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Evaluation Report 53(f)
18 June 1945

COMBINED INTELLIGENCE OBJECTIVES SUB-COMMITTEE

INTERROGATION OF ALBERT SPEER, FORMER
REICH MINISTER OF ARMAMENTS AND WAR
PRODUCTION
Target No. 28/5.01

7th Session - June 1, 1945 - 10:15 to 12:30 hrs.

PART I

1. SPEER volunteered the following additions to topics discussed in earlier interrogations:

a) The organization of post-raid measures after the attack on the MAYBACH plant was in the hands of a Herr OCHEL, of the ORENSTEIN & KOPPEL firm, who should be a good source on this and similar operations.

b) The incorporation of economic considerations in military strategy, and economic warfare policy in general, was the responsibility of the Wehrmachtsfuhrungsstab, and not the Generalstab des Heeres.

THE S.S. IN INDUSTRY

2. SPEER was asked to describe the industrial activities of the S.S. He stated that the S.S., over a number of years, had been attempting to build up an industrial combine (Industriekonzern) of its own. In SPEER's view, their main motive originally was to make money so as to be independent of the Reich Treasury for funds. They acquired industrial firms indiscriminately and at first on a fairly small scale, usually by taking over Jewish-owned and other expropriated firms. One of the S.S. interests was in the soft drinks industry. SPEER was amused by the suggestion quoted to him as having come from another source (OHLENDORFF) that this interest was due to HIMMLER's concern over excessive alcohol consumption in the S.S., in his view the profit-motive was decisive here, too. The first great coup by the S.S. was the acquisition of the MANFRED WEISS Works in BUDAPEST, which SPEER thought had occurred in early 1944. The incident occurred shortly after the Hungarian Government had confiscated Jewish-owned factories, including the WEISS plants. HIMMLER, possibly through an intermediary not known to SPEER, made a deal with the Jewish owners of WEISS who signed over their works to him against permission to proceed to SWITZERLAND. SPEER heard of this when the German ambassador in BUDAPEST telephoned him to report that he had been placed in an impossible position by HIMMLER, as the WEISS works were technically the property of the Hungarian State. SPEER immediately intervened with HITLER, not only to help the ambassador, but also because he expected that the SS would manage the WEISS works inefficiently. The whole question was to be discussed at a Berghof conference between the Germans and the Hungarian Prime Minister. HIMMLER, however, contacted the Prime Minister before the discussion had formally been opened, and by means not known to SPEER persuaded him to acquiesce in the SS expropriation.

As part of their campaign, the SS attempted to make it a condition in allocating labor from concentration camps that plants receiving such labor should pass under SS management, and that their profits should go to the SS. SPEER opposed this scheme because he feared the inefficiency that would result from technical management passing into the hands of the SS. Finally a compromise was arrived at whereby the SPEER Ministry was to retain control as regards technical management, while the SS would be in charge of labor management and conditions of work. No labor other than from concentration camps was to be employed in such plants. SPEER thought there were quite a number of factories run on this basis, including BMW-ALLACH and the MITTELWERK. The head of SPEER's AMISGRUPPE ARBEITSEINSATZ, Herr SCHMELDER, was in charge of the negotiations with the SS and knows the details.

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Later on the SS tried to organize industrial production in the concentration camps themselves; a scheme which SPEER resisted because he feared that it would result in inefficient utilization of machine tools which were scarce, and that it would take these plants a long time to become generally efficient. An SS plan to organize a rifle factory, in BUCHENWALDE, in conjunction with the GUSTLOFFWERKE, was frustrated in this way. Production in SS plants was not necessarily for the Waffen SS; in fact in most cases the products were sold to the Heereswaffenamt, which, under an agreement between the SS and Army, made raw materials available to the SS plants. After July 20, 1944, when SS General JUETTNER had become Chief of the Ersatzheer and taken over distribution of equipment, this problem was simplified in any case. He thought that in most cases the concentration camp plants manufactured only "primitive" items. As a typical instance of the irresponsible ways of the SS in production matters he quoted the case of one SS underground plant near NORDHAUSEN built under KAMMLER's Hoehlenprogramm, where the SS was making 300 fighter fuselages a month, while HIMMLER kept telling everybody that the plant was making 300 "aircraft".

