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5TH SEPTEMBER, 1944

WAR CABINET

JOINT INTELLIGENCE SUB-COMMITTEE

GERMAN STRATEGY AND CAPACITY TO RESIST

Report by the Joint Intelligence Sub-Committee

Since our last appreciation of German Strategy and Capacity to Resist dated 14th August, 1944, Germany has suffered further catastrophic disasters. The process of final military defeat leading to the cessation of organised resistance has begun in the West. In Annex A, we consider how Germany's military dispositions may be altered to meet her commitments in France and elsewhere. We do not consider possible political manoeuvres or developments which may supervene. We report as follows.

2. In France, the German front has virtually ceased to exist. The Germans have been unable, after our destruction of the greater part of their armies in Normandy, to hold any line, and the Allies have now entered Belgium and are advancing against very light opposition to the frontier of Germany and the Siegfried Line.

3. In Italy, the German defences based on the Gothic Line have been breached.

4. In the Balkans, the whole German position is crumbling. The bulk of the German Army in Roumania has been destroyed. The German front has virtually ceased to exist. Roumania has declared war on Germany, and Germany has lost her largest supply of natural oil. Bulgaria has deserted Germany and has announced her intention of withdrawing from Serbia and divisions which protected Germany's communications with Greece and the Aegean. There are also indications of German plans to withdraw from Southern Greece.

5. In the East the Russians are preparing for what they may hope to be their final offensive to destroy the German Armies in Poland.

6. Finland has accepted the Russian conditions for the opening of armistice negotiations. She claims to have secured Germany's agreement to the withdrawal of German forces from Finland.

7. The Allied advance in the West is rapidly driving the Germans from the areas from which flying bombs or long range rockets can be launched against England and is thus destroying German hopes of influencing the course of the war by the use of these weapons.

8. The speed of events in the West and in the Balkans has taken Germany completely by surprise, and has left her without the resources, and apparently, without any co-ordinated plan to meet her radically altered strategic position. The task of forecasting what, in these circumstances, Germany's strategy will be, is complicated by the fact that Hitler is increasingly out of touch with all reality. The object, however, of German strategy is to prolong the war, preventing for as long as possible the invasion of the Reich itself.