

CHAPTER IV  
THE RIGHT TO KILL

§ 1: 'Authorized' Outrages, and 'Persons Unknown'

MR. J. L. GARVIN, in the *Observer*, September 24, 1926, contrasting the Spanish dictator, Primo de Rivera, with Mussolini, wrote:

'General Primo de Rivera has emulated his Italian model by doing much practical good (*sic*). The enormous difference is that Signor Mussolini has created a large and powerful party in his support, whereas General Primo de Rivera can count on no such security. The difference now tells.'

The *Observer* did not explain to its readers why the party created by Signor Mussolini is not only large, but powerful. It should have explained that Mussolini's party is so for two reasons: firstly, its leaders are maintained at the expense of the Italian taxpayers as officers in the Militia; secondly, both the leaders and the rank and file of the party are armed among a carefully disarmed population. Had the readers of the *Observer* been enlightened on these two points, they might not have shared the editor's admiration for Mussolini and his 'powerful' party.

Still less would they have shared that admiration had they known a further vital point of the Fascist system. When outrages have been ordered by the party authorities, or approved after being committed, these same authorities intervene to prevent the police, Carabineers or magistrates from taking legal proceedings against the guilty.

The distinction between the 'authorized' outrages, in which the perpetrators enjoy impunity, and the 'unauthorized' ones in which they are punished, is fundamental for the understanding of how the Fascist machinery works.

In the preliminary inquiry to the trial for the murder of the disabled soldier Lertua (Sept. 17, 1924) one of the defendants said:

'I belonged to the Fascist Party from 1921 to April, 1924. As

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long as I was a member, I do not deny having bludgeoned whenever I was ordered by my superiors to do so.'

Alberto Bosi, the Fascist leader, who gave the order for the bludgeoning of Lertua, said to the squad:

'Give him as much as you can. I will take good care that nobody shall get to know about it.'<sup>1</sup>

In the trial at Florence for the looting of Carrer's house,<sup>2</sup> one of the witnesses deposed:

'I went to the Fascist head-quarters to ask if the attack had been authorized. They answered in the negative, and gave me back the cinematograph apparatus which had been carried off from Carrer's house and taken to the Fascio.'<sup>3</sup>

The pro-Fascist paper *Corriere d'Italia*, on January 7, 1927, extolling Mussolini's circular of January 5 to the Prefects, wrote as follows:

'The circular proclaims the end of lawlessness and squadism. It will *no longer be possible* for Fascist secretaries or simple black-shirts in the provinces to take violent measures in exceptional circumstances (*sic*) on the assumption that they will obtain the tacit approval of the Government and the central Fascist authorities, and thus be assured of impunity.'

This 'will no longer be possible' tells enough.

The *Popolo d'Italia* of June 29, 1927, extenuating the acts of violence committed against Signor Labriola in the night of October 31, 1926, naïvely wrote: 'It was merely owing to the *unauthorized* initiative of a group of Neapolitan Black-Shirts if,' etc., etc. Signor Labriola replied:

'Mussolini's organ, the *Popolo d'Italia*, recently declared that, if my house was wrecked by the Fascists, they acted without authorization. This statement is false. How could some thousands of houses have been wrecked at the same hour throughout Italy, all the homes of opponents of the Government, if no order had

<sup>1</sup> *Avanti*, June 23, 1926.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 184.

<sup>3</sup> *Stampa*, November 22, 1925.

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been given by a central authority? As far as Naples is concerned, the orders were given personally by the Fascist deputy Mazzolini, who was then acting as head of the Neapolitan Fascists. The Prefect and the Chief of Police appear to have disapproved of his orders, but they did nothing, and could do nothing, to prevent them from being carried out.'<sup>1</sup>

Plainly the distinction between the two kinds of outrages is already universally known and officially admitted. When we speak of the methods by which the inquiries and trials in connexion with the Florence outrages of October 3-4, 1925, were conducted, we shall come across many other proofs of this new common-law which would be unbelievable if it was not so unimpeachably authenticated.

Many of the officers of the police and Carabineers are ashamed of having to close their eyes. From 1919 to 1922, exasperated by the disorders of the post-war years, they tolerated and even abetted Fascist lawlessness in the hope that it was merely a transitory evil leading back to normal conditions. But now, after four years of Fascist Government, they look upon the continuance of unchecked violence as a scandal. The passive—sometimes even active—complicity to which the Fascist Government compels them, is humiliating to their professional pride and sense of honour. But their superiors are almost all accomplices of the Fascist Rasses: hesitation in obeying orders would entail loss of a coveted transfer or of long-desired promotion, nay even dismissal. For their families this would mean ruin. The honest officials, and they are the majority, have no choice but to submit and suffer in silence, doing as little harm as they can.

Burning, looting, wounding and murder are offences against public law and order, and it should be the duty of the magistrates to proceed against the guilty, without waiting for the injured parties to lodge complaint. But one of the first cares of the Fascist Government after the *coup d'état* of October, 1922, was to dissolve the Supreme Council, a body elected by the magistracy, which exercised disciplinary authority over all the magistrates. The bench is thus at the mercy of the Minister of Justice.

<sup>1</sup> *Review of Reviews*, September-October 15, 1927.

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In Italy the judges fall into two categories, not easy to explain to Anglo-Saxon readers, since the whole judicial system in England and America is different.<sup>1</sup> There are, on the one hand, examining magistrates and public prosecutors, who conduct preliminary inquiries and formulate charges. On the other hand there are the judges who hear the charges and pass sentence. The examining magistrates and public prosecutors in each province are under the control of the 'Procuratore Generale,' an official corresponding in some measure to the English Attorney-General. These 'Procuratori Generali' are creatures of the Fascist Government. When violence has the sanction of the Fascist authorities, the 'Procuratori Generali' do not lift a finger, and only come to life when the injured party is Fascist.

The result of this system is that the Fascist authors of political crimes very often remain 'persons unknown'—even when their work is done in broad daylight and their identity is an open secret.

Those responsible for the bloodshed in Turin and in Spezia, in December, 1922, and January, 1923, remained 'unknown.'

Of the five hundred armed Fascists who, in one of the most densely-populated districts of Rome, invaded and pillaged the house

<sup>1</sup> Italian judicial procedure in criminal cases is as follows: (a) an Examining Judge (*giudice istruttore*) assisted by a Public Prosecutor (*procuratore del Re*) questions the defendant and the witnesses, whose answers and evidence are written down; (b) the Public Prosecutor, as a consequence of the evidence collected in this preliminary inquiry (*istruttoria*), makes his proposal (*requisitoria*), that the accused be either acquitted or committed for trial; (c) the Counsel for the defence make themselves acquainted with the contents of the preliminary inquiry and make their objections to the proposals of the Public Prosecutor; (d) an 'accusing section' (*sezione d'accusa*), formed of three judges, makes a first pronouncement, i.e. either acquits the defendant or declares that there is sufficient evidence against him for the case to be tried; (e) in the latter case there ensues the public trial before three judges who pass the sentence in minor cases, and before a presiding judge and a jury in important cases; the defendant and the witnesses are again questioned and cross-examined; the case is argued between the Public Prosecutor, the Counsel for the defence and the Counsel for the injured party (*parte civile*); (f) the jury give a final verdict as to the guilt or innocence of the defendant; (g) the Presiding Judge passes the sentence.

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of the ex-Prime Minister, Signor Nitti, on November 24, 1923, not one was arrested, and not one was prosecuted, though there was ample time for police intervention. All remained 'unknown.'

Similarly, not one of the Fascists who assaulted Signor Amendola in Rome on December 26, 1923, was arrested, and what is more, the barracks of the Militia close by gave shelter to the motor-car used by them.

The General Secretary of the Fascist Trade Unions in the province of Caserta, who on March 18, 1924, published the manifesto ordering the concentration of all the Fascist forces in order to prevent Signor Amendola from giving his election speech, was never molested on account of this act of violence.

When on April 7, 1925, Amendola was again assaulted together with his friends, the police who intervened did not make a single arrest among the Fascists. By way of compensation they arrested two friends of Amendola, and Amendola himself was charged with assaulting a Militia officer with his stick.

When the Fascists carried out the demonstration against Amendola and the other opposition deputies on the evening of June 3, 1924, the action of the police was confined to safeguarding the deputies from any bodily injury; but none of the aggressors was arrested.

The connivance of the public authorities in regard to the Fascists was even more glaring on the occasion of the fifth assault on Amendola on July 20, 1925. A thousand Fascists, evidently summoned from the whole neighbourhood by telephone, were allowed to concentrate at Montecatini and lay siege for several hours to Amendola's hotel while the authorities did nothing beyond 'endeavouring to allay public feeling.' When Amendola left for Pistoia, his motor-car was accompanied by a lorry filled with Carabineers; but this lorry disappeared *shortly after the assault took place*. Needless to say, neither at Montecatini, nor after the ambush at Serravalle, was a single arrest made.

The murderers of Matteotti would also have remained 'unknown,' had their car number not been noted by the concierge of a house near which they were waiting to kidnap the victim.

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Count Guglielmo Salvadori, lecturer at the University of Rome, contributed to the *New Statesman* of March 1, 1924, and to the *Westminster Gazette* of March 24, 1924, two articles unfavourable to Fascism. Retaliation, preluded by threats and insults, was prompt. On the afternoon of April 1 a squad of armed Fascists appeared at his house in Florence, asked him if he were the author of the articles, and invited him to come to the Fascio: otherwise 'a second visit from them would be less pleasant.' They gave their word of honour that not one hair of his head would be touched. Salvadori, not being a man to shirk his responsibilities, went to the Fascio.

'I found myself in a room' - recounts Salvadori - 'surrounded by some fifteen individuals. First they flung at me the most infamous and wounding insults: traitor, swine, bastard, rascal, parasite, paid agent of the foreigner, etc. I was then violently struck in the face by one after the other with ever harder and more frequent blows. Blood was flowing from my cheeks, nose, chin and ears. Resistance would have been useless. It was one against fifteen, and more. Exhausted by the blows, and almost fainting, I said: "Remember that I have three children waiting for me at home." On hearing an infamous insult against my mother, I said: "Let my mother be. She was a saintly woman, and she is dead." My protests only served to increase the fury of those maniacs. I was searched. At last they seemed to tire, and telephoned to the police. While waiting for the policeman to come, one of them came up to me with a basin and sponge, and tried to wash away the bloodstains from my coat. They warned me that I should be shadowed, and that there were people determined to kill me. When the policeman came, they handed me over to him, calling him to witness that I was unhurt, and that, except for some slaps, I had received no harm! I observed something tragic in the look the policeman gave me. I had the explanation of it when, at home, I saw my face in the glass: there were two slashes at right angles on my forehead, a gash on each cheek, and one under my chin. At the door of the Fascio I was assaulted with cudgels by some thirty maniacs. A revolver shot was also fired. They would probably have done for me, but

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for the interference of my son, who was waiting for me in the street. He flung himself upon the assailants, drawing their rage upon himself. He was struck, man-handled, and thrown down half stunned. From the Fascio we went along the Lungarno hoping that our persecutors would leave us. But at the Ponte S. Trinita we were again assaulted. My son was nearly thrown into the Arno. We should not have escaped alive from their hands if a Colonel of the Carabinieri had not interfered. This officer ordered two Carabinieri to accompany us home. Among our aggressors at Ponte S. Trinita my son recognized one who had waited at the entrance to the Fascio with two others, and had said in an undertone that some one was to come out who had to be "done for".<sup>1</sup>

Salvadori instructed the barrister Signor Tempestini to bring the case before the courts. The barrister strongly advised him to escape secretly from Florence.

'A few days later' - writes Salvadori, in an account of August 27, 1927, which I have before me - 'on April 6, Colonel Pizzarello, an acquaintance of mine, and a Fascist, urged me to seek safety abroad. "No one can answer for his life - they had told him at the Fascio. Any Fascist may consider himself entitled to kill him." My landlord, a Fascist, came quite worried one evening to see me. They had told him that a special triumvirate existed which secretly issued death sentences, and that "there would be trouble for me." Another friend of mine, a Christian-Democrat, urged me to seek safety, and at all costs to do so secretly, for if I were to start from the station, I should certainly be recognized and bludgeoned to death. I was a prisoner in my house, which was watched, and the members of my family were shadowed. One evening my wife had to take refuge in the house of friends. To put an end to this intolerable life, I left for Switzerland with my son on the evening of April 11. I hoped the lawsuit would follow its course. But it was not so. One day before I left, my wife went to see Tempestini in his office. She found him in a state of agitation, almost of paroxysm,

<sup>1</sup> The account by Salvadori was published in the *Mondo* of July 2, 1924. A more concise report appeared in the *New Statesman* of April 12, 1924.

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because he had just heard that his friend and colleague the deputy Signor Frontini had been assaulted in his own house. For some months I could hear nothing from my lawyer; my letters were left unanswered. After the murder of Matteotti (June, 1924) and as a result of my article in the *Mondo* of July 2, 1924, the magistrature began to move. I and my son were interrogated in Switzerland by proxy for the Public Prosecutor of Florence. The two Fascists, Nenciolini and Fantozzi, whom I had accused in my deposition, were called before the Examining Judge of Florence. Having no news of my Counsel, I sent a trustworthy friend of mine, himself a lawyer, to Florence, to ascertain what was happening. He sent me a report on October 19, 1924. Signor Tempestini had been threatened, among other things, on account of my case. "He is sure" - says the report - "that as soon as your enemies know of your return, they will get active and take you by surprise before the Examining Judge confronts you with your assailants, and will warn you not to recognize them on pain of . . . all kinds of penalties." Signor Tempestini had not even dared to bring forward the case. I left for Italy on the evening of December 18, 1924, having been summoned to appear on the morning of the 19th. At that moment, the Fascist regime seemed thoroughly shaken by the indignation roused by the Matteotti crime. I thought I might possibly obtain justice. I was questioned by the Examining Judge, but though he seemed willing to do his best, his efforts could not go very far. Signor Frantini, who had taken the place of Tempestini, had his office looted on December 31, 1924.<sup>1</sup> He found it impossible to get witnesses. The Examining Judge could not even trace the policeman to whom the Fascists had handed me over; the police were evidently hand in glove with the Fascio. A lady who had witnessed the assault at Ponte S. Trinita, did not dare give evidence. I insisted that the judge should question my son and confront him with the aggressors. The judge objected that it was difficult and almost impossible to make confrontations, saying: "We may hear him at the trial." "The order must have come from Rome," he said. My wife asked the judge why the deposition of her son was not heard. The judge looked at her with wonder,

<sup>1</sup> See above, page 176.



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and answered: "It is better for the poor boy himself!" Another judge said: "If you knew under what difficulties we perform our task!" I remained in Italy from December, 1924, to March, 1925. Being continually watched and threatened, I returned to Switzerland.'

Even more easy-going was the Examining Judge in the following instance:

'In September, 1922' - writes Signor Labriola - 'a few days before the Fascists took over the Government, the Fascists of Giugliano, a small town near Naples, belonging to the constituency which I represented in Parliament, had forbidden me to enter the town. Notices to this effect were posted on the walls throughout my constituency. Though the Fascists were not then in power, the authorities took no steps. To me the notice was sent by telegram as follows: "Labriola, Naples. Order issued by the Fascists of Giugliano: Up with cudgels against Labriola. Signed, Giuseppe Cante, Secretary." The Examining Judge opened an inquiry, and questioned me. I produced the telegram which bore the signature. The magistrate closed the inquiry, stating the author of the threat to be a "person unknown," although Signor Cante was perfectly well-known and is still alive.'

It was 'persons unknown' who, in October, 1924, bludgeoned Don Grandi, the parish priest of Preta (Piacenza), so that he died in the hospital of Piacenza on October 19, 1924. The *Osservatore Romano*, October 22, 1924, the pro-Fascist organ of the Vatican, reporting the death observed: 'Thirty-six other priests of the same province were victims of the same kind of aggression.' These beatings were ordered by the Fascist deputy Barbiellini, 'Ras' of Piacenza and the neighbourhood. The Fascists of one town were mobilized to beat the anti-Fascists of another town, and so it was difficult to identify them. The Fascist Lertua, before himself being killed for having become a dissident Fascist, declared that 'even the beating of Don Grandi was ordered by Barbiellini.'

<sup>1</sup> *Review of Reviews*, September-October, 1927.

<sup>2</sup> This fact came to light in the public trial for the murder of Lertua (*Corriere della Sera*, November 13, 1924).

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It was 'persons unknown' who, in September, 1926, killed Anselmo Cessi:

'While the school-master, Anselmo Cessi (aged 50), president of the Mantuan branch of the "Nicola Tommaseo,"<sup>1</sup> was walking along a lonely road at Castelgoffredo, accompanied by his wife and children, three unknown persons, evidently lying in wait for him, attacked him violently with cudgels. His wife began to call for help, protesting against the aggressors. The latter, producing their revolvers, emptied them at close range into the unfortunate schoolmaster, who was instantly killed.'<sup>2</sup>

Other persons who remain 'unknown' are three men, who broke into the German Embassy on the night of March 3, 1923. Two of them were caught by the Embassy staff and handed over by the Ambassador to an official of the Foreign Office: one of them was an officer of the Carabinieri, and the other a commissioner of police (*Vorwärts* of Berlin, Oct. 2, 1926). An official communiqué of March 8 said:

'The government gave orders for a thorough investigation in order to throw full light on the responsibility for the affair.'

For four days, March 6 to 9, the newspapers devoted a great deal of space to the incident, publishing wrong names as those of the arrested men. Then the papers dropped the affair, and nothing more was heard of the two 'persons unknown.'

A 'person unknown' in the terminology of the Fascist era is a Fascist who bludgeons, loots, burns, and kills with the assurance of impunity.

### § 2: *The Travesty of Justice*

From time to time an examining magistrate is found unable to close his eyes entirely to evidence, and who issues a warrant against a Fascist – even on occasion against a well-known one. It is in the

<sup>1</sup> The National Federation of Catholic Elementary School-teachers.

<sup>2</sup> The outrage was reported by the Catholic pro-Fascist paper *Italia*, September 23, 1926. In a letter to *The Times* of September 10, 1927, Signor Villari writes: 'Fortunately, practically no political murders have been committed since October, 1925.'

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higher ranks of the magistracy that all sense of honour has disappeared. But examples of independence, uprightness and courage are found often enough among the inferior magistracy.

For instance, the Bench of Milan had the courage to accuse before the Chamber of Deputies the Fascist Member Signor Giunta, Vice-President of the Chamber and a former General Secretary of the Fascist Party, on a charge of having given orders for the bludgeoning of Signor Forni. In March, 1925, the Chamber refused to authorize the prosecution. The president of the Milan Bench, one of the public prosecutors, and two judges were transferred to another city. One of the judges who had been transferred, Signor Mussone, resigned rather than submit, and on July 28, 1925, grief and disappointment drove him to suicide.

Another Fascist deputy, Signor Barbiellini Amidei, Ras of Piacenza, who had previously been convicted of wearing decorations without authority, was charged with being an accessory in the murder of the disabled soldier Lertua, who was beaten to death in his bed, on the night of October 6, 1924. The Parliamentary Commission appointed to examine the charge proposed its rejection without giving any explanation, and on November 21, 1925, the Chamber amid unanimous applause refused permission to prosecute.

