

Testimony of Hermann Goering,  
taken at Nurnberg, Germany on  
8 October 1945, 1500 - 1620, by  
Colonel John H. Amen, IGD, OUSCC.  
Also present: Pfc Richard W. Sonnenfeldt, Interpreter; WOJG Jack  
Rund, Court Reporter.

COL. AMEN TO THE INTERPRETER:

Q State your full name, rank, and position.

A Pfc Richard W. Sonnenfeldt, interpreter for the  
OUSCC.

Q Do you solemnly swear that you will truly and faithfully interpret from English into German and from German into English, the questions put to this witness, and his answers thereto, so help you God?

A I do.

COL. AMEN TO THE WITNESS, THROUGH THE INTERPRETER, IN GERMAN:

Q Who is Dr. Joel?

A I have to think about it. I heard that name once.

Q You had a conference with him on 24 September 1942 about enlisting some convicts to go around and commit murder, arson and rape, behind the lines in Russia, did you not?

A I refute that in the most emphatic manner. I never did. The name of Joel that comes to my mind is in an entirely different connection. I believe he was a State Secretary in the Ministry for Justice, as far as I remember, but I don't know anything about this.

Q I will show you a document, being number 638-PS, and ask you to read it and tell me whether that helps you to remem-

ber anything about such a conference.

(Document handed to witness who reads same.)

A This is right. That is the same Joel, but maybe I misunderstood. They were not to commit any rape there. They had a taste of - you translated it in such a way as though they were to commit rape, back there.

Q Well, that is what the translation says?

A But not here. The document says, "I am looking for young fellows who can be committed in the East as special commandos in order to execute the tasks of disturbance behind the lines.

(The interpreter, Pfc Sonnenfeldt, translates this document as follows:)

"Mark on the upper left hand margin says "copy". From the statement of the Reichs Marshal, on the 24th September, 1942. First paragraph. The Reichs Marshal is looking for young and impetuous fellows who may be committed in the East as special commandos, and which can be used to execute tasks of disturbance behind the lines. They are to be organized in bands, and which also shall have interpreters attached to them. The Reichs Marshal is thinking of convicts in this connection, who did wrong once, but who did not commit any acts implicating their honor, and where there is human understanding for their acts.

The Reichs Marshal mentioned immediately, convicts which had been held for poaching. He does know that the Reichs Fuehrer SS asked and obtained the so-called poachers. He is asking for a renewed examination of this. Only such men can be taken who have poached out of passion, or for the trophies, but he does not want any of those who merely put traps. The Reichs Marshal said, further, that the impassioned members of smugglers' bands who had been fighting in fire fighting at the border, and whose passion it was to cheat the Customs Protection Police by risking their own lives, were desirable, but not men who tried to bring objects like this across the border in express trains.

The Reichs Marshal further says to examine whether also other groups of convicts can be obtained for these bands or Hunt Commandos.

In the areas in which these bands are to work, their task shall be in the first line, the destruction of wires, and of partisan groups. They are allowed to murder, burn, commit rape. However, when they return to their own country, they shall be again under the strictest supervision.

Signed, Dr. Joel, 24 of August 1942;

Berlin 6 of October 1942. To the gentlemen of MD Section 4 and 5. The attached extraction from the conference minutes of Ministerial Counsel Dr. Joel is hereby submitted for the preparation of a report on Friday, the 9th of October.

The section going to State Secretary Dr. Rothenberger, attention please."

Q That is what I said, is it not? To commit murder, arson and rape?

A The document says that they were allowed to murder, burn, and so on, but it was not meant like this. As you will notice, I say explicitly in the first two paragraphs that only such convicts were to be taken when their criminal act had not implicated their honor.

Q That has nothing to do with what they are going to do when you put them behind the lines, has it?

A They were to create disturbances <sup>as</sup> behind the lines, and they were to sabotage railroads, just the Russians did to us. You can easily find that I inflicted the strictest penalties for rape, mostly death, and that should be contained in many documents.

Q But what the memorandum says is, that these people are authorized to commit murder, arson and rape.

A But I did not write this memorandum.

Q It is an official document though, is it not? That is what Dr. Joel understood you to say, isn't it?

A Dr. Joel understood it like he understood it. It was not submitted to me.

