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THE FRENCH POLITICAL SITUATION

The following Report, which is for information only and is not to be quoted in any non-Secret document, represents the views of a single observer stationed in Paris and should be read in that light.

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1. Attitude towards Allies

No evidence has come to hand this week of any change in attitude toward the Allies. A prevalent reaction to the troubles in BELGIUM and GREECE has been predominantly one of self-satisfaction. "We have our difficulties like everyone else but we can still look after ourselves".

There are some signs of anxiety as to further repercussions, and members of the bourgeoisie are anxious about the effects of reports of foreign disorders on the temper of the French masses. A Belgian industrialist referred to these reports as exaggerated and dwelt on the danger of such exaggerations.

In the course of a short conversation between two leading French officials one of them gave it as his opinion that less than 20% of the French people were making an active contribution to the war effort. They had not been made to understand the urgency of present needs, nor the seriousness of the struggle. The other speaker, in agreeing tacitly, referred to the lack of interest shown by the population in the presence of Allied troops. Many of these were men back from the front, but no attempt had been made by the people of Paris to supply hospitality or entertainment.

2. Grievances toward the Allies

A tendency is noticeable to shift the blame for some of the disappointments of the Liberation period from the Allies to collaborators or fifth columnists. A Socialist artisan, asked who was responsible for the food shortage in Paris, replied without hesitation, "The fifth columnists of the Black Market". (This conversation took place between Frenchmen).

A Belgian industrialist on a visit to Paris complained about the lack of Allied propaganda, pointing out that before the war nothing could be bought or sold without it, and that now was the time to enlist people's sympathies. Unless something was done, and on a large scale, German propaganda being carried on by the fifth column would once again win the day.

3. Attitude toward GERMANY

No change recorded.

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4. Attitude to Collaborationists

There is still evident dissatisfaction with the treatment of collaborationists and with their reintegration into the order of things. A remark representative of general attitudes was made by a working class man, "Nous ne pourrions rien faire de bon ou de propre tant qu'ils seront encore la".

There is marked anxiety about the activities of fifth columnists; there are reports that Gestapo agents are still very active throughout the countryside, and very often use police cover to do their work. According to one reliable source, false identity papers are being manufactured and distributed in large quantities. According to another reliable source, a former French Gestapo agent who is now a police controller in the South, (see the previous report in this series) at present carries papers from the Ministry of the Interior entrusting him with the task of buying ten tons of gold and a ton of platinum. It is interesting to note that the source of this information was an active and highly experienced member of the Resistance who had just been in Paris. One of the objects of his visit was to denounce and arrest the man in question. He was baffled at finding out that the Gestapo man had acquired new powers under the new regime. According to one carefully documented report, Marabini, a member of the Garibaldi Legion, was arrested and deprived of his papers by so-called police officials who were, in fact, members of the fifth column. This man, who was eventually rescued by the true French police, is, according to the same report, still in prison.

5. Attitude to the Government

In the opinion of a well-informed and experienced member of the Right (now a member of the Assembly), French public opinion has both sufficient weight and strength to resist disorder, and has reintegrated the old party system. He gave an interesting review of Gen. De-Gaulle's position, saying that it was based entirely on personal prestige which was still intact. At present, criticism is levied not at the General but at those around him. Should the public, however, become critical, the General would have absolutely no means of defence, having neither an army nor a police force on which to rely. The same man pointed to the immense good fortune by which FRANCE had escaped destruction in the present war, and gave it as his opinion that the basic structure of the country was so sound as to permit a rapid recovery.

In the course of conversation between well-informed and very astute members of the Resistance, the view was put forward that the government was deliberately trying to undermine Resistance movements, thereby forcing individual members of the Resistance to choose between supporting the government and joining the opposition. The outcome of this would mean that the next elections would be a straight fight between the Communists and the Radicals. The Communists were still in a small minority, but exceedingly active, and they were bound to benefit by the government's unsympathetic attitude towards the Resistance.

6. Communism in France

Last week's report stating that the Communist Party was in possession of ample funds was confirmed by another source, though the sum mentioned was far less, only three billion francs. The present technique of the Communist Party was expounded by a man having close contacts both with the Resistance and the Government as follows: they are fully aware that as an electoral body their numbers are insufficient; they are therefore doing all they can to



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make up for quantity by the quality of their representatives or candidates, and by winning the good will of men whose reputation can help to improve theirs. (It is interesting to note that the only member of the Assembly who went forward to welcome Louis Marin was Marcel Cachin). At the same time, they are said to be intent on infiltrating their personnel into all Ministries, bureaux, and other organisations. Their opposition to elections comes from the fact that they are at present over-represented on nearly all the municipal councils in the country and can only stand to lose by ballot what they gained by surprise.

Curiosity was expressed by three entirely different people at the "leap frogging" by Thorez and de Gaulle between Paris and Moscow. One interpretation offered by a high French military authority was that Thorez' arrival had been planned to coincide with Gen. de Gaulle's departure so that Moscow could bring the pressure of a threat to bear on the General. The same commentator pointed to the fact that Marty and the other Communists in the Assembly launched a strong attack against the Government after de Gaulle's departure - "Something for him to read about on the train between STALINGRAD and MOSCOW" - though the launching of the main Communist offensive would not come until the middle of January.

