

Translation

Falkenstein, July 20, 1945

Thoughts and Events

Today, July 20, 1944, the anniversary of the day when brave German men made a last minute attempt to protect the German people ~~from the~~ against the greatest tragedy, I first direct my eye heaven-ward, to thank God for His kindness to have protected me so graciously during these dark months and to have saved me so miraculously in the moment of decision after death was before my vision for months.

My heart filled with the same gratitude, I am thinking of my dearly beloved brave wife and of my ^{good} ~~best~~ children who endured their bitter fate in heroic manner, not losing faith in me, thereby considerably easing my fate through their brave erect behaviour. Finally, my thoughts turn to the brave men who after enduring cruel tortures had to give their lives for the nation and the fatherland in that cruel manner.

In the following I have endeavored to establish in concise form those thoughts which inspired me since 1933 in my fight against Hitler and the events which in the course of the last years and especially during the last months influenced my life. These statements are intended to give an account of me ^{in my actions} ~~as a soldier~~ and as a man to the German nation, especially, however, to my family and my friends.

Introduction.

January 30, 1933, when Hindenburg appointed Hitler Reich Chancellor, the power of government thus being placed ~~into~~ with NSDAP, I expressed the opinion to my wife and my friends that this development would not turn out to be a blessing for the German people and that - unless his power

be restrained in opportune time - he would involve the German people in a new world war. In carrying on my official activity, I had met Hitler, knowing him as a fanatic demagogue of amazing energy, capable and resolved to pursue any path which would bring him nearer realization of his plans. Suffice it to ~~point~~ recall the unfair propaganda in which he engaged against Hindenburg incidental to the Reich President elections and I ask to remember that in 1932 Hitler expressed his readiness to call a general strike - in collaboration with communism - in order to obtain the downfall of the Schleicher regime. I knew Goering to be an egoist, devoid of inner restraint, and corrupt, always delving in ideas of ~~meghamax~~ megalomania and I knew Ribbentrop, whose simple-mindedness and self-conceitedness could be surpassed merely by his overbearing and arrogant manners. At that early date I was quite ^{than an environment of such people} convinced/~~that surrounded by such people~~ - who gathered as his more or less immediate entourage and ~~whom~~ which, in fact, consisted of nothing but adventurers and crashed existences - could not possibly establish a platform which would permit Germany to make her entry on the ~~world stage~~ international stage, to engage in the path of understanding and peace. The views of those people, so completely ignorant of the ways of the world and overbearing ~~and~~ could never serve as the basis for a reconciliation of nations, by means of which - in my opinion - peace alone could be secured, bolshevism banished, and the ultimate aim ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ establishment of a "United States of Europe" realized.

My scruples were deepened through that abominable occurrence, the Reichstag fire the author for which - according to Col. Gen. Halder - Goering himself repeatedly boasted himself to be.

Incidental to my trip to Russia in 1933 I had my first clash with Hitler. Deeply impressed by the vastness of the Russian space, the vigor of the Russian populace, ~~the scope of~~ the scope of Russia's self-sufficiency as regards raw materials and agricultural products, especially also by the gigantic scale of the bolshevist industry, I took the stand that Germany should establish friendly relationship with the Soviet Union and in a few years' time the Soviet Union would constitute a power of unfathomable war-economical strength. Hitler completely rejected my attitude. He was of the opinion that we had permitted ourselves to be deceived by villages a la Potemkin, that Bolshevism is exclusively a destructive power and never capable of constructing an organization. That concept of Hitler found expression in his more and more vigorous and untrue propaganda and provocation against the Soviet System.

My opinion ~~xxx~~ from the viewpoint of military economics, as applied to our relations with China, Tschiang Kaichek's Government, was the second occasion for my finding disgrace before ~~Hitler~~ Hitler. With the consent of the Reich Government, a treaty had been concluded in 1935 with China, for the purpose of strengthening us in the domain of requirements of military economicall~~y~~, according to which China supplied wolfram, tin and other important raw materials against war equipment. Under Blomberg's order I had signed that agreement. Only a few weeks after signing the agreement and with General von Reichenau sent to China by Hitler still in the country, - for the purpose of transmitting to Tschiang Kaichek a gift of honor sent to him by Hitler - the latter declared the agreement obsolete by reason of the fact that he had decided to engage now in a pro-Japan policy. China would anyhow not be in a position to be of service to us. In reply to numerous objections I raised Hitler maintained that when it comes to politics there is no room for scruples,

that he is a realist in politics and the purpose of agreements is to break them at the opportune moment.

Although inwardly my attitude to Hitler was from the first day ~~that~~ whole-heartedly one of absolute opposition, I accepted ~~the~~ call - at the end of 1934 - when I was asked to reestablish Germany's economy to qualify it for military ~~xxx~~ needs. I did this because I felt a disarmed Germany surrounded by highly armed neighbors is an anomaly and that this constituted a danger for the maintenance of peace. Contrary to the Treaty of Versailles, the Western Powers had failed to disarm: Russia was in the progress of arming on a large scale: consequently, something had to be done about Germany. When, in the spring of 1935, Hitler reintroduced the general draft law, the Western Powers did not raise objection; nor did anything happen when the Rhineland was occupied in March, 1936; more than that, England was even prepared to enter into a naval agreement with Hitler, the result being that any intelligent German naturally had to conclude that Germany was considered by the Western Powers as bulwark against Bolshevism and that they approved of rearming.

I am convinced that Hitler was of that opinion at that time. Considering furthermore that in each of his speeches before the German people he expounded the principles of peaceful politics it was but natural for every good German to take his part in this rearmament process - which ~~was to serve~~, we all were convinced, was to serve merely as a means of protection of our borders - with all his strength. I am certain at that time the number of people who for the sake of reestablishing Germany's ~~prosperity~~ ^{prosperity} would have wished for a war did not amount to one percent.

In the meantime, however, other events had taken place which deeply moved me and my friends. June 30, 1934, had pointed the way which this system had mapped out for itself to follow in order to reach their goal, uniting all absolute power in the hands of a few single men. Very soon it became ~~all absolute power in the hands of a few single men.~~ Very soon ..

evident that the "Roehm plot" was ~~unfounded~~ throughout fictitious and fabricated by Himmler merely in order to break the power of SA and thus to unite all power within the SS.

