

NOT FOR PUBLICATION BEFORE DELIVERYBELGIAN PRIME MINISTER'S BROADCAST

Following is the script of a broadcast by M.H. Pierlot, the Belgian Prime Minister, from Radio-Belgique in London on March 6, 1943, at 9 p.m. (B.S.T.).

If you want to know how the war is going, the significance of recent military operations and their repercussion on the enemy, it is the German wireless, the real, genuine article from Berlin, that will serve you best now. For the Berlin wireless has become the best instrument of Allied propaganda. What a revealing light is shed on the state of mind in Germany by the speeches of these official mouthpieces of Hitler's - their lamentations, their calls for national mourning and their warnings of grim times ahead!

Germany realises that she has lost the war.

As I make this statement I cannot refrain from a glance at the past. There was a time when those people who believed in an Allied victory were performing a meritorious act of faith. The R.A.F. outnumbered by 5 to 1, was fighting Germany for the mastery of the air, which, if Germany had won it, would have laid the British Isles open to invasion and would have meant the end of all resistance in Europe. Egypt and Suez, the key to two continents, were threatened. As yet the armed intervention of America was only a distant possibility. Nobody could foresee that Russia would enter the war on the side of the Allies, much less the military strength that she would throw into the balance. The chances of success seemed all in favour of Germany.

I am saying this to-day, because it is the truth and because a Government must sometimes do itself justice: when, at that time now receding into the past, at the height of the Battle of Britain, we decided to establish the seat of the Belgian Government in London, we burned our boats behind us. The Allied cause stood for the independence of nations; it was therefore Belgium's cause. But to espouse it was to gamble on an improbable victory; we knew that if it were lost we and ours would be outcasts for ever.

Even if things had turned out badly I should not have regretted our choice; but now that they have taken a favourable turn I want to draw the moral. Once again salvation lay not on the cautious but on the risky side.

What would be Belgium's position in the world to-day had she not continued the struggle? What prospects for the future would she have secured by the winning of a victory in which she had no part?

You are awaiting with confidence the coming of victory, and you are paving the way for it by your patriotic resistance. But you are wondering what ordeals have still to be endured before the cherished moment when Belgium will be free again. Famine grows apace as the last reserves of food are exhausted and health gives way. Germany's hand lies heavy on our industrial production, on the pretext that compensation will be forthcoming in the form of food. Our coal, our metallurgical output, our industrial equipment, are transported to Germany and you wait in vain for the corn she promised you.

"THE ETERNAL GERMAN"

The monstrous crime of deportation has recommenced. I say "deportation," for nobody is hoodwinked by the camouflage to which Germany has recourse to veil her violence under the appearance of working contracts freely entered into. That is merely a subterfuge, by which she adds juridical hypocrisy to the brutality of the assault.

Hundreds of thousands of our workmen, our young men and young women, are torn from their homes and scattered all over Europe. Who can describe the anguish of the wives, the mothers and the fathers who see them go? In some respects such separations are worse than death, because of the number and nature of the dangers to which these victims of modern slavery are exposed.

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How often will their families hear any news of them? For how long can their physical and moral strength hold out, already sapped as it is by privation? When will the absent ones return, if at all?

It is not easy to understand what Germany's object can be in this vast transference of populations. Is it to obtain labour? She is certainly short of that, forced as she is to make increasingly heavy calls on her industrial population for men to use as cannon fodder on the Russian front. Yet she can expect little work and no goodwill at the hands of our deportees. Does Germany fear that the balance sheet of this war, added to that of the previous one, will have too small a surplus of hatred? Does she want, this time, to put her conquerors on their guard against the weakness they showed after 1918? Germany is provoking her own fate. Soon she will see what a price she has to pay.

In the meantime she is endeavouring by terror to maintain her hold on the invaded countries. The prisons are full and the massacres of hostages are increasing.

Do you remember the Germans of 1940, the fine troops, trained in politeness for the occupation? - how the officers used to give the right of way to women and offer sweets to the children? It did not take long for this veneer to wear off, revealing the German of 1914, or his son grown worse than he - or rather, the eternal German, the treacherous neighbour, thief and killer, beside whom it is not possible to live and work in peace unless he is rendered powerless.