The following document shows the cavalier way in which the magistracy is treated by the Fascists. A charge of libel had been lodged against the Fascist paper *La Vedetta*, of San Remo. Thereupon the editor of the paper wrote on July 10, 1924, the following letter to the Public Prosecutor:

'The alleged offence is of a political nature, as is shown by the contents of the article. Even if the allusions made were defamatory, the charge would come under the amnesty of October, 1923. Does it not occur to you, Sir, that it would be better to stop this prosecution both in order to avoid trouble for yourself and to enable the judges to occupy themselves with more interesting matters?'

The Public Prosecutor at San Remo added this letter to the files, and did not venture to prosecute this Fascist who so arrogantly threatened him with 'trouble.'

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Should a Fascist be arrested, his friends assemble outside the prison to 'demonstrate their solidarity,' and often enough succeed in effecting his release. On January 2, 1925, the *Nazione*, a pro-Fascist paper in Florence, published the news that at 6.30 p.m. on the preceding day several hundred Fascists met at the gate of the Pistoia prison to claim the release of the young Fascist Gastone Bisi, who had been seventeen days under arrest. At 10 p.m., 'in order to avoid disagreeable incidents,' on the intervention of the Fascist Deputy, Signor Canovai, and other Fascist authorities, Bisi was set at liberty to the great joy of his comrades, who improvised a demonstration in his honour as he left the prison.

When Albino Volpi, and others accused of being implicated in the Matteotti murder, were arrested at Lecco on June 17, 1924, 'the Sub-Prefect had to transfer the prisoners in haste to Bergamo as the Milan police warned him by telephone that two hundred Fascists were marching on Lecco to release the prisoners.'<sup>1</sup>

When Signor Misuri was bludgeoned on the evening of May 29, 1923, the police arrested on the spot the leader of the squad which attacked him, Arconovaldo Buonaccorsi, 'Senior' (i.e. officer) of the Militia. Already a warrant was out for his arrest on a charge of maltreating and wounding a woman of loose character. As Buonaccorsi was a member of the Militia, the General Command of the Militia claimed for him the privilege allowed to such officers of being placed under the guard of their superior officers, instead of being kept under arrest in the common jail. He was sent from Rome to the fortress of Osopo, in Venetia, was subsequently transferred 'for reasons of health' to Bologna, and at Bologna tranquilly awaited the amnesty of October 31, 1923, which cut short the case.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Deposition of the police agent Broccardi in the Matteotti preliminary inquiry, October 8, 1924.

<sup>2</sup> According to the Fascist *Assalto* (Bologna) of November 7, 1925, after the Zaniboni 'attempt' on Mussolini's life, Buonaccorsi telegraphed to the 'Duce' as follows: 'I tender my services as executioner to behead the prisoners'; and Signor Giuliano, a member of Parliament, former Under-Secretary of Education from October 1922, to June, 1924, in congratulating Buonaccorsi on his telegram, declared in his turn: 'I will also act as executioner.'

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As we have already seen on October 31, 1926, in Bologna, this same Arconovaldo Buonaccorsi, together with the Under-Secretary for Aviation, Signor Balbo, and the Fascist Member of Parliament, Signor Ricci, was in the car immediately following that of Mussolini, when the fifteen-year-old Anteo Zamboni fired his revolver-shot at the Prime Minister.<sup>1</sup> Buonaccorsi was one of those who lynched Zamboni. So great a Fascist hero was worthy to appear in public in the personal suite of Mussolini amongst the highest representatives of the Party, and the Government.

A Press campaign praising the accused Fascists and attacking the anti-Fascists precedes the hearing of every case. The official theory of the Fascist Party is that political crimes committed by its members are revolutionary acts not to be judged by the ordinary standards of right and wrong.

At the trial, a host of witnesses appears, ready to swear that those who have been savagely beaten, wounded or killed by the Fascists, were guilty of most frightful crimes and had offered the most intolerable provocation.

Crowds of men wearing the Fascist badge invade the courts, threatening the judges and juries, bludgeoning counsel and witnesses and attacking handcuffed anti-Fascist prisoners. For instance, on December 4, 1924, a jury in Greco (province of Milan) gave a verdict of guilty against a Fascist on a charge of murder. The *Corriere della Sera* of that date thus describes the scene:

'Hardly had the sentence been pronounced than the condemned man stood up and began to shout to the public: "Fascists of Greco, avenge me!" Hereupon violent imprecations against the jury burst forth from all over the room. The young men nearest the barrier tried to scale it. The Carabinciers hurriedly had to surround the jury to protect them and to press back the public. The prisoners had to be got out by the back door into the cells, while a fierce struggle took place between the Fascists and the police, in which the glass of the entrance doors was shattered. The jury were panic-stricken, the older ones taking refuge in the jury room.

<sup>1</sup> Interview with the Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Signor Grandi, *Giornale d'Italia*, November 1, 1926.

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Army officers and police officials had to be brought in. Above the shouts of the crowd the voice of the presiding judge could be heard ordering the court to be cleared. This was no easy matter and further incidents took place in the corridors and the street outside. Finally, little by little, order was restored.'

Needless to say, not one of these 'persons unknown' was brought to justice.

On May 3, 1926, the case was heard at Mantua of a Communist, Achille Pepe, who had already spent five months in prison awaiting trial. The accused was acquitted of the charge of criminal conspiracy, but received six months' imprisonment for inciting to class-hatred. As the defending counsel, Signor Buffoni, a Member of Parliament, left the court, a crowd of Fascists overwhelmed him with insults and threats. The matter seemed over for the moment, but on reaching the station to take his train for Milan, he found the same crowd of assailants awaiting him. He was beaten and wounded. The arrival of the train put an end to the scene. It would be naïve to ask whether the assailants were ever brought to justice: be it noted, however, that at every Italian station of importance there is always a picket of police and Militia for the maintenance of order.

Another instance out of hundreds more happened at Florence, on July 13, 1925, at the end of a trial for clandestine publication. I reproduce the report given by *La Nazione*, July 14, 1925. The reader must bear in mind that *La Nazione* is a pro-Fascist paper, whose reporters had certainly no intention of putting the Florentine Fascists in a bad light.

'The reading of the sentence took place amidst the most complete silence. Immediately after, the court was cleared. The public streamed towards the exits in Piazza San Firenze, whither also the police hastened.

'Few Fascists had attended the trial, and no incidents whatsoever had taken place in the court, where certain important personages of the opposition were present. This news (namely, that certain important personages of the opposition were present at the trial without provoking any incident) had been made known out-

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side by some Fascists, immediately producing great ferment. Some one imagined that the presence of Signor Gonzales, the Reformist-Socialist deputy, of Signor Rossetti, who holds the highest Italian military decoration (the Gold Medal), of the journalist Ansaldo, editor of the *Lavoro* of Genoa, and others, must have some political bearing, against which some counter-demonstration was necessary. Therefore between eleven and twelve o'clock a strong band of Fascists streamed into Piazza San Firenze and into the corridors of the Court of Law. Signor Gonzales coming down the stairs with his friends is said to have stopped to look at the Fascists following him, exclaiming in rather a loud voice: "And they say that this is the capital of Fascism." This phrase is confirmed also in the police reports. Being overheard by some of those present, it was considered offensive and gave rise to the first incident.<sup>1</sup>

'At once fists and cudgels came into play, and the noise of the affray made people hasten to the Piazza from every side. The fight - for fight it was, blows being given and parried on both sides - spread throughout the whole square, the police and Carabinieri also taking part and trying to separate the contending parties. Seeing that there was no sign of the riot ceasing, the police managed to push the little group, which was the object of the attack, into two small shops near by. In these two premises, Signor Gonzales, Signor Rossetti, Prof. Alexander Levi, Signor Ansaldo and the counsel for defence Signor Nino Levi, found refuge. In front of the premises a strong cordon of Carabinieri was placed to keep back the Fascists. These latter, however, in a state of intense excitement, attempted several times to break through the cordon into the shops, the doors of which had to be closed.

'The Carabinieri resisted tremendously. The siege of the two shops lasted more than an hour. About one o'clock, a company of

<sup>1</sup> Do not forget that the paper is favourable to the Fascists. Signor Gonzales was present as assistant counsel for defence. It is highly improbable that he would have spoken thus, knowing the Florentine Fascists to be among the wildest in Italy. The paper itself recognizes that the Fascists had already assembled on purpose to make a counter-demonstration against Gonzales and his friends.

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the 84th Infantry and a squadron of cavalry on foot entered the square, and, along with the Carabineers, lined up in front of the two besieged shops. A motor-car also arrived with Comm. Travaglio, the Chief of Police, who had left the court before the end of the trial.<sup>1</sup>

'The Chief of Police entered one of the besieged shops, where he found three or four men slightly wounded. Being informed that among them there was Signor Rossetti, Comm. Travaglio, who was a gallant officer during the war, and obtained a medal for valour, went towards Signor Rossetti holding out his hand, as between soldiers. But Signor Rossetti curtly replied: "I do not shake hands with an official of the Fascist Government." As soon as this incident was known outside, it caused a very lively impression and roused fresh ferment. The news, passing rapidly from mouth to mouth throughout the city, caused an enormous crowd to congregate in the square.<sup>2</sup>

'The assault of the two shops was resumed. Taking advantage of a moment's apparent calm, the police resolved to get Signor Gonzales and the others out of their shelter and remove them in two lorries which had just arrived from the police headquarters.

<sup>1</sup> Is it possible that none of the police informed their Chief, when he was leaving the court, of the fact that Fascists had collected in threatening numbers near the entrance to the Court of Law? Is it possible that the Chief of Police himself did not notice the unusual throng? Is it possible that he went away in simple good faith? Be it noted that, from the police head-quarters, the Law Court square is reached by car in five minutes, but the Chief of Police left his men for almost two hours without orders.

<sup>2</sup> *La Nazione*, which concocts the report in the interests of the police and the Fascists, tries to justify the subsequent acts of violence by Signor Rossetti's reply. Note how absurd is the assertion that Signor Rossetti's words, passing from mouth to mouth throughout the city, caused the enormous crowd to congregate in the square. Even if Signor Rossetti had broadcasted them, the crowd could not have hurried up with such celerity. The truth is that the Chief of Police entered the shop only later, when the beating was ended. The facts which follow in the report of *La Nazione* took place before the Chief of Police arrived. If the police had actually wanted to protect the besieged men, they could have filled both the very small shops with a few policemen, thus easily preventing the Fascists from breaking in as they did.



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'The Fascists, noticing the intention of the police, rapidly organized a manœuvre to prevent the plan from being carried out. They made several tram-cars, standing in the square and in neighbouring streets, into a barricade, which stopped the passage of the lorries. The cords of the trolleys were cut.

'The two lorries, standing in front of the two shops, were utilized by the Fascists, who, climbing to the top of one, passed rapidly on to the other, and thence threw themselves down on the Carabinieri and the soldiers. By this manœuvre the cordon was broken through at several points. The rapid action of the Fascists, amongst whom were veterans of the squad "Desperadoes," took the police by surprise. After about a quarter of an hour's fighting with the police, the Fascists, who had increased in number, got the upper hand.

'Summoned by telephone, two motor-ambulances arrived which took the injured men to hospital.'

On the evening of the same day the Fascist Directorate of Florence in a proclamation declared:

'Florentine Fascism has exercised a legitimate right in violently intervening against the anti-Fascist projected (*sic*) demonstration. The presence of members of the Fascist Directorate during the conflict (!) indicates that the leaders of Florentine Fascism assume entire and unconditional responsibility for what happened' (*La Nazione*, July 14, 1925).

This declaration should have led to the arrest of the Fascist leaders who proclaimed that they had been present at this outbreak, a real riot against the police, and publicly assumed responsibility for it. Instead the Chief of Police brought a charge against Signor Rossetti for using offensive language to a police officer acting in pursuance of his duties.

Witnesses are often so terrorized that they no longer remember anything and even disavow previous statements. Two instances may be given out of many.

In the libel case mentioned above (p. 209) the tramway-man Parentini was giving evidence about the bludgeoning he had

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received. I give the record of the proceedings as published in the *Nazione*, February 13, 1925:

'COUNSEL FOR THE DEFENCE: Please, my lord, will you ask Parentini if he ever told Prof. Pieraccini that he knew the Consul Tamburini from his photograph and that the man who bludgeoned him at the Fascist head-quarters was none other than Consul Tamburini?

'PARENTINI: I never told Prof. Pieraccini that I knew by sight the commander of the 92nd Legion. I told him that my assailant was Consul Tamburini because the man who bludgeoned me, declared himself to be Consul Tamburini. But I did not recognize Tamburini when the Public Prosecutor confronted me with him.

'COUNSEL FOR THE DEFENCE: Is it true that some days previous to this confrontation you were approached by several Fascists and summoned to change your tactics?

'PARENTINI: The Fascists demanded that I should give up my Socialist activities and only look after the welfare of my own family. I do not remember when this happened.

'PIERACCINI: I asked him if he knew Tamburini and he answered in the affirmative, having had opportunities of seeing his photograph.

'JUDGE: Are you sure of that?

'PIERACCINI: Quite sure. I advised Parentini to behave with courage; instead of this I learned, some time later, that he would not recognize his aggressor.

'JUDGE: Do you hear this, Parentini? What have you to say?

'PARENTINI: My attacker said that he was Tamburini. I did not know him. When I was confronted with him, I did not recognize him.

'COUNSEL FOR THE DEFENCE: It is not wickedness, but fear.

'PIERACCINI: Listen, Parentini, either you were bluffing when you said that you knew him by sight, or you are eating your words now. As far as I am concerned, I do not withdraw a single word of what I have said.'

The tramway-man's behaviour showed so plainly how much

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he was under the domination of terror that the Public Prosecutor refused to allow his evidence:

'Parentini,' he said, 'did not speak out in your presence and it is plain why. He spoke out, however, in the first moment, and to several people. But then the fear of the bludgeon, which had already tortured his body, obsessed him again so that he even opposed his doctor's giving his medical report.'

The court returned a verdict that Parentini's assailant was Tamburini.

During a trial in connection with the Florence outrages of October 4, 1925, the presiding judge asked a witness: 'Do you recognize any of the accused?' The witness, without looking towards the dock, replied, 'No, Sir.' The judge: 'Turn round and have a look at them at least!' Shouts of laughter in Court.<sup>1</sup>

In March, 1926, the Communist Member of Parliament, Signor Riboldi, addressed the following question to the Minister of Justice and the Home Secretary:

'Following on the incidents which took place in Palmi on the evening of August 30, 1925, various arrests were made, and the priest Francesco Pugliese and a certain Armando Perna were examined as witnesses against the accused. The priest made two contradictory depositions before the Chief of Police; but when about to appear before the Examining Judge, he wrote a retracting letter (which has since mysteriously disappeared) and then committed suicide by throwing himself under a train. The other witness swallowed four tablets of corrosive sublimate, after writing a letter in which he declared that he took his life out of remorse for unjustly inculcating the arrested men. Both these witnesses were compelled to depose against the accused, under pressure and threats which drove them to suicide. What have the authorities done, and what do they intend to do in such a case?'

The Ministers made no reply, neither denying the facts nor attempting to diminish the responsibility of the authorities.

<sup>1</sup> *La Stampa*, November 22, 1925.

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### § 3: *Moral Anarchy*

Since the March on Rome, in many provinces, jury-lists have been purged of non-Fascist elements. As a result, Fascist defendants are systematically acquitted even when manifestly guilty of the most atrocious crimes.

On July 15, 1925, a jury at Mantua acquitted three Fascists accused of having on January 6, 1925, beaten to death the peasant Guglielmo Rossi.

On the same date a jury at Bergamo acquitted two Fascists accused of having murdered the printer Perozzi, in November, 1924.

On July 31, 1925, a jury at Ferrara acquitted the men accused of murdering Don Minzoni, the parish priest of Argenta, who was beaten to death on August 23, 1923.

On September 3, 1925, a jury at Genoa acquitted two Fascists accused of having murdered a workman named Poli.

On September 26, 1925, a jury at Genoa acquitted the Ras Carosi, accused of murdering the compositor, Rindi.

On October 20, 1925, a jury at Reggio Emilia acquitted the four men accused of murdering Piccinini.

On November 20, 1925, a jury at Rovigo acquitted five Fascists accused of murdering the peasant Giuseppe Bellettato, on February 11, 1925.

On November 26, 1925, a jury at Ravenna acquitted six Fascists accused of murdering the peasant Vincenzo Caroli, on July 3, 1925.

On December 7, 1925, at Forli, a jury acquitted two Fascists, aged 23 and 37, who had shot a man of 63, declaring that the two Fascists had killed this man of 63 in 'legitimate self-defence'! On December 15, 1925, at Bologna, a jury acquitted, also on the ground of 'legitimate self-defence,' a Fascist who had bludgeoned a Socialist to death. The latter had endeavoured to defend himself with a tumbler. On December 22, 1925, at Brescia, seventeen Fascists, who had taken part in the murder of two men, were acquitted. In the same month, at Lucca, the jury acquitted a Fascist who, together with some companions, amnestied under the

fare a me l'organico dopo la sua uscita  
 stenda, legalità accasut, fatto, unire a  
 Roma in qua prima si timorale come  
 fatto ciò intasse con il mio tempera  
 mento si giudicante temperato ed i  
 (finita) voglio subito dire che fatto  
 quanto è successo è avvenuto sempre  
 per la storia diretta o per l'effusione  
 e per la completezza del Duce. all'atto alla  
 Costituzione Amministrativa - ordinata da un  
 l'ini, nel giorno, a De Pandi, alla restau-  
 razione Mussolini - organizzata da Balbo su  
 impegno di Mussolini - a appassio  
 ne a Fiumi esultantemente ordinata proprio  
 a me da Mussolini ed organizzata a me  
 esito con Fiume, alla fine di pace con  
 il vittorio misti, alla recente dimissioni  
 come contro le opposizioni dimissioni  
 di Fiume, alla proposta avanzata a  
 da Mussolini ed unanimemente preside con  
 Benvenuto essere la meritata lezione in  
 seguito alla sua insubordinazione; alla Costituzione  
 di Giusti cattolici in ordine Amministrativa  
 Mussolini a maggioranza, e per tutte le  
 me, compie certamente; aggiunge che giuridicamente  
 mente il Comune fascista aveva l'intenzione, sul  
 indicazione di Mussolini di inviare in Fiume

FACSIMILE OF A PAGE OF CESARE ROSSI'S MEMORANDUM, JUNE 15, 1924  
 (see pages 287-288)

Facing page 258.

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decree of July 31, 1925, had shot dead an anti-Fascist who was dining in a restaurant. All these acquittals took place in the course of a single month!

On April 30, 1926, a jury at Cremona acquitted four Fascists accused of having beaten to death Augusto Bertoli, a man of 58, on April 18, 1924.

The Fascists who beat to death the disabled soldier Lertua were all acquitted on July 5, 1926, by a jury at Piacenza. One only, who had confessed to having given Lertua 'a few hits,' received a trivial sentence, and was at once set free, the jury finding that he had struck Lertua without intention to kill.

