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Chief of Mission, Frankfurt

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Theo SAEVECKE

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Attached is the English translation of Subject's statement to the Interior Ministry re the charges which have been raised against him.

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Enclosure:
Eng. translation of
Subject's Statement (in duplicate)

20 July 1954

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Translation

Theo Saevecke
Kriminalrat

Bonn, 1 Jul 1954

Herr Regierungsrat Fritze - Federal Ministry of the Interior- acquainted me today with reproaches concerning my former activities in Milan. Regierungsrat Fritze informed me of the details of the accusation and gave me the opportunity to vindicate myself verbally.

In the following written report I repeat my verbal comments concerning the accusations of which I was informed.

I joined the criminal police in 1934, was promoted Kommissar in 1938 and Kriminalrat in 1943. Up to 1940 I was employed in various offices of the regular criminal police service according to my rank. I was then transferred from the Criminal police branch office in Berlin to the Reich criminal police office in Berlin where I was ordered to take preparatory measures for the future employment of the German criminal police in the colonial service. As a part of these preparations German criminal police officers -among them I- were trained in Rome for a future colonial service by the African police of Italy. From 1942 to 1943 I underwent further training for the colonial criminal police service. Because of my knowledge of the Italian language which I had acquired in the course of my training I was -after the abandonment of the entire colonial project in Sep 1943- transferred away from the regular criminal police service and assigned by the criminal police branch office in Berlin for further duty to the commander of the German security police in Italy who appointed me chief of the branch detachment in Milan.

This branch office was subordinated to the "Police Chief of Upper-Italy - West", Standartenfuhrer Rauff in Milan. His superior officer was the "Chief of the Security Police", Generalleutnant of the police Dr. Harster who in turn was subordinated to the "Supreme SS and Police Chief and Authorized General of the German Army in Italy", General of the Waffen-SS Karl Wolff. My department was the entire city of Milan and part of the Lombardy.

The personnel of my office consisted of 20 German criminal police officers and approximately 40 Italian technical assistants. Our office building was the hotel Regina which also accommodated my immediate superior office. While the personnel of the other branch detachments which belonged within the command area of my superior also comprised officers of the SD, no such officers came under my command, on the contrary, since my superior was an SD-leader, they were directly subordinated to him.

The task of the security police in Italy, and therefore also the task of my detachment, was the safeguarding of the German Army in the rear area and the protection of the Italian population against the attacks of partizans.

For the completion of these tasks I was authorized within my department in accordance with general instructions to act on my own discretion. However, as a result of the fact that my office was accommodated in the same building as my superior office, the internal matters of the branch detachment in Milan which I commanded and consequently my decisions also were more strongly influenced by the instructions and orders from higher quarters than were those of the other detachments. Certain mail for example which was intended for or dispatched by my office was checked by Stan artenfuehrer Rauff, my superior.

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In Milan there is a prison, San Vittore, which serves the Italian courts as a jail. Following Rauff's request a certain portion of this prison was set aside for prisoners of the security service from the entire command area "Upper Italy - West". At a later time the German Army also consigned its prisoners to a special section of that prison. The three sections of the prison were independently administered by the Italian legal authorities, by the Security Police, and by the German Army respectively. I was responsible for the administration of that part of the prison which had been assigned to the security police under the immediate command of Rauff. As far as I remember the guards of our section of the prison comprised 2 officers of my detachment and approximately 20 auxiliary guards (soldiers). For the purpose of guarding female prisoners 10 Catholic nuns were later employed by the prison authorities.

I furnished this general description of the situation in order to give an impression of the true background of the accusations which were raised against me and thus to make my comment on this matter more easily understandable.

Execution of hostages

After numerous attacks against members of the German Army and Italian civilians (assassinations committed by partisans), a higher-ranking office which was not known to me, ordered the Italian military court in Milan to take retaliatory measures. This court thereupon ordered the shooting of 15 hostages. The hostages were selected from among those of the prisoners who on account of the charges against them had to expect a death sentence anyway. Some of those prisoners were also detained in San Vittore, in the section of the security police. By request of Rauff, my superior, I furnished the Italian military court through him with the records of such prisoners who had participated in acts of sabotage. On the basis of this material a number of the hostages who were to be executed - I do not remember the exact number - was selected by the Italian military court. As far as I know the remaining hostages were kept by the Italian authorities in other prisons. The execution was carried through by Italian soldiers.

