

APPENDIX A

ROSSI'S MEMORANDUM OF FEBRUARY 11,
1925¹

I

The Prime Minister, Signor Mussolini, began his mission of restoring order to the nation on Sunday, October 30, 1922, at Milan. He met me about 11 a.m. in a school near the Bastioni di Porta Nuova, which was used during the days of the Fascist mobilization as a barracks for some squads of Black-Shirts, and he gave me a bit of news and an order. The news was that he had received a telegram from His Majesty requesting him to form the new Ministry; the order was to carry out that day the 'scientific' destruction of the premises of the *Avanti*² and the *Giustizia*,³ in Via San Gregorio. This order was at the same time given to Signor Jenner Mataloni, commander of the 'Antonio Sciesa' squad. It was later repeated to the Consul-General Negrini and to Captain Forni, now a deputy in the National Parliament. That evening, and the following day, all the objectives specified by the 'Duce' were attained, with some casualties among the assailants, one of them being fatal. The exploit did not seem to me particularly justified, since both the *Avanti* and the *Giustizia* had obeyed the ultimatum conveyed to them on Friday 28, by myself and Signor Finzi and had passively submitted to the new situation. But I admit I did nothing to oppose the purpose of Signor Mussolini, nor did I go into mourning for the fresh accident which had overtaken the enemy newspapers.

II

After the accession to power of Fascism, many subversive persons asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Signor Mussolini, for

¹ I have checked the statements contained in this document. Every time I have been able to verify Rossi's assertions, they have always proved to be absolutely correct, except in one single unimportant instance. I should have liked to append to the document all the proofs which show its veracity, but they would have taken up too much room.

² Intransigent Socialist organ.

³ Reformist Socialist organ.

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passports, to escape the reprisals and boycott of the local Fascist branches, or simply to spare themselves the humiliation of their defeat. I was in favour of making this concession, and supported various requests which had reached me; among these I remember that of the elementary school teacher D'Amato, the railwayman Mosca, and the printer Parpagnoli. The Prime Minister decided to the contrary on the grounds that 'it was more expedient to keep these gentlemen under the control and rule of our bludgeon.'

III

During the agitation about the agreement between shipowners and seamen, in the spring of 1923, Senator De Bono, making one morning his daily report to Mussolini at the Palazzo Chigi asserted that the only way to put an end to the agitation was to have Captain Giulietti¹ drowned. I thought he was being funny and asked whether he had gone off his head or was joking. De Bono replied he was not joking at all, and that if we would agree, he had a plan of his own, and could supply both men and means. The Prime Minister let this drastic proposal drop, as Giulietti still had a considerable following among the seamen, and was on extremely good terms with D'Annunzio.

IV

In January, 1923, D'Annunzio made an attempt to unite in a national alliance all the trade-union organizations existing in Italy. This enterprise was warmly favoured by certain leaders of the General Confederation of Labour who were not anti-Fascist, and was followed with interest by the Opposition parties, who hoped to pit the soldier-poet against the young Italian premier. In those very days, Signor Mussolini, glancing through a heap of telegrams and letters intercepted by the Chief of the Police, came across a telegram in which two brothers living in the Province of Cremona, sent expressions of loyalty to D'Annunzio, as an element of harmony amidst the political strife. Signor Mussolini, scribbling something on the telegram, handed it to Commendatore Fasciolo, telling him 'to send it to Farinacci, so as to have these gentlemen dosed with castor-oil, and afterwards beaten.' It should be by no

¹ General Secretary of the Seamen's Union.

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means impossible to identify the authors of the telegram in question.

On the morning of June 6, 1923, Signor Mussolini learned from the Press the acquittal of G. M. Serrati whom he, in his capacity as Home Secretary, had had arrested on a charge of conspiring against the safety of the State, inciting to class war, instigating to crime and extolling criminal acts. He was indignant with the Milan judges, who had not even informed the Police of the release of the ex-editor of the *Avanti*. With perfect calmness he said: 'The next time such a thing occurs, I will send a patrol of National Militia to San Vittore to await the released prisoners. The Bench acquits and I shoot. To each his own function.' In the case of Serrati, and subsequently of Nenni, Gobetti,¹ etc., Signor Mussolini was undoubtedly actuated by personal rancour.²

VI

*Of the Misuri assault*³ I mean to speak unasked because of the light it throws on the general atmosphere of illegality and cowardice created by the weakness of the Fascist régime.

When Misuri had finished his speech before the Chamber, and a violently aggressive speech it was, I, who had been listening in the Press Gallery, came down with Italo Balbo, both of us in an excited state. We met the Prime Minister, who, even more irritated than ourselves, told us explicitly that the Party could not tolerate a speech of this kind and that punishment must be immediate and inexorable.

Balbo answered: 'Don't you worry, I'll take charge of that. Arconovaldo Bonaccorsi is in Rome, and I'll put him on the job.' That evening I left for Genoa. Arconovaldo Bonaccorsi in agreement with Candelori, the officer commanding the Roman Legion, organized

¹ See above, p. 295.

² At this point Rossi writes: 'VI, VII, VIII; I refer to the examinations undergone by me on June 23 before your lordships and on August 22 and 23 before Signor Occhiuto.' Rossi dealt with the outrages on Misuri, Amendola, and Forni. I reproduce here in italics the text of the examination of June 23.

³ See above, pp. 169, 250.

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the beating of Misuri. A few days later when we were making our morning report to the Prime Minister, De Bono informed him that Misuri insisted that the examining judge should institute proceedings against his assailants, who had been identified. On that occasion, some one, Acerbo I think, announced that Misuri was going to make another and even more violent opposition speech. The Prime Minister burst out 'This time he must be killed!' De Bono answered, laughing: 'He must be killed beforehand so we shall not have the bother of his speech.'

