

AIR HISTORICAL BRANCH

~~RESTRICTED~~
TRANSLATION NO. VII/44.

EXTRACTS FROM REPORTS
OF FUHRER CONFERENCES
HELD ON 12.12. 1942,
1.2. 1943 AND 4.3. 1943.

TRANSLATED BY:

AIR MINISTRY, A.H.B.6.

25.9.1947.

Editor's Note.

A stenographic record was maintained throughout the war of all conferences held at Fuehrer Headquarters. Although the bulk of these records were destroyed by the Germans shortly before the Armistice in 1945, it was possible for Allied Documents Teams to salvage a number of charred fragments and to reconstitute these with the aid of former personnel of Hitler's staff. This translation contains extracts from three such conference reports; it is hoped to issue a further selection in due course.

A.H.B.6.

25.9.1947.

CONFERENCE HELD ON 12TH DECEMBER, 1942

Speakers: The Fuehrer
General Jodl
Generalleutnant Buhle
Vice Admiral Krancke
Oberstleutnant Christian

Mediterranean.

The Fuehrer remarked that he had received a report that Rommel was withdrawing further in Africa.

Jodl confirmed that he had already done so. There was no doubt that the enemy had started the first serious attack and that he would probably continue it on the 13th. Air reconnaissance had confirmed that his Air Force was already in position at advanced bases. He had his main fighter force of 130 S.E. aircraft and 120 T.E. aircraft in the area to the North of Agedabia, and 100 S.E. and 40 T.E. aircraft in the area between Sollum and Marina. Radio intelligence reported the same signs as before the Alamein offensive, so that Fliegerfuehrer Africa had also come to the conclusion that a British offensive towards Tripoli was imminent. Our own forces in opposition were weak, most of our strength being based on Sicily, and were mostly drawn up behind the final defensive positions.

The Fuehrer wanted to know who had said they were final.

Jodl informed him that the Duce had ordered it.

The Fuehrer remarked that the discussion with the Reichsmarschall had not been so clear on that point.

Jodl pointed out that Rommel had used the word "final" in his telegram. To continue; he had been able to resist these attacks, and those in the South, but he said that the enemy would doubtless attack again and he could not allow his forces to fight it out, in case the enemy made a thrust from the South, however weak, which he would not be able to counter owing to lack of petrol, and therefore, of mobility. Instead he would have to remain in this position at least until the 15th, in order to regain his mobility. With the fuel position as it was, this was quite understandable. If he had mobility he could move about as he wished, and could avoid any encirclement.

The Fuehrer commented that an enormous army had moved all the way back from Alamein some time back. It had not run on water. During the whole time they had had virtually no fuel. If they had taken the fuel forward, instead of moving back themselves, they could have operated up in front. It would have been simpler to operate with a few divisions. After all, it was only a matter of the tanks and some artillery. They retreated 1500 km complete with domestic equipment and anything else they could lay their hands on. 50% of the men that we lost had been lost because of the retreat, without doubt, and the actual casualties in battle were probably extraordinarily few. There was little doubt, for instance, that the failure to break through in the first offensive had not really been due to the sinking of that 4000 ton supply ship. Kesselring was of the same opinion, and Ramcke had said that they could not understand why they got no further. The British had been in full flight and it was only a matter of following up and thrusting in from any side.

He really believed that it was a mistake to leave a man with heavy responsibility for too long. It wore away his nerves. The principle of not keeping a man in the same theatre of war for too long must be adhered to. It was better to relieve him and put in a new man

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who was comparatively fresh and had his eye on some honours. He was determined to relieve a number of otherwise good generals when the next lull came, and order them all, including a Field Marshal, to take a few months' leave. They would then return refreshed.

It was necessary to get a picture of the situation. Out there he (Rommel) had constantly to be fighting small engagements, and it was not to be wondered at that, in the course of two years, his nerves should go to pieces and he should get into a position where he says: "I can go no further". Then things which from the rear do not seem so bad, appear to him to be unbearable. In the winter of last year we had had the experience of seeing the people up at the front lose their nerve, simply through watching the catastrophic effects of the weather. It was wrong to expose a man to the same hardships all the time. If he were to expose his General Staff to mortar fire for three weeks he could expect them to lose their nerve. That was why a G.H.Q. was always well in the rear. Except in an emergency, where it was a matter of life and death, a general could not be expected to direct his forces while constantly in the midst of the noise of battle. On these comparatively narrow fronts one was always viewing the whole battlefield. He had not got the means of obtaining information either; there was a good deal of instinct involved. When a man did that for two years, his nerves were bound to go. It was the impression the Reichsmarschall had, too. He had said that Rommel's nerves were completely worn out.

