

INTERROGATION

26,02
cont'd

OF THE FORMER PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE GERMAN
REICH IN DENMARK, Dr. WERNER BEST, IN KASTELL
KOPENHAGEN, 4th AUGUST 1945

The subject declares that he was obliged to send occasionally reports to the foreign ministry, until nearly September 1943, concerning the jewish problem, in order to state the situation in the country. All reports pointed out, there was no jewish problem in Denmark, because, on one hand, there was a relatively small number of Jews and, on the other hand because they did not dominate in a particular high proportion the decisive positions, for instance, neither in Government, nor in Congress or in the main industry.

The subject says, he, personally, has always considered the jewish problem in the same way as all other minorities problems relative to different nations, but it has happened that the jewish minority has to be treated in a special, different way than the other ones, so, for instance, that they have to be abolished and defamed.

In the beginning of September the subject got the information from the foreign office, that the German authorities are dealing with a plan to prosecute the jews, the subject did not know who were the initiators of this plan in Berlin, because he had only telegraphic communication with Berlin, in connection to this question, but it is to be supposed, they were, as always, the men of the party-office of the chief office of national security (Reichssicherheitshauptamt) and, perhaps, Rosenberg, also.

As soon as these plans were brought to the subjects attention, he protested resolutely and explained that their execution would produce big trouble in Denmark, because it was quite incomprehensible for the population here in Denmark, that the jews were not a component part of Denmark's population. The subject added also, he would consider these measures as disastrous in connection with Sweden's relations, but received the answer, he should not worry about the Swedish question, because it was evident from the contents of the received telegrams that further development would indeed lead to a persecution of Jews,- the subject took a decision to enter into the matter in such a way that the persecution could be undertaken in the minimum proportions, For this reason he spread purposely the rumor about the matter through reliable agents having the same idea as he had. Questioned who were the persons used to spread the mentioned information,- the subject answered he cannot remember any other person but Mr Duckwitz, and at any rate, this one was used, and that thanks to received information, the greatest part of jews could reach security.

As far as the action in the country was concerned the subject had nothing to do with it, and furthermore, he had not received any information in which way it would be executed, except that in general the jews would be transported by ship. The military authorities, also

had not too much to, deal with the prosecution, and General von Hanneken himself, was undoubtedly very reserved. The active execution has had the former leader of security police (Eickercheitzpolizei) Dr. Mildner, also, perhaps, assisted by one Mr Eichmann from the chief office of national security.

The subject knew that Dr. Mildner, personally, did not get into the action, also, furthermore, he was against it and made statements to that effect to the chief office of national security. At that time there was a Mr. Miller there, as chief of section, bureau LV, dealing with the prosecution. As it was already mentioned at the time of execution, the subject was off duty and he was present on the spot only as an observer and reporter, but nevertheless, it was the subject who was obliged on the 1st October to communicate a message to the foreign ministry that the execution had to be carried out.

The execution being accomplished, he made a report to the foreign ministry, and pointed out that now the situation in Denmark was just as he had foreseen, and he had been right to disagree with it.

After the execution, there was an intention in Berlin to confiscate the Jewish property, - but here also the subject protested very resolutely against this project and wrote in his report it would result in robbery. He succeeded in preventing the desired confiscation and arranged that the Jewish property was put under the Danish administration.

Asked whether in his opinion having such an eminent position in the German Reich, he is not jointly responsible for such acts as transportation of Jews, and concentration camps the subject answered that by resigning, he could not, in any way, have prevented the mentioned delinquencies.

When he joined national-socialism in 1930, the subject did not think of course, that the development of this movement would produce the transportations, etc, but these violations appeared, by degrees, only later on.

It is to be understood that he discussed many times with his friends, what has to be criticized in the development of national-socialism, but they always agreed that by deserting the party, he could not prevent the development of things, on the contrary, continuing to be a member of the party, one could try to mitigate the consequence of events. Subject said the idea was Hitler, for himself was not able to carry out any action he wanted if he had not the helpers willing to aid him to build the state and to accomplish the separate actions so, in order to prevent the development of events, the attempt of 20th July should have been undertaken much earlier. The subject did not want to say, he had connections with enough persons willing to carry out an attempt of 20th July in order that it could be successful this declaration is not to be understood as though the subject, for himself, has had an idea to bring about or to attempt a 20th July and for instance, to set up a concentration camp. But he is firmly convinced, that it was necessary to prevent a small number of persons to sabotage the building of the Nazi States.

