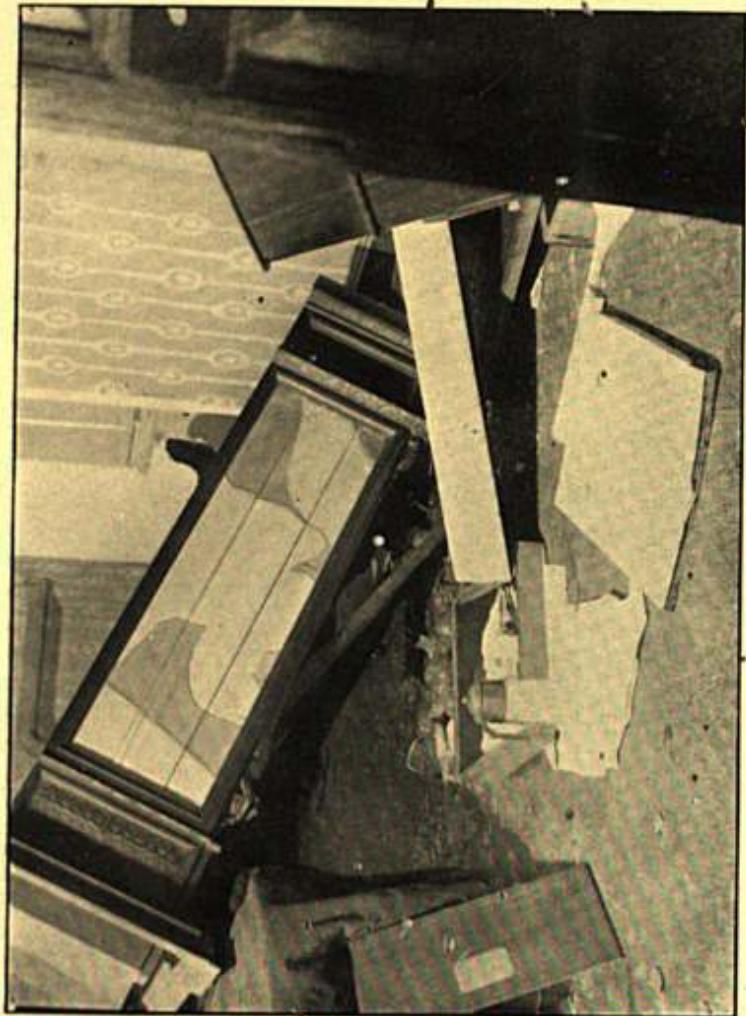






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THE FASCIST DICTATORSHIP
IN ITALY



A ROOM IN SIGNOR NITTI'S HOUSE AFTER THE LOOTING ON NOVEMBER 29, 1923

(From the *Paris*, December 22, 1923)

(see pages 169 and 247)

THE FASCIST DICTATORSHIP
IN ITALY

by

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VOLUME I

ORIGINS AND PRACTICES

With an Introduction by
RAMSAY MUIR

LONDON

JONATHAN CAPE 30 BEDFORD SQUARE

FIRST PUBLISHED MCMXXVIII

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY
BUTLER & TANNER LTD
FROME

TO
MY, ENGLISH FRIENDS
WHO HAVE CAUSED ME TO REALIZE
THAT I HAVE TWO COUNTRIES—
MY OWN AND ENGLAND

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INTRODUCTION

BEFORE the war, two great principles of government seemed to have been established, in all the more progressive countries of the world, as essential marks of a civilized State.

The first was the principle of Sovereignty of Law: which implies the abolition of arbitrary power, by whomsoever exercised; the prohibition, by the authority of the State, of every wilful abuse of strength, whether by individuals or by parties or by mobs; and the enjoyment by every man of an assurance that his person, his rights and his property will be protected from illegal assault by the whole power of the community.

The second principle – embodied in the universal establishment of parliamentary institutions – was the belief that the ultimate control over all common affairs ought to rest with the whole people, acting freely through their chosen representatives; and that absolute government, whatever temporary benefits it might bring, was an insult to the dignity of free men.

Law and Liberty had become the presiding genii of Western civilization; and every serious student of history regarded their victory as the greatest triumph and proof of progress in human affairs.

Since the war there has been a strange reaction against these beliefs. In many countries both Law and Liberty are less respected than they used to be. In two great countries, Italy and Russia, they have been dethroned; and the apostles of the new regimes in both countries assure us that a belief in the sovereignty of law, a hatred of arbitrary power, and a respect for parliamentary government and the free movement of public opinion, are old-fashioned superstitions, cherished only by the despised *bourgeoisie*.

Wide as are the differences between the Russia of Lenin and the Italy of Mussolini, they are alike in this, that they have re-established arbitrary or extra legal power, that they use brute violence and terrorism as instruments of government, and that they have substituted dictatorship for self-government.

Whether we admire or detest these new methods, it is supremely important that we should understand them. But it is difficult to

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do so, largely because it is a part of their procedure to prevent the dissemination of knowledge, and to suppress or doctor the facts. Much of what we are told about them is propagandist matter, carefully prepared for our consumption. In this book we have a study of the Italian experiment by an Italian citizen who has seen it at close quarters and lived under it. Professor Salvemini has two special claims upon our attention.

In the first place, he is a historical scholar of European reputation. His books are highly esteemed by the learned world. He has held the chair of history in three universities, and finally in the university of that magical city of Florence, which has long been the heart of the intellectual life of Italy. He has a scholar's training in the weighing of evidence, and a scholar's scrupulosity about the use of facts. The reader will observe that in this book he not only gives his authority for every statement he makes, but in most cases tells enough about the authority he quotes to make you aware of its bias.

In the second place, Professor Salvemini is an exile for his principles, who has taken refuge in England like his great compatriot Mazzini nearly a hundred years ago; and there can be no better proof of his sincerity. If he could have brought himself, as many others have done, to praise the Fascist regime — and there are things for which it can be praised if you will fix your gaze exclusively upon them — his fortune would have been secure. If he could even have held his peace, he might have gone on with his work and kept his post. He could not do so, because he believed that both in the methods of its establishment and in the methods of its maintenance, the Fascist regime had outraged law and betrayed liberty, and so had been false to the most vital principles of civilization.

He did not conceal his opinions. And, since free speech no longer exists in Italy — the suppression of free speech having been, as in Russia, one of the first signs of emancipation from the superstition of liberty — he had to resign his chair and leave his country, to wander in those other lands where this superstition still survives. The only charge brought against him (it was not pressed) was that he had expressed unfavourable opinions of the govern-

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ment in one of those secret publications which always spring up when governments try to stifle the free movement of opinion.

Being an exile, Professor Salvemini is, of course, not absolutely impartial. He cannot take a calm, indulgent view of the system which has driven him out of his country for no offence recognizable by law. He has a definite bias — a bias in favour of liberty. He cannot judicially balance the advantages and disadvantages of arbitrary rule, because he is so constituted that even very great material gains would seem to him as dust in the balance in comparison with the loss of liberty and the weighing of the scales of justice.

This is a sort of bias that used to be very common among Englishmen. Perhaps it is still common. If it is, many Englishmen will read this book, wherein the flame of a passion for liberty glows through a mass of documents and classified facts put together with the punctilious care of a scholar.

I am proud that Professor Salvemini should have asked me to contribute an introduction to his book. But it ought not to need introduction, if Englishmen still care, as they used to do, to follow the fortunes of liberty in the world.

RAMSAY MUIR

THE REVOLUTION THAT NEVER WAS

§ 1: *The Post-War Neurasthenia*

ITALY, like every other country, in 1919-20 suffered from what may be called 'post-war neurasthenia.' This disease was at its worst in the defeated countries; but it reached a dangerous pitch in those that were victorious, and did not even spare those that had remained neutral. In Italy, it was aggravated by certain peculiar circumstances.

Italy had not been unexpectedly invaded like Belgium and France. Her people were not suddenly pitchforked into war, without time for reflection, like those of Germany, Austria-Hungary, and England. For nine months, from August, 1914, to May, 1915, the question of war or neutrality was argued threadbare. The Socialists and the Catholics almost all declared against war. The governing groups split up into 'interventionists' and 'neutralists,' and remained divided during the whole of the war. This division of opinion prevented the working-classes from clearly grasping the reason for, and the necessity of, the war. They felt they were being forced to face death unnecessarily, and when the war was over, they came back with a deep feeling of bitterness against all those in power.

During the war, and especially during the last year, the politicians made extravagant promises to the soldiers in order to keep up their fighting spirit. Peace was to be ensured for their children and their children's children; youth was to replace old age in public life; land was to be given to the peasants; a root-and-branch reform of laws and customs was to prove the country's gratitude to those who had shed their blood for her.¹ When the war was

¹ On November 20, 1918, in a speech to the Chamber of Deputies, the Prime Minister, Signor Orlando, boasted: 'This war is at the same time the greatest political and social revolution in history, surpassing even the French Revolution!' The same day, an ex-Premier, Signor Salandra, who was to become one of the god-fathers of the Fascist movement, proclaimed: 'The war is a revolution, yes, a very great revolution. Let no one think that after the storm it will be possible to make a peace-

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over, the politicians found out that none of these promises could be kept, and promptly proceeded to forget them. But the people remembered: the capitalist, they said, had got the substance, and the soldiers, the shadow.

If impossible promises could not be kept, unnecessary pain at least need not have been inflicted. But as it was, the pensions to the families of the killed and wounded, and the medical examination of wounded-claimants, were granted only after exasperating delays. This was partly due to the disorder in which the soldiers in all countries keep their papers, and partly to the fact that the office staffs protracted their business as long as possible to avoid demobilization. The poor victims had the impression of being robbed of their rights by the malevolence of the 'Government' and of the *bourgeoisie*.

At the same time the country was in the throes of a severe economic crisis. During the war, and in the first post-war months, agreements were come to between the Allied powers and the Italian Government which prevented or restricted the fall of the lira. But in the second half of 1919 the Italian Government had to fall back on its own resources. As a result Italy passed through a financial crisis similar to that of France in 1925-6.¹ Prices rose accordingly.² There was a real economic upheaval. To meet the rise in prices, the workers, in town and country, struck for higher wages, and the Civil Servants followed their example.

The process of demobilization threw into the labour market, able return to the old order. Let no one think that the old habits of leisurely life can be resumed.' If this was the declared opinion of two Prime Ministers, one of them belonging to the Extreme Conservative Right, we can easily imagine how extravagant were the expectations of the revolutionaries of the Extreme Left.

¹ The average cost of 100 Swiss francs was 130 lire in December, 1918; 152.32 in June, 1919; 241.67 in December, 1919; 308.48 in June, 1920; 441.02 in December, 1920.

² Taking as 100 the Italian average prices in 1913, the index number during 1919 and 1920 ranks as follows: 1919, June, 451; December, 576; 1920, January, 639; February, 701; March, 758; April, 836; May, 831; June, 795; July, 761; August, 778; September, 825; October, 829; November, 844; December, 825.

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in the course of 1919 and 1920, some 160,000 discharged officers. The better elements among these went quietly back to their homes and sought for work like the anonymous masses of demobilized workmen and peasants. But it was not easy for some of them to find a livelihood. Called to the colours at the age of nineteen or twenty, they had learned no trade but war. Many, who before the war had been clerks, professional men in a small way, or small shopkeepers, had won the rank of officers. They had grown accustomed to having a fair amount of money to spend, they had acquired a taste for command and for a life of adventure. On their return home, they could not adapt themselves to the uneventful and obscure labour of a postman, a shop assistant, or a clerk. Being hungry and discontented, they imagined themselves revolutionaries, and hung about the towns, eaten up with idleness, dissatisfied with themselves, their neighbours and the world in general. Restless chimerical spirits, thirsting for adventure, they were capable alike of heroic acts and frightful crimes, stirring up revolt as long as they lacked a means of livelihood, but once having secured that, ready to turn into violent reactionaries. Many of them threw in their lot with the Socialist movement and were called 'War-Socialists.' Others formed in 1919 and 1920 the first nuclei of the Fascist Party. War-Socialists and Fascists are to be found at the head of all the worst disorders of the past nine years.

In the midst of this universal unrest there crept in the propagandists of Bolshevism, preaching strikes, local and general, the occupation of factories and of the land, sabotage and obstructionism, and hoping thus to pave the way for the 'dictatorship of the proletariat.'

To all these causes of post-war neurasthenia was added another - the worst of all. The war was hardly over when the General Staffs of the army and the navy, and the Foreign Office, organized a systematic propaganda to convince the people that President Wilson and the Allied Governments of France and England were robbing Italy of the fruits of victory, and that the sacrifices made in the war were in vain, since the Government could not carry out, in its entirety, the programme of territorial expansion that it

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considered necessary. The authors of this hysterical campaign and the Nationalists and Fascists who were their agents hoped to keep alive the war spirit of the Italian people, and to bring pressure to bear on the Allied Governments and President Wilson, during the interminable peace negotiations. The Allies and Wilson paid no heed to their threats, and the General Staffs and the Foreign Office succeeded only in working up a great part of the Italian middle and intellectual classes to a state of frenzy. Thus was generated the state of mind which resulted in D'Annunzio's raid on Fiume in September, 1919. Thus the spirit of sedition was fostered in the army and the Government became incapable of suppressing disorder.

Among the working-classes this short-sighted policy had a disastrous result. Having been forced against their will into an appalling war lasting three and a half years, and disappointed in all the promises that had been made to them, the Italian people were now told that they had shed their blood in vain.

The French Government also did not succeed in obtaining at the Peace Conference all that it desired - as, for instance, the immediate annexation of the Saar, the permanent military occupation of the left bank of the Rhine and the dismemberment of Germany. Notwithstanding this, the French people did not pass through a crisis of exasperation like that which made many Italians lose their heads completely. The reason was that MM. Poincaré, Clemenceau and Foch did not start a campaign of wild recrimination like that initiated by Signor Orlando, Baron Sonnino and the General Staffs of the Italian army and navy. What would have happened in France, if nearly all the newspapers, deputies and ministers on whom had fallen the responsibility of the war, for two years, had unceasingly protested that France had been robbed of her victory, that France was ruined, that France had to prepare to make war on her allies in order to seize what these allies had refused her? Would the French soldiers have returned contentedly to their homes, or would they have slain the deputies, the journalists and the ministers who had made the war and who now declared themselves powerless to safeguard the 'vital interests' of the nation?

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Those who profited most by the propaganda of the Nationalists and Fascists were the Socialists. They could affirm, in the very words of the men who were in favour of the war, that, after all the blood that had been spilt, another war was imminent—a war of which D'Annunzio gave the signal by occupying Fiume at the very moment when the country was in the midst of the parliamentary elections of November, 1919.¹

These elections took place in an atmosphere of revolutionary excitement. The new Chamber was divided into three sections: 156 Socialists, 100 Christian-Democrats ('Partito-Popolare') and a body of 250 deputies split into many political groups. No single section of these three had a majority. The Cabinets were formed by a part of the 250 deputies, who belonged neither to the Socialist nor to the Christian-Democrats. This small minority was supported by the Christian-Democrats, who lent some of their men to the Ministries, but never found a basis for a permanent agreement. And these weak coalitions had to withstand the opposition not only of the Socialist deputies, but also of those non-Socialists and non-Christian-Democrat deputies who remained outside the Coalition.

Such a situation could only lead to the paralysis of parliamentary institutions. And this parliamentary paralysis showed itself at a time when the exaltation left in people's minds by the war accentuated the need of a firm government. Post-war neurasthenia made the regular workings of Parliament impossible, and the breakdown of Parliament increased the post-war neurasthenia.

For all these reasons, Italy in 1919-20 seethed with continual unrest. The soldiers, reading the revolutionary papers, no longer obeyed their officers. The officers no longer obeyed the Government, but favoured D'Annunzio. The Ministers had forfeited all moral prestige, and moreover had not enough force at their com-

¹ On the disastrous effects of the Nationalist propaganda and of D'Annunzio's expedition to Fiume, see Novelto Papafava, *Appunti militari*, 19-1921, Ferrara, S.T.E.T., 1921, p. 143; Guglielmo Ferrero, *Da Fiume a Roma*, Milan, Ed. Athena, 1923, p. 12; and Edgar Ansel Mowrer, *Immortal Italy*, New York and London, D. Appleton & Co., 1922, pp. 275 and 315.

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mand to maintain order; they were swayed this way and that by the threats of anyone who succeeded in frightening them. Trials for political crimes were postponed by the magistrates who lacked the courage to pronounce sentence. Strikes on the most trivial pretexts were frequent, many of them exasperating, especially those which occurred in the essential services, such as the railways, tramways, postal and telegraph facilities, and the light and food supplies of the large towns.¹

§ 2: *Mussolini in 1919-20*

Apologists for Fascism, in explaining why there was no Bolshevik revolution in Italy in 1919-20, give the credit to Mussolini and the *Fasci di Combattimento* (Fighting Groups) which he began to gather round him in March, 1919. 'Fascism'—they say—'stamped out Bolshevism in Italy. Had Bolshevism conquered Italy, the rush of the Communist revolution would have been irresistible and all Europe would have collapsed in social disorganization and destitution. In saving Italy from Bolshevism, Mussolini saved European civilization from shipwreck.'

'Such an appeal for self-sacrifice'—writes the *Morning Post*, September 13, 1926—'can only be made at a moment of imminent peril, and for Italy that moment came when the post-war anarchy seemed to have won the final victory. It is to Signor Mussolini's undying glory that he made that appeal when all seemed lost.'

And Mr. Winston Churchill solemnly proclaims to the Roman Fascists in January, 1927:

'If I had been an Italian I am sure I should have been entirely with you from the beginning to the end of your victorious struggle against the bestial appetites and passions of Leninism.'

¹ A fair-minded résumé of the causes of the general unrest is given by Giorgio Mortara, *Prospettive economiche*, 1923, Città di Castello, 1923; pp. 421-2; see also Mowrer, *Immortal Italy*, pp. 317-29. The book of this intelligent and honest American eye-witness was written before the Fascist legend was concocted; it is therefore a valuable and trustworthy source of information.

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These opinions are in no way justified by facts.

Until the outbreak of the Great War Mussolini was a Revolutionary Socialist of the Extreme Left. Moreover, breaking with the official traditions of Socialism and leaning towards Anarchism, he even approved of the worst Anarchistic outrages.

In July, 1910, an Anarchist threw a bomb at the Colon Theatre in Buenos Ayres. Mussolini wrote in the newspaper *Lotta di Classe*, of which he was editor, under the date of July 9, 1910:

'I admit without discussion that in normal times bombs do not belong to Socialist methods. But, when a Government - be it Republican, Imperial or Bourbon - gags you and puts you beyond the pale of humanity, then one cannot condemn violence in reply to violence, even if it makes some innocent victims.'

In the number of July 16, 1910, he insisted:

'In the Colon Theatre, on that famous gala evening, all those present represented Government reaction. Why call the bomb-thrower a coward, simply for disappearing in the crowd? Did not even Felice Orsini attempt to hide? And did not the Russian terrorists, when their *coup* had been carried out, try to avoid arrest? Are they heroic-madmen who carry out individual action? They are heroes nearly always, but scarcely ever insane. Was Angiolillo a madman? Was Bresci a madman? Or Sofia Perowskaja? No! Their behaviour drew words of admiration even from bourgeois journalists of high intelligence. In judging these men and their acts, we must not place ourselves on the mental plane of the bourgeois and the police. It is not we Socialists who must cast a stone. Let us acknowledge instead that individual acts have also their value and sometimes are the first signals of profound social transformations.'

Angiolillo was the Anarchist who, in 1897, killed the Spanish minister Canovas del Castillo, and Bresci was the Anarchist who killed King Humbert in July, 1900.

After the assassination of the Russian minister, Stolypin, Mussolini wrote in the *Lotta di Classe* of September 23, 1911:

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'A just Nemesis struck him down. He was an oblique, sinister and blood-thirsty individual. He deserved his fate. The Russia of the proletarians is now exultant, and waits for dynamite to shatter the bones of the Little Father of the blood-stained hands. The tragic end of the minister of Nicholas II is perhaps the beginning of a new period of revolutionary action. We hope so. In the meantime, all honour to the Avenger who has fulfilled the sacred rite.'

In March, 1912, the Anarchist Alba attempted to shoot the present King of Italy, now Mussolini's 'cousin,' wounding instead a cuirassier in the royal retinue. A group of Socialist deputies led by Bissolati went to congratulate the King on his escape. At the National Socialist Congress in the following July, Mussolini censured them severely, and had them expelled.

'On March 14' — he said — 'a mason fired his revolver at Victor of Savoy. There were clear precedents for this — that of Bresci and that of Elizabeth of Austria. It might have been hoped that nowadays no Workers' Organization would hang out flags on such an occasion. Clever people should not have let themselves be influenced by sentiment. An attempt on life is an accident which happens to Kings just as falling off a bridge is an accident which happens to masons. If we are to shed tears, let us shed them for the masons. Instead of which we had an acrobatic performance. . . . Bissolati went to congratulate the King.'¹

When the Great War broke out in 1914, Mussolini, then editor of the *Avanti*, the official organ of the Italian Socialist Party, preached for two months that the workers ought not to let themselves be swept into the 'bourgeois war,' but to be ready to bring about the social revolution as soon as war had launched the 'crisis of capitalist society.' His neutrality was the neutrality of Lenin and of the Revolutionary Socialists. In October, 1914, he suddenly declared himself in favour of the intervention of Italy

¹ Speech pronounced by Mussolini at the meeting of July 13, 1912, and published in the newspaper *Letta di Classe*, July 23, 1912, edited by Mussolini.

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in the Great War on the side of the Entente.¹ In November, 1914, without a penny in his pocket he founded a daily paper: *Il Popolo d'Italia*.²

During the war he continued to call himself a Socialist and a Revolutionary, extolling the war as the way to a subsequent social revolution. When the war was over, he left off calling himself a Socialist, but continued to proclaim himself a Revolutionary, casting fuel on the flame of unrest and discontent and making a hodgepodge of ultra-Revolutionary and ultra-Nationalist propaganda.³

The programme of Mussolini and his Fascists, who began to organize themselves in the 'Fighting Groups' ('Fasci di Combattimento') in March, 1919, included demands for a National

¹ See Note A at the end of this chapter.

² More than once he has been publicly accused of having obtained the necessary capital from the French Government. A Milanese weekly paper, *L'Italia del Popolo*, in its issue of May 3, 1919, definitely accused Mussolini of 'having cashed patriotic cheques from the French Government,' and challenged him to bring the matter into court, concluding: 'We hold proofs of all that we have said and written.' In March, 1925, during the trial of Bonomini, murderer of the Fascist Bonservizi, at the Paris Court of Assizes, Maître Torrès openly accused Mussolini of having, in 1914, 'trafficked' with the French Government over his change of attitude towards the War, and reiterated the charge in an interview which was published in the leaflet *Guerra di Classe* (single edition, Paris, March, 1925): 'The first sum paid to Mussolini was fifteen thousand francs, after which a monthly payment of 10,000 francs was agreed upon. The first sum was handed over by M. Dumas, secretary of the Minister, M. Guesdes. Thus the *Popolo d'Italia* was launched with an interventionist programme. This genuine account of the fact no one dares to deny, for fear of even more crushing documents.' The French Socialist deputy, M. Renaudel, wrote in the *Quotidien* (November 9, 1926): 'Many of us remember well that the first issues of the *Popolo d'Italia* were published thanks to French money. Marcel Cachin knows all this, although he does not like it to be talked of.' (M. Cachin became a Communist after the war, but during the war he was a member of the 'Union Sacrée,' and made some semi-official journeys to Italy.)

³ See the posthumous pamphlet of Giacomo Matteotti, *Il Fascismo della prima ora* ('The Early Days of Fascism'), Roma, Tip. Italiana, 1924; and Carlo Avarna di Gualtieri, *Il Fascismo*, Torino, Gobetti, 1925, pp. 14-29.

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Constituent Assembly, which was to be the Italian section of the 'International Constituent Assembly of the Peoples'; the proclamation of an Italian Republic; the sovereignty of the people exercised by means of universal suffrage for both sexes; the abolition of the Senate; of all titles of nobility and of compulsory military service; international disarmament; an elected magistracy; the dissolution of limited liability companies and banks and the suppression of the stock exchange; the registration and limitation of private fortunes; confiscation of unproductive capital; land for the peasants and the transferring of the management of industry, transport and public services to syndicates of technicians and the workers. 'All the after-war platitudes, all the most extreme and absurd expectations of that neurotic period were embodied in the programme of the nascent party.'¹

When the Socialists demanded the eight-hour day, Mussolini's organ, the *Popolo d'Italia*, proclaimed that the forty-eight hours was a betrayal of the proletariat. In March, 1919, when 2,000 workmen in Dalmine, a town in the province of Bergamo, who were engaged in a wage dispute with their employers, occupied the workshops of Messrs. Franchi and Gregorini, this, the first of such disorders, was actually promoted by Mussolini's followers and he himself went to Dalmine and addressed the men, praising their fine achievement.

'The Dalmine experiment' - said the *Popolo d'Italia* of April 1, 1919 - 'is of the greatest value as showing the potential capacity of the proletariat to manage the factories themselves.'

The food riots which unsettled many Italian towns in June and July, 1919, were promoted by the very same men who now form the staff of the Fascist Party, while the Socialist organizers, though taken unawares by the outbreaks, did their best to restrain them. Mussolini at the time wrote in the *Popolo d'Italia* of July 4:

'In Romagna the people have revolted vigorously against the greed of the speculators and have already succeeded in obtaining a great reduction in prices. Requisitions and control of prices are

¹ Carlo Avarna di Gualtieri, *Il Fascismo*, p. 17.

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having the desired effect. We are witnessing the revolt of the working classes against those primarily and directly responsible for the intolerable food situation. It is not the Socialist Party which has provoked and directed these demonstrations. It lacks the will to lead a movement which may disrupt the parliamentary game of trickery, past and present. For our part we explicitly affirm the fundamental justice of the popular protest.'

And on July 5:

'I hope that the masses in the exercise of their sacred right will strike at the criminals, not only in their goods, but in their persons. A few food-hogs hanging from the lamp-posts would be a good example. The Fascist Central Committee proclaims its absolute solidarity with the masses who have risen against the famine-makers, welcomes the movement of requisitioning by the people and pledges the Fascisti to promote and support the agitation.'¹

On January 1, 1920, the outbreak of a national railway strike was welcomed by a contributor to the *Popolo d'Italia* (who is now

¹ Signor Villari, *The Awakening of Italy* (London, Methuen and Co., 1924), is very hard on Anarchists, Communists and Socialists, to whom he imputes all the responsibility for the post-war troubles. He is very severe on the moderate Socialists, who 'swam with the tide' (p. 79). He writes: 'Turati advocated the slow process of penetration into bourgeois institutions with the object of transforming them into organs for the welfare of the community instead of trying to erect a Socialist State by revolutionary means; even the more moderate Socialists who did not desire a revolution or who disbelieved in its possibility, such as Turati and Treves, were too much afraid of losing popularity with the masses to speak their minds openly' (pp. 51, 74, 116). But he has no word for the ultra-revolutionary attitude of Mussolini and his friends in these years when the tide was at its highest. He writes only: 'The numbers of the adherents of the Fasci were still too limited to give the movement that national importance which it was afterwards to assume, nor had it yet developed its social policy of reconciling capital and labour; for the moment its chief function was to oppose Bolshevism by force' (p. 105). In drawing so modest a veil over all that Mussolini did to swell that tide, he can allow the whole weight of his honourable condemnation to fall on the moderate Socialists who did not dam the tide with sufficient energy.

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a Fascist deputy) especially because 'it had been declared without the knowledge of either the Socialist Party or the General Confederation of Labour.'¹

'The strike is' - he wrote - the 'work of a formidable mass of employees, acting in undeniable good faith and convinced that they are in the right. In the Railway dispute the Socialist Party and the General Confederation of Labour are leaving the railwaymen to themselves till they are near defeat. After so many years of Socialist domination these strikes are the first which have been planned and carried on outside and in spite of the tyrannical will of the Socialist Party. The days of working-class violence have a revivifying value and are a thousand times superior to the paltry methods of the mischief-mongers.'

In the *Popolo d'Italia* of April 6, 1920, he wrote as follows:

'I start from the individual and strike at the State. Down with the State in all its forms and incarnations. The State of yesterday, of to-day and of to-morrow. The bourgeois State and the Socialist State. In the gloom of to-day and the darkness of to-morrow the only faith which remains to us individualists destined to die is the at present absurd but ever consoling religion of anarchy.'

At the same time Mussolini was urging the masses to overthrow their weak and worthless Government. They should be ready, he said, to lend a helping hand to the vanquished nations, Russia, Germany, Hungary and Bulgaria, which he called the proletarian nations, in promoting a new revolutionary war against

¹ In Italy before the victory of Fascism the workers' unions in a given trade were organized into National Federations, some of which were under Socialist, others under Christian-Democrat control. The National Federations controlled by the Socialist Party were united in the 'General Confederation of Labour' (*Confederazione Generale del Lavoro*) which had a permanent central office analogous to that of the T.U.C. in England. The National Federations controlled by the Christian-Democrats also formed an 'Italian Confederation of Workers' which also possessed a permanent central office. In the same way the Unions controlled by the Revolutionary Syndicalists and by the Anarchists were united in an 'Italian Syndicalist Union.'

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those which he termed the capitalist nations, France, England and the United States, which had prevented Italy from annexing Fiume, Dalmatia, Asia Minor and the colonial Empire necessary to her existence.

By means of this chaotic mixture of revolutionary and nationalist propaganda Mussolini endeavoured to win over the workers and peasants from the Socialist Party. The military authorities distributed the *Popolo d'Italia* gratis to the soldiers in 1919 and 1920, hoping they would absorb nationalistic ideas and reject revolutionary ones. The soldiers, however, absorbed the revolutionary and rejected the nationalistic ideas. Then the military authorities threw the blame on 'Bolshevist' propaganda, instead of blaming themselves for their own stupidity. And Mussolini only succeeded in rallying round him a part of that 'intelligentsia' which had been so hard hit by the demobilization. In the parliamentary elections of November, 1919, in the province of Milan, only 4,795 votes were given to Mussolini's list out of a total poll of 346,000.¹

But in those two years the work of Mussolini and his followers contributed more than a little to increase the post-war restlessness.

Men of four widely differing types of mentality came together in what was at that time called the 'Bolshevist' movement: (a) the Anarchists and Revolutionary Syndicalists; (b) the Communists proper, who were in close touch with Moscow; (c) the 'Maximalist' Socialists, who, in England, would be half-way between the I.L.P. and the Communists; and (d) the 'Reformist' Socialists, corresponding to the right wing of the Labour Party. The first group had behind it the 'Italian Syndicalist Union,' with a membership of about 300,000 workers. The Communists and the 'Maximalist' and 'Reformist' Socialists were then still united in the 'Italian Socialist Party' and controlled the 'General Confederation of Labour,' which had a membership of about 2,150,000. The Anarchists, the Revolutionary Syndicalists and the Communists were always in the forefront in economical or political strikes and riots, which frequently resulted in bloodshed. The 'Reformist'

¹ Mussolini, *La nuova politica dell'Italia*, Milano, 1925, p. 17: 'Throughout 1919, the number of Fascists in Italy did not total 10,000.'

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Socialists, amongst whom were all the most influential leaders of the 'General Confederation of Labour,' strove to restrain unjustifiable strikes and disorderly demonstrations. The 'Maximalist' Socialists, who included the greater part of the 'War Socialists' and who carried on the official organ of the party, *Avanti* ('Forward'), made a considerable display of revolutionary catchwords without having any precise plan of action. They went from right to left and from left to right according as their followers were pushed towards the left by the Anarchists and Communists or seceded to the right after having experienced the inanity of disorder.

Mussolini and his followers poured their scorn particularly on the leaders of the General Confederation of Labour and on the 'Maximalist' and 'Reformist' Socialists, calling them 'mock revolutionaries,' 'inefficient revolutionaries' and 'blacklegs.' When Enrico Malatesta, the well-known Anarchist, came from England to Italy, putting new strength into the revolutionary movement, Mussolini sent him a 'cordial welcome,' contrasting him with the 'imbecile and infamous Socialists' as a man who 'was ready to die for his faith' (*Popolo d'Italia*, December 27, 1919). He devoted a whole column of his paper on December 31, 1919, without protest or reservation, to a speech made by Malatesta at Mantua against the Socialists, who had declined responsibility for the grave disorders which had taken place there a few weeks previously: while the Socialists drew a distinction between themselves and 'hooligans and jail-birds,' Malatesta on the other hand proclaimed the 'solidarity of all.'

Confronted with this extremist campaign of Mussolini's, the Anarchists, Communists, and Maximalists were spurred on to show that they could be even more revolutionary. As a consequence the attempts of the Reformist Socialists and the leaders of the General Confederation of Labour to check the restlessness of the people were rendered more difficult.

To sum up, if in these two years a fatal crisis was averted, the credit cannot be given to Mussolini and his 'Black-Shirts.' The reason why a 'Bolshevist' revolution did not take place in Italy must be sought elsewhere.

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§ 3: *Why a Bolshevik Revolution did not Occur in Italy*

There are several reasons why a Bolshevik revolution did not take place in Italy. The most important among them are the following:

(A) A revolution of the Communist type was and is, technically speaking, impossible in Italy.

Italy is not Russia. Russia is a sparsely populated country. Before the war there were very few really small landowners in proportion to the area of available land. In 1919 the Russian peasant-soldiers deserted from their regiments in confusion, and on their return to their villages, expropriated the existing large landowners. Italy on the contrary has a dense population. Save in some parts of the South and in Latium there are few big landowners, and what passes in Italy for a large estate is ridiculously small compared with those formerly existing in Russia and still found in England. The Italian peasant-soldiers at the end of the war were formally discharged, and did not come home as the result of a revolution. The land to which they returned had for centuries been divided among many very small owners whom no one thought of disturbing in their tenure, if only for the reason that they would stubbornly have resisted expropriation.

As for the industrial workers, these knew well, then as now, that the Italian population cannot subsist without importing from abroad all the raw materials necessary for its daily life: corn, coal, iron, cotton, petrol and copper. They would be starved in a few days if a Communist revolution deprived the country of foreign credit. Even if a Communist revolution were ever possible, Italy would be the last country in which it could be carried out.¹

¹ When the news reached Russia in September, 1920, that half a million workers in Italy had taken possession of the factories, the Russian Communists celebrated the event as the long-looked-for beginning of the revolution in Italy. Angelica Balabanoff - she told me this herself, - who shared the general enthusiasm, was once speaking to Lenin about Italian affairs. He interrupted her suddenly, saying: 'Comrade, has it ever struck you that Italy has no coal?' The great Revolutionary summed up in this query all that could be said against the dream of a Communist revolution in Italy.

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The Italian workers never entirely lost their sense of this fact and its implications. They wished to make 'the rich men who had willed the war' pay dearly for it; they went on strike capriciously; they threw stones at motor-cars and voted for the Socialist candidates at elections. But even in their wildest moments a fund of common sense held them back from committing irreparable absurdities.

(B) The older and more influential deputies and organizers in the Socialist Party and the General Confederation of Labour – Turati, Modigliani, D'Aragona and others – recognized the impossibility of a Communist revolution. They ostentatiously made use of revolutionary phraseology, because such phraseology is part of the obligatory ritual of their propaganda; and besides, if they had used any other, they would have been ousted by the 'War Socialists' and would have lost touch completely with the excited populace. But at the critical moments they worked constantly to restrain the hot-heads, to postpone dangerous resolutions, and to avoid decisive struggles.¹

Ludovico D'Aragona, the Secretary of the General Confederation of Labour, in an address given at Milan in September, 1922, to the Reformist Socialists, said:

'We are perhaps responsible for having given way too much at the time of the Bolshevik madness. But we know we did all

¹ Luigi Villari, *The Awakening of Italy* (London, Methuen and Co., 1924, p. 79), states that the Socialist programme was 'to promote strikes in the public services with the object of disorganizing the economic life of the country in the hope that starvation would goad the masses to revolution.' If the Socialist general staff had had a 'revolutionary programme' as imagined by this Fascist propagandist, the effect would have been apparent in some attempt to co-ordinate the strikes which should have developed according to some organized plan. But, in reality, they occurred sporadically and without co-ordination. When a strike on any considerable scale broke out in some private industry, or when political disorders spread over any large part of the country, the public services did not strike; when a great public service came out on strike, private industries remained quiet; the postal employees' strike ceased when the railwaymen's began; the towns struck while the country remained quiet; strikes spread in the country while the towns were free from them.

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in our power to restrain the extremists. It is our glory and our pride that we prevented the outbreak of the revolution which those extremists desired. And then after we had the honour of preventing a revolutionary catastrophe — Fascism arrived.'

Mussolini therefore had good grounds, when in 1919-20, he accused the leaders of the Socialist Party of being *buoni a nulla*, i.e. 'ineffectual revolutionaries.' And Communists and Anarchists in Italy and abroad are not wrong when they accuse the older Socialists, Turati, D'Aragona, Treves, Modigliani and others, of having helped to make the revolution impossible.¹ But they should ask themselves the question: Was revolution possible in any case?

(C) In the spring of 1919 a new party came into the field which endeavoured energetically to draw the masses away from the Socialist Party, especially in the country districts. It took the name of the 'Partito Popolare Italiano' and its programme was a Christian-Democratic one. In a few months this party had gained some 1,200,000 adherents, of whom about 920,000 were peasants, while the General Confederation of Labour, controlled by the Socialists, had no more than 750,000 rural workers among its 2,150,000 members.

The Fascist propagandists often accuse the Christian-Democratic Party of having shared in the guilt of 'rural Bolshevism' in the year of the 'Bolshevist madness.' The accusation is not without grounds, if it means that the members of the Christian-Democratic Party were not less excited than the Socialists, and that many of the Christian-Democratic organizers themselves indulged to excess in apocalyptic promises. It was the malady of the moment: every one promised everything to everybody: Mussolini and his followers more than all the rest.

¹ See the accusations of the Anarchists and Communists against the Reformist Socialists collected in the volume entitled *Sempre! almanacco di guerra di classe 1923-1924*, 2nd edn., Berlin, January, 1923; in Luigi Fabbri, *La controrivoluzione preventiva*, in the volume *Il Fascismo e i partiti politici italiani*, Bologna, Cappelli, 1924, pp. 11-19; and in Armando Borghi, *L'Italia fra due Crispi*, Paris, Libreria Internazionale, 1924, pp. 125-296.

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But the Christian-Democratic Party split the Italian rural population in two. Had they not done this, the Socialists would have won 250, instead of 156, seats in the elections of 1919. The great ladies of the aristocracy and the big landowners, business men and bankers, who patronized the Christian-Democratic movement in 1919 and 1920, did not do badly out of it. They lent their capital and their religious faith (unexpectedly adopted for the occasion) at the highest rate of interest. When the so-called 'Bolshevist danger' was past, thanks in part to the efforts of the Christian-Democratic Party, the magnates found themselves to be possessed of a new religion - the 'national faith.' They therefore abandoned the Christian-Democratic Party and transferred their money and their consciences to the service of the Fascist movement, styling themselves 'National Catholics.' And now they ungenerously pour scorn on the party to which they yesterday belonged.

(D) The disturbed minds of the people, both in the towns and in the country, found in Universal Suffrage a legal method of relieving their feelings, and in Proportional Representation, a legal obstacle which kept their excitement within bounds.

It is probable that, had it not been for the safety valve of Universal Suffrage, the mass of peasants and workers, incited by the Anarchists, would have had recourse to direct action. But, instead of taking a revolutionary course, they waited for the new Parliamentary elections of 1919; and when these had been held, they waited all through 1920, to see what the newly-elected deputies would do. Thus the two most dangerous years of the post-war excitement were tided over.

In estimating the effects of Proportional Representation it is necessary to bear in mind that, given the unpopularity of all the political groups responsible for the war, under the single member system almost all the seats in northern and central Italy would have fallen to the Socialists or to the Christian-Democrats. The other groups would not only have been much weakened, they would have survived only in southern Italy; and a dangerous antagonism would thus have arisen between North and South.

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Proportional Representation prevented these evils or reduced them to a minimum.¹

Mussolini and the 'Fasci di Combattimento' were in favour of this system in 1919. Mussolini threatened the government of that time with immediate destruction if it did not give way to the demand for Proportional Representation. The Nationalists, who have subsequently joined the Fascisti, were at that time foremost in demanding this.² Thanks to Proportional Representation they saved themselves from complete disaster when they were a minority.

If we take into account all the above-mentioned factors: the economic impossibility of a Communist revolution; the moderating influence of the Reformist Socialists in contrast with the provocative action of the Communists, the Anarchists and Mussolini; the resistance of the Christian-Democrats to Socialist pressure; the electoral system, steadying and curbing the people's excitement—we can understand why in Italy during 1919 and 1920, there were many disturbances, strikes, riots and much confusion, but no fatal crisis.

§ 4: 'The Sanguinary Tyranny of Bolshevism'

There was much talk in those years of a formidable propaganda carried on all over Italy by agents of Russian Bolshevism. Excited imaginations saw sinister Bolshevist agents everywhere. There is no doubt that the Russian Government had a certain number of agents in Italy, as elsewhere. But it is difficult to estimate the precise extent of the Russian ramifications. One

¹ Francesco Ruffini, *Diritti di Libertá*, Torino, Gobetti, 1926, p. 10.

² Vincenzo Nitti, *L'opera di Nitti*, Torino, Gobetti, 1924, pp. 111-20. Luigi Villari, *The Fascist Experiment*, London, Faber and Gwyer, 1926, p. 29, asserts that the method of Proportional Representation 'had been imposed on Nitti by the Socialists and Christian-Democrats.' He suppresses the fact that it was the Nationalists and the Fascists who upheld this reform with the greatest violence. He shows that he does not possess even that minimum of critical sense necessary to understand facts, when he attributes the increase in the Socialist seats in the elections of 1919 to Proportional Representation rather than to the war and the post-war crisis.

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of the most active agents, a certain Ferrari, who spoke several languages, had huge funds at his disposal, and was on intimate terms with several Socialist deputies, formed the subject of a question asked in the Chamber by the Nationalist deputy, Signor Federzoni: Why did the Government leave this dangerous Bolshevik at large? The Government gave no reply. But one fine day the Socialists discovered that this most dangerous Bolshevik was a secret agent of the Italian Police.

In many towns the food riots of July, 1919, were stirred up not only by the revolutionary press and by revolutionary agents, but by newspapers and individuals who, as soon as the riots had ceased, started 'anti-Bolshevist' leagues. In Florence, for example, on the evening of July 2, 1919, Signor Francesco Giunta, now one of the leading personages of Fascism, waved a pair of shoes at a meeting of ex-service men, shouting that he had had to pay 48 lire for them, and urging his comrades to sack the shops. On the morning of July 3, the ultra-conservative *Nazione* published a furious article 'against the food-profiters':

'Truly it is an unsavoury task to give vent to our indignation against people who for good or ill still belong to the Italian family. But disgust and anger raise our gorge. Is it possible that even to-day, after the terrible lesson of the war, we find men so obstinate and persevering in evil-doing? Do these wretches realize nothing of what is happening around them? Do they not know that the patience of the people has its limits, behind which lie the most cruel and unknown possibilities? Have they brains, have they blood, have they nerves, these maleficent citizens? We will add no more. We have still a vague hope that certain examples of yesterday may bring more wisdom to these perverted individuals. If this hope also proves vain, then indeed we should not be the ones to deplore an outburst of collective indignation, provoked, as it would be, in every possible manner.'

Riots against the 'food-profiters' started at Forli on July 1, and from there spread to other towns. These were the 'examples' which were to bring wisdom to the perverted. When an ultra-conservative paper wrote in this manner, what else could the

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crowd do that follow the 'examples' indicated? The sacking of shops, and the 'requisitions' in the country around actually began the very afternoon of July 3 and lasted for three days. When the storm had blown over, it was precisely the *Nazione* which launched the proposal of an 'anti-Bolshevist alliance,' Signor Giunta being one of its prime leaders.

A young anarchist, who was a student of mine at the University of Florence in 1920, told me that in that year a man who claimed to be an anarchist and a secret-service agent of England, while being, at the same time, an officer of the 70th infantry regiment, offered the anarchists funds for their paper *Il Grido della Rivolta*. The anarchists of Florence kept a watch on him and discovered him to be a Government spy. Shortly after a senior officer of the Florence garrison offered a Florentine republican assistance in bringing off a *coup de main* against a military barracks, on condition that he was told the names of the men willing to take part in the operation. The republican told the anarchists of this offer, but they, suspecting a trap, did not act.

During and after his raid on Fiume, D'Annunzio was a great promoter of disorders everywhere. His agents, real or professed, organized theatrical plots which the police always unmasked at the right moment.¹ Of two rabid revolutionaries, Mingrino and Ambrosini, who in 1920-21 made a show of starting an armed organization, called the 'Arditi (shock-troops) of the people,' Mingrino was in 1926 revealed as an *agent provocateur* and the other, in 1922, was suddenly found in the Fascist ranks. Whatever authentic Bolshevist propaganda there was in Italy, there was also a trumped-up 'Bolshevism' intended to serve as a pretext for reaction.

The Italian Fascists and their friends in other countries are continually referring to the outrages perpetrated in the 'mad outbreaks of Bolshevism' of 1919 and 1920, to the amnesty granted

¹ A significant indication of these 'Bolshevist' activities of D'Annunzio's is to be found in the anarchist Armando Borghi's book, *L'Italia fra due Crispi*, pp. 193, 234; 'There was a time when D'Annunzio endeavoured to present himself as the champion of Socialism and of the Social Republic, making speeches with a Bolshevist flavour, and even concerning himself in railway strikes.'

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to deserters, to raids on land and to the occupation of factories in September, 1920.

It is undoubtedly the case that in those years riots and threats of violence were frequent and often exasperating. Unless we take these brutalities into account we shall not be able to understand the ferocity of the Fascist reaction.

In considering these 'Bolshevist' outrages, however, it should be borne in mind that according to a pamphlet published by the Fascist Party in the spring of 1921,¹ the number of murders in 1919 and 1920, up to the occupation of the factories (September, 1920), was no more than thirty.

A careful survey of the *Corriere della Sera*² for that period, made by a friend of mine, gave 65 murders committed by 'Bolshevists,' applying the term, arbitrarily to say the truth, to all kinds of people who took part in disturbances. Among these 65 victims 35 came from the ranks of the police.

