

Verbundkatalog Kalliope

In: Town and Country. Januar 1945

Giants at Home.

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Januar

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Giants at Home

BACK in the peaceful days of 1928, a friend of ours in Munich gave a little party to meet a famous visitor from Italy, Benedetto Croce. Everybody was eager to meet the Neapolitan philosopher who had been called "the lay pope of Italian thought" and "the man who transformed the spiritual physiognomy of Italy." People interested in the currents and achievements of modern philosophy admired him as the author of such solid and significant works as *Estetica* and *Logica*. Literary men knew him as the main contributor and editor of one of Europe's leading intellectual reviews, *La Critica* (founded in 1903).

In Germany, he was particularly famed for the exemplary way in which he had presented certain Germanic masters to his Latin compatriots: his monographs on Goethe, Hegel, and Marx were widely read in the homeland of those spiritual giants. Besides, liberals—in Germany as everywhere—respected him as an anti-Fascist who had valiantly resisted all threats and flatteries of the Mussolini regime.

Croce was not only a prominent man of letters but also a political figure. In 1920, he had accepted the position of a Minister for Public Instruction in the democratic government of Giolitti. Two years later, when Mussolini accomplished his famous "March on Rome" (by sleeping car), Croce became an exponent of liberal opposition. He resigned from the Senate in 1929, but instead of leaving the country, as so many of his friends had done, he remained in his Naples home, boycotted and slandered by those in power, often molested by black-shirted ruffians. Proud and isolated, he was an exile, as it were, in the land of his birth.

He did not appear tragic or proud, however, as he shook hands with his friends (including my father and mother) in that little salon in Schwabing, the "literary" district of the Bavarian capital. Croce was sixty-two years old, when I met him, and looked it, except that his features seemed to become gradually younger in the course of the conversation. Short of stature, with remarkably delicate and dexterous little hands, he impressed me as at once nimble and venerable and not without a certain quaint elegance. He was rather ageless than old, somehow resembling an amiable sorcerer or a weather-beaten peasant transfigured by the charm of genius. Did he not come from an old family of landowners in the Abruzzi? To me, the very name Abruzzi has a connotation of magic and wilderness. Yes, it must be a savage region: Croce's parents and only sister were killed there by a terrible earthquake, in 1883. Benedetto, a boy of seventeen, was only saved as by magic, dangerously injured after having been buried under ruins for almost half a day.

He was charming and unassuming, and so were his wife and his beautiful young daughter, Elena. As far as I can remember, my father and the Italian guest of honor discussed Goethe, their mutual idol and master, while my mother listened to Signora Croce's stories about life in Fascist Italy. It was only two years before that a horde of



Croce has been called the "lay pope of Italian thought"

organized hoodlums had invaded their apartment—obviously under orders to burn the philosopher's library, a famous collection of about 40,000 volumes. Signora Croce eloquently described the appalling scene, but at one point she was interrupted by Signorina Elena. "You forget to mention one minor detail," the young lady remarked, "that it was you who finally managed to prevent the disaster and to get rid of the gang." How did she do it? "I don't know," Elena said. "She just told the boys a few things that made them run away."

Signora Croce's stories sounded almost too terrible to be true—weird reports from another planet. "Thank God!" the German professors and literati exclaimed, in that little Schwabing salon, back in 1928, "thank God in our peaceful city such awful things could never, never happen!"

There was a little silence. Senator Croce exchanged a quick glance with his wife. Both of them smiled. Then we discussed Goethe again.

FIVE years later it had happened in Germany. The ruffians who invaded our homes were wearing brown shirts instead of black ones; otherwise everything developed along the familiar line.

We escaped from Munich. The first station of exile was Sanary-sur-mer, a charming village on the Côte d'Azur between Toulon and Marseille. It was the time when the first political refugees from Germany began to become acquainted with their Italian comrades, veterans in the bitter school of exile. Later we came to know men like Arturo Toscanini, Ignazio Silone, Gaetano Salvemini, and G. A. Borgese. But the first one we met was Count Carlo Sforza. He was living in Brussels at the time, spending every year a few months in the United States and the summers in the south of France. Some of our friends in Sanary—my uncle, Heinrich Mann, and Lion Feuchtwanger—were on cordial terms with the Sforzas. One day, in August, 1933, they took us to the country house near Toulon where the Italian family resided.