Added to all this was the unfortunate business of the Italians, that everlasting uncertainty. We had experienced it ourselves. He had not slept last night because of a feeling of uncertainty. If he had an all-German front something might still happen, but one had the feeling that somehow it would be remedied. At any rate, a whole army would not collapse in one day. The Russians had declared that they had taken 9400 Axis prisoners, but practically no Germans, only Rumanians. Air reconnaissance had also reported colossal grey columns moving in enemy territory, probably all prisoners. Other columns had also been reported moving in the opposite direction, but it was not possible to tell whether they were Russian or Rumanian. Once an army is in flight, only iron discipline can prevent the bonds of law and order from breaking. It was much easier to send an army forward to victory, than it was to make an orderly retreat after a setback or defeat. It had been one of the greatest deeds of 1914, to withdraw the German Army after the Marne affair, and then turn it about on a fixed line. That could only have been done with first class, disciplined troops.

Jodl remarked that it had succeeded in this case too.

The Fuehrer maintained that it had succeeded with the Germans but not with the Italians, nor would it ever succeed with Italians. That was why, should there be a breakthrough anywhere, it would be a catastrophe. When a man had a weight like that continually on his mind, he was bound to break down sooner or later. He thought it might have been better to bring him (Rommel) back right away and put another in his place with strict instructions to hold on to the existing positions.

Jodl said he did not believe it could be helped in this case. It was like keeping a man alive on a little bread and milk; you could not then expect him to take part in an Olympiad. He had not had anything for weeks.

He (Rommel) intended, and indeed was forced by the fuel position, to do things step by step, in order to gain time for preparing his positions.

/ Jodl

Jodl said that of course the British knew that the greater part of the forces here had withdrawn. That had possibly caused them to attack somewhat earlier.

The Fuehrer pointed out that if there were from 10 to 20 thousand Germans in those positions, pushed in amongst the Italians, they would have something of a grip, which with Italians alone would be out of the question.

Jodl said that they had carried out, and still were carrying out, extensive mining, particularly on the Via Balba.

The Fuehrer thought minelaying would be very difficult, as it had to be done in the rear, and during a withdrawal there was not enough time for it. Consequently the enemy would be able to spot every mine.

Jodl pointed out that mines were also laid in front of the positions. What was chiefly required was an improvement in the fuel situation. If the enemy should send strong forces up from the South, Rommel would find himself in a very awkward situation. Supply traffic by T.L.C.'s based on Sfax was more than it had been. Individual T.L.C.'s were not reported.

The Fuehrer was under the impression that up to now there had been no such traffic.

Jodl assured him that single T.L.C.'s had always been running. At any rate, Kesselring had been greatly relieved this morning, and had said that a great weight had been lifted from his mind regarding the supply position.

The Fuehrer remarked that here we had two extremes. Rommel had become the biggest pessimist and Kesselring was an absolute optimist. It was a great advance.

Krancke said there could not have been only T.L.C.'s, as there were 70 coastal motor launches on that coast.

Jodl remarked that, of course, there was a constant movement of little ships. Up to now, however, they have not had anything for further transportation. That had now been remedied by the arrival of some reinforcements in Sousse and Sfax. Now this traffic was running again and Kesselring emphasised the importance of continuing it with the utmost energy with this type of small vessel such as T.L.C.'s etc.

The Fuehrer insisted that the ships in Marseilles and Toulon would have to be used. If circumstances demanded it, safety regulations would have to be ignored in order to build ships. In earlier times there were no safety regulations, no bulkheads etc., and the ships still sailed. He did not know what sort of bulkheads the first iron ships had 40 or 50 years ago. He must see one of the designs of one of those old ships. They sailed the seas of the World. Now even T.L.C.'s must have bulkheads. If a torpedo hit them they still went under, with or without bulkheads. Was that not so?

Krancke agreed.

The Fuehrer continued that it wasted too much material. People would have to be issued with life-jackets instead. Life-jackets were much easier to make than bulkheads and they would have to jump into the water anyway.

/ Jodl

Jodl noted that the British had reported: "Action by the 8th Army is going according to plan." It seemed that the enemy had started some of his forces moving westwards and the rest were remaining at El Agheila. Of course these were only speculations.

Large-scale forward movements were not at present envisaged by the Army as it lacked mobility. In this connection, the 5th Panzer Army had reported that on the 9th, 10th and 11th December, the following German reinforcements were landed in Tunisia:

(Perusal of written report).

186 M.T. vehicles seemed to be the most important addition.

In the next few days we would be getting the shipping schedule for the 14 days to come. There were a number of ships under way at this moment. One ship was going to Tripoli. He would like to draw attention to the fact that this traffic to Tripoli could only be carried out consistently by small shipping. The nearness of the front would eventually cut out the use of big ships completely. One ship was making for Sousse, 4 naval T.L.C.'s were crossing here (indicating map) and two large vessels, behind schedule because of air attacks, were approaching Trapani. The convoys seemed to be safe.

The Fuehrer wanted to know the meaning of certain minefields marked on the map.

Jodl explained they had been recently laid by destroyers.

Krancke added that 6 destroyers had laid minefields. They were, naturally, convoy escorts that laid mines when not engaged on convoy duties.

Jodl added that Kesselring had therefore urgently asked for those ships in Toulon, which were also suitable as submarine-chasers.

