

conversation with Hitler he had pledged Slovakia to fight to a finish, and received the answer "I know." "I should like," he added, "to have these words (Ich weiss es) engraved upon stone."

*Erratum:* No. 113, Page 3, Line 7 from foot:—

For "in German eyes" read "in German hands."

#### POLAND.

During the past week no fresh news of value has come in from German-occupied Poland. For the time being interest centres round General Sikorski's visit to the U.S.S.R. and especially round his talks with M. Stalin. On the 4th December the two statesmen had a conversation which lasted for two and a half hours. Only a brief report of it has as yet been received by the Polish Government in London, but General Sikorski appears to have been satisfied with M. Stalin's attitude towards the various requests he put up to him. After an *exposé* by General Anders of the lack of provision made for the Polish troops in their camps, M. Stalin cordially agreed to the suggestion made to him by General Sikorski that he should send two of his advisers to accompany the latter on his tour of inspection of the camps, and he nominated no less people than M. Vyshinski and General Panfilov for the purpose. M. Stalin agreed that seven Polish divisions should be formed in all on U.S.S.R. territory and that the work of forming further divisions besides those already organised should begin at once. This conversation was followed by the signature of a joint Polish-Soviet declaration, in which it was stated: (a) that no compromise with the German imperialism of Herr Hitler is possible and that, together with Great Britain and the other Allies, Poland and the U.S.S.R. will continue the struggle until the German aggressors have been crushed; (b) that so long as the war lasts the two Governments will lend one another complete military aid and that when peace is established the relations between the two States will be based on neighbourly collaboration and sincere mutual observance of the obligations assumed by both parties; and (c) that a permanent and just peace can only be achieved through a new organisation of international relations based on a union of the democratic countries and supported by a collective armed force of all the Allied Powers. In an inspired article of the London *Dziennik Polski* it is stated that the idea put forward in the declaration of a permanent alliance and a joint armed force of the Powers with the object of preventing aggression and securing peace and international law is to be regarded as a completion of Point 8 of the Atlantic Declaration of the 15th August.

For some time the Polish Higher Military School in this country has been running a series of shortened courses for young officers. To these they have now added a completing course for staff officers in which Czechoslovak as well as Polish officers are participating. At the opening of the course the chief of the Czechoslovak General Staff underlined the necessity of collaboration between the two nations in their life-and-death struggle with their hereditary enemy, Germany. The soldiers of the two countries must, he said, harmonise their military organisation and equipment with a view, not only to the present struggle, but also to the subsequent peace-time.

#### SOVIET UNION.

The High Command of the Red Army is most unlikely to take at its face value the pronouncement of the Berlin spokesman on the 8th December that the German army did not expect to capture Moscow this year and that the Germans would not advance further on the Moscow front this winter. Should it turn out that the great strain imposed on the enemy by his repeated assaults on the capital and by winter conditions has convinced him of the necessity of ceasing large-scale operations in this area, the breathing-space thus afforded will undoubtedly be welcomed by the defenders, who must themselves be near exhaustion. M. Stalin himself, in a recent conversation with General Sikorski, expressed himself as not altogether satisfied with the position in the Moscow area, but he left his hearer in no doubt whatever that the U.S.S.R. would go on fighting, no

matter what happened at Moscow. He described the rout of General Kleist as complete and the spoils of the Rostov victory as enormous, no less than 11,000 mechanised vehicles, for example, having been captured. He regarded the threat to the Caucasus as having been removed for the present.

M. Stalin's interview with General Sikorski, coupled with the latter's broadcast speech to the peoples of the Soviet Union and the terms of the Soviet-Polish Declaration of Friendship signed in Moscow on the 4th December, throws additional light on the views of the Soviet Government on war aims and post-war reconstruction. M. Stalin assured General Sikorski that he had approved every word of the speech before it was broadcast, and the latter told His Majesty's Ambassador at Kuibyshev that the declaration followed the original Polish draft almost without alteration. It would be wise, therefore, to assume genuine identity of views between the two Governments on the three main principles enunciated in article 3 of the declaration, viz., suitable punishment of the German criminals, a new organisation of international relations based on an enduring alliance between the democratic countries and support of respect for international law by the collective armed forces of all Allied countries. It has to be remembered that no country involved in the present war in Europe has suffered materially from enemy action and as a result of the voluntary destruction of property in the interest of the Allied cause to the same extent as Poland and the U.S.S.R. When, therefore, according to the text given to His Majesty's Ambassador at Kuibyshev, General Sikorski made use of the words: "He must be destroyed completely, and his henchmen and his country must be made to repair the evil they have wrought," an intention on the part of both countries to claim reparations at the conclusion of hostilities seems clearly indicated. The above passage, too, was followed immediately by the phrases: "A well-deserved retribution awaits them. Future generations must understand that crimes of barbarous brutality cannot go unpunished."

Concurrently with the above, Soviet propaganda for home consumption has been laying great stress on German cruelty towards prisoners of war and atrocities amounting to massacre alleged to have been committed by German troops in Kiev, Rostov and the area recaptured by Marshal Timoshenko's armies. It is, of course, impossible to check such statements as that which estimates the numbers of civilians killed in Kiev in a few days at 52,000 men, women and children, but the keynote of revenge is being insistently struck and cannot be disregarded in endeavouring to anticipate the kind of terms which the Kremlin will be prepared to discuss when the day comes. A prominent Swede, recently returned from Berlin, has reported that there is much talk in Germany of the starvation which would ensue in the occupied parts of the Soviet Union as a result of "scorched earth," and that it was estimated that between 10 and 20 million Russians might die of hunger this winter. There was talk, too, of cannibalism among Russians, even in prisoner of war camps. This links up with a report from a Baltic source, which has proved reliable over a long period, according to which Germans admit that a large part of the population of the occupied territories of the U.S.S.R. may die of starvation. The same authority said, too, that the plight of Russian prisoners in German hands was terrible. Some 3 million were still in open camps near Riga, Minsk and other towns with hardly any shelter, and were freezing to death with next to nothing to eat. He added that with the exception of Military Commissars and proved members of the Communist party, who were shot out of hand, prisoners were treated more or less humanely in the forward areas, but that, further to the rear, Jews disappeared and other prisoners marched on, often without their boots and coats, since these had been stolen by the Germans. One seemingly endless chain of prisoners had had no food for five days and fell one after the other. The German authorities were said to have admitted that they had no means of housing and feeding such a quantity of prisoners and that it could not be helped if many of them had to die. The above accounts from neutral sources tally, unfortunately, only too closely with others from more biased sources, such as the Norwegian Telegraph Agency and Soviet communiqués and radio, and, if they are well founded, German treatment of Red Army prisoners is not likely to be forgotten when the day of reckoning comes.

It cannot be said, unfortunately, that the road to be travelled before Anglo-Soviet relations become cordial has grown any shorter of late. M. Stalin sent an extremely warm personal message to the Prime Minister on the occasion of