

ITALIAN WAR AVIATION

By CAPTAIN GIUSEPPE BEVIONE

Chief of Italian Military Mission for Aeronautics

EVERYBODY knows that the war industries of all the Allied nations, and particularly the industries of aviation, draw from America the essential part of the raw materials they use.

The magnificent victories of the Allied armies during these last days, which have added so much glory to the American name make us wonder at the splendid results that might be obtained, were we able to realize that which we most need now—a supremacy of the air, so as to pursue the retreating foe with our squadrons of aeroplanes, spreading terror and disorder among its lines and destroying and closing railway junctions, roads, bridges and trestles.

As far as raw materials, industrial organization and man power are concerned, the Allies can produce and equip an aerial fleet at least ten times larger than that of the Central Powers. If this result can be attained in 1919, if within eight months the Allies together with this country, can count upon having in Europe ten thousand aeroplanes more than the enemy and will make them serve their purpose skillfully and inexorably, the war will be won. The foe's power of resistance would be struck at its very vital source, at its center of supplies, at the great factories of arms and ammunition, and bridges, railways and roads through which the armies at the front are kept in fighting trim. But in order to carry out in its entirety this simple plan (as nothing decisive could be attained unless it were fully developed) all of us, governments and peoples, must be aware of the absolute and obvious fact, that the aerial army is of the greatest import, and that aviation can give us a formidable contribution towards the refusal of any dastard peace compromise that Germany and Austria may try to impose upon us. Aviation is a sure means of victory, and to it we must devote without hesitation and without reserve all of our efforts and best resources.

I am betraying no secret in assuming that the closest agreement has been reached on this fundamental point between the American authorities in charge of the industrial and technical development of aviation and the Italian Commissioner for Aeronautics, the Honorable Chiesa; he has been such a vigorous incentive to our aviation industry that he has brought it within a few months to its magnificent development, well deserving of far reaching results. But in order to have an unlimited output of its powers and production, Italy is obliged to seek from this country an adequate and continually increasing quantity of raw materials, metals, wood, dopes and textile matter. It is an absolute necessity that we obtain such assistance from the American Government, of course, in perfect harmony with the needs of our Allies, and for this purpose I was sent to Washington and appointed Chief of the Italian Military Mission for Aeronautics.

I will endeavor to develop my program in the most logical and persuasive manner, proving to the Federal authorities that Italian aviation is well worthy of the assistance it is demanding of the generous and powerful American nation.

I will show you how efficiently raw materials that have been provided us are being utilized, and I shall keep the men in charge of the United States Aviation Board in close contact with every progress and acquainted with the great expectations that are in store for our Italian aircraft production.

This progress is indeed remarkable, and every Italian can justly be proud of it. Italy has today passed the critical period

of experimental research and of uncertainties, always to be overcome at the beginning of new enterprises.

Today Italy is supplying its own needs in motors and planes entirely, besides using its own original types of machines; and within a few months all the machines flying at the Italian front will be of Italian manufacture and design, and equipped with Italian motors.

It is generally known that military aviation needs four types of machines: fighting, scouting, day bombing and night bombing machines. As to fighting aeroplanes, we now turn out two splendid types, the A-1 (so-called "Balilla") a machine developed from the S. V. A. of the Ansaldo factory; and the "Pe-Gamma" from the original plans of the Pomilio Works (recently taken over by the Ansaldo factory).

As to the other types of flying machines for warfare, Italy is well provided with models of her own, which are produced in large series. We have, in fact, two types of scouting machines of high value; the Sia 8-B (developed from the former 7-B type) made by the SIA factory, which is a branch of the FIAT, and the P.F. of the Pomilio factory, which, as previously stated, has been incorporated into the Ansaldo Works.

