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GROSSADMIRAL DR. H. C. RAEDER

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Officers of the Navy at the Supreme Command Headquarters
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Translated by P. O. Barnes, W.R.N.S.
and P. O. Duncan, W.R.N.S.

My Friends!

Most of you are so taken up with every day occurrences and every day work, that you seldom have the time to visualise at your leisure the situation in its entirety and thereby to derive understanding and stimulus for further resolve and further action. I am all the more pleased that it has again been possible to assemble here a number of commanding officers

The past year has once more called for strenuous effort on the part of the Navy, but has also brought great success.

I should like to avail myself of this opportunity to thank you, who have to fulfill your duty in your various individual posts, for having supported the aims of the Supreme Commander with the greatest understanding and with the full weight of your personality.

It was by no means always possible to supply you with the personnel and material which, according to all the military rules, should have been at your disposal for carrying out the tasks allotted to you. The situation as regards personnel, prevented me from fulfilling your demands for men and particularly for officers, and the general state of armament production prevented me from supplying you with ships and munitions as I would have wished.

At this point I should like to express my appreciation of the fact that the tasks set were nevertheless carried out - often in an exemplary manner - in the full knowledge of these conditions.

This year I can, however, affirm that not only have the military tasks been discharged but that in the important sphere of leadership, which is a prominent feature at this conference, marked progress has been made.

I should particularly like to express my appreciation, as I have already done recently in a memorandum, for the results achieved in advanced training of junior officers on active service, and above all, unit officers. A large number of officers - commanding officers - have done excellent work in leading the Officer Corps under their command, e.g. in the conferences arranged for Commanding Officers and in holding courses for unit leaders. Through their understanding, special interest and their own personal contribution, they have achieved outstanding military successes in a new sphere. These successes are not immediately obvious to the casual observer but they are to be compared with important military achievements because of the depth and speedy development of their effect.

In this connection, I thank especially those commanding officers who have personally taken an important part in carrying out these measures

The idea of "Spiritual Guidance of the Troops" was the subject of this meeting as well.

The lectures dealt with the actual question of leadership, corresponding to this theme. Likewise the chief purpose of the lectures on the situation was to present the reason for the peculiar position of the military leader in relation to the war, as well as for the task of correctly influencing the individual soldier in his relation to war events.

Regarding the questions of spiritual guidance of the troops, the salient points have been sifted so thoroughly during the past years, that at this point, I should like to enlarge on some of the fundamental problems.

To begin with, the immediate situation:

We must always remember that the first world war was not lost in a battle of weapons, but because of the mental-spiritual collapse of the Home Front and of the rear line troops, which was then passed on to the Front line.

Doubtless in such violent wars, as the last and this world-war, the seeds for the failure of the individual always exists in a high degree. The burden of the war is being borne once again mainly by the man and woman in the street and by the ordinary soldier.

The difficulties which simultaneously carry the seeds of disintegration apply directly to him, and scarcely differ in this war from the last.

On the Home Front there is a scarcity of food and connected with this, the daily worries of the wife, the absence of the husband and the increased demands on the working strength of the population, unavoidable encroachments on private life, and added to this the pressure of enemy operations in the form of air attacks.

For the soldier himself, there are always the same old conditions: continually repeated pledges of the best of everything and high standards in contrast to that, the appearances of barrack-life, the dwindling of commissioned ranks, which especially spoils the human conduct and the morale of the individual soldier, on one hand the too young and inexperienced Coprs of N.C.O.s, on the other the non-promotion of older soldiers who must submit to these young superior officers, the difficult relations of married and single soldier with women, the worry concerning his own future. All these difficulties exist to-day as in those days. But one must remember, however, with regard to the position to-day, that larger sections of our population were guided back only about ten years ago, from a completely negative attitude once again to order and discipline. This means, therefore, that, taken as a whole, the political seeds of disintegration throughout the population cannot consequently be looked upon as altogether destroyed. For example, even to-day, there are naturally in the units, soldiers who continually compare the present-day developments under the leadership of the Officer Corps with their own earlier - so perhaps communistic - outlook. From this it is clear how much the superior officers must make it their daily duty to employ the greatest vigilance in this respect.

