

anarchic conditions does not reflect much credit on present German organisation in Belgium, it seems to be drawn in sombre colours for the purpose of suggesting that the Germans should install a Government of collaborators with plenary powers. The real cause of the "disorders" is, of course, the rising morale of the people, their refusal to be dragooned into meek acceptance of the "New Order," and their increasing contempt for the various sorts of Quislings, Flemish Nationalist or Walloon, who are trying to acquire merit in German eyes so that they may be put in control. This contempt is signalled in a striking manner in a letter written by Degrelle from the Russian front on the 11th December. He spoke of the appalling conditions prevailing—"bleeding feet, frozen ears and bodies gnawed by vermin, bad lodging, frozen bread and frozen drink"—and then added, "but the worst suffering is to know that those for whom you suffer hate you." The rise in Belgian morale has coincided noticeably with the development of the German war with Russia. Russian victories inspire increasing hopes of a complete German defeat. It is therefore not surprising that the Belgians become increasingly intolerant of Rexists or Walloons who try to delay, in whatever degree, the much-hoped-for German collapse. There is no reliable news of the effect of the King's marriage on Belgian feelings. It has been noticeable, however, that recent broadcast addresses to the Belgian people by leading members of the Belgian Government in London have omitted the customary references to him.

Seyss-Inquart's unpopularity in the Netherlands must have been enhanced by the latest German honour bestowed on his "Austrian flunkie," Dr. Hans Fishboeck, on the 16th January. Fishboeck was raised on Göring's suggestion to the rank of Secretary of State and made Reich Commissioner for price regulation. He was an economic assistant to Seyss-Inquart in the latter's intrigues for the abolition of Austrian independence and was made economic and financial commissioner in the Netherlands after the occupation. Seyss-Inquart's appointment of Austrian renegades to profitable offices in the Netherlands has been hardly less unpopular with many Germans than with the Dutch population.

Since New Year German and German-controlled broadcasts for the Netherlands have been distinguished by a fresh wave of anti-Semitism, insistence being laid on the fact that "the Jewish question for Europe will be settled from Berlin" and the suggestion being thrown out, not for the first time, that all Jews should be expelled from Europe and compelled to settle on the land in French, British and Dutch Guiana. Broadcasts of this kind may be considered necessary because the population of Holland has shown in many ways its sympathy with the maltreated Jews. Recently the notorious Blokzihl has been put up to assert, on the basis of his own alleged information obtained as a newspaper correspondent in Berlin, that "Hitler never wanted this war." Blokzihl was at Munich during the Chamberlain interview, and now asserts that, while Hitler was then convinced that he had "won peace," many of his entourage "did not believe that the British word could be trusted." Blokzihl then proceeded to paint Hitler as "not only a great military genius, but also a good man, a pure idealist and a great statesman." Therefore, he concluded, Dutchmen could expect from a German victory "just solutions and great social improvements," whereas a British victory would bring "misery, endless unrest and embitterment."

The collection of warm clothing for German troops on the eastern front, not only for the Dutch, Flemish and Walloon contingents, has been pressed both in the Netherlands and Belgium. The announcement for the Netherlands was that Dutchmen would be "allowed" to send clothing and blankets to the German armies in Russia, but at the same time Seyss-Inquart ordered that no more sales of woollen goods would be permitted and all stocks in the possession of manufacturers, wholesalers and retailers must be declared to the Government Bureau at The Hague. The order applied also to snow-boots, high-felted shoes and other warm footwear. In Belgium, Staf de Clercq, following his policy of currying favour with the Germans, ordered all Flemish Nationalists to assist in the collection of woollen garments and furs. According to Radio Brussels of the 18th January, 62,109 fur and woollen articles had been collected in Holland, but it was not stated, and indeed is not probable, that the German seizure of material was at an end.

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Although attacks upon the Vichy Government by the reptile press in occupied France, notably by Marcel Déat, continue, there have been a few isolated suggestions that the divisions among Frenchmen are fraught with disaster, and that unity must be sought and obtained. There have also been some hints that abuse of the Marshal's Government has, in some cases, gone too far. These suggestions are, however, in no way an admission that Marshal Pétain's bitter New Year criticism of his Paris critics was justified. They are intended to emphasise anew the now threadbare theory that unity can only be achieved by reconstruction at Vichy with the inclusion in the Government of Laval, possibly Doriot, and some others whose services in the Government might bring about a return of the Government to Paris and thus a restoration of French unity. Thus the pressure upon the Marshal continues though its forms may vary. There are some indications that Vichy representatives abroad are rather more hopeful both of the Marshal's ability to maintain resistance to this pressure and of military conditions developing in a way which will strengthen his hand. There are also again reports suggesting that Darlan is less certain of German victory. But it is possible that instructions have gone out from Vichy to representatives abroad to lay stress upon the resistance of the Vichy Government to German demands. Apart from the obvious intention of supporting the Vichy position with the United States Government, it seems probable that the Marshal's advisers have been impressed by the effects of the Russian and Libyan campaigns on public opinion both in France and in North Africa. They have therefore considered that, for the sake of their own waning prestige, they must try to reduce at least in appearance the tempo of concessions to Germany and thus suggest a greater degree of independence than, in fact, they possess. It is not impossible that the Marshal's Christmas and New Year broadcasts were intended, *inter alia*, to serve this purpose. On the other hand, the Vichy Government are well aware that Laval, Doriot, Benoist-Mechin and Co. continue to receive German support, and that their intrigues for the replacement of the present Government by one more to the liking of themselves and their German masters have by no means been abandoned. Therefore the policy of co-operation on the Montoire basis cannot be reversed. The Germans must be persuaded that the economic advantages hitherto obtained by them from Metropolitan France and North Africa are still obtainable with less trouble through the present Vichy Government than they would be if a Government of arch-collaborators were installed in Paris. So far as the existing evidence goes, the Germans appear annoyed by this attempt of Vichy to maintain an uneasy balance, and are well content that abuse of the Marshal's Government should continue, but are not prepared yet themselves to apply the final pressure for a change.

There is some evidence that the course of the campaign in North Africa, despite von Rommel's success in preventing a complete *débâcle*, is producing restlessness among French officers in North Africa. There is certainly some "leakage" of military supplies through Tunisia into Tripolitania, *e.g.*, some fuel-oil sent from Metropolitan France to Algiers eventually reached Libya. But there are also uncontrollable reports of curious delays in transport over the inland supply-route from Constantine to Gabes, which avoids Tunis itself. These may point either to sabotage or to a desire on the part of the North African authorities to avoid any appearance of zeal in fulfilling Axis demands. In the meantime economic conditions throughout French North Africa show signs of worsening. There is a shortage of fuels, both coal and oil, and transport is consequently impeded, while fuel for domestic consumption becomes progressively scarcer. No doubt the situation is painted in particularly sombre colours when it is desired to impress upon American observers the urgent need for more supplies. But increasing restrictions must presumably suggest to the inhabitants that the policy of co-operation with Germany holds out no prospect of economic relief. There is known to be much discussion among French officers of the action which would or could be taken when Rommel's stand is broken and Allied troops appear on the Tunisian frontier. Would fleeing Italian and German troops be simply disarmed and repatriation allowed from North African ports? Could they be interned? Discussions of this kind seem, for the moment, academic, but they do at least point to a steadily increasing breakdown in North Africa of the comfortable

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