

MEMORANDUM OF INFORMATION

18

ON

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

NOTE

The net circulation of these Memoranda continues to increase rapidly. We are enclosing with this issue a pamphlet entitled "The Unfolding Crisis," giving the salient points from some past issues. If subscribers will be good enough to pass this on to anyone who they think will be interested, we shall be much obliged. An ever-increasing number of people desire a monthly account of contemporary events and do not know where to find it. We, on the other hand, cannot easily make contact with them. It is hoped that this pamphlet will help to bridge the gap.

An air mail edition printed on special paper is now available for all parts of the Empire, excepting Canada and Newfoundland.

We are very grateful for the promptitude with which a very great majority of readers renew their subscriptions when due. This saves the office a great deal of work and paper. It is earnestly hoped that this will continue, especially as the need for economy in labour and materials becomes more urgent. It is of the greatest help to us if readers renew their subscriptions when they receive the *first* notice.

A fifth edition of "Searchlight on Europe" has now been published by Eyre & Spottiswoode, and is being distributed as quickly as possible to those who are waiting.

KENNETH de COURCY,

Editor.

May Issue
25.4.40

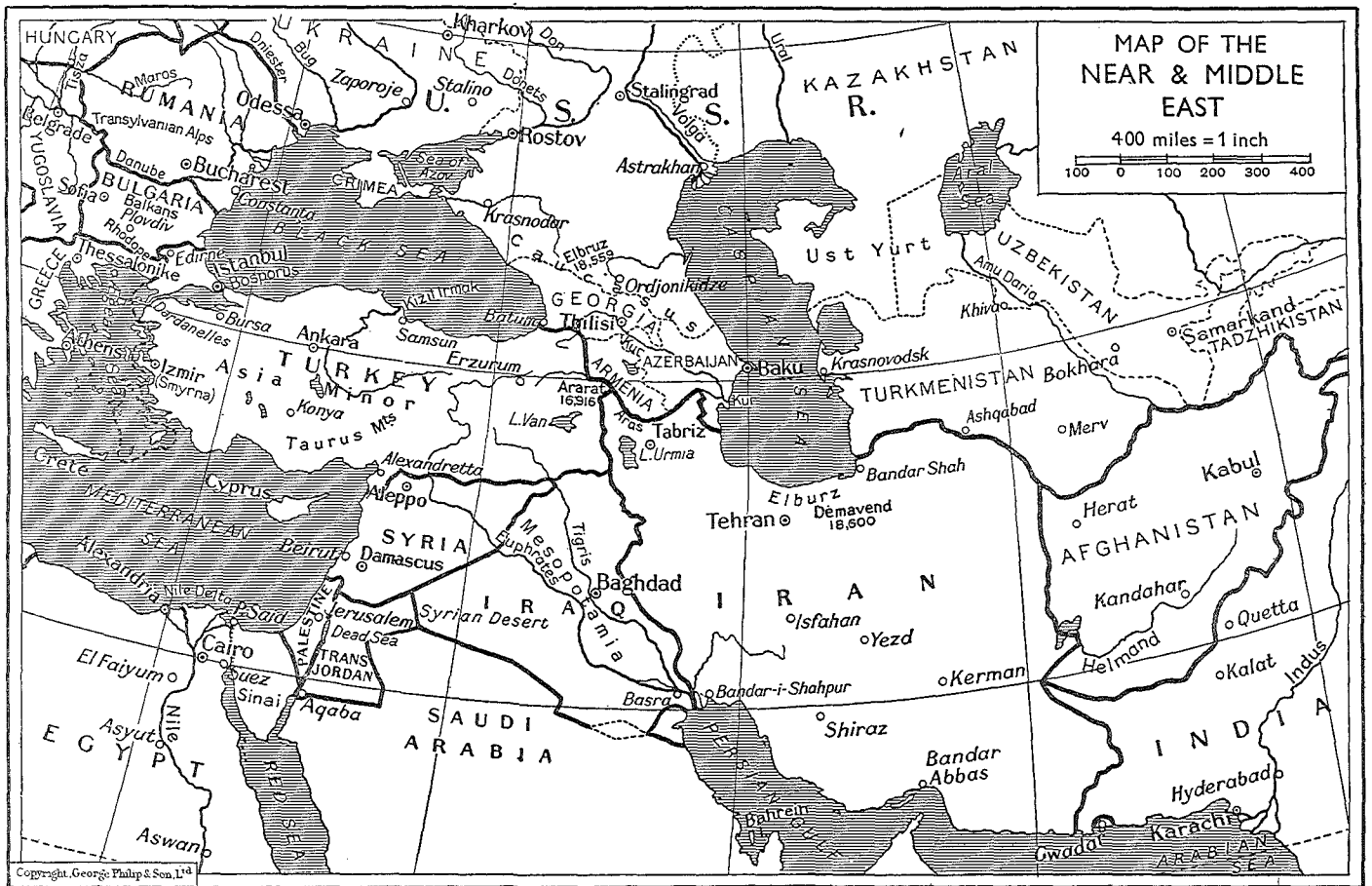
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FROM THE ARCTIC TO THE BOSPHORUS