VII

I will speak also of the attack on Amendola.¹

I read about the business in the Piccolo and immediately telephoned to De Bono, asking him if he knew who were the madmen who in cold blood had bludgeoned Amendola on Christmas Day, although he had made no recent 'outstanding' demonstration against the régime. He answered that 'fools had been chosen for the job.' My curiosity was aroused. I went to his office, and again expressed my surprise and disapproval. He answered me candidly: 'It was the boss who willed it so.' I went on to ask him what the Prime Minister had said to him. He answered: 'The first time he pretended to be embarrassed. Evidently there was some one with him, but afterwards he telephoned to me by the private line saying that it had given him a better appetite for his lunch.' I must explain that this conversation between De Bono and the Prime Minister took place by telephone because the latter was spending Christmas in Milan.

Faced by the insistent protests of the Mondo,² Signor Mussolini began to grow uneasy about the way the assault had been planned. He commented ironically on the fact that the motor-car went straight away to the Barracks of the Militia in Via Magnanapoli, on the excessive number of the assailants and on the way in which the attack had been conducted. It was on this occasion that the Prime Minister said: 'These jobs must be entrusted to persons who know how to assume responsibility for them.' He mentioned Dumini and Vitali (the latter is one of the holders of the gold medal), as the type of men suited to such work. I recently heard from the Prime Minister

¹ See above, pp. 170, 243, 289.

² The daily paper edited by Amendola.

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himself that the police had managed to persuade the staff of the Mondo that foreign elements and influences were mixed up in the affair and so obtained their silence as to the way in which investigations were being carried out.

VIII

For the same reason, i.e. in self-defence, I want to speak of the assault on Forni.¹

During the electoral campaign I was hastily summoned to the telephone by the Prime Minister, who said 'Come here at once.' I found him infuriated against Forni because of a speech the latter had made at Biella against the Party and the Government. He was in a towering rage. He was furious also with the Prefect Gasti who had wired him that Forni's speech was idyllic, while the Prefect of Turin telephoned him the contrary. He even turned on me as a member of the Directorate of the Party, saying that the Party had no fighting-spirit, that Forni was an irreconcilable opponent, and must, therefore, be struck down. At a certain point he came out with these very words: 'What is Dumini doing?' (An obscene repetition of the question follows.) I objected that he was not in Rome. Impressed by the reproofs of the Prime Minister I assured him that I would arrange with the other members of the Directorate and not fail to send some one to Milan to give Forni a good lesson. I went at once to Giunta whom I found less excited than the Prime Minister. I told him that the Prime Minister wished Forni to receive a lesson and that he had to see about sending some one to Milan. All I did was to write a note to the Fascist 'Arditi' of Milan.² I had recourse to them because I had remarked that the Milan Fascio showed a certain weakness as far as Forni was concerned. In my letter, however, I recommended that they should not go too far, because it was I myself who had summoned Forni to Milan during the strike of August, 1922, and another time for the March on Rome. At bottom he had to his credit the good services he had done to Fascism. I suggested that some meetings should be held in the constituency; during these a riot should be provoked in the course of which he could be cudgelled.

Hearing that Dumini was in Perugia. I telephoned to the Prefect

¹ See above, pp. 173; 290.

² The group led by Albino Volpi.

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to send him on to Milan where the group of Arditi would know why he had come.

On the evening of the day following the assault, as the Prime Minister was coming into the session of the Grand Council, I told him that a telegram from Ricci, the Prefect of Pavia, announced that nothing had happened at Mortara on the arrival of Forni after he had been wounded at Milan. The Prime Minister replied: 'Of course, when a beating is given, it is always all right.' In the same session the Prime Minister presented a resolution which appeared in the Press as approved by the Grand Council; and which roughly runs as follows: 'Let traitors be treated as traitors.'

I will add one particular with regard to the assault on Captain Forni. On the evening of March 12 or 13,¹ that is, after the crime, Signor Mussolini laid before the Grand Council of the Fascist party a resolution, which was of course adopted, transmitted by the official Stefani Agency to the Press, and published the following day. In it was declared that 'from henceforward it was the duty of Fascists to treat traitors as such.' Thus the Ministers and Under-Secretaries, including the Minister of Justice, Signor Oviglio, set their official seal upon the recent assault.

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It will be appropriate at this point to illustrate the procedure which Senator De Bono followed as Director in Chief of Police. I think the patent of invention belongs to him. When dealing with a crime which outraged public opinion, he would arrange beforehand with some Fascists who had no connection whatever with the crime and have them arrested. The fellow arrested would soon after prove an alibi and be released and thus the trial would come to nothing. This was easy owing to the fact that Senator De Bono cumulated two different posts, that of Director in Chief of Police and that of Commander-in-Chief of the National Militia. In the first phase of the business, De Bono, dressed as a Black-Shirt, prepared the artifice in collusion with the Fascists best suited to the purpose; in the second phase, dressed in frock-coat (or rather, armed with handcuffs) he arrested the pretended culprits, allowing

¹ March 12, 1924; see above, p. 291.

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the real culprits meanwhile to gain safety, and confusing the judges by the reports of himself and subordinate police officials. Something of this kind must have been arranged after the murder of a priest in the province of Ferrara,¹ and of the Socialist workingman Piccinini at Reggio Emilia,² for in both cases De Bono was too prompt in making arrests among his own militia-men. I seem to remember that a non-commissioned officer of the Militia was arrested for the murder of the priest, but later had to be released.

After the Lidgeoning of Signor Amendola, Signor Mussolini was immensely tickled by this method of investigation. He got into the habit of asking the skilful and diligent Director General of Police, every day when he came to report: 'Well, how many Roman citizens did that wretched shopkeeper of Via Capolecase have to identify yesterday?' This was the man who had rendered assistance to Signor Amendola, and had seen his assailants. The 'feverish' investigations were finally cut short, thanks to the shady trick which muddled the very victim himself and his colleagues on the *Mondo*.

