

CHAPTER V
THE MATTEOTTI MURDER

§ I: *Matteotti and his Murderers*

GIACOMO MATTEOTTI was a young man of 39 belonging to a well-to-do family of landowners.¹ He was an organizer of Trade Unions and Co-operatives among the agricultural labourers of the Po Delta. He first won a seat in the Chamber of Deputies in the General Election of 1919, and was returned again in 1921 and 1924. He was a member of the Reformist Socialist Party. But unlike many of the Reformist deputies and organizers, who showed no fighting spirit in their resistance to Fascism, and were always ready to compromise, Matteotti was a tenacious opponent. Courageous in face of personal danger, an indefatigable collector of facts and documents, he published in the spring of 1924 a formidable exposure of the methods and results of the dictatorship.²

¹ I published a first study on this subject in the review *Europe*, January, 1925 (ed. Rieder, Paris) and in the *Review of Reviews* (London), January-February, 1926. At that time the records of the Preliminary Enquiry into the Matteotti case were not yet available. A copy of the most significant parts of the evidence collected by the Examining Judge in this Enquiry was conveyed across the frontiers of Italy, and came into my hands. When I refer to the memoranda and examinations of the defendants and depositions of witnesses without other indication, these records are the source of my information. The documents are now in the library of the London School of Economics, where they are available to anyone wishing to verify the evidence quoted in the present chapter. In summer, 1927, after the appearance of the American edition of the present volume, Signor Cesare Rossi, who is now a refugee in France, asked me to re-examine the evidence relating to him. I make use of his notes in my possession referring to them as Rossi's Unpublished Notes of August, 1927.

² Signor Villari (*Fascist Experiment*, p. 66) tries to cast a slur on the memory of the murdered man, by representing him to have been 'a somewhat hard landowner.' This is simply an echo of the calumnies poured upon that memory during the trial at Chieti. Matteotti never had peasants in his employ; his estate was managed by his mother (*Avanti*, March 30, 1926).

³ Matteotti, *The Fascisti Exposed*, English translation published by the Independent Labour Party, 14, Great George Street, Westminster, 1924.

THE FASCIST DICTATORSHIP

In January, 1924, he said to Signor Rossetti, whom he was visiting at Rapallo:

'The Italians have been so long accustomed to be deceived by those in whom they put their trust, that now they are only willing to believe the man who sheds his blood for them. Yes, for the Italians to believe, they must see blood.'

On May 30, 1924, he made a speech in the Chamber denouncing the fraudulency and outrage which had besmirched the General Elections of the preceding April. For two hours he faced the clamour, the insults and the threats of the Fascist majority, interrupted at every moment, but tenaciously braving the storm and maintaining that the Fascist majority had no right whatever, morally or politically, to represent the Italian people.¹ On his way out of the Chamber Matteotti said to the Deputy Cosattini: 'And now, get ready to deliver my funeral oration.'²

The journalist Maratea, a witness in the Preliminary Inquiry, gave the following account:

'A few minutes after Matteotti had finished speaking I went out into the lobbies. Passing in front of a table at which Cesare Rossi was sitting, I heard him inveighing against the leaders of the Opposition and giving vent to violent threats. Knowing my relations with the Duke Di Cesaro,³ he said to me:—"Look out, your Duke too, will have his turn." Then he began to vomit forth insults and threats against Matteotti, whose speech had thoroughly irritated him, and whom he described as the lowest of scoundrels, and against Turati, Treves, Modigliani, and other deputies. "The Fascist régime"—he said—"had made a great mistake in not having them shot at the outset; what it had failed to do then, it could do now; one day or another these gentlemen would suffer the fate of gallow's birds."'⁴

¹ The speech is to be found in the volume *Matteotti: fatti e documenti*, 2nd edition, Toulouse, Exoria, 1927, pp. 69 ff.

² Deposition of Cosattini, June 16, 1924, and of Priolo, September 23, 1924.

³ One of the Opposition members, Leader of the 'democratic' group.

⁴ Deposition of Maratea, October 2, 1924.

THE MATTEOTTI MURDER

Another journalist, Carlo Silvestri, confirms Maratea's account:

'On the evening of Matteotti's speech denouncing the outrages during the General Elections, Rossi seemed to me strangely excited. In the presence of myself and others he said: "With people like Matteotti the only thing is to let the revolver speak." In those days Rossi was continually talking in this strain. I remember another day he used these actual words to me: "This crowd (referring to the Opposition leaders) are deluding themselves, if they imagine that, when Mussolini issues threats, he is amusing himself with rhetorical phrases. If they knew what passes through Mussolini's mind at times, they would pretty quickly lie low. Mussolini is fully determined to carry out his threats. If this sabotaging opposition is not stopped, it will bring the firing squads into action. Anyone who knows him must know that, every now and then, Mussolini needs bloodshed, and counsels of moderation will not always prevail.'"'¹

On May 31, Giovanni Marinelli, treasurer and member of the Central Executive ('Quadrivirate') of the Fascist Party, wrote to the Governor of the prisons of Poggio Reale, Naples, asking him to release a prisoner named Otto Thierschwald as soon as the police had made the necessary arrangements; Thierschwald was to go to Rome, and at the Hotel Dragoni he would find Signor Bianchi.² Bianchi was one of the assumed names of Dumini, who led the gang which kidnapped Matteotti on June 10; the Hotel Dragoni was the head-quarters of Dumini and his accomplices. Thierschwald was released on June 2.³

On June 1, an article in the Fascist paper *Popolo d'Italia*, edited by Mussolini's brother, contained the following:

'Matteotti made a speech of an outrageously provocative nature which should deserve some more concrete reply than the epithet of "band of scoundrels" (*masnada*) which Signor Giunta flung at him.'⁴

¹ Silvestri's deposition, September 29, 1924.

² This letter was published by Cesare Rossi in the Vienna *Stunde* and reproduced in the *Corriere degli Italiani* of March 25 and October 29, 1926.

³ Examination of Thierschwald, June 23, 1924.

⁴ While Matteotti was making his speech on May 30, Signor Giunta interrupted shouting to the Socialists: 'I have been a squadrist, and

THE FASCIST DICTATORSHIP

The article was written on May 31 by Mussolini himself.¹

On June 2 or 3 Dumini asked Filippelli, the editor of the Fascist *Corriere Italiano*, for the loan of a motor-car for a few days.²

On June 4, Thierschwald went to Rome and was entrusted by Dumini with the task of spying upon Matteotti and studying his habits.³

In the Chamber on June 4, Matteotti again attacked the Prime Minister, recalling that Mussolini himself had approved of the amnesty granted to 'deserters' in 1919⁴ and on this point reduced the Dictator to silence.

Some time earlier Matteotti had applied for a passport for Austria, but this had been refused him. On June 4 the Rome branch of the police received the following telephone message:

'Authorization is given for the granting of a passport for Austria to Signor Matteotti.'

The order came from one of the private secretaries of Mussolini.⁵ The police issued the passport at once.⁶

intend to quell your spirits. We shall try by convincing arguments to put your band of scoundrels back in their proper place!' (*Giornale d'Italia*, May 31, 1924.)

¹ See facsimiles facing the present page. The article was reproduced by the *Impero* of Rome on June 4.

² Filippelli in his examination of June 15, 1924, said that this request was made to him by Dumini 'eight or ten days before' the day of the crime. When confronted with Filippelli on June 20, 1924, Dumini maintained that he had made the request 'four or five days before' the day of the crime. On December 15, 1924, when again brought face to face, both agreed that the request had been made on June 2 or 3.

³ Examination of Thierschwald, June 23, 1924. ⁴ See above, page 38.

⁵ That the order was sent by one of Mussolini's private secretaries is shown by what Cesare Rossi says in his examination of June 27, 1924. Speaking of his conversation with Mussolini on the evening of June 11, when the news of the disappearance of Matteotti was already in circulation, Rossi states: 'Signor Lo Jacono [one of Mussolini's private secretaries] interrupted with the words: "But have we not issued a passport to Matteotti for abroad? We even sent a telegram to the frontier to announce him."'

⁶ Depositions of Cossa, November 10, 1924; Bertini, December 8, 1924; De Michelis, October 17, 1924.

con il più tangibile che l'epiteto, dopo tutti
 i laureamenti, è dantesco di "maschera" lontana.
 - dall' m. giunta: la maggioranza è: l'intera
 tranquillità - in perfetto stile - per ben 22
 ministri eletti e nel progetto per i giudici
 della destra, nell'emiciclo del Gran Consiglio
 di un primo e all'atto seguente, al
 popolo italiano bisognava come si dice
 e mente, un'imprimatura per questi atti.
 - il primo libro, in quella sua
 anima insieme mettendo l'ordine
 i propri e per ideal e in M. Mussolini.
 Complessivi: inchieste e primi di questi
 e così - il più di misfatti di suo ordine.
 di ~~colloquio~~ obliqui e sufficienti angoli.

SECOND SHEET OF MUSSOLINI'S ARTICLE AGAINST MATTEOTTI (see page 319)

Facing page 320.]

THE MATTEOTTI MURDER

On June 6 a dispute broke out in the Chamber between Mussolini and the groups of the Extreme Left. I quote the official report:

'MUSSOLINI, PRIME MINISTER: "We have admirable teachers in Russia. We have but to imitate what is being done in Russia. (*Uproar, applause, exchange of invectives between Extreme Right and Extreme Left.*) They are admirable masters. We are wrong not to follow their example completely; in that case you would now be doing hard labour instead of being here." (*Uproar and applause.*)

'GENNARI: "We are just out of prison, and are ready to go back there for the sake of what we believe."

'MUSSOLINI: "You would have got a charge of lead in your backs (*interruption*). We do not lack courage, as we shall show you. (*Applause and uproar.*) There is still time and we shall show you sooner than you think."

On June 7 Dumini was informed that the passport had been issued, and told Thierschwald of the fact.¹ The same day Marinelli left Rome for Milan.² This journey seems to have had a twofold aim: to hand over personally to Albino Volpi the funds necessary for his journey to Rome and that of his three friends, and to pre-arrange an alibi for himself by remaining in Milan while the crime was carried out in Rome.

On June 8 Dumini telegraphed to Albino Volpi in Milan asking him to come to Rome with a capable chauffeur.

On the afternoon of June 9 Dumini went back to Filippelli to ask him again to lend a motor-car and promising to return it on the Wednesday or Thursday.³ On the evening of the same day, Volpi, Poveromo, Viola, and Malacria, i.e. the four men who under Dumini's leadership were to carry out the crime, left Milan and reached Rome on June 10.

Matteotti was abducted in the motor-car and murdered in it on the afternoon of June 10.

¹ Examination of Dumini, October 24, 1924, and Thierschwald, October 22, 1924.

² Examination of Marinelli, June 20, 1924.

³ Examination of Filippelli, June 18, 1924, and confrontation of Filippelli with Dumini, December 15, 1924.

THE FASCIST DICTATORSHIP

'It was half-past four' – stated a boy of twelve, who was an eye-witness. 'I was playing with my companions. Near us there was a motor-car, which had stopped just by Via Antonio Scialoja. Five people got out of it and began to walk up and down. Suddenly I saw Signor Matteotti come out. One of the men went towards him, and when near him, gave him a violent push, making him fall on the ground. Signor Matteotti called out. Then the other four came up; and one of them struck him a hard blow in the face. Then they took him by his head and feet, and carried him into the car, which came past us. So we were able to see that Signor Matteotti was struggling. Afterwards we saw nothing more.'¹

On August 16, the skeleton was found in a wood called the Quartarella, fourteen miles outside Rome.

Up till the time of the crime Amerigo Dumini, the leader of the murderers, was a constant visitor at the Home Office and the Prime Minister's Press Bureau, from which he received a regular monthly salary.² He held a free railway pass procured for him by the Prime Minister's confidential staff.³ He was already well-known for other 'heroic' exploits. At Carrara on June 2, 1922, he boxed the ears of a girl who wore a red carnation (the Socialist symbol). Her brother and mother protested. He shot them dead with his revolver. For this offence, needless to say, he was not even arrested. In October, 1923, he abducted Signor Mazzolani, a Member of Parliament, in a car, and forced him to swallow castor-oil. During the General Election campaign of 1924, he led the squad which bludgeoned Signor Forni (see above, p. 173). Among his papers confiscated on his arrest, there was a letter from Tarantelli, Chief of Police at Florence, promising eternal gratitude for all he had done for him and apologizing for not having been able to prevent the arrest of a Fascist caught in an act of crime by the Carabineers. Another letter was from a Fascist of Pisa begging

¹ Report of the hearing of the case at Chieti, in *La Stampa*, March 18, 1926.

² Receipts for this salary were found among the confiscated papers of Rossi.

³ Rossi's letter to Mussolini, January 23, 1924.

THE MATTEOTTI MURDER

Dumini to procure him a distinction from the General Command of the Militia: 'All you need to do is to write out the reasons and get the signature of one of the members of the General Command.' The 'hero' also dealt in remunerative transactions. In 1922 he was arrested for trafficking in arms with Yugoslavia, but was released under superior orders. He was accused by Cesare Rossi (examination of June 23, 1924) of having some few weeks previously made improper use of Rossi's name in support of a bid for a timber contract with the state railways. Among his papers a letter was confiscated, dated January, 1924, in which a certain De Bernardi placed at his disposal 4,500 lire to be paid over as soon as a plot of land 's given up by its present owners and placed at the full disposal' of De Bernardi: presumably the owners had to be induced to give up this land by 'Fascist' methods, of which Dumini knew the secret. There was also another letter from a Fascist of Florence, offering 50,000 lire to Dumini and a 100,000 to Rossi, as a bribe in securing a Government contract; and a second letter increased this offer to 100,000 lire for Dumini and 250,000 for Rossi. In short, though he held no official position, he was an important and influential person.¹

The other four heroes, who took part in the enterprise, had all been sentenced or were still under charges for theft, violence, desertion, fraudulent bankruptcy, etc. One of them deserves special attention: Albino Volpi. His record reads as follows: sentenced, on October 25, 1910, to 25 days' imprisonment for insulting the police; sentenced, on January 30, 1914, to 9 months' imprisonment for attempted housebreaking and acquitted on appeal, on August 8, 1915, for lack of evidence, but fined 150 lire for giving a false name; sentenced, on September 4, 1914, to a year's imprisonment for attempted burglary by means of a false key; prosecuted for theft, but amnestied on December 1, 1919;

¹ Signor Villari, *Fascist Experiment*, p. 67, writes: "The ringleader was a certain Amerigo Dumini, a discredited and disreputable Fascist of Florence, but born in the United States, who had been mixed up in various other acts of violence and shady transactions." He conceals from his readers that this discredited and disreputable personage was an intimate of the highest authorities of the government and of the Fascist Party.

THE FASCIST DICTATORSHIP

prosecuted for desertion from the army and amnestied on February 24, 1921; prosecuted for murder of a Socialist workman and acquitted on December 12, 1921, on evidence tendered by Mussolini, who took the witness stand and swore that a Fascist, who had since died, had confessed to be the real culprit (*Corriere della Sera*, Dec. 13, 1921).

'Albino Volpi' – said De Bono in his deposition of July 9, 1924 – 'was the spoiled child of all the veteran squadristi of Milan and even of some members of the Provincial Fascist Federation. The result was that the political and police authorities of Milan showed rather too much weakness in regard to him lest his arrest should create trouble. Volpi boasted of certain words of the Premier and certain handshakes received from him, claiming to be the apple of Mussolini's eye.'

§ 2: *Who gave the Order?*

There is no doubt whatever that the gang captained by Dumini acted under superior orders.

'Dumini' – the judges of the Accusing Section stated in their pronouncement of December 1, 1925 – 'though playing a predominant part in the preparing and carrying out of the crime, could not have undertaken it on his own initiative, as is shown by the following facts: (1) Dumini had charge of providing his accomplices with food, lodging and a daily allowance of money, of paying for the hire of the car and for a plentiful supply of petrol; (2) acting under orders, he had taken part in previous assaults on political men; (3) given his moral character and intellectual level, he was not a political personality capable of undertaking on his own initiative lawless actions involving the responsibility of the Party as a whole; nor was he a witless and ignorant subaltern capable of acting from blind fanaticism, unmindful of the risk of forfeiting valuable patronage.'

