

The War and Conditions in England

## **OUR GREATEST EFFORT IS COMING**

By WINSTON CHURCHILL, Prime Minister of Great Britain

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I HOPE you will not imagine that I am going to try to make some extraordinary pronouncement tonight and tell you exactly how all the problems of mankind in the war and in peace are going to be solved.

I only thought you would like me to have a short talk with you about how we are getting on and to thank you for all the kindness with which you have treated me in spite of my many shortcomings.

It is a year almost to the day since I spoke to you on a broadcast here at home. This has been a time of disappointments as well as successes, but there is no doubt that the good news has far outweighed the bad, and that the progress of the United Nations toward their goal has been solid, continual and growing quicker.

The long and terrible march which the rescuing powers are making is being accomplished stage by stage, and we can now say not only with hope but with reason that we shall reach the end of our journey in good order, and that tragedy which threatened the whole world and might have put out all its lights and left our children and descendants in darkness and bondage perhaps for centuries—that tragedy will not come to pass.

He is a rash man who tries to prophesy when or how or under what conditions victory will come.

But come it will—that at least is sure.

It is also certain that unity of aims and actions and singleness of purpose among us all—Britons at home and our Allies abroad—will make it come sooner.

Denounces Mussolini

A year ago the Eighth Army which had marched 1,500 miles across the desert from Alamein was in battle for the Mareth Line and the First British Army and American Army were beating their way forward to Tunisia. We were all confident of victory but we did not know that in less than two months the enemy would be driven with heavy slaughter from the African continent, leaving at one stroke 335,000 prisoners and dead in our hands.

Since then the successful campaign in Sicily brought about the fall of Mussolini and the heartfelt repudiation by the Italian people of the Fascist creed.

Mussolini indeed escaped to eat the bread of affliction at Hitler's table, to shoot his son-in-law and help the Germans wreak vengeance among the Italian masses whom he had professed to love and over whom he had ruled for more than twenty years.

This fate and judgment more terrible than death has overtaken the vainglorious dictator who stabbed France in the back and thought his crime had gained him an empire of the Mediterranean.

The conquest of Sicily and Naples brought in their train the surrender of Sardinia and the liberation of Corsica, islands which had been expected to require for themselves a serious expedition and a hard campaign.

Hold Third of Italy Now

We now hold one-third of the mainland of Italy. Our progress has not been as rapid or decisive as we had hoped. I do not doubt we shall be victors both at the Anzio bridgehead and on the main front to the southward and that Rome will be rescued.

Meanwhile, we have swept out of the struggle sixty-six Italian divisions and we are holding in Italy, for most part in close action, nearly twenty-five divisions and a noteworthy part of the German Air Force, all of whom can bleed and burn in the land of their former ally while other and even more important events which might require their presence are impending elsewhere.

We have been disappointed in the Aegean Sea and its many islands which we have not yet succeeded in dominating.

But these setbacks in the eastern Mediterranean are offset, and more than offset, by the panic and frenzy which prevail in Hungary, Rumania and Bulgaria, by the continued activities of Greek guerrillas and above all by the heroic struggle of the Partisans of Yugoslavia under the leadership of Marshal Tito.

In the Near and Middle East we have certainly traveled a long way forward from those autumn days in 1940 when we stood all alone—when Mussolini was invading Egypt, when we were driven out of British Somaliland, when all Ethiopia was in Italian chains and we wondered whether we could defend the Suez Canal, the Nile Valley, the Sudan and British East Africa.

Calls U-Boat Defeat Greatest

There is much still to be done in the Balkans and the eastern Mediterranean. But here again I do not doubt the task will be finished in a workmanlike manner.

We who dwell in the British Isles must celebrate with joy and thankfulness our deliverance from the mortal U-boat peril—which deliverance lighted the year which has ended.

When I look back upon the fifty-five months of this hard and obstinate war, which makes ever more exacting demands upon our life-springs of energy and contrivance, I still rate highest among the dangers we have overcome the U-boat attacks upon our shipping, without which we cannot live or even receive the help which our dominions and our grand and generous American ally have sent us.

