

## *An Evening with the Italian Cabinet*

The Minister of the Royal household, Lucifero, asked us to attend a small informal dinner party at his home that evening. A guest was Prime Minister Parri, a gentleman of a mild-spoken, professional type. During the Fascist regime he was regarded as a Liberal or Leftist. He indicated a definite antipathy to Communists.

Present also were War Minister Brosio of the Liberal Party; Count Jacini, a member of the Catholic Party; and Minister Zanniboni, who at one time attempted to assassinate Mussolini. Apprehended, he served some 17 years in prison. Zanniboni seemed to be the hero of the hour—everyone toasted him and complimented him upon his liberation.

The members of the Cabinet present all indicated that they were definitely anti-Fascist and anti-Communist. We asked Parri what Italy needed most. He replied: "1. Bread. 2. Meat. 3. Coal. We need," he said, "a billion dollars to get our factories going. The elections should be postponed until such time as our economy is re-established, otherwise I am frightened as to the outcome of the elections."

I asked one of the ministers: "Why are you so disturbed about Communism, Italy being a Catholic country and the Church being so opposed to Communism?"

His reply was: "We are 45,000,000 people in Italy and all Catholics. The United States is a Protestant country. The Catholics in America realize that from time to time they may be called upon to fight and defend their religion. Not so in Italy. Our Catholicism comes to us at birth. We do not take threats to it seriously. Our people, many of whom are uneducated, do not know Communism is anti-Catholic, hence the reason we want the continuing of your Army of Occupation—until our people can be thoroughly educated as to the iniquities of Soviet dictatorship."

We asked the Ministers what they felt about Italy paying reparations. They said unanimously that Italy was economically ruined

and could not pay any reparations. They said Italy should have returned to it one new battleship, and the three new ships taken from them by the Allies. They also wanted a billion dollar credit for the purchase of food; with such a credit, they said, they could build a Government that would satisfy America as to its stability.

The Ministers definitely claim they should not be deprived of Trieste—that no government of any party in Italy would subscribe to their losing Trieste.

Tripolitania, they said, is a desert and worthless to them; that they should be allowed to keep Eritrea as part of their homeland. They were also unanimous in their statement that they would be agreeable to an initial trusteeship of their colonies which would not include Russia.

Speaking of reparations, they said the territory they would lose—Ethiopia, Albania, Dodecanese—was in itself sufficient reparations, as Italy had spent untold sums in developing these territories and would lose them. They further stated consideration should be given the devastation of their country by bombing.

We were rather amused by the Ministers' request for rehabilitation funds, etc. They talked with us as if they were our allies and not former enemies, and urged to be treated as allies.

These gentlemen agreed that their hopes for a future Italy lay entirely in the hands of the Americans—not British. They wanted nothing to do with Russia. They said America went to war to help civilization, and that Italy was one of the great countries they had helped to build through immigrant Italians who had become Americans. They stated if America allows Greece, Italy and Spain to function on their own, European civilization will be in a complete mess.

Upon our leaving, the Ministers affirmed that they unanimously agreed that America must keep Russia out of Italy.

We returned to our hotel after a very thoughtful and enjoyable evening.