Krancke pointed out that they had first to be converted into submarine-chasers. They were fishing craft. He could not simply send any old fishing boat. They would have to be equipped with weapons.

Jodl said they needed every little ship that could be weeded out.

Krancke told him they would be getting 23.

The Fuehrer calculated that at present 400 men could be got across. That means that the division "Goering" would be across in the middle of March. That was no good. It was pointless to send the division "Goering" across, if it was going to take so long. Nor could one now be sure of preventing activities from Malta.

Jodl pointed out that Tripoli could no longer be reached by bigger ships, hence the importance of the small ones.

The Fuehrer wanted to know if there was anything else, apart from that.

Jodl replied that otherwise nothing had happened. In contrast to this report, Kesselring had great hopes, founded on his talks with the Commando Supremo, that the traffic would really get moving in the next fortnight. He would be making a detailed report. An additional report had come in that a U-Boat had sunk a destroyer on the 9th December. Then there was a large convoy of 22 merchant vessels, 12 troop transports and 1 tanker, reported on its way from Gibraltar. It had assembled at Gibraltar and had set off in the direction of England.

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The Fuehrer thought that if only we had radio-location devices we could attack a target like that at night.

Jodl continued that the Duce had ordered the evacuation of the Commando Supremo from Rome. The object was to remove the last military reason for the British and Americans to bomb Rome.

The Fuehrer remarked that he must speak with the Reichsmarschall about strengthening the anti-aircraft defences of Berlin. The time was bound to come, despite everything, when the British would have to launch an offensive against Berlin and they would make uninterrupted high-level bombing attacks.

Christian reported that arrangements had already been made to have this programme completed by the 30th January. It would be started on at the end of December.

The Fuehrer said he thought it should be brought up to 100 six-gun batteries, so that Berlin would have the 600 guns intended for it. In peace-time Berlin was to have had 150 four-gun batteries.

Christain confirmed that the Fuehrer had already ordered 100 batteries for the 30th January.

Jodl passed on to the tank position. In Southern Italy there were already 100 tanks, 11 were on their way, and 64 in transit from Germany, making a total of 175.

The Fuehrer wished to know what the position was regarding Tigers. How many were there over there?

Buhle stated there were 7, one on its way, 3 in Italy and 9 in transit to Italy.

The Fuehrer commented that it was not much use if they did not get them over there.

Buhle said the next batch would be ready in 8 or 10 days.

Jodl next dealt with the report of an agent on possible British operations in the Eastern Mediterranean. This agent had come to the conclusion, after studying numerous reports and rumours, that the Allies would try to land on Crete and islands in the Aegean, from bases on Cyprus, Syria or Egypt. He had considered the information supplied from reliable sources and concluded that the British would not make an attempt on Crete before the Spring of 1943.

The Fuehrer indicated his agreement with this.

Jodl continued that the agent gave as reason for this the lack of large transport vessels and smaller ships, which were required for supplying the 8th Army. Also Cyprus was not convenient for the assembly of forces and the harbours were unsuitable. They would not have sufficient air cover as there was no aircraft carrier available, and the weather between November and March was not good enough. Finally the 8th Army was at the moment too busy in Cyrenaica. He had therefore come to the conclusion, that all the reports about impending operations had been deliberately disseminated in order to draw German troops away from other fronts.

The Fuehrer had been thinking it over in the last few days. It did not matter where the enemy landed, in the end it came to a certain total number of men having landed on a particular island, being opposed by a certain total number of defenders. It did not matter how much he split

up his landings, you might say he could land in 100 different places, he would still not be splitting our defensive forces any more than he was splitting his own landing forces. The important thing was: How many men could he land and in what time? He would have to use 60 to 70 thousand men to take the island, and that would take a great deal of shipping space. Of that shipping space a comparatively large proportion would be lost in an undertaking against Crete, through bombing attacks. The enemy could not use small ships alone, as our own experience had shown. If he wanted to get 70,000 men over there and they were to be effective, they would need all their weapons, even if it was only 50,000

Jodl interjected that it would require a third of that required for the North Africa landing.

The Fuehrer was of the opinion that there would be tremendous losses. It was by no means certain, either, that he would be able to hold on there once he got there. The enemy knew that there were strong German forces in the island. He did not believe there would be a landing on Crete. The enemy was more likely to attack the Dodecanese or somewhere, where he could expect support from the inhabitants. Even that would be risky, as he would have to come through the straits of Otranto within range of our bombers. When one saw with what cowardice he turned back and kept away from our bombers, the Fuehrer did not believe that he would dare to come within 100 km of them. Rather, he believed that when the enemy had the 9th Army available, he would send it to Syria and try to advance from there.

Jodl turned to a report from the C-in-C. France. The number of French workers transferred to the Reich since 1st June had reached 220,000. In Berlin there were 110,000 technicians and skilled workers. Negotiations with the French Government had been successfully concluded for a refinery with an output of half a million tons. The French Government had expressed itself willing to put more plants at our disposal if required. Apart from that there was nothing to report from France.

