

BERLIN, 10 Nov 1937

NOTES on the Conference in the Reichskanzlei

on 5 Nov 37 from 1615 - 2030 hours

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

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 these 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 ~~xxx~~ his death as his last will and testament.

The Fuhrer then stated:

increase in production. A further 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 rationalisation 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 powers 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 industrialisation has taken place in countries which formerly exported food. We live in a period of economic empires, in which the tendency to colonise again approaches the condition which originally motivated colonisation; in JAPAN

and ITALY economic motives are the basis of their will to expand, and 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 endeavour 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 favourable foundations in the

utilise the non-fulfilment 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 endeavouring 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 favourable 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 consideration 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 SILESIA,



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 safe-guarded. 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~~ then, dependent on the absence of reserves, any year could bring about the foodcrisis, 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

is nearly proved.  
Western fortifications. Without ENGLAND'S support,  
be necessary to take into consideration a march by FRANCE through BELGIUM  
and HOLLAND, and ~~this would also not be necessary to take into consider-~~  
~~ation 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-consti-  
tuting new armies up to a strength of about 12 Divisions, representing 6  
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 to-day what would be her at-  
titude in the Austrian question since it would depend largely on whether  
the RUSS 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 - paralysation of FRANCE by a civil war - then the situation should be utilised 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 FRANCE, 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 FRANCE is not desirable; we are more interested in a continuation of the war and preservation of the tensions in the MEDITERRANEAN should FRANCE be in sole possession of the Spanish peninsula it would mean the end of ~~any~~ Italian intervention and the presence of ITALY on the BALKANIC 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 BALKANIC ISLES. However a solidification of Italian positions on the BALKANIC ISLES cannot be tolerated either by FRANCE or by ENGLAND and could lead to a war by FRANCE and ENGLAND against ITALY, in which case GERMANY, 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

conditions he would have to relinquish his leave abroad, which was to begin on the 10 november. This intention was countermanded by the Fuhrer who gave as a reason that 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 ~~at hand~~ 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 mobilisation 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~~ questions.

HUGSBACH  
(signed) ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~

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