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28 May 45

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German Intelligence Section
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ESSER, Hermann, Bavarian State Secretary (ret.), State Secretary of the Reich Tourist Assoc.. Born July 29, 1900 in Roehrmoss (B.A. Dachau), catholic. Went to Grade School and "Humanistisches Gymnasium, and volunteered for service with the German Army in July 1917. He went into action during the summer of 1918. In October 1919 he joined the "Deutsche Arbeiterpartei, and became the first editor of the "Voelkischer Beobachter" in 1920. In 1923 he was chosen to be Chief of Propaganda in the Party. Since 1924 he was the leader of the "Grossdeutsche Volksgemeinschaft". In 1925 E. became Chief of Propaganda for the Reich of the newly founded NSDAP, received membership number "2". From 1926 - 1932 editor-in-chief of the "Illustrierter Beobachter". Since March 9, 1933 member of the Bavarian State Government. Member of the "Kreistag" of Upper Bavaria since 1928. From 1929 - 1933 member and leader of the NSDAP "Fraktion" in the municipal legislature of Munich. Since 1932 member and assistant clerk of the Bavarian "Landtag". 1933 he became a member and president of the last Bavarian State Legislature. Member of the Administration Council of the German "Reichspost". Since 1933 deputy to the Pres. of the Reich Authority for Tourism. Author of the book "Die juedische Weltpest". Aviation leader. - Member of the "Reichstag" since 1933, 8th election period, was elected Vice-President of the Reichstag on Dec. 12, 1933.

E. was arrested by American troops in his home in THANKIRCHEN. He claims to have evaded a Gestapo warrant for his arrest, but did not think that it was necessary to evade an arrest by the Allies, "because I did not want the war, had nothing whatever to do with it, I am not guilty of having committed any cruelties, and I have never attempted to denounce any political enemies. Neither did I have anything to do with what happened in the occupied countries. I am the only one who did not receive a "Verdienstkreuz" (medal).- I would be prepared to stand before a German People's Court, or an international court, head unbowed, and would have a list of people who would testify in my behalf."

E., several days after his arrest, forwarded the following letter to the Allied Authorities:

Hermann Esser
Staatssekretaer f. Fremdenverkehr
Staatsminister a.D.

Augsburg, May 13, 1945

To the Allied Military Government:

This letter is not one of the now customary alibis, but the report of a man of responsibility, who believes that this moment does not permit his remaining silent.

Permit me to relate the following concerning my career:

The economic distress and the political situation following the first World war, in which I participated, led me to join, in 1920, the Nazi party from which I expected, at the time, the best possible for the Fatherland. In the party I was active in local politics and in parliament until I was called upon to become Bavarian Minister of State and Economics.

Although I was one of the oldest Party members, I can furnish proof that since 1926, for a period of almost 20 years, I held not the slightest position in the Party and was never a member of the SA nor the SS.

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Moreover, my position in regard to the Catholic problem and the general methods of the Party Bureaucracy led to an oppositional stand of the population of my home region. This opposition existed since 1935, and resulted in the loss of my personal friendship of the Fuehrer and to the resignation of my office as Minister of State.

Since 1935 up to the present I was Chief of German Tourism. Since 1938 I was Secretary of State for Tourism and essayed to serve the convalescents of all lands. I might also mention that one of my co-workers, Prof. Haertl-Bad Kissingen, introduced on my personal initiative, the under-water massage system in Warm Springs, which rendered so much comfort to the deceased president of the USA in his suffering.

My international relations in my capacity as Secretary of State for Tourism - a position which of course had nothing whatever to do with the preparation and the prosecution of the war - occasioned the sharpest mistrust of the Party and led to a warrant by the Gestapo for my arrest when the Allied troops were approaching. I was forced to hide until my home region was occupied.

Considering the now possible freedom of action and in the memory of my two sons who did not return from this war, I feel it my duty not to hesitate a moment longer and to announce to the public reasons, and above all, unknown facts of far-reaching importance, which will result in extremely valuable and interesting disclosures for everyone at this moment. The intended, frank presentation by a man who, with a special knowledge of persons and events, has critically and thoroughly observed the happenings might possibly appear sensational. In order to judge the historical events of this war, it will be difficult to do without these disclosures.

