

C O N F I D E N T I A L

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Fritz Sauckel, "Gauleiter" and "Reichsstatthalter" of Thuringia, SS-Gruppenführer. Sauckel is Protestant; he attended both Grade School and the "Gymnasium". He spent the next 5 years on sailing vessels as a seaman and joined the Nationalist Movement in 1919 (Deutschvölkischer Schutz und Trutzbund). In 1921 Sauckel became a speaker for the NSDAP in Lower Franconia. From 1922-1924 he was District Leader and speaker for the NSDAP in Ilmenau-Thuringia (illegal). Since 1927 he has been Gauleiter in Thuringia. As of 1930 Sauckel has been a member of the Landtag where he was leader of the NSDAP faction in Thuringia. In 1932 he became President of the Thuringian State Ministry and Thuringian Minister of the Interior. He was appointed Reichsstatthalter in May 1933. Since 1933 he has also been a member of the Reichstag. Until the collapse of the Third Reich, Sauckel retained his posts as Reichsstatthalter, Gauleiter, and member of the Reichstag. Until the very last he did not fall into disfavor. During the so-called "Kampfzeit" (period of struggle before 1933) Sauckel was one of the Party's most ruthless and infamous propagandists.

A Seaman's View: "I see everything from the perspective of a sailor," declares Fritz Sauckel. He claims that he never imagined to end up in politics, and even today he loves "his seaman's profession", above everything else. Undoubtedly there is some truth in this "seaman's perspective". In the case of Sauckel it is symptomatic for a political dilletantism which always recognizes the individual symptoms of an unsound political system, but never the innate causes of the disease. In the case of the Weimar Republic, the "seaman's perspective" led Sauckel, the man of the opposition, to the belief that National Socialism represented a cure for everything; in the case of the Third Reich, however, it led to complete helplessness in his evaluation of the signs of political disintegration which were the characteristics of the Nazi system. It was easy for men with a "seaman's perspective", to approve of and carry out measures of whose tragic consequences they had not the slightest idea. Sauckel is a striking example of these men, who, although truly insignificant in outlook, had the effrontery to consider themselves big enough to take Germany's fate into their hands. His complete lack of understanding is indeed shocking, if not criminal.

"Systemzeit" and National Socialism: "One hates to break with what one believed in". With this statement the Reichsstatthalter and Gauleiter of Thuringia introduces an account of his attitude toward National Socialism. He asserts that the NSDAP has sprung from the fruitless strikes, the senseless party strife, and the fear of Communism. The Nazi Party appeared to those who saw the basis for a healthy Germany in a sound agriculture, the only way out of the chaos. Sauckel still does not see how much the NSDAP contributed from its very outset to the undermining of an orderly state administration, and to those conditions out of which the Party emerged victorious. Neither does he realize that, as late as March 1933, the majority of the German voters still thought the solutions other than the Nazis were reasonable. All weaknesses

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of the German Republic are enlarged by Sauckel to gigantic proportion; for instance, the "Korruptionsprozesse" (corruption trials), out of which the Nazis made much political capital during the "Kampfzeit". When confronted with the fact that even greater corruption existed under the Nazis, the same man declares: "We always thought that Goering was an eccentric. No one took him seriously when he covered himself with diamonds." (As one of the highest and most powerful Nazi leaders, Goering stole and "bamboozled" a fortune which ran into millions.)

Sauckel declares that he was drawn to the Party by pure idealism. He never intended to amass a fortune, he was never involved in any shady deals, and claims never to have had any feelings of revenge toward his former political opponents. He further states that he married the daughter of a worker who was a member of the SPD, that he had always led a simple life and that he had freed the former Social Democratic State Minister of Thuringia, Frohlich, after the latter had been detained in a concentration camp in connection with the events of July 20th. He says that he believed, until the very last, in the National Socialist ideal of a German "Volksgemeinschaft" (people's community) and that he had neither committed an act of brutality nor intended to do injustice against anyone.

