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October 17, 1945

Captain Samuel R. Conkling
Office of United States Chief of Counsel
for Prosecution of Axis Criminality
Room 4E870 - The Pentagon
Washington 25, D. C.

Rejis Hotel

Dear Captain Conkling:

Referring to our conversation of October 13th I have in the meantime rewritten the draft which Lieutenant M. E. Rome prepared as a result of our discussion on that date. I am enclosing herewith a properly executed statement and hope it will serve your purposes. In case there should be any further questions kindly do call upon me. I shall be very glad to cooperate.

While sending you the enclosed statement I should like to emphasize once more that from the point of view of the re-education of the German people it seems to me of the greatest importance to clarify the corruption and fraud which led to Hitler's appointment as Reichskanzler. Especially those two persons, Meißner and von Hindenburg, who as public servants broke their allegiance to the Republic and its Constitution cannot be judged too hard, especially as in both their cases corruption is involved.

From the same point of view of German re-education it will be of greatest importance to bring to light the unbelievable amount of corruption which is connected with several leading Nazis and especially Goering. Only a list of all the wedding presents on the occasion of his second marriage would be a sensation - from silver plates and spoons given by the insurance companies to plain cash given by the German banks. Such cases as the permits granted to Jews to leave Germany against payment of \$50,000. to some private account of Goering in Switzerland should also not be forgotten. As I mentioned to you and Lieutenant Rome the latter case could be confirmed by Mr. Fritz-Carl Sarre in Berlin who survived the chaos and is now working for American interests, I am told. But there is probably no better source of information on all these matters existing than Mr. Gritzbach, whose cooperation would be invaluable in case it is possible to get it.

Sincerely yours

Edmund H. Stinnes

Edmund H. Stinnes

EHS/k
Encl.

P.S. Please remember me to Lieutenant Rome.

E.H.S.

Kurt Sobernheim, a Jew, manager of the Commerz und Privat Bank at the time of Meissner's default, was killed by the Nazis after the occupation of Paris.

Meissner, a cunning, intelligent, and ambitious man who as public servant was under allegiance to the Weimar Republic and its Constitution, must have known that he betrayed the Republic and the Constitution by pressing the already senile Hindenburg to turn over the power to Hitler, a man who had often enough publicly declared his intention of destroying the Republic and its Constitution.

b. Oscar von Hindenburg, professional officer of remarkable arrogance and stupidity--a typical Hollywood Junker figure--was military secretary (Militaer Adjutant) of his father, the old Reichspraesident. As such he exercised a very strong influence. After the First World War German business had be-
stowed upon the old man "Neudeak", a middle-sized farm in East Prussia. However, in order to evade a later inheritance tax the son, as I was told years ago, registered the property in his own name without the knowledge of his father, who was no business man. On the farm the son built a luxurious house on credit. He also defaulted in the economic crisis after 1929. If I am not very much mistaken, Oscar von Hindenburg was also involved in one of the notorious margin accounts with the Commerz und Privat Bank. There will be sufficient former bankers of Berlin in New York or London to clear up this point.

The knowledge of this situation enabled the Nazis to use Hindenburg's son to influence his father to yield to the pressure for Hitler's appointment. After Hitler came into power he repaid his debt to Oscar von Hindenburg by consolidating the latter's finances, transferring a great state farm to him, and making the combined property forever tax exempt, which covered the previous tax fraud.

In a discussion, probably in 1936 in Vienna, Franz von Papen told me that it had been impossible for him in June 1934 when Hitler killed von Papen's main collaborators, to reach old Hindenburg. The reason for this, according to von Papen, was the fear of Hindenburg's son that an interference of the dying Reichspräsident on behalf of von Papen's persecuted friends would infuriate Hitler and thereby endanger the aforementioned financial arrangements in respect to Neudeck. All this time Oscar von Hindenburg, like Meissner, owed allegiance to the Weimar Republic and its Constitution. The whole affair was such a scandal that after the death of the Reichspräsident German society to some extent boycotted Oscar von Hindenburg. But the German people know but little about this, perhaps the worst case of corruption in German history.

