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Following is a translation of excerpts concerning Gustav Meissner from "Danmarks Historie 1900-1945" (History of Denmark) by Vilh. LaCour.

Vol.1 page 290 Legation Counselor Meissner was given the task in Berlin of working for the least possible change in his government. If one could only manage to move Stauning to another Ministry and put a non-political man in his place, that would be good.

vol.2 page 93. The German press attache Mr. Meissner — an errant journalist without standing or professional insight — tried now by threats, now by honeyed words, to change the general attitude of the press, so it at least would support Foreign Minister Scavenius's appeasement policy. Sour or sweet, it was wasted effort.

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CSO: 12679-D

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SOURCE: METHODS EXEMPTION 3B2B  
NAZI WAR CRIMES DISCLOSURE ACT  
DATE 2001 2006

EXEMPTIONS Section 3(b)  
(2)(A) Privacy   
(2)(B) Methods/Sources   
(2)(G) Foreign Relations

Declassified and Approved for Release  
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Date: 2001

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[Following is a translation of excerpts concerning Gustav Meissner from "Konge og Folk Gennem Braendingen" (King and People in Rough Sea) by Th. Thavlow. Copenhagen 1947.]

p.123-124 Editors and publishers had to enter "voluntarily" into certain agreements with the press bureau of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which in turn was under the control of Gustav Meissner, the strongly Nazi minded press attache at the German Legation. He was the son of a German navy petty officer who had gone down with his ship in the battle of Skagerrak in the first World War, while his mother, born Meta Paulsen, was the daughter of a municipal officer in Hostrupskov at Liselund on the south side of Aabenraafjord. H. P. Hanssen had his summer house nearby, and his sons became Meissner's playmates. After the war his father's sister bought Strandhotellet (Strand Hotel) in Kollund, and Meissner lived there until he started learning journalism at Flensburger Nachrichten (Flensburg News). In Germany he became a member of the National Socialist Party and made good connections in the SS and especially in Foreign Minister Ribbentrop's foreign politics office.

p.125 On 23 April 1941 Meissner held a press meeting at Hotel D'Angleterre when he expressed his dissatisfaction with the manner in which the Danish papers treated the events of the war and the lukewarmness that they showed in the Kauffman affair etc.

p.138 One sensed a certain jealousy between Dr. Renthe-Fink and press attache Meissner. It is true that the former was the plenipotentiary of the German Reich in Denmark, but Mr. Meisner had a much higher party rank, which naturally imparted a considerable self esteem. The Minister had not succeeded in forcing any change in the composition of the cabinet, but now Mr Meisner. On 23 January he went to the Prime Minister and proposed that the Ministry be expanded by a Minister for Culture and at the same time the inclusion of a National Socialist, namely Count Knuth-Knuthenborg. Foreign Minister Scavenius again proposed to the King that the Prime Minister be replaced, but in a joint meeting 26 January all the political parties agreed not to yield. The Conservatives even declared that if the Prime Minister were forced out, they would withdraw their representatives from the cabinet.

Irritated over the highhanded behavior of the press attache, Dr. Renthe-Fink six days later demanded for the second time not only the resignation of Prime Minister Stauning because he was a Marxist, but also a thorough reconstruction of the cabinet.

p.211. In a press conference at Hotel d'Angleterre called by attache Meissner he (the Chief of Frikorps Danmark — Danish Volunteer Corp — whose name is not contained in the photocopy) explained that he had enlisted in the Volunteer Corps because he had "lost all confidence in democratic Denmark could be awakened from the wretchedness that had led to the 9th of April". Press attache Dr. Meissner added that in the Danish Volunteer Corps he saw a new goal for the new Denmark and its future. It was important that the Corps was Danish all through, and the Germans would respect very highly the Danes who entered it.

p. 248 The German Minister and the German press attache Meissner were friendly toward this National Socialist onrush, but Minister of Justice Jacobsen supported by leading circles in Berlin and by (end of photocopy)

(Refers to some attempts by Frits Cäausen and the Danish Nazis to throw their weight around)

p.256 It was known that within German official circles in Berlin there were two camps of which one wished to preserve the existing relationship with Denmark, and the other would place us on an equal footing with the other occupied countries -- thus make us into a protectorate. Which of the two camps was at the present most powerful?

