

## TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES

Sir,—Your Military Correspondent appears to suggest that liability can be limited in war; that we need only employ small military forces, if any; that our Allies will agree to make good the deficiency of our contribution to the Allied armies provided that we furnish a strong Air Force and hold the sea; and that it will not be possible in the next war to send a force overseas. There are many people who go much further than your Military Correspondent in believing the comforting but dangerous theory that in the next war everything can be done by air forces alone.

Surely there can be no doubt that if we are obliged to engage in war liability at once becomes unlimited and the very last ounce of effort will have to be made to preserve national existence. The limited liability theory has been recently exploded by our experience of "sanctions."

It was not our experience in the last war that our Allies were backward in pressing us to send stronger forces on land, or that they considered it equitable for us to select those portions of the combined Allied effort which inconvenienced us least. On the contrary each nation in a coalition is continually comparing its war effort with that of each ally, and when the strain becomes severe and the alliance has to be held together with difficulty, it is necessary to be able to prove that one is doing all that can be done. It is true that in modern war it is not only the three defence Services who have a call on the country's man power. On the contrary the scientific allotment of the nation's man power to the numerous branches of the national war effort in correct proportions is the secret of victory.

Mr. Baldwin has said that in the next war every man, woman, and child will be in it. That being so it is high time that every individual should know what part he or she has to play and obtain the training to play it. We have to defend an Empire which has contacts in nearly every part of the world. Its communications are subject to threat at many places. Our Dominions and Colonies have come to our assistance before and they expect us to maintain a central Imperial Reserve to go to their assistance. It is only by the use of such a central reserve that we can ensure the maintenance of the Empire's communications. Quite recently we had to send a strong military reinforcement to Egypt and to Palestine to meet contingencies trivial in comparison with those which would arise in another war. Large military forces would be required for such purposes. The difficulties of transporting and maintaining them under modern conditions would undoubtedly be great, but unless we set to work to find the solution of those difficulties then we must give up all hope of maintaining an Empire, or cooperating with Allies, and had better ask 30,000,000 people to leave these islands.

Serious students such as your Military Correspondent do not, of course, advance the theory that successful operations can be conducted from the air alone, but this comforting and dangerous doctrine must be combated because it is naturally popular, and it is public opinion which creates and supports a nation's war effort. Fortunately, we have a recent *reductio ad absurdum* example in Abyssinia to reply to this theory. There one side had an overwhelming air force, and the other side had none, and could hardly reply with anti-aircraft fire, yet no victory could be reaped till all arms on the ground had scrambled over the mountains and occupied the country. In Spain we see the air arm playing an important part on both sides, but the Army has to advance before a decision can be gained.

It is unfortunate that voluntary enlistment for the Army has definitely broken down (that is another story), but that is no reason for putting our head in the sand and saying that after all we do not really want an Army at all. Rather does it behove us to set to work at once to deal with the man-power problem thoroughly in all branches of national effort to defend the Empire, and to ensure that every individual is trained for the part he or she will have to play.

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(retired).

*Very heavy pressure compels us to ask correspondents to write as concisely as possible. Letters intended for publication should be typed or written on one side only of the paper.*