But there are other deliverances which we should never forget. There was the sea mining peril which loomed so large in 1939 and which has been mastered by superior science, ingenuity and by the often-forgotten but almost-unsurpassed devotion to duty of our minesweepers' crews and the thousand ships they work and man that we may eat and live and thus fight for the good cause.

We have been delivered from the horrors of invasion at a time when we were almost unarmed. We have endured without swerving or failing the utmost fury Hitler could cast upon us from the air, and now the tables are turned and those who sought to destroy their enemies by the most fearful form of warfare are themselves reeling and writhing under the prodigious blows of British and American air power.

We had ourselves a large air force in this island this time last year. We have a larger one today, but besides all that our American Allies have now definitely overtaken and outnumbered us in the mighty air force they have established here. The combination in true brotherhood of these two air forces—either of which is nearly as large in numbers and in power much greater than the whole air force of Germany-aided as it will be by another Allied air force in Italy almost as large which is now established there, these together will produce results in these coming months which I shall not attempt to measure in advance but which will certainly be of enormous advantage to the cause of the Allies.

Not only have the British and Americans this great preponderance in numbers which enables them to send out a thousand bombers as often as the enemy is able to send a hundred against us, but also by sharing all our secrets with one another we have won leadership in the marvels of radar, both for attack and defense.

Surveying these famous and massive events on land, sea and air in the war waged by the two western Allies—Britain and the United States—against Hitlerism, we are entitled, nay bound, to be encouraged and be thankful and resolve to do better than we ever have done before.

It would be quite natural if our Soviet friends and allies did not appreciate the complications

and difficulties which attend all sea crossings—amphibious is the word—operations on a large scale. They are the people of great land spaces and when foes threaten the sacred soil, Russia, it is by land that they march out to meet and attack them.

Pays Tribute to Russia

Our tasks are difficult and different, but the British and American peoples are filled with genuine admiration for the military triumphs of the Russian Army.

I have paid repeated tributes to their splendid deeds, and now I must tell you that the advance of their armies from Stalingrad to the Dniester River, with vanguards reaching out toward the Prut—a distance of 900 miles—accomplished in a single year constitutes the greatest cause of Hitler's undoing.

Since I spoke to you last, not only have the Hun invaders been driven from the land they have ravaged but the guts of the German Army have been largely torn out by Russian valor and generalship.

The peoples of all the Russias have been fortunate in finding in their supreme ordeal of agony a warrior leader, Marshal Stalin, whose authority enables him to combine and control the movements of armies numbered by many millions upon a front of nearly 2,000 miles and to impart a unity and concert to the war direction in the east which has been very good for Soviet Russia and very good for all her allies.

When a moment ago I spoke of the improvements for the Allied cause which are taking place in Hungary and in the satellites in the Balkans, I was reserving the acknowledgment that the victorious advance of the Soviet Army has been the main cause of Hitler's approaching downfall in those regions.

I have now dwelt with the progress of the war against Hitler Germany. But I must also speak of the other gigantic war which is proceeding against the equally barbarous and brutal Japanese. This war is waged in vast preponderance by the fleets, air forces and armies of the United States. We have accepted their leadership in the Pacific Ocean just as they accepted our leadership in the Indian theatre.

Cites Debt Owed to U. S.

We are proud of the contributions made by Australia and New Zealand against Japan. The debt which the British and the Commonwealth of Nations owe to the United States for the fact that their operations against the Japanese shielded Australia and New Zealand from Japanese aggression and from mortal peril during the period when the mother country was at full stretch in the struggle against Germany and Italy. That debt is one which will never be forgotten in any land where the Union Jack is flown.

Remarkable success has attended the work of the American Navy and American, Australian and New Zealand troops. The progress in New Guinea is constant American victories in the Pacific and, in particular their latest conquest and liberation of the Marshall Islands, constitute a superb example of a combination naval, air and military force.