Among the Germans in this country press attache Meissner was foremost among the adherents of the latter course. Above all he was the dangerous and most inconsiderate, and he was the one who especially held his hand over the ~~Nationalist~~ Socialists and the Danish Volunteer Corps. Mr. Frits Clausen could feel safe under his protection

p.260 The dislike of the German occupation increased every week, and the development appeared to drift toward a crisis. One of the first days of June, probably the third, press attache Meissner held a press conference at Hotel d'Angleterre. He upbraided the newspapers for not having followed the Ministry's sharp condemnation of Christmas Moeller. It was the duty of the editors to face the facts. The coming months would bring important decisions, and if the press would do what was best for the people, it would keep closely to the stand expressed by the government.

p.294 In January (1943) there were rumors that members of the German Legation here were negotiating about the formation of a government with German orientation or of a National Socialist stamp -- a last attempt by press attache Meissner to get a stronger grip on us.

p.295. Likewise the no less unpopular press attache Meissner had to leave for Munich in March 1943 during the total civilian mobilization in Germany, to go from there to the Eastern Front. It was said on the grapevine that he had fallen out of favor because of his much too zealous protection of our National Socialists and the Danish Volunteer Corps during the last visit of the latter. In any case Mr. Frits Clausen lost his best support in him, and a trade espionage center established by DNSAP (Danish National Socialist Labor Party) in 1942 in close cooperation with Meissner, called Danmarks Erhvervs Korporation (Danish Trade Corporation) was at the same time abolished. The Danish press was given a little more freedom, but was not permitted to be sent to Norway, and several of the hitherto forbidden Swedish newspapers could again be bought in Denmark

p.451. The former press attache Meissner was found among the German refugees here.

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[ Following is a translation of excerpts concerning Dr. Gustav Meissner from "De Fem Lange Aar; Danmark under Besaettelsen 1940-1945" (The Five Long Years; Denmark Under the Occupation) by Johannes Broendsted and Knud Gedde. Copenhagen 1946-1947 ]

p. 115 The representatives of the press often were given evidence of the Official German interest in this side of Danish cultural life. Even at this time the German legation's special press attache Dr. Meissner, who later was to play an important role, on various occasions gave expression from what was expected by the Germans as regards cooperation in this area [ news reporting ]

p.202 Thus it is well known that the top man of National Socialism in Denmark, press attache Dr. Meissner, had not during the fall approved of Renthe-Fink's favoring of Frits Clausen (Danish Nazi) but instead stood for a "middle of the road" approach, possibly via the "Engineer Party".

p.207-208. Stauning (Danish Prime Minister) had on 7 January had a visit by the German press attache Dr. Meissner, accompanied by a member of the German legation, the Danish writer Louis v. Kohl. After a lengthy conversation, which primarily was concerned with Christmas Moeller (Danish anti-German MP) and other personalities and the conduct of the press under the tightened censorship, they had finally come to the question of a new government composition. Here Dr. Meissner had stated that one could perhaps consider a form for maintaining popular government and the functioning of the Riksdag (Parliament), but the situation demanded a cabinet reshuffle. Meissner was of the opinion that it would be valuable to retain Strauning in the cabinet, perhaps as Foreign Minister. Scavenius (Foreign Minister) could suitably become Minister to Berlin, and for the post of Prime Minister Director General Knutzen was regarded with interest. Meissner here was pursuing his pet "middle of the road" idea with a non-political head of the government.

However the position of the German Government on the situation was now on hand in the note. Meissner's representation was therefore not taken seriously.

p.209. The question of a cabinet reshuffle had not been buried, however. Prime Minister Stauning had received on 8 January a telephone request from Dr. Meissner who, stressing that it was urgent, wanted another conference. A meeting was agreed upon for Thursday the 9th in the forenoon, but it was called off early in the morning because Meissner had been called to Salzburg for a conference with von Ribbentrop.

p.210. At the end of January Dr. Meissner made his last attempt. He again turned to the Prime Minister and repeated the German point of view, that the situation required a cabinet reshuffle which could pave the way for a changed policy "according to the guidelines the Prime Minister uses when he talks". But now it was time for action, not talk. This was essential: one would put less emphasis on personal questions, if only the cabinet were so composed that it was less "reactionary". As an indication of the German wishes, Meissner would mention the following changes within the cabinet.

(list of names)

The Prime Minister replied that he could not see any basis for negotiations in these ideas and proposals. After this Dr. Meissner withdrew from the negotiations, which he declared he would leave up to Minister Renthe-Fink.