To appreciate these figures it should not be forgotten: (1) that in Italy unhappily human life is held less sacred than it should be in a civilized country; and (2), that the Italian people, in 1919 and 1920, had just returned from the war, where it had certainly not learned respect for human life. The Fascists of Turin on December 18, 1922, murdered in a single day twenty-one persons. It would be well for people to remember these circumstances when they hear talk about the 'sanguinary Bolshevist domination' of 1919 and 1920 in Italy.

For the same period, the friend who made the above-mentioned

¹ *Barbarie rossa: riassunto cronologico delle gesta compiute dai socialisti italiani dal 1919 in poi*; edited by the Central Committee of the Fasci Italiani di Combattimento, Rome Tip. Sociale, 78 Via E. L. Visconti, 1921.

² To enable those who may doubt the accuracy and the good faith of this survey to verify the facts from the same source, I give here the dates of the numbers of the newspaper from which my friend drew his information: 1919, April 17, 18; September 29, 30; December 3, 4, 7; 1920, January 2; March 26; April 13, 15, 20, 29; May 3, 4, 5, 6, 26; June 5, 12, 24, 26, 27, 28, 30; July 1, 2, 13, 26, 30; August 10, 17, 30; September 7, 11, 23, 24. Between 1919-1922, the *Corriere della Sera* vigorously withstood the so-called 'Bolshevist' tide. Its record of 'Bolshevist' outrages was very carefully compiled and it is hardly possible for many cases to have escaped its watchfulness.

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survey for me, found 109 'Bolshevists' killed by the police in street fighting and 22 'Bolshevists' killed by other people.¹ The 'Socialist domination,' as Fascist propagandists call it,² was not so absolute as they would have us believe.

Another legend is that the disorders of 1919-20 were invariably started by the 'Bolshevists.' The period of the most serious disorders runs from June, 1919, to September, 1920. The burning of the printing office of the *Avanti* by groups of followers of Mussolini, belongs to April, 1919, when the proletarian turbulence had hardly begun. On November 13, 1919, at Lodi, some followers of Mussolini fired revolvers into an election meeting held in a theatre, killing three and wounding eight.

Four days later in Milan a Socialist procession was marching along Via San Damiano celebrating their victory in the parliamentary elections. An 'Ardito,' a certain Virtuani, accompanied by Albino Volpi, one of Mussolini's bravos, hurled a bomb at the procession. Cesare Rossi, then sub-editor of the *Popolo d'Italia*, had seen Mussolini and Volpi putting their heads together at the office of the *Popolo d'Italia* shortly before the bomb was thrown.³ A few weeks later, two other sub-editors of the *Popolo d'Italia* revealed that Mussolini 'hired by the day bands of civilians and "Arditi" (ex-service men formerly belonging to the shock troops) for the purpose of terrorizing and committing acts of violence.'⁴

¹ For reference see the following numbers of the *Corriere della Sera*, from which the facts were taken: 1919, June 12; July 8, 9, 10, 14; August 8, 12; October 10, 11; November 10, 14, 15, 18; December 3, 4, 7, 18, 29; 1920, January 13; February 25; March 1, 2, 6, 13, 24, 25, 26; April 1, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 20, 23, 25; May 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 14, 22, 25, 26, 27; June 10, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30; July 1, 2, 15, 16, 26, 27, 28; August 3, 4, 10, 12, 17, 24, 30, 31; September 3, 7, 9, 11, 12, 13, 21, 22, 23, 28. Luigi Fabbri, *Contro-rivoluzione preventiva*, p. 25, estimates, from April, 1919, to September, 1920, a total of 320 dead among the rioters. I am not in a position to verify these figures.

² Luigi Villari, *The Awakening of Italy*, p. 56.

³ Rossi, Memorandum of Feb. 11, 1925 (Appendix A, § XXXVI, at the end of the present volume) and unpublished Notes of Aug., 1927, in my possession.

⁴ Pronouncement of the Arbitration Committee of the Lombard Journalists Association, in the *Secolo*, Feb. 14, 1920.

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As regards the amnesty for deserters, it must be borne in mind that, during the war, courts martial had dealt out in a barbarous fashion sentences of death and penal servitude for crimes of desertion, which in many cases were wholly imaginary. At the end of the war 1,100,000 trials for desertion were in course. The senseless ferocity of these condemnations had branded as deserters a fifth of the total number of Italians capable of bearing arms. In the country districts of southern Italy and Sicily, between 130,000 and 150,000 of these unfortunates lay in hiding. Many of them had been decorated for valour, but they had been declared deserters because of a few days' delay in reporting to their superior officers after regular leave. Twenty-eight thousand policemen had to arrest these 130,000-150,000 deserters, and there were not prisons enough to hold them all.

The Decree of Amnesty (September 2, 1919) was drawn up by the Ministers of War and of the Navy, the heads of the Military Courts, and the Minister of Justice—these were not 'Bolshevists'! It did not apply to 'those guilty of desertion to the enemy, or of armed desertion' (Art. I); it was conceded only to those whose period of desertion had not exceeded six months. In other cases the penalty was commuted or remitted, but there was no true amnesty. Under Art. I, 18,000 men were excluded from the benefits of the amnesty. Mussolini published the announcement of the amnesty in the *Popolo d'Italia* of September 3, 1919, under the heading: 'Exclusion of cowards who deserted to the enemy.' And in the issue of September 6, he wrote:

'We do not regret that the Decree should not apply to the veritable cowards and traitors who deserted to the enemy. Instead we deplore that it is limited to penal offences and does not cover disciplinary shortcomings.'

Such is the so-called 'amnesty granted to deserters.'¹

Regarding the land raids and the occupation of the factories—so often quoted as the most dangerous example of Italian 'Bolshevism'—it is well to consider the facts of the case.

¹ See Vincenzo Nitti, *L'Opera di Nitti*, pp. 1,1-73; and Giacomo Matteotti, *Il Fascismo della prima ora*, pp. 22-4.

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The first cases of land raiding occurred in August, 1919, in the province of Rome, and were the work, not of 'Bolshevists,' but of ex-service men, who marched with the Italian flag to the sound of patriotic music.¹ In the next few months the raids spread to southern Italy: some were undertaken by Socialist organizations, but the greater number were carried out by ex-service men who had nothing to do with Socialism. Those who seized the land always undertook to pay an annual rent to the owner.² Altogether the whole of Italian 'rural Bolshevism' amounted to the seizure without the consent of the owners of 74,000 acres of land, 34,000 being in the province of Rome, and of about 172,000 acres after friendly agreements with the owners.³ And this in a country with 74,000,000 acres of land!

Mussolini had been during the war one of the loudest propagandists of 'the land for the peasants,' and he gave the post-war land-raids his full approval.

'The peasants who rise up to-day to solve the land question' - he declared on May 25, 1920 - 'must not meet with our hostility. They may perhaps commit excesses, but I beg you to remember that the War was fought by peasants.'⁴

The occupation of the factories was characterized by the same type of 'Bolshevism.' The engineers, having threatened a strike for about a month, began, on August 20, to practise cautious methods. On August 30, one of the firms declared a lock-out.

¹ See contemporary newspapers, *Resto del Carlino*, August 27, 1919; *Avanti*, September 1, 1919; *Secolo*, September 1, 1919.

² Villari, *The Awakening of Italy*: 'In Sicily many landed estates were seized, but the conflicts were usually the result of action by the ex-combatants' association and by organizations of labourers who really wanted land to cultivate: settlements were sometimes effected by agreement with the landlords' (p. 101).

³ Interview given by Signor Micheli, Minister of Agriculture, to the *Tribuna*, October 22, 1920. See also Rocca, *L'occupazione delle terre incolte*, in the *Riforma sociale*, May-June, 1920; Bachi, *L'Italia economica nel 1919*, Città di Castello, 1920, pp. 274 ff.; Bachi, *L'Italia economica nel 1920*, Città di Castello, 1921, pp. 296 ff.

⁴ Giacomo Matteotti, *Il Fascismo della prima ora*, pp. 13-14, 44-46.

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The men's leaders, fearing that all the employers would follow suit, called a 'lock-in.' The movement spread from the metallurgical to other industries. Half a million men were set in motion (August 31-September 3), both government and employers being powerless to offer resistance.

During the weeks spent in negotiations with the industrialists, Mussolini supported the demands of the workers; and approved their obstructionism. When the occupation of the factories took place, Michele Bianchi, then one of Mussolini's chief lieutenants, and now a prominent figure in the Fascist regime, wrote as follows in the *Popolo d'Italia*:

'Our attitude from the first moment has been one of sympathy with the masses . . . To-day, we say the occupation is a formidable mistake, unless the organizers know how to use it as a stepping-stone to another and infinitely vaster scheme. Must it be used for a social upheaval? If so, it would be a proof of admirable political sense and would be logical. But Buoizzi, Colombino and Guarnieri have too *terre à terre* a mentality.'¹

Mussolini's own behaviour is illustrated in the following account given in the *Giustizia* of December 13, 1923:

'After the occupation, Mussolini sought out Bruno Buoizzi, the leader of the movement. Their meeting took place at a hotel in Milan, in the presence of Manlio Morgagni of the *Popolo d'Italia* and his colleague Guarnieri. Mussolini made no "offer" of any kind, but asked to be informed of the aims of the movement. He expressed the opinion that the workers ought never to be ejected from the factories again by force. If the aims of the agitation were purely economic, the Fascists would care little whether the factories belonged to the employers or the workers, but they would oppose with all their strength any experiment in Bolshevik government.'²

¹ Giacomo Matteotti, *Il Fascismo della prima ora*, pp. 59-63; and Carlo Avarna di Gualtieri, *Il Fascismo*, pp. 26-8.

² This account was textually reproduced by the *Corriere della Sera* of May 15, 1923, in a controversy with the *Popolo d'Italia*. Mussolini was not in a position to contradict it. Signor Buoizzi, in the spring of 1926

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Had the leaders of the General Confederation of Labour and of the Socialist Party wished to strike a decisive blow, here was the opportunity: they would have seized not the workshops but the government offices, the postal and telegraph services, and the railways. The bankers, big industrialists and big landlords waited for the social revolution as sheep wait to be led to the slaughter. If a Communist revolution could be brought about by bewilderment and cowardice on the part of the ruling classes, the Italian people in September, 1920, could have made as many Communist revolutions as they wished.

But the more prudent leaders of the General Confederation of Labour and of the Socialist Party fiercely opposed the proposal made by the Anarchists and Communists to extend the scope of the crisis and to give it definitely revolutionary aims. On September 11, after a day and a half of heated discussion, the Reformists defeated by 591,245 votes to 409,606, the revolutionary proposal of the Extremists.¹

'The workmen's leaders' - wrote a scholar to whom we owe an objective account of the whole affair - 'tried to prevent acts of violence, sabotage and theft. Acts of violence against individuals were not numerous, but some of them were of exceptional gravity.'² Subsequently it was ascertained that the material damage to plant

in London, assured me of its accuracy. It is not clear what Mussolini meant in threatening to oppose an experiment in Bolshevist Government after saying that he did not care whether the factories belonged to the workers or the employers. Probably he was keeping a foot in either stirrup. If things were to go well for the workers, he would recall the first part of his speech to prove that he had been in favour of the workers; if things went ill with them - as actually happened - he could claim the merit of having opposed the Bolshevist danger.

¹ See the *Corriere della Sera*, September 29, 1920: 'Italy has been in peril of collapse. There has been no revolution, not because there was anyone to bar its way, but because the General Confederation of Labour has not willed it.'

² In Turin the strikers murdered a young Nationalist, a prison-warder, three Royal Guards and a Carabineer. For these crimes, the two first of which were of a peculiarly atrocious nature, eleven people in March, 1922, received sentences ranging from one year to thirty years' imprisonment. (Royal Guards were a corps of military police.)

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and the waste of raw material and manufactured goods had been rather extensive, but the very nature of the industries concerned, and the timely measures taken by the Union leaders, kept theft within relatively narrow limits.¹

As the days passed the men saw that without technical guidance, raw materials, or the confidence of foreign markets, the occupation of the factories was useless. By shutting themselves up in the factories, they had shut themselves in a trap. The government had only to wait till the men were tired. And it did. On September 25, the men went home.

In the *Popolo d'Italia* of September 28, 1920, Mussolini commented on the events of the previous weeks in the following terms:

'What has happened in Italy in the September that is now ending has been a revolution; or, to be more precise, a phase of the revolution started — *by us*² — in May, 1915. There has been no street fighting, no barricades, nor anything of the theatrical appurtenances of revolution such as thrill us in Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*. But a revolution has none the less been achieved, and we may add, a great revolution. A right, which has been sacred for centuries, has been broken down.'

The reverse was the truth. The occupation of the factories was a great practical lesson, in politics and economics, for the Italian working classes, which may be compared, in its sobering effect, with that of the General Strike of May, 1926, in England. The Italian workers were brought up against the hard fact that their manual labour in conjunction with machinery was not enough to produce wealth. They needed technical direction, credit and commercial organization.

¹ Bachi, *L'Italia economica nel 1920*, p. 347. Cfr. A. Borghi, *L'Italia fra due Crispi*, pp. 248-96; Mowrer, *Immortal Italy*, pp. 329-34; Odon Por, *Fascism*, London, Labour Publishing Co., 1923, pp. 66 ff.; Cailton Beals, *Rome or Death: The Story of Fascism*, London, John Long, 1923, pp. 35-8; Pelham H. Box, *Three Master Builders*, London, Jarrolds, 1925, pp. 135-7. (See Note B at the end of the present chapter.)

² The italics are Mussolini's.

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'The failure of the experiment'—wrote the above-quoted observer a few months later—'had a conspicuous historical importance. The working classes have learnt much in these weeks.'¹

After the occupation of the factories in September, 1920, the idea spread among the people that the revolution had failed, and they grew discouraged. As always happens in defeat, mutual recriminations grew bitter between Reformist Socialists, Maximalist Socialists and Communists.

In the autumn of 1920, a commission of Socialists and Trade Union leaders who had gone to Russia in the previous spring to discover the promised land, came back with a harrowing tale of conditions among the Russian people. The Lenin myth then received a severe set-back.

On the other hand, in Italy, as elsewhere, an acute industrial crisis had begun to make itself felt as the artificial boom created by the war died away. This crisis led to unemployment, and increasing unemployment, as always happens, undermined the fighting spirit of the workers' organizations. Moreover, the frequent and capricious strikes of the previous two years had caused a feeling of weariness among a growing number of workers. This strike weariness coincided with the beginning of a new economic period in which the lira began to find stability. Prices grew steadier, and thus the fundamental causes of the strikes disappeared.

Mussolini, with that sense of the psychological moment which he possesses in a high degree, remarked in the *Popolo d'Italia* of November 16, 1920, that 'the Italian domestic situation is improving daily.' In the issue of December 31, he wrote as follows:

'It is honest to add that during the last three months—to be exact since the referendum which led to the ending of the occupation of the factories and since the return of the Mission to Russia—the psychology of the working classes in Italy has changed profoundly. The wave of idleness and shirking seems to have died down. The working masses seem convinced that the fundamental problem of the moment is that of production. A clear symptom

¹ Bachi, *L'Italia economica nel 1920*, p. 348.

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of this state of mind is the comparative ease with which agreements lately have been reached after peaceful negotiations in the important trades of textiles and chemicals.'

The *Corriere della Sera* on December 31, 1920 said:

'In the last few months, a spontaneous reaction on the part of the Italian people has succeeded in greatly diminishing Socialist tyranny. The high-water mark of revolutionarism, represented by the occupation of the factories, has been followed by a rapid decline.'

Riccardo Bachi wrote at the same time:

'Certain wounds inflicted on our productive system by the war are healing with remarkable rapidity. After a long phase of psychological upheavals and disturbances, a feeling of calm and serenity is returning gradually to the nation's mind.'¹

1919 and 1920 had been a period of revolutionary excitement, though without real danger of revolution. Towards the end of 1920, even the excitement began to calm down. The worst of the crisis was over.

§ 5: *The 'Economic Paralysis'*

Fascist 'propaganda' spreads the legend that in 1919 and 1920 Italian economic life was profoundly disorganized and that production was completely paralysed on account of the 'Bolshevist' disorders.²

The truth is, the disorder never was great enough to paralyse production nor was it attributable entirely to 'Bolshevism.'

¹ *L'Italia economica nel 1920*, p. xi; *L'Italia economica nel 1921*, p. 335.

² Sir Ernest J. P. Benn: 'In 1919 and 1920, the class war began in earnest, and production almost stopped. Things were desperate. The common necessities of life were in danger of disappearing. To a people in such a plight, Mussolini offered the only way out.' (*Star*, April 6, 7, 8, 1926.)—Mr. Thomas Lamont: 'The industrial situation had become badly disorganized through an epidemic of strikes, with workers seizing control of the factories, and with widespread unemployment. There had been a virtual breakdown of railway and other Government services,' etc., etc. (*Survey Graphic* of New York, March, 1927, p. 723).

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The fundamental cause of the crisis must be sought in the economic after-effects of the war, and in the difficulties which accompanied the transition from war to peace. Luigi Einaudi, one of the most distinguished Italian economists, certainly not suspected of sympathy for Bolshevism, writes:

'During the four years of war, owing to the requirements of the army, labour, fertilizers, machinery and means of transport were all difficult to obtain, and agricultural produce was requisitioned at fixed prices which were far too low to compensate for the many months of laborious toil. Faced by all these difficulties, and by the necessity of slaughtering large numbers of cattle, and cutting down the forests for military requirements, Italian agriculturists have achieved a great feat in surmounting this troubled period, without experiencing an excessive diminution of crops, cattle and forests. The greatest difficulties, however, came in the next years, 1919-22, when the effects of the great deterioration of the soil during the war period were felt; the supply of fertilizers was still very scarce, and cultivators suffered from the uncertainty of prices, the constant disputes with the wage-earners, and the high cost of transport. . . . After the armistice, an industrial crisis was brought about by the necessity of substituting other industries for those of the war period, and the difficulties of forecasting demands were intensified by the shortage of raw materials, and by a fierce struggle for the control of associated and subsidiary products. The workers' desire for a "new order" which should give them control of the factories, provoked a number of conflicts and strikes.'¹

Thus strikes were not the sole, or even the chief cause of the crisis: they were one of many elements in the crisis. Nor should we see in them only a consequence of 'Bolshevist' machinations. Giorgio Mortara, a distinguished economist free from political bias, writes about the post-war strikes:

'The unrest among the working classes in the early post-war period, was not a special malady of Italy. All the countries that

¹ Luigi Einaudi, *Italy*, in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1926, pp. 573-574.

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took part in the war and several which had remained neutral also, suffered more or less extensively from it. The difficulty of returning to regular and steady work, after years passed in idleness, though among dangers and hardships; the laziness caused by exhaustion of the over-taxed will-power; the reaction against rigid army discipline so long endured; the irritation roused by the non-fulfilment of promises lightly bestowed on combatants, to spur them on to the greatest sacrifices; the revolt against the display of ill-gotten wealth:—these were the chief factors in the discontent which filled the minds of the people. This discontent fostered by unscrupulous agitators, using it as a means of self-advancement, sometimes exploded violently in strikes and the occupation of factories, sometimes smouldered in less open forms as sabotage and ca-canny hindering the renewal of productive activity, already difficult enough owing to the destruction of wealth and the dislocation of trade caused by the war. The continual rise in the cost of living was another source of restlessness among the masses. Monetary inflation soon brought its train of consequences.

'The rise in prices was accelerated by the impatient demand of the public, eager to make up for the lean years of the war, while on the other hand supplies were scarce. The rise in the cost of living, increasing the hardships of the working classes, drove them to press continually for higher wages. The economic stress was augmented by political pressure designed to bring about the dictatorship of the proletariat.'¹

'Bolshevist' manœuvres, therefore, were only one among many factors in the strike-epidemic.

As a measure of the abyss of Bolshevism into which Italy had fallen, propaganda brandishes in front of the bewildered readers the statistics of the strikes.

Year.	No. of strikers.	No. of working days lost.
1919	1,554,566	22,214,746
1920	2,313,685	30,569,218
1921	723,862	8,110,063 ²

¹ Mortara, *Prospettive economiche*: 192., p. 415.

² Villari, *Fascist Experiment*, p. 152.

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If these figures showed that in those years Italy was at the mercy of Bolshevism, it follows that England was still more 'bolshevized' than Italy, since its statistics are higher still:

Year.	No. of strikers.	No. of working days lost.
1919.	2,401,000	34,970,000
1920	1,779,000	26,570,000
1921	1,770,000	85,870,000

It is particularly railway strikes which give grist to the mill of propaganda.

In the course of 1919 only two strikes occurred, neither on important systems: the first, from May 4 to May 10, on the secondary lines belonging to private companies throughout Italy, with 35,000 strikers; the second from December 9, 1919 to January 9, 1920 in Calabria and Basilicata (Southern Italy).¹ For July 20 and 21, 1919, the Socialist Party, then dominated by the extremists, called a general strike as a political move, in protest against the Treaty of Versailles. The Central Executive of the Railwaymen's Union declared that its members would not take part in the strike. The Turin branch broke away from the Central Executive, but out of 193,000, only 5,000 railwaymen in all joined the strikers.² Such was the degree of Bolshevization in the Italian railways in 1919.

In the year 1920 the unrest was considerably greater. I give here the list of strikes which were of more than local importance, as I have been able to compile it from the daily Press and other available sources.³ An asterisk marks the sympathetic strikes and those declared for political reasons:

- (I) January 6-20: all over the country, especially in Northern and Central Italy, 84,000 men involved, out of the total of 193,000.

¹ *Bollettino del Lavoro*, XXXIII, p. 374; XXXV, pp. 11-39.

² *Almanacco Bemporad*, 1920; and Amministrazione delle Ferrovie dello Stato, *Relazione per l'anno finanziario 1919-20*, Roma, 1921, p. 12.

³ *Almanacco Bemporad*, 1921; *Corriere della Sera*; *Bollettino del Lavoro*, Vols. XXXIII-XXXV; Reports of the State Railway Board, 1919-20 and 1920-1.

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- (II) March 10: on three lines having their junction at Bologna; 500 men involved.
- (III) *March 8-24: Verona, station staff.
- (IV) *March 26: Genoa, station staff.
- (V) *April 6-9: Bologna, station staff and those employed on the lines Modena-Bologna and Bologna-Poretta.
- (VI) April 12-14: Sardinia, all lines involved.
- (VII) *April 14-24: Turin, station staff; *on April 15 at the station of Leghorn a train of Royal Guards bound for Turin was held up*; on April 17 the strike spread to the station staffs of Santhià and Novara and on 18th and 19th to the station staffs of Asti, Alessandria, Tortona, Novi; on April 22, at the stations of Pavia, Domodossola, Novara, *the railwaymen refused to convey the troops summoned to Turin to restore order there*; at the stations of Florence and Rome there was a stay-in strike.
- (VIII) *May 1: traffic practically suspended almost all over the country.
- (IX) May 9-June 2: Strike of employees of the Compagnie Internationale des Wagons-lits.
- (X) *May 15: Casale Monferrato, station staff.
- (XI) *May 22: Verona, station staff.
- (XII) *May 24-27: Udine, station staff.
- (XIII) *June 6-9: Bari, all the lines of the province.
- (XIV) *June 8-24: the railwaymen of Cremona station *refused to convey a train of war-ammunition which they thought was destined for Poland*; a station official managed to get the train dispatched; the strikers demanded his transfer to another station; this demand having been refused, the strike spread to Milan and to Eastern Lombardy; the strike ended without the transfer being obtained.
- (XV) June 8-20: Genoa and Rivarolo Ligure, station staffs, 1,120 strikers.
- (XVI) *June 20-August 10: in sympathy with a strike on the small line Brescia-Edolo, 35,000 men on the secondary private lines all over Italy went out on strike.

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(XVII) *September 9-11: at Trieste and in Istria and Friuli traffic brought to a standstill.

To these strikes of an extensive nature must be added about 30 others of a local and trifling nature.¹ This may seem a formidable list, especially if we bear in mind that a strike in a railroad centre like Verona, Turin, Genoa, Bologna, even though it be merely local, disorganizes the service on all the lines radiating from that centre. But it must be noted almost all these strikes were of short duration, and spread over a period of nine months. In England, in September, 1919, half a million railwaymen went on strike for nine days, entirely paralysing the traffic throughout the country, and the number of less important railway strikes for that year was not inferior to that of Italy the following year; but it never occurred to Englishmen to fall into convulsions of fear that England was going 'bolshie.'

The reader will have noticed that the cases of trains of soldiers, carabinieri, royal guards, munitions being held up by the 'Bolsheviks' were relatively few. So much fuss has been made about this kind of disorder that it makes me wonder whether other cases occurred, which escaped my notice in reading the newspapers and official reports. But I was living in Italy at that time, and my memory is good, and though always subject to correction, I maintain that between the spring of 1919 and the autumn of 1920, there were not more than a dozen cases of this kind. These cases became a commonplace of anti-Bolshevik propaganda, and people, hearing them eternally talked of as an intolerable scandal, ended by believing that the scandal happened every day. I have no wish to excuse these senseless disorders, I merely wish to present in its true proportions the railway 'Bolshevism' of that ill-famed year 1920.

Certainly things would have gone better if there had been no epidemic of strikes. But when we begin talking about 'ifs,' we have no right to stop at the first one which suits our thesis. We

¹ e.g. January 26: 185 employees struck for one day on the branch line Naples-Cuma; March 7-23: 120 employees struck at the station of Vicenza; March 14: 200 employees struck on a branch line near Naples; April 25-8: 74 employees struck on the Vomero branch line, Naples, etc.

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must go back farther and say: *if* there had not been the war, *if* the Italian ruling classes had not committed so many blunders during and after the war, *if* in fact there had not been these and many others *ifs*, the post-war neurasthenia would never have existed, or at any rate would not have been so acute. The social life of a country is not an electric bell which begins or stops ringing immediately the diplomats, generals and profiteers press or release the button.

One powerful cause of trouble in these post-war years was the scarcity of coal in Italy. On the eve of the war, in 1913, Italy imported 11.5 million tons of coal; during the war, in 1917, importation fell to 5 million tons; this was not the fault of the 'Bolshevists.' In 1919 when the war was over and 'Bolshevism' arrived, importation rose to 6.1 million tons. It fell again to 5.5 million in 1920, but in that year the coal cost 800 lire (£8) a ton in Italian ports, while only costing 200 lire (£2) a ton in England. This, and not 'Bolshevism,' was the cause of grave industrial difficulties. In 1921 the price of coal fell to 250 lire (£2 10s.) a ton, and importation rose to 7 million tons. In 1922, imports rose to 9 million tons.¹

The decrease in coal importations was accounted for by the wider employment of electricity and of oil. In 1913-14 Italy consumed 2.3 milliard KWH; in 1919-20 she consumed 4.7 milliard. In 1910-14 Italy consumed yearly 1,378,000 quintals of petroleum, benzene, and residual products; she consumed 2,260,000 quintals in 1915-18; and 2,310,000 quintals in 1919-21.²

Another cause of the economic troubles of these years was inefficiency of railway transport. Strikes and the post-war wave of lassitude, and the 'Bolshevist' lack of discipline among the railway employees certainly contributed to this inefficiency; but there were two other causes which should not be overlooked:

¹ Mortara, *Prospettive economiche*: 1922, Città di Castello, 1922, pp. 207-18; Einaudi, *Italy, Economic and Financial History* in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1926, p. 575.

² Einaudi, *Italy*, in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1926, p. 575; Vincenzo Porri, *L'evoluzione economica italiana nell'ultimo cinquantennio*, in the volume *I cavalieri del lavoro*, Rome, 1925, p. 171.

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firstly, the bad condition into which rolling-stock had fallen during the war years, and secondly the bad quality of coal which the railways were forced to use.¹ In spite of these unfortunate conditions, the State railways, which in 1913 had carried 93 million passengers, and in 1918 only 65 millions, now in 1919 carried 102 millions, and in 1920 110 millions.²

The following table³ gives the number of limited companies in the year 1918, when 'Bolshevism' had not yet arrived in Italy, as against the years 1919 and 1920, in which, according to the Fascist legend, Italian production was 'paralysed by Bolshevism.'

	Number of Companies.	Capital.
1918	3463	7,257 million lire
1919	4520	13,014 " "
1920	5541	17,784 " "

The following table⁴ gives the amounts deposited in the postal and other saving institutions, banks, credit banks and people's banks, etc.:

1918	7,906 million lire
1919	10,643 " "
1920	13,213 " "

The postal services show the following statistics of letters:⁵

Year.	Letters.
1918-19	2,371 millions
1919-20	2,126 "
1920-21	1,808 "

A distinct fall is visible from 1918-19 to 1919-20. Was it due to 'Bolshevism'? No, it was due to demobilization. The

¹ Mortara, *Prospettive economiche*: 1922, p. 309.

² *Annuario Statistico Italiano*: 1922-25, p. 401.

³ *Credito Italiano: Società Italiane per azioni. Notizie Statistiche*, 1925, 10th edition.

⁴ *Annuario Statistico Italiano*: 1918-1921, p. 509.

⁵ De Stefani, *Documenti*, May 13, 1920, p. 417; *Annuario Statistico Italiano*: 1919-21, p. 508.

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men demobilized in 1919-20 no longer needed to send letters to their families, nor to receive letters from them.

The fall of 1920-21 is attributable to another cause: on January 25, 1921, a rise in postal tariffs came into operation. A new rise in postal tariffs, after the seizure of the Government by the Fascists, caused a further fall from 1,809 millions in 1921-22 to 1,730 millions of letters in 1922-23.

The following are the statistics of the motor-cars registered in Italy: ¹

Year.	Private cars.	Public vehicles.	Commercial vehicles.
1918	15,592	1,235	5,547
1919	21,759	2,124	10,613
1920	28,604	2,862	17,410

Neither must we over-rate the ill-results of the parliamentary paralysis. It is true that the three sections into which the Chamber was divided, could not form any stable and effective ministerial coalition. It is true that the Chamber, thus disorganized, was not capable of voting on estimates, or discussing bills. But the Ministers made laws and approved estimates by 'royal decrees' (Orders in Council); and never has Italy known so many laws by royal decree as in the years of parliamentary paralysis.² The administration was carried on by the same high State officials, who have continued to manufacture decrees under the cloak of the Fascist dictatorship, just as they did at the time of the 'Bolshevist madness.'

A national loan floated in January, 1920, brought in 18 milliards - a sum far in excess of any war loan.³

In November, 1919, government taxation and local rating were radically reformed. The effects could not follow at once, for

¹ *Anuario Statistico Italiano, 1919-21, p. 377.*

² From 1895 to 1913 the number of royal decrees varied from a minimum of 1 to a maximum of 24 a year. The war augmented the number of these exceptional measures. Thus there were 100 in 1914; 221 in 1915; 173 in 1916; 337 in 1917; 318 in 1918; 1029 in 1919; 350 in 1920. (Debate in the Senate, Dec. 12, 1925.)

³ De Stefani, *Documenti sulla condizione finanziaria ed economica dell'Italia*, Roma, Libreria dello Stato, 1923, p. 367.

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administrative machinery had to be created for the application of the new measures.¹ But the revenues, which for the Budget of 1918-1919 brought in 9,675 million lire, brought in 15,207 million lire in 1919-1920, and 18,820 million lire in 1920-1921.²

At the same time the government was re-organizing the forces for the maintenance of public order. When the war ended, the Carabineers numbered only 28,000. By June, 1920, their numbers had risen to 60,000. Moreover, an auxiliary police-body, the 'Royal Guard,' had been created, which in June, 1920, numbered 25,000 men.³ One Socialist deputy, a carter by trade, earned great popularity by interrupting the Ministerial speeches in season and out of season with the cry; 'Dissolve the Royal Guard!' But the Royal Guard continued to increase.

These facts, and many others I could quote, enable one to judge whether Dr. Nicholas Murray Butler, President of Columbia University, New York, gave a correct description of conditions in Italy during the post-war years, when he said:

'Anarchy, bankruptcy and powerlessness had apparently seized upon that great people. Six (?) million Italians were one day without water to drink or with which to cleanse themselves, the railways had broken down, the postal service was wrecked, the roads were in disrepair; brigandage, anarchy and crime were rampant everywhere.'⁴

In short, parliamentary paralysis did not mean the paralysis of the government. There were exasperating disturbances; there was no irreparable anarchy. The post-war 'neurasthenia' was called 'Bolshevism,' because the Russian revolution had made 'Bolshevism' the fashionable word. Every one called himself a 'Bolshevist,' but no one knew what 'Bolshevism' meant. For ninety-nine out of a hundred of the Italian post-war 'Bolshevists,' their 'Bolshevism' was nothing but an incoherent protest against

¹ Flores, *Eredità di Guerra*, Naples, Editore Ceccoli, pp. 129 ff.

² Bachi, *L'Italia economica nel 1921*, pp. 258 and ff.

³ Vincenzo Nitti, *L'opera di Nitti*, p. 165.

⁴ Speech on April 13, 1927, reported in the *New York World* of April 14, 1927.

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the aftermath of the war and the high cost of living. But the politicians who had made war badly and peace worse, the profiteers who roused general indignation by their insensate luxury, the bureaucrats, civil and military, who exasperated the ex-service men by delaying pensions, the Nationalists and Fascists who planted the seeds of sedition in the army by the occupation of Fiume—all these found it convenient to explain the people's unrest as the result of 'Bolshevist' propaganda. In politics, as in other matters, we do not like to look for the causes of evil in our own faults; it is always more comfortable to attribute the responsibility to others.

The people who with bated breath and upturned eyes speak of the 'Bolshevism' under which Italy was labouring in 1919-20 are for the most part not insincere. They were in a state of panic during those years. Panic, like wine, makes men sincere. But just as it is not advisable to take the word of a man under the influence of wine, it is also not advisable to take the word of a man under the influence of panic. If the psychological reflexes of the post-war crisis are checked by the objective indices of economic and social life, every unprejudiced inquirer must come to the conclusion that the so-called Italian 'Bolshevism' of 1919-20 was nothing worse than an outbreak of unco-ordinated unrest among large sections of the Italian people, to which the worse elements of the ruling classes replied by an exhibition of cowardice out of all proportion to the actual danger.

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

Note A to Page 23

When Signor Villari speaks of Mussolini's life before Italy's intervention in the Great War, he avoids mentioning that, up to 1914, Mussolini was a rabid advocate of the theory that the proletariat had no concern in national defence. He only asserts that 'from the moment war broke out, Mussolini instinctively understood the necessity for Italian intervention, and never wavered in his conviction' (*The Awakening of Italy*, p. 19). The truth is that Mussolini preached 'absolute neutrality' and preparation for a revolution during August and September until October 8, 1914. It was not till October 18 that he swung round and began to preach intervention in the 'revolutionary war' (see the paper *Avanti* directed by Mussolini up till October 20, 1914).

Another example of the legends circulated about Mussolini in England, the United States, and France, is to be found in Umberto Morelli's article in the *English Review*, February, 1926: 'Mussolini: a patriotic Socialist.' Among other extraordinary things it is stated:

'In the beginning of the war, all Mussolini's efforts were concentrated against the Nationalists, who were inclined to favour fighting against France, and he paralysed their machinations; and when he had succeeded in compelling Italy to remain neutral, he *immediately* began to work for the war of liberation of the two provinces - Trento and Trieste; then the war came and Mussolini joined the army and received forty-two wounds' (p. 207).

Referring to these injuries, the *Daily Mail* (Nov. 2, 1926) writes: 'He was also terribly wounded in the war'; and the writers of the *Morning Post* cannot recall these wounds without becoming light-headed:

'Signor Mussolini' - they write on October 4, 1926 - 'fell on the Italian front with as many wounds as Caesar, and when lying, swathed in his bandages, had no doubt ample time to consider the true philosophy of peace.'

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Every one in Italy knows well that all the parties, except the Nationalists, decided in favour of neutrality in the first days of August, 1914, and all, including the Nationalists, gave their adhesion to it when declared. It is throwing dust in people's eyes to attribute to Mussolini a decisive influence on the course of events during this period.

The Italian Government declared its neutrality on August 4, whereas Mussolini went on preaching, not intervention, but neutrality à la Lenin up until October 1914. It is not true therefore that 'immediately he began to work for the war.'

When the war came (May 24, 1915) Mussolini joined the army only when called up with his class on September 1, 1915; he was not wounded in action but injured in a bombing practice on February 23, 1917; when recovered from his injuries (June, 1917), which were not dangerous (see *Popolo d'Italia* of February 24, 1917) he asked exemption from further military service, as being indispensable in the management of the *Popolo d'Italia*.

Note B to Page 42

Sir Percival Phillips, special correspondent of the *Daily Mail*, in his book, *The Red Dragon and the Black Shirts: how Italy found her Soul: the true (sic) story of the Fascist Movement*, London, Carmelite House, 1923, p. 13, says:

'Communist policy is flinging men alive into blast-furnaces, as was done by a Red tribunal composed of women at Turin.'

I do not know whether in Russia or anywhere else Communist policy ever flung men alive into blast-furnaces. What I do know is that at Turin no such thing ever happened. It is bad enough that during the occupation of the factories there a Red tribunal should have talked wild words about throwing two unfortunate men named Scimula and Sonzini into a blast-furnace, before it sentenced them to be shot (*Corriere della Sera*, March, 2, 3, 4, 1922). Why exaggerate facts in themselves terrible? It would be fairer to note that in a movement of 500,000 men all over Italy, there were only six men murdered, all in Turin.

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The French paper *L'Oeuvre*, November 18, 1926, reproduced from a French weekly a description of an incident which never took place:

'The March on Rome, which put an end to this terrible regime, is due to M. Fiat. The workers, not content with occupying his factory, gagged the great Italian industrialist, and outraged his wife and daughters before his eyes. Indignant, the great industrialist placed at Mussolini's disposal the necessary funds for overthrowing the regime.'

L'Oeuvre observed that M. Fiat is no other than the F(abbrica) I(taliana) A(utomobili) T(orino) (The Italian Motor-Car Company of Turin) and this company had neither wife nor daughters who could have been outraged. The journalist paid to write this piece of propaganda evidently knew nothing of the world-famous motor factory.

As regards Signor Agnelli, manager of the Fiat Company, no one ever broke into his house, nor was he or his family attacked in any way.

On September 30, Signor Agnelli went to the main factory ('Fiat Centro') to take it over again from the 'Internal Commission' which had managed it during the occupation. The *Corriere della Sera*, October 1, 1920, writes:

'His arrival was greeted with applause. On the table of his office lay a large bunch of red carnations (the Socialist emblem). On one wall was the Soviet emblem, the sickle and hammer.'

Signor Agnelli did not consider the applause sufficient compensation for the Communist sickle and hammer, and announced in the papers that he would resign his position of general manager of the company. A month later his mother died. We read in the *Corriere della Sera*, October 31, 1920:

'Three thousand workmen of the Fiat followed the funeral. In sign of mourning the trade-union leaders called a stoppage of work during the funeral in all the 14 factories of the concern. As the coffin was carried out of the church, one of the members

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of the "Internal Commission" of the main factory, who is a Socialist member of the county council, went up to Signor Agnelli and said so that all could hear: "Do come back to us." A representative of the clerical staff on behalf of all his fellows expressed the same desire. Signor Agnelli, overcome with emotion, did not speak, but gave a long hand-shake to the two men.'

An American manufacturer, owner of a large plant in Northern Italy, told Mr. Sandford Griffith:

'The workers were simple enough to believe that in occupying the factories they had started a world revolution. At our place they did no malicious damage to the machinery. They tried to run the factory instead. During their theatricals I went out to play golf every day. Though I crossed the factory district in my car I was not molested.' (*Survey Graphic* of New York, March, 1927.)

Such was Italian 'Bolshevism' in 1919-20. A childish bacchanal of applause, red carnations, communist emblems, strikes, demonstrations, etc., lasting over twenty months and stained with the blood of 200 people killed in the disorders.

Signor Villari, in *The Awakening of Italy*, pp. 94-7, while describing the crisis of the occupation of the factories, omits, as usual, any reference to the writings and actions of Mussolini and his friends in those days. Instead he would have us believe that the Socialists regarded this form of direct action as the beginning of practical collectivism and of the long-hoped-for dictatorship of the proletariat. He states: that the occupation of the factories was ordered by the Communist Deputy, Bombacci, and other leaders of the F. I. O. M. (Italian Federation of Engineering Workers); that the proposal to give the occupation a revolutionary character was defended by the 'Socialist Party' and opposed by the General Confederation of Labour; that as a result of the crisis 'the value of the lira on the Swiss exchange fell to 25 centimes: it had been 74 at the beginning of the year.'

The statement that the Communist deputy, Bombacci, together with other leaders of the F. I. O. M., ordered the occupation of

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the factories, is sheer invention. Bombacci was not among the leaders of the F. I. O. M., and took no part in the unfortunate decision.

Signor Villari should have informed his readers that the leaders of the F. I. O. M. and of the General Confederation of Labour, who opposed the Anarchists and Communists, were right-wing Socialists, and within the Socialist Party they protested against the attitude of their Executive which sought to give a revolutionary trend to the movement.

The propagandist should have compared the rate of exchange of the lira in September and October of 1920, not only with January of 1920, but with the intervening and following months. He would then have shown that the lira had been falling steadily ever since 1919, owing to continual inflation, and in September and October, 1920, its fall was no more precipitous than the previous and following months. The purchasing price of 100 Swiss francs in Italian lire was: 1919, March, 132.30 lire; June, 151.32 lire; September, 174.86 lire; December, 241.67 lire; 1920, March, 321.24 lire; April, 410.50 lire; May, 352.78 lire; June, 309.98 lire; July, 305.53 lire; August, 341.98 lire; September, 373.74 lire; October, 408.33 lire; November, 427.55 lire; December, 441.02 lire; 1921, March, 446.86 lire; June, 339.64 lire. (Bachi, *Italia economica*, 1919, p. 106; 1920, p. 119; 1921, p. 100.) Taking the economic movement of 1913 as 100, we find that the exports of motor-cars and other vehicles of the same kind amounted to 105.7 in 1919, and to 794.51 in 1920. (Bachi, *Italia economica*, 1920, p. 22.) The crisis of the occupation of the factories was grave above all in the motor-car factories.

CHAPTER II
HOW THE DICTATORSHIP AROSE

§ 1: *The 'Anti-Bolshevist' Reaction*

A REVOLUTION which everybody talks about and which many fear, but which never materializes, ends by being looked upon as a failure. A revolution that fails leads to reaction.

During 1920, among the upper and middle classes a new state of mind was slowly maturing, which, combined with the slump in revolutionary excitement, was to lead to a complete reversal of the political situation.

The industrialists, who during the war had manufactured munitions, or army cloth, had not until now actually suffered as a result of the disorders and strikes. The fear of the disorders which might result from unemployment prevented the government from stopping the production of war material. Then the industrialists protested that they could not go on paying the wages demanded by the workers unless the government raised the price of goods. Then the government, in order to pay its way, increased the circulation of paper money. As a result prices soared, there were new strikes, a renewed fear of disorder, and new orders for war material.

But the government could not continue indefinitely to order useless war material. The industrialists, in their turn, could not pass from uneconomic to economic prices without lowering wages, and they could not lower their wages without a fierce struggle against the economic organization and the political influence of the working classes.

The industrialists, moreover, felt crushed by the relentless taxation of the past two years. If such taxes were to be abolished, the government would have to obtain its revenue from other sources by means of indirect taxation. But an increase in indirect taxes affecting the workers was opposed by the 156 Socialist deputies, and an increase in indirect taxes affecting the peasants was opposed by the 100 Christian-Democratic deputies. This problem, too, could be solved only by a reversal of the parliamentary situation.

At the same time life had become very difficult for the land-

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owners and farmers, especially in Lower Lombardy, Emilia, Tuscany and Apulia, where the pressure of the Socialist and Christian-Democrat Trade Unions was at its height. Strikes, threats and violence forced them to employ unnecessary numbers of labourers, and kept them in a state of constant uneasiness for themselves and their families, often isolated in the open country and without means of defence. In the first year after the war they had put up with these trials, hoping they would soon blow over; the peasants were nearly all demobilized soldiers, and it was necessary to look with forbearance on the extravagances of the 'saviours of the country.' But as time passed, the honeymoon with the 'saviours of the country' waned and irritation grew. The hail of new taxation made it increasingly difficult for the landowners to bear the burden of high wages and of the unessential or even wasteful work they were obliged to provide for the unemployed. Those who were most exasperated were not the big landowners, who did not come into contact with the labourers and metayers, but the farmers, the stewards, the owners of medium-sized estates and the small holders. Bitterest of all were the new owners and small speculators who had bought land with what they had saved during the war, and who had now to defend their property.

Besides the 'anti-Bolshevism' of the industrialists and landowners there was that of the shop-keepers and tradesmen. Many of these had been opposed to the war, and in 1919 had sympathized with the 'Bolshevist' protests against those responsible for the war. But as soon as this 'Bolshevism' began to fix prices, to loot shops, to break shop-windows, they too became fiercely 'anti-Bolshevist.' Moreover, the Retail Co-operative Stores of the Socialists and Christian-Democrats competed with the small shop-keepers. For these people 'anti-Bolshevism' meant putting an end (a) to street disorder, (b) to regulation of food prices, (c) to the competition of the Socialist and Christian-Democratic Co-operatives.

The public servants also had their 'anti-Bolshevism.' The workers, the landless peasants and those public servants who could strike - such as railwaymen, post office and telegraph employees - had up till then defended themselves against the inflation and the consequent rise in prices, by exacting higher

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wages and higher salaries. In contrast, the magistrates, army officers, teachers, retired officials and others with fixed incomes were living a life of great hardship. A great many of these too had been 'Bolshevists' in 1919. During 1920, comparing their increasing poverty with the increasing wages of the manual workers, they too became 'anti-Bolshevists.' They attributed their troubles solely to the secondary, but more obtrusive, fact of the strikes, instead of tracing it to its primary, but less obvious cause - inflation.

A sub-section of this bureaucratic 'anti-Bolshevism' was the 'anti-Bolshevism' of the Carabineers, of the Royal Guards and of the police, who were forced to rush hither and thither to stop disorders; were insulted in the papers and at revolutionary meetings; were exposed to continual danger of wounds or death; and were exasperated by the very necessity of the frequent use of arms against tumultuous crowds.

Finally, there was the 'anti-Bolshevism' of the patriots. The Anarchists and Communists, under the illusion that they could live indefinitely on their anti-war protests, in 1920 redoubled their efforts in a stupid and malicious campaign of hatred and contempt against those who had been decorated in the war. In certain districts where Anarchist and Communist propaganda were most prevalent, a man found that to have done his duty with honour in the war, or to have returned home disabled, was regarded as a crime which had to be concealed lest punishment should follow. Many ex-service men, who would willingly have joined with the most hot-headed 'war socialists,' became 'anti-Bolshevists' as a result of this stupid brutality which did more harm to the revolutionary parties than any violence or disorders. The main appeal of the 'anti-Bolshevist' offensive lay precisely in the vindication of the rights and dignity of the disabled ex-soldiers and of those decorated in the war.

