

Berlin, 10 Nov 1937

NOTES on the Conference in the Reichskanzlei
on 5 Nov 37 from 1615 - 2030 hours

Present: The Fuhrer and Reich Chancellor
The Reichsminister for War, Generalfeldmarschall v. BLOMBERG
The C-in-C Army, Generaloberst Freiherr von FRITSCH
The C-in-C Navy, Generaladmiral Dr. h.c. RAEDER
The C-in-C Luftwaffe, Generaloberst GOERING
The Reichsminister for Foreign Affairs Freiherr v. NEURATH
Oberst HOSZBACH

The Fuhrer stated initially that the subject matter of today's conference was of such high importance, that its further detailed discussion would probably take place in Cabinet sessions. However, he, the Fuhrer, had decided NOT to discuss this matter in the larger circle of the Reich Cabinet, because of its importance. His subsequent statements were the result of detailed deliberations and of the experiences of his 4½ years in Government; he desired to explain to those present his fundamental ideas on the possibilities and necessities of expanding our foreign policy and in the interests of a far-sighted policy he requested that his statements be looked upon in the case of his death as his last will and testament.

The Fuhrer then stated:

The aim of German policy is the security and the preservation of the nation and its propagation. This is consequently a problem of space.

The German nation disposes of 85 million people, which, because of the number of individuals and the compactness of habitation, form of homogeneous European racial body, which cannot be found in any other country. On the other hand it justifies the demand for larger living space more than for any other nation. If no political body exists in space, corresponding to the German racial body, then that is the consequence of several centuries of historical development, and should this political condition continue to exist, it will represent the greatest danger to the preservation of the German nation (Volkstum) as its present high level. An arrest of the deterioration of the German element in AUSTRIA and in CZECHOSLOVAKIA is just as little possible as the preservation of the present state in GERMANY itself. Instead of growth, sterility will be introduced, and as a consequence, tensions of a social nature will appear after a number of years, because political and philosophical ideas are of a permanent nature only as long as they are able to produce the basis for the realization of the actual claim of existence of a nation. The German future is therefore dependent exclusively on the solution of the need for living space. Such a solution can be sought naturally only for a limited period, about 1 - 3 generations.

Before touching upon the question of solving the need for living space, it must be decided whether a solution of the German position with a good future can be attained, either by way of an autarchy or by way of an increased share in universal commerce and industry.

Autarchy: Execution will be possible only with strict National-Socialist State policy, which is the basis; assuming this can be achieved the results are as follows:

A. In the sphere of raw materials, only limited, but NOT total autarchy can be attained:

1. Wherever coal can be used for the extraction of raw materials autarchy is feasible.
2. In the case of ores the position is much more difficult. Requirements in iron and light metals can be covered by ourselves. Copper and tin, however, can NOT.
3. Cellular materials can be covered by ourselves as long as sufficient wood supplies exist. A permanent solution is not possible.
4. Edible fats - possible.

B. In the case of foods, the question of an autarchy must be answered with a definite "NO".

The general increase of living standards, compared with 30 - 40 years ago, brought about a simultaneous increase of the demand and increase of personal consumption even among the producers, the farmers, themselves. The proceeds from the production increase in agriculture have been used for covering the increase in demands, therefore they represent no absolute increase in production. A further increase in production by making greater demands on the soil is not possible because it already shows signs of deterioration due to the use of artificial fertilizers, and it is therefore certain that, even with the greatest possible increase in production, participation in the world market could NOT be avoided.

The considerable expenditure of foreign currency to secure food by import, even in periods when harvests are good, increases catastrophically when the harvest is really poor. The possibility of this catastrophe increases correspondingly to the increase in population, and the annual 560,000 excess in births would bring about an increased consumption in bread, because the child is a greater bread eater than the adult.

Permanently to counter the difficulties of food supplies by lowering the standard of living and by rationalization is impossible in a Continent which had developed an approximately equivalent standard of living. As the solving of the unemployment problem has brought into effect the complete power of consumption, some small corrections in our agricultural home production will be possible, but NOT a wholesale alteration of the standard of food consumption. Consequently autarchy becomes impossible, specifically in the sphere of food supplies as well as generally.

