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INTERROGATION
OF THE FORMER PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE GERMAN REICH
IN DENMARK, DR. WERNER BEST, IN THE KASTELL.
KOPENHAGEN, 7 SEPTEMBER 1945.

The subject is asked who suggested the use of hostages in the ultimatum which the subject presented to the government in August 1943. The answers that he had received the ultimatum from von Ribbentrop, without having had anything to say about its wording. He does not believe Ribbentrop made that request. He rather thinks that this request came from Hitler himself. After all, the subject had suggested a financial penalty of 10.000 Kronen to the Red Cross, and he knows that this suggestion was submitted to Hitler who was very upset because somebody could think of such a retribution for an attack on the German armed forces.

The subject is asked who had been the originator of the various deportations to Germany, among them the deportation of about 200 men from the Freslov-camp in September 1944. He states that he was always informed only after the deportations had taken place, and the same goes for the deportation of the 200; director Svenningson informed him about it. The subject protested each time, but he was either told it was done on order from Berlin, or it was done because of the conditions of the quarters. He protested especially energetically against the deportation of the 200, because his negotiations with the Danish central administration about the building of the Freslov-camp had as a prerequisite that no more deportations would occur; that is why the subject felt compromised by his own government.

About the events during the general strike in the summer 1944, the subject declares that the curfew which led to the general strike was ordered by Pancke. Without prior consultations with the subject, Pancke had notified Berlin that he had come to the decision to decree a curfew. Therefore, the subject had no alternative to change this order, because Pancke would have had to compromise himself; and this could have had the most terrible consequences with Himmler and Hitler, resulting in actions much more severe than curfew.

The subject expected unrest because of the curfew, and already in 1943 the supreme command had provided that martial law should be declared in case of strikes or other unrest; either the armed forces or the police should be in charge. In the provinces, martial law had been declared under police jurisdiction in cases of smaller incidents. Therefore, the subject had to expect the declaration of martial law; in order to avoid that the police would take over, he turned to the armed forces and asked General von Hanneken who happened to be in Copenhagen in those days to declare martial law. Looking at it from his point of view, the subject thought it to be more dangerous to have the police interfere instead of the armed forces which could certainly be easier induced to lift the martial law again. In case of martial law under the jurisdiction of the police, the military units in Copenhagen would have been put also under Pancke's command. The subject was only interested in settling the strike as fast as possible in a peaceful way. But as he had in this case,

even during the period of martial law, accepted the assignment of a liaison officer to the Danish administration, he was forced to present to the Danish administration, that means director Svenningen, the demands and threats put forward partly by the armed forces and partly by the police. The armed forces occupied the factories on their own initiative and formed a cordon around the town, and it was Pancke who demanded the resignation of the Danish police staff and of Mister Ejler Jensen. The subject does not know which other actions were planned eventually in case of a continuation of the strike, but there was talk about a transfer of some of the larger factories to Germany and in connection with this, the deportation of the workers of the factories. Such suggestions were made by the police, but the subject does not remember, if they were made by Pancke, Bovensiepen, or by others. However, the subject was very much opposed to such actions and made protest to the German Foreign Office against such plans.

This job to present the demands of the armed forces and the police, and his own wishes for a peaceful settlement of the strike, was the reason that the subject presented threats and demands at one time and stated at another time that he was taking them back. He could take them back only, when his mediation had resulted in a mitigation of the demands, or their withdrawal.

Pancke and Bovensiepen were very mad that martial law was not even carried out for at least one week; and during the time following this incident, the subject was often blamed for the fact that they did not have a chance to muzzle Copenhagen to a greater degree. The subject suspects that the police reported to Berlin about him, and that was the reason, that he was called to Berchtesgaden in July. There, he was severely reprimanded by Hitler because of the general strike and its settlement and was "insulted in an unbelievable manner". The subject considered it as a victory for his case that he had succeed to make the Danish politicians act with regard to the settlement of the general strike, that means that it was done in this way instead of with force.

The subject is asked, if he provoked the action against the Jews with a telegram to Berlin stating that, in case such action was to be carried out, he would suggest to do it during the period of martial law. He answers that he cannot remember now, if he has sent such a telegram, but if he should have done so, then surely only after he had learned that the action had been fixed. In that case, it is not impossible that he had suggested to carry out the action still during the period of martial law. However, in no case did he desire that action.