It is possible that the war in the Pacific may progress more rapidly than was formerly thought possible. The Japanese are showing signs of great weakness. Attrition of their shipping, especially their oil tankers, and their air forces on all of which President Roosevelt dwelt with sure foresight a year ago, has become not merely evident but obvious. The Japanese have not felt strong enough to risk their fleets, in general engagements for the sake of their outer defense lines. In this they have been prudent, considering the immense expansion of United States naval power since the Japanese' treacherous assault at Pearl Harbor.

What fools the Japanese ruling caste were to bring against themselves the might and latent war energy of the great Republic all for the sake of carrying out a base and squalid ambush.

The British Empire and Commonwealth of Nations have pledged themselves to right side by side with the United States against Japan no matter what it costs or how long it lasts.

#### Pledges to Fight Japanese

Actually we have suffered from Japanese injuries even greater than those which have roused the armed wrath of the American Union. In our theatre of war, in Burma and the Bay of Bengal, we shall strive our utmost to aid the Americans in their contacts with China and to add to our own.

The more we can fight and engage the Japanese and especially wear down their air power the greater the diversion we make from the Pacific theatre and the more help we give to the operations of the United States.

In Burma those plans which were prepared last August at Quebec are now being put into practice. Young men are at the helm. Admiral Mountbatten infused the spirit of energy and confidence into the heavy forces gathered to recover Burma and by that means to defend the frontiers of India and reopen the road to China.

Our airborne operations enable us to attack the Japanese rear. They, for their part, have got behind our front by infiltration at various places and fierce fighting is going on at many points. It is too soon to proclaim the results in this vast area of mountain and jungle, but in nearly every combat we are able to count three or four times more Japanese dead —and that is what matters—than we have ourselves suffered in killed, wounded and missing.

Individual fighting superiority in the jungle has definitely passed to the British and Indian

soldiers as compared with the Japanese. Farther to the north an American column of experienced jungle fighters and a considerable Chinese army under General Stilwell of the United States service are progressing with equal mastery.

Later on I shall make to you or Parliament a further report on all this hard fighting which, mind you, is not by any means decided yet.

#### Big Fleet in Indian Ocean

Meanwhile, we have placed a powerful battle fleet under Admiral Somerville in Indian waters in order to face the main part of the Japanese fleet should it turn westward after having declined battle against the Americans.

When I spoke a year ago I drew attention to the possibility that there would be a prolonged interval between the collapse of Hitler and the downfall of Japan. I still think there will be an interval, but I do not consider it will be as long an interval as I thought a year ago. But be it long or be it short, we shall go through with our American brothers with our utmost strength to the very end.

I have now tried to carry you, as if in Mosquito aircraft, on a reconnoitering duty over the world-wide expanse of this sterile and ferocious war. And I trust you have gained not only some glimpse of the particular scenes, but also have the feeling of the relative size and urgency of the various things that are going on. There are, as you see, quite a lot of things going on.

Still, I remember when I spoke to you on March 21 of last year I gave up the main part of what I said to what we were planning to do to make our island a better place for all its people after the war was over, whenever that should be. I told you there would have to be a general election and a new House of Commons, and, if I was still thought fit to be of any further use, I should put to the country a four-year plan to cover the transition period between war and peace and bring the soldiers, sailors and airmen back to a land where there would be food, work and homes for all.

I dwelt on how wrong it would be to make promises which could not be fulfilled and for one set of politicians to try to outbid another in visionary scheming and dreaming. But I mentioned five or six large fields in which practical action would have to be taken.

#### Recalls 1943 Promises

Let me remind you of them—a reform on a great scale of the education of the people, a nation-wide uplifting of their physical health. I spoke of the encouragement of agriculture and food production and of vigorous revival of healthy village life. I dwelt upon the importance of a national compulsory insurance scheme for all classes, for all purposes from the cradle to the grave, and of the sound scheme of demobilization which would not delay

the rebuilding of industry and not seem unfair to the fighting men. I also spoke about the maintenance of full employment and about the rebuilding of our cities and the housing of the people, and I made a few tentative suggestions about the economic and financial policy and what one might call the importance of making both ends meet.

