



Rome Rampant

How Italy Went to War

The Inside Story

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ITALY'S plunge into the great war was attended by circumstances so extraordinary as to give rise to a whole series of startling conjectures. For many months the peninsula had been transformed into a gigantic debating society wherein the partizans of war and peace argued their respective causes with all the fervor of their Southern natures. Meanwhile, above the tumult of the streets, the Government haggled with Teutonic emissaries and bargained with Allied envoys in one and the same breath. Month after month passed by with no apparent change in the situation. Baron Sidney Sonnino, the new Minister of Foreign Affairs, English on the distaff side, showed Allied leanings; but Germany sent down her cleverest diplomat, Prince von Bülow, to redress the balance. Whatever might be passing in the quiet of the *consulta*, the world at large had grown frankly skeptical regarding Italy's entrance into the war. An analysis of the serious English and French reviews during the winter months shows a majority of opinions regretfully predicting Italy's continued neutrality. "The great majority of the nation clings to the maintenance of peace," wrote Professor Jean Alazard of the French Institute at Florence. "Nothing to-day permits the envisaging of the possibility of intervention." These words were written in the late winter. Still

more recently the noted Italian historian, Guglielmo Ferrero, though a fervent partizan of war, confessed his frank pessimism regarding the likelihood of a warlike decision.

But with the opening days of May something happened. Exactly what occurred behind the scenes we of course do not know, yet certain it is that from this moment the Government was for war. On May 3, Italy denounced the Triple Alliance treaty. Next day Austria countered by offering concessions so broad as to satisfy Italy's main demands. But the Italian Government refused to consider these offers, and the inspired press announced that on April 25, a whole week before the denunciation of the triplicate treaty, Italy had come to terms with the Allies. The battle seemed over, and the interventionists were already shouting victory. As a matter of fact, the supreme crisis had not yet begun; for at this eleventh hour there entered the arena Giolitti, the *maestro* of politics, the "Italian Clémenceau," the "uncrowned King of Italy," who for more than fifteen years had held the parliamentary Chamber in the hollow of his hand and upset cabinets at his will. Gathering behind him all the varied forces of neutrality,—pacifist Socialists, philo-German Catholics, and aristocrats, and the commercial and industrial North, to whom neutrality meant continued pros-

perity and plenty, while war signified hard times and contingent ruin,—Giolitti dashed into the lists waving the banner of peace. "Italy can have from Austria important and sufficient concessions without making war," was his rallying-cry. Indeed, the difference between the Italian demands and the latest Austrian concessions was so slight as to make war seem a rather foolish business, if all the cards were really on the table. Italy had demanded the immediate cession of the Italian-speaking Trentino, together with the adjoining German-speaking districts of southern Tyrol as far north as Bozen, the valley of the Isonzo, with its chief cities Görz (Gorizia) and Gradiska, several island groups off the Dalmatian coast, the recognition of Italian primacy in Albania, and lastly the erection of Triest and the Istrian peninsula into an independent state. Austria had offered the Trentino, the west bank of the Isonzo, with Gradiska, the erection of Triest into a free city of the Austrian Empire, with an Italian university and exemption from military service of its inhabitants, and the renunciation of all Austrian interests in Albania in favor of Italy. With these Austrian offers, as being all that Italy could reasonably expect, Giolitti declared himself satisfied. By these concessions, contended Giolitti, the Italian-speaking inhabitants of Austria would either become Italian citizens or be assured such guaranties as would fully safeguard their cultural rights and their national future. Even were Italy able to conquer and hold other Austrian territories, these would be lands inhabited by Germans and Slavs, and Italy would be saddled with "a problem of inverse Irredentism worse even than has been the German problem of Alsace-Lorraine." To break with her allies of nearly thirty years on such grounds would be an act of shameless perfidy which would leave Italy diplomatically bankrupt in the alliance market of the world. Even if victorious, the strain on Italy's finances and the disorganization of her industrial life would put back her economic progress for a generation. "If

Italy goes to war," concluded Giolitti, "the results are bound to be most sad, whatever the outcome."

