

6.16
Thomas paper

TRANSLATION.

CONCERNING THE QUESTION OF GUILT

The terrible indictment which the Allied Court has made against the war criminals of the period of the Nazi regime, against its political and military organizations, and indirectly thereby against the whole German people, must cause each thinking person to ask this question: How was it possible that a nation which gave to the world a Kant, Goethe, Lessing, Bach and Beethoven, trusted and obeyed such a regime for twelve years?

History will pass a terrible judgment over the past twelve years of the German people because even after the present feelings of hatred, vengeance and egotism will have made room for greater objectivity, and when the German people will no longer heap upon itself self-accusations and denunciations, in order to prove its political change of heart, the one thought will remain as a sad recognition: How could a whole nation follow the mad teachings of this man?

It is therefore absolutely essential that men who have proven themselves as opponents of this regime, and who are able out of their personal experience to contribute to an elucidation of the question of the failure of the German people, say everything openly which might serve to disentangle this German question.

The tragedy which the Nazis have brought upon the German people is too great as to permit a feeling of comradeship to interfere with criticism or an indictment of ~~these~~ persons or organizations. I therefore regret it if I shall have to seriously indict former colleagues and other German men. The one important thing now is to prevent that men who have caused the tremendous suffering of the fatherland, shall have ever again any influence on the life of Germany.

I owe it to my dead comrades, such as Beck, Witzleben, Olbricht, Oster, Stuelpnagel, Fellgiebel and the other men of July 20, 1944, to bear testimony as to what led us together already before the war and what made us to decide to overthrow the regime. This testimony will also be evidence for the fact that there was in the German Armed Forces not only the spirit of Hitler or of notorious militarism, but that there were also men who were willing to sacrifice their lives in order to save their country and to free the world from this criminal system.

I do not know enough about the time before 1933 to properly judge the reasons for Hitler's being able to seize the power. Yet I will briefly refer to this period in order to describe those factors which are in favor of the German people. I can tell incidents only concerning the period from 1933 to 1945 since, because of my anti-Nazi attitude, Keitel kept me away from all basic questions and discussions. Most of the material put down herein originates in discussions and exchange of information which I had after 1934 with the Abwehr Abteilung (Admiral Canaris and General Oster), and with General Beck, Olbricht, and the Ministers Popitz, Schacht, Goerdeler, Ambassador v. Hassel. I frequently discussed the question with these men whether it was wise to continue serving this regime.

I must point to two facts which were important for the evolution of the Nazi system. First - the attitude of the German officer corps, especially of the generals toward Hitler and his party principles, and secondly - the support which German industry gave Hitler, Goering and their system.

The time before 1933 :

National Socialism became Germany's fate. It would therefore be treason to one's own people to speak of the collective guilt of the German people, and not to point to the developments which caused the rise of the Nazi

movement. Naturally these points cannot excuse the criminal actions of the Nazi regime, but they might serve to explain some of the actions and attitudes of the German people. Certainly it was not the hope for a solution by force or the thought of an imperialistic policy of conquest, ~~which~~ which prepared the way for Hitler, but the hope for peace and work. I shall later show the part played by industry and the armed forces during this period.

The following facts have in my opinion favoured the rise of the Hitler party: (a) the peace treaty of Versailles, and its effects. After the German people had thrown away its weapons and had overthrown the emperor, they were deeply disappointed by the peace of Versailles. Part of this disappointment was the moral discrimination against the people, the loss of German living space, and German colonies, the economic depression caused by the inflation, the collapse of the currency; also the strong rise of a Bolshevistic-Communist philosophy, the flooding by the Jewish element, of legal, cultural, and state positions, and last but not least, the difficulties made by France for the Weimar Government. (b) The political immaturity of the mass of the German people, the many political parties and the petty fights of these parties against each other. (c) The lack of sufficient understanding for democratic self-administration. (d) The individualistic attitude of the Laender. (e) The lack of a first class statesman after the death of Stresemann, and the lack of a strong program of the continually changing cabinets.

All of these factors have had a great influence on the German people and ~~have~~ created a deep depression so that it was only natural that there was a longing for a strong and permanent government. I was in Soviet Russia in the spring of 1933, and must say that I found there the same attitude among the people as in Germany. One hoped that the new system -- here National Socialism -- there Bolshevism -- would provide national freedom, social improvements, work and bread, but not imperialism, terrorism, or war. Certainly there may have been in Germany, among the former Freikorps leaders and others, certain elements which would have preferred a solution by war to the peaceful reconstruction by democratic collaboration. It is certain however, that there were no aggressive or imperialistic thoughts in those years in the responsible circles of Germany. The attitude in the military-political leadership was as follows, as I see it: The early death of Stresemann had been deeply regretted. One had recognized his policy of reconciliation and peaceful reconstruction as the

only possible one. The spirit of passive resistance and of the Freikorps had been conquered. One had hoped to neutralize the Bolshevik danger through an attitude of confidence. If it is said today that the leadership of the army even then executed certain defensive measures which might resemble a mobilization, every officer of an Allied army will understand this. Even the most pacifist state, as for example Switzerland, is forced to take certain defensive measures, which have nothing to do with militarism or imperialism. (I myself, when I was a captain in East Prussia, did everything in order to make this province, which had been cut off from the rest of Germany, able to defend itself, especially since the Russian-Polish fights took place right on the East Prussian border. No one at that time thought that these defensive measures would one day be the basis for new preparations for war.) After all, no American or English General Staff would really have believed that a country of the size of Germany would have indefinitely continued to drive around in tanks made of cardboard. All these measures had a purely defensive character. Healthy and patriotic thoughts were nurtured in the ~~about~~ 100,000 man army. The following examples will show the military and political attitude of the leadership of the army and of leading economic circles.

I myself have frequently heard von Schleicher and General von Hammerstein express themselves violently against the rise of Nazism. Both hoped to gain a lot from collaboration with Soviet Russia. Even in his last critique of ~~the~~ manouvers General von Hammerstein expressed his serious concern about the rise of the Hitler movement, and demanded that it be kept out of the Army. I also know how strongly apposed Bruening and his minister of war were against a forceful rearmament.

The attitude of industry was similar. All the big industrial concerns, particularly Duisberg of the I. G. Farben, declined to do anything in the way of military or defensive questions which was not in agreement with the stipulations of the Versailles Treaty. In 1937 I asked Hammerstein why he and Schleicher had not been able to prevent Hitler's accession to power. He replied that Hindenberg had declined any interference on the part of the Army since he wanted to prevent a civil war. The movement at that time had already been too extensive, and it had not been possible to side-step the ~~present~~ Reich president.

The Hitler movement got a foothold in the Army only in 1931, when younger officers saw in it a possibility to get ahead. The officer corps would never

have succumbed to the unfortunate spirit of the movement, if not Hitler's creatures had been put at the head of the Armed Forces. This brings me to the question of the guilt of the military leadership.

II. The Seizure of Power by Hitler and the Events of the Year 1934.

After the accession to power, Hitler tried five different ways of introducing National Socialism into the Armed Forces:

- A. By putting into the highest positions men who were his followers.
- B. By playing the three parts of the Armed Forces against each other.
- C. By personally influencing officers in great historic speeches.
- D. By promising them quick promotions and better salaries.
- E. By severely punishing those who opposed his policies.

All of this would not have had the desired results if it had not been for some leading military personalities who supported Hitler 100%. These people were Goering, Blomberg, Reichenau, and Milch. These men bear the guilt for the introduction of Nazism into the Armed Forces, and for the circumstances which make the Armed Forces partly guilty for the crime of this war.

First it will have to be decided what role these men played before and during Hitler's seizure of power, and what promises they gave Hitler in order to get leading positions. Goering himself has often confirmed that he fully agreed with all of Hitler's thoughts and actions. It will have to be examined however, how Blomberg, Reichenau, and the racially impure Milch got their positions.

It will also have to be examined what role Goering and Blomberg played during the events of 30 June 1934, especially the murder of Schleicher and of the former chief of the Abwehr Abteilung. Even if they knew nothing of the plans, which cannot be true in the case of Goering, how could the minister of war permit former leading officers of the Armed Forces to be murdered without doing anything about it. General Oster told me in 1939 that Blomberg knew in advance of the crime to be committed on 30 June.

In 1939 I was told by Popitz, Beck, and Oster, and the information was recently confirmed by General Halder, that Hindenberg's last will and testament was forged by Hitler (Hilder?). If the ministers of the party considered such a forgery necessary in order to attain the union of the positions of Reich president and Reich chancellor, it would have been the duty of the so-called civilian ministers to prevent such a forgery and it would have been the duty

of the minister of war to prevent the Armed Forces from swearing allegiance to Hitler. This allegiance of the Armed Forces to the person of Hitler, and not to the constitution, was one of the most important measures and broke the backbone of the officer corps.

We younger officers often spoke about these questions but since we were always being calmed down by our superiors, we never thought that these measures would be the beginnings of Hitler's terror rule. The first sign for me personally was the manner in which Hitler received the report of our trip to Soviet Russia. I was in Russia from May to June 1933 together with General von Boeckelberg, as guest of the Soviet Government to study the Russian armament industry. We were deeply impressed by the extent of their industry, the strength of their agriculture, and the size of the Russian manpower. Even if we recognized certain weaknesses of the system, we had come to the conclusion that Russia had an unlimited war potential, and that Germany must try to get along peacefully with her. Hitler rejected this conclusion and said that we had been fooled by the Russians, and that Russia could only destroy, never construct. This was the first argument which separated me from Hitler.

