

PATHFINDER

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Duce, Peace, Cribs

"We must be strong.

"We must be always stronger.

"We must be so strong that we can face any eventualities."

Definite and clear in troubled Europe last week rang these words of Benito Mussolini. So definite and clear, in fact, that British diplomats were moved to remark that they had further surcharged the delicate situation abroad.

They were flung to the world as the Italian dictator addressed "officers, non-commissioned officers, soldiers, Black Shirts and people of Hirpinia." He delivered them from a small stand in Avellino's municipal square, in the heart of the section that saw Italy's large-scale mimic war games this summer.

He made the attitude of his Fascist regime clear; and for every striking word he spoke, up went the familiar mass roar of "doochay! doochay!" Aside from the thousands who jammed the square, millions of others listened to him as every radio station in Italy broadcast the speech and as loudspeakers carried his message to all principal public places throughout the length and breadth of the country.

Paying only a left-handed tribute to peace, Il Duce warned of the world's "irresistible" armaments race and of the need for Italian preparation. "For this reason, but not only for this reason," he shouted, "will we reject the absurdity of eternal peace, which is foreign to our creed and to our temperament." Then, as if to drive home his thought to others besides Italians, he added this boast: "We always, in the course of a few hours and after a simple order, can mobilize 8,000,000 men."

Strength, increasing and self-perpetuating strength, said Mussolini, was the order of the day for Fascist Italians, because after "the catastrophic failure of the disarmament conference, in face of certain political situations which now are in the course of uncertain developments," Italy must be ready to "look directly in the eye whatever may befall."

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This, he cried, "is the spirit of the Black Shirt revolution, the spirit of this Italy, the spirit of this populous Italy, warlike and vigilant on sea, on land and in the heavens."

Even as Mussolini said these fighting words two spokesmen for Europe's strongest dictators were seeking a way to unite in an anti-Communist drive. At Venice Dr. Joseph Goebbels, German Propaganda Minister, and Dino Alfieri, Italian Press Minister, were discussing the political tides of Europe and planning to unite in propaganda campaigns against Communism.

In France there were indications that Il Duce's speech would immediately speed up that nation's military preparations. And almost simultaneously a Polish military mission was received in Paris amid great acclaim.

Although Pope Pius XI was reported so weak from worry over bloodshed in Spain that his associates at Vatican City feared it may leave him too ill to walk, he sat at his radio and listened to the Avellino speech. Il Duce's references to peace were said to have pleased the Pontiff.

Following his speech, Mussolini held a reception for 300 families, each with more than 11 children. But his most enthusiastic greeting was reserved for the proud father and mother of exactly two dozen children. How warm that greeting was can be best judged from the fact that only a few days previously the Dictator had warned depopulated France in these words:

"Peoples with empty cribs cannot create an empire, and if they have one the time will come when it will be extremely difficult for them to keep or defend it. Those who have a right to empire are the fecund peoples—those peoples who have the pride and the will to propagate their race on earth—virile peoples in the word's strictest meaning."