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REVIEW OF THE POSSIBLE SCALE OF INVASION
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM IN 1941.

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PART I - GENERAL.

1. Introduction.

The extent of the threat of a GERMAN invasion of this country will depend on the one hand on the scale of attack that can be mounted and the degree to which other events may force the enemy to attempt a quick decision, and on the other on our own strength, and ability to defeat the attack. It is the object of this paper to consider the scale of attack that the enemy might be able to launch in the Spring or Summer of 1941, rather than the degree of success or failure that might result from it.

2. A successful enemy invasion of this country demands:-

- (a) Sufficient military forces to be able to gain a decision rapidly.
- (b) Sufficient military and air supplies, particularly of ammunition and fuel.
- (c) Sufficient shipping, suitably disposed.
- (d) A reasonable chance of local command of the sea.
- (e) Some degree of local air superiority.
- (f) Sufficiently good morale to be able to face what must at any time be a hazardous undertaking.

These are the main factors. There are many lesser ones. They are all inter-dependent, and inadequacy in one may be compensated for by an advantageous position in another. For instance, inability to convoy large quantities of shipping would be compensated for by increased air-borne forces. It is not possible therefore to estimate the possibility of invasion in terms of any one arm.

Again, the feasibility of invasion must depend on the enemy's commitments elsewhere, and on his internal situation, and these may alter radically.

Any attempt at invasion must imply a considerable risk, and it is difficult to estimate the amount he may be prepared to accept. It must depend on the urgency of the need for a quick decision, and on the enemy's estimate of the results that might follow failure.

3. The Military Position.

GERMANY has over 200 divisions. She should, therefore, have little difficulty in providing the necessary military forces for invasion at any time. Most of the countries already occupied are, however, likely to become progressively more discontented, and the demands for garrisons will not decrease. If further countries are occupied, such as JUGOSLAVIA or unoccupied FRANCE, the strain will increase. An open break with RUSSIA might occupy sufficient forces to make attempted invasion impossible while fighting lasted. Such an event however is very problematical and is unlikely to occur, on RUSSIA'S initiative, at any rate until GERMANY is so weakened that she could neither attack RUSSIA nor invade ENGLAND with any hope of success.

It can be accepted, therefore, that GERMANY is unlikely to have any difficulty in finding troops sufficient in number to undertake invasion.

The Military - Economic Position.

The question of the complete economic failure of GERMANY is beyond the scope of this paper. There is one point, however, which merits attention here. The extent of GERMANY'S oil resources is a continuous source of investigation, and it is possible that her position in this respect may be becoming serious towards the end of 1941. It is unlikely, however, that it will be such as to immobilize the relatively small proportion of her land forces that would be needed against this country. Any failure in aviation petrol would have far-reaching results, but it is understood that GERMANY is better supplied with this than with certain other oil products. There should be no shortage of ammunition or equipment.

There is likely to be no reduction, therefore, in the scale of attack owing to the non-availability of supplies or equipment.

5. The Shipping Position.

GERMANY possesses some four million tons of shipping of her own, most of which is idle. She has considerable amounts of captured shipping, particularly small craft, at her disposal and can commandeer very large numbers of barges. Any permanent immobilization of barges might cause considerable difficulties of distribution within the LOW COUNTRIES, a large proportion of whose normal transportation is done by this method, but GERMANY is probably prepared to accept this.

There will be no shortage, therefore, of shipping for invasion.

Any serious and permanent damage to enemy occupied ports as a result of R.A.F. attacks would add to the difficulties of loading and marshalling. There are too many ports, and they are too difficult a target, for all to be put out of action, but sufficient damage might be done to limit the number of ports that remain usable. This would not affect the size of the force or the amount of shipping that could be made available, for the BALTIC ports at least would still be free. It would, however, add to the congestion and difficulties in those nearer ports that remained usable, and, by limiting the possible concentration areas, it would make surprise more difficult, interception by our naval forces more simple, and the ports that remained more vulnerable to concentrated air attack.

If there is a really cold winter, as in 1939/40, the BALTIC ports may be closed, or partially closed, by ice from late December till the early spring.

Any large reduction of the shipping present in the ports of Northern FRANCE and the LOW COUNTRIES would reduce the immediate threat of invasion temporarily, but would not do so permanently unless we were able to prevent its re-concentration.

The fact that we were unable to interrupt movement in the CHANNEL in September seems to show that we should have difficulty in doing this again, even if AMERICA were in the war, owing to the enemy's strength in dive bombers.

6. Command of the Sea.

The sea covers too large an area for us ever to be able to guarantee that the enemy will be unable to achieve local command of the sea for limited periods south of the line HELIGOLAND - HULL. The extent to which we can reduce the possibility will depend largely on the number of naval craft that can be released from other duties, of which the principal one is the protection of our trade convoys. By the Spring of 1941 our naval position will be much stronger, particularly in small craft, and to this extent the threat of invasion will be decreased.

7. The Air Position.

There are good grounds for believing that the attempt at

Invasion has already been deferred, firstly as a result of the enemy's failure to achieve air superiority, and secondly owing to the damage done to ports by the R.A.F. Our relative position in regard to air superiority should become increasingly satisfactory, particularly from the early Summer onwards, but while this may make invasion correspondingly difficult and risky, there is no reason to suppose that it will make it impossible during 1941. Should a considerable proportion of the GERMAN air force have to be withdrawn elsewhere, for instance to Eastern EUROPE, the invasion threat would be reduced temporarily, but aircraft could be re-concentrated more quickly than could our own forces from outside ENGLAND.

