TRANSLATION OF DOCUMENT NO. 798-PS
Office of U.S. Chief of Counsel.

The Führer's speech to the Commanders in Chief on 22 August 1939.

I have called you together to give you a picture of the political situation, in order that you may have insight into the individual elements on which I have based my decision to act and in order to strengthen your confidence.

After this we will discuss military details.

It was clear to me that a conflict with Poland had to come sooner or later. I had already made this decision in spring, but I thought that I would first turn against the West in a few years, and only afterwards against the East. But the sequence cannot be fixed. One cannot close one's eyes even before a threatening situation. I wanted to establish an acceptable relationship with Poland in order to fight first against the West. But this plan, which was agreeable to me, could not be executed, since essentialspoints have changed. It became clear to me, that Poland would attack us in case of a conflict with the West. Poland wants access to the sea. The further development became obvious after the occupation of the Memel region, and it became clear to me that under circumstances a conflict with Poland could arise at an inopportune moment. I enumerate as reasons for this reflection:

1)First of all two personal constitutions:

My own personality and that of Mussolini.

Essentially it depends on me, my existence, because of my political activities. Furthermore the fact that probably no one will ever again have the confidence of the whole German people as I do. There will probably never again be a man in the future with more authority than I have. My existence is therefore a factor of great value. But I can be eliminated at any time by a criminal or an idiot.

The second personal factor is the Duce. His existence is also decisive. If something happens to him, Italy's loyalty to the alliance will no longer be certain. The basic attitude of the Italian court is against the Duce. Above all, the court sees in the expansion of the empire a burden. The Duce is the man with the strongest nerves in Italy.

The third factor favorable for us is Franco. We can ask only benevolent neutrality from Spain. But this depends on Franco's personality. He guarantees a certain uniformity and steadiness of the present system in Spain. We must take into account the fact that Spain does not as yet have a Fascist party of our internal unity.

On the other side a negative picture as far as decisive personalities are concerned. There is no outstanding personality in England or France.

For us it is easy to make decision. We have nothing to lose; we can only gain. Our economic situation is such, because of our restrictions, that we cannot hold out more than a few years. Goering can confirm this. We have no other choice, we must act. Our opponents risk much and can gain only a little. England's stake in a war is unimaginably great. Our enemies have men who are below average. No personalities. No masters, no men of action.

Besides the personal factor, the political situation is favorable for us; in the Mediterranean rivalry among Italy, France, and England, in the Orient tension, which leads to the alarming of the Mohammedan world.

The English empire did not emerge from the last war [illegible] strengthened. From a maritime point of view, nothing was achieved. Conflict between England and Ireland. The South African Union became more independent. Concessions had to be made to India. England is in great danger. Unhealthy industries. A British statesman can look into the future only with concern.

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France's position has also deteriorated particularly in the Mediterranean.

Further favorable factors for us are these:

Since Albania there is an equilibrium of power in the Balkans. Yugoslavia carries the germ of collapse because of her internal situation.

Rumania did not grow stronger. She is liable to attack and vulnerable. She is threatened by Hungary and Bulgaria. Since Kemal's death, Turkey has been ruled by small minds, unsteady, weak men.

All these fortunate circumstances will no longer prevail in 2 to 3 years. No one knows how long I shall live. Therefore conflict better now.

The creation of Greater Germany was a great achievement politically, but militarily it was questionable, since it was achieved throught a bluff of the political leaders. It is necessary to test the military. If at all possible, not by general settlement, but by solving individual tasks.

The relation to Poland has become unbearable. My Polish policy hitherto was in contrast to the ideas of the people. My propositions to Poland(Danzig corridor) were disturbed by England's intervention. Poland changed her tone toward us. The initiative cannot be allowed to pass to the others. This moment is more favorable then in 2 to 3 years. An attempt on my life or Mussolini's could change the situation to our disadvantage. One cannot eternally stand opposite one another with cocked rifle. A suggested compromise would have demanded that we change our convictions and make agreeable gestures. They talked to us again in the language of Versailles. There was danger of losing prestige. Now the probability is still great that the West will not interfere. We must accept the risk with reckless resolution. A politician must accept a risk as much as a military leader. We are facing the alternative to strike or to be destroyed with certainty sooner or later.