The effect of these arguments was very great. The supporters of neutrality, taking heart of grace, raised their heads once more. The Chamber of Deputies, long accustomed to do Giolitti's bidding, showed unmistakable signs of bowing again to the *maestro's* will. It really looked as though Giolitti's eleventh-hour coup was going to succeed, and that there would be no war.

But the government of Salandra and Sonnino had already decided that there should be war, and all the powerful machinery of a highly centralized bureaucracy was set in motion to down the redoubtable apostle of peace. The official press opened fire with broadsides of scurrilous invective seldom seen even in the high-tension politics of Italy. Giolitti was denounced as a traitor and branded with having sold himself to Prince von Bülow for fabulous piles of gold. The mysterious secret agreement of April 25 was continually referred to, and inspired press articles hinted plainly that the national honor was pledged beyond recall. All over Italy the partizans of war rose with the fury of tigers balked of their prey, and the Government's efforts were seconded by a host of fervid orators, headed by Gabriele d'Annunzio, whose burning words inflamed the public against Austria by references to the Wars of Liberation and intoxicated it with memories of Imperial Rome.

So the issue wavered in the balance when the Government played its trump-card. On May 13 the Salandra-Sonnino Ministry resigned, and immediately thereafter a wave of pro-war demonstrations swept over Italy. These demonstrations were in part spontaneous. From the first the most violent elements in Italian society had been in favor of war. Accordingly, the core of these bellicose mobs was always made up of Republicans, ultra-revolutionary Socialists, Syndicalists, Anarchists, and "Nationalists," or partizans of an imperial "Greater Italy." The bulk

of the demonstrators, however, consisted of excitable youths and boys under military age, mixed up of course, as in all such cases, with loafers, hoodlums, and curiosity-seekers attracted by the presence of a crowd.

At first these demonstrations merely roused the supporters of neutrality to scornful or angry contempt. "Il Mattino" of Naples, the best-known newspaper of southern Italy, scored "the forty or fifty thousand fools or rascals who wish to hurl into the abyss the country and the thirty-six million Italians who do not want war, having everything to lose and nothing to gain from such a criminal adventure." The "Regular" Socialists fought war to the last, true to the orthodox Marxian doctrine of international pacifism. Their chief organ, the "Avanti" of Milan, exclaimed in a vitriolic leader of May 16:

What signs of decadence and moral baseness! In Milan we must witness callow youths parade in triumph the expelled or deserters of all parties. In Rome the mob of hirelings fed from the bureaucratic trough gets itself drunk on the ear-splitting harangues of Gabriele d'Annunzio. And what harangues! Incitements to crime in all its forms. D'Annunzio as leader and inspirer of the national consciousness! Shame brings the blush hot into the cheeks. Truly, the most fearful disillusionments are in store. This bacchanalia of the patriots symbolized by d'Annunzio is only the outward sign of long-standing ills. And if now the war does come, if sorrow, want, and suffering settle down upon our land and aggravate still further the sad lot in which our poor working-folk groan, the people will have to bear all the consequences. The poet will have long since crossed the Alps once more, to enjoy comfortably and carnally among foreigners the fruits of that calculated frenzy of his which pushed into the blood bath the Italian people.

However, after a couple of days of the pro-war demonstrations, the peace party began to lose its nerve. The Government patently looked kindly on the demonstra-