If Dumini acted under superior orders, who gave these orders? According to the judges of the Accusing Section, it was Cesare

THE MATTEOTTI MURDER

Rossi, Chief of Mussolini's Press Bureau, and Giovanni Marinelli, Treasurer of the Fascist Party, both members of the Central Executive (the 'Quadrumvirate') of the Fascist Party.¹

Of the guilt of Marinelli, no doubt is possible. His letter of May 31 asking for the release of Thierschwald is a decisive proof, and his obstinacy during the whole of the inquiry in denying or refusing to remember even the most clearly established facts confirms his complicity, even independently of the other evidence against him.

The complicity of Cesare Rossi is not so irrefragably proved as that of Marinelli; and even if he took a share in the preparations for the crime, it is not feasible in the present state of our knowledge

¹ Signor Villari, *Fascis: Experiment*, pp. 67-9, 100, writes as follows: 'Among the persons suspected of complicity with the deed were Cesare Rossi, Filippo Filippelli, and Giovanni Marinelli. Mussolini had been very little in contact with Rossi and Marinelli, and their only connection with the government had been through Finzi . . . From all the preliminary proceedings not one scrap of real evidence had emerged incriminating the government or the leaders of the Fascist Party.' Having thus innocently laid his foundations, he is able to deplore with righteous indignation 'the hurricane of the wildest accusations and venomous attacks, these charges not one of which appears to have been based on anything more than sensational conjectures and the lust of scandal and calumny.' The truth is that Rossi, together with Acerbo, Bianchi, Finzi and Giunta, was a member of the Commission known as the Pentarchy, which drew up the list of Fascist candidates for the Parliamentary Elections of April, 1924. Soon after, in June, 1924, Rossi and Marinelli, with Forges Davanzani and Melchiorri, formed the Central Executive ('Quadrumvirate') of the Party. Moreover, Marinelli, as General Treasurer of the Party, and Rossi as Chief of the Press Bureau, and both of them as members of the 'Quadrumvirate,' belonged to the group of trusted intimates of whom Mussolini, in his speech to the National Fascist Assembly on January 6, 1924, spoke in the following terms: 'Those who are called the evil counsellors of the good tyrant are five or six men who come to me every morning to give me their daily report of all that happens in Italy. To these collaborators in my daily work, who in particular share with me the bitter bread of direct responsibility in the Fascist Government, I express here in your presence all my friendship and gratitude.' Finzi was only the Under-Secretary at the Home Office and was never either an official or semi-official intermediary between Mussolini and the other leaders of the Party.

THE FASCIST DICTATORSHIP

to gauge with exactitude his responsibility juridical or moral.¹ It must be understood, however, that even if exculpated from this particular crime, Rossi still remains the man who up till June, 1924, shared the policy of Mussolini, and would still be a Fascist leader, if in June, 1924, Mussolini had not sacrificed him to save himself. What Rossi tells of the acts of violence he either witnessed or helped to carry out while living in Mussolini's intimacy,² cannot be wiped out by the fact that there is no proof of his having had a hand in this particular crime.

Whether the evidence against Rossi is to be regarded as inconclusive, or whether he is held guilty together with Marinelli, one question cannot fail to arise: was Marinelli, or were Marinelli and Rossi, acting solely on his, or their, own initiative?

If we are to believe Filippelli, Rossi 'on the Wednesday morning after the crime, told him that Signor Mussolini knew all and that Marinelli and he (Rossi) had issued the order in agreement with Mussolini.'³ But the assertions of a witness such as Filippelli either against Mussolini or against Rossi cannot be trusted without confirming evidence.

For Marinelli the position is different. Five persons declared that both before and after the crime he named Mussolini as having given the order to have Matteotti put out of the way. The five persons are Dumini, Filippelli, Rossi, De Bono, and Finzi.

(a) Dumini for a month after his arrest persisted in denying his share in the crime or any knowledge of what had happened. When he admitted his share in the murder he took on himself the whole responsibility, and during the inquiry and the trial steadily denied having received any order whether from Marinelli, Mussolini or anyone else. Another of the murderers, however, Giuseppe Viola, a few days after the crime said to the friends who were hiding him:

'If there is a trial and I am asked if I have anything to say, I

¹ See Supplementary Note A at the end of the present chapter.

² Appendix A at the end of present volume.

³ Filippelli's Memorandum, June 14, 1924; and examinations of June 18 and December 6, 1924.

THE MATTEOTTI MURDER

shall answer, "let me speak to the Prime Minister for a moment," and then I shall leap at him and bite off a bit of his nose.'¹

It must have been from Dumini that Viola derived his knowledge that the order emanated from Mussolini.

Dumini himself did not always keep silence. While in prison, he had an impulse of rebellion when on July 23, 1924, he was confronted with the deposition wherein De Bono attributed to him the confession of having driven the car. From his cell, on July 24, he sent a letter to Finzi which he thought would be kept secret and in which he recalled his journeys to France (see above, p. 292):

"The original records of my journey are in Italy; and in the interests of my defence I will produce them if need be, *together with others concerning the present case*. I see that I have been abandoned by everyone, and especially by those for whom I have sacrificed everything. Therefore I shall defend myself, and if necessary, I shall accuse others. . . . In face of De Bono's attitude and in face also of my manifest abandonment by everyone, I am obliged to look seriously to my defence, *making use of documents and of my memory, which is good*. I have not yet compromised anyone — *neither the Viminale nor the Palazzo Chigi*.² I am not disposed to let myself be sacrificed in this way. . . . You had better tell the Prime Minister so. It would be a good thing if I could get the permission of Signor Oviglio (Minister of Justice) to speak to you. What I propose to tell you will have such importance for you and for the government that many troubles and grave developments during the hearing of the case will be avoided. This letter is not the outcome of my irritation nor an attempt at blackmail; nor is it a symptom of weakness or demoralization. It is the result of my calm and deliberate intention to sell my liberty as dearly as possible at all costs and in defiance of everybody and everything.'³

¹ Depositions of Valeriano Giunchedi, July 8, 1924, and Giuseppe Marciano, July 8, 1924.

² The Viminale was Rossi's and De Bono's office, and the Palazzo Chigi, Mussolini's.

³ The document is reproduced in The Santoro Report.

THE FASCIST DICTATORSHIP

When he was assured that Mussolini was not going to let him down, Dumini explained his allusions to the Viminale and the Palazzo Chigi by declaring that the person in the Viminale to whom he had referred was not De Bono but Finzi (to whom this confidential letter was actually addressed!) and that by the Palazzo Chigi he did not mean Mussolini, but an official whose name he refused to give! But in a clandestine correspondence with his family, which was intercepted, he wrote to his mother on November 15:

'I shall get out all right. They cannot do less for me. But when? Dirty traitors and swine! How I look forward to getting even with them all later on!'

Replies from his father, mother, and sister, written on November 18, 19 and 20 follow:

'You may be sure I shall not tell a soul about the papers. (These are the documents referred to by Dumini in his letters to Finzi.) If we have to take these papers from the place you mention, how are we to get hold of them? Meanwhile, I shall be going to Rome in a few days, and will ask these gentlemen straight out, how they mean to supply your needs, which all fall at present on my shoulders. I have met everything, so far, but the strain is too great. It is time they made up their minds. . . . But in our interests, and still more in yours, it is necessary to have a little patience. We shall always have time enough to take extreme measures . . . We shall be glad to hear what they have promised you . . . *Why are you so angry with the Duce?* Vaselli (Dumini's counsel) told us that *he had let Mussolini know plainly what a traitor he was* . . . Vaselli told your mother that he wanted to come to an agreement *with Mussolini* about your future. Do you agree? . . . Your mother says that you should as soon as possible come to an agreement, to have a large sum of money deposited for you, for when you get out, as your name has been thrown in the mire. Keep calm, as all are interesting themselves in your case, it is a terrible moment, but everyone is working for you, and they will succeed . . . It is not true that Cesare [Rossi] has blabbed.'

THE MATTEOTTI MURDER

As his imprisonment was lasting too long Dumini in August, 1925, gave way to another outburst of impatience:

'In August, 1925'—Cesare Rossi relates—'I was under treatment at the prison infirmary. One day Dumini came in scowling. He said to me: "I am sick of staying here. I'm done with promises. I think that they are trying to trick me worse than you. I have been taking care the last few days that the whole truth shall come out. I have sent a memorandum to my father telling him what Marinelli told me. It was he who told me that Mussolini wanted Matteotti to be put out of the way."'¹

After his release from prison, May, 1927, Dumini began to complain that he had never received the large sums of money he was supposed to have had. He was bold enough to take out a summons against the central committee of the Fascist party, September 15, 1926, declaring that he had received only 40,000 lire from his counsel, Signor Vaselli, on behalf of the Fascist party, and 25,000 lire from Signor Marinelli, secretary of the Fascist party.

'I, the undersigned'—states this incredible document—'intend, as an act of personal dignity, to renounce all that was promised to me, during the Preliminary Inquiry and the trial by my counsel, Signor Farinacci and Signor Vaselli, and subsequently by Signor Marinelli. In the above sums is not included the 32,754.60 lire, the amount of the fine to which I was sentenced in the Matteotti trial. I declare that these expenses do not concern me and therefore I pass them on to the General Staff of the Fascist party.'²

In October, 1926, he was again sentenced to fourteen months' and twenty days' imprisonment on a charge of having uttered the following words:

'If I have been sentenced to seven years' imprisonment for the murder of Matteotti, the President should have been sentenced to thirty years.'³

¹ Rossi's Unpublished Notes of August, 1927.

² The document was circulated in the clandestine press and published in the *Corriere degli Italiani* of Paris in October, 1926.

³ *Times*, October 12, 1926. In his defence Dumini stated that by 'the President' he meant, not Mussolini, but his fellow ex-prisoner, Volpi,

THE FASCIST DICTATORSHIP

(b) Filippelli asserts that Marinelli made him the following admission on the evening of June 12:

'Marinelli spoke with extreme annoyance of the Prime Minister's bearing: "When there are orders to be given, he issues them and insists on their execution; when these land us in a hole, he draws back." Marinelli added that once this tornado had passed, he would not mix himself up again with orders of this kind from the Prime Minister.'¹

(c) Rossi asserts that Marinelli, the day after the crime, said to him:

'It was the Prime Minister who kept on insisting on it. Again on Thursday [June 5] he rowed me because nothing was being done.'²

(d) In the night of Thursday, June 12, Marinelli, Rossi, De Bono and Finzi met at the Home Office. We have an account of this meeting from De Bono:

'ROSSI: So you really mean to arrest Dumini and the others?

'DE BONO: Why not?

'ROSSI: All right, but make a farce of it. Keep them under lock and key for a few days and then let them go.

'DE BONO: Why?

'ROSSI: Because otherwise they will talk, and they will say that he put the idea into their heads.

'DE BONO: He? Who?

'ROSSI AND MARINELLI: The Prime Minister.

'Finzi and I [De Bono] started. Rossi stuck to what he had said. Marinelli declared that, when Rossi told him of the Duce's intention of getting rid of Matteotti he was thunderstruck. He therefore went to see Signor Mussolini on the Thursday of the previous week (June 5) to ask whether he thought it advisable to form a the president of the Association 'Arditi d'Italia.' Dumini used a similar trick in explaining away his allusions to the Viminale and the Palazzo Chigi. The court did not accept this explanation, and condemned him.

¹ Examination of Filippelli, July 25, December 6, 1924.

² Rossi's Unpublished Notes of August, 1927.

THE MATTEOTTI MURDER

kind of Cheka, with Dumini at the head, for the purpose of watching and keeping a check on opponents. The Prime Minister, according to Marinelli, consented.

'In face of such a statement I thought best to say no more. Later I telephoned to the Prime Minister: "They are throwing the responsibility on to you." Signor Mussolini replied indignantly: "They want to blackmail me, the cowards!"'¹

(e) Finzi also gives us an account of the same meeting:

'As soon as we came in to General De Bono's office we sat down near his desk. Rossi speaking with decision and with considerable heat, declared, in effect, that what was happening (the agitation and confusion over Matteotti's disappearance) was wild and foolish, and that the time had come to speak out; it was absurd to attempt to lay the blame on those who had only, more or less faithfully, carried out the instructions issued by the Prime Minister; Dumini's arrest was a dangerous farce; he would let out everything, and the direct responsibility of the Prime Minister would become apparent.

'I was amazed at these statements, and General De Bono also was visibly affected. But Marinelli began to speak excitedly to put an end to my obvious stupor. Rossi, he said, was quite right. Ten days previously he (Marinelli) and Rossi had been severely reprimanded by the Prime Minister, who had reproached them in violent terms with the fact that Party had no sense of political necessities; that it was absurd for a Party which had emerged from a revolution to power, to allow its opponents to come and go undisturbed, belittling and insulting all the hierarchies of the Party and the government; that by allowing the leaders of the Opposition to open their violent hostilities during the first sittings of the Chamber, the Fascist ranks had shown a loss of fighting spirit; and that this resumption of active opposition must, somehow or other, be crushed. In view of this reprimand from Mussolini, Marinelli proposed the immediate setting up of a small secret organization financed by the Party, and entrusted with the carrying out of the necessary acts of violence. He suggested that

¹ The Santoro Proposals.

THE FASCIST DICTATORSHIP

Dumini should be placed at the head of it, and the Prime Minister agreed.

'At this point Rossi added that a few days later the Prime Minister, at the Palazzo Chigi, again made bitter complaints of the challenging speech which Matteotti had made in the Chamber¹ and pointed out that the Opposition papers were predicting that the same deputy within a few days would make a fresh indictment of the government and the Party.

'Marinelli added – I forget his exact words – that in these last recriminations, he and Rossi perceived the unmistakable desire of the Prime Minister that the existence of the Socialist deputy and of certain others should be rendered difficult (see p. 288).²

'At this point of the confessions of Rossi and Marinelli, General De Bono said with marked disdain – and it is my duty to call attention to this – that what had happened was the tragic, but inevitable result of a situation which he had for a long time condemned, and of a lamentable political system which he had in vain opposed on various occasions and in various ways. He added, referring to the Prime Minister, that the blessed fellow had never listened to him. He, De Bono, had many times declared that being in power, they ought to make use of only legal and constitutional means of repression.'³

¹ Examination of Filippelli, December 6, 1924: 'Rossi told me that Mussolini had more than once shown his determination to give Matteotti a good lesson.'

² For the meaning of this technical formula, see above, pp. 270, 290, 295.

³ Finzi's deposition, November 18, 1924, in the volume *Matteotti: fatti e documenti*, pp. 96–99. It may be remarked that all Finzi's assertions should be received with caution as he is repeatedly caught in flagrant lying (see Appendix B at the end of the present volume). Yet not everything Finzi asserts is a lie. What he says to shield the men whom at the time of speaking he considered as his friends, must certainly be regarded with distrust. But assertions damaging to his friends should not be rejected *a priori*, especially when corroborated by other evidence. In November, 1924, it was to Finzi's interest to clear De Bono from all charges of having abetted the culprits. All that he said, therefore, in order to represent De Bono as a knight-errant of justice, is not to be believed. But it was not then to his interest to show Mussolini in an unfavourable light, and we may therefore believe him, when he makes Rossi

THE MATTEOTTI MURDER

Dumini, Filippelli, Rossi, De Bono and Finzi speak on different occasions, independently of one another, in different states of mind, and actuated by widely different motives. Given their moral calibre, each alone would not carry great weight. Taken together, their concordance furnishes irreparable evidence. Is it possible that they were all lying in attributing to Marinelli the allegation that the order to put Matteotti out of the way emanated from Mussolini? ¹

Marinelli is not alone in attributing the order to Mussolini. According to De Bono and Finzi, Rossi also, in the interview of the night of June 12, asserted that Mussolini, in the days preceding the murder had repeatedly expressed his desire that Matteotti and Marinelli say (a) that Mussolini at least twice during the early part of June was infuriated with Matteotti and complained of the lack of fighting spirit in the Fascist ranks, and (b) that, as a result of these strictures, Marinelli was convinced that 'life must be made difficult' for Matteotti.