In the Balkans, mopping-up operations were going on in the Jajce area. In Belgrade people were being arrested all the time. It was true to say that between 15 and 30 followers of Mikhailovich were shot every day.

Air Situation.

Christian reported that the enemy had made a number of strong daylight attacks against France on the previous day. At first there had been a general scrimmage between enemy fighter formations and our own fighters. Then 17 aircraft had flown in over Rouen and thence to the south of Paris. As a result of a fairly low cloud base, most of the aircraft had got away. Two four-engined bombers and three Spitfires had been shot down by our fighters. The only damage was to civilian property in Rouen where, for example, a childrens' home had been hit.

Jodl commented that it would make a good write-up in the French press. Christian continued that a number of nuisance raids had also been made during the night. All were made by single aircraft and in some cases no bombs were dropped. One aircraft had been shot down. The only other report was about the attack on Sunderland.

The Fuehrer commented that the British had reported 6 aircraft over the town. He was astonished that they should report anything as exact as that.

Christian insisted that 16 bombers had gone over, at heights varying between 700 and 2,000 m. Three 1000 kg bombs, 48 large explosive incendiaries and 840 incendiary bombs had been dropped in the area of the town and three large fires had been started in the dock area.

The Fuehrer quite believed that the British would lie, but he could not imagine that, when it came to a big attack like that, they would glibly say there had only been 6 aircraft and practically no damage.

Christian suggested that 16 aircraft were not very many.

The Fuehrer reiterated that they had said there had been only six.

Jodl said that it depended whether it had been reported in the foreign press or in their own. In their own country they could not very well hide it.

The Fuehrer pointed out that up to now they had never done that. They had never minimised the damage. One could not risk that any more. Much resentment had been caused in Germany at the beginning of the war, and once or twice since then, when it had been announced that there had been little damage, when in fact there had been a good deal. He did not know what sort of a local impression it had made in the Rhineland, where the Luftwaffe had issued such reports themselves. Now that had been stopped. Only exact reports were issued. It had been particularly bad in Cologne. The people would stand anything, but when it said in the Wehrmacht communique that little or no damage had been done, when in fact 9000 houses had been destroyed or damaged, it was a serious matter. Here again the principle applied that one must endeavour to tell even the most brutal truth, for however unpleasant it may be, it is easier to bear than a pleasant falsehood.

Christian reported that the X. Fliegerkorps had received orders, from the Fuehrer himself, to attack only harbours. In accordance with this policy, 16 bombers had attacked Tobruk in the night. Detailed reports were not yet available. Single aircraft of Fliegerfuehrer Afrika, chiefly close-support bombers, had made attacks at the front. In Tunisia the weather had been bad recently. Ground attack aircraft had been active with good results: 5 tanks, 1 armoured car, 1 tractor and a number of other vehicles had been destroyed. Single bombers had carried out armed reconnaissance. 13 bombers had made a night attack on the harbour of Bone. A number of anti-aircraft positions had been hit and an 8,000 ton ship set on fire.

The Fuehrer stated that only the 8,000 ton ship could be counted as real damage.

Stalingrad.

Yesterday 50 tons of ammunition, 15 cbm of fuel and 8 tons of rations had been flown in to the 6th Army. That was not very much. Losses had amounted to four He.111's.

The Fuehrer was appalled.

Christian gave the Eastern weather report for the North and Centre as generally overcast, with occasional precipitations, temperature fluctuating about freezing point. For the next few days increasing fog in the loop of the Don and the bend of the Volga, with light frost. That was for the coming few days.

The Fuehrer hoped it would continue freezing, but not too hard.

Christian reported on road conditions in the North and Centre: Five centimetres of snow, traffic slightly hampered by icing. In the Donetz area as far as the loop of the Don, 10 cm of snow, most of the roads clear, frequently covered with glazed ice, traffic nevertheless only slightly hampered thanks to gravel-spreading.

END OF CONFERENCE.

CONFERENCE HELD ON 1ST FEBRUARY, 1943.

Russian Front

(Before the commencement of the conference, a discussion took place between the Fuehrer, General Zeitzler, and Oberstleutnant Engal on a report by the Russians that Fieldmarshal von Paulus and a number of other Generals, including Generals Seydlitz and Schmidt, had been captured in the Southern pocket at Stalingrad).

The Fuehrer complained that they must have given themselves up without a struggle. The only other alternative would have been to form up together in a hedgehog defence, and shoot oneself with the last round. When he remembered that a woman had enough pride, just when she heard a few insulting words, to lock herself up and shoot herself, he could have no regard for a soldier who shirked it and rather let himself be captured. He could understand it in the case of General Giraud, who was pounced on by us as he got out of a car. But ---

Zeitzler said he could not understand it either. He was still of the opinion that it was not right, that he had probably been very seriously wounded.