Q But that is the idea he got from talking to you, isn't it?

A This ~~is~~ not true, under any circumstances. He may have understood that, but there was any number of people there. Moreover, it is in direct contradiction to my attitude about rape.

Q Where do you suppose Dr. Joel got the idea, if he didn't get it from you?

A I don't know just where he got it from. This was a general conference about that matter, and I don't think it was ever expressed about that thing. The decisive thing was that they were to create disturbances, and that they were to sabotage lines of communication, railroads, and so on. What interest could I have had to send bands there to rape, murder, burn, and so on. The thing in here says that I did not request any criminals. I requested those whose honor was not implicated.

Q What has that got to do with what you authorized them to do after they got behind the lines?

A I said in the first two paragraphs that they were to create disturbances and destroy lines of communication, and the third paragraph is in direct contradiction to the first two.

Q Murder, arson, and rape are disturbances, are they not?

A What I object to mainly is the rape part of it, because I was always very much against that. What ever that man wrote about that is pure phantasy. My chief judge can be heard about that. That was later von Hammerstein, and he knows just what kind of penalties I inflicted for rape.

Q You take no exception, then, to the murder and arson?  
It is just the rape.

A Well, this thing is really written up with a sprouting phantasy. On the other hand, of course, if they were to burn down things that did damage to the enemy, I wouldn't have been against that. If they would burn down warehouses or granaries, or something like that, that would have damaged the enemy. Then, moreover, if these troops had been organized, they would have been given specific instructions. However, they never were organized.

Q Can we agree that they were given a pretty free hand?

A You mean in the missions that they should have received?

Q Yes. Why do you feel so strongly about rape?

A I repeatedly asked for, and finally had it executed, that the German criminal law was changed in 1937 in order to give heavier penalties for rape than before, and when it was up to me, I usually inflicted the death penalty. I upset almost all judgments which only called for imprisonment, and asked for stronger punishment.

Q I say, why did you feel so strongly about it?

A Because I think that this is the most shameless crime. That is worse than murder.

Q Who is Dr. Joel?

A I was wrong before. He was not a State Secretary, but a director in the Ministry of Justice.

Q Who else was present at this conference?

A I don't remember exactly any more, but I am quite certain that one of my Adjutant's must have been there, but I seem to remember that there were quite a few people.

Q Did you get these people organized?

A No.

Q Why not?

A Unfortunately there wasn't enough time to do it. The whole war behind the Russian lines did not work out. It worked very well, the other way around.

Q You have no reason to question the authenticity of this document, have you?

A No, that I don't have.

Q You just don't think he should have put rape in there?

A Yes. Absolutely. He should have left that out because I am certain I never said that.

Q I ask to have the document, being #638-PS, marked for identification on the Stair Evidence Analysis, Exhibit "B" of today's date, (Goering).

Do you recall a conference on or about 16-7-41, at which you were present, at the Fuehrer's headquarters with the Fuehrer, Rosenberg, Lammers, Keitel, and Bormann, at which you considered the German policy toward newly occupied areas in Russia, and personalities to be put in charge of the various areas?

A Yes. I remember a little bit about it.

Q Do you remember that that was the conference at which decided that in order to pacify the Russians as quickly it was dei

as possible, the best solution would be to shoot anybody who looked sideways?

A No. It was never expressed like that.

Q Well, that is the way it reads in the translation of the document that I have here. Maybe you can correct the translation, if you don't think it is right. I show you Document #L-221, being the minutes of the meeting about which I have questioned you, and ask you to read them over and tell me whether you are familiar with these minutes and whether they correctly reflect what transpired at this meeting. The part I told you about is on Page 9.

(Document is handed to witness who reads same.)

A This document contains many things that are correct, and it also contains many things that are exaggerated. It is mentioned here in a few places, just what my views were, and it is correct in so far as it goes. I was not interested in all the other things, but I argued that the food situation, and the economy, and the transport question should be solved in the occupied areas, as soon as possible. These minutes here seem to be taken down by Bormann, or rather, he wrote them down after the conference and the things contained in this document seem to be representing more just what was going through Bormann's head, than what actually happened. For instance, I can't remember at all the part about looking sideways. I don't think any-



thing about that was ever mentioned. There are a few absolute misrepresentations, that is, political misrepresentations in there, which did not in any way conform to the ideas that the Fuehrer had.

