

from the City Health Service was said to show that the growth of children was being alarmingly stunted, while special attention was drawn to the much more favourable health conditions of the comparatively small proportion of children for whom better nourishment had been available through relief organisations. The Vichy Government are now aware that a pronounced surrender to German pressure would remove any prospect of such release. But it is not certain that conditional American relief will outweigh the more immediate German threats.

As distinct from the special discussions with France, the carefully circulated story of a general German peace offensive for all Europe seems to have been recognised as unconvincing to Frenchmen. The German-controlled Radio-Paris on the 14th November devoted some considerable time to explaining that the Germans have no need to promote such a general peace movement just when their expenditure in men and materials is "about to yield a profit," since their armies "are approaching, slowly but inexorably, the principal sources of this planet's wealth." Radio-Paris further rejected the idea of a peace move because "it would, of course, be necessary to get rid of Churchill's Government." But this, the speaker explained, is "an improbable hypothesis." Darlan himself is known to have expressed himself as lacking interest in a general European peace plan but as anxious to procure a Franco-German peace settlement before Great Britain could herself negotiate with Germany at the expense of France and her Empire. There is reason to believe that mendacious hints have recently reached him to the effect that British peace feelers were already being transmitted to Germans through certain neutral channels, the implication being that he had better hasten his own negotiations for a separate Franco-German peace.

SPAIN.

Sir Samuel Hoare has lost no time in resuming his activities. Upon reaching Madrid he at once notified the Foreign Minister of his return, and indicated that he was available should Sr. Serrano Suñer desire to see him. The alacrity with which he was invited to call and the fact that, contrary to custom, he was not kept waiting in the ante-room, seem to show that the Spanish Foreign Minister was anxious to hear about Sir Samuel's visit to London. Inasmuch as Sr. Serrano Suñer had only a short time before received on the same day the German, Italian and Japanese Ambassadors, it is possible also that he was genuinely eager to contrast the British view of the situation with that expounded by the original members of the Anti-Comintern Pact, the renewal of which is now due, and was, it is believed, the immediate object of these interviews. The picture of this country which the British Ambassador was able to paint was one of high morale, improved food conditions, increasing war effort and decreasing losses in shipping. Sr. Serrano Suñer asked many questions, but, strangely enough, none of them referred directly to Spanish-British relations. They showed a decided preoccupation over the war, and it may be that the Foreign Minister has to some degree lost the confidence he has hitherto expressed in a German victory. Certainly the answers given by the Ambassador cannot have contributed greatly to the Foreign Minister's peace of mind. Sr. Serrano Suñer also wished to know whether substantial changes were to be expected in the near future in the British Government.

That the Germans fear the effects of the return of the British Ambassador to Madrid is clear from the violent personal attack made on him from Prague in a transmission to Spain given directly after his conversation with Sr. Serrano Suñer. This broadcast, intended to discredit Sir Samuel, was in reality an indictment of the bad conditions reigning inside Spain, and proved very clearly that the dissension between the Falange, on the one hand, and the Church and the Monarchists, on the other, is causing disquiet to the Reich.

From Spain itself there have been no further reports of possible changes in the Spanish Cabinet. From Lisbon, however, come persistent, although entirely unconfirmed, rumours that the visit to Madrid of Sr. Nicolás Franco, Spanish Ambassador in Lisbon, is not unconnected with a possible change in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

While there is no reason to doubt a general willingness of the United States to co-operate with us in our economic policy towards Spain and Portugal, a hitch has occurred owing to the whole question having come under consideration afresh

by the newly-constituted Economic Defence Board. Until that body has formulated its own policy towards the Peninsula, the State Department is reluctant to take the independent step of sending an economic mission to Spain. A further possible difficulty has also arisen. The Americans apparently wish to hold any talks on economic exchanges with Spain in Washington, whereas, in the opinion of His Majesty's Ambassador to Spain, the projected three-cornered discussions would be far more expeditious if held in Madrid.

It is still not clear what will be the outcome of the Spanish ministerial decree for the reorganisation of colonial administration. It is obvious, however, that the motive underlying the reorganisation is to put an end, or to make a pretence of putting an end, to the maladministration and graft which are rife in the Spanish Zone of Morocco. As far as Tangier is concerned, the decree has meant the appointment for that region of a "special representative" of the High Commissioner, General Orgaz. A report has it that this appointment has been made only in order to "stress the importance of Tangier," and that no change in the special economic and financial régime is contemplated. In conversation with His Majesty's Consul-General, the "Special Representative," Colonel Genaro Uriarte, himself stressed the good relations now existing between their two countries and promised to co-operate fully with him.

ITALY.

Full use was made on the 18th November of the opportunity to exploit against Great Britain the sixth anniversary of the application of "sanctions" during the Italo-Abyssinian war. There were parades of youth organisations and many speeches were delivered exhorting the Italian nation not to forget Britain's attempt to stem the march of the young nations and to impede the establishment of a new Europe. The recurrence of the anniversary was all the greater godsend to Fascist propagandists because the mass of the people does not appear to be observing with due discipline the various rationing decrees; is anything but resigned to the prospect of a protracted campaign in Russia; is increasingly exasperated by the policy of President Roosevelt; and, to judge from the tone of various broadcasts and newspaper articles eulogising the stout work done by the Italian navy, is betraying unmistakable signs of being seriously perturbed by the losses steadily inflicted by us upon their convoys carrying men and material to Libya. The effect of these losses may well prove to be far-reaching, especially since the opening of our new offensive in the Western Desert. The havoc played with Italian convoys cannot but accentuate any existing scarcity of fuel for Italian and German aircraft in Libya, and, according to reports appearing in the British press, the long-range bombers of the Axis Powers are becoming more and more dependent on Greek aerodromes. This fact, it is obvious, is susceptible of producing important repercussions in more ways than one. The loss of H.M.S. *Ark Royal* has, therefore, been hailed with all the greater explosions of joy because, apparently, it was not generally known that German submarines were operating in the Mediterranean, and because the activities of the Axis Powers in this sea will, it is claimed, be greatly facilitated by the definite disappearance of this often-sunk and almost legendary vessel. The occasion, consequently, to boast, even if vicariously, over the retribution said now to be overtaking Great Britain has been readily seized, and Mr. Alexander's statement that four Italian destroyers are now known to have been sunk in the recent engagement in the Central Mediterranean is stigmatised as a lie and an impertinence.

On the international scene Italy's only direct political appearance has been provided by the visit to Rome of Remenyi-Schneller, the Hungarian Finance Minister. According to a newspaper correspondent in Rome, who is consistently well-informed, the principal topics of discussion between the Hungarian Minister and his Italian colleague were the Italian demand for Hungarian wheat and the solution of several technical problems arising out of the recent changes in the value of the pengö. More widely interesting is the prominence given to Remenyi-Schneller's statement to the *Stefani* news-agency that "it is because we are resolved to contribute to the reorganisation of Europe that we desire to strengthen even more closely the traditionally friendly ties between Italy and the Magyar nation not only in the political and military sphere, but also in the equally important economic field." This friendly declaration cannot fail to have been

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