Blomberg was aware of this, and he permitted ~~that~~ Schleicher to be murdered which meant the first slap against the dignity of the officers corps.

Then followed Hindenburg's death; falsification of Hindenburg's last will by Hitler; the Wehrmacht taking the oath on Hitler's person, any resistance movement against such system within the Wehrmacht thus being smashed. Blomberg became the grave digger for the respectable members of the officer's corps heading the Army 100,000 men strong, and thus the foundation was built for selling out the armed forces to the party. It was reserved to Keitel and General Reinicke to carry this disaster to its completion in the course of the war. To this were further added the ruthless application of the Nuremberg laws; the increasing persecutions of the Jews; first measures taken against the Evangelical and Catholic Church and the awful violations in the realm of ^{law} application. All this combined to point to the fact that Hitler and his "loyal followers" were pursuing a highly radical road, extremely dangerous for Germany, one which was bound to be followed with highest mistrust by the world.

In 1936 Hitler permitted those in his immediate environment to take the hint that most likely his goals would not permit realization without a war. He pointed to the fact that never before had the German been so well equipped for fight and been so united behind a leader as under him; that our generation's in what it owes Germany task/still left much to do before it would be complete and that, consequently, it will once more become necessary for the German people to take the arms in order to secure finally its position in the world. Hitler at that time invented the idea of the "Blitzkrieg" and, evidently, was imbued with the idea that in the age of technical achievements it should be possible to carry on war for a brief duration ~~and thereby~~, thus carrying his plans into actual deed,

~~throughout the war~~ when engaging technically superior means of warfare with lightning speed. Already at that time he spoke of himself as being chosen by destiny to become the founder of a Reich of Germanic nations^{the} for the duration of 1000 years. To Bundeskanzler Schuschnif he declared that he is the greatest German of all times and that after him no other man will come who would combine in himself such means of power.

Hitler's will to burden the German people with another war becoming more and more evident, I felt impelled, beginning 1936 - first in concealed and then in rather open fashion, in public lectures, newspaper articles and in essays published in magazines of military science, to take issue against the idea of "Blitzkrieg" and to declare that for reasons of a military-economical nature Germany is not in a position to engage in another war. This declaration in open resulted in my complete discredit with Hitler and the party management and it created for me the reputation of a pessimist and pacifist. I am convinced that even at that time one would have liked to have me relieved, provided there had existed a ~~personality which was unqualified and~~ qualified personality with the necessary experience.

The "Fritsch Affair" set the finishing touch to my complete rupture with this system. I could not understand that this extreme disgrace which in the most malicious manner Hitler had ~~caused~~ brought upon General Col. Fritsch and the officer corps of the army, was to remain without atonement and that it was intended to conceal the truth from the German people. But since even at that time the leading ~~officers~~ soldiers, Brauchitsch in particular, failed to ~~stand up~~ come forth in order to wipe away this disgrace, several men of the old army gathered who evaluated the honor of the officer corps and the welfare of the German people higher than the oath of allegiance coerced by Hitler. Even then Gen. von Witzleben was ready to eliminate that system

and to turn over Hitler and his accomplices to a peoples' court. Unfortunately this enterprise failed because, according to the opinion of the leader of the troop detachment which was to carry the enterprise in effect, the young officers did not prove reliable for an action of such a political nature.

Then followed the Czech crisis and the departure of the Chief of General Staff, Col. Gen. Beck. The danger of war knocked at the door. Again the same men assembled and determined to prevent the war through elimination of ^{the} Hitler system. Then came the day of Munich, which meant a new success for Hitler and it was believed that to eliminate the "Beloved Fuehrer" at that moment was something that could not be accounted for before the German people.

In the course of those months I expressed myself at great length to most of the leading personalities in Germany's home economics, in order to make sure that my understanding of Germany's economic position and of the rest of the world, and the possibility of holding through another war economically, was correct; and I met with complete approval of my opinion. I am sorry to say that when the sun of Hitler's grace turned in the direction of Dr. Todt and Mr. Speer, a great many of these economists reversed themselves completely in their opinion, permitted themselves to get caught by the charm of this new strong man of the party and joined with enthusiasm those who engaged in provocations of war ~~promoted war~~ and were subject to the psychosis of holding through. If today, the German people - and rightly so - ask an accounting on the part of the highest ranking soldiers, the same should apply for many leaders in economics who - contrary to their opinion - lacked the courage to join me in declaring that this war is devoid of sense and hopeless for Germany.

Since the day of Munich Hitler has engaged systematically in war mongery and preparation for war and as of this date he also was determined to attack England in case resistance should be offered to his plans. As a matter of fact, I am of the opinion that in 1938 Hitler still hoped that in the decisive moment England would abandon Poland. Hitler's entire armament program was directed at a surprise success but not at a war of long duration. He relegated to the background all measures tending to strengthen our ability of endurance, in favor of the creation of new Divisions.

When, in the summer of 1939, it became clearly evident that Hitler provoked differences with Poland in order to deceive the German people as regards a reason for his attack, several men approached me with the request to do everything in my power to prevent this war which, in our opinion, was bound to take the dimensions of a world conflagration. Personalities especially strong in expressing this thought were Minister Popitz, Dr. Goerdeler, Col. General Beck, Ambassador von Hassel, Dr. Schacht, Secretary of State Plank, General Oster, Mr. Gisevius and Director Wittke. In extensive discussions it became clear to us that everything must be done to avoid outbreak of the war and to save the German people a new blood bath. In those days I prepared a brief memorandum which clearly established that Hitler's aspirations of conquest of necessity must lead a war of materiel of long duration and that without strong allies Germany would be unable to hold through for lack of raw materials and for reasons of nutrition. A war ending in defeat would mean for Germany her doom and that, consequently, the war must not be entered into.

