

RESTRICTED

AIR HISTORICAL BRANCH

TRANSLATION NO.VII/49

EXTRACTS FROM REPORTS
OF FUEHRER CONFERENCES
HELD ON 26.7.1943,
28.7.1943 and 26.10.1943

RESTRICTED

TRANSLATED BY:

AIR MINISTRY, A.H.B.6.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

This latest collection of Fuehrer Conference Reports (see also A.H.B.6. Translations Nos. VII/44 and VII/45), contains a quantity of material of little air interest. This has however, been included as being of general historical value, and as throwing light on the overall background of events against which air operations took place.

A.H.B.6.
18.10.1947

CONFERENCE HELD ON 26th JULY, 1943

Italy

The Fuehrer asked Jodl if there was any more news.

Jodl said there was nothing except from Italy, where a conference was to be held with Badoglio at 1800 hrs. There had not been time before, because of the pressure of work. The German High Command in Italy had taken adequate steps for its own security. The C-in-C. had just been having discussions to ensure that, in the case of any danger, there would be an airfield completely in German hands.

The Fuehrer said that the evacuation of Sicily had been set in motion.....
.....would it not be possible at least to get the tanks over?

Jodl replied that where it was not possible to take men across, the most valuable equipment would be brought over.

The Fuehrer said that the tanks were the most important. According to yesterday's returns there were 160 tanks in Sicily.

The Fuehrer remarked that we would have to watch out that nothing awkward happened with the Hungarians. What units were there, that we could send into Hungary at short notice if the necessity arose? With Hungary the situation would be complicated by the fact that we had Hungarian Divisions in the East, which would drop out if anything happened.

Himmler said that two of the Hungarian Divisions were with his people, and had done quite well.

Jodl remarked that they had a good commander.

The Fuehrer asked what we were going to do about.....? How were we going to get out troops away?

Jodl said he would suggest that they should be brought over to Corsica, if possible, and collected there.

Goering said he was of that opinion too. Make Corsica as strong as possible.

Jodl pointed out that the troops would have to leave everything behind if they were to get over to Corsica.

The Fuehrer said that there would have to be a discussion on how to move these troops to Corsica.

Jodl agreed. It would all depend on whether there was enough shipping available.

The Fuehrer said he had heard a very good report about the "Goering" (Division); it was characteristic, because it was an overall judgement of our Youth.

Jodl said he had read it.

The Fuehrer continued that the young people from the Hitler Youth fought fanatically, young German lads, some of them 16 years of age. These Hitler Youths usually fought more fanatically than their older comrades. If all these divisions fought like these two

Himmler assured him that they were good divisions.

The Fuehrer reckoned..... the "Hitler Youth" Division would fight in the same way, in fact all the Youth would. They were already formed by units. (They (the enemy) would get the shock of a lifetime. They might only be youngsters but they had had plenty of training.

/Himmler

Himmler said the two divisions were under training from the 15th February to the 15th August. They were in very good condition. They had been inspected by Dollman, Blaskowitz and Rundstedt, who had expressed themselves as well satisfied.

The Fuehrer asked, roughly, how many men each division had and what their average age was.

Himmler replied that each had roughly 400 officers and 3 to 4,000 older N.C.O's "Older" meant between the ages of 20 and 30. The two divisions had an average age of 18½.

The Fuehrer supposed that one might say the majority were 18 yrs old.

Himmler said that was correct.

Goering said he had recently been told that men between 26 and 30 years of age had proved the best fighters.

Goering enquired what there was in the way of Italian troops in Rome.

Himmler suggested that we could try and get hold of the Duce's division - we had given them 12 Assault - guns, 12 Panzer IV's and 12 Panzer III's, - that would give us another 36.

Himmler added that of his people there was Obersturmfuehrer Leinert (?) there.

The Fuehrer said that Leinert should see if he could not get the whole division to join us.

Goering added that if we at least got the guns back.

Himmler reminded them that there were also the Ausbildungskommandos down there (German instructors and training units for Italians).

Jodl asked when he could send off these orders.

The Fuehrer replied _____ could give them.

Goering asked if these orders were really just sent like that.

The Fuehrer explained that they were sent by teleprinter.

Jodl assured him that it was quite safe.

The Fuehrer asked him what else he would do. Otherwise we could not send any orders at all. Kesselring would not know then what we wanted done.

Goering said that he thought that in this case, they would have been sent by a special confidential courier.