Don Minzoni's murder deserves a few moments of special attention. Don Minzoni was beaten to death by two members of the Fascist Militia who came to Argenta (in the province of Ferrara) from another district. The orders were given by a Consul of the Militia. Don Minzoni was pointed out to the two murderers by the Fascist Maran. The Chief of the Police of Ferrara arrested, amongst others, six men who had nothing to do with the case.<sup>1</sup> Maran, whose guilt was evident, had to be arrested, but Signor Oviglio, the Minister of Justice in Mussolini's Cabinet, followed day by day the inquiry, with the result that the accused was acquitted on April 3, 1924. These facts were revealed and proved in November, 1924, by the Secretary of the Fascist Federation in the Province of Ferrara, Tomaso Beltrani, during the political crisis following the Matteotti murder, in a Memorandum which was published by the *Popolo*, December 6, 1924. As a consequence of these revelations, the case was brought up again, but the political crisis over, all the accused were acquitted in the public trial.

Amongst the most shameless acquittals let some instances be cited.

A young peasant girl of fifteen at Finale Emilia, in the province of Bologna, had been arrested for infanticide. She declared that she had been seduced and compelled to kill her baby by her lover, a Fascist. To save this man from prison, the 'Senior' of the Militia, a certain Ferrarini, tried to force the girl's father, an old

<sup>1</sup> *Secolo*, July 22, 1925.

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peasant named Baranti, to confess to being guilty of incest with his daughter. Baranti refused. On November 10, 1923, Ferrari summoned him to the head-quarters of the Militia. There, with the aid of three militia-men, Ferrari beat the old man till the blood ran, and then shut him up in a cell until he should agree to confess himself guilty. After two hours the old man was again brought out of the cell and bludgeoned until death ensued. The Militia medical officer declared that death was due to cardiac paralysis. The post-mortem examination proved that Baranti died of a fractured skull. Some militia-men, who had been accomplices in the murder, confessed. All the witnesses agreed that Baranti had entered the commandant's office that morning in full health and strength, and left it a corpse. Witnesses had heard the man's cries, and enabled the whole sombre story to be pieced together.

The case came to trial in November, 1924. The Public Prosecutor asked for the condemnation of all the defendants. The verdict of the jury was that Ferrari and the other defendants were not guilty of the death of Baranti. The jury even went so far as to declare that the accused had never struck or wounded the old man. The latter therefore was killed by 'persons unknown.'

Pietro Marani, of Molinella, also, was killed by 'persons unknown.' Every one had recognized Regazzi on the occasion of the murder, and the family of the victim had denounced him. The magistrates were compelled therefore to order Regazzi's arrest.

But from September 15, 1923, to October 14, 1924, this order could not be carried out, the police officials declaring that Regazzi was 'unknown' and could not be found. Regazzi, meanwhile, was constantly in the principal streets of Bologna, went to the theatre at Molinella, attended ceremonies together with the other Fascist authorities, and made speeches which were reported in the newspapers. He was still 'unknown,' and still 'undiscoverable,' when he attended a banquet at which he was presented with a gold medal. Among those invited to the banquet were the Prefect of Police at Bologna and the Minister of Justice, who, instead of having the guest of honour arrested, contented themselves with declining the invitation. On September 25, 1924, at Molinella, two shots were fired at a passing motor-car; Regazzi, the 'un-

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known' and 'undiscoverable,' went to the spot to investigate the matter, *with the local Commissioner of Police*. While still 'undiscoverable,' Regazzi took part in a meeting of the County Council, presided over by the Minister of Justice, and jointly with the Minister affixed his signature to a proclamation.

During October, 1924, when the assassination of Matteotti seemed to have profoundly shaken the Fascist dictatorship, the Opposition papers launched a campaign for the arrest of Regazzi and other Fascists against whom warrants were out. Then a veritable 'Regazzi scandal' began. The Minister for Justice tried to evade responsibility by throwing the whole blame for the failure to arrest him on the Home Office. The Fascists of Bologna held demonstrations in Regazzi's honour and proclaimed their solidarity with him. The Fascist papers defended and praised him. The police went to his house to arrest him, but he had been warned; it was said that it was the Commissioner of Police who warned him, at the theatre, where he had gone to pass the evening as usual. At last after official negotiations between the government and the Fascist leaders of Bologna, Regazzi gave himself up.

On that very day the Fascist Deputy, Farinacci, Mussolini's right hand, wrote to his paper *Cremona Nuova*:

'It is an honour to be arrested for having fought the enemies of the nation and of Fascism. We hope that the Bench will rapidly perform its task, and we are certain that Regazzi will soon be restored to Bolognese Fascism, to which he gave his faith and his enthusiasm and for which he has made sacrifices. If Regazzi is guilty (which has to be proved) his error cannot be judged as a breach of common law, nor he himself an ordinary offender. A higher criterion must be adopted, that which crowns with immortality the vindicators of the supreme rights of nations against the tyranny either of kings or of demagogues, even when their deeds violate the existing penal laws. The Fascists did not extend their offensive against Bolshevism in their personal interest. They acted with a national aim. It will never be possible to condemn Regazzi.'

When the case opened at Bologna against Regazzi, and the



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other Fascists who took part in the attack on Marani's farm, there were to be seen on the walls in the neighbourhood of the courts the words 'Evviva Regazzi!' (Long live Regazzi!) in big black characters.

Regazzi admitted that he had taken part in the expedition, but denied that he had fired the fatal shot. Another man had fired it, he declared, but he would not say who. The depositions of the dead man's relatives, of the persons who had seen from a distance what went on, of the peasants whom the Regazzi 'squad' had attacked before it arrived at Marani's farm, were precise, consistent with one another, and remarkably courageous. When the widow had finished her evidence, she turned to the Jury and said:

'Gentlemen of the Jury, you perhaps have wives and children yourselves; you will realize my sorrow. It may be that these persons will all be acquitted, but your consciences will not acquit them.'

The Fascist counsel for the defence mocked at these words, calling them 'bombastic rhetoric,' and asked for an acquittal. The only sin of the defendants, he said, was that they had put an end to the tyranny of the Reds.

The jury did not admit the guilt of the defendants. They even denied that Regazzi had illegally borne arms, though he himself had admitted this (March 6, 1925).

In all the above cases it is Fascist juries who frustrate justice. In other cases it is the magistrates themselves who openly throw aside all sense of honour. Two examples will suffice. On May 22, 1925, in Adria, a squad of Fascists, after having wrecked the home and offices of a barrister, Carlo Zen, attacked a draper's shop belonging to two brothers named Chiaratti. One of these resisted the attack, killing one of the assailants. The brothers were riddled with bullets. One was killed, and the other lay for months between life and death. Not one of the Fascists who took part in the attack was arrested or charged. But the surviving brother was charged with the murder of the assailant who was killed. On February 25, 1925, he was acquitted on the ground that he had acted in self-defence, but the judges declared the Fascist aggres-

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sors to be 'persons unknown,' although admitting that the attack had taken place in the presence of Carabinieri commanded by 'a superior officer, who had advised the victims not to defend themselves.' (The *Gazzettino* of Venice, February 26, 1926.)

In November, 1926, six Fascists, accused of having killed, in the night of May 13, 1926, the policeman Rossi, were acquitted by the Inquiry Judges of Milan, without public trial, on the grounds that 'they had not acted with intent to kill, but had intended simply to oppose the determined intervention of Rossi, which they considered unjust, and most inopportune.' Of all the acquittals, none reveals more clearly than these two the state of moral degradation which many Italian judges have reached.<sup>1</sup>

The acquittal of Fascist defendants is often followed by triumphal processions.

When on March 6, 1925, all the defendants accused of the murder of Pietro Marani were acquitted, the verdict was received with loud applause and shouts of *Viva Regazzi!* The Fascists in the Court hoisted Regazzi on their shoulders and carried him off in triumph, singing Fascist songs. Regazzi was immediately appointed a member of the Provincial Fascist Directory. Signor Farinacci, then General Secretary of the Fascist Party, commenting on the verdict, maintained that in this particular case as in all similar ones the defendant must not be confused with an ordinary criminal; consequently the jury of Bologna 'did very well in not

<sup>1</sup> While preparing the English edition of this book (summer, 1927), I read in the Italian press that the court of Reggio Emilia recently acquitted two Fascists on a charge of attempting to drag Angelo Magli by force to the local Fascist head-quarters: one of these two Fascists had already stood trial as an accomplice in the murder of Piccinini. The Assizes at Asti acquitted three Fascists who were under charge of having on August 29, 1925, murdered Giovanni Colla, an anti-Fascist candidate in the municipal elections of Calamandrea d'Asti. In the *Corriere della Sera* of July 23, 1927, are to be found, side by side, two news items, which, by their contrast, reveal the travesty of justice in the Italy of to-day: sixteen Communists of Imola are sentenced to a total of 137 years' imprisonment for having attempted to reconstruct a branch of the Communist party at Imola; fourteen Fascists of Agazzino (Piacenza) are acquitted of having killed on November 27, 1926, the youth Egidio Meriggi. Meriggi also was killed by 'persons unknown.'

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confusing an episode of our revolution with ordinary crimes of common law.'<sup>1</sup>

On September 26, 1925, when the Ras Carosi was acquitted at the Genoa Assizes of the murder of the compositor Rindi, he was greeted on leaving the Court by a shouting crowd with flags and trumpets. The Fascists of Pisa presented him, with a gold medal for having deserved well of his country. His friends broke into the house of Santini, a dissident Fascist who had given evidence against him. The Carabinieri, following their usual procedure, arrested Santini. On November 19, 1925, Rindi's sister, who had identified Carosi as one of her brother's murderers, received a violent blow on the head on her way home from work. Needless to say her assailants remained 'unknown.'

On their acquittal, the murderers of Don Minzoni likewise received an ovation. The following report of the proceedings appeared in the *Stampa* of April 1, 1925:

'The enthusiasm of the Fascists in welcoming their liberated comrades almost defies description. Some of the released prisoners returned directly to their homes in motor-cars, but the others took part in a procession, preceded by flags and banners, which marched to the Fascio accompanied by applause all along the route.'

During the trial, Signor Balbo, Member of Parliament, who became Under-Secretary of State in the following October, entered the court and ostentatiously embraced the principal prisoner (*Corriere della Sera*, July 23, 1925).

Piccinini's murderers were fêted in the same way after their acquittal. The *Corriere della Sera* of October 21, 1925 writes:

'The verdict was speedily communicated to the Fascists waiting in the street. These at once formed into a column with two banners at their head, to wait for the acquitted men. When they came out, young girls offered them bouquets; then the procession formed and the acquitted men were carried on the shoulders of their comrades amid song and acclamations to their homes.'

<sup>1</sup> *Cremona Nuova*, March 7, 1925.

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The *Osservatore Romano* of October 22, 1925, commented as follows on this demonstration:

'This, with the Argenta case (the murder of Don Minzoni) makes the fourth prosecution in which the guilty have escaped scot-free. A stop must be put to the habit of indulging in noisy demonstrations on the occasion of such trials. Such demonstrations are singularly out of place if one remembers that men have been killed.'

Since the Matteotti murder, Fascist demonstrations, even in the presence of the King, were very often, in 1924 and 1925, accompanied by the cry 'Viva Dumini' (the leader of the murderers of Matteotti).

If, by some extraordinary chance, a Fascist is found guilty of any crime which can possibly be classed as political, he may be sure that the prison doors will soon be opened by means of a special pardon or a general amnesty. As has been said above (p. 166), the amnesty of December 22, 1922, covered all crimes, including murder, if committed in pursuit of a Fascist aim. A second amnesty, proclaimed on October 31, 1923, was not so far-reaching, but wide enough to put an end to the judicial inquiry into the Misuri, Nitti and Amendola affairs. On July 31, 1925, a third amnesty wiped off the slate all political crimes, except murder. This amnesty had already been announced by Signor Farinacci, the General Secretary of the Fascist Party, in his paper *Cremona Nuovo*, at the end of May, 1925, so that for two months the Fascists had known that they were free to do what they liked, being sure of impunity.

On the other hand, Fascist papers have free licence to threaten members of the Opposition parties, and even incite to murder them. The following paragraph, for instance, appeared in the Florentine *Battaglie Fasciste* of May 2, 1925:

'We have no law which enables us to punish the traitors Sforza (former Minister for Foreign Affairs) and Giolitti (the ex-Prime Minister) as they deserve, but we do not lack the will to be their executioners. In Giolitti's case we may wait for justice to be done by inexorable Nature. As for Sforza, we make our own the order

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which D'Annunzio gave with regard to the deserter Misiano, a worthy comrade for Sforza.'

Misiano was a deserter during the war, and this reference is to an order given by D'Annunzio, in 1920, to strike at him with 'cold steel.'

It should have been the duty of the Attorney-General to institute proceedings for the incitement to murder contained in these paragraphs. He chose to ignore them.

Should anyone charged with an offence against the Fascists be acquitted, he is publicly banished from his own locality and has to obey or risk being killed.<sup>1</sup>

From June to August, 1923, the trial was held at the Assizes in Mantua of a group of Socialists, charged with having taken part in an ambush at Ferrara on December 20, 1920, in which three Fascists and a Socialist were killed. Of the sixteen defendants five were acquitted, and eleven were condemned to terms of imprisonment ranging from five months to five years. Eight of the condemned men, who had already been two and a half years in prison awaiting trial, were released, and three remained in prison. Signor Balbo, the Ras of Ferrara and Generalissimo of the Fascist Militia, sent the following letter from Rome to the Secretary of the Fascio at Ferrara:

NATIONAL MILITIA GENERAL HEADQUARTERS.

ROME,

August 31, 1923.

. . . As regards the defendants who have been acquitted, it must be made clear to them that reasons of health demand that they

<sup>1</sup> Other reasons can also bring about banishment. On September 29, 1925, the Secretary of the Fascist Federation in the province of Turin published a manifesto declaring that the journalist Luigi Ambrosini must not be allowed to move freely about Piedmont and that 'every Fascist is morally bound to box his ears wherever he is found.' On October 15, this decree was modified by the Secretary-General as follows: 'In order to allow Signor Luigi Ambrosini the sacred right of defending himself against the criminal charge which has been brought against him, the previous edict with regard to him is revoked.' The Attorney-General in Turin took no notice of the threat to law and order implied in these decrees.

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shall have a change of air and settle in another province. If they persist in remaining, thus causing unrest, they must be bludgeoned, not to excess, but methodically, until they make up their minds to go. Show this part of my letter to the Prefect, and tell him from me that I have in my hands all that can authorize me to demand that these assassins quit both the town and the province. . . . The police will do well to persecute them by frequent arrests, every week at least. It will be well, too, if the Prefect lets the Attorney-General know, that if there should be any beatings (which will be conducted *in style*<sup>1</sup>), there is no desire to see prosecutions instituted. This part of my letter you will read to the Federal Committee. I write this from Rome, which means that I know what I am talking about. *Et de hoc satis.*<sup>2</sup>

As a result of this decree of banishment, the houses of three of the acquitted men were picketed by the Fascists. One had his house invaded by a squad of Fascists brandishing revolvers. Others were severely bludgeoned; two fled to France, and several were obliged to take refuge in other towns. One of the defending counsel was bludgeoned.<sup>3</sup> No prosecution followed.

Banishments are proclaimed even against persons who have never been tried. For instance, the Attorney-General of Novara, on April 12, 1926, asked the consent of the Chamber to the trial against the Fascist Member, Signor Belloni, who was under charge of having banished from Novara the lawyer, Signor Porzio Giovanola.

<sup>1</sup> 'Bludgeoning in style' (*bastonatura in stile*) is a technical phrase standing for a distinct type of cudgelling: the blows are to be inflicted on the lower part of the face, for the purpose of breaking the jaw-bone, and thus laying up the victim for months; care is to be taken not to fracture the skull, lest immediate death may ensue. The weapon ('manganello') used is a specially made bludgeon, which is rather heavy towards the end, and is somewhat flexible.

<sup>2</sup> After the publication of this letter in November, 1924, Balbo had to resign the command of the Militia, but he remained a Member of Parliament and one of the most prominent personages in the Fascist Party. In October, 1925, he was appointed an Under-Secretary of State.

<sup>3</sup> *Corriere della Sera*, November 28, 1924.

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'On the evening of Nov. 5, Signor Belloni, speaking from the balcony of the prefecture to the crowd gathered in the piazza below to acclaim the Prime Minister's escape (after the Zaniboni attempt), promised that the lawyer, Signor Porzio Giovanola, as belonging to the Party which had plotted against the inviolable life of the "Duce," should be forced to leave Novara.

'Signor Belloni, with five other Fascists, went to the chambers of the above-mentioned lawyer, whom he told to leave the city within a few hours; otherwise he would order his squads to take action. Signor Giovanola departed in the afternoon' (*Avanti*, April 14, 1926).

Needless to say, the Chamber of Deputies refused to authorize the Attorney-General to charge Signor Belloni.

Here is a 'decree of banishment' issued at Padua, November 2, 1926:

'The following individuals are requested, in order to avoid more serious measures, to leave Padua and the province, and if possible, Italy, resigning from their posts and employments, during the next 48 hours. After this period, the Paduan squads, faithful to the Fascist revolution, cannot guarantee the safety of the persons in question.'

Thirty-eight names follow. And finally the words 'the list will be continued.'

The *Voce Fascista* of Treviso (November 2, 1926) publishes a list of people, headed by a Member of Parliament, Signor Guido Bergamo, who are declared to be 'bastards,' i.e. ordered to leave the province. The list includes a chemist, a number of lawyers, a café proprietor and the editors of two local papers. The ukase concludes:

'Dr. Bergamo and all the other persons officially exiled from the province will leave to-day with their families for various destinations, and have been warned never to return to their homes. It is hoped that this severe lesson will have attained its purpose and that there will be no need for repetitions.'

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In the district, which is the scene of operations of the Ras Carosi, there is a popular song about him:

'Al mondo paura non ha;  
Per lui giustizia non c'è.'<sup>1</sup>

One of the most appalling results of the Fascist dictatorship is that the Italian people have now lost all faith in justice. They are plunged into an abyss of moral anarchy from which it is impossible to see how and when they are to escape.

### § 4: *The Florence Outrages*

The absence of justice and the moral anarchy under the Fascist régime are nowhere more clearly shown than in the attitude of the police and the magistracy towards the outrages which occurred in Florence from September 25 to October 4, 1925.

As I have already said, for five days, from September 25 to September 29, the Freemasons in Florence had been hunted and bludgeoned in sets in the streets and even in public buildings. The police were never on the spot and not one of the Fascists, so liberal with their cudgels, was arrested.

On September 25, the *Battaglie Fasciste* published a manifesto, signed by the Directorate of the Fascio, inciting Fascists to 'strike at the Freemasons in their persons, their property, and their interests.' On the evening of September 26, the same Directorate issued a fresh proclamation:

'While assuming full responsibility for the very moderate reprisals taken up till now by the Fascists, the Directorate orders all Fascists to desist from all violence but to continue the work of identifying Freemasons in order to get more exact information as to convenient objectives for radical, decisive and necessary action.'

