

## EXHIBIT NO. 92

satisfactorily. Ten meetings have so far been held. I am satisfied that conditions prevailing in British prisoner of war camps under German or Italian control are being kept under close watch as a result of regular inspections by the Protecting Power and the International Red Cross Committee, and that where any breach of the Convention is observed a prompt protest is made to the enemy Government concerned.

## BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE.

**The Lord Privy Seal (Mr. Attlee):** I beg to move.

That the House do not give any Motion for the Amendment of the House that may be moved by a Member of the Crown at this Session leave to be exempt from the provisions of the Standing Order (Sitings of the House).

I think that it would meet the convenience of the House if we extended the sitting to-day.

**Mr. Tinker:** Can that also apply to other days of the Debate?

Question put, and agreed to.

## WAR SITUATION.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn."

*Mr. James Stoop:*

**Mr. Stephen Cambage:** May I ask whether the Vote of Confidence is to be put in the Paper, it will be in the hands of Members to-day?

**The Prime Minister (Mr. Churchill):** That will be in the next Sitting Day.

There are no questions in the line of any Government expenditure resolutions which are now pending. No one has read the newspapers of the last few weeks about our affairs at home and abroad, or about the situation of affairs at Llandudno.

So many questions in this country. I have been very busy, so busy that I must ask you to be satisfied by a Vote of Confidence from the House of Commons. This is a democratic, normal, constitutional, democratic procedure. A Debate on the war has been proposed. I have arranged it in the noblest and most honourable manner for three whole days. Any Member will be free to say anything he thinks fit about or against the Administration or against the

composition or personalities of the Government, to his heart's content, subject only to the reservation which the House is always so careful to observe about military secrets. Could you have anything stronger than that? Could you have any higher expression of democracy than that? Very few other countries have institutions strong enough to sustain such a thing while they are fighting for their lives.

I owe it to the House to explain to them what has led me to ask for their exceptional support at this time. It has been suggested that we should have a three days' Debate of this kind in which the Government would no doubt be harshly belaboured by some of those who have lighter burdens to carry, and that at the end we should separate without a Division. In this case sections of the Press would be hostile—and there are some whose hostility is pronounced—could declare that the Government's credit was broken, and, it might even be hinted after all that has passed and all the discussion there has been, that it had been privately intimated to me that I should be very reckless if I asked for a Vote of Confidence from Parliament.

And the matter does not stop there. It must be remembered that these reports can then be dashed all over the world, and that they are repeated in every language, and might, in order to show that the Prime Minister has no right to speak for the nation and that the Government in Britain is about to collapse. Anyone who listens to the fulsome statements which come from across the water know that that is no exaggeration. Of course, these statements from foreign sources would not be true, but neither would it be helpful to anyone that they should be any doubt about our position.

There is another aspect. We in the Island for a long time were alone, holding aloft the torch. We are no longer alone now. We are now at the centre and among those at the summit of 26 United Nations, comprising more than three quarters of the population of the globe. Whoever speaks for Britain at Government must be known to speak, not only in the name of the people—and of that I feel pretty sure I may—but in the name of Parliament and, above all, of the House of Commons. It is genuine public interest that requires that these facts should be made manifest afresh in a formal way.

We have had a great deal of bad news lately from the Far East, and I think it is probably, for reasons which I shall presently explain, that we shall have a great deal more. Wrapped up in this bad news will be many tales of blunders and shortcomings both in foresight and action. No one will pretend for a moment that there have been no such things as blunders and shortcomings like these occur without there having been faults and shortcomings. I see all this rolling towards us like the waves in a storm, and that is another reason why I require a formal, solemn Vote of Confidence from the House of Commons, which hitherto in this struggle has never flinched. The House would fulfil its duty if it did not insist upon two things, first, freedom of debate, and, secondly, a clear, honest, blunt Vote thereon. Then we shall all know where we stand and all those with whom we have to deal at home and abroad, friend or foe, will know where we are and where they are. It is because we are to have a free debate, in which perhaps 20 to 30 Members can take part, that I demand an extension of opinion from the 300 or 400 Members who will have sat silent.

It is because things have gone badly wrong so far that I demand a Vote of Confidence. This will be placed on the Order of the day, to be moved at a later stage. I do not see why this should hamper anything. If a Member has helpful criticisms to make, or even severe corrections to offer, that may be perfectly consistent with thinking that in respect of the Administration, such as it is, he might do better and fare worse. But if an honourable Member dislikes the Government and feels it in the public interest that it should be broken up, he should have the manhood to testify his opinions in the Lobby. There is no room for a Member to be mealy-mouthed in debate. There is no objection to anything being said in plain, or even plainer, and the Government will do their utmost to conform to any standard which may be set by the House of the Debate. But no Member should be mealy-mouthed in debate, and no Member should be chicken-hearted in voting. I have voted against Government, and I have been elected to support it. I have been elected to support it, and I have sometimes felt that I did so. Everyone in the House of Commons must do what he thinks his duty.

**Mr. Shinwell (Seaham):** A free vote?

**The Prime Minister:** A vote under all the conditions which hitherto have made the conduct of Parliamentary government possible. Surely the hon. Gentleman is not the man to be frightened of a Whip? The House of Commons, which is at present the most powerful representative Assembly in the world, must also—I am sure, will also—bear in mind the effect produced abroad by all its proceedings. We have also to remember how oddly foreigners view our country and its way of doing things. When Rudolf Hess flew over here some months ago he firmly believed that he had only to gain access to certain circles in this country for what he described as "the Churchill clique"—

**Mr. Thorne (Plaistow):** Where is he now?

**The Prime Minister:** Where he ought to be—to be thrown out of power and for a Government to be set up with which Hitler could negotiate a magnanimous peace. The only importance attaching to the opinions of Hess is the fact that he was fresh from the atmosphere of Hitler's intimate table. But, Sir, I can assure you that since I have been back in this country I have had anxious inquiries from a dozen countries, and reports of enemy propaganda in a score of countries, all turning upon the point whether His Majesty's present Government is to be dismissed from power or not. This may seem silly to us, but in those mouths abroad it is hurtful and mischievous to the common effort. I am not asking for any special, personal favours in these circumstances, but I am sure the House would wish to make its position clear; therefore I stand by the ancient, constitutional, Parliamentary doctrine of free debate and faithful voting.