¹ Signor Villari asserts in the *Review of Reviews* of March-April, 1926, that the accusations against Mussolini came only from Rossi and Filippelli, and 'were drafted in a moment of panic in order to save themselves by ruining others, hardly convincing witnesses in any case.' The truth is as follows: (1) the charges against Mussolini came from five men, Dumini, Rossi, Filippelli, De Bono, and Finzi, all of whom indicated Marinelli as their informant; (2) Marinelli, speaking to Dumini, when the crime was in preparation, to Rossi, on the morning of Wednesday, June 12, to Filippelli on the evening of June 13, and to De Bono and Finzi on the night of June 12, had no reason and did not intend to 'ruin others' - i.e. Mussolini. If later he forgot his allegations, he was, on leaving prison, rewarded by a high position in the Fascist Party; (3) Speaking with De Bono and Finzi on the night of June 12, Rossi had no reason for wishing to ruin Mussolini, he was only endeavouring to hush up the scandal; (4) Dumini's letter of July 24 to Finzi, and the correspondence of November, 1924, between Dumini and his family, belong to a period when the panic of the first moment had subsided (I do not here allude to Dumini's accusations of August, 1925, and October, 1926, because these were not known when Signor Villari was writing); (5) Filippelli, when examined on December 6, 1924, confirmed the contents of his Memorandum of June 14, 1924; Rossi also confirmed and amplified his own accusations in his Memorandum of February 11, 1925; in December, 1924, and February, 1925, 'the first panic' was long since over; (6) De Bono and Finzi were not under the influence of panic when, six months after the crime, they repeated Marinelli's and Rossi's allegations, nor had they any interest in ruining others - i.e. Mussolini.

THE FASCIST DICTATORSHIP

should be put out of the way. Thus Filippelli does not stand alone in attributing this statement to Rossi. Therefore we may regard it as proved that Rossi did actually make the statement. According to De Bono and Finzi, Rossi was present when Mussolini expressed the desire. Whether Rossi only knew of it, or whether he spoke of it to Marinelli without endorsing it, or whether he explicitly endorsed it himself or ever took part in its execution, the value of Rossi's statement remains unaltered.

Thus there are two witnesses, Rossi and Marinelli, who accuse Mussolini.

Certainly none of the witnesses who report the confidences of Marinelli and Rossi claims to have been present at the conversation in which Mussolini gave the order. They are all second-hand witnesses. They serve to prove, not that Mussolini actually gave the order, but only that Marinelli and Rossi said he did so.

Marinelli and Rossi might have lied in attributing the order to Mussolini.

But Marinelli, in an interview which he gave to the *Popolo d'Italia* while at Milan, i.e. between June 8 and 10, published June 11, said:

'The Fascist army, at any call to action which may come to it from the Duce or the responsible heads of the Party, is always ready to stamp out instantaneously any attempt at counter-attacks on the part of the opponents.'

When uttering such words and maintaining the principle that the prerogative of such orders lay with the Duce and the responsible heads of the party, Marinelli could not but have had in mind the imminent 'stamping out' of Matteotti. The abduction of a deputy during the sitting of the Chamber could not have been carried out without an order of this kind. Marinelli could not be sure of impunity for himself and for Dumini, unless he had previously applied for and received a clear authorization from his chief.

From Finzi's evidence we learn that 'ten days' before the assassination of Matteotti, Mussolini had a violent outburst of anger against the Fascist party, which allowed the leaders of the

THE MATTEOTTI MURDER

opposition to open their hostilities during the first sittings of the Chamber. 'Ten days' before June 10 is May 31: i.e. the day after the speech of Matteotti, the very day on which Mussolini writes his threats against Matteotti for the *Popolo d'Italia* of June 1, and the very day on which Marinelli writes the letter applying for the release of Thierschwald. Shortly after, on June 2 or 3, Dumini asks Filippelli for the loan of the motor-car.

From Finzi's evidence we learn, moreover, that 'some few days later,' Mussolini again made bitter complaints against Matteotti and that Marinelli and Rossi interpreted this new outburst as a sign that Mussolini wished 'life to be rendered difficult' for Matteotti. On June 15 and 16, conversing with Schiff-Giorgini and Silvestri, Finzi furnished the more precise indication that the order 'to put out of the way the most prominent leaders of the opposition beginning with Matteotti' was given by Mussolini 'during the days when the debate on the speech from the Throne was taking place',¹ i.e. between June 3-7. De Bono gives a more precise indication in saying that 'on Thursday,' Marinelli went to Mussolini and asked him whether he really wished to have a Cheka. And Rossi corroborates this date in attributing to Marinelli the assertion that Mussolini had rowed him 'again on Thursday.' Thursday, June 5, is the day after the new clash of arms had taken place in the Chamber between Mussolini and Matteotti, and the Rome police were authorized to issue the passport to Matteotti by a private secretary of Mussolini. (We shall shortly see the importance of this last circumstance.)

On June 6 Mussolini reiterated in the Chamber his threats against the extreme Left; and on June 7 Marinelli left for Milan.

In deeds of this kind it would be idle to seek for signed and countersigned orders from superior to subordinate. But such persistently recurring chronological coincidences force us to presume some link between the outbursts of Mussolini and the actions of Marinelli.

What was the nature of this link? From the fact that *some* link must be presumed, we are not entitled to deduce that that link was precisely an order *to kill* Matteotti. Thomas à Becket was

¹ See Appendix B.

THE FASCIST DICTATORSHIP

killed, not because Henry II gave a precise order, but because the courtiers thought to do his wish, since he had exclaimed: 'Will no one rid me of this turbulent priest?' Mussolini may have uttered a volley of insults against the Opposition in general or Matteotti in particular; or he may have expressed a hope that they might go to hell; or again he may have thundered threats against them. Marinelli and Rossi may have interpreted as a definite order for murder some note in the extensive scale of invective at the disposal of a violent and vulgar man like the 'Duce.'

If the latter was the case, we should find that after the crime Mussolini would have delivered up to justice the man who had so misinterpreted his thoughts.

Let us, therefore, examine the behaviour of Mussolini and his colleagues after the crime.

I set out the facts in chronological order, leaving them to tell their own tale.

§ 3: *The Number of the Motor-car*

Wednesday, June 11, 1924.—On the morning following the crime there were in Mussolini's immediate entourage at least three people who knew what had happened: Fasciolo, one of Mussolini's private secretaries, who in the previous night, had been informed by Dumini and Putato;¹ Marinelli, who, having in the early morning returned from Milan, was visited by Dumini; and Rossi, who, during the morning, was informed by Fasciolo, Putato, Marinelli and Filippelli, the last of whom had learned everything in the previous night from Dumini.²

Is it conceivable that none of these thought of informing Mussolini? If the order emanated from him, Marinelli must have let him know, at least summarily, of its execution. If there had been no order from the 'Duce,' it would have been none the less neces-

¹ Putato, the henchman of Dumini, did not take part in the deed, but met the assassins on their return to Rome.

² Examination of Rossi, December 17, 1924, and Memorandum, June, 1927; Filippelli's Memorandum, June 14, 1924, and Examination, December 6, 1924.

THE MATTEOTTI MURDER

saw*to inform him of so grave an occurrence and ask what must now be done.

Matteotti was killed in the motor-car. As he struggled and cried for help, one of the kidnappers silenced him by a dagger thrust in the chest. This was not a part of the original plan. Dumini had borrowed the car not for a few hours, but one or two days, and had stocked it up with petrol for a long journey (see above, pp. 320-1). Probably Dumini's idea had been to take Matteotti to some secluded spot in the Campagna Romana, kill him, leave the body there, then go on touring with his friends as if on pleasure, and finally return to Rome and give the motor-car back to the garage.¹ The murder having been perpetrated within the motor-car, the original programme was entirely upset. The murderers had on their hands the blood-stained car, which had to be taken to the garage. Once Matteotti's murder was known, the keeper of the garage would certainly associate the blood-stained car with the murder. Faced with such an unexpected complication, the murderers had first of all the idea of delaying as long as possible the discovery of the corpse. They therefore hastily buried it as best they could, not having the necessary implements to dig a deep hole. Then they returned to Rome and took the car first to the court-yard of the Home Office and later to the garage of a friend of Filippelli's. During the Wednesday and Thursday Rossi and Filippelli were busy on the problem of doing away with this evidence of the crime. The problem could not be solved without informing the Chief.

In any case the friends of Matteotti in the Chamber began to show anxiety about the disappearance of their colleague in the afternoon of Wednesday, and Mussolini was informed of this at once. Even if he was in complete ignorance of what had happened, is it possible that, knowing the ways of his followers, no suspicion should have crossed his mind?

¹ The official explanation given by Mussolini in person on October 24, 1925, is that Dumini meant to play a 'practical joke.' In spite of being so well informed, Mussolini did not make clear what was to be the nature of this 'practical joke.' It is unlikely that Marinelli would have set in motion such cumbersome and expensive machinery and have a deputy abducted merely as a 'practical joke.'

THE FASCIST DICTATORSHIP

Signor Acerbo, under-secretary in Mussolini's cabinet, deposed on August 4, 1924:

'Mussolini attached no special importance to the rumour of the disappearance of Matteotti. He instructed me to report it to De Bono, but to remind him that, a few days previously, Matteotti had obtained a passport for abroad, and that consequently his absence might only mean that he had left the country.'

The same information, that Matteotti had received a passport for abroad, and the same theory, that he had probably gone abroad, were put into circulation simultaneously by Dumini and Filippelli.¹ Now we begin to see the point about issuing that passport. But let us brush aside the suspicion and go on.

'On the evening of June 11'—relates Rossi—'Mussolini, returning from Montecitorio,² where the news had begun to circulate of the disappearance of Matteotti, exclaimed sarcastically: "The Socialists are disturbed because they cannot find Matteotti; he must have gone to . . ." and the sentence ended with an obscene expression.'³

Thursday, June 12.—The *Corriere Italiano*, edited by Filippo Filippelli, published in its morning edition an article (written the previous night) suggesting, in reference to Matteotti's disappearance, that he had suddenly gone abroad, and adding the quite fantastic detail that Matteotti was in the habit of making these long journeys, and of never giving intimation of them in advance to his friends or family.

This explanation satisfied no one. Signora Matteotti stated that her husband was never in the habit of going abroad without luggage, without a hat, without money and without letting her know. Matteotti's friends in the Chamber grew more and more anxious. Rossi, during his morning visit to Mussolini, told him:

¹ Examination of Filippelli, July 25, 1924; Deposits of De Bono, July 9, 1924; Bruti, June 25, 1924; Ticri, June 27 and November 12, 1924; Marchetti, November 3, 1924; Cellantani, September 12, 1924; Suckert, September 22, 1924.

² The Italian Chamber of Deputies.

³ Rossi's Memorandum, February 11, 1925, Appendix A, § XXXV.

THE MATTEOTTI MURDER

‘Look here, in this disappearance of Matteotti, people on our side are implicated. You can quite imagine whom I allude to. Dumini comes into it. They abducted him as he was going to bathe in the Tiber. What a madman’s act! After your speech, too!¹ There is that idiot Filippelli in it, as well. He lent the car. Just imagine it, they used a car hired from a public garage!’

And he added all the details given him by Putato and Filippelli, including those of the hasty way in which the corpse had been buried.

Rossi’s plan of action was that Mussolini should meet the storm by unreservedly declaring that the murderers had been actuated by political motives, that these motives were legitimate and that therefore the crime should go unpunished: thus discussion would be stifled from the first, the terror inspired by this bold move would be still more demoralizing than that produced by the crime; and the Opposition would, once and for all, be crushed!

The Duce began to be disturbed on learning that the car had been hired from a public garage.²

‘He said to me’ Rossi relates – ‘that in his view this occurrence was a mortal blow for Fascism. He felt he had no chance of making provision to prevent the Police from taking action, while the magistracy was too tainted with Freemasonry to be induced to make a diversion.’³

Meanwhile Dumini handed over Matteotti’s passport to Fasciolo asking him to present it to Mussolini. This Fasciolo did the moment Rossi left the ‘Duce.’⁴

¹ Mussolini on June 7 had made a conciliatory speech in the Chamber.

² Rossi’s Unpublished Notes of August, 1927; cf. Appendix A, § XXXV.

³ Santoro Proposals and Appendix A, § XXXV.

⁴ Filippelli, Memorandum of June 14, 1924, writes: ‘Dumini showed me a letter from a Genoese socialist to Matteotti and the latter’s passport, which had been removed from the body, saying that on the following day he would send them in to Mussolini.’ On the same day on which he wrote this Memorandum, he confided to Naldi that ‘the passport and a letter belonging to Matteotti had been handed over to Mussolini’s secretary, Signor Fasciolo’ (Naldi, Examination, Oct. 24, 1924). Dumini

THE FASCIST DICTATORSHIP

'When Mussolini learned that even Fasciolo had been informed'—thus Fasciolo told Rossi, who repeats it—he burst forth: "Why, everybody has been blabbing! Already all Rome know!" He asked Fasciolo, from whom he had had the first information. When Fasciolo handed over to him the dead man's passport and other papers, he showed no surprise at the singular consignment, but showed fresh signs of alarm. He simply muttered: "No good to keep these things lying round any longer." Then he asked further details, specially desiring to know whether the body had been properly buried, out of the way of all search. Fasciolo gained the impression that all the hopes of the "Duce" were concentrated on wrapping the crime in mystery.'¹

Fasciolo's impression was correct. After his usual morning visit to Mussolini, De Bono sent a telegram to Postumia (Adelsberg) Station, on the Austro-Italian frontier, asking whether Matteotti had passed through that station going in the direction of Vienna.² Public imagination and police inquiries were thus side-tracked towards Vienna.

But about 1 p.m. a police official succeeded in ascertaining the number of the car in which Matteotti had been abducted. The concierge of a house near Matteotti's, noticing the long stay of the car in the street on June 9 and 10, and suspecting that the persons accompanying it were thieves, had made a note of the number.³ With the aid of this number, the police identified the car, and suspicion was thus directed towards Filippelli and Dumini. If the concierge had not noted down the number, the assassins would have remained 'persons unknown' to all but the 'Duce' and his intimates.

in his examination of October 24, 1924, averred that, after showing the passport to Filippelli, he burned it. Fasciolo asserts that he himself executed this operation. But a passport of Matteotti figured among the evidence in the Matteotti trial. The Public Prosecutor, the examining judge and the three judges of the Accusing Section carefully refrained from pursuing this clue.

¹ Rossi's Unpublished Notes of August, 1927.

² De Bono's deposition, July 9, 1924.

³ De Barnart's deposition, November 14, 1924.

THE MATTEOTTI MURDER

‘About 4 p.m. De Bono was informed of the discovery and communicated it to Mussolini.¹

With full knowledge of all the facts, Mussolini made in the Chamber at 7.30 p.m. the following speech:

‘I imagine that the Chamber is anxious for news of Signor Matteotti, who disappeared suddenly on Tuesday afternoon, *when and where is not yet definitely known*, but in circumstances, such as to warrant the idea of crime. Such a crime, *if it had been committed*, could not fail to arouse the horror and indignation of the Government and of Parliament. I may tell the Chamber that as soon as the police heard of Matteotti’s prolonged absence, I, personally, gave precise orders that the search for him should be intensified in and around Rome, in other cities, *and in neighbouring countries*. The police went quickly to work and have found traces of suspicious elements. They will leave nothing undone to clear up the matter, to arrest the guilty, and to hand them over to justice. *I hope that Signor Matteotti may shortly be able to resume his place in Parliament.*’

The man, having had no time as yet to prepare a new plan adapted to the new conditions created by the police discoveries, kept up the farce of pretending to believe that Matteotti was alive and abroad. Again we see the point of the issuing of that passport!

Mussolini’s embarrassed, uncertain, and disturbed manner made a thoroughly bad impression. The Republican Deputy Chiesa shouted: ‘The Government is an accomplice!’ The sensation caused by this outburst of the Republican deputy made it urgent for the Government to take some step to counteract the suspicion of its complicity in the crime. Dumini had been seen about the streets in the centre of Rome that very day, and it would have been too open a scandal to let him escape.

‘About 8 p.m.’ – says Rossi – ‘I returned to the Palazzo Chigi in order to see the Prime Minister again; but he had already gone home. Signor Fasciolo (Mussolini’s secretary) told me that he

¹ De Bono’s Deposition, July 9, 1924.

THE FASCIST DICTATORSHIP

had learned from Commissioner Bodino that Dumini's arrest was imminent.¹

Amerigo Dumini was arrested at the railway station of Pome at 11.40 p.m. About an hour later, before he was taken to prison, General De Bono went and interviewed him. According to De Bono this conversation ran as follows:

"I made him sit down beside me and said to him: "Now, consider, Dumini, that you are talking to a Fascist and not to the Chief of Police; trust me, and tell me all that happened."

"I know nothing."

"How can that be? Tell me the truth. Where is Signor Matteotti? Have you killed him?"

"I don't know."

"But they saw you driving the car."

"Yes, but I know nothing more."

"But who was in it?"

