

(January 8, 1934)

Italy's Foreign Policy

BY COMMENDATORE LUIGI VILLARI.

VICE-PRESIDENT ARSCOTT:—Gentlemen, this is the first meeting of the Club this year. I would like to take the opportunity of extending to you on behalf of the executive and myself our very best wishes for 1934.

The guest of honor today is Commendatore Luigi Villari. He is visiting Toronto with a number of distinguished representatives of Italy under the auspices of the National Council of Education, and will address us on "Italy's Foreign Policy," on which subject he is particularly well qualified to speak. From 1906 to 1914 he was attached to the Colonial Foreign Offices of his government. At the outbreak of war he joined as an officer in the Territorial cavalry. Following the war, early in 1920, he was appointed a member of the staff of the League of Nations, first as Italian member and then as personal assistant to the Italian Under Secretary General. In 1931 and 1932 he lectured before the Institute of Politics in Williamstown on Italy's Corporate System in Politics and Economics. He has written a number of books on political and economic problems. He has also written articles on Italy for the Encyclopedia Britannica and on American and British subjects for the Enciclopedia Italiana. He is Commander of the Crown of Italy and a member of the Order of St. Maurice, and has been decorated with the Italian Cross, the British Military Cross, and the French *Croix de Guerre*. I have much pleasure in asking him to speak to us.

COMMENDATORE VILLARI:—Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen, I feel I must begin my address by expressing the very cordial thanks of all the members of our little party to the National Council of Education for having instituted this

"Italy Week" and for having extended its courteous invitation to us to take part in it. As Italians, we are particularly grateful that Italy should be the first foreign country selected for the national weeks. I consider this initiative of national weeks a most valuable one. Canada is less well known to the rest of the world, outside the British Empire, than she deserves to be, and if our visit has the effect of stimulating interest in Canada among our own people, it will be all to the good. If on the other hand greater interest in Italy is aroused among the people of Canada, the result will be equally gratifying. And I am convinced that this mutual interest will be aroused. We are seeing Canada in the most agreeable circumstances, meeting with a number of the most representative men and women in the Dominion, and being treated with the most delightful and cordial hospitality. Our recollection of the country and its people cannot fail, therefore, to be a most pleasant one. We on our part shall do our best to make you feel that you wish to know something more of our country and its people, and I trust that your wish will find expression in the visits of many of you to Italy. I can assure you that you will be most hospitably received.

Again let me thank the National Council of Education most heartily, and Major Ney in particular, and express the wish that their initiative will be the beginning of something much bigger in international relations.

To understand Italy's international relations today we must look back a few years, to the immediate post-war period. On entering the World War Italy had certain aspirations, the satisfaction of which was embodied in the Treaty of London of 1915 and certain subsequent agreements concluded during the war, such as the St. Jean de Maurienne agreement of 1917. Italy needed securer land frontiers than she then possessed, a more satisfactory settlement of the Adriatic problem, the annexation to Italy of the territories on her borders inhabited by a population predominantly Italian in numbers, or in tradition and civilization, and the possibility of colonial expansion in case the German colonies were seized and the Turkish Empire broken up. We have but to look at the map to see

Italy's need for expansion, commercial as well as territorial, enclosed as she is in the Mediterranean, a sea whose exits are in the hands of other Powers than Italy. Her rapidly growing population and her limited territory explain her aspirations for a larger colonial domain.

The war meant a vast effort for Italy, a relatively greater one than for her Allies, who were richer by far than she. In killed alone she lost six hundred thousand of her sons, over a million seriously wounded out of a population of thirty-five million, nearly half her national wealth was consumed, and more than half of her merchant shipping destroyed by the German submarine campaign. Yet, at the Peace Conference her achievements and her losses were not adequately recognized by her Allies, who secured the chief advantages for themselves and grudged Italy even what had been definitely promised to her by treaty. She did secure, after much wrangling, a safe frontier on the Alps, one which offers no incentive to aggression to either side, and most of the Italian districts formerly Austrian became Italian. But her situation in the Adriatic remained precarious, as the whole of the eastern shore south of Zara, with its innumerable well-sheltered inlets, admirably suited for an aggressive naval action against her own exposed Adriatic coasts, remained in the hands of a Power none too friendly, one which, although not possessing a formidable fleet of her own, might well place its ports at the disposal of a better armed ally. Of the colonial territories promised to Italy nothing was given her, except a small stretch of poor land along the Juba river in Africa, but not an acre suitable for white settlement or productive of valuable raw materials.

