

OFFICE OF U.S. CHIEF OF COUNSEL
FOR THE PROSECUTION OF AXIS CRIMINALITY

INTERROGATION DIVISION SUMMARY

Interrogation of: Franz von Papen

By: Mr. T. J. Dodd, 12 October 1945, a.m. Nuremberg

PERSONS AND ORGANIZATIONS IMPLICATED, AND SUBJECTS

1. VON PAPEN
 - a. Participation in Austrian Anschluss
 - (1) Knowledge of Taus! and Capt. Leopold's exile from Austria (pp.1-2)
 - (2) Presence at Berlin chancellery meeting 11 March 1938 (pp.2-4)
 - (3) Proposals to Schuschnigg (p.5)
 - (1) Schuschnigg's visit to Berchtesgaden (pp.41-48)
 - (4) Views on unification with Austria (pp.10-11, pp.38-40)
 - b. Participation in and knowledge of Hindenburg's last testament. (pp.12-2)
 - c. Escape from Purge of 30 June 1934 (pp.27-31)
 - d. Knowledge of Reichstag fire (p.32)
 - e. Opinion of Fritz Thyssen (pp.34-35)
2. GOERING, HIMMLER
 - a. Responsibility for Purge of 30 June 1934.
3. SEYSS-INQUART
 - a. Proposals to Schuschnigg re Austrian Anschluss (p.5)
 - (1) Call for armed assistance in Vienna (pp.6-7)
4. KEITEL
 - a. Blind obedience to Hitler (pp.8-9)
5. GOERING, NEURATH, BRAUCHITSCH, KEITEL
 - a. Presence at Chancellery-Meeting of 11 March 1938 (pp.2-4)

PARTICIPATION IN AUSTRIAN ANSCHLUSS

Von Papen does not remember a discussion at Berchtesgaden between Hitler, Ribbentrop, himself and Schuschnigg concerning Taus and Capt. Leopold, that they should go to Germany from Austria and not return to Austria. (pp.1-2)

Concerning his flight to Berlin on the day before the Germans marched into Austria, he had been invited by telephone, probably by Hitler, to come to Berlin. He was in the Reich Chancellery all day but not in the room from where Goering called Schuschnigg on the telephone. He cannot remember whether Wiedemann was present, but Goering, Keitel, Neurath, Brauchitsch were there. Says he was a spectator merely but tried to convince Neurath,

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Keitel and Brauchitsch that an armed invasion must be avoided. An agreement was reached at about 5 P.M. and Hitler ordered there should be "no march in". News came from Vienna the new government had formed. (pp.2-4)

Recalls that about six P.M. the news came that President Miklas had resisted the forming of a new government. Then Hitler took back his order not to march in. Maintains he implored Hitler several times during that day not to march. (p.4) He remembered a new government was to be formed with "National Socialist in".

Von Papen says he had proposed to Schuschnigg, earlier in Vienna, to call off the plebiscite, which proposal was one of the three made by Seyss-Inquart to Schuschnigg on March 11; the second was to resign so that a new government could be formed. The third proposal, that Seyss-Inquart should be named chancellor, was unknown to von Papen. (p.5)

Heard that Seyss-Inquart had asked for armed assistance. Says he was not aware that this call for help had been pre-arranged (pp.6-7). Thinks that Keitel never had an own opinion, regarded Hitler as semi-God whose orders had to be obeyed blindly. (pp.8-9)

Von Papen accepted the job in Austria for the purpose of "achieving unification only by agreement and with the consent of the powers, not by force." (pp.9-10)

Alone from purely personal reasons, he was a lover of peace, not a warmonger. For years, he has been working for better understanding and closer cooperation as a member of the French-German committee. Von Papen's ideas, as often expressed to Chautemps and Leon Blum, were: unification in the form of a federal state with full autonomy for Austria. When Hitler first came to power, he inclined towards this form of state because he created the post of Reich Statthalter; only later on he turned toward this dreadful idea of unification. (pp.10-11)

