NOTE BY LORD TRENCHARD ON OUR WAR POLICY—AUGUST 1942.

ONCE a major plan has been decided on in war, nothing should be allowed to interfere with it or to divert elsewhere the means of carrying it out. Compromise in war plans is fatal.

Except by air power we, and our Allies, cannot get at our enemy in any theatre of war, except by crossing the seas.

Germany is our chief enemy. The only force by which we are able to carry war operations into German territory and directly against the war production and industrial life of the German nation is the aircraft of our Bomber Command. That Command comprises only a small proportion (probably not as much as 10 per cent.) of our total operational strength. It has to divert aircraft to support land operations in Egypt and elsewhere and to help the Coastal Command in the Battle of the Atlantic. It is regarded as a pool for all other operational Commands and for side shows, minor raids and experiments, and its success in its primary work is the constant cause for demand for diversion of its resources to help elsewhere.

We and the Americans are in course of organising huge armies (may be as much as 6 to 8 million for the United States alone). These armies will need enormous quantities of material and industrial man-power to maintain them; of merchant shipping to convey that material, and other ships (and aircraft) to protect it in convoy. It is doubtful if the sources of raw material available to the Allies will be sufficient to equip these forces and on a scale which will enable them to sustain heavy operations in the face of setbacks and wastage. Less and
less can the modern army fight "on its hump" and the lesson of the present war is that large forces are no use unless provided with ample material in the first line and in reserve.

Time is short and we are at a parting of the ways. The risk is that we shall try to go down two roads and that our Air Power will be inextricably entangled in large schemes and protracted operations of two dimensional warfare.

In the present year the small proportion of our Air power employed offensively against Germany has destroyed Rostock, Lubeck and a large part of Cologne. It has done considerable damage to submarine resources at Hamburg, Kiel, Augsburg, Deutz, Emden and Oberhausen. It destroyed the Renault works equivalent to the fighting vehicles and transport of five Panzer Divisions. It has hit hard at Gennevilliers and the Heinkel works. It has taken very heavy toll of enemy shipping.

Small though they have been in proportion to the total operational strength of the Air Force the raids have been on a larger scale than those of the heaviest raids delivered by Germany against this country. We have repeatedly exceeded the heaviest weight of bombs dropped in any single raid here—450 tons on London. In the raid on London on 10th May, 1941, 422 tons were dropped; in that on Coventry less than 200 tons. But we know very well that if Germany had been able to keep up her raids against London and a few great centres on the scale of these raids, our ability to sustain the war would have been in serious jeopardy. Germany was then in sight of victory through the direct use of her air power. She lost her chance because that air power got enmeshed in her land campaigns.

The same result is inevitable if we get committed to large land operations on the Continent. That will mean that our last bomb has been dropped on German territory and the whole of our air strength and that of the United States also will be needed to support a plan which, on the most favourable assumptions, will be very difficult and costly in life and which might result in utter disaster.

For the country to get mixed up this year or next in land warfare on the Continent of Europe is to play Germany's game — it is to revert to 1914-18. It is to bring in against us the one enormously powerful military asset remaining to her — namely, the German Army. Our strength and advantage over Germany is in the air—the British and the American Air Force.

If we are to win the war in a reasonable time we must avoid entanglement in land campaigns on the mainland of Europe and instead put everything into air power (British and American) against the enemy's vital spots. If we can put such force into attack from the air German morale and ability to continue the war will be broken. To do this we must concentrate. We must give the fullest air support to fields in which the Army is already engaged and we must supply the demands for aircraft from India.

On the other hand we have very considerable resources in trained personnel and material locked up in this country in the Army Co-operation Squadrons against some future time when we can send an Expeditionary Force to land where—in Europe?

