

M. P.H. SPAAK, BELGIAN MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
DELIVERS THE FOLLOWING ADDRESS TO HIS COUNTRYMEN,
FROM RADIO BELGIQUE, LONDON, AT 9 P.M. (D.B.S.T.)
TODAY:-

I feel compelled to tell you first of all, with what warm affection and admiration, we have thought of you all during recent weeks.

We have heard reports of your sufferings. You have been cold, you have been hungry. The occupation is becoming more rigorous, arrests are more frequent; some of the best among you, our teachers and friends are in prison; traitors to Belgium become daily more bold and insolent, but in spite of that you, the immense majority of the Belgian nation, still resist.

Your confidence is unshaken, your courage undaunted. You know that the hour of justice will come, the hour of international justice which will drive the Germans from our country; the hour of internal justice, the hour of final reckoning, and this knowledge enables you to endure to the end.

And you are right to do so.

From the purely military point of view, in a war such as the one we are living through, there are bound to be ups and downs.

Since I spoke to you at the end of last year, we have had a lot of bad news. We had expected Japanese successes, but they have been greater, and more disheartening than we thought possible. Pearl Harbour, Singapore, Java, represent a series of defeats for us, but only temporary defeats, however, for history repeats itself, and you may rest assured that if the battle of Flanders and France have prevented the Germans dominating Europe, so will the battles of Malaya and the Dutch East Indies prevent the Japanese gaining mastery of the Pacific.

At the beginning of hostilities, the totalitarian and aggressive nations obviously hold considerable advantages. They are better prepared for war, both materially and spiritually than their enemies; they have the advantage of being able to take the offensive and of using surprise tactics. They can choose the time and the place; but every passing day tends to reverse this state of things; every passing day increases the strength of the allies and reduces that of the Axis powers.

In September, 1939, on the first day of the war, Germany was almost at the zenith of her power; England had scarcely begun to re-arm and the United States had done nothing at all.

Since then, Germany, mistress of Europe, but cut off from the rest of the world has been living on her own resources. Her industrial machine is getting worn and her military machine has experienced its first reverses.

England, victorious in 1940 in the air, won the Battle of the Atlantic in 1941. Never has her production been greater. In every sphere - tanks, guns, munitions, ships, mass-production is in full swing and yields outstanding results, while the United States puts at our disposal her limitless industrial resources.

/This does

This does not mean that the coming months will not be difficult ones.

Although Australia, and Burma, are organising their defence, the Japanese are still Capable of dealing heavy blows, but I think that now they will be effectively resisted.

For the moment our main interest is centred in Europe, on the much-heralded German spring offensive.

Another German offensive, you will exclaim.

Always the Germans. Yes, and remember that in July 1918, Hindenburg and Ludendorf also attacked with all the might of their armies, with the result that this, their final effort, had some initial success. But a few days later, we counter-attacked. A few months later, Germany was conquered and asking for peace.

For Germany is always faced with this problem. She cannot wait. She is not only fighting against the Allies, but against time, and that is why, whether she is ready or not, whether she has re-assembled her forces or whether she is still bleeding from previous wounds, she must attack.

Are the Russians, who will probably bear the brunt of this attack, capable of holding it? I hope so. I believe so.

Since June they have fought magnificently. In spite of German victories last summer and autumn, they have not lost courage. Faced with the most critical situations, they have never given way to despair, and this, during the long winter months, has helped them to strike such heavy blows at the German armies that it is doubtful whether the latter will ever completely recover.

In a few weeks time, the battle will rage again. England will take part in this battle with all her armed might. Her Air Force, now powerful, will bomb Germany - stations, factories, ports, creating confusion and disorder, making life increasingly difficult for the Germans. During this air offensive it is possible, it is even probable that the factories working for Germany in occupied France and Belgium will be the objectives of the Royal Air Force, which recently attacked the Renault Works.

When this raid took place, a perfectly legitimate attack in the present war - for it would be only too easy for Germany to move her war factories there, where they would be immune from our bombardments - German propagandists made considerable mention of the condolences which M. Hubert Carton de Wiart is supposed to have conveyed to Marechal Petain's Government on behalf of the legal authorities in Belgium.