tors. The inspired press came out with solemn editorials about the "impending revolution," and the mobs, waxing bold in the sunlight of official favor, began to loot shops and break windows. Prominent neutralists were threatened, and Giolitti, menaced with death, left Rome and retired to his home province, neutralist Piedmont. The "Red Week" of June, 1914, had taught Italy that the revolutionary elements which headed the present demonstrations were ripe for any mischief, and the Government, in its anger and desperation, might not be oversqueamish about what happened to those who were trying to upset its cherished plans. The neutralists might be strong in their numbers and settled in their ideas, but most of them were not the sort of men to fight for their convictions. The Socialists could probably have been counted on to return blow for blow. As a matter of fact, they actually did get up counter-demonstrations throughout northern Italy which resulted in bloody clashes here and there. At Turin especially thousands of working-men paraded the streets shouting: "Down with the ministry! We want no war!" The mass of the neutralists, however,—shopkeepers, manufacturers, and business men,—preferred trouble on the frontier to trouble at home. In Rome especially no real attempt at a counter-demonstration was made, and on May 16 the king invited Salandra to resume office. This was decisive. The mob celebrated with frenzied enthusiasm, and the pacifist opposition went completely to pieces. On May 20, parliament met long enough to vote the cabinet dictatorial powers, and thereafter promptly adjourned. The cabinet lost no time in exercising its new authority. On May 23, Italy formally declared war on Austria-Hungary.

Such are the facts. Despite Austria's grant of the substance of Italian demands, and in face of the resolute opposition of the most solid classes of the population, the Italian Government allied itself to the jingo and revolutionary parties, and virtually drove the country into war. Nevertheless, we should remember that the

cabinet which imposed this coup was not extremist in complexion. Neither Salandra nor Sonnino have ever posed as jingo-ists or revolutionaries. Obviously, there is here much which does not appear on the surface, and since the Italian "Green Book" sheds little light, we are reduced to inference and conjecture. However, though authoritative assertion would be more than usually out of place, an analysis of the main currents of Italian political life will certainly yield us some data on which to base an explanation for conduct apparently so rash and inconsistent.

Although the connection may not at first sight appear, it is probable that the Government's decision to embark on war-like courses was in great part determined by internal considerations. For the last ten years Italian political life has been getting into a condition of increasingly unstable equilibrium, menacing the country with violent upheavals or even with downright revolution. Until the beginning of the present century the upper and middle classes, intrenched behind a restricted franchise, ruled Italy with a strong hand and assured the indefinite continuance of the present régime. Whether Conservatives, Liberals, or Radicals, all played the game within parliamentary limits, and stood ever ready to unite against those who ventured to attack the existing order of things. Such foes had existed from the start—Ultramontane Catholics longing for a restored papal state, Republicans dreaming the dreams of Mazzini and Garibaldi, Anarchists opposed to constituted society of any kind. But these were mere factions, small in numbers and bitterly hostile to one another. Of themselves they could never become dangerous. It is true that rapid industrial development presently brought a new disturbing element—Socialism—into Italian political life, but this new-comer was Marxian Socialism, which, however revolutionary its theories, made in practice for at least temporary peace, pinning its faith as it did upon the ballot rather than upon the barricade. So matters stood at the beginning of the twentieth century.

With the opening years of the new century, however, there began a change within the body of Socialism itself that portended a serious and immediate menace to existing institutions. Rejecting the slower Marxian method of peaceful political action, Socialism's radical wing determined to realize its hopes by the short cut of violent revolution. This new movement—Syndicalism—is of course international in its scope, making its appearance in America with the Industrial Workers of the World. But Italy proved peculiarly fertile soil for Syndicalist labors, and the new doctrine soon had a very large Italian following beneath its banners. This would have been serious enough in any country; it was doubly serious in Italy from the fact that Syndicalism at once formed an alliance with those older apostles of violent revolution, the Republicans and the Anarchists, a thing which evolutionary Marxian Socialism had naturally been unable to do. The new coalition quickly showed its power in the long series of strikes, riots, and other disorders that have continually disturbed Italy during the last few years. The conservative governing classes have made many concessions, notably that of universal manhood suffrage in 1913; but this conciliatory attitude has apparently emboldened rather than appeased the revolutionary elements. Their crowning exhibition of strength was the great "General Strike" of June, 1914. During this famous "Red Week" Italy was a chaos of riot and disorder, the republic was proclaimed in several provinces, and the movement ultimately subsided more by reason of the Government's tact and conciliation than from any repression or resolute use of force. As close a student of Italian affairs as Professor George B. McClellan wrote of the "Red Week":

The strike was a grim warning to the government and to the nation that under favorable circumstances it is quite possible that a minority of the people may destroy the whole social and political fabric of modern Italy. A lawless but well-organized

minority frightened the authorities, terrified the public, and paralyzed the activities of nearly thirty million people for over forty-eight hours. Had the strike been called originally as a revolutionary act, and not as a mere protest, it might even then have succeeded.

