IL CENACOLO

ITALIAN CULTURAL CLUB

Founded in 1928

Regular Thursday Meetings, Noon to 2:00 P.M.
San Francisco Italian Athletic Club
1630 Stockton Street (3rd floor), San Francisco, CA 94133

www.ilcenacolosf.org

"Il Cenacolo is an organization that preserves, enhances and encourages all aspects of Italian arts, language and culture and recognizes the unique contribution of Italian heritage that is intertwined in the history and life of the San Francisco Bay Area."

DECEMBER 2019

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2019
"Camilleri, Montalbano & Vigata: A Special Trio"
Peter Sherwood

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2019
No luncheon in deference to the Christmas Gala.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2019
IL CENACOLO CHRISTMAS GALA
Chuck Stagliano, Man of the Year
(St. Francis Yacht Club, 5:30 pm)

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2019
The Merrie Olde Christmas Carolers
Guests invited!

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 26, 2019
No luncheon in deference to Christmas.

This month's programs arranged by Peter Sherwood.

PROGRAM PROFILES

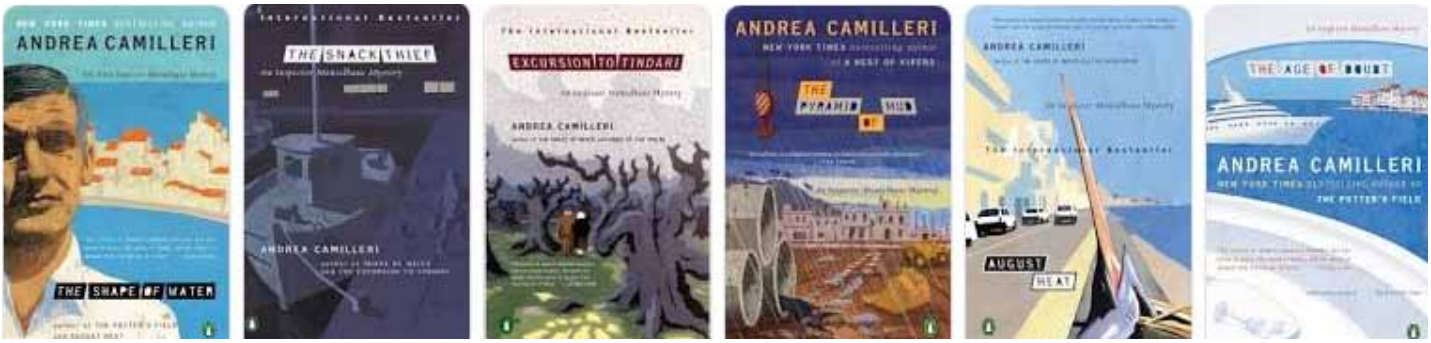
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2019
"Camilleri, Montalbano & Vigata: A Special Trio"
Peter Sherwood

Pete Sherwood has been a Cenacolista for 19 years. He worked with 2002 Man of the Year Dave Lombardi as a mediator at the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco for many years. He has traveled in Italy extensively this century and the last and never tires of this fascinating and beautiful land.

On our trip to Sicily last year, I fell under the spell of this largest island in the Mediterranean. Strung into the web of rich history and vibrant culture that ensnared me are the crime novels of the recently-deceased author, Andrea Camilleri, featuring the now world-renowned police detective, Salvo Montalbano.

Camilleri created a world based in and on his native Sicily and has populated it with alluring characters that hang out and work with Montalbano as he lives, loves, eats (boy, does he eat!) and solves crimes in his own inimitable way, while often laying waste to the status quo and police bureaucracy. These novels have become the basis for a number of international television series, the most exceptional of which has been produced for Italian television. They could even be more popular than the novels themselves!

I'm sure many of you are already devotees of Salvo Montalbano, with much deeper knowledge than I, so come on over and share your expertise and admiration for the creator, the characters, actors and locations of this wonderful series of artistic works. I will give a brief talk about the author, the novels and the TV series, and maybe show a few video clips, and we can talk about your take on them all.