We put away from us any thought of useless revenge; but we all desire that punishment shall be inflicted, for otherwise the nations would no longer believe in justice. It may be that, remembering the past, you are rather sceptical about the planned retribution for the war crimes. If that is your feeling, I think you are wrong. Ideas have progressed. The victims of the barbarity with which Germany wages war are no longer her immediate neighbours only. Germany has spread devastation far and wide; she has shaken the peoples' sense of security as far away as the other side of the world. The whole world realises the danger of impunity. This time, the Allied Powers have given to one another such formal and precise pledges that they will have to be honoured, for it would be impossible otherwise to make a new world built on respect for the plighted word. Ask the Poles, the Czechs, the Greeks and the other invaded nations whether they are any more prepared than we are to resign themselves to forgetfulness. Elementary, though new, conceptions of law now prevail. War is no excuse for anything. Even under the cloak of uniform and in an invaded country, it is not lawful to plunder, to burn property, to slaughter the innocent. War crimes are no longer privileged crimes, immune against ordinary repressive measures. They take their place among the crimes of common law. Their perpetrators will be brought to judgment in the country and according to the laws of the country where the crimes were committed.

WAR-CRIMES INVESTIGATION BEGINS

As I already have told you, the investigation procedure has begun. The Fact-Finding Commission, in which Belgium is represented, is already drawing up the list of the guilty and setting forth their misdeeds. All attempts on their part to escape punishment will be in vain. Germany will not be big enough to hide them. As for the neutral countries, the new international law will not allow them to refuse extradition, and they will realise, moreover, that it is in their interest as well as ours to cooperate in securing the establishment of a true order in human society, based on law and legality.

Whatever we may think of the Germans, there is one kind of beings whom we judge more severely still: these are they who, while claiming the name of Belgians, make themselves the servants of the enemy. Treason against the motherland is the supreme crime.

Can they be in any doubt of what is in store for them, the people of the Labour Offices, the purveyors of the deportations, who go so far as to withdraw their food rds from fathers of families so as to compel them to go and work in an enemy country?

We place in the same category as these persons all the contributors to an enslaved Press, those so-called journalists who sell their pen, their thought and their talent - such as they have - and for the past three years have made it their jobs to deceive you. I doubt whether words exist that could express the degree of contempt to which they have fallen. I speak of them with complete detachment. If my Government colleagues and I were in any doubt that we are on the right road, it would be enough, in order to feel certain again, to think of the relentlessness with which Germany and

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her collaborators have heaped their insults and calumnies upon us. To be hated by the enemy and by the enemy's friends is a sure token. Not for an instant since the tragic days of the beginning of the war, has that testimony failed us. We think we have deserved it. Our ambition is to go on deserving it to the end.

But it is not without reason that the pens of these people are trembling in their grasp, while by their verbal violence they try to put a bold face on the fear with which they are already consumed. The end of their career is in sight; they know what is in store for them. All their excuses will be in vain; their account will soon be settled.

I should like to end this address on a more serene note. I believe that what I have said and repeated tonight had to be said, but we should not do a few bad Belgians the honour of concerning ourselves with them longer than is necessary. In spite of all the difficulties in store for our country after a catastrophe which has shaken the world to the very foundations of human society, a hopeful thought is foremost in our minds. We can begin to see the end of the long ordeal of two world wars - hardly separated, in the logical sequence of events, by twenty years of unsuccessful experiments, gropings and errors, of which the present generation bears the burden. The sanguinary experience now nearing its end will not be fruitless. Beyond the immediate causes, beyond those directly responsible for these aggressive wars, the Governments of all the civilised nations, supported by the best thinkers and men of action, have undertaken the search for the ultimate causes which must be remedied. The new order, as we understand it, will be a moral order, based on principles and on mutual respect for the rights of others. It will lay down, as the fundamental dogma of any social organisation, the freedom of man of which the Nazi régime is the most shameless negation.

How is this true peace to be established? How is ^{it} to be protected and made lasting? If you are willing, turning away for a moment from the war and its horrors, and anticipating our hopes, we will make this future the subject of further talks. We will tell you what we would like this future to be, what we are trying to do and what, on your side, you can and should do, to prepare for our children a happier fate in a Belgium liberated and raised again from her ruins.

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