The Fuehrer was quite sure it was right. The Russians would take them to Moscow, to the GPU, and they would issue orders to the Northern pocket to surrender. Schmidt would sign anything. He who had not the courage at a time like that to go the way that all people must eventually go, would not have the strength to resist. We had developed the intellect too much, and not paid enough attention to strength of character

Zeitzler said he found it inexplicable.

The Fuehrer said he had come into possession of a letter written by an officer at Stalingrad. This officer had said: "I have made the following judgements of these people: Paulus: questionmark; that man, Seydlitz: should be shot; Schmidt; should be shot."

Zeitzler had also heard bad things of Seydlitz.

The Fuehrer went on that in peace-time in the German Reich, 18 to 20,000 people a year chose suicide, without ever being in a position like that. There, a man could see how 50 - 60,000 of his soldiers were dying and fighting to the end, - how could he then give himself up to the Bolsheviks? -- !

Zeitzler said it was something which one just could not grasp.

The Fuehrer admitted that he had first had doubts when Paulus had asked what he was to do.* How could a man ask such a question? In future, he supposed, whenever some fortifications were besieged, and the commander received a demand to surrender, he would ask: what am I to do now? (From the next few decipherable words, it seems clear that there followed an order that everyone must be told that if any fortifications became surrounded, they must be defended to the last) How easy it was, simply to shoot yourself with a revolver. And what cowardice it took to shrink even from that. Particularly as he knew that his death must be the signal for the other pocket to hold out. For if he set an example like this, it was not to be expected that the men would continue to fight.

/Zeitzler

* Paulus had not refused the first Russian demands for surrender, but had requested instructions from the Fuehrer on what to do

Zeitzler agreed that there was no excuse. He should have shot himself if there was any danger of his nerves giving way.

The Fuehrer maintained that if your nerves gave way, there was nothing left but to say: "I could do no more," and shoot yourself. So one could say a man should shoot himself just as the warriors of old used to kill themselves when things went wrong.

Zeitzler still thought it might be possible that that was what they had done, and that the Russians had then stated that they had taken them prisoner.

The Fuehrer rejected the idea.

Engel thought it was strange that they had not mentioned that Paulus was seriously injured. Then tomorrow they could say he had died of his wounds.

The Fuehrer wanted to know if there was any information regarding his wounds. Anyway, the tragedy had now happened. It would have to be taken as a warning. There would be no more fieldmarshals made in this war. They would have to wait until the end of the war. It was no good counting one's chickens before they were hatched.

He went on to say that he failed to see why success was not possible, having regard to the high quality of the German soldier and the superiority in weapons. After all, apart from Stalingrad, the Germans had always been superior.

As soon as he had heard about it last night, he had got Puttkamer to find out whether the story had been made public. Had it not already been broadcast, he would have stopped it. He was particularly sorry, because the heroism of a large number of soldiers had been set at naught by one characterless weakling. The important thing in a soldier was his character and bearing, and if we did not succeed in inculcating this, but produced nothing but pure intellectual gymnasts, we would never achieve that type which alone would stand up to the blows of destiny.

Zeitzler maintained this also applied to the General Staff. For the first time he had promoted an ordinary staff officer to the General Staff without sending him on a General Staff Officer's course, because he had worked out the withdrawal of his division extraordinarily well on General Staff lines. It was of no importance that he should be on an 8 weeks course. He had been promoted immediately.

The Fuehrer agreed. Brave and daring people were required, who were prepared, as every soldier must be, to give their lives. He did not know quite what to do about the Paulus matter. The Commander of the Northern Pocket must be given instructions that it was to be held at all costs.

In spite of the Russian statement that the whole of von Paulus' staff had also surrendered, he thought it might be possible that they had fought to the last and that they had been wounded, overpowered and captured.

Zeitzler felt sure that was what most of the staffs had done.

The Fuehrer maintained that they had not really capitulated but had been overpowered.

Zeitzler thought that was what would have to be said. The Russians were bound to say something else, so we would have to get that into the world press first.

The Fuehrer agreed, and they would have to say that they had not had any supplies for months, and that therefore the Russians had been able to overpower some of them.

Zeitzler thought that was the right attitude.

(General Zeitzler departed at 13.02 hrs.)

(Continuation of the normal conference at 13.05 hrs. with the usual attendance.)

The Fuehrer remarked that he had seen a British report that Cavallero had been removed because he formed a sort of centre for anti-fascist elements. Was there any report from Kesselring on the reasons for this action?

Jodl replied that apart from that which he had produced yesterday there was nothing further.

North Africa. Apparently the British had not noticed the withdrawal of Rommel from the position to the east. Only in the course of the day had their reconnaissance penetrated as far as the rear guard positions.

Considerable patrol activity was reported to the South of the Mareth line. It was believed that the British were trying to take these positions from the rear. The enemy had made an attack on our forces occupying Seneth. This had been beaten off.

Naval Situation. Jodl reported that in an attack on Biserta an Italian submarine-chaser had been torpedoed, a small floating dock had been sunk and a transport ship had been hit by a bomb. A small ship had been sunk off Sousse.