With This memorandum I acquainted Keitel about two weeks prior to the beginning of the war with Poland. Keitel interrupted me in my report and declared that Hitler would never engage in a world war, pointing out the absence of any danger in that direction because, in Hitler's opinion, the French were

degenerate
a completely/ ~~assess~~, pacifist people; that England was much too decadent to be really of assistance to Poland and that America would never send even a single man to Europe to save the chestnuts from the fire for England, leave alone for Poland. When I objected that all men who really have a knowledge of foreign countries completely differed in their opinion it was pointed out to me that apparently I had permitted myself to become infected by these pacific elements who did not want to see Hitler's greatness. On Sunday, before the beginning of the campaign into Poland, I again called on Keitel and submitted to him graphically prepared statistical material on the subject of Germany's efficiency degree in matters of ^{military economics} ~~armaments~~, as compared with that of the rest of the world powers. They clearly set forth the great superiority of the Western Powers in the realm of military economics and the dangers therefrom resulting for us.

The next day Keitel told me that he had shown these graphs to Hitler and that he had declared his inability to share my concern over the danger of a world conflagration, particularly in view of the fact that he now had succeeded to catch the Soviet Union in his net. That the agreement with Russia is the greatest political ~~and~~ accomplishment which German politicians could produce in their records for several decades. It was never really clear in my mind whether, under Ribbentrop's influence, Hitler at that time really still believed England would not interfere in the Polish war or whether already then Keitel simply deceived me. Of necessity I had to conclude that Hitler misjudged the world situation completely and that he made light of the fact that the German people was to ^{be} provoked into the war. On the strength of such recognition we decided that the time for action was at hand in order to prevent at least the worst - expansion of the Polish war into a world conflagration. Popitz, Goerdeler, Beck, Hassel and Oster approached me with the request to enlighten OKH on the true situation and to demand of OKH the deposition of Hitler by force unless he be ready for an immediate understanding with the Western

Powers. At this moment occurred the attempt on Hitler's life at the "Buergerbraeukeller" which- as became evident very soon - was a result of Heidrich's machination with the sole idea to illustrate to the German people the great danger which, allegedly, threatened from England. As a result of a raid of SS into the Low Lands - Lieut.Colonel Best, British, and the head of the British Secret Service in Holland, was seized, taken over the German ~~border~~ border and according to press reports he was then made responsible for the entire preparation of the plot. I myself spent several weeks with Best in a concentration camp, and he assured me that his sole order had been to do everything in his power to avoid a war between England and Germany.

After this renewed deception I called on 27 November 1939 on Col.General Halder, the Chief of the General Staff, acquainted him with the opinion of my friends and urged him to prebail upon Brauchitzsch to avoid the world war and, if necessary, to arrest Hitler. At this point I can now deal with events which resulted in my arrest and which I should like to describe with my interrogation and defense serving as the background.

My arrest and the reasons for same.

The plot of July 20, 1944 was a surprise to me. Developments leading to it were as follows: In view of the fact that all our attempts made during the years 1939, 1940 and 1941, to prevail upon our Commander in Chief to have ^{heads of} a picked group of men arrest the entire government and the Fuehrer/staff ~~heads~~ ~~quar~~ had failed, Beck, Goerdeler and Olbricht had decided to bring about Hitler's removal through an attempt on his life. Several attempts had failed because Hitler's mistrust grew from day to day and so did his precaution. Personally I was opposed to an attempt on his life and until the day when I was relieved from my position, at the end of 1942, I renewed constantly my endeavors to induce one of the Commanders in Chief - by means of trips I took to see the

the respective leading men, describing to them the entire situation and pointing to the economic superiority of our adversaries - to carry out the deed which would bring relief, namely elimination of the entire staff of the Uehrer. Although men like Field Marshall Kluge and Manstein saw the danger and declined even Hitler, they yet failed to in deciding for the deed. After the tragedy of Stalingrad State Secretary Planck and I ~~expressed~~ ^{took the stand that} ~~the~~ - it now having become evident that the war was lost - Hitler's removal be foree would no longer be in order because even a new government would not be able to obtain from the Allies anything but a disgraceful peace. I was of the opinion that a great portion of the German people would in that case see in Hitler's annihilation a conspiracy by the generals for selfish reasons and that they would blame the unfortunate outcome of the war on them while Hitler would continue to live on in the minds of the deceived German nation as the "Great Fuehrer" a figure of martyrdom. Such should under no circumstances be permitted to happen. As a matter of fact, I at that time did not expect Hitler to go so far as to sacrifice the entire German people, the German country and its culture ~~for the sake~~ as the price for a few added weeks of life. I now remember however, that Keitel, when I described to him the senseless sacrifices at Stalingrad, replied: "The Fuehrer does not accept any of such scruples: he takes the stand that: If the German people is unwilling to understand me and does not wish to fight, it will have to go down in doom."

14 days before the plot by Olbricht was carried out, I noticed that he was very excited and that in his house he had turned to become perfectly fanatic ~~against~~ in his hatred against Hitler. When we discussed the situation he told me that, in his opinion, not all had been lost as yet and that, in collaboration with ~~Colonel~~ ~~Fromm~~ with Count Staufenberg, he was endeavoring to convince Col. Gen. Fromm of the necessity that in view of the Field Marshall's failure at the

front, action was to be taken in hand by the country . He did not make mention of the attempt on Hitler's life, planned for an early date, the reason evidently being that the day when Staufenberg would be able to approach Hitler had not yet been fixed.

Beginning

/ July 20, 1944, I was prepared for an arrest because - in view of my close collaboration with the elements Witzleben - Beck - Olbricht, Oster in his investigations could not possibly remain ignorant of it. On the other hand I was of the opinion that material which could be used against me was not to be found because from the first day of my collaboration I had declared that it was not my desire to be involved in the formation of a new government because, after the fall of the government I proposed to continue not in my capacity as a soldier or politician, but in the field of economics. I thus only had reason to make sure about destruction of material which dealt with my fight against Hitler and his plans and which exposed me as the most critical of opponents of the Nazy system. In view of this and beginning July 20, 1944, until the day of my arrest, I ~~was~~ engaged in revising my ^{highly critical} memorandum on the subject of Germany's war Economy ~~in~~ along such lines that, if necessary, it could be referred to as defense material in my case. In addition, I asked my adjutants, Lieut.Col. Doehner and Col. Eckert to destroy all material which described my fight against the war and the measures taken along that line by the government. For the sake of the safety of my family and my collaborators, I was forced to take this step - after the attempt proved a failure - although it was not conducive to add to clarity in a historical sense. However, Doehner and Eckert are in a position to serve as witness for the existence of such ~~material~~ material.

I am sorry to say that my hope no ~~material~~ written evidence would be found, very soon found the contrary to be true.

