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"The Rome Berlin Axis"

DR. HANS SIMONS.

CHAIRMAN R. COURTICE:—Before introducing our Guest-Speaker I have been asked to refer to a special Convocation of the University of Toronto to be held at 3 o'clock when he will receive the honorary degree of LL.D., after which he will address the Convocation. It has happily been able to arrange this special meeting of the Canadian Club at which Dr. Simons is to address us.

International rôles are daily becoming more involved, and the situation is subject to rapid changes. It was felt by the executive that it would be a good thing if, at the first meeting, we could have somebody to give us an explanation of what was going on in Europe.

With that in mind we have reason to believe that we have been particularly fortunate to have been able to secure Dr. Hans Simons to address the Club.

Dr. Simons is internationally known as an authority on European and international affairs. He has had a wide experience in that field, and has held many prominent positions, both German and international, among them that of general secretary of the German League of Nations Union. He has been a member of the Reich, and has held the portfolio of Reichs Minister of the interior. He is now of the faculty of the new School of Economic Research.

Dr. Simons was first introduced to Canada at a conference of the Canadian Institute of Economics. His contribution to the proceedings of that body was so outstanding that a lecture tour throughout Canada was immediately arranged for him.

The most recent move of Mussolini and Hitler has been the establishment of the Rome-Berlin Axis, and it is on this

subject that Dr. Simons is to address us. Gentlemen, Dr. Hans Simons.

DR. SIMONS:—Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen. I have to thank your chairman for his very kind words of introduction. I considered myself very fortunate when I received your invitation to address this meeting, for I was flattered that you should want to hear my views on the European Situation. But my self-esteem received quite a blow when a friend said to me: "It has nothing to do with you; they just wanted a change from election speeches." If that is all you wanted, I think I can promise to perform satisfactorily.

In Germany and Italy the people are looking at this new Rome-Berlin Axis and wondering, "How can you make an axis into a bloc?"

It is a very difficult question to answer and, that it is being asked in both countries, goes far to show that the people are somewhat doubtful about the real strength of the formation.

Some of them look up the dictionary and discover that an axis is there defined as a straight line around which something revolves or is supposed to revolve. That, it seems to me, is an excellent analysis of the situation as it exists between Italy and Germany. It shows both the weakness and the strength of that particular form of organization.

The imaginary line reflects the basic strength, for imagination is one of the principal forces on which the totalitarian state exists. Those enormous gatherings in Berlin and Rome attract the imaginations of the people and satisfy their wishes in the realms of the unreal, which gains upon their own consciousness by the impact of these shows.

The people feel stronger because the gatherings give them an overwhelming sense of their own force, and the two countries feel stronger because they feel that they are possessed of a common philosophy.

This philosophy, first of all, is totalitarianism, and totalitarianism means very much the same thing whether expressed in terms of the domestic or the international position. It submits all its citizens to the rules of the state as embodying the nation, and as represented by the government, and

its solution to all problems is: "Believe, Obey, and Fight." This, in effect means; "Believe all that you are told by the government; believe only that part of what else you are told, that the government tells you to believe, and then realize your obedience by fighting for what you believe."

And it is a very difficult thing to realize the extent to which the people of Germany and Italy are entirely sincere in believing what the Government tells them to believe.

The government, quite naturally, of course, does not tell everything, and it is this policy, of telling the people only what they think is good for them, that enables the rulers to shift their policies from one day to the next. They are proud of this flexibility, and that has a definite implication in terms of international politics.

Hitler has very well stated the technique of international intercourse they adopt. He tells his people. "We ask for Peace, but not the peace which is the wages of renunciation and cowardice." This is an exaggeration of the kind of policy that the German Republic and pre-fascist Italy tried to adopt. But the two peoples no longer want to make sacrifices at home in the hope of gaining something abroad.

If you want to realize just how strong is the hold that the totalitarian state has gained on the minds of the people of Germany, you must remember just what Germany has gained during the period of dictatorship. You must remember how she has regained during that period her place as an international power; how she got rid of the French troops in the occupied zone years before she was entitled to do so, under the terms of the treaty; how she gained membership in the League of Nations; how she rid herself of the burden of reparations; and how she got on the road to military and economic equality.

The two countries have developed, too, what one might describe as a proletarian aspect, which represents them as poor and exploited. Mussolini used the word to describe his own country. "Italy," he said, "has become a proletarian nation."