All these forces of opposition to 'Bolshevism' were slowly accumulating in 1919-20.¹ After the failure of the occupation of

¹ For this slow growth of the 'anti-Bolshevist' mentality in the different classes before the autumn of 1920, see the remarks of Guglielmo Ferrero, *Da Fiume a Roma*, pp. 91-92. See also in the volume *Il fascismo visto dai partiti politici italiani*, the studies of Luigi Fabbri, *Controrivoluzione*

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the factories, they became active. During the municipal elections which took place in October and November all over the country, the Socialists only won 2,022 communes (24.3 per cent.); the Christian-Democrats won 1,613 (19.4 per cent.); the other anti-'Bolshevist' parties won 4,692 (56.3 per cent.).¹ The Socialists were beaten in almost all the most important cities: Rome, Venice, Turin, Genoa, Florence, Naples, Palermo; at Milan they won with barely a 3,000 majority, on a poll of 144,000 votes. The only overwhelming Socialist victory in a big town was at Bologna. Whilst these electioneering struggles were taking place, the anniversary of the armistice was solemnized with much ceremony. In November, 1919, it had been necessary to suppress all commemorations to avoid disorders. In November, 1920, no Anarchist, or Communist, or Socialist thought of disturbing the ceremony. The wave of anti-patriotism, that for nearly two years seemed to have submerged the country, was now clearly subsiding. A new frame of mind became evident.

At this point a horrible massacre which occurred in Bologna, on November 21, 1920, precipitated the anti-'Bolshevist' reaction.

The communal elections in Bologna, October 31, had, as we have said, given the Socialists a sweeping victory. A group of Fascists, exasperated by this victory, on November 4 attacked the Chamber of Workers. The Secretary of the latter, a Communist named Bucco, who had wearied and irritated the city by his overbearingness, showed himself on this occasion a coward unable to organize resistance. After having abused the police for two years, he telephoned to them for help against the Fascist assault. The police arrived and confiscated a store of arms and explosives which Bucco, as far as can be seen, had collected with the sole object of

preventiva, pp. 21 ff.; Mario Missiroli, *Il fascismo e la crisi italiana*, pp. 14 ff.; Zibordi, *Critica socialista del fascismo*, pp. 16-42. The studies collected in this volume are the work of men of the most widely divergent political views. They were written in the second half of 1921 and first half of 1922. Thus, taken as a whole, they form a first-rate source of information on the origins of the Fascist movement.

¹ Giusti, *Le correnti politiche italiane attraverso le due riforme elettorali dal 1919 al 1921*, Florence, 1922, pp. 32, 33.

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having them discovered. Whilst the police were searching the premises, the Fascists sacked them.¹

To retrieve this moral disaster, the Socialists decided to celebrate the opening meeting of the new town council, by a grand demonstration to take place on November 21. An anti-Bolshevist paper of the city, *Il Progresso*, started a campaign to prevent the Socialists from waving red flags in their demonstration. The police induced the Socialists and Fascists to come to a compromise on November 18: the Socialists renounced their procession, and confined themselves to holding a meeting in front of the town-hall (Palazzo d'Accursio); the red flags were to appear on the balcony of the town-hall only while the new mayor and the other official speakers were making their speeches; as soon as the speeches were over the flags would be taken away and the meeting would dissolve.

Notwithstanding this agreement, the population remained suspicious and excited. Dark rumours of assaults and counter-assaults were circulated. On the one hand Socialists, on the other Fascists, summoned their comrades from the neighbouring towns.

In the afternoon of Saturday, November 20, the Directorate of the Fascio circulated the following typewritten manifesto which annulled the agreement of the two days earlier:

'Citizens, the Reds, beaten and disbanded in all the squares and streets of our city, call up their hordes from the country-side, to take their revenge and hoist their red rag on the town-hall. We shall not endure this insult! It is an insult to every Italian citizen, and to our country, which will have nothing to do with Lenin and with Bolshevism. On Sunday the women and all those who love peace and quiet, are requested to stay at home, and, if they wish to deserve well of their country, to hang out of their windows the Italian flag. On Sunday in the streets of Bologna there shall be only Fascists and anti-Fascists. It will be the test! The great test in the name of Italy.'

On Sunday, November 21, at 2 p.m., i.e. an hour before the ceremony was to begin, a red flag was hoisted on one of the two

¹ See *Fascismo: Inchiesta socialista sulle gesta dei Fascisti in Italia*, Milano, Casa editrice Avanti, 1922, pp. 238-239.

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famous towers of Bologna. There were evidently, among the 'Bolshevists' as among the Fascists, fanatics determined to provoke a conflict. After half an hour had elapsed, the police had the flag taken down. At 3 p.m., when the new municipal councillors met to nominate the new mayor, the hall was full of people, and in the square outside thousands were gathered. Cordons of troops on foot and on horseback, carabinieri and royal guards closed all the streets leading to the square, to prevent the Fascists from entering it and coming into contact with the crowd gathered there.

At 3.30 p.m. a group of about 500 Fascists, starting from their headquarters, flung themselves against one barrier of soldiers and broke through. They reached the entrance to the square, and tried to break through the second barrier, just as the new mayor came to the window, accompanied by the red flags, to speak to the crowd. Three revolver shots rang out from the Fascists. These in the general nervousness produced a wave of panic. Many soldiers threw themselves on the ground or left their ranks. Some Carabinieri and Royal Guards opened fire on the town-hall. The crowd in the square rushed for shelter to the inner courtyard of the town-hall. On the terrified mass bombs fell from a window of the town-hall. A Communist named Martelli, a member of the committee which had made the arrangements for the ceremony, had laid in a store not only of refreshments for the councillors if all went well, but also of bombs, in case the town-hall was stormed by the Fascists. When the crowd surged confusedly against the gateway, Martelli seems to have thought it was the Fascists, and dropped the bombs on his own friends. Among the crowd ten were killed and fifty-eight wounded. Some were victims of the firing of the Carabinieri and Royal Guards. The greater number were struck by the fragments of the bombs.

Meanwhile, in the council-chamber, shouting and disorder reigned. Some struggled to the doors to escape, some threw themselves on the floor to avoid bullets coming in at the window. Suddenly two men armed with revolvers (or perhaps only one who changed places as he shot) came forward towards the bench occupied by members of the anti-Socialist minority, and began

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to shoot at them. One of the minority, Signior Giordani, a distinguished officer in the war, was killed, two others were wounded.

These are the facts, as they can be reconstructed to-day, in cold blood, from the records of the public trial, which took place in Milan from January 30 to March 14, 1923.¹ In November, 1920, under the immediate impression of the tragedy, it was not possible to distribute the responsibility dispassionately. Political bias had free play. The anti-'Bolshevist' parties and papers shifted the responsibilities from the actual authors of the crime to their party as a whole. The Socialists, whether 'Communists,' 'Maximalists' or 'Reformists,' were all, without distinction, involved in a storm of moral indignation.

Under the pressure of this storm the rupture between Communists and Socialists, which had been preparing for a year, became complete. At the Socialist Congress at Leghorn in January, 1921, the Communists left the Socialist Party, and formed a new Party. This division increased the bewilderment and confusion of the working classes.

From that time onwards, the latent forces of the 'anti-Bolshevist' reaction were unchained. In war an army begins to win when its opponents cease to believe in victory and begin to retreat. Then those who might have fled, had the enemy resisted ten minutes longer, feel themselves as strong as lions and charge in pursuit.

The 'Fasci di Combattimento' formed 'the White Guard,' and became the rallying points of all the 'anti-Bolshevist' forces seeking to organize themselves. The industrialists, landowners and shop-keepers who had already, here and there, given them money, had now only to generalize the method of subsidies and to enrol their own sons and followers in the Fascist bands. Truth to tell, the Fascists also made a great display of revolutionary phraseology. But revolutionary phraseology was useful to incite the 'squads' ('squadristi') who had to fight the 'Bolshevist'; the true function of the Fascists was in reality conservative - and this was important.

¹ They were published in full by the Press of the time. I have used the account in the *Corriere della Sera*.

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'After a few months' - wrote a careful observer in the summer of 1921 - 'nearly everywhere in the country districts, in Emilia, in Venetia, in Apulia, the greater part of the Fasci were formed by protégés of the agrarians. Fascismo changed markedly from what it was before October, 1920. The undergraduate element was no longer its main strength. Even the leadership of the Fascists here and there changed hands. Not even in the towns were their adherents the same as they used to be. The earlier Fascists were for the most part more disinterested and were moved by the patriotic spirit which had been fanned and exaggerated by the war - a patriotism undoubtedly ill-understood and vague, but sincere. They were reduced to a minority by the influx of new elements.'¹

Such a vast and rapid influx of wealthy and conservative people into an organization of impecunious youths who believed themselves revolutionaries, bewildered and scandalized many 'Fascists of the first hour.' One may see in Umberto Banchelli's book, *Memorie di un Fascista*,² the protests against the 'sons and hangers-on of the big-wigs,' who, if they came in great numbers to the meetings of the Fascists, were never in the dangerous expeditions:

'They had come into the Fascio for their own ends, one of which was to exercise class justice, that is to carry out reprisals, not as Fascists, but as sons of the lawyer, of the doctor, of the war profiteer. If they met men in working clothes, they fell on them and began beating them. Their mentality was on a par with that of the Communists, who had beaten and murdered anybody who was decently dressed. One saw on arriving at the Fascist headquarters the well-known surly and rapacious faces of war profiteers; these were shabbily clothed and shod, but all had the inevitable diamond on their finger, - and we were obliged to

¹ Fabbri, *Controrivoluzione preventiva*, p. 37.

² Florence, ed. Sassaiola Fiorentina, 1922, p. 12. This book is a typical document showing the incredible mental and moral confusion created in many intelligent and generous young men by the chaotic propaganda of such men as D'Annunzio and Mussolini.

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accept their money because we needed it to stifle an evil worse than they.'¹

' This 'anti-Bolshevist' counter-offensive was natural, and might have been helpful to the workers and peasants themselves. For two years they had faced nothing but the fear and cowardice of the upper classes and had lost all sense of proportion. They had become like spoiled children, and their own leaders were often unable to keep control of them. A virile resistance on the part of the Conservatives would have forced them to take a juster view of their capacities and responsibilities.

In subsidizing the Fascists, the industrialists, landowners and bankers were not going beyond their rights. Capital is a social force like labour, and it was as natural that the capitalists should assist their 'White Guard' with funds as that the workers and peasants should contribute to the support of their propagandists and organizers.

Even the acts of violence committed by the Fascists during the first few months of their counter-offensive can be viewed with a certain indulgence. Since the police and magistrates were powerless to defend private citizens from the capricious and overbearing power of the Trade Unions, such citizens might well seek to defend themselves by illegal methods.

In this first period, a Fascist had to possess a certain amount of courage, physical and moral. He had to face unpopularity, he was exposed to physical violence on the part of the crowd, he ran

¹ Cp., the following words from a speech made in March, 1925, by Signor Cuzzi, a prominent personality in Fascist Trade Unionism: 'The industrialists are greatly mistaken if they think that having accepted their subsidies in 1919, 1920, and 1921, Fascism has given up protecting the workers' (quoted in Hautecoeur, *Le Fascisme*, in *L'Année politique française et étrangère*, October-December, 1925, p. 145). Signor Villari wrote in the *Manchester Guardian*, March 27, 1926, as follows: 'Nor did many of the capitalists sympathize with Fascism; at all events, they were certainly not the organizers of the movement.' The equivocation consists precisely in the use of the word *many*. It is quite true that not *all* the capitalists, without exception, subsidized Fascism. As to the 'organizers of the movement,' we shall see in the course of the next few pages who they are.

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a risk of wounds or death – a risk not as widespread as Fascist ‘propaganda’ would have us believe, but real enough to damp the ardour of the ordinary man. The Anarchist, Luigi Fabbri, whom we have quoted already, wrote in the summer of 1921:

‘The assistance, moral, material and financial, of industrial and landed capitalism, the connivance of the public forces, and the adhesion of all the supine worshippers of success, would not alone have sufficed to give strength to Fascism. Rather, all these co-efficients would have been absent if there had not been from the beginning a nucleus of men endowed with strength of will and the spirit of sacrifice, who at their own risk broke the ice of indifference and hostility, urged on into the struggle by inward strength and careless of their own safety. Some of them met their deaths. These few, the most obscure, urging on the many, set in motion the whole machinery, which now appears so strong.’ (*Controrivoluzione preventiva*, pp. 96-97.)

§ 2: *The ‘Authorized Lawlessness’*

Towards the beginning of 1921, the moment was ripe for the government to take advantage of the Fascist counter-offensive and the Socialist discouragement, disarm all factions and restore public peace. In December, 1920, a single cannonade against D’Annunzio’s palace had sufficed to put an end to the occupation of Fiume; the Carabineers had been re-organized and were loyal; the Royal Guards were always ready to shoot, even when there was no absolute necessity to do so. There were more than sufficient forces available for the repression of disorders, whether coming from the Right or from the Left. Once the respect for law and order had been restored, it would have only been necessary to wait patiently until the healing process had done its work, and the people little by little had found their way back to the path of common sense.

It is true that the gate could not all at once be put back upon its hinges. Time is the only healer of certain diseases. And it would have been a great and precious lesson to our people, if they could have rid themselves of Communist dreams and revolu-

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tionary illusions, by free experience and spontaneous conviction. Some credit was due to them, for they had shown much firmness and spirit of sacrifice after Caporetto. Patience and calm was the obvious duty, especially for those politicians who had known neither how to make war nor how to make peace, and who were mainly and directly responsible for the post-war neurasthenia with which the Italian people were afflicted.

If there was one man who had no right to treat that disease with a cudgel and a revolver, that man was Mussolini. Before the war none had contributed more than he to the spread of revolutionary and anti-national Socialism in Italy. He had launched among the masses the slogan of revolutionary neutrality in the face of the World War. During the war none had made more lavish promises of peasant ownership and workers' control, as a result of the 'revolutionary war.' None, in 1919-20, had contributed more to the revolutionary frenzy which led to the occupation of the factories.

But if the danger of revolution had never been great, the fear of it had been great. And that fear lasted well after 1920 and in many minds it is still alive. In politics what people fear is of more importance than what actually happens. And fear is a bad counsellor.

The Italian industrialist class is of recent formation. It owes its wealth primarily to protective duties and government contracts, and has not yet acquired by a long political and economic experience a consciousness of its social dignity, of its rights and obligations. In particular the 'new rich' of the war - the *pescicani* or 'sharks' as we call them in Italy - are people of scant intellectual or moral refinement. Having achieved wealth and power more often by luck than merit, they are incapable of holding their ground in a system of free competition and political liberty. These profiteers, who form the bulk of the capitalist classes in Italy to-day, when their terror of 'Bolshevism' had turned to anger, were not content to lead the workers back to a more reasonable frame of mind. On the contrary they purposed to exploit their victory to the uttermost and to destroy the workers' organization. Even more savage than the industrialists were the land-

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owners, accustomed by secular tradition to consider themselves absolute masters of their lands and to treat the peasants as beasts of burden with no civil rights and no sense of human dignity. They, too, were not content to defend their own liberty and property: what they wanted was revenge on the serfs who had dreamed of becoming masters. 'We will put you to draw the plough with the oxen!' said the farmers of Cremona to their labourers, and they set off to enrol themselves among the Fascists. At the end of 1920, Giolitti, a 'Liberal,' was Prime Minister; Bonomi, a 'Reformist Socialist,' Minister for War; and Fera, a 'Democrat,' was Minister of Justice. These are the men who are chiefly responsible for the situation in Italy to-day. Seeing that the Communists and Socialists were everywhere yielding before the Fascists' onslaught, they thought that Communists and Socialists were having the lesson they deserved. Instead of satisfying the wish for peace and order that had arisen all over the country, they thought that the Fascist offensive might be utilized to break the strength not only of the Socialists and Communists, but also of the Christian-Democrats. The proper way would have been to restore order and then dissolve the Chamber and ask the country for a fresh mandate. They preferred to allow the civil war to continue, hoping with its help to manipulate new elections so as to have a Chamber in which a 'liberal' majority need no longer reckon either with Socialists or with Christian-Democrats. They therefore allowed the chiefs of the Army to equip the Fascists with rifles and lorries and authorized retired officers and officers-on-leave to command them.¹ The Carabineers, the Royal

¹ Already in 1919 the plan of organizing a 'White Guard' against the 'Bolshevists' existed amongst the highest officials of the Army. In fact, two friends of mine, who had returned from the war and were exercising their professions, one in Florence and the other in Genoa, were simultaneously summoned by their former commanding officers, in December, 1919, and requested to gather round them groups of White Guards, to whom the military authorities would supply arms and money. Both refused. It is more than probable that in 1919 and 1920 a certain number of Fascist groups were organized in this way. But during the time Signor Nitti was Prime Minister (July, 1919-July, 1920), the military officials had no such orders from the Minister of War, and therefore not

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Guard, the police, and the magistrates received hints to take no notice of disturbances started by the Fascists, and to intervene only when it was a question of disarming, trying and sentencing people who attempted to resist.

Italy thus entered upon a new phase of political life, that of 'authorized lawlessness.'¹

The Fascists, armed and officered, provided with funds and sure of impunity, rapidly increased in numbers and in strength during the first half of 1921.²

In this new phase of their activity, they no longer confined themselves to fighting the 'Bolshevists' in elections, in the Press and at public meetings. Having been up to this time purely *political* 'anti-Bolshevism,' Fascism now became also *economic* 'anti-Bolshevism.' The Fascists began to assail the Trade Unions in town and country. The Co-operatives were attacked in the same way.

Soon their offensive was directed even against the Christian-Democrats. In Venetia and Lower Lombardy, where the Christian-Democratic organizations were far stronger than those of the Socialists, this tendency of the Fascists revealed itself as early as the end of 1920. During 1921, the offensive spread little by little to other regions. Certainly in 1921 there was no comparison between the extreme violence with which the Socialist organizations were broken up, and the more attenuated violence under which the Christian-Democratic organizations were begin-

many officials acted on their own initiative. Only when Signor Giolitti succeeded Signor Nitti, and after the occupation of the factories, the high military authorities were given a free hand to execute the plan they had had in readiness for a year.

¹ Carlo Avarna di Gualtieri, *Il Fascismo*, p. 69.

² Mussolini, *La nuova politica dell'Italia*, p. 18: 'In 1920 our membership totalled 20,615; in 1921, it had risen to 248,936.' I give these figures for what they are worth. They must be taken with caution. Mussolini himself, in an interview given to the *Giornale d'Italia*, May 22, 1921, declared the Fascist membership to be no less than half a million. But in November, 1921, the Fascist General Secretary, at the Conference of Rome, gave the figure of membership as 320,000. (*Corriere della Sera*, November 8, 1921.) Statistics of the 'New Era' are as a rule somewhat erratic

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ning to give way. But in 1922, the 'White Bolshevism' of the Christian-Democrats suffered from Fascist attacks hardly less than did 'Red Bolshevism.'

It was the landowners who brought into Fascism their hatred of the Christian-Democrats, while the shop-keepers brought with them their aversion for the Co-operatives, whether red or white.

The Fascists, in lorries or with free passes on the railways, swarmed into the towns, sacked houses, looted the Chambers of Workers¹ and other Trade Union quarters, beat and maltreated, banished or murdered the organizers. The country was terrorized by 'punitive expeditions' which set out openly from Fascist offices in the town. The Town Councils in the hands of the 'Bolshevists' or the Christian-Democrats, were forced to resign under threats that the Mayor and Councillors would be murdered. For two years a terrible man-hunt was carried on, organized by the military authorities with the connivance of the magistrates and of the police. It was a 'pitiless counter-revolution to a *révolution manquée*.'² Some of the 'War Socialists' of 1919-20 finding that the Socialist organizations had now become 'unhealthy' for them, began to pass over, one by one, to the Fascist Party.³ Many who had been cowards in 1920, became apostles of terrorism in 1921.

Luigi Fabbri, who lived in Bologna, one of the most lively centres of the Fascist movement, writes, in the summer of 1921, the following description of the Fascist offensive:

¹ In many towns the Unions of all the trades in the town, when under Socialist control, formed a single local confederation, with a permanent secretary and headquarters. This was the 'Chamber of Workers' (*Camera del Lavoro*), an institution unknown in England, but which had great importance in Italy. The Chamber was for the workers the centre of all economic and political initiatives in local life. It was like a new municipal administrative body in contrast with the traditional town council.

² Odon Por, *Fascism*, London Labour Publishing Co., 1926, p. 106.

³ Odon Por, *Fascism*, p. 107: 'They joined the Fascists, not only because they were without political training but also because they wanted to have a hand in what was going on, and saw no prospect of realizing their Communist hopes.'

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'Where, as in Reggio-Emilia and Modena, the Reformist organizations prevailed, these were the ones attacked; at Bologna and Ferrara, those of the Maximalists and Reformists; at Treviso, the Republican; in the province of Bergamo, the Christian-Democratic; at Carrara and in Valdarno, the Anarchist; at Inacenza, Sestri and Parma, the Syndicalist organizations, not excepting those that had taken part in the war and favoured D'Annunzio; at Turin, it was the Communist organizations; in some places, Padua for instance, even the totally non-political Co-operative associations, directed by Conservatives, were not spared. The fury of destruction made no distinction between the various institutions; it was enough that they were run by working men, whether they were Unions or Federations, libraries or newspapers, retailers' or producers' Co-operatives, working-men's clubs or recreation halls, cafés and taverns or private houses. The pretexts vary from place to place. At Bologna or round Reggio they tell you that they had to scatter the Socialists, the cowards who could not or would not make a revolution; at Carrara and in the Valdarno they proclaim that it is time to have done with the Anarchists who threaten fresh upheavals; at Turin or Florence they declaim against the Russian Communist myth; at Rome or Milan against the Reformist Socialists and against Nitti. And so they go on, in every district, sparing only the minority groups, who, because they are minorities—whether Socialists, Anarchists, Republicans or Christian-Democrats—have nothing to defend but ideas, and do not represent any concrete interests to be destroyed.'¹

Here are two fundamental points, which must be borne in mind if the Fascist movement is to be understood.

The first point is that the Fascist movement—not the badly organized, inefficient, ultra-revolutionary movement of 1919–20, but the well-organized and thoroughly efficient anti-revolutionary movement of the following years—began to develop as the post-war neurasthenia in the country began to die

¹ Fabbri, *Controrivoluzione preventiva*, p. 55; Mowrer, *Immortal Italy*, pp. 357–60.



THE GENERALS WHO TOOK PART IN THE 'MARCH ON ROME'

(From a post-card circulated in November, 1922)

(see pages 83 and 153)

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down.¹ As little by little the shock of the war grew less acute, the Italian people recovered from the 'post-war neurasthenia.' The military authorities, by arming the Fascists, and the police and the magistrates, by assuring them impunity, prevented the Italian people from freely working out its own salvation. It was not pacified by reason; it was coerced by fire and sword. Fascism was no cure for the malady of Bolshevism. It was a new and more appalling disease – civil war – which took the place of the revolutionary excitement, which was already on the wane; or rather, it was a new and more appalling phase of the same disease from which all countries were suffering, some more, some less: the post-war neurasthenia.

The second point is that when the question is raised whether a Fascist movement would be possible or desirable in other countries, Fascism is continually confused with a conservative or 'Die-Hard' movement. For a Die-Hard movement to become a Fascist movement, two conditions are necessary. In the first place the Die-Hards would have to plunge into lawlessness and bloodshed. Secondly, they would then have to find a sufficient number of high military authorities, police and magistrates lost to all sense of law and honour and willing to employ the impartial power entrusted to them by law, in the service of the wealthy against the working classes. Unless these two conditions exist, there is no sense in applying the name of Fascism to a conservative movement.

¹ Prezzolini, *Le Fascisme*, Paris, Bossard, 1925, p. 236: 'Fascismo has been rather the effect than the cause of the decay of Communism; only, in politics, to be is less important than to seem.' Prezzolini is rather in favour of Fascism and lightens its shadows. Also the English writer, Pelham H. Box, to whom we owe a most penetrating study on the origins of Fascism, clearly saw that 'revolutionary Communism was already defeated by the good sense of the Italian people before the triumphant Fascists fell on its disordered forces' (*Three Master Builders*, London, Jarrolds, 1925, preface and pp. 18-9). In support of this statement, which is essential to a true understanding of Fascism, see also Mowrer, *Immortal Italy*, pp. 343-7, and Mario Missiroli, *Il Fascismo e la crisi italiana*, p. 14; Luigi Fabbri, *Controrivoluzione preventiva*, p. 19; Cesare Degli Occhi, *Che cosa ho pensato del Fascismo*, p. 21 (in the same volume as that containing the studies of Missiroli and Fabbri).

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§ 3: *The Secret of the Fascist Victory*

If we overlook the connivance of the police, the magistrature and above all of the military authorities in the Fascist activities, the whole history of Fascism becomes incomprehensible, and its victory a sheer miracle. As the point is a crucial one, it is essential for the reader to have before him the evidence of this connivance.

Umberto F. Bianchelli, *Le Memorie di un Fascista*, 1922, p. 14, wrote:

'Fascism, it is well to acknowledge, could develop with an almost free hand, because among many police agents and officers of the Carabinieri and of other branches of the service' – (he alludes to the Royal Guard and the Army) – 'it found Italian hearts and ideals. Among the rank and file and N.C.O.'s of the Carabinieri all did their best to help Fascism.'

The Pro-Fascist Adolfo Zerboglio, *Il Fascismo: dati, impressioni appunti*, 1922, p. 5 (in the volume *Il Fascismo e i partiti politici italiani*), frankly acknowledged that 'the Government, *more or less openly*, made use of Fascism to remedy the results of its own past weakness.'

'The Socialist Press' – he wrote – 'are piling up proofs of Government tolerance towards the Fascists and it *cannot honestly be disputed that some of this evidence appears convincing*. And even more than the Government they accuse the Royal Guards and Carabinieri. *This too seems impossible to deny*, even though the Socialists often exaggerate in their systematic abuse of the police.'

Zerboglio reproduced the following assertions of the Socialist Deputy, Mario Cavallari, with reservations as to details, but not denying the general facts:

'The Fascists in their punitive expeditions are followed by lorries of Carabinieri who join in singing Fascist songs. In Portomaggiore, after a painful episode in which a Fascist was killed, an expedition of more than a thousand Fascists spread terror in the night with woundings, burnings, bomb-throwing, invasions of

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houses, brutal beatings: all this under the very eyes of the police. As the lorries arrived full of Fascists, the Carabineers, who blocked the entrance to the village, furnished them with arms and ammunition when needed. At Pontelagoscuro for two days bands of Fascists perpetrated every kind of violence, compelling members of Socialist Trades Unions to join the Fascist Trades Unions. A mixed picket formed of Carabineers and Fascisti searched all who arrived by train, allowing only those to pass whom they found to be Fascists, and turning back all others. At Argenta, without any pretext whatsoever, a large expedition arrived by night and spread panic among the people, firing rifles and revolvers and throwing three hundred bombs. The expedition was even supplied with a machine gun which told its beads the whole night long. The police looked on and sang the Fascist song.'

Zerboglio explained and justified this attitude on the part of the police as follows:

'It is clear that the police who for years had been insulted at meetings and in the Press and who were the victims of the blind violence of the Reds, could not resist a certain impulse for revenge the day they felt some one behind them.'

The American journalist Mowrer, in *Immortal Italy*, p. 361, clearly notices this fact, over which Fascist propaganda spreads a veil of silence:

'In the presence of murder, violence and arson, the police remained "neutral." With their full knowledge and consent, these bands scurried along the white roads in their camions, bent on assault and armed to the teeth. The police captains refused to heed warnings of intended excursions, and where they could not refuse a summons to defend unarmed workmen and peasants, deliberately arrived too late. When armed bands compelled the Socialists to resign from office under pain of death, or regularly tried and condemned their enemies to blows, banishment, or execution, the functionaries merely shrugged their shoulders, or like the Prefect of Reggio Emilia, answered: "That's the way the wind is blowing." Sometimes Carabineers and Royal Guards

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openly made common cause with the Fascists, and paralysed the resistance of the peasants. Against the Fascists alone the latter might have held their own. Against the Fascists and police together, they were helpless, and their complaints merely caused the authorities to arrest . . . them, as guilty of attempting to defend themselves. Socialists were condemned for alleged crimes committed months, years, before. Fascists taken red-handed were released for want of evidence.'

Mowrer quotes a speech of the Nationalist leader, Signor Corradini, on the burning of the Chamber of Workers of Bologna by the Fascists on January 24, 1921:

'Cheering citizens assisted at the spectacle, while policemen, Carabineers, guards and soldiers watched the flames devouring the building, with their arms at rest.'

Another American journalist who also was living in Italy in 1921, John Carter, writes in *The New York Times Book Review* of June 12, 1927:

'The writer once attended in Rome a meeting of the Arditi del Popolo, a radical parallel to the unpunished organizations headed by Mussolini. The radical meeting-place was surrounded by plain-clothes men, and a cordon of troops - infantry, cavalry and machine-guns - were ready to attack the workers if they had ventured out of their meeting-place to bastinado the Fascist murderers of some working men. This was at a time when the Fascisti had carte blanche to beat up their opponents throughout Italy, while the Government pretended to be neutral.'

With regard to the attitude of the military authorities, Giuseppe De Falco, *Il Fascismo milizia di classe*, p. 26 (in the volume *Il Fascismo e i partiti italiani*), revealed in 1921 that a circular emanating from the General Staff, dated October 20, 1920, urged the Divisional Commanders to show active favour to the Fascist organizations.

Signor Bonomi (Secretary for War in 1920) explained the fact in 1924 as follows:

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'In October, 1920, one of the many departments of the General Staff, without asking either the Chief of the General Staff or the War Office, requested information about the first Fasci di combattimento, in terms which might have been construed as favourable towards those first Fasci, which were then rather followers of D'Annunzio than Mussolini. A commandant in Central Italy – or rather, as was subsequently ascertained, one of his subordinates – interpreting this request for information as an intimation to join the Fascists, drew up and sent out a circular eulogizing the Fascists, and directed it to the dependent Military Commands and to the three Prefects of the region.

'The Cabinet gave me, then Minister for War, due notice of the circular; and in agreement with General Badoglio, Chief of the General Staff, I sent out a clearly-worded circular, signed by him, to all the military commands in Italy, pointing out the serious mistake which some one had committed, and reaffirming that the Army was and must remain outside any party competition.'¹

In the newspaper *La Rivoluzione liberale* of Turin, March 18, 1924, Piero Gobetti replied:

'Bonomi expects us to be extraordinarily idiotic. Anyone living in Venetia Giulia, in Emilia or in Tuscany, between the end of 1920 and the beginning of 1921, while Bonomi was Secretary for War in Giolitti's Cabinet, knows perfectly well that the Fasci were then organized in many places by officers on leave or on active service, and that, in all their punitive expeditions, the Fascists openly received from the military authorities bombs, guns, helmets, lorries and petrol. Did the military authorities, who armed the Fascists, act against the will of the Secretary for War, or were they not rather perfectly sure that they were meeting his wishes? What tangible measures did Signor Bonomi, Secretary for War, take to hinder the pro-Fascist activities of the military authorities? The disavowal of the Circular of October, 1920, to which Signor Bonomi refers, proves nothing, until Signor

¹ *L'Azione*, a review of political, social and literary culture, Rome, March 9, 1924.

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Bonomi tells us what tangible measures he took to have his orders respected. Moreover we should also like to know the text of the disavowal, so as to ascertain how far it was explicit in enjoining on the military authorities neutrality in party strife. Still further we should like to know what disciplinary measures were taken against the general, who composed and distributed the circular. While waiting for such explanations, we will remind Signor Bonomi that the electioneering campaign of 1921, in the constituency of Cremona (where Signor Bonomi was a candidate in the Fascist list), was marked by most violent, inhuman and sanguinary incidents. Signor Farinacci has testified and Signor Bonomi has not dared deny the following: "Among the many episodes, let us recall one. We were at Mantua one evening, when news reached us of the acts of violence committed by the Socialists at Poggio Rusco. It was the Minister Bonomi - our candidate - who placed his motor-car at the disposal of the Fascists, who that very same night were to destroy the Co-operative stores of Poggio Rusco. And in the marvellous days of the electioneering struggle of 1921, we saw him marching under our standards and we attended his meetings and guarded him with our bold 'Black-Shirts.' "

My personal information gave me the following facts:

(1) A circular urging the Divisional Commander to favour Fascist activities was signed not by a subordinate official, but by the Chief of Staff, Badoglio; a Divisional Commander communicated this order in type-script to all Commands under him, and was warned by Badoglio to use greater caution. (The said Divisional Commander told this incident to a friend, from whom I have received the information.)

(2) At the end of 1920 the Italian Military Mission in Vienna imported into Italy from an Austrian factory two truck loads of bludgeons. (The letter containing the invoice was seen by an official of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, who informed me of the incident.)

(3) At Milan, in October, 1920, the Anarchists threatened to go and disturb a religious ceremony. A high personality in the Christian-Democratic Party went to the police to demand pro-

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tection. The police official to whom he spoke replied that the Christian-Democrats must fend for themselves: if they wanted hand-grenades, they could obtain them at the Army Divisional Command and from the Arditi; a police official would put him in touch with those in charge of the bombs. (The above-mentioned personality told a friend of mine of the incident.)

(4) In Florence, where I was living in 1921, officers in uniform were always to be seen among the civilian-clad occupants of lorries bound on punitive expeditions.

One of the generals who most contributed towards the activities of the Fascists in 1921-2, was General Capello, who was condemned in April, 1927, to 30 years' imprisonment under the charge of having participated in the Zaniboni plot. During his trial, a witness, Colonel Orazio Bartoli, who had served under General Capello during the war and in the early days of the Fascist movement, deposed that he had been admitted to the Roman Fascio precisely by his superior officer (*Corriere della Sera*, April 20, 1927).

The connivance of the magistrature is plain from the fact that the notorious crimes committed by the Fascists in 1921-2 were hardly ever followed by trial and sentence, while workers guilty of acts of violence received savage sentences even when they had acted in self-defence against the Fascist violence.

Giuseppe Prezzolini, who is certainly not unfavourable to Fascism, recognizes that the Fascists 'had full liberty of action':

'They could organize themselves in armed corps and kill right and left, with the certainty of impunity and with the complicity of the police. It is thus no over-statement to recognize that the Fascists fought with 99 chances out of 100 of gaining the victory' (*Le Fascisme*, p. 97).

The American journalist, Mowrer, already quoted above, wrote in his book, *Immortal Italy*, p. 144:

'Raids were organized into the country, strongly supported by officers of the regular army burning to requite the insults of which they had been the targets. Bourgeois elements organized into

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groups, often under the skilful direction of professional soldiers. . . . From the Army the Fascists received sympathy, assistance and war material. Officers in uniform took part in the punitive expeditions. The Fascists were allowed to turn national barracks into their private arsenals. The facts are proven. Thus the army revenged itself on the anti-patriots.'

The fact is also mentioned by a Hungarian observer, Odon Por, in *Fascism*, p. 111:

'The Fascists had been equipped largely on the quiet, from the regular army, trusting to the precedent of Fiume.'

Signor Villari, *The Awakening of Italy*, repeatedly accuses the Ministers of 1919-20 of unwillingness to repress the 'Bolshevist' disorders. He never points out that it would have been risky to use the Army for this purpose, because discipline had been wrecked, less by 'Bolshevist' propaganda, than by that of the Nationalists, by D'Annunzio's proclamations and by the seditious example of generals and admirals.

While he is thus severe on the 'connivance' of the governments of 1919-20 with the revolutionaries, our propagandist skates gracefully over the 'connivance' of the military and judicial authorities and the police in the Fascist doings during 1921-2. All that he knows of this matter is:

'Just as Giolitti had allowed the forces of revolution a free hand in the autumn of 1920, when he believed them to be the strongest, so now he refused to interfere with the repressive actions of the Fascists, illegal though they were' (p. 123).

Once I had emphasized in England this point, Signor Villari published a letter in the *Manchester Guardian* of March 27, 1926, affirming that 'the Army did *not* give arms to the Fascists, and indeed the leading generals and field officers were by no means favourable to the Fascist movement.' The propagandist, when writing these words, forgot that he himself had written two years before in *The Awakening of Italy* (p. 122) as follows:

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'Soldiers and Fascists, returning from punitive expeditions, were cheered enthusiastically and covered with flowers.'

Did the soldiers (it would be more exact to say 'officers') who took part along with the Fascists in the punitive expeditions, act *with* or *against* superior orders? Were their exploits punished or rewarded?

As regards the high military authorities, the propagandist himself wrote in *The Awakening of Italy*, pp. 175, 180:

'General De Bono had organized the Fascist forces. Mussolini had provided that to each of the columns marching on Rome should be attached a distinguished *General who had joined the Fascists*: De Bono, Fara, Ceccherini, Zamboni and others.'

• • And in his recent book, *The Fascist Experiment*, p. 162, he writes:

'The March on Rome was the work of the squadre, who had been organized in military formation by General De Bono, assisted by numerous officers, both regular and temporary.'

In order to explain the arming of the Fascists in 1921-2, Signor Villari affirmed, in his letter to the *Manchester Guardian*:

'At that time a large part of the population was armed with weapons brought back from the war - Socialists, Communists and Fascists alike - and there was no need for the Fascists to apply to the army for arms.'

This explanation is in direct contradiction with the following facts:

(1) During 1921 and 1922, the Italian papers were continually announcing house searches carried out by the police in the houses and offices of the Communists, Anarchists, etc., to discover arms, and when the results were positive the culprits were tried and sentenced. But such searches were never carried out in the houses and offices of the Fascists, nor were any Fascists sentenced for such offences.

(2) Among the *weapons* used by the Fascists in their expeditions in 1921-2, there were frequently military lorries. Did they

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bring these military lorries back from the front, and keep them hidden under their beds for two years, till the hour for the counter-offensive struck?

§ 4: *The Civil War*

In order that the non-Italian reader may form a picture of what Dr. Nicholas Murray Butler, President of Columbia University, calls 'a silent and bloodless revolution,'¹ I must place before him some of the episodes of that atrocious civil war.²

At Florence,³ on the morning of Sunday, February 27, 1921, a group of about 100 university and secondary school students of both sexes, flanked by about 60 Carabineers, were passing through the streets of the city singing patriotic songs after having attended the ceremonies of the inauguration of a flag. At the top of Via Tornabuoni, two men were awaiting the procession in a narrow side street. One fired his revolver five or six times at the procession; the other threw a bomb into the middle of the group. One Carabineer was killed on the spot and 16 people were wounded more or less seriously, one of whom, a university student, died some days later. The dead Carabineer and his wounded companions were put into a carriage and taken to a hospital, citizens who met the vehicle being asked to raise their hats. In the Piazza del Duomo, a railwayman who was walking along, reading a newspaper, ignorant of what had happened, and therefore not lifting his hat,

¹ In his preface to the speech of Signor Rocco on *The Political Doctrine of Fascism*, New York, Carnegie Endowment, 1926.

² A somewhat compressed, but objective, description of life in Italy during 1921-2, containing many valuable particulars, is to be found in Beals, *Rome or Death*, pp. 45-60, 105-8, 131-41.

³ I have reconstructed these facts with the help of the *Corriere della Sera*, February 28, March 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 1921. The *Corriere della Sera*, in 1921, was in favour of the Fascists, only deploring their more scandalous excesses and calling on the government to awaken from its inertia and restore public peace. The correspondent in Florence was frankly pro-Fascist and coloured his reports of the civil war in such a way as to put the anti-Fascists always in an unfavourable light. We can, therefore, be sure that, in basing our account on the reports given in the *Corriere*, we shall not unduly weight any charges against the Fascists.

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was shot with a musket by one of the Carabineers who was escorting his dead companion and was 'in a state of great excitement.'¹

Shortly after these unforeseen episodes, the Fascists entered the scene, while armoured-cars, Carabineers, Royal Guards and soldiers patrolled the streets and occupied the Headquarters of the local Trade-Unions Council ('Chamber of Workers') to prevent any gathering of the working masses. In the afternoon, a squad of Fascists appeared at the offices of the Communist Union of Disabled Soldiers, where the secretary of the Union, Spartaco Lavagnini, a Communist railwayman and a City Councillor, was alone. Part of the squad posted themselves in the street, while four of their number entered the premises and shot Lavagnini dead. Thereupon they wrecked the premises without any interference on the part of the police, whose activity was limited to arresting 'revolutionaries' *en masse*.

As a protest against the murder of Lavagnini and against the authorities who were systematically leaving crimes of this sort unpunished, the railwaymen, that same evening, called a lightning strike in all the district round. The tramwaymen, newspaper printers and the electricians followed suit. In the city and suburbs, numerous conflicts took place between Fascists and workers. During the night telephone and telegraph lines were cut.

On Monday, February 28, the strike spread to all categories of workers. On their side, the Fascists issued proclamations inviting the population to rise against the red terror. The Prefect forbade all gatherings and processions as well as the circulation of motor-cars; but, in actual fact, the Fascists had a completely free hand

¹ The correspondent of the *Corriere della Sera*, March 1, 1921, while mentioning this 'state of great excitement' of the Carabineer, added that the man who had not lifted his hat had said: 'If a Carabineer is dead, there is one less of them,' and that the Carabineer fired on hearing these words. I can deny this detail on the authority of a teacher, a friend of mine, who was standing close beside the man who was killed. Though at that time very favourable to the Fascist movement, my friend, as an honourable man, told me later in the same day that the railwayman never said these words. One can, however, understand and even excuse the Carabineer for losing self-control on the death of his companion and thinking that one who failed to lift his hat, showed contempt.

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to hunt the workmen, especially the railwaymen, through the streets.

• Their first offensive against the popular quarter of San Frediano was unsuccessful. The workmen and the women had torn up the roadway and barricaded the streets to prevent the entrance of the armed lorries. They fired and threw down tiles and furniture from the windows at those who tried to enter these narrow streets. In the afternoon, the Fascists returned, accompanied by a large patrol of Royal Guards, a battalion of infantry, numerous Carabineers and two armoured cars. Every outlet of the quarter was blocked. The armoured cars forced an entry across the barricades into the streets, firing up at the windows and forcing the population to shut themselves up in the houses. As in each street the resistance was beaten down, the Fascists and police invaded the houses, venting their fury. Hundreds of men and women were wounded at haphazard. The official report speaks of three workmen killed and fifty wounded.

Here and there in other parts of the city numerous other isolated collisions took place.

'At the entrance to Via Lamarmora' - writes the pro-Fascist correspondent of the *Corriere della Sera*, March 1, 1921 - 'a group of Fascists were hooted by some individuals, who, when the Fascists turned round, took to their heels, running towards Piazza Cavour. It seemed to the Fascists that one of them had taken refuge in the shop of a certain Angelico Bonini. They entered and fired their revolvers, killing Bonini. A man named Donatello Sanesi, who, frightened by the firing, was running under the colonnade of the square, was struck by a bullet and killed on the spot.'

Towards evening, a lad of sixteen, named Giovanni Berta, the son of a well-known manufacturer, 'wearing the Fascist badge in his button-hole' (*Corriere della Sera*, March 1, 1921). tried to make his way on his bicycle through a crowd of workmen, gathered on a bridge over the Arno.¹ The crowd, maddened by

¹ These details came to light in the course of the trial at the Florence Assizes in the autumn of 1922.

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the happenings of those days, irritated by the Fascist badge and believing the lad to be a cyclist in the service of the Fascists' Party, surrounded him and stabbed and threw him into the river. In a suburb of the city a Royal Guard was, during the night, brutally murdered by a crowd.

The strike lasted on into the following day, March 1. Police operations were transferred from the quarter of San Frediano to the other popular quarter, Santa Croce. In the afternoon, a squad of Fascists wrecked the premises of the Chamber of Workers, left at their mercy by the police, who had occupied them during the two preceding days. Another squad invaded and sacked the offices of the Engineers' Union. In the suburb the police repressed, with the help of artillery, every sign of protest and revolt, while everywhere the Fascists continued their work of sacking and burning the premises of the workmen's organizations. By the afternoon comparative calm was restored in Florence.

During those days, according to the official report, 16 people were killed, 100 wounded. Among the dead were two Fascists and four members of the police services. The actual number of dead and wounded among the workers was probably much higher than was stated in the official report.

That same afternoon of March 1, at an hour's distance by rail from Florence, a horrible massacre took place. To replace the strikers, the Government had dispatched from Leghorn to Florence two lorries with 45 marines and 14 Carabineers. The marines were not in uniform in order not to draw attention on the roads. But the lorries were noticed by a man, who thinking they were carrying Fascists and Carabineers, telephoned to Empoli (half-way between Leghorn and Florence) that a 'punitive expedition' was on the way. As the Fascists of Florence, Leghorn and Pisa had repeatedly threatened a 'punitive expedition' against the Empoli Chamber of Workers, the news caused the assembly of a great crowd already excited by the news from Florence.¹ When the two lorries arrived in the market-place, they were surrounded

¹ These details came to light in the course of the trial at the Florence Assizes.

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on every side: nine of the men were killed and ten more or less seriously wounded. Several corpses were thrown into the river.

In the following days, the town and district of Empoli were subjected to atrocious reprisals. The Fascists concentrated at Empoli from all the district round, wrecked the Chamber of Workers and numerous shops, while the police made 218 arrests. Three lorries full of Fascists, followed by an armoured car, scoured the district, wrecking Trade Union premises and the houses of well-known Socialists. Wherever resistance was encountered, the armoured car was brought into action. At Siena the Fascists and police attacked the Chamber of Workers. For an hour the workers put up a resistance, but when the artillery fired eight shells against the door, the besieged surrendered. There were among them ten injured more or less seriously, of whom two were mortally wounded. The Chamber of Workers was sacked and burnt down.

In Florence, on March 2, the men began to trickle back to work. In Scandicci, a neighbouring village, the peasants attacked with bombs a lorry of Carabineers and barricaded the bridge at the entrance to the village. A column of artillery with armoured cars and field-pieces stamped out the revolt. As usual, after order had been restored, a punitive expedition of Fascists from Florence arrived and destroyed the premises of the Workers' Organization in the village.