In the *Battaglie Fasciste* of October 3, there appeared another article urging the resumption of the offensive.

'Freemasonry must be destroyed and to this end all means are good: from the club to the revolver, from window smashing to the

<sup>1</sup> He fears nothing in the world; for him justice does not exist.



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cleansing fire. The life of the Freemasons must be made impossible. . . . If they are employed in private businesses their employers must dismiss them or have their businesses destroyed.'

Here was an overt, clamorous incitement to crime, the authors of which were not anonymous and should have immediately been brought to justice by the Attorney-General. But the Attorney-General slept the sleep of the just.

On the evening of October 3, after so many provocations, it happened that a Freemason fired on and killed one of the Fascists who had entered the home of a brother mason and was maltreating him. After being dragged to the Fascist headquarters, he was taken back to the scene of the crime and shot. The Fascist headquarters are close to the Prefecture and the police station. The police did not appear.

All through that night, and well on into the next morning, people were beaten in the streets, shops were pillaged, private houses sacked, and goods and furniture burnt in the streets. No arrests were made. The police still did not appear.

The Preliminary Inquiry brought to light that after the immediate reprisals against Bandinelli and Becciolini a meeting of officers and ex-officers of the Militia was held at the Fascio, at which the Consul Tamburini summoned his subordinates 'to take the initiative of serious reprisals':

'The cars, before starting out on each fresh operation, called at the Fascist headquarters; the squad leaders entered a room where other people were not admitted, and emerged with bits of paper in their hands, supposed to contain the names of the intended victims.'

The band which murdered Consolo drove back to the headquarters of the Fascio; some of the gang stopped to speak to Tamburini, and then the car drove on to the house of Targetti.<sup>1</sup>

For five hours, from 9 p.m. until 2 a.m., the taxis drove up and down Florence, without anyone taking any notice. The policemen on their way to the house of Consolo in reply to his call, met

<sup>1</sup> Pronouncement of the Accusing Section, November 30, 1926, pp. 32, 38, 39, 42, 43, 45.

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the taxis with the Fascists returning from the undertaking;<sup>1</sup> they were careful not to stop them.

It was not till the afternoon of October 4 that the Prefect awakened from his slumber, and issued orders forbidding 'public meetings or gatherings of five or more persons in the town and throughout the province.'

Signor Farinacci, General Secretary of the Fascist Party, telegraphed from Rome: 'Stop all reprisals in the name of the Prime Minister.' The Secretary of the Fascist Provincial Federation posted up copies of this telegram with a manifesto declaring:

'In the name of our beloved "Duce" and of Signor Farinacci reprisals of all sorts must cease immediately.'

Under the Fascist régime it is not the law which forbids murder; it is the 'Condottieri' of the Party in power who give the order to 'cease fire' when they think fit.

On the morning of October 5, Signor Farinacci arrived in Florence to 'hold an inquiry.' The result of this inquiry, conducted with lightning rapidity in the course of a forenoon, was summarized in an official communiqué as follows:

'On Saturday evening, Signor Luporini went by appointment to the house of the Freemason Bandinelli [the appointment is an invention to make it appear that Luporini had been drawn into an ambush]. While Luporini and the single companion who went with him were talking, a man named Becciolini burst into the room and fired on the two Fascists [it is not mentioned that there were other companions on guard in the street below: the pretended ambush is thus thrown into stronger relief]. Some of the more excitable elements proceeded to *immediate* reprisals [thus the murder of Becciolini, which really was an immediate reprisal, is mixed up with the murders of Consolo and Pilati, which were perpetrated in cold blood four hours later]. The disabled ex-soldier, Pilati, while he was a member of the Socialist-Communist minority in the Municipal Council, had cursed his own mutilation, blaspheming war and his own country. [In November, 1920, Pilati

<sup>1</sup> Pronouncement of the Accusing Section, November 30, 1926, p. 23.

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had been elected, not as a Communist but as a Socialist. On November 29, 1920 – five years before the day of his murder! – when the new Municipal Council was examining the qualifications of the councillors, Pilati brought forward as his qualification, his promotion to the rank of adjutant on the battlefield for distinguished service. The Fascist chairman congratulated him on having done his duty by his country. Pilati replied: "It shows that Socialism is not a school of cowardice."<sup>1</sup> This was his blasphemy.]

The murder of Consolo was justified in the manifesto on the grounds that he had been correspondent of *Avanti*, parliamentary candidate of the revolutionary Socialists and a contributor to the clandestine newspaper *Non Mollare* ('No Surrender'): Consolo had in fact been acquitted by the magistrates on this count. Lastly, the looting of shops and houses is justified on the grounds that the owners were 'well-known Freemasons, who had recently held secret meetings to promote anti-Fascist action.'<sup>2</sup>

Besides this official communiqué, Signor Farinacci wrote in an article in the Florentine paper, *La Nazione*, of October 6, 1925:

'The campaign which the opposition parties waged against the Fascist rule, the Fascist Party and its leaders, had a most lamentable epilogue. In the house of a "Venerable" Freemason, which was used as a lodge, Giovanni Luporini, one of the most brilliant figures of Tuscan Fascism, was lured into an ambush and treacherously murdered. The local leaders have had to display the utmost energy and authority to prevent the legitimate exasperation of our faithful comrades from having still graver consequences. . . . The martyrdom of Giovanni Luporini cannot weaken Fascism. We shall pursue our course unshaken as long as a single enemy of the national cause treads the sacred soil of our country.'

The whole of Fascist mentality is condensed in these words. Two bullies go to the house of a political opponent and try to

<sup>1</sup> *Giustizia*, October 26, 1925.

<sup>2</sup> In a letter to *The Times* of September 10, 1927, Signor Villari writes: "The events of October, 1925, were extremely deplorable, and although they were reprisals for the murder of a very popular and highly esteemed Fascist leader, no one deplored them more than all responsible Fascists."

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force him to obey illegal orders. A dispute takes place. One of the two bullies is killed. He becomes a 'martyr' and all ensuing reprisals are legitimate.

On that day the funeral of the 'hero' Luporini took place. All who failed to hang out a flag bound with crêpe, or to close their shops in sign of mourning, were threatened with looting. Employers were ordered by the Head of Police to give a holiday to their workmen so that they could join the funeral procession. Those who refused were thrashed and threatened with looting. At the entrance to some factories, armed Fascist groups awaited the workmen, formed them into columns as they came out, and marched them to the procession.

'Lower flags and pennants before the body covered with pure and generous blood' - wrote *La Nazione*, - 'and add the name of Giovanni Luporini to the glorious pages of the Fascist martyr-ology.'

As a result the manifestation of 'civic mourning' was 'general' and the procession 'imposing.' Vice-versa, the corpses of Becciolini, Consolo and Pilati were taken secretly to the cemetery in lorries escorted by Carabinieri. Some dead men inspire fear.

The newspapers of October 7 announced that 'the magistrates have opened judicial proceedings against persons unknown.' Unknown! The authors of murders, lootings, burnings and wreckings committed in the central streets of Florence, in broad daylight, in the presence and with the help of numerous people, were 'unknown'!

But the Florentine 'St. Bartholomew' aroused widespread indignation as the facts became known. Florence is an international city, and at the beginning of October it swarms with foreigners. Many of these had been man-handled in the forcible closing of the theatres, they had witnessed burnings, they had heard of the murders. Among the lawyers, whose premises had been sacked and papers burnt, was Signor Bosi, the legal adviser of the British Colony, and the papers of his clients had been burnt with the rest. The Government had to take some steps to discountenance these disorders, or have a troublesome diplomatic incident to deal with.

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The Underwood Typewriter Company was demanding an indemnity for the destruction of Breschi's shop. Moreover, Mussolini had to go to Locarno. He could not appear at the Conference while the impression prevailed that the crimes of Florence were going unpunished. Finally, the Financial Commission was to leave shortly for the United States, to settle war debts and contract new ones; it was essential to give America the impression that, under the Fascist Government, justice is done.

On the night of October 6, 1925, the Home Secretary announced in the newspapers that an Inspector General would be sent to Florence to hold an inquiry. On October 8, the papers announced that the Commander General of the Militia had also ordered an inquiry. And Signor Farinacci also, oblivious of the fact that he had already personally held an inquiry on the morning of October 5, sent Signor Balbo to Florence to hold another inquiry. Three inquiries, when the first step should have been to arrest the Fascist executive, the Consuls of the Militia, the Prefect of the Province, and the Chief of Police! Signor Balbo is the most prominent Ras in the province of Ferrara, which for six years has endured a reign of terror akin to that which was to be seen in Florence. Such was the man whom Signor Farinacci chose to make the inquiry!

The three Inquisitors set to work. On October 12 it was officially announced that the Prefect of the Province had been superseded and retired, and the Chief of Police transferred. Was this a punishment for their connivance with the outrages of September 26 to October 4? Not at all. They were punished for quite another reason. On October 5 they had been foolish enough to search the house of the Marchesa Adele Alfieri di Sostegno, a niece of Cavour, a member of the highest aristocracy, known for her devoted loyalty to the royal house and respected throughout Italy for her generosity and benevolence, but an anti-Fascist. The Florentine Fascists had got into their hysterical heads that this fervent Catholic lady harboured a Masonic Lodge in her house. The Prefect and the Chief of the Police, brutal and stupid beings, had caught the infection of Fascist fanaticism. In the absence of the Marchesa, the doors of her house were forced in and the house turned upside down. Nothing Masonic was found. This act of

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idiotic violence roused the indignation even of the royal family. It was for this blunder, in itself not more criminal, but only more stupid, than the others, that the Prefect and Chief of Police were punished. But their punishment was utilized for 'propaganda' abroad as a proof of how Mussolini punishes officials who fail in their duty.

Furthermore, two communiqués of October 19 and 25 announced that Signor Balbo had expelled 53 men from the Fascist Party. Two of the men expelled were arrested. Were these steps taken in good earnest? Far from it! Signor Balbo officially declared:

'Among those expelled there may be some who were concerned in the incidents of the first days of October; but on the other hand, there may be none. It is the task of the judges to deal with penal responsibilities. These expulsions have been decided on for reasons of a civil, moral, and political order.'

At the same time, Signor Balbo laid down the lines on which inquiries should be conducted by the police and the magistrates, in his official proclamation issued on October 12:

'All *unauthorized* action or reprisals, against any person, his property or interests, all *arbitrary* attacks, are not only repugnant, but even injurious, to the authoritarian and hierarchical principles of Fascism.'

A few days later Mussolini himself repeated this 'mot d'ordre' in the review *Gerarchia*, October, 1925:

'Violence is moral, provided it is timely and surgical and chivalrous; but since the revolutionary party holds the power, violence must confine itself to creating and maintaining a sympathetic atmosphere toward the use of this governmental violence. *Private and individual ungoverned* violence is anti-Fascist. . . . The Italian people understand the use of governmental violence in certain contingencies, through the regular armed forces, but not *supplemental individual* violence.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In an interview with the *Morning Post*, January 29, 1927, Mussolini repeated: 'To me violence is fundamentally moral. But the forces of violence must be wielded by those competent to guide their energies.'

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Thus the police and the magistrates receive their cue: they are to prosecute only *unauthorized and arbitrary* reprisals; authorized reprisals are legitimate and go unpunished. But the public in other countries does not grasp this distinction. It sees that certain trials take place, that certain condemnations are pronounced, and believes in the justice of the Fascist Government. Tragedy is thus followed by farce.

The trial which took place before the Florentine courts on November 21 to 24, 1925, and resulted in a sentence on fifteen of the accused, was concerned with the deeds of the 'squad' from Pontassieve on the morning of October 4. These outrages had not been 'authorized.' Of the two brothers Breschi, one had never meddled in politics and the other 'had left the ranks of the Freemasons and had been a sincere and loyal supporter of Fascism since its first beginning' (*La Nazione*, November 22). One of the Fini brothers produced a formal certificate from the Fascist Commissary, declaring that 'an inquiry into his political and national opinions' showed the accusation of being an anti-Fascist and a Freemason to be unfounded; on the contrary, he had been an enrolled member of the Fascist Party since January 1, 1923. (*La Nazione*, November 22.) The accountant Carrer was in the same, so to speak, 'juridical' situation (see above, page 240).

On December 11, 1925, there was another trial in connection with the looting of the premises of the pastry-cook, Chiapella. Chiapella also produced an official certificate, in which the Fascist Commissary declared that he was 'neither a Freemason nor an anti-Fascist' (*Unità Cattolica*, December 12, 1925).

One of the counsel for the defence in the trial of the Pontassieve squad said:

'The truth is this. When the first episodes were known in Rome (that is, those of the evening of October 3), the Home Secretary gave orders that such regrettable incidents must be stopped. It was then found convenient to put all the blame on the shoulders of the barbarians and vandals belonging to the villages in the neighbourhood of Florence. This is not right, not just, not generous.' (*La Stampa*, November 26; *La Nazione*, November 26, 1926.)

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The counsel for the defence was seeking by this argument to justify his conclusion that it would have been right, just, generous, also to acquit the 'barbarians and vandals.' But involuntarily his words revealed the trickery employed in such trials, whereby only those least responsible are brought to justice, the actual object being to throw dust in the eyes of the public.

After these first few sentences, which were trumpeted abroad as a proof of Fascist justice, Fascist justice took a well-earned rest.

On December 7, 1925, fourteen persons accused of having taken part on October 3 in the wrecking of the pharmacy of Caparotta at Legnaia were let out on bail. At the same time, twenty-seven Fascists of Prato, against whom warrants of arrest had been issued for robbery with violence, were simply bound over (*La Nazione*, December 4 and 7, 1925). On March 3, 1926, five men accused of the murder of Pilati were discharged for 'want of evidence' (*La Nazione*, March 4, 1926).

On March 8, 1926, eight men charged with attacking and looting the Villa Baldi, on the night of October 3, 1925, received ludicrously inadequate sentences (the heaviest was being bound over to an imprisonment of five months should a further offence be committed); the owners of the house judged it prudent to withdraw all claims (*Corriere della Sera*, March 9, 1926). On March 20, 1926, seven men charged with looting a shop belonging to Enrico Ricci, a second-hand dealer, were discharged, the proprietor being wisely unable to identify any of them (*Stampa*, March 21, 1926). In May, 1926, twenty-four Fascists of Prato received ludicrous sentences for having broken into and sacked private houses. On June 17, 1926, the editor of the *Battaglie Fasciste* and the other heads of the Fascio, who, in company with Luporini, had led the squads which took part in the outbreaks from September 26 to 29, and had publicly assumed responsibility for them, were acquitted. On June 30, 1926, the Fascist Gino Lecci was acquitted of the charge of having taken part in the outrages on October 4. On October 27, 1926, six Fascists, accused of acts of violence at Badia a Ripoli, were acquitted as not having been involved in the affair, or on grounds of want of evidence (*Avanti*, October 25, 1926). On November 19, eight Fascists



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were acquitted of the murder of Becciolini on grounds of insufficient evidence. Two only remained to stand trial for this murder, but they have been declared by the judges guilty not of murder, but of 'inflicting serious bodily injury.' (*La Nazione*, November 20, 1926.) Thus Becciolini was not killed, but only seriously injured! The judges on December 1, 1926, acquitted twelve Fascists prosecuted in connection with the Florence outrages; they committed for trial by jury four Fascists implicated in the murder of Pilati, and seven others implicated in the murder of Consolo, in the attempted murder of Cozzi and in the looting and burning of one shop, two lawyers' chambers, one tailor's workshop, and a private house. On May 16, 1927, all these bravocs were acquitted.<sup>1</sup> Pilati and Consolo were thus murdered by 'persons unknown.'

The widow of Pilati gives an idea of the methods by which the Preliminary Inquiry into this case was conducted.

'On the 8th October, whilst I was ill in bed after the emotions of those days, the police came to question me as to the description of the murderers. They showed me the photograph of a certain Castellani, and insisted that I should recognize him as one of those who fired the shots, saying: "He has nineteen crimes on his conscience, and can have committed this one also." I replied that I did not recognize the photograph as that of the man who had fired. I added that their efforts to find the culprits were useless; justice no longer counted at all; justice, too, if it did not obey the orders of Fascism, would be bludgeoned; it was all a farce; the instigator was too high up to be reached by justice. I was alluding to the Consul Tamburini. On October 9, the judge came with his clerk. They asked the same questions, and asked me also if it were true that my husband had been a friend of Mussolini, adding that Mussolini was much grieved by his death. I answered that Pilati was a friend of Mussolini when both were in the same party. If Mussolini had been friendly towards my husband, he would not have had him killed, as he himself was, indirectly, responsible. For some days officials kept coming to my house, showing me photographs and clothes. For about three months I was frequently summoned by

<sup>1</sup> *Corriere della Sera*, May 17, 1927.

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the Inquiring Judge to identify prisoners.' But none did I recognize as the culprits. After Christmas the police showed me some prisoners, amongst whom was a certain Paoletti. I declared that he had a certain likeness to the man who had fired. Some days later, I was confronted with Ezio Narbona. I recognized his voice and figure as that of the man who had fired. *The judge himself assured me that it was really the man.* I was confronted also with elderly men, but declared that I recognized nobody; those who had leapt into our room were very young. At last, in March, 1926, I was shown Ermini. I recognized him without hesitation as the first man to enter our room, holding two revolvers. During the identification, Ermini was assisted by the Counsel, Signor Meschiari, and some witnesses, whilst I had not been able to find a Counsel, and was alone. When I identified Ermini, he began to weep, and to swear that he was innocent. Signor Meschiari, taking advantage of a moment when I was feeling shaken, insisted that it was impossible for Ermini to be the culprit if he wept like that. I started up and cried out to him: "Who was in bed with my husband? You perhaps!" These words silenced the Counsel. Ermini did not want to sign the report of the proceedings. The Counsel told him to sign, and added: "If I could have imagined that things would have gone so, I would not have come. I shall feel unwell for three days." In saying good-bye, I said I looked forward only to one thing - to leave the country.'

Narbona had no part in the murder of Pilati. The judge who encouraged Signora Pilati in her mistake of identity, knew what he was about. This error of recognition was used by the Accusing Section to draw the inference that the identifications made by the woman 'could not be taken as sure evidence.' Only at the trial did Signora Pilati see the real murderer.

'Entering the court, I saw in the dock a man who, on catching sight of me, covered his face with one hand. At first I thought it was Ermini, but afterwards I recognized him with certainty as the man who had fired by his face and eyes. It was Carcacci, who, after hiding for a long time, had given himself up two months before the trial, feeling sure of acquittal.'

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But the police and the judge, by leading the woman into one mistake of identification, had attained their object of casting doubt on all identifications made by her.

