1926-06-12

Notes: W.R. Castle (Italy, Mussolini)

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Washington, D.C.,
June 12, 1926.

Mr. W. R. Castle, Jr., who is in charge of the Division of Western European Affairs, in the Bureau of the Foreign Service Personnel Board, of which J. Ch Grew, Under-Secretary of State is head, and of which J. Butler Wright, Assistant Secretary of State, is acting head. Seems to be pretty well converted to Musselini. Disgusted with the inefficiency of things he had to handle affecting him. Spent an hour with them. Said that the first effect was that he was a poseur, but when he, M. found that Castle was interested in his program, he seriously discussed very simply and directly what he was trying to do.

The gist of this is to restore order and get the people to work and it must be done through discipline and coordination.

He spoke of the simplicity in which M. lives. Lives in an apartment such as the President lived in when he was Lt. Gov. of Massachusetts. His salary is $5,000 a year - not $75,000, as some of the excited Senators said in a debate on the Italian Debt settlement.

Everyone talks about M.'s capacity for work - 12 to 15 hours a day, preceded with an hour of hard fencing.

Go to Hoover by appointment. Tell him that after an afternoon and morning with the weekly reports from him - Rome I am in danger of becoming a Fascist. Launches out - says it's an experiment born of the inefficiency of the parliamentary system
in Italy and revolt against Bolshevism. Thinks Mussolini is
he is creating a new kind of government. Thinks
it possible. Discussed the need. Is heartily disgusted with
the turn things are taking here in Republican politics against
the primarles particularly. Says that it is an invitation to
mediocrity, that the really good men will not stand policy
vituperation of a priority campaign. Does not see what we are
going to do. Tell him I don't see how anybody stands for it.
over one term. He says because too cowardly to give up, they
keep up because they don't like to be called quitters. Says
there are number of men in Washington that stay because they
are afraid of this charge.

Evidently keen on seeing what Mussolini will do next,
and not at all sure that he may not be working out something
valuable. Says that he is was interested in his previous attempt
to reform representation. Changed the geographical representation,
to agricultural and vocational, but this scheme has been abandoned;
purely party representation now. Evidently thinks that some new
device for securing representation may yet be worked out in Italy.

Klein, one of the best men I have seen here, has
material ready. Tells me that McLean at Rome will do everything.
Best man we can get woman translator, etc.

See one of the Staff that just came back from Italy.
Intelligent Jew, Russian, I think. He is a little guarded. Fact
that the first thing you notice is the suppression of free opinion, but that the economic results are so impressive that most people will accept. Thinks that the Italians have no such devotion to political freedom as Anglo-Saxons, but that if their social freedom were interfered with they would be heard from - would not tolerate the suppression of the carnivals, or a Volstead act.

Warned me to remember that M. did not start the silk factories, hydraulic works, steel - etc. Quotes some liberal who says that he accepts M, but that it is a mistake to credit him with everything that is now improving Italy, as some are doing. This man says "the corner had been turned and we would have gone ahead with the Parliamentary System", which seems to be doubtful, with eight or ten different parties each determined to lead.

No violent attack on M and the Fascisti; this man, however, tells me that there is no question about the imprisonments and violent punishments. We agree, however, that we must expect violence from the Italian temperament - that it has always accepted and that there is no great respect for life among the Italians.

See de Martino - Italian Ambassador, by appointment. W. R. Castle, Jr., arranged it. Go to the Chancery. The waiting room of which is untidy, worn carpet; general effect slovenly, though the building is beautiful. I am taken through the court into the Embassy. Large reception room with exquisite Italian furnishings; furniture, paintings.. Martino very simple. Looks
like ruddy elderly business man, whose bristling mustache has been shaved almost down to the skin, not quite. Very agreeable; asked me to have a cigarette. Says he is pleased that responsible writers go to Italy. That what they want is that people here should understand what they are doing. It is difficult, he admits. There are two situations in Italy after the war that we do not understand; the first with the Bolshevist attack. They are very crafty statesmen. Says they knew the weakest point in Europe was Italy. That "We suffered more than others, because we are younger as a modern country. It was not until 1870 that we began to industrialize. War left us weak and nearly paralyzed. The B. poured in money to organize and they had a good start. America does not understand that. Doesn't understand the degree of the inroads made on our national spirit, our depression; hard for an American to understand the of parliamentarism in Europe - you have two parties - we had ten!" America shocked, too, by overthrow of system considered best in the world, but it is what has resulted. We have no unemployed, and people are happy. There is great misinterpretation of what M. says. A year ago when the question of the Alto Adige rose, he was quoted as saying "the flag of Italy goes forward; never backward", and it was taken over here and in Europe to mean an attack possible. He explained in a later speech a few days later to the Senate - that the flag had been planted on Brunner Pass; that it would never go back. It had been put there by treaty, that is, it was a defensive
movement - not an offensive expression.

I asked him about the League of Nations. He said "it's a mistake to suppose that Italy is opposed - were in sympathy, but that the League is not honest; it is serving the strong, not looking properly after the weak; but it is necessary in the world and will live. Very pleasant impression of informality, active.

I used the word "experiment" and he said "Yes, it is." Must be a little hard for a representative of republican government to swallow the frank declarations that are announced and is working out.