

ARE WE GAMBLING ON VICTORY?

"Efforts which are divided in space must not be divided in time." Two speeches. The meaning of coalition warfare. Counter reasons for a second front now. An editorial.

AFTER Mr. Churchill's report to the House of Commons and the President's appraisal of the war in his Labor Day speech, it becomes possible to strike some kind of trial balance on the second front issue. There is a paradoxical phrase that children are fond of: "I see, said the blind man." We are now in the position of seeing—despite everything that is admittedly still obscure—the main outlines of how things stand.

IT IS clear that the fundamental agreement on the necessity of a second front has now been implemented by detailed military decisions between the highest British and American officials. These decisions were reached, says a statement from the White House, some time late in July. Preparations for the offensive on the battlefields of Europe against the main enemy—Germany—are therefore already under way. In other words, the uncertainty which arose in the minds of millions of people in July as to whether the Molotov agreement of June 11 was being implemented by concrete preparations was a justified uncertainty—for it was not until well into midsummer that such preparations were agreed upon in military detail. Obviously it was the great demand for immediate action which swept our own country and Britain in those weeks that played the decisive part in overcoming the lag between agreements in principle and agreement in military detail.

It is clear also that among the obstacles toward a more rapid development of events there was a certain conflict of views between London and Washington. That they existed, the Prime Minister has told us; whether these views revolved around matters of supply, matters of how much America was going to send over, or whether the interference concerned such matters as who was to command, or relations with the people of France—we do not know. But at least the differences have been adjusted. Obviously one of the real factors in expediting this agreement was the spirit of mutual understanding of our two peoples. The resistance of Americans to unconstructive criticism of our British ally, arising out of the mysterious loss of Tobruk, the spirit of reciprocity that was dramatized by the exchange of greetings between the Madison Square Park demonstration in New York and the Trafalgar Square demonstrations in London, were decisive factors in harmonizing the views of our two governments.

On the other hand, it is equally clear that this harmony of view between London and Washington has not yet become three-cornered, does not include our decisive ally, the Soviet Union. Prime Minister Churchill admitted serious differences between his own and Stalin's view of the war. Associated Press dispatches in recent days have told us something that

has long been obvious from the dispatches of Soviet and American correspondents in Russia—namely a real disappointment at the second front delay, and above all, the failure to bring about a real coordination of strategic and tactical views on the war.

The fact is that coordination, as Claude Cockburn suggested in a recent dispatch in these pages, is still in its "infantile stages." There is still too much of a situation in which British and American staff officers make up their minds as to what should be done and then inform the Russians, *instead of, inviting the Soviet view as an integral and equal factor in the making of decisions which must be binding upon all.* Imagine for a moment how we would feel if the British and Russians made decisions the same way. And this is, of course, alarming, not only in view of the time and the men and the ground already lost, but it is alarming because it reveals an attitude toward the war of coalition which, if it goes unrepaired, can hurt and cripple the coalition badly, both for the war and the peace.

IN EXPRESSING their "disagreeability" on this problem, the Russians are not thinking of themselves alone. If we think so, we would be making the same arrogant mistake that was made after Munich, when so many Americans thought that in projecting collective action against the aggressors, the Soviets were merely worried about themselves. On the contrary, they are worried about us. For the heart of the whole matter is that the second front is not an exclusive Russian interest; it is the common interest of all of us, and in fact, delay in opening the second front on time, and on a scale commensurate with the need for actually routing the enemy, will only boomerang upon us, in the West.

Failure to open the front in time, and on the really large scope that the war demands would hurt Russia, yes, cripple her badly. *But it is very much open to question whether we in the West could endure this boomerang anywhere nearly as well as the Russians.* The impending Nazi peace offensive—that is the greater danger for us. The shifting of tens of Nazi divisions to the West together with most of the Luftwaffe—who dares to say that we could do as well against the concentration of German force in the West and the Mediterranean as the Russians have done this summer? A simultaneous drive in the Middle East and toward Suez—can we really be as confident that in the face of the fragile political relations of the Near East and the relative inexperience of our command and our troops we could really do better than the Russians have done on their own Caucasian soil? The conclusions which Vichy will draw about Dakar, the conclusions which Turkey will draw for Syria, the decisions which Japan will make for its own future course of action—these will all rebound with even greater force upon us, who may be less able to bear it, than upon Russia, hurt as she would be by any further delay.

