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

INTERROGATION DIVISION SUMMARY

Interrogation of Hermann GOERING

By: Dr; R. M. Kempner, 13 October 1945 A.M. Nuremberg

PERSONS AND ORGANIZATIONS IMPLICATED, AND SUBJECTS

1. GOERING

a. The Reichstag Fire

- (1) Denies involvement in plot (pp. 1 - 3)
- (2) Arrests following the incident (p. 2, pp. 8 - 14)
- (3) Suspects (pp. 5 - 6)
- (4) Involvement of the SA (p. 16)
- (5) Relationship with: Rolf Diels (p. 1, 3, 5, 8, 11, 15, 16); Paul Koerner (p. 1); Gritzbach (p. 1, 3); Ernst (p. 5, 6, 15, 17); Von Der Lubbe (p. 5, 6, 15, 17); Thyssen (p. 7); Volk (p. 8); Papen (p. 20); Heidebreck (p. 9); Wierth (p. 10); Kurt (p. 11); Grossman (p. 11); Lehmann (p. 11); Russbueldt (p. 11); Hermann (p. 12); Karl Falk (p. 12); Dr. Felix Rosenheim (p. 12); Ernst Heilmann (p. 13); Eric Klausner (p. 14); Heydrich (p. 14); Eggerstedt (p. 14); Torgle (p. 16); Lammers (p. 21).

THE REICHSTAG FIRE

Diels, the leader of the Gestapo, was the brother-in-law of Goering for a short time, and was in the early days of his career very reliable. In the later years, he talked a lot of nonsense. On the other hand Goering characterizes Paul Koerner and Gritzbach as reliable. (p. 1).

Referring to a statement, which Diels made to officials of the Ministry of the Interior about two days after the fire, (also a similar statement by Gritzbach on p. 3) that Goering knew exactly how the fire of the Reichstag was to be started, and that Diels had to prepare, prior to the fire, a list of people who were to be arrested immediately after it; Goering admits the existence of lists of Communists and Social Democrats which were made long before the fire. Goering denies any connection whatsoever with the fire, and claims that the Communists and Social Democrats named in the list would have been arrested regardless of the fire of the Reichstag (p. 2).

Goering admits telling his Press Advisor, only one hour after the start of the fire, and without any previous investigation, that the Communists put fire, to the Reichstag; because he and Hitler were convinced of it (p. 4).

He does not know how the law of 28 February 1933 came into existence, but it was clear, as he says, that an emergency status had to be declared immediately.

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Goering does not believe that Diels and his men had anything to do with the Reichstag fire, but he rather suspects Police President Ernst, whom Goering distrusted and disliked from the beginning; and whom he named as responsible for wild concentration camps and for the torturing of people therein. The matter concerning the perpetrators of the Reichstag fire was not discussed any more since Van Der Lubbe confessed that "he placed those things" in the Reichstag (p. 5, 6).

The passage between Goering's house and the Reichstag was never locked, and Goering claims that at that time he lived in the Kaiserdamm. Goering denies having received 150,000 Marks from Thyssen in 1932 for furnishing his apartment in the Kaiserdamm. At that time he received only 20,000 Guilders from Thyssen, but for other purposes than furnishing his apartment. Actually, Thyssen gave him much more money than 150,000 Marks (p.7).

Upon the order of Hitler, the investigation concerning the perpetrators of the Reichstag fire was brought within the jurisdiction of the Reichs Supreme Court. Goering gave the orders for a police investigation to Diels, but not to Daluge or Volk. He claims that the investigation was not restricted to Communists only (p. 8 - 9). The reason why many people suspected Goering as the originator, and not Ernst, was because of Goering's position as President of the Reichstag.

Goering states that Ernst and his men, especially Heidebreck, created difficulties for Goering (p.9). Goering says that Communists, including Social Democrats "on the extreme left" (p.13), would have been arrested about eight or ten days later, even if the Reichstag fire had not occurred. Goering disclaims having given any order to put Wierth on the list.

Diels and his men could put people on the list on their own initiative. Goering says no list was submitted to him (p.10). Goering did not know the people like Kurt, Grossmann, Lehmann, Russbueldt, Diels, had no plenipotential power from Goering, and he must know more about listing of those people. Goering claims that he only heard afterwards of the arrest of pacifists and their transfer to concentration camps. Goering stated that he could not have released these pacifists immediately, because he received only a list of arrested Communists whose number was very large; He admits it is possible that lawyers were addressing themselves to Goering's wife in order to get her intervention for a release of prisoners; Goering explains that by doing so the lawyers were apparently convinced that their cases would be brought to his attention by his wife. Goering admits having released prisoners in specific cases; however, he does not remember them ... especially with regard to Herman, Falk, and Dr; Rosenheim (p.11;12). Goering does not know whether Ernst Heilmann was on the right or the left wing of the Social Democrats, and whether or not he was arrested. In regard to President Eggerstedt, Goering claims that he was arrested for some reason other than for his connection with the Reichstag fire (p.13,14). The murder of Erich Klausner is described by Goering as a "wild cat act", of Heydrich, and Goering claims that he had nothing to do with it, and nothing to do with some of the other wild acts at that time.

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Goering first stated that he kept Klausner in the Ministry of the Interior, but later admitted that he had transferred Klausner to the Ministry of Traffic. Goering admits that he did not prosecute those people who were involved in the case of the assassination of Klausner and of Kahr because Hitler didn't allow any prosecution in these cases. Besides, Hitler declared amnesty, so that no prosecution could take place (p.14,15).

About the activities of Ernst and his SA men, in connection with the Reichstag fire, Goering discussed that matter only once, and that was very brief. Since the confession of Van Der Lubbe, no further discussions with regard to Ernst took place. Goering states that Diels thought it possible that Ernst and his men were involved in the Reichstag fire. Goering energetically denies having given any orders to Diels regarding rumors about accusations of Ernst and his SA men in connection with the Reichstag fire (p.16). Goering states that in the first hours of the fire it became known that Torgler was the last person seen in the Reichstag. Goering admits that Van Der Lubbe was a half lunatic, and the possibility that Lubbe was engaged by the SA to start the fire (p.16,17).

Considering all factors, and looking back to all the events concerning the Reichstag fire with regard to who could have been interested in that arson, Goering comes to the conclusion that the SA could have had such an interest, in order to get a stronger position in the government and a freer hand in the prosecution of the Communists. If, as the rumors were circulated, a finale had to be given, Goering would have chosen a better one; he might have chosen the Castle of Berlin, but not the Reichstag building, the destruction of which created many difficulties as a result (p.18,19). Goering does not believe that Goebbels had anything to do with the Reichstag fire (p.19).

He denies the possibility "discussed by Meissner" that the fire was engineered to obtain Hindenburg's signature easier to the law of 28 February 1933. Papen went to get Hindenburg's signature and Goering claims that Papen was not involved at all in this law. He does not know who the author of this law was. It might have been worked out in the Reichs Chancellory, of which Lammers was the Secretary, together with the Reichs Minister of the Interior (p.19, 20, 21).

Goering concedes that he once bragged about his connection with the Reichstag fire, but says that was not in the presence of any Generals, but of some other people. Goering also admits that he was in the Reichstag at a rather earlier time, and states that the big hall was burning and the cupola was collapsing as he arrived. Goering points out that if he would have started the Reichstag fire, he would have done it for only one reason; namely, to get rid of the Congress Hall, which was very ugly (p.21,22).