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The parties, which had Meissner's last proposal submitted to them, joined completely in the stand of the Prime Minister, and it was remarked from several quarters that the time now ought to be used better than for such negotiations as these, which gradually took on the character of ~~xxxx~~ psychological warfare.

p.275. This also gave occasion for sharp German attacks on the Danish press. Several meetings were held with Dr. Meissner and the Department of State found it necessary in a special meeting to warn the editors of the seriousness of the situation.

p.296. These constant efforts on the part of German and Danish Nazis to keep the Jewish question open continued to cause anxiety, and appeared strange in view of the fact that the German press attache Dr. Meissner just before Christmas had declared to representatives of the press that the Jewish question was no longer of current interest, but had been postponed for a total solution after the war in all countries united with Germany.

p.346-348. The Press

Necessarily the varied activities of the summer half-year would create new difficulties for the Danish press. The papers, aside from the Nazi ones, neither could nor would work in the spirit demanded by the Germans. Rather suffer the consequences. And they came. On 3 July the special German press attache and legation counselor Dr. Meissner called in the editors-in-chief of Copenhagen and the directors of the press bureaux of the four parties to a meeting. The tone was now considerably sharper than it had been previously on similar occasions. Meissner found that the mentality of the press in recent times had expressed itself in a regrettable manner: in regard to the government statement after the change of Prime Minister and on the occasion of Christmas Moeller's trip. It would have been natural if the press had tied their own comments to these events instead of intentionally and unanimously remaining silent. Considering the strong position of the press with the population, he regretted that it did not support the government. The Danish press had even since 1933 poisoned the relations with Germany, which on its side had shown the greatest patience. No other country in Europe had a press that had been shown such great tolerance. Characteristic of the Danish papers' attitude was the manner in which the communications from Sweden were displayed, so that they were given a slant. There was also much to be desired as regards recognition of German victories.

As punishment for this Mr. Meissner said that the right of the press to receive news from its own correspondents in Stockholm ceased from now on. He further justified this measure by stating that the coming months would bring important decisions, and therefore the press would serve the people best by keeping as close as possible to the coalition government in its effort to be loyal. "Those who do not adjust themselves to the sober thinking must, if they want to serve the people, abandon actions of the kind referred to here, before they are forced to do so by the coming development! The freedom of the press must be conditional on the confidence the German authorities have in the Danish editors."

Among the examples Meissner pointed out as irritating was a number of

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Billedbladet (Picture Post) in which Sweden's Prime Minister Per Albin Hansson was seen during his visit to Copenhagen in the company of such people as Hartvig Frisch and Hedtoft-Hansen. One would have to understand that such things caused the Germans to wonder. Another of Meissner's complaints concerned a meeting in the Danish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, where the papers were urged to argue against the speech of Christmas Moeller on the English radio on his arrival in London, but where the press had taken the stand that to argue against the speech they would also have to print it verbatim.

Editor Stein of Boersen (The Exchange) pointed out to Meissner, with support of several of the other Danish editors, that the main reason for the difficult position of the press was that it was entirely cut off from presenting the communiqués of the other side also, and that the confidence of the people in the free evaluations of the press therefore was minimal. If they now should try to influence sentiments according to German wishes the opposite would be achieved, and they did not wish to create such a reaction. It would be as unpleasant for the Danish government as for the German occupation force.

Attempts were made to circumvent the strict cultural regulations that gradually were enforced also against periodicals, membership journals etc, especially by youth and student papers, in that one or more pages brought so-called "Press Clippings". Thereby several editors attained such skill in assembling the quotations -- by frequent use among other things of the columns of Fædrelandet (The Fatherland (Danish-language Nazi paper) that they succeeded in presenting expressive pictures of exactly that part of the events that otherwise was forbidden material. The above mentioned case against Director Adler Lund caused this loophole also to be closed at least partly. Several of the papers that had published clippings from his article had the numbers in question confiscated.

Actions against the daily press continued. Thus in July Director Cohen of Nationaltidende (National Times) had to resign with a few days' warning because he was not an "aryan" (and because he had refused to publish a death announcement of von Schalburg). The management of the paper did not submit to the German demands, but Cohen preferred to go rather than to risk arrest. In August demands were made to Berlingske Tidende (Berling's Times) that its Stockholm correspondent Ebbe Munck be called back; when he refused to return the paper was ordered to fire him.

Dr. Meissner had as mentioned above been enraged over the selection of material in Billedbladet. In August the editor of this paper, Black, had to be fired. The direct cause was a series of pictures of Kaj Munk of Vedersøe.