Cesare Rossi, from November, 1922, to June, 1924, head of Mussolini's Press Bureau, reveals one of the dodges often used to procure the impunity of those who carry out the 'authorized' outrages:

'When dealing with a crime which outraged public opinion, De Bono would arrange matters beforehand with some Fascists who had no connexion whatever with the crime and have them arrested. Those arrested would soon after prove an *alibi* and be released, and thus the trial would come to nothing. This was made easy by the fact that Senator De Bono cumulated two different posts, that of Director-in-Chief of Police and that of Commander-in-Chief of the National Militia. After the bludgeoning of Amendola, Mussolini was immensely tickled by this method of investigation.'<sup>1</sup>

The method was not invented by De Bono. Already in 1921, Luigi Fabbri, *Controrivoluzione preventiva*, p. 35, wrote:

'When serious outrages occur, which disturb public opinion, the police save the guilty by the following trick: they promptly arrest Fascists who had nothing to do with the incident, and can prove their innocence; later, when the public excitement has calmed down, the judges acquit them, and thus the real culprits are saved.'

The method was still going on in 1926.

This is what Pilati's widow narrates about the trial. The English translation cannot render the vigour of the original, with its grammar mistakes and breaks in continuity, as written down by this woman of the people, uncultured but intelligent, and moved by a great sorrow:

'As the trial drew near, pressure and threats were brought to bear to induce me to retract my identification of Ermini, and with-

<sup>1</sup> Appendix A, § VIII, at the end of the present volume. Cp. p. 259.

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draw from standing as plaintiff in the case. At first I was offered money and every kind of favour. I indignantly refused. One day I went to the bank, to draw out my husband's war pension. The clerk told me that steps were being taken by the Government to give me a bigger pension. I made him understand that I had not asked for it, and that I refused the dirty charity of the Government; I would not sell the blood of my husband. Having failed in this first attack, they laid closer siege upon us, trying to ruin the business - which my husband had built up with the labour of so many years. They prevented us from getting orders; they stopped our getting credit from the banks; they tried to smuggle in among our employees outsiders of doubtful honesty; they hindered us in selling the houses we had built. For a mortgage on building land we were asked more than 10 per cent. interest. They sought our destruction. When they lost this second battle through my doggedness, they passed over to threats. In February, 1927, Signor Gavazzi, who had been an ardent Socialist, and now was a Fascist, came to pay me a visit. He said that he had been sent by Fascist friends of Ermini and by the Fascists of our parish, who were led by Nesi, an officer of the Militia. They made him come to persuade me to declare that I no longer recognized Ermini. I answered that this was impossible. I would let myself be cut in pieces rather than betray my conscience. Seeing that every attempt was useless, he warned me to be careful about what I was doing, because my son would have to suffer for it; he did not think that we would have the pluck to resist; he would report my answer to the Fascists. After this nice performance, he went away. A month later the lawyer Pacchi came to our house, together with Colonel Lanari. They tried to persuade me with sentimental phrases and arguments to attend the trial, not as plaintiff, and without counsel; and to preach peace and love, and ask for the acquittal of the defendants; in this way I should rise to be a symbol of the People and of Italy; if so, my business would recover. All in vain. I gave them what they deserved. They went away saying that at this rate all doors would be closed to me, and my business would go rack and ruin. Thus we came to the last days before the

<sup>1</sup> Pilati was a builder.

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trial. The lawyers whom I had begged to take up my case, had refused. The young Signor Tarchiani, although aware what trouble he was making for himself, accepted. But on April 25, when I went to make the last arrangements with him before starting for Chieti for the trial, he told me that he had been seriously threatened by the Fascio of Florence and the police; if I went to the trial, the police would refuse me the passports I had asked for, for myself and my son, and we would not be spared personal violence; if I stayed away I should have the passports within twenty-four hours, and we should not be molested. I saw that it was impossible to go to the trial with the lawyer. I realized that the trial was to be nothing but a soap-bubble. I fell into deep depression, and decided to stay at home and accept the passports, to escape as soon as possible from a land which had become for me a source of misfortune and grief. I went back home, and went to bed, feeling ill. My doctor wrote me a certificate that for five days I should be unable to leave my bed. As soon as the police heard of this, they sent me the passports; moreover the Chief of Police sent an official to my bed-side to carry out the necessary formalities, with a message that the police were at my service. I answered that I only asked for my rights. Meanwhile the trial began at Chieti. On April 30, I was summoned to attend the trial, otherwise I should be taken there by the Carabineers. I learned afterwards that this summons had not been meant to come into my hands, but an official who did not know the plans of the police sent it on. As I felt rather better, I decided to go. The police sent constables to my house, and even threatened my lawyer if I did not stay at home. At ten o'clock at night, they went to my brother-in-law to know what I had decided. My brother-in-law answered that I acted of my own free will, and that he could do nothing. Word was sent me that the police would deprive me of my passports. But I remained firm in my determination. On May 2, we started, and, after a journey of fourteen hours, arrived on the morning of May 3 at Chieti. After a night in the train, and in my state of agitation, I was in a piteous condition. The court swarmed with Fascists. From the Presiding Judge to the jurymen, all wore the Fascist badge. The public consisted only of about fifty people, Fascists,

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of course, most of them from Florence. When Signor Fera, the counsel for the defence, saw me, he was struck with astonishment. Even the Presiding Judge thought I was absent. He asked me where my counsel was. I answered that I had no counsel, and that I no longer stood as plaintiff. He told me to recount the scene of that night. I did so. When I began to say a few words about the cruelty of the crime, I was interrupted by noises from the lawyers, the defendants and the public. I then turned to the Judge and said: "What! May I not even remind you what kind of man my husband was?" He said: "Silence! Let her speak." I asked Ermini why he had killed my husband. I could not understand the reason of this wicked murder. I could not understand how such a good, honest, hard-working man had been able to draw such hate upon himself as to cause his death. "Did you not think before taking arms in your hands that in killing him you killed three of us? And how many hearts have you not wounded? Did you not think that you tore from me the dearest and holiest thing in my life? Did you not know that he was a father? And now see, I live in anguish and nowhere do I find peace. May remorse gnaw your conscience, and may Divine Justice strike you down. You have basely killed a man who was sleeping quietly with his family. And he was a disabled ex-soldier." I answered the questions of the Judge as I had answered at the Preliminary Inquiry in Florence. For a whole hour I had firmly to face the attacks of the counsel for the defence, who tried to bewilder me. The Judge told me that I had signed a deposition stating that some people in my parish had shown me photographs of Ermini. I denied it, and said the document was a forgery. I was asked if my husband had ever belonged to the Freemasons. I answered that he had always belonged to the Intransigent Socialist Party. As I had recognized Ermini in a photograph, the counsel for the defence stood up and waved a photograph, saying: "Here is the photograph that the Pilati woman identified." But it was not shown to me. I realized that it was a trick, and said that if it was not the photograph of Ermini, the real one had been changed. Hereupon some confusion arose. The counsel for the defence began to pelt me with questions, asking whether I had identified Ermini by his nose, or his mouth,

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etc. I answered I had identified him by his face, because one recognizes people by their faces. Exasperated by the cowardly insinuations of the defence, and by the passive attitude of the Judge, I jumped up, shouting: "You are taking unfair advantage of a woman who is ill, distraught, and without a lawyer; you are taking unfair advantage of your strength!" And I made to go away. Then the counsel for the defence, turning to the Judge, exclaimed: "Let us get rid of her, let us get rid of her." And I: "Get rid of me if you like, but I reassert all I said at Florence. If you wish to sentence the murderer, there he is. If you won't condemn him, there is a God who will Himself do justice." There arose a clamour in the court. The Judge called for order, and requested me to point out the murderer from among the defendants. The words were not out of his mouth, when I, pointing my forefinger at Ermini, cried out: "There he is, the fourth in the first row!" The Judge said: "Yes, it is he." At last, after an hour and a half of this torment, I was let go. At eight o'clock in the evening I left Chieti. At Florence, Carabineers were stationed at our door. They passed the time gossiping and joking with the Fascists of the parish. The police took away our passports, but gave them back next day. After the acquittal, the defendants returned to Florence, and amused themselves by coming under our windows and laughing and playing jokes with the Carabineers. A few days later, a banquet was given in their honour.'

When the men who lynched—or, in the eyes of the law, merely wounded—Becciolini are acquitted, the curtain will have fallen on the last scene of this farce of Fascist justice.<sup>1</sup>

I have dealt, perhaps at too great length, with these outrages in Florence because of their importance as showing:

- (a) How authorized outrages are carried out;
- (b) How those implicated in authorized outrages go unpunished;
- (c) How Fascist propaganda abroad confuses the issues.

<sup>1</sup> See Note A at the end of the present chapter.

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### § 5: 'He governs firmly and justly'

Fascist propaganda endeavours to create the belief outside Italy that the beatings, incendiarism and murders are due to 'the impulsiveness of irresponsible elements in the Party,' to the 'arbitrary and often reckless violence of secondary and local leaders,'<sup>1</sup> who disobey the orders of the Duce.<sup>2</sup> 'He governs firmly and justly' – writes the *Daily Mail*, November 2, 1926. Mussolini, in an interview granted to the representative of the *Daily Express*, January 24, 1927, made a point of disclaiming all responsibility for the excesses of his followers:

'You know how difficult it is to check the misplaced activities of fanatics in these great movements of a people who feel they are marching to greatness and prosperity. They cannot understand the attitude of those who apparently wish to stand in the way of Italian unity, and in consequence, wish to get rid of them. I have done everything in my power to preserve order in Italy.'

The truth is that Mussolini's official paper, the *Popolo d'Italia*, edited by his brother, the *Impero*, a Roman Fascist daily, founded and subsidized by big industrialists to propitiate Mussolini, and indeed the whole Fascist Press, whether daily or weekly, whether in books or pamphlets, is constantly inciting to murder. Giacomo Matteotti, who paid with his life for his open opposition to the dictatorship, in his book, *A Year of Fascist Domination*,<sup>3</sup> quoted the most typical incitements to murder which appeared in 1923. A still more sanguinary anthology could be compiled from the Fascist literature of 1924, 1925 and 1926. If this murder campaign were carried on against Mussolini's will, it would be silenced

<sup>1</sup> So writes the Director of the British Institute in Florence, in the *Journal of the British Institute of International Affairs*, March, 1927, p. 122.

<sup>2</sup> M. Henri Lucas writes: 'It is impossible, Mussolini often says, to separate oneself from one's Party. But in private Mussolini himself readily admits that it is from his own rank and file, and especially from some of his younger partisans, recalcitrant under the discipline which they claim to impose on others, that his worst embarrassments arise' (*Le Journal*, Nov. 18, 1925).

<sup>3</sup> English edition, *The Fascisti Exposed*, published by the Independent Labour Party, 14 Great George Street, Westminster, London.



## THE FASCIST DICTATORSHIP

by the Attorney-Generals. That the Attorney-Generals and the police allow the authors of the worst outrages to remain 'unknown,' can only be explained by superior orders.

Were Mussolini opposed to violence, he would not have granted three amnesties to his partisans.

His own speeches, when, under the influence of his natural impetuosity, he forgets caution, reveal him as obsessed with ideas of violence and murder.

Here are some specimens culled from his speeches of 1923:

*June 9.*—'If the enemy raise their heads again, and make their stupid opposition heard, the Fascists will close ranks once more; and then, woe to the vanquished!'

*June 19.*—'Let no one abuse our generosity; if they do, we shall have recourse to force. If the scum of which I spoke means to go on occupying the public stage, they well know—and all Italians must know—that I shall call out the black-shirts, many of whom are champng the bit and murmuring with impatience.'

*October 8.*—'I ask you, Fascists, to bear in mind that the revolution was the work of cudgels. What have you in your hands now? (Fascists shout: "Rifles, bombs, machine-guns!") If to-morrow the alarm were to sound, the signal for those great days which decided the destiny of peoples, would you respond? ("Yes, we swear it!") If to-morrow I were to tell you that you must continue the march to the end, but in other directions, would you march? ("Yes!") The Fascist Government will last, for we shall systematically scatter our enemies.'

*November 30.*—'You pass resolutions, while in Russia they use guns. Ask Georgia, which has borne a Russian "punitive expedition"'

*Vella.*—'You have made some punitive expeditions too!'

*Mussolini.*—'We will make more, if necessary!'<sup>1</sup>

Cesare Rossi, the head of Mussolini's Press Bureau,<sup>2</sup> affirmed

<sup>1</sup> Matteotti, *The Fascisti Exposed*, pp. 72 ff.; Mussolini, *Nuova politica dell'Italia*, pp. 20, 84, 255; *Matteotti: fatti e documenti*, pp. 15 ff.

<sup>2</sup> From 1914 to June, 1924, Cesare Rossi was the most intimate of Mussolini's collaborators. After the 'March on Rome' (October, 1922)

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in a memorandum of June 15, 1924,<sup>1</sup> that all the most scandalous outrages had been committed under personal orders from Mussolini.

'All that has occurred was done by Mussolini's orders, or with his concurrence. I mean the bludgeoning of Amendola, for which Mussolini gave orders to De Bono<sup>2</sup> without my knowledge and which was carried out by Candelori;<sup>3</sup> the bludgeoning of Misuri, which was organized by Balbo, at Mussolini's instigation; the attack on Forzi, for which Mussolini gave me orders in a state of excitement, and which I organized together with Giunta; the

he was appointed head of the Prime Minister's Press Bureau. The highest honorary title in the Fascist Militia – that of 'Honorary Corporal' – was bestowed on him. He was a member of the Central Fascist Executive and of the 'Pentarchy,' which selected the Fascist candidates for the Parliamentary elections of April, 1924.

<sup>1</sup> The original of this document is now in the possession of Signor Alberto Virgili, who is in exile in France and to whom I owe the facsimile. The memorandum was first published in the Italian newspapers of December 29, 1924, and it has been reprinted in the volume *Matteotti: fatti e documenti*, Toulouse, Exoria, 2nd ed. 1927, pp. 85 ff. Rossi elaborated his accusations with the addition of much new matter in a further memorandum of February 11, 1925, written while he was in prison under the charge of complicity in the Matteotti murder. I reproduce this new memorandum in Appendix A at the end of the present volume, omitting its introductory section, which is of a purely general character.

<sup>2</sup> General De Bono was one of the generals who prepared and led the 'March on Rome.' Mussolini appointed him Commander-General of the Fascist Militia, and Director General of the Police, and made him a Senator. As head of the police, De Bono prevented any serious inquiry from being made, whenever a political crime had been committed by Fascists (see pages 259 and 280). In December, 1924, Signor Donati, editor of the Christian-Democratic paper, *Il Popolo*, accused him of having had a share in the Matteotti murder and other crimes. By Italian law a senator can be tried only by the Senate. Thus a Commission of Inquiry was set up to make preliminary investigations into the charges. De Bono was acquitted by the Commission, though the verdict of acquittal recognized that as Head of the Police he had side-tracked judicial inquiry. (See Appendix B on *The Finzi Memorandum* at the end of the present volume.) After his acquittal he was appointed, in the summer of 1925, Governor of Tripolitania.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Consul of the Militia.

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attack on Nitti's house, and the recent demonstration against the opposition groups, for which Mussolini gave instructions to Foschi.<sup>1</sup> It was Mussolini who proposed to the Quadrumvirate (the Central Committee of the Fascist Party) that the Fascist deputy Ravazzoli should receive the lesson his lack of discipline deserved. It was he who gave orders to Signor Maggi, the Fascist deputy, to destroy the Christian-Democratic clubs in the Brianza, and afterwards repeated the orders to me with complacency. I must add that Commendatore Fasciolo received daily from Mussolini the names of subscribers to the *Voce Repubblicana*, the *Avanti*, the *Giustizia*, the *Italia Libera*, the *Unità*, and other anti-Fascist papers; Fasciolo was to forward these to the local branches of the Fascist Party, so that the persons indicated might be bludgeoned, and forcibly dosed with castor-oil.'

Signor Finzi, another intimate of Mussolini's, and Under-Secretary at the Home Office from November, 1922, to June, 1924, raised the same charges against Mussolini in the days following the Matteotti murder:

'Finzi attributed the disappearance of Matteotti to a secret organization which had arisen inside the Fascist Party, in close contact with the Government, and which he called the 'Cheka.' The organization was to be directly responsible to the Prime Minister. It was this 'Cheka' which had carried out the outrages on Amendola, Nitti and Forni. Dumini had been in Paris as its agent. For the expenses of this journey to Paris, Finzi was ordered to hand over 30,000 lire to the Member of Parliament, Signor Bastianini. The acts of violence which had caused the most scandal had been organized as follows: Italo Balbo arranged the bludgeoning of the Member of Parliament, Misuri; De Bono that of Amendola; Giunta and Rossi that of Forni; and Polverelli and Igliori the looting of Signor Nitti's house.'<sup>2</sup>

It may be argued that Cesare Rossi sought to blackmail the

<sup>1</sup> Secretary of the Fascist Party for the Province of Rome (see above, page 171).

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix B on the *Finzi Memorandum*.

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Ducé, in order to obtain his protection in the Matteotti case, and that Finzi subsequently retracted his statements, which were merely outbursts of spite, and therefore untrustworthy. And certainly, had either of these accusers stood alone, without any other confirming evidence, his assertions would not bear much weight. But here we have two men, who, being both intimates of Mussolini, and speaking quite independently of one another, concur in making the same assertions. Moreover, the most startling assertions of these two men are borne out by other striking evidence.

(A) Among the outrages ordered by Mussolini, Rossi and Finzi mention the bludgeoning inflicted on Signor Amendola on December 26, 1923.

This charge is confirmed by the man who carried out the order. Vico Perrone, a sergeant in the Militia, in a letter of June 29, 1924, confessed that he was ordered by De Bono and the Militia Consul Candelori to carry out the bludgeoning of Amendola:

'I was impressed with the mention of Signor Amendola's name; so I personally made sure *that His Excellency Signor Mussolini himself required this to be done*. Discussions followed with His Excellency General De Bono, who was particular in directing that Signor Amendola should merely be beaten.'<sup>1</sup>

The *Popolo d'Italia* of December 28 commented on the assault on Amendola as follows:

'Such incidents have always occurred in Italy, especially during

<sup>1</sup> De Ambris, *Amendola: fatti e documenti*, Toulouse, Exoria, 1926, p. 25. This letter was written during the period of Fascist panic after the murder of Matteotti. Dumini, Marinelli, Rossi, Filippelli, Putato, Volpi, etc., were in prison. All who had committed other crimes in obedience to orders from their superiors were now in terror of being abandoned in their turn to prosecution, or even put out of the way. Vico Perrone, the author of the letter, was one of these. He placed his confession in the hands of a military officer, Major Vagliasindi, under whom he had served in the war. Besides this letter, Perrone wrote a more circumstantial account of his deed, which can be consulted in the volume De Ambris, *Amendola: fatti e documenti*.

## THE FASCIST DICTATORSHIP

the Bolshevist period,<sup>1</sup> and also abroad; and they may go on occurring if the systematic opponents, in good or bad faith, of the Fascist Government fail to realize that the time has come to give in.'

The *Popolo d'Italia* is published at Milan. At that very moment Mussolini himself was in Milan, and this article, if not actually written by him, certainly had his approval beforehand.

(B) Rossi and Finzi attribute to Mussolini's orders the bludgeoning administered at Milan Station on March 13, 1924, to Signor Forni, a candidate in the General Election.