Now I turn to the account of the war, which constitutes the claim I make for the support and confidence of the House. Three or four months ago we had to cope with the following situation. The German invaders were advancing, blasting their way through Russia. The Russians were resisting with the utmost heroism. But no one could tell what would happen, whether Leningrad, Moscow or Rostov would fall, or where the German winter line would be established. No one can tell now where it will be established, but now the boot is on the other leg. We all agree that we must aid the valiant Russian

[The Prime Minister.]

Armies to the utmost limit of our power. His Majesty's Government thought, and Parliament upon reflection agreed with them, that the best aid we could give to Russia was in supplies of many kinds of raw materials and of munitions, particularly tanks and aircraft. Our Forces at home and abroad had for long been waiting thirstily for these weapons. At last they were coming to hand in large numbers. At home we have always the danger of invasion to consider and to prepare against. I will speak about the situation in the Middle East presently. Nevertheless we sent Premier Stalin—for that I gather is how he wishes to be addressed; at least, that is the form in which he telegraphs to me—exactly what he asked for. The whole quantity was promised and sent. There has been, I am sorry to say, a small lag due to bad weather, but it will be made up by the early days of February. This was a decision of major strategy and policy, and anyone can see that it was right to put it first when they watch the wonderful achievements, unlooked for, undreamed of by us because we little knew the Russian strength, but all the more glorious as they seem—the wonderful achievements of the Russian Armies. Our munitions were of course only a contribution to the Russian victory, but they were an encouragement in Russia's darkest hour. Moreover, if we had not shown a loyal effort to help our Ally, albeit at a heavy sacrifice to ourselves, I do not think our relations with Premier Stalin and his great country would be as good as they are now. There would have been a lack of comradeship, and the lack of comradeship might have spread repercussions on all sides. Far from regretting what we did for Russia, I only wish it had been in our power—but it was not to have done more.

Three or four months ago, at a time when the German advance was rolling onward, we were particularly concerned with the possibility of the Germans forcing the Don River, the capture of Rostov and the invasion of the Caucasus, and the reaching of the Baku oil wells before the winter by the Panzer spearheads of the German Army. Everyone who has been giving careful study and independent thought to this war, knows how deep an anxiety that was in all our breasts three or four months ago. Such an advance would not only have given the Germans

the oil which they are beginning seriously to need, but it would have involved the destruction of the Russian Fleet and the loss of the command of the Black Sea. It would have affected the safety of Turkey, and it would, in due course, have exposed to the gravest dangers Persia, Iraq, Cyria and Palestine, and beyond those countries, all of which are now under our control, it would have threatened the Suez Canal, Egypt and the Nile Valley. At the same time as this menace defined itself with hideous and increasing reality as it seemed, General von Rommel, with his army of 10 German and Italian divisions entrenched in his fortified positions at and behind the Halfaya Pass, was preparing to make a decisive attack on Tobruk as a preliminary to a renewed advance upon Egypt from the West. The Nile Valley was therefore menaced simultaneously by a direct attack from the West and by a more remote but in some ways more deadly attack from the North. In such circumstances it is the classical rule of war, reinforced by endless examples—and some exceptions—that you prepare to fight a delaying action against one of the two attacks and concentrate, if possible, overwhelming strength against the other and nearer attack. We therefore approved General Auchinleck's plans for building up a delaying force in the vast region from Cyprus to the Caspian Sea, along what I may call the Levant-Caspian front, and preparing installations, airfields and communications upon which larger forces could be based, as time and transport allowed. On the other flank, the Western flank, we prepared to set upon Rommel and try to make a good job of him. For the sake of this battle in the Libyan Desert we concentrated everything we could lay our hands on, and we submitted to a very long delay, very painful to bear over here, so that all preparations could be perfected. We hoped to recapture Cyrenaica and the important airfields round Benghazi. But General Auchinleck's main objective was more simple. He set himself to destroy Rommel's army. Such was the mood in which we stood three or four months ago. Such was the broad strategical decision we took.

Now, when we see how events, which so often mock and falsify human effort and design, have shaped themselves, I am sure this was a right decision.



General Auchinleck had demanded five months' preparation for his campaign, but on 18th November he fell upon the enemy. For more than two months in the desert the most fierce, continuous battle has raged between scattered bands of men, armed with the latest weapons, seeking each other dawn after dawn, fighting to the death throughout the day and then often long into the night. Here was a battle which turned out very differently from what was foreseen. All was dispersed and confused. Much depended on the individual soldier and the junior officer. Much, but not all; because this battle would have been lost on 24th November if General Auchinleck had not intervened himself, changed the command and ordered the ruthless pressure of the attack to be maintained without regard to risks or consequences. But for this robust decision we should now be back on the old line from which we had started, or perhaps further back. Tobruk would possibly have fallen, and Rommel might be marching towards the Nile. Since then the battle has declared itself. Cyrenaica has been regained. It has still to be held. We have not succeeded in destroying Rommel's army, but nearly two-thirds of it are wounded, prisoners or dead.

Perhaps I may give the figures to the House. In this strange, sombre battle of the desert, where our men have met the enemy for the first time—I do not say in every respect, because there are some things which are not all that we had hoped for—but, upon the whole, have met him with equal weapons, we have lost in killed, wounded and captured about 18,000 officers and men, of whom the greater part are British. We have in our possession 36,500 prisoners, including many wounded, of whom 10,500 are Germans. We have killed and wounded at least 11,500 Germans and 13,000 Italians—in all a total, accounted for exactly, of 61,000 men. There is also a mass of enemy wounded, some of whom have been evacuated to the rear or to the Westward—I cannot tell how many. Of the forces of which General Rommel disposed on 18th November, little more than one-third now remain, while 852 German and Italian aircraft have been destroyed and 336 German and Italian tanks. During this battle we have never had in action more than 45,000 men, against enemy forces—if they could be brought to bear—

much more than double as strong. Therefore, it seems to me that this heroic, epic struggle in the desert, though there have been many local reverses and many ebbs and flows, has tested our manhood in a searching fashion and has proved not only that our men can die for King and country—everyone knew that—but that they can kill.