The Fuehrer remarked that it was clear that we would achieve the same results if we attacked the harbours repeatedly. Everything else must take second place.

Jodl continued that three motor vessels were on their way from Naples to Sicily. Three of our M.T.B.'s had laid a minefield off Bone and on the way back fought a short engagement with enemy M.T.B.'s. Nothing appeared to have happened, however. 105 ships had arrived in Italy from France.

The C-in-C. Southern Area was expecting considerable activity in the Western Mediterranean, in view of the strong forces that had arrived at Gibraltar. A convoy of 16 ships had left there and 26 vessels were supposed to have arrived, amongst them 2 battleships, 1 aircraft carrier, 5 cruisers and 10 destroyers.

The Fuehrer wanted to know when that Gruppe would finally get down there (referring to a Gruppe of long-range bombers). Was it to take months?

Jodl replied that Kesselring had told him, he reckoned on the 10th February. He continued that submarines had been located south of the Straits of Otranto, south of Taranto and in the Gulf of Naples.

The Air Situation. Christian reported that two single aircraft had made daylight penetrations over Norway yesterday, one to Oslo and the other to Stavanger. They were shot down by fighters. Three penetrations were made over the North Coast of France without any attacks.

Our own night-fighters had made attacks on places along the English coast. No operations were reported in the Eastern Mediterranean. In an attack on Gabes airfield by bombers and fighters, 2 aircraft had been shot down.

Commenting on the number of tank personnel available for the Eastern Front, the Fuehrer said he did not want to have the same situation as with the Luftwaffe, and find one day that there were plenty of tanks coming off the production lines and not enough drivers. That was the problem with Luftwaffe - there were plenty of aircraft this month.

Jeschonnek protested that the inadequate bomber training programme had been reported a year ago.

The Fuehrer repeated, he did not want the same thing to happen with tanks, that no personnel were available.

(The conversation which followed evidently led to a discussion of the unsatisfactory performance of the He 177).

Jeschonnek explained that the reasons given for this were that, due to the aircraft standing out in the open, the damp got into the cables and caused all sorts of trouble. Furthermore, too big a strain was put on the engines.

The Fuehrer was of the opinion that the whole 177 type was a thing that had gone awry, because, as had already been shown in the first World War, it was a very difficult thing to build two engines with one shaft and invariably led to difficulties. But it appeared that the results of experience were just nonsense, and only that which the theorists did was right. He had received a report from Heinkel that the range of the Focke-Wulf aircraft under construction was to be brought up to 8,200 km. If this could be achieved, it would bring the Russian industrial area in the Urals within range.

(Returning to the He 177) but two engines placed side by side created many difficulties, and it had been shown that transmission on to one shaft was always risky. If one engine broke down, the other one generally failed as well. That was surely faulty construction. The aircraft was supposed to be used as a dive-bomber as well. We had achieved nothing with all this. The first operational machines were to have been ready by the 22nd. June, 1941, and their first target was to have been Moscow. It was now 1943! It was the same trouble as with the heavy tanks which had two engines. In theory it was wonderful. In practice it had been found that two engines were heavier than one producing the same power. Anyway, that was one of the difficulties the technical people mentioned and one had to believe them sometimes.

(The discussion then turned to the new British "Mosquito" aircraft).

Jeschonnek said the arguments were quite clear.

The Fuehrer continued that even before the war, he had advanced the opinion that a fast bomber required no armament. Speed was its defence and bombs its weapon of attack. True, the Mosquito could only drop quite small bombs, but it was nevertheless enough to disturb our peace. What cheek that name was: "Mosquito" it was called! And it was made of wood!

Hereafter it was only possible to decipher the original in such small pieces as to make coherence impossible. It was deduced that the Fuehrer had gone on to discuss further questions concerning the Luftwaffe, in particular the He 177. It appeared that the Luftwaffe had demanded too much from this aircraft. It was to have had a maximum speed of 600 to 700 km, effective long-range armament and a bomb-load of 4 tons.

(END OF CONFERENCE).

CONFERENCE HELD ON 4TH MARCH, 1945.

The Fuehrer started by remarking that the attack on London seemed to have misfired. The English had reported that it was quite unsuccessful.

Christian replied that according to the report, 108.5 tons of H.E. bombs and 16,000 incendiary bombs had been dropped. The fighter-bomber attack had not been made, as although the clouds had cleared, there was a thick mist, with visibility down to 2 km. They would try again tomorrow morning.

The Fuehrer said they must be sent a memorandum. That attack had been no good, it seemed to have failed completely.

North Africa.

Jodl reported that on the edge of the Northern flank, the attack had been continued and the road from Mateur westward to Sedjenane station had been taken. The attack from the Djebel 464 was also being continued. The position on the road from Medjez el Bab to the West had not changed. The enemy had made an attack with tanks, but was unable to take the road in the face of heavy defensive fire. Further South there was only artillery activity, in fact, in this sector held by the 10 Panzer Div. it was so intense that most of the troops were moved further back, merely leaving outposts behind. Further South there was artillery fire and reinforcement of two battalions in the direction of Pont du Fahs.

