

10.08
6. H of November 1945

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To: General Donovan

From: Dr. v. Schlebrendorff

Subject: General Thomas

I have the honour to give you a statement of
General Thomas over his part in the fight of the German
General Staff against Hitler.

v. Schlebrendorff

MY PART IN THE FIGHT AGAINST HITLER

From 1936 on I lectured extensively about military economy and, under this cover, demonstrated to the German economic circles that Hitler's continuing, expanding propaganda for a "Blitzkrieg" was madness, since an eventual new war would necessarily be a long material war and Germany could not go through such a war economically on account of her food, financial and raw material situation. I conducted a systematic propaganda campaign against war and directed my military economic organization accordingly.

In just the same way, I worked against Hitler's autocratic plans and demonstrated that a close tie with world economy was of the greatest importance for Germany's welfare.

From 1937 on : close alliance with General Beck, then Chief of General Staff, for the purpose of carrying on propaganda against Hitler's designs for war.

From 1938 on : close working arrangement with the group which included Beck, Goerdeler, Oster, Canaris, Gisevius, Schacht, and Count Helldorf, with the objective of overthrowing the Hitler government.

From the summer of 1939 on: close alliance with Minister Popitz, Goerdeler, Beck, Oster, Plank and Ambassador von Hassel, to prevent the war. On the basis of these conferences, I drew up a memorandum proving that an attack on Poland must lead to a new world war, that this war would be a long material war and that Germany could not survive the war economically; therefore the war must be prevented.

I presented this memorandum to Keitel 14 days before the beginning of the war in Poland. Keitel interrupted me, did not let me finish talking and declared that Hitler would never start a new world war; that there was no danger at all - according to Hitler, the French were a depraved, pacifist people, the English were much too decadent to really help Poland, and America would never again send a soldier to Europe to "pull England's or Poland's chest-nuts out of the fire."

On the evening before the day originally set for the attack on Poland, which was then postponed for some days, Schacht, Gisevius and Oster came to my home and begged me to go to Keitel or Halder again, to ask them to prevent the attack on Poland. We then went together to see Canaris, and learned that the invasion date had been postponed. On the Sunday before the day of the attack, I tried again to convince Keitel and Hitler of the threatening danger of a new world war (and submitted detailed, statistical data about our economic war potential and that of our probable enemy). Keitel was again scornful and unreceptive, but told me the next day that he had submitted the material to Hitler. Hitler again said there was no danger of a world war and pointed especially to his great success with the Russian pact. I was kept completely uninformed by Keitel about the true events which at the time went on politically.

During those days Halder refused me an audience which I requested. A conversation with the Head Quartermaster, General von Stülpnagel, revealed the fact that the OKH was willing to carry out the Polish campaign according to Hitler's plans, without opposition. Stülpnagel had expressed his strongest objections; I told him the opinion of my friends. ./. .

In the course of the Polish campaign, Hitler and Goering next demanded the complete economic exploitation (plundering) of Poland. I warned against it and suggested putting Polish economy back in order as quickly as possible.

From the middle of September - close working arrangement with Popitz, Goerdeler, Beck, Oster and Hassel. Decided to try to induce the OKW to make a putsch if Hitler was not ready to come to an understanding with the Western Powers.

I undertook the task of informing General Halder, Chief of Staff, of our judgment of the situation and our demand, and of arranging a conference between Brauchitsch, and Halder on one side, and Goerdeler, Popitz and Beck on the other.

27 November, 1939 - two-hour conference with Halder. He appreciated our objections and our opinion, but said that Brauchitsch could not be brought into a plot against the State and in the present situation he could not over-play Brauchitsch and split the army leadership into two factions.

Halder gave the following reasons for his decision :

1. The German Army was not adapted to a coup d'Etat - the younger officer corps were politically completely unreliable and were devoted (faithful) to Hitler.
2. They (the German Army) had no one who was suitable to replace Hitler as head of the State.
3. After the defeat of 1918, the German people were completely ruined for years and needed a new pattern of living, which National Socialism had ./.

provided.

4. The English were fighting not only against Hitler and the Nazis, but against the German people and their new ascendancy.

