

Italian Clubs And Embassy In Close Touch

Post Staff
Letter of Diplomat

Calling Conference Reveals Relations

The existence of close relations between the Italian Embassy and Italo-American organizations in Washington was revealed yesterday.

The disclosure followed the dispatch of letters from Vittorio Bifulco, assistant counselor at the embassy, to the presidents of seven or eight Italo-American clubs asking them to call at his office after hours for a conference as soon as possible.

Antonio Mistretta, president of Loggia Cavaletti, largest Italian lodge in the city, told The Post that such letters were not unusual.

Visit Embassy Often

"We receive them frequently," he said. "I have many in my desk. We go over to the embassy very often, every month or so, to talk to the people over there."

Mistretta said he could not remember what had been discussed on previous occasions. As for this call, which he said he would answer by visiting the embassy Sunday, Mistretta commented:

"I don't know what it is all about."

He was anxious to point out, however, that all the members of his lodge are American citizens and "not interested" in what goes on in Italy. About reports that the embassy was about to launch an Italian Red Cross drive, he said he had heard nothing.

Just a Social Call

Bifulco told The Post that he merely wanted the heads of the various organizations to drop in for a social call.

"I had not seen them for about a year," he said, "and it occurred to me that we ought to get together for a talk."

He said there was "nothing in particular" that he wanted to talk to them about and denied that the conferences would deal in any way with the war. Asked whether any attempt would be made to whip up aid for Italy as in the Ethiopian War, Bifulco replied:

"That was the Ethiopian War. This is something else."

During Mussolini's African adventure a nation-wide campaign was maintained to obtain gold in the form of dollars or jewelry that could be melted down. Many campaigners also urged youths to enlist in the Italian army.

Dated After Fascism

Bifulco's letter to the Washington club presidents was in Italian. A translation of the text follows:

"Dear President:

"If you wish, I would like to confer with you at your earliest possible convenience.

"You will find me at my office after hours.

"Best regards. "B. BIFULCO."

The letter was dated August 7, 1940, XVIII. The Roman numerals represent the eighteenth year of Fascism.