And it is significant that Americans who cannot possibly be accused of ideological sympathy for the Soviet Union reacted immediately last week to these considerations. Dorothy Thompson, in a syndicated column, "Russia and Us," sees the thing clearly. John P. Lewis in PM asks the questions that have to be asked. In the *New Republic* last week a story from London, "Politics and the Second Front," reveals a deep understanding of how vital it is that we think in terms of true coalition with Russia, or face a protracted crisis that can only redound to our own bitter sorrow. Needless to say the continuing resolution of such key trade unions as the United Electrical and Radio Workers of America in their convention at Cleveland, O., or the United Office and Professional Workers in Albany, N. Y., last week reveals how firmly the labor movement is grappling with the issue.

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WHAT does coalition warfare really mean? It means that "efforts which are divided in space must not be divided in time." That was Litvinov's phrase last February, and it is more than ever valid. The concept that "Russia will hold," that "it is the 8th of September," while it expresses a justifiable confidence in the Red Army, nevertheless has the implication that we shall be able to meet and defeat the enemy *alone*, no matter how badly our chief ally has been weakened and pushed back.

At the very best this is a gamble. At the very worst it implies that instead of fighting simultaneously with our chief allies, we shall be fighting one after the other. At the very best, therefore, delay in opening the second front is a terrible risk, in which we risk a situation in which the Soviet Union will be weakened to a point where—no matter how much better prepared we shall be—the enemy will have gained a position from which to make our offensive incredibly more difficult. At the very worst, it means that by having to fight one after another, we shall be defeated one after another.

That is why Prime Minister Churchill's reference to the chance that Britain's Tenth Army may someday support the Soviet left flank at the gates of Persia is so disturbing. It not only projects the hardest way of doing things, but runs the risk of not really succeeding at all. Instead of preventing a further Nazi advance to the southern Caucasus by attacking in the west today, the inference is that we shall try to meet the Nazis at some future point on a battlefield where most of the advantages lie with the enemy, not with us. The logical conclusion of such a strategy is a long, and essentially defensive warfare—"a retreat to victory"—which means retreating to defeat. And the defeatists will be most sensitive to its implications. Every day's delay encourages them to the hope of thwarting the second front altogether. Give them an inch, and they will make a mile of it. Give them enough rope and they shall hang us all separately.

It is this which undoubtedly disturbs our allies, and it is here that the opinion of our own country and Britain has

its supreme obligation, a more urgent obligation than ever before.

What we have learned about the second front in the last week makes clear that public opinion has played a decisive role in crystallizing decisions from plans, in moving from principles to practice. What we still do not know about the second front—the time and the scope of the action—makes it clear that public opinion still has the decisive role to play.

The second front is needed immediately—to save Stalingrad,—the brightest gem in the crown of the United Nations—to save the Volga, to save the Nile, to really hold all the positions which the President said we must hold.

The second front is needed immediately to resolve the differences of views, differences which must not be permitted to become protracted and thus hamper the coalition of democratic forces for a long time to come.

The second front is needed immediately because we cannot afford to gamble on the difference between victory in the fourth year of the war or victory in 1946. *The decision must be for victory in this year of the war: for that a second front is crucial now.*

The second front is needed immediately to really turn the tide in our relations with all the neutrals: a second front in Europe would make Mr. Willkie's tasks in the Near East a thousand times easier. It would make obsolete all that "cultural rehabilitation" of Franco. It would make it impossible for Laval to insult us as he did last week in protesting our bombardments of German property in Rouen.