I know that SS-Brigadefuehrer Tensfeld, "Police Chief for the fighting of partisans in Upper Italy - West", was tried by a British Court on the ground of having shot hostages. The trial took place in 1946/47 in Italy. Tensfeld was acquitted in which connection as far as I remember the court established that the responsibility for the shooting of the 15 hostages rested with the Italian authorities and not with the Germans. Tensfeld is today living in Hamburg.

Persecution of Jews

As a result of a general order from the German Government I had to trace all Jews within my department. This task was carried through independently by special missions office and also by my office.

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In accordance with the orders which I had received these Jews were consigned to San Vittore and after a short time transferred from there to a collection camp under the command of the chief of the security police in Italy. I could not at the time foresee the fate of those persecutees of which I only learned after the war.

Arrest and Deportation of the last form of a Secondary School.

I have heard of this incident for the first time through Regierungsrat Fritze's remonstrance. I had nothing to do with the matter.

Ill-treatment of Prisoners in San Vittore.

I have never ill-treated a prisoner or any other person over whom I had authority by virtue of my official position. Aside from the underneath-mentioned incidents no cases of ill-treatment of prisoners on the part of my subordinates have come to my knowledge. However, that does not altogether exclude the possibility that my subordinates have not always treated prisoners, i.e. assassins, with the consideration which in normal times would have been a matter of course.

The following cases of ill-treatment have come to my knowledge.

On his delivery into San Vittore a prisoner was beaten by one of the Germans who was assigned to the prison as a guard. When I heard about this incident, I went immediately to the prison, reprimanded the culprit severely and apologized to the prisoner for the conduct of my subordinate. I learned only at a later time that the prisoner who had been apprehended and consigned to the prison under the name of Pozzi, was the partizan general Parri.

Another time an Italian officer who was at the prison on official business, beat an Italian prisoner. I learned of this incident a few minutes later. Full of disgust I went to the prison where I met the officer and turned him out. In addition to that I prepared a report on the incident which I forwarded through Rauff to the office of the Italian officer who was consequently removed from his office.

I should like to state in further explanation of this incident that during the war a Swiss paper (Bellinzona ?) reported on the incident. The paper stated after a detailed description of my personal particulars and some details of my personal career, that I had spontaneously called the officer to account. Up to the time when I was taken prisoner I kept a copy of that paper.

Among the Italian auxiliary guards there was one soldier of the rank of N.C.O. One day it was reported to me that the man had abused prisoners. I reported through the official channels about the man to his superiors and requested his removal. My request was complied with.

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In another case a member of an Army agency -as far as I remember it was an Abwehr-office in Trieste- abused a person during an interrogation at the prison of the security police in Milan. As soon as this incident became known it was reported through the official channels to the competent Army agency, which immediately punished the man.

I do not remember any other cases of ill-treatment. Despite the abundance of impressions at the time and later I believe it to be impossible that I should have forgotten any major cases of ill-treatment.

I do remember though that grave cases of ill-treatment occurred among the members of an Italian unit whose tasks were similar to those of our agency. We forcibly liberated the prisoners from the units in question, sent them to a doctor for treatment, and released them after an interrogation.

The only explanation for the accusation that members of my office have allegedly with my knowledge abused prisoners might be that the persons who were heard to the matter are accusing German agencies for want of appreciation of the true situation erroneously of occurrences for which they are not responsible.

I wish to emphasize again that I have never tolerated ill-treatment within my department and that I have never failed to reprimand a culprit. I believe it to be impossible that cases of ill-treatment should have occurred without my having obtained knowledge of the incident. In this connection I wish to point out that the head of the guard detachment at San Vittore who was a member of my agency is still living in Milan. He would certainly have been called to account by the Italian authorities if such cases of ill-treatment in which necessarily he would have been involved had occurred at the prison during the tour of his duty.

As far as I know several German members of my detachment are still living in Milan under their true name. Some of them have gone over to the partizans during the debacle and none of them was harmed. The other members of my staff were taken prisoners and returned to Milan later.

It is true that I have frequently conversed with Monsignore Don Bicherai. These conversations took place after he had in vain tried to talk to my superior and after my superior had referred him to me. As far as I remember these conversations dealt with the care for the prisoners by the clerical authorities, with interventions for arrested persons, and the exchange of prisoners against prisoners of the partizans. The decisions which were the result of these conversations were made after consultation with my superior Rauff or even on his request.

