

BADOGGIO AND HIS MISSION

Some Handicaps He Has Had to Contend With in Presenting Italy's Claims

By WALTER LITTLEFIELD.

GENERAL PIETRO BADOGGIO, former Chief of Staff of the Italian Army and now a life member of the Supreme War Council, is again in New York City in order to take part this afternoon in the congress of Italian societies being held at the Garibaldi Memorial on Staten Island. Since he landed at this port on July 12 from the Giuseppe Verdi, almost immediately departing for Washington to be the guest of the United States Government for a few days, he has been religiously fulfilling the mission on which he was sent—to impart to Americans of Italian extraction certain details of Italy's performance in the war and to thank them for helping to crown that performance with success.

There are about 3,000,000 Italian-born Americans for whom his message was particularly intended, to say nothing of the 5,000,000 of Italo-Americans of the second and third generations, some of whom rather look with contempt upon the Italian tradition before they have really learned to appreciate the American. But all, also possibly Americans of other extractions, needed enlightenment on Italy's war effort, what it cost her in lives and treasure, and how her reward compares with that bestowed upon others of the victorious belligerents. The whole picture was so badly painted abroad from the conditions under which Italy entered the war to the circumstances of the Diaz armistice and the aftermath of Fiume, that what actually took place needs an authoritative interpreter. Such an interpreter is General Badoglio.

The Italians bent on recovering Italia Irredenta paid little attention, at first, as to how the news or their victories or defeats would reach foreign lands. At first, it meant nothing to them whether, in transit, the news became colored with the views of Downing Street or the Quai d'Orsay. Their faith in their allies was simple. When they finally discovered their mistake, and at some expense began a foreign campaign of education, they realized that it was too late. The harm had been done. Their propaganda was too obvious.

In the early Autumn of 1917 Rome and the Italian Embassy at Washington and elsewhere had solemnly declared that so many German divisions released from the Russian front were prepared to join the Austrians in attacking Italy. "Not so," said Downing Street and the Quai d'Orsay; "our Italian friends are mistaken." But they were not mistaken. Von Below and Caporetto proved that. Hence Caporetto has gone down in popular foreign history as a monumental error in preparedness, if nothing worse, on the part of Italy, rather than what it really was—a lack of knowledge on the part of her allies of the true situation on the Italian front. Cadorna shows in his recently published book as plain as day the military possibilities of the Bainsizza salient, if only England and France had sent him the heavy artillery promised him before he undertook the offensive. If these guns had been sent him there is a strong probability that the war would have been ended a year before it was, but ended on the Italian front—anathema at London and Paris. And although this may be a matter for debate, a supporting analogy is shown in a matter about which there can be no debate: In the following year Diaz utterly annihilated the Austrian Army and secured an armistice a week before the Germans signed an armistice which permitted the orderly withdrawal of their army to the German frontier.

An Unfounded Boast.

On these and many other kindred topics General Badoglio has been attempting to inform all those who are so fortunate as to understand the Italian tongue. It is a pity that he does not speak English, for his mission is greatly in need of a larger audience. Once in a while, however, when he has seemed to utter an unfounded boast about his country, his words, denuded of their context, have been reproduced in the English-language press and commented on in a manner of ridicule which, in certain circumstances, is worse than unfriendliness. This happened at Baltimore, where he stated that without Italy the war would have been lost, and he cited Ludendorff to bear him out.

Now General Badoglio having a brief to speak for others of the allied and associated nations, it was natural that he should claim what he did for Italy, particularly before an Italian audience and because it was the truth. Italy saved the war for the Entente several times: Her sympathetic neutrality in August, 1914, permitted the release of 200,000 French troops from the Italo-French frontier, many of whom, under Foch a month later, gave the Germans the decisive stroke at the first Battle of the Marne; Italy's entry into the war saved the Russian front in the Spring of 1915; two years later her drive across the Isonzo made possible the drive of Brusiloff; finally, in the Summer and early Autumn of 1918 the drive across the Piave and the Bainsizza prevented any Austrian troops from being sent to aid the Germans after the first coup de Foch of July 18 on the French front.

The truth about the efforts of individual nations in the great war is only to be gained by a comparative study of the different fronts. It must also be remembered that General Badoglio is exploiting Italy because Italy needs exploiting, and that, on the other hand, he would probably be the last to deny, in other circumstances, that without certain other nations the war would have been lost just as certainly as without the aid of Italy.

France could not have been spared at the Battle of the Marne; the fleet of England could not have been spared at any time; Belgium could not have been spared at Liège and Namur, nor could the Serbians at Kruchevatz; what would have become of Egypt if the Grand Shereef of Mecca had not revolted against Turkey? And finally if Russia had not begun the war the United States certainly could not have ended it. Even the Greeks could make out a rather good case over their tardy entrance, as any one can see by reading the Treaty of Sévres. No nation which

aided the Entente could have been spared, and Italy at certain periods, as has been shown, least of all. But also Russia, France, England and the United States had their indispensable periods.

