

New Alliance Mere Gesture Of No Serious Import Now

But It's Portentous Of Strong Undercurrent Of Common Interest Between Spain And Italy Which Would Checkmate French Imperialism and Curb British Influence

By FRANK H. SIMONDS
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Washington, Dec. 6. Interesting as is the current discussion of the possible Spanish-Italian alliance, which has followed the visit of Spanish royalty to Rome, it is still necessary to take the more extensive view, to see what a world of it.

Such an alliance, if it is sure, two very solid bases, the first in the possession of two countries, the last Great Britain and the second in their not less considerable sentiment toward France.

In occupying Gibraltar and Malta the British are bound to crush and perpetuate both Spanish and Italian bitterness because, for Spain, the loss of Gibraltar is an enduring affliction, an injury alike to national pride and naval and military security, while British fleets at Malta are not less a source of resentment for the Italians, are material invasion of national security and finally constitute the single obstacle to the realization of the ancient dream of a united Italy.

As for France, in occupying the greater part of Morocco she has blocked the single remaining avenue of expansion of Spain, while her long standing possession of Algeria replaces ancient Spanish domination. In Morocco and in western Algeria there is a very considerable Spanish element and the Spanish see Morocco and Algeria developing to the profit and greatness of France.

For Italy French control in Tunis and eastern Algeria is a similar source of bitterness. Throughout Northern Africa, Rome was once supreme, and in this direction the natural development of modern Italy might have come, had not France anticipated the Italians in Tunis and Constantine as she did the Spanish in Morocco and Oran. French domination in Tunis has been for the Italians a source of enduring bitterness for the full generation during which it has continued and a cause for never ending disputes between the two nations.

British control of Egypt has blocked another natural and traditional pathway of Italian expansion, while France in Syria and Britain in Palestine have again prevented Italian growth in regions where Rome was once supreme. Even more intolerable for the Italians is the present and past support of the Greeks by the British, which prevented the Italians from acquiring Smyrna after the World War, compelled them to abandon any designs upon Corfu and steadily opposes a dangerous rival to Italian commercial and political hopes in the Near East.

As for the French relations with Jugo-Slavia, these are, also a cause for Italian bitterness. This French friendship and even definite political understanding with the Southern Slavs is a detail in the larger French programme of alliance with the Little Entente, itself, in which Jugo-Slavia is a partner. But the effect of the French policy is to oppose a strong Slav state to all Italian policies in the Adriatic. Moreover, the Jugo-Slav army is both trained and equipped by the French.

Italy, then, feeling very unpleasantly the disadvantages of her position has naturally turned to Spain. On paper and as a result of the ratification laid down by the Washington Conference and Treaties, Spain and Italy could together put a stronger fleet in the Mediterranean than France, upon whom was imposed a bare equality with Italy.

That is why the French bitterly opposed the adjustment and are certain not to continue it, when the present period comes to an end. They accepted it only because for the life of the document signed, they recognized that they would be unable to construct new battleships because of their financial condition.

Many things combine to suggest that Italy means more and more to challenge the French position in the Mediterranean, but it must be realized that for France the preserva-

tion of the Mediterranean against any invasion. In recent years the development in trade, wealth and population has been very striking, while since the World War France has adopted the principle of concentration aimed by native politicians and rapidly raising very strong forces. Also she is now undertaking to push the project for a Trans-Saharan railway which will enable her to bring her black troops from the Niger to North Africa and thus to insure this region against any invasion.

Italy cannot of course, even with Spain, hope to challenge both Britain and France, nor can she hope to establish much of a way of communication with the East, but she can and does hope to establish more than a million Euro-

pean colonists. In recent years the development in trade, wealth and population has been very striking, while since the World War France has adopted the principle of concentration aimed by native politicians and rapidly raising very strong forces. Also she is now undertaking to push the project for a Trans-Saharan railway which will enable her to bring her black troops from the Niger to North Africa and thus to insure this region against any invasion.

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