"I don't know. Everything was arranged by the others. All I can say is, that Putato was not in the car."

"But you took the initiative in the whole thing."

"I don't know anything about it."

"Do you mean to keep up this know-nothing attitude in court?"

¹ Examination of Rossi in the Santoro Proposals. De Bono states that he gave the order for the arrest of Dumini to General Agostini of the Militia, a little after three in the afternoon; but the police official who acted under Agostini's orders, instead of arresting Dumini, while the latter was having his boots blacked in the Via del Corso in the heart of Rome, arrested — some one else. (Agostini's deposition, Aug. 3, 1924, and De Bono's deposition, July 9, 1924.) Thus De Bono could say that the order for arrest had been given, but that it had not been possible to carry it out. The incident in the Chamber made it clear that this farce could not be kept up. It should be noted that the Police discovered the names of Filippelli and Dumini only at 4 p.m. . . . De Bono, a little after 3 p.m., had already given orders that Dumini should be arrested. Therefore he must have known beforehand something about Dumini's responsibility. This fact confirms that somebody had beforehand informed De Bono of what had happened, and if De Bono was informed, Mussolini also must have been informed.

THE MATTEOTTI MURDER

“Yes, because I have no knowledge whatever of what went on.”¹

According to Dumini the conversation was on very different lines:

‘On leaving me, De Bono used these very words to me: “If you know anything, deny, deny, deny. I want to save Fascism.”’²

About the activities of De Bono during the night, the Santoro Report says:

‘The inquiry has shown beyond question that as soon as Dumini had been arrested at the railway station, the superior officers of the Militia, Sacco, and Agostini, and afterwards De Bono, Chief of Police, went and interrogated him. It also showed that the bag and attaché-case which had been taken from Dumini were brought that same night to the office of the Chief of Police, where they were opened and searched. In the attaché-case Matteotti’s blood-stained trousers were found. These were absolutely arbitrary acts on the part of General De Bono, and of General Sacco and Agostini. De Bono said that he questioned Dumini, after the latter’s arrest, not as Chief of Police, but as a Fascist. No law authorized him, as a Fascist, to question Dumini.’

The Senate Committee of Inquiry came to the following conclusions:

‘Firstly: De Bono’s action in searching Dumini’s bag and

¹ De Bono’s deposition, July 4, 1924.

² Examination of Dumini, July 23, 1924. Filippelli also in his examination of December 6, 1924, says: ‘I knew from De Bono himself and from Rossi and others (Finzi? Marinelli?) that after Dumini’s arrest De Bono had advised him to keep quiet, and not to tell anyone what had happened.’ – When he knew for certain that he had not been let down, Dumini retracted his first version and declared that De Bono, wishing to show him how useless it was to go on denying, said to him ironically: ‘Deny, deny, deny, you will save Fascism!’ The mendacity of this revised version is shown by Dumini’s confidential letter to Finzi of July 24, 1924, in which he was undoubtedly sincere and in which he repeated the first version: ‘What he (De Bono) said to me was: “Deny, deny, if you know anything. Deny, deny!”’

THE FASCIST DICTATORSHIP

attaché-case was illegal. These articles were evidence, and had already been placed in charge of an official of the police-courts for transmission to the examining magistrates, as the law requires.

Secondly: De Bono removed a bundle of papers belonging to Dumini, which had been found after arrest of the latter, at the press bureau of the Home Office. This act must be severely condemned. It is impossible to eliminate the suspicion that his action was inspired by a desire to shield the guilty by removing traces of the crime.¹

Meanwhile the leaders of the Fascist Party drew up a plan to diminish the responsibility of Dumini, and to side-track investigations with regard to the other accomplices. With this end in view, Filippelli received instructions from Finzi and Rossi to publish the following day in the *Corriere italiano*:

(a) That the murder of Matteotti was a consequence of the murder of the Fascist, Bonservizi, in which Matteotti was personally implicated;

(b) That Matteotti must have been carried off and killed by

¹ Cf. Depositions of Galassi, July 7 and October 10, 1924: 'During the journey [Saturday, June 14] Filippelli told me that he had been assured by General De Bono that no warrant was out for his arrest, so far as he, De Bono, knew; in any case the warrant would have to pass through De Bono's hands, and he would do what was necessary. De Bono advised him to have all traces of blood removed from the car. He, De Bono, had managed to put out of the way some other objects connected with Dumini. I remember an expression which Filippelli quoted to me, used either by De Bono or Rossi: "The traces of the crime must be got rid of; otherwise the régime will break up."' Cf. also the Examination of Filippelli, December 6, 1924: 'De Bono said that the blood-stained clothing had been found among Dumini's things, and that he would make arrangements to have them put out of the way.' Cf. also the deposition of Finzi, November 18, 1924: 'On the next day [Friday, 13] I learned from De Bono that he considered it his clear duty to leave the trousers in the bag, and to pass them on to the judge.' It was not because 'he considered it his clear duty' that De Bono left the trousers in place, but because the police officials who arrested Dumini at the station at Rome opened the luggage and found the trousers. De Bono, on being told this, realized that he could not have put them out of the way without the connivance of the police.

THE MATTEOTTI MURDER

a squad of Fascists from the province of Rovigo, his constituency.¹

Friday, June 13. – Dumini's arrest put it beyond question that the crime had been committed by order of the highest authorities of the Fascist Party. General indignation seemed to be rapidly overwhelming the régime. Everywhere there was an outcry against Mussolini. The Opposition papers were publishing special editions in quick succession and still leaving their readers hungry for more. The order was given for the mobilization of the National Militia; but only 48 per cent. of the Militia responded in Rome, only 28 per cent. in Milan, and virtually none in Turin.

The *Corriere Italiano*, Filippelli's paper, published the article, recalling the murder of Bonservizi and attributing the responsibility for it to Matteotti. It also said that a number of 'squadristi' from Rovigo had been seen in Rome for some days preceding the murder.

The first part of this article increased the general indignation, as it was realized that an attempt was being made to rescue Dumini from the hands of the law. The second part had an unexpected result: not only Matteotti, but also Finzi, the Under-Secretary at the Home Office, came from the province of Rovigo; hence the mention of 'squadristi' of Rovigo directed suspicion towards Finzi.

In spite of the general excitement, the police took no serious steps to arrest Filippelli who was allowed to call twice on De Bono.² Albino Volpi was arrested at Milan – and allowed to escape:

'The police' – says De Bono – 'arrested Volpi in the Corso Vit-

¹ Examination of Filippelli, July 25 and October 4, 1924, and memorandum, August 6, 1924. Compare the deposition of Vincenzo Tieri, one of the editorial staff of the *Corriere Italiano*, October 31, 1924: 'At night, Filippelli wanted to make some changes in this article. He dictated to me the part dealing with Matteotti's alleged activities abroad (referring to the death of Nicola Bonservizi), and also the part referring to the political struggle in the Polesine, whence (he added) some Fascists were reported to have come recently to Rome. I remember that he dictated these sections to me after a talk on the telephone, during which he had taken down notes.' See Note B at the end of the present chapter.

² Filippelli's Memorandum, June 14, 1924.

THE FASCIST DICTATORSHIP

torio Emanuele in Milan. Volpi asked them to accompany him to the head-quarters of the Fascio before taking him to the police station. The police agreed. Volpi went in by one door and out by another, and so escaped.¹

Another of the accomplices, Amleto Poveromo, tells us:

'On June 14, I met the sergeant of the Carabineers and he told me to go to the police station. I raised objections to this, but he insisted. Then, fearing trouble, I thought it best to clear out, and this I did.'²

The last two accomplices, Giuseppe Viola and Augusto Malacria, were also allowed to escape.

Thus of the five men who had taken part in the abduction, one only, Dumini, was in prison.³

To make up for the escape of the culprits, De Bono developed a devastating energy in bringing about the arrest of four men . . . who were not connected with the crime. Filippelli's two chauffeurs were arrested in Rome; another chauffeur, a certain Mazzoli, in Florence; and Aldo Putato, in Milan. These arrests gave the impression that the police were vigorously prosecuting the search for the murderers, while they side-tracked the attention of the public, which clamoured for justice.

Brandishing these arrests, and inflamed with fervid zeal for the condign punishment of all the guilty, Mussolini appeared in the Chamber in the afternoon:

'The guilty'—he proclaimed—'shall be tracked down and handed over to justice. The first news of the disappearance of

¹ De Bono's deposition, July 9, 1924; examination of Volpi, June 25, 1924. De Bono stated that he severely reprimanded the Milan authorities for their incapacity. He did not mention that Volpi's escape was effected in a car belonging to the Provincial Fascist Federation and that no action was taken against the abettors.

² Examination of Poveromo during the trial at Chieti (*La Stampa*, March 17, 1926).

³ Signor Villari, *Fascist Experiment*, pp. 66-7, writes: 'The inquiry was conducted with great energy and speed . . . Immediately afterwards the kidnapers themselves were apprehended.'

THE MATTEOTTI MURDER

Signor Matteotti became known only on Wednesday at 6 p.m. Within the following 24 hours the police discovered the names of all those who participated in the deed. One of them was arrested yesterday in Rome, and is Dumini; another, Mazzola, has been arrested in Florence; another, a certain Putato, has been arrested in Milan. [He did not refer to the chauffeurs of Filippelli, for the latter was a dangerous name.] The other three or four are surrounded. Had there been less outcry, they would probably be already in prison. If there is anyone in this House who has a right to be filled with grief, and, I will add, with indignation, it is I. This crime which fills us all with horror, and provokes such outbursts of anger, could only have been committed by some enemy of mine who had long pondered this diabolical outrage . . . We of the Government have an enormously quiet conscience (*il Governo ha la coscienza enormemente tranquilla*) . . . The law shall take its course. The police shall bring the guilty to justice. More you cannot demand of the Government. If you authorize me to execute summary justice, summary justice shall be executed. (Great sensation in the House. A voice on the extreme right: "Yes, yes!" Much applause. Lively comments for some time.) If you do not demand this, you must keep your heads . . . Justice shall be done, must be done, because this is an anti-Fascist and an anti-national crime. And even more than horrible, it is a crime of humiliating brutality. In face of such deeds, there can be no hesitation. A distinction must be drawn between politics and crime.'¹

After the sitting of the Chamber was over, Mussolini wished to see Matteotti's wife. The *Giornale d'Italia*, June 15, 1924, gave the following account of the interview:

'As Signora Matteotti was in Montecitorio, hoping to glean news of her husband, Signor Mussolini sent to ask her to come over to the Palazzo Chigi. When the unhappy lady appeared on the threshold, Signor Mussolini leapt to his feet and stood at attention. Signora Matteotti burst into sobs. Signor Mussolini, manifestly moved, said with firmness: "Signora, I should like to restore your husband alive to you. You may be assured that the Government

¹ *Corriere della Sera*, June 14, 1924.

THE FASCIST DICTATORSHIP

will do its utmost duty. We know nothing for certain, but there is still some hope." Signor Acerbo and Baron Sardi witnessed this dramatic conversation.'

This excellent piece of copy was doubtless given to 'he Press by some private secretary of the 'Duce's.' The *Giornale d'Italia* simply tells us what the 'Duce' wanted the public to believe about the interview, with himself cinematographed standing to attention. It would be worth while to hear Signora Matteotti's version.

Immediately after this interview with the widow, Mussolini received Rossi, and said to him:

'For the moment there is nothing to be done. The lads have made too many blunders. There are already too many witnesses. I am powerless. De Bono is no good for anything. Too much bad blood is seething. All those who are under suspicion must be patient for a while. I must have my hands free to launch the counter-attack. The hour of vindication will come later.'¹

At this point we may draw our conclusions. When, on Thursday, before Dumini's arrest, we find Rossi proposing to hush up the scandal, this attitude admits of a twofold explanation: (1) Rossi was an accomplice in the crime and needed to have the case stopped in order to avoid his own guilt coming to light; (2) Rossi, though without personal guilt in the crime, realized that it would create great scandal and a dangerous political crisis, and wished the crisis to be anticipated by stifling the scandal.

Rossi's plan of action was not followed. On the contrary, Mussolini made on Friday the public promise that justice should be done.

On the other hand, De Bono let all the guilty escape, except one, whom he assured of remaining unpunished on condition of his keeping silence. De Bono had no personal interest in this line of action, having no share in the crime. He would never have taken it without being 'authorized' by some one else.

This somebody could be none other than Mussolini. It was therefore Mussolini who had a reason for assuring impunity to the guilty.

¹ Rossi's Unpublished Notes of August, 1927.

THE MATTEOTTI MURDER

By Friday this reason could not be that of facing the crisis by stifling the scandal and by drowning all opposition in a new wave of terror. The scandal was out. The crisis threatened to sweep away all resistance. If, notwithstanding the extreme peril of the moment, Mussolini sought to assure impunity to the guilty, instead of leaving them to their fate, there can be only one explanation: he needed to prevent his own guilt coming to light.

§ 4: *The Resignations of Finzi and Rossi*

The first arrests did not calm public indignation, in any way. Every one realized that, behind the men who actually carried out the crime, there must be others who had given the orders; and that these must be sought in the higher ranks of the Fascist hierarchy. Suspicion was directed in particular towards Rossi, whose office had been assiduously frequented by Dumini, and towards Finzi, in consequence of the suggestion raised by the *Corriere Italiano*, that the crime was the work of Fascists from Rovigo.

Mussolini thought that the resignation of Rossi from the Press Bureau, and of Finzi from the post of Under-Secretary at the Home Office, might help him to gain time, while appeasing public opinion.

In the morning of Saturday, June 14, he had an interview with Finzi, and begged him to resign, pointing out how important it was that public opinion, in the general excitement aroused by the murder, should not regard him (Mussolini) as responsible for the crime. The public must be presented with another target; if Finzi would sacrifice himself, he (Mussolini) would be able to save the situation, which would otherwise become impossible. When the storm was over – and it would be over in a couple of days – Finzi would be compensated for his self-abnegation by the appointment of Minister of the Interior. Finzi consented to the temporary sacrifice.¹

In the official exchange of letters which took place they wrote:

Finzi to Mussolini: 'Dear Prime Minister, I am informed that yesterday at a meeting of opposition members, my name was men-

¹ See Appendix B.

THE FASCIST DICTATORSHIP

tioned, if only indirectly, in connection with the horrible, vile, and useless crime. In order that I may have full liberty to force my enemies to throw off their anonymity and publicly prove their calumnies, I beg you to accept my resignation.'

Mussolini to Finzi: 'I consent to your request. Now your adversaries are under the moral obligation to specify and prove their accusation. If they fail to do so, they will be condemned as calumniators by the conscience of the nation.'

Thus Finzi was put forward as a sham target to draw off the fire from Marinelli and Mussolini.

Rossi was much less easy to manage. He resisted with all his might.

'When I communicated to him the Prime Minister's decision' - says Acerbo, who was present at the discussion - 'he protested violently, declaring his complete innocence, and saying that he would lose heavily by resigning. The Prime Minister again invited him to do so, pointing out that the rumours concerning his relations with Dumini had been too persistent. Rossi refused to be calmed down; he became violent, and abused the Prime Minister, who, he declared, was ruining him to satisfy - those were his exact words - four of the *canaille* of Montecitorio. Mussolini appealed to his sense of discipline, implying that he, Mussolini, was forced to do so by the political excitement of the moment. Then Rossi said: "If it is necessary for you to have me arrested for the sake of Party discipline, do so, but I owe myself the duty of defending my honour." The Prime Minister replied that it was not necessary for Rossi to be arrested, nor was there need for any kind of heroic action; all that was required was to clear the situation in view of the public excitement. Rossi went away saying that he was going to consult some of his friends.'¹

Rossi consulted Forges-Davanzati, Marinelli and other Fascist leaders at the Party head-quarters:

'It was then that Marinelli' - narrates Rossi - 'told Forges-Davanzati, Filippelli and myself the particular that he had given

¹ Acerbo's deposition, August 14, 1924.

THE MATTEOTTI MURDER

money to the members of the gang both before leaving for Milan and after the crime. With his mania for red tape he had got the assassins to sign each one his own receipt in due form. Forges-Davanzati, holding his head with his hands, shouted: "Run at once and destroy them!"¹

As a result of this consultation, Rossi bowed to the wish of Mussolini.

'Half an hour later' - Acerbo relates - 'after conferring with Forges-Davanzati and other members of the party-Executive, he handed in his resignation.'

