

AIR HISTORICAL BRANCH

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TRANSLATION NO. VII/30.

PROPOSAL FOR THE CONDUCT OF
AIR WARFARE AGAINST BRITAIN

made by General Schmid of the
German Air Force Operations Staff, (Intelligence)
on November 22nd, 1939.

TRANSLATED BY:

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Proposal for the conduct of air warfare against Britain.

1. Great Britain entered into the present War at a time when neither its military nor its economic preparations for the expected conflict with Germany had been completed. The original intention was to begin the War at a later date.

It may be counted as a political victory for Germany that such an unfavourable moment for the opening of hostilities was in fact chosen. Our diplomacy had forced Britain into such a position that the only alternative to a tremendous loss of prestige was War, and this in spite of military and economic considerations.

2. The war aim of the British, as in the last War, is to bring Germany to her knees by severing our entire foreign trade, both imports and exports. In these circumstances, Britain is endeavouring to conduct the war along the following lines:

- (a) Least possible number of military operations until the armament programme is completed;
- (b) intensive economic warfare;
- (c) propaganda warfare against the morale of her enemies.

As the results of such a policy can only be expected after the elapse of a considerable period of time, all measures adopted by the British Government, whether political, economic, or military, are based on the assumption of a long war.

3. Britain's present position may be described as follows :

- (a) Neither on land, nor in the air, have any operations in force been carried out. Naval operations have been predominantly defensive in nature.
- (b) From the economic point of view, all measures necessary, both for the protection of Britain, and for the blockade of Germany, have either been taken or are now being introduced. As regards the former, the vital necessity of maintaining the import and export trades intact has led to the introduction of the convoy system as a counter-measure to German attacks on Britain's merchant shipping. Close economic collaboration is being established with France, so that the best possible use may be made of supplies from overseas.
- (c) German operations in the air and on the seas have until now pursued the following aims:
 - (aa) of inflicting direct damage on the British fleet by air and naval attacks;
 - (bb) destruction of enemy merchant shipping by the German Navy.
 - (cc) keeping the North Sea open to a certain extent for our merchant shipping, and causing the evacuation of the British Fleet from these waters;
 - (dd) lowering the capacity of the British East coast ports by naval attacks, and the fear of aerial bombing.

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Although the results obtained by these operations are considerable in relation to the forces employed, they are none the less not decisive in the conduct of the war. They may however be considered as pointers for the further course of events. The most significant result is probably the still-existing superiority of certain weapons of attack against the defences which they have to meet.

(d) Britain has, in the near future, no interest in seeing an alteration in the present situation, in which both sides are withholding their forces. The British High Command is hoping for a quiet winter, during which weaknesses in her economic and military position will be remedied to the greatest possible extent.

4. From Germany's point of view, Britain is the most dangerous of all possible enemies. The War cannot be ended in a manner favourable to us as long as Britain has not been mastered. France, on the other hand, ranks in the second class, for, unlike Britain, she would not be capable of carrying on the War without her Allies. Germany's War aim must therefore be to strike at Britain with all available weapons, particularly those of the Navy and Air Force.

5. In pursuit of this aim, it is considered of decisive importance that operations against the British Isles should begin as soon, and in as great a strength as possible, - under any circumstances in the present year. The enemy must not be allowed the time to use past experiences to perfect his defences. Furthermore, economic assistance from the British and French Colonial Empires and from neutrals, particularly the U.S.A., and the encirclement of Germany, must not be permitted to come fully into operation.

6. Britain may most effectively be weakened by attacks on her overseas trade routes. Our aim must be to reduce imports to a level below the rate of consumption, so that reserves will eventually be exhausted. This can only be achieved by the most ruthless use of all available possibilities.

7. From political and moral standpoints, such a policy is easily justifiable, and may be stated thus:

"Britain's immediate War aim is the encirclement, and hence the starvation of Germany. Germany must therefore as a counter-measure attempt to sever the Motherland from her overseas sources of supply. As from a set day, the sea area between 61° N, 10° E and Western and Southern boundaries depending on naval intentions but including the English Channel, is to be declared dangerous for shipping, as will also be its presence in British and French harbours. The passage of neutral ships to Dutch and Belgian harbours, providing they are not carrying goods for the enemy, will be permitted in a belt 20 km. in breadth from the Norwegian, Danish, German, Dutch and Belgian coasts. For the passage from Norwegian into Danish waters, a strip 20 km. wide will be kept open West of a line OKSOEY - HANSTHOLM."

"The conduct of operations envisaged by the German High Command will be completely within the rules of humanity. Attacks will not therefore be made on civilians. It must however be pointed out that Germany will treat as war targets all ships and harbour installations. Should the British Government wish to protect the civilian populations of certain harbour towns, ample time for evacuation will be available before the coming into force of this order."