'This evening' - writes the correspondent of the *Corriere della Sera*, the night of March 2, 1921 - 'about 6 p.m. there passed through the principal streets of Florence some field-pieces, which had been in action at Scandicci. Amid the applause of the citizens, a most imposing procession then formed, in which were three lorries laden with soldiers and Fascists. They were all singing patriotic songs and waving large tri-colour flags, while flowers were thrown down on the procession from the windows. The soldiers and Fascists were carrying as trophies the red flags and other subversive emblems carried off from the premises of the Mutual Benefit Society of Scandicci. The demonstration, which

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was not disturbed by any incident, broke up at the seat of the Fascist Headquarters.'

Those guilty of bomb-throwing and other outrages received pitiless sentences; three were sentenced to thirty years, two to twenty-one, one to seventeen, seven to sentences ranging from two to twelve years. Two who had escaped were sentenced to penal servitude for life (*Corriere della Sera*, July 1, 1922). The murderers of Berta were sentenced to periods of imprisonment varying from ten to eighteen years. For the outrages at Empoli eighteen persons were sentenced to imprisonment for periods of from twenty to thirty years; thirty-two of from fourteen to seventeen years; thirty of from five to twelve. Similar sentences were given for all the other crimes. But no Fascists were ever sentenced for the murder of Lavagnini, of Bonini, of Sanesi nor for the wreckings, reprisals or innumerable other acts of violence committed by them in those days.

The happenings at Florence and in the surrounding district give some idea of the civil war which went on throughout 1921 in some of the more important towns of central Italy. In the country districts the man-hunt was even more pitiless than in the towns. I will give two instances only: Foiano della Chiana (in the province of Arezzo) and Roccastrada (in the province of Grosseto).

In the municipal elections of 1920, the municipal administration had been won by the Socialists at Foiano della Chiana, as it had been in many other Communes. At the beginning of April, 1921, the Socialist Mayor received a letter from Marchese Perrone Compagni, General Secretary of the Fasci for Tuscany, in which the Mayor and his councillors were invited to resign within the week if they did not wish to expose themselves and their families to Fascist reprisals.¹ The Mayor and the Councillors did not obey.

On April 12, 1921, more than 200 Fascists collected in lorries from Arezzo, Florence and the intermediate towns, and made an 'expedition of propaganda' to the little town, i.e., they looted the town hall, the Chamber of Workers and the premises of the

¹ Examination of Galliano Gervasi during the trial at Arezzo, *Corriere della Sera*, October 17, 1924.

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Peasants' Union, throwing the furniture into the street and burning it. They seized the Co-operative stores, distributing the goods to all and sundry and setting fire to what remained. On April 17, a second 'expedition of propaganda' was carried out. This time there were barely 20 Fascists in a single lorry. They confiscated the red flag which the 'Communists' usually ran up over the town-hall instead of the national flag, burnt it together with the records of the Socialist club and then proceeded to the neighbouring village of Marciano on another 'propagandist trip.' On their return several Fascists stayed at Foiano to form a local 'Fascio' while the rest in the lorry took the road back to Arezzo.

A short distance out of Foiano a group of about fifty peasants armed with guns, scythes, hatchets and pistols were lying in wait behind a hedge. The lorry was received with a hail of bullets. The driver fell wounded, the lorry swerved and ran against a tree. While the Fascists were thrown to the ground, the peasants in hiding leaped forward upon them. They cut off the head of the driver with a hatchet-blow. Two Fascists were killed and another had three fingers severed by an axe. The remainder managed to escape.

At the sound of the shots, the Carabineers, who till then had remained inactive, woke up and rushed out from Foiano together with those Fascists who had remained in the town. The peasants, seeing the Carabineers approaching, took to flight in their turn.

Now began the reprisals.

The farm-houses near the place of the ambush were set on fire. A peasant, Burri, who was discovered in an attic, was shot through the head with a revolver.

The next day reprisals continued on a larger scale. Five lorry-loads of Fascists left Florence in the early morning. Other lorries left Arezzo and the neighbouring towns and all concentrated in Foiano. The authorities, as usual, left the Fascists a free hand. The best-known 'Communists' of Foiano had already left their homes. The Fascists gave themselves up to ransacking, wrecking and burning private houses. A workman, Cino Milani, who had not bethought himself to escape, was dragged into the square: he was required to promise to resign from membership of the Socialist Party; he refused. He was required to declare that

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he-deplored the ambush of the day before: he again refused. He was shot. A peasant, one Gherardi, guilty of being the brother of a 'Communist,' was shot at and killed while he was trying to escape. The Fascists of Arezzo had brought with them as prisoner to Foiano the Socialist ex-Member of Parliament, Bernardini, editor of the Socialist paper of Arezzo. The prisoner was forced, under threat of death, to pronounce from the window of a house a speech against the 'violence of the Socialists,' while the mass of Fascists howled and hooted in the street below. Thanks to this act of cowardice which dishonours his jailers no less than himself, his life was spared.

When they wearied of tormenting the people of Foiano, the Fascists repaired to the place of the 'ambush' of the day before. The peasant Caciolli was seriously wounded. Two other peasants, who were wounded as they fled, were not found; probably their injuries were not serious and they managed to hide. But this was not enough. In the night, towards one o'clock, the Fascists returned to this place; they ransacked the farm-houses, one by one, terrifying women, children and old people, and reduced other houses to smoking ruins. A woman, Luisa Bracciali, who was accused of having wounded a Fascist in the 'ambush' with a pitchfork, was found in her home and shot dead with revolvers. The peasant Nocciolini was killed whilst trying to flee. Another peasant, Alfredo Rampi, hearing that the Fascists were on his track, killed himself.

Operations continued throughout the next day also, April 19. The house of the Mayor Nucci, who had fled, was invaded and set on fire. The Communist club of Bettole was sacked and burnt. Finally the Fascists collected a 'spontaneous' meeting of peasants, took down their names and declared the Fascio of Foiano founded. After having thus converted the 'Communists' of Foiano to the 'National faith,' the Fascists, glorious and triumphant, abandoned the scene of their victory.

Needless to say the civil and military authorities were conspicuous by their absence. They were engaged in 'rounding up the Communists' who had hidden themselves in the country round Foiano. Of those guilty of the 'ambuscade' who had not

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been, killed in the reprisals, four were sentenced to thirty years' imprisonment, three to twenty-five years, two to twenty years, six to ten years, and three to from seven to ten years.¹ None of the Fascists who took part in the operations described suffered in any way whatsoever.²

The facts of Roccastrada are the repetition of those of Foiano della Chiana. Of these repetitions a hundred others could be cited; and I say a hundred not speaking rhetorically but having that concrete number in mind, and knowing that even a hundred is less than the truth. I will present one only of these repetitions, so that the reader may understand that the word 'repetition' also is no figure of speech, and that the Fascists followed in their operations a definite 'method.'

Roccastrada is a small agricultural town, like Foiano della Chiana. In the communal elections of November, 1920, the administration had been won by the Socialists. On April 6, 1921, the Mayor received the following letter:

ITALIAN FIGHTING FASCI OF TUSCANY.
POLITICAL SECRETARIAT.
FLORENCE, 6th April, 1921.

To the Mayor of the Commune of Roccastrada,
Prov. of Grosseto.

Seeing that Italy must belong to Italians and cannot therefore be administered by individuals such as you, I, voicing the feelings of the citizens of your town, advise you to resign by Sunday, the 17th. Otherwise you will be responsible for anything that may happen to persons and to property. If you appeal to the authorities against this kind and humane advice of mine, the above date will be changed to Wednesday, the 13th, a lucky number indeed.

(Signed) PERRONE COMPAGNI.

¹ *Corriere della Sera*, December 13, 1924.

² In my account I have followed the version of *Corriere della Sera* of April 13, 19 and 20, 1921. I have not made use of anti-Fascist papers because the atrocious details they give could be suspected of exaggeration.

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The Mayor did not take this hint. For a couple of months the threats were not followed up. But on July 1, 1921, about 4 p.m. two lorries of Fascists arrived. According to the correspondent of the *Corriere della Sera*, July 26, 1921, they 'confined themselves to bludgeoning several people and throwing out of the windows the furniture of several houses of subversive peasants.' The Socialist paper *Avanti* states that the Fascists, shouting and letting off their revolvers into the air, to frighten the women and children - the men being still out at work in the fields - set fire to the premises of the Peasants' club and Woodcutters' Union and of the Co-operative stores. Furthermore, they wrecked the Mayor's house and that of the secretary of one of the Unions, departing before the men came home from the fields.

Some days later, the Mayor, while speaking with the Prefect at Grosseto, was seized by the Fascists, taken to the Fascio and obliged to sign a letter of resignation and to promise never to return to the town.

On July 24, 1921, about dawn, nearly 70 Fascists started from Grosseto in lorries, passing before the police headquarters unopposed. They reached Roccastrada at 4.30 a.m. The little town was wrapped in sleep. They set up a fusillade, shouting that the inhabitants must hang out the national flag, stopping the peasants who came out of their houses and bludgeoning them.

The inhabitants, wakened suddenly out of sleep, could offer no resistance. There was a general stampede. Several houses were wrecked and burned. Vandalism raged for three hours. About eight o'clock, the Fascists got into their lorries once more and left for Sassofortino, where they intended to continue their 'national propaganda.'

A short distance outside the town, three peasants, hidden behind a hedge, fired on the lorries and ran off. One Fascist was killed on the spot. The others, not being able to capture the fugitives, went back to the town.

'Along the road' - writes the pro-Fascist correspondent of the *Secolo*, July 18, 1921 - 'they met a peasant and his son and shot them dead. Then they ran into the town shouting: "Who fired

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that shot?" They broke into several houses, shouting and stabbing four men. One of these, an old man of 68, was killed at his daughter's side. Three others were mortally injured in the streets, fifty others more or less seriously injured, and seventeen houses were reduced to a heap of smouldering ruins.'

The nine dead were not members of any organization. Only one was known to have anarchist leanings.

The thirteen Carabineers stationed in the little town remained absolutely inactive, shut up in their quarters: they only telephoned to Grosseto what was happening. Needless to say no arrest was made among the Fascists, although the name of their leader, Castellani, General Secretary of the Fasci for the province of Grosseto, was on everybody's lips, while the three men guilty of the ambush were arrested and severely sentenced. Many other inhabitants of the town were arrested without reason and detained in prison for a considerable time.

§ 5: *Legend and History*

A Fascist, describing in the *Popolo d'Italia* of January 5, 1926, the 'heroic pages of Fascism in Polesine' (province of Rovigo), wrote as follows:

'Who shall sing your deeds, great-hearted youths, who by night were to be found on every road, a target for treachery, and by day on every piazza, beset by the red torrent which still foamed menacingly? We assailed the Communes and the Communes fell. We invaded the offices of the Unions, and the Unions surrendered. The nights of Polesine were lit by strange flares. The Fascists lighted the funerals of their fallen by firing Bolshevik houses, and burning the last emblems of revolution.'

A special correspondent of the *Daily Mail* has done what this Fascist desired, and has described the Fascist exploits as if he were a mediæval poet chanting the deeds of knights-errant in a *chanson de geste*:

'A writer of the Middle Ages would relate the story of this awakening with fine imagery, for it contains all the elements of a

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great romance. You have a valiant knight going out single-handed, jeered at by enemies and despaired of by faint-hearted friends, to fight a red dragon which is steadily increasing in size and strength. The entire country is in danger. The struggle is long and painful, and at times the dragon is well-nigh victorious. Gradually the knight's band of followers increases, and when the people see that their rescue is possible, they flock to his banner. And so the dragon is slain, and the valiant knight—who was no more than the son of the village blacksmith—becomes the King's first minister. . . . The new crusade was fought with as fiery zeal as their forefathers showed in their struggle for the Holy Sepulchre. It is a wonderful epic, this story of a long, weary struggle against heavy odds; of night raids and of long days of heavy toil to free a starving community from a political strike; of other towns fed and policed and even lit by Fascist volunteers who would not see their deluded countrymen die under the yoke of Communism; of successes and defeats; of grim little processions to a burying-ground with their uncovered dead, and the grimmer aftermath when Red culprits paid their debt.¹

Signor Villari is less poetical but more profound:

'Over a thousand Fascists were murdered by their opponents, treacherously sheltered behind closed windows or on lonely roads' (*Manchester Guardian*, March 27, 1926). 'No less than 2,000 Fascists have been killed by their opponents, almost invariably as the result of ambushes against isolated individuals' (*The Awakening of Italy*, p. 165). 'What struck all observers was the manly bearing of these youths, their cleanliness and good manners' (*Ibid.*, p. 115).

These statements, put forward without details and without proofs, should be discussed case by case and in the light of the evidence for and against. Such investigation would lead anyone not blinded by fanaticism to the conclusion that on both sides there were attackers and attacked, assassins and victims, ambushes and open assaults, acts of courage and of treachery.

¹ Sir Percival Phillips, *The Red Dragon and the Black Shirts*, pp. 11-13.

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Mussolini himself was obliged, in a speech of April 3, 1922, to mark his disapproval of the ambushes of which his own followers were guilty:

'We must have the courage to say that if there is a Fascist violence which is lawful and sacrosanct, lying in ambush behind hedges and breaking into houses is not Fascism.' (*Popolo d'Italia*, April 5, 1922.)

The examples of Foiano della Chiana and Roccastrada show what in many cases led up to the 'ambushes' of 'Bolshevists' against Fascists. Luigi Fabbri, in the summer of 1922, wrote:

'The hatred which the Fascists are sowing by their daily bludgeonings, by destroying the offices of Labour organizations, by violating all freedom of assembly, of speech, of the press, by rendering the working of political parties in certain districts difficult or impossible, by preventing even the normal evening amusements of working men, attacking them in cafés or in taverns, and forcing them to go home, by breaking into their homes, etc. — this daily growing hatred can find no vent in the light of day. Open reprisals would require that relative impunity, that freedom of movement, for defence or offence, which the Fascists enjoy by the connivance or tolerance of the police. Moreover the workers realize that they run the risk of death whether they use the cudgel or revolver, because the Fascists go to extremes at the smallest resistance. The workers know that if they make use of force in self-defence, they will inevitably be arrested. They lack means of communication, transport, rapid mobilization; for the most part they are taken by surprise. They cannot leave permanent guards to defend their villages while they are at work. The sackings are carried out either by day, when all the workers are away from the village at their work, or in the dead of night, when all are asleep. The workers, driven by passion and despair, act as best they can, whenever they find themselves in equal or superior numbers and wherever there is no probability of the intervention of the police. Since open fighting is forbidden and practically impossible, hatred

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finds a vent in the so-called "ambushes." Let it be noted, moreover, that the partisan press very often gives the name of "ambush" to fair fights on open ground, to acts of legitimate and spontaneous defence on the part of the workers who are attacked and have no choice but to kill or be killed. The word "ambush" has been used even in the case of a Fascist who, having forced his way into a private house by breaking the door, was killed by the inmates in their desperate attempt to defend themselves.' (*Contro Rivoluzione preventiva*, pp. 59-61.)

Fabbri is an Anarchist, and therefore colours events so as to throw all the blame on the Fascists and exonerate the anti-Fascists. But an American eye-witness, who is not an Anarchist, wrote in 1921:

'The Italian common people are ignorant, long-suffering and easily bullied, but they are not cowards. After the first surprise they would have held their own with the Fascists, had not the latter been aided by the police. It was only against the Carabinieri and Royal Guards that they proved, once they awakened to the situation, entirely helpless. Then they began to use the universal weapon of the hopelessly oppressed, assassination.'¹

Signor Villari in *The Awakening of Italy*, p. 113, describes the Fascist exploits as follows:

'The Fascists, armed with bludgeons or revolvers, would enter the town or village where the crime had been committed, arrest the murderers when they could find them, kill them if they resisted, and if not, hand them over to the Carabinieri. If the actual authors of the deed were not discovered, the leading Socialists or Communists of the place would be seized, and soundly thrashed, and sometimes the *Camera del Lavoro*, or other red institutions burnt down, or at all events, the records and furniture thrown into the street and set on fire.'

The examples of Florence, Foiano della Chiana, and Roccastrada show that not only were those who resisted murdered,

¹ Mowrer, *Immortal Italy*, p. 369.

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but also persons who had had no part in the original conflict; the Fascists followed the plan of taking hostages, like armies of occupation in enemy countries. The Chambers of Workers, and the other institutions of the working people, were burnt, not *sometimes*, but *always*: the whole aim of the offensive, whether or not provoked by previous incidents between Fascists and anti-Fascists, was nothing but to destroy the workers' organizations, by burning their records, looting the co-operative shops, and killing or banishing their organizers. Nor were the offices of the organizations the only places sacked; frequently the private houses of the leading Socialists, Communists, or Christian-Democrats were burnt, and their owners murdered, even when 'the actual authors of the deed,' used as a pretext for reprisals, were discovered.

Let some examples be given of the way in which the Fascist legend is concocted.

(A) Narrating the events of Bologna of November 21, 1920 (see above, p. 63ff.), Signor Villari, *Awakening of Italy*, pp. 110-111, ignores the Fascist attack on the Chamber of Workers of November 4, 1920; ignores the type-written manifesto circulated by the Fascists on the eve of November 21; attributes the responsibility of the first revolver shots in the square to the Socialists, whereas in the trial it was conclusively proved that they came from the Fascists;¹ and repeats the legend which was exposed as false at the trials in Milan, of a plot to 'gain possession of the town and proceed to a general massacre of the bourgeoisie.'

(B) Signor Villari, *The Awakening of Italy*, p. 123, gives the following version of the facts of Florence :

'On February 27 a group of Communists hidden in a side street, threw a bomb at a cortège of schoolboys on their way to a patriotic celebration, killing and wounding several people. The Fascists retaliated by attacking and wrecking the offices of various

¹The Fascists attempted to invade the square, breaking through the line of soldiers who were posted near the café 'Grande Italia.' Nine witnesses agreed that the shots came from people who were near the café. Three of these witnesses, including two members of the police force, deposed explicitly that the shots were fired by the Fascists.

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Red organizations and killed a certain Lavagnini, a notorious railway agent and editor of a communist paper: he was known to have been the instigator of various similar outbreaks and had been warned that if another communist crime were committed in Florence he would pay for it with his life. A series of affrays took place between Fascists and Communists, and the latter erected barricades in the popular San Frediano quarter. They also committed a number of exceptionally brutal murders, including that of a small boy, named Berta, whose only crime was that he was the son of a manufacturer: he was thrown into the Arno as he was crossing a bridge on his bicycle. The troops and police acted with commendable energy, and on one occasion had to resort to artillery. . . . At Empoli a band of armed Communists lay in wait for two lorries conveying some unarmed seamen on their way to Florence to replace the striking railwaymen, seized some of them, and murdered them in circumstances of the most atrocious cruelty. The local Fascists and others from Florence, on hearing of this outrage, concentrated at the place where it had occurred, and murdered several Communists strongly suspected of complicity and burnt their houses.'

In this report the following incorrect statements and omissions occur:

(1) The two persons, who threw the bombs against the procession, were Anarchists (*Corriere della Sera*, July 1, 1922). Every one knows that outrages, such as those at Florence of February 27, are characteristic of Anarchists and not of Communists, and that the Communists and the Anarchists act quite independently of one another. The propagandist attributes arbitrarily the crimes to the Communists, because he seeks to suggest a justification for the murder of the Communist Lavagnini.

(2) It is untrue that Lavagnini had ever instigated 'various similar outbreaks,' viz. the throwing of bombs at a procession. When the affair was discussed in the Lower House (March 8, 1921) no one raised this calumny against the memory of the unfortunate man. As the propagandist has the prudent custom of never giving his sources of information, thus preventing all control on his

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statements, it is impossible to determine whether the calumny springs from his own fantasy, or is drawn from a tainted source.

(3) It is not fair to lump together as 'Communists' all those who were in revolt in those days against the police and Fascists. Most of them were simply exasperated by the one-sided attitude of the authorities.

(4) A youth of 16 cannot be called 'a small boy.' The propagandist uses this formula to aggravate the responsibility of Berta's assassins, while he has made two incorrect statements to lighten the responsibility of the Fascists who killed Lavagnini.

(5) The propagandist conceals some essential details, which show that the murder of Berta was a typical instance of mob violence, brutal but unpremeditated, therefore less responsible than the crime against Lavagnini, perpetrated in cold blood by four adherents of the party of the propagandist.

(6) In his account of the events at Empoli, the propagandist suppresses all the particulars, which explain these other acts of mob violence and attenuate the responsibility for them.

(7) Be it noted that even this propagandist account makes it clear that the police energies were directed only towards suppressing the acts of violence of the 'Bolshevists,' while never interfering to keep the Fascists in order.

(C) On page 122 of *The Awakening of Italy*, Signor Villari writes:

'At Milan a dastardly outrage was committed by the Communists on the evening of March 23, at the Diana Theatre, where an "infernal machine" exploded, causing the death of twenty persons and the wounding of 200, including women and children. Other bomb outrages were committed in trains, restaurants, etc., in various parts of Italy: the authors of these attempts claimed that their actions were protests against the detention of the anarchists Malatesta and Borghi.'

From the trial, which was held from May 9 to June 2, it emerged that the Diana outrage was the work of three Anarchists and not of Communists. The propagandist here repeats the trick already

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used by him in connexion with the happenings at Florence (see above, p. 99); he attributes anarchist crimes to Communists, including under the term Communist all parties and persons for whom he has no liking. Moreover, the propagandist ignores that at the moment of the outrage against the Diana Theatre, another group of Anarchists approached the premises of the Socialist paper *Avanti*, intending to throw bombs on them, but were caught by the police. Half an hour later, the Fascists burned the premises of the Anarchist paper *Umanità Nuova*, looted the headquarters of the Syndicalist Union run by Anarchists, the home of the anarchist Molinari, and the Socialist club in Via Verziere, and twice attacked the premises of *Avanti*, with hand grenades, being driven off by the police. Thus the *Avanti* was nearly wrecked twice in the same night: first by Anarchists and then by Fascists. To include these particulars would have made it difficult for the propagandist to render the Communists responsible for everything.

(D) On page 101 of *The Awakening of Italy*, the Fascist propagandist writes:

'In the Puglie not a few landlords and farmers were murdered, while their colleagues retaliated by similar acts of violence on the peasantry. The Socialist Deputy Di Vagno, who had instigated the peasants to revolt, was murdered.'

The facts are that the Deputy Di Vagno was killed on the evening of September 25, 1921, at Mola di Bari, by a band of sixteen Fascists, who attacked him with revolver shots outside the city while he was going for a walk, unarmed, with friends (*Corriere della Sera*, September 27, 1921). A little earlier he had made a public speech to the peasants, but it is an invention to say that he had incited them to revolt. Any incitement to revolt, in September, 1921, would have been madness. On the occasion of the speech there had been no disorder, and no violence which could have provoked reprisals. The ambush was premeditated and carried out in cold blood. *Not one of the murderers was arrested.* The propagandist has suppressed these most characteristic elements in the case with the object of making his readers believe

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that here was a Socialist Deputy who mischievously incited peasants to revolt at a time when the country was terrorized by a civil war between landlords and peasants, and who therefore richly deserved his fate.

(E) On page 140 of *The Awakening of Italy*, we read:

'Attilio Boldori, the Socialist Vice-President of the Provincial Council (of Cremona), was shot dead in a conflict with the Fascisti.'

The facts are as follows. On December 11, 1921, Boldori and three other members of the Provincial Council were carrying out a repair to their car, on a country road. Seeing a car of Fascists approaching, and fearing an attack, they fled across the fields. The Fascists gave chase, seriously wounding two of the fugitives, and killing Boldori by blows on the head.¹ The *Corriere della Sera* (December 14, 1921), in those days favourable to the Fascists and only desirous of limiting their violence, wrote as follows:

'The deliberate brutality of the assault has no excuse. There was neither dispute nor quarrel to rouse hot blood. There was only the peaceable presence of adversaries. That was enough; the Fascists hurled themselves on the escaping Socialists, paid no heed to the entreaties of the peasants who had taken in the fugitives, and threw themselves savagely on these unfortunates.'

Our propagandist has suppressed all these characteristic details, and has tried to make out that Boldori was shot in a conflict.

Signor Villari in *The Awakening of Italy*, published in the spring of 1924, stated that the number of Fascists killed by 'Bolshevists,' up to the date of writing, was 'no less than 2,000' and 'about 2,000' (pp. 165, 255). Two years later, in the *Manchester Guardian* of March 27, 1926, he reduced the number to 'over a thousand.' In the autumn of 1924 the Fascists gave the number of dead as 3,000, but a year afterwards they gave 2,000 as the number to

¹ The *Popolo d'Italia*, December 14, accused Boldori of having threatened the Fascists with a revolver, but Boldori never carried arms. Signor Farinacci declared Boldori's death to be his own fault, since he had 'a weak formation of the skull.'

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M. Henri Lucas, correspondent of *Le Journal*, November 27, 1925. A young Englishman in Italy seriously asserted to the *Morning Post* correspondent that the Fascist dead numbered 50,000, but the correspondent himself preferred to limit it to 3,000 (*Morning Post*, April 23, 1926). Signor Bazzi, while editing a pro-Fascist paper in Rome, wrote that up till the spring of 1924 the number of Fascist dead was 2,000 (*Nuovo Paese*, March 20, 1924); but the editor of another Fascist paper, Signor Filippelli, while imprisoned as an accomplice in the Matteotti murder, stated that the number of dead was 4,000 (Memorandum, October 30, 1924). Signor Gray, a Fascist Member of Parliament, speaking in the Chamber on November 27, 1925, reduced this figure to 3,700. With these figures, which every one doctors to his own taste, the Fascist propagandists conduct a systematic campaign outside Italy to spread the belief that the ranks of the Fascists consist of nothing but 'martyrs,' while the ranks of the anti-Fascists consist of nothing but assassins.

But as soon as propaganda forsakes the upper air of unsubstantial assertion for the *terra firma* of sober fact, the over-inflated figures collapse.

The names of Fascists killed during the twenty months from February, 1919, to September, 1920, when the so-called 'Bolsheviks' lorded it in Italy, are recorded in two Fascist publications: *Barbarie rossa* ('Red Barbarities') issued in the spring of 1921, and *Le Pagine eroiche della rivoluzione fascista* ('Heroic pages of the Fascist revolution') issued in the spring of 1925. These give for above-mentioned period 10 names.

For the two years of the civil war (October, 1920—October, 1922) the *Pagine eroiche* gives 351 Fascist dead. Of these, 46 lost their lives in conflict with the police; one Fascist died as the 'result of an unfortunate accident' (p. 233), of which we are not told the nature; one fell from an aeroplane (p. 233), and one was run over by a lorry during a Fascist expedition (p. 264). Thus this Fascist source fixes the number of Fascist deaths, for which the 'Bolsheviks' were responsible, at 302.

The *Pagine eroiche* mention only 'the most dramatic episodes.' But it seems clear that the 'most dramatic episodes' were those

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in which men lost their lives, and the less dramatic episodes were those in which men did not lose their lives. In any case every person of sense can judge whether it is likely that Fascist lists simply omitted to record the names of 1,500, of 2,000, of 3,200, or of 3,500 'martyrs.'

While thus multiplying the number of Fascists 'martyred' by the 'Bolshevists,' Fascist propaganda meticulously hides the number of victims killed by the Fascists. At most it condescends to vague statements that 'the numbers of anti-Fascist victims of Fascist vengeance is a mere trifle in comparison with the large numbers of Fascists murdered by the Reds.'¹

A systematic survey of the *Corriere della Sera* from October 1, 1920, to October 30, 1922, gives the number of those killed by the Fascists as 406. The paper did not record all the conflicts that happened: this can be seen from the fact that it only records 216 Fascist dead instead of 302, as given by the *Pagine eroiche*. Hence a third at least of the conflicts escaped the notice of this paper. Moreover, the *Corriere* gives only the names of people who died on the spot and not those of the wounded who died later on as the results of their wounds. The people clubbed on the head or chest often die several months after having been beaten: this is the method preferred by the Fascists. The *Pagine eroiche*, on the contrary, give the names of all the dead, both those who were killed immediately and those who died later. Bearing these circumstances in mind, we are justified in conjecturing that, if the actual number of Fascist dead was 302 instead of the 216 given by the *Corriere*, then the numbers killed by the Fascists must likewise be proportionately increased from 406 to round about 600, i.e. about double the Fascist losses.²

¹ Villari, *Fascist Experiment*, p. 58.

² For the period 5th to 21st April, the *Corriere della Sera* gives only 24 Socialist dead, while a contributor to the *Nation* of London (quoted by Mowrer, *Immortal Italy*, p. 364) gave for the same period 43 dead. This example would justify us in doubling the number of anti-Fascists dead given in the *Corriere della Sera*, rather than increasing them by half as much again. But it is as well to be very cautious in making these calculations.

In a Fascist publication, *Italiani, ricordate* ('Italians, remember'), issued

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If to these 300 Fascists and 600 anti-Fascists who killed one another, are added the Fascists and anti-Fascists who died in conflict with the police force,¹ and the members of the police force and of the general public who were killed in the conflicts, then the number of dead reaches 2,000. But it is not fair to pass off these 2,000 casualties as heroic Fascists killed by vile 'Bolshevists.' If the 2,000 dead in the civil war of 1921-22 are compared with the 200 dead in the period of the bloody 'Bolshevist tyranny,' 1919-1920, it is evident that the evil caused by the civil war was worse than that caused by 'Bolshevism,' even granting civil war to be necessary to save Italy.

In order to explain the Fascist excesses, the civil struggles of in April 1924, the Fascist dead during the two years of the civil war are only 147. The list is evidently less complete than that given subsequently by the *Pagine eroiche*. The Socialist publication, *Il Fascismo: inchiesta socialista sulle gesta dei Fascisti in Italia* (Milano, Società editrice Avanti, 1922), gives 161 deaths caused by Fascists up till March, 1922. This list, too, is evidently incomplete.

The Socialist paper *Avanti*, June 16, 1921, stated that 202 persons were killed by the Fascists between January 1 and May 31, 1921 (quoted by Beals, *Rome or Death*, pp. 58-9). But it is safer not to rely on these figures. Sir Percival Phillips, special correspondent of the *Daily Mail*, wrote in 1923: 'The Fascists have restored justice. They avenged the murders of their comrades by inflicting reprisals. Yet they have killed in all only 2,500 malefactors' (*The Red Dragon*, p. 8). Sir Percival somewhat exaggerated the prowess of his friends.

In a letter to the *Saturday Review* of September 4, 1926, Signor Villari wrote: 'I should have preferred not to enter into details on this series of crimes, which all good Italians fervently hope is definitely passed, had it not been raised by others.' For four years the propagandist and his friends have been inundating the world with fantastic figures. The discussion therefore was raised by them and not by 'others.' What they really deplore is that 'others' have come forward and shown their figures to be imaginary.

¹ These casualties among Fascists are explained by the following circumstances: (a) Often those Fascists who had not yet forgotten their old revolutionary habits, attacked not only the Reds, but even the police and drove them to self-defence; (b) sometimes the police attempted to maintain order against the excesses not only of the Reds, but also of the Fascists, either because they had not received suitable orders, or because some official acted on his own responsibility.

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the mediæval Italian communes are often cited as a precedent. But a *precedent*, especially one so remote, is not an *explanation*. During the Middle Ages, and in even more recent centuries, political struggles, not only in Italy but in all countries, were wont to be accompanied by bloodshed. If in England to-morrow, the Communists were to institute a 'Dictatorship of the Proletariat' on the Russian model, would anyone explain the new situation by harking back to the precedent of Cromwell?

In explanation and up to a certain point in palliation of Fascist violence, two circumstances may be borne in mind: (1) In Italy, unhappily, crimes of bloodshed were more common, even before the war, than in other civilized countries; (2) Four years of war necessarily attenuated the repugnance to bloodshed which in Italy had never been great.

But these two circumstances excuse and palliate also the violence of the 'Bolshevists' in the period of their domination. It should further be noted that, while the 'Bolshevist' crimes of 1919-20 were nearly always the work of an excited populace, the 'heroic' deeds of the 'anti-Bolshevists' were too often planned and carried out in cold blood by members of the better classes, who claim to be the custodians of civilization.¹

Moreover, two facts would still require explanation; (1) The extent of Fascist violence, much greater than that of 'Bolshevist' violence; (2) The methodical ferocity of the Fascist violence.

During the two years of their 'tyranny' the 'Bolshevists' did not

¹ 'If Socialist violence often verged on the bounds of criminality and sometimes overstepped them in the barbarity of its reprisals, our civilized conscience took refuge in the thought that the masses could be slowly educated and raised above the blind cruelty of instinct and of obtuse selfishness. But no excuses, no consolation come to our aid when we think of acts of premeditated and armed violence—callously perpetrated by well-to-do men whose superior training, education, social position, habits, standards of life, did not restrain them from murder, and what is even worse, from bludgeoning. If an ambush of Trade Unionists is always a shameful thing, a punitive expedition, officered by university men, who have learnt by heart Carducci's "Song of Love," brings a chill solitude to the heart.' Missirotti, *Il Fascismo e la crisi italiana*, 1921, in the book *Il Fascismo e i partiti politici italiani*, p. 36.

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once sack an office of any association belonging to industrialists, agrarians or traders; they never forcibly compelled the resignation of any local council controlled by the Conservative parties; they did not burn a single newspaper printing press; they never looted a single house belonging to a political adversary. Such deeds of 'heroism' were introduced into Italian life by the 'anti-Bolshevists.'

The professional soldiers, who armed and officered the Fascist bands, imported their mentality into the Fascist movement, and with it that methodical ferocity which was unknown to Italian political struggles before 1921. It was the military authorities who gave the Fascists their strongly hierarchical organization. Without this aid, the armed organization of the Fascist force could never have come into being, nor would the Fascist Party machine have differed essentially from that of any other Italian party.

§ 6: *The Military Conspiracy*

In this atmosphere of civil war the elections of May 15, 1921, took place. The official organ of the Vatican, *Osservatore Romano*, stated that on the polling day alone there were 40 killed and 70 wounded.¹

The result of the elections was a blow to the hopes of the Government. The Socialists and Communists, who, if left to their internal quarrels under a regime of liberty, and without the near prospect of elections, would have mutually weakened each other, suddenly left off squabbling, and only faced the offensive of the Government and of the Fascists, to avoid an electioneering disaster. Whilst on the field of lawlessness they could not fight with success, on the legal ground of an electoral contest they were still very strong. Among the working-classes the bewilderment which had been manifest in December, 1920, and in January and February, 1921, gave way to a wave of moral protest against the Government as the abettor of Fascist violence. In the Chamber

¹ Quoted by Mowrer, *Immortal Italy*, p. 364.

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of 1919 there were 156 Socialists; in the new Chamber of 1921 there were 122 Socialists and 16 Communists.

The Christian-Democrats, who in the preceding Chamber numbered 101, rose to 107 in the new Chamber. The other groups increased their total from 250 to 280. The proportions of the three sections in the Chamber thus remained almost unchanged.

Whilst the numerical proportion remained unaltered, the psychological situation changed for the worse. The Reformist Socialists who in 1920 had preached the necessity of abandoning the intransigent attitude, and taking part in the Government with the Democrats, could not now ally themselves with the 'Democrats,' as long as these were led by Giolitti who had employed the Fascists to 'make the elections' with revolvers and bludgeons. All the intransigency in 1919, which in 1920 was beginning to fade away, was exasperated in 1921.

The Christian-Democrats also, who would have liked to pursue a policy of collaboration, had been forced by Fascist violence to stand in the elections as opponents of the Government. They returned to the Chamber elated by their victory, and angry with Giolitti, for having caused their electors to be bludgeoned by the Fascists, after inviting their leaders to join his Cabinet.

Among the mass of deputies, neither Socialist, Communist nor Christian-Democrat, which the Government regarded as its majority, was a group of 35 Fascists, young and violent, who had behind them outside the Chamber an armed organization ready for any excess.

Officially the Chamber (without counting the 16 Communists and other little independent groups) was divided in three Sections: Socialists, Christian-Democrats, and Constitutionalists. As a matter of fact, it was divided into four Sections: Socialists, Christian-Democrats, Democrats, and Nationalist-Fascist-Conservatives.

Giolitti and his Democrats were willing to ally themselves with the Christian-Democrats and Reformist Socialists; but these did not trust him. They would neither ally with Giolitti, nor were they able to combine against him. No one group could govern without co-operation of other groups, but a coalition was impossible. The

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Chamber of 1921 was impotent to check the disorders of civil war just as the Chamber of 1919-20 had been impotent to check the disorders of the post-war neurasthenia. Giolitti had burnt the house to roast a pig.

The new Chamber at once overthrew Giolitti's Cabinet by a confused vote, in which Socialists, Fascists, Nationalists and Conservatives all voted against the Government. But the new Cabinet like its predecessor had to lean on a coalition of Democrats, Conservatives and Christian-Democrats, excluding Socialists and Fascists. Nothing was changed but the Prime Minister. Giolitti who had authorized the arming of the Fascists, relinquished his post to Bonomi, who had armed them. Giolitti enjoyed a great personal prestige, which might have served either for good or for evil. Bonomi was a man devoid of all personal authority, incapable of doing either good or evil.

He perhaps hoped, in the first days of his government, to put a stop to the Fascist movement, now that it had ceased to serve his purpose. He soon found out that he had made a great mistake. The armed and organized Fascist bands were not disposed to let themselves be demobilized at the convenience of these gentlemen.

Moreover, the high military authorities, who in arming and drilling the Fascists, had acted at first in agreement with the Government, realized in the course of 1921, that the new organization might in their hands become a formidable weapon for ensuring political power to the military caste. From that moment they ceased to obey the civil authorities.

The pivot of the military conspiracy was the Duke of Aosta, the King's cousin.¹ The figure of this man can be discerned behind all the seditious movements which followed the war. He hoped that the Fascist movement would lead to the abdication of the King and a change of dynasty by which he might profit.

General Badoglio, as Chief of the General Staff, had played his part in arming the Fascists at the end of 1920. He resigned his post in February, 1921. Whilst ready to obey precise orders from

¹ He was remunerated for his pro-Fascist activities by the law of December 20, 1925, which raised his annuity as Prince of the Royal House from 400,000 lire to one million.

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the Government, he was not willing to assume responsibilities which were equivocal. His place was taken by General Vaccari, a protégé of the Duke of Aosta. Badoglio was not the only general who remained outside the conspiracy. Generals Caviglia, Albricci, Cattaneo, and some others loyally refrained from any share in the intrigue, but having no instructions from headquarters, they remained passive spectators of events. The majority, however, took an active part, more or less overtly, in the sedition.

The conspiracy of the high military authorities had a decisive effect on the subsequent development of Fascist activities.

The first Fasci, in 1919-20, consisted of patriotic youths who thought that by their 'anti-Bolshevist' activities they were serving their country.

In 1921, Fascism became an anti-Trade Unionist movement in the interests of the profiteers.

In 1922, it also became an anti-parliamentary movement in the service of a military 'Black Hand.'

This new phase of the Fascist movement was marked by a new type of operations. Up to the summer of 1921 the Fascists had worked in comparatively small groups. From the summer of 1921, operations carried out by thousands became the fashion. They would concentrate on a town, sometimes from great distances travelling by rail or on motor lorries, supplied by industrialists or the military, according to regular plans of mobilization, to which, of course, the police as a rule opposed no hindrance.

One of the earliest operations of this kind was the occupation of Treviso on July 12, 1921. It was directed not against 'Communists' or 'Socialists,' but against the Christian-Democrats, who had taken the part of some labourers against two land-owners, who were subscribers of the Fascist organization:

'Fifteen hundred men' - writes the American journalist Mowrer - 'brought together from districts as remote as Tuscany and Triest, armed with rifles, hand-grenades, machine-guns and steel helmets part of which had been supplied by the regular troops, arrived before Treviso late, in a hundred camions preceded by a white motor car. Under cover of darkness they surrounded the

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walled town and penetrated into the streets. Their plan was complete, their enemy "whoever isn't a Fascist." First they broke into and sacked the offices of the Christian-Democrat newspaper *Il Piave*, and then those of the republican *Riscossa*, where a few defenders were overcome after some hours of siege. Dawn found the Fascists masters of the town, for the police and soldiers had assumed an attitude of "benevolent neutrality." So for a few hours the Fascists tyrannized the place, sacking a few shops and houses, and then withdrew.¹

Another operation of the same kind had not so victorious a result. On July 21, 1921, at Sarzana, six Carabineers were enough immediately to disperse 500 Fascists who had attempted to rescue certain of their companions from prison.² Those Carabineers had not been suitably instructed by their superiors.

Such misunderstandings were avoided in subsequent operations. In September, 1921, the sixth centenary of Dante's death was to be celebrated at Ravenna. The city would be thronged with strangers from every part of the world. It was the moment for all parties to lay aside their petty rivalries and to spare the visitors any undignified exhibition of violence. But the Fascist Deputy of Bologna, Signor Grandi, now Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, thought otherwise, and a month before the celebrations, he proposed that the Fascists should, on that date, make a 'march on Ravenna.'

'It seemed' - wrote the pro-Fascist paper, the *Resto del Carlino* of Bologna, September 13, 1921 - 'that the idea was to stage a great demonstration of those Fascist forces that were opposed to peace with the Socialists. The leaders had in mind a spectacular march past in close formation with flags flying, that would begin at Bologna, make its way along the Via Emilia as far as Imola and double back towards Lugo before reaching Ravenna. Thus the new forces of Italy, marching in column - so it seemed to the minds of those who framed the scheme - should pass through the

¹ *Immortal Italy*, p. 367.

² Banchelli, *Memorie di un fascista*, p. 217.

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classio territory of communism and be received with open arms by the former republican towns and villages.'

Signor Baldini, the Reformist Socialist Deputy of Ravenna, personally called the attention of Signor Bonomi to the disturbances which would certainly ensue if the Fascists were allowed to concentrate at Ravenna. Signor Bonomi gave his word of honour that the march of the Fascists on the city should be forbidden at all cost.¹ It is evident that in making this promise he was sincere. Even he could not fail to grasp the necessity for avoiding a scandal occurring on such an occasion, and in the presence of so many foreigners.

But Signor Bonomi had reckoned without General Sani, the Commandant of the Army Corps of Bologna, who included Ravenna in his command. It was he who should have prevented the 'March on Ravenna,' which was generously advertised beforehand.² But on the day of the celebration, while the Fascists were advancing on the city, he went instead to Ravenna, to pay homage to Dante. He was notoriously one of those generals who, during the years of civil war, most actively helped the Fascists in his district, giving them arms and allowing the officers under him to take part in punitive expeditions.

The path was thus clear for this unheard-of demonstration. On September 9, squads of 'Black-Shirts' with flags flying began to gather freely at Bologna from Rovigo, Reggio, Modena, Carpi, Finale, etc. At six o'clock in the morning of September 10, a column 450 strong with trumpets at its head took the road (*Resto del Carlino*, September 11, 1921). The column had the delicacy to avoid Imola, the Socialists' centre, and, going by way of Medicina,

¹ Signor Baldini himself described to me the promise made him by Signor Bonomi.

² According to the *Regolamento per il servizio territoriale*, of July 8, 1883 (Art. 30, par. 218), the military authorities could not take any initiative in the suppression of disorders, unless requested beforehand by the police. But the Appendix to these Regulations, issued in 1899, and still in force in 1922 (see the edition of 1922), made it incumbent upon the military authorities to take the necessary repressive measures in the case of grave disorders, even without any previous request by the police.

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marched directly on Lugo. At the same time another column, 500 strong, set out from Ferrara, proceeding by way of Argenta. The two columns met at Lugo, in the afternoon of September 11 (*Resto de Carlino*, September 11). As they proceeded, their numbers naturally increased. Four lorries full of Royal Guards followed the march! (*Resto del Carlino*, September 13.) On the morning of September 12, 3,000 Fascists invaded Ravenna.

The events of September 12 at Ravenna were recounted by the correspondent of the *Giornale d'Italia* on September 21, 1921, as follows:¹

'The Fascists reached Ravenna at 11 o'clock on September 12, and marched through the principal streets of the city singing their hymns, while the crowds greeted them with clapping and with cheers. The Fascists compelled every one to uncover, exercising their cudgels upon the deaf and absent-minded. However, no incident (*sic*) worthy of note occurred.

'In the afternoon, while a group of Fascists were sitting in a café, insulting remarks were addressed to them by a Communist, who suddenly fired a revolver-shot amongst them without hitting anyone. The Fascists rose up to pursue their assailant, when a second Communist appeared before them and fired a second shot. In the confusion that followed the two Communists succeeded in disappearing.² The news of this encounter spread rapidly among

¹ It should be borne in mind that the *Giornale d'Italia* was favourable to the Fascists and protested against the 'exaggerated reports' circulated regarding the Ravenna incidents.

² This part of the account must be taken with a grain of salt. In the reports which Fascist and pro-Fascist newspapers give of these 'expeditions,' encounters always begin with Communist shots or provocations. Is it possible in this case that the two Communists could have disappeared after having shot twice at the Fascists without hurting anyone? Luigi Fabbri, *Controrivoluzione preventiva*, pp. 66-7, gives the facts as follows: 'The Fascists, en route for Ravenna, looted the Clubs of Godo and San Michele Fornace. At Ravenna, they at once began to compel the people to uncover at the passing of the Fascist colours, beating those who refused. Amongst those who were beaten, there happened also to be some foreigners who had come for the celebration. The Fascists broke into an inn, demanding that all present should show their personal papers. One,

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the Fascist mass. The Fascists, divided into powerful bands, wrecked the premises of five Socialist clubs in the suburbs. The Chamber of Workers was likewise wrecked. In the square, pictures, papers, and benches were piled together and set on fire.

'The authorities had taken praiseworthy precautions; troops were stationed here and there, strong bands of Carabineers and Royal Guards guarded the most important points of the city; lorries full of policemen were waiting ready in the courtyard of the Prefecture to hasten wherever they were needed, and an armoured car was stationed at its entrance; but the attack on the various clubs was so sudden and so unexpected (!) that it could not be prevented. Four or five thousand is a large number. The police force wisely confined itself to interfering only to prevent further damage. An attack by them would have resulted in a massacre. The city and its suburbs seethed with a crowd whose like had never been seen at Ravenna.

'The premises of the Federation of the Co-operative Societies situated in Via Maggini were guarded by a large force of police. A band of Fascists gathered in the street shouting: "Out with the Flag! Out with the Tricolor!" The police stationed there assured them that the flag would be hung out; but while they parleyed with the mass of Fascists, some of these, having climbed up like squirrels on the iron gratings of the windows and later on a ladder, succeeded in entering the building and hanging out the flag. Registers and bundles of papers were thrown down from the windows and were soon burnt to ashes.

