

is more favourable to the United States than to ourselves, but there is no reason to suppose that orders from Vichy for "collaboration" would be resisted.

In Metropolitan France Pucheu's police have arrested a large number of persons accused, as usual, of being Communists or agents of foreign Powers and mixed up with attacks on Germans. The Germans, for their part, have helped to convey the impression that they have no concern in this domestic Vichy activity, and it is probably true that much public attention has recently been drawn to it by the marshal's Government in the hope that it would deter the Germans from taking reprisals themselves, previous experience having shown that the result of German reprisals is to stiffen public resistance to the policy of co-operation. On the 13th December, however, General von Stülpnagel announced that, since "youthful elements in the pay of Anglo-Saxons, Jews and Bolsheviks" had been concerned in the attacks, an indemnity of 1 milliard francs would be imposed on Jews in occupied territory and many of them would be deported to hard labour in the east. Also 100 "Jews, Communists and Anarchists" would be shot. This proclamation is noteworthy not only for its savagery, but also for the fact that it conflicts sharply with the comparatively moderate tone of German pronouncements about the assaults a few days earlier, an attitude which was openly attributed in Vichy press messages to German anxiety to display clemency so as not to make the task of French co-operationists more difficult. The Vichy authorities, on receiving von Stülpnagel's proclamation, promptly announced that they were endeavouring to secure modification of the intended reprisals. They said that, even if the reprisals were this time against "culprits" and not against "hostages," nevertheless they were calculated deeply to disturb French feelings. Von Stülpnagel himself professed that the reprisals did not affect "the people of France," but only individuals in foreign pay who were trying to destroy a Franco-German understanding. But he is not likely to have expected this disingenuous disclaimer to have any effect in mitigating French resentment. It remains to be learned whether all the threatened executions have been or are being carried out. A Vichy message to Moroccan papers of the 15th December appeared to imply that all the 100 executions had been actually carried out when the marshal's Government made their protest.

#### SPAIN AND PORTUGAL.

The Spanish Government has made no official statement about the United States entry into the war, but everything points to General Franco's maintaining his present policy of non-belligerency. That he may do so is for the moment being borne out by a report from His Majesty's representative in Nicaragua that, following on the declaration of war against the Axis Powers by the Nicaraguan Government, Spain is presumably taking charge of German and Italian interests there.

There seems to be little foundation for reports of fresh German pressure on Spain for a right of passage for Axis troops through the Peninsula, though it is generally considered that the meeting of generals held during the first week in December was called to discuss Spain's position in a possible military co-operation with the Nazis. All sources of information agree, however, that at this meeting and at subsequent ones the generals were unanimously opposed to Spain becoming involved in the war, and Sir Samuel Hoare himself has reported that in a conversation with General Orgaz he was impressed by the High Commissioner's emphasis on Spanish neutrality. General Kindelán, whom Sir Samuel Hoare has also seen, was reasonably optimistic too about Spain's prospect of keeping out of the war.

In spite of the Spanish Government's discreet attitude to the extension of the war, the Falangist press and wireless, as might have been expected, have expressed great satisfaction at the Japanese attack, and have naturally blamed President Roosevelt for the outbreak of hostilities. They are giving prominence to Japanese victories, but have touched very lightly on the anti-totalitarian attitude of the South American States, a factor of some weight in Spanish policy.

The feeling in official circles is one of tension, and this cannot have been relieved by the Government's unexplained decision to close the Franco-Spanish frontier. It is not unlikely that this tension has been increased by certain

unfortunate incidents caused by the unjust discrimination of the Spanish authorities against British propaganda. Sr. Serrano Súñer's return from Berlin coincided with what appeared to be a deliberate offensive against our distribution of the B.B.C. news bulletin, which is our only medium of propaganda allowed in the country, and it is not improbable that the Foreign Minister was himself responsible for the instructions given to the Head of the Press Department. The fact that the number of persons calling for the bulletins at the Embassy Press Office has increased enormously in the last two months was used as an excuse to place secret police pickets outside the building.

More than two hundred persons were arrested as they left the Press Office. Sir Samuel Hoare immediately called upon the Minister for Foreign Affairs and delivered a strong protest, demanding effective police protection and redress. In fact, the building was already guarded by two uniformed policemen. If it is now to be protected as well we shall have the thoroughly Spanish spectacle of the Press Office receiving protection by the police, against the police. The interview with Señor Súñer was not satisfactory. Without provoking a breach with Spain, His Majesty's Government are now prepared to react vigorously, and the Ambassador has been authorised to show a studied indifference to Spanish requests for economic facilities as long as unfair discrimination against British propaganda continues. This is the culmination of a series of minor persecutions, and, though the situation has not yet improved, it is to be hoped that the Spaniards, who have long lost sight of the truth that diplomacy is reciprocity, will realise that self-interest alone would demand for us a little of the fair play which they profess to admire in our dealings with them. This is the sort of incident which may easily have wider repercussions, and Señor Súñer will need all his skill to prevent his enemies using it to compass his downfall.

Propaganda has also been a main feature of our relations with the Spanish authorities in Africa. In spite of General Orgaz's assurances of his impartiality and his desire to treat all belligerents alike, His Majesty's Consul-General in Tangier has reported that there are no signs of a decrease in Axis propaganda, but rather of an increase, and it is a fact that in Tetuan the *Tangier Gazette* is not allowed to be sold, though the kiosk outside the British Post Office is resplendent with *Signal* and *Tempo*. The close relations existing between the Gestapo agents, the Falange and the Spanish police make it very difficult for the Spanish local authorities to control German propaganda, even had they the inclination or the courage to do so, and the insistence of the High Commissioner, in his conversation with Sir Samuel Hoare, that his duty was to maintain strict neutrality in the Spanish Zone, and that he intended to do so in spite of pressure from outside, seems purely academic. General Orgaz paid great attention to Sir Samuel Hoare's assurances of British goodwill towards Spain and sympathy for her aspirations in Africa, and he suggested that proof of these feelings could be given by supplying food and necessities. Given the obstacles put in the way of the presentation of the British case in the Spanish Zone, this naïveté is a particularly striking example of that very Castilian quality of mind called "inconsciencia," which, in translation, means egocentric irresponsibility.

Though in the grand strategy of the war Spain's hour may seem to be drawing near, the Spaniards, whose major preoccupation is still food, or rather lack of it, show no special perturbation. But the Portuguese Government have already had to take decisions for the defence of their Eastern possessions. In virtue of the alliance, they accepted His Majesty's Government's proposals for assistance in the defence of Portuguese Timor in the event of a Japanese attack, but when His Majesty's Government made it plain that their wish was to occupy the island in anticipation of a Japanese attack, the Portuguese Government took fright, and, after a somewhat agitated correspondence, Australian and Dutch troops were landed in the island without Portuguese permission. Public opinion has been much disturbed by the extension of the war, and, against the general hope that neutrality will be maintained, there is a sober realisation that difficult days lie ahead. The agricultural situation was already causing concern, and now that a decrease in overseas trade is inevitable, the Portuguese people will certainly have to prepare for rationing of food as well as increased restrictions on petrol. Going, if not gone, are the halcyon days when Lisbon, with its confident lights, its pineapples and cream and its taxis so numerous that walking became a major hazard, was a lovely haven for the bewildered refugee and the war-weary belligerent. Only the secret, silent services of all nations will remain, sleuthing till the end.

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