vluchtweg* that the Swiss police was very unpleasant and not understanding the reasons why she and her husband had left the Netherlands: ‘In prison I learned from Max that his interrogation had been even more unpleasant than mine. He was constantly accused; he would be too lazy to work, lead them astray and steal Swiss food from the Swiss people.’<sup>50</sup>

This depiction of the Swiss police is fitting the research of historian Simon Erlanger, who studies the Swiss policies regarding Jewish refugees during the Second World War. Erlanger claims that the Swiss authorities wanted to make sure that the refugees would leave as soon as possible, because they were seen as a danger to Switzerland.<sup>51</sup> Thus, refugees were not allowed to work and could not travel without restrictions. More about these Swiss policies regarding refugees in chapter three.

After their release from the prison in Neuchâtel, the couple Gans-Premsele spent several weeks in various *Auffanglager*s, after which they were eventually able to rent an apartment near Geneva. They could afford this home because the previously mentioned uncle of Jenny Premsele, Hartog Lamon, who lived in New York transferred money to the young couple.<sup>52</sup> Most of the Dutch refugees did not live in apartments but in so-called hotel camps. These camps were three former hotels furnished by the Dutch embassy to accommodate Dutch Jewish refugees. The hotel camps were controlled by the Swiss authorities. In total, 2500 Dutch refugees lived in Switzerland during the Second World War. 700 of these Dutch Jews only arrived in the alpine country in the last months of the war.<sup>53</sup> As a result, the group of Dutch Jews reaching the Swiss border during the Second World War was limited.

Following their move to an apartment in Geneva, Max Gans engaged in cultural work for the Dutch Embassy. In February 1943 a new cultural commission was initiated in Geneva by the Protestant theologian Dr. Visser t Hooft to represent the cultural interests of Dutch refugees in

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid, 45.

<sup>49</sup> Parlementaire enquête regeringsbeleid 1940-1945, Zitting Mozes Heiman Gans 22-12-1949. Hyperlink: [Enquetecommissieregering - MOZES HEIMAN GANS \(google.com\)](#).

<sup>50</sup> Gans-Premsele. *Vluchtweg*, 59.

<sup>51</sup> Erlanger, Simon. “THE POLITICS OF ‘TRANSMIGRATION’: WHY JEWISH REFUGEES HAD TO LEAVE SWITZERLAND FROM 1944 TO 1954.” *Jewish Political Studies Review*, vol. 18, no. 1/2, 2006, 71–85, 75.

<sup>52</sup> Claims Resolution Tribunal, In re Accounts of Jenny Gans and Max (Moses) Gans, 2009.

<sup>53</sup> De Jong, Lou. *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog* - Deel 9 – Londen (1e band), 595.

Switzerland. Nine Dutch citizens, who lived near Geneva, were selected to carry out the activities of this new commission. One of these people was Max Gans. Why he was chosen is unclear, but in early 1943 only 200 Dutch refugees lived in Geneva. Besides, Gans was already experienced in giving aid to fellow Jews, due to his work for the Joodse Invalide.<sup>54</sup> Gans and Visser t Hooft, the chair of the cultural committee, became close contacts from February 1943 onwards, based on their mutual desire to help.

During the Second World War, Visser t Hooft led multiple organizations, besides the cultural commission, which impacted the aid toward Dutch Jews, and had influential contacts with the Dutch authorities in Bern and London. He is best known for his work as the first secretary general of the World Council of Churches in Geneva between 1948 and 1966. The World Council of Churches was already initiated in 1937 as a worldwide active inter-church organization with a focus on ecumenism, but its official foundation was postponed to 1948.<sup>55</sup> During the Second World War, Visser t Hooft was already appointed as head of this organization in formation.

Visser t Hooft was also active in the Dutch resistance. During a visit to London in May 1942, he was personally asked by the Dutch Prime Minister Gerbrandy to create an information route between Holland and the Dutch authorities via Switzerland. After his return to Geneva in June 1942, Visser t Hooft established a route that became known as 'de Zwitserse weg'.<sup>56</sup> This information route was active between the summer of 1942 and the liberation of the south of the Netherlands in 1944. Visser t Hooft not only founded this highly risky information route, but was also the intermediary between London and the Dutch resistance who illegally smuggled information to Geneva. Messages sent by Visser t Hooft to London were directly forwarded to the Dutch ministers and Queen Wilhelmina.<sup>57</sup> Due to this function as an intermediary, Visser t Hooft also transferred information about the destruction and deportation of the Dutch Jews to the Dutch government in exile.

The cultural commission, led by Visser t Hooft, was not officially created until June 10 1943. But in March 1943, the commission already received instructions from the Dutch ambassador in Switzerland to start cultural aid in the hotel-camps.<sup>58</sup> To that end, Gans was appointed by the Dutch embassy in Bern to visit the hotel camps and act as an intermediary between the Jewish refugees and the Dutch authorities. This function meant that from March 1943 onwards he wrote reports about the

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<sup>54</sup> Yad Vashem, JCC archive, Reports compiled by the JCC (Joodse Coordinatie Commissie - Jewish Coordination Committee of Dutch Jewry) in Geneva regarding providing social and cultural help to Jewish refugees from the Netherlands in Switzerland, 1942-1945, Verslag van het comité voor cultureel en sociaal werk ten behoeve van de tijdelijke te Genève vertoevende Nederlanders, over de periode Januari 1943 tot maart 1944.

<sup>55</sup> Zeilstra, Jurjen. *Visser't Hooft, 1900-1985: Living for the Unity of the Church*. Amsterdam University Press, 2020, 197.

<sup>56</sup> Zeilstra, Jurjen. "Geen doorgeefluik: Visser't Hooft en de Zwitserse Weg, 1942-1944." *Can. J. of Netherlandic Studies/Rev. can. d'études néerlandaises* 40 (2020), 105-145, 119.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*, 122.

<sup>58</sup> Yad Vashem, JCC archive, Reports compiled by the JCC (Joodse Coordinatie Commissie - Jewish Coordination Committee of Dutch Jewry) in Geneva regarding providing social and cultural help to Jewish refugees from the Netherlands in Switzerland, 1942-1945, Rapport aan de commissie ter behartiging van der cultureele belangen der Nederlandse vluchtelingen.

cultural needs in the hotel camps. For example, in a report Gans wrote about his visit to the hotel camps in Clarens and Chamby on March 2, 1943, he stated that in these camps there is a strong need for children's books.<sup>59</sup> During his visits to these camps, Gans also had one-on-one conversations with Dutch refugees about their personal problems and worries: 'These people find it pleasant when someone visits 'from outside' who wants to have an individual interest in everyone, who asks about their family, about their 'home', and who talks to them about what they consider to be important problems.'<sup>60</sup> In this approach of Gans a clear continuation is visible with his work for the Joodse Invalide. Before the Second World War, Gans has since a young age cared for fellow Jews in need, and he restarted this work during his live in Switzerland.

The desire of Gans to help not only created a close relationship with Visser t Hooft, but also started connections between him and multiple Dutch Jews in Switzerland and London who also wanted to aid fellow Jews. A good example is Albert Milhado, who was a Jewish journalist who lived in London during the Second World War. In this period, he was linked to radio Oranje and chairmen of the so-called Circle of Dutch Jews in London. This organization was created in 1943 and lobbied daily within the Dutch ministries in London to ensure that the Dutch authorities would give more aid to Dutch Jews.<sup>61</sup>

Soon after Gans started to visit the Dutch citizens in the hotel camps in Switzerland, and began correspondence with people like Milhado, he felt the need to do more for the Jewish refugees. His wish for broadening his work is transparent in the various reports he wrote about the hotel camps. An example of his wish for an increase in intensiveness in his work is a report that Max Gans sent on March 5, 1943, to Otto Zaugg, head of the *Eidgenössische Zentralleitung der Heime und Lager* (Swiss Central Administration of Asylums and Camps).<sup>62</sup> In this report, Gans not only wrote about his cultural work but also indicated that the food in the camps in Chamby and Clarens was good but perhaps not sufficient in quantity. Gans received a clear response to his remarks about the food from the Dutch authorities in Switzerland. Head of the Refugee Department of the Dutch embassy, Dr. Kijzer indicated, in a letter sent to Gans on March 8, 1943, that 'the nutritional status' in the hotel camps was not part of Mr. Gans' duties.<sup>63</sup>

As member of the cultural commission, Gans not only visited the hotel camps but was also very present in the rest of the commission's activities. Before the official founding of this commission in June 1943, its members already weekly met in three separate study groups to discuss the cultural needs of Dutch Jewish refugees in Switzerland. Gans was active in the so-called spiritual-moral study

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid, Rapport, 2-3-1943.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Onderzoeksgids Oorlogsgetroffenen WO2, Terugkeer, opvang, nasleep, Kring van Nederlandsche Joden. Hyperlink: [Onderzoeksgids Oorlogsgetroffenen WO2 -](#)

<sup>62</sup> Yad Vashem, JCC archive, Reports compiled by the JCC (Joodse Coordinatie Commissie - Jewish Coordination Committee of Dutch Jewry) in Geneva regarding providing social and cultural help to Jewish refugees from the Netherlands in Switzerland, 1942-1945, Report to Otto Zaugg, 3-3-1943.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, Letter Kijzer to Gans, 8-3-1943.

group and gave lectures with titles like: ‘Suffering that uproots, or suffering that purifies’.<sup>64</sup> In April 1944 he also gave a lecture for the entire cultural commission, in which he explained the Jewish traditions during Pesach.<sup>65</sup>

From June 1943 onwards, multiple activities were organized in the hotel camps. For example, multiheaded lectures about the French language were given, and a weekly ladies' club was started in which women could participate in a sewing class.<sup>66</sup> Jenny Gans-Premsele was also active for the cultural commission and visited several art collections in Switzerland with multiple groups of Dutch refugees in 1943.<sup>67</sup> Despite the energetic attitude of the couple Gans Premsele in the cultural committee, Max Gans resigned as a committee member at the beginning of 1944, because of the establishment of the JCC on 20 January 1944.

During the first meeting of the JCC, in the hotel Bonivar, Gans indicated that he and Salomon Troostwijk initiated the creation of this organization, in addition to the cultural committee, to try to help Dutch Jews who suffered in the German occupied territories. This initiative followed after Troostwijk had written a report for the Dutch ambassador Bosch van Rosenthal about the treatment of Dutch Jews in the Netherlands. According to Gans, this report created interest in the Dutch embassy in Switzerland, to also aid Dutch Jews outside Switzerland.<sup>68</sup>

The above-mentioned report by Troostwijk (born February 3, 1903) was written in November 1943 and the result of his work as a head inspector of *Comfina*. Comfina is the abbreviation of the Financial Affairs Committee, and it was created by the Jewish Council of Amsterdam to manage the financial resources that were needed for the nationwide affairs of this organization.<sup>69</sup>

In an overview written in 2003 about his family's travel to Switzerland during WW2, the son of Salomon Troostwijk, Arnold Troostwijk, indicates that his father worked for the financial department of the Jewish Council simply to support his family. Before WW2, Troostwijk had been a broker in machinery and metals. He was rather successful in his work, as he was able to acquire an office at the Amsterdamse Keizersgracht in 1937.<sup>70</sup> During WW2, Troostwijk had to stop working, because on May 1, 1941 the German authorities in the Netherlands ensured that Jews who practiced certain professions, such as being a broker, were only allowed to offer services to Jewish customers. This new rule led to the demise of Troostwijk's business and therefore created the need for him to

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid, De in de drie groepen gehouden inleidingen.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, Verslag van het comité voor cultureel en sociaal werk ten behoeve van de tijdelijke te Genève vertoevende Nederlanders, over de periode Januari 1943 tot maart 1944.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, Ontspanningscommissie ‘Mont Pelerin’ secr. E.H. de Vos, 4-1-1944.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid, Verslag van het comité voor cultureel en sociaal werk ten behoeve van de tijdelijke te Genève vertoevende Nederlanders, over de periode Januari 1943 tot maart 1944.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid, Report of first meeting JCC, 20-1-1944.

<sup>69</sup> De Jong, Lou. *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog* - Deel 6 – Juli '42 – mei '43 (1e band), 262.

<sup>70</sup> Troostwijk, A. *Onze vlucht naar de VRIJHEID in 72 dagen, met hulp van de DUTCH-PARIS Ondergrondse, 10 oktober/ 12 november 2003*, 6-7.



support his family financially in other ways. In his overview, Arnold Troostwijk also states that his father's work at the Jewish Council ensured that his family receive a Sperre.<sup>71</sup>

After he received this Sperre, Troostwijk came in contact with the Dutch-Paris organization via his colleague Sam Blom, who also worked for Comfina. This resistance group has helped around 800 Dutch Jews to illegally travel to Switzerland. With the help of his contact in the Dutch-Paris organization, a man called Paul Veerman, Troostwijk fled the Netherlands with his wife Erna Vohs and son Arnold on June 22, 1943.<sup>72</sup> To pay for their travel, the family Troostwijk brought a lot of Dutch guilders to pay for smugglers, and fake identities to pass German border controls. The initial idea was to travel to Spain via Pau, a French city in the Pyrenees. However, when the family Troostwijk arrived in Pau they learned from a local pastor that the Gestapo was very active in this town, and already arrested multiple Jewish refugees. The presence of the Gestapo meant that a journey to Spain was no longer an option.<sup>73</sup> During the same day, the family Troostwijk traveled to Lourdes in need of a new plan. After three days, the family Troostwijk decided to travel to Switzerland via Lyon. In this French city, they contacted the Dutch-Paris organization again. Eventually, this resistance group arraigned two smugglers for the family Troostwijk. With the help of these two men, the family Troostwijk crossed the Swiss border on August 31, 1943.<sup>74</sup>

After they arrived in Switzerland, the family Troostwijk was housed in the *Camp des Charmilles* by the Swiss authorities. Subsequently, they were sent to the Dutch hotel camp Beau Site in Clarens. Shortly after they arrived in Clarens, Troostwijk contacted the Dutch authorities. In a letter sent on October 11, 1943, Troostwijk indicated that he had been active for the committee of financial management of the Jewish Council. Due to this function, he had much knowledge about the deportation of Dutch Jews, and what the German authorities did with Jewish property in the Netherlands. Troostwijk made clear that he was willing to share this information with the Dutch embassy in Bern.<sup>75</sup> Thanks to this letter, Troostwijk was invited to travel to the Dutch embassy. During this visit, he was requested by the Dutch ambassador to write the aforementioned report about the persecution of the Jews. Troostwijk signed the definitive rapport with the following title: a former inspector at the committee of financial management of the Jewish Council of Amsterdam.<sup>76</sup> Troostwijk was probably so transparent about his role in the Jewish Council, because it showed that he could be seen as a worthy source by the Dutch authorities.

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, 12.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid, 17.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid, 27.

<sup>75</sup> Nationaal Archief, Archieven van het Ministerie van Defensie te Londen [1940-1941]; Ministerie van Oorlog te Londen [1941-1945]; Departement van Oorlog: Bureau Londen [1945-1947], 1304, Brief S.I Troostwijk inzake de deportatie van Joden in Nederland.

<sup>76</sup> For the digitized version of the report by Troostwijk see: Goudlijster, Rapport oom Sam. Hyperlink: [Rapport oom Sam – Goudlijster](#)



Even though Troostwijk was open about his role in the Jewish Council during his life in Switzerland, as this report was read by people like Gans and Isaac, this topic must have caused some discussion among other refugees, who were already very critical of this organ during the war. A good example of such a ‘critical’ refugee was Siegfried (Frits) Isaac (Born August 8, 1900). In a personal letter to Max Gans he wrote on June 9, 1944, that the people of the Jewish Council in the Netherlands argued that if they did not cooperate with the German occupiers, the Germans would choose other worse people to do the job: ‘They also said; if we don't do it, they take very bad people and that's much worse. The Jewish council also claimed; it is wrong, but we will try to make something right out of something wrong. A frustrating mentality.’<sup>77</sup> The critique of Isaac towards the Jewish Council, present in this letter, originated in the period that he encountered this organization frequently on a professional and personal level.

At the age of 25, in 1925, Frits Isaac became an employee of the well-known Dutch department store the Bijenkorf. This originally Jewish company was founded in 1870 by his grandfather Simon Philip Goudsmit. Until 1940, the family remained influential in the company due to their large possession of shares and positions on the board of directors. During the German invasion of the Netherlands, Frits Isaac was the director of the company, together with his cousin Alfred Goudsmit.<sup>78</sup> In these hectic days, he was also a lieutenant and fought in the province of Zeeland against the German army. After the Dutch capitulation, Frits Isaac gave up his position in the Bijenkorf on 29 November 1940, due to his Jewish background. Secretly, he continued to work for the Bijenkorf as an advisor. However, he was dismissed as an advisor when the Bijenkorf was put under *Verwaltung* after the February strikes on February 27, 1941.<sup>79</sup>

Before the Second World War, Frits Isaac and his wife Elisa Edersheim were active as convinced Zionists for various philanthropic boards. For example, they were both members of the 1933-founded Committee for Special Jewish Interests, which tried to help Jews who had fled Germany, and Isaac was also a prominent member of the Nederlandse Zionistische Bond (NZB).<sup>80</sup> This union was created in 1899 to promote Zionist activities in the Netherlands. Initially, these activities mainly consisted of enabling Jews to start an agricultural education and emigrate to Palestine. Before WW2, only small amounts of Dutch Jews emigrated. The couple Isaac-Edersheim thought about leaving the Netherlands, but after a visit to Palestine they decided that life there was too

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<sup>77</sup> Yad Vashem, JCC archive, Reports compiled by the JCC (Joodse Coordinatie Commissie - Jewish Coordination Committee of Dutch Jewry) in Geneva regarding providing social and cultural help to Jewish refugees from the Netherlands in Switzerland, 1942-1945, Letter Isaac to Gans, 9-6-1944.

<sup>78</sup> Stadsarchief Amsterdam, ‘Beschrijving Archief van de Koninklijke Bijenkorf Beheer N.V. en rechtsvoorgangers’.

<sup>79</sup> Stadsarchief Amsterdam, Bijenkorf, Stukken betreffende de bemoeienissen van de Duitse autoriteiten met het beheer van de vennootschap en gelieerde bedrijven, 1940 – 1944, Mededeling aan Isaac, 5 maart 1941.

<sup>80</sup> Giebels, Lidwina Antonia Maria. *De zionistische beweging in Nederland, 1899-1941*. Assen: Van Gorcum, 1975, 174.

hard.<sup>81</sup> Although the couple Isaac-Edersheim were supporters of a Jewish homeland, and Frits Isaac had a great interest in Hebrew no religion was practiced at home.<sup>82</sup>

Because of the pre-war links with self-help organizations like the Committee for Special Jewish Interests and his Zionist background, Isaac was closely involved in the establishment of the Jewish Coordination Committee (JCC) in the Netherlands during WW2. This committee was founded on December 10, 1940, via a partnership with several organizations, including the NZB. The chair of the commission became the former President of the Dutch Supreme Court, Mr. Louis Ernst Visser. Isaac himself became a committee member, alongside David Cohen, Isaac Kisch, Albert Spanjaard, Simon Dasberg, Eduard Belifante, and Jozef Stokvis.<sup>83</sup>

The JCC-NL was created to protect the interests of Dutch Jews, which were at stake due to the measures taken against them by the German occupiers.<sup>84</sup> In practice, this meant that the JCC-NL protested in conversations with the Dutch authorities about discrimination against Jews, informed Dutch Jews via circulars about anti-Jewish laws, and created plans for how to react to these new measures against Dutch Jewry. The JCC-NL wanted to be represented in the whole country. Therefore, in the course of 1941, nine regional representatives were appointed and 63 trustees were selected in municipalities with Jewish communities.<sup>85</sup> The chair of the JCC-NL, Vissers strongly believed that to save the legal rights of the Dutch Jewry, it was essential that the JCC-NL would cooperate with the Dutch authorities and not German officials. Therefore, there was no direct contact between the JCC-NL and the German occupiers.

