

D. Affidavits of Prosecution Affiants and Testimony of Prosecution Witnesses

1. AFFIDAVIT OF KEPPLER

TRANSLATION OF DOCUMENT NI-903
PROSECUTION EXHIBIT 679

AFFIDAVIT OF WILHELM KEPPLER, 24 SEPTEMBER 1946, CONCERNING
THE ESTABLISHMENT, MEMBERSHIP AND ACTIVITIES OF THE
"CIRCLE OF FRIENDS" *

A.1. I, Wilhelm Keppler, former SS Lieutenant General, member of the German Reichstag, State Secretary and President of the Reich Office for Soil Research, from April 1938 to the collapse, state herewith under oath the following facts, known to me by personal knowledge.

2. In the course of the interrogations by representatives of the Office of United States Chief of Counsel, a number of documents were presented or read to me, in order to refresh my memory.

3. At the conclusion of these interrogations this affidavit to which the statements which I had made with regard to Himmler's Circle of Friends had been reduced, was presented to me in German.

B. 1. The Circle of Friends, at first called "Keppler's Circle of Friends," and later "Himmler's Circle of Friends," was a circle of leading personalities of the German economy, which I myself had brought together at the request of the Fuehrer.

2. During a conversation which I had with the Fuehrer in December 1931, the Fuehrer expressed this desire. The Fuehrer said—"Try to get a few economic leaders—they need not be Party members—who will be at our disposal when we come into power." The Fuehrer wanted to have experts who had proved themselves in practical economy.

3. As far as I can remember, the Fuehrer mentioned no other names aside from Schacht and possibly Albert Voegler, and left the selection to me. I, myself, solicited the members for the Circle of Friends mostly in connection with trips I took. Through Kranefuss, who had a large circle of acquaintances, I gained access to his acquaintances, and that helped me greatly in winning for my idea men whom I had not previously known personally.

*Keppler was a defendant in the Ministries case, Volumes XII-XIV, this series. Extracts from his testimony in the Flick case are reproduced below, immediately following this affidavit.

4. Later some gentlemen were added who had not been invited by me personally, above all the gentlemen from the SS, who were sent to the Circle of Friends by Reich Leader SS Himmler. From 1934 or perhaps 1933, on, the Circle of Friends was regularly invited to the Party rally at Nuernberg, an invitation which the gentlemen always gladly accepted. I believe it was because of these invitations that the Circle of Friends from then on was called "Himmler's Circle of Friends."

5. The purpose of the Circle of Friends was to consult upon the plans for National Socialist leadership of the German national economy.

6. In May 1932, after I had met with gentlemen of the Circle of Friends several times, I asked the Fuehrer whether he could not receive the gentlemen some time. Then the Fuehrer received the gentlemen in the small hall of the Kaiserhof [Hotel] on 18 May 1932. As far as I can recall, the gentlemen who were at that time members of the Circle of Friends were all present on that occasion.

7. The Fuehrer made a short speech and in it disclosed among other things, as points of his program—abolition of trade unions and abolition of parties other than the NSDAP. No one raised any objection.

8. These points of the Fuehrer's program met with the fullest approval of the members of the Circle of Friends, but they expressed their apprehension that he would not be able to carry out these excellent ideas.

9. In 1932 and 1933, I often met with the gentlemen of the Circle of Friends. We had consultative meetings concerning finance, questions of economics and currency, and all were on very good terms. The members of the Circle of Friends were always very glad to attend the meetings. The meetings took place later on quite regularly on the second Wednesday of every month, an arrangement which was adhered to through the years.

10. Himmler himself became a frequent participant in the Circle of Friends. After the outbreak of the war, however, when he no longer had the time, he attended only every third or fourth meeting. Himmler or his personal staff regularly sent several SS leaders to attend the meetings. This also made possible the exchange of ideas between the gentlemen of industry and the members of the SS. The relationship between the two groups was always a very friendly one.

11. The Reich Leader SS invited us time and again, and once we were in Dachau when Himmler was present. The gentlemen were interested in seeing the installations of the SS. The re-

quest emanated not from the industrialists, but from the Reich Leader. The industrialists always accepted the invitations of the Reich Leader SS, if it was possible for them to do so.

