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INTERROGATION
OF THE FORMER PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE GERMAN REICH
IN DENMARK, DR. WERNER BEST, IN THE KASTELL.
COPENHAGEN, 4 SEPTEMBER 1945

The discrepancies between his, Pancke's and Bovensiepen's statements were again just before the subject; furthermore, he was told that it is very improbable that the two others should not want to tell the truth in that respect, as they could not possibly be interested in such statements. But the subject maintains that his statement is the correct one.

The subject was questioned again about what he had known about torture practised by the German police in this country, he repeats that the Foreign Minister had transmitted to him a remonstrance because of a professor whose name he does not remember. When he, in turn, inquired with the German police, probably with Bovensiepen, he was only told that the matter could not be cleared up because the German police official concerned who was supposed to have committed the torture had been killed in the Shellhouse. The subject was not satisfied with this answer and says he did not believe it to be true. Furthermore, he learned from illegal newspapers that torture was being used, and he also inquired at the German police about it, but received only evading answers and the advice that actions had been taken only in accordance with general orders issued by higher authority, probably by the Reich Security Main Office. The subject does not know these orders and neither does he know what actually happened.

The subject is questioned again if he had investigated the charges of torture. He answers that he had no authority to investigate the matter as the police was not under his jurisdiction. When questioned, if the rumors and complaints did not call for a report to the Foreign Office he answers that there were no such substantiated cases which would have called for a witness report. He adds that the case of the professor would have been suitable, if he would have had evidence in that case.

Concerning the Hipo (Auxiliary Police) the subject declares again that he had stressed to Pancke the fact that the Danish auxiliary police should not act independently, but only under the command of the German police; Pancke agreed to that. The subject knows that nevertheless the Hipo (Auxiliary police) did act independently. He was once stopped during a trip by an auxiliary police patrol without a German commander. He also learned from the illegal press of complaints about the activity of the auxiliary police. This caused him to discuss the situation of the auxiliary police frequently with Pancke, but he was always told that the cases in question were only exceptions. Asked, if he reported these difficulties with the auxiliary police to the Foreign Office, he answers that he had no reason to do so, because Pancke kept promising an improvement of the situation. Reminded that he was the one who handed out the

money for salaries of the auxiliary police that he therefore controlled the auxiliary police, and could have made a report to Berlin, the subject answers that he would have made a report, if the matter would have lasted longer and would have developed from bad to worse. The subject adds that he wrote too strongly worded letters to Pancke in April 1945, but that he did not receive any answer. He threatened in them that he would complain in Berlin.

The subject is asked if he knows something about the conditions with regard to doctors in (German prisons); he answers that no details are known to him in that respect. The German police were in charge of this matter and the subject has never been informed about it by them. However, he can imagine that a part of the persons arrested by the Germans were wounded at the time of their arrest, but he does not know how they were treated. But the subject did hear that they were brought to a German military hospital and were transferred to the prisons later on. He claims incidentally that he undertook something in order to alleviate the situation of the prisoners; about last Christmas, he tried to obtain the permission of the German police for prisoners in the Vestre Fangsel and in the Freslov-camp to have religious services and to have bibles issued to them.

The subject is asked according to which standard rules he had used his right to pardon Danes who did not belong to any German organizations. He says that he could pardon only, if there was a petition for pardon, while Pancke was in charge of the merely legal confirmation of the death penalties. If there was a petition for pardon, he examined every case carefully in order to determine if there were any extenuating circumstances. The subject is asked, if he does not think that the opposition of the Danes against the Germans represented extenuating circumstances as such. He answers that the condemned persons had deserved the death penalty in certain cases, and their opposition against the occupying power as such did not represent sufficient, extenuating circumstances to exempt them from the death penalty.

The subject is asked, if he did not have a conversation with Professor Chievitz about sabotage. He answers that he induced professor Chievitz to come to see him at one time; during the conversation, the subject tried to get professor Chievitz to exert a pacifying influence on the students.

The subject is asked, why, simultaneously with the disarmament of the military forces on August 29, 1943, several intellectuals were interned. He answers that internment of these intellectuals as other actions at that time, were ordered by General von Hanneken. The subject does not know, whether he had originally desired the internment of the intellectuals himself or whether he had received a corresponding order from Berlin. Asked about the directives for the internment, the subject answers that the internment was carried out according to directives set up for the case of an invasion. According to which persons especially active in the resistance against the Germans were to be interned.

The subject is reminded that relatively many conservatives were interned. He answers that this can be traced back to the fact that the conservatives as a party seem to have been the most active ones. He is also reminded that the social-democrats seem to have been treated differently from the conservatives by the Germans. He answers that this fact is mainly due to difficulties which might arise with the workers in the case of an attack on leading social-democrats. The subject is reminded of the special opposition against Hitlerism shown by the social-democrats. He answers that not political or philosophical considerations but just action against German interests were the decisive factor. In that connection, he remarks that incidentally just conservative circles were closer related to National Socialism, and that collaboration with the conservatives was thought possible in Germany before the war.