IX

Returning by car from Milan to Rome on April 9 or 10, Signor Mussolini, exchanging with me impressions and conclusions as to the election results, said – in the tone of one sure of having done right: 'It was I, and I alone, who ordered the merciless wrecking of all the Christian-Democrat premises in the province of Milan,³ and I will now bring to bankruptcy as many Catholic banks as I can.' I think he was indicating some measure which was being carried out against the Bank of Bagnolo in Piedmont. In the Press of those days there must be the confirmation of these threats.

I learned subsequently from Mario Giampaoli, secretary of the Milanese Fascio, from the deputy Professor Ernesto Belloni, and from the deputy Signor Dino Alfieri, that Signor Carlo Maria Maggi, secretary of the Fascist Provincial Federation of Milan, explicitly declared he had carried on the operations in obedience to

¹ Don Minzoni, parish priest of Argenta, see above, pp. 259, 265.

² See above, pp. 174, 258. This is the only point in which the writer's memory failed him. The men arrested some few days after the crime had actually committed it.

³ See above, pp. 293-4.

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the 'Duce's' orders. Signor Maggi himself confirmed to me the fact, which is well-known at the Palazzo Marino [the town-hall of Milan].

As further proof, I remember that Mussolini ordered his brother Arnaldo to publish an article against the Pope, deploring that His Holiness, by giving 500,000 lire to the ruined organizations, had shown himself to be, not the universal head of Catholicism, but only the petty politician of his native Brianza.

X

On April 7, likewise by order of Signor Mussolini, a violent demonstration was organized against the premises of the *Corriere della Sera* on account of the hostile neutrality maintained by this paper during the electoral campaign. During the day his brother Arnaldo telephoned me that some big doings were being prepared against the paper in question. I must admit that in this case also, I was not particularly sorry about the demonstration. I had hoped, until Saturday 5th, that Senator Albertini would choose in favour of the list which included Salandra and Orlando, the Prime Ministers who had declared the War and led to the victory. Therefore I was disappointed and indignant at Albertini's neutrality. His attitude certainly deprived the Fascist List in the city of Milan alone of at least seven or eight thousand votes, and put into the minority the Pro-Fascist coalition which administered the Commune.

XI

The ex-service men and disabled soldiers of Milan had decided to celebrate Victory Day by a procession on November 4, 1923, Mussolini, having learned the previous day from the *Piccolo* [Roman daily] that the Reformist-Socialists were to take part in the ceremony, telephoned me the order that the Fascists of Milan were to smash up this intolerable interference. I passed on this order, also by telephone, to either Giampaoli or Maggi or both; I do not remember which. On November 5, after the order had been carried out, Mussolini complained to me that Signor Treves¹ had not ended up by being taken to hospital.

I need not add that I was enthusiastically in agreement with the

¹ A Reformist-Socialist deputy, editor of the Milanese *Giustizia*.

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Prime Minister. One could admit that men like the deputies Rigola and Gonzales, and Signor Levi, who during the war maintained a correct if passive demeanour, should join in the procession. But, it would have been a crime to concede a similar right to Signor Treves, who, by his mischievous sentence,¹ undoubtedly contributed to the disaster of Caporetto, and after the Armistice made himself guilty of other utterances against the epic which has brought Italy into history. Signor Treves, and with him the bulk of Italian Socialists who now pose as the vindicators of the men who fought in the war, have always carefully refrained from disavowing their former activities for the benefit of the enemy.

XII

In the spring of 1923, a Fascist ceremony took place, at which, I think, at Rapallo – certainly in the eastern Riviera – General De Vecchi was present. Among the onlookers was Signor Rossetti, one of the men who were awarded the Gold Medal for bravery during the war. He was a bitter opponent of Fascism. Although not provoked, he thought good to rouse the anger of the majority of the crowd by calling out, 'Long live free Italy!' and 'Down with Fascism!' The next day Mussolini complained of the long sufferingness of the Fascists of the region, and expressed his astonishment that Signor De Vecchi had allowed such provocation to pass without prompt punishment. He remarked: 'Signor Rossetti, gold medal or no gold medal, was there to give provocation. Therefore without further ado, he should have been struck down dead on the spot.'

This incident, also, illustrates the fundamental reason of the tragic situation under which the régime is labouring; namely, the difficulty of distinguishing between the functions of the Prime Minister and those of the leader of a party of hot-heads.

XIII

To strike down dead opponents, was a usual phrase in the wrathful language of the Prime Minister. Signor Maffi² made

¹ In a parliamentary speech of October, 1917, Signor Treves said: 'Next winter nobody will be left in the trenches.'

² Communist deputy.

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certain contemptible declarations in Switzerland which were reported in the Italian Press. I remember that Signor Mussolini deplored that the above-mentioned deputy had been allowed to return across the frontier unmolested: 'That was a man to strike down dead at the frontier; whereas no one has hurt a hair of his head!'

He used the same phrase against the principal victim of the tragedy in which I am involved, Signor Matteotti, on the latter's return from attending Socialist congresses in Belgium and England.

XIV

In March, 1924, a divergence of opinion occurred between the Government and the brothers Scarfoglio¹ with regard to the composition of the List of Fascist and pro-Fascist candidates in the Campania division. It led to the breaking off of relations, till then cordial. The comic supplement to the great Neapolitan daily, published various irritating cartoons against Fascism and its leader.

For this reason, Signor Mussolini, in my presence, telephoned one morning to the Prefect D'Adamo the order that the premises of the *Mattino*, which had for some time been protected against the hostility of Signor Padovani's² adherents, should be no longer guarded by police or Carabineers. This was to render possible successive attacks on the premises by Fascists under suitable instructions from Rome. The records of that period will confirm what I say.

XV

In the autumn of 1923, there was a recrudescence of hostilities against Fascists resident in Paris. Therefore Dumini, Voip and Putato were dispatched thither as a result of an understanding between Signor Mussolini and Signor Bastianini, secretary of the Fasci abroad. I pass over the nature of the duties entrusted to

¹ Owners and editors of the influential Naples paper *Il Mattino*.

² Signor Padovani was a Fascist 'Kas.' Though expelled from the Fascist party, he still had a large following in Naples.