My plea to the Allied Military Government is to make it technically possible for me to formulate my disclosures - a task for which I would require from three to four weeks. And to authorize the proper authorities to seize the important documents which I require as evidence and to refresh my memory, and which I have placed in two places of security.

(signed) Hermann Esser

Is E. one of the many Party-men who play the "little man" today, who knew nothing, who place the guilt upon other Party Leaders, who want to "get away with murder" by denouncing political friends, and who want to deny the things they have announced to the German public as the only political wisdom and salvation until yesterday?

E. possesses something of all these qualities. But it goes further than that. He is actually one of the "little men", who did not immediately realize the consequences of his national-socialist activities. When he finally began to realize the criminal nature of the Regime's actions, he did not have the strength to dissociate himself of these activities, to denounce Party and Regime publicly, and to break with the policies of the Third Reich. E. has, to this date, still not realized the senselessness of the Nazi-Party-Program: "Democracy had its outgrowths", and he thought that the NSDAP, the party in which he was interested at an early date, was the proper instrument for the Reconstruction of Germany after 1918. "A number of points in the Party Program have nothing to do with the things which the world sees condemned today. There is a tremendous dissonance between the things which were preached before 1933 and the things that happened after 1933." Starting from this point, E. develops what he calls a dissenting position. He is as reluctant to admit his authorship to the book "Die juedische Weltpest" (One had to write something on this subject, it was a "sin of my youth" so to speak, and one became more mature in the course of the years) As he is anxious to

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clarify his present position to the Jewish Question: "Today it is my point of view, that every human being, every race, and every nation has a right to live, and cannot be extinguished."

His main reasons for his inner withdrawal away from the political life in the Party are the following: 1. His intensified belief in the Catholic Faith, which, he says, is closely connected with his marriage and his family life. His wife comes from a Catholic family and his 4 children (2 of them Corporals in the Wehrmacht and reported killed or missing) were educated in Catholic Schools, and did not belong to any Party Organizations. 2. The cruel treatment of political opponents by the Regime. He claims to have made a statement about his position regarding Concentration Camps, during a session of the Bavarian "Staatsrat" in 1935. E. states that he had said at that time, that he emphatically disagrees with the method of arresting and interning people without a legal investigation and conviction by a proper court. The Regime would have to be based on Justice and not on Power, if it wanted to be of any permanence. 3. The ROEHM case, which, he claims, had opened his eyes to the injustice of the System and its strong-arm-methods.

E. claims further to have realized at that time already, that the "System could not hold its own in the long run, and that the time will come where documentary evidence will have to be presented in order to prove what actually had happened and how it had happened".

"Opposition with any hope for success" seemed impossible to him, and he resigned himself since 1935 "just to swim along". He became, as he further says, a "family-man" and accepted the position of "Secretary of State for Tourism" which paid the enormous salary of RM 32.000 per annum. He feels that it was "almost heroic" that he, contrary to the other party leaders, did not purchase real estate, and was not chosen for the receipt of "Presents from the Fuehrer", valued at RM 30.000. - He further states with a certain pride, that he never received a picture of the Fuehrer.

"In consideration of the now possible freedom of action", E. thinks the time has come which makes it imperative for him to speak. He wants to talk and write. He has already thought about the subjects on which he wants to speak and write and presents the following list of subjects which he wants to treat with the aid of documentary evidence.

