

INTERROGATION OF OTTO BOVENSTIEPEN,  
FORMER CHIEF OF THE GERMAN SECURITY POLICE IN  
DENMARK (BORN JULY 8, 1905 IN DUISBURG) IN KASTELL COPENHAGEN,  
20 AUGUST 1945

The interrogated person was notified that he was interrogated because he was accused of various crimes in Denmark, but that at present it was not certain whether he would be tried here or by the allies. He was also told that it was up to him to testify, since no torture would be applied to him.

The defendant declares that he had arrived on January 6, 1944, in Denmark in order to relieve Dr. Mildner.

The defendant remarks about the formal responsibility of the various German agencies that the Reich Plenipotentiary and the General of the Police were equals, so that they could not give orders to each other. The police received its orders from the Reich Security Main Office, while the Reich Plenipotentiary was subordinated to the Foreign Office. The defendant himself was, as Chief of the Security Police, subordinated in general to the General of the Police from whom he could receive orders in general as well as in special cases; however, in addition he was subordinated to the Reich Security Main Office, i.e. to Dr. Kaltenbrunner. He received orders for individual actions from the latter.

In general, the General of the Police received notice about such orders directly from the Reich Security Main Office and, in general, the defendant notified also the General of the Police in this respect, but there were no set rules in this respect. In reality it depended on the personal relationship between the defendant and the General of the Police as to what extent the General of the Police was notified about the actions initiated by the defendant. Thus there were actions about which the General of the Police had really not been notified before their execution.

The reason for the transfer of the defendant to Denmark was Hitler's dissatisfaction with the activities carried out by the security police against terror and sabotage in Denmark. At a certain date, as far as the defendant knows, about October 1943, Hitler personally had ordered that rigorous measures were to be taken and the Reich Plenipotentiary, as well as the General of the Police were instructed accordingly. However, toward the end of 1943, no measures were yet taken as rigorous as Hitler desired and on December 30, 1943, Hitler desired and on December 30, 1943, Hitler issued orders again to follow a more rigorous course with counter-terror and counter-sabotage. In Berlin one was in any case of the opinion that it was due primarily to Dr. Mildner, former Chief of the German Security Police in Denmark, that the course of the counter-terror was not vigorous enough, and it was decided to replace him with another person, namely the defendant. Before his departure to Denmark, the accused had no opportunity to talk with Hitler or Himmler about the course in Denmark; he received his directives and his information about conditions here directly from Kaltenbrunner. Thus, the explicit purpose of the transfer of the defendant to Denmark was to perform counter-terror and counter-sabotage. As to the relation of the defendant to Dr. Best, he received directives from Kaltenbrunner instructing him to try to hold Dr. Best's political course. This meant that he would discuss the various actions with Dr. Best also, but it did not mean that Dr. Best could prevent the execution of such actions for which the defendant had received orders either from the General of the Police or directly from Berlin. According to the defendant,

he tried to reach an agreement about the actions with Dr. Best as much as possible, however, if it was necessary to force the issue, the action could be carried out even in spite of Dr. Best's protests. In view of the political course which was to be held also by the defendant, there was, however, practically no disagreement with Dr. Best about the actions which were to be carried out, but the defendant knows that Best had not been notified in advance about the action against the Danish Police which was carried out on September 19. In order to prevent any leaks about the police action, all of Dagmarhus, including the personnel of the embassy, the offices of which were on the 5th floor, was cut off from the outside world. According to the defendant, the action was the result of instructions given by the General of the Police and he himself was only as subordinate to the General an active participant.

The defendant says he is willing to give an account of the terroristic acts the execution of which he can recall. In regard to general liaison with Dr. Best he says that in the beginning he discussed practically all the actions in advance with Best, later, however, when he realized that Best approved of the course, he discussed only the more important ones with him. This referred to sabotage as well as to murder. In the latter case, if people of such importance were involved, that it was a matter of political interest, he discussed it with Best in advance. Dr. Best approved the course followed, but frequently protested against the plans of the defendant. In one case only Dr. Best's protest was disregarded, namely in the case of a terror action either in Odense or Aarhus, the particular details of which the defendant does not recall at the moment. Until the general strike of 1944, the accused had almost every day with Dr. Best on various matters; after the general strike, however, their relationship became cooler and they had fewer conferences. This changed relationship was mainly due to the fact that the defendant was in favor of a fast cancellation of the general strike, as it developed without consequences for the Danes and the Danish resistance movement.