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What measures must now be taken?

Above all it is necessary to have as underlying principle: This time, not only military successes must be unimpaired through lack of leadership, but correct leadership must increase military successes to the highest possible degree!

The most important premise is the recognition of the "totality" of war. That is indeed, a self-evident truth. It is necessary that it should always be expressed, because, in carrying out our military duties, we all constantly run the risk of neglecting or completely forgetting the other sides of the conduct of war. Once again in "total war" the officer must also be a "total" leader.

The entire armed force, that is, the best and most active part of the people, has been entrusted during the past three years of war, to the officer as the solitary leader and tutor. As far as one can tell, it will be entrusted to the officer for several years to come. Such a period, however, is an extremely critical factor in the spiritual development of young people. Consequently, a large part of the importance attached to the spiritual development of the whole German people, to their present day trust as well as to their future conduct, lies almost without exception on the work of education, which is fulfilled during these years, by the German Officer Corps.

The new aspect of this task as opposed to peacetime and former wars, is that this educational work must extend much further than hitherto, not only to the individual as a soldier, but as an entire human being. It is necessary to guide the entire personality of the soldier, with every possible means available during work and free time to an ever increasing devotion for the tasks of our people - whether engaged in warfare or industry - to an increasingly enlightened mode of a truly German way of living.

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Although familiar to the old soldier, these aims may perhaps appear even self-evident and possibly almost superfluous to some. It would be rather dangerous to say that it was "always" the duty of the officer to guide the soldier in this way.

My friends, this interpretation is only very hypothetically true. it is dangerous in any case, however, because it could lead people to sitting back, or at least to not making every conceivable effort - the following facts conclusively oppose the interpretation that this is all old history and that it has always been like this.

The first thing which is completely new to the task of leading the German people in this war, is the fact that it deals to such a degree with a conflict of ideologies which has never been the case in any of the Prusso-German wars of the previous centuries. This was certainly suspected in the last world war, but the full significance of the world war did not penetrate to the consciousness and full understanding of the soldiers.

For the first time in this war the German people are fortunate enough to meet their enemies with a united philosophy by reason of an ideology which is predominant amongst the whole people and which has become the foundation of State administration. I believe it is one of the greatest tasks of the Officer Corps to recognise these facts in their latter significance, and to appreciate them as the source of tremendous moral force and correspondingly to influence their personal attitude as well as the education of the soldiers.

The second point of view which has recently arisen for the first time in this war, is the development of the German people for such a large task as the administration of Europe presents. In this connection the most essential knowledge, which must be emphasised repeatedly, is that the assumption of this work is necessarily bound up with the progress and ultimate out-come of this war.

By this, I mean that it is not a question of first winning the war, and then organising Europe. The German people alone would only be able to master the task of this world struggle with unimaginable sacrifices.

Europe must be victorious under German Leadership and Germany must certainly take over this leadership during the fighting. This means also however, that every German, particularly every German soldier, must develop in the role of leader, both to-day and in the future. That is no longer theory but hard fact. We require the other nations in order not to bear the burden of bloodshed alone in battle against the human masses in the East. We need the men to administer the occupied territories for us or for Europe and to open up the sources of raw materials. Moreover we need foreign labour to forge our weapons and to provide our foodstuffs. Already volunteers from different European nations are fighting under our flag, and also millions from the population of territories occupied by us are already working on our behalf in their own country and abroad in munitions, industry, and food production.

The German - wherever he is or whatever rank he holds - is the leader and model for all these foreigners.

