

Red sea power and Fascist

AS RUSSIA defies Italy in the Mediterranean, charging piracy on the part of Italian submarines, she is none too sure of herself. Italy has her entire naval strength concentrated in Mare Nostrum, with numerous island and peninsular bases, while the Russian Black Sea fleet is based on Crimean Sevastopol, far away. Italy has only the Mediterranean area to consider, while the Red navy is divided into Baltic, Black, Caspian, White Sea, and Pacific squadrons.

Russia, furthermore, while strong on land and in the air, is weak on the water. Most Russian ships are World War or pre-War in origin, and many of her best vessels are in the Baltic, facing Germany, or in the Far East, where Japan looms up.

Italy launched two new 35,000-ton battleships last month. She has four other battleships, an aircraft carrier, 25 cruisers, perhaps 450 light craft, and close to 80 submarines. Total tonnage: 530,000. Her torpedo-carrying, 2-man MAS speedboats, fast, light, cheap, and deadly, were the potential terror of the British during the Ethiopian War.

The five-times divided Red navy operates four 1911 battleships, seven cruisers, 35 destroyers, between 30 and 60 submarines, 60 gunboats, etc. Total tonnage: 200,000. The British navy totals 1,500,000 tons and the French, 800,000 tons. American tonnage approaches the British, with 1,400,000; Japan, in third place, has 900,000; while Germany has 300,000.

Italy has specialized in novel sea equipment of various sorts, while Russia is orthodox. Italian sailors, too, are far handier than those of the landlubberly Soviet Union.