

Name: BARGEN, Werrner von (Bevollm.d.AA in Nordfrkr. u.Belgien)	ZS Nr. 2059	Bd. I	Vermerk:
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Historical Branch Div
G-2 Am 5874HISTORICAL INTERROGATION COMMISSION
WAR DEPARTMENT GENERAL STAFF, G-2
HISTORICAL BRANCH, MID

Source : Werner von BARGEN, Plenipotentiary of the Foreign Office in Northern France and Belgium (until 1943).

Date : 13 August 1945

Place : SAIC

Interrogator : Lt. Col. O.J. Hale

Institut für Zeitgeschichte ARCHIV	
Akz. 4637/71	Best. 25 2059
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Personal Data : Source is a professional career diplomat holding the broader views associated with experience and knowledge of the world outside Germany. Says he joined the Party in 1933 as they were told to do if they wished to keep their posts and be promoted. States that he was never active and never held a Party post or membership in an auxiliary formation. Expresses contempt and scorn for the Führer, Ribbentrop and the Nazis in general. He served as an envoy in Belgium from 1937 to 1940 and from 1940 to 1943 as FO plenipotentiary on the staff of the Military Commander, General Falkenhausen, for whom he expresses great admiration. Source has an attractive personality and answers all questions candidly and with the appearance of honesty.

I. POLITICAL CONDITIONS IN BELGIUM DURING THE GERMAN OCCUPATION

QUESTION: Did the German Government contemplate during the occupation period the conclusion of a definitive peace with Belgium?

BARGEN : As political representative on the staff of the Military Commander I never received from the Foreign Office any directive that indicated such a treaty was contemplated. It was of course discussed with colleagues in the foreign service and we felt that there could never be any solution but that of an integral and independent Belgium. However, officially from the Führer or from Ribbentrop there was never any indication of what they contemplated in the way of a final solution. Here as in other occupied territories the SS - meaning Himmler - had its special solution. In their opinion the Flemings were Germanic and they even discovered through the researches of an SS historian that the Walloons were also racially Germanic, although unfortunately they had acquired a Romance tongue. With regard to the policy of the Military Administration I can say that it did not differ from that of the Foreign Office. I always supported this solution to the Military Commander whose principal interest was in the maintenance of order and stability in the country. Pursuit of political policies were

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not welcomed in this quarter.

QUESTION: But did not German policy support Degrelle and his Rexist Movement?

BARGEN : Support for Degrelle came not from the Foreign Office and the Military Commander but rather from the SS. Politically the Rexist Movement lost its force in the election of 1939 when only 3 deputies were returned to the Parliament. I reported at this time that the Rexist Movement had failed and at no time during the occupation did I have reason to change my opinion. I should say that the Rexist Movement commanded not more than the support of 2% of the Belgian people and despite the favorable propaganda I doubt if the war years brought any increase in the following.

QUESTION: How would you characterize the chief of the Military Administration in Belgium, Herr Reeder?

BARGEN : I knew him intimately as we were both law students together at the University of Kiel. He made an excellent record in the Prussian administration and at the time of his appointment to the post in Belgium he was Regierungspräsident in Aachen. His position in Belgium was an exceedingly difficult one and he was doubtless forced to execute policies of which he personally disapproved. Oftentimes he spoke to me of the pressure that was placed upon him from a variety of sources and the conflicting orders and directives which he received. In theory all directives to his office were cleared and coordinated by General Wagner, Oberquartiermeister of the OKW, who was responsible for the military administration of occupied territories. However, it did not work this way in fact and Reeder received suggestions and orders from powerful agencies outside the military channel. Source stated further that the Foreign Office exerted no influence in the occupied territories and during his service in Belgium he never received a directive from the Foreign Office.

QUESTION: Were there political considerations behind the attachment of the French departments Nord and Pas de Calais to the Military Administrative District of Belgium?

BARGEN : This arrangement was based on military and economic rather than political consideration.

QUESTION: How was the Belgian press handled during the occupation?

BARGEN : Advance censorship of press material was not required. There was only the control that would result from the appearance of undesirable articles in the press. Considering that it was a military occupation severe restrictions were not imposed. What happened in Belgium with regard to the Jews was forced by the SS and was unacceptable to General Falkenhausen. Source then reviewed the economic achievements, particularly in the matter of food

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supply, of the German regime in Belgium. In the end, the Party's dissatisfaction with Falkenhausen and the Military administration caused them to be replaced by a civil administration under Gauleiter Grohe. However, I did not experience this personally as I left Belgium in 1943. The cause of the change, however, was well known.

