

is as yet absolutely no direct evidence that he was the victim of foul play. Reichenau was, of course, the last man whom Hitler himself would, at this juncture, wish to eliminate, for he was a persistent "yes-man" to his Führer, fulsome in his praises of Hitler's "generalship" and, as far as is known, absolutely loyal to him. The stroke, therefore, is being hailed by persistent hopeful thinkers as a foul blow, and there is a tendency to hope that there exists in Germany to-day a group of disaffected generals who, having forced Hitler into assuming direct personal responsibility for the Russian campaign, intend to turn against him when he has sufficiently discredited himself and endangered Germany's future there, and so it is but a short step to believe that Reichenau, by continuing to place his skilled advice and his prestige in the army and at home at the services of Hitler, might well have presented a serious obstacle to their plans, particularly if he were aware of their intentions. As we are not to be present at the post-mortem, if there is one, we shall be wise not to jump to conclusions.

Even before the Reichenau announcement, German spokesmen had become almost as terse in their references to recent changes in the Higher Command as in their reactions to rumours of popular unrest in Germany (for which see last week's *Summary*). Neutral press correspondents were told that many changes had taken place, but that for military reasons no names could be mentioned, and, since Brauchitsch's dismissal, the German communiqués and the press and radio have studiously omitted to give the names of the local commanders in their references to operations on the Eastern Front. This taboo does not nevertheless appear to extend to Rommel in Libya!

At the other end of the scale it seems that a large number of men have been called up for the army very recently, and a severe comb-out has taken many who were hitherto regarded as indispensable on the home front. The *Deutsches Nachrichten-Büro* announced on the 18th January that volunteers who had reached their 17th birthday would be accepted for enlistment for the duration of the war, and on the previous day the Air Ministry called for volunteers between the ages of 17 and 30 for the parachutist corps. This very extensive use of boys of 17 for active service in the army points to a growing man-power shortage which must be causing grave concern to Germany's leaders.

The world excitement about the death of Reichenau has tended adversely to affect the publicity given outside Germany, Italy and Japan, and the countries they themselves control, to the signing in Berlin on the 18th January of a military convention by the three leading Axis Powers. Details of the Convention, which comes, of course, as no surprise to anybody, were not announced, but it is significant that its signatories—possibly at the request of the Japanese militarists—were plenipotentiaries of the Higher Command of Italy and Japan, and not of their foreign ministers, in addition to "the Chief of the High Command of the armed forces"—presumably Hitler himself. A fresh economic agreement between Germany and Roumania, bringing the latter country even more completely into a position of economic subservience, was also signed on the 17th January. The journey of Ribbentrop to Budapest, which may be extended to Bucharest and even beyond, is dealt with under "South-Eastern Europe." It seems that the war of nerves against Turkey is now affecting even Papen himself, and he is said to be expressing increasing apprehensiveness—some of which must be genuine—regarding the Eastern Front. It has also to be remembered that Papen might very well be expected to be a participant in any *Herrenklub* revolt against Hitler's leadership, should such be in the wind. His apparent worry may therefore also be with regard to which way to jump in such an eventuality.

During the past week or so German propaganda has fabricated a formidable political crisis in Great Britain. Though this may partly have had the object of eliciting information regarding the whereabouts of Mr. Churchill, it is more likely that it was once again the characteristic German reply to foreign allegations regarding discontent at home. On the 12th January the Wilhelmstrasse spokesman, when questioned regarding the British crisis, unguardedly remarked: "In all probability fear of what is to come afterwards maintains Churchill in his position." Substitution of the name Hitler for Churchill may not be very far from summing up the position in Germany, as many of its citizens see it, to-day.

The Pan-American Conference at Rio (for which see also the "United States" and "Latin America") is being followed with meticulous closeness in Germany. The

press and radio are repeatedly warning the Latin American countries of the consequences of being "misled" by the United States, and the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* of the 16th January called Mr. Sumner Welles's opening speech "absolutely in Rooseveltian propaganda style, aiming at inciting the participants in the conference against the Axis Powers and Japan." It is interesting that Japan is mentioned separately. The attempt to set up what *Transocean* calls "an International Dies Committee"—with the possible collaboration of Señor Taborda, chairman of the Argentine Parliamentary Committee which investigated Axis activities in his country—has produced frenzied German protests. It is certain that, behind the scenes, the Germans are doing everything within their power to wreck the Rio Conference, and, above all, to exploit the rift which exists between the attitude of the Argentine Government and that of nearly all the other countries of the Americas.

It has been announced that Dr. Fischboeck, an Austrian associate of Seyss-Inquart for a number of years who has recently been assisting him in the Netherlands, as well as holding several directorates in the Herman Göring Werke, has been appointed Reich Commissioner for Price Control with the rank of State Secretary. His predecessor, Gauleiter Josef Wagner, is announced as having relinquished all his posts for private reasons, none of which are vouchsafed, but it is known that the fear of inflation is growing in Germany and that effective price control is becoming steadily more difficult to maintain. At Christmas-time the German black markets seem to have flourished exceedingly.

The *Deutsches Nachrichten-Büro* on the 12th January stated that the Berlin correspondent of the Spanish newspaper *Ya* had said: "If Germany has a *grande passion*, it is for her leader Adolf Hitler!"

#### CZECHOSLOVAKIA.

Suddenly and without warning the Protectorate authorities have issued a series of administrative decrees which have had the effect of restricting to a minimum the already restricted spheres of activity of the so-called "autonomous" Government. In particular, the Premier's Office and the Ministries of Public Works and Social Welfare have been virtually wound up, while matters of "cultural enlightenment" were transferred from the Ministry of Education to the direct jurisdiction of a special office nominally holding from the Premier, but really controlled by the political section of the Reich Protector's Office. On the 19th January the Cabinet resigned, the official communiqué ascribing this to the need for "mobilising, even more than hitherto, all forces in the Protectorate for the final victory of the Reich, and for the reorganisation of Europe, under the leadership of Hitler." Dr. Krejčí, who had been acting-Premier since the arrest of General Elias last autumn, now becomes Premier: he had been well tested as a colourless opportunist. Dr. Kalfus, a sound financial expert and never a pronouncedly party-man, is allowed to retain the portfolio of Finance, but there are other disturbing and significant appointments. Colonel Emanuel Moravec, who by his virulent onslaughts upon President Beneš and the whole structure of the pre-Munich Republic, has won himself the reputation of the only genuine Czech Quisling, now becomes Minister of Education, presumably for the purpose of sowing Fascist and Nazi doctrine in the unpromising soil of the rising Czech generation, and it is safe to presume that the appointment was intended, and has been accepted, as a deliberate insult to Czech national sentiment. Still more important, however, is the appointment of two Germans to the key-positions of Minister of the Interior and Minister of Labour and Economic Affairs. The latter, Herr Walther von Bertsch, is a Prussian official of the intransigent and arrogant but efficient type, who was imported by Baron Neurath for the purpose of supervising the economic policy of the Protectorate. His selection means a further stiffening of German control and German methods. The first reaction of exiled Czech opinion is that this change spells the end of such autonomy as had survived, and may speedily lead to the establishment of a purely German administration and to the final elimination of the helpless President Hácha.

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