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

INTERROGATION DIVISION SUMMARY

Interrogation of: VON PAPEN, Franz
By: Col. Curtis E. Williams, 13 October 1945, p.m. Nuremberg

PERSONS IMPLICATED AND SUBJECTS:

1. VON PAPEN, Franz, and annexation of Austria
 - a. Agreement of July 11, 1936 (pp.1, 38,39)
 - b. Pap's plan (pp.2,3,11)
 - (1) Rudolf Hess (pp.2,3)
 - c. Nazi Party in Austria (pp.4,5,18)
 - d. German arms for Nazis in Austria (pp.5,9)
 - e. Schuschnigg's role (pp. 3,6-9,17,38,43,47,48,49)
 - f. Guido Schmidt (pp. 10,45)
 - g. Role of Hitler, Himmler, Goering and Ribbentrop (pp.12, 15,13,39,44,46,47,48,56,57,58,59,60)
 - h. Meeting of Hitler, and Schuschnigg (pp.14,19,20,21,22,23, 24,25,26,27,28,29,30,32,33,37,40,41,42,43,45,46)
 - (1) Presence of generals (pp.27,29)
 - (a) Keitel (p.29)
 - (2) Role of Ribbentrop (pp.30,31,45)
 - (3) Role of Seyss-Inquart (pp.32,33,34,35,36)
 - i. Armed invasion of Austria (pp. 3,15,50,51,52,53,54,55)
 - (1) Telephone conversation between Goering and Seyss-Inquart (pp. 51,53,55)
 - (2) Keitel, von Brauchitsch (pp.51,53,54)
 - j. Plebiscite in Austria (pp.51,52)
 - k. Papen's declaration for success in Austria (p. 60)

AGREEMENT OF JULY 11, 1936.

Von Papen states that the German government held to the agreement of July 11, 1936, up to February 4, 1938; that he, as official representative of Germany did everything to help keep up this agreement during that time. Does not consider it his business to defend Hitler in any way. (p.1) Main point of agreement was the recognition of Austria's independence and sovereignty. This was also the main point of von Papen's agreement with Hitler, made when he started out on his mission in 1934, that Austria's independence and sovereignty must be recognized, and that no armed

Von Papen, Franz, 13 October 1945
p.m.

force was to be used to change it, only friendly means. This was adhered to until the date of von Papen's recall; thinks he was recalled in order to put aside the agreement with him. (2)

TAV'S PLAN

Claims he never saw so-called Tav's papers; was greatly surprised when told they had been signed by Rudolf Hess and thinks it is most unlikely that Hess signed them, since he was not a member of government, just the deputy head of the Party (2). If it is true that Tavs papers outlined a plan for armed invasion of Austria, this surely would constitute a flagrant violation of agreement of July 11, 1936. But Papen repeats disbelief that Hess would have signed such a plan that had been drawn up by Tavs, member of Austrian Nazi underground movement (3). Admits that Schuschnigg made official complaint to him, as minister, but that Schuschnigg did not say it was an official document signed by Hess. Papen always understood it was a plan of Austrian Nazi underground movement (3). Denies knowledge that the plan was made for an invasion of Austria; merely admits violations by the press on both sides. He says he had a suspicion that the Nazi underground people, i.e. the Austrian Legion in Germany, were trying all the time to get Hitler to act, to effect the Anschluss (4-5). Admits he was aware of many facts, such as the Wells incident, that Hitler and the German government, through press and radio, were trying to influence the type of government in Austria that was to come; to disturb relations and help the growing National Socialist movement in Austria (5).

NAZI UNDERGROUND IN AUSTRIA

Denies knowledge of German government sending ammunition, guns and supplies to the illegal National Socialist Party in Austria, to be used in attacks on the Austrian government (5). States that Schuschnigg never made such complaints to him, and that he himself had never heard of bombings or interrupting of railway communication, etc.

Papen admits correctness of Schuschnigg's account (6-9) but points out that there is no word in it of delivering arms and ammunition or bomb plotting (9). Says he never heard of the Austrian government having intercepted sealed packages containing ammunition, guns, etc. sent by the German government to the illegal Austrian Nazis (9). From July 1937 on, discussions of relations between Germany and Austria were no longer held with Schuschnigg but from then on with the foreign minister, Guido Schmidt (10).

Von Papen, Franz, 13 October 1941
p.m.

Papen knows that the Tavs papers contained a plan to assassinate him, as a pretext for an invasion of Austria, but says he doesn't know whether this was earnestly planned or not. Didn't know that Himmler asked to assassinate General Muff instead of von Papen (11).