Reference to previous risks.

I would have been stoned if I had not carried my point. The most dangerous step was the invasion of the neutral zone. Only a week before, I got a warning through France. I have always accepted a great risk in the conviction that it may succeed.

Now it is also a great risk. Iron nerves, iron resolution.

The following special reasons strengthen my idea. England and France are obligated, neither is in a position for it. There is no actual rearmament in England, just propaganda. It has done much damage that many reluctant Germans said and wrote to Englishmen after the seluction of the Czech question; The Führer carried his point because you lost your nerve, because you capitulated too soon. This explains the present propaganda war. The English speak of a war of nerves. It is one element of this war of nerves forpresent the increase of armament. But how is British rearmament in actual fact. The construction program of the Navy for 1938 has not yet been filled. Only mobilization of the reserve fleet. Purchase of fishing steamers. Considerable strengthening of the Navy, not before 1941 or 1942.

Little has been done on land. England will be able to send a maximum of 3 divisions to the continent. A little has been done for the air force, but it is only a beginning. AA defense is in its beginning stages. At the moment England has only 150 AA guns. The new A gun has been ordered. It will take a long time until enough have been produced. Fire directors are lacking. England is still vulnerable from the air. This can change in 2 to 3 years. At the moment the English air force has only 130,000 men, France 72 000 men, Poland 15,000 men. England does not want the conflict to break out for two or three years.

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The following is characteristic for England. Poland wanted a loan from England for rearmament. England, however, only gave credit in order to make sure that Poland buys in England, although England cannot deliver. This means that England does not really want to support Poland. She does not risk 8 million pounds in Poland, although she put half a billion into China. England's position in the world is very precarious. She will not accept any risks.

France lacks men(decline of the birth rate). Little has been done for rearmament. The artillery is antiquated. France did not want to enter on this adventure. The West has only two possibilities to fight against us:

1)Blockade: It will not be effective because of our autarchy and because we have sources of aid in the east.

2) Attack from the west from the Maginot line: I consider this impossible.

Another possibility is the violation of Dutch, Belgium, and Swiss neutrality. I have no doubts that all these states as well as Skandinavia will defend their neutrality by all available means. England and France will not violate the neutrality of these countries. Actually England cannot help Poland. There remains an attack on Italy. A military attack is out of the question. No one is counting on a long war. If Mr. von Brandutch had told me that I would need 4 years to conquer Poland I would have replied: then it cannot be done. It is nonsense to say that England wants to wage a long war.

We will hold our position in the West until we have conquered Poland. We must be conscious of our great production. It is much bigger than in 1914-1918.

The enemy had another hope, that Russia would become our emeny after the conquest of Poland. The enemy did not count on my great power of resolution. Our enemies are little worms. I saw them in Munich.

I was convinced that Stalin would never accept the England offer. Russia has no interest in maintaining Poland and Stalin knows that it is the end of his regime no matter whether his soldiers come out of a war victorious or beaten. Litvinow's replacement was decisive. I brought about the change toward Russia gradually. In connection with the commercial treaty we got into political conversation. Proposal of a non-agression pact. Then came a general proposal from Russia. Four days ago I took a special step, which brought it about that Russia answered yesterday that she is ready to sign. The personal contract with Stalin is established. The day after tomorrow von Ribbentrop will conclude the treaty. Now Poland is in the position in which I wanted her.

We need not be afraid of a blockade. The East will supply us with grain, cattle, coal, lead and zinc. It is a big arm, which demands great efforts. I am only afraid that at the last minute some Schweinehund will make a proposal for mediation.

The political arm is set farther. A beginning has been made for the destruction of England's hegemony. The way is open for the soldier, after I have made the political preparations.

Today's publication of the non-agression pact with Russia hit like a shell. The consequences cannot be overlooked. Stalin also said that this course will be of benefit to both countries. The effect on Poland will be tremendous.

Goering answers with thanks to the Führer and the assurance that the armed forces will do their duty.

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CERTIFICATE OF TRANSLATION
OF DOCUMENT NO. 798-PS ;

15 Nov 1945.

I, Virginia von Schon, hereby certify that I am thoroughly conversant with the English and German languages and that the above is a correct and true translation of Document No. 798-PS.

Virginia von Schon
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