The German authorities in the Netherlands ignored the JCC-NL and created the Jewish Council of Amsterdam on February 13, 1941. As Vastenhout states this new organization was established to govern the Jewish Community in the Netherlands, and to make new anti-Jewish rules public: 'Aiming to unite the Jewish communities in the Netherlands, Belgium and France, and to establish a properly functioning representative organization through which they could communicate their regulations, the Germans appointed at the head of these Jewish organizations Jews whom they believed would achieve these goals.'<sup>86</sup>

Initially the Jewish Council was only active in Amsterdam.<sup>87</sup> During the beginning of the Jewish Council, it cooperated with the JCC-NL. For example, they arraigned aid together for suffering foreign Jews who lived in the Netherlands. The division of tasks was also clear; the Jewish Council

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<sup>81</sup> Newmark, Ruth. Unpublished memoires, Holland, 24.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> NIOD, 248-1798A, Visser, Mr. Lodewijk Ernst, 11, Besluit tot instelling van een "Coördinatie Commissie" door de Permanente Commissie tot Algemeene Zaken van het Nederlands-Israëlitisch Kerkgenootschap en de Hoofdcommissie voor de Zaken van het Portugeesch-Israëlitisch Kerkgenootschap, 20 januari 1941.

<sup>84</sup> When the JCC in the Netherlands and the JCC in Switzerland are discussed, two abbreviations will be used: JCC-NL, and JCC-CH.

<sup>85</sup> Van der Boom, Bart. *De politiek van het kleinste kwaad*. Boom, 2022, 3 Visser contra Cohen, 9.

<sup>86</sup> Vastenhout. *The 'Jewish Councils' of Western Europe*, 69.

<sup>87</sup> Somers, Erik. *Voorzitter van de Joodse Raad. De herinneringen aan David Cohen (1941- 1943)*. Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2010, 76.

was responsible for Amsterdam and the JCC-NL for the rest of the Netherlands. However, this changed when the Jewish Council was requested by the German authorities to become nationwide active in October 1941. Within a few weeks, representatives were appointed by the Jewish Council in all provinces and in municipalities with a Jewish community. Almost all of these people had been active for the JCC-NL. Meaning that the JCC-NL could no longer carry out its affairs. On November 3, 1941, the JCC-NL was officially dissolved by the German authorities. Almost all commission members of the JCC-NL accepted a function in the Jewish Council, only Frits Isaac declined to be involved.<sup>88</sup>

Historians who analyze the cooperation between the JCC-NL and the Jewish Council, like Dan Michman, mainly describe the difficult relationship between Mr. Visser, and David Cohen, who was a member of the JCC-NL, and one of the two chairmen of the Jewish Council.<sup>89</sup> The contact between Visser and Cohen had become poor after the Jewish Council transformed into a national organization and the JCC-NL ceased to exist. In correspondence with Cohen in November 1941, Visser made clear that he does not want to cooperate with him anymore. In these letters, Visser was very critical about Cohen and the Jewish Council in general. According to Visser, the Jewish Council and Cohen were far too lenient towards the German occupier and its persecution of Jews, and had done too little to mitigate or prevent measures against Dutch Jews: ' You think you can make the best of the situation by trying, coûte que coûte, to get as many mitigations as possible from the occupier, and to serve him. In my opinion, this is a mere utility policy, which lacks principles and norms and therefore cannot bring any good[s].'<sup>90</sup> These allegations towards Cohen clearly show that after the JCC-NL stopped, Visser was still determined to only have contact with the Dutch authorities.

As a reaction to Visser's critique, Cohen stated that cooperation with the German authorities was necessary, because they had the power to determine what happened to the Dutch Jews. Given these circumstances, Cohen tried to soften the treatment of Jews in the Netherlands. As Cohen claimed, he could not prevent deportations, but by staying in touch with the German occupiers he was able to help many Jews a little.<sup>91</sup>

Isaac himself was, just like Visser, very critical of the contact between the Jewish Council and the German occupier. This criticism caused tensions within his own family before he escaped to Switzerland, mainly because his brother-in-law Henri Edersheim was a prominent member of the Jewish Council. Edersheim had been the national secretary of the JCC-NL and local representative in The Hague of this organization, but gave up these positions after he became representative of the

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<sup>88</sup> Van der Boom, *De politiek van het kleinste kwaad*, 3 Visser contra Cohen, 9

<sup>89</sup> Melkman, Jozeph. "De briefwisseling tussen mr. LE Visser en prof. dr. D. Cohen." *Studia Rosenthaliana* (1974), 107-130.

<sup>90</sup> Van der Boom. *De politiek van het kleinste kwaad*, 3 Visser contra Cohen, 6.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

Jewish Council in The Hague in October 1943.<sup>92</sup> Isaac took his place as secretary of the JCC-NL, but only briefly as this organization ceased to exist in November 1943.

In a letter that Isaac wrote in Switzerland to his sister and brother-in-law (Nelly Isaac and Leopold Loeb), who lived in the USA, he stated about Henri Edersheim that he had a very high position in the Jewish Council, was strictly focused on legal matters, was opposed to fleeing, and was very aware of the raids and deportations.<sup>93</sup> Despite this criticism, Isaac also wrote in the same letter that Edersheim protected him and his wife when they were called for deportation. Based on Isaac's membership in a cultural committee and the fact that his sister Elisa Isaac-Edersheim was regent of the Jewish orphanage in The Hague, Edersheim was able to postpone the transport of his brother-in-law and his sister. However, he was not able to save himself from deportations, and died in Sobibor in July 1943.<sup>94</sup>

After his rescue by Edersheim, Isaac decided to escape the Netherlands. This would be an expensive decision, as the travel to Switzerland would eventually cost the family Isaac 50.000 guilders. Which is about 800.000 Euros in today's money.<sup>95</sup> As Isaac stated about this money: 'Without it, it would have been very difficult, because the journey of such a caravan had to be well prepared and was therefore much more expensive than for adults who could improvise much more.'<sup>96</sup> A member of the board of the Bijenkorf was prepared to lend this money to Isaac.

On 1 November 1942, Isaac, his wife, two children, and his foster daughter left their home in The Hague by train in the direction of Eindhoven. This train ride was the start of a long journey through the Netherlands, Belgium, and France. The journey went smoothly until the family arrived in Nancy. In this French city, the family needed to meet a smuggler who would take them to Switzerland. However, this man never arrived, causing that the family Isaac lived secretly in a hotel room for ten days, while a local barmaid went looking for a new smuggler. Isaac already made the decision to travel back to Belgium, when two new runners were found. Ultimately, the Isaac family traveled to the Swiss border, and with the help of two local French women arrived in Switzerland around midnight on November 18, 1942.<sup>97</sup> The family Isaac was exhausted because they had climbed and walked for five hours. According to Frits Isaac the Swiss police at the border was very menacing. They cursed and threatened to send the family Isaac back to France.<sup>98</sup> In the end, the family Isaac was allowed to stay, because there were three children involved.

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<sup>92</sup>Melkman. "De briefwisseling tussen mr. LE Visser en prof. dr. D. Cohen.", 113.

<sup>93</sup> Private archive B. Isaac, Letter S. Isaac to Nelly Isaac and Leopold Loeb, undated.

<sup>94</sup> Arolsen Archives, Dokumente mit Namen ab DUKKER, Jonas. Hyperlink: <https://collections.arolsen-archives.org/de/document/130282023>

<sup>95</sup> IISG, Waarde van de gulden versus de Euro, Hyperlink:

<https://iisg.amsterdam/nl/onderzoek/projecten/hpw/calculate.php>

<sup>96</sup> Private archive B. Isaac, Letter S. Isaac to Nelly Isaac and Leopold Loeb, undated.

<sup>97</sup> Federal Archives Switzerland, BROESSLER, RUTH, 13.07.1931; ISAAC, ARTHUR, 09.04.1932; ISAAC, BENJAMIN HENRI, 10.05.1945; ISAAC, SIEGFRIED, 08.07.1900; ISAAC-EDERSHEIM, ELISA HERMINA, 27.09.1903 (Dossiers), Subdossier\_0000006, Fragenboden Siegfried Isaac, 28-1-1943.

<sup>98</sup> Private archive B. Isaac, Letter S. Isaac to Nelly Isaac and Leopold Loeb, undated.

After they reached Switzerland, the Isaac family was transported to a prison in Prunstrut. After a short stay in this prison and in a large refugee camp in Buren, they were housed in the Beau site hotel camp. During the ten-month stay of the family Isaac in Beau Site, the hotel was crowded leading to many difficulties. Ruth Newmark, the foster daughter of Frits and Elise Isaac, recalls in her memoirs that there was a shortage of beds, meaning that she had to sleep in a crib for a while.<sup>99</sup>

In the questionnaire that refugees in Switzerland during the Second World War had to fill in, Isaac indicated that he would like to find housing in Switzerland and be able to carry out scientific work. If these two wishes could not be granted by the Swiss authorities, Isaac still wanted to be interned with his family in Switzerland.<sup>100</sup> He wished not to be sent back to the Netherlands because that would be simply impossible for his family. Fortunately, the Isaac family was not expelled from Switzerland and was able to move into an apartment in Villeneuve in September 1943.

Finding an apartment took more than ten months for the Isaac family, but it was relatively easy compared to Isaac's efforts to find work before the JCC-CH was founded in 1944. In general, it was forbidden by the Swiss authorities for Jewish refugees to earn money. This meant that Isaac was not able to get a paying job, but he was allowed to carry out work on a voluntary basis. In June 1943, Isaac created plans about so-called cultural work among Dutch Jewish refugees in Switzerland. Isaac thought it was necessary to realize some intellectual activities in the hotel camps, and even discussed these plans with a Dutch retired business man, who in the Swiss village of Arosa.<sup>101</sup> Isaac did not operate his plans to help fellow Jews in Switzerland, before the JCC in Geneva was created, because he was imprisoned for several months in 1943.

Isaac did not stand on his own during this captivity, however. On August 30, 1943, his cousin Wim Belinfante sent a letter to the Dutch Minister of Justice in London. In this letter, Belinfante stated that he had received a telegram in which Isaac told him that he had been detained for several months by the Swiss authorities because of his status as a reserve officer for the Dutch army.<sup>102</sup> As a reaction to this letter from Belinfante, research was started by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs into Frits Isaac, which led to correspondence between the Dutch ministry and the Dutch embassy in Bern. This exchange of letters was not helpful for Isaac, but it does provide more clarity about his situation. In a letter written by the Dutch ambassador in Bern, on September 22, 1943, it is mentioned that the Dutch authorities in Switzerland had tried to release Isaac on the argument that Isaac could carry out voluntary work if released, but the Swiss authorities refused this logic.<sup>103</sup> The exact date when Isaac

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<sup>99</sup> Newmark, Ruth. Unpublished memoirs, Switzerland, 46.

<sup>100</sup> Federal Archives Switzerland, BROESSLER, RUTH, 13.07.1931; ISAAC, ARTHUR, 09.04.1932; ISAAC, BENJAMIN HENRI, 10.05.1945; ISAAC, SIEGFRIED, 08.07.1900; ISAAC-EDERSHEIM, ELISA HERMINA, 27.09.1903 (Dossiers), Subdossier\_0000006, Fragenboden Siegfried Isaac, 28-1-1943.

<sup>101</sup> Nationaal Archief, Archief van het Ministerie van Defensie te Londen [1940-1941]; Ministerie van Oorlog te Londen [1941-1945]; Departement van Oorlog: Bureau Londen [1945-1947], (1933) 1940-1947 (1974), 1299, Correspondentie met P. Kerdel. 1943-1944, Letter Kerdel to Van Tricht, 21-6-1943.

<sup>102</sup> Nationaal Archief, Archief van het Ministerie van Justitie te Londen, (1936) 1940-1945 (1953), 10176, Isaac, S. 1943, Letter W.G. Belinfante to Minister of Justice, 30-8-1943.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid, Letter Bosch van Rosenthal to Ministry of foreign affairs, 22-9-1943.

was released is unknown, but it must have been before September 1943, as he and his family started to live in their apartment in Villeneuve in that month.

Besides contact with his cousin Wim Belifante, Isaac also had contact with other family members during his stay in Switzerland. The most important contacts were his brothers-in-law Karel and Samuel Edersheim and his brother Henri Isaac. As mentioned above, Henri Edersheim died in Sobibor but his brothers, Karel and Samuel, survived the Holocaust. Lawyer Karel Jozef Edersheim and his family fled the Netherlands in May 1943.<sup>104</sup> The family went into hiding in Belgium, after which they were eventually betrayed and sent to the Mechelen transit camp. The eventual idea of fleeing to Switzerland, just like the Isaac family, never worked out.<sup>105</sup> During the stay of the family Edersheim in Mechelen, they were not sent to the East. After the last transport had left the camp in Belgium in July 1944, the family Edersheim had to live in Mechelen for multiple months with a severe food shortage until they were liberated on September 4, 1944.<sup>106</sup> Following their regained freedom, the family Edersheim went to Brussels. In this Belgian city, Karel Edersheim created a JCC in December 1944, following the example of the JCC in Switzerland, and re-established his contact with Frits Isaac. During his time as chair of the JCC in Brussels, Edersheim also cooperated with the brother of Frits Isaac, Henri Isaac, who survived the Holocaust by hiding in Belgium.<sup>107</sup>

The second brother of Henri Edersheim, banker Samuel Edersheim, did not flee the Nazis illegally, but avoided deportation via a lucky incident. On April 13, 1940, he and his wife left the Netherlands to visit their oldest son in New York. Before the capitulation of the Netherlands in May 1940, the family Edersheim had reached the United States, and did not return home for the following five years.<sup>108</sup> During the war, Samuel Edersheim was the contact person for Frits Isaac in the USA. This meant that he was the intermediary between Isaac and the JCC in New York.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Heller, Henriëtte. Interview 4464. Interview by Corinne Falch. *Visual History Archive*, USC Shoah Foundation, 15 August 1995. Hyperlink: <https://vha.usc.edu/testimony/4464>.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Yad Vashem, JCC archive, Documentation of the JCC (Joodse Coordinatie Commissie - Jewish Coordination Committee of Dutch Jewry) in Geneva regarding the situation of the Jews in the Netherlands, and the situation of the Jews deported to camps, or in refugee camps in Switzerland, 1942-1945, Letter Frits Isaac to Belifante, 29-7-1944.

<sup>108</sup> Huygens Instituut, Jansje Stodel, Levenbach, Ella (1894-1974), Hyperlink: [Levenbach, Ella \(1894-1974\) \(knaw.nl\)](https://www.knaw.nl/en/levenbach-ella-1894-1974).

<sup>109</sup> Ghetto Fighters House Archives, E.C. Edersheim - Levenbach: his diary written in the USA during WWII, 157.

About the fourth member of the JCC, Samuel van Dantzig, less archival material is available. Before his flight to Switzerland, Samuel van Dantzig (born October 31, 1897) was director of the bank S. van Dantzig and Co. in Rotterdam. This banking firm was founded by his uncle Samuel van Dantzig (1844-1921) in 1872. In 1939, the bank was bought by the Hollandsche Bank-Unie, but van Dantzig remained the head of the 'new' location of the Hollandsche Bank-Unie in Rotterdam.<sup>110</sup>

Just like the couple Isaac-Edersheim, Van Dantzig and his wife Estella van Dantzig-Broekhuijsen were very active in the Jewish community before 1940. For example, Van Dantzig was a member of the church council of the Dutch Israelite community, and Estella van Dantzig-Broekhuijsen had been a member, just like Isaac, of the Committee for Special Jewish Interests. Louise van Dantzig, daughter of the couple Van Dantzig-Broekhuijsen, indicated in a post-war statement about her life during WW2 that due to her mother's membership of this committee, the German Jewish refugees also came to their home in Rotterdam. Louise van Dantzig recalled that these visits made a deep impression on her.<sup>111</sup>

Before his getaway to Switzerland, Samuel van Dantzig was a member of the local committee of the Jewish Council in Rotterdam. His name is mentioned in an overview of this local branch of the Jewish Council, created on 6 June 1941, but I have not found specific descriptions of his work for this organization.<sup>112</sup>

After a long journey, which started on 5 October 1942, Van Dantzig reached the Swiss border with his family on the 18th of November, 1942. Just like the Isaac family, this trip has cost the Van Dantzig family a lot of money. The initial flight out of the Netherlands had been successful, until the Dantzig family was abandoned by their smugglers in Vichy France, and arrested by the *Gendarmerie*.<sup>113</sup> Fortunately, the local police commissioner was anti-German and provided new identity cards in which Dantzig's family were classified as Protestant. After these stressful events, the family Van Dantzig lived in the French city Lons le Saunier for multiple weeks, until the same police commissioner had fixed new smugglers. With a car, the family Van Dantzig traveled to a farm near the Swiss border on November 15, 1942. Eventually, the family crossed the Swiss border on November 18, 1942, and tried to walk as far into the country as possible, in fear of being sent back again.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> De Maasbode, Hollandsche Bank Unie neemt de firma S. van Dantzig te Rotterdam over, 18-4-1939.  
Hyperlink: <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=MMKB04:000192878:mpeg21:a0197>

<sup>111</sup> Yad Vashem, O.3 - Testimonies Department of the Yad Vashem Archives, Testimony of Louise Susanna Van Dantzig, born in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, 1925, regarding her experiences in The Hague and Lons Le Saunier, 20-5-1958.

<sup>112</sup> NIOD, 182 Joodsche Raad voor Amsterdam, 174, Enkele overzichten van taak en werkzaamheden van de Commissie van Geldelijk Beheer, richtlijnen, ontwerp-begrotingen, kasoverzichten, mededelingen en circulaire's inzake heffing van gelden t.b.v. buitenlandse en Nederlandse (armlastige) Joden, accountantscontrole e.d., december 1941 - januari 1943, Mededelingen aan plaatselijke comite's en besturen betreffende het verloop van de actie van de 'Joodse raad' in geheel Nederland, 6, 6-6-1941.