The Fuehrer pointed out that couriers would be more dangerous if they carried anything, and it would have to be in cipher anyway.

Goering thought they would carry it in their heads.

The Fuehrer insisted that they would not be able to carry enough detail in their heads.

The Fuehrer asked Jodl if our troops could be withdrawn from Italy via the Brenner Pass.

Jodl said he saw no difficulty in getting through the Brenner. The trains were simply running through.

The Fuehrer asked what about if they suddenly occupied the pass?

Jodl said that would be another matter.

Himmler added the possibility of an insurrection in South Tirol.

The Fuehrer objected that there were not any South Tirolese there, they had all been conscripted.

Himmler assured him that there would be some men there.

The Fuehrer was of the opinion that as soon as tanks showed up the whole cowardly gang would run off.

Goering was not worried. That these cripples should hold out on us at the Brenner was out of the question.

The Fuehrer agreed. When our tanks turned up.

Linge reported the arrival of Field Marshal Kluge and General Zeitzler. Were they to come in at once?

The Fuehrer said they were.

(The meeting was interrupted by a conference between the Fuehrer and Kluge. The situation on the Eastern Front was discussed and the Fuehrer made it clear to Kluge that troops would be required from the East for Italy. Kluge argued very heatedly against it, but the Fuehrer insisted.)

Zeitzler reported that the counter-attacks on the 17th Army's front had had some success. They had been continued today. So far everything had gone quite well; there had been only slight pressure on the flanks.

(There followed a discussion on the troop dispositions in the East, and their armament, which was unintelligible due to gaps).

Jodl then produced the plans for the safeguarding of Mussolini and for the eventual evacuation of German forces from Sicily to Sardinia.

The Fuehrer asked if the Grossadmiral had been informed of this possibility.

Doenitz said he had not been informed.

Jodl said that he only knew that the shipping space available for this purpose was equal to, if not more than, the amount in use in the Straits of Messina.

Doenitz added that in the Straits of Messina a daily total of 7,000 men were being transported. For troops without equipment they reckoned up to 10,000 men.

The Fuehrer said they would be over in two days, then,

Doenitz said that in his opinion we must if possible, obtain possession as far as Spezia, if only because of the fleet. The difficulty was that at the moment we had our supply base here, too. It was important that we should get a base somewhere in this area, perhaps at Salerno.

Goering asked if the order of transfer had been fixed.

The Fuehrer explained that that would have to be left to the local Commanders.

The Fuehrer considered that in the evacuation the order of importance was as follows: firstly the paratroopers, secondly the "Goering" Division, thirdly the Panzer Division, fourthly the rest of the Africa Divisions, and lastly the 29th as they had the least to bring with them. On the whole, though, that would have to be left to the Army, it could not be done schematically like that. But the whole front must move back in jumps. The Parachute Division was, of course, the most important because it was the most valuable.

Goering remarked that paratroops would be needed the most urgently. They were always put back into action the soonest.

The Fuehrer said that the occupation of Rome would be carried out by the 3rd Pz.Gren.Div. and all those units which..... That would be a signal for the relentless advance on the whole front.

Goering asked if he might enquire again about the Parachute Division. What were the Fuehrer's intentions for the jumping of the division?

Jodl explained that the object in dropping the paratroops was to prevent people from escaping from Rome.

The Fuehrer added that they were to occupy every road leading from Rome without exception. It would only require quite small detachments, which would dig themselves in, and allow no-one to pass.

The Fuehrer explained that the other troops who would be entering the town would be landed at an airfield. He did not yet know which. It would have to be seen that they left the airfield quickly, as it must be expected that the Allies would make an attack immediately.

Jeschonnek thought that a courier should be sent to the South of France today or tomorrow morning, to inform General Student, or the 2nd Parachute Division, where they were to go.

Goering added, to give them individual jumping areas.

Jeschonnek went on that the situation this afternoon or tomorrow morning could not be analysed.

The Fuehrer said the situation would remain the same. Rome would always be Rome. The roads from it must be occupied. That could be done, whatever happened.

Goering asked who would cut off the Vatican from the capital.

The Fuehrer replied that would be the task of those units moving into Rome, in the first place the 3rd Pz.GrenDiv. There were 3 so-called 'regular' Italian divisions "here", but he did not think they would do much if they were confronted with force.

