

9. German planning for war; Speech by General Jodl¹

7 NOVEMBER 1943

Planning to Overthrow the Versailles Treaty

Introduction: Reichsleiter Bormann has requested me to give you a review today of the strategic position in the beginning of the 6th Year of War.

I must admit that it was not without hesitation that I undertook this none too easy task. It is not possible to do it justice with a few generalities. It is not necessary to say openly what is. No one the Fuehrer has ordered may know more or be told more than he needs for his own immediate task, but I have no doubt at all in my mind, Gentlemen, but that you need a great deal in order to be able to cope with your tasks. It is in your Gaus, after all, and among their inhabitants that all the enemy propaganda, the defeatism, and the malicious rumours concentrate, that try to find themselves a plan among our people. Up and down the country the devil of subversion strides. All the cowards are seeking a way out, or as they call it a political solution. They say, we must negotiate while there is still something in hand, and all these slogans are made use of to attack the natural sense of the people, that in this war there can only be a fight to the end. Capitulation is the end of the Nation, the end of Germany. Against this wave of enemy propaganda and cowardice you need more than force. You need to know the true situation and for this reason I believe that I am justified in giving you a perfectly open and uncolored account of the state of affairs. This is no forbidden disclosure of secrets, but a weapon which may perhaps-help you to fortify the morale of the people. For this war will not only be decided by the force of arms but by the will of the whole people. Germany was broken in 1918 not at the front but at home.

Italy suffered not military defeat but morale defeat. She broke down internally. The result has been not the peace she expected but - through the cowardice of these criminal traitors, a fate thousand times harder than

¹The determination and the plans of the Nazi conspirators to remove the restrictions of Versailles, started very early. This fact is confirmed by their own statements, their boasts of long planning and careful execution. Hitler, in his speech to all Supreme Commanders on 23 November 1939, stated that his primary goal was to wipe out Versailles (789-PS). And Jodl, as Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces, delivered an address after four years of war, on 7 November 1943, in which he traced the development of German strength (L-172). The seizure of power to him meant the restoration of fighting sovereignty, including conscription occupation of the Rhineland, and rearmament, with special emphasis on modern armor and air forces. In his speech, entitled "The Strategic Position at the Beginning of the 5th Year of War," General Jodl gave a retrospective summary of the war for the benefit of the Reich and Gau leaders.

continuation of the war at our side would have brought to the Italian people. I can rely on you, Gentlemen, that since I give concrete figures and data concerning our own strength, you will treat these details as your secret; all the rest is at your disposal without restriction for application in your activities as leaders of the people.

The necessity and objectives of this war were clear to all and everyone at the moment when we entered upon the War of Liberation of Greater Germany and by attacking parried the danger which menaced us both from Poland and from the Western powers. Our further incursions into Scandinavia, in the direction of the Mediterranean, and in that of Russia, these also aroused no doubts concerning the general conduct of the war so long as we were successful. It was not until more serious set-backs were encountered and our general situation began to become increasingly acute, that the German people began to ask itself whether perhaps we had not undertaken more than we could do and set our aims too high. To provide an answer to this questioning and to furnish you with certain points of view for use in your own explanatory activities is one of the main points of my present lecture. I shall divide it into three parts:

- I. A review of the most important development up to the present.
- II. Consideration of the present situation.
- III. The foundation of our morale and our confidence in victory.

In view of my position as military advisor to the Fuehrer, I shall confine myself in my remarks to the problems of my own personal sphere of action, fully appreciating at the same time that in view of the protean nature of this war, I shall in this way be giving expression only to one side of events.

I. Review

1. The fact that the National Socialist movement and its struggle for internal power were the preparatory stage of the outer liberation from the bonds of the Dictate of Versailles is not one on which I need enlarge in this circle. I should like however to mention at this point how clearly all thoughtful regular soldiers realize what an important part has been played by the National Socialist movement in reawakening the will to fight [Wehrwillen] in nurturing fighting strength [Wehrkraft] and in rearming the German people. In spite of all the virtue inherent in it, the numerically small Reichswehr would never have been able to cope with this task, if only because of its own restricted radius of action. Indeed, what the Fuehrer aimed at and has so happily been successful in bringing about was the fusion of these two forces.

2. The seizure of power in its turn has meant in the first place restoration of fighting sovereignty [Wehrhoheit conscription, occupation of the Rhineland] and rearmament with special emphasis being laid on the creation of a modern armoured and air arm.

3. The Austrian 'Anschluss' in its turn, brought with it not only the fulfillment of an old national aim but also had the effect both of reinforcing our fighting strength and of materially improving our strategic position. Whereas up till then the territory of Czechoslovakia had projected in a most menacing way right into Germany (a wasp waist in the direction of France and an air base for the Allies, in particular Russia), Czechoslovakia herself was now enclosed by pincers.

Its own strategic position had now become so unfavorable that she was bound to fall a victim to any attack pressed home with rigour before effective aid from the West could be expected to arrive. "This possibility of aid was furthermore made more difficult by the construction of the West Wall, which, in contra-distinction to the Maginot Line, was not a measure based on debility and resignation but one intended to afford rear cover for an active policy in the East.

4. The bloodless solution of the Czech conflict in the autumn of 1938 and spring of 1939 and the annexation of Slovakia rounded off the territory of Greater Germany in such a way that it now became possible to consider the Polish problem on the basis of more or less avourable strategic premises.

This brings me to the actual outbreak of the present war, and the question which next arises is whether the moment for the struggle with Poland - in itself unavoidable - was favorably selected or not. The answer to this question is all the less in doubt since the opponent after all, not inconsiderable in himself collapsed unexpectedly quickly, and the Western Powers who were his friends, while they did declare war on us and form a second front, yet for the rest made no use of the possibilities open to them of snatching the initiative from our hands. Concerning the course of the Polish campaign, nothing further need be said beyond that it proved in a measure which made the whole world sit up and take notice a point which up till then had not been certain by any means; that is, the high state 'of efficiency of the young Armed Forces of Great Germany.

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