<sup>113</sup> Yad Vashem, O.3 - Testimonies Department of the Yad Vashem Archives, Testimony of Louise Susanna Van Dantzig, born in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, 1925, regarding her experiences in The Hague and Lons Le Saunier, 20-5-1958.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

After Van Dantzig and his family were spotted by the Swiss authorities, they were sent to the *Hotel des Etrangers* in Lausanne. This hotel was not part of the previously mentioned hotel camps. Due to his previous job as director of a Bank, Van Dantzig had good connections within Switzerland. As a result, he was able to open a Swiss bank account in Lausanne. Although he was not allowed to work, Van Dantzig was able to support his family well through a pension benefit to which he was entitled as a former bank director of the Hollandsche Bank-Unie. This pension was transferred to his newly opened bank account monthly, by a local Branch of the Hollandsche Bank-Unie in the capital city of Venezuela, Caracas.<sup>115</sup> In June 1944 Van Dantzig moved from the Hotel des Etranges to an apartment on the Avenue Eugene Rambert, Lausanne.

In sum, the future members of the JCC in Geneva, Gans, Isaac, Van Dantzig and Troostwijk belonged to the Jewish elite in the Netherlands before the Second World War. They had the opportunity to flee to Switzerland, had strong links with the JCC in the Netherlands and the Jewish Council, and, except for Troostwijk, were in the Netherlands already associated with Jewish relief work. Since their arrival in Switzerland, Isaac, Troostwijk, and Gans in particular had a strong need to help fellow Jews. Yet there were also major differences. Firstly, Gans had orthodox beliefs and Isaac was a Zionist without religious links. Secondly, due to his membership of the JCC-NL, Isaac was critical about relationships between Jewish organizations and (non-Jewish) authorities, while Gans, Troostwijk and Van Dantzig, as members of the Jewish Council, had experiences with cooperation with the German occupiers in the Netherlands. Besides his work for the Jewish Council, Gans also experienced cooperation between Jews and influential non-Jews in the Netherlands, due to his father's work in the Joodse Invalide. Thirdly, it is important to note that I have not found any people in the personal networks of Van Dantzig, and Troostwijk who could have had influenced the affairs of the JCC-CH.

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<sup>115</sup> Federal Archives Switzerland, VAN DANTZIG, ADOLPHE, 05.07.1922; VAN DANTZIG-BROEKHUYSEN, ESTELLA, 02.09.1902; VAN DANTZIG, HUGO MICHEL, 13.03.1920; VAN DANTZIG, LOUISE, 13.04.1925; VAN DANTZIG, SAMUEL, 31.10.1897 (Dossiers), Subdossier\_0000025, Letter Schweizerischer Bankverein to the Justiz- und Polizei department Bern, 10-12-1943.



## Chapter 2 Personal ideas about the JCC in Switzerland

In this chapter, I will be discussing how the ideas of the JCC members about the help toward Dutch Jews via Switzerland, and regarding cooperation with (non-Jewish) authorities affected the internal relationships within the JCC. This chapter is divided into four parts. In every part, I will analyze the ideas of the JCC members during a specific period. These periods are January 1944, February-May 1944, June-August 1944, and December 1944-March 1945. I have chosen these four periods because they show the changing context in which the JCC members had to operate. In the first period, the JCC was created and the ideas about this new organization were discussed between Isaac, Gans, and Troostwijk. In the second period, the Dutch ambassador in Switzerland officially recognized the JCC, and Troostwijk lost his influence in the organization. In the third period, Gans started to have good personal contact with Bosch van Rosenthal, and he and Isaac had much disagreement about the attitude of the JCC towards the Dutch authorities in Switzerland. During the fourth period, Isaac moved to Geneva, making close cooperation between him and Gans possible. In this chapter, there is a great focus on Isaac and Gans' ideas. This is because Troostwijk and Van Dantzig have had little influence on the day-to-day affairs of the JCC. The reasons for this lack of influence are discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

### January 1944

Max Gans, Salomon Troostwijk, and Frits Isaac did not know each other well before they fled to Switzerland. Frits Isaac must have been familiar with Max Gans' father Gans Sr. because they were very active in the pre-war efforts to help German Jews in the Netherlands, and were connected to Mr. Lodewijk Visser.<sup>116</sup> Still, Max Gans and Frits Isaac were no close contacts before the creation of the JCC in Geneva, because Gans was almost twenty years younger than the former director of the Bijenkorf.

Although Troostwijk, Gans, and Isaac were not closely connected, during the creation of the JCC on January 20, 1944, they had very similar ideas about the help of Dutch Jews and the post-war reconstruction of Dutch Jewry. In the first meeting of the JCC, Gans highlighted that he wanted to create a committee with a focus on three aspects related to the help of Dutch Jews. Organizing the cultural and social affairs of the Dutch Jews in Switzerland, preparing the restoration of Jewish life in the Netherlands after the war, and cooperating with the Dutch government to plan the return of Dutch Jews to the Netherlands.<sup>117</sup> In the rest of the gathering, Gans explained his third focus point in detail. He had doubts about the Dutch government and their knowledge about the deportation and murder of

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<sup>116</sup> Gans, Mozes Heiman. *Memorboek: platenatlas van het leven der joden in Nederland van de middeleeuwen tot 1940*. Bosch & Keuning, 1988, 791.

<sup>117</sup> Yad Vashem, JCC archive, Reports compiled by the JCC (Joodse Coordinate Commissie - Jewish Coordination Committee of Dutch Jewry) in Geneva regarding providing social and cultural help to Jewish refugees from the Netherlands in Switzerland, 1942-1945, Report meeting JCC, 20-1-1944.

Dutch Jews. For example, Gans questioned whether the Dutch authorities in London were aware of the severity of the situation and whether they had created plans for the aid of deported Dutch Jews that would be thorough enough. With Gans' concerns about the knowledge of the Dutch authorities regarding the destruction of Dutch Jewry, he wanted to make clear that during the cooperation with the Dutch government, the JCC had to make plans about how to restore the lives of Dutch Jews in the Netherlands.

Isaac expanded this argumentation of Gans about planning the restoration of Jewish life in the Netherlands. In his contribution to this meeting, Isaac mostly focused on the JCC in the Netherlands. The JCC in Geneva had the same name as the JCC in the Netherlands, to honor this disbanded organization. Isaac made it clear that the JCC in Geneva was not only in name the successor of the organization led by Mr. Visser. He stated that the post-war reconstruction was already discussed by the JCC in the Netherlands. According to Isaac, the JCC in Geneva must continue the work of its defunct predecessor and make plans for the restoration of Jews in the Netherlands. Isaac stated that these plans were necessary because, during WW2, the Dutch Jews were robbed of their possessions, and almost completely eradicated. Besides this focus on post-war recovery, Isaac also highlighted that the new JCC in Geneva needed to aid the Dutch Jews who lived in Switzerland as refugees.

Troostwijk's Ideas about the JCC-CH were also very similar to those of the other JCC members. He agreed with Isaac's focus on the creation of plans for post-war restoration and shared Gans' doubt about the knowledge of the Dutch authorities. Troostwijk feared that the government was not aware of what happened with the Dutch Jews during the occupation. Because of this lack of information, Troostwijk suggested that the JCC should inform the Dutch government in exile about this tragedy, and, just like Isaac and Gans, he repeated that the JCC had to create plans to help Dutch Jews after the war. Troostwijk claimed that the JCC should inform the Dutch government right away about the tragedy of Dutch Jews. According to him, Dutch Jewry had been 'completely ruined', meaning that recovery plans could not be created after the war had ended:

'Dutch Jewry is completely ruined. The speaker has lived through the entire tragedy until almost the end and cites as an example the hundreds of children in hiding, whose parents have been deported and are probably no longer alive. They burned and robbed synagogues, Jewish institutions, and cemeteries. Those in hiding who will live until the end of the war are physically and morally broken for the time being.'<sup>118</sup>

At the end of the first meeting of the JCC, Gans stated that he would write a letter to the Dutch embassy in Bern about the creation of this organization and its intentions regarding the help towards Dutch Jews. Gans claimed that he would send a concept of this letter to the other committee members before sending it to the Dutch authorities, leaving room for Isaac and Troostwijk to give feedback.

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

A week after this meeting, Isaac sent a letter to Gans in which he stated that he still had not received a concept letter about the creation of the JCC.<sup>119</sup> Isaac had heard that Gans had visited Bern on January 27, 1944. Because of this visit, Isaac asked Gans whether he wanted to discuss the creation of the JCC with the Dutch authorities before sending the promised concept letter to the other JCC members.

#### February- May 1944

Even though the three JCC members had very similar ideas about the aid of Dutch Jews, the first signs of disagreement between Isaac and Gans are already transparent in March 1944. During this period, Troostwijk also lost his influence in the JCC, because he was sent to a labor camp by the Swiss authorities. According to Isaac and Gans, Troostwijk was not able to participate in the JCC due to his forced stay in a camp and was replaced by Samuel van Dantzig. However, the Dutch authorities did not accept this successor of Troostwijk as an official member of the JCC, leaving Isaac and Gans as the only ones who influenced the policies of the JCC. In chapter three, I will elaborate more on Troostwijk's forced stay in a labor camp and his loss of influence in the JCC.

As a reaction to the above-mentioned letter by Isaac about a concept letter, Gans wrote on January 30, 1944 that he had not written a letter to the Dutch embassy about the creation of the JCC, because he wanted to avoid 'zwart op wit ongelukken'.<sup>120</sup> This example shows that Gans had the intention in this period to contact the Dutch authorities in Switzerland discreetly. This attitude is also present in his contact with Visser t Hooft, chairman of the cultural commission: 'With Dr. Visser't Hooft, I had a very long meeting, which went very well. Of course, I did not point out his faults to him, but only those of others, and now he is even more convinced of the necessity of our work than some of us.'<sup>121</sup>

Despite his promise to Isaac that he had not contacted the Dutch authorities about the JCC, Gans already wrote individually a letter to Dr. Kijzer on 27 January 1944. In this letter to Kijzer, Gans asked permission to create the JCC, without a clear description of this organization.<sup>122</sup> After Gans had sent this letter to Kijzer, which was not discussed with the other two JCC members, a meeting was arranged between Kijzer, Gans, Isaac, and Troostwijk on February 3, 1944. In this meeting, the creation of a new commission, with the name *Joodse coördinatie commissie*, was discussed. During the meeting, it was concluded that the JCC should protect the interest of Dutch Jews in Switzerland, with a focus on the promotion of the future integration of Dutch Jews in the Netherlands.<sup>123</sup> This description of the JCC is closely linked to the previously discussed ideas which were promoted by Isaac, Troostwijk, and Gans.

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid, Letter Isaac to Gans, 28-1-1944.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid, letter Gans to Isaac, 30-1-1944.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Nationaal Archief, Archief van het Nederlandse Gezantschap in Zwitserland, (1912) 1914-1954 (1955), 405, H.M. Gans 1943-1945, Letter Gans to Kijzer, 27-1-1944.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid, Letter Gans to Kijzer, 3-2-1944.

After this meeting, the start of the JCC seemed promising. For example, on February 10, 1944, Kijzer sent a letter to Gans in which he stated that the JCC was about to have permission to start their activities. According to Kijzer, the Dutch ambassador was initially not very pleased about the idea of another aid organization, because he thought that an excess of commissions would damage the help towards Dutch Jews. Nevertheless, Kijzer persuaded Bosch van Rosenthal that the work of the JCC would be very important: 'In the meantime, I have been able to convince him of the great importance of your plans, and if it were not for the financial argument, I could almost say; go ahead.'<sup>124</sup> As a reaction to this approval of the JCC, Isaac sent a written memorandum to Gans on 18 February 1944, in which he described the future undertakings of the JCC in detail. This memorandum was eventually typed out by Max Gans and sent to the Dutch embassy on 25 February 1944. Suggested activities were, among other things, the collecting of information concerning the treatment of deported Jews and assisting the persecuted Jews with food and financial assistance. Isaac also declared his desire to create a Jewish organization that can 'morally' and 'socially' help the Dutch Jews who would return to the Netherlands after the war.<sup>125</sup> This focus on Jewish self-help is fitting Isaac's pre-war links to philanthropic organizations like the Committee for Special Jewish Interest and his membership of the Zionist Union in the Netherlands. Isaac let no opportunity pass during his membership in the JCC, to highlight the importance of Jewish cooperation.

Unlike the promising words by Kijzer in the above-described letter to Gans, this memorandum written by Isaac was not met with enthusiasm from the Dutch ambassador Bosch van Rosenthal. Especially the proposed collecting of information about the treatment of Dutch Jews during the war by the JCC was not to his liking. In a letter that Kijzer wrote to Gans on March 2, 1944, he claimed that the ambassador believed that already enough information about the treatment of Dutch Jews was known.<sup>126</sup> Instead of collecting information about Dutch Jews, Bosch van Rosenthal urged the JCC to focus on preparing the refugees living in Switzerland to resume their lives in the Netherlands (moral rearmament). Because of these ideas, Kijzer advised Gans and the JCC to focus on the realization of the next Easter feasts in the hotel camps. Eventually, according to Kijzer, Bosch van Rosenthal would accept the other proposed undertakings if the JCC started working on moral rearmament.<sup>127</sup>

After this advice from Kijzer, the first major clash between Gans and Isaac about the JCC is evident in their mutual correspondence. A good example of this is the letter Isaac sent to Gans on March 3, 1944. In this letter, Isaac made it clear that he did not want to cooperate with the Dutch embassy based on the previously discussed advice by Kijzer. According to him, the JCC could think

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid, Kijzer to Gans, 10-2-1944.

<sup>125</sup> Yad Vashem, JCC archive, Reports compiled by the JCC (Joodse Coordinatie Commissie - Jewish Coordination Committee of Dutch Jewry) in Geneva regarding providing social and cultural help to Jewish refugees from the Netherlands in Switzerland, 1942-1945, Dutch Jews, 25-2-1945.

<sup>126</sup> Nationaal Archief, Archief van het Nederlandse Gezantschap in Zwitserland, (1912) 1914-1954 (1955), 405, H.M. Gans 1943-1945, Letter Kijzer to Gans, 2-3-1944.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

about moral rearmament if it would have permission from the Dutch ambassador to also work on the other proposed activities. However, a focus on moral rearmament as the 'pièce de résistance' of the JCC could not be accepted, because, according to Isaac, this was primarily a task for the embassy itself.<sup>128</sup> According to him: 'moral upliftment is pre-eminently the task for which the legation itself is responsible. The effectuation of this task lies in the way in which the refugees are regarded and treated here in Switzerland by the Dutch authorities.'<sup>129</sup> Isaac also did not agree with Kijzer that the JCC should focus on specific Jewish matters like organizing feasts: 'Also, as a committee, we have nothing to do with the Easter feast.'<sup>130</sup>

In this letter, Isaac also mentioned that Gans wanted to accept the advice by Kijzer to focus on moral rearmament in the JCC, as this could enable cooperation with the Dutch embassy in other areas, and therefore be able to help Dutch Jews even further. Isaac described this vision of Gans on cooperation as too 'slippy': 'I could accept some degree of tactics to get the recognition, even accept the moral rearmament, but will Z.E. not give us the recognition we deem necessary, then we must abandon tactics and diplomacy, and say very politely but firmly no.'<sup>131</sup> Isaac even doubted whether it would be beneficial to pursue recognition from the ambassador at all, as Bosch van Rosenthal had always doubted the existence of the JCC, in which he was right. Isaac believed that it would be more efficient to directly ask the Dutch authorities in London for permission to organize large-scale aid programs for their fellow Jews. With this permission, the JCC could work without the Dutch embassy in Bern. In this critical attitude of Isaac towards people like Bosch van Rosenthal it is clearly detectable that Isaac saw the newly created JCC in Geneva in January 1944 as a continuation of the JCC in the Netherlands. This made Isaac's attitude towards the Dutch authorities in Bern and London complicated. Just like Lodewijk Ernst Visser did not want to cooperate with the German authorities as chair of the JCC in the Netherlands, Isaac refused to work with the Dutch authorities as long as the JCC in Geneva was not accepted as an independent Jewish aid organization.

Within a week after Isaac shared his doubts about cooperation with the Dutch embassy in Switzerland, and Kijzer's claim that Bosch Rosenthal did not like the proposed activities of the JCC-CH, the committee of Gans, Isaac, and Troostwijk received permission from the Dutch ambassador to help Dutch Jews via the JCC in Switzerland. According to Jurjen Zeilstra, this rapid turnaround by Bosch van Rosenthal was caused by Visser 't Hooft, who convinced him to grant Gans the space needed to work on his ideas about the support towards Dutch Jews.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Yad Vashem, JCC archive, Reports compiled by the JCC (Joodse Coordinatie Commissie - Jewish Coordination Committee of Dutch Jewry) in Geneva regarding providing social and cultural help to Jewish refugees from the Netherlands in Switzerland, 1942-1945, Letter Isaac to Gans, 3-3-1944.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Zeilstra. *Visser't Hooft*, 174.

After he granted the JCC permission to work, Bosch van Rosenthal sent the previously mentioned memorandum, written by Isaac, to the Dutch government in London on March 10, 1944.<sup>133</sup> As an attachment, the Dutch ambassador also sent a message in which he expresses himself positively towards Max Gans. He indicated that Gans and the other JCC members could help him very well. However, in the same message, Bosch van Rosenthal also described the JCC as an advisory committee: 'A small study committee, which aims, among other things, is to research the issue of repatriation of Dutch Jews.'<sup>134</sup> This specification of the JCC meant that the Dutch ambassador still did not financially support the realization of the JCC's aid towards Dutch Jews. This ongoing lack of possibilities for the JCC to help Dutch Jews caused the ongoing clash between Isaac and Gans about the contact between the JCC and the Dutch authorities in Switzerland to remain unsolved. On the one hand, Isaac felt that the Dutch ambassador and his employees, like Kijzer, did not want to cooperate with JCC. This feeling caused that Isaac did not want to work with the Dutch embassy until they fully accepted and supported the JCC. On the other hand, Gans wanted to continue his cooperation with the Dutch embassy, because he remained to see possibilities to help Dutch Jews via this contact.

The disagreement between Isaac and Gans about cooperation with the Dutch authorities reached a boiling point after the Commission Poland was established with the support of Kijzer. The Dutch representative for the International Red Cross, Baron Vos van Steenwijk created the Commission Poland in March 1944. The members of the commission were J.W. Stoutjesdijk, J.B. Braaksma, Dr. Kijzer, P.C. Naeff, Van Hamel, the couple Polak Daniels and Vos van Steenwijk as chair.<sup>135</sup> Only the couple Polak Daniels were of Jewish descent and connected to the JCC.<sup>136</sup> The goal of the Commission Poland was to make plans for sending a team of Dutch people to Poland after the war has ended, to help the remaining deported Dutch citizens who were sent east by the German occupier. In a post-war statement, Vos van Steenwijk stated that he wanted to include Jews and Non-Jews in this commission: 'I believed, not to form a 100 percent Jewish committee, but one that included Israelites as well as others. I am not only for the Israelites but for the Dutch in general, and also for the workers who were not Jews.'<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> NIOD, Zwitserse weg A, 5, stukken B2 t/m B11, Letter B.V.R 10-3-1944.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Nationaal Archief, Archief van de Commissie tot onderzoek naar de houding van Nederlandse Diplomatieke en Consulaire ambtenaren tegenover Nederlandse uitgewekenen (Commissie- Cleveringa), 1946-1950 (1951), 23, Dr. J.M. Kijzer, 1948-1949, Letter Kijzer to Commission Cleveringa, 18-12-1947.