It is such things as this that tend to bind the two peoples together. At the end of the World War Italy did not gain any of those fruits of victory for which she was eagerly

waiting and to which she felt herself entitled. And Germany had lost more than she could afford to lose. Common to the two peoples was a feeling that they had been robbed of territory, left with insufficient resources to feed their peoples, overpopulated as they are, and lacking raw materials. In addition there was, drawing them together, a general feeling on the part of both peoples of economic and national isolation.

Common, also, to both is that totalitarian and collectivist technique that brings them so close to the Soviet Union. And it is just this resemblance to the Russian model that drives the two countries into such a perfect frenzy of anti-communism, which is the strongest common basis of the axis.

This anti-communistic technique serves two purposes, one at home, and one abroad. At home it serves to make the communist bogey a scapegoat for all the inevitable failures that accompany totalitarian rule. There is not the slightest doubt that the privations which were suffered in Germany, as a consequence of rearmament, were suffered so gladly because great groups in Germany expected that one day Germany would have to use those armaments to repel a Bolshevik attack.

And there is no question that the Red Bogey was successfully used abroad in the same connection, for it certainly had something to do with the attitude of Europe when it came to permitting Germany to rearm.

There is no doubt, too, that there was something of this sort behind the actions of Europeans when it came to the imposition of sanctions against Italy. There were large groups amongst the nations applying those sanctions who were deeply worried by the possibility that Mussolini might be thrown from office in the event of defeat. The result was that these nations were very lenient in their application of sanctions, so that they might save the Fascist government from any threat of the Reds. As the anti-communist bogey proved so efficient in this instance, there is no doubt that it will be used again and again in the future.

There is another point that binds the two countries together, and that is, that they both need international assistance in the matter of finance. Without some kind of inter-

national loan Italy cannot hope to exploit her conquest of Ethiopia, and Germany cannot hope to get a sufficient supply of raw materials from abroad. At the same time they both need a new distribution of spheres of influence in order to be able to develop a common program.

Again their outlook in the matter of the League of Nations is a common one. The League is an Institution which is entirely foreign to their own policies, for it represents the transfer of the democratic ideal and technique from the domestic to the international field, a policy quite unacceptable to totalitarian countries which cannot accept the idea of making sacrifices for the community. The only kind of sacrifice they consider justified is a sacrifice by the people for the State.

Another tie. Italy and Germany are bound together by a very definite anti-Russian aim which has developed into the policy of trying to isolate the Western and Eastern Systems of guarantees from one another. It is an attempt to break up the mutual assistance treaty between France and Russia: to isolate France and keep her from playing any important part in the settlement of European affairs.

Italy's policy, so far as Russia is concerned is to prevent the Soviet Union from playing any important role in the Mediterranean. The reopening of the Dardanelles gave Russia freedom from her confinement to the Black Sea by giving control of the Straits to Turkey. They had been internationally controlled, and with the change Russia has gained free access to the Mediterranean. She is naturally interested in retaining that freedom, and is therefore, to that extent, a supporter of France and Great Britain. But she is the weakest point of the triangle and therefore Italy concentrates her drive politically and practically upon Russia.

Such are the strengths, spiritual and practical of the axis. But there are also weaknesses of very great importance. When she conquered Ethiopia, Italy had to pay a very high price for her dependence on central Europe, a price which may involve the opening of a way to Eastern Europe for Germany, and already it would seem that Italy's policy of keeping Austria and Germany apart is in a way to being defeated.

Germany has an investment of around fifty million marks in Ethiopia, which so far has shown no signs of giving any return, and that is really all the interest Italy has for Germany. All Germany's interests are concentrated in Europe, and the more Italy turns to her new Empire the less the two have of common ground. Germany is bent on extending her interests in Austria, for no country, lacking the interests of Austria could hope to gain the kind of economic pre-dominance in the Balkans for which Germany is striving. Her only real ally is Albania, and I doubt if she is very impressive in that role.

What, therefore, is left to Germany and Italy in the rest of Europe? Two powers only. Portugal and Rebel Spain, and Rebel Spain, whether victorious or not, is not reliable, for she will not look with any undue amount of favor on any power trying to expand in the Mediterranean.

There are, moreover, other and older things that have a tendency to weaken the axis. The treaty of 1915 that brought Italy into the war is not yet forgotten in Germany. Italy hopes to expand into the near East, but Germany has not forgotten her own pre-war dreams in that direction—dreams that brought about the Berlin to Bagdad Railway, and the hope of providing herself with an outlet to the Indian Ocean through territory now held by Turkey.