All this was to happen after the war was over. No promises were to be made beforehand but every preparation that was possible without impeding war effort, including legislative preparation, was to be set on foot.

Now, my friends—as your unfailing kindness encourages me to call you—I am a man who has no unsatisfied ambitions except to beat the enemy and to help you in any way I think right, and, therefore, I hope you will not suppose that in what I am going to say I am looking for votes or trying to glorify this party or that. But I do feel that I may draw your attention to the fact that several of these large matters, which a year ago I told you might be accomplished after war was over, have already been shaped and framed and presented to Parliament and the public.

#### Lists Social Proposals

For instance, you have the greatest scheme of improved education that has ever been attempted by a responsible government. This will soon be on the statute book. It involves a heavy cost upon the State, but I do not think we can maintain our position in the post-war world unless we are an exceptionally well-educated people and unless we can handle easily and with comprehension the problems and inventions of the new scientific age.

Then there is the very far-reaching policy of a National Health Service, which already has been laid before Parliament in outline and received with a considerable measure of acceptance.

Before this session is out we shall lay before you our proposals about the extensions of national insurance, upon which a vast amount of patient work has been done.

So here you have, or will have very shortly, three of the important measures, which I thought would be put off until after the war already, fashioned and proclaimed at a time when no one can tell when the war can end, and all this has been done without relaxing the war effort or causing any party strife to mar the national unity. But there are several other large problems upon which the Ministers and their assistants have toiled and wrought and which are far advanced.

And, indeed, if this process continues and war goes on long enough a greater part of my four-year plan of a year ago may very well be perfected and largely in operation before we reach a general election and give the people a chance to say what they think about it.

#### Strikes Back at Critics

b. Now I must say that one might have expected His Majesty's Government would receive many compliments upon the remarkable progress they have made not only with the war but with the preparation for the social and domestic welfare at the armistice or peace.

Last Oct. 1 I thought the time had come to ask the King to appoint Lord Woolton to be Minister of Reconstruction, with a seat in the War Cabinet. His was a record which rightly commanded respect. However, there is a large number of respectable and even eminent people who are not at all burdened with responsibility who have a lot of leisure on their hands and who feel quite most sincerely that the best work they can do at this present time of hard effort and anxiety is to belabor the Government with criticism and condemn them as unprofitable servants because they are not, in the midst of this deadly struggle, ready at any moment to produce fool-proof solutions for the whole future world as between nation and nation, as between victors and vanquished, as between man and man, as between capital and labor, as between the state and individual, and so forth and so on.

The harshest language is used, and this national Government, which has led the nation and the empire and, as I hold, a large part of the world, out of mortal danger, through the dark valleys into which they had wandered, largely through their own folly, back onto the broad uplands where the stars of peace and freedom shine, is reviled as a set of dawdlers and muddlers unable to frame a policy or take a decision or make a plan and act upon it.

I know you will not forget that this Administration, formed in an hour of disaster by the leaders of the Conservative, Labor and Liberal parties in good faith and good will, has brought Britain out of the jaws of death. Back from the mouth of hell, while all the world wondered. I know you will not forget that.

#### Million Homes Destroyed

There are two subjects of domestic policy which I mentioned last year on which we have not produced an account of our course of action. This first is housing. We set before ourselves the provision of homes for all who need them with priority for service men, as and when they come home from the war. Let me first lay down an absolute rule—nothing can or must be done in housing or rehousing which by weakening or clogging the war effort prolongs the war. Neither labor nor material can be diverted in any way which hampers the vast operations which are in progress or impending.

Subject to that there are three ways in which the business of housing and rehousing the people should be attacked.

Let me tell you about it. Now I do not take the view myself that we were a nation of slum dwellers before the war. Nearly 5,000,000 new approved houses or dwellings were built out of about 11,000,000 in this small island between the two wars, and the British people as a whole were better housed than almost any people on the Continent of Europe, or, I will add,



in many parts of the United States of America. But now about 1,000,000 homes have been destroyed or grievously damaged by the fire of the enemy. This offers a magnificent opportunity for rebuilding and replanning, and while we are at it we had better make a clean sweep of all those areas of which our civilization should be ashamed.