The Merrie Olde Christmas Carolers

Thursday, December 19, 2019

The Merrie Olde Christmas Carolers have been entertaining and amusing audiences in the Bay area for over 40 years, and have appeared on local television and radio programs. A truly unique caroling group, the Merrie Olde Christmas Carolers are professional singers, members of the San Francisco Opera Chorus, and featured artists from other opera and theatre companies throughout the greater Bay Area. Costumed in Dickensian attire, the Merrie Olde Christmas Carolers is the only group in the Bay Area presenting new arrangements of carols and songs, as well as the beloved and familiar traditional carols. The quartet is accompanied by the merry sounds of cymbals, tambourines and kazoos. Any celebration featuring this outstanding group of performers will be spirited, festive and fun.

Cari Cenacolisti:

Well, here we are approaching another Holiday Season and the end of a busy year.

Our special thanks to our Board Member Dr. Don Zingale who presented three informative speakers—including himself—all from the teaching faculty at San Francisco State University.

Dr. Don Taylor kept all of us wishing we could lead such an active life in boats, both repairing and sailing all over the world, starting at our own San Francisco Bay. We all wondered how he could allocate so much of his time to these nautical endeavors, in addition to climbing steep mountains and, of course, leading and teaching at the University level. But he did it and kept all of us spellbound with his presentation and photographs.

Dr. Don Zingale, also, in addition to his active 40-year teaching and administrative career at different New York and California State Universities—including a stint as Vice President at the California State Maritime Academy and finishing up at San Francisco State—described his retirement of cruising to more than 40 countries with more than 200 nights aboard six ships during the last five years! *[Ladies and gentlemen, what have we all done (or hope to do) during our retirement years?]*

Finally, Dr. Olivia Albiero, originally from Vicenza Italy, brought us on the journey of her career as a student of languages at the universities of Padua and Washington State—leading to her 2016 move to San Francisco State as Assistant Professor in the Department of Modern Italian and German Languages. She riveted our attention with the descriptions about her courses about post-WWII Italian and German culture and, among other subjects, (most importantly) about the importance of food in Italian culture!

Indeed, through these speakers, Dr. Zingale has raised our cultural intelligence factor a notch—which is what Il Cenacolo is all about! What a treasure we have on our Cenacolo Board of Directors!

For this next month of December, we meet only twice for luncheons. First, program chair Pete Sherwood will speak about his favorite fictional detective, Salvo Montalbano, and two weeks later, we will be entertained again by the Merrie Olde Christmas Carolers! Make sure to bring your significant others to join us for this holiday celebration.

For those of you who did not attend last month's "Dinner + a Film" at the Marin Italian Film Festival, you missed a good one! For next year, participant feedback has suggested we shift the dinner to follow the film, thus allowing all the time necessary to enjoy the feast, linger and muse into the evening!

Finally, for the remainder of 2019, please make sure to reserve your attendance at our Annual Christmas Gala on December 15th at the St. Francis Yacht Club—see information on the following page You can also register by clicking here: https://ilcenacolosf.org/christmas-gala/. Join us in honoring Chuck Stagliano who has done so much for Il Cenacolo and well deserves our appreciation. Gala Committee members, Ron Derenzi, Marie Derenzi and Eugene Lanzone are setting up another wonderful gastronomical experience!

The list of our 2020 activities—now in the planning stages—promises to be full and active with special group tickets to performances at the San Francisco Opera and Symphony, a tour of the Opera House, possible outings to a winery and museum, our traditional Sal Reina Opera Outing in September, Il Cenacolo at the Marin Italian Film Festival, and full circle, back to the December Christmas Gala. All these in addition to our lively Thursday Luncheons. Do take full advantage of your membership and participate. You will feel enriched!

Wishing you all a Buon Natale,
I remain, sincerely yours, DTG

2019 Christmas Gala

HONORING OUR MAN OF THE YEAR

Chuck Stagliano

Sunday, December 15, 2019

St. Francis Yacht Club
Northwest & Golden Gate Rooms
On the Marina / 99 Yacht Road
San Francisco, CA 94123

YOU CAN REGISTER ON OUR WEBSITE HERE:

HTTPS://ILCENACOLOSF.ORG/CHRISTMAS-GALA/

NEW MEMBERS

This month we welcome:

SABRINA LONGEGA WILSON, San Francisco; sponsored by Ron Derenzi.

Sabrina was born in Venice, Italy, and holds a BA in Languages and Literature from Ca' Foscari University in Venice and an MA in Communication from UBC, Vancouver, Canada. She is the Executive Director of KOMEN, and the President of the Leonardo da Vinci Society in San Francisco.

