

and road communications through Tunisia, but information up to about the middle of November did not point positively to the use by the Axis of Tunisian ports. There have, however, been indications since then that various German parties or commissions have carried out unobtrusive inspections in and near Bizerta. A greatly increased transit traffic via Tunisia appears also to be envisaged in a German demand that certain stocks of fuel oil originally destined for Marseilles should be diverted to Tunisia. Significance may also attach to a report early in the present month to the effect that the wives and families of French officers were being evacuated from Bizerta. It would be difficult for French Mediterranean ports to take a very large, regular flow of military traffic without considerable preparations and without a large concentration of merchant shipping. But it is of some interest to note that circumstantial reports from several independent sources have very recently referred to the French intention to allow the Germans to use the main lines running to Marseilles for troop movements. Similar reports were current in the summer, but at that time with less intrinsic probability. There is no confirmation yet of rumours of actual German troop movements on a considerable scale westwards and towards the Pyrenees, but it has always been expected that such movements would take place as soon as the Russian front could be considered by the Germans as stabilised for the winter and Divisions intended for the west could be re-equipped. If main attention is drawn in these various reports to the question of supplies to Libya, they also suggest that a still more intensified exploitation of the factories of Metropolitan France, occupied and unoccupied, in the interests of the German war-effort is envisaged. Finally, the Paris press, in the days succeeding the St. Florentin meeting, was instructed by the Germans to lay stress on the importance for the Vichy Government of making a clean sweep of "Anglophile" elements in the unoccupied area. Luchaire, in the *Nouveau Temps*, went farther and insisted that Anglo-American economic influence in North Africa must be eliminated.

Statements from Vichy refer to various measures for the intensification of police-control, including the reported sending of the chief of the French police on a special mission to Bordeaux. Pucheu has also given some details of the special "flying-squad" system, whose introduction was announced in the autumn. These police precautions are attributed to the renewed wave of attacks on Germans in occupied territory, but they may also point to preparations for repressing sporadic disturbances when the true nature of the Franco-German agreements eventually becomes clear. Recent incidents themselves, reported chiefly from the Paris "red-belt," point to an increased disposition of some Frenchmen to show in any way open to them their hatred of the invader. Recent military events in Russia have no doubt counted for much in promoting such a disposition.

SPAIN AND PORTUGAL.

Although it was generally considered that Señor Serrano Suñer had made no commitments for Spain during his visit to Berlin, pro-German circles in the Peninsula cannot fail to have been disappointed at the significant silence he maintained on his return. According to Axis reports, he was expected to make an important declaration at the big reception which the *Transocean* agency announced was to be given by the Secretary-Minister for the Party and other leading personalities of the Falange in his honour, but if he did so, nothing was made public. However, in an interview with the American Ambassador, Señor Serrano Suñer reiterated his confidence in a German victory. He informed Mr. Weddell that he was awaiting a memorandum from the Spanish Ambassador in Washington on the policy of the United States towards Spain. The embargo on oil supplies for the Peninsula, recently imposed by the United States Government, will create still greater internal difficulties for the Spanish Government which may compel it to agree to the United States Government's proposals for the supervision of consumption in Spain. In spite of Mr. Sumner Welles's categorical assurance that the United States Government would give every possible assistance to His Majesty's Government's economic policy in Spain, opposition in some United States quarters and cumbersome governmental machinery are likely to cause delay in implementing this policy. A meeting of the War Council has been held, and it has been announced that General Franco has received in audience several of the generals. No disclosures

have been made about the matters under discussion, and so far there is no evidence to connect these events with the Foreign Minister's future. There is little doubt that Señor Serrano Suñer is playing his cards as carefully as possible, and wishes to avoid being on the losing side, in both home and international affairs.

The Falange is still struggling to regain lost prestige, and the extremists, who now hold key posts in the Party, would appear to have decided that the best way to do this is, to use their own words, to "make a clean breast of past weaknesses," although this does not imply a lessening of ruthlessness towards their enemies. The immediate result has been a reorganisation of the Party and the confirmation of the dismissal from its ranks of the former National Syndical delegate, Gerardo Salvador Merino, who has been in disgrace since August, awaiting trial. The nature of the reorganisation tends to give substance to the rumours of graft and corruption inside the Falange, since it greatly curbs the scope and authority of the National delegates of the various services. Under the former hierarchy, these delegates were responsible only to the Minister-Secretary of the Party in his function of Secretary-General of the Falange; now they have been grouped in four Vice-Secretariats and are subordinate to the respective Vice-Secretaries.

The press continues to give great publicity to the activities of the Blue Division. The "voluntary" contribution fund for Christmas gifts for its members is much more in the nature of a levy. Reliable reports show the Division's losses to be very high, and there is little doubt that Germany will find it extremely difficult to obtain fresh reinforcements from Spain. It is also not improbable that the heavy toll paid by the Spanish volunteers on the eastern front may discourage workers from going to the Reich in accordance with the Hispano-German Agreement of which the disgraced Salvador Merino was one of the principal promoters. Up to the present only some fifteen hundred workers, among whom are men from the metal and building trades and miners, have left, and the Minister of Industry and Commerce assured Sir Samuel Hoare that there were no skilled men among them, and that no such men would form part of any future expeditions.

There are rumours that Spain was mentioned in the conversation between Marshal Pétain and Göring and that it was decided that a Franco-Spanish-German agreement should be concluded to provide joint military resources to defend both the French and the Spanish colonial empires against possible attack from Great Britain or from America. It is rumoured, moreover, that the expediency of Franco-Spanish collaboration to exclude British influence from the Iberian Peninsula was agreed upon. It is unlikely, however, that General Franco will voluntarily depart from the prudent policy hitherto followed.

Reports from Lisbon indicate that a minor internal crisis arose following upon a four hundred per cent. increase in university matriculation fees, a measure which was intended to reduce the excessive number of graduates in Portugal. The first result has been widespread agitation among the students who not unnaturally complain that this harsh and repressive decree strikes most cruelly at the poor man, many of whom will not now be able to finish their university courses. The Minister of Education, already unpopular, came under heavy fire, and though the censorship kept the whole affair out of the press, his position was for a time seriously threatened. It is not unlikely that this agitation has been linked up with the general discontent among the working classes who are badly hit by the serious rise in the cost of living, and that the enemies of the régime are using every opportunity available to embarrass the Government. Dr. Salazar is known to be preoccupied with the internal as well as the external dangers which threaten the safety of the New State.

ITALY.

Pending an official definition of Italy's position towards Japan's declaration of war upon Great Britain and the United States, there is, it seems, much speculation in Rome as to the course which Mussolini will adopt. As recently as last week the view of some well-placed observers was that, even if hostilities did break out between Japan and the United States, the Axis Powers would in all probability not become involved of their own volition. It was pointed out that Japan, profiting by the fact of the Tripartite Pact being designed to protect

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