

Mr. Hore-Belisha, speaking confidentially to members of the Association of American Correspondents in London on April 27th, discussed the Anglo-Italian agreement, the position of Germany, and the central European situation with considerable candor.

Czechoslovakia, he stated, was already as good as "gone." He regarded Czechoslovakia as indefensible from a military point of view and did not think that either France or this country would fight in its defense.

Asked when he thought the war would come he replied that he thought Germany would be allowed to play the part of a rich man who eventually "over bought" and finally came to grief. Germany, he indicated, might bring under its control Czechoslovakia and all of southeastern Europe, as well as the Corridor, certain parts of Scandinavia, and other German islands in Europe.

He expressed the opinion that Germany would be allowed to do this, without a general war ("Democracies cannot declare war " he said) and the general war would probably not come until Germany had gained all that she desired in Europe. Then, he indicated, Germany would again build a great fleet and eventually would fight a great war with France and Britain.

He expressed the personal opinion that Germany was a definite menace, insatiably aggressive and would have to

be fought. He said he would not like to say that Chamberlain shared his views. The Prime Minister, he said, was probably not ready to say that Germany was incapable of being satisfied - whatever he really thought.

He seemed to feel that Czechoslovakia's military position had been rendered impossible by the conquest of Austria which allowed the Germans to get around the Czech "Maginot Line".

France, he said, was absolutely impregnable. Its army was absolutely first class and the Maginot Line, which was being extended to cover the whole frontier to the North Sea, was invulnerable.

Italy, he was convinced, was sincerely enthusiastic about the Angle-Italian agreement. He thought that the Duce appeared frightened by the presence of Germany on the Brenner and that Ciano, whose wife (Edda Mussolini) had been an enthusiastic supporter of the Rome-Berlin axis idea, was now intent upon cementing relations with Britain and France.

"What happens to the Mare Nostrum idea now," he said he asked Ciano.

"We will need twenty years to digest Abyssinia and can't plan to expand our Empire farther before then," he said Ciano answered.

He also asked Ciano when the Germans were going to take Trieste, to which Ciano replied that Trieste was "nine tenths Italian" and was not admitted by the Italians to be "discussable."

To this Hore-Belisha said he replied that "The Germans

1218 don't discuss."

Hore-Belisha said he was convinced that Italy would actually withdraw all of her troops from Spain after the war. Germany and ^{Britain} ~~Italy~~, he seemed to think, would then have a peaceful struggle for economic domination in that country.

Ex-King Alphonso, with whom Hore-Belisha said that he had had a "boreing conversation", told him that Franco planned to put Alphonso's second son on the throne when the war was over. Alphonso also swore to Hore-Belisha that "there hadn't been a single Italian soldier in Spain".

Referring to the British Army Hore-Belisha said that one of his biggest troubles, now that recruiting was picking up so well, was to know "what to do with the Army." He said that he had brought the government around to his view that the British army must no longer be considered as a complement to the continental armies. In his opinion the British army would not go to the continent unless there were a prolonged war.

The Cardwell System he regarded as completely out of date and he said that representatives of the Indian Government were now in London to discuss means of changing that system.

Hore-Belisha was not impressed by Mussolini and expressed the view that one could find a great many people in England who ~~could~~ were his superiors as far as "personality" was concerned.

This conversation was strictly confidential, waiters were excluded from the room and it was understood that it was not to be reported in the papers. XX