Here are the essential passages from the letters exchanged between Mussolini and Rossi:

'Rossi to Mussolini: 'Dear Prime Minister, the opposition press has made allusions to me in connection with the lamentable Matteotti episode (*sic*). These allusions induce me to consider the expediency of handing in my resignation as at this moment the régime of which you are the head and I have always been a loyal collaborator must be immune from all suspicion.'

Mussolini to Rossi: 'Dear Rossi, I take note of your letter which is inspired by feelings of personal and political delicacy. I accept your resignation. Your act testifies once again your political wisdom.'

In these letters the second person singular of the pronoun is used, a sign of the intimate terms on which the two men still stood.

After the resignation of Finzi and of Rossi, Filippelli began to feel uncertain of escaping with impunity. Still worse, Mussolini had said in the Chamber the previous day: 'If you authorize me to execute summary justice, summary justice shall be executed.' 'Summary justice,' which suppressed, as guilty, all those who were cognisant of Mussolini's responsibility, would have been a master-stroke worthy of Cesare Borgia. Towards noon, Filippelli said to Filippo Naldi and the deputy Benedetti:

'Up to now I have been acting with the full concurrence of the

¹ Rossi's Unpublished Notes of August, 1927.

THE FASCIST DICTATORSHIP

Viminale, but this morning I have been unable to get into touch with De Bono or Finzi. I am afraid they want to make a scapegoat of me. They are not the sort of people to play with. They may even put me out of the way, in order to rid themselves of an inconvenient person.'

In view of this danger, Filippelli wrote a memorandum in which he gave an account of what he knew of the Matteotti crime – denying, of course, all personal responsibility in it. He handed this memorandum over to Naldi, who placed it in Benedetti's keeping. Then, at 5 p.m., he took the train from Rome, without being interfered with.¹

On Sunday, June 15, Cesare Rossi, fearing that he too might be arrested or made away with, went into hiding. But he had no intention of letting himself be 'thrown to the wolves,' and sent to Mussolini the following letter:

'Rome, June 14, 1924. – I have the impression from a number of signs that you have singled out myself as the one scapegoat in the reverse which has befallen Fascism. Scapegoat not only in a political and moral but also in a penal sense.

'Now, certain things can only be done if both sides agree. I absolutely refuse to agree . . . In short I must, at a moment like this, have evidence that you realize your duty of loyalty, not so much towards me personally and my past record, as towards my position as collaborator who sometimes carried out illegal actions by your orders, and above all towards an elementary requirement of the *raison d'État*. If I do not receive this evidence, I will put into execution what I spoke to you of this morning, and have worked out in the course of the day. Your cynicism, of which already you have given appalling proofs, is now aggravated by your complete loss of self-control at this moment when you should master a situation, *which is entirely of your own making*. Should your cynicism cause you to order my being put out of the way either while I am in hiding or in the event of my capture, I warn you that none the less your own career will be at an end and the

¹ Examination of Filippelli, July 26, 1924; depositions by Olivieri, August 6; Benedetti, August 7; and Naldi, October 3, 1924.

THE MATTEOTTI MURDER

régime as well. There exists already, in the hands of trusty friends of mine, a detailed and documented report.¹ It is necessary, not only for ourselves, but for the tremendous interests which Italy has entrusted to us, that we should get into touch with each other. It is for you to make this possible, you who remain head of the Government, whilst I have already sacrificed myself for your safety, by the very fact that I am hiding from justice.'²

This letter was delivered to Mussolini in the afternoon of Sunday.

Finzi, too, threatened Mussolini with revelations. Immediately after resigning his under-secretaryship, he repented his resignation. Suspecting that he had fallen into a trap, he feared that Mussolini would not have the power or the wish to reinstate him within forty-eight hours. He, too, feared that Mussolini might have him put out of the way. Therefore he, too, on Saturday in due form drew up his Memorandum, in guise of a 'testamentary letter' to his brother Gino, in which he disclaimed all responsibility in the assassination of Matteotti and defended himself against accusations of jobbery. In his deposition before the Examining Judge on November 15, 1924, he explained that this letter was intended to give his brother 'precise instructions as to what to tell the judges in the event of any violence being used against him.' In his deposition before the Senate Commission of Inquiry he was still more explicit:

'I wrote the letter to my brother before the forty-eight hours had passed within which the Prime Minister had assured me that I should be fully rehabilitated from all suspicion of complicity in the disappearance of Signor Matteotti. I wrote it because on the day on which my resignation was published, the newspapers of the capital, even those that supported Fascism, connected my resignation with the disappearance of Signor Matteotti; and I had seen squads of black-shirts surrounding my

¹ This is the Memorandum of June 15, 1924, of which one passage is reproduced on p. 287 of the present volume, and in facsimile facing p. 258.

² The letter was published in the clandestine press in the spring of 1925, and was reproduced in the volume *Matteotti: fatti e documenti*, p. 81.

THE FASCIST DICTATORSHIP

house, so that my family had reason to fear that violence would be used against me.¹

Finzi not only wrote this letter, but communicated its contents to several people: an anti-Fascist friend of his, Giorgio Schiff-Giorgini, and three pro-Fascist journalists, Carlo Bazzi, Gildo Cioli, and Giuseppe Maratea.² This latter deposed on November 5, 1924:

'Finzi received us in his drawing-room in the presence of his wife. He said to us: "Do you think that I am a murderer?" When we protested, he added: "I offered myself as a scapegoat, that the attention of the public might for a few days be distracted from the crime and concentrated on me. But when these days have passed, and public feeling is calmer, I shall return to the Government, no longer as an Under-Secretary, but as Home Secretary. This reparation is due to me, for Fascism may demand my life, but not my honour." On our showing a certain scepticism, Finzi declared: "To-morrow His Majesty the King will arrive;³ I shall go and explain the position to him, and he will consider my reinstatement. Otherwise -" and he made a threatening gesture . . . I asked him: "It is true that Matteotti was killed by Dumini, is it not?" Finzi replied: "Yes, but by whose orders? . . ." I said: "Has Filippelli been arrested?" "No, he has fled." "But will he be arrested?" Finzi answered clearly "No."

During the Sunday Finzi re-cast his letter, suppressing all mention of the accusations of jobbery and accusing Mussolini of responsibility in many acts of violence and in the murdering of Matteotti.⁴

¹ Santoro Proposals.

² Finzi made the communication to Schiff-Giorgini in the early hours of the afternoon, according to the account given to me by Schiff-Giorgini, in Paris; to Bazzi at 10.30 p.m. (Bazzi's Affidavit, June, 1927, which is in my hands), and to Cioli and Maratea at 1 a.m. on Saturday, June 14.

³ The King was expected in Rome the afternoon of Sunday, June 15, on his return from an official visit to England and Spain. Delayed by bad weather at sea, he only arrived on Monday at 5.30 p.m. Maratea and Cioli both concur in putting their visit to Finzi at 1 a.m. on Saturday.

⁴ Appendix B at the end of the present volume.

THE MATTEOTTI MURDER

On Monday morning, June 16, the forty-eight hours lapsed within which Mussolini was to have compensated Finzi for his sacrifice. The sole compensation was an official declaration made by Mussolini at a cabinet meeting that 'Finzi had resigned for reasons unconnected with the Matteotti crime.'

Feeling himself tricked, Finzi entrusted Schiff-Giorgini with the task of revealing the contents of the Memorandum to Signor Amendola, Senator Albertini and other leaders of the Opposition. In the afternoon the journalist Carlo Silvestri, man of confidence of Senator Albertini, went to Finzi and personally learnt from him the contents of the memorandum. At the same time Finzi's brother, Gino, made the same communication to another anti-Fascist journalist, Giovanni Emanuel. Finzi appraised Mussolini of all these manœuvres and asked him for an interview.

In this connection the Fascist deputy, Signor Grandi (now under-secretary at the Foreign Office) made before the Senate Commission of Inquiry the following deposition:

'Signor Finzi appeared to me very excited in spite of outward calm. He said that he had been tricked in his good faith (*buona fede*) . . . It was impossible for him to bear any longer the burden of a situation in which he was blameless. He was expecting from the Government an immediate, complete and public rehabilitation, hinting at a possibility of being appointed Home Secretary. At one point he drew from a leather case some sheets of a letter which he said he had written to his brother Gino, and read me a few extracts . . . From his over-excited demeanour I had the definite impression, that to clear himself from all suspicion for the disappearance of Matteotti, Finzi would have stopped at nothing. He told me that he had made the contents known to other persons . . . He had made up his mind (and showed complete confidence in his ability to carry out his intention) to inflict irreparable injury on the Government, the Party and all those connected with it if he were not accorded the satisfaction he demanded within the 48 hours.'¹

The Fascist Senator Morello added still more interesting details:

¹ The Santoro Proposals.

THE FASCIST DICTATORSHIP

Signor Finzi asked me to arrange an interview for him with the Prime Minister, because the latter had promised him that within forty-eight hours of his (Finzi's) resignation, his position should be cleared up . . . He wanted the interview in order that he should not have to wait a minute more than the forty-eight hours. He said that he had written a letter, in which as in a last will and testament, he proclaimed his entire innocence of the crime . . . He was greatly excited in reading this letter. I interrupted him to say it seemed strange to me that he should have drawn up a document of this nature at the very moment of asking for an interview with the Prime Minister in order to have his position cleared up. I advised him not to make use of the document to obtain that interview. Finzi replied: "Copies of the document are already deposited in four banks, and its content known both to Senator Albertini and Signor Amendola."'¹

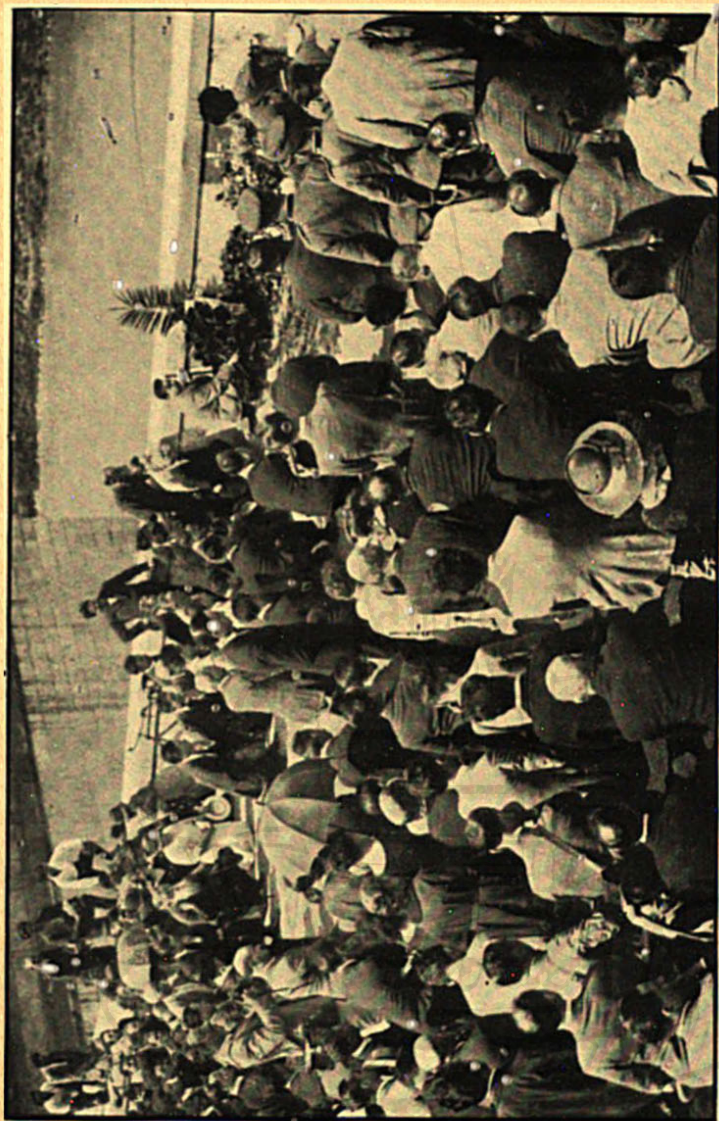
A man who had nothing to hide would not have deigned to answer Rossi's threatening letter. Instead, Rossi tells us:

'Shortly after receiving my letter, the Prime Minister sent Commendatore Fasciolo to Bazzi's house, where he thought I had taken refuge. I had gone instead to the house of another friend. There I was found by two journalists who had been sent to take me in a motor-car to see Fasciolo. I did not accept the invitation. Two hours later, about 10 p.m., the journalists came back again, and informed me that Fasciolo had told Bazzi: (1) that the Prime Minister intended to keep in touch with me; (2) that it was urgent for me to leave Rome, as on the following day the approaches might be closed by the Militia, reinforcements of which had been called up; (3) that the machinery of the police had already been set in motion in the capital, and that he was powerless to stop it.'²

A man who had nothing to hide would have disregarded the blackmailing manœuvre of Finzi, and refused the interview after Finzi had put himself in touch with anti-Fascist leaders. Instead,

¹ The Santoro Proposals.

² Memorandum, February 11, 1925; Appendix A, page 410.



'WAVES OF MYSTICISM SPREAD WIDELY' (see page 357)
June 13, 1924. The people are kneeling in the spot where Matteotti was kidnapped.

Facing page 356.]

THE MATTEOTTI MURDER

Mussolini immediately granted the interview on the Monday evening.¹

§ 5: *The Coups d'État against the Press*

In a long article on Mussolini's attitude during the crisis following the murder of Matteotti, published anonymously in the *Popolo d'Italia* of February 6, 1926, but recognizably in Mussolini's style (and which in any case gives the official explanation of Mussolini's attitude), we read: '

'The public conscience was deeply disturbed. Waves of mysticism spread widely. Some satisfaction had to be given to the conscience of the inarticulate masses whose pressure was, none the less, felt. Mussolini gave free rein to justice without regard for those who were more or less close to him. These measures calmed the excitement, but at the same time Mussolini set up forces for the defence of the régime, ordering that the whole of the Militia should be armed. It is from June, 1924, onwards, that the Militia has been armed.'

How far Mussolini really gave free rein to justice was shown later by the amnesty of July 31, 1925. The point of interest in the foregoing extract is the confession that while 'some satisfaction had to be given to the conscience of the inarticulate masses,' Mussolini was preparing to surmount the crisis by force.

On Sunday, June 15, he sent the following telegram² to the Prefects of the provinces in which the Fascist organization was particularly strong:

'To the Prefects of:—

Alexandria, Mantua, Florence, Bologna, Piacenza, Treviso, Carrara, Perugia, Sulmona, Caserta, Foggia, Catanzaro, Cagliari.

'The crime against Matteotti, which has been loyally deplored by the whole party, has been made the pretext which the Opposi-

¹ Deposition of Finzi in the Santoro Proposals: 'I requested a second interview with Signor Mussolini, and obtained it that evening (Monday, June 16), at ten o'clock at his house.'

² Original in hand of Signor Fasciolo.

THE FASCIST DICTATORSHIP

tion was looking for to attack the Government. The manoeuvre is now obvious. One has only to read the Opposition Press. We are here face to face with a sort of Labour Alliance, or a united anti-Fascist front.

'For Monday or Tuesday evening, order a concentration of Fascists of the city and of the province in a piazza of the city, solemnly to reassert their confidence in the Government and in Fascism.

'MUSSOLINI.

'June 15.'

On the morning of Monday, June 16, in order further to satisfy public opinion, Mussolini persuaded De Bono to resign his office of Chief of the Police. But at the same time, he summoned to Rome 3,000 of the Militia from Tuscany, Umbria and Ferrara.¹ The Tuscan Militia, captained by Consul Tamburini, marched through the streets of Rome shouting 'Viva Dumini!'

Scarcely had De Bono ceased to control the machinery of the police, than the latter resumed its normal working. In the afternoon of the same day, Filippelli was arrested in a motor-boat off Genoa, on his way to France. A journalist had recognized him, and pointed him out to the police.² On the same evening, Albino Volpi was arrested at Ballabio, near the Italian-Swiss frontier, where he had been left in comfort for three days. Dumini was no longer the only prisoner whose silence it was necessary to ensure. Filippelli, in particular, was a dangerous captive.

'It was only after Filippelli's arrest' - narrates Rossi, reporting information received from Fasciolo - 'that Mussolini seemed to realize how incriminating the circumstance of the passport would be, if it became known. He grasped that Dumini, to recapture Filippelli, must have told him that the passport had been handed in. He then began to row Fasciolo: "Now Filippelli will let out that Dumini gave you the passport to be given in to me. It is a beastly mess!" He began reproaching him for having

¹ *Popolo d'Italia*, June 17 and 20, 1924.