<sup>136</sup> Kijzer also had Jewish ancestors, but the JCC members like Gans did not know. See for example; Parlementaire enquête regeringsbeleid 1940-1945, Zitting Mozes Heiman Gans 22-12-1949. Hyperlink: [enquetecommissieregering - MOZES HEIMAN GANS \(google.com\)](#).

<sup>137</sup> Parlementaire enquête regeringsbeleid 1940-1945, Zitting Jan Willem Jacobus baron De Vos van Steenwijk 22-1-1950. Hyperlink: [enquetecommissieregering - JAN WILLEM JACOBUS BARON DE VOS VAN STEENWIJK \(google.com\)](#)

After the creation of the Commission Poland, Isaac did not want to cooperate with this organization, mainly because the JCC was not informed about its creation. According to Isaac, this was not fair and even an insult to the JCC, because they (Isaac and Gans) were already making plans for the repatriation of Dutch Jews in Poland and the reintegration of these deported Jews in the Netherlands. Isaac thought that the JCC was nevertheless excluded from the Commission Poland because the JCC members were both refugees and Jews:

'In a case that is at the same time purely Jewish and purely Dutch, we have been disqualified in two respects as Jews and as refugees. (...) Because we feel for the cause and do not see the big picture now. You only see the big picture if you do not feel anything for it and do not understand it and do not do anything about it. The ambassador, (...), saw the big picture. One could of course have reasoned that our work is indeed a Dutch and not just a Jewish Dutch affair. In addition, maybe be able to make a commission, for example, of three Jews and two non-Jews. That would have been correct and sympathetic. But things that are right and sympathetic are not in the broad outline of the BBC (Bernsche Borrelclub).' <sup>138</sup>

By calling the Dutch embassy the 'Bernsche Borrelclub', and his claim that Bosch van Rosenthal did not understand or cared for the situation of the Dutch Jews in Poland, Isaac challenged the Dutch authorities in Switzerland. After the creation of the Commission Poland, Isaac also expressed his dissatisfaction with Kijzer in letters to Gans. Isaac thought that Kijzer should have given the JCC more responsibilities about planning help towards Dutch Jews and not secretly joining this new commission. Due to his negative attitude regarding Kijzer, Isaac also blamed Gans that he was still working with this man:

'I still don't understand why you still think about working with this pathological liar, who has offended us very much (...). Nor can I completely rid myself of the thought that you make it very easy for him with your conciliatory attitude. In this way, you will get nothing done by him. And just give him the feeling that he can cut us and you completely.' <sup>139</sup>

According to Isaac, Gans should keep his distance from Kijzer and should, regarding the Jewish affairs of the JCC, no longer cooperate with the Dutch embassy, which Isaac once again called the 'Bernsche Borrelclub'.<sup>140</sup> In this letter by Isaac, his distrust in authorities is noticeable. He only wanted to cooperate with people like Kijzer if they would recognize the JCC as an independent Jewish

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<sup>138</sup> Yad Vashem, JCC archive, Reports compiled by the JCC (Joodse Coordinatie Commissie - Jewish Coordination Committee of Dutch Jewry) in Geneva regarding providing social and cultural help to Jewish refugees from the Netherlands in Switzerland, 1942-1945, Letter Isaac to Gans, 20-3-1944.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.



self-help organization. Besides he made it clear to Gans that only by being direct and confrontational to authorities, they (Isaac and Gans) could help fellow Dutch Jews.

Gans's reaction to this advice by Isaac is not part of the JCC archive. However, from his undertakings between March 20, 1944, and June 1944, it becomes clear that he continued to work with the Dutch embassy, and in his letters to Kijzer and the Dutch ambassador, he remained discreet. Showing his willingness to cooperate with the Dutch authorities. As Gans stated in a letter to Kijzer: 'As I wrote to you a few weeks ago, it would be a great pleasure for me to meet you again soon. I have many things to report to you and I would also like to ask your advice on some important matters.'<sup>141</sup>

#### May- August 1944

Following the first tumult between him and Isaac about the Commission Poland, Gans began to focus more on the direct help of Dutch Jews. He started to collect information about Jewish survivors, and he realized the sending of food packages to Dutch Jews in concentration camps. This latter activity was not discussed during the creation of the JCC and shows the changing focus of Gans from planning the reconstruction of Dutch Jewry to the realization of aid for deported Jews.

The JCC started sending aid packages to concentration camps like Theresienstadt after Gans contacted Saly Mayer in March 1944 to ask him for JDC funds. Eventually, by June 1944, Mayer agreed to give 200.000 dollars to the JCC.<sup>142</sup> This money made the JCC financially independent from the Dutch authorities, and Gans could send aid packages to deported Dutch Jews. In June 1944, Gans also started to have more frequent personal talks with the Dutch ambassador. In his correspondence with Bosch van Rosenthal, Gans often mentioned the successful sending of aid packages to the concentration camps. Due to this success, Bosch van Rosenthal became more tolerant towards the affairs of the JCC. This positive attitude of the Dutch ambassador is evident in a letter he wrote to Gans on 11 May 1944: 'The fact that your endeavors are also crowned with success in practice gives me great satisfaction and should undoubtedly provide you with an incentive to continue on the chosen path.'<sup>143</sup>

Unlike Bosch van Rosenthal, Isaac was not happy with the path Gans had chosen in the previous months. Mainly because Isaac remained to see people like Bosch van Rosenthal, Kijzer, and Vos van Steenwijk as harmful to the JCC, and thus simply did not understand why Gans was still willing to work with these people. In multiple letters, sent in June 1944, Isaac asked Gans to only cooperate with the Dutch authorities in Switzerland on very strict terms and repeats his idea to get permission from the Dutch authorities in London to help Dutch Jews. According to Isaac, with this

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<sup>141</sup> Nationaal Archief, Archief van het Nederlandse Gezantschap in Zwitserland, (1912) 1914-1954 (1955), 405, H.M. Gans 1943-1945, Letter Gans to Kijzer, 18-4-1944.

<sup>142</sup> AfZ, JOINT Saly Mayer Collection, 36, Letter Gans to Meyer, 25-6-1944.

<sup>143</sup> Yad Vashem, JCC archive, Correspondence of M. Gans, a member of the JCC (Joodsche Coördinatie Commissie - Jewish Coordination Committee of Dutch Jewry) in Geneva with various people, organizations, and institutions regarding locating Jews deported from the Netherlands and helping Dutch Jews detained in various camps, 1944-1945, Letter from Bosch van Rosenthal to Gans, 11-4-1944.



admission, the JCC would no longer have any obligations towards the Dutch embassy, and could even operate without the by him much-hated Commission of Poland.

In response to these plans about cooperation with the Dutch authorities in London, Gans wrote a long letter and sent it to Isaac on June 10, 1944. This message is completely digitized but barely readable. In the only part that I could read, Gans stated that he would continue to cooperate with the Dutch ambassador to help Dutch Jews. During this cooperation, post-war plans about Dutch Jewry would not be the focus of the JCC, because Bosch van Rosenthal did not want to officially accept the post-war plans of the JCC, as he did not like to make plans about the not-so-near future.<sup>144</sup>

Isaac's reaction to Gans' letter has little in common with Gans' ideas about cooperation with the Dutch authorities: 'I thank you very much for your detailed and clear epistle in which you set out your position with undeniable clarity. Your intention is clear to me. And I have to say that I principally disagree.'<sup>145</sup> Isaac believed that Gans was much too friendly towards people like Bosch van Rosenthal and Kijzer: 'Another clarification: when you play the sweet boy, you can do so for personal purposes. But not as a representative of the Dutch Jews. That's something completely different.' (...) 'I still want to ask you: you have already played the sweet boy with Kijzer. But eventually, he let you down. What has been the profit?'<sup>146</sup>

Once again, the Commission Poland caused disagreement between Gans and Isaac, mainly because Gans thought about joining this commission after Baron Vos van Steenwijk personally invited him. He argued that accepting this offer would make it possible for him to get something good out of something bad. Isaac did not accept this reasoning. He wrote that the JCC should not bow to the 'filth' of Kijzer and Vos Steenwijk. He assumed that if Gans became a member of the Commission Poland, this commission would not accept the JCC as a partner in the post-war help towards Dutch Jews in the east. Due to Gans' thoughts about joining the commission Poland, Isaac even questioned the existence of the JCC: 'But if you make such decisions as a person and not as a committee member and if you are going to report on the Jewish question as a person and as a committee member and if you become a member of committee P and start doing other things tomorrow, why do we have a commission? Then create an agency instead of a commission.'<sup>147</sup>

To explain the reasons why he did not want to cooperate with the Dutch authorities in Switzerland as long they did not accept and respect the JCC-CH, Isaac often critiqued the Jewish Council in the Netherlands and its chair David Cohen. This critique is also showing in Isaac's reasoning not to work with the Commission Poland. Isaac made it clear that it was impossible to cooperate with this organization, because it had a negative attitude towards the JCC-CH: 'What is

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<sup>144</sup> Yad Vashem, JCC archive, Reports compiled by the JCC (Joodse Coordinatie Commissie - Jewish Coordination Committee of Dutch Jewry) in Geneva regarding providing social and cultural help to Jewish refugees from the Netherlands in Switzerland, 1942-1945, Letter Gans to Isaac, 10-6-1944.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid, Letter Isaac to Gans, 12-6-1944.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

crooked cannot be made straight (...).<sup>148</sup> Isaac explained this argument by referring to the leaders of the Jewish Council in the Netherlands. According to him, people like David Cohen claimed that if they did not cooperate with the German occupier, worse people would take over the role of the Jewish Council. Isaac disagreed with this argumentation about cooperation with (non-Jewish) authorities in the Second World War, and made clear that the JCC in Geneva should not work with the Commission Poland which, in his eyes, did not regard the JCC as an independent Jewish organization.

In his letters to Gans about cooperating with (non-Jewish) authorities, Isaac often referred to his opinion that if the JCC wanted to be successful in its help regarding the deported Dutch Jews, its commission members should be direct and honest about their motivations towards the Dutch authorities. According to Isaac, this stood in contrast with the leaders of the Jewish Council in the Netherlands who always cooperated, without criticism, with the German occupiers. Isaac specially accused Jewish Council members like Gertrude van Tijn, who functioned as head of the immigration department, and David Cohen, to have sent Jewish people to Poland to save themselves from deportation to the east: ‘(...) then the leadership has indeed let the people go to Poland and legally saved themselves based on the right relations with the Germans. Had Cohen gone into hiding or had he come here illegally, it was of course different.’<sup>149</sup> Although Isaac mentioned people like Van Tijn, he mostly criticized Cohen and his presumable effort to save himself via German authorities: ‘I’ve never had any sympathy with DC, but this attempt of his is a villainy far below what I had expected of him.’<sup>150</sup>

Isaac described this specific relationship between the Jewish Council and the German authorities in the Netherlands as ‘the winding roads by David Cohen’, which, according to Isaac, saved little Dutch Jews from deportation:

‘I have been anti-Cohen for 20 years because he has always gone meandering ways, has been politically opportunistic, and has always rejected political principles with arguments such as: do not be shortsighted, do not be offended, try to make something good out of it. He had this view in Zionism and he did so in the Jewish Council. To prevent worse, he made all the concessions (...).’<sup>151</sup>

This critique is very similar in words and attitude to the allegations of Lodewijk Ernst Visser towards Cohen after the JCC in the Netherlands ceased to exist. Therefore, during his time as a member of the JCC in Geneva, Isaac was strongly influenced by the ideas of Visser about cooperation with (non-Jewish) authorities. As stated above, this way of thinking also formed Isaac’s criticism of the discreet

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<sup>148</sup> Yad Vashem, JCC archive, Reports compiled by the JCC (Joodse Coordinatie Commissie - Jewish Coordination Committee of Dutch Jewry) in Geneva regarding providing social and cultural help to Jewish refugees from the Netherlands in Switzerland, 1942-1945, Letter Isaac to Gans, 12-6-1944.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid, Letter Isaac to Gans, 9-6-1944.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

relationships between Gans and authorities, like the Commission Poland and the Dutch embassy in Switzerland.

According to Isaac, an approach of wandering around. Like David Cohen in his relationship with the German authorities, is only useful for people who want to help themselves, but not if you think about collective and common interests: ‘The meandering ways can be effective for an individual who is not principled, who lives from one constellation to another, who knows how to take advantage of every situation and to adapt again and again, (...)’.<sup>152</sup> Isaac also stated that he always tried to avoid ‘wrong’, and was only willing to have contact with ‘Crooks’ if it caused an immediate concrete benefit.<sup>153</sup> With this explanation, Isaac thus wanted to show that Cohen’s discreet relationship with the German authorities was wrong, but he also warned Gans that as a JCC member, he could not be too flexible in his relationship with (non-Jewish) authorities, if he wanted to gain collective benefits for Dutch Jews. According to Isaac, being discreet with the Dutch authorities in Bern could be personally beneficial for Gans, but it would not help the rest of the Dutch Jewish community.<sup>154</sup> Just like the concessions made by Cohen and Van Tijn in their relationship with the German authorities did not save Dutch Jews from deportation to Poland.

Two months after Isaac’s critique against Gans’ discreet cooperation with people like Vos van Steenwijk and Kijzer, Isaac sent a new letter to Gans, in which he stated that he could not continue his position in the JCC. One of the reasons for this decision is his disappointment in his contact with Gans. He mostly felt let down by Gans’ membership of the Commission Poland. While reading this letter, it becomes clear that Gans accepted a position on this commission. After a previous phone call, Isaac initially accepted that Gans would work for the Commission Poland, but in this letter, he wrote that he regrets that decision: ‘In a telephone conversation with PD from Zurich at a very inconvenient moment, I was faced with a dilemma, and I was persuaded to give up my resistance. I now deeply regret that. We have been humiliated and insulted by the invitation and it is obvious that the intention is that that will continue.’<sup>155</sup> At the end of his letter to Gans, Isaac writes that he wants to end his membership in the JCC, but that he is willing to talk about it during a personal meeting in Geneva.

#### December 1944- March 1945

What has been discussed during the above-mentioned meeting is unclear, but Isaac remained a member of the JCC after his initial decision to quit. At the end of December 1944, he even moved to Geneva with his family to be more involved in the daily affairs of the JCC. After this move, Isaac’s name was more frequently present in the correspondence of the JCC, and he became more active in the immediate help toward fellow Jews.

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid, Letter Isaac to Gans, 12-8-1944.

During this period, the conflict between Isaac and Gans about the commission Poland was already solved. Mainly because of the Jewish couple Polak Daniels, which were part of the Commission Poland and the advisory members of the JCC, was appointed by the Dutch state commissioner for repatriation G.F. Ferwerda to create a new aid committee for the Dutch Jews in Poland in September 1944.<sup>156</sup> This meant that the earlier created Commission Poland, led by Vos van Steenwijk, became subordinate to this new commission. Eventually, Dr. Anselm Polak Daniels made clear to Vos van Steenwijk that he did not want to cooperate anymore with the commission Poland, which led to the complete dissolution of this organization.<sup>157</sup> The new Commission Polak Daniels became an organization that included almost only Dutch Jews. Which, given his earlier objections to the composition of the Commission Poland, Isaac must have been very pleased with.

From January 1945 onward, Isaac and Gans were mostly concerned with the financial status of the JCC. In December 1944, during Isaac's move to Geneva, Gans already sent his concerns about this topic to the above-mentioned Ferwerda, who was responsible for the repatriation of Dutch Jews to the Netherlands. The JCC tried to create enough financial resources to free Dutch Jews from the concentration camp Bergen Belsen. According to Gans, it was possible to free Dutch Jews for 1000 Swiss francs per person. Due to this prospect, the JCC asked the JDC (Saly Mayer) to lend them extra money. Saly Mayer refused this offer, after which a financial discussion between the JCC and the JDC started. According to Gans, Mayer did not want to offer any new money as long as the Dutch government did not vouch for the funding of the JCC by the JDC. Gans hoped that Ferwerda could solve this conflict between the JCC and Mayer.<sup>158</sup> However, the Dutch authorities gave no quick solution to this financial problem in December 1944. This lack of feedback caused Isaac and Gans to send multiple cables in January 1945 to Ferwerda.

It is noticeable that in these cables to Ferwerda, Gans' preference for discretion in letters to Dutch authorities is no longer present. The letters are direct and contain hard complaints toward the Dutch authorities in London. It is not difficult to see the influence of Isaac in this correspondence. For example, in the cable sent by Isaac and Gans to Ferwerda on 26 January 1945, they complain that the contact between the JCC and the Dutch authorities in London is not sufficient to help the 'starving' refugees: 'You many possibilities for help now unused and telegrams and letters to our opinion insufficient and inadequate in the difficult and urgent problems.'<sup>159</sup> Isaac and Gans repeated that Saly Mayer still did not want to lend extra money, which affected the number of food parcels the JCC could

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<sup>156</sup> Nationaal Archief, Archieven van het Ministerie van Sociale Zaken: Regeringscommissaris voor Repatriëring; Afdeling Repatriëring en Opsporing; Missie tot Opsporing van Vermiste Personen uit de Bezettingstijd, 1943-1952, 31 Notulen van vergaderingen van functionarissen van het Regeeringscommissariaat voor Repatriëring onder voorzitterschap van de Regeeringscommissaris Mr.G.F. Ferwerda, 1944, Meeting 7-9-1944.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid, 67, Correspondentie met de Joodsche Coördinatie Commissie betreffende de werkzaamheden van de Commissie, waaronder verzorging van Joden in de concentratiekampen Theresienstadt en Bergen-Belsen, 1944-1945, Letter JCC to Ferwerda, 21-12-1944.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid, Telegram Isaac and Gans to Ferwerda, 26-1-1945.

send. Isaac and Gans hoped that Ferwerda would be able to solve the problems between the JCC and Saly Mayer.

A day before he received the messages by Isaac and Gans, Ferwerda had already sent a cable to Isaac and Gans on 25 January 1945. In this cable, he wrote that he had given the previous mentioned Gertrude van Tijn, at that time working for the Dutch government in London, the assignment to travel to Switzerland, and to research the financial problems related to the JCC.<sup>160</sup>

Despite this promise by Ferwerda, Van Tijn did not arrive in Switzerland until April 1945, causing Isaac and Gans to remain critical of the Dutch authorities in London. For example, Isaac wrote in a telegram to Jewish journalist Albert Milhaldo on 13 February 1945 that 1200 Jews had arrived in Switzerland via a transport out of Theresienstadt. These Jews were liberated after a financial deal between the Allied authorities in Switzerland and the German authorities. According to Isaac, this successful trade showed that the plans of the JCC about Bergen Belsen, releasing a group of Dutch Jews via a financial transaction, would work. However, Isaac wrote to Milhaldo that the JDC did not want to cooperate in this kind of activity, Van Tijn still had not arrived yet, and the Dutch government in London gave no answers.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> Ibid, Letter Ferwerda to JCC, 25-1-1945.

<sup>161</sup> Yad Vashem, JCC archive, Correspondence between M. Gans, a member of the JCC (Joodsche Coordinatie Commissie-Jewish Coordination Committee of Dutch Jewry) in Geneva, and A. Milhado, Chairman of the Circle of Dutch Jews in Britain, regarding locating Dutch Jews who were deported and possibilities for helping them, 1944-1945, Telegram Isaac to Milhaldo, 13-2-1945.