An experiment in strategy

In a country like ours where every class desires to make its devoted contribution at a time of national emergency, it is essential for every responsible citizen to be thoroughly acquainted with the nature of the problems that the Government has to solve. Nothing could be more dangerous to the world than a British public which does not understand the foreign situation for, humanly speaking, the Imperial Commonwealth alone stands between mankind and thralldom. It is the high responsibility of everyone connected with public affairs to become acquainted with the problems which statesmen are striving to solve. Dangerous and ill-disposed factions profit from an ignorant public.

Public
Responsibility

One of the prime objects of these Memoranda is to provide first-hand information about, and a clear interpretation of contemporary events, so that the responsible Public may be fortified with knowledge. It is natural in Britain that such a work of reference should be prepared and published by an unofficial body. It would be lamentable indeed if we drifted into the ways of the Continent. One of the most detestable characteristics of the new order in Europe is that the writer works with a revolver in his back, and the newspaper is published by an agent of the State. Fortunately, the British have a strange capacity for privateering; history shows that the individual did far more to create the Empire than any government. No doubt it will be the privateer who will help to save it.

The Committee's
Objectives

If we are to obtain the best results from a system in which freedom and private enterprise is the natural order, then we must avoid our besetting sin of underrating the enemy, which has often cost us much blood and treasure. We are facing a very formidable opponent. Hitler is a shrewd and calculating strategist. He commands the absolute devotion of a fanatical semi-religious brotherhood which comprises most of Germany's youth and many others. He owns the best equipped and most efficient military machine the world has ever seen. His country is in close alliance with others also possessed of strength. He is employing a technique which is very intelligently conceived. Since he became master in Berlin he has seized five European capitals. To under-rate such an enemy would be folly.

German
Strength

Of course, Germany has her problems and weaknesses; we do right to take them into full account. The Nazi trained German does not take a setback in his stride. Hitler himself is sometimes lost in curious depression. At times the spell he casts loses its efficacy for a passing moment; one day it will be broken for ever. There have been significant happenings like the demoralisation of the Deutschland after being hit from the air during the Spanish Civil War. . . . Then there was the Graf Spee.

German
Weaknesses

No one knows all this better than Hitler himself. He once admitted to friends that his people have lost their self-confidence, and that only a successful war would bring it back. He is trying to win his war without a big conflagration in the West, which would involve terrible casualty lists, and a long, weary struggle. He has been able to avoid a big engagement on land so far, by following a policy which few people have grasped until quite recently. In order to recapture a picture of it we cannot do better than recall two extracts from past Memoranda:—

Hitler's
Grand
Strategy

“. . . Herr Hitler is working to a plan much more subtle than many people suspect. He means to deal with one military problem at a time still avoiding general hostilities. . . . His idea is that the Siegfried Line and the air force and certain neutral countries provide an impenetrable defence behind which a mobile force of, say, 70 divisions can be used how and when Hitler may want. His policy is to strike at local objectives behind this screen. The German policy is, therefore, to maintain the defensive in the West.”—Sept. 27th, 1939.