I cannot tell what the position at the present moment is on the Western front in Cyrenaica. We have a very daring and skilful opponent against us and, may I say across the havoc of war, a great General. He has certainly received reinforcements. Another battle is even now in progress, and I make it a rule never to try and prophesy beforehand how battles will turn out. I always rejoice that I have made that rule. [AN HON. MEMBER: "What about the Skaggerak?"] That was hardly a battle. Naturally, one does not say in a case like that that we have not a chance, because that is apt to be encouraging to the enemy and depressing to our own friends. In the general up-hot, the fact remains that, whereas a year ago the Germans were telling all the neutrals that they would be in Suez by May, when some people talked of the possibility of a German descent upon Assiut, and many people were afraid that Tobruk would be stormed and others feared for the Nile Valley, Cairo, Alexandria and the Canal, we have conducted an effective offensive against the enemy and hurled him backward, inflicting upon him incomparably more—well, I should not say incomparably, because I have just given the comparison, but far heavier losses and damage—than we have suffered ourselves. Not only has he lost three times our losses on the battlefield, approximately, but the blue waters of the Mediterranean have, thanks to the enterprise of the Royal Navy, our submarines and Air Force, drowned a large number of the reinforcements which have been continually sent. This process has had further important successes during the last few days. Whether you call it a victory or not, it must be dubbed up to the present, although I will not make any promises, a highly profitable transaction, and certainly is an episode of war most glorious to the British, South African, New Zealand, Indian, Free French and Polish soldiers, sailors and airmen who have played their part in it. The prolonged, stubborn, steadfast and successful defence

[The Prime Minister.]  
of Tobruk by Australian and British troops was an essential preliminary, over seven hard months, to any success which may have been achieved.

Let us see what has happened on the other flank, the Northern flank, of the Nile Valley. What has happened to Palestine, Syria, Iraq and Persia? There we must thank Russia. There the valour of the Russian Armies has warded off dangers which we saw and which we undoubtedly ran. The Caucasus and the precious oilfields of Baku, the great Anglo-Persian oilfields, are denied to the enemy. Winter has come. Evidently we have the time to strengthen still further our Forces and organisations in those regions. Therefore, sir, I present to you, in laying the whole field open and bare and surveying it in all its parts, for all are related, a situation in the Nile Valley, both West and East, incomparably easier than anything we have ever seen, since we were deserted by the French Bordeaux-Vichy Government and were set upon by Italy. The House will not fail to discern the agate points upon which this vast improvement has turned. It is only by the smallest margin that we have succeeded so far in beating Rommel in Cyrenaica and destroying two-thirds of his forces. Every tank, every aircraft squadron was needed. It is only by the victories on the Russian flank on the Black Sea coast that we have been spared the overrunning of all those vast lands from the Levant to the Caspian, which in turn give access to India, Persia, the Persian Gulf, the Nile Valley and the Suez Canal.

I have told the House the story of these few months, and hon. Members will see from it how narrowly our resources have been strained and by what a small margin and by what strokes of fortune—for which we claim no credit—we have survived so far. Where should we have been, I wonder, if we had yielded to the clamour which was so loud three or four months ago that we should invade France or the Low Countries? We can still see on the walls the inscription, "Second Front Now." Who did not feel the appeal of that? But imagine what our position would have been if we had yielded to this vehement temptation. Every ton of our shipping, every flotilla, every aeroplane, the whole strength of our Army would be committed and would be

fighting for life on the French shores or on the shores of the Low Countries. All these troubles of the Far East and the Middle East might have sunk to insignificance compared with the question of another and far worse Dunkirk.

Here, let me say, I should like to pay my tribute to one who has gone from us since I left this country, Mr. Lees-Smith, who, I remember, spoke with so much profound wisdom on this point at a moment when many opinions were in flux about it. His faithful, selfless and wise conduct of the important work which he discharged in this House was undoubtedly of great assistance to us all, not only to the Government but to us all, in the various stages of the war. His memory as a distinguished Parliamentarian will long find an honoured place in the recollection of those who had the fortune to be his colleagues.

Sometimes things can be done by saying "Yes," and sometimes things can be done by saying "No." Yet I suppose there are some of those who were vocal and voluble, and even clamant, for a second front to be opened in France, who are now going to come up bland and smiling and ask why it is that we have not ample forces in Malaya, Burma, Borneo and the Celebes. There are times when so many things happen, and happen so quickly, and time seems to pass in such a way that you can neither say it is long or short, that it is easy to forget what you have said three months before. You may fail to connect it with what you are advocating at the particular moment. Throughout a long and variegated Parliamentary life this consideration has led me to try and keep a watchful eye on that danger myself. You never can tell. There are also people who talk and bear themselves as if they had prepared for this war with great armaments and long, careful preparation. But that is not true. In two and a half years of fighting we have only just managed to keep our heads above water. When I was called upon to be Prime Minister, now nearly two years ago, there were not many applicants for the job. Since then, perhaps, the market has improved. In spite of the shameful negligence, gross muddles, blatant incompetence, complacency, and lack of organising power which are daily attributed to us—and from which chidings we endeavour to profit—we are beginning to see



our way through. It looks as if we were in for a very bad time, but provided we all stand together, and provided we throw in the last spasm of our strength, it also looks, more than it ever did before, as if we were going to win.

