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OFFICE OF U. S. CHIEF OF COUNSEL
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INTERROGATION DIVISION SUMMARY

Interrogation of Franz von PAPEN

By: Thomas J. Dodd 8 October 1945 P.M. Nuremberg

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 - b. Position in the Balkans (p. 3 - 5)
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 - (1) relation with Schuschnigg (pp. 9-12, 24 - 27, 31, 35 - 40, 54 - 56)
 - (2) Von Runtelen (p. 13 - 15)
 - (3) Leo Blum (p. 28 - 29)
 - (4) Papen's decoration for effecting Anschluss (41 - 45)
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2. Von NEURATH
 - a. His information about Austria (p. 49)
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RELATIONSHIP WITH U. S. CONSUL MESSERSMITH

Von Papen says he remembers the U.S. Consul, Mr. Messersmith who used to be in Berlin, but he does not recall having paid him a visit, etc. after his arrival in Vienna. Says he had several conversations with him, and it is possible, or probable that he had a conversation with him at the time of his (Papen's) arrival in Vienna. Says he called on all the ministers accredited there. Cannot remember what he said to Messersmith when Messersmith paid him a return call. All he remembers is that he told all his colleagues, especially the French and English ministers, that his mission in Vienna was a particularly friendly one; that he would straighten out all troubles caused by Dollfuss' murder and that he would further the Anschluss in evolutionary ways only (p. 1 - 2); that his mission in Austria was to improve the Austrian state of affairs, especially by bringing about an economic unity with Germany.

THE BALKANS

Maintains Germany always had economic relations with Bulgaria, Rumania, Yugoslavia and Turkey but rejects the suggestion he had intimated that the Balkan up to the Turkish border was a natural sphere for German economic and political influence (p.3). Says he always disliked the term "Lebensraum" but that Germany certainly had legitimate reasons to seek commerce there, and that his mission was to establish Germany's economic influence in that region. He does not believe that he talked of spreading German influence when he began his mission though he may have done so later, when Germany's relations with these countries became increasingly friendly (p. 4 - 5).

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VON PAPEN AND THE AUSTRIAN QUESTIONS

Admits it is always a diplomat's mission to establish better relations. In the discussion with Hitler before he was sent to Vienna, Hitler had only one purpose in mind: To effect an Anschluss and save his reputation in Austria which had become endangered by recent events.

He rejects the suggestion that it was part of his mission to weaken Austria's influence, since Austria's influence in the Balken countries was good also for Germany; that the Anschluss did not depend so much on the Austrian government but rather on conditions in Austria which were far stronger than the government. Says the Austrian government at that time was very strong, very severe against the remnants of the National Socialists, whom they shut up in concentration camps (p. 6 - 7).

He considered his mission as meaning to bring about a kind of federation between Austria and Germany, give Austria autonomy within the Reich, similar to Bavaria's position; (p. 8). Recalls a conversation with Schuschnigg, when Schuschnigg was minister of justice and came to Berlin on a visit. Believes it must have been in the autumn of 1932, when he, Papen, was still Chancellor. Does not recall that he told Schuschnigg about the likelihood of Hitler's becoming chancellor. But he remembers Schuschnigg's book on Austria, in which he spoke about that visit with Papen in very friendly terms (p. 9 - 10).

Papen claims he cannot remember that in 1934, right after July 29, he had talks with Schuschnigg about seeing Hitler, thinks it is possible he made such a suggestion. Maintains he cannot remember anything about a memorandum drawn up about Schuschnigg's visit (p. 11 - 12).

Admits, in his customary evasive manner, after bickering that he knew Dr. von Rintelen, whom he met in Vienna. Von Rintelen was very much in favor of the Anschluss; may have been National Socialist but at that time National Socialism was rigidly forbidden in Austria. Says he can swear to it that he did not know whether Rintelen was a National Socialist (p. 13 - 14). Denies the truth of Schuschnigg's statement that Papen was closely associated with Rintelen and used him in Austria for years (p. 15).

Papen continues to avoid direct answers with respect to what he did to further National Socialist activities in Austria (p. 16 - 20). Admits that in Germany the general complaint was that Schuschnigg among many others favored restoration of the Habsburgs, which he, Papen himself, also considered a bad thing (p. 21). Admits vaguely that he may have said to Schuschnigg it would be all the same to Germany who was at the helm of Austria, an Austrian or a Habsburg, in the event of an Anschluss (p. 22 - 23). Admits that Schuschnigg expressed to him many times he had doubts in Hitler. Says he himself had his doubts about Hitler, but admits that he urged Schuschnigg to believe in Hitler's reliability (p. 24).