In order to clarify the significance of this task of leadership in the military sphere, I should like to quote an example which is also obvious from a military aspect. If a small number of German soldiers in one of the countries occupied by us succeed by their exemplary - or rather impressive behaviour in obtaining the extensive voluntary co-operation of this nation - or even only of a section of this country, or of a number of people in authority - tens of thousands of soldiers and workers could, under certain circumstances be freed for other purposes. This is as good as a battle won since this war has increasingly developed into a problem of available manpower. I believe that no-one can say that the task of leadership and military training arising from such reflections has "always been in existence".

This occurs for the first and probably the only time.

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There still remains a third point of view which presents something completely new in this war.

Never has the Prussian German Officer Corps to such an extent been in constant competition with the enemy's leadership. Even in the last war, there were only slight indications of this.

This depends on two factors.

Firstly: on the effect of the propaganda of enemy states on the German people and the German soldiers.

Secondly: on the effect of this propaganda as a method of controlling the enemy people themselves.

The technical basis for assisting enemy propaganda against our nation and our fighting men has been created solely by the development of Radio. Thus, practically speaking, the German soldier is laid open at all times to enemy propaganda. The objection that enemy transmissions would not be heard, is not convincing. As a matter of fact there are always individual soldiers, who personally heard some report or other, or receive information from civilians. It is a recognised fact that there are still people amongst the German nation who deliberately work for the enemy and spread rumours under orders from enemy agents. Here the situation is actually created whereby enemy rumours must constantly be combatted by means of spiritual guidance. Obviously this cannot be achieved by defensive measures, namely by contradiction, but only on the strength that State and Military leaders lead a life so imbued with justice and decency that the assertions of enemy propaganda give themselves the lie.

It is still more essential however, to estimate the competitive force which enemy propaganda exercises in influencing its own people. This propaganda is particularly effective in the Soviet Union; though this the enemy leaders have extracted from their own people a real military efficiency which can be countered on our part only by at least an equally great efficiency in the sphere of leadership. In the bolshevik army there are at work many thousands of Commissars, who have been thoroughly trained to hate the German character and the German people, and whose one and only task is to develop the bolshevik soldier in the toughness, fortitude, physical fitness and readiness to die, which have become well-known to us in the meantime.

There is no doubt that the efficiency of thousands of leaders who are just as fanatical as they are intelligent can only be equalled if the German Officer Corps no longer regards the spiritual leadership of the troops as a side-line but as a task which holds completely equal standing with the task of military leadership. This task requires that the indifference of the Junior Officers frequently shown in their personal guidance of their men should be eliminated lock, stock, and barrel. A war against a fanatical enemy will not be won if the principle "Live and Let Live" is applied to the men.

These three new considerations: war of ideologies, the task of European leadership and competition with enemy propaganda must therefore constitute the main ideas, among which is found the "Spiritual Guidance of the Troops".

I ask you to see that in your commands and among the combat forces and naval units subordinate to you, all Service Welfare work is fundamentally carried out according to these important considerations.

The individual methods of Service Welfare, that is to say, "Spriritual Guidance" as well as "Organization of Free-Time" must be carefully adapted to suit these demands.

On this sphere of spiritual welfare enough cannot be done in order repeatedly to reveal to the individual soldier the importance of his particular job, to allow him to take an interest in the significance of the war and to give him as well as an understanding of the National Socialist ideology an appreciation of the great events of this era.

That which is of particular importance however, with regard to the aforementioned considerations of ideology, European leadership and competition with the enemy's leadership, is the use of organization of free-time as a means of spiritual guidance. In the case of the ordinary soldier, this is not achieved by talk of high ideals alone. The soldier must know why he is taking part in this war and what he has to look forward to in his own life in the event of victory. Innumerable conversations at the Front are concerned with this question, which is uppermost, as none other, in the minds of the men.