IT is necessary for the American people to rise to the occasion on a scale even larger, and more decisively than last July, on a scale commensurate with the even graver crisis that confronts us now. Did you send a postal card to the President in July? Do that again, today. Did you bring the issue up at your union meeting, your local organization last July? Bring it up again today—in the light of the critical moment that faces us—and let us have a much more powerful expression of public opinion—for the second front now.

THE NEW REPUBLIC

Politics and a Second Front

NAPOLEON USED TO SAY that he won his campaigns because he had only allies.

Finally, the question of a second front in 1942 is in the profoundest sense political because it is bound up with the question of whether we want to win or to draw the war, to defeat or to make a deal with Hitler. We cannot win the war unless the USSR is one of the victors. For if the Soviet Union were defeated to the point where, say, one-third of the European Axis forces could hold the Eastern front and the rest could be used against Great Britain and America, the prospect is at best one of deadlock. It is not only a question of men, or even of artillery, planes and tanks. Hitler could organize the industries and resources under his control and allocate sufficient manpower to turning out the weapons of most effect in repelling invasion. If we cannot muster a sufficient superiority in striking power to invade Europe within the next few months against the forty or fifty divisions which are all Hitler can

dispose of now in the West, it may take us several years to gather strength for smashing into Europe against the firepower and manpower Hitler could muster if he were to achieve his object in the USSR. Then the danger of some kind of compromise peace might become very real.

The Axis is playing for a stalemate and a negotiated peace, leaving them in possession of most of their gains. It is imperative that they be defeated and utterly overthrown. But we can do that only if the United States and Great Britain treat the USSR as a 100-percent ally and partner and work out a single united strategy, treating the war as a whole. In practice that means making good our pledge to open a second front in Europe in 1942. Perhaps the immediate conference

"Russia and Us" was the title of Dorothy Thompson's column for September 9. It must have been written just prior to Prime Minister Churchill's review of the war, but it acutely reflects alarm at how things are going.

On The Record

By Dorothy Thompson

Russia and Us
Our Russian allies—I call them that though they try in vain to make a treaty of military alliance with us—are fighting in a spirit beyond praise. Their resistance before Stalingrad is one of those miracles that Paul Reynaud, in France, invoked in vain. But the spirit alone is not decisive in this struggle, and we are not even helping that spirit adequately. We will live bitterly to regret it. We have to face the strong possibility that soon the German troops will reach the strong lifeline of Russia. It is obvious that the Russian army, a few months after that event, will be short of oil, and thus will lose its main offensive power.

Furthermore, the southern supply line to Russia will be cut. The most important food areas of Russia are already lost, and the steel center of Stalingrad is in shambles. The consequences for us are that the Germans will be able to wage a defensive war in Russia next year, and to shift more than a hundred divisions to the West, together with the main part of their air force. The winter this year is ing to be a

Signed only by the initials J. H., this story from London in the "New Republic" for September 15 gives a searching analysis of how Britons feel about the war's crisis. British morale is fantastically high, says the author, but it all hangs on the fate of Russia and the second front.



QUESTIONS FOR MR. CHURCHILL

The tonnage used to transport 50,000 men some 13,000 miles around Cape Horn could have moved 100,000 men across the channel. Why hasn't it been done? What about "September eighth"?

I AM a firm believer in social amenities. Therefore, I cannot condone the discourtesy shown Mr. Churchill by members of the House of Commons when a number of them last week walked out on him, mumbling, "We want deeds, not words," or something to that effect. However, this writer is not devoid of understanding in the case of these gentlemen.

Mr. Churchill spoke many words. All too vague. This vagueness is especially regrettable in the matter of the second front. The Prime Minister in speaking of the Dieppe raid quite correctly pointed out that it was not a Commando raid, but a reconnaissance in force—"... a hard savage clash; such clashes as are likely to become increasingly numerous as the war deepens." As "the war deepens" is very vague. Neither was Mr. Churchill more specific as to the facts this reconnaissance had divulged. Many things could have and should have been said. On the part of Mr. Churchill this was political "escapology." It was not hiding information from the enemy, it was hiding himself from public opinion. Thus the most important thing of all—when do we get a second front—was left unsaid, in spite of many words pronounced.