If you wish to sponsor a prospective member to Il Cenacolo, please contact:

Ron Fenolio
510-459-5115
ron@veedercrestwines.com

He will take it from there!

Il Cenacolo at the Marin Italian Film Festival

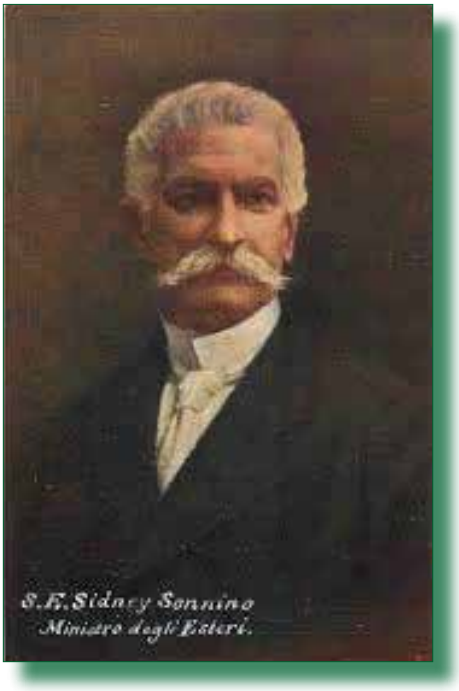
A cheerful group of Cenacolisti enjoyed our third annual "Dinner + a Film" on Saturday, November 2. The attractive private dining room at La Toscana Restaurant was the perfect venue for a fine Italian dinner complemented with BYOB wines as well as those offered by the restaurant.

We then made our way to the Marin Civic Center a short distance away for the Marin Italian Film Festival. "*Put Grandma in the Freezer (Metti la Nonna in Freezer)*", directed by Giancarlo Fontana and Giuseppe Stasi and nominated for two awards for comedy in Italy, was very entertaining, with lots of good laughs.

For next year, as previously mentioned, participant feedback has suggested we shift the dinner to follow the film, thus allowing all the time necessary to enjoy the feast, linger and muse into the evening!

SIDNEY SONNINO
(1847-1922)

This month's essay follows an earlier essay about Prime Minister Vittorio Emanuele Orlando and his work at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. His Foreign Minister, who also was in attendance at the Conference, was a strong supporter of Italian war claims of territory from the defeated Austro-Hungarian Empire. He was the stumbling block in much of the discussions during spring, 1919 that prevented compromises to be made on a number of issues. He was especially forceful in pushing the terms of the London Treaty of 1915 that had brought Italy into the war on the side of the Entente. The territorial claims in that treaty were ignored by Britain and France at the conference and became a political problem in Italy that aided the later rise of Mussolini to power. At the conference, he alienated the other participants, especially Wilson, Clemenceau, and Lloyd George with his intransigence. Even Orlando countered him on some of his positions, thus making the Italians appear confused in their policies.



Sidney Costantino, Baron Sonnino was born in Egypt on March 11, 1847. His grandfather had emigrated from the ghetto in Livorno, Tuscany, where the family had lived for decades, to Egypt. There he had built up an enormous fortune as a banker. Sidney returned to Pisa as a young child with his family. His father was an Italian of Jewish heritage (Isacco Saul Sonnino, who converted to Anglicanism); his mother (Georgina Sophia Arnaud Dudley Menhennet) was Welsh. Sonnino was raised Anglican by his family. (He was the only Protestant to serve as Prime Minister from the Risorgimento through the collapse of the democracy in 1922). Upon returning to Italy, his family did not live in the Jewish ghetto, but at the Castello Sonnino in Quercianella, near Livorno. His grandfather's wealth made the family respectable in his new home, and enabled his early education in both Pisa and, later, in England.

He entered the University of Pisa and subsequently graduated in 1865 with a law degree. Following graduation, Sonnino became a diplomat, serving as a foreign service officer at the Italian embassies in Madrid, Vienna, Berlin and Paris, from 1866 until 1871. Although he was fluent in five languages, he gained a reputation for disliking public speaking, which would later earn him the nickname, "the Silent Statesman of Italy."