'In the evening, while a lorry full of Fascists was passing in front of a café, a young man seated at a table threw a plate or a glass at it. A Fascist jumped down from the lorry and gave the rash youth a blow with his cudgel. Revolver shots sounded from the café. The Fascists replied. Then entering the café, they com-

Colombo by name, found to be in possession of the membership-card of the Chamber of Workers, was violently beaten; he took to flight; the Fascists chased him with their sticks uplifted. At last, a revolver shot rang out. The pretext had been found. In the afternoon, the punitive expeditions began.' Between the Fascist and the anti-Fascist version, it is impossible to arrive at the exact truth.

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pletely wrecked it, smashing furniture, mirrors, glasses, china, and bottles of spirit.

'The authorities succeeded in sending back the Fascists the next day by three special trains.'

That the military authorities connived at the Fascist behaviour is evident, even if we accept the version that attributes to the so-called 'Communists' the responsibility for the first provocation. In these cases, sooner or later, a revolver shot is always fired, and the one party invariably tries to throw the responsibility for the shot upon its opponents. The real responsibility lies with those who created, or allowed others to create, the situation in which that shot could not but be fired. To permit more than three thousand armed persons to congregate in a city, and then to protest that a massacre would ensue if they were interfered with – and this in a country where a year's experience had shown how such gatherings began and ended – what else was this but deliberately to promote violence, knowing quite well beforehand what would happen?

Signor Italo Balbo, who led the column which came from Ferrara, in speaking of this 'March on Ravenna' in a speech at Milan on April 23, 1923, said:

'It was in September, 1921, that Fascist "squadrist" assumed a regular military formation. On September 12, 3,000 blackshirted Fascists entered Ravenna. It was a small army, divided into regiments, battalions, and platoons; an army which had been three days on the march. At Ravenna the black-shirts raised the cry of "to Rome! to Rome!" The experiment was a complete success. Squadristm could be transformed from a local phenomenon into a national phenomenon' (*Popolo d'Italia*, April 24, 1923).

The connivance of the high military authorities with the Fascists is still more clearly shown by the two following facts.

(1) Between May 31 and June 2, 1922, ten thousand Fascists from neighbouring provinces concentrated in Bologna, and demanded the dismissal of the Prefect, accusing him of being the accomplice of the 'Bolshevists.' It is plain that the Prefect would

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have prevented this concentration if he had been able to count on the army, but General Sani was absent during the whole crisis, just as he was during the 'March on Ravenna' eight months previously.

(2) Between September 30 and October 4, seven thousand Fascists from Lombardy and Venetia concentrated on Bozen and Trent, to *protest against the civil Governor of the Province*. No one intervened to prevent their transit on the railways.

At 2 p.m. on October 4, the Commandant of the Seventh Division of Trento assumed plenary powers for the maintenance of order. The result was to increase the disorder. At 4.30 p.m. a colloquy took place between the Fascists and the Governor, in the presence of General Gherzi, commanding the Verona army corps, the General in command of the Acqui Brigade, and 'other officers of various ranks.' The Fascists demanded that the Governor should resign and leave the district, and were not satisfied by his answers (*Popolo d'Italia*, October 5, 1922). The following night, the Fascists besieged the Governor's residence:

'The troops were disposed in such a way that the slightest move on the Fascists' part would have so intermingled soldiers and Fascists, that the soldiers would have been unable to use their arms. In this situation the Fascist leaders contented themselves with a solemn (!) display of strength (!) and discipline (!), a spectacle which lasted till three o'clock in the morning' (*Popolo d'Italia*, October 6).

In the afternoon of October 5, the Fascists raised the siege of the Palace:

'General Gherzi had assured them that the Governor would leave immediately' (*Popolo d'Italia*, October 8).

Giovanni Zibordi, a Reformist Socialist deputy, wrote in the beginning of 1922:

'Instead of the typical *coup d'état* or the traditional palace revolution, carried out by one or more generals, or by military factions in the capital, with the aim of replacing the reigning sovereign by

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some royal relative – things of which there was and still is talk – we find in the provinces here and there officers and N.C.O.'s of the Carabineers and Royal Guards, who threw in their lot with Fascism, that is, with an armed and lawless organization. This is nothing less than military sedition.'¹

It is the fashion to repeat that Italian post-war Cabinets were weak and unstable. This is true. But one must distinguish between the Cabinets of 1919–20 and those of 1921–22. The Cabinets of 1919–20 were weak because the whole of society was shaken by a storm of unrest, the aftermath of the war. Nobody in the country wanted to obey, and nobody was capable of commanding. The Cabinets of 1921–22 were weak for a very different reason – because many generals betrayed their oath of allegiance to the Constitution, and were in revolt against the government. Undermined by the Right, after having been shaken by the Left, the Cabinets could be nothing else than weak and ineffectual.

My friend Dr. Arthur Livingston, professor at Columbia University, New York, reviewing the American edition of the present book, declared that he cannot believe that generals could have had the intelligence with which I credit them. Certainly, if, to explain what happened in Italy from 1921 onwards, it were necessary to attribute political genius to the Duke of Aosta, General Diaz, General Gandolfi, General De Bono, Admiral Thaon de Revel, and the other exalted personages who, betraying their oath to the Constitution, formed the military conspiracy, my interpretation of the facts would on the face of it lack all plausibility. But an hypothesis of this kind is not necessary. The Fascist regime, as we have it before us to-day, after seven eventful years, was not foreseen by anyone in 1921 and 1922. As the politicians who in 1920 authorized the military authorities to arm the Fascists, did not foresee that after six months the military authorities would be acting on their own account, so the generals who, in the second half of 1921, began to act on their own account, did not foresee the developments of 1922, and still less those of the following years. In order to take the first step in certain crimes, an intelligence

¹ *Critica Socialista del Fascismo*, p. 16.

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above the mean is not necessary; all that is required is an absence of scruples above the normal. When the first step is taken, the succeeding ones are still unforeseen; but he who has begun to sin, must go on sinning, to avoid the consequences of his first sin. Only when the chain of cause and effect has reached its end, do the men who stumble forward towards unforeseen results, appear to have guided events towards a devised goal.

Some might find it difficult to discover in the Duke of Aosta and Company, even the modicum of intelligence necessary to take the first step in the path of treachery. But it should not be forgotten that, from 1910 onwards, a clique of nationalist politicians, leaders of war industries and military men, always acted in the background in Italy. The Duke of Aosta and Company, in taking the first steps in 1921 and 1922, needed to make no unusual expenditure of cerebral matter: it was enough to let themselves be advised by men like Federzoni, Rocco, Forges-Davanzati, who led the Nationalist movement, and were by no means stupid men.

If all these exalted military personages had had a sufficiency of political intelligence they would have refrained from taking part in the Fascist activities, throwing themselves and their country into such a dangerous adventure.

§ 7: *Mussolini in 1921-22*

What was Mussolini's personal rôle in 1921-1922?

The Fascist organization - I repeat, not the ineffectual movement of 1919-20, but that which seized the government in October, 1922 - was not Mussolini's creation. The branches of the Fascist Party in the various towns were founded by intellectual middle classes, retired officers, officers on leave, members of the police and agents of the industrialists and landowners. The military authorities armed and drilled them. The big war profiteers subsidized them. And the police and the magistrates assured them of impunity. While the military authorities, the war profiteers, the police and the magistrates pulled the wires behind the scenes, Mussolini stood in the limelight, arousing the enthusiasm of the younger men by daily articles in his paper, exalting the Fascist

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'victims,' throwing mud at his adversaries, and urging ever new offensive movements.

In Spain, Greece, and Hungary, the military cliques, who after the war captured the governments, set up soldiers as their figure-heads. In Italy in 1921-22, none of the generals who built up the Fascist machine had the courage or the chance to set themselves up as leaders of the *coup d'état*. They acted more cannily. They sought a figure-head elsewhere.

Before the rôle of figure-head was entrusted to Mussolini, D'Annunzio was destined to play this part. The *coup d'état* of October, 1922, had been originally fixed for November, 1921.¹ A large number of Fascists were to assemble in Rome with the pretext of celebrating the anniversary of the Italian Victory (November 4). D'Annunzio was to deliver a record-making speech, and during the ceremony he was to place himself at the head of the Fascists, overthrow the government and be proclaimed dictator. But at the last moment the poet failed to appear. Signor Bonomi, who was Prime Minister at that time, could explain this defection, but will never do so. The Fascists gathered together in Rome without a leader, committed excesses of every kind but were repulsed from the popular quarters of the city.

Until then Mussolini had played a subordinate rôle as compared with D'Annunzio. His past as a Socialist with Anarchist leanings, and his ultra-revolutionary attitude in the early post-war period, were not such as to gain him the confidence of the industrialists, big landowners and army-chiefs, despite his later display of ultra-nationalist sentiments. The fighting groups (*Fasci di combattimento*) while multiplying around him, obeyed the impulse of unforeseen forces that escaped his control. In the

¹ The first idea of a 'March on Rome' emanated from D'Annunzio, at the end of 1919, whilst in Fiume. Mussolini at that time did not think the enterprise would be successful (Pronouncement of the Arbitration Committee of the Lombard Journalists' Association, February, 1920, in the *Secolo*, February 14, 1920). Eighteen months after, in the *Popolo d'Italia* of May 31, 1921, Mussolini wrote: 'From this moment the Fascists of Latium, Umbria, the Abruzzi, Tuscany and Campania, are morally and materially pledged to concentrate on Rome, at the first call sent out by the directing authorities of our movement.'

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spring and summer of 1921, he tried to extricate his followers from the grasp of the new-comers, who were invading and dominated their organization on all sides. This is a crucial point in the political career of Mussolini. It deserves to be noticed as a striking proof that Mussolini (like all leaders of collective movements) was able to lead his followers only in so far as he was himself led by them: *je suis leur chef, donc je dois les suivre.*

We have already seen that the elections of May, 1921, showed the Socialists still possessed of capacity for strong resistance when using legal methods, whereas they were incapable of organized and efficient resistance in street fights. The Christian-Democrats, too, seemed invincible in their positions. Having entered the Chamber as the leader of only 35 Fascist deputies, Mussolini ran the risk of remaining permanently in the opposition, if he allied only with the Nationalists and Conservatives of the Right. Fascist strength lay outside the Chamber in punitive expeditions. But the country was tired of civil war.¹ From all political camps and from all parts of the country, protests arose against the inertia of the Government. Several of the Socialist deputies were already beginning openly to advocate the laying aside of tactics of absolute negation and the forming of a new parliamentary coalition. Still fresh from the electioneering struggle, they could not ally with Giolitti, who had manipulated the elections against them, but they were ready to work under another Prime Minister. Even the Christian-

¹ Amongst the innumerable legends circulated outside Italy about this phase of the Fascist movement, there is the one that the middle classes as a whole viewed with benevolence, nay enthusiasm, the civil war waged by the Fascists. The opposite is the truth. Here is one document chosen from hundreds. On September 26, 1921, some Fascists in Modena were killed in an affray with the police. The Fascists of Florence tried to get up a demonstration of public mourning in their city. But the city remained indifferent. On September 30 the Fascio of Florence posted up in various parts of the city the following manifesto: 'Very few citizens have felt it their duty to hang out flags of mourning for the tragic events of Modena. Not a shopkeeper closed his doors. In face of this open or covert hostility on the part of the citizens and especially of the bourgeoisie, the Florentine Fascists have decided to relinquish their struggle and stop reprisals against the anti-national parties of all colours.' (*Corriere della Sera*, October 1, 1921.)

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Democrats began to show themselves inclined towards an alliance with the Reformist-Socialists. A combination among Democrats, Reformist-Socialists and Christian-Democrats seemed possible, if not immediately, in the not distant future. A Cabinet supported by such a majority would disarm the Fascists. When deprived of their strength in street-fights, and reduced in the Chamber to an unpopular alliance with Nationalists and Conservatives, the Fascists would soon have melted away. Mussolini would have been left a general without an army. He was determined at all costs not to let things come to this.

He tried a bold change of tactics. In an interview with the *Giornale d'Italia* of May 22, 1921, he declared:

'Fascism tends towards a republic ("é tendenzialmente repubblicano"). In this it differs distinctly from Nationalism which is monarchist by definition. The group of Fascist deputies will abstain officially from taking part in the opening of Parliament. In the Chamber we wish to help to solve some of the problems, which are fundamental to the life of the Country. In the field of social legislation and of improvement in the standard of life of the working classes, the Socialists may find unexpected allies within Fascism. The salvation of the country may be assured not by the suppression of the antithesis between Fascism and Socialism, but by their reconciliation within Parliament. A collaboration with the Socialists is quite possible, especially at a later stage, after the clarification of ideas and tendencies, under which the socialist party at this moment labours, is ended. It is evident that the co-existence of Intransigent and Reformist Socialists in the same party will in the course of time become impossible. Either revolution or reform resulting from participation in the responsibilities of power.'

He ended by declaring himself favourable to a Cabinet under the leadership of Signor Meda, who was at that moment the most authoritative deputy of the Christian-Democrat group: 'In short, if at a given moment it pays us to do so, we shall support the Government and even join it.' It was an explicit offer of alliance between Fascists, Christian-Democrats and Reformist-Socialists

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'at a given moment,' that is after these latter had broken with the Intransigents.

This interview roused a widespread revolt in the pro-Fascist Conservative papers, and among the Nationalist element which formed part of the Fascist membership. The Nationalist party (behind the Nationalist one must always perceive the military 'Black Hand') officially urged its members belonging to the 'Fighting Groups' to oppose Mussolini's republican tendency. Several Fascist deputies declared that they did not share Mussolini's opinions expressed in that interview.¹

Mussolini at first thought he could weather the storm:

'I shall not allow' - he wrote in the *Popolo d'Italia* of May 24, 1921 - 'Fascism to be altered and made unrecognizable by changing from republican in tendency, as I founded it, and as it ought to remain, to a monarchical, nay more, a dynastic movement. Our symbol is not the scutcheon of the House of Savoy; it is the Roman, and, with your permission, republican, lictorial fascio. The Fascist abstention from the opening of Parliament is an act of plain logic. It is not permissible to preach one thing and practice another. If by chance these ideas of mine should not meet with the approval of Fascism, it makes no difference to me. I am a chief who leads and not a chief who follows.'

Next day, faced with the growing protest of his followers, 'the chief who leads and does not follow' began to lower his sails:

'Fascism is superior to monarchy and republic. If Fascism is monarchical, it is no longer Fascism. If Fascism is republican, it is no longer Fascism. We do not mean to step into the shoes of the republican party, but we do not mean, either, to kneel before the throne. Nobody can swear that the destinies of Italy are bound up with the cause of monarchy, as the Nationalists will have it, or to the establishment of a republic, as the republicans believe. The future is uncertain, and the absolute does not exist. Those who would draw the conclusion that Fascism espouses the

¹ Mowrer, *Eternal Italy*, p. 367.

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republican cause, and regards the setting up of the republic as a prime necessity ("pregiudiziale repubblicana") reveal a lamentable want of understanding. In speaking of Fascism as republican in tendency I only meant – speaking now for myself alone – I only meant to make a commotion in the stagnant waters and disturb certain frogs. The magnificent flame of Fascist youth runs the risk of being extinguished in the pool of conservatism and selfishness. Nests of cowardice are hidden within Fascism, i.e. people who jeered at others or who jeered at us. Selfish elements, rapacious and rebellious against every aspiration towards national concord, have slipped into Fascism. Others have taken advantage of Fascist violence, to satisfy paltry personal ambition.'

These last words were the barrage, under cover of which the 'leader who leads and does not follow' beat his retreat. On June 2, there was a meeting of Fascist deputies. After a confused discussion, they decided that each should be free to attend the Opening of Parliament or not, as he thought fit.

Forced to surrender over the question of republicanism, Mussolini still stuck to the idea of 'national concord.' On July 1, two Socialist and two Fascist deputies met in Rome, to discuss a 'truce' between their respective parties. Mussolini was favourable to these negotiations.

But in the provinces the Communists refused the Socialists the right to negotiate in their name. The Fascists of Emilia, Tuscany and the Puglie, likewise declared themselves opposed to conciliation. They took advantage of the *intransigence* of the Communists, to demolish, not the Communist institutions which were few in number, but the Co-operatives, the Chambers of workers, the newspapers which were run by Reformist-Socialists, Republicans, Christian-Democrats or non-political bodies. The Nationalists were the most uncompromising opponents of conciliation.¹ The civil war grew more and more savage. This was the exact moment at which the high military authorities began to conspire against

¹ See an article of July, 1921, by Maffeo Pantaleoni denouncing the Bolshevist degeneracy of Fascism: Pantaleoni, *Bolscevismo italiano*, Bari, Laterza, 1922, p. 214 ff.

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the regular government and connive at the 'occupation of the towns' by the Fascists.

Despite the resistance from the extremists of the Left and of the Right, the representatives of the Fascist party, the Socialist party, and the Confederation of Labour on August 3, 1921, signed an agreement, in which 'they undertook at once to stop threats, acts of violence, reprisals, punishments, vendettas, pressures and outrages of every kind.' Things went from bad to worse. Sixty secretaries of Fascist branches representing 160,000 members, met at Bologna and repudiated the agreement.¹

Mussolini took offence and resigned from the National Executive of the Fasci.

'Fascism' - he wrote on August 7, 1921 - 'is no longer liberation, but tyranny; no longer the safeguard of the nation, but the upholding of private interests and of the most grovelling and unenlightened classes existing in Italy.'

In the *Popolo d'Italia* of August 18, 1921, he asked:

'How is peace to come about? Perhaps you think you can get it by wiping out the two millions of citizens who voted for the Socialist party? But are you not running the risk of perpetrating civil war? Or of finding yourselves in rebellion against the whole spirit of the nation? Or of being obliged to submit to a Socialist peace to-morrow, owing to some other quite probable turn of the tables? Do you not see signs of this? Will not the united anti-Fascist front, destroyed by the agreement, form up again to-morrow almost automatically? I lay down the leadership. I remain, and hope to be able to remain a simple member of the Fascio of Milan.'

Cesare Rossi, the intimate collaborator of Mussolini, followed suit on August 20, 1921:

'Since I have been one of the warmest advocates of the treaty of peace' - he wrote - 'and also one of its signatories, I can no longer earnestly and honestly remain among the leaders of the

¹ Beals, *Rome or Death*, p. 64.

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Fascist organization, when, in noisy conference and what is worse, by everyday happenings, it shows its determined hostility to the treaty. The early character of Fascism has been swamped by the influx of late-comers who joined mainly when the enemy was beating a retreat. Innumerable grand Panjandrums, who once formed the clerical-agrarian and conservative fraternities, have flooded Fascism. Our courageous minority of 1919 has been overwhelmed by later waves of reinforcements, which brought in insincere or hysterical states of mind or interest of caste, class or local cliques. Fascism under the pressure of its rank and file, has become an absolutely conservative and reactionary movement. It is not the reaction we preached and practised when Italy was really in danger of falling under the dictatorship of the Socialist party. It is the foolish, cruel and purposeless reaction against everything that points to the orderly, peaceable and necessary progress of the working-classes to-day. The Fascists of the fighting zones wish, for instance, to eliminate strikes - a phenomenon which we may indeed try to render less frequent and less harmful, but which is also an economic reality and cannot be suppressed; but in actual fact they end by obstructing the liberty of assembly, the freedom of the Press and the right of association of their opponents. That very mentality of petty, tyrannical, over-bearing bullying, of which we used to accuse the Socialist party in the days of their arrogance, has now been wholly transferred to the rank and file of the Fascist movement. Have you ever asked yourselves, for instance, how many sacred affections are associated with those houses and their furniture, which our followers burn with such an easy conscience in some parts of the valley of the Po, only because they are the homes of their opponents? The motion passed during the occupation of the factories in September, 1920, against a political development of the movement [see p. 41], the breach between Socialists and Communists at the congress of Leghorn [see p. 66], the present crusade of the Communists against the Socialist party and the Confederation of Labour, the disillusionment about Bolshevism in the minds of the working classes [see p. 43], the patriotic revival in the last communal elections [see p. 63], the Fascist

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counter offensive, the new cleavage between Reformists and Intransigent Socialists: all these facts do not exist and have no value for those thoughtless ones, who are in the habit of muddling up everything. We plunge forward one time consecrating a flag and another invading a town, without any coherent plan, without discipline, incapable of reflecting, incapable of facing the problems of the hour. The Fasci have carefully refrained from establishing one single popular library. The most they do is to burn down those of their opponents. Those who rejected the treaty of peace did not understand that it met a national necessity, was a patriotic duty and for Fascism in particular represented an immediate and future advantage.'

Words thrown to the winds! The industrialists, agrarians, and the military clique, did not wish to listen; and the Fascist rank and file which carried out punitive expeditions, excited by the fighting, pleased to hunt down 'Bolshevist' peasants like wild beasts, well paid and sure of impunity, were even less disposed to listen than those who cool-headedly pulled the strings.

What then did the 'leader who leads, and does not follow' do? He waited and saw. And when he saw that the defeat of the anti-Fascists, under the ruthless Fascist pressure, was certain and irreparable, he withdrew his resignation, came to the congress of the party in Rome, in November, 1921, as if nothing had happened, declared the treaty of peace of the previous August to be a 'temporary arrangement,' and embraced Signor Grandi, who had been the leader in the revolt of the uncompromising extremists against himself. Since the mountain would not come to him, Mohammed went to the mountain.

The moment selected by Mussolini to follow his followers was well chosen. In those very days D'Annunzio deserted his post as condottiere of the Black-Shirts in the projected *coup d'état* of November, 1921. In January, 1922, Asclepia Gandolfi, a general of the regular army, centralized the organization of the Fascist bands, setting up a complete hierarchy of officers.¹

Mussolini took the place left empty by D'Annunzio as condot-

¹ Signor Italo Balbo's speech in the *Popolo d'Italia*, April 24, 1923.

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tiere of the 'Black-Shirts.' Henceforward he was the figure-head of which the military 'Black-hand' was in need. In 1919-20 as long as a social revolution seemed possible, he was ultra-revolutionary. In the spring and summer of 1921, when Fascist violence seemed to be becoming an anachronism, he attempted the treaty of pacification. As soon as the defeat of the Socialist movement became irreparable, he turned reactionary.¹ All the while by a great display of revolutionary fireworks, he contrived to keep his hold on his original adherents, the 'Fascist of the first hour.' These were his companions in adventure, his strength, his capital. Revolutionary rhetoric was needful to keep them at boiling point. And it was not difficult to cast a *revolutionary* halo over their *violent* activities. Lawless violence may always be masked as revolution, even if it serves the purposes of reaction.

Mussolini's task was no easy one. It required no ordinary amount of skill. The rank and file of the Fascist movement included men of the most diverse origin and mentality: employers of labour, who provided funds, and Syndicalists, who but yesterday had led revolutionary strikes against these very employers; army officers, schooled in monarchical ideas, and Republicans, who would have nothing to do with monarchy; landowners, who took up arms to defend their properties, and a half-starved intellectual proletariat, with nothing to lose and everything to gain; boys of good family, playing truant from the secondary schools to join in punitive expeditions under the illusion that they were doing a patriotic thing, and criminals taking advantage of these same expeditions to gratify their lust for violence.

Some common faith was necessary to hold these diverse elements together, and to promote their co-operation. Collective political action is only possible when those taking part in it can hoist the banner of some common faith which appeals to their better feelings - even if their activities spring from baser sources. It might well have seemed an impossibility to find a

¹ Box, *Three Master Builders*, p. 145: 'Mussolini and his co-workers, seeing from what source their recruits were coming in, definitely ran with the crowd, and infused the fluid programme of earlier Fascism with the doctrines of the bourgeois reaction.'

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common faith for such a motley crowd. Mussolini performed the miracle.

His head was not furnished with a great wealth of ideas, but certain deep-seated instincts guided his actions.

In the first place he hated the Socialists, whose leader he had been up till the autumn of 1914, and who now threw mud at him as a renegade and a traitor.

Secondly, he had borrowed from Communism and revolutionary Syndicalism a contempt for Liberalism and Democracy, and the cult of violence as a political weapon.

Thirdly, he had borrowed from the creed of Imperialism its appeal to patriotic exaltation.

Such were, and still are, the directing principles of his whole propaganda. Such were, and still are, the elementary feelings common to all the groups jumbled together in the Fascist movement.

But each group had in addition its own particular feelings, interests, ideals.

From day to day, to hold his followers together, Mussolini was always quick to pick up from one or another group, some formula or scrap of a formula, with which to please some without displeasing others, encourage some without disheartening the rest. He would un-say to-day what he had said yesterday. He would on the same day contradict himself on different pages of the same paper, in different sentences of the same articles. When Einstein came to Italy as lecturer on his theory of relativity, and the ladies in every drawing-room were discussing Einstein's relativity without in the least understanding the subject, Mussolini immediately seized upon the new incomprehensible word, and proclaimed that he himself had already discovered and applied the principle of relativity in the field of politics, before Einstein discovered and applied it in the field of science. In this way he managed to satisfy the heterogeneous and chaotic expectations of the composite crowd to which he spoke.

He knew his public, as only a man can know it who has been a journalist, first of the Left, and then of the Right; and he played on it with the skill of a demagogue of the first rank.

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By a skilful use of the formulæ and symbolism invented by D'Annunzio at the time of the occupation of Fiume (September, 1919, to December, 1920) Mussolini worked up a large section of the youth of Italy to a state of frenzied excitement. These young men either had left school to go to the war, or learned little or nothing in the disorganized schools during the war years. War literature had intoxicated them with hysterical nationalistic sentiments and with an unmoral admiration for bloodshed. For this younger generation Mussolini was 'the leader' (Il Duce), 'the Saviour,' 'the messenger of God,' 'the man of Destiny.'

He was not the creator of the Fascist movement. He was the propagandist of the Fascist mysticism.

He succeeded wonderfully in turning topsy-turvy the ideas of both followers and opponents – so that no one really knew what his aims were. No one realized that under a cloud of revolutionary words a militarist *coup* was being carried out. He often says: 'The greater the confusion, the better.'

§ 8: *The General Strike of August 1-3, 1922*

On February 2, 1922, Bonomi's Cabinet resigned. Its vacillating attitude had pleased neither the Fascists nor the anti-Fascists. It might have seemed impossible to discover a Prime Minister more incapable than Bonomi. But one was found in Signor Facta. On July 19, Signor Facta also had to resign.

For a fortnight negotiations for a new Cabinet went on between the different groups and between their leaders and the King. In the course of those days an important new development occurred: the majority of Socialist deputies, rebelling against the Intransigent Socialists, who controlled the central executive of the party, declared themselves ready to support a new Cabinet on condition that it restored public peace. On July 29, the Reformist-Socialist leader, Signor Turati, with the consent of his colleagues, had an interview with the King to discuss the political situation.

But the restoration of public peace could not be attained without disbanding the Fascist organization. This meant challenging the military 'Black Hand' which was already too deeply compromised

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in the Fascist adventure. In censuring the post-war Chambers for their incapacity to form a stable Ministry, one must distinguish the cause which paralysed the Chambers from November, 1919, to July, 1922, from that which made itself felt in July, 1922. Up to July, 1922, the cause of the paralysis lay within the Chamber itself; all stable coalition was made impossible by the intransigent attitude of the Socialist deputies and by the mistrust which all parties felt towards the Christian-Democrats. In the July of 1922 these internal troubles were on the point of disappearing. But now an external cause paralysed the Chamber: the Black Hand, having little strength in the Chamber, but a formidable armed organization outside, laid its veto upon the parliamentary coalition of the Left which the new attitude of the Socialist deputies was making possible. 'The Chamber' - said Turati, in an interview with the newspaper *Epoca*, July 20, 1922 - 'is in the clutch of fear, physical fear.'

Had the Socialists taken their decision in July, 1921, they would probably have saved the country from the evils of military-Fascist anarchy and free institutions from destruction. In July, 1922, it was too late. But a year earlier, immediately after the ill-omened elections of May, 1921, what Socialist could have taken this step without arousing the revolt of all his fellows? The more one reflects on the events of those sad years, the more unpardonable appear the politicians, who, at the end of 1920, and the beginning of 1921, armed the Fascists as instruments of chastisement and electioneering pressure.

While the parliamentary groups were stopped dead by this obstruction, and the King was unable to find a Prime Minister who, backed by the majority in the Chamber, would stand firm against the Fascists outside, a Genoese paper, *Il Lavoro*, on July 30, announced that a general strike was called for August 1.

This crazy step was taken by an 'Alliance of Labour,' which had been formed in the previous December by the representatives of the Railwaymen's National Union, the General Confederation of Labour, the Federation of Seamen, the Italian Syndicalist Union and other lesser organizations.

In the Central Executive of the Railwaymen's Union the

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anarchists had a great deal of influence, although the great mass of members were anything but anarchist. The Confederation of Labour was led by, and mainly composed of, Socialist-Reformists, but there was an active and noisy minority of Communists and Intransigent Socialists. The Italian Syndicalist Union consisted of Anarchists and revolutionary Syndicalists. The Seamen's Federation and the other lesser organizations were made up of members belonging to various parties. The initiative in forming the Alliance of Labour emanated from the Central Executive of the Railwaymen's Union. The aim of the Anarchists, who preponderated in it, was to form a coalition of the economic organizations of the working classes, rejecting all contact with parliament. The leaders of the Confederation of Labour joined the Alliance under pressure from their Communist and Intransigent Socialist members in the belief that it would never achieve anything, and hoping to curb the extremists. For the first six months of 1922, the Alliance of Labour confined its activities to vague talk of a general strike. In July, 1922, the discussion grew heated. Those most eager for the strike were the Anarchists; the leaders of the Confederation of Labour were against it. After a month of wrangling, the motion for a strike was carried by a slight majority against the vote of the Confederation of Labour.

It is probable that, besides the extremists who hoped for a genuine revolution as the outcome of the strike, there were *agents provocateurs* amongst those who prompted it.¹ But it must also

¹ This is the opinion of Don Luigi Sturzo, *Italy and Fascism*, London, Faber and Gwyer, 1926, p. 107. Don Sturzo, as General Secretary of the Christian-Democratic Party, was in a position to obtain reliable information. I can confirm his opinion. Four weeks before the strike was proclaimed, a friend of mine, who was on the Central Executive of Railwaymen, came to me for advice as to how to vote in connexion with the proposed strike. He noticed that the most zealous advocates of the strike were men suspected of being spies of the Railway Management. He thought that the Management wanted the strike to lure the men's union into a disastrous battle, and then dismiss the most active of the men's leaders. On my advice he voted against the strike. When the strike was called, he obeyed the order. He was dismissed, while many of those who had advocated the strike were retained.

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be remembered that the working classes throughout the country were infuriated by the prospect that the new Cabinet would be in league with the Fascists or at any rate impotent to disarm them.

The final impetus was given by the disorders at Ravenna of July 26-29. On July 26 a Fascist was killed by a group of Republican and Socialist strikers.¹ A conflict with the police ensued in which seven strikers were killed. The Fascist squads of Ravenna, Bologna and Ferrara were mobilized. The Republican, Socialist and Communist leaders were ordered to leave the city within twenty-four hours. On the 27th, the Fascists destroyed the *Casa del Popolo* and attempted to invade the Chamber of Workers, the town-hall, and the chief premises of the Co-operative for the whole district. The following day they destroyed the offices of a newspaper and a Co-operative branch, burnt down a club, and by an incendiary bomb, set fire to the chief premises of the Co-operative: only the ground floor and one wing of this fine palace where Byron had once lived, were left; the damage amounted to 1½ million lire, representing twenty-five years of steady and able work. The workmen of Ravenna replied by proclaiming a strike, in which the railwaymen took part. On the 29th, in street encounters, three Fascists were wounded and one killed.

Under the influence of these happenings the Alliance of Labour proclaimed the general strike.² As Ravenna was the chief stronghold of the Reformist-Socialists, these were weakened in their opposition to the strike. Many of those who at the last moment were swept into voting for the strike, not only meant to protest

¹ My source is still the *Corriere della Sera*. It must be borne in mind that the correspondents of the paper were favourable to Fascism and tended to make their adversaries responsible for the first acts of provocation. I can vouch for neither the accuracy nor the completeness of the particulars. I merely attempt to give some idea of the facts as they appeared, not to anti-Fascists, but to those who favoured Fascism, even if not approving of its extremes.

² Signor Villari, *Awakening of Italy*, p. 153, makes this strike spring up like a mushroom in the night and then pronounces: 'Of the many strikes which had occurred during the last three years none was more absolutely unjustified than this.'

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against this senseless destruction, but hoped that a large display of anti-Fascist forces proving that the Fascists were not masters of the country, would bring about the formation of a Cabinet of the Left. To drag in these non-revolutionary elements, the Alliance of Labour, in calling the strike, proclaimed that it was necessary to 'crush the attack made by the reactionary forces on the organs of the State.'

This news took the Reformist-Socialist deputies by surprise in the midst of negotiations for the new Cabinet. The strike undid all their efforts towards parliamentary co-operation. Prevent it they could not, because the extremists who had proclaimed it, were not under their control, and the leaders of the Confederation of Labour, having made the initial mistake of joining the Alliance, were pledged to abide by the decision of the majority. Had they disavowed the strike, they would have been held responsible for its failure, at a moment when the Fascists would take advantage of the failure to launch a new offensive. Had they kept silent, they would have been accused of awaiting results before making up their minds. In this embarrassment they made the worst possible choice: that of supporting those elements whose intention in striking was to protest against the danger of a Fascist Cabinet, but not to carry out a revolutionary movement. When interviewed on the afternoon of July 30, Turati declared that the impending strike aimed at defending the constitution against anti-constitutional strikes:

'It would be a strike in defence of legality ("sciopero legalitario")' - he said. 'The proletariat will stand by the State to defend it from the Fascists.'¹

But a general strike, if intended simply as an anti-Fascist demonstration, would have had to be called for a definite period (not more than twenty-four hours), and would have needed the co-operation of the Christian-Democratic organizations. These had not been consulted, and declared against the strike. Moreover no time limit was set, since the Anarchists and other extremists who promoted it, deluded themselves with the hope

¹ *Corriere della Sera*, August 1, 1922.

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that they could carry through a revolution, after eighteen months of irresistible Fascist pressure!

To this incoherent challenge, the leaders of the Fascist party replied with an able move. They proclaimed that the Fascists would wait forty-eight hours for the State to assert its authority:

'At the end of this period the Fascists will assume complete liberty of action, and substitute themselves for the State, which will once more have given proof of its impotence.'

If the general strike had not been general, its failure would have been visible by the end of the second day: the Fascists, taking the field on the third day, would have claimed all the glory of the victory. If, on the other hand, the strike had been general, the first forty-eight hours would scarcely have sufficed for the Government to put the machinery of repression into motion: the Fascists, arriving on the scene just as the machinery had begun to work, would again have taken to themselves all credit for the repression. Whatever the turn of events, the Fascists would present themselves as the sole saviours of the country.

The proclamation of the strike had as first result that the King broke off all negotiations for a settlement of the Cabinet crisis, and retained Facta as Prime Minister, so as to have some sort of government to restore order.

From the beginning the general strike was a fiasco. The railwaymen, whose representatives in the Alliance of Labour had most strongly advocated the strike, answered the call partially and irresolutely. Of 229,000 men, only 60,000 came out.¹ The other groups responded in the same incoherent way. It was the last ill-timed move of the pugilist who is about to receive the knock-out blow. On the night of the second day, the Alliance of Labour called off the strike for the noon of the following day, August 3.²

¹ Amministrazione delle Ferrovie dello Stato, *Relazione per l'Anno 1922-23*, Roma, 1924, p. 124.

² This general strike of August 1-3, 1922, is constantly invoked by Fascist propaganda as a proof that Italy was threatened by Bolshevism even on the eve of the 'March on Rome.' For instance, Signor Villari writes in *The Times*, August 27, 1927: 'It is very misleading to state that

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On August 5, the Fascist press-bureau issued 'the first approximate list' of the towns in which the Fascists in reprisals had occupied town-halls or wrecked Chambers of Workers' clubs, Co-operatives, etc.: Alessandria, Ancona, Antignano, Ardenza, Campicaneto, Falconara, Figline Valdarno, Florence, Fornovo, Gallarate, Gravina, Intra, Leghorn, Milan, Muggia, Noceto, Novara, Novi Ligure, Oderzo, Pavia, Pegazzano, Pistoia, Ponte a Signa, Rimini, Ronco, Rebocco, Sanpierdarena, San Secondo, San Jacopo, Savona, Scandiano, Schio, Spezia, Tabiano, Torre, Torino, Vigevano, Voghera. These reprisals continued until August 17.

While this storm of violence raged throughout the country, Facta concentrated all his efforts on negotiating with the Fascists, to prevent them from occupying Rome. Having secured their promise to respect the Capital, he left them a free hand in the rest of Italy. He was the most convenient of all possible Prime Ministers for the Fascists, until such time as they should decide to occupy the Capital as well.

The House, which had refused to accept Facta's policy on July 19, gave him a vote of confidence on August 10 and went into recess. Nobody thought, however, that the new Cabinet would survive the recess. August and September were months of intensive negotiations behind the scenes. In the Socialist Congress of Rome of October 1 to 3, 1922, the Reformist-Socialist delegates represented 29,119 votes, while the Intransigent Socialists represented 31,106. The Reformist wing broke away and formed a new party, the 'Unitary Socialist Party.' As a result of this split the General Confederation of Labour dissolved its connexion with the Intransigent Socialist Party.

The way thus became clear for a stable resettlement of the parliamentary groups: - a Left coalition majority of Reformist-Bolshevism was at an end a year before the Fascist March on Rome. As late as August 1, 1922, the political general strike proclaimed by the various allied subversive parties (!) would, but for the Fascist reaction (?), have suspended the whole life of the country, as the authors of the general strike in Great Britain in May, 1926, attempted to do.' The English general strike of May, 1926, involved 5 million workers and lasted nine days. What is 'very misleading' is to put the two strikes on the same footing.

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Socialists, Christian-Democrats and Liberals; a Right opposition composed of Fascists, Nationalists and Conservatives; and an extreme Left minority composed of Communists and Intransigent Socialists. No definite agreement between the new Unitary Socialist Party and the Christian-Democrats and Liberals had yet been arrived at. But such a resettlement was a matter of a few months – possibly even of a few weeks. Among those most anxious for this parliamentary resettlement were the Communists and Intransigent Socialists. After the new Cabinet had pacified the country, they would accuse the Reformist-Socialists of having betrayed the proletariat by allying with the bourgeois parties to obtain office.

At this point the 'March on Rome' took place.

§ 9: *On the Eve of the 'March on Rome'*

The 'March on Rome' was not directed against 'Bolshevism.' Not even a shadow of the 'Bolshevist' peril remained in Italy in 1922. Mussolini himself wrote in the *Popolo d'Italia*, a year before the 'March on Rome,' July 2, 1921:

'To say that there still exists a Bolshevist peril in Italy, is to substitute certain insincere fears for the reality. Bolshevism is vanquished. Nay more, it has been disowned by the leaders and by the masses. The Italy of 1921 is fundamentally different from that of 1919. This has been said and proved a thousand times.'

And on December 1, 1921, he said to the Chamber of Deputies:

'It cannot be denied that the Italian proletariat finds itself in a period of what I shall call moral collapse, not only because of the more or less violent action of Fascism, but even more as a result of the collapse of all the ideologies which had been violently injected into it after the war. Moreover the subversive parties are fighting amongst themselves.'¹

¹ *Popolo d'Italia*, December 2, 1921. The proofs that the peril of a revolutionary crisis was definitely over in the second half of 1921, have been collected by Bonomi – the man who, at the end of 1920 as Secretary of War, armed the Fascists for civil war – in his book, *Dal Socialismo al Fascismo*, Rome, Formiggini, 1924, pp. 39 ff. See also Bachi, *L'Italia economica nel 1921*, pp. 225, 336, 339.

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Fascist 'propaganda' gives the name of 'Bolshevism' to the disorders of the Civil War, as if a homogeneous series of acts of violence lasted from the spring of 1919 to the autumn of 1922. The truth is, that in these years one must make a sharp distinction between the period of 1919-1920 (up to the occupation of the factories) and the period 1921-1922 (from the massacre at Bologna to the 'March on Rome').

In the first period, the disorders were almost always provoked by 'Bolshevists'; the police opposed to these attempts a resistance that was doubtless incoherent and intermittent, but which was not in the least weak, as some bloodthirsty people affirm, and which in any case prevented the impetuous torrent of post-war neurasthenia from overflowing all barriers; resistance on the part of the public was then little felt, being made only by scanty groups of Fascists, who from time to time even took the initiative themselves in attacking.

In the second period, the Fascists, backed by the military authorities, police and magistrates, grew rapidly in number and everywhere took the offensive, or replied to the Bolshevist attack with an overwhelming counter-offensive. The 'Bolshevists' soon became a defeated army, defending itself confusedly, without any connected plan, and without the least chance of success.

If one gives the name of 'Bolshevism' to the first period, the second period must have a different name: that of 'anti-Bolshevist reaction.' Those who seek in Russia the parallel of Italian events, must equate the Italian happenings of 1921-2, not with the Bolshevist revolution, but with the anti-Bolshevist attempts of Kolchak, Denikin, Wrangel, etc., bearing, however, in mind, the difference (not indeed insignificant) that the Bolshevist revolution succeeded in Russia, and the anti-Bolshevist attempts failed, whereas in Italy the 'Bolshevists' failed, and the 'anti-Bolshevists' triumphed. But it would be best to leave off using these Russian words when speaking of Italy. The Italian disorders of 1919-1920 do not deserve *ni cet excès d'honneur ni cette indignité* of being recorded in history under the name of 'Bolshevism,' and the Italian reaction had none of these formidable difficulties to overcome, which in Russia frustrated every attempt at reaction. Between Russia and

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the Italy of 1919-22 there is the same difference as between a tornado which devastates a whole country, and a gale which breaks some windows and blows down trees and chimney-pots. It would be more appropriate to speak of 'post-war neurasthenia' in 1919-20, and of 'civil war' in 1921-2.

If one strives for still greater precision in this analysis, one must distinguish in the civil war of 1921-2, two secondary periods: that extending from autumn 1920 to summer 1921, in which the Fascists and the military authorities acted in concert with the regular government; and that extending from summer 1921 to autumn 1922, in which, no longer obeying the regular government, they acted on their own account. The former period should receive the name of 'Fascist reaction'; the latter that of 'Fascist-military anarchy.'

Let the English reader who would realize what happened in Italy in those years, recall the general strike of May, 1926, in England. During this crisis, the volunteers, who enrolled as special constables, remained under the control of the official authorities, and acted within the bounds of the law. They did not form themselves into lawless bands to kill or banish Trade Union organizers and Labour M.P.'s, or to loot their houses, or burn the offices and registers of the Trade Unions. Had they tried to do anything of this kind, they would have had to reckon with the police and the Bench. In other words, strikers had to face 'a conservative' and not a 'Fascist' resistance. Let now the English reader imagine that in May, 1926, the English people, instead of meeting the general strike with calm, had been seized with panic, and that Mr. Baldwin, having lost his head and every rudiment of moral sense, should have ordered the police to launch the special constables against the strikers, without legal restraint, and the military authorities to provide them with rifles, machine-guns and lorries. If this had happened, the English workmen would have had to face, unarmed, an armed and lawless organization, being at the same time treated as rebels, if they had attempted to resist this illegal violence. This is what happened in Italy from the autumn of 1920 to the summer of 1921. Let the English reader make another effort of imagination. Mr. Baldwin, in this cowardly

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policy, has destroyed his own personal prestige and that of the Government. The military authorities emboldened by this moral breakdown of the regular government, conceive the plan of suppressing the liberties of the English people. To reach this aim, they intensify the man-hunt against the workers and their leaders. Finally, they replace Mr. Baldwin in the Government by Lord Rothermere. This is what happened in Italy from summer 1921 to autumn 1922. Now let the English reader make a last and still more strenuous effort: let him give the name of 'Bolshevism' not only to the general strike of May, 1926, but also to the civil war and military anarchy which must have followed it, and let him justify this use of the word by the fact that the English workers had more or less obstinately resisted the violence both legal and illegal, of the special constabulary, police and military authorities.

Fascist 'propaganda' makes out that in October, 1922, Italy needed to be saved from economic dissolution and financial bankruptcy, due to 'Bolshevism.' In the second volume of this book, I give a whole chapter to the economic conditions of Italy before and after the 'March on Rome.' For the present some essential indications will suffice.

The second half of 1921 and the first half of 1922 were the darkest periods of the post-war economic crisis. To attribute the hardships of that year to Bolshevism which was by then stamped out, is just as absurd as it would be to attribute them to Fascism, which then had complete ascendancy. The difficulties were common to the whole world. Riccardo Bachi wrote towards the end of 1920:

'The crisis was evident in the world-markets during the second half of 1920, and now warns us of difficult times, and severe economic stress ahead. It made itself just felt in the past spring (1920) in Japan, whence it spread step by step over the entire world. The immediate future promises great economic hardships.'¹

During the winter 1921-1922, the general crisis was aggravated by acute local difficulties in the electrical industries. This was the

¹ Bachi, *L'Italia Economica nel 1919*, pp. xii, 193, 224.

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result of an exceptional drought, which exhausted the reserves of water power.¹

.Notwithstanding this crisis, Italian economic life at the end of 1921 showed all the symptoms of convalescence. Giorgio Mortara wrote in December, 1921, in *Prospettive economiche: 1922*, pp. xv-xx:

'Italy has decidedly improved her condition in the course of 1921. It would be too much to say that she lies on a bed of roses. Nevertheless, remembering the difficulties overcome yesterday, we can consider without undue fears the difficulties of to-day. Agricultural industry, the base of our economic life, seems to be distinctly on the way to recover normal conditions; the deep depression consequent on the war has passed away. Not less reassuring, perhaps even more so, is the situation of cattle breeding. The mineral industries suffer the foreign and domestic depression - some of their branches, however, are active. The Textile industries, which, taken as a whole, are among the most important and vital of the transforming industries of Italy, support better the slackened demand: active in finding new outlets, and quick to adapt production to the tastes of the markets, they passed without excessive expansion through the war period, and in the same way, without undue restriction, they traverse these years of laborious readjustment. The food industries are also firm: many of them find in the home markets a wide field for the absorption of their products. The electrical industry is expanding: the production of power is inferior to the demand; under the impulse of necessity plants for the exploitation of Italy's waterfalls are being undertaken with greater activity. The building industry, and that of building materials, are still vegetating feebly, the difficulties which paralysed them during the past years being not yet overcome, although there is some improvement. Some branches of mechanical industry are still active, either by their own vitality like the motor car industry, or thanks to government orders like those which provide railway material. The industries which languish most are those which, born and developed during the war, had a fictitious appearance of prosperity: with a return to less

¹ Bachi, *L'Italia Economica nel 1921*, pp. 221, 305.