I met Oscar von Hindenburg only on very rare official occasions during the Weimar period.

c. Franz von Papen, from the First World War on, was an intimate friend of the Hindenburgs, both father and son. On account of this intimate relationship Hindenburg appointed von Papen Reichskanzler as successor to Brüning. Von Papen completely failed, and his friend, the former War Minister von Schleicher, was appointed his successor. Von Papen was convinced that von Schleicher had betrayed him and was responsible for his failure. He took revenge by using all his influence to have Hitler replace von Schleicher in January 1933, with himself as Hitler's deputy.

I knew von Papen well because I was responsible for the newspaper interests of my late father during the period from his death in the spring of 1924 until my separation from the family's affairs in the summer of 1925. Among these interests was a controlling block of shares, of which von Papen was trustee, in the newspaper Germania. He was not a man of any real ability.

His insincerity was so evident that I have never been able to understand his great influence. While Ambassador in Vienna he was undoubtedly a useful tool of Hitler, though he repeatedly told leading Austrians that he loathed Hitler. There is no question that at least Frau von Papen and several of their children, all devout Catholics, were strong anti-Nazis and quite frank about it.

2. Among the prominent Germans who worked in favor of Hitler and his party before 1933 were Fritz Thyssen and Hjalmar G. Schacht. Neither, however, was a public servant, and neither exerted any considerable influence on Hindenburg or the last ^{Republic} German Government.

a. Fritz Thyssen, son of the famous pioneer industrialist August Thyssen, had very serious struggles with his late father in earlier years, and suffered from a marked inferiority complex. He never had any particular talents in business or politics but was very ambitious to become a great national leader. Always a courageous and sincere man of principle he was imprisoned as Soviet hostage by the Communists in a terror wave in December 1918 and I think he was persecuted by the French during the Ruhr invasion in 1923. This increased his nationalism and made him an ardent adherent of Hitler. He took advantage of all his contacts to collect money for the Nazi party and thereby, before Hitler came into power, made himself unpopular with many moderate Germans.

After Hitler had come into power, when Hitler started to attack Catholics and Jews, Thyssen became one of his strongest antagonists. Thyssen was a devout Catholic and had many Jewish friends such as Jakob Goldschmidt, now in New York. Thyssen betrayed neither Catholicism nor his Jewish friends but made himself extremely unpopular with the Nazi party while defending them. In 1939 he openly opposed in the Reichstag Germany's attack on Poland. Immediately he had to flee because Hitler intended to kill him. Later the Vichy French police kidnapped

Thyssen in unoccupied France and surrendered him to the Nazis. He was liberated by the Allies from a Nazi concentration camp when Germany surrendered. In a discussion with Mrs. Stinnes in 1940 in Switzerland Thyssen was very remorseful, feeling that he had bet on the wrong horse. He said that he had erred in Hitler as everybody can err in the selection of a general manager for an industrial enterprise.

b. Hjalmar G. Schacht, one of the most brilliant financiers of our time, has always been admired by many of the heads of the leading national banks of the world. Schacht is a man of burning ambition, but he is not without religious principles.

Schacht supported Hitler's rise into power with zeal. He hoped for a strong nationalist Germany but also for a strong and powerful Schacht. As a brilliant national banker it was his aim to expand the German economy and create desperately needed employment in order to check the disastrous depression. He intended to enlarge Germany's international trade by monetary measures in spite of the aggravated difficulties which Germany was facing because his predecessor had failed in 1931 to follow the request of the Bank of England to abandon the gold standard.

Schacht was extremely successful with his economic planning and probably expected to become economic dictator of the Third Reich. However, he too, like so many outstanding leaders of the Western Democracies, had to learn that "one cannot do business with Hitler." As it turned out Schacht did not dominate Hitler but was forced to become Hitler's tool in financing an unsound war economy. After various frictions between the two men it came to an open break at the end of 1938 when Schacht declined to cooperate in unlimited war financing. He resigned. From that time on he increasingly became an open opponent of Hitler and the Nazis, opposed Germany's entrance into the war, and ended in a Nazi concentration camp.

In spite of Schacht's position in the Third Reich he did not betray his Jewish friends. He met Paul Silverberg in public in Lugano and his good relations with Otto Jeidels, now in this country (Bank of America), were continued after 1933. Schacht's opposition to anti-semitic terror was so well known in this country that George Rublee of Washington, who as personal representative of the late President went to Europe in the winter 1938/39 in behalf of the suffering Jews, tried to call on Schacht for his cooperation. But this happened at the time of Schacht's break with Hitler, when Schacht no longer had any influence.