12. In December 1943, the Circle of Friends was invited to the headquarters of Reich Leader SS Himmler. Himmler spoke about the war situation, giving a rather optimistic picture. Afterward a kind of Christmas celebration of the Waffen SS was held. A film showing the training of the Waffen SS was presented and a male choir of the Waffen SS sang.

C. 1. The members of the Circle of Friends were, as far as I can recall, the following:

Kranefuss, Fritz	Meyer, Dr. Emil
Voegler, Albert (no more in the last years)	Steinbrinck, Otto
Schroeder, Kurt von	Kehrl, Hans ²
Buetefisch, Heinrich ¹	Halt, Karl Ritter von
Rasche, Dr. Karl ²	Helfferich, Emil
Krogmann, Karl Vincenz	Reinhardt, Friedrich
Olscher, Dr. Alfred	Fischboeck, Hans
Flick, Friedrich	Heuer, Otto (?) (Heidel- berger Portland Zement Werke A.G.)
Lindemann, Karl	Hecker, Ewald
Boerger, Wilhelm	Ohlendorf, Otto ³
Walz, Karl	Pohl, Oswald ⁴
Schmidt, Heinrich	Bismarck, Graf von
Waldhecker, Hermann	Wolff, Karl
Roehnert, Hellmuth	Sievers, Dr. Wolfram ⁵
Voss, Wilhelm	Hayler, Franz
Goering, Herbert	Naumann, Werner
Kaselowsky, Theodor	Behrens, Dr. ing. Hermann
Rosterg, August	Schaefer, Dr. Ernst
Bingel, Rudolf	Dermitzel, Dr. Fritz
Blessing, Karl	Hilgenfeldt, Erich
Schmitt, Kurt	

Having carefully read and personally countersigned each of the five pages of this affidavit and having personally made the necessary corrections and countersigned them with my initials, I herewith declare under oath that all facts submitted by me in this affidavit correspond, to the best of my knowledge and belief, to the full truth.

[Signed] WILHELM KEPPLER

¹ Defendant in the I.G. Farben case, Volumes VII and VIII, this series.

² Defendants in the Ministries case, Volumes XII-XIV, this series.

³ Defendant in the Einsatzgruppen case, Volume IV, this series.

⁴ Defendant in the Pohl case, Volume V, this series.

⁵ Defendant in the Medical case, Volumes I and II, this series.

LETTER FROM VON SCHROEDER TO HIMMLER, 27 MAY 1944, TRANSMITTING
LIST SHOWING CONTRIBUTIONS BY MEMBERS OF THE CIRCLE
OF FRIENDS TOTALING 1,015,000 REICHSMARKS *

27 May 1944
Wiener Platz 5

To Reich Leader SS Heinrich Himmler
Berlin

Dear Reich Leader,

With reference to my letter of 6 May, I am sending you enclosed a list showing, in detail, the amounts that were put at your disposal by the gentlemen of the Circle of Friends.

Most respectfully and faithfully,

Heil Hitler!

As always yours

[Initials] SCH [BARON VON SCHROEDER]

[Enclosure]

Sums paid into the special account "S" during the year 1944

Dr. R. Bingel of Siemens-Schuckertwerke A.G.	100,000.00
Dr. Buetefisch and Geheimrat Schmitz of I. G. Farbenindustrie A.G.	100,000.00
Dr. Friedrich Flick of Mitteldeutsche Stahlwerke GmbH	100,000.00
Ritter von Halt of Deutsche Bank, Berlin	75,000.00
Mr. Ewald Hecker of Ilseder Huette	25,000.00
State Counselor [Staatsrat] Helfferich of Deutsch-Amerikanische Petroleum Ges.	10,000.00
State Counselor Lindemann of Deutsch-Amerikanische Petroleum Ges.	10,000.00
and personally	4,000.00
Dr. Kaselowsky of the firm Dr. August Oetker, Bielefeld	40,000.00
Dr. Alfred Olscher of Reichs-Kredit-Gesellschaft A.G.	30,000.00

* Von Schroeder's letter of 21 September 1943, enclosing a list of the contributions for the year 1943, Document EC-453, Prosecution Exhibit 682, is reproduced earlier in this section.

