

Saturday, 31 August 1946

## Final statements from the defendants

### Ernst Kaltenbrunner

THE PRESIDENT: I call upon the Defendant Ernst Kaltenbrunner.

ERNST KALTENBRUNNER (Defendant): The Prosecution holds me responsible for the concentration camps, for the destruction of Jewish life, for Einsatzgruppen and other things. All of this is neither in accord with the evidence nor with the truth. The accusers as well as the accused are exposed to the dangers of a summary proceeding.

It is correct that I had to take over the Reich Security Main Office. There was no guilt in that in itself. Such offices exist in governments of other nations too. However, the task and activity assigned to me in 1943 consisted almost exclusively in the reorganization of the German political and military intelligence service, though not as Heydrich's successor. Almost a year after his death I had to accept this post under orders and as an officer at a time when suspicion fell on Admiral Canaris of having collaborated with the enemy for years. In a short time I ascertained the treason of Canaris and his accomplices to the most frightful extent. Offices IV and V of the Reich Security Main Office were subordinate to me only theoretically, not in fact.

The chart shown here of the different groups and the chain of command leading from them is wrong and misleading. Himmler, who understood in a masterly way how the SS, which for a long time had ceased to, form an organizational and ideological unit, could be split up into very small groups and brought under his immediate influence, so far as it served his purpose, together with Mueller, the Chief of the Gestapo, committed the crimes which we

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know about today. I emphatically and vehemently state that, contrary to public opinion, I learned only about a very small fraction of the activities of these offices, which were actually under Himmler and his accomplices, and only insofar as it concerned my own special work.

In the Jewish question I was just as much deceived as other high officials. I never approved or tolerated the biological extermination of Jewry. The anti-Semitism found in Party and State laws was still to be considered in time of war as an emergency defense measure. The anti-Semitism of Hitler, as we understand it today, was barbarism. I did not participate in either of these forms and maintain, as I shall show, that the discontinuance of the extermination of the Jews is to be traced to my influence on Hitler.

After the presentation of evidence several photographs were submitted which allegedly show my knowledge of crimes in concentration camps, the camp at Mauthausen, and my knowledge of the criminal tools which were used there. I never set foot in Camp Mauthausen, only that part of the labor camps where the stone quarry was located, where hardened criminals were employed according to law, but no Jews or political prisoners. The pictures show an administration building and nothing else. Affidavit USA-909,

pictures 894 to 897-F, are therefore factually impossible and wrong. The picture with Hitler shows the visit to a building site in Linz, 35 kilometers away from Camp Mauthausen.

The statement of the witness Dr. Morgen seems essentially true, but it needs to be supplemented as far as my person and my reactions to this are concerned. In the emergency of his own arrest and defense the witness is too much concerned with himself and does not say that he was transferred by the chief of the Main Office SS Courts to Office V of the RSHA upon my request, so that as a juridical official he could supplement the special commission which was established there by the chief of the Criminal Police, Nebe, and myself for the investigation of the concentration camps. He cannot testify as to my knowledge of the subsequent events, as to what I--dumbfounded by his report, in contrast to Mueller, who raged like one who had just been unmasked--did after reading his report. On the same day an exact written report was sent to Hitler at headquarters. Days later I was ordered to appear and flew there. After my long report Hitler agreed to an investigation of Himmler and Pohl. He declared a special court competent for all subsequent investigations and necessary measures. Pohl was to be dismissed from his office at once. In front of me Hitler gave orders to Fegelein, who was liaison officer for Himmler, that Himmler was to be called to him, and he promised me that he would take all possible measures that very day against any further misdeeds.

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He refused my request to be released and sent to the front, pointing out that I was indispensable in the intelligence service. Eichmann was arrested and detained and reported to me; the decree by Himmler in October of 1944, which confirms and puts in final form that which I have just testified, is in its wording one of Himmler's last devilish actions.

Does not the Prosecution even now see any discrepancy in the fact that Amt V of the RSHA exposed the crimes of Amt IV of the RSHA and the secret criminal clique? In this I see the proof of the fact that I never knew what was really going on, and at the moment when I realized what was taking place, I protested in my own office.

Should I have shirked responsibility at that time by feigning illness, or was it my duty to fight with all my powers to have this unparalleled barbarity brought to a halt? That is the only thing to be decided here as my guilt.

The other defamations raised by the Prosecution against me do not alter that either. The letter written to the Mayor of Vienna, which seems to be so highly incriminating here and which I do not remember having signed, has been explained for me today.

All of the 12,000 people who at that time, together with tens of thousands of German men and women, were used to fortify the region east of Vienna, were, together with an additional 2,000 persons in Gunskirchen in Upper Austria, cared for by the International Red Cross through my mediation and led to freedom. The speed and excitement of the cross-examination did not permit me to recall that at the time when the commission of Amt V had long been active in the camps, I could no longer believe that there was any danger to Jewish life. My credibility has been doubted ever since then, but it would have been restored immediately if an enquiry had been made by the Prosecution with the International Red Cross at Geneva in proceedings which were not so summary.

If, however, I am asked: "Why did you remain even after you knew that your superiors were committing crimes?" I can answer only that I could not set myself up as their judge, and that indeed not even this Tribunal here will be in a position to ask for expiation of these crimes.

In the final days the Prosecution accused me of participating in the murder of a French general. I heard about the murder of a German, General Brodowski, and the order given by Hitler to investigate the question of reprisals. I heard about the murder for the first time a few days ago. Panzinger was chief of the War Investigation Division in the Reich Criminal Police Office and was subordinate to no one except Himmler in his capacity as chief of the Prisoner-of-War Organization and of the Replacement Army.

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He was not, as the Prosecution maintains, an official of the Secret State Police.

Concerning the teletype message of 30 December 1944, signed with my name, in which the method of carrying out the plan was reported by Berlin to Himmler at the latter's headquarters, I should like to say that from 23 December until 3 January I was in Austria with my family and could not have seen and signed this teletype.

In November 1944 I was merely ordered to check the report of Reich Press Chief Dietrich on the murder of a German general in France. The results were sent to headquarters by the offices there.

I regretted the fact that Hitler, in a situation such as I found when I assumed office in 1943, did not have a better relation with the Church, which in every state makes for order and cannot be theorized away. My remonstrances had no effect. I made an honest effort, as the presentation of evidence has shown, but even from this the Prosecution has not drawn any conclusions.

I know only that in my belief in Adolf Hitler I put all my strength at the disposal of my people. As a German soldier I could only put myself at the service of the defense against those destructive forces which had once brought Germany close to the abyss, and which today, after the collapse of the Reich, are still threatening the world.

If I have made mistakes in my work through a false conception of obedience, if I carried out orders, all of which, insofar as they are alleged to be cardinal orders, were issued before my time of office, then they are part of a fate which is stronger than myself and which is carrying me along with it.

I am accused here because substitutes are needed for the missing Himmler and other elements which were completely contrary to me. Whether my point of view and explanation are accepted or rejected, I ask you not to connect the fate and honor of hundreds of thousands of the living and dead of the General SS, of the Waffen-SS, and of the civil servants who, believing in their ideal, bravely defended, their Reich to the last, with your just curse against Himmler. Like myself, they believed that they were acting according to law.

THE PRESIDENT: The Tribunal will adjourn.

[*A recess was taken.*]

<https://avalon.law.yale.edu/imt/08-31-46.asp> (side 378-380)