QUESTION: How do you evaluate the Belgian resistance movement up to the time you left the country?

BARGEN : In general, remarkably little difficulty was encountered up to 1943. There was some activity in the Ardennes district but it was not widespread and powerful. It can be said generally that the majority of the Belgians up to this time passively accepted the military occupation. With the unfavorable trend in the war, the greater activity of Allied agents and the eventual landing of the Allied forces in France the picture of course changed completely.

II. THE NEW ORDER IN EUROPE

QUESTION: What were the ultimate aims of German policy in Europe and what did German leaders mean when they used the term "New Order"?

BARGEN : That is a question to which the Foreign Office officials never had the answer. It was a political slogan which at first had considerable drawing power among the people of Germany's border states, but what it meant concretely we were never able to state in reply to questions put to us in private conversation. I, and many others in similar posts, reported to the Foreign Office that the "New Order" propaganda was doing more harm than good unless it could be given a real content. No Belgian could be satisfied with a slogan which told him nothing about what kind of a Belgian there would be under this "New Order". Source believes that these reports, as well as the unfavorable turn in the war, were responsible for burying the propaganda of the "New Order." What kind of a New Europe Hitler and the highest party leaders had in mind I do not know, but the following is perhaps the mental picture which they had of the future continent: First, a mighty Germany that would be the core of the "New Order." Second, as a series of attached border dependencies would come the so-called Germanic states and peoples. A third and outer ring of states would comprise non-Germanic peoples attached to and dependent upon Germany. This system would exclude both Britain and Russia, but the remainder of Europe would be a German Continental Bloc, modeled perhaps upon Napoleon's Empire. I do not know if this picture corresponds to the idea in the minds of the Führer and the leaders, but there are indications that they envisaged nothing more concrete. We were never authorized to discuss the conception of the "New Order." As far as the Party was concerned there would be no place in this system for a diplomatic service and a Foreign Office. They would have put a Gauleiter

in each country to direct and control the local government, much as the British control and direct the government in Egypt.

III. AUSLANDSORGANISATION IN BELGIUM

QUESTION: You say that the SD kept an agent in your office force. What were your relations to the Auslandsorganisation?

BARGEN : Both before and during the war the Landesgruppenleiter made many difficulties. This occurred in every foreign colony because the consul or ambassador had always been the leader of the German community. When these duties were taken from the officials and transferred to the Party through the AO it naturally developed a great deal of friction. Moreover, the Party veto upon appointments and promotions in the foreign service, which was exercised through Gauleiter Bohle, often caused difficulties for the foreign service officer with his own personnel office. The situation in Belgium was no different in this respect than in many other countries. Friction usually arose over petty matters such as failure to include the Landesgruppenleiter in the guest list at a luncheon, or from a Landesgruppenleiter protest to the AO that the minister or ambassador cultivated only the upper social classes.

QUESTION: Do you think that the officials of the Auslandsorganisation carried on espionage activity?

BARGEN : I do not think that they engaged generally in espionage. The reasons for this belief are as follows: Their value in this respect would have been slight. Landesgruppenleiter and Ortsgruppenleiter were usually appointed from circles in the German colony which were mediocre in importance and quite limited in their contacts. What was true of the Party at home was true of the Party abroad. It rarely occurred, and never in Belgium, that a really prominent and influential German was appointed to official position in the AO. These Party officials ordinarily had no contact with influential political circles, with military circles, banking, or industry, where only worthwhile information could be procured. The limited contacts and outlook of the average AO official did not suit him for the role of a foreign agent. Finally, the officials of the AO were usually immersed in the narrow life of the German foreign colony.

IV. SOURCE'S ACTIVITY AFTER LEAVING BELGIUM

In 1943 source was recalled to the Foreign Office where he took charge of the Western European Division. He served in this post until he was sent to Paris as German Plenipotentiary in February 1944. This assignment was made because of the temporary recall of Ambassador Abetz, who had clashed so sharply with the German economic representative in France that Ribbentrop had recalled both parties to Berlin. When Abetz returned to his post

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in Paris in the late spring of 1944 source was left at the French capital practically without duties. He could not work with Abetz, with whom he clashed, but no new assignment was given him by the Foreign Office. His last task was to supervise and direct the transfer of the German diplomatic personnel to Germany.

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