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abnormal conditions, organs which once were useful and necessary, become parasitical and superfluous, or out of proportion to needs: the eliminations and restrictions which take place to-day, were inevitable from the day of the armistice. On the whole the depression of the industries which transform raw materials, appears serious and widespread even in Italy, but is far from reaching the intensity and extension which has been the lot of the big industrial countries, such as the United States and the United Kingdom. The working of the railways has distinctly improved. The mercantile fleet has increased. In the ports, things, without being altogether satisfactory, are improving. The uneasiness in several home industries has occasioned widespread unemployment. Against these depressing phenomena may be set the comforting fact of the greater steadiness and efficiency of labour. A good source of hope for the economic future of Italy is to be found in the progress of foreign trade. In 1921 the excess of imports over exports diminished from 10-12 milliards to 5-6 milliards. The expenditure of tourists in Italy has increased, sufficiently to compensate for the reduction which has occurred in the remissions of the emigrants. Our foreign debt has perhaps increased in 1921, but certainly in a much smaller degree than in 1920. The year 1922 promises well as regards foreign exchanges. It will perhaps be necessary, during the first months of the year, to increase to some extent the import of coal, to make up for the dearth of hydro-electric power; but the prosperity of the agriculture and cattle breeding in 1921, makes large imports of corn and of other food-stuffs unnecessary. The export of half-manufactured finished goods, is still fairly active. The exports of fruit and vegetables, in spite of many market difficulties, reach a sufficiently high figure. The influx of tourists does not seem to abate - indeed it seems to increase.¹

Imports of coal rose from 6.9 million tons in 1920, to 7.9 in 1921 and to 9.6 in 1922.² Imports of petroleum, benzine and similar

¹ Mortara, *Prospettive economiche*: 1922, pp. xv-xx.

² Mortara, *Prospettive economiche*: 1922, pp. 207-218; *Prospettive economiche*: 1926, p. 271.

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products rose from 2,310,000 quintals, yearly average, in 1919-1921, to 2,911,000 quintals in 1922.¹ The consumption of electricity, notwithstanding the crisis of production due to the drought, remained stationary at 4.3 milliards of kilowatt hours in 1921-1922.²

The following table³ shows the figures of Limited Companies in 1921 and 1922, compared with those of 1920:

	Number of Companies.	Capital.
1920	5,541	17,784 million lire
1921	6,191	20,350 " "
1922	6,850	21,395 " "

The following figures⁴ show the savings deposited by Italians in 1919, 1920, 1921 and 1922:

1919	. . .	10,643 million lire
1920	. . .	13,213 " "
1921	. . .	15,576 " "
1922	. . .	17,250 " "

Speaking of Railway transport, Mortara said in December, 1921, that it had 'distinctly improved.' This recovery in the service occurred gradually, as the quality of the coal improved, and as the rolling stock worn out during the war was renewed:

'In the four years following the Armistice' - wrote Mortara in December, 1922 - 'the deterioration of the war period was in part made good: new material was acquired, and old stock repaired where possible. In 1921-2 traffic has distinctly increased, and in all probability it will go on increasing in the near future.'⁵

In 1913-14, on the eve of the war, the State Railways carried 42 million tons; in 1919-20 they carried only 40 million; in 1920-21

¹ Einaudi, *Italy, Financial and Economic History* in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1926, p. 757.

² Mortara, *Prospettive economiche*: 1926, p. 334.

³ *Credito Italiano: Società Italiane per azioni*, 1925.

⁴ *Annuario Statistico Italiano*: 1919-1921, p. 509.

⁵ *Prospettive economiche*: 1923, pp. 330-347.

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they carried 39 million; in 1921-2 they regained the ground lost in the former years, and again carried 42 million as on the eve of the war.¹

Bus routes, which at the end of 1920, had a total length of 19,500 kilometres,² had at the end of 1922 a length of 24,000.³

Railway strikes were much less numerous and serious from October, 1920, to July, 1921, than they had been from January to October, 1920. The most important were:

- I. The national demonstration of May Day, 1921, in which most of the employees took part;
- II. An economic strike lasting nearly a month (April 26 to May 22, 1921) in Venezia Giulia, which ended with the defeat of the strikers;
- III. Twenty-two days of 'working to rule' (from November 18 to December 1, 1921), and six days of 'stay-in' strike (from March 1 to March 5) in the station of Paola in Calabria;

IV. There were further:

Twenty-three strikes lasting for a few hours;

Fourteen one-day strikes, six of which occurred in stations of little importance, three only being on important lines (October 18, 1920, on the Roman line; March 17, 1921, on the Modena-Mantua line; March 29, 1921, on the Roman lines);

Five two-day strikes (one in Sardinia, one in Calabria, one in the district of Florence, one in the station of Taranto, one in the station of Rimini);

One three-day strike in Calabria (October 15-18, 1920);

Four four-day strikes (February 28 to March 3, 1921, in the district of Florence; April 7-10, 1921, on the Venice-Mestre-Portogruaro line; April 8-11, in a minor station of Naples; June 13-16, in the station of Venice).

In many cases they were lightning strikes in protest against acts

¹ *Prospettive economiche*: 1923, p. 338.

² *Annuario Statistico Italiano*: 1918-1921, p. 378.

³ Mortara, *Prospettive economiche*: 1923, p. 349.

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of violence committed by Fascists on railwaymen or their organizations, or on workmen's associations.¹

As regards military transports, the Report of the administration of the State Railways for the year 1920-1921 says:

'The stoppage frequent in the preceding year, by Railwaymen of trains carrying soldiers, royal guards and war-material, has almost entirely ceased.'

For the year July, 1921, to June, 1922, the Report states:

'In the period July, 1921, to June, 1922, the unrest among the Railwaymen was much diminished, in comparison with the preceding year.'²

There were nine cases of 'working to rules' or strikes, none of which lasted more than twenty-four hours; the usual May Day abstention, in which this year only 29,350 employees took part, and a lightning strike in Rome on November 10, 1921, in protest against acts of violence committed by the Fascists (see p. 119). This strike lasted four days and involved 12,000 men. It spread to the district of Naples where it lasted until November 21, for economic reasons, but the strikers had to return to work without having gained anything. There was not one strike to stop military transports!³

Between July 1, 1922, and the 'March on Rome,' occurred the strike of August 1-2 (see pp. 131-5), in consequence of which 124 employees were dismissed, 770 were degraded, 44,000 were punished with the postponement of increase of wages; and the rest with lesser fines.⁴

In the days of the 'March on Rome,' it was possible in a single day, October 31-November 1, for 60 extraordinary trains with 40,000 Fascists, to start from Rome, without disturbing the ordinary traffic.⁵ And Rome has only two stations. This fact is

¹ Amministrazione delle ferrovie dello Stato, *Relazione per l'anno 1920-1921*, pp. 13-14.

² *Relazione per il 1921-1922*, pp. 14-15.

³ *Relazione per il 1922-1923*, p. 14.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Margherita Sarfatti, *Dux*, Milan, Mondadori, 1926, p. 282.

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enough to show whether the Railway Service was in a state of breakdown, when the Fascist Government arrived on the scene on October 31 and snatched it from chaos.

If the Railway Service was being gradually re-organized in 1921 and 1922, the financial administration never needed to be re-organized, it had always functioned with ruthless vigour. The revenues which amounted to 9,675 million lire in 1918-19, and 15,207 millions for 1919-1920, rose to 18,820 millions for 1920-21, and 19,790 millions for 1921-22.¹

In 1920-21, 12.1 milliards, and in 1921-22, 12.6 milliards of war liabilities, fell due, and were paid off. In 1922-23, after the Fascists conquered the Government, only 6.6 milliards of war liabilities had to be met; in 1923-24, 4.7 milliards; in 1924-25, 3.8 milliards.²

The pre-Fascist Governments had to face the maximum of war liabilities; the Fascist Government had a less stiff task, because the farther the war receded into the background, the more the expenses resulting from it decreased. But the taxes which had been increased or freshly imposed between 1919 and 1922, continued to bring in their returns. The Fascist Government concluded the work of the preceding Governments, reaping where others had sown. As early as December, 1921, Mortara forecast that the deficit in the budget would cease by 1923-24:

'The situation of public finance' - he wrote - 'although yet far from happy is less threatening now than at the end of 1920. The deficit is much diminished during the present fiscal year, it will be again diminished next year, and perhaps altogether eliminated in the one following.'³

In his speech to the Chamber on July 12, 1922, the Minister of Finance, Signor Peano, provided for a deficit of 4,000 million lire, for the coming fiscal year. When we consider the deficits of 22.7

¹ Einaudi, *Italy*, pp. 576-7.

² Paratore, *Alcune note di politica monetaria*, Rome, Modernissima, 1925, p. 43; and Anonymous, *La politica finanziaria del Governo Fascista*, Rome, Morara, 1926, p. 7.

³ *Prospettive economiche*: 1922, p. xx.

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milliards in 1918-19, 17 milliards in 1920-21, and of 15 milliards in 1921-22, we can appreciate the difficulty and importance of this achievement. The 'Cape of Storms' of Italian finance was safely rounded.

In the same speech of July 12, 1922, Signor Peano made the following declaration:

'The most important financial circles in the world are not pessimistic about our financial and economic situation. This is proved by the fact that offers of loans have been repeatedly made us by very important English and American bankers. The government has not found it necessary to accept these offers so as not to burden our commercial balance with new debts and because we think that *aes alienum aeterna servit*. On the other hand, the government looks with a favourable eye on every sort of initiative calculated to procure fresh capital to private enterprise.'

According to Fascist 'propaganda,' Italy was expiring on the brink of bankruptcy when the Italian Minister of Finance made that declaration. The great sin of pre-Fascist Ministers was that they were accustomed to speaking quietly without rolling their eyes and gnashing their teeth.

When the Fascists took possession of the government, the economic situation of the country, according to Mortara, was as follows:

'In spite of all obstacles, and in spite of the political disturbances that preceded the peaceful revolution of October, 1922, the economic activity of the country has strengthened steadily during the course of this year. The people work with greater faith in the future, and with greater steadiness and regularity. Agriculturalists, in spite of the poverty of the harvest, have succeeded in keeping supplied certain notable channels of export, and have reopened others. Stock-breeders, in spite of the drought, have remained in a reasonably good position. The electrical industry has been restored to vigour. The industries concerned with the manufacture of raw materials, and agricultural and pastoral products continue to pick up. The state of the cotton industry can fairly

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be called good, that of silk and wool satisfactory, and that of the minor textile industries hopeful. The iron industry, however, is still depressed. In the mechanical industries some branches are flourishing; others vegetate, others threaten to disappear altogether. Among chemical industries there is a necessary movement on foot to eliminate those to which Italy does not offer a propitious home: others are returning to their early vigour. The lowering of the price of building materials has assisted the revival of the building industry. Railway transport is being slowly reorganized: complaints against delays and irregularity of delivery are growing less. The improved conditions of the ports is easing sea-transport, which has greatly suffered from their disordered state. For two years now Italy has done without the help of foreign capital, on which she still relied in 1919 and 1920. The increase of paper money is already stopped.¹

Riccardo Bachi wrote, at the end of 1922:

'The machinery of Italian economics showed itself on the whole far more solid and consistent than might have been expected. At a year's distance from the acutest point of the crisis, a hint of blue appears in the sky and gives hope of better things.'²

In short, on the eve of the 'March on Rome' behind the screen of parliamentary paralysis and the noisy disorders of the civil war, the machinery of public administration worked with full efficiency and the economic life of the country had already recovered the equilibrium which the war had upset, and was slowly making its way towards a new phase of progress. Political events often stand to the economic life, as the waves on the surface stand to

¹ *Prospettive economiche*: 1923, pp. xvi and ff. See also *Prospettive economiche* 1924, pp. xi, xiii; Luigi Einaudi, *Italy in the Encyclopædia Britannica*, 1926, p. 573: 'In the two succeeding years (1921-1922) the world crisis made itself felt, and the effects were intensified because, owing to the bad harvests, the spending power of the poorer classes was greatly reduced and the demand for manufactured goods thereby lessened. But in 1922 conditions began to improve.'

² *L'Italia economica nel 1921*, p. 7.

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the depths of the sea: whilst the former are lashed by the winds, the latter hardly move.

But in politics appearances are more important than reality, if for no other reason than that appearances are perceived at once, whilst reality is only known years after when statistics are available to substantiate it. In the summer of 1922, the longing for peace after three years of war and four of disorder, abhorrence of the cruelties of the civil war, anxiety aroused by the military anarchy, worry over the economic and financial situation of the country which though no longer desperate seemed still to be so, weariness of the futile manœuvres of the parliamentary groups, contempt for the ineptitude of a prime minister like Facta, all these feelings resulted in a widespread mood of shame and discouragement. To escape from a moral situation which had grown intolerable, the country would have accepted any fresh government on condition of its restoring public peace.

This state of public bewilderment and anxiety was seized upon by the Conservative and Capitalist Press to launch a campaign against the alliance between Reformist-Socialists, Democrats and Christian-Democrats which was maturing in the Chamber. This alliance was the 'Bolshevism' against which the alarm was raised. Give a dog a bad name and then hang him.

Don Sturzo who, as General Secretary of the Christian-Democratic party, was at that moment in an advantageous position to observe the situation at close quarters, penetratingly analyses it in his book, *Italy and Fascism*, pp. 108-112:

'Italy in 1922 became a prey to suggestion, to unreasoning fear and unreasoning hope - the fear of Bolshevism, when Bolshevism had been overcome two years before; the hope that the energetic and intimidating action of the Fascist Irregulars would prove the one means of saving middle-class economy and the constitutional State from the advance of Socialists and Popolari (Christian-Democrats). This state of mind, excited by the general strike and by the parliamentary crisis in which industrial and agrarian capitalism had caught a glimpse of the peril of Socialist collaboration in the Government, kept the country in a state of agitation and under

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the incubus of inevitable coming events. . . . Thus was invented the fable that Fascism in 1922 saved Italy from Bolshevism; if by Bolshevism is meant the agitations and disorders of 1919-20, up till the occupation of the factories, these were already past history. There does not exist in Italian political life a more insincere phenomenon than the fear of Bolshevism on the part of the wealthy classes, in 1922. The latter had taken the offensive against the State by the Fascist acts of violence, and had to justify both offensive and violence: this they could only do by crying out that there was peril of a Bolshevization of Italy in the near future.' ¹

Don Sturzo's presentation finds confirmation from an unsuspected witness:

'The leaders of the collaborationist Socialist group' - writes Signor Villari - 'Turati, Treves and Modigliani, worked hard to convince their comrades of the advisability of such a policy, and at one moment it seemed as though it had a good chance of being adopted by the Party and of materializing. Among several of the other parties there was a regular competition to secure the support of the collaborationist Socialists for the formation of the future Cabinet, as it was believed that a combination with the moderate Reds would secure it a long tenure of office. . . . The Fascists, Nationalists, and the Right generally were rigidly opposed to this experiment, for the following reasons: *revolutionary Socialism was no longer a serious danger*; the Communists might commit occasional outrages and acts of terrorism, but they had lost the support of a large proportion of the labouring masses. . . . *But collaboration represented a much more real and insidious danger. . . . It might be thought that once the Bolshevik peril was eliminated and with it the possibility of a social revolution, the Fascists should have been satisfied with their success and limited their action to a policy of fighting collaborationist tendencies and of speeding up the Government to a higher pitch of energy and efficiency. But this was not Mussolini's view. Mussolini firmly believed that . . . a reform of the body politic of a much more general character was necessary. But such a reform no Government handicapped by*

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

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the existing parliamentary conditions was capable of carrying out. . . . Only a force like that of Fascismo . . . practically independent of parliamentary politics, could achieve this task.¹

If, in place of the term 'Mussolini' we read some such term as 'the military combine and the politicians which pulled the strings of the Fascist Party,' the passage fits the case perfectly.

In the speech made by Mussolini at Naples on October 24, 1922, just before the 'March on Rome' not a single word is devoted to 'Bolshevism.' All his thunder-bolts are aimed against democracy. In the proclamation with which the Fascist Quadrumvirate heralded the 'March on Rome,' parliament, not 'Bolshevism,' is the target. The 'March on Rome' was designed, not to put an end to parliamentary paralysis, but to prevent parliamentary paralysis from coming to an end in a coalition Cabinet of the Left, disconcerting to the plans of the 'Black Hand.' Had coalition of the Right been able to capture the government by parliamentary methods, the manoeuvre would never have been devised.²

In September and October, 1922, Mussolini was in touch at the same time with the parliamentary leaders of the Right and of the Left, ready to throw in his lot with whichever group was disposed to grant him and his friends the greater number of Ministerial posts. All that he cared about, was not to be left out of any combination. The other leaders of his party, amongst whom were the agents of the military 'Black Hand,' wished for a Cabinet in which the premiership should be given to Signor Salandra, Mussolini and his friends occupying in it only a subaltern position.

None of those who launched the movement foresaw that it

¹ *The Awakening of Italy*, pp. 150, 168.

² As early as the summer of 1921 there was talk of collaboration between Christian-Democrats, Reformist-Socialists and Liberals in order to 'put an end to the reign of the Fascist bludgeon.' Luigi Fabbri (*Controrivoluzione preventiva*, pp. 83-4) noted that 'this fact, which the military caste and the more parasitic groups of the bourgeoisie unmistakably feared, would probably have provoked a sudden *coup d'état*, a military *pronunciamento*, a violent mobilization of Fascism and militarism, of an anti-constitutional, reactionary and anti-parliamentary character.' This was exactly what happened in October, 1922.

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would end in a Cabinet led by Mussolini. This was the unlooked-for result of unforeseen circumstances.

§ 10: *The 'March on Rome'*

The legend of the 'March on Rome' has been transcribed by Sir Percival Phillips, special correspondent of the *Daily Mail*, in the following manner:

'It was a march of simple peasants, some of whom saw a large city for the first time, and of working men from the mills and factories, intermingled with other elements of society, all demanding liberty. Nearly 120,000 armed men, all loyal, all pledged to put self aside and think only of their country, gathered at the gates of Rome. They came like the legions of old, in cohorts, in companies commanded by centurions, in 'manipoli,' or sections, bearing names made famous by their exploits in action.

'The details of the final military campaign which was to overthrow the existing Government were settled at a meeting of the leaders under Signor Mussolini at Milan on October 6. Another military conference was held at Florence on October 15. A conference between Signor Mussolini and his chiefs was held the night of October 24, at the Hotel Vesuvius at Naples, at which it was decided to open negotiations with the Government for the transfer of its powers to the Fascisti within 48 hours, failing which the legions would march on the capital and take it by force. Signor Mussolini demanded six ministries and the control of the Air Force. Signor Mussolini went to Rome next day, but the Government refused to yield.

'Within 24 hours general mobilization of the militant Fascisti was begun. Mobilization began on the night of October 27. Throughout the provinces of the north the Fascists quietly occupied Government buildings, prefectural and municipal offices, posts and telegraphs, telephone exchanges, railway stations and many of the police barracks.

'By next morning they were moving on the first three points of concentration, under the direction of General Fara. The Supreme

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Council of three (General De Bono, Signor de Vecchi and Signor Balbo) remained at their general head-quarters at Perugia. Black Shirts from Umbria, Romagna and Tuscany concentrated first at Foligno, and then moved to Monterotondo, 20 miles north of Rome.

'More from the Abruzzi came down from their mountain homes and gathered near Tivoli, about the same distance from Rome on the north-east of the capital, under Signor Bottai.

'Fascist units from Genoa, Milan, Bologna and the north-west generally moved down the sea-coast to Santa Marinella, a little port near Civitavecchia, where Signor Pollastrini was in command.

'Thus Rome was surrounded on three sides by an army of nearly 120,000 men, perfectly organized and disciplined and ready to fight. I am asked to emphasize the fact that this converging movement was one of small units, not of large military hordes. Squadre and manipoli simply met at their usual rendezvous and made their way direct to the mobilization centre. They travelled by train, motor-car and lorry. They were equipped with carbines, revolvers and trench-helmets. The Government remained helpless and incredulous to the end. When, too late, the magnitude and the weight of the Fascist machine was realized, a proclamation was drawn up declaring martial law. Preparations were made hurriedly for the defence of Rome which inspired derision rather than confidence. Barbed wire was erected round the city. Guns were mounted on the walls (?). The garrison was under arms. Then the King saved Italy. He refused to sign the edict establishing martial law. Instead, he telephoned to Signor Mussolini, who was at Milan calmly waiting the outcome of the *coup d'état*, and asked him to come to Rome.'¹

Such is the legend. But for the legend to become history, certain essential particulars must be added to the picture.

The first is that, until September 29, the Central Executive of the Fascist Party knew that, in the event of a Fascist concentration on Rome, 'the Army would observe an attitude of

¹ *The Red Dragon and the Black-Shirts*, pp. 14, 54-5.

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neutrality.'¹ Not only was a general (De Bono) one of the Quadrumvirs directing the Fascist movement, but five other generals (Fara, Maggiotto, Ceccherini, Zamboni and Tiby) commanded the groups which were moving towards Rome.²

The second important particular which must be added is that General Diaz, the Commander-in-Chief, on the evening of October 27, when the 'mobilization' of the 'Black-Shirts' against Rome had already been proclaimed, spoke to the Fascists of Florence from a balcony of the Hotel Savoia, expressing his 'emotion at the welcome with which they had greeted him'; and, on October 28, he allowed the *Nazione* to publish an interview in which he declared his sympathy with the Fascist movement.³ An Englishman, who was in Rome during those days, and who took notes hour by hour of the news which was circulated, writes in this connection:

'Not for nothing was General Diaz - how reminiscent of Mexican politics is the name - in Florence on the night of the 27th.'⁴

¹ This essential point for understanding the 'March on Rome' was revealed a year after by Alessandro Chiavolini, who in 1922 was Mussolini's private secretary, in an interview given by him to the *Popolo d'Italia*, October 27, 1923. Mussolini, too, in a speech at Perugia, on October 30, 1923, said: 'Who would have resisted us? Those pallid men who in that moment represented the Government? They could never have prevented us from reaching our goal with their machine guns, which at the right moment, would not have fired' (*Popolo d'Italia*, October 31, 1923).

² *Popolo d'Italia*, November 1, 1922. See facing page 74 the picture of these generals, who broke their oath of loyalty to the King and the Constitution. Anyone going through the Fascist papers would find hundreds of names of Army officers who, in 1922, openly enrolled amongst the Fascists, shared in their public ceremonies and sent telegrams of support to Mussolini. For the three months of July, August and September of 1922, the *Popolo d'Italia* mentions the following generals: Zirano (July 5), Bertolini (July 8), Moriani (July 30), Campo-mazza (July 23), Ceccherini (July 25), Zampieri (July 26), Gandolfi (July 30), Fiori (August 1), Pastore (Sept. 8), De Marzillac (Sept. 14), Milanese and Oro (Sept. 9).

³ *La Nazione*, October 27 and 28, 1922.

⁴ Beals, *Rome or Death*, p. 286.

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The third particular is that the Duke of Aosta, the cousin of the King, went to the neighbourhood of Perugia, to keep in touch with the Quadrumvirate directing the movement.

With the addition of these particulars to the picture, its perspective becomes profoundly changed. Still more is this the case when the actual number of the Fascists who 'marched on Rome' is reduced to its true proportions.

According to Sir Percival Phillips, the Fascists numbered nearly 120,000, or more precisely 117,000, 'of whom 70,000 were Black-Shirts of the first line troops' (page 57). Signor Villari, in his book, *The Awakening of Italy*, p. 179, published in 1924, stated that 'the March on Rome was entrusted to a body of 70,000 men, afterwards increased by 20,000 more.' Two years afterwards, in the *Manchester Guardian*, March 27, 1926, he raised the number of Fascists who marched on Rome to 200,000. Sir Ernest Benn did not find the figure of 200,000 large enough, and raised it to 300,000 (*Star*, April 6, 1926). Neither Sir Percival, nor Signor Villari, nor Sir Ernest Benn asked themselves how many trains and railroads, and motor-trucks, and roads would have been necessary to convey towards Rome in a single night such a multitude.

A special edition of a Fascist newspaper published in Rome, *La Patria*, October 31, 1922, calculated 'that the Fascists who encamped at the gates of Rome during the night of October 29, were about 70,000' (*Popolo d'Italia*, November 1, 1922). This figure too was imaginary; the Fascists see everything large. The Fascists who after the 'March' evacuated Rome between October 30 and November 1, were, according to the *Popolo d'Italia* of November 3, about 45,000. Mussolini's own estimate of the men at his disposal in Rome during those days was 52,000.¹ In a speech made on June 17, 1924, he increased the estimate to 60,000.² In a letter of October 22, he went back to 50,000.³

But the Fascists who evacuated Rome after the festival of victory were much more numerous than those who *on the morning*

¹ Speech of March 24, 1924, published in Mussolini, *La Nuova Politica dell'Italia*, pp. 20, 155.

² *Ibidem*, p. 182.

³ Carlo Gualtieri di Avarna, *Il Fascismo*, p. 85.

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of October 28, might have had to face the regular troops round Rome. Once the King, by his refusal on the morning of October 28 to sign the proclamation of martial law, had given the Fascists the victory without their having had to fire a shot, there was a rush of Black-Shirts towards Rome from every part of Italy for three days - October 28, 29 and 30 - all the more so as they had free passes on the railways. Thus the number of Fascists in Rome on October 30 rose to about 50,000. A staff officer who was in Rome at the time, gave me the figure of 8,000 as his estimate of the number of Fascists scattered around Rome at various rallying points on the morning of October 28. This figure also, is of course, merely approximate.

Another point which deserves to be cleared up, is that these 'first line troops,' as Sir Percival Phillips calls them, were badly armed,¹ disorderly as carnival revellers, and dispersed between Santa Marinella, Monterotondo, Tivoli, Valmontone, in 'localities unsuited and insufficient to house them.'²

The regular forces, concentrated in Rome, might easily have driven back these loosely organized groups. The men coming from greater distances might have been stopped on the railways. Bloodshed would not have been necessary. Had the groups gathered round Rome been left to themselves for a few days in the desert of the Roman Campagna, in hunger and thirst, it would have been easy to make a clean sweep of them.

The King, returning from San Rossore (Pisa) to Rome on the evening of October 27, was indignant with the Cabinet for allowing

¹ *Popolo d'Italia*, November 1, 1922: 'One of the characteristics of this powerful (l) post-war army is its quaint uniforms. Its chief weapons are bludgeons and revolvers, but there are also very numerous guns with scanty supplies of cartridges.' The Belgian member of Parliament, M. Louis Piérard who happened to be in Rome in October, 1922, describes the Fascist army as follows: 'Men armed in the most fantastic manner, with revolvers, sporting-rifles, cudgels, machine-guns, and hoes' (*Le Fascisme*, Bruxelles, L'Eglantine, 1923, p. 7). The Englishman Beals, who was in Rome at the time, wrote: 'The Fascists, armed with guns, table legs from wrecked labour head-quarters, tree roots, have been coming into town on the dead men' (*Rome o' Death*, p. 290).

² *Popolo d'Italia*, October 31, 1922.

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things to go so far. 'Rather than yield, I will take my wife and son and go away,' he said in Piedmontese to the Prime Minister, Facta, who awaited him at the station. In 'the night of October 27, the Cabinet, sure of the King's consent, decided to proclaim martial law. While waiting for the King's signature, they instructed the Prefects of the Provinces to take without delay the first measures. But when in obedience to the decree of martial law, the civil authorities surrendered their powers to the military authorities of the provinces, these everywhere allowed the Fascists to seize public offices, railways, post and telegraph offices, depots of arms, and newspaper offices.¹ It was the order of the day, which all obeyed.

When, at 10 a.m. on October 28, the Prime Minister, Facta, brought the decree of martial law for the King's signature, the King hesitated. Facta – one of the biggest idiots of all times and all countries – hesitated more than the King. He was then negotiating with the Fascists for an amicable compromise, and 'cherished the confidence' that things would mend of themselves. The King clutched at these negotiations as a drowning man clutches at a straw: since there was hope of a peaceable understanding, why should he proclaim martial law? The Cabinet would do well to reconsider the question. Facta therefore returned to the Cabinet.

The Ministers stuck to their first decision. Facta brought the decree back. The King refused to sign it. In the interval, a group of Nationalists and Fascists, and certain Army and Navy chiefs,

¹ In the *Popole d'Italia*, October 28, 29, 31, the accounts from Siena, Florence, Piacenza, Cremona, Vicenza, Alessandria, Verona, Mantua, Bologna, all testify to the same procedure: the civil authorities hand over their powers; thereupon the Fascists seize the public offices, while the military authorities stand passively by. A member of the Fascist squad which, on October 28, occupied the railway junctions of Canello and Caserta, writes: 'A rumour had got about that the Carabineers were intending to break our lines, so we took up our posts with a small tin of bully beef and a little loaf of bread as our entire day's ration. But the Carabineers, unjustly defamed, did not come. Instead there came a captain of the commissariat who, singing hymns in praise of Mussolini, gave us a lorry-load of all sorts of good things.' (*Pagine eroiche della rivoluzione fascista*, p. 319.)

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had spoken with him, and had assured him that the Army would refuse to fight the Fascists.¹ The news that the Duke of Aosta was among the Fascists, ready to take up his cousin's crown as soon as the King should let it fall, gave the final push. The official statement that 'the Cabinet Meeting had decided on the proclamation of martial law throughout the realm from noon October 28 onwards' was communicated to the Press by the Stefani Agency at 10.20 a.m. on October 28. At 12.15 p.m. the Stefani Agency announced that the decree of martial law was withdrawn.²

The decree of martial law being recalled, the politicians and Army Chiefs, who had advised the King not to sign it, put forward the name of Signor Salandra as the best man to form the new Cabinet. They soon perceived that they had backed the wrong horse. The Fascists, who had been panic-stricken at the prospect of martial law, recovered their swagger when the revocation was announced. The whole country had the impression of a sweeping Fascist triumph. Up till 12.15 p.m. Mussolini might have been treated as a subaltern. After 12.15 the subaltern had become the master.

The King tried for one more day (October 29) to find a Prime Minister who was not Mussolini. But in refusing his signature to the decree of martial law he had disarmed himself. From all parts

¹ Luigi Sturzo, *Italy and Fascism*, p. 119: 'At the same time various persons gave the King to understand that a fight between the Army and the Fascisti would be a most serious matter, of which the consequences could not be foreseen. . . . The advice of certain Army Chiefs decided the King to refuse his signature.' Don Sturzo was at that time in Rome and had first-hand knowledge of what was going on behind the scenes.

² I owe my information regarding the behaviour of the King and of the Cabinet to three sources, which, while independent, agree in every respect: (a) Signor Amendola, who was Minister in October, 1922, and with whom I had a conversation on this subject in November, 1924; (b) a friend of Signor Taddei, who was Home Secretary in October, 1922: Signor Taddei (now deceased) gave a full account of the events of that time to my informant; (c) a senator, a personal friend of the King, whom I cannot name under the conditions obtaining in Italy to-day; (d) Signor Alberto Cianca, now an exile in Paris, who was himself an eye-witness of the happenings in Rome and as editor of the Roman daily paper *Il Mondo* was in hourly touch with Amendola.

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of Italy thousands of Black-Shirts stormed the trains without paying fares, and thus 'marched' on Rome. Every hour increased the numbers of the converging multitudes. Repression, which would have been easy on the morning of the 28th, had become impossible on the afternoon of the 29th. The King feared that Mussolini, invading the capital at the head of that unruly rabble, would proclaim a republic. So as to have at hand another irregular force with which, in case of need, to oppose the Fascists, the Nationalists and the military authorities hastily hired men in the more disreputable quarters of the capital and despatched lorries to collect men in the country round. These mercenaries were supplied with blue shirts (the Nationalist garb), while the Fascists were held back as long as possible on the outskirts of the city. In the night of October 29, the King, finding no other man able to set Mussolini aside, telegraphed to him to come to Rome and form a Cabinet. In this way Mussolini also, in the night of October 30, 'marched on Rome' in a sleeping-car.

An old Roman prelate, Monsignor di Bisogno, who had stood beside Pius IX in Rome on September 20, 1870, when the Italian troops occupied the city, and put an end to the temporal power of the Pope, commented on the 'March on Rome' in the following Tacitean sentence: 'We, in 1870, defended Rome better.'¹ The Italian troops in 1870 lost about twenty killed before the Papal garrison surrendered.

There was no revolution, as has been claimed, but a *coup d'état*, staged as a spontaneous rising of 'Black-Shirts,' but in reality carried out by a military 'Black Hand.' This *coup d'état* was not directed against Bolshevism, but against the Chamber of Deputies and against the King. From that moment Italy no longer had free and representative institutions, but a dictatorship. From that moment Italy no longer had a King – but only a 'prisoner of war' with the title of King.

¹ Ugo Ojetti, *Cose Viste*, Vol. I, Milan, Treves, 1925, p. 265.

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'Note A to Page 149

The Director of the British Institute at Florence, Captain Harold E. Goad, writing in the *Journal of the British Institute of International Affairs*, March, 1927, p. 121, contradicted Don Sturzo's assertion that 'Bolshevism' had been overcome 'two years before 1922, after the occupation of the Factories.' He writes:

'Every Englishman who was in Italy during 1922 will surely be ready to reply that life and property were safe for no one at that time, even in a great town like Florence. For unrestricted bands of brigands sacked every unguarded flat and villa in broad daylight, and the country-side was still infested with gangs of "Communist" ruffians, whom the Fascist Government was only able to suppress after some months of rule. The writer of this review speaks feelingly on this matter, having been plundered of every object of value as late as at the end of December, 1922; and few were the resident foreigners in Florence who had not a like experience . . . Moreover, Don Sturzo forgets the strike of August 1, 1922, as well as sundry other shadows that would sadly darken his idyllic picture of the state of Italy immediately before the Fascists came into power.'

Don Sturzo never claimed that Italy in 1922 was in an 'idyllic' state. The right way to refute the views of an opponent is not to misrepresent them. In 1921-2 Italy was in a state of 'civil war.' The strike of 1922 was an episode in the 'civil war.' It is unfair to lay upon 'Bolshevism' alone the blame for this strike and all the other disorders and outrages of the 'civil war' instead of distributing the blame between 'Bolshevism' and 'Fascism.' It is not honest to term as 'Bolshevism' a 'civil war' in which the 'Bolshevists,' especially in 1922, desperately fought a losing battle against the Fascists, who were backed by the Army, the Police and the magistrature.

Captain Goad invokes his personal experiences of Florence in 1922. I, too, was living in Florence in 1922, and I maintain that

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Captain Goad gives rein to his imagination in his description of the conditions in Florence and the surrounding country-side during that year. The Florentine Conservative paper *La Nazione*, in its daily records of 1922, gives no confirmation to the picture drawn by Captain Goad. I do not say that in these records there is no mention of outrages against life and property. Even in times of political stability such things occur: For instance, in the *Corriere della Sera* of June 30, 1927, the two columns devoted to the daily chronicle of the city of Milan gives the following facts: a man attacks a woman with a revolver, and resists the policemen who try to disarm him; a dismissed shop-boy wounds his employer: 'persons unknown' rob a post office, break into the safe and carry off 36,000 lire; thieves make a large hole in the wall of premises in the heart of Milan, and are only by chance surprised by the caretaker who had got up early to view the eclipse. By Captain Goad's reasoning, Milan in 1927 must have been in the throes of 'Bolshevism.' Captain Goad's flat in Florence was burgled in December, 1922. The Press of June 16, 1927, records that burglars robbed Countess Di Robilant's flat of half a million lire worth of jewels. Are we to consider Countess Di Robilant as a victim of 'Bolshevism' in 1927? In the *Corriere della Sera*, July 7, 1927, Captain Goad may read:

'Burglaries are occurring in Milan with exceptional frequency and audacity. To mention only the most noteworthy effected during the last few days; on Sunday night Signor Baronio's goldsmith's shop was visited by thieves; on Monday, in broad daylight, the house of Signor Pigliafreddo; yesterday it was the turn of the shop "Città di Londra," situated in via Pattari. The proprietor of these premises, on going out yesterday after midday, as usual, to lunch, locked the glazed door of the shop, which also has a large window. The thieves, using skeleton keys, opened the door of the shop, and were able to collect at their leisure a plentiful and somewhat cumbersome booty, so much so that for its removal they must have made use of a motor-car. Pieces of stuff, a dozen or so English mackintoshes, shirts, woollen garments and silk ties, umbrellas and other objects, among the most expensive in the

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shop, were carried off. The thieves did not forget to take the ready-money, amounting to about a thousand lire, from the cash-desk, which had just been smashed in. The damages are calculated to amount to 60,000 lire.'

Are we to consider the city of Milan as the prey of 'Bolshevism' five years after the 'March on Rome'?

The American writer, C. E. McGuire, in *Italy's International Economic Position*, New York and London, Macmillan, 1926, p. 15, does not agree that Italy in 1922 was already in chaos. But he knows that Italy 'must surely have been engulfed in economic chaos if no change had come.' It is not very easy to know what 'must surely have' resulted, if things had turned out differently. Oracles, such as the above, can neither be approved nor disproved. They are not scientific statements, but declarations of faith.

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THE working people in the towns and in the country bowed submissively beneath the *coup d'état* of October, 1922. They had been reduced to a state of stupefied terror by two years of sanguinary violence against which resistance legal or illegal had been unavailing.

A large section of public opinion, indifferent to party, hostile to 'Bolshevism,' but scandalized by Fascist violence, accepted the *coup d'état* as the only method of putting an end to the illegal and violent methods of the Fascist Party. Up till then the latter had had no share in the government, though it was, nevertheless, more powerful than the government. All good citizens had but one wish - to see the end, once and for all, of the civil war which disgraced the country. Now that the Fascists had taken over the government it was hoped that they would give up their tactics of lawless violence. They would of course govern according to their programme, but they would no longer murder their opponents. The reign of law would be restored.

This hope was widely prevalent in the middle classes, and its presence explains the crowds of supporters ('*fiancheggiatori*') who along with the professional turncoats hastened to back the winning party. And propaganda has spread the legend outside Italy that the re-establishment of public peace and justice is the greatest benefit which triumphant Fascism has bestowed upon the country. A French journalist, M. Henri Lucas, writing in the *Journal* on November 23, 1925, says:

'When the Fascist Party forcibly seized the reins of power it promised the nation to put an end to those acts of violence which here and there were daily disturbing the peace of the country. No one denies that this promise has been kept.'

The *Morning Post*, of April 23, 1926, informs its readers that:

'Except for sporadic outbursts and a little bullying the chapter of violence may be regarded as definitely closed.'

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And the propaganda agent in England of the Fascist Government says:

'The first measures were directed towards the re-establishment of public order. "The brawls and conflicts occurring every Sunday (Mussolini stated in a circular to the Prefects) with their tale of killed and wounded which dishonour the country, must absolutely cease"; and they did cease. . . . The Fascists had no longer any excuse for committing reprisals.'¹

Such is the legend. History is very different.

§ 1: *Reprisals on a large Scale*

On the night of December 17, 1922, in Turin, a city of 400,000 inhabitants, a certain baker, once an Anarchist, now a Fascist, asked some of his Fascist friends to 'give a lesson' to a young man whom he charged with having induced his two daughters, both under age, to leave home. The Fascists attacked the young man, and a desperate fight took place in which revolvers were used. The young man, after being wounded in the legs, killed two of the aggressors. On the pretext of avenging their dead comrades, but really in order to assert their power over a compactly anti-Fascist city, the heads of the Turin Fascio on the morning of December 18, gave orders for a Fascist mobilization to carry out reprisals.

Towards noon a detachment of Fascists took possession of the head-quarters of the Confederation of Local Trade Unions (Camera del Lavoro) and set fire to the building by means of an incendiary bomb. A workman, the secretary of the metal-workers, who had not fled from the scene of the operations, was dragged along behind a motor-lorry and his shapeless and unrecognizable corpse was abandoned in the street.

At the same time, as the employees were leaving for dinner, another squad appeared before the offices of the State Railway, picked out two men and compelled them to get into their car. On the way, the occupants of the car set one of them free; the other, the secretary of the Turin branch of the Railwaymen's Union,

¹ Luigi Villari, *The Awakening of Italy*, p. 190.

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was taken out into the open country and shot dead with revolvers. Two other working men, Zurletti and Pochettino, were taken from their homes, where they were at dinner, in another car, and driven outside the city: one was shot dead and the other seriously wounded and left for dead. Still less ceremony was shown to Chiolero, a tramway conductor, and Anicono, a railwayman. The former, who was surprised at table, was shot dead before the eyes of his wife and child. The latter was compelled to get out of bed and come into the street, where he was killed: his wife and child were driven from their home in the night, and their furniture thrown out of the windows, saturated with petrol, and set on fire. Another workman, named Turizzo, was awakened, taken into the country, and killed by a blow from a bludgeon which split his skull. Another workman, Chiomo, finding in the middle of the night that his house was surrounded, tried to hide in a neighbouring flat; he was discovered, his host savagely beaten, and he himself killed, his body riddled with wounds being left in a field. It would serve no good purpose to continue this horrible enumeration of atrocities. It was an orgy of bloodshed.¹

The next day, a railway employee, Angelo Quintaglié, was killed in his office for having deplored the massacre of the preceding day. His wife gives the following account of the murder in a letter to the *Avanti* of July 26, 1924:

'My husband was anti-Socialist but he was a kindhearted man. He had served his king and country as a Carabineer for nine years. He had received mention and had been maimed in an affray with brigands. On the morning of December 19, 1922, on reaching his room at the office, he asked a workman named Gallegari, a Fascist, where they had taken Berruti, the day before. Gallegari

¹ Repaci, *La Strage di Torino* ('The Carnage in Turin'), Milan, Società Editrice 'Avanti,' 1924. In December, 1922, no paper dared to give any account of these facts for fear of having its premises sacked by the Fascists. But in the summer of 1924, after the Matteotti murder, the moral revolt in the country rendered the Fascists powerless for a few months. The papers profited by this short period of liberty to recall many of the crimes about which they had up till then observed an enforced silence. None of Repaci's statements have been challenged or contradicted.

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replied: "We have killed him." My husband deplored the killing of the father of a family, and added words such as any well-thinking man would have uttered. Gallegari without replying left the room. In less than an hour there arrived six "Black-Shirts" of the "Campiglio Squad": they ranged themselves, two at the entrance, one with his revolver in front of the window in the courtyard, one at the telephone, while the remaining two broke into the room armed with pistols and bludgeons, shouting "Hands up!" Surprised at their work, my husband and his colleagues could not but obey. "Which of you is Quintaglié who has deplored the killing of Berruti?" My husband and his colleagues, terrified, did not dare to breathe. "If you do not tell which is Quintaglié, we shall fire at all six of you." "I am Quintaglié," said my husband then. This was the end. Kicks, bludgeon blows, revolver shots brought him to the ground in a pool of blood, in the presence of the others. My husband, who was a strong and brave man, attempted to resist, but a last revolver shot made him helpless. He did not die at once. He was carried to the hospital where he died after four days of indescribable suffering, asking with anguish why Gallegari had so cruelly betrayed him.'

The Fascist chieftain, Brandimarte, declared in an interview published by the *Secolo* on December 20, 1922, that he himself had ordered and organized these reprisals, 'to inflict a terrible lesson on the revolutionaries of Turin.'

'Out of a list of three hundred revolutionaries,' - he said - 'twenty-four were selected and entrusted to the best squads for punishment.'

One journalist remarked that the official list of dead totalled only fourteen. Brandimarte replied:

'The Po will deliver up the remaining bodies, if it chooses, unless they are found in ditches or ravines or in the brushwood on the hills around Turin - except two who escaped.'

Signor Villari gives the following version of these facts:

'A few isolated incidents did occur, of which the most serious

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was the one at Turin in December, when two Fascists were murdered by Communists, and other Fascists retaliated by murdering several Communists; but the Government took severe measures to prevent or punish similar acts. Now that Fascismo was in power it must act with absolute legality.¹

The first 'severe measure' taken by the Fascist Government 'to prevent or punish similar acts' was to refrain from arresting any of those responsible for the bloodshed: even Brandimarte, who had publicly boasted that he was one of the organizers of the 'heroic' enterprise, was left undisturbed. Quintaglié's wife, in the letter to the *Avanti* of July 26, 1924, says:

'I lodged a formal complaint. The judge had on his table one of the projectiles, extracted in the autopsy. But it was no good! Or rather, all I got by it was this, that the "Black-Shirts" came to threaten me too, obliging me to leave Turin and give up a business by which I might have gained a livelihood for my children. Nineteen months have passed since then, but I still look for justice, for it seems as if I were out of my mind and dreaming an evil nightmare, that a husband so good and generous as mine was can have been so cruelly murdered and that his murderers can still be at large.'

The second 'measure' was the amnesty of December 23, 1922 – five days after these atrocities – which wiped out all crimes, including murder, if they had been committed with a 'National aim.' In the explanatory memorandum which prefaced the decree of amnesty a National aim was explicitly defined as a 'Fascist aim': thus the Turin murderers, having had a Fascist aim, were included in the amnesty.

The third 'measure' was a speech made in Turin on January 1, 1923, by the Fascist Member of Parliament, Signor De Vecchi,

¹ Luigi Villari, *The Awakening of Italy*, p. 190. General Sanna is even more stoical than Signor Villari. Presiding over the 'Special Tribunal for the Defence of the Fascist State,' in the Lucetti trial (June, 1927) he declared that in December, 1922, no incidents at all had taken place in Turin.

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Under-Secretary of State in Mussolini's Cabinet. In this speech, he said:

'Yes, the reaction of a few days ago was necessary: and though I was not here, I accept the responsibility for all that happened.'¹

The fourth and fifth 'measures' were to appoint Brandimarte, in January, 1923, to the post of Consul of the Volunteer Militia for National Defence, a rank equal to that of colonel in the army, while De Vecchi was first made a general of the Militia, then given the title of count, and subsequently appointed Governor of Somaliland.

After such 'severe measures,' it is small wonder that the Fascists were encouraged to act with an ever-increasing 'legality.'

