

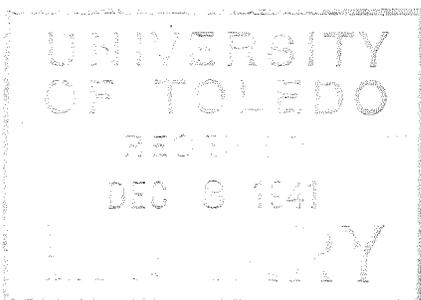
# MEMORANDUM OF INFORMATION

ON

28

## FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND THE WORLD CRISIS

PAMPHLET OFFICE



### NOTE

Readers may be interested to know that since the outbreak of war members of the Committee's permanent staff have visited France, Holland, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Italy, Yugo-Slavia, Roumania, Bulgaria, Turkey, Syria, Palestine, Iraq, and Iran. Special observers have travelled in Hungary, Belgium, the Baltic States, etc., etc. Reports from observers not specially employed by the Committee, but working in arrangement with them, have been received from many other parts of the world.

These Memoranda appear monthly; they are published by The Imperial Policy Group, and written by Kenneth de Courcy. The Editorial Committee consists of Lord Phillimore, The Earl of Mansfield, Flt.-Lieut. Victor Raikes, M.P., Captain A. R. Wise, M.P., Mr. W. Nunn, M.P. (Flt.-Lieut. Victor Raikes and Captain A. R. Wise are temporarily absent from political duties on active service).

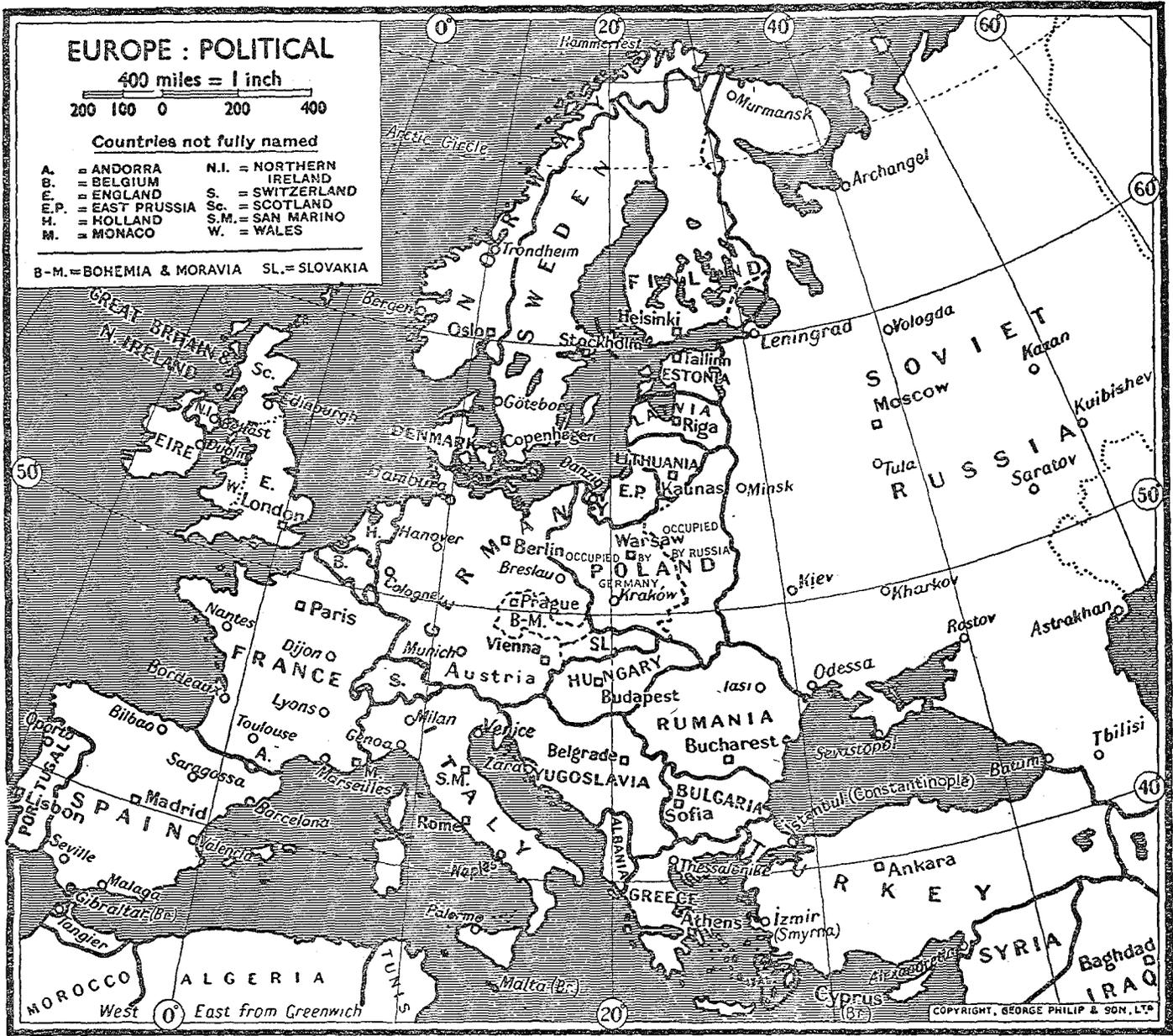
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*March Issue.*