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them,¹ but I remember that they were quite outside those normally expected from public officials, if for no other reason, because the above-mentioned personages did not belong to any category of public officials. Notwithstanding, the Central Headquarters of the Police issued to them three passports under false particulars. I must add that it was not I who provided the expenses of this expedition, nor was I in any way concerned in issuing the false passports.

XVI

On the day following the debate in the Chamber of May 30 [1924] in which the Giunta-Bencivenza incident occurred, Signor Mussolini gave orders for a demonstration to be organized against the Opposition deputies, who had left the Chamber that day in sign of protest. I left the Palazzo Chigi, accompanied by Signor Alfieri,² and went to the head-quarters of the Roman Fascio, and communicated the Prime Minister's order to Commendatore Italo Foschi, adding that at least 2,000 Fascists should be collected, but that no public notices should be issued. Foschi assured us that he would give the Fascist sections all over Rome orders to gather. The next day, Sunday, while I was informing the Prime Minister that his order was being carried out, Foschi came to Palazzo Chigi. He had been summoned by Signor Mussolini himself, who wished to make sure how the demonstration was being organized. It took place on Tuesday, 3rd.³ Certain newspapers made allusions to my presence in the Piazza Montecitorio⁴ on that occasion, as specially tending to excite to violence. Therefore I desire to make known the following. Signor Amendola was being followed beyond the Piazza Colonna by a large crowd of demonstrators. I leapt into the car provided me for my official duties and, together with Signor Rotigliano,⁵ drove towards the Porta Pinciana, near which Signor Amendola lives, in order to avert possible assaults upon him. Later on I learnt that Signor Amendola had remained in the centre of Rome.

¹ See above, pp. 291-3. ² Fascist deputy. ³ See above, pp. 171, 243.

⁴ In front of the Chamber of Deputies.

⁵ Fascist deputy.

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XVII

On the evening on which the Giunta-Bencivenga incident occurred [May 30, 1924], the *Mondo* in its parliamentary columns related the incident in hyperbolic terms, producing the impression that the conflict had resulted in a definite success for the Opposition members who had come down on to the floor of the House to face the Fascists. The Prime Minister in my presence repeatedly gave vent to his irritation. He would have wanted the Fascist deputies, the moment the attack began, to have instantaneously united in crushing all attempt on the part of the opponents to make a display of physical force. 'Instead of which' - he said - 'I saw nearly all of them, except Bastianini and a few others, engrossed in playing the part of peacemakers on the benches of the extreme Left. Consequently the day resulted in a set-back for us. On the first possible occasion we must have our return game.' I record this incident because it has been said that I used to urge the Fascist deputies to violence during the sittings and in the lobbies.

XVIII

In my last examination before your lordships while speaking of my having acted as Signor Giunta's second in his duel with Signor Bencivenga, I received the impression that your lordships thought that I had endeavoured to envenom the quarrel. I do not know why and how the duel never took place. I do know that I did what was politically necessary in the case. It is a fact, however, that the Prime Minister, of his own initiative and quite apart from my own opinion, more than once urged me during those days to force the duel upon Signor Bencivenga, who had acted provocatively in the Chamber. The evening that the banquet in honour of the delegates to the Emigration Congress took place at the Hotel Excelsior, the Prime Minister summoned me to him as soon as I entered the hall, coming from the first meeting of the seconds. He nervously asked me when and under what conditions the duel was to take place, adding that it was time to have done with lengthy preliminaries and mock duels. I assured him that he might set his mind at rest, because, in agreement with Signor Iglioni, the other second, I had succeeded in hammering into

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Signor Bencivenga his obligations as a soldier,¹ as having contributed to the *Paese*, a paper which specialized in disgraceful attacks on His Highness the Duke of Aosta, Commander of the Third Army during the war. This brief conversation took place while Signor Mussolini had standing beside him Signor Tittoni, President of the Senate.

XIX

In May, 1923, I persuaded Signor Mussolini to accept an invitation to a banquet offered by the Press Association to the London journalists who came to Rome for the visit of the King and Queen of England. Mussolini, arriving with his Under-Secretary Signor Acerbo, perceived in the ante-room, among others, Signor Amendola and Signor Emanuel of the *Corriere della Sera*. Coming up to me while I was talking with some journalists, he exclaimed: 'You have brought me into fine company! There are some faces here that I cannot stomach, so I am off.' I asked him if he had gone mad. He replied that 'such a move would be quite in his own style, while, I, as a politician and fire-extinguisher, would not understand it.' Endeavouring to prevent the bystanders from noticing our excited conversation, I insisted on the gravity of such a step. I managed to dissuade him by pointing out that after all Amendola and Emanuel were, by their presence, rendering homage to the Italian Prime Minister who had risen from the ranks of journalism. The Presidents of both Chambers and Signor Orlando were present at the banquet.

XX

Among the men of the Opposition who most often provoked the wrath of the Prime Minister, I remember in particular Cesare Sobrero,² correspondent of the *Stampa* and *Giorno*, and Francesco Ciccotti Scozzese, who years ago was Signor Mussolini's substitute on the *Lotta di Classe* of Forli, while Signor Mussolini served his sentence for promoting disorders during the Tripoli war. One day he exclaimed: 'Must I every time I come to the Palazzo Chigi, run up against that ugly face of Ciccotti's.' He is one of those men

¹ Signor Bencivenga was a retired general.

² See facsimiles facing pp. 320 and 321.

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who went into hiding and have now come to light again. He must not be allowed to go about. He must be made to go and take a change of air. He must be compelled to go back to Monaco.' Ciccotti had gone there at the time of the March on Rome. It was De Bono, Director-in-Chief of Police, who took on the job of inducing him to seek a change of air. I do not know exactly by what methods. A few days later, Signor Mussolini complained that the operation had not yet been carried out. I heard De Bono excusing himself on the grounds that a squad had been entrusted with the duty of watching him, but it had not been possible to carry out the operation, as Ciccotti had the habit of going back home early in the evening. The intended victim must have got wind of what was being plotted against him, and as a result De Bono informed the Prime Minister that Ciccotti had cleared out.

