

One item of Roumanian news has naturally enough given rise to much wild speculation at home and abroad. King Michael, whose presence in Germany was wrongly reported, is now known to have gone with the Queen Mother to Ravenna and then to Florence. Thus after being completely ignored during the Quisling Congress in Berlin, he was not even in Roumania when the rupture with Britain became final. No wonder that there are wild rumours about an impending change upon the Roumanian throne, due possibly to the form which Latin imagination assumes on the Lower Danube.

The stiffening of Turkish opinion during the past six weeks has been so marked that even thoroughly sceptical Soviet observers now admit it. None the less a certain nervous irritability has again been noticeable in Angora. Reasonable Turks admit that it is illogical for them to be minutely suspicious of Russia's every action, and yet to be hurt at Britain not renouncing all attempts at criticism of their quite legitimate but tortuous manoeuvres between the two belligerents. The three nerve centres are (a) a series of spy incidents on the Soviet frontier (alleged landings from a motor-boat, and descents from parachutes) surrounded by the usual mystery and conflicting statements, (b) wild rumours from Tabriz with regard to Kurdish activities, culminating in the Secretary-General at the Foreign Office treating as credible the highly improbable story that Kurds and Armenians are jointly planning "some kind of republic," and (c) the aftermath of speeches in the Bulgarian Parliament (see *Summary* No. 112). Official Turkey affects not to take such pronouncements very seriously, on the ground that King Boris always uses mere nonentities, and that he alone decides policy. But Angora is none the less watching Sofia very closely, and still more the strip of territory lying to the west of the River Maritsa, which is held under direct German military control and hermetically sealed from the outside, while the Bulgarian Cabinet refuses all explanation on the subject. Angora is also watching closely the extension of German naval and military control to the whole Black Sea coast of Bulgaria and the conversion of Burgas to a naval and air base. Meanwhile the German Minister in Sofia, Dr. Beckerle, the former Gestapo chief in Frankfurt, is rapidly establishing a control of the central machine in Sofia, similar to that of Herr von Killinger in Bucharest.

The announcement that President Roosevelt had declared the defence of Turkey to be "vital to the defence of the United States," and had consequently ordered the inclusion of Turkey under the terms of the Lease-Lend arrangement, caused great elation in Turkey and corresponding annoyance in Axis circles. It had, of course, long since ceased to be a secret that Britain had been acting as intermediary for specific Lease-Lend shipments to Turkey, and the presidential announcement merely made public an arrangement which has been in force for some time. The elation caused by this news and by the impending visit of Mr. Bullitt as the President's special representative in the Near East was, it is true, somewhat damped by a recognition that war in the Pacific may complicate the despatch of military supplies from America to Turkey. A similar elation and depression may be noted in connexion with the arrival of three Soviet tankers at Istanbul; at first it was supposed that their entire contents were intended for the Turks, and there was disappointment when it was learnt that a proportion was to go on to Vladivostok. British good offices have been invoked by the Turkish Government to secure a greater proportion of the oil, and it may be doubted whether the Russians will now wish to send it to the Far East and run the Japanese gauntlet.

Information from Yugoslavia is of a more than usually conflicting character. Fighting has flared up again both west of the main Morava valley, where armoured trains protect the railway, and even on the Danube near the Iron Gates. The Yugoslavs in Cairo issued a regular war communiqué, announcing the resistance of General Mihailovitch to three divisions of Germans and Italians in the Uzhitse sector: but it would be unwise to enquire how far this "second front" is a piece of wishful thinking. On the 8th December the Belgrade wireless issued a special message to the effect that Mihailovitch's forces had been completely destroyed, and that he himself was in flight with a price upon his head: this again represents wishful thinking by the Germans. There is again confirmation of the news that Bulgarian forces are being gradually pushed westwards from Nish, to replace the German occupying garrisons, and that the Bulgarian troops are showing praiseworthy reluctance to move against their Serb kinsmen. Meanwhile General Neditch, by his broadcast of the 4th December, must be regarded as having finally

capitulated to the Axis and to a narrow form of Pan-Serbism. He began by denouncing as "a malicious lie" the widely credited reports that Uzhitse and Chachak had been bombed or that the Germans ever contemplated the destruction of Belgrade, and he urged the nation against "the Communist monster." His main theme was a profound belief in the nation's future, the sacred duty of national unity (but on a purely Serbian basis) and God's retribution for political dissensions. He closed by affirming that Germany "was not our enemy in the past and is not to-day," that those who thought otherwise did not know history, and that the Germans' "feeling of justice" was "akin to ours."

From Croatia comes steady confirmation of the belief that the Ustashi by their misdeeds and incompetence have united all sections of the nation against them, and that the Yugoslav idea is rapidly regaining lost ground. Dr. Matchek is now in confinement near Graz, in Styria, and has so far resisted repeated efforts of the Germans to win him over to the régime. In spite of this there are some super-patriots in exile capable of suggesting that Matchek is "a German agent!" It is worthy of mention that an exactly similar view in respect of the future President Masaryk was put forward in 1915 by one of the most eminent Serbian statesmen, at the very moment when Masaryk was working closely with the exiled Yugoslav Committee in Paris and London.

THE MIDDLE EAST.

On the 5th December the British and Soviet representatives at Tehran handed copies of the final draft of the treaty to the Persian Minister for Foreign Affairs. He showed disappointment at the absence of certain amendments the insertion of which he had requested, but was informed that no more amendments could be considered, and that the Persian Government must delay no longer over its decision. On the 9th December His Majesty's Minister reported that the Cabinet had accepted the treaty, and that as soon as they had received a vote of confidence in the Majlis (which they expected on the 11th December) the treaty could be initialled and the assent of the Majlis obtained forthwith.

The delay over the treaty negotiations in Tehran has been due partly to the time occupied in obtaining replies to the Soviet Ambassador's questions to his Government—two weeks elapsed before the latter accepted the final British draft—but even more to the fear and suspicion of Russia felt by the Persians. The safeguards inserted in the draft at the request of the Persian Government, trivial though they may appear to us, are occasioned by Persia's apprehensions of Russian interference. The Persian Government knows that any treaty with Russia is bound to be unpopular, and it hopes by these means to sugar the pill. In the opinion of His Majesty's Minister, had the British alone been concerned in the negotiations, they could have got Persia's agreement to the treaty in a week or two. While the Persian Government admits in theory that its position *vis-à-vis* Russia should be improved by the treaty, it argues that Russia disregards written promises, as, for example, in not paying customs dues on goods exported to Persia, in spite of the Russo-Persian commercial treaty.

This, in effect, sufficiently answers the recent criticism of *The Times* correspondent in Tehran (see *Summary* No. 113); it is not British diplomacy, but mistrust of our Soviet Allies, that is in question. The same correspondent is also at fault in asserting that the Persian Government ever undertook to break off telegraphic communication with Germany. The treaty provides for a joint Anglo-Soviet-Persian censorship. Pending its conclusion, a temporary censorship has been established in Tehran. Owing to lack of staff and to the Persian Government's unwillingness there has been some delay in stopping wireless communication between Berlin and Tehran. All telegrams between Persia and Germany have, however, now ceased. For press telegrams some difficulty attended the censorship, as a full-time censor did not arrive until the 2nd December; but arrangements are now in hand for the complete censorship of all telegrams.

For some two weeks the trial *in absentia* of Rashid Ali and his fellow-accused has been proceeding in Bagdad. Meanwhile, Rashid Ali himself, who has for months past resided in Istanbul, has moved to the adjacent island of Prinkipo; and His Majesty's Ambassador at Angora has suggested to the