Participation in World Economy. There are limits to this which we are unable to transgress. The market fluctuations would be an obstacle to a secure foundation of the German position; international commercial agreements do NOT offer any guarantee for practical execution. It must be considered on principle that since the World War (1914-18) an industrialization has taken place in countries which formerly exported food. We live in a period of economic empires, in which the tendency to colonize again approaches the condition which originally motivated colonization; in JAPAN and ITALY economic motives are the basis of their will to expand, the economic need will also drive GERMANY to it. Countries outside the great economic empires have special difficulties in expanding economically.

The upward tendency, which has been caused in world economy, due to armament competition, can never form a permanent basis for an economic settlement, and this latter is also hampered by the economic disruption caused by Bolshevism. It is a pronounced military weakness of those States who base their existence on export. As our exports and imports are carried out over those sea lanes which are ruled by BRITAIN, it is more a question of security of transport rather than one of foreign currency, and this explains the great weakness in our food situation in wartime. The only way out, and one which

may appear imaginary, is the securing of greater living space, an endeavor which at all times has been the cause of the formation of states and of movements of nations. It is explicable that this tendency finds no interest in GENEVA and in satisfied States. Should the security of our food position be our foremost thought, then the space required for this can only be sought in Europe, but we will not copy liberal capitalist policies which rely on exploiting colonies. It is NOT a case of conquering people, but of conquering agriculturally useful space. It would also be more to the purpose to seek raw material producing territory in Europe directly adjoining the Reich and not overseas, and this solution would have to be brought into effect in one or two generations. What would be required at a later date over and above this must be left to subsequent generations. The development of great world-wide national bodies is naturally a slow process and the German people, with its strong racial root, has for this purpose the most favorable foundations in the heart of the European Continent. The history of all times - Roman Empire, British Empire - has proved that every space expansion can only be effected by breaking resistance and taking risks. Even setbacks are unavoidable; neither formerly nor today has space been found without an owner; the attacker always comes up against the proprietor.

The question for GERMANY is where the greatest possible conquest could be made at lowest cost.

German politics must reckon with its two hateful enemies, ENGLAND and FRANCE, to whom a strong German colossus in the centre of EUROPE would be intolerable. Both these states would appose a further reinforcement of GERMANY, both in EUROPE and overseas, and in this opposition they would have the support of all parties. Both countries would view the building of German military strongpoints overseas as a threat to their overseas communications, as a security measure for German commerce, and retrospectively a strengthening of the German position in Europe.

ENGLAND is NOT in a position to cede any of her colonial possessions to us owing to the resistance which she experiences in the Dominions. After the loss of prestige which ENGLAND HAS suffered owing to the transfer of ABYSSINIA to Italian ownership, a return of EAST AFRICA can no longer be expected. Any resistance on ENGLAND's part would at best consist in the readiness to satisfy our colonial claims by taking away colonies which at the present moment are NOT in British hands, e.g. ANGOLA. French favors would probably be of the same nature.

A serious discussion regarding the return of colonies to us could be considered only at a time when ENGLAND is in a state of emergency and the German Reich is strong and well-armed. The Fuhrer does not share the opinion that the Empire is unshakeable. Resistance against the Empire is to be found less in conquered territories than amongst its competitors. The British Empire and the Roman Empire cannot be compared with one another in regard to durability; since the Punic Wars the latter did not have a serious political enemy. Only the dissolving effects which originated in Christendom, and the signs of age which creep into all states, made it possible for the Ancient Germans to subjugate Ancient ROME.

Alongside the British Empire today a number of States exist which are stronger than it. The British Mother Country is able to defend its colonial possessions only allied with other States and NOT by its own power. How could ENGLAND alone, for example, defend CANADA against an attack by AMERICA or its Far Eastern interests against an attack by JAPAN.

The singling out of the British Crown as the bearer of Empire unity is in itself an admission that the universal empire cannot be maintained permanently by power politics. The following are significant pointers in this respect.