Sforza, 71 years old today, was just sixty at the time of this meeting—a tall, elegant figure, rather impressive-looking with his high forehead, wide, deep-set eyes, monocle,

Hearthside view of two great Italians: an activist philosopher, Benedetto Croce, and a philosophical man of action, Count Carlo Sforza

by S/Sgt. Klaus Mann

and stylish goatee. No doubt he has the attitude and appearance you would expect in the scion of a proud, glorious tribe. The name of Sforza is indeed almost as laden with fabulous memories as are the names of Alba or Bourbon: the fame of the Sforzas goes back to the time of the Renaissance when they were dukes of Milan, conquerors, adventurers, *condottieri*.

He received us with exquisite cordiality. "Welcome in exile!" he said. "We are colleagues now. Too bad. I know how you feel. I know what it means to give up the country to which you have tried to be useful—and not always quite without success."

Not quite without success, indeed! The career which Sforza voluntarily interrupted in 1927 was brilliant and colorful. As far back as 1906 he represented the Italian interests at international conferences—in Algeiras, for instance, where the complex question of what belonged to whom in North Africa was discussed by the emissaries of the Great Powers. From 1911 to 1915 he was the Italian Minister in China; then the Foreign Office in Rome sent him to Serbia and Macedonia. In 1918 and 1919 he was Allied High Commissioner to Turkey; in 1920 and 1921, Secretary of State in Giolitti's government—the same government to which his friend Croce belonged. His next position, as Ambassador to France, he resigned in 1922 as a protest against the newly established Fascist system.

Back in Italy, Sforza found himself confronted by the same menaces with which Croce and so many other upright anti-Fascists were already familiar. Mussolini first wooed, then persecuted him. In Milan, Sforza was beaten down by a gang of fanatics. His house in Rome was confiscated ("organized," as the Nazis would put it) with all his belongings, including a valuable collection of Chinese art. His villa in Forte dei Marmi was burned down by the vandals. His brother was put in jail for having celebrated a mass for one of Mussolini's most illustrious victims, Matteotti.

Together with Croce, Sforza was the mouthpiece and leader of opposition in the Senate, until 1927, when he ceased to attend the meetings which, in his own words, "were no longer anything but parades in the service of Fascist propaganda." At that point the Count left Italy for China, as a special correspondent for French and English newspapers. He was determined not to return to his homeland so long as Mussolini was in power.

His Belgian-born wife, a quiet, intelligent woman of aristocratic simplicity, and his two children were with him in France. I don't remember having met the daughter, Signorina Fiammetta. His son, whom everyone called Sforzino, was around, however, a youth of sixteen, handsome, bright, reserved—a frailer, less dynamic version of Sforza père.

We talked politics, naturally. Sforza anticipated the disastrous alliance between fascism and nazism. Would the



Sforza's name has been famous since the Renaissance

democratic powers recognize the danger? Would they act in time to prevent the catastrophe? "What can be done to warn the world?" one of us asked. Sforza answered, "Nothing. The world does not want to be warned." And, after a short silence: "But we have to try. Of course, we have to keep trying. . . ."

HE kept trying, all right. For twenty-one long, painful years, from 1922 to 1943, he kept vocalizing, organizing, publicizing, activating the anti-Fascist resistance. He traveled, lectured, wrote, attended conferences. He remained in contact with anti-Fascist compatriots and with leading personalities of the international scene. In the U. S., he was a frequent guest at the White House and made friends with several members of the Roosevelt Administration. In London, he conferred with Churchill and Eden. In Paris, he knew everybody who had influence in pre-Vichy France. The Vichyites, however, hated him—even before Vichy. Charles Maurras, the literary champion of extreme French reaction, wrote in the Goebbels-backed weekly, *Je Suis Partout*: "The most dangerous enemies of France are not Hitler and Nazism, but three men: Churchill, Sforza, and Beneš."

