

the distribution of forged ration cards. *Ceské Slovo* recently issued a warning against the numerous anonymous letters sent to editors in protest against their acceptance of the "New Order." Meanwhile Karl-Hermann Frank is more obsessed than ever with his Germanising mission. At a meeting of the German Historical Society he made a frontal attack upon the whole interpretation of Bohemian history by all her leading historians from Palatsky to Masaryk, denounced this interpretation as the "mortal disease" of the old republic and thus reached the conclusion that the closest co-operation with the Reich was the sole hope for the Czech nation. Frank was equally prominent at the celebrations of Mozart's 150th anniversary. He was, of course, right in remembering Mozart's close association with Prague, where "Don Giovanni" was first produced, but he forgot that Mozart was closer to the Italian than to the German tradition and was himself a cosmopolitan, a Freemason and a Liberal, whose "Magic Flute" aroused the suspicions of the censorship. The central note of the ceremony was the German character of Prague, and Czech public opinion was probably right in regarding it as a counter-blast to the recent Dvorak celebrations in England and to the increasing extent to which the latter's New World symphony is being adopted as one of the symbols of democratic culture. Herr von Gregory, chief of the German Press Service, continues to preach the need for all Czechs to learn German, and one newspaper went so far as to suggest that all school instruction should be imparted in both languages. Meanwhile, the fairly elaborate purges recently effected in the Government Party show that even the most subservient elements include a considerable sprinkling of suspects.

Slovakia, like the other Quisling States, has declared war upon Great Britain and America, announcing somewhat plaintively that it was transmitting this decision by radio and in the press because neither State had ever recognised her and, therefore, there was no official channel through which a message could be sent.

#### POLAND.

Fuller reports are now available of General Sikorski's conversations with M. Stalin. The latter expressed his determination that all Poles still detained in labour camps, &c., on the territory of the U.S.S.R. should be released without further delay. He also chid severely his own officers for their failure up to now to make suitable provision for the Polish troops. All this will certainly have a good effect for the time being, though even now it is quite possible that the thunder of the Dictator's orders will have sunk to a dull and not very terrifying rumble before they reach some of the distant northern camps in which Poles are still confined. It was General Sikorski's desire to secure, if possible, the transference of all Polish soldiers, both those who have already joined up and those who may still present themselves, from the U.S.S.R. to some foreign country, possibly to Northern India. He soon realised, however, that there was no hope of M. Stalin's agreeing to such a suggestion. The example of the Czech Legions in Siberia in the years 1919-20 has made Russian statesmen very suspicious of any concentration of foreign troops in or on the borders of Siberia. In this situation General Sikorski seems to have shown considerable diplomatic skill. He abandoned his maximum demand and fell back on M. Stalin's offer to allow 25,000 Polish soldiers to leave the U.S.S.R. Finally it was decided that between 25,000 and 30,000 soldiers should be sent to strengthen the Polish forces in this country and in the Near East, while the remainder of the Poles in the U.S.S.R. both soldiers and civilians, are to be concentrated in Uzbekistan, mostly between Tashkend and the Persian frontier, but some possibly to the east of Tashkend. It is certainly most desirable that the Polish civilian population should be concentrated in the same region as the Polish troops so as to have the protection and moral support of the latter in case of necessity. Other promises made by M. Stalin to General Sikorski cover the grant of a loan of 100 million roubles by the Soviet Government for the relief of the Polish civilian population and permission for representatives of the Polish Embassy to visit the larger Polish centres in the U.S.S.R., including Vladivostok.

Although great caution is necessary in assessing the value of the information received by the Polish Government here from their representatives in the General

Government, it certainly seems as if the majority of the Poles there have approved General Sikorski's action in signing an agreement and trying to co-operate with the Soviet Government. In one such report from Poland received a few days ago it was bluntly stated that, as Poland's only hope of regaining her independence lies in the friendship of Great Britain, her Government must accept any agreement or treaty which has the approval of His Majesty's Government. Whether the majority of Poles would subscribe to the axiom thus categorically worded is uncertain, but it is interesting to note that, so far as can be deduced from the very brief reports received, it is the practical consideration that the signing of the agreement has saved the lives of countless Poles in the U.S.S.R. which is considered by the Poles of the General Government to justify General Sikorski in accepting an agreement which leaves open the question of Poland's eastern frontiers.

The Polish Government in this country has declared officially that as from the 11th December Poland is in a state of war with Japan.

#### SOVIET UNION.

German announcements that further large-scale offensive operations on the eastern front would be suspended for the winter received a defiant reply from Moscow in the shape of a leading article in the *Pravda* of the 12th December calling for "incessant and increasingly intensive effort" to bring about the "complete destruction of this gigantic military machine." The Red Army was told that "no mercy must be shown to the invaders. Do not give them a minute's rest. Follow close on the enemy's heels, never give him an opportunity to pull himself together and shake off the pursuing Soviet forces." It is evident that the feeling in Moscow is that for the time being the Red Army has got the upper hand over the enemy, since the same paper, in repeating its message two days later, featured M. Stalin as the responsible strategist. "The military leadership is in reliable hands. Stalin has planned and put into operation the entire campaign." Certainly the situation has changed very much for the better in the last fortnight. The driving of the Germans out of Tikhvin and the progress made in a north-westerly direction along the Moscow-Leningrad railway towards Chudovo make it possible to hope that in due course Von Leeb's almost complete encirclement of Leningrad may be broken and the way laid open for the restocking of the city with supplies, the reconstruction of its defensive positions and the replacement of smashed war material and of tired troops. The progress effected in the Klin area to the north of Moscow and the still greater advance in the area Stalinogorsk-Tula have removed the two claws which were tightening round the capital. Moreover, the latter success, coupled with that at Yelets, has reopened an important line of rail communication from Moscow to the south. The chances of the German troops in the U.S.S.R. being able to rest and recuperate in security behind some form of outpost line are lessened by the apparent omnipresence of the bands of partisans. Hitherto there has been comparatively little information from non-Soviet sources about these activities, but it now appears that they have become a sufficiently serious nuisance to lead Lohse, the Reichskommissar for the Ostland, to offer a reward of 5,000 roubles for information leading to the capture of the leader of a band, or of 3,000 roubles in the case of a mere member. In the announcement the population was called upon to give notice to the authorities of any partisans seen and a warning was given that persons who did not disclose such information, or who hid suspicious characters, would be executed. Realising the fate which would await informers at the hands of their countrymen, if their treason became known, Lohse announced as an inducement that their names would be kept secret, if desired. A further warning was given out that the population would be held collectively responsible for the safety of power stations, cables, railways and other public installations.

The Anatolian Telegraph Agency having given additional publicity to a story in the *Berner Tageblatt* to the effect that the Soviet Government would probably be ready to conclude peace straight away on the basis of the U.S.S.R. being permitted to keep all territories not as yet occupied by Axis troops, M. Zaslavski was turned on to write a leader in the *Pravda* entitled "Daydreams of the Hitlerite Gang." This article bluntly ascribed the story to Nazi hopes that they might be able to drive a wedge between the Soviet Union and its Allies