The Fuehrer informed Rommel that the position was as follows, then; firstly there was the withdrawal of the forces from "here", as it would be impossible to hold Sicily. Whether he would be able to hold the "Boot" of Italy, was another question, but that did not really matter either. The main thing was to keep the front intact, in order to be able to fight at all.

/Jodl

Jodl then raised the question of the command of the forces. Either Field Marshal Rommel would be in command down there, or else a division would be necessary, Rommel commanding this action, and Kesselring bringing up these fresh forces from the south. As soon as they arrived they would come under the command of Rommel. There was no other way to do it.

The Fuehrer agreed, but said he was still of the opinion that the leadership should be given to Rommel. Kesselring had not got the same reputation. Then we must aim to get the Fascists over on our side immediately, both regular Divisions and volunteers. That was a very good idea of Himmler's: we would get Farinacci to announce that every man could go home: we would then get the cream; the others, who went home would not be any use to us anyway.

Himmler suggested that we might bring them to Germany later as workers.

The Fuehrer agreed. They were no use otherwise. The second thing would be to try and withdraw the personnel from "here". That, by and large, was the task which had been set, quite apart from the security measures to be taken "here". The third thing was the occupation of Rome, by the dropping of paratroopers and the entry of the 3rd.Pz.Gren.Div.

Goering remarked that orders for that would have to be issued on the spot. It could not possibly be done from Munich.

The Fuehrer said that the orders would be given, and the local commanders would be responsible for seeing that they were carried out, synchronised with the entry of the German ground forces.

Goering pointed out that our Italian enemies would naturally turn to the Allies for help and beg for their protection.

The Fuehrer remarked that it would take time before the enemy was ready to make a landing.

Goering pointed out that they could drop paratroops just the same as we could.

The Fuehrer admitted that they could, but

Goering said he had only brought it up for consideration.

The Fuehrer maintained that in the first place, they would, as always in a case like this, be nonplussed themselves.

Goering added that as soon as Rome capitulated, there would be no more cries for help to the Allies.

(Hewel laid a report of a conversation between Mackenzen and Badoglio before the Fuehrer).

The Fuehrer said that Badoglio was an arch-enemy of ours. It was he who, on the 25th August, 1939, arranged that Italy should stay out of the war; he was in fact responsible for the Polish Treaty of Alliance being signed, and consequently for the Franco-British declaration of war.

What was the situation "here"?

Jodl replied that there was nothing special. The whereabouts of the 50 vessels reported yesterday had not yet been ascertained. The enemy had made stronger attacks along the coastal road on the right flank of the 29th Pz.Gren.Div. The new commander had taken over the 9th Division.

Naval Situation

The Fuehrer wanted to know where that eastbound convoy was.

Junge replied that a report had been received concerning it: The convoy had been sighted to the east of Palermo yesterday afternoon, consisting of 8 larger ships and about 30 or 42 small vessels, possibly landing craft. Its exact position was not known. This possibly had some connection with a report which had come in this morning, of a force of 16 small vessels, believed to be landing craft, on a northerly course, 30 to 40 miles north of the Straits of Messina. It was believed to be the same force, but that was not certain, and there was no special significance to be attached to it, other than that the enemy was fairly free to move about in this area.

The Fuehrer asked whether they were not being attacked.

Junge replied that there were no naval fighting forces there, apart from submarines and E-boats.

The Fuehrer said that he meant attacks by the Luftwaffe.

Junge pointed out that the report had only just come in.

Christian said he did not know yet what measures were in view.

Junge continued, that otherwise there had been considerable enemy movements in the Eastern Mediterranean and fairly lively activity off the North Coast (of Africa).

Regarding the Italian naval forces at Toulon and Spezia, Doenitz said it would be best if the ships were seized as quickly as possible, in the event of the propaganda being ineffective.

The Fuehrer pointed out that in Toulon they would be

Doenitz agreed, but perhaps it would be possible to seize them before. He had U-Boats crews in Spezia, who were armed with nothing other than rifles and revolvers. If we wanted to be able to seize the ships, we would need forces armed accordingly. Apart from that he thought the Italians would let them be seized.

Goering said that there were some of our people there.

Doenitz pointed out that they were not mobile. We had two boats there, but one could not make effective propaganda with their 300 men. They were not trained for it, they were just seamen. He thought that an effort must definitely be made to prevent the possibility of the Italians breaking out with their ships.