The press on November 29, 1924, published the text of a circular letter of March 11, signed by Signor Giunta, Deputy and General Secretary of the Fascist Party, ordering the bludgeoning of Forni. The circular letter contains the following passage:

'By order of the Prime Minister and Duce of Fascism, and with the concurrence of the National Directory, Provincial Secretaries should regard as the most formidable enemies of Fascism Signori Sala and Cesare Forni. Accordingly, *in line with the instructions issued by the Head of the Government to the Prefects of Provinces*, life is to be made impossible for the two above-named gentlemen in the provinces where they have interest in creating disturbances. They must not be allowed to hold meetings or give addresses. Wherever they may present themselves they must be energetically attacked by all Fascists. . . . I await your reply in order to report to the Duce that the orders will be carried out.'

After the bludgeoning of Signor Forni the *Popolo d'Italia*, March 15, 1924, published an article entitled: 'He who betrays, perishes' (*Chi tradisce, perisce*), of which the following passages are the most characteristic:

<sup>1</sup> As regards Members of Parliament, this statement is absolutely untrue for Italy in the period preceding May, 1915. In May, 1915, three Members of Parliament were man-handled, not gravely, however, for their opposition to Italy's entry into the War. From May, 1915, up till 1920, such incidents remained extremely rare. It is in 1920-1 that the Fascists introduced into Italian political life the habit of bludgeoning and even killing Members of Parliament.

di un campo elettorale, i socialisti, i dirigenti, non  
 per ispirazione di principio ma per motivi personali,  
 hanno fatto il gioco di tutte le opposizioni, hanno  
 girato a tutti i nemici, se necessario, hanno  
 compiuto un'eccessiva opera anche abietta  
 opera di tradimento, nel momento in cui  
 - che conta un numero di nemici - il partito  
 rappresenta la sua battaglia.

Il partito è chiaro e refrattario.  
 Quanto alle istituzioni allora occorre basterla  
 rimanda. può si trovare nelle sue istituzioni  
 inferiori - come il regime di Lenin ha  
 tentato non di meno i nemici, ma i dirigenti.

I dirigenti menzionati, sono  
 stati onestati e ingenui e molti di essi facili  
 furono sempre intransigenti per tutti.

SECOND SHEET OF MUSSOLINI'S ARTICLE, 'WHO BETRAYS, PERISHES!'  
 (see page 291)

Che tradisce, perisce! ~~con~~ ~~tra~~ ~~il~~ ~~pa~~

Naturalmente, tutti i giorni dell'opposizione dopo averi sottile  
del resto a Roma, si sono gettati tutti i suoi nomi occorrendo  
alla ipotesi di Milano, per insinuare la più grande  
fatica operata e disposta già!

I fatti parlano chiaro. Il T. M. Tassotti è  
attorno a ben più - siccome più - partiti di  
opposizione e cioè al partito comunista, al partito  
socialista, al partito unitario, al partito repubblicano,  
al partito popolare, al partito democratico italiano.

Ma è <sup>occorre</sup> disingante a tutti i partiti, i  
gruppi più o meno organizzati, con quelli degli  
anarchici - <sup>gruppi</sup> le sette e le sette - e altri elementi  
più o meno ripresentati, in esplicito o n. l.

Ma che cosa è accaduto?

Che in un momento delicato - quale quello

'WHO BETRAYS, PERISHES!' (see page 291)

The original is part of the collection of documents written in Mussolini's hand which Comandante Fasciolo, Mussolini's private secretary, took away with him when he fled abroad, fearing that Mussolini would have him done away with as an inconvenient witness in the Matteotti case.

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'What exactly has happened? At a delicate moment, such as is an electoral campaign, the so-called Dissident Fascists have played into the hands of the Opposition group, thus assisting the enemies of Fascism. . . . Their crime is plain and abominable. . . . Bolshevism has "physically" suppressed the Mensheviks. No better fate befell the Revolutionary Socialists in Russia. As to the Anarchists, many have been executed there. Is it not criminal insolence for the unclean reptiles of the Italian subversive parties not yet stamped out by the Fascist Party, to raise a howl if some traitor to Fascism is more or less noisily chastised? We are still a long way from the Russian system. When a Party has assumed the tremendous responsibility of directing the destinies of a nation, it has the right and the duty of being inflexible towards its enemies, still more towards those who desert and go over to the enemy. In any case Fascism is following the example of your comrades in Russia, you scoundrels of the Italian Socialist Party. He who betrays, perishes!'

This article was written by Mussolini himself.<sup>1</sup>

(C) On June 10, 1924, Finzi mentioned a journey to Paris made by Amerigo Dumini, the ringleader in the Matteotti murder. Some months later, he repeated his statement before the Senate Committee of Enquiry:

'On one occasion I *received instructions* to remit to Dumini 10,000 lire for a mission with which he was to be entrusted by the Secretariat for Fasci abroad. I refused to hand the money personally to Dumini, and gave it to Commendatore Bastianini instead.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See facsimiles facing pages 290 and 291.

<sup>2</sup> The Santoro Proposals. Santoro is the Attorney-General who assisted the Senate's Committee of Inquiry in its investigations into the charges brought against General De Bono in connection with the Matteotti murder. In his Proposals covering some three hundred type-written pages (this document is available with the records of the Preliminary Enquiry into the Matteotti case at the library of the London School of Economics), Santoro manipulates the evidence, attributing to one witness statements made by another, interpreting documents as conveying the opposite of their real meaning, and shuffling the cards so as to be able to propose De Bono's acquittal. But the evidence on which he had to work, and which



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As Under Secretary at the Home Office, Finzi could *receive instructions* only from his Minister, namely, Mussolini.

Rossi, too, in his Memorandum of February 11, 1925, speaks of this journey which Dumini made to Paris in September and November, 1923, with the object of inflicting severe punishment on Italian Communists who had taken refuge there:

'After the murder of the Fascist Geri<sup>1</sup> in Paris, the Prime Minister, in agreement with Signor Bastianini, the Secretary for Fasci abroad, ordered Dumini, Putato, Volpi and others to go to Paris and give a lesson to the anti-Fascist *émigrés*. The police head-quarters issued three passports with false particulars.'

Amerigo Dumini corroborates:

'I went three times to France to watch Italian Communists who had fled abroad, and were resident in Paris. I received from His Excellency Signor Finzi the funds for these trips to France, to the aggregate amount of 30,300 lire, in two instalments.'<sup>2</sup>

A letter from prison written by Dumini to Finzi on July 24, 1924, contains the following passage:

'You will certainly remember the various journeys to France which I made with certain comrades, and why I made them. I have been so imprudent as to send to Bâle the complete diary, compiled and signed by me, faithfully reproducing all the oper-

he could not but reproduce, is so crushing that no sophistical adroitness can lessen its force. See at the end of the present volume the Appendix on *The Finzi Memorandum*.

<sup>1</sup> The Fascist Geri was killed in Paris on September 3, 1923, by a certain Mario Castagna. A brother of Castagna, on October 5, 1921, had been brutally beaten by the Fascists at Carpaneto, and left for dead; he had one eye put out of its socket, and the other nearly blinded. Another brother, half paralysed, had to escape to France to save his life. Yet another brother was beaten, under his mother's eyes, until the blood flowed. The poor woman, overcome by so much anguish, died of heart-disease in the beginning of 1924. Castagna, in Paris, surrounded and attacked by a group of Fascists, fired a revolver shot which killed Geri. The Jury of the Seine, on June 28, 1924, sentenced him to seven years' imprisonment. The French Government pardoned him in July, 1927.

<sup>2</sup> The Santoro Proposals.

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ations carried out in French territory, up to day on which I was wounded. . . . The documents are in the care of a friend of mine and I should not like him to make use of them. You can imagine what a scandal there would be in Italy and what complications with France.'<sup>1</sup>

Among the documents belonging to Cesare Rossi which were seized after the murder of Matteotti, were found the following receipts signed by Dumini: September 12, 1923, 10,000 lire from Finzi for a journey made to Paris with fifty other persons; September 28, 1923, 1,500 lire for another journey to Paris; November 12, 1923, 10,000 lire from Finzi for a journey from Rome via Milan to Paris, made with six others.

Albino Volpi, when arrested on June 16, 1924, for complicity in the Matteotti murder, had on his person a false passport made out in the name of Giuseppe Parrini, issued by the Prefecture in Rome on September 11, 1923. In his examination of June 25, 1924, Volpi accounted for his possession of this passport as follows:

'I got it to go to France on secret service. I went to Paris a couple of times in the company of Dumini.'

(D) Rossi attributes to Mussolini the orders for the destruction of the Christian-Democratic clubs in the Brianza. Here are the facts: in the district of Brianza (province of Milan) the majority of votes in the parliamentary elections of April 6, 1924, had been given to anti-Fascist candidates, and consequently the whole district was given over to systematic reprisals. At Monza the Fascists sacked and burned the printing works of the *Cittadino* (which had been sacked once before), the Christian-Democratic library, almost all the Christian-Democratic and Socialist clubs, and the Chamber of Workers. In twenty-six other centres in the same province similar scenes of violence and destruction were witnessed.

'The authors of these acts of violence'— wrote the Milan Catholic paper *Italia* on April 10, 1924— 'are always armed Fascists, who arrive suddenly in the night, break in the doors, burn and destroy, and disappear after having spread terror everywhere.'

<sup>1</sup> The Santoro Proposals.

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In one small village, Lazzate, the casualties totalled 28, two of the victims being very seriously wounded. The material damage done to the Catholic organizations was so serious that on April 15, 1924, the Pope sent half a million lire (then £4,000) for distribution among the Catholic institutions affected by 'these barbarous and often impious acts of devastation,' as Cardinal Gaspari wrote in the letter accompanying the Pope's gift.

We possess the original in Mussolini's own hand of a communiqué of the Volta Agency published in the press of April 19, 1924, in justification of these outbreaks. These are his words:

'In the Brianza the Fascists, or men calling themselves such, did not kill any member of the Christian-Democratic Party. They simply did damage to goods; they had no intention of committing acts of anti-Catholic vandalism. They looted the Clubs because these were carrying the contraband of a violently anti-Fascist policy under the flag of religion.'<sup>1</sup>

It would be difficult, I think, to find statements more forcibly documented by an array of evidence than those assertions of Finzi and Rossi.

There are other acts of violence, not mentioned by Rossi or Finzi, for which Mussolini was undoubtedly responsible.

(A) In the letter of August 31, 1923, reproduced above (pages 266-7), Signor Balbo writes:

'It will be well, too, if the Prefect lets the Public Prosecutor know that if there should be any beatings (which will be conducted according to all the rules of the game) there is no desire to see prosecutions instituted. *I write this from Rome, which means that I know what I am talking about.*'

The italicized words cannot be interpreted otherwise than that Balbo's instructions were being issued under Mussolini's authorization.

(B) In a letter, dated November 24, 1924, a certain Guido Narbona, a Fascist of Turin, indignant at the condemnation of Major Freguglia and other comrades for outrages committed

<sup>1</sup> See facsimile facing this page.

Fascismo e violenza anti-cattolica

gli ambienti repubblicani del Partito Nazionale Fascista e nei  
sugli vicini di Breno; il ministro a ritroso che le proteste  
con episodi <sup>sporadici</sup> di violenza accaduti in Brianza dopo  
l'armata del 6 aprile, ma di una temeraria euforia  
hanno un carattere che il fascismo nettamente respinge.  
che si ripresenta <sup>quasi</sup> <sup>come</sup> <sup>spontanea</sup> <sup>liberazione</sup> <sup>altrimenti</sup>  
Jan <sup>epistola</sup> <sup>mentare</sup> che il P. N. F.  
in ordine nella recente campagna elettorale democristiana  
voti: P. Ricci l'annuncio di un giudice fascista in  
scena; e di oggi, il barone ecclesia di uno giudice  
vinto. in Lombardia. Non v'è dubbio che una  
viperia della all'ingenuità non è in alto. In  
Brianza i fascisti o xidendi. Tali <sup>refuge</sup> <sup>mentre</sup> <sup>al</sup> <sup>PT</sup>  
hanno danneggiato delle cose e una più per  
pre. del <sup>traudalipso</sup> <sup>anti</sup> <sup>cattolico</sup> <sup>una</sup>

'FASCISM AND VIOLENCE AGAINST THE CATHOLICS' (see page 294)

Facsimile of a communiqué written by Mussolini, and published in the Press of April 19, 1924, in justification of the outrages committed by the Fascists in the Brianza. The original is in the hands of Signor Fasciolo.

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under superior orders,<sup>1</sup> revealed that on February 22, 1924, Mussolini had received him and two other Turin Fascists, and had said to them:

'You must act as Fascists, and with the greatest energy. You know, of course, of Professor Gobetti, of Turin. He is a troublesome individual, and needs a severe Fascist lesson. You will undertake to give it him.'<sup>2</sup>

This document is corroborated by the following telegram which Mussolini sent to the Prefect of Turin in March, 1924:

'I hear that Gobetti, who was recently in Paris, is now in Sicily. Please keep me informed, and be vigilant in *making life difficult again* for this stupid opponent of the Government and of Fascism.'<sup>3</sup>

The phrases 'to make life difficult,' 'to make life impossible,' are technical formulæ in Fascist language, indicating that an opponent is to be exposed to every sort of violence, not excluding murder.<sup>4</sup>

The Prefect of Turin rendered Gobetti's life so difficult that this gifted and high-minded young man of twenty-five had to escape to Paris in winter while suffering from influenza, and died there in hospital, leaving at Turin a young wife and new-born baby.

(C) After p. 300 there is a reproduction of a telegram of March, 1924, in Mussolini's own hand, addressed to the Prefect of Milan:

'Call the attention of Signor Longoni [the owner of the printing press used by the Socialist paper *Avanti*] to the insolent attitude of the Socialist paper [*Avanti*] and to the fact that Scalarini [the caricaturist] has resumed his activity. If within the next few days things do not alter, I shall give orders for the measures adopted against the Communist paper of Trieste to be applied here.

MUSSOLINI.'

<sup>1</sup> *Corriere della Sera*, November 21, 1924; Carlo Gualtieri di Avarna, *Il Fascismo*, pp. 49-50.

<sup>2</sup> This letter was published in the clandestine press in Italy in the spring of 1925.

<sup>3</sup> See facsimile facing p: 296.

<sup>4</sup> For other instances of the same formulæ, see pp. 270, 290, 332 of the present volume.

## THE FASCIST DICTATORSHIP

The printing press and offices of the Trieste Communist paper, *Il Lavoratore*, were wrecked on October 31, 1923. Mussolini here threatens the owner of the printing press used by the Socialist *Avanti* of Milan with the same treatment. Thus we have proof that the wrecking of newspaper offices was not due to the 'arbitrary and reckless violence of local leaders' but was ordered by the Duce himself.

(D) On September 27, 1925, when in Florence the Fascists had already for two days been hunting down the Freemasons, Mussolini declared to the 'Black-Shirts' at Vercelli:

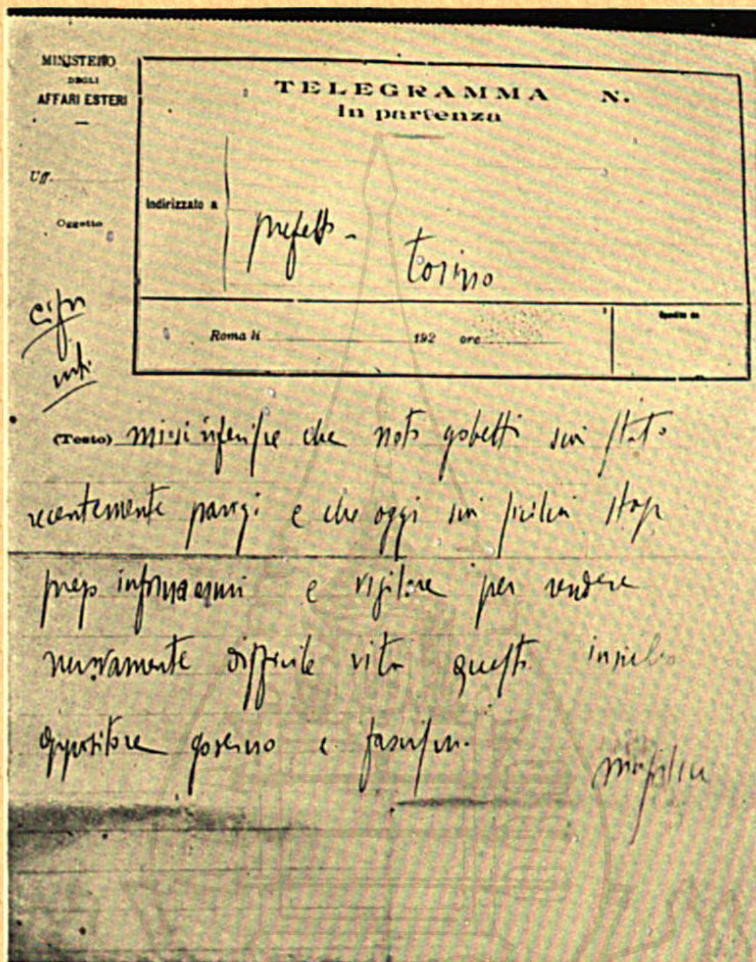
'If necessary, we shall use the bludgeon, and also steel. A rising faith must needs be intolerant. Either my faith is true or yours, either yours or mine. If I think that mine is true, I cannot suffer secret murmurings, petty ambushes, skulking calumny, base slander. All these must be put down, overthrown, buried.'

During those very days, the whole Fascist press was accusing the Freemasons of 'secret murmurings, ambushes, and base slander.' Mussolini, as Prime Minister, was undoubtedly informed of what was happening in Florence at that time. He could not but realize that his words would be taken by the Fascists there as an authorization to go ahead. And this they did.

(E) During the riots in Genoa on November 1, 1926, following the attempt made on Mussolini's life by Anteo Zamboni at Bologna, the Fascists tried to sack the house of the ex-deputy Francesco Rossi.

'Having attempted to break open the doors, they placed a ladder against the window on the first floor, opening on to the premises of the firm of Rebora and Boeuf. Having thrown open the shutters, they broke in, and were just about to go down to the entrance to open the street door, when a group of Carabinieri, soldiers and Customs officials appeared. Shots began to be fired, and lasted for half an hour' (*Corriere della Sera*, Nov. 3, 1926).

Two Fascists and one Carabincier were killed, and twenty Fascists wounded. The Fascists abandoned the enterprise for the moment. But the day after, the Chief of Police at Genoa was dismissed for having protected the house of an anti-Fascist.



'TO MAKE LIFE DIFFICULT' (see page 295)

Facsimile of a telegram written by Mussolini and sent to the Prefect of Turin, ordering him to 'make life difficult' for Signor Piero Gobetti. The facsimile was first published in the *Quotidien* of Paris, February 19, 1926. The original is in the hands of Signor Fasciolo.

[Facing page 296.]

## THE RIGHT TO KILL

The next day, the Fascists were given a free hand not only to sack Signor Rossi's house, but also the houses of Signor Canepa, an ex-Minister, of the journalist Ansaldo, of the lawyers Uttini and Lotti, and of Signor Vannuccio Faralli.

