

ITALY.

Mussolini's announcement on the 11th December that Italy, like Germany, had declared war upon the United States, and that the Axis Powers had signed with "heroic Japan" a pact not to conclude an armistice or peace with the United States or Great Britain except in complete mutual agreement was far from unexpected. The likelihood of some such course being adopted was discussed in the last number of this *Summary*, where it was pointed out that great pains had been taken for a long time past to represent the third member of the Tripartite Pact as the victim of a criminally aggressive Anglo-American policy, instigated mainly by President Roosevelt. In pursuance of this thesis Mussolini now sought to justify his breach with Washington to his people by making "one man only, an authentic and democratic despot," responsible for the extension of the conflict and for having prepared it day by day with diabolical tenacity. At the same time Mussolini set in motion all the creaking old Fascist machinery with the object of persuading his hearers and the world at large that Italy was "proud of this great hour." There was a noisy demonstration of sympathy outside the Japanese Embassy. Numerous processions of people waving Japanese, German and Italian flags paraded the streets of Rome. The Piazza Venezia was, of course, packed at the appointed hour with a vast crowd of yelling Fascists who dutifully applauded or booed at the appropriate moments during their Duce's brief oration. Congratulatory telegrams were exchanged between Rome, Berlin and Tokyo. The official *Stefani* news-agency found nothing fresh to say in its comments upon Mussolini's harangue or upon the signature of the new military alliance. The Italian press and radio, on the other hand, outdid themselves in the scurrility of their attacks upon all their enemies, one particularly vulgar example being the reference by Appellius to the alliance between the decadent civilisation of the Jew-ridden English-speaking peoples and the "miserable, dirty, vile barbarism of the primitive Russians, who have as many lice in their heads as bees in their bonnets." Some of these outbursts were anything but helpful to the official doctrine that Japan's aggression was an act of legitimate self-defence. After praising Japan for having conducted negotiations with the sincere desire of maintaining peace, Ansaldo incautiously went on to say that "the time came, we cannot say precisely when, but we imagine it happened a few months ago, when the Japanese Government acquired the deep moral conviction that it was impossible to reach an agreement. . . . The Japanese Government then secretly decided in favour of war. With unflinching courtesy they carried on negotiations, but gave orders to the armed forces to have everything ready. When preparations had been completed the negotiations were interrupted, the war was declared."

The very elaborateness of the demonstrations in favour of Japan and the desperate attempts to whip up fresh animosity against all opponents of the Axis are probably not without significance. Reports on the authentic reaction of the Italian people to the declaration of war upon the United States are, at present, few and scanty, but from such accounts as have reached this country it would appear that the extension of the conflict is highly unpopular and that the principal blame for it is being attributed to Germany. There would be nothing surprising in such an attitude. Ansaldo may be brought to the microphone to denounce "the insults, humiliations and innumerable injustices suffered in the United States during the last fifty years by Italian emigrants," but by millions of Italians maintaining close family ties across the Atlantic these words will surely be regarded as a grotesque travesty of the facts and of their personal sentiments. Some observers, moreover, recently returned from Italy with the impression that the Italians were less concerned that the war should end with their victory than that it should end somehow, so long as it ends quickly.

If this impression, formed some weeks ago, was correct, the unpopularity of a war against the United States, which has already opened fresh fronts and may well open yet others nearer home, can be the more readily understood. Under the heading: "Rome fears a new African front," the correspondent of a Swedish newspaper has reported that a new development is expected in Africa owing to the entry into the war of the United States. The fighting in Libya is being described as largely a struggle between the ability of the Axis Powers to support Rommel and his Italian allies and the success of Great Britain in

bringing the products of American factories on to the field of battle. The pretence that the Libyan campaign is only of minor importance has been dropped in the light of the German admission that the centre of gravity has shifted from the East to the Mediterranean and that we have succeeded in establishing there a second front. Italian accounts of the meeting in Turin between Ciano and Darlan have been even less informative than those issued in France. It is, however, obvious that, as the German-Italian divisions in Libya are driven westwards, and as we continue to levy a heavy toll upon Italian convoys at sea, the question of Tunisia becomes of more urgent importance. It is therefore not surprising to find press messages from Rome suggesting that this was one of the problems discussed in Turin. Nor is the importance of the Libyan campaign by any means only military. There have been renewed reports that the effect of a heavy reverse in North Africa would be so damaging to Italian morale as seriously to undermine the stability of the Fascist régime. These reports, however, perhaps underestimate the strength of the German grip on the Italians.

SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE.

The extension of war to the Pacific has forced a whole bevy of lesser Powers in the two hemispheres "to define their position" towards the belligerent groups. The Quisling States of Europe were obviously not free agents, and merely obeyed orders from Berlin; but it is worth recording some curious *nuances* in their final reactions. As late as the 11th December the Hungarian Premier, M. Bardossy, informed the United States Minister that the solidarity of Central Europe made a rupture almost inevitable, but that Hungary did not intend to declare war. Yet on the evening of the 11th it was officially announced that the Cabinet had decided to declare war.

In Bulgaria the final decision was taken in the Sobranje, where the Foreign Minister, after expressing gratitude to Hitler and the Reich, declared that the "aggressive attitude" of the Anglo-Saxon Powers towards Germany had forced Bulgaria to declare a state of war with them both. A formal declaration of war has, however, not yet reached London. It is to be noted that there has been no declaration of war against Russia, and that, while the mob was allowed to stone the American Legation and pull down the American flag from the Minister's private house (which faces on to the Parliament Square in Sofia), the police at once intervened when the crowd tried to demonstrate outside the Soviet Legation.

In Roumania the Government contented itself with issuing a declaration of war upon America "in accordance with the Tripartite Pact." In Croatia, Pavelitch, the phantom Chief of State, himself read out the declaration of war from the balcony of the Banal Palace in Zagreb, in the presence of the Cabinet and the Diplomatic Corps. The ceremony was accompanied by a review of volunteers for Russia, and German and Italian detachments marched past to the strains of the Croat hymn, the Horst Wessel song and the Italian Royal March. By way of emphasising Croatian subservience, the "Poglavnik" (leader) left the same day on a state visit to Italy, taking with him the Ministers for Foreign Affairs, Finance and Education. *Stefani* issued an official statement, expressing Italy's "lively sympathy" for the declarations of war by these various States, which it described as an act of European solidarity, and special praise was bestowed upon "the high degree of political maturity attained by the Bulgarian people."

There has been no outstanding event in Turkish domestic politics, and public opinion has been left free to take stock of the new world situation created by Japanese aggression. The general attitude may be summed up in the comments of the semi-official *Ulus*: in its view there is now a life-and-death issue, at the end of which either the Democratic system will triumph or the world will be run on Fascist lines. There are signs of anxiety at the slowness of British progress in Libya, after the exaggerated optimism of the first few days, and in lesser degree at the possibility of Vichy being involved in the sea war; but His Majesty's Ambassador reports that Turkish morale is standing the strain. The Deputy Yalchin has openly treated Rostov as demonstrating German miscalculation and shattering the myth of German invincibility. Meanwhile, the Turkish Government hastened to declare its neutrality and for this earned the obviously insincere praise of *Transocean*. What made a special impression on the Turks was the arrival of Russian tankers in the Bosphorus, as a demonstration that Soviet