The Fuehrer remarked that he had said that a special force should be held ready for this purpose.

Goering asked Doenitz if he had any U-Boats covering the entrance.

Doenitz said he was having the entrance covered by U-Boats immediately, in case they should try to break out. We would have to wait for further developments. It was quite possible that there would be an internal split in the Italian fleet, and that the younger Officers would remove the older ones.

Goering emphasised that a force must nevertheless be held in readiness.

Junge suggested that the Italians might be told that there were U-Boats lying in wait outside.

The Fuehrer was quite adamant that they must under no circumstances know of it.

Christian reported that it was noticeable that the enemy had been holding back in the air yesterday. There had been one attack on There was no detailed report of damage.

The Luftwaffe had sent out 99 aircraft during the night, to attack a convoy sunk, one from a torpedo hit 13 other hits with torpedos.

The Fuehrer remarked that altogether that made 56,000 tons. In time it could become unbearable for the enemy. If he took that loss of 50,000 tons, and reckoned with an estimated loss of 20,000 tons a day or even only 10,000 tons, that would make 300,000 tons for one month and 1 million tons that the enemy was losing in three months in the Mediterranean alone. Damaged shipping, quite apart from that sunk, had to be sent back for repair. That was a further loss of 90,000 to 100,000 tons. That was 300,000 tons a month i.e. 1 million a year.

Doenitz remarked that if we destroyed his shipping like that, the enemy would have nothing available for operations.

Christian went on to report that there had been no further reconnaissance over Spezia,

Goering remarked that it was very noticeable that in areas where the enemy had until now been operating in force, since yesterday he had not been flying at all. Italy (Cont.)

Returning to the proposed occupation of Rome, Goering suggested that the Italians should be told that we were flying reinforcements to the 1st Parachute Division in Sicily and that we required trains for the ground equipment to follow on. The first wave could then be landed at Rome with the explanation that we could go no further, as the airfields to the south had been shot up and we could not fly direct because of yesterdays losses. We could then report to the Commando Supremo that we required trains to get the paratroops to Reggio. Then the second wave would come.

Jeschonek said that the fact that not all the aircraft being brought up for the operation were adapted to paratroop dropping must also be considered.

The Fuehrer asked how many could be used for jumping.

Jeschonek replied that at the moment the number of aircraft available and suitable was 90 Ju 52's and 45 He 111's

Goering wanted to know how many men each took, on an average.

Jeschonek informed him that the average was 10 men with equipment. With these machines that would give us a total of $2\frac{1}{2}$ to 3 battalions.

The Fuehrer said that would be 1,200 men.

Jeschonek said that if we collected every aircraft, we would have 160 Ju 52, 98 He 111, say 100 111's, 6 Me 313's and 80 glider-towing aircraft.

Goering asked him to repeat the number of 111's that were adapted.

Jeschonek replied that he had 20 plus 70 He 111's, i.e. 90, and altogether 160 Ju 52's.

Goering objected that he had previously said 45.

Jeschonek said no, there were 20 plus 70 i.e. 90 and 45 111.

The Fuehrer remarked that that was a different story again.

Balkans

Warlimont reported that a conference of leading members of the Mihailovich party had taken place in the Balkans on the 23rd July. The outcome had been the decision for the immediate implementing of sabotage..... and a declaration of hostilities against Tito and co-operation with..... on the orders of the King of Yugoslavia. Roosevelt and Churchill had given a guarantee of the restoration of the State, from which Stalin was said to have dissociated himself. Preparations for the landing of 20,000 paratroops - that was Balkan exaggeration, of course - formation of a Serbian State Police, a Serbian Frontier Force and a Serbian Volunteer Corps. Fighting with any of these forces was in future to be forbidden.

France

From the West there nothing special to report, apart from the fact that the Field Security Police had seized a lorry in Paris yesterday, belonging to "this" well known sabotage organisation. It had contained the instructions from London for the destruction of locomotives and rail installations in the event of an Allied landing.....

There was nothing new from the battle-fronts.

Junge reported nothing unusual from the Aegean.

Enemy Shipping Losses

The Fuehrer asked what the enemy losses for this month were, up to now.

Doenitz replied that they amounted to 13 ships, a tonnage of 340,000 sunk by submarines.

The Fuehrer said that was over 300,000 tons, then. So the Mediterranean theatre was costing him a lot, after all.

Doenitz said it would improve when the U-Boats.....