In the face of happenings such as those of Florence and Genoa, can anyone see in them nothing but 'arbitrary and reckless violence of secondary and local leaders'?

### § 6: *Mussolini's double game*

Fascist propaganda continually recalls the exhortations to peace and concord which are scattered about many of Mussolini's speeches, and which seem in contradiction with his violent utterances.

The key to this contradiction is to be found in the fact that in the rank and file of the party there is a precarious equilibrium between 'the extremists' and the 'normalizers.' The former want to continue the beatings and murders; the latter consider that the time has come to abandon these methods, as no longer of use, and indeed as calling forth protests from persons otherwise well-disposed towards the régime. Mussolini plays up the one or the other of these tendencies according to whether he finds no obstacle to his unbalanced impulses, or whether these are checked by the scandal of some more than usually atrocious outrage. He goes forward, steering one way or another, adapting himself to the necessities of the moment, insolent and loquacious when all goes well, pusillanimous and silent in the hour of danger, passing in a flash from generosity to blood-thirstiness, from recklessness to caution; ever ready to say and unsay, to repeat and to contradict himself, to betray to-day those who yesterday were his accomplices.

Cesare Rossi, who having lived for five years in Mussolini's immediate entourage, had exceptional opportunities for gaining an insight into the character of the man, writes in this connexion:

'How can certain noble sentiments which Signor Mussolini expresses in his speeches, be reconciled with facts which put such grave moral, political, and penal responsibility upon his shoulders?



## THE FASCIST DICTATORSHIP

'His temperament, unstable by nature, as I am certainly not the only one to know full well, has, together with his mania for Machiavellianism, led him in the last few years into numberless acts of duplicity and changeableness.

'Thus it can happen that he touches the hearts and rouses the admiration of the Roman crowds in Piazza Colonna on April 10, (1924), by crying "Let our faction perish, if the country is saved!"<sup>1</sup> having, a few minutes earlier, said to me he hoped the Fascists would put their opponents back in their proper place. By turns he is cynical and sentimental, impulsive and cautious, irritable and calm, generous and cruel, quick to decide and slow to move, uncompromising and conciliatory. All the qualities of heart and mind have in him contradictory aspects, but in his activities as Head of the Government and of the Fascist Party, the tendencies which predominate are duplicity, superficiality and improvisation. In an interview with socialist trade-unionists he talks as one who has no confidence in the Fascist Unions, whereas he answers Rossoni<sup>2</sup> that he only gave the interview so as to compromise these men with their own party. Officially he makes a show of endorsing the policy of Signor De Stefani,<sup>3</sup> whereas he refuses the latter's request to stop the publication of the newspaper *Il Nuovo Paese*, because, as he says, "in the journalistic key-board it is expedient for him to have also that note of personal opposition to De Stefani." He is present at De Stefani's speeches at Milan,<sup>4</sup> and later, in conversation with myself, Acerbo and Finzi, gives vent to his anger against De Stefani, complaining that "the Ministry of Finance has become the arsenal of anti-Fascism." He officially sends amicable messages to Farinacci, while urging me to get the Party to stop the grumblings of that same gentleman; and when a current of opposition to Farinacci becomes apparent in the Cremona town council, Mussolini expresses the hope that he will be able to "prick that blister too" (i.e. Farinacci).

<sup>1</sup> Mussolini, *Nuova politica dell'Italia*, 1924, p. 44.

<sup>2</sup> Secretary and chief of the Fascist trade-unions.

<sup>3</sup> Minister of Finance in Mussolini's cabinet from November, 1922, to July, 1925.

<sup>4</sup> March 15, 1923; May 30, 1924.



THE CINEMA ARTIST

[Facing page 298.]

## THE RIGHT TO KILL

Once or twice a day he receives De Bono, Finzi, Acerbo and Bianchi, and, in his speech of January 27, 1924, expresses his appreciation of them,<sup>1</sup> while on the other hand, he suggests to Pio Vanzi how to harass them in his paper *Il Serenissimo*. (Vanzi afterwards avowed to me having received these directions.) In the same speech of January 27, 1924, he proclaims: "Mussolini is the arch-enemy of Mussolinism," while he encourages the publication of *Il Sereno*, which aims at widening the breach between Mussolini and his party.'<sup>2</sup>

An illuminating instance of this double game is furnished by the Ricciotti Garibaldi incident in the autumn of 1926.

From the autumn of 1925 to the autumn of 1926 the Fascist Press carried on a violent and systematic campaign, accusing the French Government of favouring Italian political refugees.

The Lucetti attempt of September 11, 1926, afforded an excellent pretext for redoubling this campaign: Lucetti came from France; the plot had been prepared in France; therefore the French Government had lacked either the power or the wish to prevent the crime. Reasoning on these lines one might equally well claim that as the attempt was carried out in Italy, the Italian Government lacked either the power or the wish to prevent it. But the Fascist Press confined itself to accusing France. Mussolini in person in his speech to the Fascists of Rome on September 11, 1926, thundered forth the following threats:

'I wish to say some words in earnest. My words must be thoroughly understood by those to whom they are directed. I say that it is time beyond our frontiers, to have done with the toleration of certain goings-on, if the friendship of the Italian people is desired. Such incidents as that of to-day may fatally compromise our friendship.'

The Fascists understood at once at whom these words were aimed, and attacked the French Consulates in Venice and Leg-

<sup>1</sup> There is here a slip of memory. The speech was delivered on January 6, 1924. Cf. present volume, p. 325, n. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Rossi's Memorandum of Feb. 11, 1925: Appendix A, § XXXVIII, at the end of the present volume.

## THE FASCIST DICTATORSHIP

horn. Not one of the assailants, of course, was prosecuted; they were all 'persons unknown.'

Since genuine attempts made by men coming across from France had proved so useful to exploit against that country – always provided that the Duce remained intact – Mussolini and his friends turned to manufacturing a fictitious attempt on French soil.

One of the degenerate grandsons of Garibaldi, Ricciotti, was in touch with a secret agent of the Italian police, named Sala, another high police official, named La Polla, and Baron Romano Avezzana, the Italian Ambassador in Paris. La Polla travelled in France, unknown to the French Government, under a false name and passport given him by the Italian Government. Ricciotti had his letters sent to the address of the Ambassador, whom he met in secret at the Café Fouquet in the Champs Elysées. For services rendered during the last months of 1925 and 1926 he received 645,000 lire.<sup>1</sup>

On October 5, 1926, Ricciotti Garibaldi had a meeting in Paris with three Italian anarchists, Meschi, Diotallevi, and Fantozzi, whom he exhorted to go to Rome and assassinate Mussolini, offering to pay their expenses. The houses in Rome in which the conspirators were to lodge while awaiting the moment for their attempt, were to be secured by another anarchist, Scivoli, a native of the same town as Lucetti. On October 14, Ricciotti Garibaldi asked Scivoli to carry to Rome letters addressed to Domizio Torrigiani, the Grand Master of the Freemasons, Eugenio Chiesa and Cipriano Facchinetti, Republican members of Parliament, and Ravasini and Gambelli, Republican Freemasons. On October 16, Ricciotti again had a meeting with Meschi and his other confederates, and asked Meschi, who had been a sergeant in the 'Garibaldian Legion' of 1924,<sup>2</sup> to hand over Lucetti's card of membership of that organization. On October 1, he summoned Scivoli to Nice and asked for his passport, under the pretext of having it renewed by the Vice-Consul at Nice. What

<sup>1</sup> Examinations of Ricciotti Garibaldi, November 3, 7, 8, 9, 1926. See Note B at the end of the present chapter.

<sup>2</sup> In the second half of 1924 Ricciotti Garibaldi was making a feint of raising legions to invade Italy and bring about a revolution there.

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che la carta potrà fornire con una  
ambrosiano omissis applicazione migliore  
più adatte carta giornale communitaingle  
mussolini

'IF WITHIN THE NEXT FEW DAYS THINGS DO NOT ALTER . . .' (see page 295)

Facsimile of telegram in Mussolini's handwriting from the original in the hands of Signor Fasciolo.

[Facing page 300.]

## THE RIGHT TO KILL

he did was to hand it over to La Polla, who had six copies made of Scivoli's photograph. Some days later, the Italian police notified the French police that a certain Scivoli, resident in France, was preparing a plot against Mussolini. They kept to themselves, however, the photographs and the address of Scivoli, so that the French Police had no chance of acting swiftly, and could thus be accused of failing to take action.

Assuming that these anarchists had left for Italy, they would have been arrested as soon as they had crossed the frontier. Since Scivoli was a confederate of the three men on their way to attempt the life of Mussolini, the letters which he was carrying would compromise the Freemasons and the Republicans. Scivoli, moreover, was a native of the same town as Lucetti; Lucetti had belonged to the Garibaldian legions, as his membership card showed that Meschi had been one of the recruiting sergeants of the Legions. Thus the connection would be established, not only between Lucetti and the anarchists, but also between Lucetti and the Republicans and Freemasons.

These intricacies were calculated to produce the following stage-effects:

(1) The 'attempt' would be a good pretext for a fresh pogrom against anti-Fascists;

(2) The French Government could be accused of complicity in the plots of Italian refugees in France.

As if these diabolical manoeuvres were not complicated enough, Ricciotti Garibaldi was in touch with Catalan *émigrés* in France, who, under the command of Colonel Macia, were preparing a *coup de main* against the Spanish Government. All the information gained of Colonel Macia's plans Ricciotti Garibaldi passed on to Mussolini. The latter, in his turn, informed Primo de Rivera, but omitted to inform the French Government. He was thus able to excite De Rivera's anger against the French for their inaction.

While the 'plot' was maturing, the Fascist Press and the leading members of the party carried on during the second half of September a frantic campaign of threats against the Opposition parties and against the French Government as their accomplice.

Did Mussolini wish to provoke a war with France? This I

## THE FASCIST DICTATORSHIP

do not believe. To my mind, what he wanted was a serious diplomatic quarrel, with the aim of forcing the French Government to expel from its territory a dozen or so of the more noted refugees. In the diplomatic dispute which must have resulted from the 'discovery' of the 'plot,' Mussolini could rely on the intervention not only of Primo de Rivera, who, outside Spain, counts for nothing, but of Sir Austen Chamberlain, who speaks in the name of the British Government. Sir Austen could not have stood aloof from a dispute so dangerous to the peace of Europe. All the 'organs of public opinion' would have put pressure upon the French Government to give Mussolini the moderate satisfaction he demanded, namely, the expulsion of a few refugees. The French people, having troubles enough of their own, would have seen no reason for their country to risk grave difficulties with Italy for the sake of a few refugees. The French Government would have found it hard to resist such pressure, even should it have wished to do so. A few dozen refugees would therefore have been expelled. The Duce and his papers in every country would have trumpeted forth this result as an 'imperial' success, achieved by the world's greatest statesman and warrior. The whole manœuvre was nothing but an impudent piece of bluff.

At the moment when the 'discovery' was nearly ripe, a genuine attempt was unexpectedly made on Mussolini's life in Bologna on October 31, 1926, by the sixteen-year-old youth Anteo Zamboni, a disaffected Fascist. This genuine attempt was utilized to carry into execution the programme of reprisals already prepared as a sequel to the fictitious one. The Fascist Press denounced in the Zamboni attempt 'the hand of the foreigner.' The Fascist squads cudgelled opponents of the régime and raided their houses, shouting not only 'Viva il Duce!' but 'Death to France!' French railwaymen were maltreated at Ventimiglia station. The French consulates at Ventimiglia, Tripoli and Bengasi were attacked. In the streets of Milan there were cries of 'To Paris! To Paris!' The French, English and American papers affiliated with Fascist propaganda started to deplore the abuse of the right of asylum on the part of Italian refugees in France.

Suddenly, on November 3, the French police arrested Ricciotti

## THE RIGHT TO KILL

Garibaldi, who confessed his ignominious offence. The French Government could show not only that the French police had not been inactive, but that plots organized in France were the work of Italian *agents provocateurs* and of high officials of the Italian police, travelling under false passports issued directly by the Mussolini Government.

Discomfited by this turn of affairs, the 'unconquerable' Duce beat a hasty retreat. He protested that he was sincerely, profoundly, unspeakably scandalized, distressed and disgusted by the anti-French incidents that had occurred in Italy. He made his apologies by means of three separate notes, one for each of the incidents of Ventimiglia, Tripoli and Bengasi (*Times*, Nov. 10, 1926). Not content with these official apologies to the French Government, he apologized also to the French public, and in an interview given to the *Matin* (Nov. 16, 1926), he declared:

'Everything is over. I have had the most frank and satisfying explanations with the French Government. The anti-French demonstrations which took place after the last attempt have been less grave than those which occurred in Leghorn after the previous attempt. I regard such incidents as scandalous and intolerable. They revolt me. I give you a guarantee that such things shall not occur again' (*Corriere della Sera*, Nov. 16, 1926).

Nor was he content with this apology to the French daily paper. He apologized again in a Cabinet meeting of December 6, declaring:

'The demonstrations against the foreign consulates are a bad habit belonging to the old régime (1) and must be stopped by every means possible. They are extremely stupid and are certainly to be condemned.'

On January 5, 1927, he was still apologizing in a solemn encyclical to the Prefects:

'Above all, whatever happens, or happens to me, the Prefects must use every means, I say every means, to prevent the smallest sign of demonstration against the residences of foreign representatives. Relations between people and people are so delicate and



## THE FASCIST DICTATORSHIP

may lead to such developments that it is utterly intolerable for them to be at the mercy of irresponsible demonstrators or of *agents provocateurs* seeking to provoke some irreparable mischief. Any Prefect failing to act in this spirit will be regarded as a cowardly slave or a traitor to the Fascist régime, and will be punished as such.'

In face of such apologies, such protestations, such declarations, who could have the heart to suspect that the anti-French outbursts of the Press and the attacks on the French consulates complied with his own wishes?

Not many weeks after the encyclical of January 5 a man named Canovi, passing himself off as a disaffected Fascist, came to Paris and proposed to a certain refugee that he should make a fresh attempt against Mussolini. Canovi was in league with the editor of the Fascist paper *Il Pensiero Latino* of Nice. As a result of this renewed plotting, the two *agents provocateurs* were expelled from France. This, however, does not prevent the Italian Press and the French papers affiliated to Fascist propaganda from continuing their campaign against the Italian refugees in France.

There are many other instances of this double game which I could cite. I select two only.

(A) In July, 1923, outbreaks against Christian-Democratic organizations occurred in Florence, Pisa, Milan, Monza, Osimo, Canicatti. Here, for example, is what the *Corriere della Sera*, July 17, 1923, reports about the Fascist doings in Florence:

'Some Fascists entered various churches and told sacristans to ring the big bells. The palace of the Catholic Association in Via dei Pucci was broken into and the University students' club was damaged; books and pamphlets were taken away and burned in the street. Similar attacks were made on two other clubs.'

At Pisa the Fascists wrecked, amongst other institutions, the Catholic club which bore the name of the Cardinal Maffi, archbishop of Pisa.

During the disorders, the police as usual were conspicuous by their absence; none of the authors of so many acts of violence perpetrated in broad daylight was arrested. It was clearly a case of

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Indirizzo: ai prefetti Firenze e Pisa

Roma, 6 1923

comuni data riferimento sparsa <sup>in</sup> Vaticano cattolici  
incidente anti-cattolici sarebbe ben che  
sarebbe locale per. per. si  
veramente sufficientemente. etc. Anonimo  
prefetto spiegazioni rimando alle prefetture  
alle prefetture proprio per religione cattolica  
mentre

TO PLACATE THE VATICAN (see page 305)

Facsimile of a telegram written by Mussolini and sent to the Prefects of Florence and Pisa after the outrages against the Catholic Clubs, July, 1923. Original in the hands of Signor Fawcett.

## 'THE RIGHT TO KILL'

'authorized operations.' The Archbishop of Pisa, Cardinal Maffi, issued an official protest. The Pope, too, was scandalized, in spite of its Fascist leanings. Mussolini snuffed the wind and rushed for cover, sending to the Prefects of Florence and Pisa the following telegram, which must have been written on July 15 or 16, 1923:

'Home Office Code. To the Prefects of Florence and Pisa.

'In view of the unfavourable impression created at the Vatican by the recent anti-Catholic incidents it will be advisable for the Committee of the local Fascist Federation to pay an official call at the Archbishop's palace to deplore what has happened, and renew their declarations of profound Fascist respect for the Catholic religion.

MUSSOLINI.<sup>1</sup>

As a consequence of this telegram a deluge of official apologies poured forth. The Prefect of Pisa went in person to pay a visit to Cardinal Maffi, and showed him the telegram from Mussolini deploring the 'idiotic acts of violence against the Catholic Clubs,' and informed the Cardinal of the steps which had been taken to identify the culprits. The Mayor of Florence and the Vice-Chairman of the County Council called on the Archbishop of Florence to inform him of the true meaning of the happenings. Mussolini personally telegraphed to Florence:

'It cannot be Fascists who have wrecked the Catholic clubs. I have ordered that the culprits be immediately identified and arrested.'<sup>2</sup>

But Cesare Rossi, chief of the Press Bureau under Mussolini, reveals that Albino Volpi and the other Fascists, who came to Rome those very days to threaten the Opposition deputies, were summoned from Milan by orders from Mussolini.<sup>3</sup> The fact that the attacks on Catholic clubs broke out contemporaneously in cities far apart from one another, makes it plain that an order must have emanated from the centre. In any case, nobody was ever punished for these outrages, as is always the case with 'authorized

<sup>1</sup> See facsimile facing page 304.

<sup>2</sup> See *Corriere della Sera*, July 17, 1923, and *Il Popolo*, July 21, 1923.

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix A, § XXXIV, at the end of the present volume.

## THE FASCIST DICTATORSHIP

outrages.' And in April, 1924, Mussolini gave his approval to the looting of the Christian-Democratic organizations in the Brianza (see page 294).

(B) The order for the bludgeoning of Amendola was issued by Mussolini to De Bono before December 20, 1923, and carried out on December 26. Meanwhile, on December 23, Mussolini went to Monterotondo to inaugurate an inscription and declared in a speech:

'We are ready to shake hands with our opponent, on condition that his hand is disarmed and is stretched towards us in the spirit of sincerity and loyalty.' (*Giornale d'Italia*, December 25, 1923.)

After the outrage, De Bono told Rossi:

'It was the boss who willed it so. When I telephoned the deed to him <sup>1</sup> he at the first moment made a show of cutting up rough. Evidently there were people round about him. But later he rang me up by the private line, asked for further details, and rang off, saying that the news had given him a better appetite for lunch.'<sup>2</sup>

In his Unpublished Notes of August, 1927, in my possession, Rossi gives the following particulars about Mussolini's speech at Monterotondo:

'Mussolini wanted me to be present as he proposed to make political declarations to which I had to give great importance through the friendly newspapers. The Prime Minister delivered a short speech, in which he expressed himself favourable to a reconciliation, saying, that he was ready to shake hands with his opponents on condition that they were not concealing the dagger of calumny. After the speech, which I was the first to take seriously, he called me and asked me to give the greatest possible prominence in all the Fascist and pro-Fascist papers to his peace gesture, even giving me suggestions as to the titles! This was done. Exactly four days later, whilst Mussolini was at Milan spending the Christmas holidays with his family, the assault on

<sup>1</sup> On December 26, 1923, Mussolini was in Milan for the Christmas celebrations.

