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WESTERN EUROPE DIVISION

WEEKLY SUMMARY

VOL. VII - No. 1

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FRENCH AND SPANISH NORTH AND WEST AFRICA

A

Current reports indicate that the French General Staff is considering the desirability in another general war of basing African resistance in French West Africa rather than in North Africa, by creating a first line of defense south of the Sahara along the 14th parallel. This line fronts on the Sahara and skirts the first fully habitable land south of the desert. The present proposed pattern of defense installations includes the establishment of an extensive air base at Bilma (Niger), to be sustained in the west by

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the existing military installations at Bamako (Sudan), and in the east by Fort Lamy (Chad), with intervening strategically located points of support at Zinder (Niger), and Gao (Sudan).

The Inter-Arms Command of all armed forces in French West and Central Africa (headed by Lt. General Astier de Villatte at Dakar) is concerned with the possibility that in the event of war the USSR might attempt to cut off the western bulge of Africa in order to deny this strategically important area to the US, jeopardize the export of uranium from the Belgian Congo, and acquire Atlantic bases.

The chief obstacle confronting the French in the implementation of their defense plans is the inadequacy of funds and personnel because of prior commitments elsewhere. It is reported that French military specialists experienced in African desert warfare estimate that if the USSR made a landing on the coast of politically unstable Libya, it could strike overland virtually unopposed to the Gulf of Guinea. These experts consider that it is a dangerous error to suppose that the desert areas of Libya and the Niger cannot be crossed by a large and properly organized expeditionary force.

According to French authorities, there has recently been an intensification of Communist activities along the 14th parallel. This report is based upon the visits of members of the French Communist Party to the area and upon the presence in this hinterland of officers of the African Democratic Rally (RDA) prior to serious disorders earlier this year. The backwardness of the native culture and the sparsity of population, however, make it extremely unlikely that an effective Communist resistance to the plan of the French General Staff could be set up in this area. On the other hand, there can be no doubt that the Kremlin would have a substantial interest in the 14th parallel if the present plans of the French General Staff are realized. These plans would amount to an admission by the French of their inability to hold North Africa.

#### BELGIUM

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The Socialists are unlikely to call a general strike in the event of King Leopold's return, because of the strong possibility of a compromise solution providing for the King's eventual abdication in favor of his eldest son, Prince Baudouin, and also because of the depletion of

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Socialist strike funds. It is fairly certain that the law of 1945, which declares the King ineligible to reign, will be repealed within a couple of weeks. The Socialists probably will, however, conduct a "passive resistance" campaign designed to emphasize the fact that Leopold is a one-party King. In addition to pursuing a policy of obstructionism and non-cooperation with the Government, the Socialists probably will refuse to participate in gatherings honoring the King and may "go into mourning" when the King passes in parade. This campaign probably would be partially effective in Brussels and Wallonia where a majority of the Belgians voted against the King's return. It may even develop into sporadic one-day strikes in some Walloon industrial areas where anti-Leopoldism is most pronounced, and where the discipline of the Socialist labor federation is weak.

If the King returns, the Communists are likely to encourage strikes not only of the Communist labor unions, but also of the non-Communist workers. In this appeal, they are likely to have some success in the Antwerp port area and the Charleroi and Liege mining and metallurgical areas. In addition, the Communists may attempt sabotage, if the blame can be placed on the Socialists, although the Communist Party is unlikely to disband itself in order to go underground to conduct its campaign.

#### THE VATICAN

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The Vatican will point to the aggression of Soviet-directed North Korea as proof of the hypocrisy of the Soviet "peace" campaign, in contrast to the Vatican's sincere efforts for world peace. In joining with the Western nations in condemnation of the invasion of South Korea, the Vatican newspaper, Osservatore Romano, has accused Moscow of encouraging and then defending the attack. The Holy See can be expected to use this situation to urge again that Catholics everywhere resist the spread of Communism and vigorously support the action taken by the US and the UN.

#### SPAIN

B

Official recognition of the anti-Franco Basque Nationalists by the Christian Democratic parties of Europe, at the international Christian Democratic Congress held in Sorrento

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this spring, may provide the real explanation for Franco's recent trip to Bilbao. Franco's longstanding desire to discredit the Catholic Basque exiles as isolated malcontents without support inside Spain may well have been reawakened by the action of the Congress, which gave international standing to the leading Catholic elements of the Franco opposition. The case is similar to that of the Spanish Socialist party, whose leaders in exile are recognized as official delegates to the International Socialist Conference.

