

EHRI Online Course in Holocaust Studies

MS (CDJC); XLIX-42

Persecution and Deportation in Western Europe – General Introduction

Translation: A06 'Aktenvermerk' signed by Herbert-Martin Hagen

The Higher SS and Police Leader
Xxxx Military Governor in France

Paris, 3 September 1942

I. Memo:

Re: talks with President Laval on 2.9.42.

During a dinner given by ambassador de Brinon on 2.9.42, where – amongst others – ambassador Abetz was also present, talks took place between SS Brigadier General OBERG (SS-Brigadeführer) and President LAVAL. The following points were discussed in the talks:

1. Jewish question:

a) President Laval explained that the demands we have made of him regards the Jewish question have been greatly opposed by the Church in recent days. Prominent in this opposition to the government is Cardinal Gerlier. Because he did not wish to arrest him directly, he ordered the arrest of his right-hand man, the head of the Jesuits in Lyon, on 1.9., and had him placed in a “Résidence forcée”. In this connection Laval remarked very ironically: “And that’s quite a lot in a state under the leadership of Marshal Pétain.”

In view of the opposition of the clergy, President Laval requests that, if possible, no new demands be made of him in the area of the Jewish question at present. It is particularly important not to give him numbers in advance with respect to the Jews to be taken by Germany from the unoccupied territory. The demand has been made, for instance, that 50,000 Jews be delivered for the 50 available trains. He pleads us to believe in all sincerity that he will fulfil the promises made to us in the Jewish question, but handing over Jews is not like some “one-price store” where one can fetch as many as one wishes for the same price. And by the way, he does not even wish – he added in an intentionally jesting manner – to ask about what is to be given in return.

He confirmed once again that in line with the agreements made as to the transfer of Jews formerly possessing German, Austrian, Czech, Polish and Hungarian citizenship, those with Belgian and Dutch citizenship will also be handed over. Accordingly, this means, as discussed previously, those Jews are handed over who have become French nationals after 1933.

President Laval then inquired if the Higher SS and Police Leader (Höhere SS und Polizeiführer) intended to make any more demands in this field at present, which was answered in the negative. Thereupon, President Laval again asked that no great pressure be exerted in this matter given the difficulties encountered.

b) In this connection he again spoke about the matter of Darquier de Pellepoix, which, by the way, in meetings up until now he has discussed in a very ironic tone every time. He emphasises that he has reiterated to Darquier de Pellepoix, who constantly comes to him with unfeasible proposals, that he will not be given a special police as he wishes. He assured him once again that he can have special confidants for his Jewish affairs in the departments of the regional prefectures but their information has to be passed on from him to Bousquet.

He further pointed out that such an organisation on the part of Darquier de Pellepoix would be very agreeable to him because, as he unfortunately has to admit, he cannot rely fully on his police.

In addition, he also pointed out, as already noted repeatedly, that Darquier de Pellepoix was a “bon garçon” but utterly useless for ensuring the orderly functioning of an administration. (The repeated ironical allusions to Darquier de Pellepoix’s inability to perform administrative tasks gives the impression that President Laval wishes his dismissal. This is particularly apparent in how, during today’s meeting, he remarked that Darquier de Pellepoix raises hardly any objections at discussions held with him, but after such talks he constantly writes letters with allegations about different ministers.)

c) President Laval also asked if the law drafted by him to transfer the Aryanisation of enterprises to the domains administrations had already reached us. He was told that as of yet we know nothing about this law, but that inquiries will be made immediately.

d) During discussions on the Jewish question President Laval also pointed out that he, when the occasion arises, would request that the Jewish wife of the Jew Citroen be allowed to enter the unoccupied territory so that she can visit her children. At present however, the request is not yet relevant.

In this connection he emphasises that he has yet to file an exemption application and would not submit one. It is a fact though that the Jew Citroen had done a lot for the French automobile industry by creating a standard car and that, after all, the occupation army has profited from him by using this very good car.

By the by he remarked with a hint of irony that up until now only Marshal Pétain has asked for exemptions, which he had received approval for from the Higher SS and Police Leader as well. Incidentally, he asked the Higher SS and Police Leader for information as to if there were also protected Jews in Germany. The Higher SS and Police Leader answered in the negative, while ambassador de Brinon remarked to Laval that such exemptions are only issued in the Reich when it serves the Reich’s interests.

2. Fire brigade regiment

The reorganisation of the fire brigade regiment was again raised. In a longer discussion it was agreed that President Laval would put this regiment under his direct control. He will find out in detail what such a control would entail, so as to decide whether it will be run by Bussièrre or Bousquet on his behalf. He undertakes to reorganise the regiment in accordance with technological requirements and, in particular, name a new chief. It was reported to him on 1.9. that the current chief was a colonel of the armoured corps, who has not received any technological preparatory training. By the way, he is a regiment comrade of de Gaulle, which though cannot be taken as proof that he is a Gaullist.

3. Police

Here President Laval mentioned himself the question of the control and treatment of the gendarmerie. He emphasised that the gendarmerie remains under his control and, to underline this position, SS Brigadier General Oberg from time to time receives Chasserat when in Paris.

The Préfecture de Police is to be treated just as independently as the gendarmerie. He requested SS Brigadier Gen. Oberg to also support him here so that he does not encounter any further difficulties caused by the rivalry between individual administrations.

It was nevertheless agreed that correspondence, in particular in relation to the question of the arming of the whole French police, is to be conducted exclusively through Bousquet. So as to observe propriety, President Laval requested that the letters for Bousquet we have sent up

until now on this issue be directly addressed to him. Bousquet will then handle what needs to be done in his name as representative.

4. Leroy-Ladurie, Minister of Agriculture

Laval was very disparaging about the French minister of agriculture. He described him as “un peu fou” and compared his way of working and making representations to him with those of Darquier de Pellepoix.

Translated by Paul Bowman