The second was the treatment of the Jewish industrial enterprises. My intervention in behalf of the firm of Simson in Suhl, against which Gauleiter Sauckel had taken certain strong illegal measures, brought me in party circles the reputation of being a protector of Jews. Sauckel refused to attend one of my lectures in Weimar. The Gestapo also reproached me for my attitude towards the Jews.

Blomberg gave in to the demands of the party, however only after he had told me that I had been right. Blomberg was willing from the very beginning to comply with Hitler's requests in any questions concerning the Armed Forces. Goering was much more powerful, felt to be the stronger of the two, and gave Blomberg a good example in his program of Nazifying the Luftwaffe. Blomberg

followed his example in the case of the other two parts of the Armed Forces. Blomberg could do nothing against Goering so that the ministry of war did not play the role it should have. Hitler assigned the rearmament program to the Supreme Commanders of the three parts of the Armed Forces and made them responsible for it. The Defense Economic Staff of the OKW became not an authority giving orders, but a clearing office for the requests of the three arms of the Armed Forces. Goering refused to let the Defense Economic Staff gain clear insight into his armament program.

Hitler gained strong support in the officer corps through the ceremony which took place in the Garnisonkirche in Potsdam in 1933, and the government declaration which had been read there. The emphasis on peace, liberty, and bread made us all believe that this government would bring us peace and prosperity, and that such a declaration could only have been made if there were prospects for a peaceful conciliation with our political neighbors. The events of 30 June 1934 and the events accompanying the death of Hindenberg, aroused our suspicions but the people and the officer corps still trusted in Hitler implicitly.

I do not know what role was played by industry in the seizure of power by Hitler. I know that Hitler once spoke to the leaders of industry at the Park Hotel, and that they found themselves in agreement with him. The result of this meeting ^{is said to have been} ~~was~~ a strong financing of the Nazi party by an industrial group composed of Thyssen, Kirdorf, the banker von Schroeder, and Krupp von Bohlen. I have never been able to definitely determine that such financing was done in order to enable Hitler to wage aggressive war; I believe that it was done in the hope of reactivating the empty factories and reemploying former workers. Also it seems that the fear of Bolshevism was a contributing factor. Mr. Reusch told me in 1938 that he had considered Hitler an adventurer ever since 1933, and he could never understand why the people, such as Kirdorf and Thyssen, had such trust in him. I shall refer later to the support given the Nazis by industry.

I have never been able to understand the attitude of the

parties of the Left or of the unions when Hitler seized power. They, who had until 1933, brought such great sacrifices in their fight against Hitler, suddenly lost all power to fight. I remember that during the last weeks of 1932 Schleicher told me that Hitler was negotiating with the German Communist Party in order to overthrow the Bruening Cabinet, and that he was ready to call a general strike. We could not understand this attempt at collaboration with Communists. Neither could we understand when, after the accession to power, ^{and had taken} /Hitler/ ~~took~~ away more and more of the ~~rights~~ rights of the parties of the left and of the unions, and when part of their leadership was liquidated, that nothing was undertaken by labor to counteract these developments. These facts should be considered today in a determination of the guilt for the rise of National Socialism, which is to be given exclusively to heavy industry, the Wehrmacht, and the Junkers.

THE YEARS FROM 1935 TO 1937.

These were the years of Hitler's great political successes, i.e. in 1935 the return to Germany of the Saarland, and the introduction of military service and in 1936 the restitution of military authority in the Rhineland and the conclusion of an armament and naval agreement with England. These steps of Hitler, which were accepted by the world without any strong resistance, became the basis for his increasingly unscrupulous plans; they were the basis also for the German people and the officer corps seeing in him a real statesman in whose greatness and good luck one would have to have to trust implicitly. In wide circles of Germany he ~~was~~ was considered as the man who had been sent by God, and that everything he did in the way of foreign policy, was being done with England's permission.

From the very first day I was a sharp critic of Hitler and an opponent of his political ideas and human qualities, but I must admit that I saw in Hitler during these years the fate of Germany and therefore faithfully executed the tasks entrusted to me. I have never done anything which would have been opposed to my feelings

as a religious and honorable man. I have always opposed all the misdeeds of the Nazis, as far as I have heard about them, and have also opposed the moral decrees of this clique of criminals. Hitler tried during these years ~~xxx~~ to win the officers over to his side by talking to them with skill and warmth. Doubtlessly these purposeful remarks made their impression on the historically untrained officers - actually they contained nothing but historic misrepresentations and consciously wrong conclusions. Hitler told these officers that Germany's history had been a tragic one since the Middle Ages, which had been caused partially by the characteristics of the German people, partially by its unhappy situation in the heart of Europe, mostly however, through its internal and external enemies and poor politics. England should be an example to us. Hitler said that he wanted nothing but peace and liberty for the German people, and that he was going to attain this by social measures and a successful foreign policy, based on a strong army and efficient industry. Complete internal unity of the people was a prerequisite for this.

Hitler further stated that German disunity, the particularistic and separatist trends, ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ and the fights among the political parties during the last decades, had made a great policy impossible. He proved the good racial qualities of the Nordic, and particularly the Germanic race and demanded that the German person develop himself into a Master Race, which should be higher in attitude and accomplishment, than the proud Englishman. Hitler went on to describe the tremendous power of the Catholic Church which had brought misfortune to Germany; he also attacked Luther and his Reformation, and he attacked the activities of free masonry. He particularly dwelt on the Jewish question and proved that the Jews had, not only in Germany, but in the rest of the world, participated in all subversive movements. He criticized the policies of the Hohenzollerns, and declared that Germany must never expose herself again to a war on two fronts as she did in 1914-1918.

Hitler was a master in appealing to the good qualities of the German soldier and was particularly successful with younger officers. I had several talks with General Beck about his lectures and we both realized that they represented a great danger since they served to draw the officers' corps closer and closer to Nazism.

In these years the systematic rearmament began. When I now read in the

indictment against the 24 war criminals that the rearmament program was ^{executed} ~~planned~~ for the purpose of an aggressive war which had been planned all along I am deeply shocked. I must say that even people who had as high positions as I did never knew anything about a planned aggressive war, and that I and my colleagues had offered our collaboration in the thought that we were fulfilling an honorable duty to our Fatherland. We believed that the rearmament program was being conducted in tacit agreement with the western powers. Since the danger of Communism was viewed very seriously not only in Germany but also in England.

There were four factors which confirmed me and my colleagues in our attitude:

(A) The invitation of the United States to send an officer to the American military academy for the study of American defensive sciences.

(B) The close collaboration and open discussions which I was permitted to have with the attaches of the American, English, and Russian Armed Forces.

(C) The Naval Agreement of Hitler with Great Britain, and

(D) The sanction which Hitler's propagandistic fight against Bolshevism in the rest of the world found.

I would like to state that War Minister von Blomberg never spoke to me about the possibility of an aggressive war, but on the contrary, always emphasized, whenever he received warnings from Schacht, industrialists, etc., because of the Jewish and church agitation of the Nazis, that Hitler was much too smart as to start a war. He would attain his aims in other ways, and his connections in England, the United States, and France were much better than was thought.

In 1937 Keitel stated in a meeting of chiefs of sections that our generation would have to make up for the ignominy of 1918, and could not leave to our children a dismembered Germany. Hitler was determined, he said, to present his demands to the world and this at a time when his age and state of health would permit him to settle the score with the world. He hoped to be able to reach his goal without the help of weapons. However the armament program would have to be completed by 1942.

If the documents found ~~and~~ prove that Hitler and his closest advisers planned from the very beginning to wage aggressive war, this will also prove that only a small group was involved which deceived not only the German people but also the competent experts. During those months I often spoke about developments with my subordinate officers and other comrades. All clearthinking men

rejected the methods of the party against church, Jews, the free masons, and their methods of legislation. Hitler retained his aureole since even we, who had already organized ourselves in 1933 to oppose this system did not have sufficient proofs to convince reasonable people of the true nature of the aims of Hitler. In 1936 the first terror methods were undertaken in order to suppress any opposition to Hitler or to his party. It was notable that workers in large factories approved of Hitler. The extremely well planned deception of the people was successful.

In 1937 the conception of the blitzkrieg arose first in theoretic discussions. It appears improbable that Hitler conceived this idea.

I opposed from the very beginning the idea of a blitzkrieg, and as a result had violent arguments with members of the German General Staff, particularly Jodl and Guderian.

I was of the opinion that any war that might break out would decide the very existence of the nations involved. No nation would possess a weapon which would decide the outcome of the war with lightning speed. I believed that any war might be a long war which would be won by the nation that was economically strongest and have the greatest amount of materiel. It was Germany's experience during the first World War that she was unable to conduct such a war. The idea of the blitzkrieg was mad, the idea of any new world war impossible.

I represented this idea in the various talks which I was ordered to give. I emphasized it since I saw how the idea of a blitzkrieg spread due to Goebbel's propaganda. I emphasized it because I saw how the Nazis spread unbelievable theories concerning economy and army.