In the month after Isaac wrote this critical telegram, he resigned as a JCC member. The reasoning for this break between Gans and Isaac does not become clear, although Isaac already seriously considered resigning in August 1944. It is possible that Isaac still believed that Gans was too compliant in his attitude toward the Dutch authorities, but in reality, Gans did not regain his previous discretion in the letters he wrote to the Dutch authorities. Instead, he is highly critical and direct, just like Isaac. For example, in a letter he directly wrote to Ferwerda on 12 March 1945, Gans claimed that he almost lost all hope in getting a good personal relationship with the Dutch authorities in London.<sup>162</sup> As stated earlier, Gans was flexible in his contact with authorities, because he believed that this attitude would increase the help toward fellow Jews. However, during this period the Dutch authorities did not give the support Gans hoped for, which caused his attitude to change from flexible to confrontational:

‘After the announcement that by your visit and that of Mrs. v Tijn (promised some time ago) important decisions of the government would reach us, and after having thereupon lived in a continuous tension of optimism, we must now admit frankly, that we have lost all courage. All the same, we hope that Mrs. v. Tijn shall indeed soon be coming over, so that personal contact is at last made possible, and even if it will be too late for much and many, it will not be too late for everything.’<sup>163</sup>

As stated earlier, Van Tijn arrived in Switzerland in April 1945. During her visit, she wrote a report for Ferwerda about the JCC, with a focus on the problems between this organization and the JDC. According to Van Tijn, this quarrel was started because Gans had gained full control of the JCC:

‘The coordination commission now consists only of Mr. Gans, Geneva, Mr. van Dantzig (formerly Rotterdam, now Lausanne, a man well known for his difficult disposition), and Dr. Lebenstein, who is more than 80 years old and lives in Zürich. Dr. Polak Daniels and his wife act as advisory members only but have taken-for the Equipe- separate offices. Mr. Troostwijk left for Holland, and Mr. F. Izaak (the former director of the Bijenkorf, Hague) left the committee beginning of March because he could not get on with Mr. Gans as soon as he tried to take a more active part and control of the work after he came to live in Geneva.’<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> Nationaal Archief, Archieven van het Ministerie van Sociale Zaken: Regeringscommissaris voor Repatriëring; Afdeling Repatriëring en Opsporing; Missie tot Opsporing van Vermiste Personen uit de Bezettingstijd, 1943-1952, 69, Stukken betreffende de werkzaamheden en de subsidiëring van de te Genève opgerichte Joodsche Coördinatie Commissie en de steun daarbij van de Regeringscommissaris voor Repatriëring, 1944-1945, Vertrouwelijk rapport Gans to Ferwerda, 12-3-1945.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid, 4, Rapporten en memoranda van het Regeringscommissariaat voor Repatriëring betreffende de organisatie van het Regeringscommissariaat voor Repatriëring, de Sectie Bijzondere Vluchtelingenverzorging, een algemeen overzicht van en de zorg voor de gedeporteerde Nederlanders, de concentratiekampen Bergen Belsen en Buchenwald, de moeilijkheden met het "American Joint Distribution Committee" in Zwitserland, de gastvrijheid voor Nederlandse kinderen in Zwitserland en het Joodse Coördinatie Comité te Genève, 1944-1945, Report concerning the Jewish coordination Committee Geneva, 27-4-1945.

The description by Van Tijn about why Isaac left the commission is one possible explanation, but it is not true that a quarrel started in the JCC as soon as Isaac took a more active role in this organization. As described above, Isaac and Gans worked together on a daily base in the period between January and March 1945. That simply is a longer period of cooperation than Van Tijn tried to imply in this report about the JCC. Furthermore, Van Tijn claimed in her report about the JCC that the control of Gans of this organization caused problems with the JDC because he needed guidance in his effort to help deported Dutch Jews:

‘He is a very young man who, under good management, might be able to do good work, but who lacks all sense of proportion and is entirely incapable of bearing the responsibility alone. (See cables and reports to London- his unnecessary and extremely unpleasant quarrel with the joint- his quarrel with Mr. Izaak, his extraordinary behavior towards me which I prefer not to qualify, etc., etc.)’<sup>165</sup>

I cannot analyze the behavior of Gans towards Van Tijn, and his quarrel with Isaac, but Van Tijn, firstly, forgot to mention, or simply did not know, that the cables of the JCC towards London, and their correspondence with the JDC (the joint) were not the sole responsibility of Gans, but written by him and Isaac. Between January and March 1945, Gans and Isaac had the same ideas about how to help Dutch Jews. These ideas included a direct approach towards the Dutch authorities in London and the JDC to gain financial possibilities to free Dutch Jews from deportation camps like Bergen Belsen. Van Tijn did not approve of this confrontational approach of the JCC, but her statement that this approach was the own doing of the young Max Gans, instead of a collaboration between him and the very experienced Isaac, is incorrect. Secondly, there is no reason to believe that the relationship between the JCC and Van Tijn would have been better if Isaac had guided Gans in April 1945. Isaac was very disappointed in the Jewish Council and its high ranked members like Van Tijn, and would probably not wanted to cooperate with her.

In essence, Isaac and Gans had similar ideas about the help towards fellow Jews but had opposite thinking about the interaction between the JCC-CH and (non-Jewish) authorities. To understand these different believes, which caused heated discussion, it is important to highlight the distinction in the pre-war lives of Isaac and Gans. These differences in life can be best captured in two concepts Laurien Vastenhout has used to understand the actions of the Jewish council leaders in the Netherlands. These concepts are ‘the level of religious adherence’ and ‘the influence of Zionist thinking’. As mentioned in the first chapter, Gans had grown up in the Joodse Invalide with orthodox nurturing. This experience meant, firstly, that Gans found it very important that he and the other Jewish refugees in Switzerland could celebrate Jewish feasts like Pesach. Gans was therefore pleased

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<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

that Kijzer allowed him to organize the Pesach festivities via the JCC. Secondly, just like his father, Gans was flexible in his cooperation with non-Jewish organizations to help other Jews. As mentioned previously, Gans Sr. worked with many important non-Jews in the Netherlands to finance the Joodse Invalide. In 1944, Max Gans was also willing to be flexible and discreet with his contact with Dutch officials to get the JCC officially recognized, and therefore be able to help Dutch Jews who suffered from the Holocaust.

Isaac was much more influenced by Zionist thinking than Gans. As stated earlier, he had a strong interest in Hebrew studies, was a convinced supporter of a Jewish homeland in Palestine, and, unlike Gans, did not practice religion at home. These attributes made it more logical that he did not want to be involved with the organization of Jewish feasts, but wanted to focus on the organization of large-scale help for Dutch Jews. His Zionist background, and involvement in organizations like the NZB and the JCC in the Netherlands, also explain why Isaac only wanted to cooperate with the Dutch authorities if the JCC-CH was accepted as an independent Jewish organization. Firstly, Isaac found it essential that specific Jewish influence was present in the aid of suffering Jews. Isaac believed that the deported Jews needed Jewish agents, who cared for the ongoing catastrophe, and understood what it takes to rebuild Dutch Jewry. Secondly, Isaac was critical regarding compliance with authorities, due to his experiences with the Jewish Council in the Netherlands. Isaac thought that the Jewish Council made too many concessions to the German authorities, because of which very few Dutch Jews were able to escape the deportations. To help these deported Jews, Isaac believed that the JCC in Geneva must be direct and confrontational in her contact with (non-Jewish) authorities like the Commission Poland, and the Dutch embassy in Bern.

### **Chapter 3: Personal circumstances, and social contacts**

In this chapter, I will, firstly, outline how the personal conditions of Gans, Troostwijk, Van Dantzig, and Isaac during their living in Switzerland influenced their functioning in the JCC. I have analyzed their functioning via the correspondence of these four men that is part of the JCC archive. It was striking to see that the travel restrictions in Switzerland for refugees during the Second World War had a considerable impact on the work of the JCC-members. Secondly, I describe how the personal networks of Isaac and Gans affected the operating of the JCC. As stated in the introduction, in this analysis, I use the work of historian Bob Moore. He emphasizes the importance of pre-existing social contacts for the success of Jewish aid organizations in Western-Europe during the Second World War.<sup>166</sup> Pre-existing is in this thesis defined as people who have met each other before the creation of the JCC in Geneva in January 1944. Troostwijk and Van Dantzig are not part of this analysis, because

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<sup>166</sup> Goda, ed. *Jewish Histories of the Holocaust: New Transnational Approaches*, 9.



in chapter one, I have determined that only Isaac and Gans had relatives and acquaintances who were connected to the institutes to which the JCC was politically and economically obliged.

### Restriction on traveling

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Jewish refugees were not allowed to earn money in Switzerland during World War II. Every activity of Gans, Troostwijk, Van Dantzig, and Isaac for the JCC was voluntary. Only the Dutch authorities in Bern or organizations like the JDC reimbursed their essential expenses. Besides this ban on paid work, Jewish refugees were also severely restricted in their freedom of movement by the Swiss authorities, as they were only allowed to travel to certain places in the country via a permit. This restriction is fitting the uncompromised dealing with Jewish refugees in Switzerland.

On August 13, 1942, the Swiss federal council closed the borders for all civilian refugees.<sup>167</sup> Before this date, refugees already needed a visa to travel to the alpine country. As the Swiss authorities were not enthusiastic about the migration of European Jews, they only gave these visas in very small numbers. As the earlier mentioned historian Simon Erlanger claims: 'The Swiss Federal Police for Foreigners intended to keep the number of refugees who might receive visas as small as possible and limited to «especially valuable persons», as well as to those who had close relationships to Switzerland and could guarantee financial security.'<sup>168</sup> Because of this lack of visas and the closing of the border in 1942, all four members of the JCC traveled to Switzerland illegally. This illegal status meant that they, like all Jewish refugees, had to live for months in so-called reception camps, led by the Swiss army. After their stay in these camps, they were allowed to live in the previously mentioned hotel camps. Some people, like Isaac, Gans, and Van Dantzig, could rent an apartment with their families after their stay in the reception camps.

Even in these civilian accommodations, Jewish refugees were in constant uncertainty about whether they would be able to live together with their families for a longer amount of time. As Erlanger argues:

'First the men were put in labor camps; from 1942 women, younger children, and the elderly were sent to "homes." These were mainly old houses, unused hotels, or vacation compounds where the people lived and worked under slightly better conditions than the men in the labor camps. Older children were distributed among Swiss families; hence families could stay separated for years.'<sup>169</sup>

The work camps, also called labor camps, were created in 1940 to force refugees to work on fortifications and military roads. Outside the many non-civilian camps in Switzerland, the refugees

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<sup>167</sup> Bergier Commission. Final Report of the Independent Commission of Experts Switzerland – Second World War, 2002, 136.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid, 111.

<sup>169</sup> Erlanger, 'THE POLITICS OF 'TRANSMIGRATION'', 75.

had more possibilities to have a life of their own, but they were still not allowed to travel. To move out of their place of residence, Jewish refugees always had to ask permission from the cantonal authorities in Switzerland. If these applications were approved, they were only valid for a limited period and certain travel routes.<sup>170</sup>

Measures against Jewish refugees in Switzerland during the Second World War, like the forced stay in labor camps and the closing of the border in 1942, were taken by the Swiss authorities, because they wanted to make sure that the refugees would leave 'as soon as it became possible again'.<sup>171</sup> Swiss policy regarding refugees in the Second World War, was based on a law introduced in 1931. This law on the residence and settlement of foreigners was focused on the transmigration of refugees. As Erlanger states: 'Any stay in Switzerland had to be temporary and serve the sole purpose of organizing emigration to a third country.'<sup>172</sup> According to Erlanger this law was approved to prevent the integration of refugees in Swiss society. Fugitives were seen by the Swiss authorities as harmful to the Swiss culture and a danger to the labor market.

Due to the 1931 law, all illegal Jewish refugees who lived in Switzerland during the Second World War should have remigrated to another country. However, as Erlanger stated, migration had become almost impossible since France's defeat in 1940. Causing Jewish refugees like Isaac, Gans, Troostwijk and Van Dantzig to be allowed to stay in Switzerland, albeit on very strict conditions. Still, the Swiss authorities made sure that they (the JCC-members) could not integrate into Swiss society.

Not long after the JCC was created, it already had to deal with the policies regarding Jewish refugees in Switzerland, as committee member Troostwijk was forced to live in a work camp from March 1944 onwards. After Gans heard about this new living situation of Troostwijk, he indicated that he wanted to support Troostwijk, and advised him to approach Kijzer: 'Dr. Kijzer wants us to do all possible work here, but that is only possible if he cooperates in ensuring that not one of our members is put in a labor camp with Dutch people.'<sup>173</sup> Despite the support from Gans, Troostwijk was transferred from the hotel camp Beau-site to a camp in Chalais at the end of March 1944.<sup>174</sup> In this camp, Troostwijk was not able to carry out his work for the JCC. Isaac and Gans tried to solve this problem with the addition of a fourth JCC member. This new member became Van Dantzig, who was already introduced by Isaac, to be part of the JCC meetings in February 1944. As Isaac claimed: 'Van

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<sup>170</sup> Nationaal Archief, Archief van het Nederlandse Gezantschap in Zwitserland, (1912) 1914-1954 (1955), 405, H.M. Gans 1943-1945, Letter Kijzer to Gans, 29-6-1944.

<sup>171</sup> Erlanger, 'THE POLITICS OF 'TRANSMIGRATION'', 75.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid, 74.

<sup>173</sup> Yad Vashem, JCC archive, Documentation of the JCC (Joodse Coordinatie Commissie - Jewish Coordination Committee of Dutch Jewry) in Geneva regarding the situation of the Jews in the Netherlands, and the situation of the Jews deported to camps, or in refugee camps in Switzerland, 1942-1945, Letter Gans to Troostwijk, 4-3-1944.

<sup>174</sup> Federal archives Switzerland, TROOSTWIJK, ARNOLD, 07.12.1929; TROOSTWIJK, ERNA, 27.09.1904; TROOSTWIJK, SALOMON, 13.02.1903 (Dossiers), Subdossier\_0000008, Eintritsmeldung Salomon Troostwijk, 4-4-1944.

Dantzig is very happy to come; he was from the first moment very positive, also regarding the Jewish character of the case. We will probably benefit from him.’<sup>175</sup>

Officially, Troostwijk remained a member of the JCC; however, all his work was taken over by Van Dantzig: ‘Mr. Van Dantzig is a very active member of our committee and since Mr. Troostwijk has been in a camp for quite some time and therefore, to our regret, is completely out of the running, Mr. Van Dantzig, Mr. Isaac, and the undersigned, together with our advisory members Dr. Polak Daniels and wife take full responsibility for all the work of the committee.’<sup>176</sup> Gans hoped to accomplish that Kijzer would accept Van Dantzig and invite him for the next meeting between the Dutch embassy and the JCC. According to Gans, Kijzer already approved Van Dantzig as a new member of the JCC, but this decision was never made official: ‘This was indeed decided with your consent, but if I am not mistaken, we failed to communicate this in writing. An omission that I am hereby rectifying.’<sup>177</sup> Kijzer reacted surprised to this claim that he knew about a new member of the JCC: ‘I must confess that I was not aware that Mr. van Dantzig had become a member of the committee.’<sup>178</sup> After this confession, he also informed Gans that he would not invite Van Dantzig to the next meeting: ‘Since Mr. van Dantzig is not aware of the committee's history, I see no reason to invite him. Should it appear during the discussions that his presence is desired, he can still be called up by telephone.’<sup>179</sup> This decision by Kijzer, caused that Van Dantzig never had much influence in the course of the JCC.

Besides these problems, regarding Troostwijk and Van Dantzig, Gans also had difficulties with obtaining travel permits for his fellow JCC-members. Via Kijzer, he had asked permission from the Zentralleitung in Zurich to visit the hotel camps in Chamby, Clarens, and Mont-Pellerin. This Zentralleitung was responsible for the administration of all the asylums and camps in Switzerland. Based on the argument that Gans could help the refugees as a mental caretaker, this Swiss administrator granted him access to the camps in March 1944. Although this permit was very important for Gans's work during the first months of the JCC, it had limited usability. It needed to be renewed every three months and did not give Gans the possibility to visit the other committee members of the JCC regularly.<sup>180</sup>

After he received the allowance to visit the camps, Gans also tried to get travel permits for himself, Isaac, and Van Dantzig, to make physical meetings between the JCC committee members possible. However, due to the very strict rules of the Swiss authorities for Jewish refugees to travel in

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<sup>175</sup> Yad Vashem, JCC archive, Reports compiled by the JCC (Joodse Coordinatie Commissie - Jewish Coordination Committee of Dutch Jewry) in Geneva regarding providing social and cultural help to Jewish refugees from the Netherlands in Switzerland, 1942-1945, Letter Isaac to Gans 28-2-1944.

<sup>176</sup> Nationaal Archief, Archief van het Nederlandse Gezantschap in Zwitserland, (1912) 1914-1954 (1955), 405, H.M. Gans 1943-1945, Letter Gans to Kijzer, 11-5-1944.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid, Letter Kijzer to Gans, 12-5-1944.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid, Letter Kijzer to Section Refugee, 30-3-1944.

Switzerland, the procedure to gain travel permits took until December 1944. This long procedure caused the JCC committee members to almost not see each other in 1944. Contact within the JCC was only possible via letters, phone calls, or occasionally when Gans was able to visit Isaac or Van Dantzig via his refugee-camp-permit.

The restrictions on travel, and Troostwijk's forced living in a labor camp, negatively influenced the functioning of the JCC. Mainly because Troostwijk and Isaac began to doubt their role in the JCC. In July 1944, Troostwijk, after living in the labor camps, stopped as a commission member, and in August 1944, Isaac threatened to leave the JCC. In the previous chapter, it was discussed that the Commission Poland was an important reason for this desire by Isaac to leave the JCC, but the problems with the travel permits were an important factor as well.

In the letters Troostwijk sent to Gans during his stay in the labor camps, he increasingly seemed to become more skeptical regarding an early release. At the beginning of April 1944, Troostwijk believed that he would be able to leave the labor camps on short notice. For example, he thought that in practice only men younger than 40 were required to live in the labor camps, meaning that he could leave soon because he was 41.<sup>181</sup> Troostwijk also wrote to Kijzer to pursue him to get him free with the argument that he was now not able to function as a member of the JCC. Despite this active effort to be released from the camps, Troostwijk's belief to regain his freedom quickly dissolved. In a letter that he wrote to Gans on 20 April 1944, he stated that he did not get answers to the previous letters he had written. He also made clear that Kijzer had let him know that he was not able to do anything to help him.<sup>182</sup> In Gans' answer to this letter by Troostwijk, he apologizes for his late answers and wrote that he thinks it is a shame that the embassy does nothing to help Troostwijk, but he does not propose a solution for his imprisonment either.<sup>183</sup>

After this letter by Gans, Troostwijk still wanted to exit the labor camp but his belief in a quick release was gone. Troostwijk had the feeling that he was stuck in his effort to regain freedom due to the long administrative procedures. In June 1944, Troostwijk already lived in the labor camps for over two months, but he believed that it would take multiple months to regain his freedom. Nevertheless, he wanted to stay involved in the JCC. For example, on June 7, 1944, he wrote a letter to Gans in which he stated that he would like to get some information about the affairs of the JCC.<sup>184</sup> Troostwijk did not receive an answer to his letter until July 3, 1944. In this answer, Gans explained this long absence of correspondence between him and Troostwijk. In June, the travel permits for the JCC members were still not granted, meaning that Gans had no contact with the other

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<sup>181</sup> Yad Vashem, JCC archive, Correspondence between M. Gans, a member of the JCC (Joodsche Coordinatie Commissie-Jewish Coordination Committee of Dutch Jewry) in Geneva, and Dutch Jewish refugees in Switzerland whose last names begin with the letters T-U, 1944-1945, Letter Troostwijk to Gans, 9-4-1944.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid, Letter Troostwijk to Gans, 20-4-1944.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid, Letter Gans to Troostwijk, 28-4-1944.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid, Letter Troostwijk to Gans, 7-6-1944.

members of the JCC.<sup>185</sup> This absence of contact between JCC members is present in the JCC archive, but it does not explain why Gans did not respond to Troostwijk quicker.