8. GERMAN Morale.

There are increasing numbers of reports which suggest that the morale, particularly of the GERMAN Army, is weakening. There is, however, no reliable evidence to substantiate this, nor is a decisive failure of morale likely to occur unless and until the enemy has a serious reverse. This failure can therefore only be expected after an unsuccessful invasion rather than before the attempt.

9. The possibility of invasion.

No factors are likely to arise which will in any way reduce the forces available for an invasion of this country during 1941, except that the numerical superiority of the GERMAN Air Force should progressively decline. It is unlikely to happen to such an extent as to make invasion impossible.

The passage of time may alter the type of forces that the enemy can make available, for he is pressing on with the mechanization of his army, but it will not alter the number. It will, however, increase the strength both of our own formations and defences, and of our air force. This will not necessarily deter the enemy from the attempt, for the longer he waits, the greater will be the need for ~~an early~~ decision, and the greater will be the risk he is prepared to run to achieve it. Moreover the time may come when the enemy's internal situation will force him to the attempt in desperation.

PART II - THE THREAT TO INDIVIDUAL COMMANDS.

10. General.

If the enemy decides to attempt invasion he will do it with the maximum possible strength. Whatever his commitments elsewhere, he will do his utmost to ensure that the forces required for invasion are available when he wants them. These forces might be anything up to 60 divisions. His resources of sea and air transport are far from sufficient to carry such a force in the first wave, and the initial landing force is not likely to exceed some 20 - 25 divisions. This figure will not decrease, and may increase as further ships are converted for invasion purposes and more special landing craft are constructed.

II. Eastern Command.

At present the main threat is to Eastern Command owing to its geographical position in relation to Continental ports, and to the fact that the enemy can only provide maximum air cover up to the line THE WASH - BRISTOL, and is likely to make his main effort within this protective zone.

Shipping in the appropriate ports at the present time is sufficient for 15 - 20 divisions, and some 4 smaller divisions could be transported by air. Any additional forces from the BALTIC are likely to be directed against the Eastern or Northern Commands.

There is no reason why the threat to this Command should decrease numerically, though continued attacks on the LOW COUNTRIES ports might make the assembly of an expedition more difficult, and the possibility of enemy success will diminish as the strength of our beach defences increased.

12. Southern Command.

The threats at present to Southern Command are from attack, limited to 2 or 3 divisions, as far West as PORTLAND in co-operation with any operations against Eastern Command, from diversionary sea-borne landings elsewhere, and from large scale air landings in the many suitable areas.

The sea-borne threat will only increase if the enemy is able to move large convoys down channel at will. There is no reason why the threat should decrease.

13. Western Command.

The threat to Western Command, except for local air landings, is at present almost negligible. It will only increase if the enemy is in occupation of EIRE.

14. Northern Command.

The threat to Northern Command is at present small owing to the fact that enemy forces at sea would be in great danger north of the HUMBER, and because he can only provide maximum air cover south of the WASH.

New types of enemy fighters and dive bombers are likely to have increased range. This area of maximum air cover will consequently spread northwards, thereby increasing the threat to the southern portion of Northern Command.

The general threat may, therefore, increase rather than decrease, though the deciding factor will be the BRITISH Navy's ability to prevent enemy movements in the open sea. Ample forces for an attack on Northern Command will always be available from the BALTIC.

15. Scottish Command.

The threat to Scottish Command is small. The only forces likely to be used against it are those from NORWAY or DENMARK. While the long winter nights will increase the chances of surprise for any forces operating from these countries, the long hours of daylight in Summer should make surprise almost impossible.

The threat to Scottish Command which is already small will therefore tend to decrease after the Spring of 1941. The maintenance of any forces landed must be difficult at all times.

16. The effect of an enemy landing in EIRE.

A successful enemy landing in EIRE would increase the threat to Western Command and to the CLYDE. Its effect however is far more likely to be decisive as regards blockade, than as regards invasion of GREAT BRITAIN. It is in fact doubtful whether the enemy, having seized EIRE, would need to invade GREAT BRITAIN unless he were in danger of being ejected from EIRE. Invasion of this country, particularly if troops had been transferred to EIRE, would then, however, be more likely from the East than from the West.

17. Conclusion.

It cannot be said that ^{the} possible scale of attack against the UNITED KINGDOM will have decreased during the next 12 months, for the enemy can always make available some 40 - 60 divisions, and we must expect that shipping for 20 divisions or more will remain within striking distance of this country.

As far as we can judge GERMANY is convinced that she can and will win a military victory over GREAT BRITAIN. Her staffs and troops are working hard to increase their efficiency and to perfect their arrangements, embarkation and disembarkation exercises continue, and a considerable programme of motorization is being pushed on.

Our own strength, however, grows at a much quicker pace than that of our enemies. As our beach defences grow, our field formations complete their training and equipment, and as further armoured formations become available, so it should be possible to decrease the strength of the field army in this country. We should be able to decrease the likelihood of invasion by an offensive policy of raiding along the whole extent of the enemy coast in order to force him to build and occupy defences, and to keep him in a state of uncertainty. Systematic air attacks of a harassing nature, though not necessarily on a large scale, against ports likely to be used for loading should increase the enemy's difficulties. The cumulative effect of such action over a long period may render the ports unserviceable, or may make the GERMANS hesitate to use them for fear of a heavier scale of attack during the critical period. As the numerical strength of our Air Force more nearly approaches that of the enemy, and as our air defences improve, so any attempt to invade this country will become more hazardous, and should allow a reduction in the strength of our Field Army in this country.

Against all these factors, however, tending to add to the enemy's difficulties must be set the fact that the longer the war lasts, the more pressing will become the enemy's need for a decision, and the greater will be the risks that he is prepared to take in an effort to achieve the successful invasion of this country.

G.S.(I),
G.H.Q. Home Forces,
29th October 1940.