The preparatory measures for a mobilization were the result of the experiences of the first world war and of the suggestions made by the then Captain Warlimont on his the basis of ~~xxx~~ studies at the American Military Academy. No responsible person in my office believed that these preparatory measures were to be the basis of imperialist, irresponsible attacks; we had learned too much from the first World War. I took every opportunity to express my opinion that, in the state of development of technique and especially of the airplane, Germany must never wage war to gain its political and economic aims, since it was not in a position to survive such a war. I was of the opinion that in view of Germany's military, political, and geographically dangerous position, and in view of the extent of Russian armament, she should prepare the necessary defense measures which the security of any country, even the smallest neutral nation, requires. I believe that every officer and official who concurred with me in

my attitude, fulfilled the holiest duty towards his fatherland, just as any American, Englishman, or Russian would do.

All those however, who knew of Hitler's plans and who propagated the ideas of aggressive war for imperialistic rule of the world, should today confess their great guilt before the German people and before the world. I am convinced that the majority of military leaders, insofar as they did not belong to the close circle around Hitler and Goering, did not know until 1938 of the plans which were the basis for this world war. The responsibility of these generals begins only later.

The years 1935-1937 brought developments in other spheres which the Supreme military leadership could not tolerate. The fight of Hitler against the church, the execution of the Nurnberg Jews, the persecution of the Jews, and the destruction of German jurisprudence, were heavy moral burdens which had to assume important proportions for the Armed Forces and for our foreign affairs. Blomberg, and certainly Goering, did not prevent these methods, but furthered them and thereby weakened the moral fiber of the Armed Forces and of the whole German people. The German people at that time trusted the Armed Forces and hoped that the military leadership would prevent these excesses of Nazi principles. The opposite occurred and in this the Supreme Commander of the Army and the Navy, and later particularly General Keitel and General Reinicke, later Chief of the Nazi Leadership Staff, assumed a heavy guilt, as did Goering and Blomberg of course. Later General Schmundt, the adjutant of Hitler, played a similarly unpleasant role. They became, whether out of expediency or conviction, the bearers of the Nazi spirit in the Armed Forces. They and their helpers are the most guilty in the circles of the Armed Forces and should be called to account for the national catastrophe and for the misdeeds of the regime. They are the ones who knew of the concentration camps and of the other terroristic Nazi measures, who left the church, who sat with the "men of the party" day and night, and who forgot their education and morals in their New Nazi spirit.

I know that General von Fritsch, General Beck, Admiral Canaris, Schacht, Reusch, and others as well as myself and later Blomberg and Keitel repeatedly pointed to the dangers of the Nazi measures - without anything being done about it.

The following will show how weak Blomberg was vis-à-vis Hitler. In 1935 Blomberg concluded an agreement with the government of Chiang Kai-Shek concerning

an exchange of goods and authorized me to execute it. Germany delivered armament materia , and received raw materials from China. Reichenau went to see Chiang Kai Check and took with him a present from Hitler. While Reichenau was still in China, Hitler gave in to Ribbentrop's suggestions and decided on a pro-Japanese policy, and to break the agreement with China. Blomberg went along and left me completely in the lurch with all the incident financial difficulties. The agreement was broken four months after it had been put in force.

Another case: Schacht warned ~~concerned~~ concerning the speed of rearmament since the production of vital goods was thereby being retarded and since financial difficulties were to be expected. I supported this view with Blomberg and pointed out that he as Reich Minister was also responsible for the welfare of the German people. Blomberg replied that in the Third Reich the Fuehrer alone had the responsibility. Neither he nor I had any responsibility; we had only to execute the orders of Hitler. Blomberg often said such things.

I may say in conclusion: that there could have been only a very small circle in the Armed Forces who knew of Hitler's plans; all the others executed their tasks out of love for their country and a feeling of responsibility. The officer corps gradually broke up into two groups - those who out of conviction or ambition approved of everything that was done by Hitler and his party, and those who rejected the morals and actions of the Third Reich. It is certain that Goering, Blomberg, and later Keitel, Reinicke and Schmundt brought the spirit of Nazism into the Army, killed the feeling of honor, duty and responsibility in the leaders, and in place of it introduced the spirit of subordination, lack of feeling of responsibility, of blind obedience and lack of morality. This explains in great part the failure of the officer corps and of the generals during later years.

Conditions in industry were similar, in my opinion. I do not believe that Hitler informed economists or industrialists of his plans for war. He saw in the industrialists nothing but willing tools whom he used for his purposes, by giving them work, profits and a new greatness, and by emphasizing the dangers of Bolshevism. The gentlemen of industry told me often during the war: The generals are to be blamed for our tragedy because they did not liquidate Hitler in time. I can only say that industry is equally to blame. The industrial

leaders have been fooled by Hitler just as the generals were. By their financing of Party, Hitler, Goering and other Nazis - whether voluntarily or under pressure - they gave the Nazi leaders the security and possibility for their actions. Some of these industrialists promoted the corruption of Goering and others by their willingness and thereby have strengthened the regime. It would be wrong to assume, however, that even one single industrialist - unless he were a 100% Nazi - had the wish to see his work reinforced by war. There may have been industrial imperialism in certain concerns - but there was no wish for another war.

Only those may be considered partly guilty who supported Hitler and Goering in their plans for the creation of new war industries within the framework of the Four Year Plan. Men like Kranich (?), Koppenberg, Fleiger, Budin and others of the airplane industry strengthened the Nazi belief in their own economic superiority by misguided and excessive suggestions, and thereby undermined the reasonable attitude of economic leaders and of myself. A few of the men of the big banks also helped in this connection.

In many circles of industry there was the wish to stay away from Nazi organizations, not to enter the party and not to enter the Nazi organization for Technics. This latter organization, however, immediately tried to unite within itself all of German industry and technics. I tried therefore to create another organization to counteract this one in the form of "Defense Economic Leaders", which was to comprise experienced and reasonable opponents of the Nazi regime out of the circles of economy and industry, and who were to function as the advisers of the economic organization of the Armed Forces. In case of mobilization they were supposed to be used in economic positions. The organization could follow our policies only for a short time since Gauleiter and party ~~xxxx~~ opposed it with Goering, who thereupon ordered an investigation of the members by the Gestapo. During the course of the war the term "Defense Economic Leader" was degraded to a distinction for faithful war services. The "Defense Economic Leaders" therefore will have to be evaluated from an entirely different point of view, as far as their reliability is concerned; some of them were outspoken opponents of the Nazi system and of war agitation.

THE YEARS 1938 AND 1939 UP TO THE OUTBREAK OF WORLD WAR II.

The years 1938 and 1939 were the decisive years for the future of the Nazi system, and the years out of which the guilt of the German people grows. After the Olympic Games of 1936 had been a wonderful international success, after

a rebuilding of the German Navy had been sanctioned by the Naval Agreement with England, and after the construction of cities and highways flourished all over the country, and were considered an expression of Hitler's "work of peace", the German people became convinced that Hitler wanted peace and welfare and was taking certain military and armament measures only because of the danger of Bolshevism.

Then one after another/ event occurred which lead to the formation of the Opposition which unfortunately was not successful in liquidating Hitler in time.

The first such an event was the dismissal of the Supreme Commander of the Army, General von Fritsch, and the impossible second marriage of the War Minister von Blomberg. In spite of my repeated requests, Keitel never told me the true story of these two events. As usual/a cloak of deep secrecy was put over these events.

I don't know how the matter of Blomberg's second marriage ended. I can imagine chose this woman in order to show to Hitler that he was the man who out of a deep feeling of belonging to the people, was marrying a woman of the people. I do not know whether the Gestapo had anything to do with the matter. There is no doubt about the fact that through this marriage Blomberg deeply harmed the prestige of the officers' corps, and strongly supported Hitler's endeavors to proletarianize the officers' corps.

Hitler's true face was shown in his manners against General Fritsch. Goering and other Nazi leaders had seen to it that the officers' corps, especially the officers of the old Imperial Army, were considered as ~~the~~ reactionaries, as opponents of the National Socialist dynamic power, and as enemies of the new Nazi philosophy, who under Fritsch, and under the antiquated German General Staff, would never be useful helpers of the new regime. The weakness of Blomberg and Keitel and the egotism of the Chief of the Navy, could do nothing against the agitation/against the army of Goering and his colleagues - Milch, Bodenschatz, Breim, Richt-hofen, etc. Added to this was the fact that men of the army such as the Generals Reinicke, Jodl, and others supported this agitation against the officers' corps, in order "to go along with the new times."

I shall refrain in this memorandum to go into any details concerning the disgraceful liquidation of General Fritsch, but must put this question: How was it possible that the highest military leaders did nothing against this act of force on the part of Hitler? How could a new Supreme Commander of the Army take

over, as did General von Brauchitsch, without having first the whole matter cleared up, and without a complete rehabilitation of General von Fritsch? What role was played in those days by Goering, Keitel, and Brauchitsch? Why did no one ask for a punishment of Himmler and the members of his Gestapo for what had been done to General von Fritsch? Undoubtedly this was the complete failure on the part of the supreme military leaders, which later led to the unscrupulous treatment which Hitler applied to the military leaders of the Army. I have never been able to understand why ~~the~~ Fritsch later accepted his appointment as chief of an artillery regiment and why he asked that nothing be done about his case. I believe that when he was before Warsaw he wanted to die, since events after his dismissal showed that his consideration of Hitler had been wrong.

A few weeks later Hitler invaded Austria. This attack had been kept so secret that even I as Chief of the Department in the OKW learned of it only when the order was given to march into Austria. If I remember correctly Schacht, who was then minister of Economics, also learned of it only at the time the border was crossed.