In the month of August, when after having been attached to OKW for special assignments (z.b.V.Stellung) I was transferred to OKH's Fuehrer reserve detachment, I recognized that Keitel was trying to get rid of me. October 10 I learned that my confidant, Dr.Reuter in Berlin, had been arrested; that was proof enough that my activity was under surveillance. I then recalled/Col. Doechner^{Ltd.} from his vacation in order to discuss with all necessary measures, in particular the protection of my family.

This step, however, did not succeed because as early as 11 October, 3:30 p.m. I was arrested in my office at Muskau through a judge attached to the Central Court (Zentralgericht) of the Army and 2 Gestapo men. By car I was taken to Berlin, to the Gestapo building at Prinz Albrechtstrasse where Obersturmbannfuehrer Huppenkoether informed me that the Fuehrer had given personal order for an investigation against me. I was kept in a cell in the basement in single detention. At my side sat Dr.Schacht.

After having spent the first days with describing my relations to the men since July 20, 1944 and the circle which formed my acquaintanceship, Huppenkoether sent for me 16 October, 1944, for interrogation, and he informed me that the crime ascribed to me was not cooperation in the conspiracy of 20 July 1944 but conspiratory machinations in the years 1939 to 1942 and sabotaging of the Fuehrer's plans. I replied that from 1939 on to this day I have been a severe foe of the war and that the concerns to which I gave expression at that time had really had had ample confirmation since then. I refused to accept, however, that I am guilty of conspiracy. It then was revealed to me that General Oster and his accomplice Dohnanyi had very cynically declared that since 1938 they had pursued the plan of doing away with Hitler and that my collaboration in such plan had been plainly proven through notes found among Dohnanyi's papers. They read two memoranda to me which these gentlemen - contrary to agreement and evidently intended to be used as part of the material ~~to be used~~

in the impeachment of Brauchitzsch - had preserved. As far as I could find out, together with the diaries of Admiral Canaris von Dohnanyi this material which covered our activity in its entirety, had been hid in ~~the~~ a garden ~~of Admiral Canaris von Dohnanyi~~ the location of which was revealed by Mrs. Dohnanyi - evidently after torture.

These memoranda ~~xxx~~ cover the following: 27 November 1939, General Thomas, acting at the same time in behalf of Goerdeler, Popitz, Beck and Oster, called on the Chief of the General Staff Corps, General Halder, to state that an attack in the West was bound to lead to another world war, that Germany is not equipped to hold through such a war and that a war ending in defeat would mean Germany's doom. That, consequently, it would be necessary to make every endeavor to prevent such an attack by Hitler in the West. Should Hitler not be found disposed for such an understanding with the West Powers, the Army would have to take recourse to a coup d'etat and that Hitler would have to be eliminated.

Halder's reply was stated to have been that Halder likewise was greatly concerned and that he would like to see Hitler eliminated. That Brauchitsch, however, could not be made to acquiesce in such an action because the German Army is not available for such a coup d'etat. That, furthermore, there was nobody available to replace Hitler, that the people requires an idea, such as National Socialism, that England's war was not directed against Nazis only but against the entire German nation and that, finally, the young members of the officer corps do not prove reliable for the execution of a political act of that type.

Halder stated that also Generals von Stuelpnagel and Wagner has prevailed upon him persistently along the same lines but that he could not give his approval to have the highest military leadership split into two camps now with the war being in process.

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The only thing which I could consider an accomplishment then was that Halder and Beck met together and established contact with Goerdeler in writing, the idea being thus to win OKH for our ideas.

1940

The second memorandum covered the following: That early in April/I had submitted to Halder a report which had reached me through Oster from Rome and which clearly proved the Vatican's readiness to act as intermediary in negotiating with England for an understanding on the following conditions:

Elimination of Hitler and Ribbentrop.

Formation of a new government (Goering's person being considered/~~xxx~~ ^{bearable.})

No German attack in the West.

Settlement of all questions pertaining to the East in favor of Germany.

The report made evident the Pope's close contact with England and that England would be actually ready for an understanding on the basis of the above mentioned conditions, The Pope had advised the Englishmen that ^{this} ~~the~~/proposition had the backing of a group of generals in Germany.

The memorandum further stated that Halder forwarded this report to Brauchitsch but that the latter once more had declined any forceful measure against Hitler. Brauchitsch likewise declined my suggestion to receive Ambassador von Hassel for the purpose of elucidation in detail of peace possibilities. As a matter of fact, Brauchitsch - as Halder advised me - had at that time the intention to have me arrested and that only Halder's intervention had prevented carrying out this intention.

Finally, I was accused of a reputation as pessimist before the war and during the war, that I had sabotaged Hitler's propaganda and that before the war I had made defeatist utterances to the American reporter Mr. Wiegand.

Inasmuch as the memoranda laid open developments in their true light, I found myself in an extremely difficult position and it was clear that were

were I to consider all these accusations openly as in order, I could be clearly indicted for high treason. My situation was all the more critical as -according to Huppenkothen - Oster and Dohnany allegedly had made a complete admission of all their deeds and that, furthermore, I did not know what statements Halder and Goerdeler would make. In other words, already my first hearing revealed a serious crisis for me.

My vindication.

I was faced with a very difficult decision. Were I to admit in full measure my attitude against Hitler and my activities for a prevention of the war and for elimination of the regime, death sentence because of attempted high treason was sure to follow. To deny everything was impossible because the memoranda were available and because Goerdeler had indicated all of us severely. On the other hand I was determined to make every possible false statement and to try out every possible means in dealing with this collection of culprits as represented by SD and the people's court which I could not recognize as authorities legally established by the German people, in order to escape the passage of quick judgment and to protect and relieve my family and my friends as much as possible.