² *Corriere della Sera*, June 18, 1924.

THE MATTEOTTI MURDER

accepted from Dumini such a document and such a message. Fasciolo replied that this was not the first time that Dumini had given him a message for the Duce. As far as he was concerned, he had no objection to going before the Enquiring Judge and deposing as to this particular. Mussolini said: "What an ideal! Keep silence. If I remain here, I shall save the whole show. If not, we shall all blow up sky-high." He grumbled at the bungling way in which the abduction had been carried out. "They might" – he said – "have at least taken the precaution of hiding the number of the car."¹

The afternoon and evening of Monday, June 16, may be regarded as the critical moment in the career of Mussolini and in the history of Fascism. Their fate lay in the hands of the King.

The King was on his return from a state visit to Spain. Amerdola and the leaders of the Constitutional groups in the Opposition, wishing him to be informed without delay of Finzi's revelations, sent Count Di Campello, Senator and Gentleman-in-Waiting, to join the Royal train between Leghorn and Rome. They expected that the King would himself take the initiative in solving the crisis. The constitutional monarch – they argued – is not the 'pig being fattened' (*cochon à l'engrais*) which Napoleon called him. He must know what is happening in his own country. If a minister guilty of crime has at his back a parliamentary majority of his own unscrupulous creation, it is the King who must intervene to compel the minister to resign, and thus clear the way for justice. The King must understand that the time had come to put an end to a régime of murder which disgraced the country and was condemned by the great majority of his subjects. As chief of the army and loyally supported by it, he would undoubtedly use the prerogative accorded him by the Constitution: he would call together a Cabinet of generals whose programme would be to dissolve the Fascist Militia, to hold a General election and impose on all parties respect for the Constitution. Thus

¹ Rossi's Unpublished Notes of August, 1927. The actual words quoted in Rossi's text are: 'Porca Madonna, bastava avessero pisciato sulla targa.' (I cannot translate them.)

THE FASCIST DICTATORSHIP

the House of Savoy would find itself strengthened by the gratitude of the whole nation, thereby increasing its prestige for years to come.

The King commanded Count Di Campello to thank Amendola for his loyalty, and on arriving in Rome at 5.30 p.m. decided that the duties of a constitutional monarch in such circumstances was to take a good rest after the fatigues of his journey, then dine and go to bed.

Mussolini must have felt in the course of the evening that he had won the game. The first man to feel the effects of this reassured frame of mind was Finzi.

'Finzi returned after about half an hour' - Schiff-Giorgini recounts in his deposition before the Senate Commission of Enquiry - 'agitated and pale. Mussolini, he said, had declared that, thanks to the breathing-space given him by the Opposition Parties during the past few days, he was now, once more, master of the situation; but not to the extent of being able to reinstate Finzi. His first task would be to reform and reinforce the "Cheka," which was the most essential organ of government in Italy. He then said: "Good-bye, Aldo, now we understand each other." From that moment I felt that Finzi had repented his step of making known to the Opposition leaders the contents of his memorandum. I had the impression of a man absolutely terrorized. He urged me to declare to Amendola and Albertini that I had not spoken on his instigation. He spoke of taking refuge in his native district of Polesine and of organizing and arming his followers there. The words: "We understand each other" had completely thrown him off his balance.'¹

On the evening of Tuesday, June 17, the King gave an audience to Mussolini, and they agreed together that all that was necessary

¹ For three more days, Finzi continued to be tossed to and fro between opposing impulses. But on the evening of Thursday, June 19, he realized that Mussolini had won the game: 'I returned' - Schiff-Giorgini recounts - 'to Finzi's house. His brother Gino came to the door, but did not unbolt it. Aldo then appeared, and both in much agitation declared that their lives were in serious danger. I came away, and made no further efforts to get into touch with him.' See Appendix B.

THE MATTEOTTI MURDER

was for Mussolini to let Signor Federzoni replace him as Home Secretary.

In that and the ensuing days, the demonstrations summoned by the Duce's telegram of the 15th, took place at Perugia, Sulmona, Florence, Genoa, Ferrara, Spezia, Carrara, Vicenza, Bologna, Turin, etc. At Turin on June 23, the Fascists, bludgeoning right and left in the streets, sent about a score of people injured to hospital, and attacked the house of Senator Frassati, editor of *La Stampa*.

These happenings did not prevent Mussolini from declaring to the Senate on June 24:

'The aim of my general policy remains unchanged: to attain at any price, within the law, the normalization of political life, and the pacification of our country; to sift and purge the Party of undesirable elements and to suppress with the utmost vigour the last remnants of an out-of-date and fatal lawlessness. Let there be light and justice! Let the reign of law be ever more firmly established!'¹

Not even the attack on Senator Frassati's house prevented the majority of the Senate from listening gravely to the Prime Minister's promises.

Three days later, on June 27, in Milan, the Fascists beat to death a tramway employé named Oldani.² But those who wished to believe the promises of Mussolini could point to other facts to show that 'the last remnants of lawlessness' were disappearing: Cesare Rossi, despairing of evading arrest, gave himself up on June 22; Giuseppe Viola was arrested at Milan on the night of June 24; Amleto Poveromo was arrested at Milan on June 28, and on the same day Marinelli was arrested in Rome. 'Justice was taking its course!'

Anyone not convinced of this, could not but be so on July 10, 1924.

In the first years of Fascist domination (1921-3) printing works and offices of opposition papers were looted or set on fire; editors

¹ Mussolini, *La nuova politica dell'Italia*, pp. 188-9.

² *Popolo d'Italia*, June 28, 1924.

THE FASCIST DICTATORSHIP

and correspondents were beaten, wounded, banished, killed; whole issues were burned as they left the press, or on arrival at the railway stations; newsagents were threatened and beaten and their kiosks burnt; at times the prefects of the provinces arbitrarily confiscated the day's issue of a paper.¹ But the old laws which guaranteed the freedom of the Press still remained officially in force, and those who wished to blind themselves could go on hoping that these lawless and unconstitutional acts would some day cease and free speech and freedom of the Press be restored. The King, at any rate, was able to ignore these acts in virtue of his theory that a constitutional monarch is a blind and deaf personage who only knows what his Prime Minister lets him know.

He could not, however, be ignorant that in the Constitution to which on his accession he had sworn allegiance, there was an Article 28 which enacted: 'The Press shall be free, but the law may suppress abuses of this freedom'; another Article 3, which enacted: 'The legislative power shall be exercised collectively by the King and the two chambers, the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies'; and another Article 6 which enacted: 'The King makes the necessary decrees and regulations for the execution of the laws, provided that such decrees do not suspend or modify the observance of the laws.' On July 15, 1923, the King broke his oath to the constitution by signing a decree under which the Prefect of a province could warn (*diffidare*) a newspaper to change its attitude if in his opinion

(a) the paper, 'by means of false or tendencious news, may hamper the diplomatic action of the Government in its foreign relations, or damage the national credit at home or abroad, or arouse baseless alarm among the people, or incite to any breach of the peace';

(b) the paper, 'by articles, comments, notes, titles, illustrations or vignettes, instigates to crimes, or excites class hatred or dis-

¹ The *Communist* of Trieste was confiscated by the prefect on March 9, 1923, and remained suspended until March 13; the *Unità* of Verona was confiscated on April 7, 1923, the *Galletto* of Asti on April 19, 1923, etc.

THE MATTEOTTI MURDER

obedience of the laws or of the authorities, or undermining the discipline in the public services, or serves the interests of foreign States, authorities or individuals to the detriment of Italian interests, or disparages the country, the King, the Royal Family, the High Pontiff, the religion of the State, the institutions and the powers of the State and friendly Powers.'

If the paper was warned twice in one year, the Prefect might forbid the editor to continue in office, even if there had never been a conviction against him, and might refuse to authorize any new editor. If the Prefect approved none of the editors proposed, in this case the paper was not suppressed, but . . . could not appear.

To this breach of the constitution was added a further irregularity: Mussolini kept the royal decree in his desk for a year before publishing it. Thus the King initiated a new practice, that of issuing a *lettre de cachet* against the constitution to be used by the Prime Minister when he thought fit.

As this document remained unpublished for a whole year, though the 'Duce' continually threatened to apply it, those who wished to believe well of the King, ended by being persuaded that he could not have signed such an unconstitutional decree.¹

After the Matteotti murder, Mussolini judged that the moment had arrived to issue the *lettre de cachet* obtained a year previously.

¹ In the spring of 1924 the Royal Decree of July 15, 1923, was not yet promulgated, though its existence was already known. Thus Signor Villari, *Awakening of Italy*, p. 264, was able to write: 'As to the Press censorship, of which so much has been made in foreign newspapers, it was merely a threat made by the Prime Minister. The measure, however, was never introduced.' The propagandist, of course, made no mention of the illegal violence to which journals and journalists were subjected. After the censorship was introduced, Signor Villari became convinced in the spring of 1926 that all this was quite right: 'The freedom of the Press is differently interpreted in different countries and in different times, and its limits vary according to circumstances. Had there been a sound opposition Press in Italy, there would have been no need for severe action' (*Fascist Experiment*, pp. 207, 215). Obviously the judge of the soundness of the Opposition Press must be the political friends of the propagandist, and no one else.

THE FASCIST DICTATORSHIP

He found that it was not enough. So the King 'prisoner of war' on July 10, 1924, meekly signed another decree, empowering the prefects to confiscate any issue of a paper at their own discretion.

Confiscation was a much more serious matter than censorship. The censor suppresses an article before it is printed. Confiscation takes place when the paper has already been produced. It means loss of material, labour, and capital. The loss may be very considerable in the case of the big papers. A newspaper was never safe from confiscation, even when reproducing news from another paper which had not been confiscated. Thus the Government did not openly suppress the Opposition papers; it ruined them by silent, stealthy suffocation.

The Opposition groups were incapable of opposing the Fascist armed forces, or unwilling to do so, save by legal methods, that is, by words.

'The truth is' - said Mussolini on July 22, 1924, and he was quite right - 'that those in Parliament can do nothing but wait passively, and those outside Parliament can only pass resolutions. None of them can even dream of overthrowing the Fascist Government. A parliamentary vote against the Government and an anti-Fascist revolution are both impossible. At bottom, what are our opponents doing? Are they calling general or even partial strikes? Are they demonstrating in the streets? Are they attempting armed revolts? Nothing of the sort. They are carrying on a purely newspaper campaign. They are incapable of anything else.'¹

Yet this purely newspaper campaign was a formidable obstacle. A newspaper, even though gagged, is still a newspaper. The Italian reader was able to read between the lines, to interpret silences, to grasp the slightest allusions. An Opposition paper continues to be effective as such even if it says nothing at all. The anti-Fascist newspapers in the second half of 1924 had a daily circulation of four million copies, the Fascist of only four hundred thousand. It was a daily plebiscite against Fascism. The Press did not bow to the Militia, nor the Militia to the Press.

¹ Mussolini, *La nuova politica dell'Italia*, pp. 203, 210.

THE MATTEOTTI MURDER

By the beginning of August, Mussolini already felt strong enough to pass from promises to threats.

'A single centre of Fascist revolt' – he said on August 8 – 'can be stamped out, but not seventy-five provinces, where the Fascists are absolute masters of the streets. If the wretched incident of last June took us by surprise, we should not be taken by surprise now, whatever might happen in August and September. Nobody can bring our régime to trial. If our opponents think they can do so by compiling a list of all our illegal acts, we declare that it is impossible. That would mean bringing to trial the March on Rome. And if our opponents put the question in terms of force, we will act accordingly.'¹

In a speech of September 1:

'The day our opponents no longer content themselves with annoying us by their vociferations, but take definite action, on that day we shall make them a bed for our "Black-Shirts" to lie on.'²

At the end of July, Amendola had come into possession of Filippelli's Memorandum of June 14; and at the beginning of August he had received the Memorandum drawn up by Rossi on June 15. Having lengthily weighed the pros and cons, the Opposition leaders, towards the middle of November, came to the conclusion that these documents must be made known in the first place to the King, so that the King might have the merit and the glory of cutting on his own initiative the Gordian knot. The man who laid before the King the facsimiles of the documents was none other than Signor Bonomi: i.e. the politician who as Minister of War had armed the Fascists in 1920-1, and who now, expecting the imminent collapse of Fascism, judged the moment ripe to pass over into the anti-Fascist camp.

The King received the documents, warmly thanked Bonomi and his associates and . . . did nothing. But Amendola and his friends went on waiting for the King to act. And during the

¹ Mussolini, *La nuova politica dell'Italia*, pp. 237-46.

² *Ibid.*, p. 255.

THE FASCIST DICTATORSHIP

whole of December, all Italy went on waiting for the King to act.

On December 29, 1924, seeing that the King went or doing nothing, the Opposition leaders tried to give him a start by publishing the Rossi Memorandum. They again waited to see the effect. The King did not move.

The man who did move was Mussolini. It was for him imperative to prevent the publication of the Filippelli Memorandum, which would be incomparably more damaging, as it directly implicated him in the Matteotti murder. On December 30, 1924, the Home Secretary, Signor Federzoni, unearthed in the text of the old law of local government a certain 'Article 3' which in case of emergency empowered the Prefects of the provinces 'to take in the various branches of the public services such measures as they may judge necessary.' This clause had never in sixty years been interpreted as including the control of the Press. The freedom of the Press was subject solely to the jurisdiction of the magistracy and regulated by other laws, which were regarded as an essential part of the Constitution. On December 30, 1924, it was ruled that the Press is a 'branch of the public services.' Thus the Prefects had authority to take any measures they thought fit to muzzle it. Any paper that tried to publish news of the Matteotti case could now be confiscated, and even suppressed. Only official communiqués had the right to appear.

This *coup d'état* against the Press was accompanied by a large-scale campaign of terrorism (see pp. 175 ff.).

On January 2, 1925, three Ministers resigned, refusing to give their adherence to this policy of terrorism.

Thus the crisis reached its culminating point.

Mussolini, at the Cabinet meeting on the same day, replied to the resignation of these Ministers by a threat of civil war. The following day, in the Lower House, he resolutely disclaimed any share not only in the Matteotti murder, but also in all other acts of violence which had occurred during the preceding years:

'Can you conceivably think that, on the day after the festival of Christmas, I could order an attack on Signor Amendola, at ten

THE MATTEOTTI MURDER

o'clock in the morning, in Via Francesco Crispi, in Rome, after the most earnest speech for peace that I have ever pronounced during my Government? Spare me the insult of thinking me capable of such an idiotic stupidity. And is it possible that I should have prepared with the same lack of intelligence the lesser attacks on Misuri and Forni?'

He forgot to explain why his paper the *Popolo d'Italia* had approved the idiotic acts of violence against Amendola. He forgot to explain why the acts of violence against Amendola, Misuri, Forni, etc., had never been punished. He forgot to explain why Signor Giunta remained one of the most prominent personages in the Fascist Party, even after the letter had been published in which 'by order of the Prime Minister and Duce of Fascism' life was to be made impossible for Forni and Co. And he forgot that this same parliamentary majority, which at that moment applauded him, had refused to authorize the judges of Milan to proceed against Signor Giunta.

As for the 'earnest speech for peace' pronounced by Mussolini on the eve of the attack on Amendola, he also noted that on June 7, the eve of the murder of Matteotti, he had pronounced a similar 'pacific' speech; but he did not recall the fact that the speech of June 7, was uttered one day after he had threatened, in the same Chamber, the deputies of the Extreme Left with shooting in the back; and a week earlier he had, on May 31, written his article in the *Popolo d'Italia*, in which he declared that Matteotti deserved a more practical punishment than the merely verbal insults hurled at him by Signor Giunta.¹

¹ In an interview with the German correspondent of the 'Telegraphen Union,' November 24, 1926, Mussolini declared: 'When I took over the Government I was wholly ready, as is clear from my speech of May 5, 1924, to collaborate with the Oppositions.' The speech of May 5, 1924, is in reality a speech pronounced on June 7, 1924. The Duce falsified the date of the speech to remove it as far as possible from the fatal June 10, the day on which Matteotti was murdered. How could a speech of June, 1924, show 'clearly' that when he 'took over the Government,' i.e. in October, 1922, Mussolini was disposed to collaborate with the Opposition? The man always shuffles the cards in this way.

