

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

43.03

INTERROGATION DIVISION SUMMARY

Interrogation of von PAPAN, Franz

By: Mr. T. J. Dodd, 13 October 1945, AM, Nurnberg

---

Persons and organizations implicated, and subjects.

1. Von PAPAN

- a. Knowledge of Seyss-Inquart's call for armed assistance in Vienna.-  
11 March 1938 (p. 1-2).
- b. Opposition to Rome-Berlin Axis (p. 6).
- c. Efforts toward peace as ambassador to Turkey (p. 4-8, 14, 16,  
18-19, 20-21).
  - (1) Relationship with Ribbentrop (p. 6, 22)
  - (2) Relationship with NSDAP (p. 21).
- d. Peace proposals to Hitler in 1939 (p. 9-11).
- e. Knowledge of Russo-German relations (p. 14-15).
- f. Knowledge of German aims in Near East (p. 24-26).

2. HITLER

- a. Purpose of military campaigns against Balkans (p. 13).
- b. Russo-German relations (p. 15-16).

3. RIBBENTROP

- a. Opposition to Von Papan's peace proposals (p. 7, 10).
  - (1) Neglect of relations with Turkey (p. 12)
- b. Negotiations with Russia to join Three Power Pact (p. 14-15).
  - (1) Attitude toward Turkey (p. 16).

Franz von Papen, 13 October 1945, AM., Nuremberg

#### AUSTRIAN ANSCHLUSS

Von Papen corrects his earlier statements made in reply to questions what he did in Vienna after having been recalled on the 4th. Says he finds his memory has greatly deteriorated. (p.1) He remembers now that the "false" call for help from Vienna came by telephone, not as telegram, on the 11th, and that Neurath said it had to be confirmed, as it was most important. (pp.1-2)

#### AS AMBASSADOR TO TURKEY

Papen gives an account of his mission in Turkey, as follows: On Holy Friday, he suddenly got a call from Ribbentrop to proceed to Turkey. It was on the same day that Italy occupied Albania. (p.3) The post of Reich ambassador to Turkey had been vacant for over six months. He went to Berlin to discuss the situation with Ribbentrop who gave him some particulars about the English-French-Russian negotiations, as well as about negotiations with Rumania, Greece and Turkey. Papen accepted the post, with a reservation: said he would go only for the purpose of investigating the situation and trying to keep Turkey from joining the encirclement. (p.4) Papen saw Inonu, the president of Turkey, who told him it was not so much fear of Germany but fear of Italy; that the menace to the Straits and the possession of the Dodecanese islands by Italy was what concerned Turkey. (pp.4-5)

Upon returning to Berlin, Papen found Ciano there to sign the Italian-German pact to which he, Papen, always had been opposed, as Neurath and Hasselt had been. (p.6) After his arrival in Berlin, von Papen made a memorandum dealing with his impressions gained in Turkey, which he distributed to Brauchitsch, Keitel, Hitler and Ribbentrop, to whom Papen was directly answerable in his position as ambassador. (p.6) This memorandum pointed out Turkey's wishes with regard to Italy. Previous to this memorandum, he had a talk with Count Ciano about Turkey and the Dodecanese islands. Ciano was very astonished and troubled and hastened to Ribbentrop complaining about Papen. (p. 7-8).

#### VON PAPAN'S PEACE PROPOSALS TO HITLER IN 1939

Papen was desperate about the situation created by the Russo-German Pact in August 1939. That he then did not resign from his post, was due to the fact that there was choice between two things only: public protest and concentration camp, etc., or - to fight at the front as commander of a battalion. Both ways were not his. It seemed to him he could be more helpful to his country if he stayed on as ambassador to Turkey.

He refers to the Netherlands minister in Ankara, Mr. Visser, with whom he discussed the situation. (p.9) Mr. Visser was on very good terms with the British and, after the Polish campaign was over, Papen claims they sought to have a conversation with England to return to some kind of peace.

Franz von Papen, 13 October 1945, M., Nuremberg.

Presumably in December 1939, Papen talked it over with Ribbentrop who declined flatly and forbade him to talk to Hitler about this plan, saying "there is no possibility of such a peace talk, we reject this. It would be a sign of weakness." (p.10)

Papen, however, talked to Hitler anyway whose reply was, laughingly: "No, no, my dear Papen, we are just going to revise the peace treaty of Westphalia," which concluded the Thirty Year War. (p.11) That famous peace treaty split Germany up in a great number of states, and Hitler said: "We have to revise that, it must be done now, there cannot be any peace talk, and so on."

