Memorandum.

Sent to L.H.

(1291)

The Hague, October 14th, 1939.

Owing to the postal and censorship situation in the French African possessions I was unable to write a memorandum. This mem. will probably be censored by the British, but at least I must not restrict myself to that extent as was the case in Africa.

I find the situation very complicated, owing to Russia 's attitude. I really dont know how it was possible that the German-Russian pourparlers were not known to the British and French diplomacy. I, after all, published the news of the proposals of Ribbentrop to Stalin on November 16th, 1938, and in my article series in March this year on Russia I predicted the commercial agreement. Some great mistake has ben committed somewhere!

The Democratic Powers must be very careful now if they dont want to get into a new impasse. An early peace now would leave Hitler still master of Germany, even if with an impaired might. Even if next spring then there would be no "mobilization," the old blackmail would start very soon again. If, however, the war would last long, then Germany and the whole of Central and South Eastern Europe would go Bolshevik, unless the Western Powers have [redacted] enough foresight to stop this development.

I am sure there is an influential group in England and France at present which clandestinely is ready to make peace with Germany. There influence at present is not sufficiently strong, especially in view of public opinion's opposition to such a procedure. But obviously this group, which is supported by the City and in France by the Comite des Forges, say:

"Can we go on as we do? If we prolong the war, this will lead to Bolshevism. In three months' time the capital levy will be due; in France already profits on armaments are reduced to 3 percent and it is planned to reduce profits for the other industries to six. With the progressing months and years the state will swallow up all industries and trade, and then what is the difference between Germany's organization and ours? Moreover, if Germany will lose, she will go Bolshevik, and we will be faced with a united Russian-German Communist group."

These fears are sincere. But there are other things in question than the private property. It is the question whether international law or banditry should rule the world, in which case it is necessary to carry on with the war. But then the Allied diplomats must be more alert than they were before the outbreak of this war. Germany will have to be watched. I am affraid if the war will go on, then Stalin will start a new diversion toward South-Eastern Europe, by taking Bessarabia and the Ukranian corridor of Hungary, and to prevent the Soviets from further transgression, the Nazis will try to soothe Stalin by home "reforms," such as the persecution of the bankers, industrialists, rich people. This, in any case, is not so far out from the line of their policy. Moreover, to please Stalin they will start an atheist propaganda. All this is dangerous because if this will go on, it will be difficult to distinguish between German Nazism and Russian Bolshevism.

If the political outlook is dark, the military is exceedingly favorable. The neutrality of Spain and Italy (which I predicted in previous memoranda) has changed the situation in the Mediterranean. During my stay in Tunis I found the Mediterraneana quiet lake. Conversations with American and neutral skippers revealed that there are no submarines in the Mediterranean, though they were a few drifting mines. When I flew from Algiers to Marseilles, the Mediterranean look as pacific as any inland lake, no signs of warlike preparations-- at least hardly any more than in July.

Italy's neutrality apparently will hold on.

I am convinced that Italy did not intend to fight on the side of Germany but that the axis was just a huge blackmail organization. The Soviet treaty is just a good excuse to get out-- certainly a better excuse than what she had in 1915. She just could not afford to be involved in a war with France and Great Britain. Her shores are too vulnerable; France would have invaded Savoy and Lombardy, and the almost half-a-million strong Tunisian army was ready to invade Tripolitania. Balbo's original aim was to make a fast motorized raid into Egypt right up to the Suez canal; this has been made impossible by France's strength in Tunis where the Mareth line is an excellent line of defence and the large army could have made a raid into Tripolitania and Cyreneica as fast as Balbo was advancing into Egypt. Thus Balbo would had been cut off from his base and resources.

Italy's neutrality is a good sign, because, first, she is now frightened by the joint danger of Pan-Slavism and Pan-Germanism, and, second, her interest in the Western Powers is significant because Italy seems to have already picked the winner!

The situation in France is also different than in 1914. The Germans have at present only 50 really first class divisions, these however being as good as those in 1914. But the rest of 100 is second class. Germany thus have just over two million men in the field, while France alone has five million excellently trained persons. At present these armies are limited to a 160 miles narrow front.

If Hitler, despite the opposition of his generals, is foolish enough to make an offensive, against the Maginot line, this would be the ruin of his prestige. The Maginot line is impenetrable, I believe. But the French are in the same fix, because even if the Siegfried line is not as strong as the Maginot line it is still quite formidable, and it would demand too great sacrifice of lives to conquer it. At present it is a systematic reduction of iron, steel and concrete forts, hidden mines, various defences-- destruction carried out by a superior artillery. But this is a slow work, and it seems that using huge number of workers the Germans can construct in the back new fortifications as fast as the French reduce the defenses in the front.

What is Hitler going to do? The present constallation would indicate, that, despite the advice of his generals, he is planning an offensive against the Maginot line. Others believe that he is going to attack Holland, Belgium and Switzerland. Colonel Fuller, the Am. Military Attache in Paris, believes that this attack will come before the end of this month (later it will be impossible). The Germans believe that the occupation of Holland would be a walk-over like that of Poland, that they can do it in 48 hours. The Dutch experts believe that they could offer sufficient resistance to Germany which then would enable the Powers to bring help. They hope especially that the flodding of the country will be efficient. The Germans believe that by the time the flooding becomes efficient, they will be already on the Dutch frontier.

I myself dont share the fears of Col.Fuller. Bob Casey is of the same opinion. I dont think Hitler will attack Holland or Belgium, at least not this year. He wont do it for many reasons. First, he fears the reaction which such an invasion may create in the U.S.A. Second, the Dutch and Belgian defences are such that it will demand heavy casualities and at the end , in the best case, he may arrive at the Belgian-French frontier to find the resistance of the extension of the Maginot line which if not quite as formidable as the Maginot line itself is stronger than the French defenses were at the end of the last war. Third, even if he could break through here, the gap is too narrow for a large scale manoeuvre. One must remember that in 1914 Germany not only invaded Belgium but Northern France and that

this front was a long one ,hinging on Verdun. But the present break-through, even if it would be feasible, would allow a development on a front which is about 150 miles long. And the situation changed since 1914. Then Germany had a numerical superiority, today France has troops 2:1 ! The gap could be stopped. But such an advance is dangerous for Germany, because, in face of French superiority of armament and numbers, the tide can be turned and the Belgian "hole" may become the line of advance against Germany!

If,however, is better to take into calculation such a danger of German violation of Holland and Belgium, it is simply because the wild beast (Hitler) run into a trap, and he has no way out. And yet he cannot sit still and wait, what England and France can afford to do. Thus in his desperate position he may violate these neutral countries. But that probably would be his end.

Germany has, of course, an aerial superiority (in numbers) over France and England. But even in this line, if he wants to do something, he has to act fast, because the weather may turn absolutely unfavorable to Germany for an aerial escapade. And if this winter is survived without such German air raids, then at least equality in the air will be attained...

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