

(C O P Y)

C 283297

MOST SECRET & PERSONAL.

TEXT OF MESSAGE TO MARSHAL PETAIN.

If at any time in the near future the French Government decide to cross to North Africa or resume the war there against Italy and Germany, we should be willing to send a strong and well-equipped expeditionary force of up to six divisions to aid the defence of Morocco, Algiers and Tunis. These divisions could sail as fast as shipping and landing facilities were available. We now have a large well-equipped army in England and have considerable spare forces already well-trained and rapidly improving, apart from what are needed to repel invasion. The situation in the Middle East is also becoming good.

2. The British Air Force has now begun its expansion and would also be able to give important assistance.

3. The command of the Mediterranean would be assured by the reunited British and French fleets and by our joint use of Moroccan and North African bases.

4. We are willing to enter into Staff talks of the most secret character with any military representatives nominated by you.

5. On the other hand delay is dangerous. At any time the Germans may, by force or favour, come down through Spain, render unusable the anchorage at Gibraltar, take effective charge of batteries on both sides of the Straits and also establish their Air Forces in aerodromes. It is their habit to strike swiftly, and if they establish themselves on the Moroccan coast, the door would be shut on all projects. The situation may deteriorate any day and the prospects be ruined unless we are prepared to plan together and act boldly. It is most important that the French Government should realise that we are able and willing to give powerful and growing aid. But this may presently pass beyond our power.

8th January, 1941.