He remarked in this connection that from the beginning the sense of the concentration camp was only restriction of liberty, without any kind of torture, Later however especially by broadcasts, he got the knowledge that everybody was convinced there were tortures applied in the concentration camps, but he had not any opportunity to check on that whether it was really so or not, and to the direct question, the subject answered that he did not, even try to check up.

But when he heard the complaints in the country that the danish people were not properly treated in concentration camps,- he laid down a complaint to the foreign ministry proposing and requiring that the Germans would be transferred to a special camp in order that they could properly treated, As far as the danes were concerned he requested repeatedly that they be transported back to Denmark.

To the question, when he personally, got the conviction, that Germany was not able to win the war,-the subject answered,- he did not in a german victory since England and France entered into the war; he feared a defeat from the very beginning of the war with Russia,- but he had, of course, for a long time, a hope, the complete catastrophe would be avoided. The subject asks that in connection with the above questions his draft (Aufzeichnung) of the 5th August 1945,- is considered as a component part of his declaration. The "draft" will be marked as pages 20a - 20; and connected to this document.

Asked who was the author of the official order releasing the danish soldiers after the jewish elements had been removed. The subject answered that the order was received from Berlin, but he could neither remember whom it was directed to, nor who was its author.

On the 5th October, when the subject, after termination of the "state of emergency" entered again into his former function, there were in his opinion, no more important difficulties in administration, except strikes and deportation of the on the 19th September 1944,- but the acts of sabotage were increasing by degree. On the whole, the subject did not have any reason for complaint, nor did he send any complaints to Berlin.

The event of the 19th September was for the subject a complete surprise, a few days before the event he went to Jutland to take part, as all other conscripted germans, in the digging of entrenchments. On the 19th September, at dinner time he received a phone message about the event from Dr. Jaspar, his deputy with General Hanneken in Silkeborg. The subject interrupted immediately his stay in Jutland and went to Kopenhagen by car, where he tried to get some more details about the event, partly from Ambassador Baranden and partly from General Pancke.

It was obvious that things were purposely kept secret from the subject, the proof was among other things, that his whole Headquarters, including Ambassador Barandon, were put under arrest in Dagmarhus, 2 hours before the beginning of action, so that they could not even telephone.

The subject observed that the later dismissal of Barandon was connected with the "police-affair" because Barandon in a phone conversation with Berlin, soon after the event, pointed out that the subject was eliminated from the action, and that the whole affair was undertaken against subjects wish. The conversation was brought to Himmler's attention who immediately ordered an indictment of treason against Barandon, because he gave the information that the subject was eliminated, by telephone,

The subject immediately protested very resolutely at the foreign ministry against the undertaken action as well the personal humiliation experienced by himself. He requested permission to come to Berlin in order to verbally support his complaint after a few days the subject went to the head-quarters in East - Prussia and brought his point of view to Ribbentrop's attention. He then learned that the "police action" was undertaken according to Hitler's direct order in the matter and that the subject, himself, was eliminated by Hitler's order, because Hitler was influenced to believe that the subject and his officials could not keep the affair secret.

As it could be seen from Ribbentrop's report to Hitler - the subject then requested permission a personal report to Hitler but that was declined. After that the subject asked to be discharged from his position but this was also turned down by Hitler.

Even later the subject received neither any detailed information what was the cause of the "police-affair" nor who was its initiator. Anyhow Himmler must have obtained this idea from the high ranking police-officials, because it was unbelievable that such an idea could arise directly in Berlin.

The subject knew from the later proceedings about the liberation of arrested danish police-officials, that the germans had spread the opinion that the danish police collaborated with the danish underground movement.

Formerly, when there was talk about this collaboration, the subject protested against this opinion, because from his point of view, and he was convinced, - the danish police as such did not collaborate with the underground, - and there were only some individuals taking part in the underground movement.

Besides, there was an opinion among the high ranking german officials, that such an organized danish police, in case of invasion would immediately go over to the allies.

The subject could not give any detailed information which role the individual german police-official took in preparation for the police affair