

EUROPEAN SCENE

League of Nations

At the time of writing the League of Nations Assembly had met at Geneva and sent a telegram to Russia and Finland proposing immediate cessation of hostilities, with a limit of 24 hours for a reply. Russia's reply was a polite "No." Forty nations are represented at Geneva: 13 are absent. The question of the expulsion of Russia from the League is one of the most important subjects for discussion. The fact that 15 Nazi journalists were attending the meeting suggested to foreign observers that another Peace move might be expected.

Petsamo's Nickel

Four hundred miles north of the Arctic Circle lies the tiny Finnish town of Petsamo, scarcely known to the outside world, but one of the most important towns in the present war.

Petsamo has a population of only 200 Soots and Finns, but the most important nickel mine in the world outside America is nearby. Since Germany wants nickel, even more than she needs gold, for the manufacture of armaments, Hitler probably hopes that Stalin will subjugate the Finns and then ship to Germany the product of the Petsamo mine.

For four months in the year Petsamo is in total darkness. A great military highway runs from the south for 400 miles to the town, which is on the narrow strip of coast that is Finland's only contact with the Arctic Ocean. Almost as important strategically, is the fact that Petsamo is an ice-free port. Snow fences have been built to keep the highway approach from the south free from blocking in the winter months.

Only 20 miles away from the town is the Russian frontier. If Russia captures and holds Petsamo, Finland's independence will be gravely endangered, for this port is her only outlet to the West, round the northern coast of Scandinavia. She can use the Baltic Sea only by the grace of Germany and Russia. Recent cable messages stated that the town had been captured by the Russians, but was again in Finnish hands. As this is the Arctic winter, most of the fighting has been done in the dark.

Finland's Military Leader

Field-Marshal Charles Gustav Mannerheim is Finland's military leader. He was decorated by the Tsar of Russia for service against the Germans, and by the Kaiser for service against the Russians in the same war.

Now 72 years old, Field-Marshal Mannerheim served in his younger days in the Russian Army, and fought against Japan in 1904. He was with the Cossacks then, and a great rider. During the first stages of the last war Mannerheim was a Brigadier-General with the Russian Lancers, but when the Bolshevik Revolution broke out he returned to

Finland and, with the help of German soldiers, drove the Russians from his native soil.

Mannerheim assumed the position of Regent in the new State of Finland, but in 1919, when that country became a Republic, he was defeated in the election for the first President. He resists Germans and Russians with equal fervour, and fought successfully against a plan to make a German prince King of Finland. Mannerheim speaks six languages, has written a book in English, and compares Finland to a donkey between two pecks of carrots. His country will die, he says, when she has to choose between the two pecks.

Finland's Appeal

An appeal to the whole world for help against Russian aggression has been issued by Finland. America has agreed to a loan of 10 million dollars to Finland for the purchase of agricultural and civilian supplies. A report from Helsinki states that a British Legion is being formed to aid the Finns.

Thirty British planes were reported to have been sent to Finland: Italy has sent 60. Reports that Germany was sending ammunition and arms have been denied from Berlin.

Western Front Quiet

Little activity has been reported from the Western Front this week. British soldiers are now holding part of the Maginot Line, and patrol activity on

in a week, three in 24 hours. Two British destroyers have been sunk, H.M.S. Jersey by torpedo and H.M.S. Blanche by mine. The following British ships have been lost: R.M.S. Navasota, 8,795 tons, torpedoed in the Atlantic; Merel, 1,088 tons, mined off English coast; Thomas Walton, 4,460 tons, sunk after explosion off Norway; Brandon, 6,668 tons, torpedoed off British coast. A German steamer with 300 Germans aboard was captured off Dar Es Salaam. The Dutch steamer Tajoendoen, 8,159 tons, was torpedoed in the English Channel.

Churchill's Review

On December 6 Mr. Winston Churchill reviewed the progress of the war. He said that Britain had more than 2,000 ships at sea continuously. The destruction of submarines averaged from two to four a week. Britain had armed 1,000 merchant ships and before very long would have 2000 armed. Less than one ship in every 750 of the convoy ships had been sunk. More than half the losses were due to magnetic mines.