List:

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|-------------|--|
| <u>1938</u> | After the "Anschluss" of Austria Hitler feels that the "Einigungskrieg" will be necessary. Numerous statements made while travelling through the country. |
| <u>1938</u> | Hitler's statements - some of them rather malicious - about Chamberlain, Daladier, etc. after the dinner given during the Munich Conference. |
| <u>1939</u> | Hitler's table conversations with Mitford about the questions of England's neutrality in case of war and about the English mentality. |
| <u>1939</u> | Hitler's statements about the warning telegrams from Roosevelt and his anxiety that Mussolini might become intimidated. |
| <u>1939</u> | Hitler's anxiety about the mediating activity of Mussolini and the Vatican in the Polish question. His opinions after the Reichstag sessions of Sept 1 and 26, 1939. |
| <u>1940</u> | Hitler and the visit of Mussolini to Munich in July 1940 after the French campaign. Against the German interest in the French question involving Italy. |
| <u>1941</u> | Hitler tells about his visits to Franco, Petain and Mussolini in Florence, April 1941. |

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- 1941 Italy's attack on Greece and the Balkan campaign disturbs Hitler's concept. Hitler and the Duce play hide-and-seek. Neither trusts the other. Many statements on this question in Berlin and Munich.
- 1941 Whitsun 1941 on the Obersalzberg. His fury over Hess.
- 1943 Hitler learns details about the situation in Italy. All information is false. He claims to be better-informed than the correspondents. My own report after my visit in May, 1943.
- 1944 Hitler about Mussolini after the last visit of the Duce on 22nd April 1944. Hitler on Horthy and Hungary.
- 1935-1945 Numerous descriptions of Hitler and Hindenburg - His environment and sources of information - His motto "All or nothing" - His path toward becoming "Semi-divine" and super-militarist etc. etc...

The statements made by Esser during the interrogation prove clearly that he too, places the blame on the others. "I am a special case, you won't believe it. I am human while the others are monsters and pathological cases." Concerning Hitler, he says: "Since 1938 Hitler is - almost - insane. After the Anschluss with Austria succeeded there was no stopping for him any longer. He wanted to create a powerful Germany which dominates the world. It was impossible to tell him about unpleasant things. He had lost all sense for reality. I saw him last on July 13 in Berchtesgaden. He had heard that I had been in Munich during an air attack, and he wanted me to report about it. I told him what I had witnessed, and said that I feared that the Munich population would simply not tolerate a repetition of such raids. They could not stand it. He interrupted me, shouted at me, and said: "You need not concern yourself with that, I shall see to it that things will change before long." The report on the great air raid had lasted less than 5 minutes. Hitler is fully responsible for everything that happened inside Germany and abroad. In an important "Reichstag" speech he accepted responsibility over the life and death of every single German, and had declared that nothing happened without his knowledge and without his approval. From then on executions took place on the basis of Fuehrer decrees no one had ever laid eyes upon. Were I to appear as witness before a court I could not find a single extenuating circumstance to offer in his defense." E. further states that the personal physician of Hitler, Dr. Morel, came to E. during the night of April 22nd-23rd. He told him that he had just arrived from Berlin by plane and Hitler had discharged him with the explanation that he no longer required his services. Out of gratitude for his services, Hitler had permitted him to leave Berlin and to go to a place which would offer shelter. (Morel is said to have gone to Karynthia (Kaernten) afterwards).

About Goering: Goering's case is different. A man who knows how to think clearly. He possessed a tremendous urge for good living and property. On the basis of his position he must be considered one of the men who have to bear the main responsibility. He must have known what went on in the concentration camps. He was the first Chief of the Gestapo and Himmler's right-hand man for quite some time.

Gauleiter Giesler: "A Bormann-Creature".

Ritter von Epp: "A fatherly friend to me, a very noble and educated man, who only kept on carrying out his functions out of a soldierly sense of duty. He was in the same position as I."

Question of War-Guilt: "The war has been brought about by the responsible leaders of Germany. But it is self-evident that the entire Nation must make reparation. I too, am willing to do my share, and, together with

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my children do all the work which is demanded of us. But furthermore it is my point of view that hundred of leading German National-Socialists, SA - and SS-leaders ought to be sentenced to death by a German People's Court."

Note: The interrogators think it worthwhile to give Esser an opportunity to carry out his intentions of writing his memoirs for which job he required four weeks' time, as well as the documents which are to be found at his home in Tangkirchen.

Capt Hans Wallenberg
Captain Hans Wallenberg, PWB 7th Army

Ernst Langendorf
Ernst Langendorf, PWB 7th Army

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