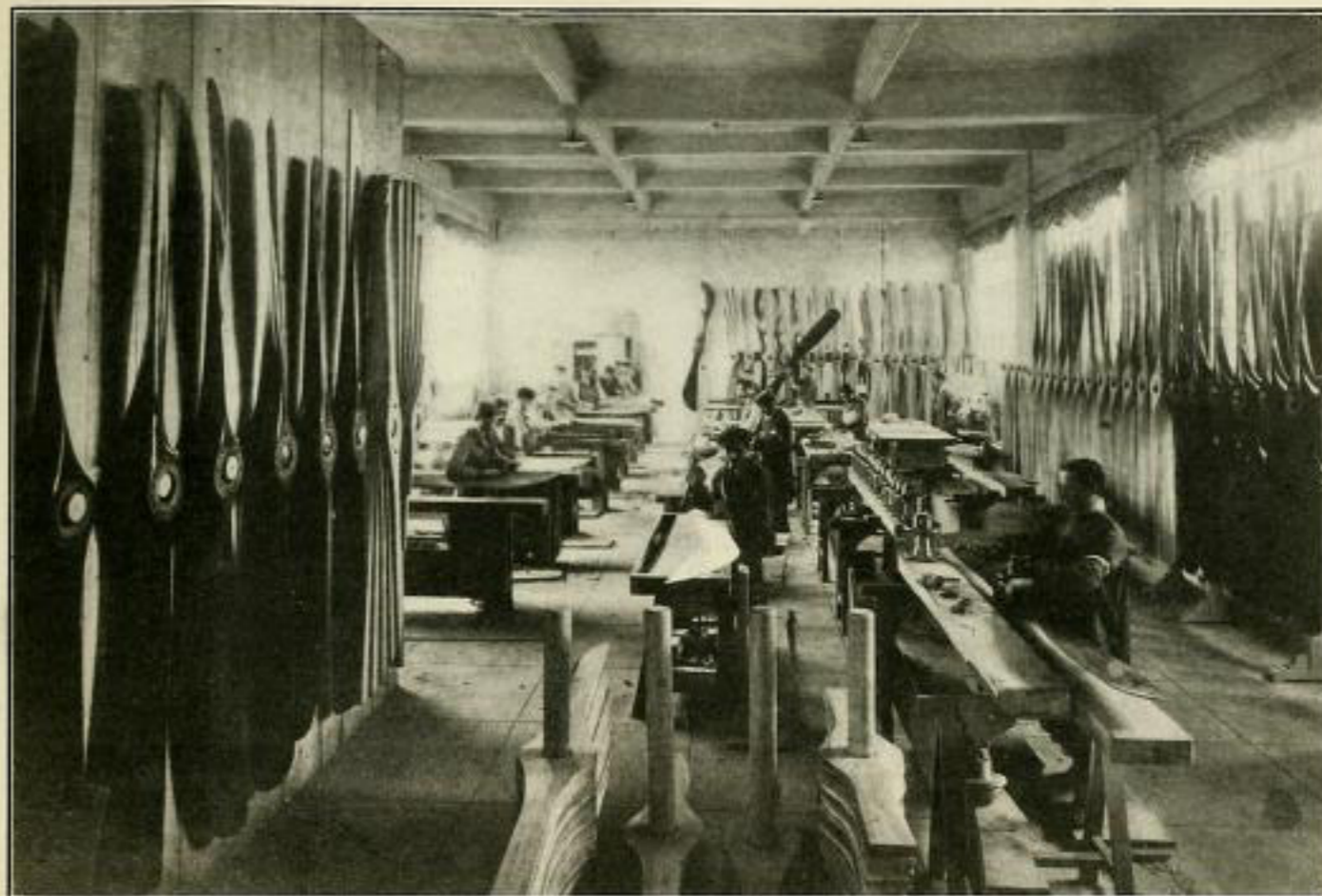
Two important raids were performed last year by the SIA 7-B aeroplane; that is, the flight Turin-Naples and return (1,004 miles) without landing, and Turin-London (700 miles) with the crossing of the Alps.

For day bombing, where speed and great power are essential, two Italian machines are ready today, which have already undergone the most severe tests. One is the SVA, built by the Ansaldo Factory, which can also be used for fighting and scouting, and has already accomplished the bombing of Innsbruck, besides performing the raid on Friedrichshafen. The second machine is the SIA 9-B, equipped with a FIAT engine of 799 h.p., which, owing to its speed and great power, can be flown over long distances and be used in broad daylight bombing.

For night bombing there are the biplane and triplane Caproni, now of international fame. The larger model of Caproni biplane (CA-5) equipped in Italy with three FIAT motors of 300 h.p. each, is without doubt superior to all similar types in existence, so much so that our Allies, American, British and French, have largely adopted it; and at the French front several Italian squadrons of Caproni are in active service, adding new records to their well-established reputation. It is also known today that at Mineola, L. I., the first Caproni built in the United States and equipped with American Liberty Motors has gone through its tests with the greatest success, and that the Federal authorities have since placed with American firms large orders of Caproni-Liberty aeroplanes.