The League of Nations had, it is true, been created and was professedly intended to be an instrument for international justice. But Italy at first viewed this new organ with suspicion, inasmuch as it appeared to be too much under Franco-British influence and intended above all to safeguard the maintenance of a *status quo* favorable to the greater Allies and their vassals, and not too sympathetic towards her own aspirations and necessities. We must remember that Italy is a purely Mediterranean

country, that she must import a considerable part of her foodstuffs and raw materials, and that, while those imports are conveyed to Italy mostly from lands beyond the Mediterranean, the exits of that sea are not under her own control. The League did not seem inclined to or capable of providing for such a situation.

All this explains Italy's attitude towards the League. She wished to see it become really universal, so that all States might join it and that it should dispense justice to all. But experience has shown that such is not always its character, and that there is need for greater agility than is possible today in an organization with a Council of fifteen or sixteen members and an Assembly of fifty or sixty. Within the League itself the great Powers are often in disagreement among themselves, and each one often tries to secure the support of a group of lesser Powers for voting purposes, so that League policy is reduced to a sordid game of intrigue.

One of Italy's first attempts to secure a more reasonable attitude on the part of the victorious Powers was her policy towards Turkey. At the end of the war the Turks were more completely defeated than any other nation, and were ready to accept any conditions which the victor might impose on them, except one—that a large part of Turkey should be placed under Greece. Yet that was the very condition which France, Great Britain and the United States at first did try to impose on them. Italy did her best to avert the danger, but hers was a voice crying in the wilderness, and at that time she was too weak to enforce a more sensible and fairer policy. The Sèvres peace, however, proved even more brittle than the beautiful porcelain manufactured in that Paris suburb and was smashed to bits by the onrush of a revived Turkish nationalism.

Meanwhile Italy did good spade work for peace by concluding treaties of conciliation and friendship with a large number of Powers. She effected a settlement with the new Kemalist Turkey and also with Greece, with whom she had at one time had difficulties. In fact, she even stood sponsor to a settlement between Turkey and

Greece, and today the friendly understanding between Italy, Turkey and Greece, is one of the bulwarks of peace in the Near East.

Today it is essential above everything else that the great Powers should arrive at an understanding among themselves for the enforcement of peace. Peace is endangered by disagreement among the great Powers or an aggressive policy on the part of the irresponsible smaller Powers. If the great Powers are determined to maintain peace, the civilized smaller Powers will support them and the irresponsible ones will be impotent for evil. It was for this purpose that Signor Mussolini took the lead in promoting the Four-Power Pact between his own country, Great Britain, France and Germany. But he also had the courage to affirm what many had long been thinking, without daring to say so, that some form of treaty revision was indispensable. He did not propound any cut-and-dried scheme for revision, as that would have been dangerous, but the mere assertion that revision is possible under Article Nineteen of the League Covenant and that sooner or later we must achieve it, was most valuable and important.

Together with the Four-Power Pact goes disarmament. Italy has never failed to insist on the necessity that disarmament, to be effective, must be general and universal, *i.e.* that it must be applied to land, sea and air armaments and to all countries; she rejected any idea of disarmament which would leave some countries fully armed and others defenceless. It was the Italian delegation at Geneva which made the first practical proposal towards a reduction of armaments by suggesting the abolition of aggressive arms for all Powers. The proposal was ridiculed at first as incapable of realization, but as a matter of fact the distinction is a very real one; it was laid down in the Peace Treaties, which forbade the defeated Powers from possessing such arms while it permitted them to possess defensive weapons, and it then gave a definition of the two types of arms. Gradually the idea came to be accepted, but as there is no copyright in disarmament proposals it is sometimes called the British scheme, sometimes the American, while its "onlie begetter" is apt to be forgotten.

When we come to Italy's relations with individual Powers, those with France are the most immediately important. There were old causes of dissension between the two countries, going back to the days of the Risorgimento, and the dispute over the Temporal Power of the Pope. More recently Tunisia proved a bone of contention. France had occupied Tunisia in 1881 in a manner which aroused much resentment in Italy, and since then she has made every effort to force the Italian settlers in the Regency, who constitute the majority of the European inhabitants, to take French citizenship and to send their children to French schools. The intervention of French Freemasonry in Italy's internal policy was also resented. These and other disputes remained in abeyance during the war, but they were revived at the Peace Conference. France's support of Yugoslavia's ambitions and her refusal to agree to any of Italy's demands for colonial compensation, although such compensation had been promised in the treaties whereby Italy entered the war, added fuel to the flame. At the London Naval Conference of 1930 further dispute arose over the question of parity in cruiser strength between the two countries.

