

COLOURED PAPER
PAPIER DE COULEUR

POOR PRINT
Epreuve illisible

268567

12

THIS DOCUMENT IS THE PROPERTY OF HIS BRITANNIC MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT

GERMANY.

January 8, 1940.

CONFIDENTIAL.

SECTION 2.

[C 485/81/18]

Copy No. 036a

Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Bland (The Hague).

(No. 15.)

Sir,

Foreign Office, January 8, 1940.

I ASKED the Netherlands Minister to call this afternoon, and told him that I had some information to pass on to him, which might or might not be new to his Government.

2. I said that we understood from certain quarters in Italy, which had been convinced in November last that there would be no attack on the Netherlands and Belgium by Germany, that they were now less sure of this. We should not attach so much importance to these reports were it not that they were supported by other information which had come to us from two secret sources, the general impression being that the date for the German attack was some time in February. Naturally the last accusation to which I would wish to expose myself was that of crying "wolf." I understood that the French Government for their part considered these rumours as possibly connected with some further peace offensive. But I thought it as well to pass on this information quite unofficially for what it might be worth. I told the Minister that I thought that the declaration made by the Netherlands Government on the 6th January, to the effect that any attack on the Netherlands would meet with obstinate resistance, was much the best way of staving off any invasion that might be in the offing. It was our information that there was some difference of opinion between the German Government and the German generals with regard to the wisdom of an invasion of the Low Countries, and the more reasons the generals could be given for showing that such an invasion would not be an easy matter, the better chance there would be of their view prevailing.

3. Jonkheer Michiels thanked me for my information, which he said he accepted in the spirit in which it was offered, that is to say, simply as information. He himself had received a somewhat similar report from a private industrial source, though the date given to him had been the beginning of March. German agents in the Netherlands had for some time been trying to spread the idea that, if German troops simply passed through the Maestricht appendix, there would be no need for Holland to oppose them. The recent declaration by the Netherlands Government had, however, been intended to show that the invasion of any part of Dutch territory would be opposed.

4. When I suggested to the Minister that I thought it might perhaps be helpful if the Belgian Government were to declare that if the Netherlands were invaded it would be a matter of direct interest to Belgium, who would inevitably be drawn in, he replied that the Belgian Government had not yet said anything of the sort, though he personally thought that if they were to do so it would be a very good thing.

I am, &c.
HALIFAX.

[804 h-2]