

Memorandum of a conversation between Hitler, Ribbentrop and Ciano at Obersalzberg August 13, 1939.

"The Fuehrer said that since the last conversation, he had been considering the whole position. Ribbentrop had meanwhile told him that in the circumstances Ciano had decided not to conclude the conversation with a communique. The Fuehrer agreed with this decision. The door was therefore open, no-one was committed and no course was blocked."

"The Fuehrer had also come to the conclusion, as he had said in a previous conversation, that the danger of delaying too long into the autumn was that Poland would be able to carry out its relatively limited aims." Danzig could be blockaded by Poland during period of bad weather when German army was immobilized. Poland was therefore playing for time. "The Fuehrer had therefore come to two definite conclusions, 1) in the event of any further provocation, he would immediately attack, 2) if Poland did not clearly and plainly state her political intention, she must be forced to do so. It should not be forgotten that the test of nerves which the Poles had begun by means of continual instances of provocation had now lasted for three months. Any sign of giving way would, in view of the Slav mentality, bring a violent reaction of over-confidence on the part of the Poles. Surrender would not, in any way, strengthen the German position but would be regarded by every other country as a sign of weakness. If the Western Democracies had already decided to move against the Axis, they would not in any case wait for three or four years before carrying out their plan and attack only at a time when the Axis Powers had completed their necessary preparations, but they would pass the earlier conflict. If, however, they had not yet come to a decision in the matter (and the Fuehrer thought that in the state of their armaments they had not come to this decision), the best way of preventing them would be to deal with the Polish matter quickly. In general, however, success by one of the Axis partners would result not only in strategical but also psychological strengthening of the other partner and also of the whole Axis. Italy carried through a number of successful operations in Abyssinia, Spain and Albania and each time against the wishes of the Democratic Entente. These individual actions have not only strengthened Italian local interests but had also reinforced her general position. The same was the case with German actions in Austria and Czechoslovakia. Here also not only had German local interest been strengthened but the

general position had been reinforced. The Axis had thereby won considerable victories. If one were to consider what would have happened if these individual operations had not been successful and to ask what the position of Germany would then have been, one reached a similar conclusion. The strengthening of the Axis by these individual operations was of the greatest importance for the unavoidable clash with the Western Powers. As matters now stand, Germany and Italy would simply not exist further in the world through lack of space; not only was there no more space but existing space was completely blockaded by its present possessors, they sat like misers with their heaps of gold and deluded themselves about their riches. The Western Democracies were dominated by the desire to rule the world and would not regard Germany and Italy as their class. This psychological element of contempt was perhaps the worst thing about the whole business. It could only be settled by a life and death struggle which the two Axis partners could meet more easily because their interests did not clash on any point." Speaks of rightful claims in Mediterranean belonging to Italy. "Ribbentrop added that if the two problems mentioned in yesterday's conversation were settled, Italy and Germany would have their backs free for work against the West. The Fuehrer said that Poland must be struck down so that for (250) years she was incapable of fighting. In such a case matters in the West could be settled." Ciano thanked and promised to report to Duce. There might be no need for the Duce to make a decision if the conflict with Poland could be localized; so far the Fuehrer had always been right. "If however Mussolini had no decision to make, he had to take certain measures of precaution and therefore Ciano would put the following question:

The Fuehrer had mentioned two conditions under which he would take Poland 1) if Poland were guilty of serious provocation and 2) if Poland did not make her political position clear. The first of these conditions depended on the Fuehrer's decision, and German reaction could follow it in a moment. The second condition required certain conditions as to times. Ciano therefore asked what was the date by which Poland must have satisfied Germany about her political condition. He realized that this date depended upon climactic conditions.

The Fuehrer answered that the decision of Poland must be made clear at the latest by the end of August. Since however the decisive part of the military operations against Poland could be carried out within a period

of 14 days and the final liquidation would need another 4 weeks, it could be finished at the end of September or the beginning of October; these could be regarded as the dates. It followed therefore that the last dates on which he could begin to take action was the end of August. Finally the Fuehrer assured Ciano that since his youth he had favored German-Italian cooperation and that no other view was expressed in his books. He had always thought that Germany and Italy were naturally suited for collaboration since there were no conflicts of interests between them. He was personally fortunate to live at a time in which, apart from himself, there was one other statesman who would stand out great in history; that he could be this man's friend was for him a matter of great personal satisfaction and if the hour of common battle struck, he would always be found on the side of the Duce."