<sup>2</sup> Rossi Memorandum, June 15, 1924, examination of June 23, 1924; Appendix A, §§. VII, VIII.

## THE RIGHT TO KILL

Amendola took place. Our papers, in absolute good faith and on their own initiative, contrasted the conciliatory speech of Montetorondo with the 'thoughtless action' against Amendola. Whilst arranging the attack on Amendola, Mussolini was at the same time preparing the counter-manœuvre of his conciliatory speech, with the object of removing from himself all suspicion of complicity with the aggressors. In order that this manœuvre might more surely succeed, and deceive the Italian people, Mussolini began by deceiving the chief of his Press Bureau!

### § 7: Fascist Heroism

Where crimes cannot be hidden from the outside world, pro-Fascist propagandists have a startling way of absolving their Party from responsibility. They discover the crimes to be committed, not by Fascists, but by Communists. For instance, on April 23, 1926, a correspondent in the *Morning Post* stated:

'Foreign attention has been mainly focussed on them (i.e. the outrages which still occur) and they have brought great discredit to Fascism. But certain facts must in fairness be remembered. First, anybody who has lived in Italy knows that bloodshed is far less regarded there than in England. . . . Second, there is no doubt that in the early days of Fascism many undesirable elements joined the Party for purposes of sheer loot. Previously these had been found in the ranks of the Communists, but when Fascism seemed to offer the greater opportunities for brigandage with impunity, they became Fascist. . . . Unfortunately, some still remain and on critical occasions reappear in their colours. After all, it is not necessary even that these ruffians should proffer allegiance to the Party: anyone can buy a black shirt. Nevertheless several people think that both inside and outside the Party there are *agents provocateurs*, who deliberately encourage or perform acts of violence, though the Fascists themselves seem loath to admit it.'

I wonder whether the *Morning Post* correspondent is equally mindful of the Italian lack of repugnance for bloodshed when judging non-Fascist violence. But it is clear that in his anxiety for 'fairness' he has forgotten several fundamental facts. It is

## THE FASCIST DICTATORSHIP

only too true that the Italian people do not share the repugnance for bloodshed felt by more civilized nations. But while the 'rotten principles of liberalism and democracy' ruled in Italy, crimes were followed up and punished, whatever the political opinions of the guilty parties. And during the fifty years of the 'old régime,' crimes steadily diminished, though not so rapidly as might be wished. Everybody in Italy felt ashamed of them, everybody endeavoured to wipe out the dishonour of them. And no foreign journalist tried to discover excuses for them.

As to the *agents provocateurs* and the 'undesirable elements' on whom is laid the responsibility for the acts of violence, while the authentic Fascists are to be held innocent as lambs, Mussolini himself has officially endorsed the explanation found six months previously by the correspondent of the *Morning Post*. In the interview with the *Matin*, November 15, 1926, after Zamboni's attempt on his life, he explained that the subsequent reprisals were 'mistakes (!) committed by persons already turned out of the Party, and by *agents provocateurs*' (*Corriere della Sera*, Nov. 16, 1926). And he repeated the same explanation in the Cabinet Meeting of December 6:

'As always happens in moments of public excitement, alongside the exultant and honest masses, elements of doubtful origin appeared, *agents provocateurs* and fishers in troubled waters, many of whom had been turned out of the Party. It was to them that the greatest number of the more serious incidents which occurred between November 1 and November 4 were due. Many of the acts of violence were the outcome of ordinary crimes, or private quarrels' (*La Stampa*, Dec. 7, 1926).

This explanation ignores the fact that the acts of violence, if committed with a 'national aim,' go unpunished: they do not come to trial; or should they do so, the accused are acquitted or amnestied and made into heroes. In these circumstances, it is joking to attribute Fascist crimes to Communists or to *agents provocateurs* (paid by whom?).

Where it is impossible to conceal that the authors of the crimes are not Communists or *agents provocateurs* but Fascists, propaganda

## THE RIGHT TO KILL

tries to excuse them by saying that they are an unavoidable retaliation against the attacks of which the Fascists are the victims.

In a letter to the 'Duce' on September 12, 1925, Signor Farinacci, then General Secretary of the Fascist Party, stated that in the year ending September, 1925, 55 more names had been added to the list of Fascist 'martyrs.' And Signor Villari affirmed in the *Saturday Review*, August 14 and September 4, 1926, that according to the Association of Widows and Mothers of Fascist Victims, the number of Fascists killed 'between the Matteotti murder and the end of the year 1925' amounted to 65. No Fascist source gives the names of Fascists killed between November, 1922, and June, 1924. In the volume *Le Pagine eroiche* only a few dozen names occur, because the compiler died in the beginning of 1924 and did not have time to complete his work. But it must be borne in mind that the year following the Matteotti murder was a difficult one for the Fascists. During this year the anti-Fascists were more aggressive than they had been from November, 1922, to June, 1924. It is difficult to believe, therefore, that the number of Fascist dead during this period is higher than it was after the Matteotti murder. Altogether, it is unlikely that the Fascist dead numbered more than from 130 to 150 during the three years 1923, 1924, 1925.

In November, 1924, when the number of 3,000 Fascist dead was officially circulated, the Secretary of the Reformist Socialist Party declared the number fantastic, and challenged the Fascists to produce proofs in support of it. The Fascist Press Bureau published an official communiqué (*Popolo d'Italia*, November 26, 1924), in which it declared the contradiction of the Reformist Socialist Party 'to be unheard-of provocation, and an audacious lie, as would fully be proved in a book shortly to be published.' But this book 'shortly to be published' never appeared, unless it was the *Pagine eroiche della rivoluzione fascista*, to which we have already referred.

Looking at the other side, Giacomo Matteotti, in his book, *Un Anno di dominazione fascista*, records about 150 deaths from November, 1922, to November, 1923.<sup>1</sup> During the five months from June 25, to December 2, 1924, the Press Bureau of the

<sup>1</sup> English version, *The Fascisti Exposed: a Year of Fascist Domination*, published by the I.L.P.

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Reformist Socialist Party denounced the following acts of violence committed by Fascists:

Dead, 36.

Severely wounded, 77.

Houses invaded or looted, 74.<sup>1</sup>

Altogether it seems to be no iota of exaggeration if one affirms that even during the period 1923, 1924, 1925, the number of the anti-Fascist victims is double that of the Fascist dead.

After 1925, no enumeration or comparison is possible, because with the complete muzzling of the Opposition Press, information about acts of violence committed by the Fascists is too fragmentary.

Besides, one must not forget that the Fascists inflate their 'Book of Martyrs' with names of persons to whom the quality of martyr can be applied only more or less arbitrarily.

For instance, the first name recorded in the list published in September, 1925, by Signor Farinacci is that of the Fascist Member of Parliament, Signor Casalini. Casalini was, in fact, shot dead by a man named Corvi, an habitual drunkard suffering from the mania of persecution, a constant associate of Fascist circles and a regular visitor at Casalini's house. The crime was a common murder and had nothing to do with politics.<sup>2</sup> It would be as reasonable

<sup>1</sup> *L'impero della legge!* opuscolo distribuito al Senato dell'ufficio Stampa del Partito Socialista Italiano; Dicembre, 1924.

<sup>2</sup> Signor Villari, *Fascist Experiment*, p. 77, wrongly asserts that the murderer was a Communist, and proclaims that 'the crime was no less horrible than that of Matteotti.' He seems to see no difference between a drunkard's crime and a murder carried out in cold blood by five men acting under the order of the leaders of the Party in power. — After these words had been published in the American edition of the present work, the trial of Corvi took place at the Assizes in Rome. The jury declared Corvi to be insane, and therefore not responsible for his actions. As a result of this verdict, Corvi has been confined in a lunatic asylum (*Stampa*, June 16, 1927). The official account of the proceedings states that Corvi said he had intended to avenge the murder of Matteotti. Even if, contrary to the usage of the Fascist régime, this account were truthful, the crime of a madman would still not be a political crime. The revolver which Corvi used belonged to the equipment of the Militia. How did such a weapon come into the madman's hands? The examining judges did not pursue



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to include in the 'Book of Martyrs' the names of Fascists killed in railway accidents, or carried off by the influenza epidemic.

Lupatini, who was killed in October, 1925, at Florence, is regarded as one of the ten 'martyrs' for the period of October to December, 1925.

In the 'Book of Martyrs' of 1927, the name of Giuseppe Francis will appear as that of 'a young comrade assassinated in New York by a subversive mob,' as recorded by the *Popolo d'Italia*, January 29, 1927, which published a portrait of this new victim. On the arrival at Genoa of the steamer *Biancamano* (January 18, 1927) a great manifestation of Fascists saluted the corpse of the 'glorious victim of his duty butchered by the vile anti-Italian renegades of New York.' The truth is that on December 22, 1926, the Italian Fascist paper of New York, *Il progresso italo-americano*, announced the death of Gino Francis at the Roosevelt Hospital in consequence of a cancerous ulcer of the stomach. In the number of January 7, 1927, the same newspaper announced that the corpse of 'the regretted Fascist, Gino Francis,' had left the preceding day on the identical steamer *Biancamano*, which arrived at Genoa on January 18. An Italian New York paper, *Il Martello*, March 12, 1927, published the facsimile of the medical certificate, declaring that the said Gino Francis died 'as a result of the bursting of an ulcer in the duodenum.'

Certainly there still are among the Fascists, especially among the younger ones, men of courage who are ready to give up their lives for their ideal. But, in the majority of cases, to speak of a Fascist killed or wounded in the civil war as a 'hero' or martyr, is as absurd as to apply these terms to an apache who is killed unexpectedly by his intended victim. No doubt it needs courage to be an apache, but this courage is not to be confused with heroism.

In a village two young 'Black-Shirts' enter a room where fifty workmen are assembled. They cover them with their revolvers shouting 'hands up,' and then order them to stand up and leave the room two by two. As the workmen do so, Fascists waiting at the entry fall on them and bludgeon them. The fifty workmen

this line of investigation. In spite of this the Fascist Press blamed them for not having discovered accomplices, and the jury for having declared the prisoner insane (*Tribuna*, June 18, 1927).

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attempt no resistance. On one side two heroes – on the other fifty cowards! Stop a moment, the matter is not quite so simple. The fifty cowards, who obey the two heroes, are unarmed; and the two heroes know this, as the police have, beforehand, searched the men for arms, and carrying arms would have been a ground for arrest. Moreover the fifty cowards know well that if they disobey, the two heroes will not hesitate to fire. Their heroism is not of a very costly kind. The fifty cowards know further that the sound of a shot would bring the Carabineers on to the scene, to arrest, not the armed Fascists, but the unarmed workmen. Most weighty of all: the fifty cowards know that, should a Fascist by chance be killed in an affray, the Fascist Directorate will at once be told by telephone: a few hours later hundreds of Fascists from the neighbouring villages, summoned by telephone, will arrive in motor-lorries, sack their houses and those of their neighbours, burn their furniture and bludgeon indiscriminately old men, women and children. The Carabineers this time will not appear till everything is over, and will then intervene only to arrest as murderers the men who had acted in self-defence. This is the true picture. Looking at this picture, every unbiased man must recognize that among the two armed and fifty unarmed men, there is no hero, but there are two criminals.

Some people have made a great discovery: that there is a close parallel between the Italian Fascists and the Russian revolutionaries; they explain the victory of both Fascists and Bolshevists by the heroic sacrifices of the forerunners of both revolutions.<sup>1</sup> A heroic sacrifice of common sense is necessary to discover such a parallel. The Russian revolutionaries carried on for over a century their fight against the Cheka, the judges and the army of the Tsarist Government. In Italy the first groups of Fascists

<sup>1</sup> Cambò, *Autour du Fascisme Italien*, Paris, Plon, 1925, p. 15: 'Without the thousands of young Fascists who gave their lives in the struggle with the Communists, Fascism would never have captured the power and, to keep that power, Mussolini does not hide his determination to bring back the heroic period of Fascism if it proves necessary. Without the years when conspiracies were drowned in blood, without the thousands of Russian revolutionaries who perished on the scaffold or in Siberia the Russian proletariat could never have attained to power'

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carried on for two years, in 1919 and 1920, a fight against the words rather than the deeds of an hysterical and aimless mob. The more numerous Fascist groups, who entered the field after 1920, were backed by the military authorities, by the magistrates and by the police, and having captured the government, they still continue savage methods and are assured of impunity. If any similarity exists, it is only between the Italian Fascists and the Russian Communists, after these had seized the power.

The triumph of the dictatorship over all opposition dazzles most people. They measure by success and shout: Long live the victor, and woe to the vanquished! And it is the fashion to despise all the Italian political parties which the Fascist dictatorship has reduced to impotence. But before joining in the chorus of eulogy, one should take into account the fact that the Fascists and their opponents did not fight on equal terms. The anti-Fascists, being disarmed, were crushed by sheer physical force.

Much of the success of Mussolini is due to those qualities of leadership which he possesses in a high degree. But his chief advantage over his opponents, and one which always loads the dice in his favor, is his unscrupulous use of violence. The soldier who slew Archimedes was without doubt the moral and intellectual inferior of Archimedes, but in terms of force he was the superior. One Fascist armed with a gun and unpossessed of ideas will always get the upper hand of ten anti-Fascists armed with ideas but unpossessed of guns.

I am not contending that the politicians who were reduced to impotence by Fascism merit comparison with Archimedes. But the mediocrity of the vanquished does not imply that the victors are of any great merit. The soldier who slew Archimedes, had he killed a pig instead, would still have remained the brute he was. The triumph of the dictatorship over all opposition became complete only with the new legislation of 1926; that is to say, two years of civil war (1921-2), and four years of despotic rule, were necessary before the last resistance was suppressed. An armed party, which takes six years to dislodge its unarmed opponents, does not give the impression of possessing great intellectual and moral superiority over these opponents.

## SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

### *Note A to Page 284*

In the *Review of Reviews* of April 15, 1926, Signor Villari wrote as follows:

'We have but to read the records of the Italian courts to realize the utter groundlessness of this conclusion (i.e. that the Italian judges dare not condemn Fascists). There are, in fact, hundreds of Fascists now in prison condemned or under trial. To mention but one instance, the persons responsible for the Florence incidents (!) of last October were *all* arrested within a *few days*, and while those indicted for murder are in prison awaiting trial before the Assizes, the minor offenders have *all* been tried and condemned and quite recently their appeals to the higher court have been rejected.'

Since the propagandist has not indicated 'the records,' it is impossible to verify his assertions. In speaking of the sentences on those guilty of what he calls 'the Florence incidents,' he himself acknowledged that up to the time of writing 'the minor offenders' only had been condemned. But, even here, he could not refrain from propaganda, and asserted that '*all* minor offenders had been tried and condemned.' The same writer in his recent book, *The Fascist Experiment*, p. 89, writes: '*Nearly all* the guilty were *at once* arrested,' thus still hiding the fact that, of all those concerned in the outrages, not a single one was arrested on the spot.

In an article in the *National Review*, December, 1925, the Fascist Senator, Signor Corradini, had the audacity to write:

'Benito Mussolini's Ministry has always had the quite definite intention of disciplining its own party, and this discipline is acknowledged and accepted by the party. The recent incidents in Florence provided an illustration of this. Strict orders were issued by the Prime Minister, the Minister of the Interior, Federzoni, and the General Secretary, Farinacci, to the effect that search should be made for the guilty parties and that they should be delivered up to justice; to avoid a repetition of such events, these orders were everywhere promptly obeyed.'

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Here also no explanation is given of the fact that no arrests were made during the actual rioting: but to make up for that, we are made acquainted with a knight-errant of justice in the shape of that Signor Farinacci, who was the author of the two ignominious documents textually quoted above (pp. 271-2).

In the *Saturday Review*, September 4, 1926, to explain how it is that the authors of crimes of which anti-Fascists are the victims so often remain unpunished, Signor Villari maintains that crimes committed by anti-Fascists also escape sentence. He cites 'one case alone':

'The murderers of Signor Giordani in the Town Hall of Bologna, one of the most infamous crimes of the whole civil war, have never been caught.'

Reading these words I asked myself if I were awake or if I were dreaming. It is universally known in Italy that for the murder of Signor Giordani at Bologna on November 21, 1920, and for the circumstances which preceded, accompanied and followed it, hundreds of people were arrested; ten people were brought to trial at the Assizes at Milan in February, 1923; the trial lasted two months; one of the accused was sentenced to thirteen years' imprisonment and another to nine months'. The accused against whom the most serious evidence was brought could not be sentenced, because he had fled to Russia. (One of the acquitted, Alfredo Gelosi, after his release from prison was beaten, and died from his wounds, without his murderers ever being brought to trial. Another, Corrado Pini, was deprived of the post of elementary schoolmaster, which he held at Bologna.)

How, therefore, can Signor Villari quote the case of Bologna as a proof that crimes committed by anti-Fascists went unpunished? He wrote himself in 1924: 'At the trial which was held in Milan in February and March, 1923, one of the accused, Venturi, got thirteen years, but the rest were acquitted, the chief culprits having escaped abroad' (*Awakening of Italy*, p. 112).

## THE FASCIST DICTATORSHIP

### *Note B to Page 300*

It would be interesting to know the precise moment at which Ricciotti Garibaldi became the secret agent of the Fascist police.

In his examination of November 7, 1926, he admitted that he had given useful information to Sala even before Zaniboni's attempt, i.e. before November, 1925. His brother Sante Garibaldi was likewise in the pay of the Fascist police before November, 1925: he gave 45,000 francs to Girolamo De Vito Piscicelli to organize a band called the 'Corsairs of Death' to make a raid on the Paris Fascio on the evening of October 31, 1925 (Piscicelli's deposition, November 20, 1926).

Ricciotti Garibaldi further admitted that Sala had been introduced to him by his brother, Peppino Garibaldi, in Rome (Examinations of November 3 and 7, 1926). Ricciotti did not set foot again in Rome after the spring of 1925.

I have it on good authority that in the summer of 1924 Ricciotti was receiving 3,000 francs a month from the French police. If he rendered services of that value to the French police, it is likely that he did the same for the Italian police, taking money from both sides.

When examined on November 3, 1926, Ricciotti let slip the information that the Italian Ambassador, Baron Romano Avezzana, promised to compensate him for the expense incurred by him in organizing his legions in 1924. Was the Ambassador backing him already at that date?

The examination of November 8, 1926, made it clear that La Polla in 1926 was subsidizing the Italian Communist paper *La Riscossa*, which appeared in Paris. In return, this paper printed violent articles against the non-Communist refugees, and even went to the length of publishing a spurious letter insinuating that one of the refugees, Signor Donati, was in league with Fascist agents.

La Polla wanted Ricciotti to get hold of the documents in Mussolini's handwriting that Signor Fasciolo had brought away from Italy. (A certain number of these documents are reproduced in facsimile in this work.) Had Ricciotti accomplished this, La Polla would have given him a huge sum.