These two events which definitely revealed the true thinking and lack of morals on the part of Hitler, ~~led~~ led to the formation of an opposition group within the officer corps of the Army, which I shall in the future refer to as the group Beck-Witzleben. We realized that Hitler's policy would create serious tensions both within and without the country, that Hitler was playing with the fate of Germany, and that his lack of morals would destroy the German people. We came to the conviction that a liquidation of Hitler would serve the good of the German people, but that such a deed would meet with strong opposition within the people, and that only the Army would be able to execute such a measure. General von Witzleben was determined to execute the measure after the leadership of the generals had shown no reaction whatever against Hitler's treatment of General von Fritsch. If I remember correctly, nothing was actually done because Count Brockdorff-Rantzau told Witzleben that the young officer corps would be unreliable in this respect, and that there was danger of a betrayal. I believe that Schacht's advice was asked.

The next event was Hitler's action against Czechoslovakia which he wanted to cover up by the incorporation of the Sudetenland. Without any documents I am not in a position to describe the exact sequence of the preparations. I do

remember that my own office and the Ministry of Economics were informed only at the last moment, and we were given no details. Keitel told us merely that Czechoslovakia as the jumping board to Soviet Russia represented a dagger to the peace and that her strength would be considerably weakened by taking the Germans living there, especially the Sudeten Germans, back into the homeland. We of the Beck-Witzleben group, especially General Beck, saw the possibility of another war in this renewed violation of international law, since we were sure that England and France would not stand for such a measure of force and territorial change. Beck resigned and all of us discussed the question whether we should follow suit. The only reason we did not resign was the realization that Hitler rejoiced at the resignation of each of the older officers of the army since this enabled him to infect the leadership apparatus with the spirit of Nazism. The new Chief of the General Staff, General Halder, was favourably inclined to our thoughts and was in touch with Witzleben. There followed the memorable discussions between Chamberlain and Hitler. In the Sudeten territory the Nazis provoked the necessary difficulties, and the tension arose from day to day. I do not know what actually happened during the last two days before Munich. We were under the impression, however, that mobilization was being discussed in the inner circle of the leadership staff of the Armed Forces. The warnings which were given to Keitel by different people, were not considered; the danger of war was here.

One day in September Witzleben went to see Halder in order to get from him instructions to start the revolt and so to try at the last minute to prevent war. I do not know whether Brauchitsch learned of this meeting. Halder will be able to answer this question. At this moment we received news of Hitler's political victory and that the meeting in Munich was over. This unexpected solution made it impossible for Witzleben to raise the weapon against Hitler. In spite of all the lies and all the immoral methods of the Nazi regime Hitler's reputation rose tremendously.

We were so amazed at this turn of events that for a time we did not know whether we were actually on the right path. Our attitude was confirmed however when Keitel returned from Munich. He briefly described the negotiations in a meeting of section chiefs and told us of the very apparent lack of power on the French and English side. Hitler had realized during the meeting he said that it would not be possible to collaborate with England and France but that England wanted to gain time in order to complete its rearmament program. The important thing for us was to get ahead of them in the way of armaments and we would have

to increase, not dedcrease, the speed of our armament. All of this showed quite clearly that Hitler was willing to arrive at his aims by force. All of us in the Beck-Witzleben group were filled with the hope that fate would interfere with Hitler's plans before 1942.

From this moment on I carried on an open propaganda against war by pointing to the fact that Germany could not wage war for reasons of finance, food and raw materials. I tried to show the madness of Goering's plans at ~~an~~ autarchy. I demanded that more funds should be made available to make Germany economically strong and not to spend money only on new divisions. I was of the opinion that each new division was strengthening the Blitzkrieg idea of Hitler, while an economic strengthening of Germany would bring her closer to the economy of the rest of the world, and would do away with the thought of war. I was opposed to the methods of Todt which were being used in the construction of the ~~the~~ Westwall. Schacht, Krosigk and I, as well as some others, tried to point to the madness of the continually rising speed of armament~~s~~. Everything we did was in vain. Hitler played the heads of the three armed forces against each other. Wherever he did not attain the desired results, he appointed Commissars and plenipotentiaries who only increased the confusion in ^{the} economy. Anyone who opposed his madness, was called a defeatist and saboteur, and reported to the Gestapo.

The measures against the lives and property of the Jewish population in November 1938, and the overpowering of Czechoslovakia in March 1939 were the two other acts of force which strengthened our conviction that the Hitler Government would have to be liquidated. We knew nothing of the attack on Czechoslovakia. Keitel later gave us completely misleading reasons. Even then Keitel deceived the officers who worked under him by giving them false data. He felt to be speaking for Hitler, and from that time on positively supported Hitler's deception of the German people.

of the Reich Defense Council

In November I attended a meeting with Goering, as observer of the OKW, during which Goering described the events of the pogrom of Nov. 8. Goering did criticize the cruelties and crimes of the Gauleiter and Nazi leaders, but on the whole he backed the action. This meeting in which the shameless behaviour of Streicher and of certain Gestapo and SA leaders was brought up, shook me so deeply that I immediately went to see Keitel in order to tell him of these conditions. Keitel rejected these actions but was not willing to make representations with Hitler as coming ~~with~~ from the Armed Forces, since "this was a

purely political matter of the Fuehrer and party, in which a soldier had nothing to say". If I remember correctly I told Brauchitsch of what went on at this meeting.

If up to this period the supreme commanders of the three arms of the Armed Forces and the highest troop leaders did not see sufficient reason to warn Hitler of the dangers threatening the fatherland, and did not request a change in the political policy, in 1939 the last moment had arrived to do this if they did not want to blame themselves. At this point no one could claim lack of knowledge, or compliance with duty. Every one had seen what had happened to the Jews, everybody knew of Hitler's arrangements at Munich and his repeated declarations that he had no further territorial demands, everybody had seen his attack on Czechoslovakia, everybody saw his suppression of the church and the taking away of children from their parents, and everybody laughed over the steadily increasing corruption among party officials. Every thinking person should have known that such a policy, which violated every feeling of humanity and international law, must ruin our fatherland. If the highest leaders at this point still hid themselves behind the principle "the Fuehrer alone has the responsibility and we have to follow him ~~and we have to follow him~~ with unfailing trust, they became accomplices in guilt. Guilty are also those millions of adherents who agreed with everything the "beloved Fuehrer" did, in the way of applause and financial contributions, and who had made our fight against these criminals so extremely difficult.

Industry played a role in this time which I have not been able to understand. I am not talking about the men now, who were wild Nazis, such as Pleiger, Geilenberg, Porsche, Lawrenz, Avieni, Bubin, Voss, Hunke, and others. The mass of the other leading men in industry and economy were enraptured by the successes of Hitler and saw no possibility to reject financial support of the regime and of the party. It is true that the terror of the labor front of the Nazi economic deputy and of the Gauleiter was great, but even the innermost thoughts of the otherwise so realistically thinking economists agreed somewhat with Hitler so that some of them considered me as much too pessimistic. With the exception of a very few, most of them lived in this thought: "Hitler will never permit another war, certainly not a war with the Western Powers. We are arming as a defense against Russia. Hitler's aim is peace and a united greater Germany".

After some of my lectures I often discussed these questions openly with

economists, and was astonished to see that I, as representative of the OKW, judged Hitler's internal and foreign policy much more critically than the industrialists, and that I had many more misgivings concerning the economic consequences. Only, when war was actually there, did a part of them lose their faith in Hitler.

It is my duty to emphasize that there was a group of men who, from the very beginning, were opposed to the Nazi system. These were: Mr. Reusch, Hermann Bosch, Carl Friedrich von Siemens, Director Wittke-Dillingen, Dr. Wildgrubea- Dresden, Dr. Loeser, of Krupps, Mr. Buecher of the AEG.

Men such as Reusch have proven that even in the Third Reich it was possible to serve the Fatherland without supporting the criminal Nazi system. Even if he lost his position as head of the concern, Gute Hoffnungshuette, and all his other positions, He came through as a courageous, honest, German man, who deserves honor and recognition.

FROM THE OUTBREAK OF WAR TO THE BEGINNING OF THE OPERATIONS IN THE EAST.

was overshadowed by
The summer of 1939 ~~was overshadowed by~~ the German-Polish tension. The German people believed that Danzig and the Corridor would return to Germany, and that then Hitler would have attained his goal. There were few people who saw the danger and believed in the possibility of a war.

In June I received instructions from the Defense Leadership Staff, to examine the papers for the Defense Economy of Poland. Neither I nor my staff were kept informed concerning the preparations then going on within the Armed Forces Leadership Staff and within the General. In July I went on a long vacation. When I returned, preparations for a camouflaged attack were in full swing. from the first moment I was of the opinion that war with Poland would mean a new world war. Keitel and the Armed Forces Leadership Staff rejected this view, and believed that Hitler would be able to attain his aims, without the use of weapons, and that in case of a war, England would drop Poland with a cool smile.

I asked a number of economists to come and see me in order to get their views of the situation. I particularly wanted to talk to men who knew the opinion of people abroad and who would have an opinion concerning Germany's economic ability to fight. The opinion was practically unanimous; They believed that the Western Powers would not stand for an attack on Poland, but would be ready

to undertake something against Hitler's continual disturbances of the peace. These economic leaders shared my view that a German-Polish war would be a serious danger and might mean a new world war. They agreed that Germany was not able to wage a long war, for economic reasons. Almost all of them were of the opinion that I was too pessimistic and that Hitler did not want a world war. This opinion of theirs was reinforced when the non-aggression pact with Russia was concluded, and now there were people in industry, such as Voegler and Borber (?) who did not judge too unfavorably the prospects of a war with England and France. The condition was that the United States of course should not enter such a war.