- a) IRELAND's tendency for independence.
- b) Constitutional disputes in INDIA where ENGLAND, by her half-measures, left the door open for Indians at a later date to utilize the nonfulfillment of constitutional promises as a weapon against BRITAIN.
- c) The weakening of the British position in the FAR EAST by JAPAN.
- d) The opposition in the MEDITERRANEAN to Italy which - by virtue of its history, driven by necessity and led by a genius - expands its power position and must consequently infringe British interests to an increasing extent. The outcome of the ABYSSINIAN War is a loss of prestige for Britain which Italy is endeavoring to increase by stirring up discontent in the MOHAMMEDAN world.

It must be established in conclusion that the Empire cannot be held permanently by power politics by 45 million Britons, in spite of all the solidity of her ideals. The proportion of the populations in the Empire, compared with that of the Motherland is 9:1, and it should act as a warning to us that if we expand in space, we must NOT allow the level of our population to become too low.

France's position is more favorable than that of ENGLAND. The French Empire is better placed geographically, the population of its colonial possessions represents a potential military increase. But FRANCE is faced with difficulties of internal politics. At the present time only 10 per cent approximately of the nations have parliamentary governments whereas 90 per cent of them have totalitarian governments. Nevertheless we have to take the following into our political considerations as power factors:

BRITAIN, FRANCE, RUSSIA and the adjoining smaller States.

The German question can be solved only by way of force, and this is never without risk. The battles of FREDERICK THE GREAT for SILECIA, and BISMARCK's wars against AUSTRIA and FRANCE had been a tremendous risk and the speed of PRUSSIAN action in 1870 had prevented AUSTRIA from participating in the war. If we place the decision to apply force with risk at the head of the following expositions, then we are left to reply to the questions "when" and "how". In this regard we have to decide upon three different cases.

Case 1. Period 1943-45. After this we can only expect a change for the worse. The re-arming of the Army, the Navy and the Air Force, as well as the formation of the Officers' Corps, are practically concluded. Our material equipment and armaments are modern, with further delay the danger of their becoming out-of-date will increase. In particular the secrecy of "special weapons" cannot always be safeguarded. Enlistment of reserves would be limited to the current recruiting age groups and an addition from older untrained groups would be no longer available.

In comparison with the re-armament, which will have been carried out at that time by the other nations, we shall decrease in relative power. Should we not act until 1943/45, then, dependent on the absence of reserves, any year could bring about the food crisis, for the countering of which we do NOT possess the necessary foreign currency. This must be considered as a "point of weakness in the regime". Over and above that, the world will anticipate our action and will increase counter-measures yearly. Whilst other nations isolate themselves we should be forced on the offensive.

What the actual position would be in the years 1943-45 no one knows today. It is certain, however, that we can wait no longer.

On the one side the large armed forces, with the necessity for securing their upkeep, the ageing of the Nazi movement and of its leaders, and on the other side the prospect of a lowering of the standard of living and a drop in the birth rate, leaves us no other choice than to act. If the Fuhrer is still living, then it will be his irrevocable decision to solve the German space problem no later than 1943-45. The necessity for action before 1943-45 will come under consideration in cases 2 and 3.

Case 2. Should the social tensions in FRANCE lead to an internal political crisis of such dimensions that it absorbs the French Army and thus renders it incapable for employment in war against GERMANY, then the time for action against CZECHOSLOVAKIA has come.

Case 3. It would be equally possible to act against CZECHOSLOVAKIA if FRANCE should be so tied up by a war against another State, that it cannot "proceed" against Germany.

For the improvement of our military political position it must be our first aim, in every case of entanglement by war, to conquer CZECHOSLOVAKIA and AUSTRIA simultaneously, in order to remove any threat from the flanks in case of a possible advance Westwards. In the case of a conflict with FRANCE it would hardly be necessary to assume that CZECHOSLOVAKIA would declare war on the same day as FRANCE. However, CZECHOSLOVAKIA's desire to participate in the war will increase proportionally to the degree to which we are being weakened. Its actual participation could make itself felt by an attack on SILESIA, either towards the North or the West.

