

Martin Bormann's Minutes of a Meeting at Hitler's Headquarters (July 16, 1941)

Abstract

German occupation policy was determined by racial-ideological as well as economic considerations. At the same time that various party and state offices were drawing up plans for a thousand-year reordering of Europe under German hegemony, most territories were being administered by more or less provisional occupation regimes, which supported Germany's war efforts through the economic exploitation of their respective regions. The chosen method of subjugation and the harshness with which it was applied was directly dependent upon the Nazis' racial valuation of the resident population—a fact that explains the especially brutal occupation policy in Eastern Europe. Martin Bormann's minutes of a meeting at the Führer's Headquarters on July 16, 1941, include Hitler's explanation of his general position on the conduct of the war in the East.

Source

Top Secret

Führer's Headquarters, July 16, 1941

A conference attended by Reichsleiter Rosenberg, Reich Minister Lammers, Field Marshal Keitel, the Reichsmarschall [Göring], and me was held today by order of the Führer at 3:00 p.m. in his quarters. The conference began at 3.00 p.m. and, including a break for coffee, lasted until about 8.00 p.m.

By way of introduction the Führer emphasized that he wished first of all to make some basic statements. Various measures were now necessary; this was confirmed, among other events, by an assertion made in an impudent Vichy newspaper that the war against the Soviet Union was Europe's war and that therefore it had to be conducted for Europe as a whole. Apparently, the Vichy paper meant to say by these hints that it ought not to be the Germans alone who benefited from this war, but that all European states ought to benefit from it.

So it is now essential that we do not proclaim our aims before the whole world; also, is not necessary, but the chief thing is that we ourselves should know what we want. In no case should our own way be made more difficult by superfluous declarations. Such declarations are superfluous because wherever our power extends, we can do everything, and beyond the sphere of our power, we cannot do anything anyway.

What we tell the world about the motives for our measures ought to be conditioned, therefore, by tactical reasons. We ought to proceed here in exactly the same way as we did in the cases of Norway, Denmark, Holland and Belgium. In these cases, too, we said nothing about our aims, and if we were clever we would continue in the same way.

So once again, we shall emphasize that we have been obliged to occupy, administer, and secure a certain area; it was in the interest of the inhabitants that we provide order, food, traffic, etc., hence our measures. It should not be evident that a definitive regime is thereby being initiated! We can nevertheless take all necessary measures—shooting, relocation, etc.—and we shall take them.

But we do not want to make any people into enemies prematurely and unnecessarily. Therefore, we shall act as though we wanted to exercise a mandate only. It must be clear to *us*, however, that we shall never

withdraw from these areas.

Accordingly, we should act:

1. To do nothing which may obstruct the definitive regime, while preparing for it in secret;
2. To emphasize that we are liberators.

In particular:

The Crimea has to be evacuated by all foreigners and to be settled by Germans only.

In the same way the former Austrian part of Galicia will become Reich territory.

Our relations with Romania are presently good, but one does not know what our relations will be at any future time. We have to consider this, and we have to draw our frontiers accordingly. One ought not to depend on the good will of other people; we must organize relations with Romania according to this principle.

Fundamentally, we have now to face the task of cutting up the giant cake according to our needs, in order to be able: first, to dominate it; second, to administer it; and third, to exploit it.

The Russians have now given an order for partisan warfare behind our front. This partisan war again has some advantage for us; it enables us to exterminate everyone who opposes us.

The following principles are fundamental:

Never again must it be possible to create a military power west of the Urals, even if we have to wage war for a hundred years in order to attain this goal. All successors of the Führer must know: Security for the Reich exists only if there are no foreign military forces west of the Urals; it is Germany who undertakes the protection of this area against all possible dangers. Our iron principle must be and must remain:

We must never permit anybody but the Germans to carry arms!

This is especially important. Even when it seems easier at first to enlist the armed support of foreign, subjugated nations, it is wrong to do so; this will prove someday to be to our disadvantage absolutely and unavoidably. Only the German may carry arms, not the Slav, nor the Czech, nor the Cossack, nor the Ukrainian!

On no account should we apply a wavering policy such as was done in Alsace before 1918. What distinguishes the Englishman is his constant and consistent following of *one* line and *one* aim. In this respect we must learn absolutely from him. Therefore, we ought never to base our position on specific, individual persons; here again the conduct of the British in India towards the Indian princes, etc., ought to be an example: The soldier must always secure the regime!

We have to create a Garden of Eden in the newly won eastern territories; they are vitally important to us; as compared with them, colonies play a far less significant role.

Even if we divide up certain areas at once, we shall always proceed in the role of protectors of the law and of the population. The terms which are necessary at this time should be selected in accordance with this principle: We shall not speak of new Reich territory, but of the task which became necessary because of the war.

[...]

The Führer emphasized that the entire Baltic area must become Reich territory.

Likewise the Crimea, including a considerable hinterland (the area north of the Crimea), must become Reich territory; the hinterland must be as large as possible.

[...]

The Führer emphasized further that the Volga colony too will have to become Reich territory, also the district around Baku; the latter will have to become a German concession (military colony).

[...]

The annexation of Finland as a federated state should be prepared with great caution. The area around Leningrad is wanted by the Finns; the Führer will have Leningrad razed to the ground before he hands it over to the Finns.

[...]

The Reichsmarschall, however, emphasized the most important criteria which must be exclusively important for us for the time being: securing food supplies, and as far as necessary, the economy; securing the roads, etc.

[...]

Reichsleiter Rosenberg then broached the question of providing for the security of the administration.

[...]

Field Marshal Keitel emphasized that the inhabitants themselves ought to be made responsible for their affairs, because it was of course impossible to put a sentry in front of every shed or railway station. The inhabitants had to understand that anybody who did not perform his duties properly would be shot, and that they would be held responsible for every offense.

[...]

After the break the Führer emphasized that we had to understand that the Europe of today was nothing but a geographical term; in reality Asia extended up to our frontiers.

[...]

Source of English translation: Unsigned Memorandum (July 16, 1941), in United States Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918–1945: From the Archives of the German Foreign Ministry*. Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1964. Series D (1937–1945), The War Years, Volume 13: June 23–December 11, 1941. Document Number 114 (Nuremberg Document 221-L), pp. 149–56. Edited by GHI staff.

Source of original German text: Aktenvermerk vom 16. Juli 1941, in *Der Prozess gegen die Hauptkriegsverbrecher vor dem Internationalen Militärgerichtshof. Nürnberg 14. November 1945 – 1. Oktober 1946*. Volume XXXVIII, *Amtlicher Text – Deutsche Ausgabe, Urkunden und anderes Beweismaterial*. Nuremberg 1949. Reprint: Munich, Delphin Verlag, 1989. Document 221-L, pp. 86–94.

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