

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

INTERROGATION DIVISION SUMMARY

Interrogation of: Robert LEY  
By: Major J.J. Monigan, Jr., 6 October 1945, P.M., Nuremberg

PERSONS AND ORGANIZATIONS INPLICATED, AND SUBJECTS

1. LEY
  - a. Participation in Nazi seizure of German labor unions
    - (1) Reports to Hitler in March, April 1933 concerning union unrest (pp.1-2)
    - (2) Surrender of union sovereignty and property to Ley on 2 May 1933 (pp.2-3,11)
      - (a) Prior instructions to Gauleiters (pp.4-9)
      - (b) As chief of DAF (pp.4,15-17)
      - (c) Employment of foreign workers (p.16)
2. HESS, BORMANN
  - a. Participation in Nazi Seizure of German labor unions. (p.2)

NAZI SEIZURE OF GERMAN LABOR UNIONS

In regard to taking over the property of the trade unions, Ley relates that in the middle of March, 1933, Schumann, leader of the NSPO (Nationalsozialistische Parteiorganisation), told him of clashes between the NSPO and the trade unions. Elections to be held in March 1933 were jeopardized by unrest among working factions. Ley reported to Hitler about this situation. Hitler intended to take over the unions in order to dissolve them. Ley suggested Schumann to Hitler as the man to take them over, but Hitler did not want him. According to Schumann's information, "the labor unions had planned to use force on the 1st of May." (2) Early in April Ley told Hitler the matter was more pressing (2). Hitler still did not want Schumann and said he "was going to think it over."

Called to Hitler on the 14th or 15th of April, Hess, who was present, suggested Bormann. Hitler was against him and appointed Ley, who was to take over the unions on the second of May, 1933, one day after the May parade. It was done "without resistance." Union heads and heads of the employers "came voluntarily." Two hundred and sixteen different unions signed. All their property and funds were to go over to the new organization. Four days later Ley reported to Hitler that the mission had been accomplished, suggesting that the DAF (German Labor Front), should be founded. (pp.2,3). Ley was made chief of that organization by Hitler after the establishment was announced in a radio meeting. (p.4)

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Before the action (2 May), Ley prepared a circular letter informing all gauleiters of the prospective action. "There may have been a meeting... it was completely secret... and we had to act... we couldn't tolerate this civil war... in the factories." (pp.4,5) The personnel for the "Action Committee" was selected by Ley for Berlin and by gauleiters for the provinces, using Ley's "people for the largest part." SS and SA leaders were responsible for the organizational task, although not represented on the Action Committee. (p.5) He did not know who authorized these SS and SA leaders for action. Ernst, he believed (p.6), was SA leader, and the SS at that time was unimportant.

People were not to be taken into protective custody, according to his circular letter from 21 April 1933 (p.6), but "certain people" were, "to avoid civil war and to keep them from withdrawing money or property." (p.7) These contradictory orders (same letter) for protective custody were given for a few organizations and "leading personalities to prevent them from giving counter orders" as a "precautionary measure" (p.8). Ley took charge of these activities in the Berlin area but denied that he nor any gauleiters had taken anyone into protective custody.

He explained that collective bargaining agreements (p.9) should continue as well as the unions so that the work could go on without interruption after the DAF "took over everything the unions had." He boasted about the increase of DAF members from five millions (when he took over) to thirty millions, with a property in the end worth ten billions.

Speaking of the activities of the "Treuhaender der Arbeit" established 19 May, 1933, by law (after his taking over), he said that "it was not the purpose" of his circular letter (same as above) "to arrest those men, but just to found something new." (p.10)

He denied having had any idea of the property owned by the unions. "The property was nil when we started out. Everything was rotten." Therefore, "it was of no importance to us. One has to consider that Hitler was called by Hindenburg. More legally it couldn't have been done." He denies "to have done this out of a lust for power or a desire for robbery." (p.11)

Ley does not recall with whom of the trade unions in Berlin he discussed the matter. "Everything went very fast. I did not arrest anybody, put in my people and went away. All came voluntarily in my office." (p.11) Asked why the actions was taken by virtue of a circular letter rather than by Gesetz, he said he did not bother with that. He obeyed the orders and wishes of the Fuehrer. "He was the Reichs Chancellor, the lawmaker" (p.12) and underlined that neither he nor any gauleiter had to overcome any resistance (p.13).

After having taken over the labor unions, he worked on Section 2 in Reichsgesetzblatt, page 285, dated 19 May. He explained the set-up of the organization: German labor unions, by order of the party, set up fundamentals, after which the laws were made.

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Their execution supervised to insure peace within the factories.(p.13)  
Party instructions and labor union laws were "to solve the whole social  
difficulty" with free-of-charge services such as legal advice to settle  
conflicts.(p.14) The task was to rebuild the social structure.(p.15)

Ley spoke of the foreign workers who "took up the battle for achievement."  
When they arrived their average was not over 60 percent, and rose to 80 percent  
(p.16). He boasted of labor union dues, that there were none after the First  
World War and in April of this year they had 90 percent of the contributions.  
There were 55 million per month.

The trustees of the DAF, he states, were under the direction of the  
Minister of Labor, at the end, under Sauckel.(p.17)

Ley, "at the end of his work" still is proud of it. It is a great  
pity that his system has not be carried over to other countries, he states.  
(p.17)