

German firing squads have been dealing with further victims in Norway, and Terboven, who was reported on the 26th November to have passed through Sweden on a visit to Berlin, has supplied himself with a further weapon against the Norwegian opposition by means of a decree enabling him to allocate or withhold food supplies in accordance with the degree of co-operation obtainable from the recipients. The strength of the national resistance is, however, still sufficient to induce the Quisling "Minister" Riisnes to complain of the "terror" to which members of the Nasjonal Samling are subjected.

The Germans in Norway have been unsuccessfully endeavouring to persuade Norwegian seamen to sail in their service, and to induce ships serving Great Britain to desert into ports under German control. At present, however, the desertions reported have been all in the opposite direction; there have been several instances recently of escapes from German-controlled Norwegian ships while in Swedish harbours, and a quantity of shipping is said to be held up in Norwegian ports for lack of crews.

The increasing severity of German rule in Norway is interpreted in the Swedish press as betraying impatience and dissatisfaction with the Quisling régime, and Quisling himself is apparently hurt by his exclusion from the recent conference in Berlin. His organ, *Fritt Folk*, complains of Norway's relegation to the status of "unnoticed onlookers who have lost everything."

FRANCE.

Marshal Pétain and Admiral Darlan left Vichy on the 30th November by special train for the occupied zone to meet "a high German personality." According to the German wireless, they were not accompanied by any other members of the Vichy Government. The meeting took place at St. Florentin-Vergigny, about 11 miles from Laroche on the Paris-Dijon line. Though Hitler himself was stated in early reports to be the "high German personality" concerned, later messages said that not Hitler but Göring was present and that the Vichy party returned in the evening of the 1st December. The fact that Göring and not Hitler personally was present does not diminish the importance of the interview. Stories that Göring has fallen into general disfavour with Hitler should be received with reserve.

Marshal Pétain was met at Coulanges-sur-Yonne on behalf of Abetz by a German General, who travelled with the Marshal by car for the rest of the journey. The interview is said to have lasted about three hours, long enough for the ratification of previous agreements, but hardly sufficient for a thorough discussion of new developments. Vichy spokesmen during the day sought to insist that the interview took place at the desire of the Marshal, who accordingly went as "a free agent." The old Montoire cliché about the meeting being between "two soldiers rather than two statesmen" was pulled out again, but this fact was also used to emphasize indirectly the military character of the meeting. Benoist-Méchin told Paris journalists to beware of inopportune conjectures, reminding them that the integration of France in the New Europe was a long-term policy which would require much patience. At the same time German hints to Paris newspapers were to the effect that, despite the ebb and flow of the military situation in Russia and the Western Desert, the war was "virtually ended," so that the reconstruction of Europe could be taken in hand. Benoist-Méchin drew the conclusion that, though France was not represented at the recent Anti-Comintern Congress in Berlin, she had now shown that she did not wish to stand aside while Europe is being reconstructed. This and other similar suggestions may hint at an intention that France should be represented at a more widely based European "peace conference," if Hitler has determined to hold one early in the New Year.

Despite this German pretence of optimism about the military situation there can no longer be any doubt that the Germans have been and are seeking the use of North African bases for the movement of Axis troops and material to Libya. They would also like the employment of French naval vessels for convoy purposes on trans-Mediterranean routes. A recent report suggests that in return for this complete co-operation Germany may have offered, in addition to a much more extensive return of prisoners, a complete or partial restoration of Lorraine to French sovereignty after the war. Another possible sidelight on German paper-promises is contained in a long "editorial" lecture about French Africa issued

from the German-controlled Paris Radio station on the 29th November. The speaker announced that France must now examine clearly what she is unable to defend and what it would be "criminal" for her to abandon. The speaker said that any outlying part of the French Empire within reach of United States striking power could hardly be saved in case of "aggression." But the greater part of the Colonial Empire lay in Africa. Against this any attack must be resisted. He went on to explain that France has now an opportunity not only to preserve but to consolidate her African Empire by incorporating in it "Anglo-Saxon enclaves which are at present spy-bases and possible starting-points for operations against French Africa." Such incorporation, it was explained, would largely compensate France for the loss of territories of which geographical conditions prevent the defence. Marcel Déat in the *Œuvre* followed much the same line on the 2nd December.

There is now evidence that the summary dismissal of General Weygand had caused considerable bewilderment at Vichy and disappointment in wider circles of Metropolitan France. The official account according to which an actual German "ultimatum" preceded the Vichy decision has met with considerable scepticism. Recent information suggests that the real form of pressure may have been preparations for German troop movements, of which the Marshal was made aware by Darlan, Pucheu and Co. Since the dismissal coincided with news of the British offensive in the Western Desert and of Russian counter-attacks, it may have assisted to encourage the fresh wave of sabotage, especially on railways and ancillary institutions, of which official statements have given evidence. It has been found necessary, according to Vichy messages, to create a special corps of "guards of communications" throughout the country as a precaution against railway sabotage. Disappointment and bewilderment, moreover, must necessarily have been the lot of those Frenchmen whose habit of "wishful thinking" had led them to believe in a "secret agreement" between Marshal Pétain and General Weygand, just as some people at one time credited fantastic legends of a similar agreement between the Marshal and General de Gaulle. *Le Temps* of the 30th November explained the impossibility for the Vichy Government to make public all their efforts to "improve the lot of the country," and warned against manifestations of "surprise or regret" at decisions which might not have been expected. Surprise and regret, rather than more active resentment, are, in fact, likely to have characterised public opinion at any rate in the unoccupied zone, though there are also some indications that the Marshal's prestige, for some time on the down grade, may have received a further diminution. It is noticeable, for example, that doubts about the extreme piety which has been attributed to him, especially in connexion with his restoration of privileged positions to the Catholic Church, appear to have been sufficiently widespread to attract attention beyond the French frontiers, notably in Belgium. There was a curious reference to the relations of Vichy with the Church in Degrelle's Rexist paper *Pays Réel* on the 12th November. The paper felt impelled to protest against reports that the Marshal's ecclesiastical concessions were the outcome of cold political calculation. "Neither the Marshal nor the Bishops," said the article, "can be suspected of bargaining in political style." The Bishops, it continued, were putting their prestige at the service of the new régime "as a matter of pure patriotism." They had discovered that the New Order could favour religion in a Catholic country provided the Catholics "firmly take their places in it." The article then proceeded to refer in curious terms to the intended elimination of Vatican influence in the relations between the Vichy Government and the Church. The writer claimed to have learned from Vichy that a "Paris coadjutor" was to be the link between Vichy and the Church. "This," he said, "excludes the intervention of a Nuncio and hence of Rome. The Gallic idea thus surreptitiously reappears. This does not signify schism, but the French Church's realisation of an existence separate from the Roman Catholic Church." This "explanation" of Vichy concessions to Catholics is hardly calculated to enhance the Marshal's reputation, but he had already declared in the early autumn that he was prepared to sacrifice even his popularity to what he considered to be French interests. Successive Vichy submissions since then to German dictates suggest that his obstinacy in defeatism has not been modified.

As regards North Africa General Weygand himself appears to have hoped that his dismissal might not necessarily involve a complete surrender to German demands in North Africa, or the complete suspension of American supplies. Attempts have also been made to depict the actual situation in North Africa as

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