The Basque leaders, Jose Antonio de Aguirre, President of the Basque government-in-exile, his Finance Minister Jesus Leizaola, and the President of the Basque Nationalist Youth organization were accredited in the Christian Democratic Congress and served on working committees. Subsequently, with the support of some members of the Italian Christian Democratic Party, Aguirre conferred with officials of the Vatican Secretariat of State. These incidents were a setback to the Franco Government's prolonged, elaborate and costly efforts to obtain, as "the most Catholic government of Europe", the unconditional political support of all Catholics everywhere. Appeal to this type of sentiment in the US and Latin America has been an important part of the propaganda effort with which the Spanish Government has been preparing for renewed discussion of the Spanish question at the next UNGA meeting. Franco's probable extreme irritation at the Christian Democratic action may have been reflected not only in the renewed repression of the Basque Nationalists (which began almost immediately after the Sorrento Congress) but also in a subsequent, rather tentative, Spanish effort to promote a new slogan to the effect that "an anti-Franco position is an anti-Catholic position."

Although the Bilbao trip was successful as an evidence of the regime's police and organizational power, it is not likely that much was gained toward the main object--that of demonstrating Basque loyalty to Franco. Foreign correspondents reported that 60,000 workers were ordered out for the welcoming demonstration, paid a half day's wages and threatened with reprisals for failure to appear, and that extraordinary police precaution and Falange activity were conspicuous characteristics of the occasion.

Another possible direct repercussion from the Christian Democratic Congress is found in the persistent reports that Madrid may permit the formation of a new political party, and that various lay Catholics are trying to organize a new

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movement. Professor Manuel Gimenez Fernandez of Sevilla, the outstanding potential Christian Democratic leader of Spain, has become more open in his criticism of the present Government. Any movement to form a Christian Democratic party in Spain at this time, however, would be immensely complicated and could be confused by the efforts of some Catholic collaborators of the Franco regime to capture it a-borning, either as a means of preserving the regime itself or their own security in a subsequent situation.

B

The increased East-West tension as a result of the invasion of South Korea will improve Franco's ability to retain the mastery of Spain, as long as the Spanish Army chiefs believe an expansion of the military situation may occur in which Spain's contribution would be sought by the West. Preoccupation with the Korean affair and a physical breakdown have been two of the explanations offered for Franco's recent failure to appear at public functions. In addition to cancelling a regular Cabinet session, he did not show up at the inauguration of the new oil refinery at Cartagena. The refinery, in which the California Texas Company has a 24% interest, represents the first substantial investment of US capital in Spain for many years, and its opening would normally receive all the publicity possible.

There is no strong evidence that Franco is ill; if, however, he should be incapacitated, the internal struggle for power would be more bitter and acute than might have been the case in 1947, when the Law of Succession was promulgated. It is probable that no force in Spain could effectively carry out the provisions of that Law as it now stands. On the other hand, despite the slight political activity of the past two years, there has been some advancement in understanding among the elements that might coalesce in a centrist movement capable of sustaining an interim situation. Ultimately, foreign encouragement and aid would probably be required for such a regime to stabilize itself.

ITALY

A

The prompt, determined reaction of the US and the UN to the Soviet-sponsored aggression in Korea will assist the Italian Government in its efforts to win strong popular

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support for the country's participation in the NATO. President Truman's decision to rush military aid to the South Korean forces has been fully supported by the Italian Government and very favorably received by all sectors of the population except the far Left. The decision is viewed as a clear demonstration of US intentions to work for peace, whatever the cost.

Statements by public officials and prominent press coverage almost to the exclusion of other news indicate that the Italian Government and people view the Korean situation as an important test case and as a direct challenge by the USSR to the West in general and particularly to US leadership and ability to act with speed. News of the invasion of South Korea aroused fear among many Italians that the beginning of World War III was imminent. Initial North Korean successes generated considerable apprehension over Soviet initiative and ability to achieve surprise. At the outset of hostilities, popular reaction made it clear that in the event of the subjugation of South Korea, US prestige would be severely damaged in the eyes of both the Italian Government and the people. The stability of the Government would be seriously weakened by an increase in neutrality and pacifist sentiment, which would demand a change in Italy's pro-Western alliance, and by an increase in the Communists' popular appeal.