XXI

One morning early in 1924, Signor Mussolini ordered me to write Mario Giampaoli¹ instructions to execute speedy vengeance on two or three Milanese Communists, who were to be stabbed to death because the Police had discovered in their homes membership cards of the Milanese Fascio. I did not attach much importance to the matter, but the Prime Minister desired me to make a note of the numbers of the cards and the names of the men. So I made up my mind to write to Giampaoli. In the days that followed the Prime Minister kept on asking me how things were getting on. He got furious when I told him that Giampaoli, while still pursuing inquiries, thought the discovery of the membership cards to be a mistake of the Police. Possibly a search made at the Milanese Fascio without warning and not by the Milan Police, might bring my letter to light.

XXII

The Prime Minister assiduously read the Opposition papers every day and handed to Signor Fasciolo the cuttings from the *Giustizia*, the *Unità*, the *Avanti* and the *Voce Repubblicana*, containing the lists of those who contributed funds to these papers,

¹ Secretary of the Milanese Fascist branch.

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and in particular of those who expressed anti-Fascist views. Fasciolo's job was to forward these lists to the various provincial and local men of confidence of the party, who at their discretion dosed with castor-oil, beat or threatened the persons designated.

XXIII

One morning in the Autumn of 1923, Signor Mussolini informed me that Signor Nitti had returned to Rome, and that according to information received by the Police he was engaged in political intrigues with opposition deputies and journalists at his villa. Signor Mussolini added that evidently the Roman Fascio did not exist, as it was so inert with regard to the opponents; it was necessary to 'render Signor Nitti's presence in Rome impossible,' reckoning on his great impressionability. I summoned Signor Polverelli and Signor Foschi, the leaders of the Roman Fascio. They came to see me as I lunched at the Restaurant 'Brecche,' and I conveyed to them the will of the Prime Minister. The Roman Fascio, on this occasion, exhibited an excess of zeal, its leaders being anxious to demonstrate to the Central Executive of the party, including myself, who was regarded as a supporter of Calza Bini¹ that the legally recognized Fascio of Rome was in a position to mobilize considerable forces without delay. For this reason, instead of sending 15 or 20 Fascists to spend the evening in Via Alessandro Farnese, singing 'Giovinezza' and emitting hostile shouts and whistles, the Roman Fascio mobilized several hundred men, who wrecked the Villa Nitti.² The same evening Mussolini angrily telephoned to me, that he had had Polverelli dismissed from the post of correspondent of the *Popolo d'Italia*. The dismissal was caused not by Polverelli's participation in the outrage, but because, in addressing in Piazza Colonna the Fascists returning from the expedition, Polverelli had used almost threatening language against the Fascist Government for its leniency towards the ex-Prime Minister. Next day the dismissal was revoked, and Signor Mussolini commented ironically to me upon Polverelli's eagerness for violence: he, Mussolini, did not need to

¹ Calza Bini was a dissident Fascist of Rome.

² See above, pp. 169-70.

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be urged to action, as in the Fascist ranks he was the only man always ready for fight. ;

The Prime Minister's responsibility for this outrage and consequently, that of the Roman Police Headquarters, is proved by the fact that when Signor Baviera¹ asked a question in the Chamber about the incident, no reply came from the Government, which desired to avoid expressing mendacious regrets. I must point out that on this occasion – although the daily papers made known the participation of the leaders of the Roman Fascio in the outrage – the Attorney-General of Rome took no proceedings. He remembered the incident only after my resignation under the illusion (not unjustified, considering the line followed by the Government) that he could put this crime also on my shoulders.

XXIV

In March, 1924, Signor Giunta, vice-President of the Chamber of Deputies, and at that time General Secretary of the Party, sent to several Fascist Provincial Federations in Northern Italy, a circular, giving orders to smash by all possible means any spoken or written manifestation on the part of the dissident Fascists led by Forni, Gorgini, Sala, etc. The circular, which has been reproduced by the Opposition daily papers, and figures in the trial for the assault on Captain Forni, begins as follows: 'By order of the Duce of Fascism and the Head of the Government . . .'²

XXV

On December 19 and 20, 1922, for a futile reason which had nothing to do with politics, as Signor Bruno Buozzi³ explained, and as some of the Turin Fascists also maintained, a certain number of 'squadrists' gave vent to their lust for reprisals with the result that 18 opponents were killed.⁴ It should be noted that these crimes – veritable summary executions – were not committed by excited crowds which have the excuse of mob psychology, but were almost all perpetrated, by night, by a few men who went straight to the homes of the intended victims. Several

¹ Liberal deputy.

² See above, p. 290.

³ Reformist-Socialist deputy of Turin.

⁴ See above, pp. 163-6.

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people, among others Senator Teofilo Rossi and Signor Olivetti, reported to me particulars of revolting cruelty.

I must in good faith declare that in this case no orders were sent from Rome. The responsibility lay entirely with a group of Turin Fascists gathered round by Senator De Vecchi, whereas another group, led by Signor Mario Gioda, Signor Gorgolini and Captain Gobbi, keenly deplored the useless acts of cruelty. Signor Massimo Rocca,¹ who was at that time in Turin, indignant at what had happened, sent a wreath of flowers to the funeral of one of the murdered men, a Socialist member of the town council.

The moral and political responsibility of the Government and of the Fascist Party is evident from the following facts: (1) Signor Gasti, who was sent to Turin to hold an inquiry on behalf of the Government, was recalled when those responsible perceived that he intended to act in earnest. I was entrusted with the task of telephoning to recall him, but refused to do so, because I knew my place in the administrative hierarchy better than did the Prime Minister. I transmitted the order instead to Signor Giunta, who was sent to Turin for a parallel inquiry on behalf of the Party, and as he was absent I telephoned it to a certain Marchisio, of the Turin Fascist Provincial Federation. (2) In January, 1923, the Grand Council dissolved the Turin Fascio, giving, however, the task of reconstructing it to that very Signor De Vecchi who, at a meeting at the Grand Hotel, Turin, had unconditionally asserted his responsibility with regard to the orders for the massacre.² This assumption of responsibility was easy enough for him, since he enjoyed parliamentary immunity, and justice and the Police were in acquiescence. De Vecchi was later rewarded by being made Senator and Governor of Somaliland.