Prof. Dr. Meyer and Dr. Rasche	
of Dresdner Bank, Berlin	50,000.00
Generaldirektor Dr. Roehnert	
of Rheinmetall Borsig A.G.	50,000.00
of Busch Jaeger Luedenscheider Metallwerke	10,000.00
Generaldirektor Rosterg	
of Wintershall Akt. Ges.	100,000.00
Commander Otto Steinbrinck	
of Vereinigte Stahlwerke A.G.	100,000.00
Kurt Baron v. Schroeder	
of Braunkohle-Benzin A.G.	100,000.00
of Felten & Guilleuame Carlwerke A.G.	20,000.00
of Mix & Genest A.G.	5,000.00
of C. Lorenz A.G.	20,000.00
of Gewerkschaft Preussen	50,000.00
of interest and myself	16,000.00
	RM 1,015,000.00

LETTER FROM KRANEFUSS TO RUDOLF BRANDT, 20 JUNE 1944, PROPOSING THAT FUNDS FOR "SPECIAL TASK OFFICE KEPPLER," MAINLY USED FOR EXPENSES OF MEETINGS OF THE CIRCLE OF FRIENDS, BE REIMBURSED FROM SPECIAL ACCOUNT "S" INSTEAD OF BY DEFENDANT STEINBRINCK FROM FUNDS OF MITTELSTAHL OR GEWERKSCHAFT PREUSSEN

Berlin C 2, 20 June 1944
Schinkelplatz 1
Kr/Ki.

Fritz Kranefuss

[Stamp]

Personal Staff Reich Leader SS
Record Department
File No. Secret/45

To SS Standartenfuehrer Dr. Rudolf Brandt
Personal Staff of the Reich Leader SS
Berlin /SW 11, Prinz-Albrecht-Strasse 8

Dear Comrade Dr. Brandt:

For a considerable number of years the Administrative Office of the Personal Staff placed at my disposal a monthly amount of at first RM 2,500—and later RM 1,500—under the heading of "Special Task Office Keppler" to cover certain expenses for personnel and materials. The greatest expenses which had to be paid from this amount were the costs for the meetings of the Circle of Friends, i.e., the accounts of the Aero-Club, etc.

The same amount was, when due, refunded to the Administrative Office of the Personal Staff, i.e., to the special account "R" by SS Brigadefuehrer Steinbrinck, that is, from the funds of the Mitteldeutsche Stahlwerke A.G. as long as Steinbrinck was with them, and later, that is after he had resigned, from the funds of the Gewerkschaft "Preussen." This settlement was made in agreement with SS Major General Wolff, who had obtained the approval of the Reich Leader SS to carry this out.

Some time ago I discussed with SS Brigadier General [Brigadefuehrer] Kurt Baron von Schroeder, who is also informed of the matter as far as it concerns the Gewerkschaft "Preussen," the expediency of taking the required amounts from the yearly contributions made by the Circle of Friends which are placed at the disposal of the Reich Leader SS and which are deposited with Baron Schroeder in the special account "S".

Since it was at the beginning of February 1943 that I received the last sum—amounting to RM 9,000—for the period of 1 July to 31 December 1942, I am now facing the necessity of having to augment the cash holdings in order to pay the diverse current expenses. As already mentioned above these expenses have been decreasing slowly in the course of the years and amount to approximately RM 1,000 per month.

May I now ask you to obtain the approval of the Reich Leader SS to the effect that I have the necessary amounts transferred from the above-mentioned account with SS Brigadefuehrer Baron Schroeder, and that I can receive them as previously via the Administrative Office of the Personal Staff, so that there will be no change in that respect. As from 1 January 1943, therefore, only the Gewerkschaft "Preussen" or alternatively SS Brigadefuehrer Steinbrinck will cease to be a contributor, and will be replaced by the account to which the yearly payments of the Circle of Friends are made.

I have discussed this matter with SS Brigadefuehrer Steinbrinck in the same sense and received his approval.

I should be grateful if you would inform me as soon as possible that the Reich Leader SS approves of this arrangement and remain, with cordial, comradely regards and Heil Hitler, as always,

Yours,

[Signed] KRANEFUSS

25 June 1944

28 October 1944—off.

RF [Illegible initials]