Here it is not so much a question of promising the soldier possible economic advantages in the future, but even to-day, he must be shown through the every day life of the unit what he has to win and what he has to lose. The life of the unit must be in reality a representation of a truly German life. In his personal relationship with his superior officer, in his relations with his friend, in strict discipline, justice, and also in the implicit execution of his duty, in the tastefulness and cleanliness of his quarters, in communal life of the unit, in his songs and in what is commonly the "team-spirit" the soldier must experience what "being Ge-

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really means. The German soldier is sufficiently idealist on the hand and sane enough on the other, not to expect a bed of roses, during the present national emergency, either during the war or afterwards. What he does ask for, however, is absolute confidence that the German leaders will unselfishly look after the interests of the ordinary, individual soldier and civilian after the war. Even to-day the soldier must experience this confidence in Service life. Here too, it does not mean: first conquer, and then look after the soldiers, but, by caring for the soldier, do everything for victory even if it has to be won with difficulties, perhaps as yet unimagined.

If the soldier is educated along these lines in his daily life, this represents the best and probably the only chance of successfully carrying out our tasks of leadership in the light of the important considerations previously emphasized, namely - ideology, tasks of European leadership, competition with the methods of leadership of the other side.

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In addition to this, I must of course point out yet another difficulty which exists, in this case, for all of us who must direct these things from our superior positions and which we must freely admit; for the most part we no longer have direct contact with the every day life of the soldiers. In military ranks, the unit leader is the last person to have anything to do with the cares and needs of the individual soldier during the course of his daily activities.

In the Navy, direct contact extends, on board, to the No. 1. Beyond that - on shore, in the case of the divisional commanding officer, this close contact is often broken off, and senior officers and staffs experience only occasional instances of it. This fact is regrettable because generally the senior officer, who possesses the human maturity which enables him to be a leader and adviser to younger and older subordinates in vital questions, is the officer who exercises his ability of direct leadership only to a limited extent.

It is more important, therefore, that the senior officers are appointed to the unit leaders' courses ordered by me, in order to pass on their experience through their teaching and guidance to the younger officers. I have already pointed out, that the onus of the war is being borne by the man in the street and by the ordinary soldier, that is, by people who view the war from a totally different angle from us, who are fortunate enough to occupy leading positions.

It is not as if the officer, the military leader, in actual fact carries less onus than the ordinary citizen and soldier, but he feels the burden and tragedy of personal destiny much more. He has not the compensating knowledge to the same extent as we have, that all difficulties are unimportant as opposed to the powerful spiritual happenings, the eternal task of our people and the will of God. For this reason, we, personally, must continually persist in considering all details in the life of the unit to be just as important as the individual soldier is bound to consider them since for him they are life itself.

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The following is still of decisive importance for the organized direction of these tasks of spiritually guiding the troops; I ask you all to make every effort to occupy yourselves still further and more searchingly from a higher standpoint, with the National Socialist ideology.

This is a point, particularly important for our consideration and action in the National Socialist world of ideas:

Do not think only of the day and do not think only of the war, but think of the thousands of years through which the German people have fought already, and the centuries which lie ahead of us, and which demand that all our resources should be used skillfully from this day onwards. Therefore take the long view as a basis for all your reflections. So take a comprehensive view of the principle which is of the maximum importance in the structure of ideas of our Fuehrer and Supreme Commander; it is not the individual person, family, or relatives who are the conditions which have to determine the life of the people, but simply and solely the eternal nation as the most vital living unit.* The nation personifies the ambition and substance of our whole life. Its thousand year-old tasks and struggles reach to the Heavens, from whence the influence of God governs all living creatures.

To-day the life of the people must depend on these tasks as primarily on the totality of national socialist ideas. National Socialism is what is held in common above all keenly desired personal convictions. From it alone, therefore, can grow the uniformity of ideas in the Officer Corps, which is necessary to sweep the nation and the services on towards the high aims which we wish to attain. There is no doubt that this uniformity of ideas in the Officer Corps has not yet been sufficient. The Officer Corps of the Navy is from a point of view of origin and formation of a very irregular composition.