"Struck with Blindness": "It is terrible", moans Sauckel, "that the world now regards all Gauleiters as criminals. The things that are being revealed now have, of course, nothing in common with the ideals of the NSDAP. You may believe me that we are just as shocked by these revelations as you are." Sauckel still does not realize or, at least, pretends that he does not, that the criminal withholding of information on the part of those who knew is the inevitable result of the Nazi system. "The Fuhrer issued the order: 'Stay away from matters which do not directly concern your official duties.' To know what went on in the offices of other officials was considered despicable and constituted an offense." Sauckel accepted this rule unconditionally. "Once one had pledged allegiance to the Fuhrer, for better or for worse, like to a captain of a ship, there was nothing else to do but to follow in blind obedience." Like all others who fell for the National Socialist propaganda line, Sauckel claims to have believed until the very last in the possibility of a compromise-peace. "What caused the German people to hold out until the end was the belief that the Western Powers would not, after all, permit Russia to exercise such a tremendous influence in Europe." In addition to that Sauckel says the German people were afraid of Bolshevism, this fear having reached its peak after the US air raid on Dresden. Even then people in Dresden said: "We'd rather have American bombs than Bolshevism," and in Dresden "hell really broke loose", Sauckel added. "If you keep the East away from us, we shall kiss your feet yet." Sauckel goes on to say that great hopes had also been pinned on the "Turbojager" (secret weapon) which was expected to bring about the turn in the air war. Sauckel never listened to Allied radio broadcasts because firstly "I was never alone. There were always 36 persons for dinner in my house; I have 10 children. Secondly, it was blind obedience for," as he put it, "it was forbidden".

Concentration Camps: Sauckel states: "I myself never denounced anyone, nor did I ever cause anyone to be taken to a concentration camp. I do not know whether it ought to be called a

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'Hitler system' or a 'Himmler system'; I would prefer to call it the latter." In 1934 or '35 Hitler supposedly said that the concentration camps had been established by order of the Reichsfuhrer SS (Himmler) in order to subdue the political opposition which threatened to injure the work of reconstruction.

"Later on the concentration camps became, so to speak, 'extra-territorial', and the Gauleiters had lost all control over them. The BUCHENWALD concentration camp was established against my will." Concerning the treatment of foreign workers, Sauckel claims to have unsuccessfully proposed all along that they receive the same treatment and pay as the German workers. "Besides, one had to realize that the Gauleiter meetings more and more developed into lectures, in which the Gauleiters received instructions but were unable to air grievances and to request their rectification."

The Division of Power: Sauckel asserts that he had opposed Himmler as well as Bormann, the former ever since 1934. At that time, Himmler had assumed authority over all police forces in Germany, much against the wishes of the Gauleiters, since the Gauleiters were thus deprived of their executive power. Administration and police had consequently been completely separated. Sauckel goes on to say that Himmler had dictatorial powers over all police forces, including field and security police as well as Gestapo and SD. "Whenever I wanted assistance from the Police I had to specially request it. More often than not I was told: 'This has already been decided by Berlin'. I have never seen a single Gestapo directive. Final arrest warrants were issued in Berlin." Sauckel continues to say that, after Hess' flight, it became increasingly difficult to be permitted to see the Fuhrer. "Whenever I voiced my doubts about this 'division of powers' to Hitler, he would impatiently answer: 'Don't bother me with such things; consult the Minister of the Interior (Frick, later on Himmler) on the matter.'"

Thus, the split between the Gauleiters and the SS deepened as time went on. The SS, so Sauckel says, which was originally considered the "cleanest" organization of the entire NS system, had become a body whose development had to be viewed by the Gauleiters with increasing mistrust. Sauckel attributes this development largely to the influence of Heydrich, "a Himmler product". "The Gauleiters feared Himmler more than they hated him, but they simply despised Heydrich. As far as the SD is concerned, 'it was the general opinion that it was an instrument to check on the activities of the old Party members themselves'."

The Jewish Question: "I still can't grasp it". - He does not grasp it because "the Fuhrer always regarded the Jews as being the best 'Faustpfand' (hostages) we possess." When Goering once voiced his opposition against the persecution of the Jews, Sauckel took it that Goering was taking a similar attitude to that of the Fuhrer. Sauckel thus regarded the Jewish question not from a human point of view but rather from that of a political usefulness. Therefore he had believed that a physical extermination of Jews would not take place. The events of November 9th, 1938 ("Kristallwoche") took place while Sauckel was absent from Thuringia, and had been organized by Dr. Goebbels, according to Sauckel's statement.

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