I firmly believe that Italy can be proud of its aviation achievements and victories; as on the 15th of last June, the first day of the ill-fated Austrian drive on the Piave, 34 Austrian aeroplanes were downed, and only two of our machines were reported missing.

But no aeroplane, as perfect as may be its design and construction, could be of any service if not equipped with the best and most reliable motor, and if the capacity for production of the factories connected with the manufacture of aircraft were not equal to cope with the demands for the keeping up of the



The propeller department of the Italian Pomilio factory which has now been taken over by the Ansaldo concern. Official photo

full efficiency of the aerial force. And here again have Italy's efforts been met with success.

The FIAT factory stands first as one of our largest manufacturers of aviation motors, with her two well-known engines, the A-12 and the A-14. The A-12 develops 300 h.p., and the A-14, 700 h.p., this being the most powerful motor used at the front for aviation by any of the Allies. The FIAT has a remarkably large output of these engines, and I regret that for obvious reasons I cannot give the exact figures concerning it. But I can say that our Aeronautical Department, which buys all this production, after having met with all of our own requirements, can afford to supply the Allies with an important number of these motors daily, in compliance with their urgent demands. Besides this, the FIAT has now ready a new model which will soon be produced in large series: the A-15 of 450 h.p., greatly reduced in size from previous models, light, accessible, and possessing new and important characteristics which will undoubtedly cause a further and greater development of our military aviation.

In addition to the FIAT, we have the SPA of the well known automobile factory by that name, which with some important changes and only a light increase in weight, has been able to develop her old 220 h.p., motor into a new 300

h.p. motor, without being obliged to change her former equipment and machinery—thus mastering a great technical and industrial success, and producing a new engine of slight specific weight and great power. These motors are already being turned out in large series, and will be of the greatest value to aviation, especially fitted to fighting aeroplanes.

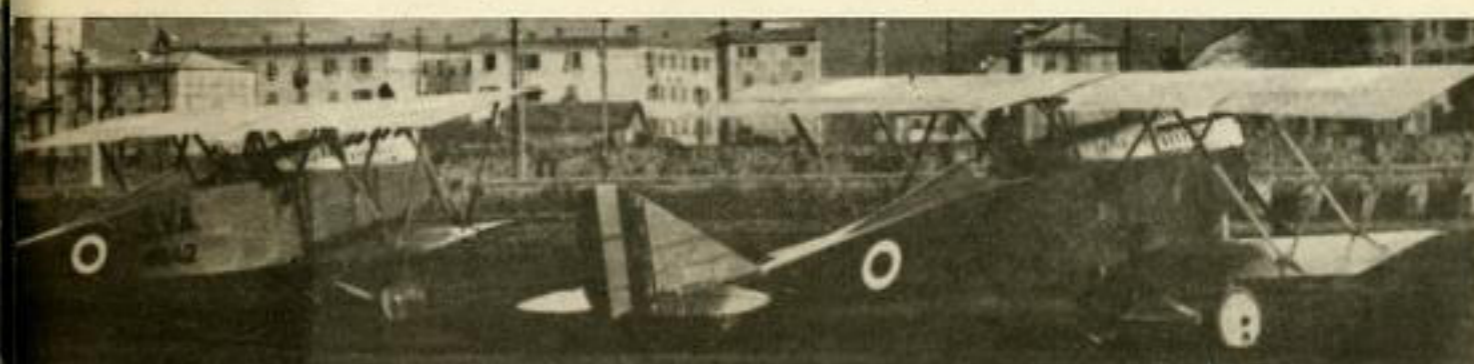
Another important factory, the Isotta-Fraschini, produces high-grade machines, which have won reputation for their reliability and perfect workmanship; here again a new motor is ready, the I.F.V.-6, developing 300 h.p., greatly appreciated both by aeroplane manufacturers and pilots.

I shall not mention minor though excellent factories, among which excel with many others the Nagliati, the Colombo, etc.; nor the greater works which have taken up the manufacture of some of the motors described above, such as Bianchi, Tosi, Breda, etc.