Those two possible lines of expansion are bound to clash, and the more that the two countries stick to their present policies of expansion the more certain it is that they *will* clash.

There is, further, the question of Italy's attitude toward Britain. Germany is trying to gain Britain's friendship, for perhaps the only lesson she learned from the great war is that she will never again face Britain in war as an enemy. Her whole policy, therefore is to try to isolate France.

Italy's policy, on the other hand, is just the opposite. Her policy is to try to gain the cooperation of France in the Mediterranean. Both countries have great interests in Africa, and by this common interest Italy hopes to be able to isolate Great Britain—at least so far as the Middle Sea is concerned.

Even if we think in terms of common political action in Germany's colonial claims the cleavage appears. Any favor-

able result of such action would be to strengthen Germany with a corresponding weakening of Italy, because, whatever the outcome, territorial achievements by Germany would present a threat to Italy. As allies in any war with Great Britain they would run into tactical difficulties at once, with one fleet bottled up in the Mediterranean, and the other in the Baltic.

Then, too, one must consider the past relations of the two countries. Germany has by no means forgotten the history of those relations. Italy was a member of the Triple Alliance, but she forsook her obligations under that agreement, and joined with the powers that offered her the most advantages. In the event of another European war the same thing would be quite likely to happen again, because she realizes that a German victory would mean an extension of German influence in the Mediterranean, with consequent threats against her own territory.

When it came to making terms of Peace after the last war Italy was no more lenient to Germany than any of the other powers. And Germany remembers that too, even though Hitler may have declared that during the period of German humiliation Italy did not exploit Germany to the same extent as most of the other countries did. I personally cannot see a single instance of a different policy on the part of Italy from that of any of the other nations. Italy vigorously opposed the German rearmament and she cooperated with Russia at the disarmament conference.

Germany, it is claimed, did not take part in the imposition of sanctions. Of course she did not, officially, but on the other hand she did not send anything to Italy anyway.

No, there can be no question that the national interests of the two countries are widely opposed, and dictatorships will serve their own interests regardless of any international obligations. When it comes to personalities Hitler and Mussolini are so utterly different that there is no reason to suppose that any personal friendship between them would have a tendency to strengthen the new axis.

Again in the long run the Germans do not really expect the Italians to form a very warlike nation. They had experiences during the last war that lead them to suspect that an alliance with Italy is in itself not very much of an

advantage. The Italians, on their side, know only too well that Germany will not be controlled by any feelings of friendship for them, and that, if they are allies, Italy will be expected to assume the role of a very junior partner.

The impact of the alliance on the rest of the world is not greatly important. The axis is formed by outside pressure rather than by any friendships from within. Italy is losing ground in central Europe, and the inevitable result will be, the reorganization of central Europe on general lines that will involve not only a threat to her Italian territory but to her position as a great European Power.

In Spain, both countries look for a spring-board to South America, but any such result of their intervention would only be a means of importing German political and economic values into South America, with a consequent gain of influence for Germany for which Italy has long been striving herself. But that particular threat is not serious any way. It was taken care of at the Pan-American conference, which was probably called because of some such thought in the mind of the United States.

What is the impact of the Axis on these instruments of international cooperation which have been developed since the war? It seems to me that the League of Nations has gained, rather than lost, by the fact that two Dictatorships have left it, and another has turned into a passive membership.

I do not agree that the usefulness of the League has ended. There is no other place where the bombing of civilians could have been condemned publicly as it was at the League Assembly. There is no other place where the smaller countries can make their voices heard; where the influences for peace can become vocal.

In the last analysis the axis is an attempt on the part of the two countries to join their voices in an attempt to bring to the strength of a common position to bear in bargaining for such things as the access to raw materials. We may ask them what is their price. Mussolini, during a meeting with Hitler at Berlin, said: "The entire world is asking what will be the result of the axis, war or peace?" And Hitler and Mussolini replied together with a loud voice; "Peace."

Dictatorships are not the only countries with loud voices. The whole world becomes vocal on facing the question: "What is your price?" Italy and Germany both have claims which must be considered, and which have to be satisfied. But they must be considered and satisfied by using the means of cooperation within the League of Nations. And when Italy and Germany put the question: "What is your price?" the rest of the world must also reply with a loud voice: "Peace."