In the night, January 21, 1923, a Fascist named Lubrano was killed in Spezia by some brother Fascists whom the Carabinieri identified and arrested a few hours after the crime.² In Spezia, as in Turin, this incident became a pretext for violence on a large scale designed to terrorize the town. On the afternoon following the crime a squad of Fascists 'requisitioned' two workmen, Poveltoni and Rattone, from their homes in broad daylight and dragged them to the Fascist head-quarters. There the two men were savagely beaten because they could not disclose the names of the 'Communists' by whom, it was alleged, Lubrano had been killed. Another workman, Pasini, was 'requisitioned' from his home, beaten to death and his body left in the streets. Another, Bellandi, was killed and his body thrown into the river. A secondary school-teacher, Del Santo, was set upon as he left the school, ferociously beaten with fists, sticks and revolver butts and left for dead on the road: his life being saved by a miracle. A peasant of 70, Bacigalupi, was attacked in his shed in the fields: the Fascists first killed his horse, then set fire to the shed, and finally shot him with their revolvers. Another workman, a consumptive, named Zilioli, was torn from his bed, placed against a wall in the street and shot. The outrages went on for five days without the police

¹ *Corriere della Sera*, Jan. 2, 1923.

² They were sentenced to 30 years' imprisonment (*Corriere della Sera*, Oct. 25, 1927).

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taking any steps to check them. Fourteen persons were thus massacred and over a hundred more or less seriously injured. Not until the evening of March 26, did the consul of the 'Fascio' of Spezia issue an order to cease reprisals.¹

It may be argued that these happenings at Turin and Spezia, a few weeks after the 'March on Rome,' should be regarded as the last upheavals of the revolutionary movement which preceded the Fascist conquest of the government; after such an earthquake the ground could not become solid all at once. Some landslips were unavoidable in the early months of the 'new era.'

This reasoning contains a grain of truth. Reprisals on a large scale, like those of Turin and Spezia, did not occur from January, 1923, until the Matteotti murder. Only the operations against individuals went on.

§ 2: *Operations against Individuals*

Among the operations having for their aim 'the teaching of lessons' to individuals or special groups, particular interest attaches to the outrages committed against Members of Parliament or candidates for elections. They not only show the sort of life that a Member or candidate belonging to the Opposition had to endure under Fascist rule, they also help us to discern the abundant vein of humour in the following words of the Fascist propagandist in England:

'On November, 1922, in answer to a complaint by Signor De Nicola, President of the Chamber, that many deputies had been forced by the Fascists to leave their constituencies, Mussolini assured him that orders had been issued for the immediate withdrawal of these bans of exile.'²

¹ *Corriere della Sera*, January 27, 1923; *Giustizia*, January 26, 1923. These facts also only became known in all their atrocious details in the brief period of relative liberty which followed on the murder of Matteotti in the summer of 1924. Paolo Marsicano, who revealed them in the *Avanti* of June 11, 17, 19, 23, 27 and August 3, 1924, was never called to account, nor even contradicted by the murderers, whose names he gave.

² Luigi Villari, *The Awakening of Italy*, p. 190.

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One of the first Members who was taught the danger of withholding full and entire approval from the working of the Fascist régime, was Signor Misuri, a dissident Fascist. On the evening of May 29, 1923, he was very nearly cudgelled to death for having ventured to deliver a speech in the Chamber criticizing, not the 'Duce' himself, but some of his most intimate co-adjutors.

'My intention' - Misuri relates in the *Indicatore della Stampa* of June 20, 1924 - 'was to denounce all that I had been able to observe inside the Party. As a final gesture of deference and devotion towards Signor Mussolini I informed him through Signors Finzi and Buttafochi, of my intention. After seeing the Premier, Buttafochi came back and said to me, "The Premier says that he will have you arrested if you speak." I replied: "In that case you may tell the Premier that the Constitution stands between him and me, and that I shall do my duty as a Member of Parliament." As threats had failed, the well-known gang planned the assault on me. A few days before, in expelling me from the Party, the Executive Council had threatened me with "severer sanctions," as an official communiqué expressed it. Any new sanctions beyond expulsion could only take the form of illegal violence. The assault of which I was the victim was the work of a detachment of Fascists from Bologna led by the "Senior"¹ Bonaccorsi, and including two men named Sansoni and Nobili, who had followed me step by step in the motor-car usually stationed in the courtyard of the "Viminale."²

On the evening of November 29, 1923, the Fascists invaded and looted the house of the ex-Prime Minister, Signor Nitti, in Rome. In the course of the looting, clothes, linen, silver, shoes, even a typewriter, vanished.³ The Fascist *Corriere Sabino*, of November 30, gives the following account of the exploit:

'Yesterday at about 7 p.m., some 500 Fascists, not without daring, gathered in front of Signor Nitti's house. Some hundreds of the most excited of them began to fire on the villa. Two com-

¹ 'Senior' is a rank in the Militia.

² i.e. the Home Office.

³ See frontispiece.

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fact groups attacked the railings. Some policemen ran up but were driven off by the crowd. One went to report to the Police Commissary. Meanwhile the Fascists broke into the building and smashed the windows on the ground floor with their sticks, still keeping up the firing. The group which penetrated into the house sought in vain for Nitti. The Political Secretary of the Rome Fascio declared that the capital cannot tolerate the affront of Nitti's presence, and that to-morrow Fascism all over Italy will learn the news that the days of combat are perhaps near for which all are already prepared and resolute.¹

Signor Giovanni Amendola, an ex-Minister (in England he would have been a follower of Mr. Baldwin) received five successive 'lessons.' The first was administered at 10 a.m. on December 26, 1923, in one of the most frequented streets of Rome, the Via Francesco Crispi. Five men who had been following him in a motor-car attacked him with bludgeons from behind, striking him on the face, head, and neck until he fell insensible. They then re-entered the car and made off unhindered. The assault was the work of two officers of the Fascist Militia, a man who had been discharged from the Militia for criminal offences, and two others, one of whom had already killed a newspaper seller in November of the same year and had been left at large despite this murder.

Amendola received his second lesson on March 20, 1924. On that day he had to deliver his election address in Naples. But on March 19, 1924, the General Secretary of the Fascist Trade Unions published the following ukase:

'In the name of His Excellency Benito Mussolini, Head of the Government, and Duce of Fascism, we, the General Secretary of

¹ Signor Giunta, the General Secretary of the Fascist Party, speaking at a public meeting in Rome on November 30, 1923, alluded to this fact in the following terms: 'It is not worth while to protest against the little harmless demonstration of yesterday evening against Nitti, when there is another man who is working indefatigably from morn to night, for the good of the country.' Admirable logic! Sir Ernest Benn, one must suppose, was ignorant of this, when he reproached Nitti for having deserted his country: *Star* of April 6, 1926.

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the Fascist Trade-Unions of Terra di Lavoro, do hereby order a great concentration of the Fascist Trade-Unions in Naples for the debate between the candidates Greco and Amendola on the subject of constitutional opposition. All members must be present in full force, with flags and black shirts. All means of public and private transport, including trains, will be requisitioned, against formal receipt, signed by the General Secretary of the Trade-Unions or by the Political Secretary. All expenses will be paid, and board and lodging will be provided free. The poorer members who attend will also be paid by the day. Managers of factories and employers to be notified beforehand to grant leave of absence to the working-men at all costs. The meeting is fixed for 2 o'clock prompt on Thursday, the 20th inst., outside Naples Station (departure side). This paper to be shown on demand.'¹

The meeting could not be held. The police forbade it.

Amendola received a third 'lesson' on April 7, 1925, when he dared to disobey the Fascists by taking part in a political meeting in Rome. After the meeting he and his friend were attacked three times with cudgels. Amendola escaped unhurt, but several of his friends had to go to a hospital.

Amendola received his fourth lesson along with some other members of the opposition on June 3, 1924, a week before Giacomo Matteotti was murdered. This is the report of the *Corriere della Sera*, June 4, 1924:

'Before the Session opened, talk of a demonstration against the opposition, to be carried out at the end of the session, was heard in the corridors of the Chamber. As a matter of fact, this morning the Fascist and pro-Fascist papers published two communiqués, the first of which stated: "At 5.30 p.m. to-day, all the Fascists of the Porta Salaria branch shall assemble in the offices of the branch." About two hundred Fascists mustered there, and, after receiving their instructions, moved towards Piazza Montecitorio.² Here they awaited the breaking-up of the Chamber, acclaiming Mussolini from time to time. When Signor Di Cesarò appeared,

¹ De Ambris, *Amendola: fatti e documenti*, pp. 40-41.

² Chamber of Deputies.

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the few carabinieri were unable to stem the onrush of the Fascists, who surrounded the ex-minister, hissing and howling. When the deputies Amendola, Bencivegna, Molé, and Labriola, accompanied by Sig. Zaniboni and some of the editorial staff of the *Mondo*, appeared, the mob succeeded in surrounding them, and accompanied them, yelling, pushing and threatening towards Piazza Colonna. In via del Tritone, the violence of the demonstration reached its height. The police tried in vain to isolate the group of deputies. For a moment it seemed as if they would be overpowered. One maniac was brandishing a heavy Indian club. A closed car into which Amendola and the editorial staff of the *Mondo* jumped, was besieged by the crowd until the police succeeded in making a way for it to pass.'

The fifth 'lesson' was administered to him on July 20, 1925. He had gone for a cure to the baths at Montecatini. On the news of his arrival, a thousand Fascists gathered from all the villages around laid siege to his hotel, demanding that he should leave at once. He was obliged to leave by motor-car. In the dead of night a gang of Fascists who had been lying in wait for the car attacked it at Serravalle, on the road from Montecatini to Pistoia. They struck Amendola savagely on the head, face, hands, arms, and breast. This time the 'lesson' had the desired effect. Amendola never recovered. After two operations necessitated by his injuries he died on April 6, 1926. The doctors declared the cause of his death to be 'a degeneration of the left hemi-thorax consequent upon the violent blows in July, 1925.'¹

¹ See De Ambris, *Amendola: fatti e documenti*, Toulouse, Exoria, 1927, pp. 52 ff. The Italian Fascist papers and the pro-Fascist papers outside Italy published with the notice of his death, a statement that the dying man had declared that 'his death was not caused by acts of violence.' His brother and the members of his family who tended him in his illness contradicted this assertion, but the denial was not published in the English and French pro-Fascist papers. Another miracle of propaganda! Signor Villari writes: 'His friends attributed his death to the injuries received in the attack made on him the previous summer' (*Fascist Experiment*, p. 62 note). The truth is that it was not his friends who attributed his death to these injuries, but three French physicians: MM. Laredennois, Gandy, and de Parrel (*Corriere degli Italiani*, Paris, April 8, 1926).

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On the eve of Miss Gibson's attempt on Mussolini another Member of Parliament, Modigliani, was assaulted for the third time and badly beaten. After the attempt (April 7, 1926) his flat in Rome was invaded. He was in bed recovering from his injuries, but escaped with his wife (who had also twice suffered injuries at the hands of the Fascists) over the roof of an adjoining house.

The number of Members of Parliament who have been beaten and wounded, is about fifty.

The outrage of which Signor Forni, a candidate for Parliament, was a victim, on March 12, 1924, is described by the Attorney-General¹ of Milan in the request which he presented to Parliament in December, 1924, for leave to prosecute the Deputy Giunta, the latter, in his function as General Secretary to the Fascist Party, having given orders for the operations:

'On the afternoon of March 12, 1924, during the electioneering campaign, a group of about twenty persons armed with clubs surrounded Captain Cesare Forni and Signor Guido Giroldi, an accountant, at the exit of the Central Station at Milan on the arrival side. They had just arrived from Vigevano with Signor Raimondo Sala, ex-Mayor of Alessandria. Giroldi was wounded in the head, his left arm fractured. Captain Forni received many blows, one on the left side of the head with injury to the mastoidal gland and another on the upper lip. This assault, which was clearly premeditated, and which was beyond doubt essentially political in character, might have had the gravest consequences, especially for Captain Forni, against whom it was particularly aimed, as one of the principal representatives of the dissident Fascists of Lomellina, had not the Captain's exceptional physical strength enabled him to put up a vigorous defence against his assailants.'²

¹ By Italian law a deputy cannot be brought to trial before the ordinary courts, on a criminal charge, without the preliminary consent of the Chamber. When the Attorney-General of a Province presents such a demand, a parliamentary commission is appointed to examine the charge and propose the refusal or acceptance of the demand.

² See the volume *La Ricostruzione Fascista*, Milano, Corbaccio, 1924, p. 157.

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Another candidate, Antonio Piccinini, had not the same strength to resist; he was weakly and in poor health. The following account of the crime of which he was the victim is taken from the pronouncement of the Accusing Section committing the defendants to the Assizes:

'On February 28, 1924, about 8.30 p.m. while Piccinini was at home showing a picture book to his two little daughters, one nine, and the other two years old and explaining it to them, there was a knock at the door. A young man of about 19 came in; he was of decent appearance, but had his hat pulled over his eyes. He asked Piccinini on behalf of Signor Carboni to come out with him. Piccinini said that he had nothing to do with Carboni. The young man insisted with some heat, and finally ordered Piccinini to come. Piccinini's wife and little daughters grew alarmed and burst into tears. "May I at least know where you are taking me?" asked Piccinini, when he had put his coat on. "Come along, come along, no scenes," replied the unknown man, seizing his arms and dragging him out. In the broad avenue leading towards Reggio Ciano station there were some revolver shots, a last cry for pity, and then silence. The corpse was not discovered till 4 a.m. next morning. The post-mortem showed that three of the four shots fired had struck the victim.'

Giacomo Matteotti in his book, *A Year of Fascist Domination*, occupies forty-two octavo pages in setting out in summary form the list of assaults committed from November, 1922, to October, 1923: there are over 2,000 cases of murders, woundings more or less severe, beatings, forcible administration of castor oil, decrees of exile, illegal seizure and burning of newspapers, wrecking of private houses and offices, etc.¹

¹ During the last months of 1922, and the first half of 1923, one of the basest forms of violence was that of forcing the anti-Fascists to swallow castor oil. So shameful was this practice that even the Fascist leaders felt it to be their duty to put a stop to it. Having received orders to wake up, the judges opened their eyes, passed judgment on some of the culprits, and so this disgrace came to an end in Italy. But it still goes on in the Dodecanese Islands, if we are to believe a report sent from Athens to the *Manchester Guardian* of November 16, 1926. Luigi Villari (*The*

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The acts of violence during the election campaign of 1924 alone fill a book of 213 pages.¹

The murder of the Deputy Giacomo Matteotti belongs to the type of operations designed to terrorize opponents and stifle every discordant voice in the Chamber.

§ 3: 'Fascistopolis'

After the murder of Matteotti (June, 1924), as operations against individuals proved insufficient to silence the opponents, the Fascists resumed large scale operations.

It is December, 1924. The scene is Florence, 'Fascistopolis' it is called in Italy, as being a favourite arena of Black-Shirt exploits.

On December 30, 1924, a notice was issued in Florence summoning a general 'mobilization' of Fascists for the following day. During the night the police made hundreds of searches and arrests among anti-Fascists. From the early hours of December 31, there was a continual coming and going of motor-cars and lorries carrying Fascists, who cheered the 'Duce' and shouted threats against the opponents. The commandants of the Militia and the Party authorities paid a visit to a neighbouring village, where they supervised the mobilization and distribution of arms. From all over Tuscany, and from provinces even farther afield, trains poured into Florence filled with 'squadristi'; the Militia was in military formation, and the squads were armed with sporting rifles, cudgels and pitchforks. At the Prefecture, the Prefect, the Chief of Police, some Fascist Members of Parliament and the most prominent members of the Party made arrangements for the afternoon's demonstration. Large forces were distributed

Fascist Experiment, p. 39) finds this form of violence quite natural as 'a characteristic instrument of punishment: a novelty indeed in partisan warfare.' This gives the measure of the intellectual and moral abyss into which so many other Fascists of the upper classes in Italy have fallen.

¹ *La Libertà di voto sotto il dominio fascista; come il Fascismo conquistò la maggioranza nelle elezioni del 6 Aprile 1924* ('The free vote under Fascist rule; how Fascism captured the majority in the elections of April 6, 1924'), Rome, Tipografia Italiana, Viale el Re, no. 22, 1924.

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in all quarters of the town and municipal lorries were loaded with arms and ammunition.

At 2 p.m. there was a meeting in the Piazza Santa Maria Novella attended by the Mayor of the city. The crowd of 'Black-Shirts' carried placards with inscriptions such as 'Enough of Opposition!' and 'Duce! Give us a free hand!' or, slipped between the teeth of the pitch-forks, 'This is for our opponents!' When the speeches were over a procession formed and marched through the city, headed by the Mayor and the Commandant-General of the Militia in Tuscany.

Under the orders of a consul of the Militia, a column separated from the procession and marched to the offices of the *Nuovo Giornale* in the Via Faenza. The building was guarded by platoons of soldiers and Carabinieri, who barred all access. These regular troops would certainly have sufficed to deal with a few dozen Fascists, but they had orders to offer no resistance. The Fascists passed through the cordon and broke into the building. The employees sought safety in flight. Furniture and bundles of newspapers were thrown out of the windows and burnt in the street. Other furniture was even burnt inside the building. The composing room was invaded, the linotype machines wrecked, the type boxes emptied, the tables smashed; great rolls of paper were thrown into the yard, drenched with petroleum and set on fire. The firemen were prevented by the Fascists from entering the Via Faenza. Everything was destroyed. The damage amounted to nearly two million lire (then equal to £16,000).

Meanwhile, other columns of Fascists sacked the 'Circolo di Coltura' in the Borgo Santi Apostoli, throwing out books, tables, and chairs, even shutters and doors into the Piazza Santa Trinita and piling them into a great bonfire. The ex-service men's club in the Via San Gallo met with a similar fate, as did also the two Masonic Lodges in the Via della Pergola and the Via Ghibellina and the offices of the ex-service men's paper *Fanteria*, the Free-thinkers' Association, the offices of Signor Corazzini, a lawyer and one of the leaders of the Liberal Party in Florence, the offices of the Socialist Member of Parliament, Targetti and Frontini, of Signor Consolo, a lawyer and the Florence correspondent

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of the *Avanti*, and of two other lawyers, Signor Tempestini, a Republican, and Signor Tacchi. Eight Fascists, brandishing revolvers, entered the office of Signor Saccenti, a publicist, and compelled him to hand over the papers of the Reformist-Socialist Party. Numbers of people were indiscriminately beaten in the streets. For many hours Florence looked like a city in the hands of enemy troops. Traffic was suspended and shutters closed. Apart from the Fascist battalions nothing passed along the streets except fire-engines and ambulance cars. From the sky above an aeroplane dropped thousands of little multi-coloured leaflets announcing that the last hour had come for the opponents of Fascism, and that soon there would be none in Italy but Fascists.

During the next two days the 'offensive' was extended to the whole of Tuscany; Arezzo, Leghorn, Pisa and Lucca all became the scenes of similar outrages. Those committed at Pisa were so savage that Cardinal Maffi, the Archbishop, sent a telegram of protest to Mussolini, declaring himself filled with 'consternation as a Christian and humiliation as an Italian.'¹ From January 3 onwards, the wave of violence spread to Emilia and Lombardy.²

It is the autumn, 1925; we are still in Florence.³

¹ The whole text of the telegram is to be found in the booklet, *La Ricostruzione Fascista*, Milan, edizione Corbaccio, 1925, p. 219 ff.

² My information about the facts of Florence I owe to a group of friends in Florence, who collected at my request the facts and verified them with the greatest care. Some accounts of the outrages at Arezzo, Leghorn, Pisa, etc., were published by the newspapers in a very summary form, the only way in which the political authorities allowed them to be mentioned.

³ I have compiled the record of these facts from the following sources: (a) the official Police Report in the Italian papers of October 6, 1925; (b) the issues of *La Nazione*, a pro-Fascist paper from September 27 to October 7; (c) the issues of September 25 and October 3 and 10 of the official Fascist paper in Florence, the *Battaglie Fasciste*; (d) the reports of the public trials published in *La Nazione* and *La Stampa* on November 22-5 and December 12, 1925; (e) an early account from a Freemason source published in *The Times*, the *Manchester Guardian*, and the *Daily News* of October 8, 1925; (f) a clandestine pamphlet, published in Switzerland, *I fatti di Firenze* ('What happened in Florence') of anti-Fascist origin; (g) information collected by my friends in Florence with great

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On the night of Friday, September 25, the Fascists of Florence inaugurated a 'man-hunt' against the Freemasons.¹ Bludgeonings developed on a large scale for three days up till September 28, and went on sporadically during the next day.² The squads of bludgeoners were captained by the editor of the local Fascist paper, *Battaglie Fasciste*, and by the three members of the local Fascist Directorate.

In the afternoon of October 3, after four days of almost complete truce, a squad of Fascists under the leadership of Luporini, one of the three directors of the local Fascio, went to the house of the Freemason Bandinelli, who the previous day had been beaten by the Fascists. What happened at this point is not clear. The *Nazione* of October 6, says prudently that 'certain circumstances are still doubtful; reports on this point are perhaps not very precise.' But if the usual Fascist methods of persuasion are borne in mind, it may easily be imagined that the discussion soon degen-

care on the lines of several questionnaires which I sent them; (h) the pronouncement of the Accusing Section (November 30, 1926) against Castellani and 27 other Fascists charged with the murder of Pilati and Consolo; (i) the account written by the widow of Pilati and published in the anti-Fascist Italian paper *La Libertà*, Paris, July 24, 1927, after she had succeeded in leaving Italy for the Argentine. I, published myself a first account of the facts in the *Review of Reviews* of November, 1925, and a fuller statement in the *Corriere degli Italiani* published in Paris, April 11, 1926.

¹ Italian Freemasonry was favourable to Fascism up till the beginning of 1923. Between 1919 and 1922, many Fascist sections were founded on the initiative of Masonic Lodges. A group of high dignitaries of the order contributed three and a half million lire (£35,000) towards the expenses of the 'March on Rome' (Chiesa, *La mano nel sacco*, Rome, Libreria Politica Moderna, 1925, p. 6). The Grand Master of the Italian Masonic Order, Signor Domizio Torrigiani, published in the papers of November 2, 1922, a declaration of confidence in the new-born Fascist Government. But Mussolini, drawing up the balance, found it more profitable to ally with the Vatican and the Jesuits. From that moment the Masons were treated as foes, and, in return, Jesuits carry on all over the world an unscrupulous propaganda in favour of Fascism.

² See the Florence newspapers *Battaglie Fasciste*, September 25 and October 3; *Nazione*, September 27, 28 and 29; and *Nuovo Giornale*, September 30.

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erated into blows. Another Freemason, named Becciolini, who was present, drew his revolver and fired on the Fascists, killing Luporini and wounding another. He was at once thrashed, flung into a motor-car, taken to the premises of the Fascist Provincial Federation, brought back again half dead to the scene of the murder and there riddled with bullets. Bandinelli's house was sacked.¹

Two hours after this immediate 'vendetta,' reprisals on a large scale were set on foot against people entirely unconnected with the original incident. The Fascists cleared the streets in the centre of the town, blindly bludgeoning everybody. The cafés were forcibly closed, the theatres invaded and the performances stopped. Soon after 10 p.m. the work of destruction began. The offices of thirteen lawyers and one accountant, a tailoring business and seven shops were wrecked - nearly all in the centre of the town, not far from the Prefecture, the police headquarters, and the barracks of the Carabineers. The furniture was thrown into the streets and set on fire. Watchers on the hills round Florence saw the columns of smoke and flame rising from the city. Many of the rioters indulged in indiscriminate looting. The *Nazione* of October 6, writes:

'These shady individuals who are found on the outskirts of every great Party abandoned themselves to excesses which the Fascist Authorities are always the first to deplore.'

An hour later operations were extended to private dwelling-houses. In the Via Giusti, a squad of Fascists set up a fusillade

¹ The accounts which the semi-official Italian agencies sent abroad said nothing about what had happened at the end of September, or of what Luporini was doing in the place where he was killed. His death was represented as the result of an 'ambush' laid by Communists. The Communists had nothing to do with it, but the false light thus thrown on the affair served to justify the subsequent 'reprisals.' The worst aspect of Fascist mentality is that this sort of falsification is committed with a certain degree of good faith; for, according to Fascist ideas, non-Fascists have no rights. They have to obey and hold their peace. Fascists are entitled to thrash, wound, insult, invade private domiciles and give illegal orders. Those who resist are guilty of 'provocation,' and expose themselves to 'legitimate reprisals.'

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on the house of the authoress, Signora Amelia Rosselli, which had already been sacked from top to bottom on July 15. Other squads tried to break into the houses of the ex-Member of Parliament, Frontini, of Signor Mariotti, a Socialist, who had been assaulted and beaten more than once, and of Dr. Gaetano Pieraccini, a lecturer at the University. The house of the sitting Member, Signor Baldesi, was sacked; there were no victims, the occupant being away. Another Socialist named Ferro was not so fortunate. He fled over the roof clad only in his night attire, while the Fascists destroyed everything he possessed.

The Accusing Section in its pronouncement of November 30, 1926, thus reconstructs the operations of one of the bands in that night of terror:

'A group of about fifteen Fascists took possession of two taxis and forced the two chauffeurs to drive them to different parts of the town. After smashing the shutters of the shop of Raffaele Busoni, they invaded it, damaged and threw out the goods, and set fire to it. The damage was estimated at about 170,000 lire. At about ten o'clock, having broken in the door of the office of the lawyer Signor Corazzini, they smashed the furniture, seized books and legal files and burnt them in the street, causing damage of over 3,000 lire. Thence they drove to Via Boccaccio. The two taxis stopped at the corner of the street. One of the gang got out, revolver in hand, calling the Fascists of the quarter gathered there: "Go and kill all the Communists you find." A group went to the house of the tramway-man Ademaro Cozzi. Two men went up to his flat, summoned Cozzi to come down into the street. Cozzi refused, having already suffered violence on another occasion. The Fascist with whom he spoke fired point blank at his chest. The shot was stopped by a pocket-book. But for this lucky chance, the shot would have caused serious injury, or even death. From Cozzi's house the same band drove to the tailor's shop of Cardoso. They only partially wrecked it, as the carabinieri arrived. But they returned later, and finished the destruction, causing damages of about 180,000 lire. They next rushed the offices of the lawyer, Signor Citi, on the floor above the aforesaid tailor's

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shop, and destroyed furniture and legal papers to a value of about 15,000 lire. About half an hour after midnight they went to the home of the lawyer Signor Consolo.¹ He had had a foretaste of violence two hours previously; three unknown men had tried to induce him by pretexts, to go out of doors; as he refused they fired revolvers outside his windows. The police, summoned by telephone, came and gave him the news of what had happened in the city and then left him, saying they would come back and protect him, as soon as he rang them up. At that late hour the whole family was fast asleep. When the alarm was given by the violent ringing of the door bell, and by the revolver shots fired against the shutters, Consolo tried in vain to ring up the police.² The Fascists broke into the house - Signora Consolo with her two children and her niece tried to reach the ground floor but were stopped on the stairs by a group of assailants. The unfortunate lady heard one of them call out: "Look everywhere, and if you don't find him, kill everybody." She threw herself on her knees to implore pity for her husband, appealing particularly to a big man who appeared to be the gang leader. He seemed at first to be moved. Then he said: "They kill so many of ours!" Signora Consolo was led to the terrace and closely watched whilst three or four men went upstairs, and hunted for Consolo through several rooms. In vain Consolo's niece tried to make them believe that he was away from home. They found him in his night-shirt under the servant's bed. They fired revolver shots at him and made off. Consolo died without being able to say a word. From the house of Consolo, the band went to that of Signor Targetti, ex-deputy. They broke in the door and hunted for him everywhere, threatening death. Not finding him, they threw his furniture into the street, causing a loss

¹ Consolo had been arrested in the preceding May on a charge of having helped to distribute the clandestine anti-Fascist paper, *Non Mollare* ('Never Yield') and acquitted after 40 days' imprisonment. But if judges acquit, Fascists kill.

² Consolo succeeded in telephoning to the nearest police station for protection; but the Fascists beat in his door. Leaving the telephone receiver on the table he hid in his children's room, between their two little beds. The telephone receiver transmitted automatically to the police station every noise that was made and every word that was said.

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of about 150,000 lire. Thence they went to Piazza Vittorio Emmanuale where, at about 2 a.m., they dismissed the taxis.'

Another squad silently surrounded the house of Signor Pilati, a former Socialist Member of Parliament. Pilati had lost his right arm in the war, and had received the medal for military valour. Though living in humble circumstances he was widely respected for his kindly character, his intelligence and his hard-working life. He and his family, knowing nothing of what was happening in Florence that night, were asleep, the windows being open on account of the heat. Silently placing a ladder against the sill, two Fascists climbed into the bedroom through the window, and ordered the light to be turned on.

'About 11.30 at night' - writes Pilati's widow - 'a great noise startled us out of sleep. Instinctively I turned on the light. Before me was a short, stout man with an ugly face and his cap over his eyes, pointing two revolvers at us. Another man approaching the bed, said to my husband in a threatening voice: "Get on your clothes and come to the Fascio with us." My husband answered: "Directly, directly," and began to get up raising his arm to take his trousers from the clothes-peg. The second man, who was tall, dark, with a swarthy face, repeated in an even more menacing tone: "Hurry up. Are you really Pilati?" "Yes," answered my husband. The words were hardly out of his mouth, when the man began to shoot at him. He was an easy target at point blank range. My husband, either because he feared that I should be hit too, or because he feared that my son might come in and be hit, after having received the first shot in his left shoulder quickly got out of bed and stood up against the door of the room where my son slept, trying by rapid movements of his sound arm, his wounded arm, and his whole body, to escape being hit again. I clearly saw my husband's movements and those of the man who fired, whilst the other murderer was hidden by his companion. Then a third man appeared, also holding a revolver. There was another shot, then the first two turned towards the third, saying: "Let us clear out." They were not yet out of the room when my husband almost without help got on to the bed: "See! What a lot of wounds," he

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said, and asked for a bandage. I ran to the chest of drawers. The man who had fired, fearing perhaps that I was looking for a revolver, glared at me savagely, and then disappeared. The loss of blood was great – yet he had the pluck to tell us, who were quite bewildered, what we ought to do. My son ran to the ground-floor, and telephoned to the ambulance corps, then he came up again to examine the wounds. The wound that was mortal was not visible. We saw a wound on the left shoulder, another in the lower lip, a third on the left thigh, and another on the left leg. The ambulance men arrived. He was taken to hospital, and placed in the operating room. When questioned, my husband only answered with the words: "The Austrians disabled me, and the Italians have killed me." The shot which had hit him in the abdomen, had perforated the intestine five times. During these three days that we passed in the hospital, we were under the nightmare of further reprisals. We feared that although wounded, my husband would still be ill-treated. After three days he died.

The order for 'reprisals' was telephoned to the Fascists in the suburbs and neighbouring communes.¹ In the suburb of Ponte a Mensola about 11 p.m., the Fascists collected before the house of a retired infantry captain, Fattirolli, and began shooting through windows. Fattirolli let himself down by a sheet into the fields and fled to the nearest police station, asking to be arrested and thus kept in safety.

As the Fascist flag covered all deeds done in its name, a group of 'heroes' attacked the Villa Baldi in the Via Bolognese in Trespiano, another suburb of Florence. The villa was the home of the Pizzi family – wealthy people who took little interest in politics and were even favourably inclined towards Fascism. A large number of valuable objects were stolen.

At Legnaia, another suburb, the Fascists summoned Dr.

¹ In the trial of the murderers of Pilati and Consolo at the Chieti Assizes, an officer of the Militia deposed that on the evening of October 3 'numerous groups of Fascists converged upon Florence from the country' (*Corriere della Sera*, May 7, 1927). Plainly this rapid concentration on the city must have been in response to a telephone summons from the Florence Fascio.

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Caparotta, a Communist, to his window. When he appeared they ordered him to come down, saying they had need of him. On his refusal, they fired on him, broke open the door, invaded the house and sacked his pharmacy. But Dr. Caparotta had escaped.

At Badia a Ripoli the Catholic Club was destroyed, and the house of Ildebrando Ottavelli sacked.

At Tavarnelle, the house of a lawyer named Chiti was broken into and looted. He escaped on foot to Florence.

At San Baronto, the villa of Torrigiani, the Grand Master of the Freemasons, was sacked and burnt.

At Arezzo, the offices of two lawyers, Gatteschi and Morvidi, were wrecked and the former was only saved from death by the intervention of an officer of the Carabineers. At Anghiari, the village doctor was called out on the pretence that one of his patients was dangerously ill, and almost beaten to death. At Prato, the studio of the sculptor, Amedeo Strobini, the offices of the solicitor Prignani, the printing works of Martino Martini, were wrecked. At Montemurlo the rural Co-operative was also wrecked.

In Florence the disorder reigned unchecked throughout the morning of Sunday, October 4, gradually calming down during the afternoon. Bands of Fascists and criminals – the 'shady individuals' of the *Nazione*, – coming in from the country or belonging to the dregs of the city, gave themselves up freely to looting. One of these bands started early in the morning from Pontassieve, and arrived at about 8 o'clock in Florence. There it was joined by a number of Florentine 'heroes.' Their first exploit was to sack the 'Underwood' typewriter shop belonging to the brothers Breschi, Piazza Vittoria Emanuele, and the shop of the brothers Fini in the Via Cerretani. About half-past ten, in the Piazza del Duomo, they stormed a motor-bus, turned out the passengers and forced the conductor to drive them to Via Mattonaia. Here they sacked the house of the accountant Carrer.¹

¹ One of these 'heroes' had spent five months in jail for theft and three months for illegally carrying arms: he had been charged with murder but acquitted on the ground that he acted in self-defence. Another had been prosecuted for theft but amnestied; another for fraudulent bankruptcy

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Other bands sacked the shop of a tailor, Rossi, in Via Tornabuoni, and made a new attack on Dr. Pieraccini's house, but again failed to break down the door.

A lady in Florence wrote in a letter dated October 4, 1925, now before me:

'I went out to see the damage that had been done. You cannot imagine the scene. Window frames torn out, plate glass smashed, merchandise of all sorts ruined in half a score of shops. Baldesi's home was completely looted: happily the women had been warned and got away in time. One flat in Via della Mattonaia and another in Via dell' Ariento have been treated in the same way: the furniture thrown out of the windows - the crockery, even a piano and a bicycle - everything into the street and set on fire.'

In the evening these bands were still marching round the outskirts of the town, firing their revolvers into the air, using their cudgels liberally, and ordering people indoors.¹

The official report of October 6, 1925, the only one which the Italian papers were allowed to publish, stated the number of dead to be four: the Fascist Luporini, and the anti-Fascist Becciolini, Pilati and Consolo. But the report was reticent. Signora Pilati, writes in her account:

'Two family friends whose names I omit, went to the hospital to take farewell of my husband's body. They were accompanied by armed Fascists to a broken-down door that would not open. After a good quarter of an hour they managed to get it open. A revolting sight met their eyes. A dirtier room could not have been found. It was more like a pig-stye than a mortuary chamber. On a table lay my husband covered by a cloth. In the same room on planks lay four other corpses still dressed, with rough boots still covered with dust. These four unfortunates had no doubt been killed on

and for rape, being acquitted on the latter charge because the complaint was not made in time. Another had been sentenced for swindling and assault, for robbery and violence: *La Stampa*, November 25, 1925.

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

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the same evening, returning from their day's work. Nothing was ever known about them. The Fascists in these days killed seven innocent men, and not three.'

§ 4: *When there are no Reprisals*

After Zaniboni's attempted assassination of Mussolini on November 4, 1925 – or rather, after the Police had thought fit to disclose *urbi et orbi* that Zaniboni had schemed to make an attempt on Mussolini's life – the Fascist Government stated in the Italian and foreign Press that Mussolini had ordered the Prefects of the provinces to prevent reprisals. And Signor Farinacci, the General Secretary of the Fascist Party, had the courage to congratulate himself, in an official speech, on the fact that following Mussolini's order no incident had occurred after the news of the attempt; a proof of the heroic discipline in the ranks of Fascism.

As a matter of fact, at Brescia several lawyers' offices and the offices and printing works of two newspapers were sacked and burned, and a number of persons bludgeoned.

At Parma, Signor Micheli, a Christian-Democrat ex-Minister, was nearly beaten to death. Signor Venturini, a lawyer, and several other persons were bludgeoned. The offices of Signor Albertelli, an ex-Member of Parliament, of Signor Candian, a lawyer, of two other lawyers, of a notary, and of an engineer, were sacked; a grocer's shop shared a similar fate; and the clinic of Dr. Braga was destroyed.

In Padua, Signor Nogari, a lawyer, was beaten and seriously injured.

In Este, several lawyers' offices and a dozen shops were sacked, as were the offices of Signor Garbagni, a lawyer in Milan.

In Forlì the Fascists profited by the excitement to make a demonstration against the Prefect, whom they regarded as insufficiently energetic against Freemasonry, and a bomb was thrown at his house.

In Trieste the Fascists burned the printing works of the Slovene paper *Edinost*, and sacked the houses of two lawyers, Ara and Samaja, and of Colonel Finzi.

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In Reggio Emilia the Fascists attacked the surgeon, Signor Alberto Furno, and beat him, as he was motoring home from his round. He succeeded in reaching home, and, fearing a renewed and more violent assault, hid in the cellars of a neighbouring grocery, belonging to a man called Ancesti. The Fascists found him out, beat him until the blood flowed, and locked him in the cellar: they then set fire to the house of the grocery. One of them, less ferocious than the rest, liberated the unfortunate doctor, and took him to the railway station to escape. The firemen who came to put out the fire were attacked and driven away. From Thursday to Sunday there was a real pogrom in the town. The house of Commander Montanari, Secretary of the Savings Bank, was besieged, but thanks to a friend he escaped. Signor Magnavacchi, an engineer, had his arm broken. An employee of the Volta Moncasale Co-operative store was badly wounded by a revolver, and a large number of people were bludgeoned and more or less seriously injured. The police declared themselves unable to restore order, and urged all anti-Fascists to get out of harm's way, if they did not want to be killed.

In Mantua, the editor of the Christian-Democratic paper, and Signor Frignani, a teacher, barely escaped with their lives. A crowd peaceably assembled in the weekly market in Via Garibaldi was indiscriminately bludgeoned. Fifty-seven persons were arrested and kept in prison for three days; on their release they found awaiting them a double file of 'Black-Shirts,' who beat them brutally one after the other; thirty of them were taken to hospital with serious injuries.

At Savona three lawyers had their offices stripped.

In Venice, the ex-Member of Parliament, Piva, was attacked.¹

¹ None of these facts were ever reported in the Italian papers. I collected the information from letters sent by persons residing in the various towns mentioned, and it is certainly far from being exhaustive. From central and southern Italy I had no reports. The French journalist who discovered Italy, in the autumn of 1925, with the aid of glasses provided by the Fascist Government, commented as follows on the Zaniboni affair in *Le Journal* of November 24, 1925: 'After the discovery of the attempt, Signor Mussolini seems in reality to have employed all his skill on the one hand to exploit general indignation to get Parliament to pass such

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Even after Miss Gibson's attempt on Mussolini's life (April 7, 1926), the Fascist Government broadcasted to the world that there had been no disturbances or reprisals. The truth is that, in Rome, the offices and the printing press of the opposition paper *Il Mondo*, were looted from top to bottom: furniture, books, etc., were thrown into the street and set on fire.¹ Other newspaper offices shared a similar fate: those of the *Risorgimento*, *Voce Repubblicana*, *Giustizia* (a weekly), the Roman agencies of the *Avanti* and *Unità*, and the headquarters of the Republican Party. The house of the Russian ambassador was enthusiastically stoned. The house of Signora Lerda, correspondent of German Socialist papers, was invaded and looted: that of Signor Giannini, editor of the satirical laws as would enable him to stifle his opponents once and for all, and on the other to prevent this crime from leading to others for which the responsibility might be attributed to him. His word of command "No reprisals" was placarded in the streets of Rome the same evening: he repeated it with insistence to the crowds that thronged to cheer him in front of the Chigi Palace. At the same time the offices of the Opposition papers and houses of well-known opponents of the government were guarded by troops. Terrible threats were made by some of the Fascist leaders and papers of the extreme kind but they had to obey orders. Propaganda can indeed work miracles! In his book, *The Awakening of Italy* (spring of 1924), Signor Villari mentioned nothing but the looting of Signor Nitti's house (p. 267, Note 2). In his recent book, *Fascist Experiment*, he condescends to record, in addition to 'the raid on Nitti's house,' the 'attack on Amendola, Forni, and Misuri' (pp. 62-65), the 'murder of Matteotti,' the 'incidents' of Florence (October 3-4, 1925), and that is all. 'The few serious crimes and the many minor offences committed by individual Fascists undoubtedly merit the severest reprobation. But . . . against the murder of Matteotti can be set a whole series of atrocities, from the horrible murders in Turin, Bologna, Modena and Ferrara in 1920, down to that of Nicola Bonservizi, in Paris, in 1924, and the more than sixty murders of Fascists committed after the Matteotti affair' (p. viii). He evidently thinks that the crimes of his friends are cancelled by those of his enemies. Moreover, he lays in the one scale a mass of crimes perpetrated by his enemies; and on the other side one single crime committed by his friends, thus putting himself in a position to protest against those foreigners who condemn the Fascist régime 'on the basis of incidents which, in some cases, are grossly exaggerated, in others non-existent, and in others again merely isolated episodes' (p. vii).

¹ See plate facing the present page.



FASCISTS, AFTER LOOTING THE PREMISES OF THE 'MONDO,' MAKING A DEMONSTRATION IN HONOUR OF MUSSOLINI, IN FRONT OF HIS OFFICIAL RESIDENCE, APRIL 8, 1926 (see page 187)

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paper *Il becco giallo* ('The yellow beak'), was invaded but not looted, though 25,000 lire disappeared from a drawer. Later in the afternoon, operations spread from the centre of Rome to the outskirts. It is impossible to know the number of people who were beaten, because the victims remain silent for fear of being sought out and beaten again. It must not be forgotten that these are very convenient opportunities for the settling of private feuds under cover of the Fascio.

At Genoa, the offices of the paper *Il Lavoro* were looted and the sub-editor, Federico Striglia, was seriously wounded; the premises of the barristers Uttini, Lotti and Vassia, of the deputy Francesco Rossi, and of the stockbroker Gino Levi were wrecked.

At Milan, a group of Fascists invaded the headquarters of the *Avanti*, and dragged the former deputy Schiavello down the stairs, beating him on the head. Other squads wrecked the headquarters of the *Unità*, and beat the manager and his wife. The same squad invaded the offices of the General Confederation of Labour, the Co-operative stores in Via Solar, a restaurant in Via Pietro Colletta, the premises of Giovanni Bensi, former Secretary of the Milanese Chamber of Workers. Bensi and Azimonti, an official of the Confederation, were dragged from the former's house into the street and savagely bludgeoned. Another squad attempted to invade the house of the Socialist deputy, Signor Turati.

In Venetia, at Vicenza, Arterga and Pordenone, there was the same looting and bludgeoning.¹

After Luccetti's attempt on the life of Mussolini (September 11, 1926), the same manœuvre was repeated. The Duce ordered that there were to be no reprisals, and Fascist papers at home and pro-Fascist papers abroad gave out that no reprisals had taken place. As a matter of fact, at Milan, in the afternoon of September 11, a squad of Fascists invaded and sacked the offices of the *Avanti*. Twenty-five police, who were on duty there, allowed them to break

¹ No paper was allowed to give an account of these incidents. It is therefore only possible to know what happened from private sources. What took place in southern Italy and in many small towns and villages of northern and central Italy, remains unknown.

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in, disappearing when the work of destruction was well under way. During the night a squad arrived at the office of the lawyer and Reformist-Socialist deputy, Signor Treves, and threatening his portress with revolvers, forced her to open the door, whereupon they ransacked his papers, took away three great packets of them and smashed the furniture with axes. Signor Treves' office is fifty yards from the police headquarters. The procedure was the same at the premises of another lawyer, Signor Francesco Clerici. Other squads wrecked the printing press of the *Unità*, a Co-operative store at La Cagnola and the house of the novelist Mariani. The sub-editor of the *Unità*, Peluso, was savagely bludgeoned and had several ribs broken. It is impossible to give the total number of beatings distributed broadcast.

At Monza and in the Brianza (part of the province of Milan) Fascists sacked the premises of those Christian-Democratic clubs which had escaped their attentions on previous occasions. At Ravenna there was a veritable orgy of beatings. One of the bludgeoned men, the Republican Arnaldo Guerrini, a character of magnificent tenacity and courage, gets beaten, arrested, and has his house searched, on every possible occasion. The Chief of Police told him in April, 1926: 'You must make your choice: either leave the country or kill yourself.' One of the wounded, a woman, Lucia Morini by name, had a chair thrown at her face while she was trying to defend her husband.

At Bologna, during the night of September 11, a squad broke into the house of the workman Amedeo Faustini, and beat him so savagely before the eyes of his aged mother that he died the next day in a hospital.

Another anti-Fascist was murdered by the Fascists at San Giovanni Persiceto (province of Bologna).

At Modena the Fascists sacked fifteen lawyers' offices and private houses. Amongst the most savage havoc made on this occasion that of the chambers of the lawyer Pedrazzi must be mentioned, and of the Socialist ex-deputy Donati. Paolo Bentivoglio, a blind man, whose house was broken into, was forced to escape through a window in order to save himself, together with his eighty-year-old father.

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At Leghorn and at Trieste, Fascists attacked the French Consulate. At Rome, the American vice-consul was assaulted, and the Fascists wrecked the premises of the Maximalist Socialist and of the Reformist-Socialist Parties. At Santa Marinella (on the coast near Civitavecchia), they invaded the house of the dissident Fascist, the deputy Susi, and beat him in bed.

Other beatings took place at Piacenza, and at Asti. In a Slav village on the Carso (Loqua, near Corniale) the Fascists attacked and wrecked an inn, savagely beating a dozen Slavs.

The worst disorders occurred at Trieste. Here the Fascists had for some time been demanding that the old-established 'Philharmonic Society' should give up its handsome quarters to them. The members of the 'Philharmonic Society' are rich merchants and business men, almost all Fascists, who saw no reason to give up their quarters. They subsidize the Fascists to hold down the workers, not to turn them out of their own premises. The Fascists, however, excited by the success of their attack upon the French Consulate, thought that this was the moment to win their point with the 'Philharmonic.' Thus on the night of September 13, they attacked the building and took possession of it. The 'Philharmonic' being the property of the richest class in Trieste, the Carabineers intervened. Received with revolver shots, they replied with rifles. Before the Fascists could be dislodged, one was killed and another seriously wounded. Next day (September 14), at 10 a.m. a squad of some fifty Fascists retaliated by attacking the Carabineers' barracks in Via Sanità, throwing two bombs at the door and firing a hundred revolver shots at the windows. The rabble broke in the door and brutally murdered the Carabineer Mario Grassi, and wounded the Commissioner of Police, Falcone, and several other Carabineers. Reinforcements were called up, the building was surrounded, and after a fierce struggle the Fascists were all arrested. While this was going on, another squad made an attack on the police headquarters, but was repulsed. Other incidents occurred between Fascists and squads of Carabineers patrolling the city. On the evening of the 14th, the Prefect had to proclaim martial law. Assemblies of more than five persons were forbidden, and cafés, theatres and places of public entertain-

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ment were closed. On the 15th, newspapers were allowed to appear only on condition that they did not print a line on these events. The *Piccolo*, however, for September 15, informed its readers, on page 4, that by express command of the Prefect, it abstained from 'all allusion, direct or indirect, to the occurrences of which we are duly aware, and to their tragic and justly deplored consequences.'