Apart from an exchange of artillery fire there had been no activity on the Mareth Line. The general impression was that the enemy was massing at the Mareth positions and was moving up very close to them, so that an attack could be expected in the near future. The mobile battle group of the 10th and 21st Panzer Div. was in readiness north of Gabes. The number of tanks stood, at the moment, at 135.

A general review of the situation by Rommel had just arrived. That was to say, it was in the form of a query to the Commando Supremo, with the opinion of Field-marshal Kesselring. The numbers mentioned were actual establishments.

(Perusal of report.)

The Fuehrer remarked that this was a complete change from his previous view.

Jodl said that Rommel only wanted a decision. That was impossible. He had done it from the point of view of his Army.

The Fuehrer pointed out that it was an evasion on the part of Kesselring too. He had maintained that as soon as the French ships arrived, everything would be all right. Now the French ships had arrived, and everything was not all right. One could not fall back on the November shipbuilding programme, because they would not be ready in time.

Jodl insisted that there must be enough ships. 112 or 113 ships had already been sent over.

The Fuehrer said that for him to withdraw now was impossible. It was contrary to all Kesselring's explanations. Kesselring had given assurances that matters would take shape in a very short time. Two months had gone by without any effective check having been put on things. Of course, if through negligence and lack of co-ordination between the forces one allowed tankers to be sunk, it was not surprising that such crises arose. If a single one of those tankers had got through, there would have been enough fuel to carry out such operations. It would undoubtedly have carried the 8 to 10 "Verbrauchssätze" (fuel consumption for 100 km). He did not know what the exact fuel consumption was there, but he did not

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think it would be more. What would the daily fuel consumption be? Surely 500 cbm at the most.

Jodl was sure it would be less.

The Fuehrer continued that therefore 14 days' fuel supply had been lost through the negligence of the Luftwaffe under Kesselring, and through the inefficiency with which the Navy was at last bringing the little ships into use.

Jodl said that a further withdrawal was out of the question. By the constant destruction of the enemy's preparations for attack, Rommel would have to gain the time to bring over stronger forces, so that eventually the mobile units could be held in the rear of the positions as reserves. Forces available for this purpose were the greater part of the Hermann Goering Division, part of which was in France, the 999th Division and the Special Duties Regiment which belonged to Felmy and which was still fairly complete. It had lost some men.

The Fuehrer wanted to know where this regiment was.

Jodl replied that it was still in the Mius positions. The Corps staff had already been withdrawn. If the situation down there improved because of the withdrawal from the Mius positions, he thought that the regiment could be brought out, so that it would make up a brigade with African Legion, which was already there. This regiment was made up of 2 Battalions, an Assault-Gun Company, a light A.A. Battery and a Signals Company.

The Fuehrer said that it must be pointed out to Rommel that the review he had sent was totally different from the ones he had previously sent.

Jodl said he would sum up, then. A voluntary withdrawal here would mean, at the same time, giving up the bridge-head. If the available forces were over there and supplies were getting through, there ought to be enough. The number of men Rommel calculated were required was 210,000. We had that number too. There were 140,000 Germans there alone. Of course, the British had a great deal more in material. Our material was over in Italy. Naturally, in the course of time, the small shipping traffic would assume great importance. That is why he must ask that the shortage of steel must not be allowed to decrease this shipping any more than the shipyards could help.

Reports that the enemy was about to start an offensive in the Eastern Mediterranean had recently increased. They all came to the same thing: they told of large concentrations on Cyprus, which were definitely not there.

Hewel remarked that, on the other hand, the enemy press had been warned not to mention Sardinia.

Jodl said that looked suspicious to him. Reports showed that the British forces in the Eastern Mediterranean, or at least most of them, were quite unsuited for such an offensive; the Indian and Polish divisions there were out of the question. It was true, the 9th Australian Infantry Division must be there. He did not believe, however, that the Australians would give permission for the Division to be used for another attack. That would leave a South African Division and the 8th. British Armoured Division, and perhaps another British Infantry Division, the presence of which we had not confirmed. Everything else in this area would be out of the question for an offensive in the Eastern area. He saw no danger there at the moment. He did consider it possible that on this coast preparations were being made for an attack, in that landing craft were being built, so that when they commanded the Sicilian Straits, - - -

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The Fuehrer wanted to know about the landing craft being built there

Jodl replied that there was information from agents that they were building landing craft with special motors, supposedly a British invention, to use solid fuel.

The Fuehrer considered that if they did anything they would have to concentrate their forces with lightning rapidity.

Jodl reported that the situation in England remained unchanged. Landing craft were fairly evenly distributed along the South Channel Coast. The land forces reported were 33 Divisions, 5 Armoured Divisions, 5 Independent Brigades, 5 American Divisions and, what was significant, 2 to 3 Airborne Divisions, of which one or the other might be a Paratroop Division. There were 6 Divisions and 2 Independent Brigades unconfirmed. The overall picture had not altered, however. 6 Divisions had disappeared, and had probably been transferred to the Far East.