As to the connections between the defendant and the General of the Police, the situation was that Pancke fully approved the course followed and did not raise any protests, against it. It was therefore of no importance whether the defendant submitted his plans to Pancke in advance and when he did so, it was a mere coincidence. He had daily conferences with Pancke and told him what he had undertaken and some times also what he was going to undertake.

When, in fall of 1943, the leaders in Berlin directed Dr. Mildner to initiate counter-terror, Mildner declared that he was not willing to do it with his men here and, instead, a group from Skorzenis's agency, Office VI S in Berlin, was to be sent here. This section consisted rather of people who volunteered for individual actions. One group which received the name of "Peter Group" was sent to Denmark under the leadership of a man who was called Peter Schaeffer. As far as the defendant knows, his true name is Schwerdt, but he does not know this with certainty. The group was sent here already before the defendant had arrived, but so late that Mildner did not find any real assignment for it. The group received its instructions to carry out individual actions from the defendant and it was also planned that the group should act only in accordance with orders of the defendant. Nevertheless, various actions were undertaken in Denmark, about which the accused had no knowledge, such as the murder of the president of the city court

Myrdahl; the defendant is inclined to believe that these actions which were not known to him, could have been carried out by the Peter-Group by short-cutting the defendant and in such cases probably upon Skorzeni's orders. However, the defendant does not believe that in such instances Skorzeni had ordered to carry out certain actions, but had given order only for actions leading beyond those which were initiated by the defendant. In any case, the defendant knows that the group reported directly to Skorzeni, short-cutting the defendant. The defendant does not know how often such reports were turned in. While Peter was the leader of the group, he showed the reports to the defendant later on, but when "Waldenburg" (Issel) became the leader of the group, the defendant learned nothing about the reports. The defendant realizes that he shared the responsibility for the counter-terror which was performed by the Peter Group by him and others, but only to that extent that in all cases he acted upon orders.

When asked whether in his opinion the counter-terror is permitted by the rules of warfare, or whether he is aware that by initiating counter-terror against persons who had nothing to do with "sabotage" or with other "activities injurious to the war effort" he made himself subject to punishment, the defendant replies, that, in his opinion, there is a balance between terror and counter-terror; but he recognizes that counter-terror, as mentioned above, does not belong to the rules of warfare. However, he adds that he was otherwise of the opinion that the war, as it had been constructed, discarded these former rules of warfare, since, among other things, bombings were attacks against people who did not participate in the war, namely the civilian population. Furthermore, he believes that he is covered by the orders he had received as far as he is concerned, and in Germany the orders of the Fuehrer could not be debated.

When asked who was responsible for the torturing of prisoners in this country, the defendant declares that there were general directives from the Reich Security Main Office ordering the application of torture in certain cases during the interrogation namely when organizations which were hostile to the state were being investigated and there was no other means to clarify the matter or to get a confession out of the prisoner, particularly if a speedy clarification of the matter was necessary. When he took over the post as Chief of the Security Police, he was acquainted with the directives, and, as a chief, he was of course responsible for the tortures applied but he could delegate his power to others; in Denmark he empowered Dr. Hoffmann. It is possible that Dr. Hoffman authorized others in the same way, but the defendant has no further knowledge about this. He himself has ordered personally the torturing of 2 cases, namely of Professor Mogen's Fog and Colonel Timroth. He heard complaints about tortures in 3 cases only, and those referred to mistreatments during the arrests.

When asked, who was responsible for the German prisons here in the country, the defendant declares that he had appointed the leader of the Frøslev camp; however, the German constabularies (ORPO) was in charge of Vestre Faengsel and of the police headquarters. When asked whether the German constabularies (ORPO) could, in consequence, prevent members of the Security Police from applying torture in the prisons, the defendant answers "No".

When asked on what basis the victims were selected for counter-terror and murder, the defendant declares that here in the country as well as in Germany lists were prepared containing the names of persons who played a role in the resistance

movement against Germany or were politically involved and who could become dangerous during an invasion, among other things. On the basis of these lists, the Peter-Group submitted plans for liquidations to the defendant .

When asked, to whom HIPO was subordinated, the defendant declares, that they were under the General of the Police Pancke and that the defendant had nothing to do with the HIPO. However, during all the time he was in Denmark, he had fought to have the HIPO placed under his command.

When asked, whether the general of the Police as superior of the defendant was also responsible for the torture applied by the security police, the defendant answers that he can only say that Pancke was his superior in police matters, and that he cannot judge the legal question whether in that capacity he had become also responsible for such a thing as tortures.