A possible explanation is that Gans considered Troostwijk as no longer involved in the JCC. Troostwijk wanted to get more information about the JCC but received small answers to questions he asked in letters to Gans, like how the office in Geneva was doing, or what was discussed during the meetings of the JCC. As mentioned earlier, Van Dantzig became the new JCC member, because Troostwijk was seen by Gans as ‘completely out of the running’. In this replacement of Troostwijk by Van Dantzig, reasons can be found about why Gans did not brief Troostwijk more elaborately on the JCC. During his stay in the labor camps, Troostwijk could simply not do much for the JCC, causing that he was not seen by Gans and Isaac as a functioning member anymore. His proceedings were taken over by Van Dantzig and he was no longer informed on the daily affairs of the JCC by the other committee members. Following this forced alienation of the JCC, Troostwijk did not resume his work for this organization after he could leave the labor camps.

At the beginning of July 1944, Troostwijk was finally reunited with his family in Clarens after almost 5 months. Gans reacted with ‘joy’ regarding the liberation of his fellow commission member, but, after his return to Clarens, Troostwijk did not regain his position within the organization. During the rest of his stay in Switzerland, Troostwijk did remain in contact with Gans about sending help toward deported Dutch Jews via a local commission established in the hotel camp where he lived, but not as a member of the JCC. When Troostwijk officially stepped down as a committee member is not clear.<sup>186</sup>

Unlike Troostwijk, Isaac remained a member of the JCC until March 1945. Nevertheless, the lack of a travel permit made him doubt his links to the JCC. In the letters in which Isaac discussed these travel permits, not only these doubts about the JCC are noticeable but also criticism against the Dutch authorities in Bern, specifically against Kijzer, for not doing enough to make traveling for JCC members possible. In a letter that Isaac wrote to Gans on 14 May 1944, his critique of Kijzer’s role in the absence of travel permits is very evident. According to Isaac, Kijzer was to blame for the fact that the JCC members could not leave their residence. Kijzer had not advised the JCC members enough on travel permits and had not made a persuasive effort to obtain these documents himself either.<sup>187</sup> After this criticism, Isaac stated that he did not want to work with Kijzer anymore without a travel permit.

Almost a month after Isaac had criticized Kijzer, he wrote a letter to Gans in which he made it very clear that if the JCC wanted to function, its committee members needed to gain the right to travel in Switzerland: ‘I would also like to reiterate the urgent need to guarantee our freedom of movement. (...) In other words, if we also end up in a camp, and we can't travel, we can already stop the

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<sup>185</sup> Ibid, Letter Gans to Troostwijk, 3-7-1944.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid, Letter Polak Daniels to Troostwijk, 20-10-1944.

<sup>187</sup> Yad Vashem, JCC archive, Reports compiled by the JCC (Joodse Coordinatie Commissie - Jewish Coordination Committee of Dutch Jewry) in Geneva regarding providing social and cultural help to Jewish refugees from the Netherlands in Switzerland, 1942-1945, Letter Isaac to Gans, 15-5-1944.

commission.<sup>188</sup> With this prediction, Isaac showed that he had little belief in the JCC as long as its members did not have travel permits, or were not protected from a forced stay in a labor camp. Despite Isaac's threat to stop working with Kijzer and his doubts about the future of the JCC, no travel permits were given to him until December 1944.

As mentioned above, in June 1944 the travel permits for Isaac, Gans and Van Dantzig were still not granted, meaning that Gans had no direct contact with the other members of the JCC. The first letter by Isaac that can be found in the archive after this absence of contact, was written on 12 August 1944. As discussed in chapter 2, in this letter, Isaac stated that he no longer wanted to be part of the JCC. Isaac was disappointed that Gans had accepted a position in the Commission Poland, but he also wanted to step down as a member of the JCC, because he still had not received a travel permit: 'As I told you, I am gradually considering membership of the JCC no longer viable in today's restricted freedom of movement. The attempts to obtain a travel permit, like so much in this country and connection with our own "authorities", become a tragicomedy that I do not want to consume any longer.'<sup>189</sup>

Isaac also wrote that he appreciated how much Gans tried to keep in touch with him, but according to him, phone calls and long letters simply could not replace physical contact. According to Isaac, he had to meet Gans if important topics for the JCC were discussed. Isaac questioned whether he and Gans would understand each other more regarding subjects like the Commission Poland if these were discussed in regular meetings. However, if Commission Poland was indeed discussed via physical contact, and not only via letters or phone calls, he believed that he would have more influence on the acting of the JCC.<sup>190</sup> Although Isaac remained a member of the JCC after this letter, he and Troostwijk started to doubt their memberships of the JCC, due to limited freedom in traveling. Mostly because they both had the feeling that they were no longer involved in the decision-making of the JCC after contact between them and Gans became difficult.

Van Dantzig's ideas regarding travel permits can only be analyzed via very few resources. As mentioned above, Kijzer did not want to work with Van Dantzig. However, after Troostwijk stopped as a JCC committee member, Van Dantzig officially became the third member of the organization. This status as a committee member meant that in December 1944, he also received a travel permit.<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>188</sup> Yad Vashem, JCC archive, Correspondence between the JCC (Joodshe Coordinatie Commissie-Jewish Coordination Committee of Dutch Jewry) in Geneva and various people, organizations and institutions regarding providing relief to Dutch Jews in refugee camps in Switzerland, and locating their relatives who had been deported from the Netherlands, Letter Isaac to Gans, 10-6-1944.

<sup>189</sup> Yad Vashem, JCC archive, Reports compiled by the JCC (Joodse Coordinatie Commissie - Jewish Coordination Committee of Dutch Jewry) in Geneva regarding providing social and cultural help to Jewish refugees from the Netherlands in Switzerland, 1942-1945, Letter Isaac to Gans, 12-8-1944.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

<sup>191</sup> Yad Vashem, JCC archive, Correspondence of M. Gans, a member of the JCC (Joodsche Coordinatie Commissie - Jewish Coordination Committee of Dutch Jewry) in Geneva with various people, organizations and institutions regarding locating Jews deported from the Netherlands and helping Dutch Jews detained in various camps, 1944-1945, Letter Office Cantonal de controle des habitants et de police des étrangers to Bosch van Rosenthal, 30-11-1944

About the work of Van Dantzig after he replaced Troostwijk, not much can be found in the archive of the JCC.

One of the few insights into how Van Dantzig thought about the travel permits can be read in the previously discussed letter that Isaac wrote to Gans on 12 August 1944. In this letter, Isaac stated that Van Dantzig tried to gain a travel permit via his 'great relationships'.<sup>192</sup> However, this attempt did not work because, according to Isaac, the application for a permit had to be approved by the Dutch ambassador, who refused to do so. Isaac's mentioning of Van Dantzig's 'great relationships' must be read with a cynical tone, but is probably linked to the contacts Van Dantzig had in the Swiss banking sector. This link between Van Dantzig's contacts and an attempt to get a travel permit remains an assumption, as does much of Van Dantzig's life in Switzerland.

As mentioned earlier, in his correspondence with Troostwijk, Gans emphasized that he found it wrong that Troostwijk was forced to stay in a labor camp and called it 'outrageous' that the embassy did not do more to get him released.<sup>193</sup> Gans' responses to Isaac's letters about the travel permits are not part of the JCC archive or are not readable. Still, Gans' relationship between the Swiss authorities and the Dutch authorities in Bern gives some insights into his ideas regarding the limitations of traveling in Switzerland.

Just like Troostwijk, Gans received instructions from the Swiss Police to work in a labor camp in March 1944. However, a few days after these instructions, Gans also received the previously mentioned permission to visit the hotel camps from the Zentralleitung. Gans tried to use this permission to convince the Swiss police that he could not live in a labor camp. In a letter to the federal police in Bern, Gans wrote that he received permission to visit the hotel camps and that he was officially appointed by the Dutch authorities in Bern as a caretaker of the Dutch refugees in these camps.<sup>194</sup> Based on this function as caretaker, Gans hoped that the police would allow him to remain in Geneva. This effort to stop his forced move to a labor camp was supported by the Department for refugees of the Dutch embassy, which was led by Kijzer. As a result, this department wrote a letter to the Swiss police, in which they stated that Gans was indeed an official caretaker.<sup>195</sup> Even with this support from the Dutch authorities, the Swiss police still insisted that Gans had to travel to the labor camp in Chalais. Nevertheless, Gans could stay in Geneva and never lived in a labor camp like Troostwijk. This retaining of Gans' freedom was mostly caused by his relationship with the Dutch ambassador.

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<sup>192</sup> Yad Vashem, JCC archive, Reports compiled by the JCC (Joodse Coordinatie Commissie - Jewish Coordination Committee of Dutch Jewry) in Geneva regarding providing social and cultural help to Jewish refugees from the Netherlands in Switzerland, 1942-1945, Letter Isaac to Gans, 12-8-1944.

<sup>193</sup> Yad Vashem, JCC archive, Correspondence between M. Gans, a member of the JCC (Joodsche Coordinatie Commissie-Jewish Coordination Committee of Dutch Jewry) in Geneva, and Dutch Jewish refugees in Switzerland whose last names begin with the letters T-U, 1944-1945, Letter Troostwijk to Gans, 28-4-1944.

<sup>194</sup> Federal Archives Switzerland, GANS-PREMSELA, MOZES HEIMANN, 12.05.1917; HAMMELBURG, NICO, 19.10.1921; GANSS-PREMSELA, JENNY, 25.01.1919 (dossiers), Subdossier\_0000008, Letter Gans to Department Federal de justice police Berne, 8-5-1944.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid, Letter Legation des Pays Bas section des refugies to Dr. Delaquis head of police Berne, 9-5-1944.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Gans started to have more contact with Bosch van Rosenthal from May 1944 onward. This contact helped Gans to prevent a stay in labor camps, as evident in a letter that Gans wrote to Bosch van Rosenthal on May 24, 1944: 'I was just notified by the police that my wife and I can stay in Geneva. From Dr. W.A. Visser't Hooft I heard that Your Excellency has handled this matter personally so that I can continue the relief work for our Jewish nationals uninterrupted.'<sup>196</sup> This influence of Bosch van Rosenthal on Gans' ability to stay out of labor camps could be a reason why Gans remained discreet in his contact with the Dutch authorities in Geneva, despite the in the previous chapter's discussed wish by Isaac to stop working with people like Bosch van Rosenthal and Kijzer. Still, this raises the question of why Gans did not use his contact with the Dutch authorities to free Troostwijk from the labor camps, also because he has used his good relationship with the Dutch ambassador to gain the travel permits for Van Dantzig and Isaac.

At the end of July 1944, Gans again tried to get permits from the federal police to travel. Just like the previous attempt, they declined his application. As a reason for this decline, the police stated that they could only give travel permission if the Dutch authorities agreed.<sup>197</sup> After this statement, Gans contacted Bosch van Rosenthal personally to send approval for these travel permits to the federal police. Surprisingly, in this letter to Bosch van Rosenthal, Gans stated that only Isaac and Van Dantzig wanted to get authorization to travel in the canton of Vaud and between Geneva and Lausanne. Why Gans had dropped his application for a travel permit is unclear. A possible explanation is that Gans already was able to travel via his permission to visit the hotel camps in Chamby, Clarens, and Mont-Pellerin. These places are in the canton of Vaud. Meaning that after Isaac and Van Dantzig would receive their travel permits, the JCC members could meet in Geneva, and near the hotel camps in Vaud. In his answer to Gans' request to help with travel permits, the Dutch ambassador stated that he wanted Isaac and Van Dantzig to be able to move in Vaud and the trajectory between Geneva and Lausanne, after which he sent an official approval for travel permits to the Swiss police on August 23, 1944.<sup>198</sup>

Even with the support of the Dutch ambassador, the Swiss authorities still did not agree to the travel permits, however. According to the federal police, the Dutch ambassador had to approve the applications for a travel permit separately.<sup>199</sup> In addition, these separate applications must include a description of the purpose and activities of the JCC. After these demands of the Swiss police, the Dutch authorities in Bern sent two renewed approvals on November 3, 1944. Almost a month later, on

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<sup>196</sup> Yad Vashem, JCC archive, Reports compiled by the JCC (Joodse Coordinatie Commissie - Jewish Coordination Committee of Dutch Jewry) in Geneva regarding providing social and cultural help to Jewish refugees from the Netherlands in Switzerland, 1942-1945 Letter Gans to Bosch van Rosenthal, 24-5-1944.

<sup>197</sup> Yad Vashem, JCC archive, Correspondence of M. Gans, a member of the JCC (Joodsche Coordinatie Commissie - Jewish Coordination Committee of Dutch Jewry) in Geneva with various people, organizations and institutions regarding locating Jews deported from the Netherlands and helping Dutch Jews detained in various camps, Letter Gans to Bosch van Rosenthal, 4-8-1944.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid, Letter Bosch van Rosenthal to Gans, 21-8-1944.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid, Letter Gans to Bosch van Rosenthal, 2-11-1944.



November the 30th, the Swiss police finally agreed on the travel permits.<sup>200</sup> Isaac, and Van Dantzig were now allowed to travel between the period of November the 22nd until January the 15th, 1945. After Isaac and Van Dantzig received this limited permission, the federal police made it clear to Gans, that this availability to travel will not be made permanent. In a letter written by the federal police in Lausanne to Gans on November 24, 1944, they stated that traveling to Geneva by Isaac and Van Dantzig will not be allowed after January 15, 1945. The Police suggested that after this deadline the JCC could use a liaison between its members, who is a Dutch citizen and not a refugee. This suggestion by the federal polices shows, as Simon Erlanger argues, that the Swiss authorities indeed wanted to make sure that Jewish refugees would not be integrated into Swiss society. The above-analyzed history of the problems of traveling for the JCC members reveals that Gans' continuing relationship with the Dutch authorities in Geneva ensured that JCC members could eventually travel in December 1944. Due to the good relationship between Gans and Bosch van Rosenthal, the Dutch embassy tried to gain travel permits for the JCC quickly. However, the Federal Police were not helpful at all, because they followed very strict rules and had very long answering intervals. Isaacs described 'tragicomedy' was thus mostly created by the Swiss authorities.

#### Influence of personal contacts on the working of the JCC

In 1945, the JCC planted five trees in Palestine to honor Visser t Hooft. Gans believed that Visser t Hooft deserved this gift, because he had made the work of the JCC possible.<sup>201</sup> In his post-war statement for the commission Cleveringa, Gans stated that only through the continuous support of Visser t Hooft, he was able to carry out his work as a JCC member.<sup>202</sup> Visser t Hooft himself thought that this statement by Gans was overstated: 'That's a little exaggerated. It is as if he was besieged on all sides. The ambassador indeed knew that I supported it, but I cannot say that I had to fight such a great battle over it.'<sup>203</sup>

Visser t Hooft unnecessarily downplayed his influence on the JCC with this statement. He has been essential for the success of this organization. Not by battling people like Bosch van Rosenthal, but by supporting the JCC in his contact with important organizations like the JDC and the Dutch authorities in Bern and London. As written in his memoirs, the reason for Visser t Hooft's help as an intermediary between the JCC and the Dutch authorities, was his deep respect for Gans' efforts to save

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<sup>200</sup> Ibid, Letter Office cantonal de controle des habitants et de police des estrangers to Bosch van Rosenthal, 30-11-1944.

<sup>201</sup> Yad Vashem, JCC Archive, Correspondence between M. Gans, a member of the JCC (Joodse Coordinatie Commissie - Jewish Coordination Committee of Dutch Jewry) in Geneva, and Jewish refugees from the Netherlands living in Switzerland whose names begin with the letter "V", 1944-1945, Letter Gans to Visser t Hooft, undated.

<sup>202</sup> Nationaal Archief, Archief van de Commissie tot onderzoek naar de houding van Nederlandse Diplomatieke en Consulaire ambtenaren tegenover Nederlandse uitgewekenen (Commissie- Cleveringa), 1946-1950 (1951), 19, M.H. Gans, 1947-1948.

<sup>203</sup> NIOD, 455, Borsum- Buisman, 54, Hearing Visser t Hooft 1947.

fellow Dutch Jews.<sup>204</sup> Without this respect between Gans and Visser t Hooft, the JCC would have never been a successful organization.

Visser t Hooft mentioned in his post-war hearing for the commission Cleveringa that his contact with Bosch van Rosenthal was different from the relationship the Dutch ambassador had with the refugees.<sup>205</sup> Bosch van Rosenthal often spoke with Visser t Hooft, but had little direct contact with Dutch refugees during the Second World War. At the beginning of 1944, he also did not correspond with the JCC members. Besides this lack of contact, the Dutch ambassador was also hesitant to give the JCC official approval to help other Dutch Jews. However, Bosch van Rosenthal changed his mind after Visser t Hooft convinced him to support the JCC.

According to Visser t Hooft, he discussed the JCC for the first time with Bosch van Rosenthal during an informal lunch in Geneva in February 1944. Before this meeting, Gans had complained to Visser t Hooft about his contact with the Dutch ambassador. According to Gans, Bosch van Rosenthal wanted to send him to a Labor camp. During the lunch, Visser t Hooft supported Gans and the creation of the JCC. He mentioned to Bosch van Rosenthal that it was very important that the JCC would start its activities. According to Visser t Hooft, the Dutch ambassador quickly agreed and approved the official formation of the JCC.<sup>206</sup> Besides the need for an approval of the JCC, Visser t Hooft also mentioned to Bosch van Rosenthal that Gans was required to stay in Geneva as a free man, and that the JCC-members needed travel permits. According to Visser t Hooft, the Dutch ambassador also agreed on these two points.