However, I have given my word that, so far as it may lie in my power, the soldiers, when they return from the war, and those who have been bombed out and made to double up with other families, shall be restored to homes of their own at the earliest possible moment.

The first attack must evidently be made upon houses which are damaged, but which can be reconditioned into proper dwellings. This must go forward during the war. And we hope to have broken the back of it during this year. It is a war measure, for our allies are here among us in vast numbers and we must do our best for them.

The second attack on the housing problem will be made by what are called the prefabricated, or emergency, houses. On this the Minister of Works, Lord Portal, is working wonders. I hope we may make up to half a million of these, and for this purpose not only plans but actual preparations are being made during the war on a nation-wide scale. Factories have been assigned, the necessary set-up is being made ready, materials are being ear-marked as far as possible, the most convenient sites will be chosen, the whole business is to be treated as a military evolution handled by the government with private industry harnessed to its service.

And I have every hope and a firm resolve that several hundred thousand of our young men will be able to marry several hundred thousand of our young women and make their own four-year plan.

Now what about these emergency houses? I have seen the full-sized model myself and steps are being taken to make sure that a good number of housewives have a chance of expressing their views about it. These houses will make a heavy demand upon the steel industry and will absorb in a great measure its overflow and expansion for war purposes. They are, in my opinion, far superior to the ordinary cottage as it exists today. Not only have they excellent baths, gas or electric kitchenettes and refrigerators, but their walls carry fitted furniture—chests of drawers, hanging cupboards and tables which today it would cost eighty pounds to buy. Moreover, for the rest of the furniture standard articles will be provided and mass produced so that no heavy capital charge will fall upon the young couples or others who may become tenants of the houses.

Owing to the methods of mass production which will be used, I am assured that these houses, including the £80 worth of fitted furniture, will be available at a very moderate rent. All these emergency houses will be publicly owned and it will not rest with any individual tenant to keep them in being after they have served their purpose of tiding over the return of the fighting men and after permanent dwellings are available. As much thought has been and will be put into this plan as was put into the invasion of Africa, though I readily admit

that it does not bear comparison in scale with the kind of things we are working at now.

The swift production of these temporary houses is the only way in which the immediate needs of our people can be met in the four or five years that follow the war. In addition to this and to the reconditioning of the damaged dwellings, we have the program of permanent rebuilding which the Minister of Health, Mr. Willink, has recently outlined and by which we shall have two or three hundred thousand permanent houses built or building by the end of the first two years after the defeat of Germany.

For these 200,000 sites are already owned by the local authorities.

Side by side with this comes the question of the employment of the building trade. We do not want a frantic splurge of building, to be followed by a sharp contraction of the trade. I have a sympathy with the building trade, and with the bricklayers. For they are apt to be the first to be taken for the wars and in time of peace they all know if they work at their job, that when it is finished they may have to look for another. If we are to secure the best results, it will be necessary that our twelve-year plan for the building trade on which Mr. Bevin [Minister of Labor and National Service] and Lord Portal have spent so much time—a plan which will guarantee steady employment for long periods and increased reward for increased efforts or superior skill we have—it will be necessary to see that that plan is carried out.

#### Asserts Land Will Be Taken

Then we are told by the busy wiseacres: How can you build houses without the land to put them on; when are you going to tell us your plans for this? But we have already declared in 1941 that all land needed for public purposes shall be taken at prices based on the standards of values of March 31, 1939. This was a formidable decision of state policy which selected property and land for a special, restricted imposition. Whereas stocks and shares and many classes of real property have gone up in value during the war, and when agricultural land, on account of the new proposals and new prospects opened to farmers, has also risen in value, the state has the power, which it will on no account surrender, to claim all land needed bona fide for war industry or for public purposes at values fixed before wartime conditions supervened. There are certain hard cases which will best be adjusted by Parliamentary debate, but in the main you may be sure that ample land will be forthcoming when and where it is needed for all the houses, temporary or permanent, required to house our people far better than they have ever been housed before.