Industrial influence of the SS was more pronounced in the CZECH PROTECTORATE, where it was promoted by the SS "protectors", DALUEGE, HEYDRICH and FRANK. Here, they occasionally organized "black" production of items which they were unable to obtain in the REICH, e.g. half-tracks. Most of this production was concerned with radios and other items which were not made in the REICH during the war. SPEER could not mention any specific plants run by the SS in the PROTECTORATE. He was certain, however, that their influence did not extend to the big concerns, like SKODA and CKD, whose capital had been acquired by the HERMANN GOERING WERKE.

3. The SS Wirtschafts-Verwaltungs Hauptamt existed already in 1943 when SPEER became Minister. He confirmed that it was in full charge of SS industrial activities. Its chief, POHL negotiated with SCHMELDER on the supply of concentration camp inmates for work in industry. KAMMLER was under POHL. When in winter 1943/44 the SS began making plans for taking over the government, SPEER thought that KAMMLER had been earmarked as his successor in the armaments industry, or at least in the control of building. When SPEER was ill in early 1944 an intrigue was started by the SS to take building controls away from him. The SS wanted to set up its own Baubetrieb SS; a scheme under which the SS was to supply labor, while the building industry was to contribute management personnel and skilled workers and machinery. This scheme did not go through, but KAMMLER soon afterwards obtained powers from GOERING to take over the underground relocation program of the aircraft industry, against an offer to supply 200,000 workers for the execution of this project. SPEER violently opposed this scheme, but finally had to accept it. Shortly thereafter, HIMMLER developed an interest in V-weapons, and offered to HITLER to take control of all production. Apparently by way of a compromise, only the MITTELWERK was transferred to HIMMLER for management. This plant had been developed from caves which originally had been a gypsum mine owned by I.G. FARBEN, and then a WIFO oil storage depot. KAMMLER then obtained control of the operational employment of V-2 and later V-1, for which he created the Division ZbV KAMMLER. After July 20, development work on V-2, then under DORNBERGER, also came under KAMMLER, and finally, also jet-propelled fighter aircraft production. SPEER considered that his position was being seriously undermined by this process.

4. The GUSTLOFFWERKE, according to SPEER, were SAUCKEL's personal concern. "Der Gauleiter" had organized them in the form of an endowment (Siftung) in order to raise funds for use in the Gau, not necessarily for his personal benefit but also for schemes like the re-planning of WEIMAR. GUSTLOFFWERKE mostly consisted of ex-Jewish and other confiscated plants. Its subsidiaries included the SUHL rifle factories, the SAUCKEL WERKE at WEIMAR, and the KAHLA underground plant, which had been planned to produce 1,000 jet fighters monthly, a target which it never attained.

LAST DAYS OF THE THIRD REICH

5. Asked to give an account of the political background of his role, and economic developments during the final phases of the war, SPEER began with a description of SAUR's part in this connection, which SPEER considered important. Differences of opinion between the two began to arise in summer 1943, when the series of attacks on HAMBURG had shaken SPEER's confidence in GERMANY's ability to win the war. SAUR, on the other hand, remained optimistic, and persisted in this attitude almost to the very end.

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SPEER, up to mid-1943, could consider himself a "strong man". He had direct access to HITLER, reported to him verbally at infrequent intervals and his views carried weight with the Führer. When his reports started getting pessimistic, HITLER's readiness to listen to SPEER began to fall off, and gradually SAUR, always the optimist, became more and more popular with HITLER, and was frequently summoned to report to him directly. SPEER stressed that SAUR, unlike DORSCH, never used his favored position for intriguing against SPEER, and personal relations between them remained good. SPEER's personal interviews with the Führer became more infrequent, and HITLER would pay no attention to SPEER's warnings about GERMANY's difficulties. SPEER finally decided that these interviews were a waste of time, so he started reporting in writing, and soon found that his reports were read by HITLER and sometimes were acted upon. (SPEER's principal reports dating from this period were in his personal files and have been secured). SPEER noted that the frank tone which he adopted in his correspondence could only be appreciated if one knew the moderation of language that was the custom in reporting difficulties to HITLER. When SPEER, in a memorandum on the effects of the oil offensive, said that the consequences were "tragic" he was saying in effect that the war was lost. SPEER repeatedly thought of resigning his post. However, he refrained from doing so, because owing to his personal standing with HITLER, he had developed into an unofficial spokesman for all Ministers in charge of specialised fields (Fachminister), e.g. Food and Agriculture. They urged him not to leave, because he was the only one who had access to HITLER, and could go against BORMANN. SPEER had first wanted to resign in spring 1944 when during his illness DORSCH started an intrigue against him, attempting to set himself up as controller of building independent of SPEER. On this occasion SPEER sent FRAENK to the OBERSALZBERG to warn HITLER of his intention to leave, but GOERING and others persuaded him to change his mind. His position with HITLER, however, remained weak, and HITLER's conferences with SAUR became more and more frequent. SPEER was glad in a way to be out of these meetings, because HITLER would usually go into endless detail which taxed SPEER's memory to the limit. He suggests that a search should be made for the minutes of the HITLER-SAUR conferences.