5. We could not let ourselves be deceived again as we had been by the promises of Wilson in 1918.

I replied that history would not only hold the head of the State responsible for the loss of a new war, but also the highest military leadership, and that even an unsuccessful attack in the West could mean Germany's downfall. Halder reminded me that Ludendorff was not held responsible for the loss of the 1st World War. At my continuing pressure, Halder declared himself ready to receive Goerdeler's written proof of the situation so that not only through me but through economic circles the OKH could be given a picture of the situation such as it appeared to people who really knew foreign countries.

Some time later, I arranged a conference between Beck and Halder and then transmitted twice a letter and exchange of ideas between Halder and Goerdeler.

At the beginning of December 1939, I went to Witzleben and Sodenstern in Frankfurt a/Main to inform them of our opinion and to ask them to oppose an intended western front invasion. They promised to influence Generals von Rundstedt and von Bock against this.

Beginning of December 1939 : conversation with General von Reichenau, who likewise was strongly opposed to an attack in the West and a world war and was especially impressed by the strong economic objections of the Western (Western Germany) heavy industry. At the beginning of 1940

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I informed Keitel and Halder that, according to a report from Geheimrat Dr. Buecher of AEG, the Belgian King was of the opinion that there was still a possibility of an understanding between Germany and England, even with National Socialism continuing.

Canaris and I warned Keitel several times of what effect the over-running (invasion) of the neutral countries Belgium and Holland must have on the outside world. Keitel was not receptive to our objections.

January or February 1940 : I informed Halder that Goering was trying to come to an understanding with England, through channels in Sweden, and recommended that Brauchitsch ally himself with Goering for the preservation of world peace. Halder maintained that this was hopeless as no one trusted Goering.

At the beginning of April 1940, I interrupted my cure in a sanatorium in Dresden to inform Halder that a communication from Rome indicated that the Pope was prepared to offer the services of the Vatican to negotiate for the preservation of world peace on condition that the government of Hitler-Ribbentrop be removed. After 10 days' study, Halder returned the report to me with the notation that Brauchitsch had taken note of it, but had refused to take any steps. My request that he receive Ambassador von Hassel for further discussion of peace possibilities was likewise refused. (Brauchitsch wanted to have me arrested, but Halder prevented it.)

In a letter on Easter Sunday, 1940, Halder wrote Goerdeler that the Army would do its duty for the Fatherland even against the Government if the critical situation

of the Fatherland demanded it.

Autumn of 1940 : memorandum of Wirtschaftsrüstungs-
amtes (Economic Armaments Office) to the Chiefs of the General
Staff of the Wehrmacht and to Keitel, in which I took a stand
against the planned mass air attacks against English industrial
cities. Goering sent the memorandum, with strong marginal
notes, to Hitler and added that he would never be able to
destroy England's economy with the Luftwaffe if responsible
men in the OKW obstructed it with these defeatist views.

Canaris and I constantly warned Keitel and the
OKH about underestimating the danger from America, and of
the consequences of an eastern front.

Reichenau stabbed us in the back completely with
his propaganda for the "Feldherrn Hitler". From the autumn
of 1940 on, close alliance with General Olbricht and vain
efforts to win over Col. General Fromm for the overthrow of
Hitler.

In November 1940, after it was realized that
Hitler also planned to attack Russia, we were agreed that
we could not wait until the OKH was ready to carry out the
putsch, but that we must either win over one of the Field
Marshals to our plan or must go ahead with the attempt our-
selves. I was in favor of the first solution, as in my opinion
the whole National Socialist Government together with the
Führer Headquarters, had to be overthrown and as one must
always consider the danger of the failure of a putsch. In
the spring of 1941, Stülpnagel, Canaris and I tried to win over
the OKH to make use of the impending Eastern crisis to over-
throw Hitler. Halder himself was very much in favor of it,
but could not successfully persuade Brauchitsch. Halder, twice
dismissed me, inwardly broken, and with the deepest regret
that - under the prevailing conditions among the top leaders

of the OKH - he could see no possibility of carrying out the plan.

