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

INTERROGATION DIVISION SUMMARY

Interrogation of: Erich RAEDER.

By: General Alexandrow of USSR Delegation, 3 November 1945, P.M., Nuremberg

PERSONS AND ORGANIZATIONS IMPLICATED, AND SUBJECTS

1. RAEDER
 - a. Reservations as to personal written statements to Russians (pp.1-2)
 - b. Plans for invasion of England in 1940 (p.2)
 - c. Plans for aggression war against Russia (pp.3-15)
 - (1) Knowledge of Hitler's intentions, in October 1940 (pp.3,5,6)
 - (2) Knowledge of Plan Barbarossa (pp.7-15)
2. HITLER
 - a. Plans for invasion of England (p.2)
 - b. Plans for aggression war against Russia (pp.3-5)
3. KEITEL, JODL, OKW
 - a. Preparation of Plan Barbarossa (pp.7,10)

RESERVATIONS AS TO PERSONAL WRITTEN STATEMENTS

Raeder recalls having submitted written statements on July 10, July 27, August 4, August 28 and August 30. Says he would like to have them available when talking with his defense counsel; wants to use them in his defense. Made these written statements because he was asked if he wanted to cooperate with Russia and would give the benefit of his experiences. (pp.1-2) Admits that these statements were made by him, but makes the reservation that he did not approve all statements as summarized in a transcript in Berlin (p.2)

PLANS FOR AGGRESSIVE WAR AGAINST RUSSIA

He was asked to state what he knows about preparation of the plans for Germany's aggression against the Soviet Union. Preparations for landings in England were made in September, 1940; at the very latest, this invasion was to be made in October, 1940, if at all in that year, a very difficult assignment for the Navy. In September it was realized that they could not be ready by October, because aerial superiority by that time could not be obtained, a prerequisite for invasion. Hitler cancelled the invasion at the end of September, or beginning of October, postponing it until Spring, 1941. (p.2)

Erich Raeder, 3 November 1945, PM. Nuremberg.

Towards the end of October, 1940, Hitler told Raeder, as well as all the commanders-in-chief of the services that he was planning to go to war against the Soviet Union, in 1941. He supposed that the Commanders in Chief of the Army had been previously informed about it, as the army was far more concerned and required longer preparation. (p.3)

Denies having any knowledge of the order issued by the OKW and dealing with war against Soviet Union; adds that, in August or September, Hitler told him he was transferring troops to the East. Hitler knew that Raeder was opposed to war against Russia and therefore told him nothing of his plans. (p.3)

Says he cannot swear to it - but assumes - that he was present at Hitler's conference with all his commanders in chief, on November 23, 1939, in which conference Hitler expounded his ideas on foreign policy. At that time, the Germans were close Allies of the Soviets and hopeful that the treaty with Russia would be honored. The Navy greatly favored adherence to that treaty. (p.3)

Cannot remember that Hitler, three months after signing the treaty with Russia, should have uttered an idea such as, "We will be able to fight Russia if we get our hands free in the West." At that time Hitler cannot have intended to make war against Russia; he may have talked about it merely hypothetically. (p.4) Adds that he would have known about it, if Hitler as early as 1939 had said that he might go to war against Russia, but that even in September 1940, when preparing the invasion of England, he had no thought whatever of a war against Russia. (p.4). In 1939, there was not thought of breaking relations with Russia, and there was certainly no talk of war against Russia. (p.5)

Hitler may have said that Germany would be in a position to go to war with Russia, after having defeated the western powers. It is probable that Hitler decided to make war against Russia on realizing that he could not invade England. (p.5) Raeder repeats that in October 1940 he heard for the first time from Hitler about his intention to make war on Russia, (p.5) and that he was then completely surprised. (p.6)

PLAN BARBAROSSA

He learned about directive 21, the so-called plan "Barbarossa", towards the end of October, 1940. Thinks he was informed very late of the plan because Hitler knew of his opposition to a war on Russia. Raeder had several very serious conversations with Hitler in November, 1940, stressing the reasons why Germany could not go to war against the Soviet Union. At the end of November, he believed he had convinced Hitler. (p.7) Knows that Hitler declared in December, 1940 that the final plans were drawn up and that his decision had been taken. Raeder states that the date on the document coincides approximately with the date on which Hitler informed the Commanders in Chief's of the various services of his intentions to go to war against Russia. (p.7)

Erich Raeder, 3 November 1945, PM., Nuremberg.