He eventually retired from the diplomatic service in 1873 and began studying the political, social and economic history of Italy, particularly steeping himself in economic affairs. In 1876,

Sonnino traveled to Sicily with Leopoldo Franchetti to conduct a private investigation into the state of Sicilian society. Their research was published in 1877 as a two-part report for the Italian Parliament: *La Sicilia nel 1876 (Sicily in 1876).*

In the first part, published separately as *I Contadini in Sicilia (The Farmers in Sicily)*, Sonnino analyzed the lives of the island's landless peasants. The work was a notable contribution to public knowledge of agrarian conditions in Sicily. One of his aims, he said, was to revive southern Italy economically and morally. Franchetti's half of the report, also published separately as *Condizioni Politiche e Amministrative della Sicilia (Political and Administrative Conditions in Sicily),* was an analysis of the Mafia in the 19th century that is still considered authoritative today. His study was the first convincing explanation of how the Mafia came to be in Sicily. (Franchetti influenced thinking about the Mafia more than anyone else until Giovanni Falcone, a judge and prosecuting magistrate in Palermo, fought to overthrow the power of the Sicilian Mafia during the 1980s and early 1990s. Falcone was ultimately assassinated on May 23, 1992 by the Sicilian Corleonesi Mafia in the massive Capaci bombing on the A29 motorway near the town of Capaci).

In 1878, together with Franchetti, Sonnino founded *La Rassegna Settimanale (The Weekly Review),* which was originally a weekly economic review that subsequently became a political daily. As Franchetti bowed out of publishing the *Review* after several issues, Sonnino took over the editorial responsibilities of publication, which for years gave him the opportunity to air his political and economic opinions. A versatile scholar, he also wrote and lectured on Dante and Petrarch, both of whose works he was a careful student.

Sonnino's long political career began when he was elected to the Italian Chamber of Deputies in the general elections of May, 1880. He represented the constituency of San Casciano in Val di Pesa, a part of the municipality of Florence, located about 10 miles southwest of Florence. He was a member of the chamber until September, 1919. Sonnino soon became one of the leading opponents of the Liberal Left. As a strict constitutionalist, he favored both strong government to resist pressure of special interests and support for universal suffrage, making him a Conservative Liberal.

After he was elected a deputy to the Chamber of Deputies, Sonnino's background and interest in finance and economics led to a series of appointments to government cabinet positions that dealt with economic issues. His first governmental appointment was as First Undersecretary of the Treasury and then, in 1893, he was made Minister of Finance (December 1893-June

1894) and Minister of the Treasury (December 1893-March 1896) in the two governments of Prime Minister Francesco Crispi.

One of his first tasks was to attempt to resolve the financial crisis of 1893, which had resulted from the Banca Romana scandal. (The Banca Romana scandal stemmed from the bankruptcy of the bank, which was one of six national banks that were authorized to issue currency). Sonnino wanted to establish a single bank to issue currency, but the main priority of his bank reform was not to design a new national banking system, but quickly to solve the financial problems of the Banca Romana, as well as to cover up the scandal that involved the political elite class in its bankruptcy. He created Banca d'Italia, which was the result of a merger of three existing national banks that were authorized to issue currency (the Banca Nazionale and two banks from Tuscany). However, regional interests were still strong, and this resulted in the compromise of allowing two other national banks (the Banco di Napoli and the Banco di Sicilia) to continue issuing currency. Sonnino, however, was able to establish stricter state control over these three national banks.

As Minister of the Treasury, Sonnino implemented a number of crucial remedial measures, including taxation by decree. He restructured public finances, imposing new taxes and cutting public spending. The budget deficit was sharply reduced, from 174 million lire in 1893–94 to 36 million in 1896–97.

After the fall of the Crispi government as a result of the Battle of Adwa (the climactic battle of the First Italo-Ethiopian War on March 1, 1896 in which an invading Italian force was defeated by Ethiopian forces, with the aid of Russia and France, near the town of Adwa in Tigray), Sonnino served as the leader of the opposition conservatives against the new liberal Prime Minister, Giovanni Giolitti. In January, 1897 Sonnino published an article titled "Torniamo allo Statuto," ("Let's go back to the Statute") in which he sounded the alarm about the threats that the clergy, republicans, and socialists posed to liberalism. He called for the abolition of the system of parliamentary government and the return of the royal prerogative to appoint and dismiss the Prime Minister without consulting Parliament, as the only possible way to avert the danger. In 1901, to continue the exposition of his political views, he founded a new major national newspaper, *Il Giornale d'Italia (The Newspaper of Italy).*

