

more drastic régime of political repression owing to the influence of recent world-events on Dutch minds. A paucity of direct information on this matter is partially compensated by indirect evidence from broadcasts to the Dutch people from German-controlled stations. Violent abuse of the United States, especially of President Roosevelt as "warmonger No. 1," is combined with equal abuse of the Dutch Government in London, "whose pathological hatred of national socialism had already induced them to offer portions of the Dutch Empire on a plate to the vultures on the other side of the Pacific and has now plunged the Netherlands Indies themselves into the war." Such abuse is followed, as usual, by assurances that the power of "Jews and Bolshevists" in the United States is more apparent than real. "A time is coming," declared a Hilversum broadcast on the 12th December, "when all the money and gold of the United States will have but little power in a world which will include South and Central America. . . . The present friendship and solidarity between all American countries is a phantom. On the contrary, the solidarity which will exist in other parts of the world after this war will be more genuine and more lasting."

It is now evident that King Leopold's marriage has disturbed the minds of many loyal Belgians. This has been stated in messages to certain Swedish newspapers and it is also confirmed from reliable private sources. It is particularly unpalatable to Walloons, especially in Brussels, because of the conjectural Flemish implications to which attention was called in last week's *Summary*. Walloon anxiety is not lessened by the closing of Brussels University on the 10th December by the German military authorities, the Senate having refused to recognise three Flemish professors from Ghent imposed by the German authorities. Ten members of the Senate were arrested, and the rest fined or otherwise penalised. All professors and lecturers who refused to resume their courses have been removed from the pay-roll. It is probable, too, that the Walloons have wind of an alleged renewal to the Vichy Government of a German offer to "compensate" France after the war for the loss of Alsace and most of Lorraine by the acquisition of Walloon districts.

The German authorities are exercising increased severity in Belgium in all cases of alleged sabotage. Thus, as in the Netherlands, the velvet glove is stripped from the mailed fist, partly or mainly as the result of increasing German anxiety about the effect upon all occupied territories of their defeats in Russia and the full entry into the war of the United States.

FRANCE.

The outbreak of war between the United States and Germany and Italy has greatly increased the difficulties of the Vichy Government. Henceforth concessions made to the Axis directly injure the United States war-effort, and Vichy knows full well that the United States Government would vehemently and actively resent any such injury. Despite German and German-inspired assertions, diplomatic relations between Vichy and Washington are not yet interrupted, nor was the visit paid by Admiral Leahy to Marshal Pétain on the 11th December for the purpose of taking leave. But certain much-discussed Vichy concessions to the Germans, especially the use of the French fleet and bases, would make the further maintenance of diplomatic relations at once impossible. Of this fact, in itself sufficiently obvious, the marshal's Government are understood now to have been formally apprised. They have proffered in return certain assurances of present fact which, however, are not and cannot be looked upon as equivalent to guarantees for the future. If the Vichy Government have not yet made any such grave concessions as have been variously reported, or if, for the present, maintenance of "correct" relations with the United States is still envisaged at Vichy, as seems to be the case, it is because the Germans have not yet insisted upon the concessions or demanded a breaking of relations with the United States. When they choose to do so, they may be expected to apply the same kind of blackmail as proved effective in securing the dismissal of General Weygand. Nothing suggests that the Vichy Government would offer any more strenuous resistance, despite formal and public assurances of their determination to maintain the so-called "neutrality" of France in relation both to the war in the Pacific and the hostilities between the United States and Germany and Italy. Moreover, with the example of Japanese treachery in mind, the possibility must necessarily be

envisaged that the marshal's Government, under extreme German pressure, may continue to proffer assurances up to the very moment when their invalidity is proven by action.

Statements made by the usual Vichy "authorities" to Axis correspondents on the 11th and 12th December amount to a reassertion of Vichy "determination to safeguard French interests in Europe and the integrity of the French Empire." "Neutrality," it was declared, "continues to be the order of the day, but this neutrality is based on extreme vigilance and French diplomacy is ready to react promptly to any new development of the situation such as may demand from it appropriate measures." Such a new development, it was added, might be constituted by an attack on the French Empire. These press communications correspond fairly closely with the tenor of formal statements made at the same time in more completely authoritative quarters at Vichy. The reference to attacks on the French Empire itself points to the danger lest, pressed by the Germans, the Vichy Government may employ some such excuse as a reason for abandoning their "neutrality." There still exists, for example, the dispute between Great Britain and Vichy over the convoy system increasingly employed by the latter for transport between French colonial and French Metropolitan ports. His Majesty's Government are quite unable to recognise the completely neutral status of French-escorted convoys for the reason that the Axis Powers control their voyages, dictate their routes and supervise the use of their cargoes. Admiral Darlan's publicity officials continue to try to excite opinion in Metropolitan France and in the Empire on every occasion of interception by asserting that the blockade is used to "starve" Frenchmen. On each occasion, too, a fresh threat is made of drastic measures to prevent search and interception. It is notorious that the Germans have been trying for many months to precipitate a conflict between the French and British navies by persuading Darlan to order convoying in force. They have recently launched press statements to the effect that this measure has already been decided upon at Vichy, though the only official hint from Vichy was a statement on the 12th December denouncing the sinking "presumably by a British submarine" of the French steamer *St. Denis* from Algiers for Marseilles and asserting that "steps would be taken to put a stop to such cowardly attacks in these seas." The German radio on the 14th December added that the "steps" would be a Vichy prohibition of sailings except under control. So far so good or bad. The British Admiralty have announced that no British submarine was near the scene of the sinking and it may be that this statement and the fact that the Spanish tanker *Badalona*, sunk within a few miles of the Spanish coast in similar circumstances, is known to have been the victim of a German submarine, decided Vichy to think again and admit that an Axis submarine was, after all, involved.

In the meantime the German-controlled press in occupied territory is tireless in insisting that France should now abandon the attitude of neutrality and fight at the side of Germany for Europe's New Order. Jean Luchaire, in *Nouveau Temps*, for example, asserted that for France to be absent from the world war would mean her descent to the rank of a third-rate Power. At the same time, he demanded a speedy reconstruction of the Vichy Government, with the inclusion of Laval and others necessary for a "union sacrée" of the country. Déat also forecast and demanded a Cabinet reconstruction within a few weeks. It is not surprising in these circumstances that Darlan is reported from several quarters greatly to fear a German attempt to overthrow him and to replace him, and perhaps also the marshal himself, by more servile persons, who might include Pucheu and Doriot as well as Laval.

As regards North Africa there has very recently been reported a heavy movement of Germans in plain clothes from Lyons to Marseilles. Accommodation on the Marseilles-Dakar air service is said to have been reserved for Germans up to the end of the month, and all ordinary traffic from Marseilles to North African ports to have been suspended.

There is also further information of the arrival from Marseilles of a considerable number of French troops refitted after the Syrian campaign. Detachments reach Dakar at frequent intervals. Reports of public feeling in Dakar are contradictory. Some describe it as acutely anti-British, others say that an Anglo-American victory continues to represent a general hope. French officials are, in any case, afraid to express opinions. It is probable that sentiment

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