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Count Sforza Unruffled Despite Attempt On Life.

Mann, Klaus

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Count Sforza Unruffled Despite Attempt On Life

By Cpl. KLAUS MANN
Staff Correspondent

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ROME, March 17—The news that an attempt on Count Carlo Sforza's life had been made, and had failed, was, significantly, first disclosed by a Fascist radio station allegedly operating underground in the liberated area but in reality probably located in German-occupied northern Italy.

As soon as the story was released, newspapermen of various nationalities tried to get an interview with Sforza, but he did not want to discuss "such a trifling affair." He received me as a friend, not as a reporter; but when I told him that I might want to write something about our conversation, he agreed, with smiling resignation: "Well, if it has to be . . ."

Sforza—a remarkably well-preserved, aristocratic-looking man of 71—appeared not very excited about what had happened to him. "There have been so many attempts on my life," he observed, with one of his characteristic grins, "that one more or less doesn't really make much difference."

And, indeed, there is nothing surprising about the fact that the Nazi Fascists should be interested in "liquidating" the Italian statesman and thinker who is known all over the world as one of the most consistent, most uncompromising and most distinguished anti-Fascists.

But why—I wanted to know—should the new attempt on his life have taken place just now, at a time when Sforza holds no office in the government, several months after he resigned as High Commissioner for the Purge of Fascists?

Sforza thinks this particular timing of the murderous plot may have to do with an article he wrote in the Roman newspaper *Il Giornale del Mattino*, March 6, about the notorious case of General Roatta, the Fascist war criminal who recently escaped from a prison hospital.

REVEALS DETAILS

In this piece Sforza revealed certain sinister details, hitherto unknown, of the fugitive's political and military career and pointed out the grave implications and possible consequences of Roatta's escape. In Sforza's opinion, the attempt on his life may have been instigated, as a direct act of revenge, by Roatta himself or by the general's political friends and sponsors.

Those people—former high-ranking Fascist officers and officials of the former Fascist regime, still at large in Rome—are becoming alarmingly active and impudent in liberated Italy, Sforza said. Their methods remain now what they have always been—threats and naked, physical brutality.

"Of course," Sforza remarked, shrugging his shoulders contemptuously, "those gentlemen know quite well that they can't terrorize me! Yet what they try to do is, to create a general atmosphere of terror, the atmosphere of the jungle, the only atmosphere in which Fascism

—under another name, disguised, but not essentially changed—could make, or prepare, its comeback."

"You can see now," Sforza said to me, "how right I was to reject the ambassadorship to Paris offered to me, a short time ago, by the Bonomi Government. How could I possibly leave a country where attempts on my life are being made? It's much too interesting here!"

Previously Sforza had refused to go as Italian Ambassador to Washington. Sforza would have liked to go to the United States where he lived for a number of years and had been very happy. Yet he declined the offer.

TELLS MOTIVES

His motives, it can now be revealed, had to do with the friction that developed some months ago between the Italian statesman, on the one hand, and the British Foreign Office, on the other.

Sforza, who believes that complete Anglo-American unity is of the utmost importance for the future of our civilization, did not feel like becoming the hero of anti-British elements in the United States.

He explained his position in a recent letter: "I wish not only to remain but also to appear to everybody what I have been, even at a time when it was costly and unpopular: a champion of constructive understanding between Italy and the two great English-speaking democracies — an understanding that will prove of vital importance also to those two great powers, if what one wishes to create tomorrow is not to be just another truce but true, lasting peace."

RED ARMY

(Continued from page 1)

release a substantial percentage of his forces for the forthcoming assault on the lower Oder.

Progress of the battle on the central Oder sector opposite Kustrin to Silesia was again blacked out today, but there was reason to believe there will be highly significant developments there in the near future.

German counterblows in Hungary are beginning to weaken as a result of heavy German tank losses, estimated by the Russians to be at least five divisions.

Pravda printed an interview with an unnamed German general in the Stettin area today and quoted him as saying the German generals are highly resentful that Adolf Hitler had appointed Gestapo chief Heinrich Himmler to take over command of the front.

According to the general, Himmler's command brought an intensification of terror in the German Army as well as a high rate of desertions.