

TOP SECRET

*Political Adm*  
(1)

Interrogation of Herr Franz von Papen,  
held at Rheims, France, 1115-1245 hours,  
16 April, 1945.

Present

Lt-General SUSLOPAROV, Russian Army;

Major-General K.W.D.STRONG, A. C. of S.,  
G-2, Supreme Headquarters AEF;

Major-General DRAGOUN, Russian Army;

Brigadier-General T. J. BETTS, D/A. C.  
of S., G-2, Supreme Headquarters AEF;

Major I. MUNRO, British Army, Interpreter;

Two Russian Officers, Interpreters.

The interrogation was conducted in French.  
A record of the interrogation is attached.

TOP SECRET

**TOP SECRET** 16 April 1945

INTERROGATION OF FRANZ VON PAPEN

General Strong made it clear to von Papen that the interrogators were merely to ask military questions.

(von Papen) - "I am ready to give every bit of information to help my poor people and the whole of Europe. Before saying anything, however, I would like to know what my status is. If I am held as a war criminal I would prefer to say nothing."

(The members decided that this was a political question for Allied Governments, which General Strong tells von Papen.)

(General Strong) - "Our aim is to end the war as quickly as possible and yours' must be the same. In the circumstances perhaps you can give us information on military questions."

(von Papen) - "I do not wish to be classed as a war criminal with these other men. I am recognized by my people as a man who has always done his duty. I have often been asked to do things to hasten peace but I have found myself unable to carry them out as I have had no opportunity. If I gave you any military information it could only be suggestions. I have no knowledge of military secrets. If I did make any suggestion the German people might say that I had revealed information to save my life. I have been a gentleman all my life and will remain one."

(General Strong) - "This is a question we cannot discuss. If you do not wish to answer our questions you need not."

(General Strong) - "We have heard that the Germans intend to retire to the Redoubt with the Government, part of the Army and part of the Civil Service - together with Hitler, Goering, Goebbels, etc., and to defend themselves to the last. Is this hypothesis true or not?"

(von Papen) - "I know nothing of that. I have been without contact with the German Government since I returned from Turkey in August. I have lived in the country and been watched by the Gestapo. I have had talks, of course, with Officers, Generals, etc., and personally I think this hypothesis is correct."

(General Strong) - "Norway has suffered a great deal from the German occupation. Is it Germany's intention to remain in Norway or to withdraw her troops and spare the Norwegians the horror of war?"

(von Papen) - "I know nothing, but I think it is useless to hold Norway as we can no longer get iron from the North. I have not even discussed this question with any Generals in Germany as it deals with territory so far away."

(General Strong) - "If resistance continues in the Redoubt do you think resistance will also continue in Norway?"

(von Papen) - "Even if it continues in the Redoubt it is militarily without significance whether it continues in Norway or not."

(General Strong) - "You do not think that from the point of view of German prestige they will try to continue in Norway?"

(von Papen) - "Everything is possible. I do not know what happens in the heads of these people."

(General Strong) - "Have you any idea of the German plans in Italy? At present the Germans are defending Italy. Do they intend to remain there or retire to the Alps?"

**TOP SECRET**

## TOP SECRET

(von Papen) - "According to the method of Hitler he will leave everywhere pockets with orders to defend themselves to the last. I think he will leave troops in Italy but I do not know. The same can also apply to Norway."

(General Strong) - "Why in your opinion do German troops remain in Italy? Is there any economic or industrial reason?"

(von Papen) - "I think it may be because of a promise to Mussolini. I do not think it is a question of the supplies which Germany may draw from Italy. I think on the other hand that Germany must be supplying Italy."

(General Strong) - "You have just spoken of the strategy of Hitler. Does he still control German strategy?"

(von Papen) - "I think so."

(General Strong) - "Do the German Generals near him have any influence on this strategy?"

(von Papen) - "Keitel and Guderian perhaps. They change so often, however, that one does not know who is near him."

(General Strong) - "You were in the Ruhr. What is the state of food stocks, petrol, etc., in Army Group 'B'?"

(von Papen) - "Pretty bad. I have not spoken to any military commander there as I have only been there a fortnight, but I think it must be bad just like in the whole country. There are crowds of people - Russian workers, etc., in the pocket, migrating all over the place."

(General Betts) - "Was the German population also migrating in the Ruhr?"

(von Papen) - "Yes, they had flocked from the Eastern provinces and were now flocking back. There were also German workers on the move from the Ruhr factories."

(General Strong) - "What do you think of the food situation and the petrol situation in Germany in general?"

(von Papen) - "There is no petrol at all. It has all been destroyed."

(General Strong) - "No reserves?"

(von Papen) - "Not that I have heard of. Hitler may have some at his Redoubt."

