

International Review

Italy's Play for Syria and Syria's Revolt

THE furious pace at which Italian imperialism is developing is again indicated by the report, reliably given in the *Journal de Genevois*, a paper close to the league of nations' affairs, that the approaching conversations of the French foreign minister, Briand, with Mussolini will take up the question of transferring the mandate over Syria, given to France in 1920, to Italy. In return Italy is to renounce all claims to Morocco and Tunis, the north African reserve of French imperialism.

Whether or not Italy secures the mandate over Syria, it is certain that the Italian-inspired demand of Spain for Tangiers has thrown France into a frenzy of fear at the prospect of a loss of position in the Mediterranean and a strengthened rival in north Africa. The tremendous reserve of man power for its army—which is now the largest in Europe, if not in the world—that is afforded by the 35,000,000 inhabitants of French colonies in north Africa, who gave 750,000 colored troops to France in the world war and who compose an ever greater proportion of its armed troops, is not a light matter for France. And, in addition, there is the wealth of mineral resources, especially in Morocco, to be considered.

IT would not, therefore, be improbable that France would think of handing Syria to Italy in return for other assurances. This is all the more possible when the continued development of the revolutionary movement in Syria is held in mind. French policies in Syria have been anything but successful. The rebellion of the Djebel Druzes is by no means liquidated. The former high-commissioner, M. de Jouvenel, has been recalled and another French colonial dictator, M. Ponsot, put in his place. And still the rebels continue to harass the French quite successfully.

In the regions of Aleppo, Baalbeck and Djebel Druze, the French have suffered sharp defeats, and the hospitals of Damas and Liban are filled with the wounded. Near Baalbeck, Tewfik Bey Haidar, reported dead by official French communiques, has reappeared at the head of the insurgents. It is reported further that in the battle of Aere, in Djebel Druze, a number of Moroccan soldiers in the troops commanded by Colonel Kalah, went over to the rebels and presented a united front with them against French imperialism.

Still further, a congress was recently held in El-Azrav which elected a national government. All the rebel groups pledged themselves to a single leadership and the army is being re-organized, trained, improved and augmented daily under the able direction of Raschid Back Falik, who led the insurgents at Aere. Raschid Back Falik, the commanding general of the national army, is a former governor of Aleppo.

ITALY is quite anxious to secure control over Syria for a number of reasons. The absence of grains, cereals, potatoes and other necessities, the substantial import of which has resulted in a passive trade balance for Italy, can be largely overcome by Syria, which produces these necessities in great quantities. Italy also desires a country where it can dump emigrants. It wants, furthermore, the heightening of its prestige in the Mediterranean. It wants a base in Asia Minor for a possible onslaught against Turkey. And in securing Syria it will, paradoxically, get greater support from Great Britain in its imperialist adventures by further threatening Great Britain's domination of the Mediterranean and the route to China and Asia; Syria faces the British base, Cyprus Island, on the east, as the Italian dominated Dodecanese Islands face it on the west.

—Max Shachtman.