

from Hitler an assurance of Dutch independence. Details regarding this alleged "assurance" were given in the weekly *Summary* for the 15th and 22nd October. The significant passage of the Hilversum summary was as follows: "The speaker then went on to examine the question of the place which the Netherlands will hold in the coming Europe. He pointed out that there can be no question of complete independence in the ordinary sense . . . Europe is to be a common 'Raum,' and this demands common representation in foreign relations and common defence of frontiers." He went on to observe that this does not preclude the greatest possible national development in spiritual and cultural directives. Here it was a question of equality of rights, and it was the earnest intention of the Führer to receive the Netherlands into the German 'Raum' as comrades with equal rights. Seyss-Inquart had declared earlier in the speech that the placing of Norway and the Netherlands under Reich Commissioners had a special significance. The two countries, he said, belong to the 'family of the Germanic peoples,' and it was accordingly the intention of the Führer to restore 'normal conditions' in these two countries as speedily as possible and to persuade the populations to assist energetically in the reconstruction of Europe.

From Belgium there have now been received texts of two curious leading articles of the 20th and 21st October. The earlier, from the Brussels *Nouveau Journal*, reads like an appeal to the Belgian Foreign Minister, M. Spaak, to dissociate himself from "a certain radio which has passed the bounds of foolishness, stupidity and mendacity to devote itself to the most monstrous of all propaganda, incitement to murder." The writer of the article professes to feel convinced that "if M. Spaak were able one day to reveal to us his personal point of view he would protest that this was not what he wanted and that the lackeys of the microphone are exclusively in Mr. Churchill's service and outside his own control." The writer said that it was certain that there were factions among Belgians in London and that "M.M. Pierlot and Spaak represent the most moderate of all." The conclusion of the whole matter appeared to be that M. Spaak could still be accorded a certain "benefit of the doubt" by his former associates now in Belgium, but that he must distinguish between them and genuine "traitors" and not tar all with the same brush. This article produced next day a violent tirade from the Flemish Nationalist *Volk en Staat*. The writer said: "We ask ourselves whether we are dreaming when we read such stuff in this autumn of the year 1941." He continued: "We also have friends of our youth among the Belgian ministerial camarilla . . . but no hair of our head dreams of pleading extenuating circumstances for them." It is almost entertaining to note that the writer began by pointing out that the possibility of such an article as that of *Nouveau Journal* appearing at all in Belgium to-day is sufficient evidence that there is no such preventive censorship as existed from 1914-18. He is apparently unable to see that Hitler's real purposes regarding Belgium are admirably served by such "fuming-furious" press disputes between Belgians themselves in occupied territory.

FRANCE.

The death of General Huntziger in a flying accident on his way to Vichy from his tour in North Africa raised the question of his successor and produced a curious series of alternative German suggestions. The first, issued nominally from Vichy by *Transocean* on the 13th November, was to the effect that General Weygand would be offered General Huntziger's post at home, while his present post as Delegate-General for North Africa would be abolished. Later, the same German agency suggested that General Juin, who arrived in Vichy on the 15th November at the request of the Vichy Government, was considered to be General Huntziger's most probable successor. If both these suggestions failed, the Germans, it appeared, would welcome the appointment to General Huntziger's post of General Dentz, whose Anglophobia since his return from Syria has been pronounced. The death of General Huntziger may appear to the Germans to have facilitated such ministerial and other changes as would be favourable to their ultimate projects in North Africa. Abetz may have exerted pressure in the course of his many conversations at Vichy during his visit in connexion with General Huntziger's funeral.

Meanwhile, rumours have reached the United States and other countries to the effect that General Weygand has offered his resignation. The Germans have long sought to get the general removed from North Africa. Failing this, they have done their best to secure the limitation of his actual power, with a proportional increase of the direct authority in North Africa of Admiral Darlan. There is substantial evidence from Vichy that, in these intrigues about North Africa, Pucheu, the Minister of the Interior and an ultra-collaborationist, has been and is playing a considerable part. General Weygand had a long conversation with Marshal Pétain on the 17th November. He is known to attach more importance to his task in North Africa than to any other appointment which could be offered to him, but it is very doubtful whether he would resist direct orders from Marshal Pétain. Moreover, such resistance would presumably involve resignation—as the rumours suggest—unless, indeed, he had good reason to believe that he could save North Africa from German clutches by a still more vigorous display of independence. But it is clear that, even if he could contemplate the stronger line at all, he would only do so if he felt absolutely certain of receiving prompt and effective military support, in men and war materials, from Great Britain and the United States. British military action in the Western Desert may possibly stiffen his resolution. On the other hand, it may also cause the Germans to insist on an immediate change of the *attentiste* policy in North Africa.

The general expectation in Vichy Government circles in the past week is known to have been that German pressure for concessions in North Africa would reach its maximum intensity when the fighting on the eastern front had either produced a thorough Russian defeat or made possible stabilisation. The German demand for concessions would coincide with preliminary discussions of a peace treaty between France and Germany to replace the armistice conditions. It is curious that the 20th November has been put forward as about the date when Vichy might expect to be faced by such pressure. The Germans might no doubt prefer to present Darlan and the marshal with more decisive results in the Russian campaign. But they may also be moved by fear of the near approach of some military development against them such as might increase Marshal Pétain's hesitation and at the same time enhance his Government's bargaining power.

It has been brought officially to the knowledge of the Vichy Government that reported concessions to the Germans in North Africa, exceeding the conditions of the armistice, notably the establishment of a German Consulate-General in Casablanca, would not only gravely concern the United States Government, but would reverse the entire American policy towards France. The removal of General Weygand, with whom the measures of controlled relief for North Africa were arranged by the United States Government, would presumably be decisive in this direction. Present indications are that the United States Government would not take the initiative in breaking off relations with the Vichy Government. But they have made it clear that certain French concessions to the Germans would break the whole existing basis of those relations, and for this the Vichy Government will have no one but themselves to blame. During the week under review there have been some signs of Vichy anxiety on account of American reactions to the Darlan policy. It has been remarked, for example, by American newspaper correspondents at Vichy that, whereas the Vichy press has of late had little to learn from that of the occupied zone in the way of abuse of Great Britain, the French authorities appear to miss no opportunity for showing their regard for the United States. The departure of the Counsellor of the American Embassy in Vichy, Mr. Freeman Matthews, on his way to Washington before joining his new post at the London Embassy, is said to have been the occasion for special marks of cordiality. The Vichy Government undoubtedly has hoped that charitable American sentiment would be moved by pitiful stories of the distress of the French population, especially of the children, and might accordingly insist on the passage of considerable supplies through the British blockade, if, indeed, the United States Government could not actually be prevailed upon to press for free transit at least of food-stuffs between various parts of the French Empire and Metropolitan France. For example, at the beginning of last week American correspondents were invited to consider how desperate must be the plight of children in other parts of France in view of the official statement that even in Vichy 52 per cent. of the kindergarten children were ill from privation. A report

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