THE BUILDING-UP OF THE U-BOAT ARM

The state of the U-boat arm at the present time of tension, and the impossibility of producing the desired results with the numbers of U-boats now available, make it my duty to express my views on the relevant questions, and draw the necessary inferences.

I. The task of the U-boat arm.—The Navy’s principal task in the war, is the struggle with England. The focal point of warfare against England, and the one and only possibility of bringing England to her knees with the forces of our Navy, lies in attacking her sea communications, in the Atlantic. So long as we do not have sufficient numbers of surface forces which are suitable for this task, it will fall chiefly to the U-boat arm.

Even if our surface forces are equal to the task, the U-boat has the decisive advantage that it can reach and remain in operational areas in the Atlantic without support, and does not have to undergo the same dangers as surface forces. I therefore believe that the U-boat will always be the backbone of warfare against England, and of the political pressure on her.

II. Forces required.—The main weapon in the U-boat war against merchant shipping is the torpedo-carrying U-boat. About 90 are required simultaneously in the most important operational area, i.e. in the Atlantic, north of the Equator. In all, about 300 operational U-boats are necessary. (There follows a technical description of the different types of U-boats required.) How do these requirements compare with:

III. The present situation.—Of the 57 U-boats now in commission:

18 U-boats are in the Atlantic.
21 " are in the North Sea or are intended for use in the North Sea.
10 " are in the Baltic.
4 " are not ready for active duties.
4 " are still undergoing trials.
1 " U-boat is set aside for A/S experiments.

57 U-boats.

From a total of 26 U-boats suitable for operational duties in the Atlantic, 18 are in the Atlantic, 3 in the Baltic, 3 still not ready for active duties, and 2 still undergoing trials... At this time all available U-boats were sent out immediately, and no reserves were held back as replacements. In the event of a war, it would therefore very soon become obligatory to reduce greatly the numbers of U-boats on operation, and later increase that number gradually to about one third of the available U-boats. The number of U-boats for the Atlantic would thus be reduced to about 8 or 9. We cannot expect the number of U-boats now on operation to be more than a petty annoyance to British commerce, and we can expect still less from those numbers which will continue to be available. This means that: At the present moment we are not in the position to play anything like an important part in the war against Britain’s commerce. Can we expect an alteration in this situation in the next few years on the basis of the existing plans?

IV. The development of the situation in the next few years.—I have been informed that in the coming years we shall have the following numbers of U-boats suitable for Atlantic operations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type VII b and c, IX</th>
<th>Type XI, XII</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beginning 1940</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot; 1941</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot; 1942</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot; 1943</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot; 1944</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot; 1945</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of 1946</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Numbers based on 1944.
This means that if the required strength as shown in "II" is acknowledged and, if the present building programme is retained, it will be quite impossible for our U-boats to exercise anything approaching an effective pressure on Britain or her commerce within a reasonable space of time.

V. Inferences.—Measures must be taken even beyond the normal planning and existing Naval problems must be put aside, so that the U-boat arm can be brought as soon as possible to such a condition as will enable it to carry out its main task; that is, to defeat England in war. I nevertheless believe that such decisive measures can be carried out only under suitable conditions. I am therefore of the opinion that a central control office, with far-reaching powers and directly responsible to the C.-in-C., must be created to deal with all questions relating to the building of the U-boat arm. I fully realise that the existing development of the U-boat arm after such a long break in U-boat building is an excellent performance, but incisive measures will be necessary in many departments if, in future conflicts with England, we want to stand forth with a really effective U-boat arm.

(signed) DOENITZ.

* * * * * * * * *

Doenitz was not alone in his pessimism. His C.-in-C., Raeder, also viewed the prospect of naval warfare against England with gloomy forebodings, and, on the outbreak of war with England on September 3, 1939, recorded his view of the situation:

Berlin, September 3, 1939

REFLECTIONS OF THE C.-IN-C., NAVY, ON THE OUTBREAK OF WAR, SEPTEMBER 3, 1939

Today the war against France and England broke out, the war which, according to the Fuehrer’s previous assertions, we had no need to expect before about 1944. The Fuehrer believed up to the last minute that it could be avoided, even if this meant postponing a final settlement of the Polish question. (The Fuehrer made a statement to this effect in the presence of the C.-in-C. of the Armed Forces on the Obersalzberg on August 22.) At the turn of the year 1944—1945, by then, according to the Fuehrer’s instructions, the Navy’s “Z Plan” would have been completed, Germany could have begun a war against Great Britain with the Navy at the following strength:

For merchant warfare on the high seas:

3 fast battleships.
3 converted pocket-battleships.
5 heavy cruisers.
Several mine-laying and reconnaissance cruisers.
2 aircraft carriers.
About 190 submarines, including about 6 gun submarines, 6 fleet submarines, and 6 mine-laying submarines.

Two groups, each consisting of three of the heaviest type Diesel-powered battleships equipped with 40-cm. guns, would have had the task of intercepting and destroying the heavy British forces which, more or less dispersed, would pursue the German forces engaged in merchant warfare. Two ships of the Scharnhorst and two of the Tirpitz class would have remained available in home waters to hold down some of the heavy British ships. In this way, especially with the co-operation of Japan and Italy, who would have held down a section of the British Fleet, the prospect of defeating the British Fleet and cutting off supplies, in other words of settling the British question conclusively, would have been good.

On September 3, 1939, Germany entered into a war with Great Britain, as the latter—contrary to the Fuehrer’s assumption that “England did not need to fight on account of the Polish question”—thought it expedient to fight now with the Polish question as a pretext. Sooner or later, as she saw it she would have to fight Germany, and then probably under unfavourable military conditions, i.e. against an expanded German Fleet. As far as the Navy is concerned, obviously