For us men of the opposition group, an attack on Poland meant a world war. Goerdeler, Popitz, Plank, Hassel, Wittke, and others came to see me and asked me to do everything I could in order to prevent war. I wrote a brief memorandum in which I proved on the basis of figures that Germany was incapable of waging a long war of material, that our economic armament was not ^{nearly} ~~exactly~~ sufficient, and that the economic mobilization preparations had not been concluded.

About 14 days before the outbreak of war, I tried to give Keitel this memorandum. Soon after I had started to read it to him, he interrupted me, as he usually did, and stated that Hitler had no intention whatever of waging a world war. Keitel said that Hitler would get what he wanted in Poland, and that no nation would be ready for Poland's present boundaries. The French were a corrupt pacifist nation, the English much too decadent, in order to really give help to Poland, and the United States would never send a single man across the ocean in order to get the chestnuts out of the fire for either England or Poland.

When I said to Keitel that men who knew the world had talked differently to me, for example Goerdeler and several other industrialists, Keitel declared: "Don't let the Fuehrer know that you are in touch with Goerdeler. He'll kick you out!" On the Sunday before the Polish campaign, I went to see Keitel again and gave him statistics concerning the principle raw materials and production areas of Germany and of the Western Powers, in order to prove again the comparative weakness of Germany in a defense economic sense, as compared with the other great powers. Keitel told me the next day that he had given the material to Hitler, that Hitler had again negated the danger of a world war, and had pointed to the change of the whole situation brought about by the ~~xx~~ agreement with Russia.

We never learned of what actually happened in the political circles around

Hitler during those days.

The defense economic staff, the plenipotentiary for industry, and the other economic authorities were always, before and during the war, left out of any basic discussions with Hitler. Hitler's economic advisers, were Goering, later Todt, and Speer. I ~~have~~ objected to Keitel several times about this procedure since it was an impossible one if I was to carry out the tasks assigned to me. Keitel always refused to have the economic officers participate, ostensibly for reasons of secrecy, and pointed to Hitler's order that everyone should know only as much as was absolutely necessary. The actual reason was that Hitler had absolutely no comprehension of the importance ~~of the~~ and the requirements of industry, and believed that industry could be commandeered just as a troop. Keitel often recognized my economic misgivings, but was too weak to properly fight for them with Hitler. Only the big military defeats were able to convince Hitler of the importance of industry.

Our group was so concerned, ~~that a German Polish war might break out,~~ that Schacht, Gisevius, and Oster came to see me the evening prior to the first attack to ask me to again try to have Keitel or Halder postpone the date of the attack. If such a delay could be effected, they hoped to be able to settle the question by diplomatic means. A meeting with Canaris that evening showed that the attack had already been postponed by several days and that diplomatic negotiations were still going on. We both agreed however, that neither Hitler nor Keitel could be moved by logical reasons to change their tactics and that we would have to do everything in our power to prevent the war against Poland ~~to~~ from developing into a world war.

The situation concerning defense and armament economics was as follows at the outbreak of the Polish war.

The German food situation had considerably improved during 1938 to 1939. There was still a lack of fats, but sufficient corn supplies offered a guarantee that a war of one or two years duration could be conducted. The raw material situation was not very good in view of the long rearmament, and the small imports of raw materials, and in no way warranted a world war without ^{further} foreign imports. The fuel situation was unfavorable, the supplies would last only for about three quarters of a year.

The financial situation was extremely tense, the preparations for war in an economic way were bad in the fields of synthetic fuel, india rubber, powder, and

explosives. The production and installations for ~~the~~ munitions and tanks were very much behind.

Industry had a small supply program ready which was probably sufficient for a war against Poland, but not for a world war. The preparations of the Ministry of Economics, of home and industry aid protection, the assurance of workers against being drafted, and the assurance of half-finished products were not nearly concluded.

If actual warfare had immediately set in on the western front, and if France had not so quickly collapsed, Germany would have had considerable difficulties in an economic way. I was present at the Reichstag meeting of 1 September when war was declared, and must say that this meeting made a horrible impression on me, because the Satanic motions of Hitler and the absolutely crazy behaviour of the deputies showed how irresponsible and unscrupulous this regime was in plunging the German people and the whole world into war. I can still hear the words of Hitler: "Whoever is against this, either directly or indirectly, will fall."

After this I refused to enter the Reichstag and had therefore not taken part in the meeting which took place after the Western Campaign. I shall revert later to the question of guilt of the Reichstag. Instructions issued during the first weeks of war, in the field of mobilization, and the propaganda on the part of the government and the party, represented nothing but a deception of the German people. The German people were told that Hitler did not want a world war but was anxious only to settle the Polish question, and that if there should be a war with the Western Powers, it would be a short one which Germany would win with its superior armament and the invincible Luftwaffe. The truth and the seriousness of the situation were suppressed. Goering reproached me for having said at a meeting of the Reich Group Industry on 30 November 1939, that the situation was very serious.

During the course of the Polish campaign, Popitz, Goerdeler, Hassel, Beck, and I met in order to discuss the liquidation of the Hitler government in case Hitler were to start a world war. I was of the opinion that only the army could carry out such a measure since the Air Corps was completely National Socialist and the Navy would be of no use. I was also of the opinion that, besides Hitler, Keitel and Goering and all of the Nazi leaders should be arrested and that such action must be executed as a legal measure, and not as the revolt of a small oppositional group. I took it upon myself to tell Halder and Brauchitsch of these demands of the oppositional group, and to get a clear view of the attitude among the leading generals. Goerdeler and Popitz wanted to tell Brauchitsch in a personal interview

of the seriousness of the situation and the necessity of liquidating Hitler.

Hitler's speech in the Buergerbraeukeller at Munich and the then beginning agitation against Hitler proved that we were right. On November 26 Oster and Dohnanyi came to see me and told me that according to information received by the Abwehr, the international situation was leading to a world war. On Nov. 27 I went to see General Halder and asked him to bring about an interview between Popitz, Goerdeler and Brauchitsch. We spoke quite openly about liquidating Hitler. Halder shared our views completely and in talking to us represented more Brauchitsch's views than his own. He told us about this: That Brauchitsch was against the use of force and would never agree to a coup d'etat. He as Chief of the General Staff could not now, that we were at war, permit the leadership of the army to break up into two groups, and these were the reasons for rejecting a coup d'etat:

1. The German army is, because of its upbringing, ~~is~~ not fit to undertake a coup d'etat. In the opinion of Leeb and Witzleben the young officer corps was completely unreliable politically and believed in Hitler.
2. We have no personality commanding sufficient respect among the people who could take Hitler's place.
3. Since the defeat of 1918 the German people had been completely rootless and needed a new ideal, such as the National Socialist idea.
4. The fight of the English was not directed against Hitler and the Nazis, but instead against the whole German people and its recent economic rise.
5. The German people must not again be so deceived and made to put down its weapons as it was in 1918 with the promises of Wilson.

My remark that in such a situation not only the political leadership, but also the military leadership was responsible to history, could not change Halder's attitude. He refused to arrange the meeting with Brauchitsch, but was ready to talk with Beck himself, and to receive a written aide memoire from Goerdeler. The exchange of notes between Halder and Goerdeler was effected through me.

In the beginning of December, after Keitel had told me again that he would not inform Hitler of my economic misgivings, I and Mr. Posse wrote a memorandum to show that for economic reasons we could not wage a world war. On December 10 we showed this memorandum to Minister Funk, and asked him to inform Hitler of the facts. Funk refused to do this and said he had no intention of influencing Hitler's plans in any way. Funk also refused to show the memorandum to Goering with the remark that Goering would show it to Hitler, and this would be held against Funk.

I reported this incident to Keitel and added that my concern about the future of the German people was becoming stronger in view of this attitude on the part of ~~isadaxix~~ leading personalities.

In January 1940 the agitation against me on the part of the National Socialist League for Technical Science was fruitful, and Hitler declared that he was not satisfied with the measures taken by the economic offices of the Armed Forces, that the Army Weapon Office had been a complete failure, and that soldiers were incapable of organizing an economy; for that a man of industry was needed, a new man who was filled with the dynamic spirit of National-Socialism.

The result of long discussions between Hitler, Goering and Keitel was that Dr. Todt was appointed Minister of Armament and Munition. This was the beginning a three-fold line of economic war measures: a. G.B.W. (?), b. Armed Forces, and c. Reich Ministry of Armament and Munition. Besides that, Goering gave orders to his various plenipotentiaries. This created chaotic conditions in the administration of the war economy which represents a great part of the guilt of Hitler, Goering, Keitel and Funk.

In the meantime Ambassador von Hassel, Catholic circles (Miller) Oster and Dohnanyi had succeeded in taking up contacts with the Vatican in order to find out whether the English government would be ready to negotiate in case the Hitler regime were to be ~~overthrown~~ overthrown. We hoped that such evidence would move Brauchitsch to undertake a coup d'etat. At the beginning of April 1944 the result of the Rome discussions was received and was very encouraging for our aims.

