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Reference:-

CAB 21/1393

107298
XC/A 014730

Subject: Kenneth Pearson interview in Jan 1940 P.P.

Tel. No. ABBEY 3411.

Ext.....

AIR MINISTRY,

KING CHARLES STREET,
WHITEHALL



SECRET.

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31st January, 1940.

by J.P. C.J.

31/1/40

I have been looking through the draft of J.P.(40)22, and the following are some first reactions to the comments by the Second Eleven on pages 3 onwards of that paper.

1. Reference paragraph 11. I think our comment should be much stronger on this head, which is one of the most important in the whole paper, in my view.

I suggest that after the quotation the comment should read as follows:-

"The Chiefs of Staff, on the other hand, in paragraph 7 of C.O.S.(40)218 said: 'It is not of course suggested that the Allies could operate substantial forces in both areas simultaneously; but neither is it considered that Germany could take the offensive in both places at the same time'".

The Chiefs of Staff and the Allied Military Committee thus hold diametrically opposed views on this point. The point was thought to be of such importance that in the discussion on intervention in Scandinavia at the 28th (40) Meeting of the Allied Military Committee the

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British representatives particularly invited an expression of the French views upon it. The French representatives said in reply that "they were quite definitely of opinion that in view of Germany's present advantages on land and in the air, and of the relative weakness of Swedish resistance, Germany might quite well capture a number of bases at any rate in Southern Scandinavia and, at the same time, conduct a major operation in the Balkans".

We suggest that it is a matter of crucial importance to resolve this difference of opinion on a point which must have a profound effect on our own strategy in the coming months. It is essential that there should be no doubt in our minds as to whether, having made the necessary provision for the security of the Western Front against any possible Allied attack (which the Allied Military Committee put at 70/80 Divisions), the Germans would be able with their balance of 90/100 Divisions to conduct offensive operations in Scandinavia and in the Balkans and at the same time to ensure internal security in the newly occupied territories under their control.

As far as air forces are concerned we have no

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doubt that the Germans have ample strength to do so; we must reach definite agreement as to whether or not the same applies to the land forces. We suggest, therefore, that the General Staff should be instructed to examine this problem and report as a matter of urgency.

From the point of view of our own strategy the issue may well be one of shipping. It is no doubt true that the Germans could not take the offensive in the North, in the South-East and at the same time on the Western Front. If, therefore, they committed themselves to operations in the North and the South-East we might, and indeed should, be justified in withdrawing forces from the Western Front to meet them on the other fronts. The problem which will then arise is whether or not we have got the shipping and the naval escorts to undertake two substantial overseas operations at the same time. The Admiralty have already expressed considerable concern at the size of the commitment represented by the projected operations in Scandinavia; if to this were added the necessity for transporting and maintaining substantial forces in the Middle East, it is at least a matter of grave doubt whether it would prove to be practicable.

This again we suggest should be a matter of

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immediate examination by the Admiralty and the Ministry of Shipping.

It is hardly necessary to emphasise that these two points must be taken into serious consideration in deciding upon our policy in Scandinavia. // A further point which emerges in this connection is that it has become clear from our reviews of Scandinavia and the Middle East that a major limiting factor in any event is likely to be our lack of base and administrative units....."etc., etc., as in the present draft.

2. Reference paragraph 12. I rather doubt whether it is worth letting the Joint Planning Committee in for an examination of the possibilities of Allied assistance in the Balkans in the event of restricted German penetration. Is it not quite clear that we could not give any direct military assistance to Roumania? The A.M.C. in paragraph 80 of their paper are quite clear on this point; and it seems certain that we could do nothing in that part of the world unless we had the active support of Turkey. I feel if we undertake the examination suggested it would merely lead us into a labyrinth of different hypotheses and that we really should not get anywhere.

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3. Reference paragraph 14. I think this might be amplified a bit by adding something on the following lines:-

"The French are, for obvious reasons, unwilling to admit that anything is more probable than an attack on France. Nevertheless we feel that from what we know of German policy, the present German campaign against our shipping and the trend of German propaganda, internal and external, this course is the most likely one for them to adopt. It should be noted that it is the course which the Chiefs of Staff have for some years consistently said they believed to be the most probable and the most formidable threat that we have to meet; it is true that we have always visualised in the past that this form of attack may be intensified and extended to our ports and to the system of distribution from the ports, and this may well turn out to be so.

We feel it right to draw attention to the fact that the present limited operations against our seaborne trade in the North Sea bear no relation to the scale of attack that we may have to meet when the weather improves and the Germans intensify their action. Everything possible is being done to develop our active defences against this

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form of attack, but we would again point out the vital necessity of doing everything within our power to improve and increase the facilities at Western ports and for the inland transport of goods to and from the Western ports. We are fully aware of the difficulties and disadvantages of this course, but feel certain that if they are tackled with vigour and with a clear recognition of their vital importance they could at any rate be largely overcome."

4. Reference paragraph 15, last sentence. I am not quite clear what this is intended to convey. It is very unlikely that any substantial reduction in the scale of attack on our shipping could be effected by counter measures against the German air forces engaged. It has already been agreed by the War Cabinet that if German operations on these lines assume proportions which threaten to be decisive we must not shrink from using all that we have got, and our striking force must be employed at all costs in the manner that holds out the best hope of obtaining decisive results against Germany (see Annex I to C.O.S.(39)107).

On the other hand we do not want to be forced

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