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and

War, 1939 -



## A FRESH ANALYSIS THE ENEMY'S PLAN

Last month we described Hitler's revised plan for bringing the war to an end this year. Events have since borne out our information point by point. Hitler, in his anxious search for a decision, is finding how much easier it is to start than to finish a war. Perhaps he no longer feels so enthusiastic about large-scale slaughter as he did in days gone by; he wrote in his testament:

" . . . during the boisterous years of my youth nothing used to damp my wild spirits so much as to think that I was born at a time when the world had manifestly decided not to erect any more temples of fame excepting in honour of business people and State officials. . . . Why could I not have been born 100 years ago, I used to ask myself—somewhere about the time of the war of liberation—when a man was still of some value even though he had no business.

"Thus I used to think that by an ill-deserved stroke of bad luck I had arrived too late on this terrestrial globe, and I felt chagrined at the idea that my life would have to run its course along peaceful and orderly lines. As a boy I was anything but a pacifist and all attempts to make me so turned out futile. The Boer War came like a glowing light on the far horizon. Day after day I used to glance intently at the newspapers, and I almost devoured the telegrams and communiques, overjoyed to think that I could witness that heroic struggle, even though from so great a distance. . . . The War of 1914 was certainly not forced on the masses; it was even desired by the whole people . . . for me those hours came as a deliverance from the distress which had weighed upon me in the hours of my youth. I am not ashamed to acknowledge to-day that I was carried away by the enthusiasm of the moment, and that I sank down upon my knees out of the fulness of my heart for the favour of having been permitted to live in such a time . . . ."

This man, who loves war and who in August, 1939, deliberately plunged the whole world into another tragic conflict, is now eagerly searching for an end of it. Yet it eludes him. His ambition and political commitments at home make it impossible for him to restore peace through reparation of the wrongs he has perpetrated, and he has failed to achieve decisive victory. For all his boastings he desperately fears us. A short, sharp, successful war, bringing great profits at small cost may be attractive enough to one of his kind, but a long drawn-out indecisive struggle is another thing, and he fears it. He knows that the British are tough and persistent. He knows that for him everything depends upon reaching a decision soon.

Our latest direct intelligence from Germany, which arrived only a few hours before going to press, and after most of this issue had been written, shows how although there is no revolt within sight the Germans are beginning to get bored with the war. They want some actual profit from all this effort. Of course, there are those who like "making history"; and there are the fanatical Nazis. Yet there is a great mass of people who want peace. They are not yet opposed to Hitler, nor do they want peace at any price. They just want it very much, and they want it very soon.

The troops in the occupied countries are getting homesick. They are drinking a little too much. The young people at home are less interested in politics than they were, and are more interested in finding amusement. They want to live and live well—the war looks more like a menace to that prospect than an adventure worth risks.

