

# ADMIRAL LEAHY GIVES SUPPORT TO AGED PETAIN.

## Letter Read in Court Expresses Belief in Loyalty to France

Paris, Aug. 1.—(AP)—Admiral William D. Leahy, chief of staff to President Truman, expressed the belief that Marshal Petain always acted in the best interests of France in a letter read to-day at the treason trial of the old soldier.

### Desired Huns' Defeat

As read in court the letter of Admiral Leahy, now attending the "big three" conference at Potsdam, expressed "high regard" for Marshal Petain and said he was unable to appear as a witness because of his position. He had been United States ambassador to the Vichy regime of Marshal Petain until the Germans took over the unoccupied portions of France in November, 1942, when North Africa was invaded by the Allies.

Admiral Leahy's letter, dated July 22, was in reply to Marshal Petain's request that he return to France as a witness.

The admiral wrote he recalled that on many occasions he had heard Marshal Petain express a desire to see the Nazis overwhelmed.

After the letter was read, Chief Judge Paul Mongibeaux asserted: "There is one sentence against Petain in that letter."

The defence protested and Judge Mongibeaux did not explain the sentence to which he referred.

### Favoured Allied Cause

Admiral Leahy's letter said that while he was ambassador to France "you did, on occasion at my request, take action in opposition to the desires of the Axis and favourable to the Allied cause."

"On every instance when you failed to accept my recommendations to oppose the Axis powers by refusing their demands, you stated the reason was such positive action by you would result in additional oppression of your people by the invaders," the admiral continued.

"I had then, as I have now, the conviction that your principal concern was the welfare and protection of the helpless people of France. It was impossible for me to believe that you had any other concern."

### Refers to Future Position

"However, I must in all honesty repeat my opinion, as expressed

to you at the time, that positive refusal to make any concessions to Axis demands, while it might have brought immediately increased hardship to your people, would have in the long view have been advantageous to France."

(It was to this last passage the judge apparently alluded.)

The old soldier's counsel said also that Pierre Laval, described yesterday as Marshal Petain's "evil genius," would be summoned as a witness.

As Gen. Maxime Weygand returned for further cross-examination, bearded prosecutor Andre Mornet demanded that "we return to the essential facts of the Petain trial" and avoid a repetition of yesterday's session when General Weygand, Marshal Petain and former Premier Paul Reynaud engaged in bitter recriminations.

### Not Trial of Armistice

"This is not a trial of the armistice," said the prosecutor who sent Mata Hari before a firing squad in the First Great War. "The armistice is only a preface to the accusation. Petain's treason would have been impossible without it. His treason began on July 11, 1940, when he plotted against the republic. At that moment Petain outrageously violated his responsibilities to the republic."

Once again, he promised that written documents—unknown to most people—would be presented, constituting "the true basis for this action."

Judge Paul Mongibeaux and M. Mornet both attempted to prevent a continuance of the running debate between Gen. Weygand and M. Reynaud, but it broke again after Armand du Chayla, minister to Luxembourg, testified briefly. He was counsellor of the French embassy in Madrid while Marshal Petain was ambassador, and he denied the old soldier had plotted with Gen. Franco.

As he finished, Gen. Weygand and M. Reynaud both rose. The little general, who commanded French forces at the time of the collapse, declared:

### Demands Right to Reply

"Reynaud made some grave accusations against Marshal Petain and myself yesterday. I demand the right to reply."

The court, instead, allowed M. Reynaud to begin a statement which he said was "proof that Petain and Weygand put their ambitions ahead of their country."

"From the day he took the supreme command, Weygand thought of using his power for political aims," M. Reynaud—who appointed Gen. Weygand a month before the armistice—said. "Gen. Maurice Gamelin told me of Weygand's attitude when he took command."

Gen. Weygand burst into laughter when M. Reynaud asserted that on the day he assumed command he went to see Gen. Gamelin, his predecessor, and told him, "I have the secret of Foch." Gen. Weygand was chief of staff to Marsha

Foch, hero of the first Great War.

Mr. Reynaud continued that Gen. Gamelin told him Gen. Weygand had said: "We must finish with these politicians, and we must finish with them sooner than the other."

Spectators laughed. M. Reynaud looked displeased.

### Murmur of Protest

M. Reynaud asserted Gen. Weygand, when asking for an armistice, declared, "We must keep the army intact to maintain order within the country." He quoted Gen. Weygand as saying: "The ministers of the Cabinet are crazy. They have understood nothing. We will have to arrest them."

A murmur of protest swept the audience when M. Reynaud declared:

"Petain and Weygand had the same object—to force France to capitulate. We are in the presence of a general who wanted an armistice at any price."

As M. Reynaud spoke, Gen. Weygand paced up and down, apparently restraining himself with difficulty. When the former premier finished, Gen. Weygand started speaking, but was interrupted by Judge Mongibeaux, who said:

"We expected to finish here in two weeks, but I am afraid we will go for a month."

### Prosecution's Contention

Counsel for Marshal Petain, charged with intelligence with Germany and plotting against France, contend that Laval was responsible for the Vichy regime's policy of collaboration with the Germans and hope that his testimony will save the aged marshal from a death sentence.

The prosecution, on the other hand, has been maintaining throughout the eight days of the trial that Marshal Petain worked hand and glove with Laval, his No. 1 man and chief of government, in collaboration with the Nazis.

News that the swarthy, long-fugitive Laval had arrived in Austria from Spain and surrendered was communicated to court officials and lawyers yesterday afternoon and it sent most of them scurrying off for hurried consultations.

### Stage Set for Free Fight

That bombshell came just as the judge, jurors, lawyers, witnesses and the defendant himself were mopping their brows after one of the most emotion-packed court sessions in French history.

Chief Defence Counsel Fernand Payen leaped to his feet just before the gavel fell on the day's session. "We will ask a postponement in order to obtain supplementary information from Laval," he said.

The interruption came at a time when the stage appeared set for a free-for-all fight among the trial principals. Accusations and counter-accusations flew thick and fast through the testimony of Gen. Maxime Weygand, commander-in-chief of the Allied armies at the time of the German victory over France.

Gen. Weygand made a number of startling statements during his five hours on the stand, but reserved for himself complete responsibility for having demanded an armistice "on military grounds alone."

### Avoids One-Sided Fight

Moscow, Aug. 1.—(AP)—Gen. Georges Catroux said to-day his policy as governor-general of French Indo-China had been aimed to save the colony by negotiation and stalling rather than to lose it to tremendously superior Japanese forces in a one-sided fight.

Now France's ambassador to Soviet Russia, Gen. Catroux said he had been without hope of aid from Great Britain or the United States and from the Vichy Government of Marshal Petain.

His hitherto-unpublished story

HAMILTON SPECTATOR

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of the swift-moving events leading up to Japanese entry into Indo-China was disclosed in response to a question of the Associated Press after it was stated by a witness at the Petain trial in Paris that Marshal Petain removed Gen. Catroux as governor-general because he was favourable to Japanese demands and replaced him with Rear-Admiral Jean Decoux.

(The witness was Charles Roux, who was secretary-general in the foreign ministry).

### Publish Official Texts

"I will not refute this allegation," Gen. Catroux said, "except by reference to the irrefutable testimony of authentic facts."

The French general added that his statements were supported by official texts which would be published shortly.

His statement brought out that, although he was relying chiefly on hopes for support from United States, he was informed through the French ambassador to Washington at that time that the United States would take no action if Japan attacked Indo-China. He said he was informed by Admiral Sir Percy Noble, of the Royal Navy, that he, too, could give no assistance.

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