The opposite interpretation was offered by a Georgian who fled RUSSIA in the Revolution and has since then lived in FRANCE, where he has wide connections. Though by no means hostile to Communism per se, he does not believe that it is suited to the French temperament or tradition. In his opinion, Stalin sent Thorez away because the presence in MOSCOW of a Frenchman claiming independent political authority might have embarrassed de Gaulle.

The meeting at the Vel d'Hiv on 30 November, to mark Thorez' return to FRANCE, was attended by a crowd estimated (probably without much exaggeration) by l'Humanite at 50,000. Admission was limited to members of the Party or to those with invitations, but Allied and military personnel, amongst whom figured many Frenchmen in uniform, including Officers, had no difficulty in gaining access. The meeting opened with the singing of the "Marseillaise" followed by the "Internationale". These songs were repeatedly sung at jubilant intervals throughout the evening.

Thorez was received with an ovation; Cachin, the first speaker and Marty received warm applause, while Jacques Duclos was rather less heartily welcomed.

The speeches were clearly aimed at the next elections, with a view to enlisting the support of the Socialists and the Resistance movements. The M.L.N. was called upon to unite with the Front National and Thorez insisted on the need for unifying resistance. Amongst the targets were the fifth column and collaborators; there were appeals for increased industrial production for the battle-front and for efforts to promote Franco-Soviet friendship. No mention of Gen. deGaulle nor to his journey to RUSSIA was noted.

The meeting ended with the offering of bouquets to Thorez, welcoming him back to FRANCE. Noteworthy amongst those carrying bouquets were Russian officers and two American soldiers who were greeted with great applause.

## 7. Industry and Labour

Conversation with an intelligent artisan revealed what may well be typical of the labour attitude toward the "patronat". The patrons,



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as a whole, had been collaborators and the government could not count on them for patriotic support. On the other hand, even amongst the workmen the Communists were in a minority and workers' interference in the management of the industry would be limited to considerations of social welfare. This man clearly expected the reforms and improvements necessary to an industrial recovery to come from the government. In his own words, "L'ouvrier francais aime travailler et ne demande que ca."

The reaction of the owners of heavy industry to the news that 36 locomotives are shortly to be delivered by the United States and that a further 600 are on order was summed up by someone having close connections with them as follows: "this is the first serious example of foreign competition and is a direct attack on the re-establishment of French industrialism". (Those who adopt this attitude seem to pay little attention to the dire and immediate needs of the whole French population.).

8. Town and Countryside

Conversation with a workingman gave further evidence that the workmen are still grieving about the great profits made by the peasants under the Occupation and that they expect the government to render justice on this score.

9. Finance and Money

Conversations with members of various parties all tend to show that the public expects far better results from the loan than can at present be foreseen. One man with a long experience in French administration who had studied the financial situation under Poincare after the last war gave it as his opinion that, to be effective, the loan would have to absorb some 400 billion francs. This result was confidently expected by a workman discussing the subject and when it was suggested to him that far less might be forthcoming, he immediately said that very drastic measures would have to be taken. He had previously expressed his satisfaction saying that in FRANCE the government could get results without going to extremes, as in BELGIUM. It is said that large sums of francs exported by the Germans, some of them to SWITZERLAND, are finding their way back into FRANCE for investment in the loan. This theory may find confirmation in the report that contributions to the loan rose sharply after the taking of STRASBOURG.

In a private conversation, one of the directors of the Credit du Nord said that the total subscriptions to the loan to date amounted to 80 billions. In his opinion a figure of about 100 billions would be reached; this could not be considered a success. Most of the subscriptions came from the towns, and more especially from those in the North (the Credit du Nord has had exceptional success). Little cooperation was coming from the South. Throughout the country the peasants had failed to subscribe.

Two members of the public, a salesman and a waiter, have expressed lack of confidence in Allied franc notes, since a great many forgeries - especially of the 500 franc bill - are said to be in circulation.

There are no present signs of the Black Market abating. In ROUEN, butter is said to be plentiful but only at the price of 400 francs a kilo.

Those coming from the South of FRANCE still report very severe privation.



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10. FFI and the Army

In spite of a report that the FFI in BRITTANY have received supplies of British arms, there is great dissatisfaction in informed quarters with the lack of equipment and comforts. An organisation called Victoire has been founded to try to supply their needs through public assistance. According to one source with close connections with FFI, no arrangement has been made to deal with convalescents, and when soldiers leave hospitals they do not know where to go.

A member of the FFI from BOURGES reports an improvement in general conditions in the area, but, according to the same source, there is still great uneasiness in the Centres around CLERMONT-FERRAND.

11. Rumours and Miscellaneous

A report that, in RUSSIA, Marshal von Paulus had formed a Free German movement some 200,000 strong was looked on with misgivings by one French service source, and interpreted as a threat, inasmuch as GERMANY might once again be handed over to military authority, as after the Weimar Republic.

It is widely believed that V1 and V2 are due over PARIS shortly.

The flow of supplies through Red Cross channels to French POWs in GERMANY is said to have been interrupted by the campaign, and this constitutes a new source of anxiety to their families in FRANCE.

There have been traces of "peace feeler" gossip among working class people; the source of the information has in each case been attributed to unspecified returned deportees.

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