MEETING HITLER - SCHUSCHNIGG

Was in Berlin, one week before he was recalled, at the time of the Fritsch, von Blomberg and von Neurath crisis. Is vague as to whether or not he had a talk with Hitler at that time; finally denies he had a talk, either with Hitler, Himmler, Goering, Ribbentrop (12). After his recall, he met Hitler at Berchtesgaden. Ribbentrop was present at the conference in place of von Neurath. (13) Papen describes conversation with Hitler, asking for reasons why he had been called and suggesting that Schuschnigg seemed inclined lately to have a personal talk with Hitler about all the grievances. Hitler sent him back to Vienna to tell Schuschnigg he would be delighted to talk with him. (14) Papen does not believe that Hitler already had decided to invade Austria when he saw him and Ribbentrop at Berchtesgaden, or he would not have made his speech in Reichstag and Ribbentrop would not have gone to London (15).

Denies an agenda was drawn up by him and Schuschnigg prior to Schuschnigg's talk with Hitler; says he made Schuschnigg no promises (17). Admits that Austrian Nazi party absolutely depended on the Party in the Reich. (18) Says he does not remember that Schuschnigg stipulated conditions for his talk with Hitler (19-20). He is of the opinion that a communiqué about the outcome of the Hitler-Schuschnigg talk was purely a matter concerning Hitler and Schuschnigg, that he had nothing to do with it (20-22). Denies having promised Schuschnigg that the communiqué after the talk with Hitler would contain certain statements (23-24). Maintains he did not lure Schuschnigg to Berchtesgaden (25-26) Denies he promised things to Schuschnigg (26)

Denies having told Schuschnigg when meeting him at the border on his way to Berchtesgaden, on the morning of February 12, 1938, that a few generals would be with Hitler; says he did not know the generals were there. Says he stayed with Schuschnigg in Salzburg during the night of February 11, 1938 (27). Denies the truth of Schuschnigg's statement that Papen met Schuschnigg at the border; maintains they went together all the way from Vienna to Berchtesgaden (27-28). Papen thinks it is possible he may have told Schuschnigg, when asked by him, that he might meet Keitel there for Keitel was always in the antechamber of Hitler (29). Says Keitel was named Chief of Staff of OKW about February 4, 1938 (29).

Von Papen, Franz, 13 October 1945
p.m.

Papen describes what took place at the Fuehrer's Berghof. Claims not to have been present at the conversations, only dropping in now and then; in one instance he came in when Hitler very sharply attacked Schuschnigg for lack of German feeling, etc., and states that he deferred Schuschnigg to Hitler (29-30). Believes it is possible that Ribbentrop had drawn up written demands and give them to Schuschnigg and Guido Schmidt, but claims he did not see these 11 demands (30-31); claims he interfered in Schuschnigg's favor (31).

After having been told what these demands were, he recalls them; but thinks it was a question only of having a National Socialist in the cabinet, not the demand that Seyss-Inquart should be given Ministry of Interior. Says he monitors these demands, with the exception of two, but considers it true (32-33).

Says he desired Seyss-Inquart for place in cabinet because he knew he was a Catholic, a moderate man and would bring about Anschluss in evolutionary way (34). Hitler did not know Seyss-Inquart, but Papen assured him that he was a National Socialist; says von Keppler, his close collaborator, who was murdered later, knew all Austrian Nazis, held Seyss-Inquart to be the best of them for the post (35). Hitler agreed and Schuschnigg also did not object to Seyss-Inquart (35).

Papen modifies this statement, says Schuschnigg did not object to taking Seyss-Inquart into the cabinet, but did object to giving him the post as Police Minister. (36) Admits that Schuschnigg had a very hard time during his conversation with Hitler (37). Admits that he promised Schuschnigg the agreement of July 11, 1936 would be maintained (38); admits that Hitler in some sense - did not abide by the 1936 agreement (39); admits the correctness of Schuschnigg's description of his meeting with Hitler (40-41).

Papen says he did not make any agreement with Schuschnigg prior to his Berchtesgaden visit: felt sure that the 1936 agreement would be the basis of the conversation; maintains it is the first time in all these years that he heard the real text of the Hitler-Schuschnigg talk; Schuschnigg never gave him a literal description. All he remembers is that Schuschnigg complained to him about Hitler's harshness, using great pressure on him. Papen claims he apologized for this mistreatment (42-43). He says he told Schuschnigg he would go to Hitler and try to smooth things over (43). Describes how he reproached Hitler, but got no answer (44) Ribbentrop came and brought the final draft of the document, which was signed later in evening probably by, Schuschnigg, Hitler, Ribbentrop, Guido Schmidt. Papen says he did not sign it (45).