Our very shrewd and well-tried observer—who is not a German—knows what he is talking about. Hitler is pressed. If he does not soon find some means of ending the war, his spell will gradually lessen.

It will be remembered that the plan Hitler last devised was four-fold. First, France was to be pressed into "collaboration". Secondly, Italy was to be assisted in the Mediterranean, in order to detain the largest possible concentration of Allied forces in that area. Thirdly, the Balkan position was to be thoroughly prepared with the object of terrorising Greece into a settlement, and making a base for wider operations against the Allies should they later become necessary. Fourthly, a new assault upon Britain was to be prepared and soon launched.

The Russian and Far Eastern questions were dealt with separately; the first because it was the only part of Germany's original plan which was still working smoothly and had

## THE PRESSURE UPON FRANCE

Germany's fresh and eager effort to force the French into "collaboration" has been pressed throughout February. Many conversations have taken place. Flandin has gone. Darlan has risen to power. The Marshal has allowed a few guarded but conciliatory remarks to be made about his willingness to work with the Germans within the framework of the Armistice.

M. Flandin's resignation was not surprising. His character is such that he had little chance of survival in a crisis so acute. This is not the hour for the grand bourgeois. Contemporary politics are too harsh for one of his easy-going nature.

Admiral Darlan, who has replaced him, is an altogether different type; a sailor, the son and grandson of sailors, he has a fighting record and is a fighting man. Next to the Marshal and General Weygand, he is undoubtedly the most important man in France. Later he may become the biggest of the three. He personifies the political sentiments of most of his fellow-citizens in the unoccupied zone. He does not want Britain to lose the war; but he does not want us to win it outright. He hates the British Navy; he cannot forget Oran, and indeed does not care for us very much at all. He would like to see us in difficulties, but he knows quite well that without the British Empire in the background, France would be destroyed utterly. He wants us to survive because otherwise France cannot live. He knows that there is only a Vichy government to-day because we in this Island have successfully resisted the enemy's assault. Without us France would be destitute, and collaboration with Hitler would be a hollow sham.

He will try and follow a middle course going far to conciliate the Germans, but avoiding, if possible, anything likely to assist them to beat us in the war. The trouble is that, although he and the Marshal have some good cards, France is desperately sick and still far from convalescent. In their toilsome and desperate effort to avoid hostilities the Vichy government may yet land themselves in what would amount to another disaster. They may—however unwillingly—be driven into a policy which will help the Germans in the war against England. But it is not their deliberate policy to help the enemy to defeat us. Indeed they have resolved to avoid it, and have told the Germans over and over again that they will not go beyond the Armistice terms.

The highly complex policy they are trying to follow is nevertheless fraught with danger. The Marshal's chances of success are fair—not brilliant. If reports about France are indecisive, it is because her policy is likewise so. We suspect that if Hitler contents himself with a demand for economic and political co-operation, he will get it. Moreover, he will gain distinct diplomatic advantages from it, for it will give his policy an appearance of respectability—which it certainly needs, and which may deceive one or two weak neutrals here and there. If he demands the assistance of the French Navy and Empire for the prosecution of hostilities against us, he will almost certainly continue to meet with resistance. Admiral Darlan might agree to the French Navy undertaking neutral defensive patrols, for the purpose of guaranteeing that the Allies shall land no troops upon unoccupied French soil or derive any strategic benefits. He may also discreetly help Hitler in an attempt to bring about what we may call a "Lindbergh" peace.

Although during the last three or four weeks the Germans have been dropping hints in Berlin that relations with Vichy are now easier, their radio has been no less violent in its criticism. This double-faced policy is intended alternately to encourage and frighten Marshal Petain. On February 6th a commentator speaking over the German-controlled radio in Paris said:

" . . . there must never be war again between Germany and France . . . there must be friendly co-operation . . . and no thought of revenge . . . Petain was one of the men who declared war on Germany . . . thousands of Frenchmen had to lose their lives in consequence . . . ."