Air Situation in the West

Christian reported that yesterday's air attacks had been by about 250 American aircraft. First a feint along the coast and then the main penetration over "this" area, culminating in an attack on Kiel. The smoke-screen at Kiel had been good, but considerable damage had nevertheless been inflicted. There were as yet no detailed reports from the Luftwaffe.

Junge added that the Howaldt factory had been fairly badly damaged, but the adjacent Germania Werft and Deutsche Werft had sustained only light damage to 3 motor launches.

Christian went on that there had also been an attack on Hamburg, chiefly on the harbour area. Our fighters had accounted for 25 enemy aircraft and A.A. for 8. At the same time, there had been a purely diversionary raid by 80 aircraft in "this" area, on Amsterdam, on the airfield at Schipol and on smaller localities in the neighbourhood of Ghent. There had been only damage to houses, no military damage. Fighters had shot down 6 raiders.

A heavy attack, involving 300 or 400 aircraft with at least 1,200 incendiary bombs had been made on..... So far the number of dead had been put at 180 and wounded at 300. The number of night fighters operating had been 81.

Goering asked how much flak there was in Essen.

Christian told him that Essen had 31 heavy batteries, $4\frac{3}{4}$ light, and $6\frac{1}{2}$ searchlight batteries.

The Luftwaffe had sent 51 aircraft to Hull, 47 of which had been over the target. Exact results were not yet available. 3 aircraft were missing, 1 had been shot down by enemy fighters over home territory.

Today, from 11 o'clock onwards, a number of strong formations had flown in over the German Bight. Their objective had not at first been recognised. The formations at first held a course for Kiel and Hamburg, then turned South and attacked Wilhelmshaven, Bremen, Hanover and Hamburg. Details were not available. Fighters were in the air.

Goering explained that the first formations had come in "here", and fighters were immediately sent to intercept, as it was quite a large formation. It had then flown up "here", the fighters following, but then turned off "here". At that instant a large formation came in "here". Quite rightly, the fighters had been called back to intercept this formation. As soon as the others noticed this they had swept round "here", whilst the fighter had clung to the large formation. This showed how extraordinarily difficult it was to master the situation with the small number of fighters available. It would doubtless improve in the near future, when the twin-engine Me 410 was added to the fighters. Then there would be greater successes. Every fighter which could be brought into action had been used.

Christian went on that one aircraft had penetrated as far as the outer defensive ring of Berlin, in the Brandenburg district. Berlin had had an air raid warning. At the same time there had been a penetration over Holland. There was a raid in progress on the coast near Dunkirk.

Eastern Front

In the east the main weight of the attack had been in the Krymskaia area, chiefly by Luftflotte 4 with the 16th Pz.Gren.Div. at Isium. Some of the close support forces had participated in the defensive fighting round Bielgorod. Luftflotte 6 had also been engaged to the North-East and South-East of Orel and Luftflotte 6 reported having destroyed 17 tanks and damaged another 3. Of the 17 tanks, 4 had been destroyed by ground fire and the rest from the air. In addition Luftflotte 4 had destroyed 19 tanks.

Enemy air activity had been confined to the day time, in particular to the South of Odessa. Luftflotte 1 reported very strong air support of enemy attacks, particularly in the south of Schlucsselburg by bombers. Our own fighters had been sent against them and had shot down 7; 20 aircraft were also shot down by flak.

During the night, aircraft of the Stoerkampfgruppe (nuisance raiders) had been out, chiefly attacking enemy movements at the front.

In the North, operations were flown against shipping targets. A number of aircraft had been unable to find their targets and therefore attacked alternative objectives.

Losses in the East yesterday had totalled 13, as compared with the enemy's 60.

Goering said he had seen the new Russian bombers and fighters; he had to say that he was quite relieved, The fuel tanks were in the back and unprotected. Altogether it was very primitive, and the weakest effort he had seen so far from Russia.

(END OF CONFERENCE)

CONFERENCE HELD ON 28th JULY, 1943

Speakers: The Fuehrer.
Field Marshal Kluge.
General Zeitzler.
Generalmajor Scherff.

Italy.

The Fuehrer began by asking Zeitzler whether there was anything of importance to report.

Zeitzler replied that there was not.

The Fuehrer then asked Feldmarschall Kluge if he had been informed about the general position.

Kluge said that he had heard a radio report that day.

