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Report of Interrogation No. 5237

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Report on Interrogation of:

P/W KESSLER, Ulrich, General d. Flieger (Maj. Gen)

28 May 1945

Capt. HALLE

Kampfgeschwader 1 (Hindenburg)

Captured 15 May 1945; surrendered to Americans at sea.

Veracity: Believed reliable.

INFORMATION RE: POLITICAL ALIBI OF GENERAL DER FLIEGER KESSLER.

P/W states that he has knowingly sacrificed his military career to his political convictions. In the summer of 1938, P/W declined the position of Chief of the General Staff of the Luftwaffe offered him by Jeschonnek with the remark that he would but be able to stay in office for more than 14 days. This conception was proven on the occasion of a conversation which P/W had with Gen. Feldmarshall Goering in September 1938 on the very day that Hitler made his speech in the Sportpalast at the time of Godesberg and Munich. Goering ordered P/W to this interview with him in order to find out why P/W believed in a military intervention by England in case Germany should settle the Sudeten-German and Czech problems by force. This interview between Goering and P/W was also attended by Bodenschatz. During the conversation, Goering let P.W perceive that he had earmarked P.W for the job of Chief of the Gen. Staff of the Air Fleet which he had built up to fight England for him. Of such a Chief, Goering expected not only knowledge, ability, and ideas, but also, above all, the conviction that Germany would smash England. After P/W had silently listened to Goering's comments without making any personal comment, Goering flatly asked P/W to tell him "on his honor" if he had that conviction.

P/W states that he felt all too clearly what kind of an answer Goering expected from him and he knew equally well what was in store for him if he answered in the negative. In spite of this, P/W said to Goering:

"No! Because America will be behind England and the whole world would be behind America. A war with England will always be a long war; a war with England should be prepared for spiritually and materially long beforehand so as to achieve a knockout blow by the first, initial attack. Germany possibly had time in peace whereas England had time in war. Germany cannot go on saying one day that a war with England is entirely out of the question and then the next day start an a war for which they were unprepared."

To this Goering replied, "Very well; then I cannot use you." He then dismissed P/W.

The decision to relieve P/W from his position as Air Attache in England was not apparent that evening. This decision was taken spontaneously after Munich on 10 October as P/W asked through Goering's adjutant when he would receive P/W before his departure for London. Goering let it be known to P/W that he could not use men in London who had a feeling of inferiority toward the English.

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Immediately after the conversation with Goering, P/W wrote the contents down for his wife; later on, he completed these notes by a typewritten and improved text. These papers, P/W states, are among his documents in his desk in Neubrandenburg, Schwedenstrasse 19.

From various sources and later from Col. Gen. Loerzer, it was confirmed to P/W that the Reichsmarschall never, through all those years, forgot P/W's attitude.

INFORMATION REGARDING P/W'S ASSOCIATION WITH THE GOERDELER GROUP:

Frau Hanna Luecke-Kallenberg, Berlin/Wilmersdorf, Berlinerstrasse 67, Phone 87 8161, a relative of P/W's wife, had repeatedly urged P/W to contact one of her friends who would have something very important to tell him. Such a meeting took place at the end of February 1943 when P/W met a well-known Leipzig lawyer by the name of Perkuhn (?) or Pekruhn with whom P/W was not previously acquainted. This man had previously been a judge advocate in the army and his address could be obtained from Frau Luecke, who, incidentally, knows numerous Anti-Nazi personalities and has always had contact with these circles.

P/W met P. in the evening at a street corner and went with him to his room at the Esplanade Hotel. P. knew about P/W's attitude from Frau Luecke. Cautiously he spoke of a group which had been formed around Goerdeler whose main purpose was to avoid mob rule when the Nazi Government should disappear after the war was lost, which was even then taken for a fact. Only as the conversation proceeded were the cards laid on the table and the decision to assassinate Hitler brought into the discussion. According to P., important army personalities had already voiced their agreement; all that was needed now was to enlist an important personality of the Air Force in their cause. He asked P/W whether he knew somebody suitable. P/W could not think of anyone but suggested that he would cautiously sound out Kesselring as a suitable man. Stumpff, Richthofen, Sperrle and von Greim were considered unreliable by P/W. P/W states that he was certain that his own officers and his units would stand solidly behind him.

P. said the Navy would not be used. In spite of his knowledge of Goering's unsuitability, Goerdeler was said to have toyed with the idea of using Goering as a front during the transition period in order to remove all the other parasitic elements from the government. P. also mentioned that a certain American, with whom he had close contacts, had told him before leaving for the U.S. that he (the American) knew for certain that he would be one of those who would one day draw up the conditions of peace for Germany. It was his desire that P. should then be a part of the German delegation. The American's name was not mentioned.