While facing Germany and Italy here and in the Nile Valley we have never had any power to provide effectively for the defence of the Far East. My whole argument so far has led up to that point. It may be that this or that might have been done which was not done, but we have never been able to provide effectively for the defence of the Far East against an attack by Japan. It has been the policy of the Cabinet at almost all costs to avoid embroilment with Japan until we were sure that the United States would also be engaged. We even had to stoop, as the House will remember, when we were at our very weakest point, to close the Burma Road for some months. I remember that some of our present critics were very angry about it, but we had to do it. There never has been a moment, there never could have been a moment, when Great Britain or the British Empire, single-handed, could fight Germany and Italy, could wage the Battle of Britain, the Battle of the Atlantic and the Battle of the Middle East—and at the same time stand thoroughly prepared in Burma, the Malay Peninsula, and generally in the Far East against the impact of a vast military Empire like Japan, with more than 70 mobile divisions, the third navy in the world, a great air force and the thrust of 80 or 90 millions of hardy, war-like Asiatics. If we had started to scatter our forces over these immense areas in the Far East, we should have been ruined. If we had moved large armies of troops urgently needed on the war fronts to regions which were not at war and might never be at war we should have been altogether wrong. We should have cast away the chance, which has now become something more than a chance, of all of us emerging safely from the terrible plight in which we have been plunged.

We therefore have lain—I am putting it as bluntly as I can—for nearly two years under the threat of an attack by Japan with which we had no means of coping. But as time has passed the mighty United States, under the leadership of President Roosevelt, from reasons of its own interest and safety but also out of chivalrous

regard for the cause of freedom and democracy, has drawn ever nearer to the confines of the struggle. And now that the blow has fallen it does not fall on us alone. On the contrary, it falls upon united forces and united nations, which are unquestionably capable of enduring the struggle, of retrieving the losses and of preventing another such stroke ever being delivered again.

There is an argument with which I will deal as I pass along to pursue my theme. It is said by some, "If only you had organised the munitions production of this country properly and had had a Minister of Production (and that is not a question which should be dogmatised upon either way) it would have made everything all right. There would have been enough for all needs. We should have had enough supplies for Russia, enough well-equipped squadrons and divisions to defend the British Islands, to sustain the Middle East and to arm the Far East effectively." But that is really not true. As a matter of fact, our munitions output is gigantic, has for some time been very large indeed, and it is bounding up in a most remarkable manner. In the last year, 1941, although we were at war in so many theatres and on so many fronts, we have produced more than double the munitions equipment of the United States, which was arming heavily, though of course a lap behind on the road. This condition will naturally be rapidly removed as the full power of American industry come into full swing. But, Sir, in the last six months, thanks to the energies of Lord Beaverbrook and the solid spadework done by his predecessors and the passage of time—he particularly asks me to say that—[AN HON. MEMBER: "Who did?"]—Lord Beaverbrook; I should have said it anyway—our munitions output has risen in the following respects: We are producing more than twice as many far more complicated guns every month than we did in the peak of 1917-18 war period, and the curve is rising. The guns are infinitely more complicated. Tank production has doubled in the last six months. Small arms production is more than twice what it was six months ago. Filled rounds of ammunition have doubled in the last six months. I could go on with the catalogue, but these are not doublings from early very small totals, they are doublings from the totals we boasted about, as far as we

[The Prime Minister.]  
 dard, six months ago. There has been an immense leap forward. In aircraft production there is a steady increase not only in the numbers but also in the size and quality of the aircraft, though I must say there has not been all the increase which I had hoped for.

But all this has nothing to do with the preparations it was open to us to make in Malaya and Burma and generally in the Far East. The limiting factor has not been troops or even equipment. The limiting factor has been transport, even assuming we had wished to take this measure and had had this great surplus. From the time that this present Government was formed, from the moment it was formed I may say, every scrap of shipping we could draw away from our vital supply routes, every U-boat escort we could divert from the Battle of the Atlantic, has been busy to the utmost capacity to carry troops, tanks and munitions from this Island to the East. There has been a ceaseless flow, and as for aircraft they have not only been moved by sea but by every route, some very dangerous and costly routes, to the Eastern battlefields. The decision was taken, as I have explained, to make our contribution to Russia, to try to beat Rommel and to form a stronger front from the Levant to the Caspian. It followed from that decision that it was in our power only to make a moderate and partial provision in the Far East against the hypothetical danger of a Japanese onslaught. Sixty thousand men, indeed, were concentrated at Singapore, but priority in modern aircraft, in tanks, and in anti-aircraft and anti-tank artillery was accorded to the Nile Valley.

For this decision in its broad strategic aspects, and also in its diplomatic policy in regard to Russia, I take the fullest personal responsibility. If we have handled our resources wrongly, no one is so much to blame as me. If we have not got large modern air forces and tanks in Burma and Malaya to-night no one is more accountable than I am. Why then should I be called upon to pick out scapegoats, to throw the blame on generals or airmen or sailors? Why, then, should I be called upon to drive away loyal and trusted colleagues and friends to appease the clamour of certain sections of the British and Australian Press, or in order to take the edge off our reverses in

Malaya and the Far East, and the punishment which we have yet to take there? I would be ashamed to do such a thing at such a time, and if I were capable of doing it, believe me, I should be incapable of rendering this country or this House any further service.

I say that without in the slightest degree seeking to relieve myself from my duties and responsibility to endeavour to make continual improvements in Ministerial positions. It is the duty of every Prime Minister to the House, but we have to be quite sure that they are improvements in every case, and not only in every case but in the setting. I could not possibly descend to, as the German radio repeatedly credits me with, an attempt to get out of difficulties in which I really bear the main load by offering up scapegoats to public displeasure. Many people, many very well-meaning people, begin their criticisms and articles by saying, "Of course, we are all in favour of the Prime Minister because he has the people behind him. But what about the muddles made by this or that Department; what about that general or this Minister?" But I am the man that Parliament and the nation have got to blame for the general way in which they are served, and I cannot serve them effectively unless, in spite of all that has gone wrong, and that is going to go wrong, I have their trust and faithful aid.