(General Strong) - "In this case how will the war end?"

(von Papen) - "If Hitler retires with the divisions of which he now disposes to his mountains, then it can last sometime because to make war in the Alps is difficult. Perhaps he bases his hopes on that."

(General Strong) - "Do you think we will find a German General who will come and ask for an armistice either in the East or in the West?"

(von Papen) - "It is possible."

(General Strong) - "Is it the intention of the German High Command to ask for an armistice?"

(von Papen) - "That has been discussed a lot but it is difficult. A General is alone. If he makes any step he is arrested."

TOP SECRET

**TOP SECRET**

(General Susloparov) - "Can you give us the names of the Generals who were shot for the 20th of July?"

(von Papen) - "Yes, I know some but not all."

(General Strong) - "The most important ones."

(von Papen) - "Witzleben, Stuelpnagel and Falkenhausen."

(General Strong) - "The Stuelpnagel from the air force or the army?"

(von Papen) - "The army. Perhaps my son could tell you more."

(General Strong) - "What about Rommel?"

(von Papen) - "They said Rommel had something to do with it, but he was really wounded by a Jabo and died in hospital."

(General Strong) - "Does the High Command have no intention of asking for an armistice?"

(von Papen) - "Do you mean Hitler, Keitel and company?"

(General Strong) - "Yes."

(von Papen) - "I do not think so. I have never heard of this."

(General Susloparov) - "Do you know Model?"

(von Papen) - "No."

(General Strong) - "You do not know his intentions?"

(von Papen) - "He has the reputation of being a Nazi General and very close to the party. He will defend himself to the last."

(General Strong) - "Will he remain in the pocket or escape by air?"

(von Papen) - "As a good soldier he should stay with his troops."

(General Strong) - "Let us leave the question of the Redoubt. How long could the rest of the German troops resist, taking into consideration morale, stores, petrol, etc?"

(von Papen) - "It would be very difficult. For the Redoubt there would certainly be stocks of some sort. As for the North, Russia and the Baltic, etc., and also for Italy, etc., there it cannot last long."

(General Strong) - "One, two, three, four, six months or a year?"

(von Papen) - "As soon as the Allies and the Russians meet near Berlin, and the North is occupied, one could do something politically and psychologically to end the war more quickly. That is a question which must be discussed from every point of view."

(General Strong) - "I should like to repeat the question from a military point of view. You must have a personal opinion of how long it could last. I speak of the North, Denmark, Norway and of Czechoslovakia and the South apart from the Redoubt."

(von Papen) - "But it really is a political, not a military question. People who have lost everything will go on fighting unless they are given some hope of life."

(General Strong) - "You think then that resistance could go on for two or three months?"

**TOP SECRET**

## TOP SECRET

(von Papen) - "Yes, to the last cartridge."

(General Strong) - "You don't think someone will approach us to end this?"

(von Papen, heatedly) - "What good would it do? Who would do that, merely to be sent as a laborer to Russia or to return without the possibility of earning livelihood in a destroyed country?"

(General Strong) - "A lot has been said of a resistance movement in Germany. What is your opinion of this? When the Redoubt is finished will we find such a movement?"

(von Papen) - "I do not think so. What good would it do? Some young men might lose their heads and do something, but a general resistance movement is unlikely."

(General Strong) - "After the last war we found the Freikorps, especially in the East. In your opinion will we find a sort of Freikorps after hostilities?"

(von Papen) - "That is really something the same as a general resistance. After the last war the Freikorps movement was purely a question of internal politics. They were formed against internal revolution. I do not think it will be the same this time."

(General Strong) - "The German radio has recently said a lot about the Wehrwolf movement and has given instructions to them. Can this organization be a danger or is this merely a propaganda move?"

(von Papen) - "I have heard about this on the radio - for example the murder of the Mayor of Aachen. Some few similar cases may arise but I think it is propaganda."

(General Strong) - "Have preparations for a Wehrwolf movement been made?"

(von Papen) - "I do not know. That would be a Gestapo matter."

(General Strong) - "In your opinion is the German army under the control of the party or of the Gestapo?"

(von Papen) - "The army has retained very little independence."

(General Strong) - "Who is in your opinion responsible for this decision to resist to the end - Hitler, the Party, the Gestapo, or is it a general decision?"

(von Papen) - "I cannot think that the Generals who understand war would like to continue this useless war and its devastation. I think this is a decision of the Party and the Gestapo together - Hitler and his entourage."

(General Strong) - "The whole army, therefore, does not agree with this decision?"

(von Papen) - "No."

(General Strong) - "After the termination of hostilities there will be an occupation of Germany. What will the attitude of the German people be to the occupying forces?"

