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OFFICE OF US CHIEF OF COUNSEL
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INTERROGATION DIVISION

Nurnberg, Germany.
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Brief of
Interrogation of Dr Friedrich RAINER
Gauleiter and Member of the Illegal Nazi Party in Austria.

made by
Colonel Curtis L. Williams, IGD

On 6 Nov. 1945, PM

Dr Friedrich RAINER was interrogated concerning his activities in the Illegal Nazi Party in Austria previous to the Anschluss and, in addition thereto, his duties as Gauleiter of Kaernten, which included a part of Upper Italy.

In regard to the first part of the interrogation concerning his action as an illegal Nazi in Austria previous to the Anschluss, Dr Rainer testifies that he was a member of the illegal Nazi Party and a collaborator of Major Klausner, Dr Muhlmann, Tavs, Leopold, Seyss-Inquart, and others of the radical National Socialists; that on the afternoon of March 8, 1938, when Chancellor Schuschnigg informed Seyss-Inquart that he, Schuschnigg, intended to hold a plebescite in Austria, Seyss-Inquart wrote a letter addressed to Zernata, Secretary of State in the Schuschnigg Government, and sent a copy of this letter on the morning of the 9th to Hitler by special messenger, Globocnik; that Globocnik delivered the letter to Hitler is confirmed by another testimony of Glaise von Horstenau which has already been made known. He testified further that on the night of 10 March 1938, Globocnik returned to Vienna from a visit with Hitler and that he delivered to Seyss-Inquart a message from Hitler which stated that whatever action the National Socialist Party in Austria took toward the Schuschnigg Government, would be backed by the German Reich and the Fuehrer personally. Subsequently, by mid-morning of March 11, 1938, Glaise von Horstenau returned from Berlin with a message from Hitler and Goering to the effect that Schuschnigg must call off the plebescite or else serious trouble would develop. Klausner, when informed of this, summoned a meeting of Seyss-Inquart, Glaise Horstenau, Rainer, Muhlmann, Jury, Tavs, and other prominent leading National Socialists and, at the conference, Major Klausner informed Seyss-Inquart and Glaise Horstenau that they must approach Schuschnigg and inform him that if he did not call off the plebescite then Seyss-Inquart and Glaise Horstenau must perforce resign from the Schuschnigg Ministry. Seyss-Inquart and Glaise Horstenau agreed and went to approach the Chancellor and, while on the way, they received this subsequent message from the German Reich which demanded that Schuschnigg call off the plebescite or else Germany would invade.

Regarding the incidents which happened further between the Reich Government and the Austrian Government, Rainer can only testify from

hearsay except that on the night of March 11, 1938, between the hours of 1900 and 2000, he sent a message to all the Gauleiters of the illegal National Socialist Party in Austria and informed them that they were obliged to approach the Landeshauptmann of the respective areas and take over from them the authority which they had previously had and assume it in the name of the National Socialist Party in Austria. When questioned as to his authority for the sending of this telegram to the Gauleiters, Dr Rainer testified that the only reason he had was that he had been informed by Seyss-Inquart that he, Seyss-Inquart, would be appointed Chancellor soon and, further, inasmuch as the National Socialist Party at this time was the strongest party in Austria and that the emergency then existing called for immediate action and that he, Rainer, was in a position to secure that immediate action and therefore took this means to settle the conditions in Austria. However, he admitted that the then Chancellor of Austria was still Kurt von Schuschnigg and that his action in regard to this incident was without authority. It proved later that the backing which he had from the Reich Government was powerful enough that he ran into no trouble concerning the decision that he had made at this time.

In regard to his activities as Gauleiter of Kaernten, which included a part of Upper Italy, he testified that the German Reich was very satisfied with the way in which he ran his Gau and that he never allowed Sauckel, although Sauckel often insisted that he deport people from Rainer's Gau to Germany as forced laborers, to forcibly take people from his Gau to Germany as laborers. Rainer testified that he was successful in getting more people through voluntary means to go to Germany and work than Sauckel ever secured through forced deportation. He further testified that he was aware that Sauckel did, in other Gaus in Italy, forcibly deport individuals to Germany as laborers.

Regarding the partisan activities in that part of his Gau which was included in Italy and Jugoslavia, he mentioned that the atrocities committed there were all committed by the Army and SS Police forces and not under his jurisdiction and of which he could do nothing about. He admitted that the SS did on several occasions burn houses and murder people in the houses from which certain police forces had been attacking, but disclaimed any authority for control of such activities.

The interrogation will continue.