

Italians as a far severer shock than the disappearance of Mussolini's East African Empire. Libya has been incorporated as an integral part of the Italian body politic, and the amputation of this limb would be felt all the more keenly since Libya is so much nearer to the heart of Italy; was the prize of a war more truly national than was ever the "Fascist stunt" war against Abyssinia, and could show in the colonization and settlement of Cyrenaica one of the most successful undertakings of the Government.

Such a loss would, moreover, be the more painful in that, under the proposed new dispensation recently sketched in Rome by Funk, it was clearly intimated to Italy that she was expected to concentrate her attention upon the basin of the Mediterranean (see p. 13 of *Summary* No. 108). The published accounts of the drearily similar and formal speeches delivered at the Berlin gathering of the McQuisling clansmen have not been supplemented by any interesting information upon the more intimate conversations held there afterwards, such as that between Hitler and Ciano or, again, that between Ciano and Sr. Serrano Suñer. The importance of the political issues involved in the outcome of the Libyan battle has, however, been more or less openly admitted in Rome, and is generally acknowledged by all political onlookers in countries forming the hinterland to the Mediterranean. There have been renewed reports that, as part of a German-French deal, Mussolini has been compelled to forgo his claims upon Tunis and has been promised compensation in some form or another in Syria and Egypt. For several years past Italy has been bidding for the favour of the Islamic world, and the redoubled intrigues in which she is known to have been engaged since the outbreak of the war testify to her deep interest in all the countries of the Middle East. The obliteration of Italy from the soil of Africa would, then, affect profoundly her immediate and future political fortunes and provide justification of the despatch of large Italian reinforcements for Libya.

That there has been any rise in the morale of the civilian population corresponding to that displayed by the armed forces does not appear probable. Ansaldo, in broadcasting a description of a visit paid a few days ago to a small town at the foot of the Alps, was apparently much pleased because "nowhere was there any sign of ill-temper, only patient resignation," and he recorded as typical such remarks as: "Let us hope that so much suffering will lead to something." The truth of this picture is borne out by neutral observers, who report that depression, discontent and apathy are prevalent generally, and that especially in the upper classes the attitude is one of helpless despair. Preziosi, well known for his frank criticisms, has renewed his attacks upon the defeatist "poisoners" of public opinion, and deplors the failure of the Fascist party and officials to enforce control of prices and stop the scandal of the black market in its various forms. The conduct of the traders and of their different suppliers has, he writes, been "the saddest of the surprises of this war," and "not even the greatest pessimist could have expected so much indiscipline, greed and brazenness." A few persons have professed to detect signs of a movement for the conclusion of a separate peace. But the most generally accepted view is that, in spite of so much unrest and selfish inobservance of patriotic obligations, no immediate threat to the régime is yet apparent. Whether this view may have to be modified when more is learned of the trial in Trieste of seventy-one persons charged with participation in a "vast conspiracy against the State" is not yet clear. It is, of course, possible that publicity has now been given to this trial with the object of arousing popular sympathy for a tottering régime, but it is also arguable that the Government would never have allowed so much to be revealed to the world unless it were tolerably sure of its position.

SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE.

The German aspects of the Anti-Comintern Congress held in Berlin on the 25th November have already been dealt with under "Germany" last week: but a certain time must necessarily elapse before its bearings on South-East Europe can be fully estimated. In the first instance, it is to be noted that Hungary apparently ranks first in the Quisling hierarchy, being the first of the lesser Powers to join the Anti-Comintern Pact. Hence, M. Bardossy's speech took precedence over those of Señor Suñer and all the lesser lights; and he can hardly be blamed for stressing the fact that Hungary was the first country to fall victim to bolshevism in 1919, and the first to recover from the disease. He went on to peg out Hungary's claim to having enjoyed

centuries of friendship with Germany and Italy, and therefore to have welcomed the victory of Fascist and National-Socialist ideas with special enthusiasm. She was thus ready to join Führer and Duce in "forestalling the imminent Bolshevik offensive against European culture" by force of arms. All this was in keeping with his speech in Parliament a week before leaving Berlin, in which he expressed Hungary's eternal gratitude towards Hitler, declared "the Serbian nightmare" to have vanished for ever (this from the man who concluded a pact of Eternal Friendship with Yugoslavia last March) and exulted in Hungary's share in driving back the Russians to a distance of 1,500 kilometres from the Hungarian frontier.