(von Papen) - "The population will try to live."

(General Strong) - "An hostile attitude?"

(von Papen) - "No. In the debris which remains they will not think of hostility but merely of how to maintain a simple existence."

## TOP SECRET

## TOP SECRET

(General Strong) - "When will the troops garrisoned in Norway be ready to surrender? As long as the Redoubt holds will they hold out?"

(von Papen) - "If there are means of transport they will probably be moved to the South. If not, which is more likely, they may remain in Norway to the end and fight it out."

(General Susloparov) - "Have you been sent here by the German Government?"

(von Papen) - "I left Turkey at the beginning of August on the rupture of diplomatic relations. I returned to Germany and made a report at Headquarters and have since been unemployed. I have had no contact with the German Government since. I went to my estate in the Saar. It was destroyed. So I went to the Hundsruok. The Gestapo forced me to cross the Rhine on the approach of the Allies so I went to my daughter at Stockhausen. There I was taken. I did not try to flee as stated in the newspapers. On the contrary I felt that discussion with the Allies might be useful for us both."

(General Strong) - "You cannot make contact with the German Government?"

(von Papen) - "Yes, I could."

(General Susloparov) - "You were not a person in the confidence of the German Government recently?"

(von Papen) - "I have had no recent contact with the German Government. I am known not to be a Nazi, so they preferred to have nothing to do with me," (von Papen later requested that this be changed to "so they preferred not to use me for any special missions", when text re-read to him.) "Among the German people, however, there are many who feel I might be able to do something for them."

(General Susloparov) - "Have you tried to enter into contact with the Allies with the intention of asking for an armistice or have you tried to get into contact with your Government now?"

(von Papen) - "Not now."

(General Strong) - "You were not sent here officially?"

(von Papen) - "No, I am a private person. I have had no contact recently at all. In view of the situation, telephone, post, etc., one was entirely cut off."

(General Betts) - "Can you tell us anything about the Volksturm?"

(von Papen) - "It has failed completely. Either they were too old or had no weapons or no desire to fight."

(General Betts) - "Do you think the majority of the ministries are still in Berlin?"

(von Papen) - "I think most of them left long ago. A few offices remain to give an appearance of a Capital. They are, I think, in Silesia and Bavaria."

(General Strong) - "When were you last in Berlin?"

(von Papen) - "About the 10th of August."

(General Strong) - "The center is destroyed?"

(von Papen) - "Completely."

## TOP-SECRET

## TOP SECRET

(General Strong) - "And the surroundings?"

(von Papen) - "Also."

(General Strong) - "Will we find any buildings, ministries, etc?"

(von Papen) - "None."

(General Strong) - "How could the people exist?"

(von Papen) - "In cellars and shelters."

(General Strong) - "How do you think you personally could end the war?"

(von Papen) - "I cannot discuss that without having my status defined."

(General Strong) - "There might, however, be a contact made by you with the German Government?"

(von Papen) - "I have at the moment no contact with the German Government."

(General Strong) - "Has your son-in-law no contact with the German Government?"

(von Papen) - "None at all."

(General Strong) - "And your son?"

(von Papen) - "No, but he, of course, knows the army better than I do."

(General Strong) - "This question of food for the Germans after hostilities. Is the situation very bad?"

(von Papen) - "Very bad. We tried to cultivate the land but it was impossible" (goes on to elaborate this). I think the seeds for the next crops are now being taken for food.

(General Susloparov) - "You say you are no follower of National Socialism but when you were Ambassador to Turkey you supported the German policy and spread German propaganda. You particularly tried to spread German influence in the near East and especially in the Ukraine."

(von Papen) - "What did not concern Turkey had nothing to do with me. I had to try to prevent Turkey from entering the war. I was convinced that it was good for us, for Turkey, and for the Allies that she should not enter the war. I tried to convince the German Government of the correctness of this policy of peace and succeeded."

(General Susloparov) - "Did you personally share the opinion of the German Government as far as the invasion of Russia was concerned?"

(von Papen) - "No, not at all. It was the most absolute nonsense. Ask your former Ambassador in Ankara what I thought of it."

(General Strong) - "Who decided the invasion?"

(von Papen) - "Hitler."

(General Strong) - "Against the advice of the High Command?"

(von Papen) - "Yes, I think so."

## TOP SECRET

# TOP SECRET

(General Susloparov) -- "Where is Schulenburg now?"

(von Papen) -- "He is dead."

(von Papen) -- "May I make a personal suggestion? If you are going to publish any of my replies my children in Germany will be shot. I do not know what you intend doing with my replies, but I should like to draw your attention to this fact."

Von Papen was assured by all concerned that his replies would not be published in the press.

# TOP SECRET