This choice was in itself a gross error. But really bad was the text under a picture of Mr and Mrs Munk listening to the radio, which told that they always listened with especial interest to the radio before supper at 6:30 pm. The Germans also understood that it meant the Danish transmissions from England. This had to be punished.

p. 366 The case had consequences also for other persons. Thus General Lüdke, the German Commander in Chief in Denmark received orders to leave Denmark immediately as well as Legation Counselor Meissner and Regierungsrat Kannstein were recalled to Berlin. While the latter two returned to their posts after some time, General Lüdke's departure was final.

( This had to do with a flap over a telegram from the King acknowledging congratulatory greetings from the Führer, who was enraged over the abrupt form of the acknowledgment. The others involved were the German Minister to Denmark who was recalled and the Danish Minister to Germany who was given his passport)

p.406. Furthermore the month of November brought the news that Legation Counselor Meissner, who until then had functioned only as press attache at the German Legation, now had his field of action broadened: he now carried the title Cultural and Press Attache. One of his first acts in this new capacity was to impress upon the Foreign Ministry the German dissatisfaction with the excessive use by the Danish reading public of "allied literature". Consequently a new request issued from the press bureau of the Foreign Ministry, that English and American translated literature be mentioned as little as possible in the press, preferably not at all.

p.415 Legation Counselor Meissner had on several occasions expressed his dissatisfaction with the provincial paper not treating military and foreign politics material editorially. The big Copenhagen dailies had their military columnists who from time to time wrote objective overviews of the course of the war. Meissner wanted something of that kind for the provincial press. Articles without argument, only with presentation of facts. The Foreign Ministry press bureau proposed to set up a special bureau under the direction of the editors Cai Schaffalitsky de Muendell and Eigil Størnmetz who were to deliver such articles. The papers would not be forced to take them, but they were asked to do so. The plan was received without enthusiasm but was carried out in January as the Foreign Ministry held out the prospect to the papers that in that way they would avoid further interference.

Dr. Meissner was as mentioned above (p.406) interested in what the Danes were reading: too much "allied liberation" was not good. From January 1943 importation and sale of English, American and Russian books was practically forbidden. Scientific and technical works were excepted, provided they did not contain anything offensive to German eyes. At the same time it was decided that from the said languages only books written before 1914 would be permitted to be translated.

p.434 General von Hanneken was utterly enraged about these acts of sabotage (bombings) ... He called in the press to his headquarters at Nyboder Skole in Copenhagen Saturday 27 February at 12:25 o'clock. He himself appeared at 12:30 accompanied by Legation Counselor Meissner and some high officers.

(The general read a statement. Meissner was just there: it is not reported that he did or did not say anything)

p.456 The dissatisfaction of the Germans with the press was expressed on several occasions. Thus the new press attache, Schröder, who had replaced Meissner after the latter's departure for the Eastern front complained several times to the Foreign Ministry press bureau.

p.1088 On the German side press attache Dr. Meissner was the leader in arrangement of the trips, but he undoubtedly received important suggestions about who should be invited from the leaders of the Dano-German press corps.

(This refers to "Study Trips" for Danish labor leaders to Germany in 1940-41)

p.1240-41 Fortunately we had no censorship in Denmark.

After the occupation there was a sudden reversal in this: the Danish press was immediately made to feel that its freedom had vanished. It was in the first instance the press attache at the German Legation Gustav Meissner who was given the power of life and death over the Danish press.

"Dr." Meissner he was generally called, but he was not any kind of doctor. He was born in South Jutland and could therefore speak Danish when he wanted to, but as a rule he used the German language and always when he expressed himself in writing. Actually he was quite talented, but he was only about 30 years old and of course quite immature for carrying out the task that had been entrusted to him, and faced with the phalanx of Danish newspapermen, skilled in negotiating, who saw it as their sole mission to preserve as much freedom of action as possible for their papers, he was worsted miserably time and again. But he was not stupid, and when he discovered that things did not go as he wanted, in spite of the fact that he had the whole mighty German Nazi Reich to back him up, he had fits of rage that required victims, and one prominent Danish newspaperman after the other had to retire. Meissner was the Party's man at the German Legation, which explains his great power and influence, which was not in any proportion at all to the authority that otherwise is attributed to a press attache. But there was a crying disproportion between his age and ability and the power that had been placed in his hands. It is told about the wife of a Copenhagen editor, who of course had heard much about the press dictator Meissner, that when on an official occasion she was confronted with the young fanatic, she exclaimed in amazement, "Good God, is it really you that is called Meissner?" And it was. It was really the young, immature and cockeyed Nazi sprout who by the masters in Berlin had been given the task of bringing the Danish press into line.

