

Oklahoma's distinguished visitor

BY CORTEZ A. M. EWING

During the first three weeks of March, the University of Oklahoma was host to Count Carlo Sforza, eminent Italian statesman and one of the recognized authorities of the political developments of post-war Europe. His latest book, *The Makers of Modern Europe*, represents the finest evaluation of the personalities engaged in the rebuilding of a war-torn world.¹ In 1927, he delivered a series of lectures on the post-war European situation before the Williams-town Institute, and his addresses have been published under the title, *Diplomatic Europe since the Treaty of Versailles*.² Count Sforza was brought here under the auspices of the Carnegie Foundation for International Peace. Only two other universities, the University of Texas and the University of Iowa were included in his American itinerary.

His official program consisted of two formal lectures and one round-table for each of the three weeks. He began his lecture series March 3 with a discussion of series "The Dissolution of the Hapsburg Empire," and followed that with lectures on "The New Turkey," "Franco-German Relations," "The Political Importance of Poland," "Franco-Italian Relations," and the "Communist Regime in Soviet Russia," on each Tuesday and Thursday, including March 19. At the round-tables, held on Friday of each week, Count Sforza led an informal discussion upon world politics in general. As an index to the interest that he created on important political problems of contemporary Europe, I need only to mention that hundreds came to each lecture, and to the round-table discussions as well. Besides the formal program, he spoke before numerous classes and student groups.

For more than twenty years, prior to 1922, Count Sforza served in the diplomatic corps of Italy. Even before receiving a permanent appointment, he had acted as a personal representative of the Italian king to the courts of Austria and St. James. As a regular diplomatic representative, he was first connected with the Italian embassy at Cairo, from whence he

was transferred to Paris. At that time France was wildly excited over the spectacular revelations resulting from the second Dreyfus trial. When the international crisis developed in Morocco, Count Sforza went to the Algieras conference as chief of the Italian secretariat. And then, just before the outbreak of the Young Turk revolution, he was as counselor attached to the Italian embassy at Constantinople. He was destined to return to this city in a more important rôle at a time when the modernization of Turkey was being consummated at a tremendous pace. There is no doubt that the impressions which he received in his initial contact with Turanian politics had much influence upon his later ideas concerning Turkey and the post-war attempt to restrict her exclusively to Asia.

In 1911, Count Sforza was sent as Italian ambassador to Peking, being at that time the youngest member of the Italian diplomatic corps with ambassadorial rank. Remaining at the capital of the Celestial Emperor until 1915, he came to feel the pulse of the Chinese people and to appreciate the finesse of that Oriental civilization. During this period, he was in a favorable position from which to view and study the first stages of the Chinese revolution. There is little doubt that Count Sforza's observations in China and Turkey contributed materially to his faith in self determination as an instrument of national and international polity.

Recalled in 1915, the Count was sent to the Balkans as minister to Serbia, and, while there, he combined military service with that of diplomacy, participating in engagements in Macedonia and Albania. At the close of the war, he was sent to Constantinople as high commissioner for Italy. Admiral Calthorpe was high commissioner for Great Britain and Admiral Amet for France. In a recent article, Count Sforza has described some of the vexing problems with which the high commission was faced.³ Turkish authority had practically disappeared, and it became the responsibility of the high commission to maintain a semblance of peace and order throughout the crumbling em-

pire. The selfishness of the Sultan and the weakness of the Grand Vizier convinced Lloyd George and Lord Curzon that the Allies could dismember the Ottoman empire and finally, after a half-century of serious effort and Christian prayer, drive the "unspeakable Turk from Europe." Then followed the Greek thrust into Asia Minor and the succeeding debacle of 1922, all of which Count Sforza, as high commissioner, had anticipated and against which he had warned the Allies. The Turkish spirit, which he had witnessed in 1907, had returned in increased confidence. The action of Lloyd George and Curzon merely marked another example of a complete non-conversance with a political situation, resulting in another sordid chapter in mad diplomacy. Poor little Greece, noble and deserving, overtaxed her own strength in an attempt to realize the *megala idea!* In his prediction that Turkey would rise up to smite, with biblical ferocity, the attempts to violate her, Count Sforza showed himself a statesman of the first order.