Q Doesn't this document state, on page 9, "Naturally, this giant area would have to be pacified as quickly as possible. The best solution was to shoot anybody who looked sideways."

A I don't remember this thing at all, and the Fuehrer did not say it. This is more something that Bormann drew up, and it went through his head. Anyway, if this had been mentioned, it wasn't official. It was merely being talked about.

Q But I say, that is what the document says.

A Yes.

Q And you can identify the document as being the official minutes of the meeting, as written up by Bormann, or under his direction. Is that right?

A Yes, but I say, there are several things in there that were misunderstood.

Q I understand, but you have no question to raise about the authenticity of that document, do you?

A No.

Q You just think that Bormann didn't correctly express the sentiments of the meeting, in some respects.

A That is especially true about some political things in there that he discusses. It happens very often that somebody takes the minutes and then the things he sets down on paper

are no relation to what was said. I have seen many documents like that, and it has happened to me personally in the interrogations I had before I came here, that somebody showed me the minutes that had been taken of them, and they said entirely the opposite of what I have said.

Q Nevertheless, these are the official minutes of that meeting, in so far as there were any official minutes. Is that right?

A Yes. For instance, here is one of these things--just a detail. The document says here: "The Reichs marshal thinks it right that several parts of the Baltic States, for instance, the Bialostok Forest should be incorporated into East Prussia." I was of the opinion that the forest should be incorporated into East Prussia, but I didn't say anything at all about the Baltic States. It has got nothing to do with it, and they don't belong to the Baltic States.

Q How do you translate the word "Aussiedlung", as it occurs in that document?

A Aussiedlung. That is quite clear. That is, if you take a certain part of the population that is now living in a certain area and resettle them, that is, you force them to evacuate this area.

Q To go somewhere else?

A Yes.

Q How about the remarks in there, on page 10, with respect to the churches? Does that correctly reflect what the Fuehrer said?

A Yes. That is correct.

Q And the remarks about Finland. Do they correctly reflect what was said at the meeting concerning the annexation of Finland?

A The Fuehrer never said either that the Volga colony should become a German District and belonged to the Reich. The same applies to Baku, which was not supposed to become a military colony. No. That was not said. What was said was that if that area was to be occupied, it was to be administered by the Germans during the war, and then the area was to be returned to the Finns after the war. Those nickel deposits were in Finland itself.

Q But you don't recall anything about the remark that the best solution was to shoot anybody who looked sideways?

A That is nonsense.

Q Where do you think that Bormann would have gotten that idea to put into the official minutes, if it wasn't said by somebody?

A That may be one of his - well, I don't remember it - well, as I said before, this may be just a phrase that was used there, and by the way, this was something that Bormann always liked to say. Just to give you another instance of how the Fuehrer might use a remark like that. He had been annoyed, say, about my technical department, and he would come and say to me, "Well, the best thing is to string up the whole technical department on a nail," and somebody would come and find a docu-

ment which said that, and it would be quoted as his intent and purpose.

Q You mean Bormann, or the Fuehrer?

A The Fuehrer too. I don't deny that the Fuehrer said it. Absolutely not. But if he said it, it was just a phrase.

Q In any event you have no reason to question the authenticity of this document. Is that right?

A No.

Q I ask to have the document marked for identification as Exhibit C of today's date (Goering) being Document #L-221. Did you ever see this memorandum from Papen about the churches?

A No. I don't remember anything about this memorandum of Von Papen's. However, I do remember it was the first intention to restore the churches in Russia, but I don't remember this.

Q I show you a document #R-92, being a report to Himmler as Commissioner for Consolidation of German Polldom, with regard to the seizure of Polish estates pursuant to the Goering decree of 17 September 1940, and ask you whether you have seen this document before and are familiar with its contents, and can identify it as an official copy of the report.

(Document handed to witness who reads part of it.)

Q Don't read it all, word for word, unless you have to in order to identify it.

A I don't know this, but I believe that it is an official document.

Q Look at the last page.

A You mean the very last page.

Q Any of the pages where the authentication appears.

A I don't know the names that are mentioned in the document.