6. On January 30, 1945, after the loss of SILESIA, SPEER decided that HITLER must be told that the war was lost economically. He wrote a memorandum (said to be in our hands) setting out his arguments which he was going to submit to HITLER at a conference in SAUR's presence. SPEER had briefed SAUR not to intervene until he had presented all his arguments. During the conference, however, SAUR forgot all about the briefing and indulged in his customary rosy optimism, carrying HITLER with him, so that SPEER did not get anywhere. A similar incident occurred later in February, after six Hauptauschussleiter had presented an ultimatum to SAUR, trying to force him to go to HITLER and tell him that the game was up. SAUR agreed to do so, but changed his mind again while talking to HITLER, and ended up by consoling HITLER with the prospect of a four-engined jet bomber soon coming into service. Actually, according to SPEER, this bomber was not expected to mature for another two years. SPEER thought it was very likely that (as Gauleiter Hofer had said under interrogation) SAUR deliberately exaggerated production figures when reporting to HITLER. SPEER admitted that in the final phase of the war he had adopted the same policy, not only towards HITLER, but especially towards the Gauleiters. SPEER instructed his regional commissioners ROHLAND in the West, WOLFF in the East and SAUR in the South, to spread the story that German armaments production was going well. His reason for doing so was the fact that the Gauleiters started getting "hysterical" towards the end of March, and were about to carry out a drastic scorched earth policy. SPEER's move was part of his campaign to frustrate this policy, and to get the Gauleiters to postpone demolitions. His idea was to build up their sagging morale through false tales of production successes. SPEER then proceeded to a detailed account of his campaign.

SPEER'S SABOTAGE OF THE SCORCHED EARTH PROGRAMME

7. When he saw that defeat was inevitable, SPEER decided that it was essential to save as much as possible of German industrial capacity, transport services and public utilities so that there would be possibilities of employment for the common people after defeat and to avoid conditions of chaos. Acting under orders from HITLER, passed on and strongly backed by BORMANN, the Gauleiters in the threatened areas were getting ready to carry out widespread demolitions. In the RUHR and elsewhere these were aimed primarily at the power plants. SPEER claimed that on his instructions the Germans had carried out no scorched earth policy when retreating from FRANCE, BELGIUM and HOLLAND, the BALKANS and the Government-General. He had had the necessary

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authority to issue orders to this effect, and any scorching that may have been done was performed by the troops on their own initiative. His refusal to scorch the earth there was due to a desire to save the French, Belgians, etc. etc. from unemployment, and he did not see why the German workers should be deprived of the same favor. Yet, in the words of an article by SUENDERMANN in the V.B., inspired by BORMANN, GERMANY was to be "turned into a desert". SPEER first tried to counteract these intentions in September 1944, when he sent BORMANN a draft decree to the effect that no destruction measures (Zerstörungen), but only immobilization (Laehmungen) should be carried out in threatened REICH territory. "Laehmung" was usually effected by removing vital machinery parts and burying them. In order to get this proposal accepted SPEER requested BORMANN to ask HITLER whether the latter intended to re-conquer the territory then lost (SAAR, AACHEN, LUXEMBOURG), as it was vital to SPEER to have it back for economic reasons. HITLER, as SPEER had expected, promptly replied that, of course, he was planning a re-conquest. As a second move, SPEER got HITLER to agree with his view that in this case a scorched earth policy would only harm the Germans, and not the Allies, and asked him to inform the Gauleiters accordingly, which HITLER did. Thus, SPEER was covered for the time being, and he issued a supplementary decree to his regional representatives, informing them that he would punish those who carried out immobilization measures too early, but not those who carried them out too late or not at all. He had a conference with KESSELING on the same subject, who also subscribed to SPEER'S view.