On the same evening a Stuttgart commentator said:

"There still exist people in France who think that the Vichy government cannot be wrong . . . they are blind to the extreme danger of France through the mismanagement of those at Vichy who are conducting the country towards a dangerous path. . . . Will prove the mistake of Laval's dismissal by Marshal Petain . . . extremely unfortunate incident was the product of intrigues, jealousies and similar machinations . . . Laval was the victim . . . his arrest was the climax of these machinations. . . . But who gave the order for his arrest?"

In addition to this kind of thing, Marshal Petain still has to face the hostile intrigues of many Frenchmen in Paris and some in Vichy. Moreover, Hitler holds one very powerful card which persistently influences the Marshal's conduct. It is the fate of the French prisoners now in

have arisen about the final terms of Peace. Just as the Marshal has shown himself unprepared to go beyond the Armistice, so too has he shown a good deal of determination not to accept harsh Peace terms which would leave metropolitan France hopelessly dismembered. Such questions can only be discussed academically just now, but nevertheless they are of the greatest importance to both the Germans and the French.

The political travels of French Statesmen have not been confined to the railroad between Vichy and Paris. The Marshal has made a very important trip to meet Franco in the south. At this conference the Mediterranean situation was fully reviewed. Economic relations were particularly discussed. Petain is always on the look-out for the chance of making a Latin Bloc, however difficult or impossible it may seem. That will always be the goal of most Frenchmen of his school. They have long hankered after something of this sort. They would like to see Mussolini defeated and a separate Peace made between the Italians and the Allies. In his place they would like a comfortable conservative government.

With France on tolerable terms with Germany, the Marshal and his friends would like to see their country the architect of a new Mediterranean system, with Paris as the link between Rome and Madrid, and the Latin Bloc holding the balance between the Russo-German and the Anglo-American systems. That is a goal towards which the Vichy French are groping, and to tell the truth, they have played some of their cards rather well. But they and Hitler and we know that they have only been able to do so because of Britain's successful resistance. We may be held guilty of repetition, but the point is too important to be lost.

All this school of Frenchmen hate the Russians, the Communists, the anti-clericals, and the continental Freemasons. They think all are of the devil himself. Moreover, in their hearts they will never really forgive Germany for having beaten them twice in seventy years, and for that matter for nearly doing so three times. Nor will they ever forgive her for having set up the Russian Bolsheviks in 1917, or for making an alliance with the Stalinists in 1939. They are convinced that from the beginning of the war until now, the Germans have worked closely with, and have subsidised, the French Communists, with the object of getting rid of the Petains, Weygands, and Darlans.

The Germans know quite well that the Vichy French harbour such feelings—they are half angry at it and half afraid—for they do not quite know what to do about it. Apart from bringing prestige to Germany, a political and economic understanding will really do nothing more than establish the Marshal's France, and make it possible for him to work towards his real objective. To gain more than such an understanding is evidently impossible.

If Hitler could bring into power men like Laval and de Brinon, things would be different. But neither could survive without the help of the German secret police, and that would never prove a very satisfactory solution in a country like France. There is a wide gulf between those who are inclined to be anti-British, and men like Laval who is consumed with a passionate hatred for us. There are many in unoccupied France who not only dislike us, but feel some admiration for German efficiency. But they do not detest us to the point of insanity, nor do they feel sincere friendship for Hitler's Germany or indeed for Germany at all. Many think it would be foolish for the two countries to go on fighting each other. Not a few thought the war should have been averted at the last moment by negotiation, even though that would have meant a German success. But those who hold such views are really not pro-German, nor very thoroughly anti-British.

They are much like Marshal Petain himself. They want to make use of both Britain and Germany. They hanker after good relations with a more sensible Italy and the new Spain. They would like the great belligerents to fight their battles far away from France and to settle their differences without disturbing her. They want to pursue a comfortable middle course, and it is for that they are searching. They stoutly refuse to acknowledge that in these revolutionary times no nation can expect such a cataclysm to pass it by. They think they have had their full share of it, and they seem to think that Providence ought now to arrange for them to be spared further troubles.