Before the Greeks began their fateful push into the Smyrna hinterland, Count Sforza had been recalled to Italy, and had been appointed to the Italian senate, and, also, to the office of under-secretary of state for foreign affairs. In 1920, he became minister of foreign affairs in what was known as the Giolitti-Sforza cabinet. In this position, he participated in many of the post-war conferences, along with Poincaré, Briand, Lloyd George and Curzon. One of his outstanding triumphs was the breaking of D'Annunzio, and the settlement of the Fiume-Dalmatian question in the Treaty of Rapallo. He also negotiated treaties and conventions between Italy and the various members of the Little Entente, with especial emphasis upon the position of Italy in the Balkans. Upon the fall of the Giolitti-Sforza ministry, Count Sforza was sent to Paris as the Italian ambassador, in which position he served until the ascendance of the Fascists to power in 1922. He was an important figure in the Silesian boundary dispute, being the delineator of the now-famous Sforza line. He also made an official investigation in the Polish-Lithuanian question, in which he won the unmitigated respect of the new Baltic states. Incidentally, Count Sforza believes that Poland, especially in relation to the Corridor, now offers the most menacing threat to the Peace of Europe.

Casual impressions of a public man are generally manifestly immature. Near the close of Count Sforza's visit to Norman, an anonymous writer remarked that the whole manner and philosophy of the Count appeared to have been molded in the crucible of diplomatic practice. Courteous, affable, enigmatical, and a master in the art of parrying dangerous questions, it was said that he handled himself in open sessions with the skill of a trained

¹Bobbs Merrill Co., 1928.

²Yale University Press, 1928.

³In his article, "The Big Idea," *Asia*, XXIX, no. 6, (June, 1929), p. 486 *et seq.*

diplomat, giving both sides of controversial questions and rarely making statements that were unequivocal. Upon reading this, the Count's only remark was, "Well, it is evidence that some students think." In the last conversation that I had with him before he left for Iowa, I was struck by his evaluation of himself—"After all," he said, "I am only an amateur and a sportsman." Without detracting from a true appreciation of his abilities at tennis and polo, and as an enthusiastic huntsman, future historians will busy themselves with the contributions that he has made to the political history of the first quarter of the Twentieth Century, and they, most surely, will correct him in his modest evaluation of his importance as a statesman.

In this short sketch, I am not particularly concerned with the general culture of Count Sforza. Possessing a speaking knowledge of several languages, and an intimate conversance with modern as well as with classical literature, he is more than a mere statesman. His is a wide and many-sided culture. In commenting upon Count Sforza's knowledge of art, Professor Jacobson said, "He is a splendid student of Chinese art, and he knows European, and especially Italian art, as well." It is the usual weakness of the scholar to love books; they represent the food of thought. Therefore, I was somewhat astonished to hear Count Sforza remark that after buying and reading a book, he generally gave it to a friend. To him, there are so few books of the whole number now being published that deserve a place on the shelves of a personal library; a private collection should contain only the masterpieces of centuries.

I was particularly interested in the political ideas of Count Sforza. The fact that he belongs to one of the two oldest noble families of Italy is, for present purposes, decidedly irrelevant. I have no desire to psycho-analyze him or to explain his political theory by the Freudian formula. To me, he represents the Burkean view of political thought. He is a humanist. Extremes tend to breed excesses, and the improvements that might be achieved by radical programs are outweighed by the wealth of misery that is wreaked upon a fairly constant and consistent social order. Moreover, to turn the cloak wrong-side out will scarcely offer greater security from a wintry blast. Profound political changes should be the result of centuries. Radical movements should ripen and mature in natural order. If such is the case, evolution will bring in perfect sequence all that could be achieved in a wild orgy of revolution. Therefore, it becomes the duty of those in power to march with their generation, and not to become obsolete in a too great trust in and adoration for a golden age of the past. The medieval twentieth-century empire of Franz Josef remains a classic example of the failure of a ruling order to make and obey po-

litical soundings. And because of this failure more than for any other reason, the holocaust of 1914-1918 swept through Europe.

