

belief in the prolonged survival of a more-or-less economically advantageous neutrality. Nevertheless, there is not, and for many months past has not been, any evidence of a growth of Free French—that is, de Gaullist—sentiment in North Africa. Doubtless many of the younger French officers, particularly in the North African air force, do itch at times to take a hand in the rout of Axis troops, especially of Italians, but it would be unwise to infer that there is a concerted desire and design to re-enter the fight even if there were found among present military French chiefs in North Africa a man who could provide the necessary non-de Gaullist leadership. Darlan's changes in Morocco have been intended to prevent the emerging of any such leader. Among the latest of these changes to be announced is that of the military command in Tunisia. General de Lattre de Tassigny has been promoted, but recalled and appointed to the command at Montpellier. He is replaced by the former Chief of Staff at Algiers.

There are still no signs of any such movement of German troops into Metropolitan France as would point to an early intention of the Germans to attempt a *coup de main* in French North Africa either direct or via Spain. On the contrary, the most recent information points to the withdrawal of some German troops, which have been rested and re-equipped in occupied France, without their being replaced by other comparable formations, though a number of disabled Germans from the eastern front, especially of men suffering from frost-bite, are said to be arriving in various parts of France, including Mediterranean districts.

As regards the Free French movement, the National Committee has hesitated to adhere to the Washington Declaration *sans phrase* partly because of an intense dislike of appearing to accept enrolment among the adherents on a par with "Free Roumanians," "Free Germans" and other rather dubious groups with much less claim than have the Free French to recognition as a valid and representative movement. It is believed, however, that their misgivings on this account may be overcome. The National Committee are also known to have felt so far that they ought not to adhere until they have received some more decided recognition of their special status from the United States Government. Finally, the difficulty arising from the occupation of St. Pierre and Miquelon has considerably confused issues. There has, no doubt, been some anxiety on the part of the National Committee lest they should cease to be regarded as trustees for France even of such parts of the French Empire as might be willing or anxious to join the Free French movement. They have been anxious to emphasise their right to safeguard French interests in all such places. They have, however, recently received from the United States Government satisfactory assurances about certain other islands belonging to France, and these may serve to allay their uneasiness. It is, nevertheless, apparent that the movement everywhere, including Equatorial Africa, is inclined, at the moment, to suffer from a certain sense of frustration. The final settlement of the question of St. Pierre and Miquelon is still under discussion.

SPAIN AND PORTUGAL

Yet again have the rumour-mongers of Madrid dismissed the Minister for Foreign Affairs and sent him to fill the long-vacant post of Ambassador in Rome. His successor had even been named, and the Duke of Alba took the reports so seriously that he postponed his departure for London in order to be in at the kill. But the Duke, now fully recovered from the attack of pneumonia which has kept him in Madrid since October last, must return to his post still serving the same master, for Señor Serrano Súñer appears to have survived one more crisis, though it is doubtful whether there was any more substance in this particular one than a pointed reminder from the Italian Ambassador that the Spanish Embassy in Rome still had no ambassador. The "Cuñadísimo" (arch brother-in-law) has been wished out of office so often that when he really does go it will be hard to credit his relinquishing a portfolio which he holds with such satisfaction to himself and such embarrassment to others. Rumours of an impending meeting between General Franco and Marshal Pétain have been denied by Vichy; they appear to have been reinforced by the arrival in Vichy of a "high Spanish personality," the Marquis of Casa Rabago, and by an interview in Madrid between the Minister for Foreign Affairs and M. Piétri.

Following the allegation in *Arriba* on the 17th January of an attack by a Free French destroyer on three Axis merchantmen in the harbour of Santa Isabel, on the Spanish island of Fernando Po, the Madrid press has launched an attack on this "new violation of Spanish neutrality," and *Transocean* lost no time in reporting that the Spanish Government had protested to His Majesty's Government for their responsibility in the affair. This news was first given in a leading article in the Falange organ, and no news item appeared in any of the other papers, which confined themselves to endorsing *Arriba's* indignation. The evening paper *Madrid*, using, perhaps unconsciously, a famous phrase, warned the aggressors that "our patience has been exhausted." After this outburst, however, the press has dropped all reference to the incident. The Admiralty has issued a communiqué stating that no British or Allied warships were in the vicinity at the time of the alleged incident.

This diversion will be welcomed by the German controllers of the Spanish press, for they had been seriously embarrassed by an article criticising German policy which appeared in the *Diario de Barcelona* on the 1st January. This is a date reserved for outstanding contributors, and any article published then carries special weight. The pseudonym over which the article was published covers the identity of General Kindelán, the Captain-General of Catalonia, who is reliably reported to have expressed the hope that the article would be read in London. The Falange Civil Governor wished to suppress the article, but General Kindelán insisted upon publication as it had the approval of the Supreme War Council, and the only change he allowed was that of title from "The Apostasy of the Aryans" to "The Betrayal of the White Race." The writer, assuming the thesis of the necessary solidarity of the white race against the Asiatics, criticises Germany for the Soviet Pact of 1939. Though she atoned for her crime by the attack of the 22nd June, he says, she fell still more grievously into sin by the alliance with the Japanese, which placed her under the gravest threat to Europe, one which had constantly obsessed Kaiser Wilhelm II, the menace of the "yellow peril." Great Britain and the United States have fulfilled their clear duty in uniting against this threat to the white race, though they themselves are not free from blame, for they have sought Asiatic support in Russia and China. The article, which is the first expression in Spain of criticism of German policy, created a sensation, and called forth a protest from the German Consul-General in Barcelona. A week later the editor of *Alcázar*, one of the most foolish and flatulent of Falangists, took it upon himself to reply to this article, and gave the following picture of this "total war": "The nations which represent the ancient Christian cultures of the West, Italy, Germany, Hungary, Finland, Roumania and others, and the Empire which holds the finest and most elegant realities of the East are fighting against those States which incarnate the ruin of old traditions, upon whose ruins [sic] materialism and marxism have built the most appalling shacks [sic] of soulless wealth—England and her two allies."

The Germans are not having things all their own way in Spain at present. Apart from this pointer to public opinion and the recent incidents reminding them that they have no monopoly of Spanish territorial waters, there are signs that they are dissatisfied with their Spanish trade. It appears that owing to their inability to reduce the debt, estimated by some at 2 million reichsmarks, contracted during the course of the war, the Spanish Government are showing increasing reluctance to supply Germany with needed commodities in exchange for luxury goods which Spain does not want. The Germans are having no difficulty, however, in the supply of one commodity of which they are particularly short, for in spite of the assurances of the Spanish Government given by the Minister of Commerce to Sir Samuel Hoare that no skilled workmen would be allowed to leave Spain for Germany, during the month of December last, to take only one example, out of a total of 206 men who left the Rio Tinto mines to go to Germany, sixty-five were first-class miners whose departure has resulted in an immediate drop in the grade of smelter ore extracted.

Details of the strenuous negotiations respecting Portuguese Timor are reserved till next week, by when it is hoped that the incident will have been settled.