From all of Huppenkothen's utterances and those of his secretary I was lead to assume that Oster and Dohnany - under pressure resulting from discovery of the material - had admitted their activity completely ~~and had also indicated~~ ~~all of which~~ also involved charges against me. Halder, on the contrary, seemed to have stated that he could no longer recollect the contents of my reports. His fat^{er}, in other words, was closely ~~linked to me~~ predicated on statements I would make. The only possibility to save my life seemed to lie in an admission of my fight against the war but to deny any personal partnership in aspirations to do away with Hitler. I then pursued the following course:

I admitted that before the war I had fought against Hitler's aspirations of conquest, that I warned Col.Gen. Keitel and the Commanders in Chief of the German Armed Forces against a new war, ~~that on 27 November 1939~~ that on 27 November 1939

I had expounded the utter futility of a world war to General Halder - upon the request of Goerdeler, Popitz, Beck and Oster, asking General Halder to prevail upon Brauchitsch to demand of Hitler an understanding with the Western Powers. I also admitted having made the statement to Halder that my friends take the stand that Hitler must be eliminated before the German people is plunged into a new world war. I denied, however, that I had encouraged Halder on the question of a coup d'etat and I denied participation of any kind in steps ^{aspiring} ~~for~~ the elimination of Hitler I also admitted that I had taken the report received from Rome to Halder, denying, however, any participation in endeavors to bring about negotiations with the Vatican (the latter fact was true because I did not know that initiation of these negotiations had their point of issuance with Oster). I declared that I had considered the report purely as an agency report of the defense division.

Furthermore, I admitted that I had considered it my duty, as early as November 1939, to inform my superiors of the attitude taken by Goerdeler, Popitz, etc. and that I had also been forced to inform General Keitel about the report from Rome. In all these instances I emphasized that in all my actions I had centered my thoughts exclusively in striving for the welfare of the German people and of the fatherland and that over and over again I had tried to inform my superiors relative to my opinion and my desire to acquaint them with the situation as it truly exists.

The situation became problematical for me when I was acquainted with a statement made by Planck. Having already been sentenced to death, he had made the statement that I was against Hitler's elimination but that I had knowledge of all conversations carried on between 1939 and 1942 for the purpose of bringing about Hitler's elimination. Now there was nothing else left for me

for me to do then to hold against these accusations my record of personal efficiency and my reliability for a military and political point of view

in the course of 36 years of service. I also declared that - if Oster and Dohnanyi really admitted that they had engaged in high treason - all that was left for me to do was to refer to my religious conviction which would not permit of my breaking my oath of allegiance. I hoped that such a statement would not only relieve Halder and me but that it would likewise prevent the Gestapo from taking action against my wife and the children.

But this attempt to relieve the accusation against me failed. Toward the middle of December Huppenkothen revealed to me that the investigation ~~relating to the investigation in my behalf had been concluded and that I was accused of aspirations leading to conspiracy, particularly so because, at least until the end of 1942, I was aware of preparations being made by the group Beck-Oster-Olbricht for an over-throw. That, of course, calls for the death sentence.~~ Huppenkothen also added that the Main Reich Security Office had no influence ^{formulation} on the ~~form~~ of the indictment through the Attorney General of the Reich (Oberster Reichsanwalt) so that a possibility also existed of my being accused of other crimes, f.i. inciting OKH to revolt against the Highest Commanders against which accusations I might have to defend myself. Huppenkothen also revealed to me that ^{inasmuch as} Hitler himself had ordered the investigation - the documents pertaining to indictment in the beginning would not be submitted to the People's Court but would be sent to Hitler by way of Himmler and that Hitler would decide in regard to the type of judicial procedure to be adopted in my case. In that manner some more time was gained for me.

In these days my entire planning was devoted to my family. The idea ^{brave} that my wife who was seriously ill, and my children and relatives through

proclamation of a death sentence against me not only would lose their support but even their last possessions and that the grief thus caused to my dear wife would cause her death, was unbearable to me. For a time I felt my heart affected and close to a nervous break-down. Fortunately I received news about happenings at the front at about that time and from then on I could not ban the idea from my mind that my enemies might be able to free me. I now decided to pursue a new tactic in ~~my defense~~ pleading my case. I wrote to Himmler and pointed out that developments of the war exactly confirmed my predictions. That I was the only person in OKW who through clear recognition of facts and through having pointed them out openly in their danger, ~~having brought them to the attention of the command~~ had rendered a real service and that, consequently, I am not guilty of high-treason but a man who gave the best he has for the German people and for the fatherland, I thus asked to be set free from my detention and to be given ^{commander's} a assignment at the front, to enable me thus to serve my fatherland also in a time of extreme and ultimate emergency. In stating this my only thought, of course, was to get out of the Gestapo's grip and to escape to Switzerland in order to continue from there my fight against the government of ~~such~~ scoundrils.

At that time there were three factors which upheld me:

- 1) The faith that destiny would at least permit the survival of one man who was in a position to give a clear picture of developments and who could stand up as the accuser of this corrupt system.
- 2) The will to hold to life to permit my protecting my wife, dear above everything else, and my good children; and, finally
- 3) My faith as a Christian and quite particularly the quotation given me on the day of my confirmation "Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of eternal life for the sake of which you too ^{(thou also) hast} have confessed yourself as a witness before many witnesses."

As of the end of December no more interrogations took place. All my attempts to bring about a clarification of my case was left without reply. Written inquiries sent to Huppenkotten found no answer at all. In reply to questions addressed to subordinates the reply was always the same: Just wait, the Fuehrer will decide whether you will have to appear before the People's Court or whether judgment will be passed in some other manner.

My sojourn at Prinz-Albrecht Strasse

I was kept there in single detention in a cell in the basement. The bed had to be folded back during the day; only in the middle of the day, between 12:30 and 1:30 p.m. was it permitted to use it. The other equipment comprised a chair and a small table. Neither a wardrobe nor any other convenience to place things was available. Suitcase, reading material, medical items, etc. all had been taken away from me. Noon-time meal was according to what prevailing conditions would permit, bearable although insufficient in quantity; in the morning and at night I was given a small pot of coffee and 2 slices of bread with margarine or jam, hardly scraped on the bread. It is only thanks to the packages sent to me by my good wife and which were turned over to me at the mess that I was able to hold through. Huppenkotten's treatment was blameless until about the middle of December, from then on he treated me as if I did not exist. Subordinates to whom special surveillance of political inmates was entrusted, varied. Some of them were very correct and uttered remarks of anger about the system. Others were sadistic creatures in the truest sense, torturers of humanity. Small things in particular served as reason for worst chicanery. Their first concern was to treat us with indignance. All those who had been sentenced to death were hand-cuffed night and day, likewise some of the inmates whose hearing were still in ~~xx~~ process. The hand-cuffed me at night only when, as a result of an air attack, fire had broken out in the building. During air attacks the "interesting prisoners" were taken to the

bunker: others with cuffs on hands and feet, were locked up in the cells; others, again, were locked up in the large cellar. An ~~extra~~ hour spent in the "open air" did not exist for the Gestapo; torture alone was on their daily program. Planck too was tortured to enforce from him a statement about me. Repeatedly Dr. von Schlaberndorf, an attorney, was returned to the cell ~~afterwards~~ in an unconscious condition. Deprivation of food and similar punishments were repeatedly applied. During those months I lacked sleep almost entirely: ~~at~~ at the utmost I slept 1 to 2 hours a day.