Reiterates his account of his motives for working in Austria towards Anschluss. Denies he lured Schuschnigg to Berchtesgaden. Schuschnigg was convinced finally that he should have a talk with Hitler. Denies again there was an agenda for the talk (pp.38-39). Admits that Schuschnigg conveyed, diplomatically, that he had no faith in Hitler. Says Schuschnigg was convinced that the unification must come one day, but not while Hitler was still at the helm of Germany. That his own opinion differed only in that respect that he thought the situation in Europe was ripe, not dependant on personalities. (p.40)

Claims he cannot recall the conversation with Schuschnigg after Schuschnigg saw Hitler in Berchtesgaden, but admits that Schuschnigg if he says so, must be right. Claims he never heard of the eleven points raised by Hitler at Berchtesgaden. Admits his responsibility for Schuschnigg's visit to Berchtesgaden. Says the purpose of having the generals there was to intimidate Schuschnigg. (pp.41-48)

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HINDENBURG'S LAST TESTAMENT

With regard to a successor for Hindenburg in the Spring 1934, when Hindenburg's health was declining, von Papen mentions the three possibilities: Hitler might take over the post of head of state, combining it with the other of head of the government; secondly, Goering or some one else might be made Reich President. Both possibilities were considered unsatisfactory. And the third possibility was to convince Hitler to restore a monarchy. (p.12)

Papen suggested to Hindenburg to make an open testament which Hitler could have used, if he later wanted, to restore monarchy. After Hindenburg's death, Oscar von Hindenburg, the son, handed the testament to him. Papen in turn handed it to Hitler. Believes it was an authentic document, of which he does not recall the exact text. (p.13) Von Papen thinks that the praise of Hitler contained in the last will was merely in recognition of his achievements in unifying the German nation. (p.14)

Asked how it can be reconciled that Hindenburg's will was handed to Hitler by von Papen, after what happened on June 30, he says he had to deliver it, he could not change it. That between the blood purge and Hindenburg's death, he could not see Hindenburg at all (see also summary p.2 of October 22, 1945) (p.15)

Admits he tendered his resignation to Hitler on July 3, 1934 but knows nothing of Hindenburg's refusal, July 4, to accept his resignation. (p.16) Thinks that May 11, 1934, would be the approximate date of Hindenburg's last will. He does not remember that the text was to a large extent a reiteration of what Hindenburg had written in or about 1919, as his will to the German people. (p.17)

Von Papen insists that the last part of the will, referring to Hitler, etc., was Hindenburg's authentic expression, but that he was not present when Hindenburg wrote it. Says he only drafted it, that Hindenburg may have made corrections but that it was closed when he, Papen, got it after Hindenburg's death. (18)

The special reason for making the last will, restoration of the monarchy, was never revealed to the public. Thinks this paragraph must have been in the last will when he handed it to Hitler, on August 15 (pp.19-22). Admits that by early fall of 1934 he knew that the National Socialists had misused the testament. Asked how, knowing it, he could continue to serve such a government, Papen repeats that he felt great responsibility for that government, thought he could still influence Hitler somewhat. (pp.22-24)

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PURGE OF 30 JUNE 1934

Papen gives a lengthy explanation why he holds Himmler, the Gestapo and Goering chiefly responsible for the blood purge of June 30, 1934, and not Hitler, (pp. 25-27) and why he believes he was on Himmler's death list that day and that it was not Hitler who marked him for execution. (pp. 27-31)

REICHSTAG FIRE

Asked about the Reichstag fire, Papen says he learned like all others that the Reichstag had been burned by the National Socialist Party, from what was revealed at the trial of Van der Lubbe, the halfwit. (p. 32)

OPINION OF FRITZ THYSSEN

Admits that Fritz Thyssen, who first aided the Nazis, later opposed them. But he says that Thyssen never was a State Counsellor; that he was a member of the Prussian Staatsrat, from which post he resigned. After resigning, Thyssen emigrated. Papen, peeved, remarks that if he had emigrated he would also have written a book and protested, but that he didn't. (pp. 34-35) Repeats that he, too, resigned as vice chancellor, that he protested many times orally and in his reports about persecution of churches and Jews. (pp. 36-37)