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Unfortunately these differences are not only of a superficial nature. If once we examine how this Officer Corps faces particular problems of life - I am only referring to the problem of leadership, especially such problems as "The soldier and women", "the soldier and Religion", etc., problems which are most important to any soldier or human being - it must be established that there can be no question of a necessary and vigorous uniformity of ideas. And yet, the opinions regarding all these matters are quite natural and self-evident for those who have grasped the sense of National Socialism. The Officer Corps, therefore will automatically arrive at the required uniformity even down to the last detail, as soon as a common and clear outline is created in the common ideology.

This knowledge carries with it the provision that the junior officers, as well as the officer cadets must be educated and given further instruction in this conception. Young officers or officer candidates in some form or other are entrusted to you all. Always be aware of the fact that no effort made on behalf of these young men during their early life or education can be in vain or too great. For in this young generation there are also those personalities who will occupy some day, the intermediate and higher positions not only of the armed forces, but also possibly in the state. Now their personal talents, for their mode of life, for the most part indeed, set a standard for these men, but we also want to consider the fact that the great men in our military history have been indebted to their instructors for their high quality, be it at school, or during military life. The high intuitive ideals, which often decisively influence and fashion the destiny of great men already take shape in their youth and indeed not infrequently from the instruction of a particularly inspired teacher or from the example of eminently able superior officers.

In this respect I ask you always to pay particular attention in all your inspections and other acts of leadership, to what is being

* What serves the nation is good: what injures the nation is bad.

done for the general training of officers especially for that of unit officers and the training of officer cadets.

Take good care, that our young officers do not grow stultified with service - even if on active service - that they remain inwardly alert, that they retain the capacity for serious, intellectual work - in short, that they grow up, not merely to be superior officers, but leaders who will be equal to the tremendous responsibilities of the future.

Finally, my Friends, I should like to enlarge upon a few individual points, which I have particularly at heart - after I have outlined the situation and the measures to be taken. Above all, there are three things: the relation of the Services to the Party, the problem of soldiers and women, and finally THE PROBLEM OF the soldier and religion.

There would be no need for words to be lost concerning the relations of the Services to the Party, if this were not the eternal theme of enemy propaganda and if there were not always people who further the cause of the enemy by indulging in careless talk and passing it on. It is quite obvious from the great common task of educating the German to his new aims, as indicated above, that there must be a complete mutual trust in the relationship with the Party which can only exist if both sides have recognized their duty.

If an officer encounters a different attitude then it is his duty to interfere. It is equally reprehensible to spread unproved assertions concerning misdemeanours, as to pass on reports of proven misdemeanours, instead of approaching the proper authorities to obtain redress. I ask you all therefore, to use your influence in this respect, with the Officer Corps under your command.

The problem of soldiers and women during this war has the greatest importance to the spirit of the home, as well as to the prestige of the unit. As in every war, the danger exists, whereby all principles in this respect waver.

In June of last year, I, therefore, found myself induced once again to lay down in a memorandum the lines of which the problem of soldier and women must be dealt with in the Navy.

I do not want to repeat details of this memorandum, I only want to point out some particularly important points of a personal nature.

First of all, there is the problem of the numerical sufficiency of succession. I ordered in my memorandum that in this connection each superior officer should influence his subordinates in the appropriate manner. Perhaps many a man will consider this to be none of his business because he has to admit that he cannot be an example to his men in this respect, even if he may have cogent reasons which he nevertheless cannot discuss.

My friends, I believe that we can all admit, that we did not recognise promptly to its full extent, the seriousness of this problem in its entirety. We can therefore approach our people calmly and say to them what matters is that it is done correctly in the future. For in the meantime it has become clear to everyone that the main problem of the rising generation of leaders is so important that it constitutes the final decision as to whether all the efforts of previous centuries and particularly of the last two wars have had any meaning or not.

With regard to the attitude to women I should like to refer particularly to the duty of the officer's wife. Unfortunately, the necessary uniform point of view has not yet been publicly established in this respect. The fact that in the National Socialist country the officer's wife cannot live her life according to her own taste and wishes, but that her life will be regarded as an example has obviously not yet been completely realized. In the long run it is impossible to refer to the contrasting example of officers' wives whose mode of living and appearance are not based on sound principles when one considers on the other hand the trouble taken to establish amongst N.C.O.s and other ranks, a healthy relationship with their wives and to unite them with rare, but homely and natural women in the interests of healthy families and a healthy rising generation.