At present, however, both neutrality proponents and the Communist "peace" campaign have received a distinct setback and the Government's position has been strengthened. Success by South Korea in repelling the invaders would further increase Italian confidence in the ability of the US to protect its interests and those of its allies and would further enhance US prestige in Italy. Nevertheless, there will be continued apprehension over the possibility of future Soviet military moves and greater pressure by the Government for the speedy implementation of MDAP. The fear has been widely expressed in Italy that the Communist move in Korea presages similar moves elsewhere and is designed to divert US aid from western Europe.

B In reaction to Korean developments, Italian Communists, taken aback by the fast US and UN action, may be expected to concentrate their efforts primarily upon peace demonstrations and strike action. Some local riots and civil commotions may occur which would prove well within the capabilities of the police to control. It is very improbable that any large-scale

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insurrectionary effort will occur in Italy, unless the USSR should order it as part of a larger campaign in Germany, Yugoslavia or, possibly, the Near East.

The Italian Communists, apparently caught flat-footed, met the situation with scattered local "Partisan of Peace" demonstrations, a few local protest strikes, and propaganda alleging US aggression in Korea. Such propaganda was sceptically received, even among some Communists and sympathizers. The Government took advantage of the initiative gained to deny visas for foreign Communists and sympathizers to attend a "Partisans of Peace" Congress scheduled to be held in Italy in July, and to suppress (possibly as a test case) the circulation in the Chieti region of the Communist petition to outlaw the atomic bomb. Even more stringent restrictions on Communist action and propaganda media were urged by conservatives. Against this setback the Communists will probably attempt to counter with mass peace demonstrations, while aggravating and exploiting fear in Italy over the possibility that World War III will arise from the Korean situation. Increased strike action will also be taken, exploiting available economic issues, but timed to coincide with "Peace" efforts. A general strike among the maritime workers has already begun and walk-outs in the mechanical and metallurgical industries, especially, are probable.

Such Communist action will have diminished prospects for success, however, unless the Far Eastern situation should deteriorate very seriously and undermine the renewed Italian faith in the efficacy of US action. The fear of retaliatory measures will limit the Communist use of direct action tactics. There are no indications in Italy that any insurrectionary effort is contemplated for the near future. The Communists could, however, move on orders from Moscow on relatively short notice. The Communist Party's paramilitary force has been strengthened during the past year and there has been a slight increase in Communist penetration of the Italian armed forces. The most recent estimates place Communist paramilitary strength at 125,000. The Italian police, with army assistance, are capable of suppressing an insurrectionary effort made without outside military support. But in the event of revolt, Government forces would require a month to regain control of the strategically important Tuscany-Emilia area, a Communist stronghold that bisects Italy. In any event, the Communists could seriously hamper any war effort of the Italian armed forces.

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FRANCE

B French participation in the proposed European Wool Union may stimulate action on the part of other French industries to form international unions looking toward the liberalization of trade. The French Central Committee on Wool issued a statement on 24 May wholeheartedly supporting the project, put forward by Belgium, for a wool union. Also participating in negotiations are the wool industries of Great Britain, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg.

The principal objectives of the union are: (1) the elimination of all trade restrictions on wool; (2) the gradual reduction of tariffs until all are abolished; (3) the free convertibility of currencies among member countries; and (4) a prohibition on dumping. These points were accepted by all the delegations, although the French favored a more gradual reduction of tariffs than did the others. The French did, however, provisionally accept automatic reduction with a view toward complete elimination of tariffs in from three to five years.

There are several advantages for France to be gained from adherence to the wool union. The wool industry feels, in particular, that despite some competitive disadvantages, it may be able to increase its exports on a free market. Because the industry must import 95% of its raw wool, mostly from the sterling area countries of Australia and New Zealand, great emphasis is laid on export, especially to Great Britain, in order to gain the necessary foreign exchange. For this reason, manufacturers will welcome a lowering of the trade barriers of other countries. Furthermore, the industry feels that free competition reduces the possibility that new manufacturing establishments will be set up in foreign countries where France now has markets.

The way may now be paved for France to propose or participate in similar arrangements for other industries, especially in the field of textiles.

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