Since 1924 I have met Schacht on various occasions, the last time in Switzerland after his break with Hitler in 1939. At that time he made violent anti-Nazi statements.

3. Gustav Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach was never to my knowledge a real Nazi at heart. Before Hitler had come into power he belonged to political parties which opposed Hitler. Thereafter he joined the Nazi party, with so many other leading Germans, for reasons of expediency. For similar reasons he accepted all kinds of honors and positions, and received Hitler as his guest. A decent but weak man, Krupp von Bohlen felt he had to do so in order to save the Krupp enterprise for his children. It should be added that von Wilmowsky, the husband of the younger Krupp sister, always defied Hitler. He was a devout adherent of Niemöller's Confessional Church. Von Wilmowsky I knew well, as we both belonged to that Church. Krupp von Bohlen I knew only slightly.

4. Erich Gritzbach was political secretary (Staatsrat) with Goering. He was a former foreign-office man and came into prominence with Goering, on account of his unusual talents, diligence, and efficiency, when the latter became Prussian dictator after January 1933. In his position of confidence with Goering Gritzbach must have witnessed many cases of terrorism, looting, and crime connected

with the highest Nazis, especially Goering. Doubtless, however, he lacked the power necessary to interfere in such cases where prominent persons incurred the personal hatred of Hitler or Goering. In many cases he was able to save less important people. For instance, he helped me to save some of my employees and workmen who had been thrown by the SS into a concentration camp.

In the winter of 1938/39 it was Gritzbach who arranged for George Rublee of Washington to meet Goering in order to help mitigate the plight of German Jewry. As a consequence from that time on to the beginning of the war Jewish persecution in Germany was practically stopped.

Gritzbach told Mrs. Stinnes in 1940 in Italy that he had warned Goering and Hitler in advance against attacking Poland because he believed it would lead to a general conflagration. Both Hitler and Goering, under the influence of Ribbentrop, refused to listen to any such warnings. For several weeks afterwards Goering did not speak to Gritzbach. (Among all the key Nazis there is no more sinister criminal to be found than Ribbentrop.)

Gritzbach was well known to me before the Nazis came into power. We continued to meet on various occasions afterwards. Although he was forced to become mixed up with dealings in which an honorable man should not have allowed himself to become involved, he was fundamentally decent. There is hardly a person in Germany who will know more about Nazi corruption than Gritzbach. In order to spread the truth among the German people it would be of great value to gain his cooperation so that the crimes and corruption of the leading Nazis can be brought to light.

5. It would be of great value also to discover the documents of the Nazi Party which reveal all who financed the Party both before and after Hitler came into power, so long as contributions were voluntary. Hitler had very strange bed-fellows, foreigners as well as Germans. On the occasion of the last presidential campaign in

Germany, Oscar Wassermann, a Jew and the leading executive of the largest German bank, the Deutsche Bank, could be forced to contribute to the campaign of Hitler's opponents only by being confronted with the fact that his previous contribution to Hitler's party was known.

6. After I left the Hugo Stinnes interests in 1925 I was owner of the AVUS, a private toll and racing road linking Potsdam and Berlin. The Nazis forced me to "sell" this property to Nazi interests for barely 12% of its construction value.

Edmund Stinnes

Edmund Stinnes

(SEAL)

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 17th day of October, 1945.

Carson H. Hall
Notary Public

NOTARY PUBLIC

My Commission expires 12/31/46

1945-1946

Erläuterungen zu den Briefen von Kaiser Wilhelm II
an Edmund H. Stinnes, in der Zeit zwischen 1927-1931.

Akz. 6859/84

Best. 251678

Rep.

Kat. Ras

Hugo Stinnes, mein im Jahre 1924 verstorbener Vater, hat Kaiser Wilhelm II nur einmal erlebt. Es war dies anlässlich eines grossen Diners bei der Familie Krupp auf dem Hügel in Essen. Als mein Vater dem Kaiser vorgestellt wurde, sagte dieser zu ihm: "Sie sind mein grosser Gegner." Das war an sich richtig und traf auch für August Thyssen zu. Aber eine Entgegnung erübrigte sich.