ON A PAR with the failure to mention and explain the brilliant air victory over the German Luftwaffe at Dieppe, was the failure to explain why near Malta a British convoy was able with carrier-based aircraft to lick the German land-based planes and why the British Eighth Army suddenly acquired such "undoubted mastery of the air" over the Western Desert in Egypt. The answer is obvious: the Luftwaffe is engaged up to its neck in the East, as the German air general Erich Quade said so plainly in a recent broadcast from Berlin. Mr. Churchill avoided this explanation because it would have undoubtedly sounded awkward in the face of his second front escapology.

It is a well known fact that the bombings of Germany and France from the air are represented by some quarters as a substitute for the second front. Mr. Churchill wished to make these bombings appear grandiose and impressive, this being part of the same escapology. The result was slightly on the pathetic side. "We have discharged," said Mr. Churchill, "nearly double the bomb load upon Germany as was discharged in the corresponding period of last year—and with much greater precision. A far larger proportion fell in built-up areas or hit actual targets." The ratio is nothing to brag about after a year of

doing nothing except preparing. The description of the batting average is somewhat childish.

IN THE matter of the Battle of the Atlantic Mr. Churchill was more specific. He said that during July, August, and the first part of September the graphs show that the line of new ship building has "crossed and maintained itself over the line of sinkings." This is good and almost definite, but in this connection Mr. Churchill makes a statement which is only too typical of defensive psychology. "We must regard this struggle at sea as the foundation of all efforts of the United Nations." This is not so. The real foundation in this respect is to destroy the nests of German submarines, for instance, instead of simply thinking of warding them off or building more ships than the subs can sink.

It must be admitted that Mr. Churchill made a great show of courage when he frankly described the terrible mess which the Army of the Desert got into in Egypt. He said: "The Eighth Army ... had lost more than 80,000 men. It had been driven back about 400 miles since May, with immense losses in munitions, supplies, and transport. General Rommel's surprisingly rapid advance was only rendered possible because he used our captured stores and vehicles. ..." The structure of the army "... had become much deranged. ..." In other words, the whole thing was just a grand mess and it is surprising that under the circumstances the man responsible, General Auchinleck, should be permitted "to go on leave" with the hope expressed that "his services may be available later on in the war," instead of being court-martialed.

The same benevolent "cover-up" attitude was apparent in Mr. Churchill's reference to the Burma mess when he said that the new commander in Egypt, Gen. Sir Harold Alexander, was "fresh from a brilliant uphill campaign in Burma." General Alexander may be very good, but the Burma campaign was "brilliant" only because a lot of good walking to the rear was done.

The reference to the formation of a separate Middle Eastern Command under Gen. Sir Henry Maitland Wilson (Iraq, Syria, and Iran) is a good thing, but it was presented by Mr. Churchill with an unnecessary flourish. He said: "The Tenth Army is being rapidly strengthened and, with the substantial air forces which it will require, may eventually give support to the Russian left flank and will, in any case, defend the soil of Persia." One feels very distinctly that Mr. Churchill had to blush inwardly after talking of "support to the Russians," then inserting the word "eventually" to soften the remark, and finally taking refuge in the phrase "will, in any case, defend the soil of Persia." He surely at that moment could not help thinking of what he probably had been told during his several days' visit in Moscow about fighting in general, and things like that.

ABOUT the biggest, most important, and only really decisive front of the war—the Soviet front—Mr. Churchill said exactly thirteen words: "Of the Russian front, I will only at this moment say it is the eighth of September." Did he mean that, winter being near, there was no need to open a second front because the Russians would be quite all right, what with the mud, snow, frost, and all that sort of thing? If that was the idea, it might be said that Mr. Churchill is playing with fire, and not with ice. On most of the sectors of the Eastern Front real winter is still at least two and one-half months away. A lot of things can happen during that period of time. It took the Germans forty-five days to go from Rostov to Mozdok, and Mozdok is the halfway mark between Rostov and Baku.