Once CZECHOSLOVAKIA is conquered - and a mutual frontier, GERMANY-HUNGARY is obtained - then a neutral attitude by POLAND in a German-French conflict could more easily be relied upon. Our agreements with POLAND remain valid only as long as GERMANY's strength remains unshakeable; should GERMANY have any setbacks then an attack by POLAND against EAST PRUSSIA, perhaps also against POMERANIA, and SILESIA, must be taken into account.

Assuming a development of the situation, which would lead to a planned attack on our part in the years 1943-45, then the behavior of FRANCE, POLAND and RUSSIA would probably have to be judged in the following manner:

The Fuhrer believes personally that in all probability ENGLAND and perhaps also FRANCE have already silently written off CZECHOSLOVAKIA, and that they have got used to the idea that this question would one day be cleaned up by GERMANY. The difficulties in the British Empire and the prospect of being entangled in another long-drawn-out European War, were decisive factors in the non-participation of ENGLAND in a war against GERMANY. The British attitude would certainly NOT remain without influence on FRANCE's attitude. An attack by FRANCE without British support is hardly probable assuming that its offensive would stagnate along our Western fortifications. Without England's support, it would also NOT be necessary to take into consideration a march by France through Belgium and Holland, and this would also not have to be reckoned with by us in case of a conflict with France, as in every case it would have as consequence the enmity of Great Britain. Naturally, we should in every case have to bar our frontier during the operation of our attacks against CZECHOSLOVAKIA and AUSTRIA. It must be taken into consideration here that Czechoslovakia's defence measures will increase in strength from year to year, and that a consolidation of the inside values of the Austrian army will also be effected in the course of years. Although the population of Czechoslovakia in the first place is not a thin one, the embodiment of Czechoslovakia and Austria would nevertheless constitute the conquest of food for 5-6 million people, on the basis that a compulsory emigration of 2 million from Czechoslovakia and of 1 million

from Austria could be carried out. The annexation of the two States to Germany militarily and politically would constitute a considerable relief, owing to shorter and better frontiers, the freeing of fighting personnel for other purposes and the possibility of re-constituting new armies up to a strength of about 12 Divisions, representing a new division per 1 million population.

No opposition to the removal of Czechoslovakia is expected on the part of Italy; however, it cannot be judged today what would be her attitude in the Austrian question since it would depend largely on whether the Duce were alive at the time or not.

The measure and speed of our action would decide Poland's attitude. Poland will have little inclination to enter the war against a victorious Germany, with Russia in its rear.

Military participation by Russia must be countered by the speed of our operations; it is a question whether this need be taken into consideration at all in view of Japan's attitude.

Should Case 2 occur - paralyzation of France by a Civil war - then the situation should be utilized at any time for operations against Czechoslovakia, as Germany's most dangerous enemy would be eliminated.

The Fuhrer sees Case 3 looming nearer; it could develop from the existing tensions in the MEDITERRANEAN, and should it occur he has firmly decided to make use of it any time, perhaps even as early as 1938.

Following recent experiences in the course of the events of the war in Spain, the Fuhrer does NOT see an early end to hostilities there. Taking into consideration the time required for past offensives by Franco, a further three years duration of war is within the bounds of possibility. On the other hand, from the German point of view a 100 per cent victory by Franco is not desirable; we are more interested in a continuation of the war and preservation of the tensions in the Mediterranean. Should Franco be in sole possession of the Spanish Peninsula it would mean the end of Italian intervention and the presence of Italy on the Balearic Isles. As our interests are directed towards continuing the war in Spain, it must be the task of our future policy to strengthen Italy in her fight to hold on to the Balearic Isles. However, a solidification of Italian positions on the Balearic Isles can NOT be tolerated either by France or by England and could lead to a war by France and England against Italy, in which case Spain, if entirely in white (i.e. Franco's) hands, could participate on the side of Italy's enemies. A subjugation of Italy in such a war appears very unlikely. Additional raw materials could be brought to Italy via Germany. The Fuhrer believes that Italy's military strategy would be to remain on the defensive against France on the Western frontier and carry out operations against France from Libya against North African French colonial possessions.

