

Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT **SECRET**

TO : Lt. Commander O'Malley

FROM : Robert Eisenberg *RE*

SUBJECT: Interrogation of Hermann Röchling

DATE: 17 August 1945

It would seem profitable to recapitulate in a few words what is known about background and carrier of the interrogated.<sup>1</sup>

Ever since the first world war Hermann Röchling was one of Germany's leading industrialists, which was due both to his economic power as head of the Röchling combine -- the leading steel producers of the Saar basin -- and to his political activities. After the defeat of 1918 Hermann Röchling chose to play the role of a diehard nationalist and protagonist of a return of the Saar to the Reich. (It must be noted that this was the only solution which guaranteed employment and profits for the Saar Steel industry.) The role which he played in German political life made him a natural partner of Nazism; before 1935 his contacts with leading Nazis were close, but after reincorporation of the Saarland he evidently was not allowed to play an active political role. He found compensation in the rearmament boom in which his plants prospered producing construction and special steels used among others for the building of the Reich superhighways, machine tools, war materials, and, in 1938-1939, the building of the Westwall fortifications. In summer 1940, after conclusion of the French campaign Hermann Röchling was appointed Commissioner for operation of the steel works in occupied Lorraine, most of which had until 1918 been in German hands. In 1941 the plants were turned over for operation to individual German firms and the Röchlings took over the Thionville plants. They reorganized the corporate structure of the plants but were careful enough not to expropriate the French owners outright, assuming only trusteeship of the stock.

The reorganization of German industrial controls which Speer began in 1942 resulted in Hermann Röchling's appointment to the czar of the steel industry both in Germany and in all German controlled countries. He was made head of the Ring Iron Industry, of the Economic Group Iron Industry and the Reichsvereinigung ( supercartel ) Iron Industry and plenipotentiary for the steel industry in all occupied territories. He was a member of the Armament Council and held many

- 
1. See Situation Report, Central Europe of 10 March 1945 as well as biographical report on Hermann Röchling of 9 May 1945 for more details.

**SECRET**

**SECRET**

Subject: Interrogation of Hermann Röchling

honors bestowed to him by Hitler for his part in the war effort. Nevertheless shortly before he received the last decoration, in December 1944, there was a rumor current to the effect that he had been arrested because of defeatism.

Hermann Röchling can be considered a war criminal on the following counts:

- a. He supported the Nazi party during their campaign for acquiring power in Germany and in the Saar;
- b. he organized the exploitation of the steel industries in occupied Europe;
- c. he had part in organizing the use of slave labor in the German steel industry;
- d. he organized the spoliation of French steel works in the Lorraine and Moselle regions preparing their postwar expropriation and transferring actual possession into the hands of German firms;
- e. he enriched himself and his family supplying steel for the German rearmament, building of fortifications and war production;
- f. he enriched himself by sharing in the spoils of the near-expropriation of French steel works;
- g. he employed slave labor in his own plants.

Hermann Röchling is probably fully aware of these qualifications. He will undoubtedly avoid during any interview to make statements which might incriminate him before a war crimes court. It may however be possible to secure from him information on the part played by others in the preparation of war and the spoliation of property in occupied territories which he might convey in order to exculpate himself if evidence presented to him would purport his responsibility. It is certain that he knows of arrangements between Hitler and the leading men in German industry regarding the exploitation of industry in occupied countries and has detailed knowledge of the procedure used when policies were formulated for the control during the war and post-war organization of such industries. From captured files of I. G. Farben and other German firms it is known that leading German firms as well as industrial organizations were in close contact with the German

**SECRET**

**SECRET**

Subject: Interrogation of Hermann Röchling

government in matters of formulating policies on treatment of the corresponding industries (chemical industry in Western Europe, for example); there is also evidence that German firms were promised the right to acquire after the war participation in industrial firms in France and other Western European countries. (See for example Göring's directive V.P. 16411/5 of 7 October 1940 for farming out of orders to Western Europe.)

The Röchlings did not share in the spoils of German conquests in the East; it is possible that Hermann Röchling will be willing to talk about the part the Krupps, the Ballestrems, or the Göring Works had in this spoliation. Röchling might be asked specifically according to which principles the Lorraine steel works were divided up among the German firms which took them over in 1942; how foreign labor was allocated between the various industries and plants; in which form the German steel industry was forced to contribute to the financing of the Hermann Göring Works; how he can explain the German policy in regard to steel works in occupied Russia, and so on.

Specific questions as to arrangements within industry to support Hitler should refer to the meeting of industrialists held in January 1932 in Dusseldorf in which Hitler outlined his plans for economic penetration into the East; the raising of a 3 million RM election fund by German industry which was decided upon request of Schacht in a meeting of German industrialists in February 1933 in which Hitler promised to fight against Communism (see statement of Georg von Schnitzler quoted in May 1945 report of US Group CC Finance Division).

**SECRET**