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INTERROGATION OF THE FORMER COMMISSIONER OF THE
GERMAN REICH IN DENMARK, DR WERNER BEST, IN THE
CASTEL COPENHAGEN, 3 AUGUST 1945.

With regard to the political development after the formation of the ministry SCAVENIUS and until to the 29 August 1943, the accused states that the collaboration with the government was in reality frictionless and in Berlin the government had been accepted without the national-socialists.

In the beginning of 1943 sabotage increased however and was organized in the opinion of the accused, while it so far had been quite accidental. According to the opinion of the accused this took place, because one wanted "to blow up" his policy in Denmark by aggravating the nervous tension and the feeling of prestige of the armed forces and of the FUEHRER's Headquarters, until a change of the political situation would take place in Denmark. The accused was during all this time of the opinion that factually sabotage was of no importance for the German prosecution of the war and his reports suggested that too. Therefore he had the opinion that the Danish police would intervene on a larger scale toward the saboteurs and would actually use force of arms.

However, General VON HANNEKEN was more and more dissatisfied with the development and apparently also nervous about it. Perhaps his decision could also be reduced to the fact that he wanted to enlarge his position somewhat with the help of the increasing sabotage. From the beginning of August, the general sent time and again cables to headquarters because of the increasing unrest in the provincial towns, in particular Esbjerg, Odense and Aalborg, and the accused received in all cases inquiries from the German Foreign Office, what the meaning of it was; these inquiries gradually increased in strength. In consequence of the reports of the general, the accused was called on about the 24 August before von RIBBENTROP into the FUEHRER's headquarters and there he was strongly reproached by von RIBBENTROP on the development in Denmark. He was told that HITLER was very excited about the condition and that he supported general von HANNEKEN. The wish of the testifying person, to be permitted to explain personally the development to HITLER, was denied. He states in this connection that von RIBBENTROP as usual showed a negative attitude and that he did in no way oppose HITLER, if he was excited about something. In spite of the protests of the accused, he was sent back with the ultimatum, which was presented to the government on the 29 August.

The testifying person states furthermore, that in itself it was neither mentioned nor agreed upon in the headquarters, whether the state of emergency which should follow on the refusal of the ultimatum, should be followed by the resignation of the government. It also had not been discussed with the accused whether something should be done with the armed forces. The testifying person was of the opinion which he also had expressed in the headquarters, that an intended intervention of that kind could not prevent sabotage and he also had the desire that the sabotage should be pushed into a vacuum and only would take notice of it with a, as mentioned, greater activity on the part of the Danish police. It was general von HANNEKEN who, on his own initiative disposed of the government and it was also he who, without the permission of the accused obtained, the approval of the high command for the dissolution, disarmament and internment of the Danish armed forces. At this point the testifying person wishes to pay attention to the fact, that it was obvious, that the agreement between General von HANNEKEN and the high command had been quite superficial and vague, which fact became evident about a week later, when the high command

wired to General von HANNEKEN, and the KING should now be imposed upon to grant leave of absence to the armed forces until further notice. When the accused obtained knowledge from the general about this telegram, he reported in very bitter form to the foreign office, that this desire of the high command of the armed forces could have been fulfilled by him faster and "cheaper" - that is without the sacrifices on both sides, by having negotiated in due time - i.e. before the military state of emergency - with the King about it. The accused declares further with regard to the internment of the armed forces that the thought arose within the high command to bring the armed forces to Germany and to place them into actual PW camps, partly as a security measure and partly, because apparently on the intuition of HIMMLER the possibility was considered, to achieve by appropriate treatment and thru influencing the armed forces, to recruit volunteers among the interned. When the testifying person obtained knowledge of this plan, he opposed it violently by asserting that it would be both politically stupid and harmful to perform this action and that it would be wrong legally, to make actual prisoners of war out of the Danish soldiers, because a state of war would be established on the part of Germany with Denmark thru this action, and besides it would be disadvantageous for the production in Denmark. It had to be feared that the Danish farmers in the case, that many of their sons would have been sent to Germany as prisoners of war, would cease production. Not only was the accused against stronger measures toward the Danish armed forces, but he also made positive recommendations for the dismissal of the interned and it was due to his arguments that the dismissal took place.

The accused further states that he had to bring out the legal consideration in another question and that in making use of the Danish war-material. General von HANNEKEN wanted to declare that as war booty and against this the testifying person protested also by asserting that a state of war with Denmark would be established in that way. It had to be done that way that the war material would be confiscated as a war emergency measure.

By proclaiming the military state of emergency, the accused was eliminated formally and he had no authority whatsoever. For the management of the civil administration, President KANSTEIN was assigned to General von HANNEKEN during the state of emergency. However, von RIBBENTROP had asked the accused by cable to make an attempt in asserting his influence and in order to be able to do this, the accused remained here in the country and kept primarily in touch with KANSTEIN. He informed von RIBBENTROP daily on the course of the development during the state of emergency. General von HANNEKEN played with the thought, to make the military administration a permanent institution and also "offered" the accused, to become chief of the administration. The testifying person, however, opposed the proposition and therefore succeeded that the military administration ceased.