(President Beneš of Czechoslovakia, incidentally, happens to be one of Sforza's oldest, most trusted political friends. "Many powerful men in all the capitals of the world have assured me, with beautiful eloquence, of their sympathy and admiration," Sforza once told me, with a little chuckle. "Beneš is different, I've never heard from him that I was a great man, or anything of the kind. But every time I met him, his first question was, 'What can I do for you?'")

Of course, you have to keep trying. When the Pan-American Conference of Free Italians gathered at Montevideo, in 1942, Sforza was acclaimed as the leader against fascism. In 1943 he became one of the founders of the Italian Action Party, to the moral sponsors of which he still belongs, although he is not a member of any party at this point.

When Mussolini fell, there were two men the world expected to become leaders of a liberated Italy—Benedetto Croce and Count Carlo Sforza. (Continued on page 90)

N. Y. TIMES STUDIO



Jenny McKean, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Q. A. Shaw McKean of Prides Crossing, Mass., married Marine Captain Paul Mocre, Jr., in her grandmother's gown. Capt. Moore has the Navy Cross, Silver Star, Purple Heart

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WHEN I saw Sforza again, in his rather modest apartment in Naples, he and Croce had just joined Badoglio's government as ministers without portfolio. The intrigues and dilemmas preceding this development must have been tiring and irritating. Yet I found Sforza as alert and well poised as ever. As I told him so, he answered smilingly:

"I don't allow myself to get too excited about current events. One has to maintain a certain sense of proportion and must not overrate the importance of one's own failures or successes. After all, our present struggle—all these hopes and disappointments which mean so much to us—are only episodes, minor vicissitudes, from the point of view of history. We should try to think of ourselves not as the center of the universe but as links in a long chain of striving generations."

This detachment, almost Chinese in its philosophical serenity, is by no means a pose. Nor was Sforza joking when he answered my question, whether he enjoyed his new governmental position, with the dry remark: "There is nothing enjoyable about being a member of any government. . . . But you have to show your good will; you have to cooperate. Of course, you have to try, and try again. But it is not always easy."

Naturally, the Count is used to the flattering and disturbing hullabaloo of fame and power. When the photographer asked him to pose at his desk, pen in hand—"just as if you were writing, see?"—Sforza murmured, with a resigned sigh, "Life is monotonous."

Even the daily avalanche of printed insults and broadcast slander was deplorably lacking in originality. Radio Rome called Carlo Sforza an enemy agent. A Fascist paper in Milan spoke of the members of the Badoglio government as "cannibal traitors." The most ingenious member of the gang was still old Doc Goebbels himself. Sforza had a good laugh when I showed him a front-page story, "Sforza," recently published in Goebbels' own paper, *Das Reich*—a venomous slur full of stale gossip

and grotesque inventions. "Yet I think it's funny," the Count insisted with a malicious giggle, as if one of his enemies, not he himself, were the object of the foul attack. "Rather clever, for all its absurdity. It somehow has that certain Goebbels touch, you know."

At that time Sforza's wife and daughter were still in New York City. The Countess was active as president of a welfare organization of Italo-American women gathering clothes to be shipped to the "old country." Signorina Fiammetta, twenty-eight years of age, as a nurse at a hospital.

Sforzino, twenty-seven, was in Naples, active there, as he now is in Rome, as his father's secretary, driver, bodyguard, and collaborator. He no longer is the shy, dreamy youth I knew in Toulon, eleven years ago, but has become a mature, self-assured, remarkably brilliant young man—destined perhaps to play an important rôle in the future life of his nation. Educated in Belgium, France, and England, he came to the U. S. with his family after the German invasion of the Low Countries. For a year he studied law at Columbia University, then worked for N.B.C., broadcasting twice a day short-wave programs to Italy. In March, 1943, he joined the American Army, to which he belonged for about half a year, stationed first at Camp Grant, Ill., as a medic, then in a small camp in Maryland. It was there that I met him again. Two promising privates, we did KP together and discussed world affairs.