I had been recovering at the sanatorium Weidner in Dresden and went to see Halder in order to tell him of the attitude of the Vatican. Since I did not know enough about the possibility of these peace negotiations, I asked ~~him~~ ^{that} ~~expressive~~ Ambassador von Hassel, who could give ~~him~~ further details, / On this date Halder was completely opposed to Hitler but pointed out again that the supreme leadership of the army could not undertake a revolt. Halder kept the document I had given him for ten days, and when he returned it to me he said that Brauchitsch was not ready to undertake anything against Hitler, and was also unwilling to receive von Hassel. Halder told me later the Brauchitsch had planned to have me arrested, but Halder had prevented this. In the course of the correspondence between Halder and Goerdeler, Halder told Goerdeler on Easter Sunday 1940, that the army would be ready to undertake something against Hitler's government if the Fatherland should require it.

Thus our efforts to prevent ~~XXXX~~ world war had failed, fate took its course,

the world war began.

The guilt of the closest advisers of Hitler, of the Cabinet, of the leaders of the SS and Gestapo, and the party leadership in agitating for war, ~~is~~ obvious. But the highest military leaders, especially Brauchitsch and Rader, will have to be taken to account by the German people and will have to state what they did in order to prevent war. This is especially ^{necessary} ~~xxxx~~ in view of the fact that I told Keitel and Brauchitsch, through the mediation of Halder, that according to Geheimrat Buecher of the AEG the Belgian King was of the opinion that war between England and Germany could be avoided even without the overthrow of the Nazi regime. I also told Keitel and Halder that Goering had made peace feelers via Sweden. Canaris and ~~x~~ I warned Keitel repeatedly of the consequences which an attack on Belgien and Holland would have in the rest of the world.

I do not know what happened during the meeting of the generals in the spring of 1940, or whether the supreme military leadership made representations against Hitler's plans. But I do reproach the highest military leaders for for not having attempted, ~~xxxx~~ if they did not agree with Hitler, to withdraw from being accomplices by at least asking to be permitted to resign. On the basis of the documents submitted to them it would have been their duty to prevent war and to protect the German people from this deed of madness. I am not able to say whether such a duty could have been fulfilled only by a forceful overthrow of the Government. I am able to judge all this only from a very personal point of view. I am not informed about what went on in the immediate entourage of Hitler, or between him and the generals.

I cannot understand why there was no opposition whatever on the part of labor either on Sept. 1, 1939 or later on the occasion of other violations of international law. Labor leaders failed during thistime just as much as the officers, officials or other professional groups, which are being so much attacked today by the German Communist Party. I just want to recall the violent acclaim which the Nazi speeches and lies and promises found in the big industrial concerns during the first years of the war.

The armistice with France again showed the ^{immorality} ~~xxxxxxx~~ of Hitler's plans. My office had proposed that France be given clear economic ~~xx~~ duties, and that besides a preliminary peace be concluded with her so as to get the voluntary collaboration of French industry in support of German war economy. Hitler rejected any economic conditions and Keitel declared that our claims on French economy were

clearly laid down in the preamble to the armistice agreement, which could be construed in such a way as to justify any demand which we considered necessary.

The basic discussions for an invasion of England must have taken place in a very small circle. I was never asked by Keitel to attend such discussions at which either the planned invasion or the reasons for not undertaking it, were taken up. I was asked by the OKH to organize an economic staff for the occupation of England and to get ready all economic documents which might be needed by an occupation army.

I want to emphasize one important point in connection with the war against England: The Defense Economic Office said clearly, when air attacks against English industry were being discussed, that mass attacks against industrial cities would not induce England to conclude peace, since

1. English industry is regionally too well distributed to be shut down completely;
2. the German Luftwaffe was not strong enough to effectively attack such large areas;
3. such terror acts are bound to cause retaliation which would seriously harm Germany when about two years hence the English-American armament industry would be far superior to the German.

I x decidedly warned against undertaking such attacks.

Goering bitterly complained to Hitler about my attitude and that of my offices.

THE OPERATIONS IN THE EAST AND THE WAR ECONOMIC SITUATION UP TO MY SEPARATION FROM THE OKW

In November 1940 I was told by Goering that Hitler planned a war against Soviet Russia. Goering ordered me, General v. Hanneken, and the State Secretaries Koerner and Neumann to his apartment and declared that Hitler had to attack Russia since Russia was planning to attack Germany. Goering said he would take over the administration of Russia. All/economic measures would have to be undertaken. Since we were deeply shocked by this news and pointed to the dangers of a war on two fronts, Goering replied that Hitler was convinced the war would be decided within three months, since the ~~xx~~ border states, the Ukraine and the Caucasus States would desert Moscow. Goering would destroy the industries in the Ural with his Luftwaffe and reestablish the connections with the Far East by occupying the Trans-Siberian railroad by ~~parachutists~~ by troops which were to be transported by air. This attitude was so strange and so inconceivable that I immediately informed Keitel and the men of our opposition group of it. Keitel confirmed that Hitler had such a plan but said that the other statements made by Goering were sheer nonsense. Keitel never spoke to me concerning the reasons and aims of this war. From everything that I heard later, I think that the reasons for starting the war against Russia were these: (1) The party did not like the new friendship with Russia

since its officials and numerous SS leaders had already seen themselves ~~as~~ as owners of ~~six~~ large estates and as leading personalities in the new living space provided by Poland and Russia. (2) Hitler had recognized that his idea of a blitzkrieg was wrong and that the war would last a long time. He did not have sufficient food supplies for a long war. (3) State secretary Becke had told Hitler that the "black soil" could feed all of Central Europe. (4) Hitler was afraid that ~~af~~ the completion of their armament program, Russia might attack Germany. (5) Rosenberg had given Hitler a completely wrong picture of the strength and popular feeling of Soviet Russia.

Hitler prepared this war with great finesse and with the ugliest manouvers of deceit, first in order to deceive the Russians concerning his plans, and second, in order to justify to the German people his change of attitude. If Hitler said later that the German leadership had been deceived concerning the strength of Soviet Russia, this only proves in what irresponsible manner Hitler started this war. The documents which were presented to the leadership by the Economic Armament Office and the warnings connected therewith, should have caused serious consideration in a responsible leadership.

During the course of the war, the Armed Forces Leadership Staff, the General Staffs of the three Arms of the Armed Forces, and the highest commanding authorities were given so much good material and so many clear warnings concerning the strength of the Russian power that no military leader could today claim that he was surprised by the Russian power of endurance.

The Armed Forces Leadership Staff and the highest leaders of the three parts of the Armed Forces assumed great guilt when, in spite of all these warnings, they continued this war with Hitler up to the complete collapse. Even Keitel admitted to me when I resigned that my opinions of Russia had been correct and my warnings justified. But it had not been possible to convince Hitler. The military leaders, who even after the catastrophe of Stalingrad, and after July 20 1944, expressed their loyalty to Hitler, gave proof of their lack of responsibility. The Russian campaign has clearly shown immorality of the whole Nazi system, the criminal egotism of Hitler, and the complete submissiveness to him of the military and political leaders. It also proved that the majority of the highest military leaders did not have the mental or moral strength to separate themselves from this system. That is their guilt.

THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES.

and the Nazi
organizations

The indictment against the 24 war criminals shows that they/are made responsible for the administration of the occupied territories. I would like to say the following in this connection. The economic exploitation of the occupied territories was directed by Goering, the police measures by Hitler. Goering issued instructions in connection with his 4 Year Plan ~~and~~ to the military commanders and to the civil commissioners of the occupied territories. The Economic Armament Office distributed the armament industry among the parts of the armed forces which were responsible for the development and reactivation of the factories. The leading spirit of the Four Year Plan was State Secretary Neumann, who sincerely tried to conduct the exploitation of the occupied territories in a ~~planned~~ ^{planned,} humanly decent manner which would be in agreement with international law. The army and navy authorities followed this policy at first while SS, the Organization Todt, and the Luftwaffe went their own ways, and unscrupulously appropriated to themselves State and private property. The same is true of the organizations Sauckel and Speer, and of the civil commissioners Koch, Lohse, etc. who had been appointed by Hitler. The bad effects of the actions and manner of men such as these were increased by the sharp instructions which Hitler, Himmler and Goering gave for the harsh treatment of the population and which had for its aim the exploitation of the very last man. Another cause ~~for~~ ^{of} these bad effects was the shameless personal behaviour of the Nazi leaders who had no respect for state or private property in order to satisfy their own desires. The deep immorality and complete lack of feeling of responsibility of the Nazi leaders, led to the misdeeds mentioned in the indictment. The German soldier hated all these actions, but a great majority of the military leaders did not proceed with the necessary severity against these measures. The army had soon adopted Keibel's principle that "what the SS does is none of our business."

The armed forces had ~~put~~ ~~put~~ put their economic organizations at the disposal of the Nazis for the administration of the occupied territories. I assigned two tasks to this organization: (A) to help the troops, and (B) to be a friend and helper to the country. The organization was to rebuild what had been destroyed, to maintain what still existed, to reconstruct and not to destroy. The members of this organization were taught by me to be human, orderly, and modest. Whenever I found men who did not work in this sense, I dismissed them. I even dismissed the leader of the Economic Staff East, General Schubert, when I found out that his ideas approached

the ideas and policies of Hitler.

