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AIR HISTORICAL BRANCH.

TRANSLATION NO. VII/13.

MINUTES OF A CONFERENCE HELD IN GÖRING'S

SPECIAL TRAIN IN ROME ON 30TH NOVEMBER, 1942.

TRANSLATED BY:-

AIR MINISTRY, A.H.B. 6.

7th December, 1946.

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Present:

Reichsmarschall Goring.
Field Marshall Kesselring.
Field Marshall Rommel.
Major G.S. von Brauchitsch.
Lt. Berndt (F.M. Rommel's duty officer).
Gaulciter Kaufmann.

1. Reichsmarschall Goring said that the Führer was very anxious about the Duce's long illness. Italy possessed no possible successor to the Duce. All measures to be taken to prevent Italy's fall must be dealt with and in this connection it should be considered whether Italy could stand a further retreat beyond Tripoli.

2. The British strategic concentration opposite our positions at Marsa el Brega was being completed according to plan. There was a possibility of the British forces by-passing our positions. The question was, whether Rommel's Army would make a further retreat to positions in Tunisia. The danger existed that only part of our forces would reach Tunisia.

3. At the Führer's H.Q. the opinion prevailed that the Marsa el Brega position was protected against a flanking movement. The falsity of this opinion had not been clearly demonstrated at the conference with the Führer. About ten days ago, Reichsmarschall Goring had handed detailed aerial photographs in connection with this to the Führer.

4. F.M. Rommel was of the opinion that the Marsa el Brega position could not be held against a strong British attack. Furthermore, the combat value of the Italian troops was questionable.

5. The Führer was of the opinion that sufficient German troops were still available to occupy the Marsa el Brega position. Because of the shortening of supply routes, a large number of the personnel hitherto employed on supply duties could be used in the front line.

6. During the retreat of Rommel's Army it was discovered that more supplies had been sent to Africa than had been thought. Large dumps of ammunition and other goods had to be destroyed.

The Führer was, therefore, of the opinion that there were at present more supplies in Tripoli than was stated. To the Führer, as to ourselves, the supply position was of decisive importance.

7. At the interview with the Führer, the water supply position had also not been so clearly stated as it now was. Water had to be brought up from a point 150 km. behind the front-line.

8. No front was named in answer to the Führer's question as to which position Rommel believed could be held. The Führer therefore adhered to his decision to hold the Marsa el Brega position under all circumstances. OKW had reported that sufficient arms were available in Italy to supply Rommel's Army.

9. F.M. Rommel said that the Duce's opinion expressed through Cavallero was that Tripoli was unimportant if the whole African theatre of war could be saved.

10. Reichsmarschall Goring told F.M. Rommel that Hitler was furious about F.M. Rommel's plan to transfer the German tank army from Africa, there

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being no longer any position to hold. In view of the strong propaganda effect on the Italian population, it was out of the question to leave the Italians behind.

In the instructions given by the Führer, it had been stipulated that the decision concerning the surrender of Tripoli rested solely with the Duce.

11. The Biserta ultimatum would be discussed separately.

12. F.M. Kesselring reported that the British 8th Army was concentrating according to plan and was at present maintaining contact until artillery etc. had been brought up. Reconnaissance could furnish no proof of larger outflanking movements. The enemy would, as at El Alamein, make a frontal attack after heavy artillery preparations. No reserves being available, Rommel was not in a position to repulse the attack. It could not be guaranteed that sufficient supplies would be sent to Rommel before the British attack. The Air Force was unable to give sufficient help over such great distances.

The 300 km. of desert lying behind this position would delay the enemy.

The intended supplying of the position could not be carried out because of the demands made on supplies during the retreat.

At present, 13-14 supply ships were employed in and around Tripoli. The present German Commander in Tripoli was General Schnarrenberger. It was no longer possible to maintain the position, but in order to gain time, it was possible to attack individual divisions seeking to establish contact.

13. Reichsmarshal Goring confirmed that under no circumstances were false reports to be made. The real state of Rommel's Army must be clearly indicated.

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