

TRANSLATION

File
27 November 1945

To General Donovan

From: Dr. von Schlabrendorff

1. I am convinced that SS Obergruppenfuehrer Erich von dem Bach-Zelowski is a poor witness. He has a bad name in Germany in all circles who know of him, since he took too active a part in the events of June 30, 1934. He belongs to those people who had to join the SS since the Armed Forces refused to accept him.

2. I have known Bach since 1941. At that time he was Higher SS and Police Leader in the rear area of the Army Group Middle. The commanding officer of the rear area was the deceased general of the infantry, Max von Schenkendorff, Bach later became Higher Police Leader of the whole area of the Army Group Middle. He had at that time a very bad reputation because of his brutal and unscrupulous actions against partisans and against the civilian population.

3. The statements of Bach have in my opinion been made in the desire to blame the army for the cruelties of the SS.

4. Bach is right in so partly blaming the army, but only insofar as he names the leading gentlemen of the High Command of the Armed Forces.

5. Bach is wrong insofar as he also puts the blame on the commanding officers and troops, generals and Field Marshals at the eastern front.

6. I no longer remember in detail the orders of the high command of the Armed Forces concerning procedures against the civilian population. I only know that they were extremely severe. I know that the activity of SS and police units behind the line were the subject of continuous fights between the army groups on the one hand, and the High Command of the Armed Forces on the other. I know with certainty that Field Marshal von Kluge, at various times, objected, both orally and in writing, to these cruelties, but could achieve nothing in the majority of cases since the SS and police units behind the lines were not under his command. I remember that the Supreme Commander of the Second Army, General Weiss, had the same attitude. Weiss is at present an American prisoner of war in the camp of Neu-Ulm, and I think he should be interrogated if testimony of a man like Bach-Zelowski is considered important.