In the summer of 1941 I went to see Field Marshal von Rundstedt and his chief, Sodenstern, Field Marshal von Bock and his chief, Greifenberg, and Field Marshal Leeb, to inform them of the economic war prospects and to point out to them the necessity of ending the war. Only Sodenstern and Greifenberg had any understanding of it. In the autumn of 1941 Goerdeler and I drew up a document about the German economic situation and prospects and urgently demanded the end of the war. As a warning cry of German economy, we had this document signed by some leading men from industry, agriculture, trade and banking circles, and sent it to General Halder, so that he could once more persuade the OKH to take steps to negotiate. General Director Stahl (Repr. chairman of the Reichs group for Industry), Herr von Zitzewitz/Kottau, Goerdeler and three other men whose names I am no longer certain of, signed the document. The so-called "great men" of industry refused to sign this document, because it was too dangerous for them. Also, this document only resulted in my friends' and my being rejected more and more as defeatists.

Spring, 1942 : conference with Field Marshal Kluge, who agreed with us, but did not think the time was ripe.

Summer 1942 : I looked up General Field Marshal List in Stalino, informed him and asked him to receive Goerdeler. List agreed, but shortly afterwards he was sent home by Hitler.

Winter 1942 : I sent my intimate friend and confident, Colonel Beutler, to General Field Marshal Mannstein

and had him inform Mannstein of the necessity of ending the war by removing Hitler. Mannstein was of the opinion that the day would still come (there would be another opportunity), but that for various reasons the time was not yet ripe. In the autumn, 1942, I spoke to Field Marshal Rommel and believe that my arguments contributed to his joining our side later on.

Autumn 1942 : Keitel forbade me to give any further economic information about our war potential and that of our enemies, to the Chiefs of General Staff since Hitler had been scandalized by them more than once and the Wehrmachtteile would be unfavorably influenced by these too "objective" expositions.

Winter 1942 : Several memoranda, in which I proved that the occupation of Stalingrad was of little use to us and that Russia could only be defeated economically if we had the Ural industries, besides the Kaukasian oil district and the newly-opened oil fields between the Volga and the Urals. After the debacle at Stalingrad, I took the standpoint with Plank, and later with Oster, that now, after the war was really lost, it was unsuitable to attack Hitler, since a new government could only have a disgraceful peace, and if the attack succeeded, a great part of the German population would place the blame only on the Generals and Hitler would be considered a martyr and great leader. This must be prevented.

After the collapse of Stalingrad, in confidential talks with the Bulgarian War Minister, General Michoff, the head of Italian armaments, General, and the Finnish head of Economics, General Grandell, as well as with the Hungarian Minister Stojay, I took the standpoint that we, as responsible advisors of our Governments, must recommend their making peace as quickly as possible, as we could not continue the war in the face of the superiority of our enemy,

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and no longer had any prospects of victory. 1943 : several talks with Popitz, Langbehn, Olbricht and Beck. Beck again tried to win Mannstein over.

Summer 1943 : Goerdeler informed me that his preparations were made for Hitler's overthrow.

Autumn 1943 : I arranged a conference between Popitz and Witzleben.

11 December 1943, Olbricht had me informed that I should hold myself in readiness - that they hoped to attack Hitler. In the winter 1943-1944, my friends and I saw that a continuation of the war could only bring a greater disaster upon Germany. For that reason I tried to inform England and America, through my Swiss connections, that the terror attacks did not contribute to ending the war, but only evoked frightful misery and to a great extent hit innocent people. I had them told that the attack targets for ending the war quickly were alone large power works, gasoline installations, ball-bearing and crank-shaft industries. The attacks on residential quarters were really murderous and would only stir up more hatred in the population and strengthen support for the government.

When I moved to Muskau in the beginning of 1944, my Adjutant, Lt. Colonel Doehner, acted as liaison between my friends.

April and beginning of June 1944: last discussions with Olbricht and Popitz. At the beginning of July 1944 Plank informed me that connections had been made with the Left Parties for the purpose of working together to overthrow Hitler.

11 October 1944 : Arrested.

(signed) Thomas.
(Gen. Thomas was in Speer's ministry)