That broadcast report, said the Fuehrer, did not correspond to the truth. Briefly, this was the position. Things were happening in Italy which he had always feared would happen and to which he had previously referred at another conference. There had been a revolt - a revolt instigated by the Royal House or Marshal Badoglio, the old enemies of Germany, in fact. The Duce had been imprisoned the previous day. He had been called to the Quirinal for consultations, arrested there, and then he had been deposed by decree.

A new government had then been formed and had expressed its desire to continue to work with Germany. This, of course, was mere camouflage, to gain a few days in which the new government could consolidate its position. It was quite plain that the new regime had no one behind it except the mob in Rome. But they were installed, and immediate action was called for. This was a situation, the Fuehrer continued, which he had always dreaded. That was why he wanted to strike early in the East. He had seen that things were about to happen in the south, and the English would snatch at every opportunity; they would land.

In these circumstances it was necessary to wait at least until more formations were ready. These could now be found in the west. The Fuehrer said that he was determined to strike with lightning speed, just as he had done in the case of Jugo-Slavia. He anticipated no Italian resistance. The Fascists would go over to the German side. It had been possible to extricate Farinacci; he was now in Munich, on his way by air to the conference. The whereabouts of the Duce were unknown, but as soon as he was found, he would be released immediately by paratroops.

The whole government, the Fuehrer went on, was the typical product of a coup d'etat - just as the one in Belgrade had been. One day it would collapse. Meanwhile, immediate action was necessary. This could only be taken by bringing troops over from the east to the west. This situation had to be liquidated, in case the offensive here did not prove successful.

It would not be possible to take troops just as one came to them: it was necessary to call on the forces which were politically reliable. The 3rd. Panzer Div. could be switched from the southern army group, but it would have to be replaced by other forces. These, in turn, could only be found by giving up ground, and perhaps by minor shortenings of the front.

The Fuehrer (then asked Field Marshal Kluge for his report on the situation.

/Russian

Russian Front

Kluge told the Fuehrer that strong enemy pressure was being applied, but its effect could not yet be seen fully, as the enemy was having difficulty in crossing the Oka. In the sector occupied by the 34th Army he had made deep penetrations, but these had been met by counter-attacks. The forces held in that area were, however, relatively weak, and a break-through during the night on the front occupied by the 297 Division had forced the line to be taken back to resolve the position.

Kluge went on to report an attack with 150 tanks, and said that 50 of them had been destroyed.

(With the aid of maps, he then explained his plan for a shortening of the front. These movements were to be screened by reconnaissance units of the "Grossdeutschland Division")

After referring several times to the map, Kluge said that the enemy's tank attacks were as strong as ever and that every effort would be called for if the threat was to be overcome. It would be necessary to withdraw in the Oka sector, and to evacuate Orel.

The Fuehrer stated that he was faced with a difficult decision, but he must obtain from somewhere first class troops, men who were firm supporters of Fascism. He felt sure that all would be well if only Northern Italy could be held.

In a further discussion of possible moves at the front, Kluge warned the Fuehrer of the dangers of moving into positions which were not ready to be occupied, the Kratschew position, for instance. An attack by tanks would succeed in over running these points, and a difficult situation would result.

The Fuehrer repeated that there could be no thought of headlong withdrawals.

He said that as units were taken out of the line they must leave part of their equipment behind, thus strengthening those divisions which remained. When the "Reich" division was withdrawn it would leave something behind, too. It would also be possible to let Mannstein have more material.

In reply to the Fuehrer's suggestion that he should give up more of his armoured divisions, Kluge said that his strength in this respect was as low as he dared allow it to be. Nevertheless, said the Fuehrer, some Panzer divisions must be taken out of the line to be re-equipped. Besides the men had earned a rest.

He had seen English reports on the fighting qualities of the "Goering" division. According to these, the sixteen year old boys just out of the Hitlerjugend had fought fanatically. They would not allow themselves to be taken prisoner; they had fought to the death. The spirit of these men was splendid, and he was convinced that they would fight remarkably well.

As he had said before, the Fuehrer went on, the first thing was to get the SS Korps out of the line. The SS Korps was as good as 20 Italian divisions.

For a short time after Kluge had left, the Fuehrer and Zeitzler discussed additional plans, which would enable more troops to be withdrawn, or would make it unnecessary to send more troops to the Russian Front.