I should particularly like to refer also to the activity of the officer's wife in this connection. The personal guidance of the wife is of the same immense importance to the spirit of the home as the welfare of the soldier is to the spirit at the Front. I ask all of you, my friends, to see to it that as a general rule the Officer's wife applies herself to the public duties within the scope of organizations and such like, everywhere, where in individual cases there is an opportunity of so doing, despite fairly familiar difficulties. But even in cases where personal circumstances stand in the way, it is the obvious duty of the officer's wife to take a purely human interest in the wives of the N.C.O.s and other ranks serving at the front.

So far as dealing with the problem of soldiers and women in the units is concerned I should still like to point out a grievance, which has already existed for years without yet having been eliminated. It concerns the conduct of actors, for example, in the form of variety groups visiting the Front. They try to compensate for their mediocre performances by lewd jokes which frequently degrade the dignity of woman and to make sure of applause from the soldiers in this cheap way. And so, all the decent tone the unit officer has built up with great effort amongst his men is in these circumstances made ridiculous and ineffective in a few minutes. From this, it is now quite simple to establish the following: a unit-leader who allows himself to be amused by this kind of performance which endangers discipline, makes himself guilty of a severe violation of duty. It is his duty to report, through official channels, performances of a trivial nature or with generally third-rate turns so that other units will be spared. But in cases where things which must be kept sacred in the interest of the National-Socialist State for the sake of the future of the people, are dragged into the dirt during the performances, the Unit-leader must interrupt during the show, stop the performance and immediately make a suitable report through official channels.

I make the commanding officers etc., personally responsible for seeing that things will be carried out in this way in the future.

Finally, I should still like to say a few words on the problem of the soldier and religion. Even this war shows repeatedly how susceptible the soldier is to religious feeling when on active service, and what great strength he derives from it. We, as the leaders of a people split up into many forms of belief, are not in a position to take entire care of the religious life of the troops, as would satisfy the requirements of the soldier in these difficult times. It is necessary to take the present conditions into consideration. But it does not mean that the officer should give up all attempt to prevent the religious feeling inherent in every sound human being

from dying out in his soldiers. It is quite possible through discussion with the individual soldier and by active organization of communal life amongst the troops, to foster the natural, religious feeling of the soldier.

In a unit where the correct relationship between the officer and soldier prevails, where fellowship is as it should be, where the familiar "spirit of the soldiers" has developed, and also where the soldier's spare-time is occupied with active soldierly pursuits, which is what the organization of spare-time in an Army Welfare strives for, in such a unit, spare-time, duty and primarily the whole community and the course of the day are so filled and imbued with, I might almost say "godly" life, that doubts as to the name of God no longer play the part that the dogmatists are inclined to assign to them.

My friends, I have reached the end of my discourse. I have outlined for you the tasks of leadership which lie before us. We are now at a turning point of the world's history. Unheard of duties are required of the new German. The German officer must model and lead him.

The task rests now entirely with you to find practical ways of reaching the goal, to tread the paths already laid by previous welfare work in the Navy with the tenacity required in this field. It is surely the duty of every man, and particularly of every officer who is a leader in a wide or narrow sphere, to translate into life and action everything which he has recognized as right. May God give us the strength, to prove ourselves worthy of the greatness of the time and let the direction and standard of our life and work and of our personal leadership of our men satisfy what is expected of us.

In this respect we have the good fortune to have permanently before us in all our actions, the example of a gifted and creative personality, the example of our Fuehrer and Supreme Commander. He has set an example to us, showing how in the mind of a single man, hitherto unknown ideas which have been translated into action by unflinching energy, and unshakable belief in the final outcome, could be successfully pitted against literally a world of enemies. We solemnly vow to follow our leader in this, his way.