Q Have you any reason to question the authenticity of the document?

A No. That I don't have.

Q You can identify it as an official copy of the report?

A Yes. It gives me the absolute impression of an official document.

Q I ask to have the document marked for identification as Exhibit D, of today's date (Goering). You do recall your decree of 17 September 1940 with regard to the seizure of the Polish estates?

A Yes. This law had jurisdiction over the former German area that had been incorporated into Germany in 1918.

Q Was that the decree in conformity with the German Policy with regard to dealing with Polish properties?

A This was an order and also the policy of the Fuehrer. I, myself, could not have issued this decree. It was his intention that the area that has once belonged to Germany and then had come into Polish hands was to be given back into German hands.

Q But I say, did that decree correctly reflect the policy of the Fuehrer in dealing with Polish properties?

A Yes.

Q Were you in agreement with that policy?

A Yes. I agreed with him as far as the former German area is concerned.

Q How did you differ with him?

A I didn't have any differences with him about that.

Q You remember that I questioned you sometime back, about the Reichstag fire?

A Yes.

Q I suggested to you that you had instigated that fire.

A Yes, and I said there was not a true word in it.

Q That is right. You also said that you were satisfied the fellow who was responsible for the fire was the fellow who was executed. Is that right?

A Yes.

Q Now, I am going to show you what purports to be a confession of one of the persons who was responsible for the fire, and ask you to read it over and tell me what your view of that is.

(Document handed to witness who reads same.)

A I already heard about this letter at the time - well, I don't know whether it was this letter, but anyway, the foreign press mentioned these things repeatedly, but <sup>it</sup> is complete nonsense.

Q Have you any way of demonstrating it is complete nonsense?

A In my opinion this is one of the men that belonged to the Roehm clique, and after the 30th of June 1934, he kept himself busy by making such statements. As I told you the

other day, the fire did not originate in such a manner, but it was found out in the investigation by the Supreme Reich Court that there were self-igniting cannisters placed into the hall and on the lower seats, and that is the way the fire started.

Q I know what the court found, but that doesn't necessarily mean that it is true.

A This is absolute nonsense, and as far as I am concerned the investigation was correct. As I said the other day, the most complete nonsense for me to set fire to my own house as the Reichstag President. For instance, he says here, as one of the reasons, that otherwise the elections might take a bad turn. Well, it is a fact that the elections already took place before the Reichstag fire.

Q Oh, no.

A Yes, yes. The first meeting of the Reichstag still was in the old Reichstag.

Q We went into all that before.

A Well, not about the elections for the Reichstag. They were right after the 30th of January. No. They were decided right after the 30th of January.

Q The documents will show the dates. I don't mean this document, but I mean the official documents.

A Yes, but this is complete nonsense put out by some little man.

Q Why would this little man want to implicate himself in such an occurrence if it never took place?

A Well, at this time he didn't have to be afraid of anything any more. Why did he wait until July 1934, in the first place. He was abroad, and possibly he did this out of a feeling of revenge. Then <sup>he</sup> goes ahead and publishes all that wisdom at no risk to himself. Possibly somebody even in Switzerland instigated him to do this.

Q Have you any information about it?

A Of what?

Q Of this man.

A I know nothing at all about this man, but I read in the foreign press that an SA man had written to the press, and statements like these went back and forth constantly after the fire.

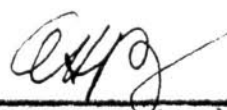
Q I ask to have this photostat copy of the document, being D-68, marked for identification as Exhibit E of today's date (Goering).

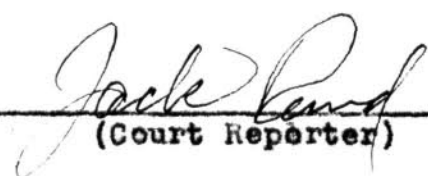
A As far as I remember, different statements about the origin of the Reichstag fire were published in the foreign press. He may have heard about this version, that he is describing here, from that source. In all these statements the underground passage that went from the President's building to the other building, played a great role in it, and I assume that this registered with him and he used it in this statement. Luber could not even speak German so far as I know, so he wasn't even in the SA. He was a Dutch Communist.



APPROVED:

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Interrogator)

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(Interpreter)

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(Court Reporter)