In response to the social reforms presented by the Prime Minister Giuseppe Zanardelli in November, 1902, Sonnino, still the opposition conservative leader, introduced a reform bill

to alleviate poverty in southern Italy. Sonnino criticized the usual approach to solving the poverty crisis through public works: "to construct railways where there is no trade is like giving a spoon to a man who has nothing to eat." His bill provided for a reduction of the land tax in Sicily, Calabria, and Sardinia. It also made it easier to obtain agricultural credit, and it re-established the system of perpetual lease for small holdings, in addition to the dissemination and enhancement of agrarian contracts in order to combine the interests of farmers with those of the landowners.

Sonnino's uncompromising extremism in some of his views prevented him from being elected Prime Minister numerous times. In addition, the king felt he was an uncomfortable and uncompromising politician who was too rigid to be readily adaptable to the requirements of both the monarchy and the compromises required in parliamentary politics. However, he finally achieved his political dream, and on February 8, 1906 Sonnino became Prime Minister. He formed his first government, but was forced to resign on May 18, 1906, after only 100 days. He had proposed major changes to transform southern Italy. Land taxes were to be reduced by one-third, except for the really large landowners who were given no reduction. He also proposed the establishment of provincial banks and government subsidies to schools. His reforms provoked opposition from ruling elites, and his uncompromising attitude toward his own party deputies and the opposition parties led to the overthrow of his government and the establishment of a new government by the once-again Prime Minister, Giovanni Giolitti *(right).*

Sonnino did emerge again as Prime Minister on December 11, 1909 when he replaced Giolitti. His new government lasted about the same length of time (110 days) as his first. He was no different in his dealings with colleagues as he had been in his first term as Prime Minister. So, the predictable end result was the same.

After the events of August, 1914, Sonnino was initially supportive of Germany and Austria-Hungary because it would provide an opportunity to get the territory he wanted from these powers. He firmly believed that Italian self-interest required Italy's participation in the war, with its prospect of territorial gains as a completion of Italian unification (i.e. gaining territories where Italians were a majority or a large minority of the population). However, at the start of the war, the Italian government opted for an official policy of neutrality on August 2, 1914, reflecting popular opinion across the country that had been pushed by the Catholic Church under Pope Benedict XV and by other political groups.

The Entente victory over the German army at the First Battle of the Marne (September 6-12, 1914) gave Sonnino pause for consideration. While he continued to believe that Italy needed to play its part in the war, he was naturally concerned that it be on the winning side. So, he resolved to adopt a wait-and-see policy.

After becoming Minister of Foreign Affairs in November, 1914, in the conservative government of Prime Minister Antonio Salandra, he began to realize that it was unlikely that Italy could secure Austro-Hungarian agreement to the concession of certain of its territories to Italy, especially on the eastern shore of the Adriatic Sea. So, he turned his focus to the Entente powers—France, Great Britain, and Russia. In April, 1915, at a meeting with these powers, Sonnino and Prime Minister Salandra signed the secret London Treaty of 1915, in which the Entente powers agreed to the annexation to Italy of German and Austro-Hungarian territory at the close of hostilities if Italy entered the war on their side. Sonnino had finally achieved agreement in a treaty for what he was seeking for Italy's participation in the war. This agreement would fulfill Italy's territorial claims on the shores of the Adriatic Sea, in Africa, and in the eastern Mediterranean. He successfully urged his government to declare war, even though Parliament was not in session. Italy consequently declared war on Germany and Austria-Hungary on May 23, 1915.

Hoping for a relatively short war, with its subsequent prospects of territorial gain, Sonnino was to be disappointed in both. He remained Minister of Foreign Affairs through the fall of Salandra's government in 1916 and that of Paolo Boselli's in 1917. In the government of Boselli's successor, Prime Minister Vittorio Emanuele Orlando, he continued to remain Minister of Foreign Affairs. As such, he retained largely unchallenged supremacy in determining foreign policy.

However, he became dismayed at the Italian army's lack of success on the battlefield. He consequently urged Armando Diaz, Chief of Staff of the Army, to mount a major offensive and secure a notable Italian victory that would strengthen his hand at the peace conference after the war concluded. The victory he needed came at the Battle of Vittorio Veneto (October 24-November 3, 1918) in which the Italians finally routed the Austro-Hungarian forces and ended the war on the Italian Front a full week before the armistice on the Western Front (November 11, 1918).

