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

INTERROGATION DIVISION SUMMARY

Interrogation of von RIBBENTROP, Joachim

By: Colonel Brundage, 29 August 1945, a.m.

Persons and organizations implicated, and subjects

1. RIBBENTROP

- a. German Foreign Minister (1-2)
- b. German Ambassador to London (1-2)
- c. Member of NSDAP (11-14)
- d. Acquaintances with
 - (1) Bruening (2)
 - (2) Roehm (4)
 - (3) Papen (4)
- e. Commissioner for Disarmament (7,9,10)
- f. Ambassador-at-Large (10)
- g. Chief Nazi aims (2-3)
- h. Seizure of Power by the Nazis
 - (1) Negotiations to appoint Hitler Chancellor (4-6)
 - (2) Meetings with Papen and Hitler (5-6)
 - (3) Ribbentrop's deals preceding Hitler's appointment to Chancellory (7-8)
 - (4) Discussions dealing with Treaty of Versailles (7-8)
- i. "Mein Kampf" and Ribbentrop's reaction to matters advocated therein (11-16)
- j. Persecution of Jews and churches (18-20)
- k. Foreign policy and responsibility for it (21)
- l. Undieing loyalty to Hitler (23-24)

GOVERNMENT AND PARTY AFFILIATION

Ribbentrop said he became German Foreign Minister on the 4th or 5th of February 1938. In 1937 he was German Ambassador to London (1-2). Joined NSDAP in 1922 but did not belong to Party veterans of 1921. Later he said he joined the NSDAP in 1932 (11,14). Used to vote for Stresemann (4) and had "great esteem for Bruening" (2). In 1932 - 1933 he met Helldorf, a NSDAP veteran in Berlin, and Roehm, and through them got to know the Party. "On the other hand I knew Papen, who was also a national man, but he came from the Right Wing of the Catholic Party" (4). Ribbentrop said he got his first official job in 1934 "when I became Commissioner for Disarmament" (7). The Fuehrer wanted to create an Army, and since he was interested in the "quality of armaments", and since

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he, Ribbentrop, had widely traveled in England and France, the Fuehrer thought he was the right man for the job (9). As Commissioner for Disarmament Ribbentrop, under the German Foreign Minister, had to treat "especially the question of rearmament as a whole" (10). In 1935, Ribbentrop became Ambassador-at-large and in that capacity negotiated the Naval Agreement with Britain (10).

CHIEF AIMS OF NAZIS

Ribbentrop said Hitler's chief aim from the outset was "to restore a free and independent strong Germany, both politically and economically, because he was of the opinion,--and rightfully, I think,--that former governments had not succeeded in bringing Germany into a position in which she could stand up, in the long run, without coming into chaotic conditions" (2). Poor German economy 1931 - 1932, unemployment, five million communist voters listed as factors necessitating political change (2,3).

SEIZURE OF POWER IN GERMANY

Ribbentrop said he did not participate in "negotiations" to make Hitler Chancellor in August 1932 (4). Wanted "patriotic front" from Nazis to Center Party (5). "At the instigation of Helldorf", Ribbentrop went to see Papen who told him that Hindenburg would not have Hitler as Chancellor (5). Ribbentrop offered to see Hitler to ascertain (a) whether "things could be arranged in some way"; (b) whether he could "bring Papen and Hitler together again" (5). So in August 1932 Ribbentrop met Hitler personally for the first time at the Berghof (5), found that Hitler was thoroughly distrustful of Papen (6) and told the Fuehrer he would not try again to arrange a meeting between him and Papen (6). Nothing was done while General Schleicher was in power (6). Then Hitler and Papen met again in the house of Baron von Schroeder, but Ribbentrop did not know "what happened there" (6). About a week after that, in January 1933, Ribbentrop was asked to bring Hitler and Papen together again for conversations at his, Ribbentrop's house.

Ribbentrop admitted (a) "I believe that these conversations in my house contributed to the fact that later on the Hitler government was formed" (7; though he qualified this admission by saying he didn't participate "in the material side of the discussions"); (b) His own aim was to "form a patriotic front to stabilize business and political conditions;

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that is, to bring Germany equality and abolish the worst clauses of the Versailles Treaty" (7); (c) Hitler had repeatedly asked him for an opinion "about certain matters" and in this way "I became, sort of in private capacity, political advisor, or let's say, political collaborator in the foreign policies of Hitler" (8); (d) He agreed with Hitler that the Versailles Treaty was "in most of its clauses an impossibility" (8).

Ribbentrop said he told Hitler that "Mein Kampf" and the Party Program were all right as "fighting slogans for fighting peoples to get into power" but were not suited for statesmen actually in power (11). "I have, of course, read "Mein Kampf" and the Party Program, but I have been interested more in the foreign political part of it" (11). Ribbentrop stated he had already in 1933 taken exception to the Fuehrer's opinions regarding (a) France, where "I had an old friend, Buncau Verilla, proprietor of the Matin" (12) and knew Brinon (13) (b); the Racial Program; (c) the Jewish question; (d) the church problem; (e) the free Masons (11-16).

PERSECUTION OF JEWS AND CHURCHES

Between 1933 and 1936 the Fuehrer's views on Jewish and church questions had been more "moderate" under his, Ribbentrop's, influence. At his advice, the Fuehrer even made a friend of Ribbentrop's, "a quarter Jew" named Tholrner, a Party member (17). But later on, the Fuehrer became increasingly adamant (18-20).

RESPONSIBILITY FOR FOREIGN POLICY

Ribbentrop said he was ready to assume responsibility for everything "I have done as German Foreign Minister" (21).

RELATION TO HITLER

Ribbentrop stated "I have been loyal to the Fuehrer to his last day. I have never gone back on him. I did not always agree with him, on the contrary, we sometimes had very divergent views. But I promised him in 1941 that I would keep faith with him. I gave him my word of honor that I would not get him into any difficulties. He considered me his closest collaborator...it was sometimes very difficult to keep this promise, and today I am sorry I have given it" (23). He said one might think he had more to tell about "the background of things" but "I want to be and remain loyal to this man, even after his death, as far as I can possibly do it" (23). At the

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same time, "I reserve for myself, of course, the right of history to show, while keeping my promise, the role which I have played in this whole drama" (23). Questioned whether he felt any obligation to the German people to set forth for the record both good and bad things, Ribbentrop said "that is a terribly difficult question to answer", adding "I do not want to stand before the German people as being disloyal to the Fuehrer" (23-24).