Dieses Ereignis ist mir nur deshalb so gut in Erinnerung geblieben, weil es meinen Vater damals so belastete, zu sehen, wie den anwesenden Damen und Herren der Gesellschaft andauernd der gute Markobrunner Wein, Jahrgang 1893, Trockenbeeren-Auslese nachgeschenkt wurde, obwohl die gefüllten Gläser dann stehen blieben, ohne ausgetrunken zu werden. Mein Vater war ein grosser Rheinwein-Kenner und er trank auch täglich davon. Aber Gästen wurde bei uns nur dann Wein angeboten, wenn man vorher feststellen konnte, dass es sich auch wirklich um Wein-Liebhaber handelte.

Diese Episode mit dem damals noch regierenden Kaiser habe ich absichtlich meinen eigenen Erfahrungen mit Wilhelm II vorausgeschickt.

Aufgrund meiner Freundschaft mit dem holländischen Bankier Eduard von der Heydt, an dessen Bank ich damals beteiligt war, kam ich oft nach Zandvoort bei Scheveningen und nach Doorn, wo der Kaiser mit seiner zweiten Frau Wilhelmine im Exil lebte. Die Briefe, die der Kaiser und seine Frau mir damals schrieben, stammen aus den Jahren 1927 bis 1931.

In der Emigration war der alte, würdige Herr weitgehend aufgelockert gegenüber der Vergangenheit. Er hinterliess mir z. B. einen besonderen Eindruck, als er mich fragte, warum ich mich mit meinem Vater überworfen hatte. Ich bekannte, dass ich meinem Vater in aller Offenheit entgegengetreten war, was vielleicht falsch gewesen sei. Darauf erwiderte der Kaiser, dass es ihm genauso ergangen sei. Auch er habe eine Anzahl Fehler begangen, die er sicher unterlassen hätte, wenn er damals schon über seine späteren Erkenntnisse verfügt hätte. Ich erwähnte z. B., dass der Reichskanzler Fürst Bülow einmal gesagt hatte: "Wenn ich seiner Majestät, dem Kaiser, in seine blauen Augen sehe, dann kann ich ihm immer nur das sagen, was er gerne hört." Darauf antwortete der Kaiser impulsiv: "Kaum einer hat mich später mehr verraten als Bülow."

Natürlich war es schwierig, beim Kaiser etwas durchzusetzen, womit er an sich nicht einverstanden war. So hatte mich das Ehepaar Henry Ford sen. bei einem vorherigen USA-Aufenthalt in Detroit gebeten, ich sollte mich beim Kaiser für dessen ältesten Enkelsohn, Prinz Louis Ferdinand verwenden, damit derselbe wieder zurückkehren könne zur Ford Motor Company, wo er sich früher so ausgezeichnet bewährt hatte. Henry Ford hatte mir die diesbezüglichen Papiere mitgegeben und ich habe sie dem Kaiser gezeigt.

Dieser war anfänglich ganz aufgebracht, dass sein Enkelsohn erneut zu einem "Kaufmann" gehen solle, noch dazu einem nicht-deutschen ! Jeder andere Grossvater wäre stolz gewesen auf diese Bewährungsbeispiele seiner Nachkommen - nicht so Wilhelm II. Die Tätigkeit eines "Kaufmannes" passte nicht zu der Familie der Hohenzollern. Doch schliesslich gelang es mir doch - auch dank der Unterstützung eines gewissen Herrn Grancy, der gerade beim Kaiser weilte - denselben umzustimmen.

Hierzu möchte ich erklären, dass es das Recht des Kaisers war, über seinen Enkelsohn zu bestimmen, nicht aber des Kronprinzen, der ja der Vater von Louis Ferdinand war. Ich selbst stand auch mit dem Kronprinzen sehr gut. Doch auch noch im Exil blieb nach dem alten Reglement die Autorität des Kaisers gewahrt.

In Doorn beherrschte der Kaiser die gesamte Gesellschaft. Man muss jedoch zugeben, dass er ein äusserst liebenswürdiger Gastgeber war. Die Mahlzeiten waren bescheiden aber immer sehr würdig. Es gab nur einen Gang und eine Nachspeise, dazu immer den gleichen Rosé-Sekt, sowie Mineralwasser. Der Kaiser führte die Unterhaltung, und zwar meistens über seine beiden Hauptthematika : die Ausgrabungen in Ur und die Höhlentempel im Inneren Afrikas, von denen ich vorher noch nie etwas gehört hatte. Seine Vorträge waren eigentlich immer faszinierend.