It was my principle that an occupied territory will only remain calm if its inhabitants earn their bread by labor, and if they are treated as human beings who cannot be blamed for the war. I saw that the population liked the military economic authorities, and that their suffering began only when brown or black authorities took over the work. I do not know how the Defense Economic Organization was exploited after my resignation. I will give but one example of my attitude; On Goering's instructions I was made a member of the Board of Directors of the Hermann Goering Works and of the Continental Oel A. G. , as a representative of the Armed Forces. I received no remuneration but was only to represent the interests of the Armed Forces. After the first meeting of the ~~board~~ of directors I informed both companies that I was resigning, since I was not willing to be a member of companies which had as their aim financial corruption and theft in other countries.

THE QUESTION OF FOREIGN LABORERS.

The removal and treatment of foreign laborers is in my mind ~~one~~ of the worst chapters of the Nazi system. It is a fact that State Secretary Syrup tried sincerely, both before and during the first months of the war, to direct all questions of labor supply in a humanitarian and professional fashion. But one could already see in the treatment of the German laborers, in their unscrupulous resettlement in other industrial areas, in the separation of their families, and extremely hard work, ~~which~~ what Hitler himself expressed during the war: "I consider these people only cattle; they do not work, they must be beaten, and for that I have Himmler." Sauckel adopted this attitude and later his organization adopted it. I believe that Sauckel took over his post with the best intentions, but like all men in the circle around Hitler, he became a victim of the demon Hitler and in a few weeks he became inhuman, and brought suffering into all countries. Hitler recognized in 1942 what General Olbricht and I had prophesied since the beginning of the war, namely that his plans for increasing the army and extension of industry would have to fail because of the lack of man power, and that our production would not be able to keep pace with that of the rest of the world. Sauckel and Speer bear the guilt for this crime to humanity since they followed the unscrupulous and inhuman exploitation of human labor.

The labor procuring authorities were from this point on one of the worst Nazi institutions of this war. Their leaders were the vilest kind of National Socialists.

THE ENTRY OF THE UNITED STATES INTO THE WAR

The lack of a feeling of responsibility and ^{che} frivolity of the Hitler system

were again evidenced in its evaluation of the attitude of the United States towards Germany and toward the European war. According to everything that we were told during the first months of the war, Hitler was certain of a benevolent neutrality of the United States towards Germany. When the first deliveries of war material from the United States to England became known, the belief of American neutrality was still maintained, and the deliveries were represented as the transactions of Jewish speculators. Any thought that the United States ~~was~~ might be on the side of England, not only for economics but also for moral reasons, was rejected with disdain. All remarks to the effect that the United States had already once contributed to Germany's collapse by virtue of her superior economic strength, were pushed aside. When the U.S. made clear its attitude, these same men declared that the ~~USA~~ United States could never be a danger to us since by the time that might be possible, the war would long have been decided. The frivolity of the supreme leadership went so far that in 1942 Keitel and Goering rejected the figures of the Economic Armament Office concerning the American war potential, as the "gossip of Jewish agents," or as the very pessimistic view of the Economic Armament Office. In 1943 proof was given that the production figures which I have given, were being far surpassed in the United States. Only in 1943, when the part member Speer gave Hitler the American production figures, did the leadership which dangers Germany was facing. Every sensible man could now realize the tremendous material superiority which Germany would have to face in 1944. The Supreme Leadership knew these figures, and in spite of this continued the war with tremendous sacrifice. No responsible officer should have continued to carry any responsibility as Hitler's adviser.

THE QUESTION OF GUILT IN THE SPHERE OF ARMAMENT.

The party and the Armament Ministry accused me of sabotaging armament. I would like to say the following in this connection:

Before the war I was opposed to the war and tried to prevent it. During the war I tried to have the supreme leadership realize the uselessness of this fight, and to seek peace. I have tried to get the army to put an end ~~to~~ to the war by overthrowing the government and thus to save the Fatherland. I did all this out of a deep feeling of responsibility to God, the German people, and the Fatherland. I have always fulfilled with faith and diligence my duties as a soldier.

German armament suffered from the complete lack of planning with which the war organization had been set up and with which the production of war material was being directed by the supreme leadership. The complete ~~mis~~judging of the political

and military situation, the underestimation of the war potential of our enemies, the systematic deceit of the people by the leadership, and the extravagance of the measures taken led to a condition whereby war armament was not being conducted according to planned military principles, but was being influenced by a Nazi dynamic theory without any plan. I have always/refused to collaborate with ~~the~~ the men of the Ministry of Armaments and Munition, such as ~~the~~ Sauer, Schieber, etc. who tried to fulfil their tasks by Nazi terror methods. I left this ministry after six months since I was not willing to be a partner in the deceit of the German people.

Before and after the war I did my best to procure for the Fatherland the maximum of armaments, but I have always pointed to the limits set to such armaments and have asked for termination when it was clear that Germany had lost the war. I always refused to give Hitler too optimistic a presentation of the possibilities of production, as was done by Speer, Milch, Roechling, Sano, Krauch, and the other collaborators, in order to improve the atmosphere in the Fuehrer's headquarters, and in order to get the people to go on fighting in this hopeless situation.

Undoubtedly Speer deserves a lot of credit for having strengthened the German defensive power, but I do blame him for not having tried to persuade Hitler to stop the war - knowing very well how superior our enemies were to us. Instead he squeezed the very last drop of blood out of the German people and out of the foreign laborers for a hopeless task. He deceived the German people with respect to the possibilities of its own power to fight. Speer is one of the most faithful friends of Hitler; he knew of his irresponsible plans and deeds. Milch was no better. If the German industrialists, the economic leaders and other personalities put at the disposition of the fatherland their ability and executed the assignments given to them, they have in my opinion fulfilled their duty just as any soldier at the front. Those, however, who as convinced Nazis, or out of greediness and personal egotism, often against their better judgment, collaborated with the Ministry of Armaments and furthered the continuation of the war by irresponsible suggestions and advice, are to be condemned just as much as the military leaders, who served Hitler to the last.

THE FURTHER NAZIFICATION OF THE ARMED FORCES

With the increase of tension in the military and political situation, Hitler's

desire to nazify the Armed Forces grew. Keitel, and General Reinecke, who became instruments more and more of a Nazi, were his ~~means~~ to do this. The means used were deceit, rewards and threats. About once every quarter Keitel spoke before the section chiefs of the OKW and tried, by optimistic and untrue representations, to give a picture of the situation and to prove the greatness of Hitler. The means which Keitel used to try to influence the officers, were almost childish. He usually ended with the threat of the Gestapo and the People's Court. These speeches, which were the basis for Oster's calling Keitel a man without character and great weakness, are a heavy indictment against a man who made himself one of the chief war criminals by being so subservient to Hitler, by his dishonorable attitude vis-a-vis his comrades, and by his knowledge of all the crimes ~~of~~ perpetrated by the Nazi system. The climax of his activity in the nazification of the Armed Forces was his creation of the National-Socialist Leadership Staff in the OKW and the introduction into the troupes of Nazi supervising officers. Reinecke became chief of the latter organization. This step actually proved the weakness of the Hitler regime. Those, however, who served these political purposes, are just as guilty as the men who propagated the agitation for war and the "stick it out" psychosis.

Men such as Reinecke, Burgdorff, Maisal, Scherff, Stengel, (or HENGEL) Bodenschatz bear a much deeper guilt than the majority of the officers of the General Staff and members of the OKW, who did nothing but their duty.

Keitel, Reinecke and the other generals of the court of honor to judge the men of 20 July 1944, degraded themselves more than anyone else could have when they delivered their comrades who had wanted to save Germany, into the hands of the Gestapo, and of the Peoples Court. I accuse these men of ~~being~~ the greatest dishonorableness of having prolonged the war, and of having been accomplices in murder.

CORRUPTION.

One of the ugliest signs of the immorality of the Nazi system was corruption. The years before the war had already shown the shameless behaviour of the highest Nazi leaders; the war made the picture complete. Goering gave the worst example. By the most impossible kinds of pressure he exacted great sums of money and valuable presents. The fact that the Nazi leaders gave each other presents was another proof of their dishonesty. Heavy industry is to blame in that it made possible such behaviour by its numerous contributions. Even though the manner in which presents and donations were asked for made ~~xxx~~ it difficult to say "no", industry would have been able to

fight this corruption by collective action.

It is regrettable that certain leaders of the armed forces were also seized by this disease and permitted Hitler to give them either monetary gifts or real estate. When the leader of a state makes excessive presents and at the same time squeezes the last penny out of the population, every decent person must be filled with serious misgivings. All of those who let themselves be "paid off" in this manner by Hitler and Gaering, violated all decent conceptions of a soldier and have therefore revealed their close ties with this system.

The removal of considerable financial sums and objects of value of the highest Nazi leaders into other countries should be investigated. These removals took place at a time when the smallest violation of the German foreign exchange regulations was being heavily punished. I believe that in this respect Goering, Ribbentrop, and others have committed serious crimes. Their helpers in these schemes, such as State Councillor Hermann, should be specially investigated.

THE ACTIVITY OF THE OPPOSITIONAL GROUP.