XXVI

The day before Signor Amendola was to make his electoral speech at Naples, in March, 1924, Signor Greco³ gave me a copy of the text of the speech, which he had managed to obtain beforehand, and suggested that I should let the Prime Minister see it. I went to Palazzo Chigi and gave the sheets to Mussolini. He

¹ Fascist deputy. ² See above, pp. 166-7. ³ Fascist candidate.

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glanced rapidly at them, exclaimed that it was an extremely bad speech (bad in the sense of being hostile to the régime) and asked me to call Signor Greco who was waiting in the corridor. The Prime Minister said to him that at all costs this manifestation must be prevented as both realized it would result in a triumph for Signor Amendola. In consequence definite orders were given in the constituency for a Fascist concentration to take place, and prevent the delivery of the speech in any public hall. The circular, published in the *Mondo*, can be adduced in proof.-

XXVII

Besides the phrase which I recorded in my first examination: 'I am determined to see some bald skulls rolling across Piazza Colonna,'² I remember another threatening phrase against Senator Albertini. He had written in the *Corriere della Sera*, referring to the policy of intimidation pursued by the Government, that rather than write against his conscience he would break his pen in pieces. Signor Mussolini told me he had let Albertini know 'he would have his back broken first.'

XXVIII

In autumn, 1923, bands of Milanese Fascists attacked and almost entirely wrecked the printing offices belonging to Zerboni, who

¹ See above, pp. 170-1.

² Examination of June 23: 'It is well for it to be known that I have always tried to calm the nerves of the Prime Minister with regard to the personality of Senator Albertini. I tried to win the co-operation of the *Corriere della Sera*. I was not successful for two reasons: On the one hand, the obstinacy of Senator Albertini; and on the other, the attitude of the *Popolo d'Italia* which was always associating Signor Albertini with the Communists. The obstinacy of Signor Albertini was the result of two definite causes: firstly, Mussolini was continually uttering threats against him, sometimes saying: "I am determined to see some bald senatorial skulls rolling across Piazza Colonna"; secondly, the Prime Minister composed with his own hand a communiqué to the Volta press agency, in which Turati [Reformist Socialist], Malatesta [Anarchist] and Albertini [Liberal] were associated together. At the *Corriere della Sera* it was seen at a glance by the easily recognizable style that the author of the communiqué was Mussolini himself.'

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had been guilty of printing, among twenty-five weekly publications of various sorts, two Socialist papers with, of course, the regular authorization from the prefect. I was greatly indignant at this unjustifiable act of violence, the victim of which was an honest business man of no party leanings, who in 1919 had refused obedience to the order of the Printers' trade union not to print the two papers *Il Fascio* and *L'Ardito*. I persuaded several industrialists and public bodies to give orders to Zerboni to compensate him for his losses. Signor Mussolini himself, at my suggestion, enjoined that orders should be given to him. I set on foot an inquiry into the responsibility for the outrage and obtained that the Central Directorate of the Fascist party expressed its disapproval of it. But the next day Signor Mussolini told me 'I was making too much fuss about it'; even if there has been a 'misunderstanding' since Zerboni was a friend rather than an adversary, the attack had come at an opportune moment; it would be a warning to all owners of printing works who were disposed to do publishing for the opponents in the coming electoral campaign.

XXIX

In our frequent discussions of the prospects for the elections of April 6 [1924], I regarded our defeat as impossible for psychological reasons. Signor Mussolini, on the contrary, kept repeating: 'If things go badly next Sunday, so much the better: I will rip the toad up: on Monday I'll make the two hundred thousand guns of the Militia all vote together.'

XXX

At the opening of the electoral campaign, Signor Turati [the Reformist-Socialist leader] made a speech at the Balbo and Scribe theatre in Turin. The next day Signor Mussolini complained that the Turin Fascists had remained inert and that Signor Freguglia, head of the 'Arditi,' had used such chastened language in his debate with Turati. As a speech of Signor Gonzales was announced in Genoa for the following Sunday, Signor Mussolini gave orders that the meeting was to be broken up by the Fascists of Liguria. This was duly carried out. The papers reported that

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Signor Gonzales received serious injuries, and that many others present (amongst them Signor Rossetti) suffered violence.

XXXI

A few days before the Matteotti tragedy, I and other members of the Central Directorate of the Fascist party were discussing with Signor Mussolini the insubordinate and devil-may-care behaviour of certain Fascist deputies, such as Signor Rocca and Signor Ravazzoli (the latter was in conflict with two other Fascist deputies, Signor Pisenti and Signor Spezzetti).

Signor Mussolini expressed his surprise that the party police – the famous Cheka of which I shall speak later – gave as yet no sign of life. On that occasion he said with the greatest calmness: 'Our party has no legal weapon at its command against these devil-may-care deputies. We blame them, we expel them, we demand their resignation. They don't care a damn, and in the long run it is we who are the losers. The only thing to do is to bludgeon them without mercy. Does this Cheka do anything, or does it not?'

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Public opinion, misled by information which the government circulates to suit the needs of the moment, has swallowed the fairy-tale of a Cheka which worked not only without the knowledge of the government and the party but actually against the interests of Fascism in the service of a plutocracy hostile to Fascism. That Cheka is thought to have been under the direction of Rossi, of Marinelli and, still more absurdly, of Filippelli. It is true that no official record exists of a resolution to set up a Cheka. I do not imagine anybody would expect the production of official records of such a nature, or that such a resolution would need to be ratified by a referendum of the 800,000 members of the party. It is further true that the Cheka was still in process of organization, and its aims and procedure were not definitely formulated, nor its leaders definitely appointed. But it is certain that the original idea of it was due to Mussolini and to him alone. I refer to what I said in my examination of June 23, 1924.¹ I add here

¹ See above, pp. 389-92.