I am not sure what this ambiguous term "legal authorities in Belgium" implies.

/In Belgium,

In Belgium, there is a King, a prisoner of war, exercising no authority, and an administrative body whose duty it is to abstain rigorously from any political action - and above all from showing any sympathy towards the Germans.

People who forget that we have signed neither peace treaty nor armistice with the Germans - those who forget that Belgium, in spite of being invaded, occupied, and tortured, is still at war with Germany and will be until the allied victory is won - those who pretend to forget that there is only one legitimate authority, that exercised by the Belgian Government in London, are playing a very dangerous game, and they must know in their own hearts that they will have to answer for their behaviour.

We know that life under German occupation is not easy, that your responsibilities are great and the dangers manifold, and we unreservedly admire those who have remained in the country and have established centres of resistance. Our whole-hearted admiration also goes out to the immense majority of the people who are resisting in spite of extreme privations. These are the people who are saving Belgium. Thanks to their determination and courage, when peace returns, Belgium will make her voice heard and win back her liberty.

The rest are traitors or poor politicians.

The traitors are those who accept as final what is only the temporary victory of the German armies: Those who accept the idea of a Belgium without political independence, and those who have renounced liberty either as citizens or as individuals; those who have forgotten the shameful aggression of the 10th May 1940, carried out in spite of Germany's pledged word: traitors, those who without reflecting for a moment on what Belgium's fate would be in the so-called New-Order, meekly acquiesce in the destruction of our Fatherland.

What poor politicians they are who to-day claim to stand aside from the world conflict! They believe in a "wait and see" policy and the present war is an event completely foreign to them: these gentlemen consider themselves to be above the fray, fastidious creatures who profess themselves unable to choose between Germany and England; they are people whose country is occupied by an invader and who still call themselves neutrals.

No Belgian has the right to adopt such a preposterous, such an immoral attitude. Our foreign policy was always honest. That was one of its chief merits and was one of the factors which contributed to our strength.

We tried by all legitimate means to avoid war, but war came in spite of us, and in circumstances such that we were in honour bound to fight, and we did not seek to minimise our commitments, by making those mental reservations, as some people are doing to-day.

All the chances of winning this war are in our favour. For us there is only one thing to do, to play our part with all our strength, or rather with all the strength we still have left.

That is what we are doing here. And so we care little what misrepresentations, stupidities and libels are spread abroad by the Germans and those in their pay. If the Germans were to win the war, we know full well that Belgium would be lost to us forever. But the Germans will not win the war and we will return to our country.

We will return and tell you all we have done, all we have spent; how we retrieved the gold from abroad, and ordered conscription, how we tried to feed both you and our prisoners; we will tell you about our colonial policy, the war with Italy and Japan, all we brought to England.

No doubt, you will find that we have made mistakes and that we have at times been inadequate and you will tell us so. But, in future there can be no possible misunderstanding among Belgians, you, in the Fatherland, patriotic and loyal, and us in London. You must be convinced of this; when we meet again it will be as a united nation.

In news from the Fatherland, I sometimes find evidence of uneasiness with regard to two matters. It is said that those in London must not impose their opinions on us when victory is won; nor must this British victory mean a return to the old order of things.

You may rest assured on that score. You have nothing to fear from either of these dangers.

Belgium will be mistress of her destiny and you are Belgium. We, here, are only the van-guard. The help which we can give you and want to give you, when peace is declared, is detailed information about what has been planned and prepared in the allied camp; we want to help you to regain your place in a free and victorious Europe.

And an Allied victory will in no way bring about a return to the mistakes and mistaken ideas of pre-war days.

Those who, in Belgium fear this victory are those who fear that the return of liberty will mean a return to all-too-searching truth.

I will try to tell you soon, what we in London think, of our new-found hopes, of the profound changes which are taking place, the new ventures which are being planned.

The world is not suffering in vain. All the tears, and all the horrors, and all the sacrifices, will not have been useless.

You are resisting, you are fighting for something great; a better world is being born and you will have your share in it.