8. When the loss of the RHINELAND and UPPER SILESIA caused growing unrest among the Gauleiters, who knew that their own lives were forfeit, and did not care what happened to the rest of GERMANY, SPEER realized that he would have to renew his campaign. Out of their fear, SPEER claimed, the Gauleiters pretended to be optimistic till the very last, "clutching at any straw of hope". SPEER was afraid, however, that when war came close to their Gau they would "run amok" in scorching the earth. In particular, SPEER had a row with FLORIAN, in the RUHR, who argued that if GERMANY lost the war, both himself and the people were lost in any case, a "terrible view to take" according to SPEER. To meet these tendencies, which he knew were also strong in HITLER'S surroundings, SPEER wrote his memorandum of March 15, 1945 (said to be in our hands) in which he said that total economic collapse would take place within 4 to 8 weeks. In such a case, SPEER continued, he was in favor of concentrating on saving the factories, etc., on which the German people depended for its livelihood, and the personal fate of the leaders should be of no importance. He did not know Allied intentions. If they intended to destroy German industry, he wanted them to take the blame for destroying the existence of a "brave and decent people". It was at this time that he formed the Verkehrsstab, which was to concentrate on maintaining transport services. He also urged that measures should be taken to insure food supplies. He summarized his program in four points:

- a) There should be no destruction, only temporary "Laehmung". He drafted a decree by which the exclusive right to instruct Gauleiters on such measures should rest with him.
- b) Bridges were to be destroyed only for operational reasons, i.e. chiefly in order to protect planned lines of resistance.
- c) Stocks of food and consumers' goods, including Wehrmacht stocks, should be distributed to the population. (He did not know the Allies' intentions as regards such stocks).
- d) Food production was to be given priority over armaments production.

9. SPEER presented these arguments in very blunt terms in a meeting with HITLER (SAUR warned him that he would be arrested if he was not more careful). HITLER asked for time to think it over and promised a written reply by the evening. The reply was negative. HITLER argued that if GERMANY lost this war, its people would have no right to live (Keine Existenzberechtigung); the "eastern race" was too powerful and would destroy GERMANY in any case. SPEER was much shaken by this reply, which provided the basis for the scorched earth decree (Zerstörungserlass) of March 19, signed by HITLER. The argument was that it was useless to hand anything over intact to the enemy, who would destroy it in any case. Everything of direct or indirect value to the enemy was to be destroyed, all bridges to be blown, etc. SPEER said he kept this decree in order to expose the authors of this policy later. The decree was implemented in orders to the Wehrmacht from the Chef des Wehrmachtstransportwesens, who ordered the creation of a "transportation desert" (Transportwueste) in GERMANY, and the Chef des Nachrichtenwesens issued a similar order for the destruction of all transformer stations, telephone

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exchanges and cables. All records which might assist in restoring such services were to be burnt. SPEER hurried to BERLIN in order to try to get this decree revoked, but had to leave for the RUHR immediately because he heard that the Gauleiters were getting ready for blowing up power plants and flooding coal mines. (This was on the day of the airborne landings across the RHINE). SPEER found that the demolition parties were standing by and went to work without delay. He found "many courageous men in industry" who were also determined to frustrate this plan. After a late conference with these industrialists, it was decided to prevent the demolitions by hiding all detonators and fuses (Zuendschnuere) in the coal mines by throwing them down the mine shafts. SPEER obtained 50 machine-pistols with ammunition, with orders to open fire via ROHLAND, to trustworthy workers in key installations, with orders to open fire even on Gauleiters personally if required. The next day SPEER got to work on the Gauleiters, most of whom finally yielded to his arguments, and agreed that HITLER's decree "could be interpreted in SPEER's sense". FLORIAN alone was recalcitrant, and wanted to go as far as ordering the population of towns in his Gau, all heavily bombed, to set fire to the surviving houses. FLORIAN read out this decree to SPEER, who advised him to publish it without delay by the most prominent means (e.g. posters in the towns), which SPEER considered the best way of sabotaging it, as the people would have revolted on seeing it. He also called up the Party Chancellory asking them to stop FLORIAN.

10. After having arranged for the dissemination of HITLER's Zerstoerungserlass in order to warn the workers, SPEER left for the South, where he conferred with KOLCHNER and ROEHLING on how best to sabotage the decree. They decided that the best way would be for the Gauleiters, who did not dare to go against HITLER's word, to have the decree printed and then distributed by mail, thus insuring that nobody would get it in time. SPEER then laid on the hiding of a stock of explosives at NECKARZIMMERN in BADEN, held there in connection with construction of an underground ball-bearing plant. He sent SCHULTZE-FIELTIZ to the TYROL to arrange for the protection of the SILVRETTA and other power plants, and had another 50 machine pistols distributed to key plants in SW GERMANY.

