

ITALY.

Italians are fond of describing themselves as realists. Scepticism, often allied with a lack of true sentiment and a complete lack of romance, would seem to be a more accurate appellation.

Italian realists had apparently failed to realise that Italy might be expected and made to pay for her "stab in the back" and for her three years of war against the United Nations, with the result that Mr. Eden's statement, in reply to a question in the House of Commons, that Italy's African Empire was irrevocably lost, seems to have come as a very unpleasant shock, although it in fact only repeated previously declared views.

The Christian Democrat paper *Il Popolo* asks whether Mr. Eden's statement refers to the Ethiopian Empire or to the old colonies as well, and is anxious to know to whom the colonies will go in view of the fact that the Atlantic Charter proclaims that Great Britain and the United States of America are not seeking "territorial aggrandisement," and in this connexion the paper quotes information attributed to a broadcast by "Radio London" in Arabic to the effect that Said Idris es Senussi had had an interview with Nahas Pasha during which the Libyan question was discussed. The author of the article then asks if an international administration for colonial territories is under consideration because in that case Italy would, more easily, be able to make the sacrifice . . . , and finishes by enquiring if it is conceivable to invite Italy to fight against Japan after learning that her colonies, gained at such great expense, are irrevocably lost.

In an interview with Sir Noel Charles, Marchese Visconti, the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, said that the situation in Sicily was serious owing to the increasing activities of the Separationists, and that Signor Orlando, himself a Sicilian, had, on his return from the island, confirmed this state of affairs. The Separationists, said Marchese Visconti, were working against the Bonomi Government and also against the High Commissioner for Sicily, Signor Aldisio. The Separationists were claiming that their movement had the backing of Great Britain and the United States of America, which the Italian Government of course knew to be untrue, and there was also a rumour that they had joined forces with the Mafia, supposedly suppressed by Mussolini, and that the latter were intimidating the peasants and that cases of violence were not uncommon.

During a conversation with Sir Noel Charles, Signor De Gasperi, the leader of the Christian Democrats, one of the three strongest parties, said that all politics in Italy centred round the "Institutional question." Therein lay the danger of strife. Signor De Gasperi spoke at length on the problem of where and how to settle the "Institutional question"—whether by plebiscite or election, and whether to decide this question as soon as possible after the liberation of Italy or wait until all the Italian prisoners of war and workers had been repatriated. The Christian Democrats have not yet made clear their own policy as regards the monarchy and have been assiduously wooed by the Communist-Socialist alliance to decide in favour of a republic. The Christian Democrat party appears to have a Left and Right Wing but may possibly be more pro- than anti-monarchy.

The trial of Azzolini, the former Governor of the Bank of Italy, began in Rome on the 9th October. Azzolini is accused of handing over to the Germans the gold reserves of the bank amounting to 117 tons. Azzolini's defence was that he had always served his country faithfully but that German pressure had been too strong. Mussolini, and subsequently Badoglio, had wanted the gold removed to various places in the north of Italy, but in Azzolini's opinion it was quite as safe in the vaults of the bank. He had had 50 tons walled up in the vaults but the Germans had been too well informed and knew exactly the quantity and position of the gold. Finally, German pressure had become so strong that the gold had to be handed over to them. On the 28th September, 1943, the gold was removed to Milan and thence was deposited in a tunnel near the Brenner Pass. Most of it was subsequently carried off into Germany. During the trial it emerged that, when Italy occupied Yugoslavia, the gold in the Yugoslav National Bank was seized and sent to Italy—only, however, to fall into the hands of the Germans as well. The trial of Azzolini is not yet over and may last three or four days.

Rumours as to evacuation preparations in the North are contradictory. Graziani, who has recently been decorated with the Iron Cross by Kesselring, is said to have denied all rumours of an imminent abandonment of Lombardy by the Wehrmacht. At the same time Swiss reports suggest that German preparatory measures for evacuation are going on apace. Much troop movement is

reported on the highways leading from Piedmont and Lombardy to Venezia Giulia and Venezia Tridentina. Some 2,000 S.S. men are said to have arrived in Milan, where it is feared that they are to carry out destruction works prior to evacuation. Industries carrying out work for Germany have been told that all deliveries must be completed by the 15th October. Several prominent industrialists of Milan and Turin are said already to have left Italy, apparently with German consent. Milan workers staged a 3-hour strike in protest against the intensified transfer of machinery to Germany. Turin railway workers have been on strike for a fortnight, and a new High Commissioner Extraordinary has been appointed to deal with the situation there.

German and Fascist propaganda speaks of North Italy as "a land of plenty" and favourably contrasts food conditions there with those pertaining in the South. This is no doubt true as far as it goes, as the fertile wheat-producing North is now relieved of any necessity to feed the South. But the North Italian population, whose defeatist attitude has recently been openly admitted by Pettinato in the Turin *Stampa*, are not likely to be taken in by such representations or by the few half-hearted social measures recently put out, such as a proposed cost-of-living bonus and special aid to servicemen's families. A Swiss paper is probably near the mark when, quoting the view of anti-Fascist circles, it expresses the opinion that Kesselring will try to hold on in the Apennines until the North Italian rice crop has been harvested and threshed; only transport difficulties, says this report, have prevented a more wholesale transfer of other crops to Germany, and stocks are still awaiting removal.

(See also under "Czechoslovakia.")

THE VATICAN.

When the present Pope saw that his efforts to prevent war would be vain, he turned to works of charity, and the Vatican has constantly emphasised this side of the Church's activity. Recently the Pope gave his official support to the National Association for Distribution of Relief in Italy, a body to which the Church promised 5 million and the Bonomi Government 10 million lire. Mr. Myron Taylor conveyed his appreciation of this act and the Pope, in a reply dated the 4th October, described Italy as "one of the most grievously tried nations in the war," and expressed the hope that "the work begun might prove to the suffering population the tangible proof in the world of Christian charity."

On the 6th October the Vatican wireless urged Catholics to concentrate their prayers this month on the return of Eastern Christians to Rome—"to the one and only true fold and the one and only true shepherd." Pius XII's Encyclical, *Orientalis Ecclesiae Decus*, which made a similar appeal, found no support amongst the Orthodox and the Copts for unity on such terms.

So far no one has been appointed to succeed the late Cardinal Maglione as Secretary of State. Meanwhile, the Pope fills the position himself. As Cardinal Pacelli, he was Secretary of State from 1930 until his election as Pope. Previously he had been for fifteen years Nuncio in Germany, first in Munich then in Berlin. Cardinal Maglione, after being Nuncio in Berne, spent ten years as Nuncio in Paris. When France collapsed, the German Ambassador told Cardinal Maglione that the war was won. He replied: "On the contrary, Monsieur l'Ambassadeur, the war is only now about to begin." In this conviction Cardinal Maglione was at variance with Vatican opinion generally from the most exalted quarters downwards. In business dealings both Secretaries of State were equally gracious and receptive; but Cardinal Maglione was by nature open and frank, while his predecessor's characteristic was caution. In his death, which the British Minister to the Holy See described as a personal loss, the Pope lost a loyal servant and this country and France an understanding friend.

SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE.

Hungary.

The whole Hungarian position was dominated by the military situation. Soviet pressure was concentrated on Hungary's south-eastern front, and here, after a period of relatively indecisive fighting, the Soviet forces began a rapid advance which by the 10th October had carried them as far as the line of the Tisza on a broad front, from Szeged in the south to the neighbourhood of Debreczen in the north. On the 11th October the fall of Kolozsvár (Cluj) was