

Allied Rift Called Aim of '44 Nazi Ransom Plan

Brand, Go-Between, Calls His Role a 'Terrible Mistake'

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FRANKFURT, Germany, May 20—Joel Brand, whom the Nazis used as an envoy in their unsuccessful plan to trade the lives of a million Jews for 10,000 trucks, said today that the plan was actually aimed at splitting the Soviet-Western Alliance.

Mr. Brand, a former Budapest resident and now an Israeli citizen, gave a detailed account of the origin and failure of the plan at the trial here of Hermann Krumei and Otto Hunsche, two of Adolf Eichmann's closest collaborators in the extermination of Hungarian Jews, in 1944.

He testified "that though the deal was suggested by Eichmann" it must have originated in the mind of Himmler as one of his desperate attempts at driving a wedge between the Allies." Heinrich Himmler was chief of the SS (Elite Guard) and Gestapo.

Seeds of Suspicion

Eichmann sent Mr. Brand to Istanbul 20 years ago to propose the offer to Jewish agencies. The Israeli testified that the Nazis' true motive shone through the frequent assurance that the vehicles would be used "on the Russian front only."

"I made a terrible mistake in passing this on to the British," Mr. Brand said.

"It is now clear to me that Himmler sought to sow suspicion among the Allies as a preparation for his much-desired Nazi-Western coalition against Moscow," he said.

The witness emphatically disagreed with the court's description of Krumei, who was a lieutenant colonel, as Eich-



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Joel Brand

mann's "deputy" in Hungary.

In the weeks before his departure for Turkey in May, 1944, the defendant appeared to him as the chief organizer of all anti-Jewish measures in Hungary, Mr. Brand said.

He also said that Krumei, who "sought to befriend Jews since he knew the war was lost," was less dangerous than Hunsche, a former SS captain, "whose name spread terror everywhere."

Program Formally Ended

Hunsche was Eichmann's legal expert in Hungary. According to the indictment, he caused the deportation of Jews even after formal suspension of the extermination program by the Hungarian Government under Adm. Nicholas Horthy.

Mr. Brand said he met Hunsche and Krumei three times before his encounter with Eichmann in a Budapest hotel

Trial Told About Himmler's Lives-for-Trucks Proposal

on May 8, 1944. "On all these occasions," he said, "I brought the two men money, gold and jewels in execution of a 'money-for-blood bargain' concluded with Krumei's subordinate, Dieter Wisliceny."

Wisliceny was hanged by Czechoslovakia in 1948 for the murder of Jews in Slovakia.

"In all, we gave Krumei and Hunsche \$200,000 worth of valuables as down payment in a \$2 million deal to save all Hungarian Jews," Mr. Brand said, "but all we got in return from Krumei was a fit of anger because we couldn't pay the whole amount at once."

'Blood for Goods'

The witness testified that Eichmann introduced himself with the words: "You certainly know who I am. I carried out the programs in Poland and Czechoslovakia, and in the East now it is Hungary's turn."

"Blood for goods is my offer!" Mr. Brand quoted him as having shouted. "What do you want, young women, young men, children, old people? Speak up!"

"I am not here to determine who is to be murdered," Mr. Brand said he replied.

Eichmann then disclosed his price for the lives of one million Hungarian Jews. It was 10,000 new trucks, with spare parts, which he said Mr. Brand could obtain through negotiations with Jewish organizations "anywhere" abroad. The deal was never carried through.

Mrs. Brand, who also was in court, said that up to the end of the war she and her family were kept as hostages by the Nazis. Krumei, she said, repeatedly refused to let them leave Hungary and later Germany.