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'that the necessity of an organization for defence and revenge was expounded by the Prime Minister in the following terms:

'Our régime has not yet at its disposal lawful means of striking at its enemies, because the existing laws are inspired by that spirit of Liberalism against which Fascism rose in revolt. To get over this difficulty, all governments in a state of transition must govern illegally in order to overcome their opponents.'

Remembering the struggle against Forni in Lomellina, he added that, as we controlled all the powers of the state, we were always in a position to cover up illegal violence.

If then, those who with the approval of the 'Duce' were to compose the Ceka, committed arbitrary and untimely actions, this does not lessen the responsibility of the one who proposed the institution of the Ceka, i.e. Signor Mussolini. To attribute the responsibility solely to Rossi and Marinelli is the climax of effrontery and childishness.

XVII

The personal relations between the Prime Minister and Amerigo Dumini, though not frequent, were cordial to the point of affection. In the National Library of Florence there must be a number of the paper *La Sassaiola Fiorentina* which reproduces a photograph of the Duce with a dedication to Dumini. On various occasions, especially on the day when he gave me the order to launch an offensive against Forni, Mussolini asked me: 'What is Dumini doing?' I answered: 'He is travelling all over Italy in the service of the *Corriere Italiano*.' When Dumini had his duel with the editor of the *Becco Giallo*, Alberto Giaunini, the Prime Minister expressed his approbation of Dumini's intention of wearing the black shirt during the encounter. I made the comment that this was a regular piece of bravado. However, of my opinion and the Duce's, Dumini preferred the latter.

On many other occasions Signor Mussolini spoke to me of Dumiri with affection..

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XXXIII

Numberless incidents show that the Duce was mistrustful of the local organizations of Ex-service men. I, on the contrary, was inclined to protect them against the excesses of the Fascists in the provinces. But the Prime Minister always ended by supporting the local 'Rasses.' It was owing to the pressure of Farinacci that the Fascist party lost all control over the Central Executive of the National Association of Ex-service-men which was then under the leadership of Signor Arangio Ruiz.

XXXIV

The personal relations of the Prime Minister with Albino Volpi lie further back than those with Dumini and were more frequent. Mussolini was to some extent the spiritual father and commander-in-chief of the Milanese 'Arditi,' especially in 1919 when Volpi was the factotum of this association.

I may add that when electoral reform was being discussed (July, 1923), Signor Mussolini got me to summon Volpi with some of his 'Arditi' from Milan to Rome in view of possible political complications. This was done.

On another occasion when a dissension had arisen between the Arditi and the commander of the Militia in Lombardy, General Stringa, Signor Mussolini told me: 'Do all you can to summon Albino as often as possible to Rome, because in Milan he gives trouble to Stringa.'

Lastly I would record that Mussolini when already a deputy, was a witness on behalf of Volpi in the trial for the murder of the workman, Inversetti. He gave evidence not on the actual murder but on the merits and personal qualities of Volpi. See the reports of the trial in the daily Press of 1921 and the beginning of 1922.¹

XXXV

In the Prime Minister's behaviour when confronted with the Matteotti crime we can distinguish several phases:

(1) On the evening of Wednesday, June 11, Mussolini, return-

¹ See above, pp. 323-4.

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ing from Montecitorio,¹ where the news of Signor Matteotti's disappearance had begun to circulate, exclaimed sarcastically: 'The Socialists are disturbed because they cannot find Matteotti; he must have gone to . . .' and the sentence ended with an obscene expression. Signor Lo Jacono was present, taking the place during those days of Mussolini's private secretary, Signor Barone Russo. Reflecting on the tone of those words, I begin to believe that the Prime Minister already knew at least that Matteotti had been abducted.

(2) The following day, Thursday, the Prime Minister grew more disturbed at the emotion which was spreading in parliamentary circles. It was then that I, after Signor Rocco and Signor Giunta went away, stayed behind and said to him that the abduction was undoubtedly the work of our people, and that he understood quite well whom I meant. Already at that moment I told him that I had broken with Dumini some time before, and had no contact with him, so that I had absolutely no responsibility in the business. Mussolini interrupted: 'To be sure, you are too intelligent to compromise the political situation by such a deed after the speech I made on Saturday.' He then referred to the difficulty of extricating the guilty, as I have stated in my examination of June 23.²

(3) On Friday Mussolini had to reckon with the accusations made by Giunta and Balbo against Dumini, rather with the aim of damaging me than because they were distressed at the crime itself. As De Bono also was inciting him against me, Mussolini considered the possibility of saving the situation by throwing me overboard, i.e. allowing the whole responsibility for the state of affairs leading up to the crime to fall on me.

(4) On Saturday, he extorted my resignation from the Press Bureau and the Directorate. A Press campaign against me was the inevitable sequel of the Government's desertion of me. Thereupon he carried his fratricidal scheme so far as to give orders for my arrest. The Prime Minister will no doubt invoke this measure to discount my accusations against him. He will say: 'I had so little to fear from Rossi, I am so guiltless of respon-

¹ The Italian Chamber of Deputies.

² See above, p. 339.

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sibility that I had him arrested on Saturday, four days before the Judge thought of doing so.'

(5) But on Sunday afternoon, surprised and indignant at what had befallen me, I sent Signor Mussolini a letter in which I briefly reminded him that he himself was responsible for lawlessness and incitement to violence, that I was entirely innocent of the Mattcotti murder and that the sacrificing of me would be futile and dangerous.

Shortly after receiving it, the Prime Minister sent Commendatore Fasciolo to Bazzi's house where he thought I had taken refuge. I had, however, gone to the house of another friend. There I was found by two journalists who had been sent in a motor-car to take me to see Fasciolo. I refused to go with them, because I was expecting other people, and did not think it wise to go about too much in the town and because Bazzi was known as a friend of mine and therefore it was not prudent to go to his house of all places.