Not long afterward P/W discussed this meeting with his sister-in-law's husband, Kurt Weber, Dr. Jur., (Address: Buergermeister, A.D. Dr. Kurt

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Weber, Hamburg; formerly Adolf Str. 21;). P/W and Weber have been close friends since their bachelor days in Wilhelmshaven and also through the close ties between their families during the past 25 years. From the beginning, Weber hated the Nazis intensely, even more so than P/W since he was better informed about their doings. Weber had succeeded Goerdeler as Mayor of Koenigsberg, East Prussia, and the two had been close friends since 1925. Weber told P/W more about Goerdeler's plans. He had already been informed by Goerdeler of P/W's interview with P/. He told P/W that Goerdeler planned to make him, P/W, Secretary of State for Air.

From the fall of 1943 on up to Easter of 1944, P/W heard of several fruitless assassination attempts or planned attempts were brought to his attention by his brother-in-law, Kurt Weber. On Easter Sunday 1944, Weber phoned Goerdeler from P/W's home. P/W maintains that neither he nor Weber had any advance knowledge concerning the date of "the twentieth of July". However, both P/W and Weber were constantly apprehensive over the possibility of being arrested; Weber who was in constant contact with Goerdeler, always had poison for himself and his family within immediate reach. Weber knew from Goerdeler himself that no written notes had been made of the names of the participants or their future assignments. The Gestapo reported having discovered that Goerdeler had had a permanent room in the Hotel Bristol and that a search through the ruins after the bombing had disclosed a list made up by Goerdeler in the hotel vault giving the names of all participants. Weber told P/W that Goerdeler never stayed at the Hotel Bristol but always in the Christian Hospice near the Anhalter Station. Weber also disclosed having read Goerdeler's "Appeal". On the day of Hitler's assassination, a complete capitulation on the Western Front was to take place and the blackout was to be lifted. This appeal was signed by former members of the Reichstag of all political parties ranging from the Communists to the German Nationals. Goerdeler received these members in his Leipzig office quite openly and generally acted in accordance with his conviction that 95% of the German people were embittered Anti-Nazis. This conviction was not shared by Weber.

This signing of the Appeal by former Reichstag members might possibly explain why in August 1944 all former Social-Democratic officials were taken and kept under arrest for three days, among them in Neubrandenburg the former Social-Democratic City Councillor, Kaehlke, P.W's grocer, with whom P/W had been talking freely on general political convictions. Kaehlke had never concealed his Anti-Nazi feelings.

P/W finds it hard to explain why other littlepeople, too, like former secretaries of labor unions spoke openly to him. P/W heard from his chauffeur and also from his orderly that his former command (Flieg. Fhr. Atlantik) believed P/W to have been a participant in the attempt of 20th July and either jailed or already executed. Men who hardly knew P/W requested leave in order to see his family and to find out about his fate.

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A friend of P/W, a certain Dr. Jur. Riensberg, had retired after World War I, had studied law, and had gained a leading position in Hamburg maritime circles. During this war, he was attached to the German Embassy in Stockholm as representative of the German Sea Navigation, and he, too, belonged to the circle of Goerdeler.

P/W and Riensberg planned to have their wives meet during a visit to P/W's home in Neubrandenburg. In the Fall of 1943, such a meeting was arranged. P/W was on business in Hamburg. When Riensberg was expected to arrive in Neubrandenburg, he suddenly phoned and told P/W's wife that he could not come to Neubrandenburg but would have to see P/W urgently on a very important matter and wanted him to come to the ferry of Warnemuende. At the station, Riensberg advised P/W to be more careful as a major of the LW. had recently visited an agent of his in Copenhagen and, although this major did not know this agent, he spoke openly of the participation of the Luftwaffe in the projected overthrow of the government by force. The major also named Kessler as the only General of the LW. considered suitable for the task. Naturally, Riensberg did not disclose to the agent that he knew P/W. P/W is still wondering who the major could be.

P/W reassured Riensberg that he knew of no major in the LW. to whom he had at any time spoken in confidence and that he had never spoken to any officer about Goerdeler. The only possibility of explaining this major's statement would be to attribute it to P/W's attitude in 1938.

In the Spring of 1944, Riensberg and his wife came to Neubrandenburg. He believed the hour of liberation was drawing near. His last words before leaving P/W were: "So you really think that the invasion will succeed?"

"No question about it," answered P/W.

"If so, then everything is fine," said Riensberg and left.

Since that day, P/W never heard any more of Riensberg. A letter sent by P/W to Riensberg via the Foreign Ministry in May or June remained unanswered. Apparently the participation of Riensberg in the Goerdeler conspiracy had become known. For obvious reasons, P/W refrained from inquiring about Riensberg at the appropriate places and also from writing to him. Maybe similar reasons prevented Riensberg from writing to P/W. Inquiries at the Hotel "Vier Jahreszeiten" in Hamburg where Riensberg used to stay every three months brought no results.