THE FASCIST DICTATORSHIP

The speech of January 3, 1925, contains, side by side with their disclaimers, a challenge and a threat to his opponents:

'Article 47 of the Constitution says: "The Chamber has the right to impeach the Ministers of the Crown." I formally ask whether, in this Chamber or outside it, there is anyone wishing to avail himself of Article 47? If Fascism has been a criminal association, then I am the leader and the one responsible for this criminal association. If all acts of violence have been the result of a given historical, political and moral environment, I am the one responsible for all this, because I, by my propaganda, have created this historical, political and moral environment. When two incompatible elements are at war, the only solution is force. In the forty-eight hours following this speech of mine, the situation will be made clear.'

In making this challenge, Mussolini was well aware that his opponents at the moment were not in a position to draw up a formal impeachment against him. The evidence collected in the Preliminary Inquiry into the Matteotti case was not yet available. Consequently, much of the most incriminating evidence was not known.

But the leaders of the Opposition groups had in their possession two documents, the contents of which were extremely serious: the Memorandum written by Filippo Filippelli on June 14, and the Memorandum of Cesare Rossi of June 15. They were further aware of the revelations made by Aldo Finzi on June 14 and 15.¹ These three separate sources coincided in raising the same charges against Mussolini. There were not yet perhaps definite grounds for an impeachment, but there were more than sufficient grounds for proposing in the Chamber that a committee of inquiry should be appointed.

The Opposition groups ought immediately to have answered Mussolini's challenge by this proposal. The public – especially the Italian public – is always impressed by 'gestures.' The gesture of Mussolini, which was both a challenge and a threat, should have been answered by the gesture of the Opposition groups

¹ See Appendix B on *The Finzi Memorandum* at the end of this volume.

THE MATTEOTTI MURDER

accepting the challenge and showing they were not intimidated by menaces.

Among the leaders of the Opposition groups were men of high personal courage; for five years, their daily life had been made an inferno by continual threats of violence; some had already been beaten more than once; Amendola ended by actually losing his life; and yet they refused to give in. But many of the hundred and fifty deputies, who formed the Opposition rank and file, had no real fighting spirit. With such an army, action was bound to be hesitating and incoherent, as a result of long and exhausting discussions and unworthy compromises. Moreover the members of the Opposition always went on waiting for the King to act.

The King made no move. He accepted, on January 4, 1925, the resignations of the dissentient Ministers and the new nominations which Mussolini laid before him.

The Opposition groups delayed their reply to the challenge of Mussolini for four days. On January 8, they issued a long-winded manifesto which was a masterpiece of high-flown and ineffective pedantry:

'The nation realizes that the Government, haunted by the moral problem, is making unparalleled efforts to block the way of justice and so escape the verdict of public opinion. In face of such an attempt, what value has the so-called "challenge" of the Prime Minister? By invoking Article 47 of the Statute, he pretends to appeal to the existing parliamentary majority. But this majority is his own creature and he has already prudently reminded it of its joint responsibility with himself. He himself, in the Chamber, and amid the applause of his followers, has taken upon himself the responsibility, political, historical and moral, for all that has happened. Thus there can no longer be a question of drawing up an indictment or of giving a party vote. There only remains the question of penalties which grows more and more disquieting for each of those concerned. . . . The moral battle is already won, and it is futile for the Government to attempt to transform it into a conflict of material forces. Violence can strike at men and parties,

THE FASCIST DICTATORSHIP

it can strangle the Press, but it can never strangle the aspirations of a civilized people.'

It was, as Mussolini declared, a question of force; but while Mussolini was parading his material force, the Opposition groups should have displayed all their moral force. At the decisive moment they showed themselves lacking in the necessary moral determination. Not one of them felt the irresistible obligation to break with Party discipline, transcend the irresolution of the herd, and stand up alone in the Chamber as the accuser of Mussolini. In all probability the Fascist majority would have shouted him down; but this itself would have been a moral defeat for Mussolini. He might even have been killed; but the Fascist régime could not at that moment have survived a second Matteotti murder. Or again the Fascist majority might have let him speak and have rejected the proposal for a committee of inquiry; in that case the grounds of the charge would have been officially formulated to the conscience of the nation and the accuser would thus have shown himself stronger than Mussolini. The Opposition showed itself as deficient in moral strength as it was impotent in the sphere of material force.'

Berni introduces into his *Morgante Maggiore* a knight-errant who, in the fury of battle, is killed by a mighty blow of the sword:

'But he, poor fellow, paid no heed,
And still fought on, though he was dead.'¹

The parliamentary Opposition groups still fought on; but from January 3 onwards, they were really dead. Brought up in the respect for human life, accustomed to play the political game according to the rules traditional in democratic countries, they proved incapable of putting up an efficient resistance to Fascist methods. Mussolini, on the contrary, as soon as he smells danger, has no scruples in transferring the fight from the plane of legality to that of force. He unfailingly bewilders his opponents by attacking them with the use of force in ways which they do not expect.

¹ 'Il poverino non se n'era accorto:
andava combattendo, ed era morto.'

THE MATTEOTTI MURDER

§ 6: *The Amnesty of July 31, 1925*

As a result of the *coups d'état* of July 10 and December 30, 1924, the Press was silenced. The next move was to silence justice. A public trial in which men of the type of Rossi, Filippelli, Finzi and Marinelli were cross-examined, would have brought to light the very things to conceal which the Press had been stifled. The Rossi and Filippelli Memoranda had been incorporated with the evidence. Their authors had reasserted their veracity. Finzi had repented his revelations, had returned humble and contrite to the Fascist fold and was ready to withdraw the whole contents of his Memorandum; but a dozen witnesses had reported his revelations to the Examining Judge and to the Senate Commission of Inquiry and these revelations coincided in a startling way with those of Rossi and Filippelli. Marinelli did not speak, but mourned, desponded, said *ave marias* and *paternosters* to all the saints of the calendar of both sexes:¹ such a man might have a breakdown at any moment; the Examining Judge had always had the prudence to avoid bringing him face to face with the other accused; but a cross-examination could not be avoided in a public trial, in which counsel acting on behalf of Matteotti's widow would take part. It was unthinkable to discuss in the public assizes the culpability of the subordinates, when such a mass of evidence had piled itself up against the Prime Minister.

These obstacles were cleared away by the decree of amnesty signed by the King on July 31, 1925.

This decree reprieved all those serving sentences for political crimes, excepting murder and manslaughter, and reduced the penalties even for these latter crimes. While appearing to be useless to the murderers of Matteotti, the amnesty was, in reality, the key to the door of their prison.

The proposals of the Public Prosecutor, a brother-in-law of Signor Farinacci, General Secretary of the Fascist Party, in regard to the Matteotti affair were made public on October 9, 1925,

¹ See an article published by Cesare Rossi in the *Corriere degli Italiani*, October 29, 1926.

THE FASCIST DICTATORSHIP

just at the moment when the whole country was upset and terrorized by the murders and devastation at Florence.¹

The Public Prosecutor found that Dumini and his companions had acted under superior orders. – By whom were these orders given? – By Marinelli and Rossi. – Did Marinelli and Rossi act solely on their own initiative? – The brother-in-law of Farinacci ignored this question; as far as he was concerned, the indications of Mussolini's responsibility might never have existed.

Having thus eliminated from the case the most important defendant, the Public Prosecutor went into the question of what precisely were the orders given by Marinelli and Rossi to Dumini and his gang.

Matteotti had been killed soon after being forcibly dragged into the motor-car.

Was the gang under orders to kill Matteotti, or were they simply ordered to abduct without killing him?

The Public Prosecutor settled this point by finding that Dumini and his accomplices were solely under orders to abduct him.

He reasoned as follows: the murder took place in the hurry and confusion; therefore it was not premeditated; therefore there was no order to kill; therefore the orders given to Dumini and his gang were simply that Matteotti was to be abducted.

If five men fall upon another, drag him forcibly into a motor-car, and kill him immediately after – this does not prove that the aggressors wished to kill him, but only that they meant to kidnap him for some days, and if they put him to death it was because he had the temerity to protest and struggle too noisily.² The hypothesis apparently never entered the head of this upright

¹ See above, pp. 178 ff.

² Among the evidence from which the Public Prosecutor drew this conclusion, he regarded as very important 'a long chain with two padlocks,' found in Dumini's room on June 13. Dumini declared that he kept it 'to fasten his suit-cases together when he was travelling' (Examination of June 14). No proof was found that this chain was ever in the motor-car. But the Public Prosecutor maintained that it was in the motor-car and that it must have been intended to chain the prisoner; therefore the intention was to abduct Matteotti, and not to put him to death.

THE MATTEOTTI MURDER

judge that the orders to kill were so definite, that one of the gang thought it best to kill the victim immediately, to put an end to his cries.

The just judge did not even for a moment consider that an hypothesis such as this ought to receive public discussion in the presence of a jury, as a part of the case. So certain was he of having discovered the truth that he proposed to the Accusing Section that his assumption be immediately adopted without referring this part of the case to the jury.

What then was the motive of the abduction? Only a man out of his senses would give orders for an enemy, hated, feared and uncompromising, to be abducted – and nothing more.

On October 24, 1925, Mussolini himself took the trouble to reply to this question, in a signed article in the monthly magazine *Gerarchia*:

'The involuntary character of what took place is henceforth proved and demonstrated historically and juridically. The truth is, that the practical joke of June (1924) degenerated into a horrible tragedy, independently of, or rather, against the will of its authors.'

The judges of the Accusing Section could do nothing else but think the same as the Prime Minister. On December 1, 1925, they pronounced judgment that Dumini and his companions did not intend to kill Matteotti, but only to carry him off for a time. The murder was therefore not premeditated.

If the murder was unpremeditated, it followed that Dumini had received no order to kill; therefore his order had been to abduct; therefore those who had given the order were liable to penalties for abduction, not for murder. But the order for abduction had been given for political reasons; therefore the crime was a political one. All political crimes, except murder, were covered by the amnesty. Therefore the case against Rossi and Marinelli was quashed and they were acquitted.¹

¹ Signor Villari, alluding to this amnesty in the *Review of Reviews* of March–April, 1926, writes that along with the condemned Fascists 'many anti-Fascists have benefited by the amnesty. Professor Salvemini himself is a case in point.' He did not point out that it would have been

THE FASCIST DICTATORSHIP

On December 2, in consequence of this judgment, Marinelli, Filippelli and Rossi, were set free. Marinelli was the following day officially received by Signor Farinacci, who gave him the post of Inspector-General of the Fascist Party.¹

As to Filippelli, the leader of the motor-car, this motor-car was intended to be used in an abduction, and not for purposes of murder. Abduction came under the amnesty. Filippelli, too, was set free.

The elimination of Rossi, Marinelli and Filippelli from the case cut the chain which linked Dumini to Mussolini.

Of the five persons who had carried out the abduction, two were in front of the car, in the driver's seat. These could not be charged with the unpremeditated killing which took place inside the car. Being liable only for abduction, they, too, were amnestied.

It was impossible to grant an amnesty only to Dumini and Marinelli, and it was therefore necessary to include in it also the anti-Fascists. I was among them; I had been imprisoned on a charge of having been a possible contributor to a clandestine anti-Fascist journal. The propagandist has not scrupled to place the charge against which the amnesty prevented me from defending myself – on the same footing as the crime committed by assassins belonging to his Party, and amnestied by the Government of the same Party.

¹ The Official Bulletin of the Fascist Party, on October 23, 1925, published the following communication: "The Chief of Staff of the Militia, General Bazan, has sent to Commendatore G. Marinelli the following letter: Dear Commendatore, The Prime Minister, Commander-in-Chief of the Militia, has awarded me the welcome task of informing you that he has reinstated you to the rank of *honorary corporai* in the Militia. While expressing my personal satisfaction to you, a veteran "Black-Shirt," silent and faithful, trained by sufferings to sterner strife, I am happy to interpret the feelings of the Militia, unanimously proud to find you again within its own ranks, where it has always considered you present in spirit. With kindest regards, your aff. General, E. Bazan." The Official Bulletin comments on the announcement in these words: "To the "Black Shirt" of the first hour, Giovanni Marinelli, who takes up again his post of honour, the whole Party gives the Fascist salute." During the solemn ceremony at which Marinelli was reinstated in his rank, in the presence of Signor Federzoni, then Home Secretary, Signor Foschi, Secretary of the Fascist Party for the province of Rome, made a speech in praise of Marinelli, attributing to him, among other virtues, that of 'having kept silence to save the Duce.'

THE MATTEOTTI MURDER

There remained in the field only Dumini and his two companions who were inside the car. They were liable on two charges: abduction, and 'unpremeditated manslaughter.' On the count of abduction, they, too, came under the amnesty. Therefore the only count which remained was that of 'unpremeditated manslaughter.'

The maximum penalty for 'unpremeditated manslaughter' is twelve years' imprisonment. None of the three concerned had confessed which of their number had dealt the fatal blow. And the judges were too delicate to press them on the point. The principal culprit being unknown, the penalty for all three accomplices was reducible by half. This brought it down to six years. Four of the six years were already covered by the amnesty, and the accused had already spent eighteen months in prison. Result: the immediate or almost immediate release of all the accused, whether condemned or not.

The Preliminary Inquiry having ended thus, there was now the public trial to be faced. A public trial may always produce surprises. It was necessary to take precautions.

In January, 1925, the Supreme Court removed the trial from Rome to Chieti, one of the smallest provincial capitals of Italy, where railway communications are difficult, where there are few hotels, and where, consequently, witnesses, jurymen, barristers, journalists and the public could be well supervised.

Further, the conduct of the trial was entrusted to the judge, Francesco Danza. In September, 1913, Danza, then judge at Lucera (Puglie), was accused by a well-known Neapolitan journalist, Roberto Marvasi, of having in a case of bankruptcy, appointed as Receiver a tailor, a certain Manna, known to the police as a disreputable character and to the citizens of Lucera as the hero of various scandalous exploits. The only qualification which Manna apparently possessed for such an extraordinary and remunerative appointment, was that of being a frequent visitor at Danza's house, and of having business relations with him. Marvasi repeatedly published his accusations in a weekly paper, *Scintilla*. The tailor, not Danza, took action; but when the case came to trial at Naples, on January 18, 1915, the plaintiff did

THE FASCIST DICTATORSHIP

not appear, and the defendant was acquitted, after having vainly begged to be allowed to prove his allegations both with regard to Manna and Danza. Such was the judge to whom the public trial was entrusted.

In face of this legal farce, the widow of the murdered man, had no other choice than to withdraw from the case. She did so in the following letter:

'MY LORD,

The murder of Giacomo Matteotti was a tragedy for me and my children, but still more for free and civilized Italy. I thought at first that justice would not be sought in vain. This trust was the only consolation left me in my deep sorrow. For this reason I stood as a plaintiff.

But the real trial was gradually lost sight of in the course of legal proceedings, and as a result of the recent amnesty, what remains to-day is only an empty shadow.

I did not feel rancour; I did not seek revenge; I merely asked for justice. Men deny it to me, but history and God will grant it.

I therefore ask permission to withdraw from a trial which has ceased to concern me. My legal advisers, who have always been in agreement with me, will give a legal form to my decision.

I beg your Lordship to exempt me from the terrible ordeal of appearing in court. In my sad and lonely life, my husband's memory strengthens me to bring up my children to follow in the footsteps of their noble father. To consent to appear would seem to me a desecration of that memory. For Giacomo Matteotti, life was a terribly earnest thing.

VELIA MATTEOTTI.'¹

The trial, in March, 1926, proceeded exactly as had been staged beforehand. The President of the Court strictly limited the cross-examination of the defendants and the witnesses to the actual abduction and unpremeditated manslaughter, only allowing the witnesses and the counsel for the defence to throw mud at the memory of the dead man. The Public Prosecutor left the defendants free to maintain their thesis of unpremeditated manslaughter,

¹ *Matteotti: fatti e documenti*, pp. 99-102.

THE MATTEOTTI MURDER

taking care not to bring forward proofs which might wreck this defence. The trial resolved itself into a kind of 'family party' consisting of the defendants, the judges, the lawyers and the public. The jury acquitted two of the five defendants who were on the driver's seat: these could not be immediately set free, as one had been condemned and the other was on trial for fraudulent bankruptcy.¹ Dumini, Volpi, and Poveromo were condemned to six years' imprisonment and were set free two months later.²

§ 7: '*Le mort saisit le vif*'

Such are the facts. And yet there still may be people who hold that those who accuse Mussolini, are calumniating him. Even if there were a full confession, written and signed by Mussolini himself, there would always be some good-natured persons ready to see in such a document the proof, not of the crime, but of the heroism of the 'Duce,' who thus shields the faults of his friends. The human spirit is capable of wonderful delusions!