But of late Franco-Italian relations have undoubtedly improved. France appeared less anxious to encourage Yugoslavia in her ambitious policies and began to feel some alarm lest the war material supplied to that country might not be paid for. Above all the spirit inspiring Franco-Italian relations has improved, and each is now readier to understand the other's point of view sympathetically, than was the case a couple of years ago; this renders individual points of difference less acute. Italy's dispute with Yugoslavia is really a function of Franco-Italian relations; now that these are improved the danger of Yugoslave aggression grows far more remote.

Since the end of the war Italy ceased to feel any resentment against Germany, and realized that that Power could not be kept permanently in a position of inferiority. Whatever responsibilities the German Government may have incurred in bringing about the outbreak of the war, it was impossible and impolitic to exclude the country from the

community of nations in perpetuity. Italy therefore from the first advocated the admission of Germany to the League of Nations, and as soon as that question came up for discussion she strenuously supported Germany's application. Nor did Italy ever have much faith in the possibility of extracting from Germany "astronomical figures" in reparations, and although she actually received somewhat more from her share of reparations than she had to pay on her debts towards her Allies, she always strongly supported the wiping out of both reparations and inter-Allied debts.

With the advent of Hitlerism, Italy has watched the progress of events in Germany with some anxiety. She sympathized with German reaction against Communism and the feeble and unnatural Weimar Constitution and with the attempt to restore a feeling of hope and confidence among the German people. She also understood Germany's resentment at some of the clauses imposed on her under the terms of the Peace Treaties, a resentment which was felt just as strongly by the pre-Nazi Governments as by that of Hitler himself. But there is no real similarity between Italian Fascism and Hitlerism. If a rose by any other name would smell as sweet, it is also true that flowers having the same name may smell very differently. The origins of the two movements are very different; the Italian middle class, although severely hit by the war and post-war difficulties, was not utterly broken and reduced to desperation as was that of Germany by the post-war inflation, nor has anti-Semitism ever been a problem in Italy. Italians have perhaps a greater political sense and a truer perspective than the Germans, and therefore are less apt to go to extremes. In any case, they claim to be judged for their own actions and not for those of their more or less successful imitations, particularly of those who only imitate the outward aspects of the Italian Fascist movement. If Italy's reasonable attitude towards the more reasonable demands of Germany after the war was over had been followed by the other victorious Powers, the world would probably not have witnessed the dangerous and explosive reactions which we now have before our eyes.

Italy's attitude towards Austria after the war was also

not inspired by any feeling of revenge or bitterness. Together with Great Britain, she extended moral and material help to the defeated foe, and contributed to save thousands of Austrians from starvation. The Austrians themselves realized the value of Italy's friendship, to the point that in 1922, when their financial and economic plight seemed well-nigh desperate, they were actually prepared to contract a customs and perhaps even a political union with Italy. The only difficulty between Italy and Austria arose in connection with the German-speaking inhabitants of the district south of the Brenner who, as a result of the Peace Treaties, had been annexed to Italy. But even this trouble has been overcome, owing to the ever-increasing friendliness between the two countries and between the Italians and the German-speaking people in the district itself. It is Italy's interest that Austria should maintain her independence and not be absorbed into a greater Germany. Italy has no wish to have the German Reich on the Brenner frontier, and she also fears that too great an extension of that Power might well prove dangerous to world peace.

Let us now come to British-Italian relations. The friendship between the two countries is a historic tradition. Italy has in the course of her long history been invaded by nearly all the peoples of Europe and by some non-European ones as well—the Germans, the French, the Swiss, the Austrians, the Magyars, the Spaniards, the Russians, the Arabs, the Turks, at one time or another all poured into Italy and plundered the land and the people. The British alone never did so. It is true that Italy did once invade Great Britain, but that was two thousand years ago, and Romans imported into the island a civilization of which both countries may be proud. On the other hand, Great Britain and Italy have twice fought side by side on the same battle-fields and twice won a common victory together for the defence of common ideals, first in the Crimean War of 1854-55, and then in the far greater World War. Apart from collaboration on the field of battle, the intellectual relations between the two countries have already been intimate. In Elizabethan times every educated Englishman considered it his duty to learn the Italian language

and study its literature; Queen Elizabeth herself was a good Italian scholar. In the eighteenth century no Englishman's education was complete until he had made the grand tour and visited the monuments, churches and museums of Italy and admired her far-famed beauty spots. Nor did he study only her antiquities and natural beauties; he also inquired into her economic and social life, her politics and her administration.