“. . . Hitler's strategy is to collaborate fully with Russia, to remain passive in the West and to achieve a series of local objectives without giving room for Allied intervention. Hitler believes he can become master of an area extending from the Rhine to Vladivostock and from the Arctic to the Bosphorus. . . . That is to be the first phase; then—and only then—is to come the direct challenge to Great Britain.”—Feb. 28, 1940.

When the war started the public did not understand the military difficulties in Western Europe nor did they know of Poland's weakness—the two factors which made Germany's policy practical. Hardly anyone knew about Russo-German relations or that Italy's neutrality was merely strategic. Indeed, there is still much wishful thinking about the former. There are many, for instance, who believe that M. Molotov's recent speech on neutrality was a good sign. We must, however, remind our readers that twenty-four hours before he made that declaration, the following paragraph appeared in our last issue:—

“ . . . We also have reports suggesting that with the conclusion of the war in Finland, Russian agents have been instructed to start a campaign for generally lessening the tension between the Western Powers and the Soviet. We must expect a good deal of propaganda initiated by these agents, and supported by the Germans, emphasising Russia's neutrality and even minimising the nature of her relations with Germany. It is not without significance that within a couple of weeks of Finland's surrender stories started appearing in the Continental press suggesting that there are some differences between Moscow and Berlin which might help the Allies. It cannot be too strongly emphasised that one of the salient points in Germany's policy at the present time, is to ensure Russia's neutrality and freedom from blockade, both of which are of great importance to Germany in this phase of the war. . . . ”

M. Molotov's deceptive speech was followed by an article in *Pravda* hinting at the possibility of better relations between the Soviet and the Western Powers. It is to be hoped that the Allies will not fall into what is nothing more than a dangerous trap. Our reports tell of even closer relations between Moscow and Berlin. A distinguished American observer, recently returned from both capitals, tells us that Germany is doing pretty well out of the whole affair. Our latest information only confirms what we have so frequently said, namely, that the understanding between Russia and Germany is of a far-reaching character. The acceptance by the Allies of the Soviet's nominal neutrality is of the utmost value to Germany. If we miscalculate this factor we shall be handicapped in our economic warfare and our military strategy. Space does not permit a full account of all we learn about this absorbing subject, though some points of special importance must be given. A Soviet Commission is at present in Germany arranging for the construction in German yards of warships for Russia. The Soviet is to provide all the necessary material in double quantities for each ship built. We also have reason to believe that this Commission is doing something even more interesting, namely, planning for the future co-ordination of Russian and German naval policy. Russia, as a matter of fact, is having an all-round speed up in her ship-building. New yards have already been constructed and others are in preparation. There is to be a big one at Viborg. The Soviet is already hard at work building new warships of all classes, and we have reason to believe that a number of German experts are helping to advise.

It was in the second half of March that London and Paris came to realise that behind her strategic screen in the West, Germany was gradually drawing both northern and south-eastern Europe into a bloc, while the Allied forces were bottled up in a corner of Western Europe. Germany was gaining her ends by the employment of a leisurely aggression against neutral countries. Terrorised by the Reich (with Russia in the background), they were allowing their neutrality to become helpful to the enemy and unfavourable to the Allies, even though this was against their ultimate interests.

A crisis was reached when, as a result of successful Russian aggression, covered by Germany, Finland was driven to surrender. The fall of M. Daladier's Government and the formation of a new French Cabinet under M. Reynaud presented an opportunity for the Supreme War Council to review the strategic situation afresh. The Council decided to prosecute the economic war more vigorously and to redress the balance of Norway's neutrality, the persistent and successful violation of which, was helping the enemy. It was also decided to start a vigorous trade policy in the Balkans. These decisions were of immense interest to Germany. Herr Hitler decided to speed up his well laid plans for aggression in the North. An allied success in Scandinavia would have far-reaching repercussions in the Balkans and *vice versa*. This could not be allowed; his whole strategy was at stake; his plan to gain gradual domination of his Northern and South-Eastern Flanks was in danger.