Just how General Badoglio interprets his mandate is here given in his own words:

La mia particolare missione, è di dare il saluto della patria a tutti i connazionali. Io visiterò i principali centri, da Pittsburg, Chicago, Baltimore, San Francisco, dappertutto dove sono grandi collettività di Italiani. Io porterò a tutti essi il messaggio di affetto dell'Italia, a l'espressione della gratitudine per la generosa cooperazione da essi data e durante la guerra e durante il presente periodo di ricostruzione.

This read in translation:

My special mission is the salutation of the motherland to all her children. I shall visit the principal centres, Pittsburgh, Chicago, Baltimore, San Francisco, where there are particularly large collections of Italians. I shall bear to all of them the affection of Italy and the expression of her gratitude for their generous co-operation given during the war and during the present period of reconstruction.

The Fame of Badoglio.

Before the United States entered the war 200,000 Italians had left their American homes to fight on the Italian front. Later there were over 300,000 Italo-Americans and Americans of Italian extraction enrolled in the armies of the United States. It therefore seems proper that Italy should wish to salute them and to express her gratitude to them all, through the mouth of one of her most distinguished commanders and in the mother tongue. If incidentally he can also tell them something about their motherland of which they had heretofore been ignorant, why, so much the better. New bonds are often made the stronger where respect is rekindled for the old.

Of course, Diaz might have come, but it is characteristic of the man that he did not. When, after Caporetto, he succeeded Cadorna, and there was talk of putting Badoglio in the place of Porro as Under-Chief of Staff, "No," he said "if I am to command, he must have a

free hand in order to interpret me. Badoglio must not be diverted by the War Office as Porro was." And what Diaz often generously said during the last year of the war—after the Piave, after Vittorio Veneto—"He did it," so two months ago, when the American patriotic mission was talked about, he said: "He goes."

Legend is ever the appendage of fame, and in this the fame of Badoglio is not exceptional. Many stories might be related of him, particularly his conversations with the poeta-condottiere of Fiume, Gabriele d'Annunzio, but it seems best to quote the simple sketch written out for THE TIMES by Colonel Marchese Vittorio di Bernezzo, the Military Attaché at the Italian Embassy at Washington:

General Pietro Badoglio is one of the most brilliant Generals of the Italian Army. (Born 1871, Second Lieutenant, 1890.)

In the Libian war he had already shown his high qualities, both as field artillery officer and as staff officer; so that at the outbreak of the great war he was able to take part in it with perfect moral and technical preparation.

Months in the Trenches.

He was first Chief of Staff of a division and then of an army corps, and it was in this position, in the Spring of 1916, that, well aware of the capital importance of Mount Sabotino as fulcrum of the Austrian defenses of Gorizia, he requested and obtained from his corps commander the honor of taking command of the brigade which would have the principal part in the attack of that important position.

There, under Mount Sabotino, he lived for months in the trenches with his soldiers, studying minutely the terrain, the ways of approach, the passages and the weak points of the enemy's defensive system, and prepared the complete plan of attack, down to the smallest details.

After having repulsed the Austrian offensive in the Trentino in June, 1916, the Italian reserves were rapidly moved to the Isonzo, and the long-awaited attack on Gorizia began.

Badoglio, then Colonel, jumped off at the head of his brigade, completely surprising the enemy, and, applying the plan which he personally had studied so deeply, was able to occupy Mount Sabotino in a very short time, and with relatively minimum losses. Mount Sabotino was the key to all the defensive system of Gorizia.

Having its defenses surprised and broken, Gorizia fell into the hands of the Italian troops, and one of the most brilliant feats of the war was accomplished, principally due to the audacity, the study and deep preparation of the man who had thought out and accomplished the capture of Mount Sabotino.

For this action of exceptional im-

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portance, Colonel Badoglio was promoted General on the field.

"He was later Chief of Staff of the Second Army and Commander of the 27th Corps.

Reorganization of Army.

"After the Italian army's retreat on the Piave in October and November, 1917, General Badoglio was named Chief of Staff of the army.

"In this high position he gave proof of all his fine qualities of citizen and soldier. With untiring energy and with firm faith in the future of his country, he put himself to work for the reorganization of the Italian Army and to study plans of defense of the line held by the army and an eventual offensive.

"He had been one of the most capable collaborators of General Diaz, then Commander-in-Chief, and the results obtained can be easily estimated by the defeat of the Austrians on the Piave in June, 1918, and by the great victory of Vittorio Veneto in October of that same year.

"After the armistice of Villa Giusti, in which General Badoglio had a most important part, as chief of the representatives of the Italian Supreme Command, General Badoglio took in hand the immense work of demobilization of a force under arms of over 5,000,000 men.

"General Badoglio was promoted during the war six times on his service in the field (the greatest number of such promotions received by any man in the army). The last promotion was the one which made him a full General.

"He has been awarded the highest Italian and foreign decorations."

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