In a way he tackled the problem very cleverly. He could strike down the Danish press and put his Danish party friends to write it as it suited the Germans, but he was smart enough to understand that if he chose that method the Danish population would simply quit reading the papers, and that would do him no good. The other way out was to try to influence the Danish press to the extent it was possible for him at all, to write as he and the Germans wished, but so that the change did not become more conspicuous than that the public would continue to hold onto the papers. It was this way he chose, and with that it was a foregone conclusion that it must come to a continuous struggle between him and the editors, who would resist to the very end every attempt to Germanize the papers and who would fight to get away with the least possible concessions. The fight was to cost many victims and destinies, but it was the press that stood up in the long run.

During the period when he stood at the summit of his power Gustav Meissner held a number of meetings with the editors in chief in Copenhagen who stood foremost on the firing lines. These meetings usually proceeded in the way that Meissner read a speech which gradually, as the situation became aggravated, became more threatening in tone. The editors listened, to all appearance politely and presented their counter-arguments, often in very sharp form, whereupon they went home and continued in the old manner until a dictatorial command further limited their freedom of action. As an example of what went on at "Dr." Meissner's, meeting of 25 April 1941 at Angletorre may be mentioned. Meissner opened with a long speech in which he expressed great dissatisfaction with the Danish, and especially the Copenhagen press. He said among other things:

"After having studied both the press of the capital and the provincial papers carefully during recent months, I can only come to the conclusion that the press is carrying out a certainly adroit and effective sabotage against Danco-German cooperation. If you believe, gentlemen, that I as the representative of the Great Reich, who have been given the task of creating cooperation with the press, will yield to this, you are mistaken! I am saying this quite openly, as I always

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have spoken openly with you. If from your side, both in the Capital and in the provinces, a thoroughgoing reorientation does not take place, you will experience that from the German side measures will be taken which are capable of carrying through this reorientation completely. I should like in this connection to stress that I find Politiken's way of working absolutely unsatisfactory."

Meissner was forcefully opposed by the editors in chief. The president at the time of Copenhagen Editors' Association, Editor in Chief Stein, presented a series of counter remarks in which he made it clear that the Danish press demanded respect for the facts, and he furthermore expressed strong regret that Meissner had seen fit to take aggressive steps against individual Danish newspaper men. In addition editors in chief H. P. Soerensen of Socialdemokraten, Niels Hasager, Politiken and Svend Aage Lund, Berlingske Tidende spoke, and all refuted Meissner's statements.

After a couple of years Meissner fell out of favor and was sent to the Eastern front. He was replaced by a still younger and still more immature man, Schroeder, who likewise was born in South Jutland. Schroeder had been Meissner's subordinate. Now he became press attache under Dr. Best, but he never went farther than second rank: to be the carrier of Dr. Best's orders.

p.1244 Meissner showed up at the Foreign Ministry immediately after the occupation and demanded that Berlingske Tidende's well known foreign political writer Mr. Blaedel and Franz von Jessen, the most prominent staff writer on Nationaltidende should immediately discontinue every form of journalistic work for the respective papers. There was nothing to do except to bow to the dictation ...

In the summer of 1941 H. P. Soerensen, editor in chief of Socialdemokraten ~~which~~ had to pack up and go. Harald Bergsted, who at that time worked on that paper, had written some articles for Socialdemokraten after a trip to Germany that were so Nazi slanted that the editor rejected them. But Meissner heard about the articles through an intermediary and demanded of H. P. Soerensen that the articles be published in his paper. He received an unostentatious reply, but after discussion in the Central Committee which governs his paper, the result was that the articles were to be published, but the editor supplied an introductory note dissociating the paper from the "political and ideological comments" in the article. This note was too much for the Germans. Meissner demanded that H. P. Soerensen take a furlough from his job and must not write a single line for the paper in the future because he did not have a "positive attitude". Under the circumstances Soerensen preferred to withdraw completely.

p. 1247 Meissner and the Germans obviously still believed in the beginning of 1941 that they could achieve their goal, namely to get the Danish press to write in the German "spirit". Although the press according to the rules that had been laid down was not to have any direct contact with the Germans at all, Meissner tried time and again by invitation to meetings at hotel D'Angleterre to bring the editors of the papers around by direct negotiations. The treatment on such occasions as editor Tabor writes in the account cited above, consisted of undisguised threats and gentle persuasion on the part of the Germans, and the starting point was always the same -- a constant dissatisfaction with the attitude of the Danish press, which they found was in very poor agreement with the policy Foreign Minister Scavinius represented.

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