Nur auf einem Gebiet, nämlich auf dem der Finanzen, wollte der Kaiser mehr von mir wissen. Im Gegensatz zu Baron von der Heydt, dessen Fähigkeiten eher auf dem Gebiet der ostasiatischen Kunst lagen, war der Kaiser ein ausgezeichneter Bankier, der auch meine diesbezügliche Begabung anerkannte. Diese Begabung des Kaisers stammt wohl von seiten seiner Mutter, der Tochter der englischen Königin Viktoria, durch welche er zur Familie Koburg gehörte, wo der jüdische Hofarzt den legitimen Vater ersetzt hatte, wie Disraeli feststellte, bevor er die Genehmigung zur Heirat der Königin Viktoria gab. Aus diesem Grunde war auch für mich eine Unterhaltung mit dem alten Herrn immer sehr interessant. Uebrigens hatten auch Eduard VII, Leopold von Belgien und Ferdinand von Rumänien die gleiche Begabung ! (Alle aus dem gleichen Blute !)

Wilhelm II hatte ein körperliches Gebrechen : einer seiner Arme war von Geburt aus verkrüppelt. Die Mutter des Kaisers soll zutiefst bedauert haben "einen Krüppel" für den deutschen Thron geboren zu haben. Dieser Umstand ermöglichte es später Bismarck, den Kaiser gegen seine Mutter und alles Englische aufzuhetzen. Tatsächlich war es jedoch für den Kaiser völlig egal, ob er zu Pferde eine etwas mehr oder weniger gute Figur machte. Somit war dieser Komplex wirklich völlig unberechtigt, aber leider eine Tatsache.

Wenn Besucher nach Doorn kamen, erwartete man von ihnen, dass sie eine Anzahl Rosensträucher für das schöne Rosarium des Kaisers als Geschenk mitbrachten. Selbstverständlich habe auch ich das jedesmal getan, wenn ich dorthin ging und später konnte ich mich dann auch an

schönen Rosen erfreuen, die alle meinen Namen trugen. Ich fand dies eine sehr nette Sitte, die ich auch später in meinem eigenen Garten in Ascona beibehalten habe. Natürlich eignet sich auch Wein für ein solches Geschenk, oder Goldstücke, eventuell auch ein Reitpferd - nach nach der Situation. Ich selbst habe diese Form der Liebenswürdigkeit zuerst in Oesterreich und später dann in Argentinien und Brasilien kennengelernt.

Erst anhand dieser Erläuterungen lassen sich die Briefe des Kaisers vom 1. 8. und 30. 8. 1931 an mich richtig verstehen. Dies sind die beiden Briefe, die auf Herrn von Schlabrendorff und den 90-jährigen Staatsrechtslehrer Rudolf Smend einen negativen Eindruck hinterliessen.

~~Ich gebe ohne weiteres zu, dass die darin enthaltene Kritik über den "Jesuitenzögling" Brüning absolut unzuständig ist, ebenso wie die Kritik an dem damaligen Reichsbankpräsidenten Luther. Sieht man jedoch von diesen Aeusserungen eines sehr temperamentvollen Mannes ab, so hatte Wilhelm II mit seiner harten Kritik an den beiden genannten Herren vollkommen recht.~~

Ich selbst habe sowohl Brüning wie auch Luther gekannt. H. Brüning hat sogar einmal meine Studenten auf dem College in USA besucht. Er hätte nie Kanzler werden dürfen, schon deshalb nicht, weil er ein ausgesprochener "Candidat" war. Was nun Luther betrifft, so mag er ein guter Bürgermeister gewesen sein, aber von Währungs- und Finanzpolitik verstand er nichts. Selbstverständlich hatte der Kaiser darin recht, dass das damalige Finanzgenie Hjalmar Schacht sofort hätte einberufen werden müssen. Diese Fehlbesetzungen haben schliesslich dann auch zu Hitler geführt.

Hinzufügen möchte ich noch, dass Konrad Adenauer später ebenso negativ über Brüning und Luther sprach wie Wilhelm II, wenn auch nicht mit so temperamentvollen Worten wie der alte Herr.

Was die "Tributzahlungen" angeht, so hatte mein Vater später neue, direkte Wege zu französischen Freunden gefunden und über den Goldstandard braucht man heute nicht unbedingt den törichten Ansichten der Treasury zu folgen, sondern man kann auch anders darüber denken.

Handwritten signature

An
J. SCHAUFF