Later during the wars of Italian independence the Italian national cause nowhere found so many and such real friends as in Great Britain, and it was in Great Britain that many of Italy's political exiles found refuge and a warm welcome. Foscolo, Panizzi, Mazzini, Garibaldi, to mention only a few of the most famous, spent a long time in England, and the great mass of British public opinion extended cordial sympathy to the rebirth of Italy. And help came not only from public opinion, but also from responsible British statesmen. It was the refusal of the British Government, of the British Foreign Secretary, Lord John Russell, to cooperate with Napoleon III, in preventing Garibaldi from crossing the Straits of Messina, which made the project fall through and enabled Garibaldi to conquer the Neapolitan mainland as well as Sicily, and thus bring about the union between Southern Italy and the Kingdom of Sardinia, which made Italian unity possible. It was in fact an important British interest that a strong independent Italy should arise, as an impediment to a Continental hegemony, whether it were French, Austrian, German or other.

During the post-Risorgimento period relations between Great Britain and Italy were less intimate. More British tourists visited Italy than ever before, but they took less interest in the country and its people, apart from its monuments and natural beauties, than their predecessors had done. In the political field Italy was forced into joining the Triple Alliance by the policy of France, not always too friendly to Italy, especially in connexion with the occupation of Tunis. But Italy, mindful of her traditional friendship for and community of interests with Great Britain, insisted that a clause should be inserted in her

treaty with Germany and Austria, exempting her from having to participate in any conflict in which the Alliance might be involved, if Great Britain were on the other side. It was this clause, among others, which entitled Italy to declare her neutrality when the World War broke out in August, 1914. How valuable that neutrality was to the cause of the Entente was proved by the subsequent course of events.

Ten months later Italy intervened in the war on the side of the Entente, and her collaboration was even more valuable to the Allied cause than her neutrality had been. At first British and Italian soldiers, while fighting on the same side, did not fight side by side. Then came the Macedonian expedition, and there British, Italian and French troops, together with Serbs, Russians and afterwards Greeks, did fight side by side. The cooperation between British and Italians there was most intimate and cordial. Here I speak from personal experience, as I was for nearly two years Italian liaison officer with the British Salonika Force, and I can say that no two armies got on so well on that front as did those of Italy and Great Britain. Never was there any dispute between the two Commands or armies—and that is more than can be said of any other two armies on that or any other front. Later, in 1917, after Caporetto, British and French troops came to Italy, and although the enemy was held up on the Piave by Italian troops alone, the knowledge that the Allies were coming had an immensely important moral effect. In 1918 British, French and Italians fought side by side on the Piave and at Asiago, until at Vittorio Veneto the enemy armies were swept away in the tide of victory.

At the Peace Conference there were differences between the various Allies, but those between Italians and British were now matters of disagreement between individual statesmen, rather than between Governments or peoples, and the old friendship was not impaired.

Today collaboration is still closer. Both countries favor a more equitable policy within the League of Nations, both are averse from extremist attitudes, both are freer from hysteria and panic than most other countries, and no seri-

ous divergence of views divides them. Both are ready to regard the Franco-German dispute from the angle of common sense and are most anxious to see it settled in such a manner as to cement world peace, and both are trying to treat the points of view of the two parties to the quarrel with due consideration. Both are determined to discourage policies of aggression and adventure on the part of irresponsible States.

The world today is expecting a declaration of British policy on the international situation. But such a declaration would be further strengthened if it were Italo-British. The Four-Power Pact as I said before, was in its inception Sig. Mussolini's idea. But it materialized at a meeting between him and the British Premier and Foreign Secretary; France and Germany, after some hesitation adhered to it. That policy must be continued, for within the Four-Power Pact there is an even closer understanding between Great Britain and Italy. The statements issued during these last days are a confirmation of the identity of view between the two Governments and countries.

In the field of economics, too, Great Britain and Italy should collaborate as closely as possible, for they seem to take a saner view of the economic situation and its necessities than many others and to be more capable of restoring some measure of sanity to this mad economic world.

If in politics and in economics the two countries continue to collaborate as they have done in the past, and that collaboration becomes ever more intimate, not only will they be acting in their own highest interests, but also in those of the whole world. For they will be securing a real and lasting peace.

As your greatest poet Shakespeare said in one of his immortal plays:

"Let
A Roman and a British ensign wave
Friendly together." Cymbeline, V. 5. ad fin.

VICE-PRESIDENT ARSCOTT:—Signor Villari, you have given us a most excellent address. We have enjoyed it

very much. You have given us a very clear and enlightened account of the foreign policy of your government. I think you will have judged from the applause that it has been very much appreciated by your audience. On behalf of the Club, I extend to you our thanks.