

some circles that the marriage is a step towards an intended abdication, which, however, would not take place until after the war. Some Flemish nationalists, on the other hand, appear to believe that the marriage represents a further public indication of the King's Flemish sympathies and even of his intention to introduce a Flemish Government of Belgium after the war. Curiosity has naturally been aroused by the three months' delay in announcing the marriage, and the door is left wide open for speculations of the kind to which *Transocean* refers. One result may be somewhat to lessen the atmosphere of almost canonised detachment which has come to surround the "prisoner of Laeken," or, as one Belgian commentator is said to have put it, to "take the King out of the stained-glass window." Whether or no that is an advantage to Belgian cohesion at the present time is another question.

Politically, some little interest attaches to the dissolution by the German military authorities of the *Légion Nationale*. This was founded originally after the last war mainly as a student organisation with Fascist leanings. Its ideas tended to become assimilated with those of the Rexists, with whom, however, the original body broke when Degrelle showed his pro-Germanism. Its dissolution represents a minor favour shown to Degrelle, though there have been reports at various times of the legion concealing small stores of arms and munitions.

A number of reports point to the continued pressure for the complete "Germanisation" of Luxemburg but also to continued Luxemburg resistance. Recently, a census was ordered to be taken of the population. Under the heading "nationality" the people were told that they could describe themselves as either "German" or "foreign." They were forbidden to describe themselves as of Luxemburg nationality. Nevertheless the order was widely disobeyed. A further report states that the penalty for this infraction of the order was usually confiscation of property and, in the case of younger people, removal to Poland, where they have been forced to work under slave-conditions. It is believed that the original object of the census so regulated was to use it as a faked plebiscite in favour of incorporation with the Reich. If so, it failed of its purpose. It appears to have been followed, according to the *National-Blatt* of the 15th November, by a decree that all French Christian and surnames must be Germanised. For example, Boulanger must become Bäcker or Becker, Petit must become Klein, and so forth. The object was declared to be to "eliminate all differences among Luxemburgers." An angrily hostile comment and therefore a dependable side-light on the attitude of the Luxemburg population appeared in the *National-Blatt* of the 25th November. The paper declared that many Luxemburgers were so stupid in their anti-German attitude that they lost all "common sense." There followed a list of punishments for "anti-German activities" imposed on a number of people of ages from 16 to 40. One example, quoted as both pathetic and pathological, is that of a sixteen-year-old student who had been an enthusiastic group leader of the Hitler Youth but in September acquired "completely abnormal ideas." He tore up pictures of the Führer, wrote anti-German slogans on school walls and sent letters to co-operationist teachers and school-companions denouncing them as "cattle, cowards and traitors."

The threat or promise of the German and Dutch Nazi officials in the Netherlands that the so-called "surplus agricultural population" would "find an outlet" in the Ukraine appears to be in process of fulfilment. A party of Dutch farmers is stated already to have arrived in Eastern Europe chiefly for technical and administrative work in connexion, doubtless, with much larger deportations in the future. A similar "offer" of co-operation in the exploitation of the Ukraine has been made to Walloons. A broadcast in French from Lille on the 2nd December urgently invited Belgian attention to a recent speech of von Ribbentrop in which he declared that Europe was "once and for all safe from the blockade" because Europe and occupied Russia could cover all European requirements in cereals and raw materials. Germany, however, could not undertake alone the exploitation of the "immense territories of the East." All continental peoples, including Belgians, would be invited to take part in the development of this rich soil.

If this "offer" was, as appears, especially addressed to Walloons, it is scarcely likely to attract them. They will certainly not forget the acquisitive designs announced by Flemish nationalists and may well fear that their own lot is to be deportation, on Hitler's familiar lines, in favour of Flemish puppets of Germany.

FRANCE.

The outbreak of the war in the Pacific will affect immediately the relations between different parts of the French Empire. It will also demand at Vichy the examination of the Franco-Japanese Treaty, whereby the strict neutrality of Indo-China was assured in connexion with any military measures against a third Power. The eventual implications must be considered in the light of later developments. An immediate result will presumably be to solve in a manner by no means gratifying to Vichy the vexed question of sea-borne traffic between Indo-China and North Africa. *Transocean* of the 7th December gave an account of the most recent French protest, said to have been made by M. Henri Haye to Mr. Sumner Welles on the 6th December, about the indifference of the United States Government to problems affecting communications between Metropolitan France and the colonies and to the resultant difficulties of food supplies to the French population. There were no indications at the time of writing of the effects of the Pacific war on French mentality. It is possible that the "co-operationists" will be encouraged for the time being, as will also that section of the press of occupied France which has insisted that France must not look to the United States for aid, but only to Germany and her "New Europe." French press comment comes mostly from occupied France, and, as might be expected, throws the blame for the extension of the war on the United States; the intervention of Japan is described as having come at an opportune moment to "end the carnage" and to "remove all hypocrisies." The *Nouveaux Temps* expected that America would now need all her arms and munitions for herself. The *Matin*, professing to quote Vichy opinion, made the same point, and added that, in any case, the United States supply routes to Cyrenaica, Iraq and the Caucasus are cut.

Further attempts have been made at Vichy to support the view expressed by French Government spokesmen at the outset that the meeting between Marshal Pétain and Göring took place at the express wish of the Marshal. A surprising number of Vichy officials and unofficial "collaborators" appear to have been taking a hand in the Franco-German discussions in order, as it appears, to be sure of having a finger or more in the collaborationist pie, and so the Marshal may well have wished to cut out this confusing multiplicity of intermediaries and to try to obtain himself a clear picture of German demands and promises. He may also have taken the opportunity to make his own views clear.

Nevertheless, statements from Vichy and other quarters, to the effect that no definite agreements were reached at St. Florentin but that an intensification of Franco-German collaboration might later result, conflict with a large number of reports pointing to the direction in which collaboration was and is moving. These differ in some particulars and are of varying degrees of authenticity, but all agree that the chief German bribe offered is a return of a large number of French prisoners of war. This has always been the Marshal's foremost preoccupation. Priority, it is generally stated, would be given by Germans to colonial troops, and this agrees with a statement made by Admiral Platon at Dakar. The primary purpose of such priority is, in the first place, to ensure the return to North Africa and Senegal of a considerable number of men who have been given an intensive training in German propaganda. There may be a subsidiary plan to cause returned prisoners, considered by the Germans as "reliable" from their point of view, to be absorbed into the French forces in Africa. A very considerable reduction of the costs of occupation has been suggested as a second bribe on the German list. A share in the technical exploitation of the Ukraine has also been reported as an offer. It might appeal to some French industrialists, but could have no attraction for the French rural population. The principal stumbling-block so far in the way of complete Franco-German collaboration has been the Italian territorial claims, which have included Nice, Savoy and Corsica, as well as Tunisia. Admiral Darlan met Count Ciano at Turin on the 9th December, but the result of their discussions was not known at the time of writing.

As against these possible German concessions reports received agree in attributing to the Germans a demand for the use of Metropolitan French and North African bases for supplies of men and material to Libya, but without any use of the French navy. There is no reason to doubt that Axis interests in Libya, chiefly in connexion with food-supplies, have for some time been served by rail

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