

his birthday, but his attitude towards His Majesty's Government has recently been described as almost certainly one of profound distrust. This has even led him to suspect that proposals to move some of the Polish troops from the U.S.S.R. into Persia for the purpose of organising, equipping and training them were due to a conspiracy between Great Britain, the United States and Poland. He is reported to have said that the world would laugh at him if Polish forces in the U.S.S.R. were to be withdrawn to another country. The British Military Mission remains in Kuibyshev with only the most tenuous liaison with the Red Army Staff. The Soviet peoples are being kept informed of the progress of British naval, military and air operations by the publication of our communiqués, but comment has generally been sparse and reproach may have been intended in an article in *Pravda*, which described the humiliation experienced by "the luckless Cæsar Mussolini" as "all the more bitter, since the main part of the last battle which sealed the fate of Gondar belonged to Abyssinian troops." The article went on to assert that the Gondar garrison expected Hitler to send tank divisions to help his ally, "but the tanks, camouflaged in the colour of the African desert, were hastily repainted to match the snow of the Russian plains and their remnants now lie in black heaps of scrap metal at the approaches to Moscow. . . . Moreover, the Italian reserves which should have come to the rescue of Gondar are meeting an inglorious end on the Soviet steppes."

Taking into account the strain already imposed on the military and economic resources of the Soviet Union by the German war and the somewhat resentful attitude of the Kremlin towards us, it seems problematical whether the declaration of war by Japan on the British Empire and the United States will be followed up by similar action in the immediate future by the U.S.S.R. against Japan; more especially in view of the delay of five months by Great Britain in breaking finally with Finland, Hungary and Roumania. It may, however, be judged wise by the High Command in Moscow to seize the opportunity presented by Japanese preoccupations in the South to employ all their forces, particularly aircraft and submarines, to assist in giving Japan a death-blow. All that can be said safely is that M. Stalin is pre-eminently a realist and is not likely to allow an opportunity of this nature to slip by if he judges it to be a really good one.

SCANDINAVIA.

The reply of the Finnish Government to the British ultimatum was handed to the United States Minister in Helsinki by M. Witting at 6 P.M. on the 4th December. During the previous days some slight hope of a peaceful settlement had been aroused by statements from apparently well-informed Finnish quarters, but the reply itself in no way met the British demands, or held out any prospect of a cessation of hostilities before the achievement of a frontier which the Finnish Government regarded as satisfying the requirements of national security. In these circumstances His Majesty's Government felt compelled to inform Finland that a state of war between that country and Great Britain would exist from immediately after midnight of the 6th December. The United States followed up the British declaration by immediately arresting Finnish ships in their waters and the Government of Norway severed diplomatic relations with Finland.

By an undesigned coincidence, the 6th December, the date on which the British declaration reached the Finnish Government, was the twenty-fourth anniversary of Finnish independence. The occasion was marked by a speech from President Ryti, in which he reiterated the now familiar arguments in support of the Finnish case, and by an order of the day from Field-Marshal Mannerheim, in which, while expressing the opinion that Finland's heaviest trials were already over, he stated that the army must still persist till the fight for Finnish security was finally won.

It must be anticipated that the immediate result of the declaration of war is likely to be a closer association of Finland with Germany, and the obstinacy characteristic of the Finnish temperament will probably contribute, for the time being, to a more complete internal unity. Economically, Finland is now exclusively dependent upon such supplies as she can obtain from Germany; yet the food shortage, which is already very serious, may quite possibly create internal disturbances before very long, and strain Finno-German friendship. The scarcity is already a prominent topic of discussion in the Finnish press and

Suomen Sosialidemokraatti, on the 2nd December, admitted that morale was already tending to deteriorate as a consequence of it.

The British declaration of war may also give rise to some division of feeling in Sweden, where the traditional sympathy for Finland and distrust of Russia must be expected to continue. The first reactions of the Swedish press, however, indicate on the whole a satisfactory understanding of the problem. British reluctance and forbearance are emphasised, and though *Dagens Nyheter* states that the declaration has caused grief and anxiety in Scandinavia, it compares the British action favourably with German conduct on previous occasions. The present situation is, however, generally regarded as tragic, and there is no apparent diminution in the sympathy felt for Finland, who is simultaneously pitied and admired. The Russian evacuation of Hangö was greeted with a chorus of satisfaction in the Swedish press, though less as a Finnish triumph than as an event which might expedite the cessation of hostilities. There is no doubt an undercurrent of anxiety lest the situation should prejudice Sweden's efforts to preserve a neutral attitude. In Italy Signor Gayda, describing the British declaration of war as "the great test of Swedish policy," has hinted that the time has arrived for Sweden to decide on her attitude, and no longer to stand aloof from that European solidarity symbolised by the Anti-Comintern Pact, with the opponents of which England has now definitely joined forces.

In Denmark, the Nazi organ, *Fædrelandet*, has already tried to suggest that the signature of the Anti-Comintern Pact involves solid obligations. The action of the Minister of Trade in appointing a Jew as Vice-Chairman of the Council for Price Control is criticised as inconsistent with these obligations, and described as a "smack in the eye" for the Government and Scavenius. There are also some reports that the signature of the pact was accompanied by a secret agreement for the supply of Danish forces to serve against Russia, though it seems doubtful whether any such proposal was in fact accepted by the Danish Government. Public opinion in Denmark continues to be outraged by the signature of the Pact, and anti-German feeling is becoming intensified. There are said to have been clashes between the German forces and Danish fishermen, who are angered by the restrictions imposed on their activities, and also jealous of German interference with Danish women. A number of Danish workers employed in Norway on the Trondheim naval base are stated to be most unhappy, since they are not only unpopular with the Norwegians but are unable to escape from German control or to return to their own country.

In Norway there has been a fresh wave of arrests, and Quisling, speaking at Bergen on the 6th December, repeated his threats against those who would not collaborate with his party. As a further measure directed against Norwegian seamen sailing in the service of their Government and of Great Britain, the authorities have decided to withhold support from their families. This has been accompanied by offers of financial assistance from German Consulates in America to any Norwegian seamen who would consent to return to Norway. The Norwegian Government in London has guaranteed the eventual repayment of any sums advanced by individuals or institutions in Norway for the maintenance of the families of loyal seamen.

There has been an energetic attempt on the part of the Quislings to excite public indignation against the recent sinking of the Norwegian steamer *Vindafjord* by a British plane. Oslo radio reported that 500 persons attended a protest meeting held in Stavanger on the 1st December, but, as this is little more than one per cent. of the population of the town, the success of this propaganda does not seem to have been impressive. All reports from Norway, indeed, continue to stress that the loyalist front holds with almost incredible solidarity and mutual helpfulness, in spite of all dangers and discouragements.

LOW COUNTRIES.

The marriage of the King of the Belgians with Mlle. Marie Lilian Baels has been described by Cardinal van Roey, who performed the ceremony as far back as the 11th September, as affecting exclusively the King's private family life. This statement has not prevented discussion in Belgium of possible wider implications. According to *Transocean* of the 7th December, it has "convinced"