

Name: BLOMBERG, Werner von R'Kriegsminister	ZS Nr. 2060	Bd I	Vermerk:
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v. Blomberg  
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Interrogation of Field Marshal Werner Von Blomberg, former Reich War Minister and CinC, at 7th Army Interrogation Center, 29 August 1945.

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Q. How far was economic planning for a potential war, and for maximum military strength, carried in the pre-war period?

A. The real beginning in armament on any substantial scale was in 1935, when conscription was reintroduced and a rearmament plan for 12 corps and 36 divisions was initiated. Until January 1938 there was no restriction of living standards. Goering was no expert in economic matters and Schacht was the real brain behind the Four Year Plan which also enlisted the services of various state secretarial experts. The Four Year Plan required a lot of foreign exchange and the demand collided with that of the civilian economy and the established armament industry. Not much of the latter had been left after the Treaty of Versailles and a broadening of the base took time. If we exclude fats the foreign exchange demands of the civilian economy and for rearmament were about equal until 1937 and Hitler had given priority to the needs of the people. In January 1939 (when Blomberg emerged from retirement) a great change was noticeable. During 1938 much more gold and foreign exchange had been used for rearmament and the aggressive policy which began with the annexation of Austria had been accompanied by a great change in the attitude toward armament. Manpower and consumer goods shortages were now evident. There was a heavy draft of workers into the armament industry, the building of the Westwall and the Autobahnen. To me it seemed that Germany was by then living under war conditions. I was disturbed. Hitler said to Goebbels "I have no use for two men (Blomberg and Fritsch) who go around the ministries with warnings against war." Hitler told me that Germany would have to fight for freedom (like the reoccupation of Rhineland and the right to conscribe troops) only once more, and only in the 40's and on one front.

When the Rhineland was militarily reoccupied, and there was much tension, Hitler promised the generals that if an armed conflict appeared imminent he would withdraw.

On the occasion of my visit to London in 1937 for the coronation ceremonies I took the opportunity with Hitler to open up the question of the former German colonies and a possible friendship with England. I pointed out that in this matter, Germany must be patient, since England could not be pushed, and that confidence would have to be carefully cultivated. Hitler agreed.

In May-June 1937 when I went on an official visit to Italy I felt that Mussolini was greatly disappointed because I did not bring with me an offer of alliance. I felt that the Italian air force was the best part of their show but that it was more interested in records than in a good all round performance. The Navy was next - the personnel was O.K. especially on the U Boats of which there were approximately 100 in the Gulf of Naples. The Army was last in efficiency and the Italian generals were possessed with the idea of Blitzkrieg. I felt that Fascism was not a popular movement but was imposed from above and that it would collapse with Mussolini's death or other elimination.

Q. What were the preliminaries to the naval agreement with England?

A. In 1938 General v. Brauchitsch was asked to prepare a memo on the Sudeten question. The memo was written by Beck and signed by Brauchitsch. Beck was decidedly against the forcible occupation of the Sudetenland and prophesied that single acts of this sort would evidently lead to war both against the West and against Russia. Hitler always recurred to the theme

that he would not fight communism in Germany and at the same time show a friendly front toward Russia. When I was on a mission to Russia in 1938/39 and asked whether Russia would not repudiate communism in Germany, Voroshilov replied that this was an internal problem for Germany.

Q. Will you now tell us about industrial mobilisation and planning in Germany?

A. There was a plan for a larger army with a unified Wehrmacht and command with three separate services. The question of a separate air force or of its distribution between the Army and Navy was decided in Goering's favor. To coordinate the armament of the three services, eliminate competition among them and allocate manpower and materials a War Economic (Wehr-Wirtschaft) Staff was created (1) to receive the requirements of the three services, (2) to bring them into alignment and (3) to regulate the allocation of funds, manpower and materials on order of the OKW.

The demands on industry were great and many concerns specialized in only one weapon. This specialization was at first continued. The receipt of new orders aided further development and Gen. Thomas and I made frequent visits to both old and new plants. There was always a shortage of skilled workers in spite of the inception of a training program by the DAF. The OKW realized the need and supported greater efforts in this direction.

In theory there was planning for a broad mobilization of industry, but the practical achievements were restricted. The target of the original armament program was to make Germany competent to wage a defensive war and remained so until the end of 1937. Industry was slow to respond to the rearmament program and had to be stimulated. Subsidies were given for the expansion of plants (specific plants without any global program) and the actual orders were of course a stimulus.

Schacht was the man with whom the financing of armament had to be cleared and was a leading figure in the program. (Von Krosigh did not play a great part). The services prepared their estimates which were submitted first to Thomas, who made redirections and then to Schacht who, in discussion, might reduce requirements. The resulting compromise was always carried out. The Minister of Finance had to provide the global sum which was allocated by Thomas among the three services. In the early stages of the Four Year Plan food imports had priority and during the Schachtian regime the needs of consumers were given equal weight with the rearmaments of the armed forces. Armaments received priority only in 1938. Hitler always refused to reduce the building program (Autobahnen) as a means of promoting armament. Schacht, Darre and later Backe represented the needs of the civilian sector, the OKW those of rearmament and Hitler the building program. Schacht, not Hitler, was in his day the final arbiter in the allocation.

Q. Did the German people believe the war propaganda?

A. The Polish campaign was quite evidently an aggressive war, but in the Western campaign the line that Germany had been attacked and that the Germans must fight for their lives was believed. On the other hand nobody believed that, as was put out, the Russian campaign was to forestall Russian aggression.

Q. Was there ever any real intention to make a stand in an inner fortress?

A. I know only that an officer of the Waffen SS Corps sent an adjutant to me in March 1945 to say that Himmler had decided to set up an impregnable redoubt in the Alps and that, to prevent my capture, I was to be liquidated. He told me to flee within 12 hours.