Britain Accepts the Challenge

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From this it is evident that an economic revolution is aimed at, the repercussions of which could not fail to extend across the Atlantic. With the wealth of the British, French, Dutch and Scandinavian merchant fleets under her control, Germany will have command of the seas in every mercantile sense. She will inherit the British markets in Latin America since she, and not this country will be able to absorb their products.

But Nazi aims do not stop at economic penetration. The ambitions of Herr Hitler, as announced by his own spokesmen, envisage even the occupation of territory in Brazil, Uruguay and the Argentine.

If this is achieved, the United States will find itself confronted in the West by an Europa Germanica, in the South by a flanking movement—both above and below the Panama Canal Zone. Mexico is also a fertile field for Nazi operations—and in the Orient, by an enriched and invigorated Japan. Unless America is prepared, both physically and morally, to meet this challenge to her national interests, she will be forced to make a capitulation in comparison with which the Munich Agreement will appear as a diplomatic victory for Great Britain and France.

But there are deeper issues even than these. If we perish in this struggle, the United States will become the last refuge of democracy and liberty, and the American people will become the ultimate trustees of individual freedom.

You cannot fail to accept this responsibility; and in accepting it, you must not fail to be ready to meet the challenge which it implies. We shall bequeath to you, as sole guardians, that common tradition of "a deathless attachment to freedom" which our two countries have shared for generations. If we go down, can we do so with the assurance that here, in this land, this tradition will continue to be cherished and championed, and that you will have learned from us the lesson and the penalty of being unprepared?

When the sweetened tones of Nazi leaders declare that Germany is satisfied with what she has gained and has no further ambitions—remember that this promise was made in turn to Austria, to Czechoslovakia, to Poland, to Denmark, to Belgium and to Holland.

This is the warning which will be written in flames above the ruins of Europe.

"Be strong and well-prepared and place no trust in Nazi promises."

I have tried to portray for you the two possible futures which confront my country, and, if the latter is a gloomy one, I would not have you think that my faith in Britain is shattered. We have made our choice and, in accepting it, you will have learned from us the lesson and the penalty of being unprepared.

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of a world-wide tragedy. For the issue at stake is more than the existence or downfall of the British Empire—if this were all, there would be little to distinguish this war from the many that have gone before it—the issue at stake is the future of mankind, the possible triumph of a new Ideology which will determine the development of Europe, and perhaps of much beyond, on lines which we believe to be evil and abominable.

All this was present in the mind of the man-in-the-street in Great Britain when he went to war on September 3rd of last year. It may have lacked eloquent expression, and in many cases it had not been fully analyzed, but it was deep in the heart of every cockney and every countryman. For this is a war in which the people feel they have a part. The man-in-the-street knows well that it is his struggle which was being fought in France, and which will be fought tomorrow in England itself, and he realizes that the threat to the very fundamentals of his democratic faith can only be ended by the destruction of the generating force of Nazi ambition.

To the British, therefore, the answer to the question: "Why are you fighting?" is clear and evident. We are fighting to defeat and destroy that aggressive and brutal mentality in our enemies which seeks continually to dominate other peoples by force, which wantonly violates the neutrality of inoffensive States, and which justifies the repudiation of its own pledged word whenever it finds it convenient. We are fighting for our lives. We are fighting in defence of our own Empire. We are fighting to bring about restitution for the wrongs done to the long and growing list of the victims of Nazi aggression—to Austria, to Czechoslovakia, to Poland, to Denmark, to Norway, to Belgium, to Holland, and to Luxembourg—and, especially, to France.

But above all else we are fighting in defence, and for the preservation, of that basic factor of our faith—our individual freedom; freedom of conscience and utterance, freedom from arbitrary arrest and punishment; freedom from concentration camps and firing squads, and from all the other sneaking, cruel machinery of the secret police system.

We are fighting as the Scots fought for Robert the Bruce—"Not for glory, nor for wealth, but for that freedom which no man can surrender, which in his own blood he keeps and bleeds for." This is the cause for which we fight, and in its defence we are prepared to shoulder heavier burdens, to suffer greater sacrifices, to make the offering of "blood, tears, toil and sweat" which our chosen leaders have demanded of us. In defence of this cause we must either conquer or perish—for to us, at least, it is self-evident that the world cannot exist half Nazi and half free.

