

not necessarily worsened. "Explanations," for example, have been tendered about the appearance of members of the German Armistice Commission in uniform, and it has also been asserted that, despite instructions from Vichy countermanding General Weygand's orders, the French security services in Morocco were recently told by the Residency to maintain the restrictions on French contacts with members of the German Armistice Commission and on the movements of Germans themselves. Unfortunately these assurances have themselves been contradicted by other detailed reports from at least equally well-informed quarters.

Moreover, the whole system of North African reorganisation, as decreed from Vichy simultaneously with General Weygand's dismissal and the abolition of his post, points to a determination of Darlan, or of his German wire-pullers—to prevent any one man from acquiring in French Africa the prestige of General Weygand or of repeating such resistance as he was able to make to German infiltration. Some attempts have been made by German-controlled publicity in France to suggest that General Weygand's dismissal has had less effect on the official United States attitude to Vichy than had at first been suggested. In fact, however, the days succeeding the dismissal can have brought no reassurance to Washington, where very little hope is believed to be entertained that a more robust attitude to the Germans can any longer be expected from the Vichy Government or, in consequence, from its agents in North Africa. No doubt there can never have been much expectation that either at Vichy or in North Africa peremptory German demands, accompanied by threats of force, would be resisted. But a useful purpose was served by General Weygand's ability to stem for the time being the tide of German invasion by infiltration.

#### SPAIN AND PORTUGAL.

Reports continue to suggest that the internal crisis in Spain is slowly coming to a head, although in view of past experience they should be treated with very considerable reserve. The fact remains, however, that the Government is being openly criticised, and the economic situation is becoming rapidly worse. Hunger and disease are rife. The generals and conservative civil elements, opposed to the present Government, can now also count on police support, since the Director-General of Security, himself a soldier, is said to have gone over to their camp.

From conversations which he and the military attaché have had with leading generals, Sir Samuel Hoare understands that General Franco's own position will depend largely on the attitude he adopts: if he resists, he will be removed entirely from office; if not, he may be allowed to remain as a figurehead. Whatever the Caudillo's position, however, there is said to be no question of Señor Serrano Suñer's continuance in office.

It remains to be seen whether or not Señor Serrano Suñer's decision to go to Berlin to attend the Anti-Comintern Conference may have been in part responsible for the postponement of the zero hour in the pending crisis. It would appear that shortly before his departure, Señor Serrano Suñer was anxious to know which Foreign Ministers were going to attend, and his enquiries almost certainly show that his decision to be present in person was only taken at the last moment. Having, however, once decided to go to Berlin, he delivered a speech which, although adding nothing fresh, managed to be gratuitously provocative to the British and American Democracies. Some Spaniards are said to have found the speech particularly tactless at a moment when Spain is passing through a crisis on the oil question, and also resent the idea of Spain having been dragged along behind Germany's chariot wheels in company with a number of satellites. It is difficult to say whether his speech and the subsequent uncompromising statement to the press that "Spain remains united to the Continental policy" were made in ignorance of his own precarious position, or whether he was making a direct bid for German support against any attempt to dislodge him and the Falangists. If certain rumours are true, Señor Serrano Suñer may see his hopes of regaining German favour frustrated, since it is said that a high Nazi official in Spain has expressed German disappointment in the Falange, whose lack of support for the German war effort they attribute to the Foreign Minister himself. It is not unlikely that the long over-due "purge" of the party, which has just been decreed by the Old Guard extremist and Minister-Secretary of the party, Señor Arrese, is a last minute attempt to win back for themselves the good graces of the Nazis.

The result of the Libyan campaign will inevitably be of great importance both in Spanish internal and external policy and, if matters go well in Russia and Libya, a change of régime may come more quickly than many expect.

Reports show that the High Commissioner in Spanish Morocco, General Orgaz, is perturbed by the departure of General Weygand. He can be no less troubled by the attitude of the German Armistice Commission to French Morocco, under General Schultheiss, which gives some substance to the rumours that the Nazis are preparing to trump up incidents which would justify their occupation of the French Protectorate before next spring. At the same time the Germans are increasing their secret anti-British and anti-American activities in Tangier and the Spanish zone. Spain is in a difficult position for several reasons. Sir Samuel Hoare has already pointed out to General Aranda that any attempt on her part to occupy the Sebou line, even as a move to forestall the Germans, would endanger Spanish relations with Great Britain and the United States; and he has also emphasized that closer co-operation with us over African questions was desirable. General Orgaz is thought to be faced with difficulties among the natives, who blame the Spaniards and Germans for the serious food shortage and who are becoming in consequence more pro-British. There is also, it would appear, an attempt on the part of the French to regain Moroccan sympathies, and eventual support should the Spaniards consider the moment opportune to press their claims in the French zone. The general upshot is to make the natives aware of the importance of their rôle.

The internal disorder in Spain is causing Dr. Salazar no little anxiety. Influential business men enjoying his confidence seem to have discussed with him the possibility of a situation arising in which Portugal would have to ask Britain to guarantee her against an extension of this disorder to her own territory. They probably have pointed out to Dr. Salazar that unpleasant as is the prospect of a victorious Red army spreading over Europe the communism he dreads, equally disquieting is the prospect of a victory for the Nazis, whose cavalier treatment of Portugal over the sinking of the *Corte Real* cannot fail to have brought home to him their ruthlessness. Here again the march of events on the Russian front and in Libya, if favourable to us, may finally disabuse Dr. Salazar, who continues to be impressed by reports of German military strength.

#### ITALY.

Whatever may be the state of civilian morale in Italy at the present moment, there is little doubt that the morale of the army in Africa is appreciably higher than it was a year ago. If the defence of Gondar has not deserved all the grandiloquent panegyrics of Rome, it cannot be denied that the Italian troops held out stoutly enough in their stronghold, where they are said to have been short of food, boots, ammunition and barbed-wire entanglements. The loss of the last fragment of those overseas possessions which have been so intimately connected with the names of Mussolini and many of the most prominent Fascist leaders is bound to come as a specially severe blow to the régime and to deepen the resentment of those many Italians who have grudged the squandering of milliards of lire upon an enterprise conducted largely to satisfy the overwhelming ambition of a *miles gloriosus*.

In Libya, as at Gondar, the Italians are putting up a better show. According to reports from Rome, General Ettore Bastico was declared at a press conference to be in supreme command of all the Axis troops. But if the voice is the voice of Bastico, the tanks are the tanks of Rommel. Be that as it may, the Italians, stiffened by the German panzer divisions, are fighting with much greater spirit than did the ill-found forces of Marshal Graziani and General Bergonzoli ("Electric Whiskers"). Except for a few jibes at our broadcasters for having underestimated the fighting capacity of the Italian divisions, the Rome *communiqués* have become more cautious in tone, and the Italian press has obviously been prohibited from publishing any more premature whoops of victory such as were reported by *Transocean* to have "overjoyed" the public. It is evident that, while it may suit the book of some Italian and German propagandists to belittle the Libyan front as of secondary importance, the battle there is being taken very seriously by the military authorities of the Axis. This is only natural. Apart from the self-evident military consequences that would inevitably flow from defeat, it may confidently be conjectured that the loss of Libya would come to

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