Serious as is the menace of the social revolution, it is not the only explosive element which present-day Italian statesmen have to take into account. At the same time that the proletariat was being infected with Syndicalism, another sort of leaven was working among those middle classes that formed the backbone of Italian political life. This leaven, wholly distinct from the Syndicalist doctrine, but no less dynamic in character, was Nationalism.

Italian Nationalism, like Syndicalism, is a product of the twentieth century. Ten years ago Italy was still engrossed in that self-absorption in home politics and economic development that followed the cruel disillusionments of the Abyssinian disaster (1896). But the European crisis of 1908 following Austria's annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina acted like an electric shock on the national psychology. The eastern shore of the Adriatic Sea is one of Italy's sensitive points. Besides its scattered Italian-speaking populations, long the object of Irredentist aspirations, Italy looks on Albania, with its splendid harbor of Avlona dominating the Adriatic mouth at the Strait of Otranto, as a necessity for her future security. Taking advantage of popular fears of Austrian preëminence along the whole east Adriatic shore, a group of patriotic savants and litterateurs evolved a body of extreme imperialistic doctrine looking to nothing less than a revived Roman Empire dominating the whole Mediterranean basin. The propaganda of these so-called Nationalists fell on fertile soil. Successful economic development had enriched the country and stabilized its finances. The Italian people felt a sense of unwonted confidence and power, while the five hundred thousand emigrants annually forced

from its fecund bosom gave assurance that the conquests of Italian armies might soon be transformed into new Italies.

The first real trial of strength between the old spirit and the new came in the months preceding the Italo-Turkish War of 1911-12. The descent on Tripoli was preëminently a Nationalist idea. Long before such action had been seriously broached in older political circles, the Nationalists were loudly demanding the immediate seizure of Tripoli, and they did not fail to brand all opposition as cowardice and treason. When, therefore, the expedition actually took place, the Nationalists claimed it as their work, called "Libya" their gift to Italy, and took advantage of the tremendous outburst of patriotic fervor evoked by the war to extend still further their imperialistic propaganda. Acting as a general leaven rather than as an exclusive political group, the Nationalists permeated all parties, all strata of the population. It is thus easy to see how profound was the effect when, at the beginning of the present European conflict, the Nationalists called for war against the Teutonic powers, and intoxicated imperialist circles with promises of Adriatic supremacy and rich conquests in the near-East as the spoils of victory.

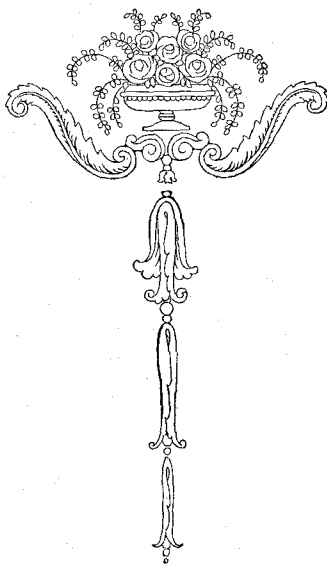
The Government was probably all the more influenced by this warlike propaganda from the fact that the Nationalists left no doubt as to the consequences of a refusal to comply with their imperious behests. Like the social revolutionaries, the Nationalists have never hesitated to threaten violence in case of opposition to their demands. During the period preceding the Tripoli expedition the Nationalist leader, Professor Corradini, met with exceedingly menacing language rumors that the king was opposed to a Turkish war. "It is my opinion," he wrote, "that the party of the nation, Nationalism, should then [in case of royal opposition] proceed to very revolutionary action even against things and persons whom to-day we do not name." These threats were repeated during the winter of 1914-15, and both the Government and the Crown

were told what to expect if Italian aspirations were not gratified. One of the most moderate of these warnings is that of Guglielmo Ferrero, who, after asserting that "the dynasty is responsible" for the existing situation, continues: "I do not know what may happen on that day when, in the midst of a Europe rent by war and restless in the face of such ruin, the Italian people become persuaded that the monarchy, by the mistakes of its foreign policy, has prevented Italy from taking the Italian provinces. It is even possible that the monarchy's last hour will strike."