PARIS PEACE CONFERENCE, 1919.

Sonnino and Prime Minister Orlando represented Italy at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference. Sonnino strongly defended the literal application of the London Treaty of 1915 to win for Italy all the territory

that the Allies had promised. He was opposed to a policy of respecting the territorial desires of the nationalities in the former territories of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Orlando's inability to speak English clearly and his weak political position at home allowed Sonnino to play a dominant role. However, Sonnino's intransigence and uncompromising attitude alienated his Entente partners, making him a "persona non grata" at the peace conference meetings. Also, Orlando's government was teetering on the desire of strong nationalist parties and sentiment at home, stirred by fiery orators like Gabriele D'Annunzio, that were demanding that Italy receive all the territory that had been promised to it in order to bring Italian unification to its completion.

Sonnino and Orlando's policy differences also proved to be disastrous during the negotiations. Orlando was prepared to renounce territorial claims for Dalmatia in order to annex Fiume (the present-day Rijeka, Croatia)—a major seaport on the Adriatic Sea—while Sonnino was not prepared to give up Dalmatia or any of the other promised territories. Italy ended up claiming both and getting neither. President Woodrow Wilson *(right)* strongly opposed Italian demands; he had an intense dislike of secret treaties, which was also tied to his desire for national self-determination as stated in his Fourteen Points.

The British and the French did not want to consider the provisions of the London Treaty of 1915, and so they refused to give the Italians the territory they wanted. The populace in Italy was furious with both Orlando and Sonnino for not winning territory, especially Fiume. *"Vittoria mutilate"* (mutilated victory) became the rallying cry for the nationalistic cause. (D'Annunzio even led a citizen-army and captured Fiume, holding it until well after the Paris Conference had ended. Fiume became a free city under the guardianship of the League of Nations after D'Annunzio was defeated). The lack of territorial gains at Paris caused the eventual downfall of Orlando's government in June, 1919. Mussolini watched all these happenings and eventually showed how well he had learned the lessons of Fiume. The Fascist Black Shirts marched on Rome on October 27-28, 1922 and Italian democracy was destroyed. Mussolini had picked up the national resentment about the lack of territorial gains, and pushed his desire, as he rose to power, to right the *vittoria mutilate* that had taken place at Paris. (Eventually, Mussolini annexed Fiume to Italy in January, 1924, with very little opposition from the League of Nations).

With the fall of Orlando's government, Sonnino decided to return to private life. He did not participate in the elections of November, 1919. Nominated senator in October, 1920, he did not actively participate.

Sidney Costantino, Baron Sonnino died on Friday, November 24, 1922 at the age of 75. He had suffered an apoplectic stroke early in the morning of November 23. His illness was a complete surprise to his friends; he had shown no symptoms of a breakdown. In fact, the day before his stroke, he had been seen walking the streets with his usual light and almost youthful step. His only request was that he be buried in a sarcophagus cemented into a cliff below his beloved house—the Castello Sonnino in Quercianella, near Livorno *(right).*

EVALUATION

One of Sonnino's main aims was to revive southern Italy economically and morally, as well as to fight illiteracy. His policies to do so were partly successful for a time, but the area eventually returned to its prior condition as powerful elites pushed to do away with his reforms in the decades following his death.

Sonnino was described as "decidedly British in manner and thought" and "the great Puritan of the Chamber, the last uncorrupted man." His stern intransigent moralism made him a difficult man and, although his integrity was universally respected, his closed and taciturn personality gained him few friends in political circles. His obituary in the New York Times described him as an intellectual aristocrat, great financier, and an accomplished scholar with little talent for popularity whose greatness would have been unmistakable in the days of absolute monarchy. He was further portrayed as a very able diplomat belonging to the 'old' school of diplomacy, with an undeserved prominence at the Paris Peace Conference as the typical imperialistic annexationist at a time when the diplomatic rules had been changed. According to historian R.J.B. Bosworth, "Sidney Sonnino, who was Foreign Minister from 1914 to 1919, and with a personal reputation, perhaps deserved, for honesty in all his dealings, has strong claims to have conducted Italy's least successful foreign policy."

Adapted by James J. Boitano, PhD from:
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