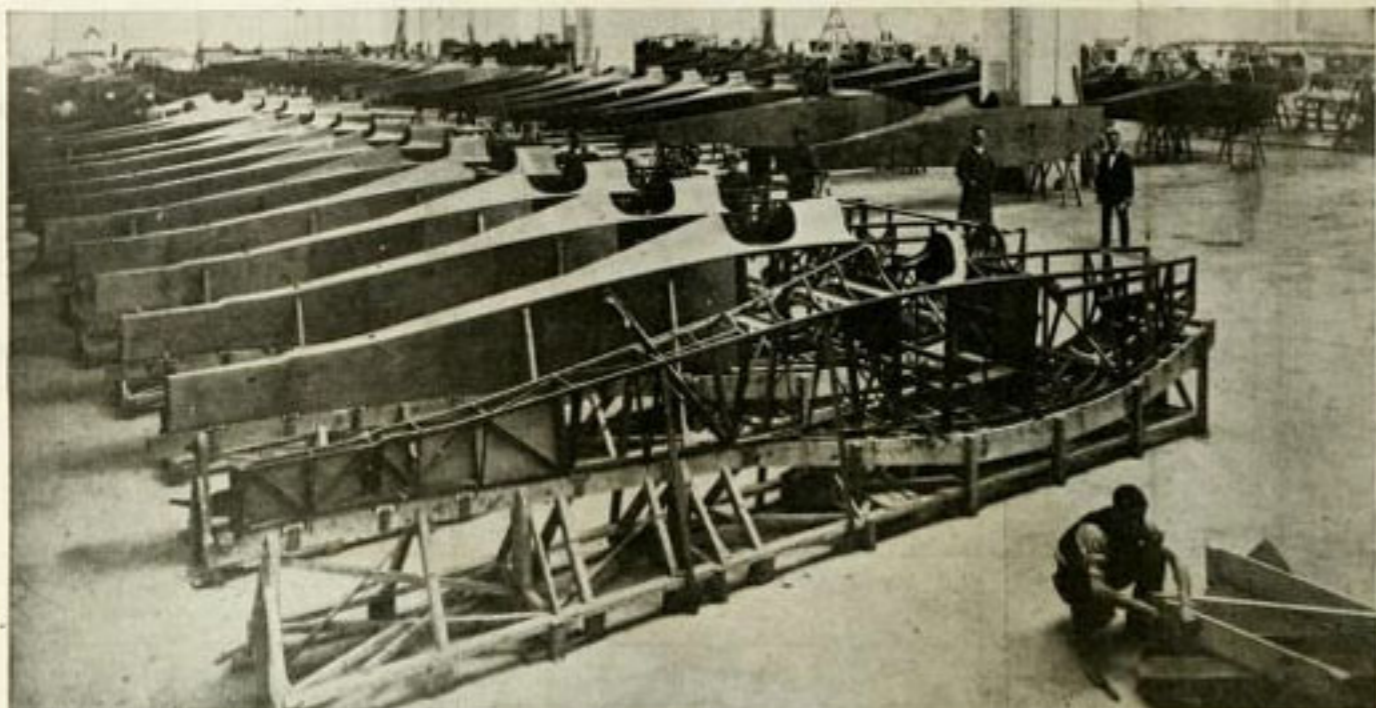
The following figures may give a more correct idea of Italy's effort in the production of aviation motors: 1,500 motors a month being the present output, before the end of the year we shall certainly produce over 2,000 motors monthly, which means the astonishing figure of 24,000 aviation engines per year; and all of them of Italian design, of Italian construction, all of high repute, established after the severest tests. And



A squadron of S. V. A. Italian scouts equipped with Spa motors, ready for flight. On August 10th word was received here that approximating 875 miles. While over Vienna the squadrons



quadrone of these S. V. A. planes, under the command of Captain D'Annunzio, had flown from Rome to Vienna and back, a distance topped over one million manifestoes.—Official photograph.