(END OF CONFERENCE)

CONFERENCE HELD ON 26th OCTOBER, 1943

Effect of Allied Air Raids

The Fuehrer said he had been speaking with Goebbels, who had given him some interesting news. The British had been saying that the interrogation of exchanged Prisoners of War had revealed the following picture of conditions inside Germany: there was a great deal of pessimism. On their departure from the hospitals they had been told that it was to be hoped that they would be back soon, before the Bolsheviks got there first. The British concluded that this was proof of the effectiveness of their bombing attacks, and that it was, therefore of the greatest importance that they should be continued with the utmost energy. We would have to see about that. If some swine had made such remarks.....

Russian Front

The Fuehrer asked Zeitzler when these two divisions which were to be sent to the Crimea could be there.

Buhle explained that the foundations for the divisions would have to be drawn from the East.

Zeitzler told him that he had given orders for the divisional staffs to be withdrawn. We must be quite firm in the matter. They naturally had a tendency to cling to the divisional staffs and gave them any sort of job. There was no point in that. They must be brought out in any case.

The Fuehrer said that if we left a division at the narrows at Kertsch, had both coastal and A.A. batteries properly manned, and the G.A.F. there was ready to attack, and the Navy patrolled the whole area between Feodosia and Yalta, then he did not think that anything could happen there.

Italy

Jodl handed the Fuehrer a chart showing the coastal batteries on the German occupied part of the Italian coast. These marked in red were there, but not yet ready for action. These in blue were ready for action.

The Fuehrer remarked that "this" was a long stretch of 200km. but then, they could not, of course, land everywhere along that 200 km. What was the position in Istria ?

Jodl confessed that we had nothing there. Something would have to be sent.

The Fuehrer agreed. They would not make any more landings, they were much too cowardly for that. The landing at Salerno had been made with the connivance of the Italians.

A.4. Rocket

Jodl asked about the use of the A.4. Was it to be reported, was it to be made public or not ? The reason why he asked was that there had been various reports in the press, and queries had been received from Budapest, on the strength of a statement made by Ley that a new weapon would be in use within 6 weeks, which would raze whole towns in England to the ground. Was it to be mentioned publicly at all ?

The Fuehrer said it was not.

Jodl said he would not fix a date in any case, as that might well lead to disappointments. It had already been generally said that we had

/something

something, but that would not no harm.

The Fuehrer agreed that it was already known. The only ones who did not know about it, were the great mass of the German People. All the others knew about it, though.

Air Situation

Below reported on the activities of the Luftwaffe. In the West little had taken place because of bad weather. No improvement was expected tonight.

In the East, Luftlotte 4 had been able to operate since 10.00 hrs. Neither Luftlotte 6 nor Luftlotte 1 had been able to send out aircraft due to fog and bad weather.

In the South East, 55 bombers and divebombers had been sent to attack Ieros.

In the South an attack on the harbour of Naples had resulted in damage being carried to 34,000 GRT of shipping. Apart from this, no operations had been possible

Buhle pointed out that the Luftwaffenfelddivisionen in the West were all unarmed, they hadn't any more of these guns. What we had received from Italy had been of poor quality.

Italian Booty

The Fuehrer asked what the general position was with regard to captured Italian material.

Buhle replied that as far as guns were concerned, they were practically worthless.

The Fuehrer suggested that the Italian factories should not be converted to make German weapons, but should continue to produce Italian guns. This would be much more convenient. If we could not use it for any other purpose, the Italian 12cm gun could at least be used for coastal defence. We would be very glad of them. We should also go on producing their 9cm A.A. guns for which we could always find a use in coastal defence. To convert the factories would take at least two years. It was always claimed that it would be completed in a year, but then you would find that in January '45 we would get one gun, in February another, in March perhaps two, and April two etc. in other words, nothing worth mentioning. In that time we would be getting 12 or 15 a month of the others, if we continued the production of Italian guns. By using the 9cm A.A. gun for coastal defence, we would be releasing German guns for use elsewhere. If we converted now, we would not get anything for this war. Had we not made that stupid conversion at the Skoda works, we would have got our howitzers, and by now would have at least 1000 decent field howitzers. As it was, we had received nothing. It was the same in this case. With our enormous demand for coastal guns, their 9 cm A.A. was very suitable. The 7.5cm could also be used against landing craft. The 7.5cm A.A. gun made by Ansaldo had the same range as the 88mm.

(END OF CONFERENCE)

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