THE SCANDINAVIAN FLANK.

THE CAMPAIGN IN NORWAY.

Germany would have preferred to gain complete control of Scandinavia without a military campaign by making it impossible for the northern states to trade with Great Britain. It was for this reason that she constantly sank their shipping, and was therefore guilty of a series of acts of war. She always realised, however, that the Allies might step in. Moreover, between December and March, Berlin had to take into account the possibility of Franco-British intervention on behalf of Finland. As a precautionary measure, therefore, preparations were made for a northern campaign as far back as last November, based on plans drawn up over two years ago. If we had gone to Finland's assistance, Germany would have entered the conflict at once.

Germany's Acts of War against Scandinavia and Plans for Invasion

The Germans did not find it hard to guess what the Allies decided at the Supreme War Council. Articles in the French and British press and speeches by responsible statesmen made it clear enough. Moreover, it was the common gossip of Paris. The enemy had ample time for setting in motion the machinery for the invasion of Denmark and Norway. As we know, the first German transports sailed before the Royal Navy mined Norwegian waters. Hitler took great risks, but his whole strategical plan was at stake. He regards the domination of his flanks as the equivalent of a major success in the West which would cost him hundreds of thousands of lives; his fleet was of little use to him in any case, and his people are less sensitive to naval losses than to military ones. Weighing his fleet in one hand and the riches of Scandinavia in the other, he chose the latter.

Hitler's Decision to Strike

Although Hitler has not departed from the fundamental principles upon which his strategy has always been founded, this is nevertheless the first case in which the objective has not been completely isolated. The plan, however, was to strike so swiftly at Denmark and Norway that this lack of isolation would be overcome. The whole scheme was to be carried out in 36 hours. On balance, the Germans did not think the Allies would be able to send any force at all until they, the enemy, had established a defensive line from Trondheim to the Swedish frontier, having already gained complete mastery of Southern Norway. As a precaution, however, a naval and military force was sent to Narvik with the object of diverting Allied attention from the south for just long enough to establish the German defensive line. It was never thought for a single moment that we should be able to land south of Trondheim, let alone send a force into the Oslo sector. We believe that the German force in Narvik consisted of picked volunteers who were told that they might be abandoned, and have to make their way to the Swedish frontier, there to be interned. Germany meant to take and hold Norway with a force of 50,000 men all trained in mountain warfare. She has, as a matter of fact, a reserve of 250,000 mountain troops.

The General Plan and Mistakes

The Allies, however, have some first-class such troops at *their* disposal. The French ski battalions are perhaps the best in the world, and they have had a whole winter's intensive training in Savoy and the Maritime Alps. One of our observers fresh back from Paris tells of a conversation he had with somebody who has recently visited some of these units. The spirit of both officers and men is beyond praise; they are the last word in highly trained, physically fit, fighting troops. Their routine this last winter has been strenuous; for example, a practice trip with full kit, consists of a four-day run, twelve hours a day up and down precipitous slopes; the fifth day is a rest day. The comradeship between officers and men is ideal. Food, drink, shelter and risks are shared alike.

The Germans counted a very great deal upon their internal sabotage. Most of it was organised through the Nordische Gesellschaft, ostensibly a society for the propagation of Nordic culture and ideals. It claims to have contacts in every village and town through Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Finland. It is, in fact, a vast organisation of espionage and treason. It has filled the Nordic states with spies, and planned the betrayal of Norway. It will be found that this organisation in Sweden is very extensive indeed. There is a complete plan for taking over that country if, in German eyes, it should become necessary.

German Political Sabotage in Norway