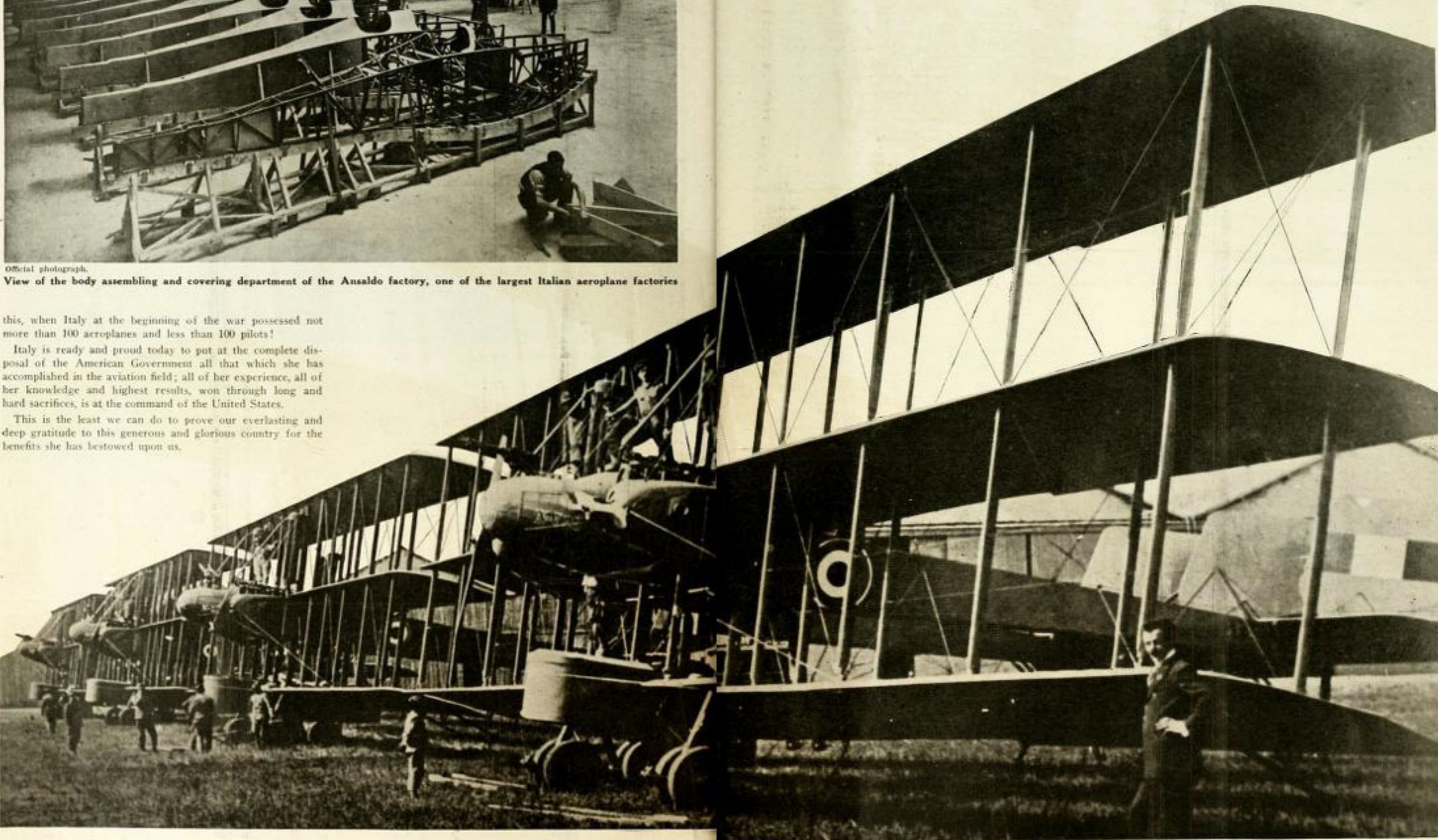


Official photograph.
View of the body assembling and covering department of the Ansaldo factory, one of the largest Italian aeroplane factories

this, when Italy at the beginning of the war possessed not more than 100 aeroplanes and less than 100 pilots!

Italy is ready and proud today to put at the complete disposal of the American Government all that which she has accomplished in the aviation field; all of her experience, all of her knowledge and highest results, won through long and hard sacrifices, is at the command of the United States.

This is the least we can do to prove our everlasting and deep gratitude to this generous and glorious country for the benefits she has bestowed upon us.



A squadron of the famous Caproni Triplanes which have been doing such wonderful work in bombing the German and Austrian positions for over a year. (Official photograph.)