What caused P/W's activities to remain concealed from the Gestapo is unknown to P/W. For many years he was careful not to write anything political in his letters and also warned his parents accordingly about their letters to him. He does remember having written to his parents in the beginning

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of 1940, after having read a report by Gen. Col. v. Blaskowitz about the atrocities of the SS and the Country Police in Poland:

"If there is Justice, we should never win this war."

Later on, P/W learned that about two-thirds of all his mail was regularly censored and that during periods preceding speeches by the Fuehrer, all of his mail would be censored. That he himself was under special censorship observation during a certain period in 1943 came out when he talked to his adjutant.

P/W remarked: "I wonder why my mail is so irregular; I think I am being spied upon."

To which his adjutant replied: "If you notice that much, I may just as well tell you that you were reported to the SD in Berlin as 'unreliable' because you went to a concert in Angers with some officers. This concert was given for the benefit of French P/Ws under the auspices of a French bishop with a known Anti-German attitude."

The adjutant learned all this from his wife who worked for the "IC" of the LW. Fuehrungsstab.

P/W maintains that his last assignment, which was made contrary to the expressed wishes of Doenitz, was in reality a shelving despite the continuous assurances of the General Staff that they really had no one else for the assignment to Tokyo. Radio Atlantic announced P/W's assignment even before it was officially known. His eldest son, who finished his course of pilot training in the aviation school Neubrandenburg in the Spring of 1944, was asked by his Horst's dentist whether there was another General Kessler besides his father in the LW. When the son answered in the negative, he was asked whether it was true that his father was going as attache to Tokyo. Radio Atlantic announced the names of Fieldmarshalls and Generals who would be dismissed and spoke of P/W as being sent off to Tokyo.

In view of this publicity, P/W thought he would be exposed to stricter supervision and was especially cautious. So, after 20 July 1944, he wrote to his parents in order to inform them about the extent of the retribution: "In compliance with the sound will of the people, the whole breed of vipers and conspirators has been eradicated, down to their children, and their children's children."

There is a possibility that this letter of P/W's to his parents was especially pleasing to the Gestapo because Oberlt. Schumann (Flak) told P/W that his record was good with the SD. This Schumann was assigned to P/W as Adjutant and Japanologist and had especially good connections with the SD. He received from the SD special tasks for Japan, the nature of which were unknown to P/W.

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Schumann was scheduled to leave with the next boat. His relationship with the SD goes back to his university years when he had some kind of an important position with the leadership of the Student Movement.

As to the attempt on Hitler's life, P/W's brother-in-law, Kurt Weber, is of the opinion, which, incidentally, P/W did not share, that this attempt had been staged by Himmler in order to dispose not only of Hitler but also of the "Officers' Clique" as well. Goerdeler told Weber that an attempt was planned only if 100% success could be insured and if Himmler could be disposed of at the same time and that several opportunities had been purposely missed because the simultaneous disposal of Himmler could not be guaranteed.

In order to characterize Kurt Weber, P/W emphasizes that he had a splendid career behind him in Parliamentary Germany and could look forward to an even better one in the future. Politically, he belonged to the German People's Party (Deutsche Volkspartei). As Mayor of Koenigsberg, he was so well known that he was elected to be vice president of the "Congress of Municipalities" (Staadtetag). As far as P/W seems to know, Weber declined this appointment because he did not want the one sided communal activities to bar his ascension to the highest positions in the Reich cabinet. After 1933, he opposed on many occasions and very sharply, Koch, otherwise called the "King of East Prussia", particularly by refusing to consent to contributions of the city (Koenigsberg?) to the Herr Gauleiter. When inducted in 1940 as Reserve Officer, Col. Gen. v. Blaskowitz took Weber into his staff as "II b".

Today he is 51 years old and knows a great many people, both positive constructive forces and also the dangerous elements (Scheedlinge). One of his sisters emigrated to the U.S. during the twenties and became a naturalized American citizen.

None of P/W's relatives ever belonged to the party. His brother, Capt. Horst Kessler, up to 1 April 1945 Naval Commander of Hemmerfest (Harstadt) and since then Higher Artillery Commander (Flak), has his family living in Borkum. Like P/W, he always was an active officer. His wife, Astrid, nee Lyncke, lived for many years in Lisbon. Her father is German, her mother Norwegian. In peacetime, her parents lived in Bayonne, France, moving to Biarritz after the German occupation. They fled to Spain in the Summer of 1944. Close relatives of theirs, by the name of Krone are well to do and live in Lisbon. One son, as a Portuguese national, has remained in London.

The only surviving sister of P/W's wife is married to a wholesale grain dealer in Budapest, a Jew by the name of Bika Jozsi, and lives at Bimbo Ut 141. Since early in December 1944, there has been no word from her or from P/W's mother-in-law who lives with her. She is Luise Richter, the widow of Vice Admiral (Ret.) Friedrich Richter who died in 1922.

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