I must linger for a moment on our political affairs, because we are conducting the war on the basis of a full democracy and a free Press, and that is an attempt which has not been made before in such circumstances. A variety of attacks are made upon the composition of the Government. It is said that it is formed upon a party and political basis. But so is the House of Commons. It is silly to extol the Parliamentary system and then, in the next breath, to say, "Away with party and away with politics." From one quarter I am told that the leaders of the Labour party ought to be dismissed from the Cabinet. This would be a return to party Government pure and simple. From opposite quarters it is said that no one who approved of Munich should be allowed to hold office. To do that would be to cast a reflection upon the great majority of the nation at that time, and also to deny the strongest party in the House any proportionate share in the National Government, which



again, in turn, might cause inconvenience. Even my right hon. Friend the leader of the Liberal party—[An Hon. Member: "Who is he?"]—the Secretary of State for Air, whose help to-day I value so much and with whom, as a lifelong friend, it is a pleasure to work, even he has not escaped unscathed. If I were to show the slightest weakness in dealing with these opposite forms of criticism, not only should I deprive myself of loyal and experienced colleagues, but I should destroy the National Government and rupture the war-time unity of Parliament itself.

Other attacks are directed against individual Ministers. I have been urged to make an example of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, who is now returning from his mission in the Far East. Thus, he would be made to bear the blame for our misfortunes. The position of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster at the head of the Council which he had been instructed to form at Singapore was rendered obsolete by the decision which I reached with the President of the United States to set up a Supreme Commander for the main fighting zone in the Far East. The whole conception of a Supreme Commander is that, under the direction of the Governments he serves, he is absolute master of all authorities in the region assigned to him. This would be destroyed if political functionaries representing the various nations—for it is not only this country which would be represented; others would have to be represented as well as ours—were clustered round him. The function of the Chancellor of the Duchy was therefore extinguished by the appointment of General Wavell to the Supreme Command. I may say that regret was expressed at his departure by the New Zealand and Australian Governments, and still more by the Council he formed at Singapore, which, in a localised and subordinate form, it has been found necessary to carry on. When I am invited, under threats of unpopularity to myself or the Government, to victimise the Chancellor of the Duchy, and throw him to the wolves, I say to those who make this amiable suggestion, I can only say to them, "I cannot regret that I am unable to gratify your wishes,"—or words to that effect.

The out-standing question upon which the House should form its judgment for the purposes of the impending Division

is whether His Majesty's Government were right in giving a marked priority in the distribution of the forces and equipment we could send overseas, to Russia, to Libya, and, to a lesser extent, to the Levant-Caspian danger front, and whether we were right in accepting, for the time being, a far lower standard of forces and equipment for the Far East than for these other theatres. The first obvious fact is that the Far Eastern theatre was at peace and that the other theatres were in violent or imminent war. It would evidently have been a very improvident use of our limited resources—as I pointed out earlier—if we had kept large masses of troops and equipment spread about the immense areas of the Pacific or in India, Burma and the Malay Peninsula, standing idle, month by month and perhaps year by year, without any war occurring. Thus, we should have failed in our engagements to Russia, which has meanwhile struck such staggering blows at the German Army, and we should have lost the battle in Cyrenaica, which we have not yet won, and we might now be fighting defensively well inside the Egyptian frontier. There is the question on which the House should make up its mind. We had not the resources to meet all the perils and pressures that came upon us.

But this question, serious and large as it is by itself, cannot be wholly decided without some attempt to answer the further question—what was the likelihood of the Far Eastern theatre being thrown into war by a Japanese attack? I have explained how very delicately we walked, and how painful it was at times, how very careful I was every time that we should not be exposed single-handed to this onslaught which we were utterly incapable of meeting. But it seemed irrational to suppose that in the last six months—which is what I am principally dealing with—the Japanese, having thrown away their opportunity of attacking us in the autumn of 1940, when we were so much weaker, so much less well-armed, and all alone, should at this period have plunged into a desperate struggle against the combined Forces of the British Empire and the United States. Nevertheless, nations, like individuals, commit irrational acts, and there were forces at work in Japan, violent, murderous, fanatical and explosive forces, which no one could measure.



[The Prime Minister.]

On the other hand, the probability, since the Atlantic Conference, at which I discussed these matters with Mr. Roosevelt, that the United States, even if not herself attacked, would come into a war in the Far East, and thus make final victory sure, seemed to allay some of these anxieties. That expectation has not been falsified by the events. It fortified our British decision to use our limited resources on the actual fighting fronts. As time went on, one had greater assurance that if Japan ran amok in the Pacific, we should not fight alone. It must also be remembered that over the whole of the Pacific scene brooded the great power of the United States Fleet, concentrated at Hawaii. It seemed very unlikely that Japan would attempt the distant invasion of the Malay Peninsula, the assault upon Singapore, and the attack upon the Dutch East Indies, while leaving behind them in their rear this great American Fleet. However to strengthen the position as the situation seemed to intensify we sent the "Prince of Wales" and the "Repulse" to form the spear-point of the considerable battle forces which we felt ourselves at length able to form in the Indian Ocean. We reinforced Singapore to a considerable extent and Hong Kong to the extent which we were advised would be sufficient to hold the island for a long time. Besides this in minor ways we took what precautions were open to us. On 7th December the Japanese, by a sudden attack, delivered while their envoys were still negotiating at Washington, crippled for the time being the American Pacific Fleet, and a few days later inflicted very heavy naval losses on us by sinking the "Prince of Wales" and the "Repulse."

For the time being, therefore, naval superiority in the Pacific and in the Malaysian Archipelago has passed from the hands of the two leading naval Powers into the hands of Japan. How long it will remain in Japanese hands is a matter on which I do not intend to speculate. But at any rate it will be long enough for Japan to inflict very heavy and painful losses on all of the United Nations who have establishments and possessions in the Far East. The Japanese no doubt will try to peg out claims and lodgments over all this enormous area, and to organise, in the interval before they lose command of

the seas, a local command of the air which will render their expulsion and destruction a matter of considerable time and exertion.

Here I must point out a very simple strategic truth. If there are 1,000 islands and 100 valuable military key points and you put 1,000 men on every one of them or whatever it may be, the Power that has the command of the sea and carries with it the local command of the air, can go around to every one of these places in turn, destroy or capture their garrisons, ravage and pillage them, ensconce themselves wherever they think fit, and then pass on with their circus to the next place. It would be vain to suppose that such an attack could be met by local defence. You might disperse 1,000,000 men over these immense areas and yet only provide more prey to the dominant Power. On the other hand, these conditions will be reversed when the balance of sea power and air power changes, as it will surely change.