Such was the critical situation which faced the Salandra-Sonnino ministry in the spring months of 1915. Both of the dynamic factors in Italian political life were demanding war; both were threatening revolution as the penalty for refusal. It is true that the social revolutionary parties were moved not so much by patriotism as by the desire to fish in troubled waters and by the knowledge that military disasters abroad would enable them to start the desired cataclysm at home. Still, continued peace with Austria might have resulted in an alliance between the social revolutionaries and the Nationalists, which would have precipitated this cata-

clysm in any event, whereas a victorious war would rally the Nationalists to the present régime and might so stimulate national pride and satisfy popular needs by opening up new outlets for emigration and industry that would permanently exorcise the social revolutionary peril. Even before the beginning of the European War the "Red Week" of June, 1914, had led some Italian thinkers to envisage the prospect of a war as a useful counter-irritant to revolutionary discontent. "There are many Italians," wrote Professor George B. McClellan at that time, "who seriously advocate a war with Austria as the only means of quelling the revolutionary spirit." If such were the ideas of many Italians at a time when all Europe was at peace, it is easy to see how the thought must have appealed to them in the spring of 1915.

Of course these are only conjectures; yet it is at least reasonable to believe that the considerations analyzed in the preceding pages played a not inconsiderable part in the decision of the Salandra-Sonnino cabinet when, in the opening weeks of May, they beat down the Giolittian opposition and took the fateful plunge into the World War.





"The royal yacht, bearing the dead queen from the Isle of Wight to Portsmouth"

"Pleasures and Palaces"

By PRINCESS LAZAROVICH-HREBELIANOVICH

(*Eleanor Calhoun*)

Illustrations by John Wolcott Adams

Part Three: Phases of London Life

ONE of the most striking characteristics of English political life is the place of woman in it. When a husband or brother was standing for Parliament, it was to me both surprising and amusing to see delicate, sensitive, and shy ladies enter actively, and often powerfully, into the campaign, speaking from the platform as well as canvassing from house to house in behalf of their men-folks. And all this they did without faltering or without the least self-consciousness, and as naturally as if they were merely taking tea at the rectory, attending the Ascot races, or driving down to Hurlingham for polo. Who is not familiar with the pony-cart that Lady Dorothy Nevill's daughter Meresia, arch-conservative herself, drove about, seated between big white canvas screens that were inscribed with "Vote for ——" and other electioneering devices? A typical case is that of the Hon. Mrs. Lyttleton, who, when her husband was taken ill with typhoid fever at the beginning of his campaign for Parliament, stepped instantly into his shoes, kept his engagements, and, by her sole efforts during his illness, triumphantly won his election. These women belong to the upper classes.

No one acquainted with their authors

could read the recent memoirs of Lady St. Helier, famous as Lady Jeune, holder of the most renowned general political salon of her times, and the autobiography of Lady Dorothy Nevill, not less famous as the friend of Disraeli and the second Duke of Wellington, and the center of a strictly conservative political group, without realizing the reserve that those who know most about matters feel bound to impose upon their contemporaneous utterances in print. In both books there are veils and veils of silence over certain moments and epochs of which these ladies could speak words of vivid interest.

Lady St. Helier was the confidante and often the counselor of many leading political men. She once told me that she had made it her rule to burn immediately every letter that might bear any clue to the plans and actions of her political friends. She was a conservative in politics—a Liberal Unionist, I believe,—but she possessed that fine fiber and breeding which would have made it impossible for her, even under goading circumstances, to betray a confidence reposed in her by men of a party opposed to her own; and she did receive such confidences.

On the paneling of the great white