As regards persons known, detention with me was shared by: Dr. Schacht, Minister Popitz, Dr. Goerdeler, Col. General Halder, Col. Gen. Fromm, Secretary of State Planck, Ambassador von der Schulenburg, Admiral Canaris, General Oster, Gauleiter Wagner, Ministerial Director Sack, Herbert Goering, Dr. Loeser, Dr. Josef-Mueller-Munich, Dr. Struenk, Dr. v. Schlaberndorf, General Lindemann's son and numerous others, there being a constant change among those present. Early in December Schacht was ~~he~~ removed to a different camp; likewise Gauleiter Wagner; middle of January Planck was removed to Tegel, to await there the outcome of his petition ~~for~~. Goerdeler and Popitz were sent for February 2 whether they were to be ~~executed~~ executed, I do not know.

I spoke to Fromm 6 February 1945: he was the only optimistic element among us and he believed that he would be set free very shortly. At the end of February he was shot ~~for~~ for reason of cowardice, the people's court having sentenced him to ~~the~~ death through strangulation.

February 3 was the day of the great air attack which ~~severely~~ severely damaged the Gestapo building. A heavy and direct hit was made on our "bunker": it withstood: until February 7 we were without light, water, window and heat in our damaged cells and suffered dreadfully from the cold.

At 5 o'clock in the afternoon of February 7 I was told that I would be "moved". One never knew whether that meant murder or local removal. Under extremely heavy guard Halder, Canaris, Oster, Struenk, Sack, and I were loaded into a bus. Schacht and the Schuschnigg couple were added from other camps and after a trip of 14 hours duration we were taken to concentration camp Flossenbuerger in the Bavarian forests, east of Weiden. What I felt when that morning we were taken through Grunewald, passing so closely my apartment, only those ~~knowing the circumstances~~ can understand who are somewhat familiar with the relations between me and my wife and children. The trip by automobile, from Berlin to Nuernberg, also brought to my recollection beautiful hours passed with my dear ones.

My sojourn in Flossenbuerger

The first impression was awful. After having passed the numerous electrically charged and other type of barbed-wire fences, Schacht said to me in a low voice: Nobody gets out of here alive. Quarters and food were better than at Albrechtstrasse. The oppressive feature here was that a person was being kept completely isolated and that one was not permitted to see or speak to anybody else. Thanks be to God that not until later did I learn what was going on in our camp while we were present. It was a camp for annihilation purposes of the worst kind; a number of men and women, ~~who~~ after having divested themselves of all clothes, were shot or hanged immediately before our cells, and the corpses were carried past our eyes for cremation. Their morning job completed, these murderers, who at the same time acted as our wards, sat down and enjoyed their morning coffee. There were some among them, however, who suffered very much under these awful conditions but who were too weak to offer opposition to this activity of murdering. After having been kept there for about 14 days, it was agreed to permit us daily 20-30 minutes outdoors, in the fresh air, in the yard

where executions had taken place. While in Berlin a newspaper was made available to us from time to time, no news of any kind reached us in Flossenburg; mail service too was for the present completely broken down. The entire situation still worsened considerably when Sturmabannfuhrer Stawitzki, of SD Berlin, made his appearance, taking charge of us. He revealed to me that I had been discharged from the Army without being granted permission to wear the uniform. repeatedly He/slapped several other inmates during interrogations in the face; in regard to Canaris particularly the worst methods were used to put him in irons. I was able to obtain news from the front by bribing the hair dresser ~~with~~ who likewise was an inmate with cigarettes. Also during those days I received two letters from my wife which gave me the certainty that the entire structure of the 3rd Reich was about to crumble. From then on the only thing I lived for was preparing for escape.

I was no longer subjected to questioning; only once I had to face Halder and Oster because of a statement made. April 8, in the afternoon, the prison director of Prinz-Albrechtstrasse, ~~WIMMER~~ Gogala, arrived as a surprise and he told me that once again he would like to undertake a trip with me. Soon thereafter the manager of the Flossenburg Detention Institution, Oberscharfuhrer Hauboldt, came to announce that now I would be taken into more congenial surroundings. At 4:00/^{a.m.}~~p.m.~~, April 9, 1945, Schacht, Halder, Col. von Bonin (the nephew of my friend Bulow, former chief of Division for Operations in OKH), the family Schuschnigg and I were loaded into a prisoners' truck which had no windows (called the green Minna) and without information of any kind were moved away. During a brief halt we could determine that we were in the section of Passau. In a village near Passau we picked up ~~Kirch~~ General von Falkenhausen, the British Lt.Col. Best and ~~Molotow's~~ Molotow's nephew and, under strong escort of American bomber formations, departed in the direction of Munich. At 7:00 p.m. we arrived at concentration camp Dachau and there had to wait for 3 hours until they had the kindness to admit us.

According to a statement made by Prince Philipp of Hesse and Dr. Joseph Mueller, who also were imprisoned in Flossenbuerg, Canaris, Oster, Struenk and a lady (presumably one of the secretaries of these gentlemen) were hanged in the most cruel fashion one hour after our departure from Flossbuerg. I assume that in the case of these people, their immediate participation in the plot could be established while the ~~xxxx~~ ^{documents} concerning Halder and me still were on Hitler's desk and that he in view of the volume ~~af~~ and fluidity of events in those days had not had time to make a decision. It seems that this happy circumstance saved us. The order offered at a later date, to the effect that I was not to be permitted to fall into the enemy's hands but must be killed ~~that I was to be killed before my hands were broken and before I was permitted to~~ before, was evidently an order of Himmaler who is said to have issued once more orders on April 17, 1945, to shoot all political prisoners if the danger should arise that they could be freed by the enemy.