Such is the phase of the Pacific war into which we have now entered. I cannot tell how long it will last. All I can tell the House is that it will be attended by very heavy punishment which we shall have to endure, and that presently, if we persevere, as I said just now about the Russian front, the boot will be on the other leg. That is why we should not allow ourselves to get rattled because this or that place has been captured, because, once the ultimate power of the United Nations has been brought to bear, the opposite process will be brought into play, and will move forward remorselessly to the final conclusion, provided that we persevere, provided that we fight with the utmost vigour and tenacity, and provided, above all, that we remain united.

Here I should like to express, in the name of the House, my admiration of the splendid courage and quality with which the small American Army, under General MacArthur, has resisted brilliantly for so long, at desperate odds, the hordes of Japanese who have been hurled against it by superior air power and superior sea power. Amid our own troubles, we sent out to General MacArthur and his soldiers, and also to the Filipinos, who are defending their native soil with vigour and courage, our salute across those wide spaces which we and the United States will presently rule again together. Nor must I fail to pay a tribute, in the name of

the House, to the Dutch, who, in the air and with their submarines, their surface craft, and their solid fighting troops, are playing one of the main parts in the struggle now going on in the Malaysian Archipelago.

We have to turn our eyes for a moment to the hard-fought battle which is raging upon the approaches to Singapore and in the Malay Peninsula. I am not going to make any forecast about that now, except that it will be fought to the last inch by the British, Australian and Indian troops, which are in the line together, and which have been very considerably reinforced. The hon. Member for the Eye Division of Suffolk (Mr. Granville) had a very sound military idea the other day, when he pointed out the importance of sending reinforcements of aircraft to assist our ground forces at Singapore and in Burma. I entirely agree with him. In fact, we anticipated his suggestion. Before I left for the United States, on 12th December, the moment, that is to say, when the situation in Singapore and Pearl Harbour had disclosed itself, it was possible to make a swift redistribution of our Forces. The moment was favourable. General Auchinleck was making headway in Cyrenaica; the Russian front not only stood unbroken but had begun the advance in a magnificent counter-attack, and we were able to order a large number of measures, which there is no need to elaborate, but which will be capable of being judged by their results as the next few weeks and the next few months unfold in the Far East.

When I reached the United States, accompanied by our principal officers and large technical staffs, further important steps were taken by the President, with my cordial assent, and with the best technical advice we could obtain, to move from many directions everything that ships could carry and all air power that could be flown transported and serviced to suitable points. The House would be very ill-advised to suppose that the seven weeks which have passed since 7th December have been weeks of apathy and indecision for the English-speaking world. Odd as it may seem quite a lot has been going on. But we must not nourish or indulge light and extravagant hopes or suppose that the advantages which the enemy have gained can soon or easily be taken from him. However, to sum up the bad and the good together, in spite of

the many tragedies past and future, and with all pity for those who have suffered and will suffer, I must profess my profound thankfulness for what has happened throughout the whole world in the last two months.

I now turn for a short space—I hope I am not unduly wearying the House, but I feel that the war has become so wide that there are many aspects that must be regarded—to the question of the organisation, the international, inter-Allied or inter-United Nations organisation, which must be developed to meet the fact that we are a vast confederacy. To hear some people talk, however, one would think that the way to win the war is to make sure that every Power contributing armed forces and every branch of these armed forces is represented on all the councils and organisations which have to be set up, and that everybody is fully consulted before anything is done. That is in fact the most sure way to lose a war. You have to be aware of the well-known danger of having "more harness than horse," to quote a homely expression. Action to be successful must rest in the fewest number of hands possible. Nevertheless, now that we are working in the closest partnership with the United States and have also to consider our Alliance with Russia and with China, as well as the bonds which unite us with the rest of the 26 United Nations and with our Dominions, it is evident that our system must become far more complex than heretofore.

I had many discussions with the President upon the Anglo-American war direction, especially as it affects this war against Japan, to which Russia is not yet a party. The physical and geographical difficulties of finding a common working centre for the leaders of nations and the great staffs of nations which cover the whole globe are insuperable. Whatever plan is made will be open to criticism and many valid objections. There is no solution that can be found where the war can be discussed from day to day fully by all the leading military and political authorities concerned. I have, however, arranged with President Roosevelt that there should be a body in Washington called the Combined Chiefs of the Staff Committee, consisting of the three United States Chiefs of the Staff, men of the highest distinction, and three high officers representing and acting under the general instructions



[The Prime Minister.]  
of the British Chiefs of the Staff Committee in London. This body will advise the President, and in the event of divergence of view between the British and American Chiefs of the Staff or their representatives, the difference must be adjusted by personal agreement between him and me as representing our respective countries. We must also concert together the closest association with Premier Stalin and Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek as well as with the rest of the Allied and Associated Powers. We shall, of course, also remain in the closest touch with one another on all important questions of policy.

In order to wage the war effectively against Japan, it was agreed that I should propose to those concerned the setting-up of a Pacific Council in London, on the Ministerial plane, comprising Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand and the Dutch Government. Assisted by the British Chiefs of the Staff and the great staffs organisations beneath them, I was to try to form and focus a united view. This would enable the British Commonwealth to act as a whole and form part of plans—plans which are at present far advanced—for collaboration at the appropriate levels in the spheres of defence, foreign affairs and supply. Thus the united view of the British Commonwealth and the Dutch would be transmitted, at first, on the Chiefs of the Staff level, to the combined Chiefs of the Staff Committee sitting in Washington. In the event of differences between the members of the Pacific Council in London, dissentient opinions would also be transmitted. In the event of differences between the London and Washington bodies, it would be necessary for the President and me to reach an agreement. I must point out that it is necessary for everybody to reach an agreement, for nobody can compel anybody else.

The Dutch Government, which is seated in London, might be willing to agree to this arrangement, but the Australian Government desired and the New Zealand Government preferred that this Council of the Pacific should be in Washington where it would work alongside the Combined Chiefs of the Staff Committee. I have therefore transmitted the views of these two Dominions to the President, but I have not yet received, nor do I expect for a few days to receive,

his reply. I am not, therefore, in a position to-day to announce, as I had hoped, the definite and final arrangements for the Pacific Council.