General Weygand may take a more robust view, but his is based upon a mystic belief that France must be tried in the fire of suffering before she can live again. The trouble with the French is that few of them have the slightest desire to achieve a spiritual recovery at the cost of personal discomfort. On the other hand it would not be fair, and it would not be true, to dismiss their feelings with undue cynicism. France has suffered much. In the last war she lost a terrible proportion of her young peasants, and it is from this that she is really suffering to-day. She lost them in what was a truly common cause, and we must not forget that her troubles to-day arise almost entirely from this.

We must carefully guard our sense of proportion as we assess the French position, and its value both to ourselves and the Germans. On the whole we feel that things are still going fairly well—though not brilliantly. The last four weeks, with all their toil and effort, have so far failed to produce anything concrete from which the Germans can really hope to benefit. Thus in connection with the first point in his new plan Hitler has very little of importance to record.

### THE MEDITERRANEAN POSITION

The second point in Hitler's programme, namely, to help Mussolini in the central Mediterranean, has not proved a success. Gibraltar and Malta stand defiant. Our fleet freely passes to and fro. Its mobility and striking power have proved of the first importance in assisting our land forces in Africa, and it took our offensive to the gates of European Italy in an action which may well have upset a vital part of Germany's scheme of operations.

Germany has not diverted an important number of her aircraft to Italy, nor planned any effort in the Mediterranean area out of love for her Italian ally, nor because she much cares what happens to Italy in the long run. The German General Staff has always had the most profound contempt for the Italian Army, and has never hesitated to say so. Indeed Italy's armed forces have been a laughing stock in Germany for many years.

The only thing in which Germany is interested, is the detention of all our present forces in the Mediterranean area, while she attempts to terrorise the Greeks, assault us in the west, and induce the Japanese to come into the conflict. Such plans would be seriously upset if we were suddenly to be freed from our major commitments in the Mediterranean. Beyond this, Germany has very little interest in Italy's fate. She regards Russia as far more useful. In a special supplementary edition published during April, 1939, we wrote:

"Germany certainly believes that the time will come when Italy's help will be no longer necessary. It is some matter of speculation as to whether, when that phase is reached, Italy will be allowed to retain any gains she may have achieved. The fact that she has been promised compensation, does not mean she will get it. A guarantee from the Nazi government is, of course, worthless. For the present, however, Germany is doing her utmost to continue collaboration with Italy which is vital for her and will remain so, until one or all of the following conditions are fulfilled.

- (I) The Reich is strong enough to stand alone.
- (II) The defeat or capitulation of France is assured.
- (III) The Reich has found a new and more powerful ally.

"This third point is of great importance. No doubt the finding of another ally is much in the German political mind. There is a growing desire in certain German quarters to collaborate with Russia. That this may be more a matter of practical politics than now appears possible, is the view of many highly trained observers. It is desirable to watch the relations between Germany and Russia with the greatest care."

Germany's tactics in the Mediterranean then are not intended to assist the Italians out of loyalty to the alliance, but to prove a nuisance to us during a very critical phase of the war in which Hitler is anxious to see our Forces as heavily engaged as possible. He cannot achieve this without diluting his power.

He has not succeeded in changing the course of events in the Mediterranean, which is still highly favourable to us. Italy is being defeated. Soon the Italian Empire will be rent in pieces; and then it will take more than a force of bombers to detain the whole of our present forces in central and western Mediterranean areas. This is giving the Japanese food for thought.

However disinterested Hitler may be in the fate of Italy, that country's defeat cannot fail to react unfavourably upon Germany's policy throughout the world, as well as upon her capacity to overcome the British Empire. We shall obviously be better off after having defeated the Italians than we were before, and that defeat cannot be far distant for Italy's position is becoming acute.

It is now commonly said in the Roman Cafés by wits with defeatist sentiments that "things will not be better until Italy has lost the war". On every front the enemy is retreating. Mussolini's armies have been routed. Every day brings worse news to Rome. The blow to Mussolini is grievous. The ambition of his career was to invade and conquer Egypt. All his entourage well know how