My sojourn in Dachau

Compared with the other camps, our stay in Dachau was heaven. We were accomodated in individual cells located in the socalled special structure of the camp. The cells had normal windows and we were permitted to walk in the day ^{wired-in} time inside of a small/yard. ~~Waxxxxxxxxxxx~~ The members of our group were also permitted to talk to eachother and to call on eachother. We learned that gradually all prominent personalities were being assembled at camp Dachau and were under the impression that if need arises we were to serve as hostages which Gestapo would use in exchange against captured Gestapo leaders. ~~Thax~~ In the measure as the enemy's front approached, restless among the guards increased, in the same measure also increased politeness among some of the guards. The Wehrmacht report which we could hear were the great event of every day and according to it our plans were fashioned which would permit us to adapt ourselves to the general situation. There were constant rumours that they would carry us off to the Alps or to the vicinity of Salzburg.

comradeship

A magnificent ~~relationship in the camp~~ was founded here and Mrs. Schuschnigg in particular never tired in her endeavor to cheer ^{up} us worn-out prisoners, through coffee or tea or fried potatoes. Several days later we chanced to see Niemoeller who also proved to be an excellent comrade. In the meantime the following personalities also reached Dachau: Mr. and Mrs. Thyssen; Count Plettenberg and daughter; Mrs. and Miss von Hammerstein, Mrs. Lindemann, Ambassador Heberlein and wife; a family by the name of Kaiser; Miss von Gisevius, Prelate Neuhausler from Munich; Prince Friedrich Leopold of Prussia; Prince Philipp of Hesse; Prince Bourbon, the French Minister Blum and wife; ~~the entire Hungarian government~~ all members of the Hungarian Kalnay government; Horthy's son; Badoglio's son; the Minister of Economics for Slovakia; the Bishop of Clermont-Ferrand, ^{Schmidt,} /ex Chief Mayor of Vienna; the entire leadership of the Greek army and numerous officers from Great Britain, France; altogether 23 nations. April 24 we were told that it was not to be permitted to have us fall into American hands and that, consequently, we would be removed into the Alps.

Delivery

L a.m., April 24 we were loaded into busses and trucks and were driven ~~into~~ in direction of Innsbruck during the night. One gathered the impression that the Secret State Police was without leadership. First symptoms of the disintegration process became apparent. Inas,uch as we had no weapons ~~array~~ while our escorts were heavily supplied with weapons, we had to relegate into the background any thought of delivery by force, for the time being. Yet, even in the personnel charged with our safety a split was noticeable; the decent elements went out of their way to be pleasant to us; the bad elements, as a result of their uncertainty became more and more radical. After having being quartered for 2 days under ignoble conditions in a transit camp near Innsbruck,

we once more were ~~headed in the direction of~~ set in motion, late on the 27th, our destination was to be Pustertal. After being stalled at the Brenner for several hours, we reached the village Niederdord near Toblach in the forenoon of the 28 and were to find that quarters which had been planned for us were occupied by the Luftwaffe. Our guards increased in insecurity; our courage grew. Bonin and I were able to find out that ~~general command~~ General Vietinghoff's headquarters should be in our proximity, and we decided the moment had now come to venture the step which was to bring us into safety. Bonin succeeded in getting secretly a telephone call through to General Roettiger, the Chief of the army squad and to acquaint him with my request to free us.

At the same time we pushed our wards aside and went to the village to try and find some sort of food. I was just about to enter the village when all of a sudden I see General Hoepfner, my friend, before me; he throws his arms around my neck. This was the signal for all the foreign prisoners that from now on the Gestapo's power to issue orders ceased to be and that contact had been established for us with the Wehrmacht. The gestapo leaders really withdrew and seemed completely out of their wits. The night which we spent at mass quarters in Niederhof was without any event. The following morning a ^{German} company under command of Captain von Alvensleben arrived and declared we are now under the guardianship of the Wehrmacht. Shortly ^{thereafter} ~~afterwards~~ Italian Partisans also arrived and offered us their protection. The Gestapo leaders were arrested and after their arrest they declared it had been their order to shoot 5 of us (I among them) under all conditions and that ^{the 29th was} ~~xx~~ the date set for it. It was thanks to the appearance of the German Company only that this murder was prevented. General Hoepfner and his staff drove in direction of the Gr. Glockner, his intention being to reach Salzburg vicinity; I do not know where he was taken prisoner. Our entire group of 160 persons were now taken to the magnificently located Hotel ~~Gr~~ Pragser Wildsee where, for the first time, we were restituted to life, where we slept in good

beds, where the food was excellent and where we were to await the arrival of the Americans. May 7, ~~1944~~ 1945 one of my old officers, Col. Holledt made his appearance who had heard of my ventures, who had searched for me 2 days and who now came with all kinds of gifts in his hands in order to please me. May 5, 1945, the first American troops/^{of General Gerow} appeared, ~~declared~~ gave us our freedom and said we now are under their protection.

I still should supplement that in those decisive days the population in Tyrol behaved toward us ~~in~~ magnificently and especially the former Bundes Chancellor and honored Schuschnigg was greeted/by the population as sort of a Saint. General von Roettiger and Captain von Slvensleben likewise did everything to help us. Under Lt. the lead of the British/Col. Best, we created a committee which was to have the task of gathering the wishes of all the different nations and to be in charge of all negotiations with our American liberators. Those days of tension in that magnificent nature will ~~remain~~ stand out in my memory for ever; but of course, ~~although~~ just one thought dominated in all of us: the worry about our dear ones back home.

In American Hands

The treatment by the American troops on the Pragser Lake was excellent. We were treated as comrades; everything was done to better our terrible fate. On May 7, 1945 General Gerow appeared and told us that he could not release us immediately since there were no transportation possibilities to Germany. We would first be taken to headquarters in Naples where we could be released. This news was a great disappointment for us since everyone had but one desire, i.e. to go home in order to be with our dear ones. On May 8, 1945 we drove to Verona, via Cortina d'Ampezzo. We arrived late at night, after a 14 hour trip. We were billeted and fed at the hotel.