I should like to say, however, that underlying these structural arrangements are some very practical and simple facts upon which there is full agreement. The Supreme Commander has assumed control of the fighting areas in the South-West Pacific called the "A.B.D.A." area—A. B. D. A.—called after the countries which are involved, not the countries which are in the area but the countries which are involved in that area, namely, America, Britain, Dutch and Australasia. We do not propose to burden the Supreme Commander with frequent instructions. He has his general orders, and he has addressed himself with extraordinary buoyancy to his most difficult task, and President Roosevelt and I, representing, for my part, the British Government, are determined that he shall have a chance and a free hand to carry it out. The action in the Straits of Macassar undertaken by forces assigned to this area apparently has had very considerable success, of the full extent of which I am not yet advised. The manner in which General Wavell took up his task, the speed with which he has flown from place to place, the telegrams which he has sent describing the methods by which he was grappling with the situation and the forming of the central organism which was needed to deal with it—all this has made a most favourable impression upon the high officers, military and political, whom I met in the United States. This is all going on. Our duty, upon which we have been constantly engaged for some time, is to pass reinforcements of every kind, especially air, into the new war zone, from every quarter and by every means, with the utmost speed.

In order to extend the system of unified command which has been set up in the "A.B.D.A." area—that is to say, the South-West Pacific—where the actual fighting is going on, in order to extend that system to all areas in which the forces of more than one of the United Nations—because that is the term we have adopted—will be operating, the Eastward approaches to Australia and New Zealand have been styled the Anzac area, and are under United States command, the communications between the Anzac area and

America are a United States responsibility, while the communications across the Indian Ocean and from India remain a British responsibility. All this is now working, while the larger constitutional, or semi-constitutional, discussions and structural arrangements are being elaborated by telegrams passing to and fro between so many Governments. All this is now working fully and actively from hour to hour, and it must not, therefore, be supposed that any necessary military action has been held up pending the larger structural arrangements which I have mentioned.

Now I come to the question of our own Empire or Commonwealth of Nations. The fact that Australia and New Zealand are in the immediate danger zone reinforces the demand that they should be represented in the War Cabinet of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. We have always been ready to form an Imperial War Cabinet containing the Prime Ministers of the four Dominions. Whenever any of them have come here they have taken their seats at our table as a matter of course. Unhappily, it has not been possible to get them all here together at once. General Smuts may not be able to come over from South Africa, and Mr. Mackenzie King could unfortunately stay only for a short time. But Mr. Fraser was with us, and it was a great pleasure to have him, and we had a three months' visit from Mr. Menzies, which was also a great success, and we were all very sorry when his most valuable knowledge of our affairs and the war position, and his exceptional abilities, were lost. For the last three months we have had Sir Earle Page representing the Commonwealth Government at Cabinets when war matters and Australian matters were under discussion and also, in similar circumstances upon the Defence Committee. As a matter of fact this has always been interpreted in the most broad and elastic fashion. The Australian Government have now asked specifically "that an accredited representative of the Commonwealth Government should have the right to be heard in the War Cabinet in the formulation and the direction of policy." We have of course agreed to this. New Zealand feels bound to ask for similar representation, and the same facilities will of course be available to Canada and South Africa. The presence at the Cabinet table of Dominion representatives who have no power to take decisions and can

only report to their Governments evidently raises some serious problems but none, I trust, which cannot be got over with good will. It must not, however, be supposed that in any circumstances the presence of Dominion representatives for certain purposes could in any way affect the collective responsibility of His Majesty's Servants in Great Britain to Crown and Parliament.

I am sure we all sympathise with our kith and kin in Australia now that the shield of British and American sea power has, for the time being, been withdrawn from them so unexpectedly and so tragically and now that hostile bombers may soon be within range of Australian shores. We shall not put any obstacle to the return of the splendid Australian troops who volunteered for Imperial service to defend their own homeland or whatever part of the Pacific theatre may be thought most expedient. We are taking many measures in conjunction with the United States to increase the security of Australia and New Zealand and to send them reinforcements, arms and equipment by the shortest and best routes. I always hesitate to express opinions about the future, because things turn out so very oddly, but I will go so far as to say that it may be that the Japanese, whose game is what I may call "to make hell while the sun shines," are more likely to occupy themselves in securing their rich prizes in the Philippines, the Dutch East Indies and the Malayan Archipelago and in seizing island bases for defensive purposes for the attack which is obviously coming towards them at no great distance of time—a tremendous onslaught which will characterise the future in 1942 and 1943. [AN HON. MEMBER: "1944 and 1945?"]. No, I do not think we can stretch our views beyond those dates, but, again, we must see how we go. I think they are much more likely to be arranging themselves in those districts which they have taken or are likely to take than to undertake a serious mass invasion of Australia. That would seem to be a very ambitious over-seas operation for Japan to undertake in the precarious and limited interval before the British and American navies regain—as they must certainly regain, through the new building that is advancing, and for other reasons—the unquestionable command of the Pacific Ocean. However, everything in human power that we can do to help Australia, or persuade America



[The Prime Minister.]

to do, we will do; and meanwhile I trust that reproaches and recriminations of all kinds will be avoided, and that if any are made, we in Britain will not take part in them.

Let me, in conclusion, return to the terrific changes which have occurred in our affairs during the last few months and particularly in the last few weeks. We have to consider the prospects of the war in 1942 and also in 1943, and, as I said just now, it is not useful to look further ahead than that. The moment that the United States was set upon and attacked by Japan, Germany and Italy—that is to say, within a few days of December 7, 1941—I was sure it was my duty to cross the Atlantic and establish the closest possible relationship with the President and Government of the United States, and also to develop the closest contacts, personal and professional, between the British Chiefs of Staff and their trans-Atlantic deputies, and with the American Chiefs of Staff who were there to meet them.