After this important meeting, Bosch van Rosenthal quickly made his support of the JCC public. He signed a letter of recommendation about Gans and the JCC, which was sent by Visser t Hooft to the Dutch authorities in London on March 10, 1944.<sup>207</sup> As described in chapter three, Bosch van Rosenthal also helped Gans to stay out of labor camps, and made sure that Isaac and Van Dantzig received travel permits in December 1944. The Dutch ambassador mostly used his influence to help the JCC after he and Gans started to have more informal conversations from May 1945 onwards. In this personal contact between the JCC and the Dutch ambassador, Visser t Hooft's important role appears as well. As mentioned by Bosch van Rosenthal in his hearing for the Commission Cleveringa, he and Visser t Hooft saw each other very often during the Second World War: 'We were always together'.<sup>208</sup> In this regular contact with the Dutch ambassador, Visser t Hooft supported the JCC and passed on Gans messages to Bosch van Rosenthal. During the beginning of the JCC, Visser t Hooft, therefore, acted as an intermediary between the Dutch embassy and Gans. Later on, Gans and Bosch

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<sup>204</sup> Visser't Hooft, Willem Adolph, and Cornelis Michael de Vries. *Memoires: een leven in de oecumene*. Elsevier, 1971, 170.

<sup>205</sup> NIOD, 455, Borsum- Buisman, 54, Hearing Visser t Hooft 1947.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> NIOD, Zwitserse weg A, 5, stukken B2 t/m B11, Letter B.V.R 10-3-1944.

<sup>208</sup> Nationaal Archief, Archief van de Commissie tot onderzoek naar de houding van Nederlandse Diplomatieke en Consulaire ambtenaren tegenover Nederlandse uitgewekenen (Commissie- Cleveringa), 1946-1950 (1951), 15, mr. J.J.B. Bosch Ridder van Rosenthal, 1947-1948.

van Rosenthal contacted each other directly, but it cannot be denied that the early support of Visser t Hooft towards the JCC was essential for the start of this organization.

The early support of Visser t Hooft has also influenced the financial needs of the JCC. As mentioned earlier, the JCC was financially obliged to the JDC during most of its existence. In March 1944, Gans contacted the local representative of the JDC, Saly Mayer, and asked him for funding. After this first contact, Mayer granted 50.000 dollars to the JCC to help Jews still living in Holland.<sup>209</sup> Following this first JDC fund, Gans kept asking Mayer for more money. Eventually, by June 1944, Mayer agreed to give 200 000 dollars to the JCC.<sup>210</sup> Adjusted by inflation, that is a grant worth millions of dollars in today's money (2023).<sup>211</sup> Thus, Mayer had to trust the JCC. This initial belief in the JCC by Mayer was mostly based on the link between this organization and Visser t Hooft. For example, Mayer discussed the funding of the JCC multiple times with Visser t Hooft. In these discussions, it was decided that the 'friends' of Visser t Hooft, the JCC, should receive the money to prepare the help toward Dutch Jews. This help, in the form of food packages and money, must then be delivered by Visser t Hooft via the previously mentioned smuggling route 'Zwiterse weg'.<sup>212</sup>

With trust in Visser t Hooft and his network, Mayer started to give the JCC a lot of money. Besides the first transfer of 50.000 dollars, Visser t Hooft also made sure that Mayer kept financing the JCC. For example, in a letter sent on May 11, 1944, Gans asked Mayer for new funds to support the Dutch Jews hiding in the Netherlands and France. To support this new transfer of money, Visser t Hooft wrote a remark in this letter, in which he stated that he agreed with the new funding of the JCC because the work of this organization was very important and its proceedings still growing.<sup>213</sup> This kind of support of Visser t Hooft to get new funding for the JCC worked because Mayer granted the JCC the previous-mentioned 200.00 dollars in June 1944.

Although Visser t Hooft had much influence on the funding of the JCC by the JDC, he could not change Mayer's decision to stop financing the JCC in December 1944. After the JCC had received the 200.000 Dollars, Gans kept sending new letters to Mayer with requests for money. Initially, Mayer continued to send money to the JCC but with increasing reluctance. Especially because the Dutch government did not provide financial support for the JCC. In December 1944, Mayer stopped sending money to the JCC, after Gans had asked for financial resources to free Dutch Jews from the concentration camp Bergen Belsen.

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<sup>209</sup> Yad Vashem, JCC archive, Correspondence between the JCC (Joodse Coordinatie Commissie - Jewish Coordination Committee of Dutch Jewry) in Geneva and various bodies regarding efforts to rescue the Jews of the Netherlands detained in various camps, 1943-1945, Letter Gans and Mayer, 24-3-1944.

<sup>210</sup> AFZ Zurich, Saly Mayer collection, 36, Letter Gans to Mayer, 25-6-1944.

<sup>211</sup> MeasuringWorth, Purchasing Power Today of a US Dollar Transaction in the Past. Hyperlink: <https://www.measuringworth.com/calculators/ppowerus/>

<sup>212</sup> Yad Vashem, JCC archive, Correspondence between the JCC (Joodse Coordinatie Commissie - Jewish Coordination Committee of Dutch Jewry) in Geneva and various bodies regarding efforts to rescue the Jews of the Netherlands detained in various camps, 1943-1945, Letter Mayer to Visser t Hooft, 15-5-1944.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid, Letter Gans to Mayer, 11-5-1944.

After this refusal of new funding, Mayer also stopped responding to letters from Gans. In December 1944, Gans sent multiple requests to Mayer for extra money, but he received no answers. It was not until January 24, 1945 that Mayer messaged Gans. In this letter, Mayer explained why he no longer wanted to grant extra money to help Dutch Jews: ‘We need to put our relationship back in order. [...] agreed with our approach of only assisting the stateless and not intervening if there is a legitimate government that should stand up for its citizens.’<sup>214</sup> This letter shows that in January 1945, Mayer thought that the Dutch government should finance the JCC and its help toward Dutch Jews. This argumentation by Mayer, and his discussion to stop funding the JCC, posed a threat to the survival of the JCC, because the Dutch government was very reluctant to financially support this organization. For example, in a letter to Mayer on August 9, 1944, Gans stated that the JCC had received a total of 400 Pounds from the Dutch government in London to help Dutch Jews.<sup>215</sup> This amount of money is simply not comparable to the funding the JCC received from Mayer.

The same day Gans got the above-discussed letter by Mayer, he sent an overview of the affairs of the JCC to Visser t Hooft. In this overview, Gans also highlighted the difficulties with Mayer: ‘You know this problem. Either the government should support us, or intervention is necessary at the joint. We already protested to the Dutch people in America.’<sup>216</sup> As mentioned in chapter two, the Dutch government did not grant the JCC sufficient money to cover the stopped JDC-funding. After Gans and Isaac contacted the Dutch government in London about Mayer’s refusal of new funding, they only received the promise that Van Tijn would travel to Switzerland to analyze the problem.

Correspondence with the Dutch government did not solve the problems. However, the JCC soon regained funding from the JDC, because Isaac and Gans also contacted their relatives in the United States. After Mayer stopped communication, Isaac and Gans reached out to Samuel Edersheim and Hartog Lamon multiple times to complain about this situation in their effort to try to make sure that the JDC would fund the JCC again. In their contact with their relatives, Isaac and Gans used similar arguments. They both claimed that Mayer needed to fund the JCC; otherwise, Dutch Jews will die. For example, on 9 February 1945, Gans sent a telegram to Lamon in which he states that the JDC must force Mayer to continue his help to the JCC: ‘Ask urgently to take steps that joint orders representative Switzerland to give maximum help the life of internees also depends on your energetic acting stop.’<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>214</sup> AFZ Zurich, Saly Mayer collection, 36, Letter Mayer to JCC, 24-1-1945.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid, Letter Gans to Mayer, 9-7-1944.

<sup>216</sup> Yad Vashem, JCC archive, Correspondence between M. Gans, a member of the JCC (Joodse Coordinatie Commissie - Jewish Coordination Committee of Dutch Jewry) in Geneva, and Jewish refugees from the Netherlands living in Switzerland whose names begin with the letter "V", 1944-1945, Letter Gans to Visser t Hooft, 24-1-1945.

<sup>217</sup> JDC Archive, Holland, General, 1945, Cable Gans to Lamon, 29-1-1945.

In the messages that Isaac sent to Edersheim in January and February 1945, similar thoughts about why funding the JCC is essential are noticeable:

‘One of the difficulties is the Joint. Until recently, the Joint paid for all expenses for food parcels. This has stopped. No reason has been given. The representative of the Joint is Saly Mayer in St. Gallen. (...) He pretends that it is no longer possible for him to earmark parcels for Dutch persons, as they benefit from the general shipment, and that he does not dispose of sufficient funds. This is not correct, as the International Red Cross (which organization furnishes and ships all parcels) informs us that only those parcels, requested by our Dutch Coordination-Committee, go to Dutch people and that from other shipments nothing will reach them.’<sup>218</sup>

After Edersheim and Lamon received these complaints from Isaac and Gans about JDC funding, they immediately started to use their influence within the JDC. Edersheim contacted Noel Arnovici in January 1945, who already worked for the JDC for 26 years and after the war would become director of the Joint Distribution Committee reconstruction department. In his letter to Arnovici, Edersheim made it clear that the problems of the JCC with Mayer are very serious because Isaac reached out for help: ‘My brother-in-law was in Holland Managing Director of the largest Department Store and you can be perfectly sure that when he gives the authorization to use his name, there is no doubt about the urgency of the matter.’<sup>219</sup> In addition, in February 1945, Lamon had contact with J.C. Hyman, the vice chairman of the JDC, about the difficulties between the JCC and Mayer. As a reaction to these talks, Hyman promised Lamon that the JDC will do as much as possible to quickly help ‘the internees in the several camps in occupied territory.’<sup>220</sup>

Following Lamon and Edersheim’s contact with very influential people in the JDC, Mayer was forced by his superiors to restart his funding of the JCC, and it was made clear to him that he needed to cooperate with the JCC better. On February 16, 1945, Mayer received a telegram from Harold Trobe, who worked for the JDC in Lisbon in 1945, in which the following was stated:

‘Urgent cable received from Dutch committee Switzerland states Saly refusing to furnish funds for parcels Bergen-Belsen believing that funds for Dutch nationals should be provided by the Dutch government and our funds designated for a stateless stop we realize we must try to obtain governmental aid for their nationals in case of parcels for those interned stop, however, this policy cannot be pressed and in view reports malnutrition at Bergen Belsen urge greatest possible numbers of parcels be sent stop.’<sup>221</sup>

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<sup>218</sup> Ibid, Letter Edersheim to Moses Leavitt, 23-4-1945.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid, Letter Edersheim to Arnovici, 29-1-1945.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid, Letter Hyamn to Lamon, 1-3-1945.

<sup>221</sup> AFZ Zurich, Saly Mayer collection, 36, Telegram Trobe to Mayer, 16-2-1945.

This telegram from Trobe shows that the management of the JDC just like Mayer believed that the Dutch government should finance the help of Dutch Jews in the concentration camps in 1945.

However, via Edersheim and Lamon, Isaac and Gans were able to convince the officials in New York that JDC funding was essential for the activities of the JCC. Gans made it very clear that the Dutch people in concentration camps like Bergen Belsen were starving and that they could only be saved via food parcels. The delivery of these parcels could be arraigned, but the JCC was simply 'powerless' without the support of the JDC. Without money, nothing could be sent.

After Mayer was forced by the JDC to finance the JCC again in February 1945, he was also stimulated to improve his relationships with the JCC members. According to Trobe, a 'Dutch group' wanted that Mayer would again have a friendly relationship with the JCC: 'Important individuals here pressing us for such cooperation which we hope will work out.'<sup>222</sup> With 'important individuals' Trobe probably referred to people like Lamon and Samuel Edersheim. Succeeding these telegrams by Trobe, Mayer restarted the funding of the JCC, but the contact between him and the members of the JCC did not improve. As mentioned in chapters two and three, Van Tijn arrived in Switzerland as a representative of the Dutch government to investigate the problems between the JDC and the JCC. Before her arrival, she already had contact with Gans and Mayer. In her contact with Gans, she made it clear that Mayer disliked that the JCC had contacted Dutch people in the USA after he had stopped the funding.<sup>223</sup> After he received this message by Van Tijn, Gans wrote a letter to Mayer in which he explained why he and Isaac reached out to people like Lamon and Edersheim: 'We have always pointed out to the USA the great help we have received from you as representatives of the joint, but when the aforementioned difficulties arose, we have added communications on the attitude of the government and your arguments, with the urge to immediately make sure that we receive an available fund (...).'<sup>224</sup> Mayer never reacted to this letter, indicating the deteriorated contact between him and the JCC.

When Van Tijn finally arrived in Switzerland to analyze the financial problems of the JCC, they were already solved. Not because the Dutch government quickly responded to Mayer's concern about the funding of the JCC, but because Gans and Isaac used their contacts in New York. Regarding the JCC, Van Tijn was mostly tasked to deal with the personal quarrel between Mayer and the JCC members. As stated before, Van Tijn thought that Gans was the biggest reason for this conflict, but she should have mentioned that Gans and Mayer would have had good contact if the Dutch authorities in London were willing to financially support the JCC.

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<sup>222</sup> Ibid, Telegram Trobe to Mayer, 16-3-1945.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid, Letter Gans to Mayer, 21-3-1945.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid.

Although Gans and Isaac were grateful that their relatives and friends helped the JCC in difficult times, they also criticized some individuals in their social networks. This critique was mostly focused on the effort to centralize help toward the Dutch Jews and was shared by Gans and Isaac, as a result it did not negatively affect their relationship within the JCC.

After Allied forces freed large parts of Europe in 1944, organizations similar to the JCC in Geneva were created in countries like Belgium and the south of the Netherlands. A good example was the previously mentioned JCC in Brussels, founded in December 1944. This organization was closely linked with the social network of Frit Isaac because its chairman was his brother-in-law Karel Edersheim, and its secretary was his brother Hugo Isaac. This close connection is also present in a letter in which Karel Edersheim expressed the creation of the JCC in Brussels to the Dutch ambassador in Belgium in December 1944. In this letter, Edersheim clarified that he saw the JCC in Brussels and the JCC in Geneva as one organization.<sup>225</sup> Edersheim also wrote that he intended to establish a central organ to organize help for Dutch Jews. This new organization would consist of members of the JCCs in Brussels and Geneva, members of the Circle of Dutch Jews in London, and Dutch Jews who organized help in the liberated parts Netherlands.<sup>226</sup>

The previously mentioned chairmen of the circle of Dutch Jews in London, Milhado, had similar ideas about centralizing the help toward Dutch Jews as Edersheim and actually created a new central JCC in January 1945. After Milhado had established this organization, he sent a telegram to the JCC in Geneva about his ideas. In this message, he invited Gans and Isaac to be part of a 'temporary Dutch-Jewish coordinating committee', which would be seated in London, to establish good contact with the Dutch government if possible.<sup>227</sup> On January 24, 1945, Gans and Isaac reacted to this invitation by Milhado via a telegram. Gans and Isaac indicated that they only wanted to be part of a central committee if 'close personal contact' between its members would be possible, if the Dutch government would be willing to communicate with this new organization, and if the Dutch authorities in London would support the necessary help toward deported Jews.<sup>228</sup> As long as these criteria were not achieved, Gans and Isaac believed that a new organization 'would give the appearance of cooperation while deportees are starving.'<sup>229</sup> The strict criteria for a new central JCC by Isaac and Gans are not surprising, since these two men did not have good experiences with the Dutch authorities. Shortly before Milhado had initiated the creation of a central JCC, the Dutch government had expressed its unwillingness to financially support the JCC in Geneva. This caused major problems for

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<sup>225</sup> Nationaal Archief, Archief van het Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken (Londens archief) en daarmee samenhangende archieven, (1936) 1940-1945 (1958), 2448 Stukken betreffende de instelling en werkzaamheden van een Joodse Coördinatie Commissie te Brussel. 1945, Letter Edersheim to Dutch ambassador in Brussels, 29-12-1944.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid.

<sup>227</sup> Yad Vashem, JCC archive, Correspondence between the JCC (Joodsche Coördinatie Commissie-Jewish Coordination Committee of Dutch Jewry) in Geneva and other organizations and institutions in the Netherlands, Switzerland, Belgium and England, Telegram Milhado to JCC, 12-1-1945.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid, Telegram Isaac and Gans to Milhado, 24-1-1945.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

Isaac and Gans, as Saly Mayer stopped sending financial support as well. Therefore, it is not difficult to see the reasons why Isaac and Gans only wanted to cooperate in a central committee if the Dutch Government was willing to help.

As a reaction to the criteria of Gans and Isaac for a central committee, Milhado wrote a letter in which he elaborated on the creation of a 'temporary Dutch-Jewish coordinating committee'. In this letter, Milhado mostly focused on his idea that in this new central JCC, all organizations who are working on the restoration of Dutch Jewry must be represented. He does not elaborate on the concerns that Isaac and Gans had about this new central organ. For example, regarding cooperation, Milhado only indicated that contact between the members of the central JCC would be difficult. Nevertheless, this lack of communication did not bother him, because he stated that important decisions could be discussed by telegram.<sup>230</sup> This argumentation did not convince Isaac and Gans to join the new central JCC.

Unlike their sister organization in Geneva, The JCC in Brussels became a member of the central committee. Karel Edersheim did not have the same concerns about governmental support as Isaac and Gans, and he shared Milhado's focus on the reconstruction of Dutch Jewry. For example, in a memorandum he wrote in December 1944, Edersheim stated that a new JCC in the Netherlands must be created to coordinate the 'special problems' of the individual Jews and the Jewish community in post-war Holland.<sup>231</sup> Edersheim did not discuss how to centralize the immediate help toward the deported Jews in this memorandum however.

Despite a mutual focus on the post-war help toward Dutch Jews, Edersheim also criticized Milhado, because of his unclear communication. According to Edersheim, he had no direct contact with Milhado about the creation of a new central JCC in January 1945. He only heard about the intention of Milhado to centralize the help toward Dutch Jews, after Milhado had already made the creation of a new centralized JCC public via an official announcement.<sup>232</sup> In this letter, sent to Jewish aid organizations in the Netherlands on January 20, 1945, Milhado stated that Karel Edersheim, but also Gans and Isaac, would be members of the central JCC.<sup>233</sup> This mentioning of Isaac, Gans, and Edersheim as members of the central JCC by Milhado was premature because they were not yet consulted. Edersheim criticized this communication of Milhado but joined the new organization anyways. Isaac and Gans still declined to be part of the new central committee.

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<sup>230</sup> Yad Vashem, JCC-Archive, Correspondence between M. Gans, a member of the JCC (Joodsche Coördinatie Commissie- Jewish Coordination Committee of Dutch Jewry) in Geneva, and A. Milhado, Chairman of the Circle of Dutch Jews in Britain, regarding locating Dutch Jews who were deported and possibilities for helping them, 1944 -1945, Letter Milhado to JCC, 1-2-1945.

<sup>231</sup> Yad Vashem, JCC archive, Correspondence between M. Gans, a member of the JCC (Joodse Coördinatie Commissie Jewish Coordination Committee of Dutch Jewry) in Geneva, and Dutch Jewish refugees in Switzerland whose last names begin with the letter E, Memorandum Edersheim, 10-12-1944.

<sup>232</sup> Yad Vashem, JCC-Archive, Correspondence between the JCC (Joodse Coördinatie Commissie-Jewish Coordination Committee of Dutch Jewry) in Geneva and various bodies regarding efforts to rescue the Jews of the Netherlands detained in various camps, 1943-1945, Letter Edersheim to Kubowitzki, 3-2-1945.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid, Letter Milhado to Royal Netherlands Brigade, 11-1-1945.



