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OFFICE OF US CHIEF OF COUNSEL
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OPERATIONS SECTION
INTERROGATION DIVISION

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Brief of
Interrogation of General Adolf WESTHOFF.

by
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On 2 November 1945.

General Adolf WESTHOFF, who is an infantry general officer and who had served in the German army on the Russian Front until February of 1943, when he was relieved of his duties as infantry officer and transferred to OKW as Inspector of KGW, directly under GRAVENITZ, who was subordinate to REINECKE, who, in turn, was subordinate to KEITEL. Field Marshal KEITEL, at the time WESTHOFF joined the OKW, was responsible to HITLER for all prisoner of war camps, with the exception of the Luftwaffe camps and Navy Camps, and, in this connection, KEITEL was responsible under the then organization of the KGW for the inspection of the Luftwaffe and Navy Camps.

When General WESTHOFF joined the OKW and was made inspector of KGW, subordinate to GRAVENITZ, who was the Amtsgruppe Chef de KGW in OKW, he and GRAVENITZ were both of the opinion that it was their duty as officers of the Wehrmacht to follow the rules laid down by the Geneva Convention. During the month of March 1944, 80 British flying officers escaped from the Stalag Luft III, Sagan, which camp was under the jurisdiction of GOERING, but also under the jurisdiction of KEITEL as chief of the Prisoner of War organization in OKW. When this incident occurred, it was so well known to Hitler, Himmler and Goering that a special meeting was called in Berlin by Hitler and attended by the last named persons and Field Marshal Keitel was called to come before the meeting and, while there, Goering accused Keitel of permitting through negligence these 80 British officers to escape from a camp that was under the jurisdiction of Goering, but for which Keitel was responsible as inspector. At this meeting, Goering, Himmler, Hitler, and Keitel decided that these officers should be shot upon their recapture, and Hitler directed that this order be carried out. Keitel, upon returning to his headquarters in OKW, summoned GRAVENITZ and WESTHOFF before him and issued to them the following order: "Gentlemen, this must stop. We cannot allow this to happen again. The officers who have escaped will be shot. I must inform you that most of them are already dead and you will publish a notice in the prison camps where PWs are held telling all PWs what action has been taken in this case in order that it will be a deterrent to other escapes." General WESTHOFF and General GRAVENITZ both objected, but were told by Keitel that that was his order and it would have to be carried out in the future. GRAVENITZ and WESTHOFF returned to their headquarters perplexed and, after some thought concerning the order which

they had received from Keitel, decided that such an order contravening the rules of the Geneva Convention concerning prisoners of war must be placed in writing and would have to be signed by Keitel or some other higher official, before GRAVENITZ and WESTHOFF could consider it in future action. WESTHOFF, therefore, drew up an order in accordance with the conversation which he and GRAVENITZ had recently had with Field Marshal Keitel, and submitted the order through REINECKE to KEITEL for his signature. KEITEL initialled the order in the upper right hand corner and made a marginal note as follows: "Concerning the word "shot". I did not say they would be shot, I said they would be turned over to the SD when recaptured by the Wehrmacht". WESTHOFF then deemed it necessary that he make a complete investigation concerning this case in order that he would know what actually happened to the fifty British flyers of the eighty who had escaped. He, in return, got a report from Camp Commander Gorlitz stating that the fifty had been shot but not by the Camp Commander but had been taken from the camp and that the bodies of the fifty had been cremated and the ashes placed in urns and were awaiting disposition. WESTHOFF testified that he was astounded, not so much at the killing of these fifty because he had previously been told by Keitel that they had already been killed when he had received the initial order from Keitel, but that he was astounded that the bodies had been cremated which he then knew was another violation of the Geneva Convention regarding the disposition of prisoners of war who had died. He, nevertheless, was not satisfied with the report that he had received from the Camp Commander but went to the Gestapo and attempted to get the Gestapo to explain to him in an official report as to what had actually happened to these fifty British flying officers who had been killed. His efforts were unrewarded, the Gestapo refused to talk even to the inspector of KGW. Other attempts were later made with the same results.

WESTHOFF, in compliance with a previous order which he had received from the Reich Chancellery, that all matters concerning violations of the Geneva Convention would have to be reported to the Reich Chancellery, did report this incident to the liaison officer of the Reich Chancellery in AWA. Only a few days later, WESTHOFF was called by Admiral Brueckner, who was liaison officer for the Foreign Office, who told WESTHOFF that the House of Commons of England had demanded an explanation of this incident and that he, Brueckner, must secure information from WESTHOFF upon which he, Brueckner, could base a reply. WESTHOFF could report no more than what he knew. Nevertheless, a reply to the House of Commons' inquiry was drawn up at Berchtesgaden by the Foreign Office, Hitler, and a Oberstleutnant Kraft, a representative from Westhoff's office, and WESTHOFF testified that when he subsequently read the reply in the newspapers of Germany, he held his head because he knew the reply was not true.

In regard to the shackling of officer PWs, General WESTHOFF testified that Marshal Keitel, after the escape of 103 Dutch officers, issued an order that all officer PWs, with the exception of British and American, when being moved from one camp to another, would be shackled and that all movements of officer PWs from one camp to another would be reported in teleprint to Keitel previous to their movement, and, in regard to British and American PWs, Keitel himself would make the decision whether such officers should or should not be shackled.

General WESTHOFF further testified that, as far as his knowledge, he never turned over to the Gestapo recaptured PWs when such PWs were re-taken by the Wehrmacht but that in most cases, after March 1943, escaped PWs were usually captured by the Gestapo for the troops in use for hunting escaped persons were under the direct command of Himmler as Commander of the Reserve Army and he was surprised to learn that 600 American prisoners were recovered by the American forces in a Gestapo Concentration Camp. In October 1944, Himmler succeeded in gaining control of the PW camps, with the exception of the Allgemeine Wehrmachtsamt, which still remained under Keitel. Concerning the section of the PW organization that was directly under Himmler and his Chief of KGW, Obergruppenfuhrer Berger, WESTHOFF would not testify as to what was done in that section, but did testify that the section of the AWA, under General REINECKE, of which he himself was inspector of KGW, attempted even after October 1944 to follow as closely as possible and did follow, with the exception of those cases where he was subsequently directed to do otherwise, the rules of the Geneva Convention in regard to the treatment of prisoners of war in the hands of the Wehrmacht.