There appear to have been amusing quarrels about precedence in Berlin: and the Slovak Premier, M. Tuka, having given great publicity to the fact that he sat next to Ribbentrop at the official lunch, M. Bardossy announced in Budapest that he had had a special half-hour with the Führer in addition to all the usual receptions. Ribbentrop, in calling up the Quislings one by one to sign on the dotted line, stated that he was summoning them alphabetically.

The shortest speech came from M. Mihai Antonescu, who stressed the common struggle for justice and civilisation as "the greatest creative work of our century," merely adding that Roumania began the fight against bolshevism in 1919. The Croat Foreign Minister, M. Lorkovitch, put forward the highly unconvincing claim that "already under foreign rule" Croatia was arming herself against communism, and joined the common front as soon as she had obtained her independence. Not to be outdone, M. Tuka claimed that Slovakia had already "joined in spirit" before she possessed political independence, and took this chance of denouncing President Beneš and the Prague Government for "laying open the heart of Europe to communism." M. Popov, the Bulgarian Foreign Minister, adduced an overwhelming national motive in the desire to reverse the "Diktat" of Neuilly and Versailles: but the undertone of his speech betrayed a genuine fear of communism at home, which derives its force from the extent to which Russia and bolshevism are identified amid wide sections of the Bulgarian peasantry. It is important to note that, while Ribbentrop himself began with Britain and ended with America as the true villains of the piece, and kept forgetting that the demonstration was really staged against Russia, all the others concentrated their fire upon Bolshevik ideology and never even alluded to Britain or America, much less joined in his vulgar abuse of Mr. Churchill and President Roosevelt.

The whole orientation of official and non-official opinion in the South-East European States is likely to be affected very materially by impending events—on the one hand the first two suggestions of German military reverses and on the other the expectation that His Majesty's Government will treat as open enemies the three Governments which have joined Germany in the active invasion of our Russian Ally's territory. It is only right to draw a distinction between the three cases of Finland, Hungary and Roumania. Roumania, like Finland, was beguiled into action by the desire to recover national territory torn from it only a year ago, but was also, like Finland, encouraged by its German task-master not to rest content with the recovery of what it had lost, but to lay hands on further territory to which it had no just claim, and the retention of which was bound to perpetuate its quarrel with Russia and so play the German game. In the case of Hungary there was no territory to be recovered from Russia, but there was, of course, the knowledge that Russia, whether Bolshevik or non-Bolshevik, was more likely to support Slovak and Yugoslav and even Roumanian territorial claims than Hungary's own designs of further revision, and that her only possible hope of a complete restoration lay in a German victory. A further important motive was provided by the question of Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia; so long as Russia held Eastern Galicia and the crests of the North-Eastern Carpathians, this little province, inhabited by the most neglected of all Hungary's subject nationalities, would be in permanent danger, while the Czecho-Polish rapprochement, under the aegis of the democracies, has only served to confirm Hungary in a general anti-Slav attitude.

Information accumulates to suggest that Roumanian opinion is more than ever conscious of the trap into which incompetent leadership has plunged the country, of Germany's success in creating a gulf between Roumania and any sort of future Russia, and of the impossibility of upholding the Transdnestrrian claim. The Conducator himself is known to be increasingly disturbed at the turn of events, and while doubtless realising that for himself there is no hope of effecting a retreat, he resents the shameless manner in which the Nazis are exploiting the