After it had been impossible in 1939 and 1940 to convince the OKH of the necessity of a coup d'etat, the opposition group believed that everything should be tried in order to end the war by overthrowing Hitler. In 1940 we all believed that it would be advisable to liquidate the government by an open action by the army and to indict the members of the government before a People's Court. This demand was the subject of ~~exchange~~ the exchange of correspondence between Goerdeler and Halder, and the subject of discussion between Beck and Haeder. Halder declared during the Russian campaign that he also was in favour of such liquidation; but that he saw no possibility for action under existing circumstances. The opposition group now tried to reach its aim through one of the highest troop leaders at the front. Goerdeler went to see Kluge, I went to see Rundstedt, Leeb, Bock, and List in order to get their views. I spoke openly with General von Lodenstern (or Zodenstern), Chief ~~of~~ ^{under} Rundstedt, and with General von Greiffenberg, Chief under Bock. Both were open-minded, but of the opinion that their Fieldmarshalls would reject any step in this direction. List, to whom Olbricht had spoken, ^{himself} declared/ready to receive Goerdeler, but several days after my visit he was deposed by Hitler. In 1942 I sent a trusted member of my staff, General Beutler to Fieldmarshal von Manstein, who sent me a message to the effect that he also recognized the necessity of overthrowing the government but that the time had not yet come. I know that General Olbricht had at this time contact

with command officers at the front, e.g. General Reinhardt, in order to convince them of the necessity of this step. Beck was also in touch with Manstein. The difficulties of finding troops for the incarceration of the Fuehrer's headquarters, led already in 1941 to the decision to attempt an assassination. I opposed such a step since its success was dependent on too many chances, and I repeatedly tried to create among the supreme commanders, a readiness to execute the action which saved the situation. For this reason, I prepared a memorandum in 1942, together with Goerdeler and Director Stahl of the Mansfeld Concern, in which I set down once more the hopeless situation of Germany and the necessity to end the war. It was a warning of German industry to the army. The terror in Germany at that time was so strong already that there were few leading men in industry, trade and agriculture who were ready to sign this memorandum. It was finally signed by Stahl, Goerdeler, Zitzewitz-Kottau, and several other gentlemen whose names I can no longer remember. The memorandum was then submitted to the OKH (General Halder). The presentation remained without success.

The only thing that remained, was assassination.

Olbricht, Oster, Goerdeler, Later Steff, Meixner, and Treskow were the ones who maintained contact with the officers at the front in the planning of the assassination. (Several assassinations attempts failed; particular hope had been set ~~xxxx~~ on the visit of Hitler to Fieldmarshal von Manstein at ~~Saporoshe~~ Saporoshe.)

After the defeat of Stalingrad, Goerdeler, Popitz, Olbricht, Oster, Plank, and I repeatedly discussed the question of whether the liquidation of Hitler in this hopeless situation was still indicated. Plank, Oster and I were of the opinion that the war was definitely lost, and that a new government would be able, after everything that had happened, to get only a dishonorable peace. If Hitler were assassinated a great part of the German people would believe that the ones who had perpetrated this deed were responsible for Germany's calamity and that Hitler would have been able to get better peace terms. Hitler would have become a martyr and the Nazis would have been able to continue their nefarious activities. I was of the opinion that National Socialism would now have to be eradicated completely, and this was only possible if the people themselves realized that they had given their loyalty and trust to a group of criminals. I must say I never thought that any government would go so far as to sacrifice people and fatherland in order to hold on for a few weeks longer. Olbricht, the men around Stauffenberg, and others believed that it was the duty of German officers to save their honor, to make up for the failure of the

military leadership and at the last moment to save the Fatherland from a complete collapse.

In spite of my dismissal, and my having moved to Muskau, I was in close touch with the opposition group until 20 July 1944. On July 20 1944, I was in Muskau and did not take part in the revolt.

MY ACTIVITY AFTER MY RESIGNATION FROM MY POSITIONS IN THE OKW AND MINISTRY OF ARMAMENTS AND MUNITIONS.

For the reasons given above I offered my resignation from my position in the Ministry for Armaments and Munitions, at the end of October 1942. I turned over my office, if I remember correctly, in November 1942.

In January 1943 I asked Keitel to be released from my position as section chief in the OKW. I did this because of the differences I had with Speer, and because of the continual agitation against me on the part of the party and of the people in the immediate entourage of Hitler. Keitel welcomed my decision and advised me to be active in the fields of activity of the Reich Marshal, which I refused to do. Keitel had only one desire - to get me out of the OKW. I asked Keitel to have me transferred to the group of officers "for special use", since I did not want to carry on any other military activity. I did not ask for my retirement, but instead for the above mentioned transfer, for the following two reasons: (1) In view of the agitation carried on against me, I considered it necessary, in order to justify my actions, to write a memorandum concerning my work and my organization, and to put on record for posterity, what had actually happened. I could do this only if I remained a soldier and have access to the files. (2) I did it for my personal protection, since I had to anticipate, the minute I no longer belonged to the Armed Forces, that I might be arrested by the Gestapo because of my "defeatist attitude".

I left my position as Chief of the Economic Office of the OKW on January 31, 1943. My memorandum was almost finished when the revolt of July 20 occurred. It was objective, but highly critical. When after the revolt a wave of arrests set in and my political friends and some of their families were already in prison, I decided to change the memorandum in such a way that it might serve by way of exoneration vis-a-vis the Gestapo. My adjutant, Lt. Col. Oschner (?), Col. Eckert and Captain Trahndorf helped me in doing this by destroying all material which might serve to bear witness against me insofar as my attitude toward war, toward Hitler, and toward the party was concerned.

I realized that what I had done might turn out to be a mistake for a later political clarification. I did it in order to protect my family and my collaborators which

I considered more important under the circumstances than to be able to justify myself in the future. No person who has not lived through these years with me, can realize what a nervous strain this double life meant for me and for my dead comrades. We suffered terribly under the feeling that we would have to prevent war, the urge to help our comrades who were fighting at the front from the responsibility to God and to our own families, the hatred against this criminal system, the necessity to protect ourselves against their terror, from the impossibility ~~in~~ of leaving Germany and from the clear recognition that the German people was on a disastrous path. I think this burden was a more difficult one than the one which the men at the front or the refugees who had gone abroad had to carry.

Frequently during 1942 and 1943 I discussed with Olbricht, Oster, Beck, and Popitz the question whether it would be advisable to resign from the OKW in order to publicly express opposition to the regime. Olbricht, Oster and I did not resign for the following reasons: (1) The opposition Group considered it important that we retain our positions as a source of information and organization. (2) In case of resignation we would probably have been used in some other office where we also would have had to serve the system. (3) It was impossible for us to leave Germany. If we had gone abroad the strongest measures of terror would have been taken against our families.

CONCLUSION

The trial against the 23 chief war criminals begins within the next few days. It will give the German people a picture of the criminal wantonness, the lack of a feeling of responsibility, and the unbelievable immorality of the Nazi system. The German people has during the last twelve years failed in all classes and professions to fight this system, and has become a victim of the criminal deceit of Hitler and his helpers. This is its guilt. Actual crimes, in the sense of humanity and international law however, have been committed in my opinion only by those who gave the orders for punishable deeds and by those who executed these orders. All such people should be made to atone for their guilt and should be made to realize the suffering and misery which they have caused by their policies.

These are in my opinion the Reich government (with the exception of Schacht) with its State Secretaries; the Fuehrer's headquarters, the leadership of the party, the Reich Leaders (Reichsleiter) and Gauleiter (with the exception of Joseph Wagner), the political leader corps, the Higher SA and SS leaders, leaders of the

Labor Service, of the Gestapo, the higher judicial officials of the People's Court, and other high functionaries who served this system either out of ambition or conviction.

In the armed forces the following bear a heavy guilt: Fieldmarshal Keitel, and the leading men of the Armed Forces Leadership Staff; The Supreme Commanders of the Arms of the Armed Forces; the Highest Military Commanders who conducted the war to the last drop of blood, such as Tschoerner, Model, Richthofen, Greim, Kesselring, Guderian, Milch, and others; Those officers who under General Reinecke made out of the Armed Forces Nazi Mercenaries, and indoctrinated the army with the curse of this system; The members of the Court of Honor of the army, and finally all those who as individuals committed crimes against martial and human law.

The General Staff of the army (with the exception of certain individuals) was, under its Chiefs Beck and Halder, never a place where agitation for war was conducted; on the contrary, it always tried through professional objectivity to prevent a war. The office of Admiral Canaris and my own office within the OKW, have always fought against war. It would therefore be a mistake to put the General Staff of the Army and the OKW in their entirety on an equal footing with criminal organizations of the party.

In industry and economy those men bear guilt who supported the corruption of the system in order to gain advantages, and those who, by their irresponsible advice, furthered the continuation of the war, together with the Reich Ministry for Armaments and War Production. Finally, those are guilty who tried to enrich wether themselves or their concerns at the expense of foreign property.

It is ~~simply~~ a duty to emphasize that there are those among the indicted organizations as well as under the arrested members of industry, estate owners, army and officialdom, who did nothing except to fulfil their duty toward the fatherland. They will be able to account for what they have done before God and humanity. It would be desirable to have these men return to their families and possessions as soon as possible in order to help in the conversion of the German people to a world of peace and conciliation among peoples.

The men of the opposition group believe, even if they ^{did} ~~am~~ not attain their holiest objectives, that by their actions they have fulfilled their ^{holiest} duties before God, the German people, and the whole world. They have fought for their virtues and for the ~~the~~ rights of humanity, in whose behalf the United States and England took up

the struggle. The majority of these men paid for their faith in God and humanity and for their love of the fatherland with death. Our wives and children are the victims of the greatest misery. Therefore, I would like to express a request, side by side with my indictment of the guilty ones, that the families whose fathers fought for Germany's liberation from this system, be taken care of by the Allied victors.

/s/ THOMAS

12 November 1945