It was fun to talk good old GI gossip, at the luncheon table of the Sforzas in Naples. That sergeant, back in Camp X—wasn't he a character, though! And that red-haired Red Cross girl—boy, oh boy! The older Sforza cheerfully joined in the conversation. He loved to speak about America, which has become a second home to him. With gusto he recalled people and places he used to know over there—the many colleges and universities where he stayed as a guest professor; the many cities where he has so many friends.

"There is so much good will in America," he said, "especially among the young. I've met wonderful lads, in all those colleges. Let's hope that their idealism will not

be disappointed; that they will have a word to say when it comes to shaping the world of the future—and that their word will be heard."

One of the Croce daughters—Elena—joined our little party. "How I'd love to see America!" she sighed. "But you know how Papa is. He doesn't dare to go there because he is afraid of the publicity, the endless banquets, and of the public speeches he'd have to make. He really hates to make public speeches."

I REALLY hate to make public appearances, to be interviewed, to preside at political rallies, and all that kind of thing."

This is Benedetto Croce speaking, in his studio at the Villa Tritone, in Sorrento. He does not seem to have changed since I saw him last—in 1928. If his features appeared, at that time, rather older than his actual age, his gait and motions are now surprisingly agile for a man near eighty.

It's a beautiful home to which the Croces moved from Naples, in November, 1942, when the air raids began to interfere too much with the philosopher's work and when friends began to worry too much about the grand old man's security. Maybe the Villa Tritone, situated on one of the most picturesque spots in Europe, is almost too beautiful for so simple and austere a man as Benedetta Croce. It's a sumptuous affair—built by John J. Astor, then taken over by a wealthy Dutchman, Mynheer Gerthsema—a fancy *palazzo* with spacious reception room, Pompeian terraces, and a vast garden full of exotic plants and antique statues. But there is nothing fancy or formal about the life in this luxurious mansion.

The Croces are hospitable in a casual, somewhat absent-minded fashion. The house seems to be constantly swarming with people whose identities are completely unknown to the hosts—young British lieutenants from the neighboring rest camps, American AMG officers, Italian generals covered with decorations, Neapolitan politicians, ladies with dogs and children, foreign diplomats. It may happen that one of the daughters exclaims suddenly, at the tea table: "Gosh! I forgot to tell you, Papa, that the Russian Ambassador is waiting for you in the drawing-room. He says he's in a rush."

During the period of political crisis preceding the abdication of the King, the Villa Tritone became a political center, a meeting place. It was there that the members of the anti-Fascist junta discussed momentous problems and agreed upon the necessity of forming a new coalition government including Communist, Socialist, Liberal, Actionist, Christian Democrat, and Labor Democrat representatives.

But the Sorrento villa is also a real Italian home, where a venerable scholar resides as pater familias with his wife and four daughters. Elena, twenty-nine, is the oldest and most worldly of the girls. Her sister Alda, twenty-six, has the reputation of being the real genius of the younger Croce generation. She has studied Spanish literature and published a valuable treatise on Lope de Vega. Besides, she has been chosen by her father as his secretary and collaborator. The two younger sisters—Lydia, twenty-two, and Sylvia, twenty—

are impressively erudite, too, with doctors' degrees and all. They all look a little like very earnest and engaging characters from a Russian novel—except Elena, who looks like a very attractive young lady from Naples, Italy.

"We lead a very normal, uneventful life," Elena assures me. "Rather dull, in fact. Of course, once in a while there are little incidents."

One of those little incidents occurred when the Germans approached Sorrento. There was reason to expect that they might try to kidnap Benedetto Croce and his family: so the British rescued the philosopher, with his wife and daughters, on September 15, 1943, and took them to Capri. "We stayed there about a month," Elena said. "It was lovely."

