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UNITED NATIONS WAR CRIMES COMMISSION

INTERROGATION OF PRISONERS OF WAR

Amended Proposal by the Chairman of Committee I

It is now clear that thousands of prisoners of war have passed through Allied countries and have been interrogated without being asked whether they have witnessed any war crimes or questioned regarding war crimes; it has been disclosed further that the interrogating military authorities have not yet received instructions to question in respect of war crimes.

Some members of the Commission have been told that when, in the statements of these prisoners, any reference is made to a war crime, a copy of that statement will be sent either to the War Crimes Commission or to the National Office concerned, but it is not known whether such action is being taken.

In any case the above form of interrogation is not sufficient from the point of view of the Commission: enquiries should be systematically conducted to detect and furnish evidence of war crimes.

Furthermore, evidence and particulars should be collected as soon as possible from prisoners of war who have been transported to countries across the seas.

The War Crimes Commission as at present organised is not in a position to conduct such interrogation and therefore recommends that the Governments of the United Nations in whose hands enemy prisoners of war have fallen, take the necessary steps in order to collect information on war crimes from all prisoners of war either at time of capture or at the earliest possible moment after their arrival at prison camps. In the view of the Commission, supported by the advice of military authorities, the sooner the interrogation is conducted after capture the more likelihood there is of prisoners of war divulging information which would be of use to the Commission.

The following questionnaire is an indication of the matters to be covered, and it should be taken into account that information is necessary not merely about crimes committed against the country of the interrogating officer but also about crimes committed against victims belonging to other countries.

QUESTIONNAIRE

- 1). Have you been stationed in an occupied country, where and when?
- 2). Have you been a member of the police (state unit, etc... with particular reference in the case of Germans, to the Gestapo, the S.S. and the S.A.)?
- 3). Have you been employed in the civil or military administration of an occupied country (state place and time)?

- 4). Have you belonged to the personnel of a camp for prisoners of war, of a concentration camp, of a forced labour camp, and the like (for Germans add the Todt Organisation)?
- 5). Have you any knowledge - either from your own observation or from other persons' accounts - of facts concerning executions or ill-treatment of prisoners of war during the 1939 campaign, or thereafter in the war prisoners' camps?
- 6). Have you an exact knowledge - either from your own observation or from other persons' accounts - of any offences committed against the civil population of occupied countries :
 - (a) deportations, mass-arrests, street round-ups?
 - (b) execution of hostages?
 - (c) torturing in prisons?
 - (d) mass-shooting of inhabitants of villages - setting on fire of houses and settlements?
 - (e) rape of women and coercion to prostitution?
 - (f) attempts to deprave and inducing of children and youth to drunkenness?
 - (g) robbery of private or public property - destruction of buildings, museums, libraries, monuments?
 - (h) reprisals following the non-delivery of contingents of corn and cattle?
- 7). Can you state any names of individuals holding an office in the police, or in the civil or military administration of occupied countries (with particular reference in the case of Germans, to the Gestapo, the S.S. and the S.A.)?

In forwarding the above recommendation the Commission wishes to emphasize that in its view the proposal should be referred to the military authorities with as little delay as possible, should the Governments approve the proposal.

The Commission therefore suggests, that in the event of such approval being given, the Governments move the combined chiefs of staff with a view to instructions being issued to each of the Supreme Commanders requesting them to take the necessary steps to effect interrogation of prisoners regarding war crimes, and to forward the information obtained direct to the headquarters of the United Nations War Crimes Commission at the Royal Courts of Justice, Strand, London, W.C. It would also be desirable to forward (if convenient) a copy of the information to the Government of the country concerned through the usual military channels of communication.