As a landing of French-British troops on the Italian coast can be discounted, and as a French offensive via the Alps to Upper Italy would be extremely difficult and would probably stagnate before the strong Italian fortifications, French lines of communication by the Italian fleet will to a great extent paralyze the transport of fighting personnel from North Africa to France, so that at its frontiers with Italy and Germany, France will have at its disposal solely the metropolitan fighting forces.

If Germany profits from this war by disposing of the Czechoslovakian and the Austrian questions, the probability must be assumed that England - being at war with Italy - would not decide to commence operations against Germany. Without British support a warlike action by France against Germany is not to be anticipated.

The date of our attack on Czechoslovakia and Austria must be made dependent on the course of the Italian-English-French war and would not be simultaneous with the commencement of military agreements with Italy, but of full independence and, by exploiting this unique favorable opportunity he wishes to begin to carry out operations against Czechoslovakia. The attack on Czechoslovakia would have to take place with the "speed of lightning" (blitzartig schnell).

Feldmarshall von Blomberg and Generaloberst von Fritsch in giving their estimate on the situation, repeatedly pointed out that England and France must not appear as our enemies, and they stated that the war with Italy would NOT bind the French army to such an extent that it would NOT be in a position to commence operations on our Western frontier with superior forces. Generaloberst von Fritsch estimated the French forces which would presumably be employed on the Alpine frontier against Italy to be in the region of 20 divisions, so that a strong French superiority would still remain on our Western frontier. The French would, according to German reasoning, attempt to advance into the Rhineland. We should consider the lead which France has got in mobilization, and quite apart from the very small value of our then existing fortifications - which was pointed out particularly by Generalfeldmarschall von Blomberg - the four motorized divisions which had been laid down for the West would be more or less incapable of movement. With regard to our offensive in a South-Easterly direction, Feldmarschall von Blomberg draw special attention to the strength of the Czechoslovakian fortifications, the building of which had assumed the character of a Maginot line and which would present extreme difficulties to our attack.

Generaloberst von Fritsch mentioned that it was the purpose of a study which he had laid on for this winter to investigate the possibilities of carrying out operations against Czechoslovakia with special consideration of the conquest of the Czechoslovakian system of fortifications; the Generaloberst also stated that owing to the prevailing conditions he would have to relinquish his leave abroad, which was to begin on 10 November. This intention was countermanded by the Fuhrer who gave as a reason that the possibility of the conflict was not to be regarded as being so imminent. In reply to the remark by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, that an Italian-English-French conflict be not as near as the Fuhrer appeared to assume, the Fuhrer stated that the date which appeared to him to be a possibility was summer 1938. In reply to statements by Generalfeldmarschall von Blomberg and Generaloberst von Fritsch regarding England and France's attitude, the Fuhrer repeated his previous statements and said that he was convinced of Britain's non-participation and that consequently he did not believe in military action by France against Germany. Should the Mediterranean conflict already mentioned lead to a general mobilization in Europe, then we should have to commence operations against Czechoslovakia immediately. If, however, the powers who are not participating in the war should declare their disinterestedness, then Germany would, for the time being, have to side with this attitude.

In view of the information given by the Fuhrer, Generaloberst Goering considered it imperative to think of a reduction or abandonment of our military undertaking in Spain. The Fuhrer agreed to this in so far as he believed this decision should be postponed for a suitable date.

The second part of the discussion concerned material armament questions.

(Signed) HOSZBACH

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CERTIFICATE OF TRANSLATION
OF DOCUMENT NO. 386-PS

18 November 1945.

I, EVE GLAZIER, P/O, W.R.N.S., 37371, hereby certify that I am thoroughly conversant with the English and German languages, and that the above is a true and correct translation of Document No. 386-PS.

EVE GLAZIER
P/O, W.R.N.S.
37371.