Nobody needs be deterred from planning for the future by the fear that they may not be able to obtain the necessary land. Legislation to enable the local authorities to secure any land required for the reconstruction of our towns has been promised and will be presented to Parliament this session. There are some comfortable people, of course, who want to put off everything until they have planned and got agreed to in every feature, a White Paper or a blueprint for the regeneration of the world, before, of course, asking the electors how

they feel about it.

These people would rather postpone building the homes for the returning troops until they had planned out every acre in the country to make sure the landscape is not spoiled. In time of war we have to face immediate needs and stern realities, and it surely is better for us to do that than to do nothing whilst preparing to do everything.

Here is my difficulty. I put it frankly before you. I cannot take anything that will hinder the war. And no one—except the very clever ones—can tell when the war will end or whether it will end suddenly or peter out. Therefore, there must be an emergency plan, and that is what Ministers concerned have been working at for some time past. But in spite of this and of all I have said, I cannot guarantee that everything will be perfect or that if the end of the war came suddenly, as it might do, there will not be an interval when things will be pretty rough.

But it will not be a long interval, and it will be child's play compared to what we have already gone through. Nor need we be frightened about the scale of this task. It looks to me a small one—this housing—compared to some of those we have handled and are handling now.

The value of the land involved is between one-twentieth and one-thirtieth of the cost of the houses to be built upon it, and our population itself is unhappily about to enter upon a period of decline—numerical decline—which can only be checked by the most robust treatment of housing and of all its ancillaries.

There is one other question on which I should like to dwell tonight, but for a reason which I will mention later I only intend to utter a passing reassurance—I mean demobilization.

Now, I know about as much about this as most people, because I was Secretary of State for War and Air at the time of the great demobilization after the last war, when in about six months we brought home from abroad, released from military service and restored to their families nearly 3,000,000 men. Great plans had been prepared before the armistice by the planners to bring home all the key men first, and any soldier who could get a telegram from someone at home saying that he was wanted for a key job had priority over the men who had borne the burden and heat of the war. The troops did not think this was fair, and by the time I went to the War Office a convulsion of indiscipline shook the whole of our splendid army which had endured unmoved all danger, slaughter, privation.

Hints of Invasion Feints

I persuaded the Cabinet to reverse this foolish and inequitable plan and to substitute the simple rule—first out, first home—with the result that discipline was immediately restored and the process of demobilization went forward in a smooth and orderly fashion.

Now, my friend, Mr. Bevin, the Minister of Labor, for whose deep sagacity and knowledge of the wage-earning masses I have high admiration—Mr. Bevin has devised a very much less crude but equally fair and healthy scheme in which I have the greatest confidence, in which all concerned may have the greatest confidence.

Why am I not going to tell you all about it tonight? Or why will Mr. Bevin not tell you about it in the near future?

Here is the reason. This is not the time to talk about demobilization.

The hour of our greatest effort and action is approaching. We march with valiant Allies who count on us as we count on them. The flashing eyes of all our soldiers, sailors and airmen must be fixed upon the enemy on their front. The only homeward road for all of us lies through the arch of victory.

The magnificent armies of the United States are here, or are pouring in. Our own troops, the best trained and best equipped we have ever had, stand at their side in equal numbers and in true comradeship. Leaders are appointed in whom we all have faith. We shall require from our own people here, from Parliament, from the press, from all classes, the same cool, strong nerves, the same toughness of fiber which stood us in good stead in those days when we were all alone under the German blitz.

And here I must warn you, that in order to deceive and baffle the enemy as well as to exercise the forces, there will be many false alarms, many feints and many dress rehearsals. We may also ourselves be the object of new forms of attack from the enemy.

Britain can take it. She has never flinched or failed, and when the signal is given, the whole circle of avenging nations will hurl themselves upon the foe and batter out the life of the crudest tyranny which has ever sought to bar the progress of mankind.