I hope I appreciate as well as anyone that, if we failed to keep the seas open, we should finally lose the war, but our naval problems will not be lessened—they will, on the contrary, be greatly increased by further commitments in respect of transportation and support of new land forces. We have many reasons for limiting the calls made upon our naval resources for convoy and protection, not the least of which is the added complexity of operations by naval forces created by the impingement of air upon sea power. Two of the most important naval engagements of the war—Pearl Harbour and Midway Island—were decided without any of the ships on either side firing a shot at each other.

At present very considerable air resources are being employed on two-dimensional operations in the Atlantic, which are purely defensive. I have much admiration for the work of the Coastal Command, but I feel that the Bomber Command has, by its direct operations in Germany, done more to reduce the enemy's naval effort by attacks on surface ships and submarines at their harbours and bases. The place to hit the submarines is where they are made and to mine the seas where they emerge, instead only of hunting them over the illimitable sea.

Further, can we afford to run the risk of diversion of aircraft for the purpose of forming airborne forces on a scale out of proportion to any major effect on the war?

The strategy of warfare to-day is undergoing a greater change than that caused by the invention of gun-powder or the coming of the modern battleship.
The power of the air grows every day. It has progressed enormously since 1939. The bombs and the bomber to-day are vastly different from those in use when war broke out.

It is impossible to see the limit to air power even in the next twelve months. To-day air power decides the issue in every field. Only by means of it was the situation saved in Libya and Egypt. Malta can only be held if we can hold or defeat the attack from the air on our essential convoys.

The raid at Dieppe was only possible by the fullest use of air power. Its success or otherwise can be judged by what we achieved in the air.

Britain and America are growing stronger in the air every day. There is no realisable limit to the power we can achieve in this arm if we concentrate our efforts on a policy which realises what we can do—and do quickly.

If the right decision is made now and tenaciously adhered to it is easily possible to increase the scale of bombing attacks on Germany by something like ten times their present weight.

We have in our possession the opportunity of producing decisive effects if we realise now that air power has already been proved to be the dominant deciding and final power in the warfare of to-day and the future. If we pay lip-service only to this fact we shall disperse our air and use our present and potential superiority in this dominant force for defence instead of offence.

We shall be putting the cart before the horse—we shall be dissipating our present decisive superiority in support of long-drawn-out campaigns of costly battles which can only give us victory at the cost of hundreds of thousands of human lives.

It is already being demonstrated that the resources of the Allied Nations are going to be strained to the utmost to provide the raw material alone which is required for a policy of the equipment of 10 or 12 million soldiers—not to count the still greater demand for their subsequent maintenance in the field.

The policy of victory by land forces entails stupendous drains on material and on man-power. Air, the new dimension, the new power in military science, has given the Allied Nations the great alternative. If we decide to use it with determination and concentration, we cannot only save millions of lives but we can shorten the war by months, perhaps by years.

We have the decision in our hands, we have the weapon which the Germans have not—the weapon which the Germans banked on and failed to use in the right way.

Are we going to make the same mistake?

Whatever we decide we know to-day that air is going to be the factor in all military or naval actions of the future.

As the enemy conquered Poland and France by their "tank blitz" so can we smash the German machine by the "bomber blitz."

In a single attack a third of one of the most important areas in Germany was destroyed. The Prime Minister has promised that forty other areas shall be dealt with in the same way.

That promise is well within our means—but only if we use our bombers for what they were intended and do not allow them to be used in "tiny packets" here, there and everywhere.

Our present policy is half-hearted and feeble—Bomber Command is the Cinderella of our forces.

Can anyone foretell the results of even three months' ruthless bombing of Germany on the Cologne scale?

Finally, the carrying out of this policy requires that there should be one brain responsible for the purely military (in its widest sense) strategical conception of the war in Europe, supported, of course, by a staff representative of all three Services. It would be essential that this Commander should be one who believes in his weapon, the power of the Air, and should have had experience of command in this war—there are many such.

Then all the world, and both America and England, would see what the policy was, and it would be easier to adhere to it.

TRENCHARD.

August 29, 1942.