11. On his return to BERLIN, he was informed by SEEBAUER, who had just been talking to SAUR, that a "queer" situation had arisen in the capital. ~~HITLER was to be made~~ War Minister, and SAUR his Plenipotentiary for Armaments. SPEER rushed to the Reichskanzlei where he encountered a frigid atmosphere. On the "Fuehrer's stock exchange" (Fuehrerboerse) he could always sense how his shares stood before even having seen HITLER. This day they were very low. Finally he was officially summoned to the Fuehrer (usually he was informally invited) and had a talk with him which was conducted in a decent manner (in menschlich anstaendiger Form), but in which HITLER informed SPEER that he wanted him to go on sick leave. SPEER refused to accept such a solution, and said that he would prefer a straight dismissal. HITLER argued with him that he had no use for a Minister who did not "radiate faith" in a critical situation. It was obvious to SPEER that the Gauleiters had reported to HITLER on his activities. After a lengthy argument, HITLER finally explained that for reasons of foreign and domestic policy, he could not afford an outright dismissal at this moment. SPEER took this for an opportunity to arrive at a face-saving compromise, saying that if the Fuehrer wanted him to accept the sick leave solution for "reasons of state" he could not but accept. However, at this point he brought in the rumor he had heard from SEEBAUER, and, as his own suggestion, proposed the HIMMLER-SAUR arrangement, and also suggested that deputies should be appointed for all the various jobs held by SPEER. HITLER refused to consider this proposal, and started arguing again. He retold to SPEER all his biography with its many difficulties and crises which he had successfully overcome. Worn out by this tirade, SPEER finally shut up "so as not to have to insult the Fuehrer" and the meeting was concluded after two hours without any result. It took place on March 26, 27 or 28.

12. SPEER then wrote a letter to HITLER, speaking in purely personal terms (menschlich) which, for this reason, he had intended to withhold from the Allies (who found it nevertheless). He urged HITLER once again not to "destroy the existence of the people". He repeated what he had told HITLER at their meeting - that he had neither hope nor faith in a German victory, that it was time to realize that the war was lost, and that the German leaders personally had to face what a just Providence had in store for them. Twenty-four hours later SPEER received a telephone call from HITLER and was invited to his presence. Once again HITLER pressed SPEER to declare that he had faith, or at least hope, in a German victory, but SPEER would only go as far as assuring HITLER that

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he backed him unconditionally. HITLER finally had to be content with this; they shook hands and after some more arguing SPEER persuaded HITLER to repeal his Scorched Earth Decree. An order to this effect, which also re-instated SPEER in full control of scorched earth decisions, was signed 6 a.m. and SPEER had it immediately distributed by couriers.

13. SPEER proceeded to organize a special campaign to prevent bridge demolitions. After REMAGEN and the executions which followed it, the engineer troops had "become nervous" and blew bridges on the slightest provocation. SPEER made use of a sudden resurgence of optimism in HITLER and his generals which was due to a plan to attack the Southern flank of the US forces which then had reached ERFURT and WELMAR, to press them back as far as SUHL and possibly to effect a juncture between the WENCK and MODEL Army Groups. HITLER told SPEER and SAUR of the great hopes which he pinned upon this attack. SPEER retorted that the area to be reconquered would be useless to him if the earlier demolition orders had been carried out, but HITLER assured him that there had been no time for this as the US advance had been so rapid. SPEER's comment on this was that it was better not to issue demolition question, to the effect that the OKW was to have powers only to order the blowing up of operationally important bridges, and engineer troops alone would be held responsible for the execution of such orders. All other bridges were to be destroyed only after consultation with the Gauleiters, in their capacity as Reich Defense Commissars, the chairmen of Armaments Commissions, and the Reichsbahn authorities. SPEER was confident that the bad state of communications would make such consultations impossible, which would save the bridges and absolve the troops of their responsibility. This was the only one of his "illoyal tricks"; others included six or eight orders which he forged on behalf of the Wehrmachtfuehrungsstab ordering the non-destruction of specific bridges. SPEER said that he normally preferred more honest methods but had no choice in this case. He would have considered it as the most satisfactory end of his activities if he had been called to account for them and sentenced. It was still a puzzle to him how he had escaped such a fate, as he counted up all the acts of high treason which he had committed from the end of January onwards, and had arrived at a total of over sixty.