The next morning we flew to Naples via Florence and Rome. We arrived at 1 p.m. During the flight I followed in my thoughts the route taken by my son the year before. After our arrival in Naples the greatest disappointment of the last difficult months began. We had hoped to be welcomed by our American liberators as "friends" and "men of action", but had to realize that after our 'liberation' by General Gerow we were again taken prisoner.

The various nationalities were separated on the Naples airport. The Germans and Hungarians were billeted in the very mediocre hotel "Terminus". Then, on May 10, 1945 we were taken to the isle of Capri on an English tender, and there to the beautifully situated Hotel Paradiso. On May 13, 1945 we had another disappointment - after several short interrogations, Schacht, Halder, the Prince of Hessen, Falkenhausen, Liedig, Engelke, v. Petersdorf and I were taken away in an American motor launch in order to have it determined whether or not we were war criminals. I was especially hard hit by this development since I had led the fight against Hitler since 1933 and had risked my life in order to liquidate him. We were first taken to a small English camp near Caserta where we were treated very decently. The next day we

were taken to a large American PW camp, No. 326, near Naples, and at first treated as criminals. All our luggage, including toilet articles, was taken from us, and we were locked up with captured generals and their orderlies in a ramshackle barrack.

The food was bad, the treatment and lodging undignified in every respect. After ~~XXXXXXXX~~ numerous complaints and after a visit by the Swiss, Burkard, of the Red Cross, we finally had our luggage returned to us. Everything had been opened by force, and all our valuables had been taken out. I lost my last underwear which was all I had left after my apartment had been destroyed.

The following generals were in the camp with me: Air Corps General Ritter v. Pohl, General Schlemmer, Heidrich, the Major Generals Leyers, Swade, v. Ilsemann, Wehrich. My impression of the mental and moral standards of these generals was horrible. These four weeks behind barbed wire, under Negro guards, was a bitter period for me. Schacht, Halder and Falkenhausen also suffered a great deal. On June 10, 1945 we took the Lord's Supper. On June 13, 1945 Schacht, the Prince of Hessen and I were taken to the airport at Naples and put aboard a plane, together with Mr. and Mrs. Thyssen. We were not told where we were going. We then flew via Ostia, Elba, Corsica, Toulon, Marseille - to Lyon where a thunderstorm broke out. I thought we were going to London. Suddenly we saw Paris under us and came down on the Orly airfield.

We were taken to the small castle of Le Grand Chesnay near Versailles. Here we met our comrades from Capri. Speer and his staff were also there. Mr. Saur wanted to talk to me but I openly expressed my contempt for him and Mr. Speer. I also saw Mr. ^{ter}Mer and Dr. Buete-fisch of the I.G. Farben. On June 16, 1945 I was taken to the airport with Niemoeller, Puender, Count Staufenberg, Count Plettenberg and Heberlein. Schacht, the Prince of Hessen and Thyssen were taken somewhere else in a car. Since then I have not seen Schacht. On the airfield I met more of my comrades (Bonin had arrived in the meantime) and

at noon we were put aboard three planes and flew toward the fatherland.

When we arrived at Frankfurt, we were greeted by the new mayor as fighters against the Hitler regime. Another surprise - Halder, Falkenhausen, Liedig, Bonin, Engelke and I were taken to the Wiesbaden prison and locked up in a cell full of bedbugs. My nerves could takethis no longer. I reported sick. An American captain appeared, and at 8 p.m. told us that a mistakehad been made. He took us to the house of the ophthalmologist Dr. Pagenstecher in Wiesbaden. Here I met Lt. Col. Zinnemann and Dr. Flick. I refused to greet Field Marshal Rundstedt who was also present since I consider the men who weremembers of the Court of July 20, 1944 and had served Hitler as long asv. Rundstedt, as war criminals.

After my arrival in the house of Pagenstecher I wastreated very well by the Americans. On June 23, 1945 I wastaken to the former officers' recreation home in Falkenstein/Taunus in order to recover from the nerve inflammation which I had contracted in Dachau. I was treated extremely well. My one worry now is that about my wife and children.

I would like here to give the answer to a question which was put to me repeatedly by British and American interrogators. The question was: "If you rejected Hitler so much, why then did you not leave Germany?" I would like to make the following definite statement:

Just as any American or Englishman is proud of his people, his country and history, so am I proud of Germany, of our culture, our history, and knowledge and our virtues. I have been an officer since my early youth and had served my country and my people faithfully, willing to sacrifice my life. I did this as long as my conscience could justify it. I had had at various times the opportunity to leave Germany when the dangers of Hitler's policy became apparent. I did not take advantage of these opportunities since I consider it dishonorable for an officer and father of a family to expose his family and relatives to the blackmailing methods of Hitler's policies in order to save

himself. It would have been considerably easier to follow all these developments from outside the borders of Germany, without undertaking anything positive than to fight against this system as a man - with the aim of saving the German people from the worst and of overthrowing this criminal Government. Consciously I stayed in my office in order to be well informed concerning the development of Hitler's plans. Like almost no one else, I have, together with the bravemen of July 20, 1944, given all my strength, my knowledge, my work and my life in order to overthrow this system. I risked not only my own life, but also that of my family in order to serve the German people and the fatherland. My wife has bravely supported me since 1933 in this fight. Only a person who knew our family life will be able to properly judge what they have suffered - my son as a ~~1st~~ lieutenant and my daughter as a nurse - in not being able openly to reject the system and to stand up for me. I shall never forget this brave attitude on the part of my family.

My wife and I had deliberately educated our children to hate this regime. We believed that this regime could not survive, and we wanted to have our children grow up in the same virtues as we had ourselves. My house has done its duty in the fight for Germany's honor and integrity, and certainly has given a better example in the struggle against Hitler and his criminal methods than the men and women who left Germany in time and without being forced to do so, and there waited, without any peril, for the tragedy to overcome the German people.

If the world then rightly calls for the punishment of the war criminals, it should punish those men and women who served this criminal system either out of conviction, lust of power, or selfish interests, or those who in full awareness of the dangers and misdeeds of the system continued to follow Hitler and were not ready to overthrow this criminal and infamous regime.

I believe that I have done my duty to the German fatherland over the past

twelve years, and I also believe that I have done my share in the attempt to prevent this terrible war and to liberate Germany and Europe from the terror rule of this "criminal with genius".

Georg Thomas