The political consequences of such a policy may be assessed as follows:

France: As long as no warlike operations are conducted against France, the mass of French public opinion will accept more and more the German theory that the war is directed against Britain alone; initial successes will influence opinion in our favour.

The U.S.A. will probably judge our action from a moralistic point of view. The question of whether the possibility of the United States entering into the war can thereby be excluded will depend very much on the effectiveness of our operations. This attitude will presumably be shared by the other 'strict' Neutrals.

As regards our Allies, and friendly Neutrals, this decision will have a very favourable effect providing that results can be expected in a short time.

8. Within its range of action the German Air Force is offered the following main targets:

- (a) British ports,
- (b) The British Merchant fleet,
- (c) The British Navy.

As regards (c), the maintenance of imports from overseas is closely linked with the fighting capacity of the British Navy. Its destruction would decide the outcome of the war. For the following reasons, however, such a result cannot be achieved by the Air Force alone.

- (aa) It is unlikely that strong units of the enemy Fleet will remain for any length of time within the range of action of German aircraft.
- (bb) Warships at sea are very small, quickly movable and strongly defended targets. Hits can only be scored with great difficulty, and only achieve a really destructive effect against small surface vessels.
- (cc) Attacks against warships in harbour promise greater chances of success. It is however improbable that enemy warships will remain long in British ports which are within our range of action.
- (dd) Attacks against warships in construction or under repair do not usually produce any very immediate results in the general situation. If a rapid decision is to be won, therefore, only such ships must be attacked as are within 6 months of completion.

As regards (a) and (b), attacks on merchant shipping offer considerably greater possibilities of success. In this connection it should be noted that, for the following reasons, operations against single ships in the coastal waters and particularly against shipping in harbour should take preference over attacks against convoys.

- (aa) Most convoys are normally outside our range of action.
- (bb) Convoys are relatively strongly defended.
- (cc) Successes can only be expected if wide sea areas are constantly patrolled and watched.

Attacks against shipping in harbour, on the other hand, have the following advantages:

- (aa) primarily, greater certitude of causing appreciable losses in shipping space to the enemy;
- (bb) as secondary results,
 - destruction of further shipping and dock installations due to fire;
 - disruption of harbour traffic due to ships being sunk within the harbour basin;
 - stoppage of neutral shipping from visiting British ports;
 - a fall in production, both of those industries immediately adjoining ports, and in factories on the routes of our aircraft, and a lowering of civilian morale in these areas.

9. Britain's only possible counter-measure would be to attack German ports. The effect produced by such operations on our overall situation would however be negligible compared to that which similar attacks on Britain by the German Air Force could achieve. In addition, whereas Britain has between 9, - 10,000 km. of coast open to attack, Germany has only between 900 - 1,000 km., and possesses stronger defences. The regrettable fact that such attacks by the British might lead to the destruction of German submarine and aircraft construction plants will be compensated for by the even greater successes that will certainly be achieved against the enemy.

Should the enemy resort to 'terror' measures, for example to attacks on towns in Western Germany, here again similar operations could be carried out by the Luftwaffe with even greater effect, due to the greater density of population of London and the big industrial centres.

It would be an error to carry out any other air attacks, such as attacks on enemy airfields, for example, as this would be diverting our effort from the main target, - the paralysing of British overseas trade. As long as British ships can continue to sail the seas, the effects of such operations will quickly be made good.

The counter-measures which the enemy is likely to take against German industry will be infinitely harder to support than attacks on our coasts. A partial stoppage of industrial production cannot be remedied by imports.

10. As regards the actual carrying out of the air offensive against Britain the following points must be remembered:

- (a) The most important ports must be attacked without exception, and as far as possible, simultaneously. The inter-mixture of residential areas with dockyards in some British ports is no reason for failing to attack such ports.

The most important ports are those of

London,
Liverpool
Hull
Bristol - Avonmouth, and
Glasgow.

In all these ports, the primary target will be actual shipping. As secondary targets, dockyard and warehouse installations, in particular food and oil stores and silos may be attacked. Raids must be constantly repeated, - by day and by night. To achieve the maximum effect, even small formations may be usefully employed.

- (b) Warships under repair and under construction, which are on the point of completion, are also to be considered as targets worthy of attention.
- (c) It is necessary that ports of secondary importance should also be subjected to occasional attack. Nevertheless, in view of their very limited capacity, they should only be considered as secondary or alternative targets.
- (d) In view of the superior bad weather flying training of the Luftwaffe, it is also possible that we may be able to achieve some purely tactical successes should the enemy Air Force choose to counter-attack, which is unlikely.

Signed:

SCHMID.

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