We need the sense of our cause for many reasons. We need it to give us the resolution and drive and self-sacrifice necessary for victory. We need it to meet, with continued hope and courage, the reverses which are inevitable in war. We need it that when the end of the war confronts us with problems as great as the war itself, we can attack them with the confidence which comes from a clear purpose. We need it to keep our minds sweet, when offences against international law and against human decency may arise, and when personal loss and the grinding hardships and inhumanity of war threaten to deprive us of sane judgment.

Above all we need the sense of our cause to sustain us in contemplating the future—and the future holds for us but two alternatives, victory or defeat.

If our cause triumphs, we cannot promise immediately a reign of sweetness and light—passions slowly aroused must inevitably subside slowly—but we can promise a renewal of honest endeavour, profiting by the errors of the past, striving to avoid the pitfalls of the future. But Britain there will be three major problems. First, we must put aside, as soon as is practicable, the armour of authoritarian government which we have gladly and willingly assumed to meet and parry the threats of our more powerfully armoured foes. We have assumed this method of government as a temporary protection because we could no longer afford to give our enemy that great advantage in organization and production which the centralized authority of a dictatorship has over the more dilatory methods of a democracy. As soon as the danger against which this precaution was taken has passed, we must resume those unfettered liberties which we have voluntarily abdicated.

Secondly, we have to create security for ourselves and for the other peoples who have been threatened and victimized by Nazi aggressions.

Thirdly, there must be founded a New Order in which Germany must resume her place in European civilization, for even the most complete victory would, in the long run, prove barren unless this were achieved.

Whether this end will be attained by means of European Federation or of Union Now or of a restored League of Nations is, at the moment, impossible to say. We can only record our ardent desire and continue our search for the magic formula which shall transmute it into durable reality. When the hands of the enemy have been removed from our throats, we shall be able to think more clearly. But we are fully conscious of our misfortunes and shat, and deeply and sincerely anxious that some New Order shall be established on our Continent, under which disputes shall be settled by sane negotiation and not by threats backed by violence.

One thing we hold to be certain. Before a New Order can take form, a new ethic must precede it—an ethic which shall restore the belief of man in his neighbour's word; an ethic from which shall spring some better moral code in international life than that under which we have lived, and which has proved so signal a failure.

Towards the final attainment of this goal the contribution of the British people must be a readiness to share with others the advantages and privileges of our position in the world; a realization of the fact that the task of a people is not merely to secure itself in peace and comfort, but to bring into the world more justice, more truth, more opportunity for all men, whatever the difficulties and the disappointments.

So much for the future after victory—but what of defeat?

If our cause fails, it will mean that the flame of freedom will have been snuffed out in two continents, and that from London to Vladivostock the human mind will have been enslaved.

More specifically, it will mean the realization of Adolf Hitler's oft expressed dream of a European continent welded into a Nazi pattern, with, as its centre, the steel core of a greater Germany comprising a population of a hundred million. Tied to it will be a Balkan Union to the South, a Scandinavian Union on the North, and a Western Union composed of Holland, Flanders and Northern France; but these groups will not be on terms of equality but rather, vassal States, belot peoples, with no armed forces of their own, no separate policy, no separate economy.

For Great Britain it will mean the occupation of the British Isles and the break-up of the Colonial Empire. Germany would become undisputed master of the African Continent, with the resources of the British, French and Belgian possessions at her command, while the rich prizes of the Orient, Hong-Kong, Indo-China, Borneo, Malaya and the Dutch East Indies would be ripe for plucking by Japan, who would be more than willing to free her hands from Chinese entanglements in order to fill them with these still more luscious fruits.

Logically, also, Germany would fall heir to the British, French, and Dutch West Indian possessions, and to the Guianas, British Honduras and Greenland, unless America took action to prevent such occupation.

Nor is this the whole picture. German war aims, as disclosed by such Nazi leaders as Hitler, Goebbels, Ley and Frank, envisage not only political domination and territorial conquest but also the world-wide extension of the system of controlled national planning until the destruction is achieved of the capitalistic system, which is based on free world trade, and the monetary function of gold. If such a system is established, it will be utterly impossible for any State whose economies are based on capitalism to compete on equal terms.