At the end of 1939, Papen made a lengthy report to Ribbentrop containing suggestions on how to obtain peace, or materially to prepare a feeling of peace, if Hitler would return to the German people their constitutional rights and restore justice. But it produced no results (p.11)

On returning to Turkey, Papen had to limit his endeavors to keeping Turkey out of the war. Meantime, the Turkish prime minister, Saracoglu, went to Moscow to negotiate for a mutual understanding. Ribbentrop was at the same time on a second visit in Moscow, ignoring Saracoglu; and finishing his own negotiations within three of four days. Saracoglu, who had been kept waiting in the antechambers for about three weeks, was furious and wired from Moscow to his government urgently to sign the alliance with France and Britain. (p. 12).

To keep out Turkey from the war if it came to the Balkans, Papen suggested that Hitler write a letter to President Inonu, saying he would order his troops to remain about 30 kilometers from Turkey's frontiers, since he did not wish to attack Turkey. At that time there was not the slightest reason to envisage a German-Russian war. All that Papen could do was to stress to Hitler and the German General Staff, that Turkey must not be used as a route to get to the Suez Canal. This was done, as usual, through Papen's military attache, General Rohde, in Ankara. (p.14)

#### GERMAN MILITARY CAMPAIGNS AGAINST BALKANS

War came to the Balkans because of developments in Yugoslavia, Yugoslavia and Greece were overrun. Greece had been attacked by Mussolini, presumably against Hitler's will and wishes. But when the Italians could not get through, Hitler had to help them, though no German had any bad feelings against the Greeks. (p.13)

#### RUSO-GERMAN RELATIONS

Papen says he was not present in the preliminary conversations of the Molotov conference at Berlin. (p.14) Ribbentrop later informed him about the contents of the negotiations: that Russia should join the Three-Power-Pact. Molotov formulated Russia's conditions after his departure, saying

Franz von Papen, 13 October 1945, AM., Nuremberg

that Russia must have a predominant influence on the Balkan States, the Straits. Papen thinks this was a great political turning point of the war, but Hitler considered it impossible to give in to Russian demands. Papen believes he had some part in Hitler's decision since he had always impressed on him the idea that the Balkan countries and the Straits should remain European, and that means could surely be found to meet legitimate Russian interests, in the Straits. (p.15) Hitler decided this price could not be paid, and that was the start of growing feeling against Russia, approximately in October 1940. (p.16)

Turkey was much alarmed by these negotiations with Molotov. That is why Papen endeavored to calm Turkey. The idea to negotiate a pact of friendship with Turkey was brought up, notwithstanding her treaty with the Allies. (p.16) Ribbentrop, never satisfied, demanded that Turkey should renounce her good friendship with the Allies. Finally the pact was signed with the consent of the Allies, (p.16) only a few days before war broke out between Germany and Russia.

Papen admits his policy in helping the Turks to stay out of the war may have been against German interests, since Germany at that time was still very strong. But his main idea was to keep such countries out of the war: Turkey, Switzerland, Spain, Portugal, for a possible later reconciliation of Europe. (p.18)

Denies ever having suggested to Turkey to let German forces pass through Turkey. In one instance, he asked to let material, oil, fuel pass through when the German air force started on a mission to Syria, from Syria to Iraq. Says Germany always maintained connections with Iraq. The president of the Iraq government was at that time in Germany. Everything in relation with Iraq passed through Papen's office. (pp.18-19)

Papen later managed to secure for Turkey a loan of 100 millions, for armament, in exchange for cereals. Turkey only got the armament of one division. Hitler asked Papen why "do you want to arm an ally of my enemies?", and Papen replied that he thought it would be in the common interest to keep Turkey strong and independent but friendly towards Germany. (pp.20-21)

#### VON PAPAN'S RELATIONSHIP WITH NSDAP

He mentions that, as always, he had many difficulties with the Party. He had to put the so-called Gauleiter of Turkey, by the name of Friede, out of his embassy and, after a long fight, succeeded in having him thrown out of Turkey. (p.21)

Asked why he, being in the diplomatic service, gave a copy of his memorandum (see page 6 of interrogations report) to Keitel and von Brauchitsch, Papen replies he thought it was necessary for the soldiers to know his judgment of the situation, in view of a possible war. Claims there never was talk of moving German forces, etc. through Turkey to Rommel but says it may have been that Ribbentrop and the military asked him to find out.

Franz von Papen, 13 October 1945, AM., Nuremberg

Says he never had any direct contact with Hitler in all these years, that all went through Ribbentrop's office, even military demands. (p.22)

GERMANS AIMS IN NEAR EAST

It was his understanding that Germany's final aim was to go, after crossing the Caucasus, through Rumania to the Persian Gulf, which was the vital point, not the Suez Canal. (p.24) Admits that the possibility of German arms uniting on the Persian Gulf, sooner or later, might have been discussed by him with the Turks in Ankara; it was obvious, and the Turks very much afraid of it. But the friendship pact was concluded prior to the outbreak of war with Russia. (p.25) Cannot remember any conversation to the end that Turkey would be completely enveloped. (p.26)