(Monsignore Don Bicherai does not give a true picture of the situation when he states that his endeavors to obtain favors for the prisoners had been met with understanding and obligingness by Rauff, while I had obstinately refused his requests. Since he

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usually contacted Rauff with his matters, he could easily have complained to Rauff about my alleged intransigent attitude as a result of which I would have been called to account by my superior for disregarding his general instructions. Since Rauff, whose office was in the same building as mine, knew about all measures of my office, such a divergence between our respective conceptions of our official duties is unthinkable. I have at the time often found that Rauff, though seemingly giving consideration to wishes which were presented to him, advised me to act contrary to his former promises. This may have caused the impression that Rauff was understanding and willing to help while I seemed to be particularly unyielding.

It seems that the persons who were heard to this matter were not only mistaken in accusing me of allegedly culpable acts but also in their presentation of the attendant circumstances. It is for example not true that I fled from Milan without giving any thought to the prisoners. The members of the office of my superior as well as the personnel of my department including myself were taken prisoner by the US-Army in Milan. During the days preceding our captivity, Rauff and I on the one hand and Monsignore Don Biccherali on the other hand as representative of the partizans, strong forces of whom had entered Milan 6 days prior to the entry of the US-Army and taken over the government, negotiated on the delivery of our prisoners to the authorities which had been appointed by the partizans. In the course of these negotiations Monsignore Don Biccherali escorted by me only went to the prison under the protection of the flag of truce. At the prison I handed the prisoners, their property and all evidence which had been secured in connection with their case to a representative of the partizans. Monsignore Don Biccherali then took me back to the hotel Regina together with other police officers who had meanwhile been taken prisoner and who had been detained at the prison. During the time of the partizan rule our office building was not attacked by the partizans as a result of which we were able to surrender to the US-Army in full possession of our arms.

I was already interrogated in detail by Allied agencies concerning the charges which were preferred against me. These interrogations began 4 days after I was taken prisoner and continued by British agencies in Rome for several weeks. The agencies in question must have been furnished with the incriminating material by Italians and Allied officers who had served with partizan units. After the interrogation I was detained in the British P.O.W.-camps in Italy until the beginning of May 1945. My whereabouts must have been known in Milan because I learned later that Parri, former partizan general and now Prime Minister, intervened with the British authorities for my release. It would have been easy at the time to charge me with any offences of which I might have made myself guilty, as was done with others, and to punish me accordingly. However, because I had stated as my place of residence the US-sector of Berlin, I was instead transferred in or about Apr 1945 to the US-P.O.W.-camp in Dachau for subsequent release.

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I was discharged from the P.o.W.-camp; however, because of my connection with the Criminal Police and the NSDAP I was transferred to the internment camp in Hammelburg. In Oct 1947 I was returned to Dachau, i.e. to the extradition camp for war criminals. 4 weeks later I was handcuffed and transported individually and under strict guard to Klagenfurth where after three weeks of imprisonment I was presented to a British agency which dealt with the examination of war crimes which had been committed in Italy. The interrogation which was conducted by a British major and took approximately half an hour, dealt with the chain of command of German agencies in Italy. I was not at the time accused of any culpable acts. After the interrogation the officer told me that there was no incriminating evidence against me. For that reason he had no objections against my release. He promised to inform the commander of the Dachau war-criminal camp that I was not guilty. I was then individually returned to Dachau, escorted by a major and without handcuffs and without being in any other way treated as a war criminal. On account of the letter which my escort brought along, I was immediately on my return to the Dachau war-criminal camp transferred to the Dachau internment camp and released on the termination of my automatic arrest.

The description of these post-war experiences is intended to show that I have already been subjected to another and most intensive investigation procedure during which all possible sources of information were available and which yet did not reveal any cause to punish me for any activities in Milan.

I can, therefore, refute the accusations which are now raised against me with a safe conscience. However, the charges against me are so weighty and slanderous that I must insist on a clarification of every point of the accusation. It is of no importance to me in which form this is done, however, I request that I be given an opportunity to supplement my present summary statement and if it should be considered necessary that the witnesses whom I shall name and who will confirm the truth of my statement be heard to the matter.

With the exception of Monsignore Don Saccharai I do not know nor have I ever heard the names of any of the persons who were heard in this matter.

/s/ Sirovacko.