Kesselring had forwarded his final establishment and strength report. Jodl thought it might now be approved. He had incorporated the whole of the Fuehrungsabteilung in the Commando Supremo. It would also be located in the same place. Then he had another General to take charge of the Transport fuehrungs-stab (Transport Operations Staff) and the Oberquartiermeister (Chief Supply Officer). He considered it necessary, as these staffs were separated from him. The Transportfuehrungsstab, particularly, was 60 km away. It had to be located with the equivalent Italian departments because of the unloading of shipping and the constant changes of arrangements. When they were scattered like that, he must have a General on his staff to represent them. Then he had a Signals Officer, a Chief Supply Administration Officer for the whole theatre, and a Legal Adviser.

(Perusal of strength report.)

The Fuehrer wanted to know how many Tigers were servicable at present.

Jodl replied there were 15. Up to now there had been 4 total losses.

Italian Army.

The Fuehrer remarked that the Italians were given weapons: and they fell into the hands of people who deliver them to the enemy, and in a short time they were being used against us. It did not make any difference whether they were Russian or any other captured weapons, they were being used against us in a very short time. He was considering advising the Duce to form 6 fascist divisions out of nothing but reliable fascists, drawn from the M-Divisions. These divisions could then be organised, trained and equipped in Germany. He was considering Italy as well in this, because two such divisions, one in Rome and one in North Italy, would be better than anything they had got. There was no sense in going on as at present, delivering weapons all the time.

He could speak quite frankly with the Duce: the latter had already asked to be told the whole truth about the losses in the East. He would say to him: If you do not build up again right from the beginning you will achieve nothing. Everything could be put right, providing you had good officers. If they were lacking and one did not start right from the beginning again, the rebuilding of the forces was impossible. Of course there were some good people amongst them, but they could not pull the whole thing through on their own. The M-Batallions had been used to leaven individual divisions, where they were wasted and had no influence. It would be different if he formed 6, and later 8, 10 and 12 divisions himself. If we had to deliver weapons we would rather deliver them to these units, they would then be excellently equipped. Once he had

4 such divisions he could set about getting rid of some of those miserable Army divisions or he could replace the officers and gradually improve things. It would be greatly to our advantage. If we had one of those Fascist Divisions, trained by us, in North Africa, it would be worth more than 4 of these divisions which, because of bad leadership, give up at the first shot. The officers had no sense of responsibility but thought only of their pleasures.

Jodl went on to report a regrouping of forces in Norway. There had been little air activity there in the last few weeks, due to bad weather. About 7,000 mines had been laid. The road to the North of Pauske was blocked by snowdrifts. That was unusual, as generally the roads could be kept open. At the moment, however, it was completely blocked.

The Air Situation

Christian reported that in the previous night, a total of 5 mines and 19 H.E. bombs had been dropped on seven places in the Rhine-Westphalian industrial area. There had been 11 dead and 69 injured.

In an attack on Hamburg, a total of 22 mines, 360 H.E. bombs and 40,600 incendiary bombs had been dropped at 28 places. Of these, Hamburg itself received 2 mines and 31 H.E. bombs, and Wedel received 20 mines, 300 H.E. bombs, 30 incendiary bombs and 21 phosphorus bombs.

The Fuehrer queried whether it had not been more in Wedel.

Christian replied there had been considerable casualties in Wedel, 20 dead, 150 injured and 10 missing. Of a total of 700 houses, two thirds had been destroyed or damaged. 8,000 inhabitants were without homes. The railway station had been badly damaged. An optical works had sustained structural damage causing a drop in production of 20%. In this optical works 50% of the optical instruments on tanks were manufactured.

Today, between 10,00 hrs. and 11.05 hrs. a formation of 50 to 60 bombers had penetrated over the Reich, but had been headed off by the immediate massing of fighters. 20 to 25 aircraft had then proceeded to Hamm. In Hamm 28 houses had been destroyed, including the station post office.

There were two wire factories there, one belonging to the Vereinigte Stahlwerke and the other to Krupp; both received direct hits and production had temporarily dropped by 50%. Production was only kept going by the immediate rearranging of the works. In the rail yards, one line was temporarily blocked by a delayed action bomb. Here there had been comparatively few casualties, but there was one more report which had come in; that in two factory shelters there were a number of people buried. If they were not rescued alive, the number of dead would be considerably higher.

The Fuehrer wanted to know how many aircraft had been shot down.

Christian told him 10. One of these had not yet been confirmed. The A.A. Units and the fighters were still arguing about it.

Otherwise there was nothing special in the West. Reports of our own air activities in the Mediterranean had not yet come in. The enemy had attacked Reggio and Trapani but no damage had been sustained.

(There followed a detailed discussion of the situation on the Russian front which it was not possible to follow due to constant reference to maps and written reports.)

(END OF CONFERENCE)

DISTRIBUTION: - Same as for Translation VII/42.