Just like his brother-in-law, Isaac mentioned the premature description of the three men as members of the central JCC as well. Isaac criticized this communication of Milhado and made clear, in a letter to a fellow-Zionist, that he would not accept membership in a central JCC without the cooperation of the Dutch government:

‘That this is not possible for us, as long as the Dutch authorities do not make regular contact possible. Without it, such a committee would be a fiction. Nevertheless, it seems to us (...) that in London we seem to be regarded as members of this committee.’<sup>234</sup>

In the same letter, Isaac also criticized Edersheim and his focus on the post-war restitution of Dutch Jewry:

‘Meanwhile, Mr. Edersheim in his letter of 11 Jan indicated that, given limited resources, we have to wait for investigations into deportees. We must point out once again how extremely important it is to have such data (...). These data can be of the utmost importance for the sending of provisions (often a life condition!) and other assistance. (...) As important as the political and organizational issues are, in our opinion the direct provision of aid to deportees is the most topical and urgent matter.’<sup>235</sup>

Despite the concerns of Isaac and Gans to join the new organization, Gans decided to become a member of the central JCC in March 1945. In a letter he wrote to Milhado on March 11, 1945, he stated that he still had doubts about the help of the Dutch government toward deported Jews. However, Gans also indicated that these concerns had become less important in the functioning of a central JCC. Mainly because the relief of Jews became more organized at an international level.<sup>236</sup> According to Gans, the contact between the JDC and the JCC had improved, and the Jewish World Congress had created a ‘relief committee’, in which all help organizations, including the JCC in Geneva, were represented.<sup>237</sup> The Jewish World Congress was created in 1936 in Geneva ‘to protect Jewish communities across the globe and to allow Jews everywhere to live freely as Jews, without discrimination or the threat of persecution.’<sup>238</sup> The support of this Jewish World Congress and the JDC meant, according to Gans, that a central JCC would be less dependable on the Dutch authorities. Due to this change in dependability, Gans accepted Milhado’s offer to become a member of the central JCC. After his acceptance, Gans still indicated that he regretted that the members of the central JCC in

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<sup>234</sup> Yad Vashem, JCC archive, Correspondence between M. Gans, a member of the JCC (Joodsche Coordinatie Commissie-Jewish Coordination Committee of Dutch Jewry) in Geneva with various people, organizations and institutions regarding the situation of the Jews in the Netherlands and of Dutch Jewish refugees in Switzerland, 1942-1945, Letter Isaac to A.L. Kubowitzki, 23-2-1945.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid.

<sup>236</sup> Yad Vashem, JCC-Archive, Correspondence between the JCC (Joodse Coordinatie Commissie-Jewish Coordination Committee of Dutch Jewry) in Geneva and various bodies regarding efforts to rescue the Jews of the Netherlands detained in various camps, 1943-1945, Letter Gans to Milhado, 11-3-1945.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid.

<sup>238</sup> The World Jewish Congress, About WJC. Hyperlink: [About Us - World Jewish Congress](#).

Brussels and the Netherlands mainly focused on post-war reconstruction, and not on direct aid to Jews in need.<sup>239</sup>

Isaac never became a member of the central JCC, because he left the JCC in Geneva at the beginning of March 1945. Due to Isaac's leave, Gans stated to Milhado that Van Dantzig would become a member of the new central JCC.<sup>240</sup> Milhado was 'very pleased' that Gans had changed his mind about his membership of the central JCC, and accepted Gans and Van Dantzig as new members.<sup>241</sup> In his plans for a central JCC, Edersheim always insisted that his brother-in-law Isaac had to be part of this organization as well, but he did not complain after Van Dantzig replaced Isaac. As F. Sanders, a Jewish friend of Gans who left Geneva in 1945, indicated after he had talked with Edersheim in Brussels in April 1945: 'Edersheim does not want to interfere with his brother-in-law's resignation; I have explained things as objectively as possible.'<sup>242</sup>

The exact reason for Isaac's quitting as a JCC member cannot be found in the JCC archive. He left Geneva on August 24, 1945, after which he resumed his position in the management of the battered Bijenkorf. Until he died in 1948, Isaac tried to rebuild 'his' company, strived for restitution for his family, and helped with the recovery of Dutch Jewry. The grant, which Mayer wanted to award him for his work for the JCC in Geneva, he never accepted.<sup>243</sup>

In short, from a circumstance dimension, the measures of the Swiss authorities regarding Jewish refugees during the Second World War negatively influenced the cooperation between the JCC members, and the working of the JCC in general. Firstly, due to a forced stay in a labor camp, Troostwijk lost his influence in the JCC and stopped as committee member of this organization. Secondly, Isaac started to doubt his membership of the JCC because he was not allowed to travel until December 1944. Thirdly, Gans lost contact with the other three committee members because the Federal Police did not grant travel permits to the JCC members until the end of 1944. Eventually, Gans was able to gain travel permits for Isaac and Van Dantzig, via Bosch van Rosenthal. But it cannot be denied that the Swiss authorities have opposed the affairs of the JCC in Switzerland in 1944.

From a social dimension, the relatives and personal acquaintances of Isaac and Gans were very important at the beginning and the continuation of the JCC in Switzerland. For example, with the help of Visser t Hooft, the JCC was accepted by Bosch van Rosenthal, and large JCC-funding arranged. Besides, without the influence of Hartog Lamon, and Samuel Edersheim in the JCC in New

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<sup>239</sup> Yad Vashem, JCC archive, Correspondence between the JCC (Joodse Coordinatie Commissie-Jewish Coordination Committee of Dutch Jewry) in Geneva and various bodies regarding efforts to rescue the Jews of the Netherlands detained in various camps, 1943-1945, Letter Gans to Milhado, 11-3-1945.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid, Letter Milhado to Gans, 24-3-1945.

<sup>242</sup> Yad Vashem, JCC archive, Correspondence between M. Gans, a member of the JCC (Joodse Coordinatie Commissie - Jewish Coordination Committee of Dutch Jewry) in Geneva, and Jewish refugees from the Netherlands living in Switzerland whose names begin with the letters "R/S", regarding locating family members and sending parcels to relatives detained in camps, 1944-1945, Letter Sanders to Gans, 15-4-1945.

<sup>243</sup> AFZ Zurich, Saly Mayer collection, 36, Letter Mayer to Van Tijn, 8-6-1945.

York the JCC would have been forced to stop their aid toward Dutch Jews, after Saly Mayer refused to continue the financing of these activities in December 1944.

Even though they criticized people like Karel Edersheim and Milhado for being too focused on the post-war reconstruction of Dutch Jewry, Isaac and Gans personally also knew how important their social networks were for solving the above-mentioned problems they had to face as JCC members. For instance, Isaac has indicated in several letters to Gans that he was very satisfied with how Visser t Hooft helped the JCC. According to Isaac, the JCC would never have achieved anything without the connection between Visser t Hooft and Bosch van Rosenthal.<sup>244</sup>

## **Conclusion**

After this analysis, I conclude that the three used dimensions (believe, circumstance, and social) show that three intertwined factors have majorly influenced the internal cooperation in the Joodse Coördinatie Commissie between committee members Gans, Isaac, Troostwijk, and Van Dantzig, between January 20, 1944, and April 1945. Firstly, the different lives of Isaac, and Gans, before the creation of the JCC in Switzerland, in which opposite ideas about cooperation with authorities were formed. Secondly, the unfriendly attitude towards refugees in Switzerland which decreased the contact among the JCC Members between March 1944 and December 1944. Thirdly, the pre-existing influential contacts of Isaac and Gans which positively impacted the activities of the JCC members, and the functioning of the JCC-CH in general.

From a believe dimension, Troostwijk, Isaac, and Gans had similar ideas about the help forwards Dutch Jews via Switzerland during the creation of the JCC in January 1944. However, Isaac and Gans already started to disagree about the course of the JCC in March 1944. During the start of these conflictive thoughts, the Dutch authorities in Bern were reluctant to help the JCC. This lack of support, on the one hand, caused that Isaac not wanted to cooperate with people like Kijzer and Bosch van Rosenthal as long as they did not recognize and support the JCC as an independent Jewish aid organization. On the other hand, Gans wanted to continue his contact with the Dutch embassy, because he saw ways to help Dutch Jews via this relationship. From May 1944 onwards, Gans had good contact with Bosch van Rosenthal. This relationship meant that the Dutch ambassador in Switzerland helped the JCC with travel permits, and made sure that Gans was not sent to a labor camp. Still, Isaac remained critical of the cooperation between Gans and the Dutch authorities in Switzerland. He thought that Gans was too discreet in his relationship with people like Bosch van Rosenthal and Kijzer, and was certain that a direct and confrontational approach would be more beneficial in the aid of fellow Jews.

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<sup>244</sup> Yad Vashem, JCC archive, Reports compiled by the JCC (Joodse Coördinatie Commissie - Jewish Coordination Committee of Dutch Jewry) in Geneva regarding providing social and cultural help to Jewish refugees from the Netherlands in Switzerland, 1942-1945, Letter Isaac to Gans, 12-6-1944.

These differences between Gans and Isaac almost caused Isaac to resign from the JCC in August 1944. However, after personal talks with Gans, Isaac remained connected to the JCC, and the relationship between the two men improved when Isaac moved to Geneva in December 1944. Between January and April 1945, Isaac and Gans worked closely together. During this period of cooperation, Gans had abandoned his discreet approach to authorities, but, just like Isaac, he opted for a confrontational approach in the contacts with the Dutch authorities in London. I do not believe that Gans became confrontational in his contact with authorities to please Isaac, but because the JCC was not supported enough by the Dutch officials in London.

After a period of cooperation in Geneva, Isaac resigned as a member of the JCC in April 1945, leaving Gans as the only influential member of this organization. I have not found the exact reasons why Isaac left, but, as indicated above, Isaac and Gans have had conflicting thoughts about the JCC. Due to these fundamental disagreements, Isaac had already almost left the organization in August 1944. The different thoughts of Isaac and Gans about the JCC, can be explained by their lives before they escaped to Switzerland. Gans was an orthodox Jew who had grown up in the Jewish Invalide. This pre-war experience, firstly, meant that when the JCC was instructed by the Dutch authorities in Bern to organize Pesach for the Jewish refugees in 1944, Gans accepted this responsibility. Secondly, due to his father, Gans was flexible in his cooperation with non-Jewish authorities. Isaac Gans had good contact with non-Jews in the Netherlands to finance the Jewish Invalide. In 1944, Max Gans was also willing to be discreet with his contact with Dutch officials to be able to help Dutch Jews via the JCC. Isaac, on the other hand, was a Zionist and did not practice religion before the Second World War. Firstly, this Zionist thinking determined why Isaac did not want to be involved with the organization of Pesach. Secondly, this thinking explains why Isaac only wanted to work with the Dutch authorities if the JCC-CH was accepted as an independent Jewish organization. Due to his Zionist beliefs, Isaac found it essential that independent Jewish organizations helped fellow Jews.

Isaac also opted for a confrontational approach towards the Dutch authorities, because of his experiences as a member of the JCC in the Netherlands. Isaac had the same thoughts about having contact with authorities in Switzerland as Lodewijk Ernst Visser, chair of the JCC, had shown in his discussions with David Cohen, chairman of the Jewish Council, about the relationship between Jewish organizations and the German authorities. Visser made sure that the JCC in the Netherlands never had contact with the occupiers, while Cohen choose to cooperate with the German authorities to improve the living conditions for Dutch Jews.

As a kindred spirit of Visser, Isaac thought that the Jewish Council was too discreet in contact with the German authorities, because people like Cohen did not, for example, protest against the deportation of almost all Dutch Jews. To help these suffering Jews, Isaac believed that the JCC in Geneva must not follow the procedures of the Jewish Council, but be confrontational in her contact with the Dutch authorities in Bern and London. Isaac wanted to make sure that the JCC in Geneva would be the continuation of the JCC in the Netherlands.

From a circumstance dimension, the conditions in Switzerland during the Second World War were not easy for Jewish refugees. The Swiss authorities were focused on remigration because fugitives were seen as a danger. Due to this focus, refugees like the JCC members were not allowed to work, needed travel permits, and could be transferred to labor camps in an instant. These measures negatively influenced the working of the JCC. For example, Troostwijk lost his influence in the JCC after he was forced to stay in a labor camp for months, and Isaac started to have doubts about the JCC after he was unable to get a travel permit. Van Dantzig was the intended successor of Troostwijk, but was initially not accepted as a new member by the Dutch authorities in Bern (Dr. Kijzer) and never influenced the course of the JCC. Gans was eventually able to arrange limited travel permits via his good contacts with Bosch van Rosenthal in December 1944. However, the Swiss authorities, and their strict rules regarding refugees, played a major role in the declining cooperating in the JCC between March 1944 and December 1944.

From a social dimension, this research has shown that the pre-existing contacts of Isaac and Gans were crucial for the success of the JCC. Acquaintances like Visser t Hooft and relatives like Hartog Lamon were influential when the JCC had to face problems. Think about the difficult contact with Bosch van Rosenthal, and the financial difficulties of the JCC. Visser t Hooft made a good relationship between the Dutch ambassador and Gans possible, and the financial conflict between Saly Mayer and the JCC was solved due to the influence of Lamon and Edersheim in the JCC. In December 1944, the JCC also asked for help from the Dutch authorities in London when Mayer stopped funding this organization, but people like Ferwerda never came up with a clear solution. Thus, the personal contacts of Isaac and Gans were crucial in the success and continuation of this organization.

With these insights in the JCC in Geneva, I contribute to the historiography of the destruction of Dutch Jews during the Second World War. Historians like De Jong, Presser, and Happe have indicated that the JCC had a difficult relationship with the Dutch authorities in London and Bern because the Dutch officials were incompetent or not willing to (financially) support this Jewish aid organization. These historians also states that Gans was the pacesetter of the JCC. I believe the history of the JCC is more nuanced, however.

First of all, the Dutch authorities have indeed not funded the JCC enough, causing conflicts between the JCC and the Dutch officials in London. However, the JCC not only had difficult relationships with the Dutch authorities, because from May 1944 onwards the Dutch ambassador in Bern and Gans had good contact. I am certain that without this good relationship between Gans and the Dutch authorities in Bern, the JCC would never have functioned until June 1945. Bosch van Rosenthal made sure that Gans was not forced to live in a labor camp, and could continue to function as a JCC member. The Dutch ambassador also ensured that Isaac and Van Dantzig received travel permits. These licenses made personal contact between the JCC members possible again in December 1944. Secondly, the description of Gans as the pacesetter of the JCC is not accurate for the entire

period this organization existed. Between January and the beginning of March 1945, Isaac had a direct influence on the proceedings of the JCC, and also before his move to Geneva in December 1944, this former director of the Bijenkorf had much contact with Gans about the course of this organization. Therefore, Isaac must be seen as an important member of the JCC. The JCC became the sole enterprise of Gans when Isaac left the organization in April 1945. Troostwijk and Van Dantzig have never played an important role in this Jewish aid organization, due to the living circumstances in Switzerland during the Second World War.

With my research, I also contribute to the (international) research into Jewish aid during the Second World War. Firstly, I have shown that to understand the thinking of people active in the Jewish aid during the Second World War, it is necessary to analyze their pre-war lives. Just like Laurien Vastenhout states in her research on the Jewish Councils in Belgium, France, and Netherlands that the leaders of these organizations were influenced in their actions by their lives before the Second World War, I can conclude that the acting of Gans and Isaac in the JCC was also affected by their experiences before their travels to Switzerland. Secondly, with a focus on the working of the JCC, I highlight, just like Katja Happe, that the efforts to help Dutch Jews were not only carried out by resistance groups active in the German-occupied territories but also the matter of organizations like the JCC and the JDC. With the help of the JDC, the JCC has sent many food packages to concentration camps like Theresienstadt and Bergen Belsen. When Saly Mayer refused to continue the financing of the JCC, Isaac and Gans did anything in their power to restart JDC funding, and therefore ensured that starving Jews would continue to receive necessary food via Switzerland. As Gans have stated in February 1945, without the food packages arraigned by the JCC more Dutch Jews would have died.

Thirdly, with the focus on a Jewish organization active in Switzerland, I have also shown that this alpine country was not just a safe haven for Jewish refugees, but a place in which Jewish people inexhaustibly tried to help fellow Jews. The Swiss authorities, and their strict measures against refugees, made these efforts of Jewish aid difficult. Swiss instances like the federal police almost made sure that the JCC was not able to function, in their trying to stop the integration of refugees in the Swiss community. Fourthly, with the focus on the social contacts of Isaac and Gans, I indicate that their relatives and acquaintances, which they already knew before the JCC existed, were essential for the continuation of the JCC. Just like Bob Moore indicates that pre-existing contacts were important for the success of resistance groups in Western Europe, I conclude that the JCC would never be able to aid suffering Jews if its members did not have contacts with influence in powerful institutes like the JDC and the Dutch authorities in Bern.

This analysis in general is mostly focused on the lives and thinking of Frits Isaac and Max Gans during the Second World War. As indicated-above, this focus gives, for example, insight into the importance of the pre-existing social networks of these two Jewish men for the working of a Jewish aid organization in Switzerland between 1944 and 1945. However, this remains a limited scope in

research regarding Jewish self-help, and Dutch Jews who lived in Switzerland during the Second World War. Therefore, follow-up research can, firstly, focus on the general treatment of Dutch refugees in Switzerland during the Second World War. For this research, the archive of the JCC can also be used. This organization received hundreds of letters from Dutch refugees in which they explained and/or complained about their lives in Switzerland. Secondly, the knowledge in this thesis about the importance of social networks in Jewish self-help during the Second World War can be expanded further. For example, new research can focus on how pre-war contacts have influenced the success of (Jewish) resistance groups active in the occupied Netherlands.

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**Appendix A: Pictures of the JCC-members after their arrival in Switzerland.**



*Mozes Heiman Gans. 7-6-1943.*

Source: Federal Archives Switzerland, GANS-PREMSELA, MOZES HEIMANN, 12.05.1917; HAMMELBURG, NICO, 19.10.1921; GANSS-PREMSELA, JENNY, 25.01.1919 (dossiers).



*Siegfried Isaac. 20-7-1942.*

Source: Federal Archives Switzerland, BROESSLER, RUTH, 13.07.1931; ISAAC, ARTHUR, 09.04.1932; ISAAC, BENJAMIN HENRI, 10.05.1945; ISAAC, SIEGFRIED, 08.07.1900; ISAAC-EDERSHEIM, ELISA HERMINA, 27.09.1903 (Dossiers).



*Salomon Troostwijk. 6-9-1943.*

Source: Federal Archives Switzerland, TROOSTWIJK, ARNOLD, 07.12.1929; TROOSTWIJK, ERNA, 27.09.1904; TROOSTWIJK, SALOMON, 13.02.1903 ( Dossiers).



*Samuel van Dantzig. 12-4-1943.*

Source: Federal Archives Switzerland, VAN DANTZIG, ADOLPHE, 05.07.1922; VAN DANTZIG-BROEKHUYSEN, ESTELLA, 02.09.1902; VAN DANTZIG, HUGO MICHEL, 13.03.1920; VAN DANTZIG, LOUISE, 13.04.1925; VAN DANTZIG, SAMUEL, 31.10.1897 (Dossiers).