At present the main interest of the younger Croces is a new literary magazine, *Aretusa*, the first issue of which has just appeared and looks indeed very promising. Since *La Critica* recently discontinued publication (the last number featuring a fine farewell message from the editor), *Aretusa* has a good chance of becoming the literary mouthpiece of Italy's most distinguished author—Benedetto Croce.

While deeply involved in political activities, Croce remained essentially and above all a man of letters. Of course so long as he belonged to the government he was not free to concentrate on his creative work. "There are sacrifices one has to make for the sake of one's country," he said to me. "Besides I have produced, in the course of the years, fifty volumes or so. Why shouldn't I devote the rest of my life partly to politics, since it seems to be necessary? But what a relief to return to literature, if only for a few hours! Yesterday I managed to escape all visitors and to work on a little essay. It was like a tonic bath."

He showed me a pamphlet which he recently published, *The Spiritual Difference of Germany from Europe*.

I was not surprised when I heard, shortly afterward, that Croce had resigned from the Bonomi Government, which had been formed in the meantime, and had retired to his Sorrento home. Somehow I could not help feeling that this was the right thing for him to do. After having played his rôle in Italian politics at the moment of crisis and decision, he should be allowed once more to devote the best part of his time and energy to what has always been, and will always remain, the real mission and passion of his life—the delights and efforts of meditation and creative thought. In doing so he will not cease to contribute to the social and intellectual renaissance of his country, just as, with different means and in a more worldly sphere, does his friend Sforza.

IF Italy, still torn and suffering, seems nevertheless on the way to recovery—not far, perhaps, from finding a new moral and political equilibrium—two men have contributed essentially to the preparation and effectuation of this second *risorgimento*: an activist philosopher and a philosophical man of action—Benedetto Croce and Carlo Sforza.

Both are ardent patriots but un-
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way paved with bright new dimes," said Mr. Smith. But if he had his way, all contributions this year would come in the regular coin cut-out containers which also have special slots for dollars, checks, and money orders. Coins gummed up with beeswax, tape, or mucilage frequently have to be put through an intricate cleaning process before they can be counted.

Each day's batch of contributions is sorted by eight experienced mail clerks. Mr. Smith keeps a careful check of each day's receipts—not in money but in the number of letters and cards. Then the mail is packed in bags and delivered, unopened, by armored truck to temporary offices of Horwath and Horwath, public accountants who do the actual tabulating. The names and addresses of all persons sending in more than a dollar are kept.

Knowing how much money comes in is only half the task for the accountants. Knowing where it comes from is the other. The birthday-greeting cards and letters are sorted according to states, then counties. The Foundation furnishes the accountants with a list of names and addresses of all county chairmen. On this they insert the amount due each and draw a check payable to the chapter treasurer. Next stop on the silver-streamed special is at New York headquarters where checks are signed by Basil O'Connor, president of the National Foundation. Back to the local chapters goes half of the total contribution. The remainder is used by the National Foundation which, through grants to universities, hospitals, and laboratories, directs and supports a research program into the cause and the methods of treatment of infantile paralysis. The answer to the riddle has not yet come, but in the meantime modern treatment, such as that based on the work of Sister Kenny, is being studied and taught to doctors, nurses, and physical therapists, while all tested facts about the disease are disseminated both to professionals and laymen.

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compromisingly opposed to that "monster, Nationalism," and hoping for a supernational organization to emerge from this second universal war: "a Declaration of Interdependence of Nations, which will be for human society what the Declaration of Independence was for the American colonies at the end of the eighteenth century," as Sforza puts it in his recent book, *Contemporary Italy*.

Both, though fervent liberals, are aware of the dangers inherent in unrestricted liberty, "when applied to all economic activities of a world that has permitted the birth, and later the egotistic arrogance, of a new tyranny—the tyranny of wealth."

Both are realistic and unorthodox, free of illusions and free of pretensions, but solemnly conscious of their high responsibility and of the grave, decisive character of the crisis we are passing through. "We are on the crossroad," says Sforza. "Tomorrow's Europe will be what we make it—for us, or against us."

Both are real Italians, real Europeans, real citizens of the world.