

POLAND.

The official German publications containing the text of what is apparently a special penal code applicable to Poles and Jews in the Polish territories "incorporated" in the Reich have not yet reached the Polish Government in this country. In a recent number of the *Kölnische Zeitung* Herr Freisler, Under-Secretary of State in the German Ministry of Justice, stated that this is the fourth penal code in the Reich, the others being those of the *Altreich*, of Austria and of the Protectorate. In the "incorporated territories" the Poles are not, according to Herr Freisler, an "autochthonous race" (they were there, however, already in the tenth century when the Polish State first came into being in what is now Posnania); unconditional obedience to the German authorities is incumbent on them and judges and public prosecutors are not to consider themselves pedantically bound by the letter of the law—they have complete freedom in convicting Poles and suspicion of guilt is an adequate ground for arrest without obligation to furnish any reasons. Herr Freisler goes on to say that the maintenance of order in the "incorporated territories" is a purely internal question and the methods adopted need not necessarily be regarded as a precedent for the treatment of other nations which are *Europafähig*—a new expression which in a less sinister context would have rejoiced the heart of Lewis Carroll. According to a German paper appearing in Poznań, the first sentence under the new code was passed on a Pole in that city who was sentenced to one year's detention in a penal camp for trying to give a piece of sugar to a British prisoner of war. Sentences under the new code are apparently to be served in special penal camps reserved for Poles and Jews. The régime consists not only of detention but is also characterised by absolute discipline and work for the benefit of the community such as will absorb the whole capacity of the prisoner and last one hour a day longer than that in a prison. There is, of course, no remuneration for any work done by persons detained in such camps but there are plenty of punishments to be imposed on such as are guilty of misconduct.

In the light of the most recent reports it is clear that the German authorities have not yet mastered the epidemic of spotted typhus which has broken out in the *Ostland*. The disease has certainly reached Wilno, and in the south not only Lwów but also Tarnopol are suffering severely from that or something similar. In the Tarnopol district schools, theatres and cinemas have been closed and all public meetings banned. To judge by the orders issued to doctors, the German authorities in the *Ostland* fear that there may be outbreaks of other diseases, including some, such as cholera and plague, which have been almost unknown in Western and Central Europe for many years. Spotted typhus appears to have already spread to the General Government, but has probably not yet assumed there the proportions of an epidemic. The principal centres of the disease are said to be the camps in which Russian prisoners of war are interned. The postal authorities in the General Government have received orders not to accept parcels from Jews in order to prevent the spread of epidemics. It is obvious that the resistance to disease of the inhabitants of Poland, no matter what their race, must already have been diminished by under-nourishment. Ever since the end of the first war winter there has been a great shortage of fuel in Central Poland. In this respect the sufferings of the inhabitants have been intensified of late by the requisitioning of furs and other warm clothing for the use of the German armies which has been very rigorously enforced in Poland.

On the 13th January General Sikorski presided at the meeting in St. James's Palace, at which the representatives of the nine Allied Powers whose territory is occupied by Germany signed a common declaration as to the punishment of war criminals and of all persons responsible for crimes against the civil population in the occupied countries. British, Dominions, American, Soviet and Chinese representatives were present as observers.

SOVIET UNION.

The Germans have at last been turned out of their entrenched position at Mozhaik and the victorious Red Army troops, who are already to the west of the town, will now be able to co-operate with those operating from Maloyaroslavets in their advance towards Smolensk. Maloyaroslavets itself has been left 20 miles behind now, whilst to the north-west of Moscow Russian troops,

pressing forward from Volokolamsk, have covered 20 miles towards Rzhev. The threat to Moscow may therefore be considered to have been definitely removed until such time, if ever, as the German Army is in a position to stage a new offensive on the grand scale against the U.S.S.R. Fighting has been going on in the areas of Orel, Kursk and Kharkov, but whether, or to what extent, the German hold on these cities has been imperilled is uncertain. Still more obscure is the situation in the Crimea, where, according to Russian semi-official reports, Soviet troops from the East from the direction of the Kerch peninsula and partisans and detachments of troops from the West from Evpatoria have been engaged in a concentric advance designed to meet in rear of the Germans in the Simferopol area, whilst, according to German accounts, Feodosia, together with some 4,000 prisoners, has been recaptured by a strong German counter-attack. Perhaps the sector where substantial progress would be most welcome is that of Leningrad. It is evident, from a broadcast made by the President of the Leningrad Municipal Council on the 13th January, that the food situation in the city has been giving cause for some anxiety, since he found it necessary to declare that "the Soviet Government is now giving the greatest attention to Leningrad and has taken all possible measures to provide Leningrad with essential reserves of food." He went on to explain that, when railway communication with the outside world was cut, transport of food supplies became particularly difficult, but that during the past few days the quantity transported had been considerably increased. There were signs, too, that, in spite of great difficulties, deliveries would increase every day. Lake Ladoga has been the key to the situation from the outset, and now that supplies can be brought by rail as far as Voibakala, recaptured not long ago, and thence by lorry over the ice of the lake, it should be possible to redeem the promise. Still, there is evidently great shortage, and this is borne out by an announcement on the Leningrad radio, on the same day as the above-mentioned broadcast, of the trial and punishment of persons guilty of theft of and speculation in food-stuffs. One man, who with some accomplices had stolen 25 kilog. of bread, was sentenced to be shot. The people of Leningrad have been warned that "the grim penalty of the Soviet Law awaits all swindlers, speculators and marauders," and have been told that they "should hand such people over into the hands of the People's Justice."

In an endeavour, almost certainly destined to prove fruitless, to convince the Turks, who probably do not want to be convinced, that during the conversations between Mr. Eden and M. Stalin there was no bargain struck by which control over the Straits was to be handed over to the Soviet Union after the war, the *Izvestiya* has published a leading article ascribing the whole idea to German propaganda. The Soviet Government's official newspaper very politely takes the view that "Turkey is well aware of the falseness of this fabrication and realises that the suggestion that there has been any bargain is merely another of Hitler's and Ribbentrop's tricks." All independent politicians, newspapers and public circles in Turkey are stated by *Izvestiya* to have been aware for a long time now that it is certainly not the Soviet Union which is threatening, or will threaten, the territorial integrity and independence of Turkey. It is well known, however, in Moscow that von Papen's story, to the effect that M. Molotov, when in Berlin in 1940, made overtures designed to secure for the U.S.S.R. the control of the Straits, was avidly swallowed by the Turks and is still firmly believed. Unfortunately, too, according to *Izvestiya*, it has just been given further currency by the former United States Ambassador in Angora, Mr. MacMurray, in a contribution to the *Baltimore Sun*, conduct which is stigmatised by *Izvestiya* as "unworthy of an American diplomat, even a retired one." In point of fact, such references to Turkey as were made by M. Stalin during the Moscow talks were entirely friendly, and it is right, though perhaps rash, to hope that nothing will occur to lead him to change his tone.

The decision has been taken to form a Czechoslovak military unit in the Soviet Union "to form part of the independent army of the Czechoslovak State." The President of the Czechoslovak Republic will be its supreme head, it will wear Czechoslovak badges and will fight under the Czechoslovak flag. On the other hand, it would appear that members of the unit will be under Soviet military law and that both they and their families will enjoy the same privileges as equivalent members of the Red Army and their families. On the 16th January a long appeal was broadcast by the head of the Czechoslovak Military Mission in the U.S.S.R., Colonel Pica, urging his fellow-countrymen to report without delay for duty.