Two hours later, towards 10 a.m., the same journalists returned 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.

A further proof of the Prime Minister's wish to facilitate my flight, is the fact that the *Piccolo* and the *Meridiano* of Monday, June 15, published an official communiqué of the Stefani Agency announcing that up till then no warrant of arrest had been issued against me. This was intended to counteract the public impression that an order was out for my arrest, and to assure me that I might seek safety in flight. But at the same time, the *Serenò* published the telegraphic circular sent by De Bono to the Prefects and to the Carabineers, giving my description, and ordering my arrest.

What must we conclude from all this? Assuming that the Prime Minister believed in my guilt, and was not acting purely from political opportunism, this could only mean that the Home

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Office, which on Saturday evening had ordered my arrest, became on Sunday and Monday an abettor to my escape.

After I had given myself up (an act certainly unexpected and displeasing to the Prime Minister) he must have consoled himself with the idea that I had resigned myself to be the scapegoat for himself and the régime.

XXXVI

As another proof of Signor Mussolini's tendency to favour acts of violence, even when culminating in crime, I recall the pronouncement of the arbitrators of the Association of Lombard Journalists, published by several Milanese papers and by the *Avanti* in full, in February-March, 1920. The text of the award drawn up by Signor Poggio, chairman of the arbitrators, condemns Mussolini. It appears from it that two sub-editors of the *Popolo d'Italia*, Signori Capodivacca and Rossato, had resigned rightly or wrongly, alleging their repugnance for collaborating in a paper whose editor (Signor Mussolini) had in their presence congratulated two youths who on November 17, 1919, had thrown a bomb at a Socialist procession which was marching to the offices of the *Avanti* in Via San Damiano, to celebrate their triumph in the elections. The explosion of the bomb wounded several persons.

XXXVII

As further proof of all that I have set forth here, I mean to lay before your lordships extracts of speeches containing definite incitement to crime, made by Signor Mussolini after his assumption of power.¹

In addition I recall that Signor Mussolini often drew up with his own hand the communiqués published by the Volta Agency, particularly those containing the most violent threats.² I must also inform you that the most severe reprimands to the Opposition, published in big type by the *Popolo d'Italia*, and appearing simultaneously in the *Corriere Italiano*, *Nuovo Paese* and *Impero*, were often composed under instructions sent directly by telephone

¹ See above, pp. 286, 296. ² See above, pp. 290-1, 319-20.

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by the Prime Minister. I remember particularly an extremely violent article against the *Giornale d'Italia* and Senato Bergamini, written entirely by Mussolini, and published in the *Impero*, the editors of which kept the original manuscript.

XXXVIII

I assure you that the present account has not been written with a light heart. But it is thoroughly correct, to the point of becoming at times photographic. It will be possible to deplore in it gaps and omissions, favourable to Signor Mussolini, but no calumnious distortions.

At this point I must reply to a question which instinctively arises. How can certain noble sentiments which Signor Mussolini expresses in his speeches be reconciled with facts which put such grave, moral, political and penal responsibility upon his shoulders?

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

Thus it can happen that he touches the hearts and rouses the admiration of the Roman crowds in Piazza Colonna on April 10, [1924] by crying: 'Let our faction perish, if our country is saved,' whereas a few minutes earlier he has been saying to me, he hopes the Fascists will put their opponents back into their proper place. By turns he is cynical and sentimental, impulsive and cautious, irritable and calm, generous and cruel, quick to decide and slow to move, uncompromising and conciliatory. All the qualities of heart and mind have in him contradictory aspects. In his activities as head of the government and of the Fascist party, the tendencies which predominate are duplicity, superficiality and improvisation. In an interview with socialist trade-unionists, such as Colombino, D'Aragona, Beelli, etc., he talks as one who has no confidence in the Fascist unions, whereas he assures Rossoni¹ that he only gave the interview so as to compromise these men with their own party. Officially

¹ The secretary in chief of the Fascist trade unions.

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he makes a show of endorsing the policy of Signor De Stefani,¹ whereas he refuses Signor De Stefani's request to stop the publication of the newspaper *Il Nuovo Paese*, because, as he says, 'in the journalistic keyboard it is expedient for him to have also that note of personal opposition to De Stefani.' He is present at De Stefani's speeches at Milan, and later in conversation with myself, Acerbo and Finzi, gives vent to his anger against De Stefani, complaining that 'the ministry of finance has become the arsenal of Anti-Fascism.' He officially sends amicable messages to Farinacci, while urging me to get the party to stop the grumblings of that same gentleman; and when a current of opposition to Farinacci becomes apparent in the Cremona town council, Mussolini expresses the hope that he will be able 'to prick that blister (i.e. Farinacci) too.' Once or twice a day he receives De Bono, Finzi, Acerbo, Bianchi, and in his speech of January 27 [1924] expresses his appreciation of them² while on the other hand he suggests to Pio Vanzì how to harass them in his paper, *Il Serenissimo* (Vanzì afterwards avowed to me having received these directions). In the same speech of January 27, he, to my disappointment, proclaims: 'Mussolini is the arch-enemy of Mussolinism,' while he in agreement with the coterie of the Foreign Office and to my disappointment and in spite of the indignant protests of Forges-Davanzati and Meraviglia he encourages the publication of *Il Sereno*, which aims at widening the breach between Mussolini and his party.

Knowing all this mass of facts and unimpeachable truths I ask your lordships, as one day I shall ask my unwitting detractors in the Fascist party, whether I must resign myself to be the scapegoat, whether I have not the right, nay more than the right, the duty of revolting against this man, who is primarily responsible for the creation of the environment and of the circumstances leading up to the assassination of Matteotti.

Thrown over, denounced and culminated by order of Mussolini, I, Cesare Rossi, am no longer under any obligation of generosity or discretion towards him.

¹ Minister of Finance in Mussolini's Cabinet from November, 1922, to July, 1925.

² See p. 325, n. 1.