

SECRET

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Lisbon, 4th January 1944

Darnand's nomination

According to information from French sources the nomination of Darnand to the posts of Secretary General of the Ministry of the Interior and Chief of the Police was a surprise to the French political circles which expected Marshal Petain to take a different course and appoint a different man. Amongst the names quoted were those of Delyat and Deat, and others. It is further expected that Darnand's nomination will result in serious consequences. He could play a part in the elimination of Laval, which matter seems to be Petain's greatest concern at the present moment. Rumours circulate that Marshal Petain's initiative in this direction may go even further as it is generally ~~believed~~ and can lead to Darnand's taking over the Premiership in place of Laval.

How
Darnand is undoubtedly a man of the gangster type. In the Army he was commanding a shock unit and was even decorated during the campaign. He is the organizer of the Service d'Ordre Legionnaire "SOL"; he also owns a commercial establishment at Nice and for some time he was the secret "chief" of the entire black market organization in the South of France. In 1941 he became a hero of a much spoken of affair when he slapped the face of Colonel Vautrin of the Second Bureau. This incident had some connection with the Second Bureau's activities in favour of the Allies and against the collaborationists. In connection with it the Anciens Combattants' Organization was ordered to suspend its activities.

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The conditions now prevailing in France resemble those of a civil war. Darnand's predecessor Bousquet has been accused with having collaborated with the underground movement. Just before Christmas mass arrests took place all over the country. About 25,000 people have been kept in detention in many uninhabited country mansions. Dauphinois is considered to be the most important centre of the underground movement. At Grenoble, ~~first~~, the curfew begins at 3 p.m., when the street traffic is stopped and all house entrances are closed. The other centres of the underground movement are Haute Savoie, Paris and the central departments ~~(Correr, Cevennes)~~. It is feared amongst the members of the French resistance movement that not France but Norway and the Balkans will be first invaded by the Allied troops.

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