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THE CONFLICT

“Arm yourselves, and be ye men of valour, and be in readiness for the conflict, for it is better for us to perish in battle than to look on the outrage of our nation and our altars. As the will of God is in Heaven, even so let Him do.”

WITH this quotation from I Maccabees, iii, 58-60, Mr. Winston Churchill closed his first broadcast message since he became Prime Minister. In calm and dignified terms, he outlined the position in the great battle raging across Belgium and into a corner of France. At the time of writing, the battle is continuing, and on it, the first since the War of 1914-18 in which the German armies have met major Allied forces, depends much of the future course of hostilities. But even if this battle goes against us, still the struggle must continue, for, in the Prime Minister's words, it is a “struggle for life and honour and freedom to which we have vowed ourselves”.

Now is the moment when the utmost effort must be made. Thanks to the conquest of the air, it is possible for the leaders of the Allied nations to keep in close personal touch, and to devise immediately ways of meeting the German menace from whichever direction it may come; though equally it may be urged that the progress of aviation and radio communication has made possible the onslaught of masses of tanks and other armoured vehicles, and the wholesale bombardment of hundreds of towns in the invaded countries. The answer surely is that force must now be met with force. After years of endeavour, it must be admitted that the principle of settling disputes by negotiation has not been accepted; the world was not ready for it. The task of educating mankind for peaceful progress has received a grievous setback. Nationalism, at first a puny weakling, has grown, passing through the stage of economic sufficiency of the national unit, until

now its chief exponent is aiming at domination of Europe and of the world, by utilizing to the full the fruits of scientific and engineering developments.

To meet the menace will require our whole effort. The immediate need is for more tanks, more aeroplanes, more munitions, to replace the ghastly wastage which is going on. Those whose duties are in this field will not fail the cause. But behind these workers must be an army, ever watchful, ever ready, to find ways of defeating new devices of the enemy and also to seek means of increasing the striking power of our Fighting Services. The interests of pure science and the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake must temporarily remain in abeyance. The whole of the intellectual power of Great Britain must be brought to bear on the task of winning the War. Mr. Duff Cooper, the new Minister of Information, broadcasting on May 18, compared Germany with “a mad gambler at roulette, who has gathered all her vast resources and staked them upon red”. It is well to bear in mind that Germany has indeed vast resources, in men, in material and in intellect, and her present rulers will exploit them all to the utmost. To meet this appalling menace will test our powers, but not beyond their capabilities.

Great Britain is now represented by a Government including men of most shades of political opinion, and its constitution under Mr. Churchill has been welcomed from all over the British Empire. France also has a Government formed on a wide basis. The two Empires are united in their determination to rid Europe of the tyranny which has come out of Germany. The battle is joined, and the enemy has shown us the importance of speed and efficiency. Yet more speed and efficiency must be our watchwords in the task before us.