The plan "Barbarossa" was prepared by the OKW. As to whether he knows this document, he says "I must have been informed".(p.7) Raeder assumes that the plan "Barbarossa" constitutes a final plan of attack, but that there were not definite instructions for any action in it, that it merely meant one had to be prepared for such orders. No date for the start of war was fixed in the plan. The plan was not even an order to undertake the preparations, it merely states what would be necessary in case of war.(p.8)

The plan "Barbarossa" expressed for the first time, in writing, the idea that a war against Russia was possible.(p.8) Although Hitler in October 1940 gave indications of contemplating war against Russia, the plan was conceived only for an eventuality of Russia changing her attitude.(pp.8-9) The plan "Barbarossa" was an attempt to prepare the minds of the chiefs of the armed forces for an eventual war against the Soviet Union. (9) It was not an operational order; it was a directive, to apply in the event of war against Russia.(p.9) Admits that the directive was put into practice June 22, 1941, but - nevertheless - it was not an order which provided for an opening of hostilities (pp.9-10) After this directive had been issued, it was no longer possible to tell Hitler that a war against Russia was impossible. (p.10)

Raeder maintains he had nothing to do with the preparations of the plan; that it was prepared by the OKW; that he had nothing to do with the preparation of the part dealing with the plans for the Navy, either. The OKW had a naval member, as well as air force and army members. All members of the OKW were under Jodl and Keitel. (p.10)

Jodl and Keitel did not discuss or consult with him, since he was not a member of the OKW.(p.10) Neither did the Naval General Staff participate in preparing this plan.(p.10) According to the plan, the navy began its small preparations in March 1941.(p.9) Raeder recalls the directive dealing with employment of the fleet. It came from the operational staff of the German Navy, signed by Admiral Fritzsche, chief of that staff. Another signature on the document is that of Wagner.(p.12) Says he assumes responsibility for the actions of his subordinates, providing these actions were in compliance with his orders but that the Chief of naval operations, who was his subordinate, issued this document on his own, without informing Raeder. Although he had the authority to issue it "under his own firm", he should have submitted it to Raeder, for information (p.12)

Maintains he read about this document for the first time in the indictment. Had he seen it before, his initials should be on it.(p.12) Calls the part of the document which says that "there prevails no interest as to whether or not the civilian population would survive the operations", a superfluous expression of a personal view, to which he would not have agreed had he seen it; he would have deleted such a statement.(p.12) Does not know whether Hitler's directives were

Erich Raeder, 3 November 1945, Pl., Nuremberg.

followed in the document. Says that Admiral Fritzsche had discussions with the OKW and, undoubtedly, his instructions came from the Fuehrer. (p.13) Denies knowledge of a similar directive signed by Jodl and Keitel, dealing with the destruction of Leningrad and other cities; the Navy was not concerned with actions against other cities. (p.13)

Raeder agrees that the document constitutes a criminal violation of international law and of the rules and customs of war, but he points out that it was sent to the Navy only for information; that it came from the OKW by order of Hitler. (p.14) OKW is responsible for such directives, within the OKW the operational section. Adds that such documents merely re-transmit OKW instructions. Denies that responsibility for the contents rests with the Chief of the Navy and the Chief of Staff of the Navy. (p.14)

Regarding the communication from the Chief of Staff of the Navy, dated September 29, 1941, the Navy was passing on verbal instructions it had received from the OKW in a personal meeting between the OKW and the naval representative.