Von Papen, Franz, 13 October 1945
p.m.

Claims he cannot remember that afterwards praised him in the presence of Schuschnigg, Schmid and Ribbentrop, for having given him (Hitler) the opportunity of taking over the power in January 1938. (46) Says he did not understand what Hitler meant by saying that, for first time in his life, he had changed a resolution; does not even remember this remark (46-47). Repeats he cannot remember any of these remarks but that they might be true if Schuschnigg testified to them (47).

Hitler in his Reichstag speech of February 20, 1938 made mention of the agreement in friendly words and had words of great praise for Schuschnigg (47). Agrees, on hearing the text of Hitler's speech, that speech was not friendly towards Schuschnigg, had remembered it as more cordial in tone. (48-49).

ARMY MARCHES INTO AUSTRIA

The activities of National Socialist Party in Austria probably increased after Berchtesgaden conference. He was in Berlin on March 12, 1938, when Army marched into Austria. Arrived by plane on the 11th, went to Chancellery, stayed there whole day. Says he cannot recall that von Glaise-Horstenau came on the same plane with him to Berlin. In the Chancellery were: Hitler, his staff, Keitel, Brauchitsch, Goering, Neurath, Goebbels, Capt. Wiedemann (50). Denies having been present at any of the telephone conversations, Goering calling Seyss-Inquart, etc. since these were conducted in another room (51). Says he learned that preparations for armed invasion were underway when he saw the military men (51). Keitel and von Brauchitsch had charge of plans. Von Neurath had been called back because of Ribbentrop's absence from Berlin. Feels sure that von Keppler had arrived in Vienna from Berlin the day before Papen left Vienna; that they talked together about plebiscite (51-52) Keppler said Hitler was opposed to the plebiscite, Papen tried to induce Schuschnigg in vain to change it. Keppler said it was too late now and that Schuschnigg should resign (52).

Papen maintains he objected to action against Austria, to Hitler, Goering and Neurath (52). Clearly remembers that Neurath and the military, particularly von Brauchitsch, were absolutely opposed to armed invasion. Keitel - on other hand - always carried out Hitler's wishes. Jodl was not present (53).

Repudiates Wiedemann's statement that he (Papen) was present when Goering telephoned with Seyss-Inquart (53). Goering afterwards told him about the conversation. About 3 PM., Goering said Schuschnigg would resign; a new government would be formed, everything would be fine. All were greatly relieved. Papen claims having urged Hitler, Neurath and probably Brauchitsch, that Hitler should withdraw the order to march in, and that Hitler did (53-54).

Later, someone brought in telegram that government could not be formed, President Miklas opposed it. Then Hitler ordered preparations to march, about 6-7 PM., giving orders to Keitel, who acted as letter carrier, giving order to Brauchitsch (54). Does not know whether Brauchitsch was present at that time (55). Thinks, troops marched next morning. Denies having been present when Goering phoned Seyss-Inquart, demanding Seyss-Inquart should wire for troops

Von Papen, Franz, 13 October 1945
p.m.

on pretext of murder and bloodshed in Vienna, but recalls that Neurath said: "this call for help is important, we must have it confirmed" (55). Doesn't know whether it was confirmed. Says he played part of figurehead that day. Hitler overthrown his (Papen's) work of four years when he marched in (56).

Papen reiterates the lag incident of Pinkerfeld, when Hitler wanted to march in but Papen pacified him (56-57). Says there were many similar incidents, that the were presence of the Austrian Legion in Germany, in special camps, produced such incidents (58). Believes, things were moving too slowly for Hitler's taste after 1937, and that that was why he wanted to replace Papen by someone more active, who might help him with his scheme (58). Thinks Hitler's intention to act may have been influenced by the change in Mussolini's attitude, from opposition to pro-Axis policy. Hitler did not march in after the Dollfuss murder, because uncertainty prevailed as to whether other powers would offer armed protest (59-60).

PAPEN DECORATED

After march into Vienna, Hitler sent Papen congratulatory telegram and honorary Party insignia. Says he did not deserve insignia, but felt satisfied with having done his duty for four years. He was compelled to accept Party insignia, though not a member of the Party. Believes Hitler was glad Papen obtained the agreement of July 11, 1936 for him. He (Papen) wanted to solve the Austrian problem in peaceful way. (60)

Papen thinks he was successful because there was no bloodshed. Was always in favor of the federal system of Germany, not of unification; wanted Austria to be autonomous, within the frame of the German Reich, etc. (61).