

**459 Lord Cranborne, U.K. Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, to Sir Geoffrey Whiskard, U.K. High Commissioner in Australia**

Cablegram 230 LONDON, 15 May 1941, 2.17 p.m.

IMMEDIATE MOST SECRET

My telegram No. 93 and Commonwealth Government No. 163. [1]

We have reason to suppose that the question of German internees was discussed during the visit to the Netherlands East Indies of the Netherlands Minister for Foreign Affairs [2] and Colonial Minister. [3] One secret report is to the effect that M. Welter requested the Governor-General [4] to release all internees but that the Governor-General after consultation with the Procurator [5] refused and that the subject was dropped.

His Majesty's Consul-General at Batavia [6] reports that nevertheless enquiries are being made through the Netherlands East Indies Tourist Office for securing accommodation from the Netherlands East Indies to Japan by Japanese line for 350 German women in June next and we know from secret but reliable source (on no account to be quoted) that the Japanese Government have promised the German Government to provide sufficient accommodation in Japanese ships during May, June and July to remove 500 internees.

German pressure may therefore be expected to continue and His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom are concerned at the possibility that male internees should be removed since many of them are experts on conditions in the Netherlands East Indies and might be used by Germany or Japan to the detriment of the Allies in the Far East. As the Netherlands Government are understood to regard the problem principally from the point of view of its reaction on German treatment of the Dutch population in Holland, it would be useful if Far East security aspect could be emphasized by the Commonwealth Government. Please therefore suggest to them that they should take the opportunity of the visit of Dutch Ministers [7] to ask M. Van Kleffens whether there is any truth in rumours that a proposal is afoot to repatriate German internees in the Netherlands East Indies.

*1) Cablegram 93 of 18 February conveyed a request that, subject to the approval of the Netherlands Govt, 400 of the most dangerous German internees in the Netherlands East Indies should be transferred to Australia. In cablegram 163 of 19 March the Commonwealth Govt agreed to accept the internees if necessary. See file AA: A1608, B41/1/9, ii.*

*2) Dr E. N. van Kleffens.*

*3) C. J. I. M. Welter.*

*4) Jonkheer Dr A. W. L. Tjarda van Starkenborgh Stachouwer.*

*5) Dr H. J. van Mook.*

*6) H. F. C. Walsh.*

*7) On 31 March the Minister for External Affairs, Sir Frederick Stewart, had dispatched an invitation to van Kleffens and Welter to visit Australia at the conclusion of their visit to the Netherlands East Indies. See cablegram 439 on file AA: A981, NEE 51.*