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A REVIEW OF THE WAR POSITION.

*Memorandum by the Prime Minister.*

THE time has come to review the whole field of the war and place its salient features in their true proportion.

2. The first is the immense power of the German military machine. Because the German armies have been so long busy in Russia, we are apt to forget this terrible engine. When we feel what a couple of Panzer divisions and the 90th German Light Division can do in North Africa against our greatly superior numbers and resources, we have no excuse for underrating German military power in 1943 and 1944. It will always be possible for them to set up a holding front against Russia and bring back fifty or sixty, or even more, divisions to the West. They could make the transference with very great rapidity across the main railway lines of Europe. We have no right to count upon a collapse of German military power on the European Continent. In the event of the overthrow of the Nazi régime, it is almost certain that the power would pass to the Chiefs of the German Army, who are by no means ready to accept the kind of terms which Britain and the United States deem essential to future world security.

3. The second main fact is seaborne tonnage. We can only get through this year by running down our stocks heavily. At the cost of much internal friction and disturbance, we may, by "tightening the belt," save perhaps a million tons. Whether this should be done as a moral exercise, should be carefully weighed. It can, however, have no appreciable effect upon the problem of maintaining our war effort at home and abroad. There is no reason to assume that we cannot get through the present year or that the tonnage position in 1943 will not steadily improve as a result of the prodigious American shipbuilding. But we must be careful not to let our position deteriorate to an

unmanageable degree before we have a clear understanding with the United States as to the future. With this object we must now in the next few weeks come to a solemn compact, almost a treaty, with the United States about the share of their new building we are to get in 1943 and 1944. Up till the time when the United States entered the war, we had pretty well recouped ourselves for our losses by acquiring control of the shipping of Continental States as they were successively subjugated by the enemy. No more windfalls can be expected from this source. We can only expand our own building sensibly at dire expense to our war effort. Nothing we can do can change our minimum import requirements appreciably. The tonnage needed to guarantee these must be a first charge. We ought, therefore, to ask the United States to deliver to us during 1943 sufficient tonnage to occupy fully our available merchant crews. As it would be foolish to have large numbers of British life-trained merchant seamen and officers standing idle without ships while in the United States crews will have to be trained specially, our desire should not be deemed unreasonable.

4. On no account must we run our stocks down to a dangerous level for the sake of getting through 1942, without knowing where we stand in 1943. And the minimum stocks needed must not be written down unduly. Serious bombing of our ports might well hamstring our intake for considerable periods when we should be lost without something in the larder. Moreover, we should not start on the basis that the British should make a greater sacrifice of their pre-war standard of living than the American people. We should point out that any further curtailment of imports taking 1942 and 1943 together can only be made through a definite curtailment of our munitions output. Already nearly three-quarters of British and British-controlled shipping is primarily employed on the war effort, and only one-quarter is exclusively engaged in feeding and supplying this island.

5. It might be true to say that the issue of the war depends on whether Hitler's U-boat attack on Allied tonnage, or the increase and application of Allied Air power, reach their full fruition first. The growth of U-boat warfare and its spread to the most distant waters, as well as improvements in U-boat design, in a formidable degree must be expected. Against this may be set the increase of Allied anti-submarine craft and improvement in methods. But here is a struggle in itself.

6. On the other hand, we Allies have the Air power. In the days when we were fighting alone, we answered the question: "How are you going to win the war?" by saying: "We will shatter Germany by bombing." Since then the enormous injuries inflicted on the German Army and man-power by the Russians, and the accession of the man-power and munitions of the United States, have rendered other possibilities open. We look forward to mass invasion of the Continent by liberating armies, and general revolt of the populations against the Hitler tyranny. All the same, it would be a mistake to cast aside our original thought which, it may be mentioned, is also strong

in American minds, namely, that the severe, ruthless bombing of Germany on an ever-increasing scale will not only cripple her war effort, including U-boat and aircraft production, but will also create conditions intolerable to the mass of the German population.

7. It is at this point that we must observe with sorrow and alarm the woeful shrinkage of our plans for Bomber expansion. The needs of the Navy and of the Middle East and India, the shortfall of our British production programmes, the natural wish of the Americans to fly their own bombers against the enemy, and the inevitable delay in these machines coming into action, all these falling exclusively upon Bomber Command, have prevented so far the fruition of our hopes for this summer and autumn. We must regard the Bomber offensive against Germany at least as a feature in breaking her war-will second only to the largest military operations which can be conducted on the Continent until that war-will is broken. Renewed, intense efforts should be made by the Allies to develop during the winter and onwards ever-growing, ever more accurate and ever more far-ranging Bomber attacks on Germany. In this way alone can we prepare the conditions which will be favourable to the major military operations on which we are resolved. Provision must be made to ensure that the bombing of Germany is not interrupted, except perhaps temporarily, by the need of supporting military operations. Having regard to the fact that Allied aircraft construction already outnumbers Axis aircraft construction by between two and three to one, these requirements should not be unattainable.

8. Although no expansion of A.R.P. services can be accepted and, on the contrary, judicious pruning must still continue, we should be unwise to assume that heavy bombing attacks on Great Britain will not be renewed. At present over half of the German Bomber strength is occupied against Russia. By a transference to the West, the Germans could assemble during the next few months an equality in Bomber aircraft for our account. We have developed an elaborate, and indeed wonderful, system of scientific defence which has enabled us to await a renewal of the former "blitz" with confidence. If anything should go wrong with this scientific system of defence, even though the enemy were similarly affected, then the reciprocal bombing of both countries would be conducted on very much the conditions of the winter of 1940-41. Should this develop, our advantage over Germany would have to be expressed by the ever-increasing numerical superiority of our Bomber aircraft and the bomb-content capable of being discharged by us.

W. S. C.

July 21, 1942.

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