Having crossed the Atlantic, it was plainly my duty to visit the great Dominion of Canada. The House will have read with admiration and deep interest the speech made by the Prime Minister of Canada yesterday on Canada's great and growing contribution to the common cause in men, in money, and in materials. A notable part of that contribution is the financial offer which the Canadian Government have made to this country. The sum involved in one billion Canadian dollars, about £225,000,000. I know the House will wish me to convey to the Government of Canada our lively appreciation of their timely and most generous offer. It is unequalled in its scale in the whole history of the British Empire, and it is a convincing proof of the determination of Canada to make her maximum contribution towards the successful prosecution of the war.

During those three weeks which I spent in Mr. Roosevelt's home and family, I established with him relations not only of comradship, but, I think I may say, of friendship. We can say anything to each other, however painful. When we parted he wrung my hand, saying, "We will fight this through to the bitter end, whatever the cost may be." Behind him rises the gigantic and hitherto unmobilised gigantic power of the people of the United

States, carrying with them in their life and death struggle the entire, or almost the entire, Western hemisphere.

At Washington, we and our combined staffs surveyed the entire scene of the war, and we reached a number of important practical decisions. Some of them affect future operations and cannot, of course, be mentioned, but others have been made public by declaration or by events. The vanguard of an American Army has already arrived in the United Kingdom. Very considerable forces are following as opportunity may serve. These forces will take their station in the British Isles and face with us whatever is coming our way. They impart a freedom of movement to all forces in the British Isles greater than we could otherwise have possessed. Numerous United States fighter and bomber squadrons will also take part in the defence of Britain and in the ever-increasing bombing offensive against Germany. The United States Navy is linked in the most intimate union with the Admiralty, both in the Atlantic and the Pacific. We shall plan our Naval moves together as if we were literally one people.

In the next place, we formed this league of 26 United Nations in which the principal partners at the present time are Great Britain and the British Empire, the United States, the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics of Russia, and the Republic of China, together with the stout-hearted Dutch; and the representatives of the rest of the 26 Powers. This Union is based on the principles of the Atlantic Charter. It aims at the destruction of Hitlerism in all its forms and manifestations in every corner of the globe. We will march forward together until every vestige of this villainy has been extirpated from the life of the world.

Thirdly, as I have explained at some length, we addressed ourselves to the war against Japan and to the measures to be taken to defend Australia, New Zealand, the Netherlands East Indies, Malaya, Burma, and India against Japanese attack or invasion.

Fourthly, we have established a vast common pool of weapons and munitions, of raw materials and of shipping, the outline of which has been set forth in a series of memoranda which I have initialled with the President. I had a talk with him last night on the telephone, as a result

of which an announcement has been made in the early hours of this morning in the United States, and I have a White Paper for the House which will be available, I think, in a very short time. Many people have been staggered by the figures of prospective American output of war weapons which the President announced to Congress, and the Germans have affected to regard them with incredulity. I can only say that Lord Beaverbrook and I were made acquainted beforehand with all the bases upon which these colossal programmes were founded, and that I myself heard President Roosevelt confide their specific tasks to the chiefs of American industry and I heard these men accept their prodigious tasks and declare that they would and could fulfil them. Most important of all is the multiplication of our joint tonnage at sea. The American programmes were already vast. They have been increased in the proportion of 100 to nearly 160. If they are completed, as completed I believe they will be, we shall be able to move across the ocean spaces in 1943 two, three or even four times as large armies as the considerable forces we are able to handle at sea at the present time.

I expect—and I have made no secret of it—that we shall both of us receive severe ill-usage at the hands of the Japanese in 1942, but I believe we shall presently regain the naval command of the Pacific and begin to establish an effective superiority in the air, and then later on, with the great basic areas in Australasia, in India and in the Dutch East Indies, we shall be able to set about our task in good style in 1943. It is no doubt true that the defeat of Japan will not necessarily entail the defeat of Hitler, whereas the defeat of Hitler would enable the whole forces of the united nations to be concentrated upon the defeat of Japan. But there is no question of regarding the war in the Pacific as a secondary operation. The only limitation applied to its vigorous prosecution will be the shipping available at any given time.

It is most important that we should not overlook the enormous contribution of China to this struggle for world freedom and democracy. If there is any lesson I have brought back from the United States that I could express in one word, it would be "China." That is in all their minds. When we feel the sharp military qualities of the Japanese soldiery

in contact with our own troops, although of course very few have as yet been engaged, we must remember that China, ill-armed or half-armed, has, for four and a half years, single handed, under its glorious leader Chiang Kai-shek, withstood the main fury of Japan. We shall pursue the struggle hand in hand with China, and do everything in our power to give them arms and supplies, which is all they need to vanquish the invaders of their native soil and play a magnificent part in the general forward movement of the United Nations.

Although I feel the broadening swell of victory and liberation bearing us and all the tortured peoples onwards safely to the final goal, I must confess to feeling the weight of the war upon me even more than in the tremendous summer days of 1940. There are so many fronts which are open, so many vulnerable points to defend, so many inevitable misfortunes, so many shrill voices raised to take advantage, now that we can breathe more freely, of all the turns and twists of war. Therefore, I feel entitled to come to the House of Commons, whose servant I am, and ask them not to press me to act against my conscience and better judgment and make scapegoats in order to improve my own position, not to press me to do the things which may be clamoured for at the moment but which will not help in our war effort, but, on the contrary, to give me their encouragement and to give me their aid. I have never ventured to predict the future. I stand by my original programme, blood, toil, tears and sweat, which is all I have ever offered, to which I added, five months later, "many shortcomings, mistakes and disappointments." But it is because I see the light gleaming behind the clouds and broadening on our path, that I make so bold now as to demand a declaration of confidence of the House of Commons as an additional weapon in the armoury of the united nations.

**Mr. Pethick-Lawrence** (Edinburgh, East): The Prime Minister has drawn, in his own inimitable manner, a comprehensive picture of what has been happening all over the world during the last six weeks while he has been away from us, and of all the dispositions that have been made for the major control of the war. I have no intention of attempting to embellish, still less to repeat, that picture. What I propose to do is to attempt to