In any case the question of the 'Duce's' responsibility ought to have been squarely faced, first in the Preliminary Inquiry, and then in the public trial, in connection with all the other questions and in conformity with the rules of normal legal procedure. Instead, we have a Preliminary Inquiry conducted by judges who shut their eyes every time they encounter the name of the Prime Minister. And we have a public trial from which the principal defendant has been eliminated, while three other defendants are removed by means of an amnesty, granted to them by the principal defendant.

Even if one accepts as lawful a sentence pronounced under such conditions,³ two conclusions must at least be drawn:

¹ One of them, Augusto Malacria, on May 28, 1926, was sentenced to imprisonment for fraudulent bankruptcy (*La Stampa*, May 29, 1926).

² Volpi and Poveromo, after Zamboni's attempt against Mussolini's life (Oct. 31, 1926), led the squads in Milan that looted the houses of the anti-Fascists.

³ Here I feel obliged to hand down to posterity an opinion wholly opposed to my own. The Director of the British Institute in Florence writes in the *Journal of the British Institute for International Affairs*,

THE FASCIST DICTATORSHIP

(1) The upper ranks of the Fascist Party were sullied by the presence of men without principle;

(2) The amnesty of July 31, 1925, was designed to save those guilty, if not of murder, at least of the abduction of a deputy, who was troublesome to the Government.

Once the danger was safely past, Mussolini himself, addressing the Chamber on January 3, 1925, declared:

'Before this Assembly, and before the people of Italy, I declare that I alone assume the moral, political, and historical responsibility for all that has occurred.'¹

The only responsibility which he did not accept was the penal responsibility. Any murderer would readily accept moral, political and historical responsibility for his act provided that he was exempt from penal responsibility.

The Matteotti murder marks a decisive turning-point in the political evolution of the Fascist régime.

Up to June, 1924, Italy was still in law if not in fact a country whose citizens without distinction of party enjoyed the same personal and political rights. If as head of the Fascist party, Mussolini

March, 1927, p. 121: 'After reading all the official documents, the accusations and the findings, the verbatim accounts of the proceedings, sheets and leaflets secretly circulated by anti-Fascists, we remain convinced, as we think most men are here, that the verdict of the court was quite legally just, as the murder of Matteotti was clearly not premeditated, much less "ordered" or prepared, but was due to a brutal attempt to kidnap, that led to the unintended killing of the victim.' The young Italian students who seek contact with English civilization at the British Institute in Florence, deserve a better representative of the British race.

¹ A more explicit utterance is to be found in the January, 1926, number of *Gerarchia*, a review founded by Mussolini and now edited by his Egeria, Margherita Sarfatti: 'The abduction of Matteotti and its consequences belong morally, politically and historically to Fascism. It is useless and foolish to seek the guilty and the innocent at the moment of committing a specific act. This and this only is revolutionary language and this was the language of the "Duce" in the Chamber on January 3, 1925.' Mussolini's tone had been very different on June 13, 1924, when he was shaking in his shoes (see pp. 346-7).

THE MATTEOTTI MURDER

'authorized' behind the scenes the acts of violence of his followers, as Head of the Government he officially disavowed them. Unofficially he guaranteed impunity to his followers, but officially he pledged that justice should be done. He played a juggler's game with lawlessness and legality, with 'revolution' and 'normalization.' The supporters ('fiancheggiatori') were always able to justify their adherence to the Fascist policy by the prospect that their support would contribute to bring about an evolution of Fascism from the dictatorship to a new kind of parliamentary régime.

On the Matteotti crime Mussolini could not hide his own complicity and that of the other leaders of the party. He could not pretend that it was due to the ungovernable restlessness of some local leader. He could not play the double game of authorizing and disavowing. He had to throw in his lot once and for all with the 'extremists' against the 'moderates.' He had to forsake the path of 'normalization' and pursue to the end the path of 'revolution.'

The open break with the old régime of liberty which followed the Matteotti murder, might perhaps have come to pass under the pressure of other circumstances and by other ways as a logical development of the Fascist system. But in actual fact it came to pass in connection with the Matteotti murder. To save themselves from being swamped in the wave of moral indignation aroused by the crime, Mussolini and his associates had to block all the constitutional channels by which that indignation might have found vent. The freedom of the Press was officially abolished in order that the Press might not be able to discuss the Matteotti murder. The large-scale operations aimed at terrorizing the country which seemed to have ceased after the massacres of Turin and Spezia (see pages 163-8) began again after the Matteotti murder. The amnesty of July 31, 1925, demolished the whole edifice of judicial procedure in order to withdraw from the normal jurisdiction the prime-movers of the Matteotti murder. The bare-faced and systematic acquittals of Fascists in clearly proved cases of guilt dated from the Matteotti murder. The Opposition deputies were driven out of the Chamber and all parliamentary

THE FASCIST DICTATORSHIP

liberties were violated because the Opposition persisted in regarding Mussolini as guilty in the Matteotti murder. Freedom of speech, of association, of assembly, and the elections for local government have been abolished since the Matteotti murder.

The Italian people is considered by those outside Italy as being politically acute but morally obtuse. The truth is that, if we leave aside the upper classes and go down to the mass of the population, no European people is politically less experienced: it is easily intoxicated with fine words, responsive to the suggestion of demagogues of all sorts, apt to rush from extremes of expectation to extremes of despair. But no people is morally more sensitive than the Italian. Anyone who wishes to rouse them must appeal to their moral sense; anyone who outrages that moral sense may hold them down for a while, but will never conquer them.

Up till the Matteotti murder Mussolini always had a way open to win a new popularity by swinging back to the Left again after having swung to the Right. After the Matteotti murder he lost all liberty of action. A myth grew up in June, 1924, in the minds of the Italian people, the Matteotti myth. An implacable ghost will always come between the 'Duce' and the people. For the Italian people Mussolini will always be the murderer of Matteotti.

Into the unequal and merciless struggle between himself and the shade of his enemy, the 'Duce' has dragged the King. While crimes were officially disavowed by the Prime Minister, while Fascists were acquitted only by partisan juries or by servile judges, the King could be regarded as a stranger to these practices and hence blameless. But when Mussolini by his declaration of January 3, 1925, officially took upon his shoulders the responsibility in the Matteotti murder, the King accepted the names of the new Ministers put forward by him, thus reaffirming his confidence in him. The King by the amnesty of July 31, 1925, went a step farther: he actively intervened in judicial proceedings to block the way to justice. On October 28, 1922, he had found the strength of will to refuse his signature to the proclamation of martial law; on July 31, 1925, he did not find the strength of will to refuse complicity in an offence against the administration of justice.

THE MATTEOTTI MURDER

Justitia regnoꝝ fundamentum. On that day Victor Emanuel, III undermined the foundations both of justice and of the monarchy. Until July 31, 1925, he was a 'prisoner of war' who might any day regain his liberty by appealing to his people. After that day he became the slave of his jailer. None of his words will ever reach the hearts of the Italian people again. The acclamations with which the crowds greet him on every public appearance, must not mislead anybody. The only moment when the people may without danger acclaim somebody else, than Mussolini, is when the King shows himself. These demonstrations voice not loyalty to the King, but hatred of Mussolini.

The King feels the disrepute into which he has fallen, and suffers from it. He still perhaps hopes that some occasion will present itself opening the way for a return to the Constitution. But no outside circumstances can help a man who lacks the inward strength to use them or to create them. Thus he slides from capitulation to capitulation, from complicity to complicity, from shame to shame ever seeking a foothold from which to make a stand, and never finding it. The first essential for resistance is character, and character is what he lacks. There are kings who actively break their oath to the Constitution and openly accept the responsibility for their perjury. And there are kings who become faithless to their oath by passively allowing their ministers to violate the Constitution, comforting themselves with the illusion that they have incurred no personal guilt. Ferdinand II of Bourbon, 'Re Bomba,' belongs to the first category; Victor Emmanuel III of Savoy to the second. He is a machine for signing decrees. He is the 'roi fainéant.' He is the last of the Merovingians.

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES.

Note A to Page 326

The evidence which may be arrayed against Rossi is as follows:

(a) Filippelli, who lent the motor-car to Dumini, maintained (a) that Dumini told him he was acting under definite orders from Rossi and Marinelli, (b) that Rossi himself told him that he and Marinelli had given the orders to Dumini.¹ But (a) Dumini, in speaking to Filippelli, may have made improper use of Rossi's name, and (b) Filippelli himself may have wished to implicate Rossi as well as Marinelli so as to have two high Fascist officials instead of one to shelter behind in the storm loosed by the crime. Moreover, in his examination of July 26, 1924, Filippelli declared that Rossi and Marinelli, 'denied having given Dumini the order to kill Matteotti, or being capable of such a mad idea.' Accusers of this kind can never be believed without further proof, all the less so when it is realized that, during the six months of the Enquiry, the Examining Judge and the Public Prosecutor did not once confront Rossi either with Dumini or with Filippelli, nor did they confront Filippelli with Marinelli, exactly as if they were afraid of pursuing such a line of investigation.

(b) Rossi uttered insults and threats against Matteotti on the afternoon of May 30 (see pp. 318-9). But the habit of threatening their opponents with death and destruction was and still is so ingrained amongst Fascists, that it would not be fair to deduce from these alone that Rossi had a hand in the murder which ensued.

(c) After the murder, Rossi displayed much zeal to prevent the arrest of the culprits and to get the whole affair dropped. This can be explained by his anxiety to avoid a political scandal, and judicial proceedings in which he himself must be involved because of his relations with Dumini, even were he not an accomplice in the Matteotti murder.

(d) General De Bono, in the Memorandum which he presented to the Senate Commission of Inquiry (see above, p. 330), asserted that during the night of June 12 Marinelli declared to him *in*

¹ Filippelli's Memorandum, June 14, 1924, and Examinations of June 18, July 25, December 6 and 15, 1924.

THE MATTEOTTI MURDER

Rossi's presence that 'when Rossi spoke of the "Duce's" intention of getting rid of Matteotti, he (Marinelli) was thunderstruck.' But the mere fact that Rossi spoke to Marinelli of the 'Duce's' intention, is no proof of Rossi's assent or co-operation in its fulfilment. According to De Bono, Marinelli, after his conversation with Rossi, 'went to Signor Mussolini, and asked if he thought it advisable to form a Cheka, with Dumini at the head, and the Prime Minister consented.' This does not mean that Rossi was present at this conversation between Marinelli and the 'Duce,' which must have been the very one in which the final decision was taken about Matteotti. This evidence of De Bono's simply shows that Rossi knew of Mussolini's desire, not that he shared it.

(e) In the days following the crime, Finzi maintained that Mussolini 'gave orders to the chiefs of the Cheka [Rossi and Marinelli] that the most prominent leaders of the Opposition, beginning with Matteotti, should be put out of the way';¹ and his deposition of November 18, 1924, reveals that in the interview of the night of June 12 (a) Marinelli affirmed that ten days before the crime, Mussolini in the presence of himself and Rossi gave vent to an outburst of rage against the Opposition leaders; (b) Rossi affirmed that some days later Mussolini renewed his outburst against Matteotti; (c) Marinelli affirmed that in these utterances he and Rossi perceived 'the unmistakable desire' of the Prime Minister that the existence of Matteotti should be rendered difficult (see pp. 331-2). This deposition, while showing Marinelli and Rossi as attributing 'the unmistakable desire' to Mussolini, does not prove Rossi to have had, like Marinelli, a hand in its execution. Marinelli's responsibility is based, not on this deposition of Finzi, but on other evidence.

(f) During the Preliminary Inquiry, Rossi accused Mussolini alone, and only of having created and kept alive the atmosphere of crime without which the murder of Matteotti would not have been possible; and he proved this charge by a pitiless avalanche of concrete and well-substantiated assertions which he ultimately collected in his Memorandum of February 11, 1925 (Appendix A). On the other hand he kept an obstinate silence as to what he knew

¹ See page 421.

THE FASCIST DICTATORSHIP

of the murder, thus abstaining from any definite accusation on this point not only against Mussolini but also against Marinelli and Dumini, whose guilt was undoubtedly known to him at least after the crime. These tactics rouse the suspicion that Rossi really had a hand in the crime, but wishing to appear innocent, could not accuse his accomplices without revealing his own guilt; he therefore, pretending to know nothing about their guilt, concentrated his attacks on Mussolini alone, limiting them to actions in no way connected with the murder. He thus forced Mussolini to extricate all the accused so as to avoid a public trial in which Mussolini himself might be compromised by further revelations. But Rossi gives another explanation: he was innocent, and learned the particulars of the crime only after it had been committed; during the Inquiry he dared not reveal what he knew of the guilt of Marinelli and Dumini, lest the latter should revenge themselves on him by falsely declaring him their accomplice, or worse, by agreeing to cast the whole responsibility on him, which would have also suited Mussolini's plans. This explanation of Rossi's is not convincing. Anyone who was entirely innocent would at once have told the judges all he knew.

Did Rossi, on learning of Mussolini's desire, explicitly disapprove of it?

Did he avoid all expression of opinion, leaving the responsibility on Marinelli's shoulders?

Did he explicitly endorse the order?

Did he know anything of the preparations for the crime?

Did he actually take a hand in them?

These are questions we have no means of answering.

Note B to Page 345

Bonservizi, Secretary of the Fascist Party in Paris, was murdered there on March 26, 1924, by an Anarchist, Bonomini. At 3.40 p.m. on February 23, 1924, an Italian police official, Sabatini, sent from Paris a telegraphed report, No. 230, to the Director-General of Police in which he wrote:

'Our secret agent, *who was in touch last month with Bonomini,*

THE MATTEOTTI MURDER

reported that when he asked Bonomini why he was not a member of the Anarchist group, Bonomini answered that he did not choose to limit his freedom of action.¹

As an 'individualist anarchist' Bonomini could still less have been in touch with a Reformist Socialist and Member of Parliament like Matteotti. Nor was a word ever mooted before June 12, 1924, of any share of Matteotti in the death of Bonservizi. A charge of complicity raised at such a moment is clearly devoid of weight.

Moreover Dumini was not such a friend of Bonservizi as to wish to become his avenger. Among the papers seized by the police at Rossi's office, were found two letters written from Paris, by Dumini to Rossi, in September, 1923, in which Dumini complained of the incapacity of Bonservizi:

'Bonservizi is a dead failure; he always foresees disaster and thus fills our followers with terror. The *criminal* attitude of Bonservizi will ruin all our work in this country if no immediate remedy is adopted.'

It is interesting to note how the theory of Matteotti's share in the murder of Bonservizi was put forward during the Preliminary Inquiry.

On August 21, 1924, a prison warder, Saio, reported to the magistrates that according to certain 'revelations' made to him by Filippelli, Dumini had been ordered not to kill Matteotti, but only to 'give him a taste of the stick,' and to make him confess what he knew about the murder of Bonservizi.

The same day a Police Commissioner, Francesco Lapolla (subsequently discovered by the French police to be the *agent provocateur* who, together with Ricciotti Garibaldi, prepared the bogus 'plots' against Mussolini's life) reported to the magistrates *the same 'revelations'*, claiming to have received them 'one day, a good while after the crime' from a certain Pinardi, a Milan Fascist. (Why, then, had he not reported them to the magistrates long

¹ The facsimile of the document, belonging to the Fasciolo collection, was reproduced in the anti-Fascist paper *Il Dovere*, Paris, May 22, 1927.

THE FASCIST DICTATORSHIP

since?) Pinardi, when examined on September 2, declared that he had no first-hand information and had only expressed to Lapolla his own private suppositions. Thus Lapolla's version fell.

At once the ball was picked up by some one else. One of the prisoners, Putato, in a memorandum dated September 3, 1924, made the same 'revelations.' He, also, retracted them on December 3, 1924, confessing that during his imprisonment he had two or three times exchanged a few words with Dumini, who had suggested that he make these statements.

Meanwhile the ball had been picked up by yet another. On September 22, a prominent Fascist, Curzio Suckert, made the very same 'revelations' to the magistrates, claiming to have had them from Dumini himself on the evening of the crime or the next evening! (Why did he report them to the magistrates only three months after?)

When on October 18, the magistrates confronted Dumini with Suckert's evidence, Dumini asked for the adjournment of his examination, saying he felt tired. Two days later, he confirmed by writing every detail of the version given by Suckert, explicitly charging Matteotti with responsibility for the assassination of Bonservizi.