Admits that Schuschnigg in 1936, when the agreement was drawn up, was not in favor of Anschluss (p. 25 - 27).

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Admits having had a conversation about Austrian Anschluss with Leon Blum, in November 1937, when he visited Paris for the World Exposition. Claims not to remember that Schuschnigg asked him about this conversation (p. 28 - 29). Admits estrangements with Schuschnigg at several times. Did not see Schuschnigg, the head of the government, very often. After much bickering, finally says that his visit to Paris was no secret. Denies again truth of Schuschnigg's statement (p. 31). Maintains that his negative and uncertain answers are due to the fact that he sent his notes and reports to Switzerland, to save them because he had a very good conscience, but that these papers later were taken by the Gestapo (p. 32 - 34) after his recall in 1938.

Papen says he discovered this fact when he was nearly put on trial for high treason. The German law forbade bringing papers to foreign countries, and that he had done it to be able to justify his activities (p. 34).

Describes Schuschnigg's reluctance to see Hitler whom he did not trust and how he tried to bring these two men together, in order to avoid greater difficulties. Says there was no written agreement as to what would be discussed at Berchtesgaden, reiterates his former description of what took place before and at Berchtesgaden (p. 35 - 38). Admits he knows that Schuschnigg must have been put under great pressure by Hitler, but cannot state this under his oath, as he was not present at their conversation (p. 38 - 39). Admits, after stalling, that he may have apologized to Schuschnigg afterwards for Hitler's behavior (p. 40).

Papen reiterates his former statements about his having been decorated for effecting the Anschluss, etc. (p. 41 - 45). Admits existence of an unpublished agreement providing peace, press peace and exchange of commerce, the so-called 'gentlemen's agreement'. After more bickering, admits that the important point in this unpublished agreement was the release of imprisoned Nazis in Austria which delighted Hitler so that he promoted Papen (p. 45 - 48).

Papen says that von Neurath never took great interest in the Austrian question. But that Neurath must have received copies of all of Papen's reports. They were good acquaintances, on cordial terms; he regards Neurath as an able man in politics (p. 49). Papen states that he thought Neurath sometimes was not strong enough to counteract Hitler in foreign politics; in the case of Germany's leaving the League of Nations, to which Papen was greatly opposed, Neurath remained wishy-washy. Further, in the case of Bohle, which Papen calls a typical case, where Bohle prohibited Reich Germans in Vienna to attend or give lectures in the 'Kulturbund', an association headed by a very fine woman, a Jewess, Papen was placed in an impossible situation. He had invited Professor Sauerbruch to give a lecture there, moreover he ordered the members of his embassy to attend there. In that situation he appealed to Neurath, but in vain (p. 50 - 51).

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Denies responsibility for the Nazis growing stronger in Austria while he was there. He did everything to calm them down. Conditions alone were responsible. (p.52) Reiterates his views with regard to the plebiscite, stated in previous interrogations. (p.52) Denies knowledge of the fact that a vote taken in some of the Austrian towns resulted in 75 or 80 percent of votes against Anschluss. (p.53)

Mentions the result of another vote, taken in Salzburg after the first world war, in 1919, which he calls a real plebiscite. (p.54) Admits, after more bickering, that he said to Schuschnigg that if he would reach an accord with Hitler, he would do a great service to his country and to the church (p. 54-56). States as his reason for doing this that he, like many German Catholics held the hope that this would strengthen the resistance of the Catholic church, in spite of the continuous persecution (p. 56-58). Wants to prove his good will in mentioning that he brought Cardinal Innitzer and Hitler together after Hitler had marched into Vienna (p.59).

Claims - reiterating former statements - that he held Hitler back from an armed invasion of Austria for four years. That he merely fulfilled his mission to accomplish a peaceful, friendly, evolutionary Anschluss, to avoid conflict. (p. 60-61)

Says he is ready to clear his record; told that his is merely a part of the record of history, he says he wants to be helpful to unravel past events, for the sake of his people, his country. (p. 62-63)