The keystone of Count Sforza's whole political philosophy is his appreciation for liberty. With Mazzini, he would declare that all he is and all he hopes to be he owes to the sacred name of liberty. And, concomitantly, he would deny the iconoclastic statement of Mussolini that liberty is merely another of the myths of the Nineteenth Century. He supports the principles of the Risorgimento. Liberty is sacred for the fruit that it bears. It sublimates and ennobles the individual; it gives a spice to life and a purpose for personal ambition; it assures the desire to live, and fully; and, equally important, it rebukes the idea that the social amenities can best be realized in a scheme which produces human automatons. Count Sforza has nothing but contempt for a Robot world, because it denies individual liberty to those who would contribute to the progress of civilization. To him, history is a recital of the work and ideals of great men. Thus, inevitably, the question of leadership remains vital to every generation.

Democracy, says he in answer to my observation concerning the faith which America put in demagogues, is never fully appreciated by a people until they have lost it. Witness Italy and Russia! Democracy alone offers political safety over a long period of time. Apropos this point, it was no less a philosopher than Emerson who compared popular democracy to travel by raft on the high seas—those abroad would always have their feet wet, but their craft would, nevertheless, never wreck itself upon icebergs or other hidden dangers. Count Sforza noticed and remarked on the prevailing criticism of democracy in America. "It is one of the best evidences that you Americans are thorough democrats, and that you seek to purge your system of government of any visible weaknesses." And yet, in his constant willingness to grasp with political problems, he admits that chauvinism, or irrational nationalism, stands today as the pre-eminent danger to democracy. Dictatorships will fall like houses of cards, for they cannot successfully suppress unwilling peoples over long periods of time. The dangers to democracy are autochthonous, indigenous, inherent in the stuff of the democracy itself. The desire and the will to magnify the national ego overreaches the strength of the willers, and retribution ensues in the form of loss of confidence and of economic capital. Therefore the true national leader is one who will seek always to prevent unnecessary clashes with foreign states. As an example, Count Sforza recalls the criticism that was unleashed against him when he was minister of foreign affairs because he had negotiated a treaty that was not overly favorable to Italy. "It is for that reason,"

he informed the Italian senate, "that I regard it a good treaty for Italy." Justice is all that any state should demand. In international relations, hard bargains are dangerous for the states that drive them. Yet democracy habitually worships the charlatan who delivers advantages to his "masters." Only real leadership and courage can dissipate this inherent weakness of popular government.

Though admitting certain inconsistencies, Count Sforza supports the general European settlements of 1919 and 1920. Some have belabored the Allied statesmen for their Balkanization of Europe, in that the old balance between large states has been discarded and a new order comprising a much larger number of small states has been set up. In their reasoning, these critics declare that more states are certain to engage in more quarrels, and that more quarrels inevitably result in more wars. But what of self-determination? Count Sforza firmly believes in the inherent right of considerable nationalities to complete independence or general political autonomy. The old Austro-Hungarian Empire was an hodge-podge and dangerous to peace. Both Russia and the Balkan Slav states felt it their duty to aid the Bosnians, the Slovenes, and the Croats. In fact, while he was in power, Count Sforza inaugurated a system which granted a very large degree of local government to the Italian colonies. Mussolini and Fascism has, of course, abandoned that policy.⁴ The world has entered an age, maintains the ex-minister, when subject peoples cannot be coerced into accepting an unpalatable foreign domination.

I might write pages concerning the political ideas of Count Sforza, but lack of space forbids such fullness. In summary, I must say that the students and faculty of the University of Oklahoma have been fortunate, indeed, to meet and hear Count Sforza. On every hand, there are unnumbered complimentary testimonials that evidence the manner in which Count Sforza's visit is regarded.

The Count proved to be very much at home on the campus. He willingly gave lectures to various classes, now in geography, again in journalism, and one day varied his lectures by talking to successive classes in Italian and French. He lectured on art for the school of art and entered heartily into the spirit of his mission as the first visiting professor to the university.

He was the tea guest of Governor and Mrs Murray at the executive mansion in Oklahoma City and was presented to the Oklahoma senate, which he addressed.

⁴Hullinger, *The New Fascist State*.



The women's self governing association of the university proposes to bar women from organized activities on the campus during the first six weeks, so that the scholastic standards may be advanced.