

caught by the German police, though they should prosecute those caught by the private defence corps. As long as the latter functioned, the public were urged not to take the law into their own hands.

LOW COUNTRIES.

Conditions in the occupied part of the Netherlands are very bad. On the 6th Dr. Gerbrandy declared at a Press conference that "at the present rate the cities of Holland will be literally without food, without lighting, and without heating of any kind before this month is out and in many cases before the next fortnight is out; that an enormous amount of the industrial equipment, on which modern civilisation depends is being systematically destroyed. . . . ; that close to 20 per cent. of our agricultural land has been ruined for many months to come and in some cases for years to come; and that even greater destruction by floods. . . . impends." The Dutch Premier added; "For us Dutchmen the next few weeks will decide, not whether we are going to be richer or poorer after the war, but whether as a modern civilised nation we shall be able to play our part in the world of the future."

On the 5th M. Pierlot made a very candid statement on the policy of his new Cabinet to the Belgian Chamber. Without making any attempt to minimise the difficulties that lay ahead he promised that the Government would act vigorously and promptly; traitors would be speedily punished; every effort would be made to improve rations; a firm currency and price policy would be pursued, everything would be done to further the resumption of economic activity; extensive measures of social reform would be introduced; it would also be desirable to consider the revision of the constitution, for reform of the structure of the State and of the powers of the executive was necessary. M. Pierlot also stated that Belgium would take such part as she could, in the prosecution of the war and in the eventual occupation of Germany. Belgium, too, wished to co-operate in the arrangements for the establishment of a real peace in the economic, political and military sphere; but, while her aspirations included a general organisation to improve international relations, she could not lose sight of the bonds that united her with the friendly nations nearest her frontiers.

M. Pierlot's statement was followed by a brief debate, after which the Government obtained a vote of confidence by a majority of 131 to 3, with 7 abstentions.

On the 6th the Belgian Finance Minister gave a broadcast on the Government's plan for dealing with the problem of inflation; under the German Occupation the volume of currency and bank deposits had increased from 65 to 183 milliard francs; drastic reduction was necessary; all existing notes above a certain denomination were to be called in forthwith and withdrawn from circulation and all bank deposits were to be blocked; the issue of new notes and the liberation of a portion of the bank deposits would begin concurrently; the process, however, would be gradual, and ultimately, a tax on war profits would be imposed, so that the volume of the note issue and of bank deposits would be substantially lower than that which had existed on the eve of liberation.

Preliminary reports indicate that the announcement of these measures has been well received. Public opinion is eager for a tax on war profits and for the abolition of the black market, and the Government has promised the former and dealt a severe blow to the latter. The details of the new measures, however, will probably provoke a lively controversy when they are announced.

The deflationary policy of the Belgian Government is among other things aimed at maintaining the exchange rate of 176·625 frs. to the pound sterling that was established in the Anglo-Belgian monetary agreement concluded on the 5th; that agreement also provides that sterling held by residents in the Belgian monetary area, which henceforth is to include the Congo, will be available for payments outside the sterling area; that, as opportunity offers, it will be sought to make sterling available for payments outside the sterling area; that, if the contracting Governments adhere to general international monetary agreement, the terms of the Anglo-Belgian agreement will be reviewed; that the balances of each other's currency which the central banks of the two countries may be called upon to accumulate is limited to £5 million, and its franc equivalent, with the proviso that the National Bank of Belgium's holding of sterling is to be increased by an agreed amount equivalent to the sterling balances owned by residents of the Belgian monetary area. Above the total limit in each case the excess must be met, not by local currency, but by an earmarking of gold. No price for gold, however, is mentioned.

FRANCE.

On the 7th October General de Gaulle left Paris for a three days' tour of inspection in Normandy. He visited Cherbourg, Le Havre, Rouen and Caen, and in a speech at Rouen again emphasised the magnitude of the tasks by which France was confronted. The liberation of the territory had still to be completed, the war won, reconstruction undertaken, and the policy of national renovation shaped. All this required an immense effort, which could only be achieved by a united nation in conditions of public order and national discipline under the authority of the State, with the Government of the Republic rendering account to the French people as soon as they had been able freely to elect their representatives. Stressing the need for unity, he said that France had need of all her children, even if some of them had at one moment or another gone astray. There were some who thought that in the inevitable commotion which followed the sudden liberation the country would lapse into confusion and disorder. He admitted that as a result of the interruption of all communication between the central authority and its agents or of the sudden emergence into the open of men who had gathered in the maquis clandestinely, there might have been trouble and disorder here and there, but the authority of the State was daily gaining ground, and the whole country was responding to the only voice which could speak to it in the name of the Republic, the voice of the Government.

After hearing a report by M. Jeanneney the Council of Ministers on the 6th October adopted an ordinance determining the composition and functions of the new Provisional Consultative Assembly. The Assembly, which is to meet on the first Tuesday in November, possibly in the Luxembourg, will consist of 246 delegates, 149 (as against 49 in the Algiers Assembly) representing metropolitan and 25 extra-metropolitan Resistance movements, 60 Senators and Deputies chosen from amongst those who voted against the delegation of powers to Pétain in 1940 and from among those who were unable to be present on that occasion, and 12 representing overseas territories. While the Resistance groups will thus have a large majority and the metropolitan Resistance movement has been given 22 more members than it asked for, it appears that the Government took an independent line notwithstanding the formal resolutions of the *Conseil National de la Résistance* (C.N.R.) and the Socialist party. In spite of the opposition of the C.N.R. to any appreciable increase in the representation of parliamentarians, the number of parliamentary delegates has been increased from 20 to 60 instead of to the 40 for which the parliamentarians asked. Furthermore, the nomination of these delegates is to be at the discretion of the parliamentarians themselves, and the C.N.R. have not been given the right of scrutiny and veto which they demanded. Political parties will be represented in the same proportions as in 1939. The fact that the Government has been able to override the C.N.R. on a matter which has attracted so much attention both in France and abroad is an indication that it is now conscious of its own strength. It is noteworthy that at the public meeting held by the C.N.R. in the Vélodrome d'hiver on the following day the only reference to the Assembly was made by M. Saillant who expressed satisfaction that the date of its meeting had now been fixed.

The Government has also announced that elections for municipal councils and *Conseils généraux* will be held from the 1st February, 1945. *Résistance* has expressed astonishment that no arrangement has been made for simultaneous elections to the Representative Assembly provided for by Articles 21 and 25 of the ordinance of the 21st April, 1944. *Figaro* has pointed out that in some departments the revision of the electoral rolls will be an enormous task owing to the destruction of archives, the displacement, deportation or capture of many electors and the necessity of including women in the lists.

The seriousness of the transport situation, already mentioned in previous *Summaries*, means that the country is in effect divided into a large number of small areas with practically no contact between them. Paris itself is still cut off from most of the provinces. Although trains started running again between Paris and Bordeaux and Paris and Lyons on the 9th October, instructions to Regional Commissioners had at one time to be broadcast from Radio Paris and are still difficult to transmit. The Paris papers do not reach the provinces, and public opinion is ill-informed at a time when it is eager for news. Factories in the Paris region have now been idle for 6 or 7 weeks, and although the Government intends to take over on its own account German contracts in course of execution in France, the factory cannot resume work until supplies of coal arrive.

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