German Taxation

The President of the Reichbank, Dr. Funk, has issued a warning that taxation has reached its limit in Germany. He appealed to the people to invest their savings in savings banks and life insurance funds, all of which would be mobilised to meet the cost of the war. An increasing shortage of petrol was also reported from Germany.

Balkan Intrigue

Secret intrigue in the Balkans has been the subject of comment. Budapest reported a secret treaty between Germany and Rumania, guaranteeing Rumanian frontiers against Russian aggression. It was also reported that Von Papen's recall from Turkey had been demanded by the Turkish Government because of intrigue with Russia.

Italy's Neutrality

The Grand Fascist Council met in Rome and reaffirmed Italy's neutrality. The danger in the Balkans was emphasised.

First Naval Battle

In the first major naval engagement of the war, three British cruisers, the Exeter, Ajax and Achilles, engaged the more heavily armed German pocket battleship Admiral Graf Spee off the coast of Uruguay early in the morning of December 14 and after a running fight of 18 hours, severely damaged her and forced her to seek refuge in Montevideo harbour. Early reports stated that the Graf Spee disembarked 36 dead and 60 wounded and that the ship was badly holed in hull, superstructure and fo'c'sle. Inferior in armament to their victim, the British ships are said to have been successful through superior tactics, speed and manoeuvrability. At the time of going to press, it was not known whether the German ship would be able to make necessary repairs or be forced to submit to internment.

ALLIED LEADERS (7): General Sir E. Ironside



which has led to numerous scenes among the Army chiefs.

General Ironside is 59, speaks six languages fluently and knows 14, and includes among his achievements a period as a secret service agent in South Africa. When war broke out in 1914 he was a British staff officer, 3rd grade; by 1918 he was in charge of a Brigade, and at the end of the war he was a Major-General in charge of the Archangel expedition, fighting in 83 degrees of frost. From then on he has held all the high posts. He went to Persia; to Iraq; was Commandant of the famous Camberley Staff College; Commander-in-Chief of Eastern Forces; Inspector-General Overseas Forces; Quartermaster-General in India, and, until recently, Governor of Gibraltar. This last post is regarded as a comfortable retiring job, but not for General Ironside. He got busy, turned the Rock almost upside down, and to-day its defences are really impregnable.

He is famous for picking the right men and inspiring blind worship. Here is an example. In 1917, when he was in Persia (now Iran) he remarked on the bearing of a man in the ranks. There and then General Ironside called him out, made him an officer, and extracted a promise that he would never intrigue against the Shah. Six years later that man was Riza Pahlevi, Prime Minister. Later he became Shah of Iran.

ARMY methods have never rolled the personality out of General Sir Edmund Ironside, G.C.B., K.C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., and a host of foreign decorations (including the German Iron Cross). He is Chief of the General Staff of the British Army on the home front, big, burly and a force in the land. His favourite expression is "Give me a free hand,"

Finland's Struggle

Finland was still resisting Russia on December 13, fighting under adverse conditions along an 800-mile front. Russia claimed advances, but the Finns stated that the invaders had been repulsed. A Stockholm message gave the Russian losses as 25,000 killed in the first week of the war, but that is not easy to believe. An earlier message stated that Finland was not only resisting Russia's enormous armies, but was taking the offensive. As a result of her inability to pierce the Finnish defences, Russia's prestige in the Balkans was falling.

their particular front has increased in an effort to capture prisoners. Increased German activity behind the lines on the Luxembourg frontier has been reported.

Fewer Air Raids

Several enemy air raids on the English coast have been reported, but no bombs have been dropped. There was one unsuccessful enemy attack on trawlers in the North Sea. R.A.F. machines have made flights over Germany. One plane was reported lost.

U-Boats Destroyed

On December 11 the Allies claimed to have destroyed five German U-boats