The news of these incidents at Trieste provoked encounters between Fascists and Carabineers in various cities of Istria during the days that followed. At Capodistria, on the 15th, Fascist squads attacked the barracks of the Carabineers, and two Fascists and the captain of the Carabineers were wounded.

About what happened in other towns I have no information.

§ 5: *The Pogrom of November 1926*

After the attempt on Mussolini's life made by the dissident Fascist Anteo Zamboni at Bologna on October 31, 1926, the 'propaganda' announced to the world not only that Mussolini had remained 'calm and smiling,'¹ but that he had given orders to his friends that 'no one must lose his head.'² The 'fascitized' *Corriere della Sera* (Nov. 2, 1926) proclaimed:

'All last night there was intense activity at the Home Office. Signor Federzoni, Home Secretary, and the Chief of Police, remained at work until the early hours of the morning. Signor Federzoni was again at the office early this morning (Nov. 1), and remained in touch with all the Prefects of the Kingdom. These assured him that public order was in no way disturbed.'

The immediate results of the 'Duce's' command was that the high Fascist personages, who were in the car following that of the 'Duce,' themselves took part in the lynching of Zamboni. One of

¹ The fascistized *Giornale d'Italia*, November 2, 1926, made the blunder of revealing that Mussolini himself drew up the communiqué in which the 'smiling calm of the Duce' was broadcasted for the admiration of the world.

² Interview given by Signor Grandi, Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, to the *Giornale d'Italia*, November 1, 1926.

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them, Arconovaldo Bonaccorsi, cut the boy's throat with his dagger. Another high personage in the car, shot twice at the tortured body. The corpse was dragged about the streets, and left eleven days unburied; at last it was buried, as a sign of contempt, outside the ordinary cemetery. Mediæval barbarism comes to the top again in its most savage and repugnant forms.

The Treasurer-General of the Fascist Party, Signor Marinelli (who was charged as a promoter of the murder of Matteotti, and amnestied on July 31, 1925), in a speech delivered on November 1, 1926, at Milan, said to the assembled and enthusiastic Fascists:

"The first words of the "Duce" yesterday after the attempt made on his life were these, "It must be made known throughout Italy and the whole world that the assailant was lynched." These words have great significance. Signor Turati, Secretary of the Party, said that as a sequel to this first act of justice carried out at Bologna, all moral accomplices must be struck at inexorably."

At Bologna, 2,000 'moral accomplices' had already been imprisoned during the days which preceded the visit of the 'Duce.' (Who could have foreseen that the danger was going to arise in the very ranks of the Fascists themselves?) 'Thus the 'raw material' on which the Fascists could carry out the 'Duce's' orders was lacking in Bologna, where, in consequence, few acts of violence took place.

But in Milan the printing premises of the Communist paper, *L'Unità*, were looted and burned, as were the premises of the Socialist paper *Avanti*, the head-quarters of the General Confederation of Labour (or rather, of what remains of that once powerful body), the offices of the publishing company, *La Coltura*, the offices or private houses of the deputies Treves, Caldara, Gonzales, Dugoni, Chiesa, Bentini; of the lawyers Levi, Morandi, Momigliano, Bertolotti, Crestana; of Signori Nenni, Passigli, Schiavi, Montanari, Gaetani, Mariani, Cilla, Palmiotta, Gardenghi, Gilli, Brigatti, Salvalai, Fanoli, Buscaglia, Pini. The timber yard of Mazzocchi at Lambrate (a suburb of Milan) was burned and destroyed. A bomb was thrown at a Palace in Via Spiga, 25, and the entrance and the stairs were damaged.

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Three workmen, Suardi, Bersani, Barilati, were killed. The members of Parliament, Bentini and Reossi, and the following citizens, Salvalai, Mariani, Silvestri, Scalarini, Leonetti, Fanoli, Brigatti, Morinari, Cassoni, Scorza, Rosa, Tengoni, Cottrè, Bruschi, Alemanni, Postinger, Manini, Morilli, Sardi, were more or less savagely cudgelled. These are not all the names. No one can know the number of the persons who were wounded and beaten, but took good care to conceal their misfortune.

The house of the deputy Chiesa, after having been sacked, was appropriated by the Fascists, who established a Club in it.

At Bergamo, the secondary school-teacher Fachery and the lawyer Briolini were flogged. The Fascists looted the house of Count Secco Suardo and of Signor Gavazzeni, ex-Member of Parliament. The first was ferociously beaten and forced to sign a declaration that no violence had been done to him. Signor Gavazzeni was dragged out of his house, beaten and spat at along the streets, and taken outside the city to a place where a gallows had been erected. The Fascists put a noose round his neck, lifted him on to a stool and kept him there for some time, as if they were about to hang him. Before letting him go, they beat him nearly to death.

At Como, the Fascists got hold of many of the Opposition and painted their faces in three colours. Amongst the persons who suffered this vile treatment were the proprietor of a clock factory at Monte Olimpino, the proprietor of a cement factory at Pontechiano, and Commendatore Rosasco, one of the most important silk weavers of the district. The houses of Signor Noseda, a member of Parliament, of the lawyer Beltramini-Frontini, and of the priest Primo Noiana, were sacked. The last named was also severely bludgeoned. The three victims were kept in prison for three days.

At Sondrio, the deputy Merizzi's house was looted.

At Brescia, the printing establishment of the paper *Il Cittadino di Brescia*, and the head-quarters of the Christian-Democrat organizations were smashed and burnt: the damages amounted to £18,000. Signor Ducos, Member of Parliament, was flogged.

The Bishop of Vicenza, preaching in the Cathedral, dared to deplore, not only the attempt itself, but also the reprisals which

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had followed it. The Fascists laid siege to the episcopal palace for several hours, and had to be dispersed by a detachment of troops.

At Verona, the Christian-Democrat deputy, Signor De Gasperi, was seized in the train on a journey from Milan to Trent and led to the local Fascist head-quarters. Here the Fascists tried to extort from him a signed 'recantation' of his anti-Fascist past. De Gasperi did not yield. A fictitious 'recantation' was published in the daily press. De Gasperi's letter of protest was not allowed to appear.

At Padua, the Fascists sacked the Bishops' Printing Press, the Jewish Synagogue, and the house of the lawyer Toffanin, and occupied the aristocratic Pedrocchi Club, 'a den of anti-Fascist slander.' In the local Fascist paper, November 3, 1926, the following ukase from the Fascist Federation may be read:

'No Fascist is allowed to comment in public, or in any way, on the events of the past few days, under penalty of expulsion.'

At Treviso, the Fascists destroyed the premises of the chemist Fanoli, the offices of the lawyers Grollo and Visentini, the engineering works of the brothers Ronfini, and the clinic of Doctor Bergamo, Member of Parliament. Before setting fire to this latter building, the Fascists forcibly transferred the 40 patients to the town hospital: three of the sick men died on the way. The brothers Ronfini were dragged through the streets with ropes round their necks, spat upon, and whipped amidst disgusting shouts and insults; outside the city, they were placed beneath a gallows, and for the last time, flogged.

At Venice, the premises and offices of the paper *Il Gazzettino*, the chambers of the lawyer Cornoldi, the offices of the engineers Samasso, Fano, and Carli, and that of Commendatore Grubisich were wrecked. The sub-editor of the *Gazzettino*, Stringari, Commendatore Grubisich and the workman Mondaini, were flogged till the blood flowed. All the Christian-Democratic clubs of the city, about fifteen in all, save one, were wrecked.

At Trento, the Fascists wrecked the offices of the *Azione Cattolica* (head-quarters of the Christian-Democratic organizations), the offices and printing press of the paper *Nuovo Trentino*, and the

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head-quarters of the *Sindacato Agrario Industriale*, which is the centre of all the Christian-Democratic Co-operatives of the district. The safe of the *Sindacato* was emptied.

At Genoa, the printing presses of the paper *Il Lavoro* were completely wrecked. This is how the fascistized *Corriere della Sera*, November 3, 1926, describes the exploit:

'The assailants broke open the doors and entered the editorial offices and the printing rooms, where they destroyed everything. They then sprinkled paraffin and petrol over the furniture and the paper stores and set fire to it. By the time the firemen arrived the flames had already taken a good hold. The fire brigade was from the first hampered in its movements by the aggressors; but later under the protection of the troops they were able to get on with the work of extinguishing the flames. The twelve linotype machines were wrecked; moreover, the most important parts of the rotary machines were carried away. Besides the premises of the *Lavoro*, the house of Signor Beccaro, the landlord of the building, where the paper has its premises, was also destroyed.'

On November 3, the Fascists threw all the furniture of the house of Signor Francesco Rossi, an ex-deputy, into the street and set fire to it with petrol. They likewise wrecked and burnt the houses of Signor Canepa, Member of Parliament and ex-Minister, of Ansaldo, Uttini, Lotti, Raimondo, and Faralli. Numberless people were beaten in the streets.

At Forte di Marmi (prov. of Lucca), the country house of Count Sforza, the ex-Minister for Foreign Affairs, was wrecked. Valuables, books and papers were stolen. Three heaps of furniture were made on three different floors, oil was poured upon these and they were set on fire.

At Pesciano, near Perugia, Signor Oro Nobili, a member of Parliament, was kidnapped in a motor-car, and taken towards Todi. On the way two other cars came up, filled with Fascists, who rained blows upon him, and left him for dead. He was carried to the hospital at Todi in a serious condition.

At Rome, the Fascists wrecked the premises of the newspapers *Mondo*, *Risorgimento*, and *Voce Repubblicana*; those of the Reform-

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ist-Socialist Party, of the Intransigent Socialist Party, of the Republican Party, the head-quarters of the International Confederation of Transport, the Morara printing premises and the houses of the journalists Cianca, Giannini and Mrs. Olga Lerda-Olberg, of General Bencivenga, Member of Parliament, Signor Sardelli, Member of Parliament, Signor Ferrari, ex-Grand Master of the Freemasons, Signori Campanozzi and Bombacci, ex-Members of Parliament, Signor Zanerini, secretary of the Reformist Socialist Party, and several shops in the suburbs. While some Fascists were wreaking havoc in the house of Signor Cianca, others loaded furniture, clothes and linen on to a lorry, and departed for an unknown destination.

This is how M.s. Olga Lerda-Olberg describes the house in which she lived, after the punitive expedition:

'On the ground floor everything is destroyed; the telephone in fragments, the electric installation destroyed, the central heating radiators thrown out of the windows; not a window, not a door, not a shutter left intact. In the streets there are heaps of smashed furniture. Although a lorry has already gone laden with furniture, the courtyard is full of broken pieces. Of the three typewriters, only one broken piece has been recovered; probably the wind has carried away the rest, like the telephone, the cyclostyle, and other things. The house is now absolutely abandoned. The ground floor is without windows, shutters, or doors. Four Carabineers mount guard, and the public gazes curiously through the empty windows at the devastation and disorder within. A sight like this in one of the principal streets of the new Rome! The capital has a garrison of several tens of thousands of men. However, it was not possible to prevent an attack, of which warning had been received two hours previously, against a house in which there were only a man of seventy, three women, and a little girl.'

The editor of the *Voce Repubblicana*, Schiavetti, was seriously assaulted with cudgels. It is impossible to estimate the number of those flogged, especially among the workmen in the suburbs.

At Naples, the Fascists sacked the houses of the following: Senator Benedetto Croce, ex-Minister, the world-famous philo-

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sopher; the Members of Parliament Labriola, ex-Minister, Pre-sutti, a professor of the University, Bracco, the well-known dramatist, and Lucci; of the journalists Scaglione, Marvasi, Scar-foglio; and of the citizens Bordiga, Colozza, Pistolesi. Colozza was seriously wounded. Bracco's library, one of the finest theatrical collections in Italy, was entirely ruined.

'In my house on the outskirts of the city' - writes Signor Labriola - 'I and my son, a boy of fifteen, were alone. It was a Sunday night. At 2 a.m. we heard loud knocking at the door. Jumping out of bed without dressing, I went to open the door, but before I could reach it, it gave way under the blows rained upon it. Ten or a dozen armed Fascists put their revolvers to my head and ordered me not to move. Then they pushed me into a corner of the dining-room and set two of their number to stand guard over me. Meanwhile my son had got up and came and stood by my side. I said to the leader of the gang - "Do what you like with me, but let the boy go." He answered: "Not a bit of it. The boy must stay here." The Fascists then entered the bedroom and began to smash everything. In the room there was a large wardrobe with a big mirror, a wedding present from my mother. The Fascists banged at it with their sticks, but failed to break it. Withdrawing a few paces they then fired their revolvers at it and smashed it. Next they invaded my study, and threw all my books out of the window. Luckily there is a terrace below the window which belongs to another tenant, so that the Fascists were unable to set fire to the books after having thrown them out. But they took their revenge by heaping up in the garden all the clothes, linen, and other effects they could find, soaking them with petrol, and burning them. After half an hour of these operations, nothing remained of my home. Neither I nor my son had a rag to cover ourselves with. Before we could get away we had to borrow clothes from our neighbours. The Fascists took away nothing except an almost worthless revolver and two letters that Mussolini had written to me in 1922. From the deputy, Signor Lucci, one of the most distinguished lawyers in the city, they stole some 40,000 lire which had been deposited with him by his clients. In the interest of his

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clients, Lucci was obliged to lay information with the authorities, but two days later he was arrested. For seventeen days he was kept in prison, and then set free without explanation. No magistrate examined him while he was in prison; and when the barristers of Naples made inquiry of the Public Prosecutor, the latter declared that he knew nothing of the arrest, which had been made unknown to the judicial authorities. Yet, according to the Italian Code of Penal Procedure, the judicial authorities must be informed within twenty-four hours of every arrest that is made.¹

At Cagliari, the Fascists sacked the printing premises of the two papers *Corriere di Sardegna* and *Il Solco*, the offices of the lawyers Pais, Mulas, Mercu, and Angius, the club of the Christian-Democratic University students, the offices of the Christian-Democratic Boy Scouts, etc. The house of Signor Lussu, Member of Parliament, who was one of the most brilliant soldiers during the Great War, was attacked.

This is how the now pro-Fascist *Corriere della Sera* describes the affair:

'A small group of youths gathered in front of Lussu's house and began to make a hostile demonstration. They were held in check with much difficulty by a platoon of Carabineers who were guarding the entrance. Without anyone noticing him, the Fascist Porra climbed up on to a parapet and succeeded in reaching the balcony of Lussu's flat on the first floor. Signor Lussu, from behind the shutters, fired at Porra, wounding him seriously in the head. Porra with a cry fell from the balcony. While he was being carried to the hospital he died. The crowd, enraged by this insane (sic) act, tried more than once to break into Lussu's house, but did not succeed owing to the resistance of the police, who arrested Signor Lussu.'

¹ *Review of Reviews*, Sept.-Oct., 1927. The *Popolo d'Italia* of June 29, 1927, alludes to the looting of Signor Labriola's house in the following terms: 'It was merely owing to the unauthorized initiative of a group of Neapolitan black-shirts if on the morrow of the Bologna attempt some bits of furniture belonging to Signor Labriola's study ended up in the street.'

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Signor Lussu appointed as his counsel for the defence a barrister named Marcello. Two hours later Signor Marcello received from the Fascist deputy, Signor Cao, a letter, ordering him to decline the task. Upon his answering that he knew where his duty lay, he was arrested.

Bologna, Milan, Bergamo, Como, Sondrio, Brescia, Verona, Treviso, Venice, Genoa, Forte dei Marmi, Perugia, Rome, Naples, Cagliari, are only 15 out of the 9,200 cities and towns of Italy. Who will ever give a full account of the outrages committed in the whole country? ¹

In face of facts of this kind it may well be asked how there can exist in the world people so ill-informed or so fanatical as to affirm that in Italy 'in the present state of affairs life and property are safe and one can go about one's business or one's pleasure without let or hindrance' (*Morning Post*, April 26, 1926). When it is said that there is no disorder in Italy under the Fascist Government, the statement is a half truth which is worse than the blackest lie. To-day there are no longer disorders of the kind provoked by the 'Bolshevists' in 1919 and 1920. There is no longer the disorder of the civil war of 1921 and 1922. But there are disorders of a new kind: beatings, woundings, killings, perpetrated by the members of the Party in power on their opponents.

§ 6: 'Militia' and 'Squads'

But how are such outbreaks of violence possible? For the maintenance of public peace the Italian Government can command 15,000 police, 60,000 Carabineers, and 265,000 members of the 'Volunteer Militia for National Security.' ² What are all these armed forces doing?

Among them there is one body, the 'Militia,' whose main *raison d'être* is in reality the fomenting of disorder.

When the *coup d'état* of October, 1922, took place, there was in Italy a police force, the Royal Guard, numbering about 35,000

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

² Such is the figure given by Mussolini in his interview with the *Sunday Express*, January 24, 1927.

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men, which had vigorously resisted the 'Bolshevist' tide in 1919-20, and in 1921-22 had faithfully obeyed the order to back the Fascists in the civil war. It was a non-party force, which would have loyally served whatever government was in power. In January, 1923, it was disbanded and replaced by the 'Militia.' What Mussolini and his friends wanted was a force entirely devoted to their party. Moreover, their followers were claiming a share in the spoils, and posts in the 'Militia' were their first reward.

The members of this new force took an oath of personal loyalty to Mussolini. The officers were Fascists who had taken a leading part in punitive expeditions before the 'March on Rome.' None but Fascists are admitted to its ranks. 'Militia' officers are frequently members of the committees of the 'Fasci,' i.e. of the local branches of the Fascist Party. The 'Militia' describes itself as 'Super-Fascism.' Armed, equipped and maintained at the expense of the taxpayer, but placed at the discretion of the Prime Minister, it is the actual backbone of the Fascist Party.

'The Militia' - said Mussolini in a proclamation of September 12, 1925 - 'draws its officers and men exclusively from the Fascist ranks, and its chief task is to defend *at all costs*, both at home and abroad, the régime which came into being with the "March on Rome."'¹

¹The director of the British Institute of Florence, Mr. Goad, writes in this connection: 'It is curious to be told so often and so emphatically that the National Militia is a Party Force, when we are personally acquainted with members of that patriotic body who are not and who never have been Fascist' (*Journal of the British Institute of International Affairs*, March, 1927, p. 121). The probabilities are that the official proclamation of Mussolini on this point is more to be relied on than the 'personal' acquaintanceships of Mr. Goad. Signor Villari, *Fascist Experiment*, p. 165, writes: 'A man need not be registered a member of the Fascist Party to be admitted, but his political antecedents are inquired into, and all whose patriotism is regarded as doubtful are rejected.' As under Fascism, patriotism = Fascism, it follows that there is no discrepancy between the statement of Mussolini and those of his propagandists: only in the latter there is the desire to muddle the cards. The propagandist, while concealing that the Militia has a partisan character, finds it perfectly natural for it to receive orders from Mussolini. 'The government' - he says - 'is one and under one

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In giving his sanction to the creation of this 'Militia,' the King, 'prisoner of war,' made the first open breach in the Constitution;¹ he signed a measure which had not been passed by Parliament, transforming an armed political party into a legally recognized body maintained by the taxpayers of all parties.²

The Militia has two functions: the one, official and legal, is to aid the police and the Carabineers in the maintenance of public peace; the other, semi-official and illegal, is to stifle 'at all costs,' as Mussolini says, any opposition to the Dictatorship.

When the Militia is on regular service, or in attendance on official ceremonies, its members wear uniforms. But when they are out to burn, beat, and kill, uniforms are left at home. They are then no longer 'militi' (members of the 'Militia') but 'squadristi,' members of 'squads.'

As we have already seen, the semi-official and illegal activities fall into two main types: (a) attacks on single individuals; (b) large-scale operations.

When an attack on a single individual is planned, the assailants, as a rule, outnumber him ten to one; and as a further precaution,

head; even if the Militia was placed directly under the Minister of War, it could not be employed on a large scale without the Prime Minister's authority. At present the Prime Minister is also Minister of War.' The propagandist substitutes the Minister of War, who has nothing to do with internal affairs, and the Prime Minister, who may not be Home Secretary, for the Home Secretary, under whom the Militia ought to remain. He further hides the fact that the members of the Militia take an oath of allegiance not only to the King (since August, 1924), but also to Mussolini. Such an oath of personal allegiance not only to the King as representing the nation as a whole, but also to the chieftain of a faction, is without precedent either in Italy or elsewhere, unless we go back to the days of the last of the Merovingians and their Major-domos. The relative position of the King of Italy and Mussolini to-day bears many resemblances to that of Childeric III and Pepin the Short in A.D. 750.

¹ Art. 5 of the Constitution enacts: 'The King commands *all* land and naval forces.'

² The officers and a proportion of the men hold permanent paid positions. The rest are called up in case of emergency and are then paid by the day. The relative proportions of these two categories are wrapped up in mystery, as is also their cost to the budget. See Note C at the end of the present chapter.

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uniformed 'militi' are sent on in advance to search the house and person of the intended victim. Having thus ensured that he is unarmed, the uniformed men withdraw and the 'squad' appears to finish the job. Should weapons be found, the possessor is arrested and prosecuted for carrying arms without a licence. Occasionally, however, if the precaution has been omitted and the victim is armed and able to turn the tables on his aggressors, the uniformed 'militi' are called in and the man is shot dead, or tried for resisting the public authorities:

Cet animal est fort méchant
Quand on l'attaque il se défend!

When an enterprise on a large scale is to be carried out, the leaders mobilize Fascists from the neighbourhood – or even from distant towns. The bulk of the uniformed force waits close to the scene of operations ready for all contingencies, while the squads carry out their assault on the printing offices of the newspaper, or the Trades Union premises, or the persons marked out for attack. Should there be a serious attempt at resistance, the troops who are in waiting are summoned, and speedily settle matters.

These methods are not applied everywhere in the same proportions. In the centre of big cities violence is comparatively rare. In a big city news spreads more rapidly and public opinion might still be roused. The great anonymous masses are less easily controlled and might play an unexpected part. Rome, from this point of view, is a haven of comparative peace as the presence of the Embassies and of many foreign journalists compels the Fascists to observe a certain self-control. But even in cities, especially in the outlying suburbs, violence is often used. In Rome itself very serious outrages have taken place, such as the attacks on Signor Misuri and Signor Amendola, the wrecking of the houses of Signor Nitti and of Signor Modigliani, and the murder of Matteotti. In the small towns and villages, where people are known to one another, and where the Fascists can control the inhabitants individually, the life of anti-Fascists is made unendurable; threats, pressure, bludgeonings and woundings are of daily occurrence.

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The 'squads' have characteristic names: 'the Savages,' 'the Damned,' 'the Desperadoes' ('la Disperata'). They as a rule consist of a nucleus of 'militi' eked out by other Fascists not enrolled in the Militia.

When the Militia was created in January, 1923, the Government declared officially that the 'squads' were to be disbanded. But they continued to exist. In March, 1924, for instance, one 'squad' of 'Arditi' (members of shock-troops during the war) drove about Milan in a motor-lorry, armed and wearing Militia uniform. The Commander-General of the Police, De Bono, telegraphed to the Prefect of Milan:

'All persons appearing in Milan in uniform are to be arrested. If the notorious Volpi¹ makes any difficulties, arrest him and put a stop to this, once and for all.'

In the following June this 'squad' was still active. On June 13, 1924, De Bono again telegraphed to the Prefect of Milan:

'It must be definitely understood that the "Arditi" are once and for all to be dissolved - and dissolved in real earnest.'

Till then the orders had obviously neither been given nor taken in real earnest. The head-quarters of this 'squad' were searched on June 14, and 20 rifles, a quantity of ammunition, 13 bombs and a machine gun were discovered.²

In an article, published in the review *Gerarchia* (October, 1925), reproduced in the *Sunday Times* of October 25, 1925, Mussolini wrote:

'It is opportune to state that Fascist armed squads did serve their purpose at the proper moment. They must now cease functioning. They should form a regular part of the Militia, which is the Party's only military formation, as well as the aristocracy of Fascism. All other pseudo-military organizations are merely artificial or harmful to Fascism.'

¹ Volpi was one of those who took part in the murder of Matteotti on June 10, 1924.

² This appears in the documents produced by De Bono on July 8, 1924, in the preliminary inquiry into the Matteotti case.

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Consequently, on October 16, 1925, the Commissioner of the Fascist Party in Piedmont issued a circular to all the branches of the Party saying:

'On no pretext whatever shall squads be permitted to exist in your district. Should any of them exist, you will take measures to dissolve them immediately and enroll their members in the Militia, which is the only organization worthy to continue the traditions of squadristo.' (*Corriere della Sera*, October 17, 1925.)

And on October 22, 1925, the Press-bureau of the Fascist Party issued the following statement to the newspapers:

'The Secretary General of the Party has instructed Fascist Head-quarters at Siena that the squads known as "the Savages" of Colle Val d'Elsa are to be disbanded.'

But the Fascist *Corriere Latino* of January 13, 1926, writes as follows about the 'swaggering squadristi':

'The village Anticoli has been forcibly entered at night and terrorized by a gang of black-shirted hooligans, who have allowed themselves the Sunday sport of a punitive expedition, going the length of pricking with their daggers the unarmed and peaceful customers of a local wineshop. This is an instance of the excesses to which the degeneration of "squadrist" can lead. We know perfectly well who the culprits are. Some of them, unhappily, come from our old ranks. But most of them are new-comers on the scene: they are outcasts from family life, unfit for honest work, beggars exploiting the patient generosity of others, hanging about in swarms around the public-houses.'

On February 1, 1926, Mussolini again said:

'All the squadristi must join the Militia. . . . The squadristi are to be employed by public and private bodies on duties requiring energy, fairness, lack of prejudice and the spirit of sacrifice.'¹

In plain words, the 'squads' never have been dissolved and never will be: only their members are to be enrolled in the Militia.

¹ Official communication of the Stefani Agency, published in the papers of February 2, 1926.

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The 'squads' continue to function for the tasks which require 'energy' and 'lack of prejudice,' the words fairness and the spirit of sacrifice being added for the sake of appearances.

Let us give examples of the 'fairness' and 'spirit of sacrifice' displayed by the 'squads' after this solemn admonition from the 'Duce.'

In *La Stampa* of May 8, 1926, a statement appeared to the effect that the Prefect of Turin had dissolved the 'Mutual Benefit Society' among the 'squadrists,' because 'on many occasions public order has been disturbed by its riotous and lawless demonstrations.' The members of the Society attempted to wreck the office of the Fascio in Turin, but were driven off by the police (*La Stampa* of May 9, 1926).

The *Osservatore Romano*, the official organ of the Vatican, which is most favourably disposed to Fascism, wrote in its issue of June 12, 1926:

'Following on the very serious incidents provoked at Leghorn by the squad known as the Forlorn Hope during the Eucharistic procession, the Bishop has forbidden all processions. A large group of evilly-disposed and violent persons, stationed at intervals along the route of the procession, in which the Bishop himself took part, broke into the ranks, profaned the religious vessels and assaulted our unarmed, peaceful young men, who are not members of any party. The band of the Institute of Saint Francis of Sales, marching at the end of the procession, was forced to play profane music formally forbidden by the Canon law. These are the facts. We should add that these bullies - who were not, we must admit, enrolled Fascists - were allowed to proceed with their ruffianism without interference from the police, whose head-quarters were in the vicinity: and so far we have not heard that any arrests have been made.'

Next day the *Osservatore*, amending its previous statement, disclosed that 'the aggressors were genuine Fascists, amongst whom even certain leaders were noticed.'¹

¹ *Daily Mail*, November 2, 1926: 'Religion under the Red tyranny was persecuted, and attempts were being made to force atheism on all the children in the schools. Nothing of that kind is permitted under Signor Mussolini.'

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The Roman Fascist paper, the *Tribuna*, in its issue of May 8, 1926, deplors the continued existence and activity of the 'squads':

'These squadristi not knowing whom to attack, commit a series of small but irritating outrages, which are often a grotesque imitation of the sacred violence which delivered Italy from the scourge of Bolshevism and Democracy. This squadristismo of the 1926 type is moreover ridiculous in its outward appearance, long hair floating in the wind, gold and silver braid rivalling that of a commissaire or a general of the Republic of St. Domingo, glittering baldrics, yard-long pistols, and, worst of all, collections of medals of all kinds.'

Mussolini's circular of January 5, 1927, to the Prefects of the Provinces, reveals that the squads had still not been disbanded:

'Now that the State is armed with full powers of prevention and repression, certain "remnants" must disappear. I mean the "squadristism" which in 1927 is simply anachronistic and sporadic, but which nevertheless makes a tumultuous appearance in moments of public excitement. Lawlessness ("illegalismo") must cease. Not only the lawlessness which vents itself in petty acts of local bullying, which help to harm the régime, and sow futile and dangerous rancour, but also that lawlessness which breaks loose after some serious occurrence. It must be borne in mind that whatever happens, even to me, the time for reprisals, looting and acts of violence is over.'

How is this? Have we not been persistently answered by Fascist propaganda that 'reprisals, looting and acts of violence' came to an end soon after the March on Rome? Has not the Duce in person broadcasted at intervals ever since that event that he has disbanded the squads?¹

To sum up, the Fascists not only use against their opponents all the legal means of repression at the disposal of a modern state; they also employ a far more formidable weapon, illegal

¹ Mussolini, *La nuova politica dell'Italia*, pp. 22, 142, 183; Villari, *The Awakening of Italy*, p. 225.

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violence. The two activities of the Militia, which might seem logically and morally incompatible – legal maintenance of public peace and illegal oppression of opponents – are in practice not contradictory but complementary. It is precisely the Militia's legal function that renders possible and cloaks its illegal activities.

§ 7: *The Rasses*

In many towns there is a 'Ras' (in Abyssinia the Ras is the chieftain of a band and holder of a fief). The Fascist Ras is either the secretary of the local branch of the Party or an officer of the Militia. He is lord over the Police, the Carabineers and the Mayors. He is above the law, and when he thinks fit, he brushes aside the regular official hierarchy.

When a Ras enjoys some measure of credit among his subordinates, he will even revolt against the central authorities of the Party, and carry on as he pleases, precisely as the Abyssinian Rasses flout the authority of their Emperor.

To realize fully what a Ras is, let us make the acquaintance of some of them.

The Ras of Vecchiano, Ponte a Serchio and the neighbouring communes in the province of Pisa, is a certain Alessandro Carosi, an ex-lieutenant. His police record contains the following entries:

'Charged with eloping with a girl under age with her consent: case dismissed as he came to terms with the girl's parents. Charged with unlawful wounding; charged with threats and breaking into private premises; cases stopped through amnesty; condemned to two months' imprisonment for wounding.'

But these were matters of no importance. He habitually introduced himself as 'Lieutenant Carosi, seven murders.' He made regular exhibitions of ferocity; for example, when he went into a café he would spear with his dagger the cakes he wanted. The peaceable customers in the café were often compelled to rise when 'Ras Carosi' came in, and one of his amusements was to terrify them by firing revolver shots into the ground at their feet.

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On October 28, 1923, in the garden of the 'Trionfo' Club, at Filettole, he decided to give a public imitation of William Tell. A peasant aged 28, Pietro Pardi, was compelled to serve as target; his hat was to be shot through. The bullet struck him full in the face and killed him instantly. In September, 1925, Carosi had to answer another charge at the assizes at Genoa, and referring then to this earlier affair, he said that 'it was a misfortune which had been exploited by his enemies who thus displayed their lack of generosity' (*La Stampa*, Sept. 18, 1925).

On the night of April 8, 1924, Carosi set out with a group of Fascists to avenge the death of one of their comrades, who had been killed by a Communist. He went to the house of Ugo Rindi, a compositor, a harmless being who took no part whatever in politics but was wrongly suspected by the police of complicity in the murder. Carosi forced him to get out of bed, representing himself as a police officer. He led him out of the house, killed him with a thrust of his dagger, and left the corpse lying in the street.

One of the Rasses of the city and province of Florence, Augusto Tamburini, was, before the war, an insignificant individual, who touted at lawyers' offices for orders for visiting cards printed by himself at two lire the hundred; one would give him the two lire and not expect to get the cards. A sentence of five days' imprisonment for petty swindling stood to his record. After 1920, Tamburini became a real pillar of society in Tuscany. In 1923 he was appointed Consul of the Militia. A libel case tried in Florence in February and March, 1925, threw a singular light upon the moral character of this Fascist dignitary. The Marquis Luigi Ridolfi, a leading Fascist, gave evidence that, as the result of an inquiry, he had drawn up a report from which the following is an extract:

'Almost every day at the head-quarters of the Fascio, men were summoned to give information, and beaten. Often those who went thither beheld the unedifying spectacle of bloodstains along the stairs and on the walls. In many cases such beatings were not political reprisals but personal vendettas. On one occasion a

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man who had come to the Fascist head-quarters to enroll as a Fascist was beaten on the pretext that he had previously been a Socialist. This beating was witnessed from the windows of a neighbouring boarding-house by a number of foreigners, who called out for it to stop. The Fascists resented this interference, threw stones at the windows, and even tried to invade the boarding-house. A Fascist named Merciai Renzo was beaten by Tamburini and 20 others for having boxed the ears of Tamburini's chauffeur.¹

Another witness, Dr. Pieraccini, deposed that he had twice visited a tramwayman named Parentini:

'Parentini had been beaten by the Fascists for being a Socialist. The unfortunate man had weals all over his back, resulting from blows inflicted either with a stick or with a whip. He had been beaten as one would not beat a beast. He told me that after stripping him the Fascists held him face downwards and beat him with rods. It was, as he said, like a scene from the Inquisition. At a certain point, one of the most ferocious assailants asked him, "Do you recognize me? I am Tamburini." I asked Parentini if he knew Tamburini, and he answered that he did, as he had happened to see photographs of him. Parentini opposed the doctors giving their medical report.'²

While a witness was giving evidence about this and other beatings, Tamburini protested:

'If a Consul was to be sentenced for giving a beating or two, there would not be a Consul left in Italy.'³

A witness named Carcassi deposed:

'I was bludgeoned by the Fascists one evening in front of the Alambra, why, I don't know, as I never mixed myself up in politics.

TAMBURINI (*starting up*): Here it is Fascism which is being put on trial!

¹ Statement during sitting of February 11, 1925.

² Hearing of February 13, 1925.

³ *Ibid.*, 11, 1925.

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THE PUBLIC PROSECUTOR: It was yourselves who demanded the trial.

WITNESS: That evening I was with my brother-in-law Armando Mazzoni. He was seized by the Fascists, dragged into a taxi, and taken to the Fascist head-quarters. The Consul Tamburini was there. He expressed regret at what had happened.'

Mazzoni's evidence illustrated the consequences of Tamburini's regrets.

'I was in Piazza Beccaria with my brother-in-law one evening in July, 1923, and was stopped by a band of Fascists. They asked me if I was Mazzoni, and began to beat me. I ran away, but was pursued, caught, and dragged to the Fascio. Here they told me that they had brought me there to save me from further bludgeonings, and that I could go away freely. I asked for a word with Consul Tamburini. He assured me that nothing else would happen to me. But as I was leaving, some Fascists sprang on me and beat me again.'¹

It was proved that a certain Professor Murray, in bringing a suit against his wife for adultery, came to an arrangement with certain Fascists that they were to spy upon her movements, while another of their number played the rôle of the lady's lover and was taken *en flagrant délit*.

'Murray'—runs the Marquis Ridolfi's report—'was accused by his wife of bribing the witnesses. This bribery was effected by means of jewellery that Murray sent to the witnesses through his servant or his chauffeur. Tamburini received from Murray a diamond ring worth 7 or 8,000 lire. In all probability he provided the men to watch the lady, and to stage the discovery of the adultery. At the trial, Tamburini and numerous other Fascists were among the general public, and openly took the part of Murray.'

In spite of these facts, Tamburini remained in Florence a pillar of the new Italy up till the autumn of 1925.

After the bloodshed of October 3-4, 1925, for which he bore the

¹ *La Nazione*, February 13, 1925.

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prime responsibility, he was sent from Florence to Tripolitania. But in September, 1926, he reappeared at Geneva in the suite of the Italian delegation to the League of Nations.

Another Ras whose name deserves to go down to posterity is Antonio Arrivabene, Consul of the Militia, Secretary of the Fascist Party at Mantua and Member of Parliament. The 'Permanent Court of Honour' in Florence ascertained the following facts about him on March 23, 1924:

'Signor Arrivabene was aware that a fatherless young girl had been betrothed a few days previously to Signor Attilio Ferrari. Notwithstanding this, on December 19, 1923, he went personally to ask for her hand. The girl's mother and she herself having confirmed the news of her betrothal, he answered that he was quite aware of this, but that he attached no importance to this sort of thing. He refused to admit any right of precedence, he only recognized that of force. He insisted upon his request. He did not care at all whether the girl had freely consented to marry Signor Ferrari, or not, being quite sure that when she knew *him* better she would call him back of her own accord. He therefore announced that he would do everything in his power to become acquainted with her and would begin by writing to the young lady every day. On the remonstrance of the mother, he answered: "If my letters are sent back unread, I will find other means of becoming acquainted with your daughter at any cost." In order to cut this painful and absurd discussion short, the mother said: "Do what you like." Signor Arrivabene, on leaving, exclaimed that he knew perfectly well that after this conversation he would no longer be able to set foot in the house.

'The girl's aunt intervened and tried to persuade Signor Arrivabene not to molest the girl and the family; but he declared that he would keep to his decision and would gain his end.

'On December 23, 1923, having met the girl's fiancé in the street, he asked whether the latter were aware of the visit he had made her and what he thought of it all. Signor Ferrari answered: "Do what you like, as long as you leave my fiancée and myself in peace."

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"No," replied Signor Arrivabene, "my intention is precisely to molest you. You get there before me, but nevertheless I do not admit that you have any prior claim and I shall do everything I can to get in your way."

Moreover he informed Signor Ferrari that he would return next day and challenge him more energetically if, within 24 hours, he had not received Signor Ferrari's seconds.

Next day, Signor Ferrari sent his seconds, and on the same day his fiancée returned two letters which Signor Arrivabene had written her.

The seconds met and compiled three records quite wrongly showing Signor Ferrari in an unfavourable light. The first two of these records were not communicated to Signor Ferrari. A typewritten, unsigned copy of the third was the only one sent him, from which it appeared that the dispute was settled in favour of Signor Arrivabene. It was only on March 7, 1924, that Signor Ferrari succeeded in obtaining authentic records in which both parties were declared to have behaved honourably. Signor Ferrari found in them statements against his honour and even against the reputation of his fiancée.

In its judgment the Court deplored the behaviour of Signor Arrivabene and blamed the seconds for the manner in which they put an end to the dispute. Is it unnecessary to add that, in spite of this verdict, Signor Arrivabene is still a prominent personage in the Fascist Party.

But even Signor Arrivabene is not the very finest specimen of his kind. A still more perfect one is Commendatore Italo Bresciani, Ras of Verona, who was once secretary of the Party for that province and a general of the Militia. The *Corriere della Sera* of November 27, 1925, published the following verdict pronounced by a Committee of four high Fascist dignitaries:

'The Committee, before examining the various questions, remarks that all the activities bound up with the Fascist revolution cannot be judged by moral standards, having been sanctioned by the success of the revolution which culminated in the March on Rome.

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'Having made this reservation the Committee passes on to examine the accusations.

'(1) Signor Bresciani is accused of having had very intimate and not disinterested relations with a woman of ill fame, a brothel keeper. The Committee had found no proof of not disinterested relations between Signor Bresciani and the keeper of the brothel, which he is known to have frequented, and is unanimous in judging that general and insufficient evidence cannot be regarded as proof, especially in view of the poverty of Bresciani, acknowledged by all the witnesses. Signor Bresciani can only be reproached for not having behaved in a more dignified manner, more suited to his position in the Party and to his rank in the Militia.

'(2) Comm. Bresciani is accused of having, when a general of the Militia and a high official of the Government, gone to Rome with and at the expense of another brothel keeper, in order to obtain for the latter the concession of a gaming house; he is even said to have entertained to dinner in the company and at the expense of the above person, well-known members of the Fascist Party, who, of course, did not know in what indecorous company they were. The Committee has ascertained that at that moment Signor Bresciani was neither a general nor a high official. There is no proof of his travelling at the expense of the above person. He travelled in the company of other Fascists of Verona with the object of obtaining from the Government a concession which then was considered legitimate. The Committee finds no cause for censure, all the more so as the above brothel keeper was not acting in his own interest but in that of a financial group of the district.

'(3) Signor Bresciani is accused of having, when a high official of the Government, broken into a private office with a squad and seized private documents relating to a pending trial. This act being a political one and included in the complex phenomenon of the Fascist revolution, the Committee for the reasons given in the prefatory remarks, abstains from pronouncing any judgment.

'(4) Signor Bresciani is accused of having retained in the

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Militia against all pressure, in charge of a most delicate mission, a person who, on account of previous dishonest behaviour, was totally untrustworthy. The Committee has ascertained that two inquiries were held on the above person, one by a consul of the Militia and one by Signor Bresciani himself; both were submitted to the general staff of the Militia, who decided that the person in question should be retained in his post. Therefore no imputation can be made against Signor Bresciani.

'The Committee has extended its investigations to other minor charges, which could not be substantiated.

'In any case the great merits of Signor Bresciani, as founder of Fascism in Verona and one of the heads of the Fascist revolution, must be recognized.

'Finally the Committee cannot but recognize that Signor Agostino Fiorio, editor of the newspaper *Audacia* (in which the accusations were raised) acted in good faith and with the utmost honesty and correctness.'

The document is characteristic, as proving not only what a Ras is capable of, but also what was the moral sense of the four members composing the Committee who, in face of accusations of such a nature, absolved both accused and accuser.

Signor Villari, writing in the spring of 1924, gave an assurance that the Rasses had ceased to exist:

'The Fascist high commissioners in the provinces who tended to override the Prefects and nullify their authority have been abolished. The *fiduciari*, or trustees of the party, in the various towns and districts, who at one moment seemed inclined to take the place of the high commissioners, have been reduced to order.'¹

Signor Villari went too far. Mussolini himself in a speech on November 11, 1924, did not venture as much as to say that 'Rassism' had ceased, but merely stated that it was 'in evident decline.'² A year later, in December, 1925, and January, 1926, a

¹ *Awakening of Italy*, p. 265.

² *La nuova politica dell'Italia*, p. 406.

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Senator, Signor Ciccotti,¹ and a Fascist Deputy, Signor Amicucci,² deplored the activity of the local Rasses, declaring the necessity of checking their arrogance.

In the spring of 1926 Signor Villari no longer dared to assert, as he had done two years previously, that 'Rassism' had ceased:

'During the early days of the Fascist Government the local party leaders were apt to get out of hand and to exercise undue influence on the prefects and other properly constituted authorities. This, of course, is nothing new in Italian political life, for there have always been unofficial personages who dominated the situation in the provinces. But Signor Mussolini *had done his best* to eliminate such irregularities.'³

In January, 1927, the all-powerful Duce had still not succeeded in 'eliminating such irregularities.' In a circular of January 5 he had to remind his followers once more:

'The Prefect is the highest authority of the State in the province. Citizens, above all those who have the great privilege and the honour of serving in the Fascist ranks, owe respect and obedience to the highest political representative of the Fascist

¹ Signor Ciccotti's speech in the Senate on December 15, 1925: 'In Italy one may bow to a single central Dictator, but 9,382 miniature dictators, one in each town, are too much to be borne, especially since so many undesirable elements have filtered through into the Fascist ranks. The citizen is constantly trodden under foot by men with neither right nor ability to rule. This cannot be endured.' Signor Ciccotti's error consists in his believing that it is possible to have a 'single central Dictator' without 9,382 miniature Dictators.

² *La Nazione*, January 26, 1926: 'In the provinces it is indispensable that the Prefects alone should command. It is inconceivable that provincial party secretaries should take the place of the Prefects, or what is worse, that they should pursue a policy of rivalry with the Prefects.'

³ *The Fascist Experiment*, p. 59. The propagandist is right in asserting that even before Fascism there were in the provinces 'unofficial personages who dominated the situation.' But he forgets to mention that: (1) Before Fascism many provinces, especially in Northern and Central Italy, were free from this disease, whereas under Fascism it has been disseminated over the whole country, (2) Before Fascism it was possible to criticize these 'unofficial personages' without being murdered.

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régime, and must collaborate as subordinates with him to facilitate his task. . . . Let it be quite clear to all that authority cannot be split up between two persons. It must be one and indivisible.' .

One of the journalists of the régime commented on the Duce's declaration as follows:

'Mussolini's circular is addressed to the prefects, but it is meant in the first place for the Fascists. This document . . . it is clear was not born by chance. It corresponds to a necessity recognized as immediate. It is no mystery that until yesterday the life of the Nation laboured under a state of confusion which gave rise to many evils and many uncertainties. The man who to-day is consecrated as the "highest authority in the Province" was too often resisted as an enemy, and not seldom overthrown by insidious intrigues. The authority now justly declared "one and indivisible" was degraded and split up in a way now sharply condemned. The truth did not always reach the ears of the Duce, and the ambiguity of certain situations and episodes caused laxity and inertia. To-day all this is dead and buried. When the words we have quoted have become iron law, morally and materially, then violence and lawlessness will disappear, public peace will no longer be disturbed, public finances will be rigidly administered, and it will be possible to banish from the ranks of the Party all those whom Mussolini defines as "jobbers, profiteers, self-advertisers, braggarts, incurable politicians, swelled-heads, gossip-mongers, sowers of discord, and all those who live without a recognized occupation." To the true Fascists falls the task of putting this document into practice. The application of this ruling may at last bring about internal order and social peace.'¹

Four years after the restoration of 'internal order and social peace' this order and peace have still to be born. Four years after Mussolini had given the Italian nation the 'Strong State,' the Prefects, the 'highest authority of the State in the Provinces,' are given permission to check the lawlessness of the Rasses.

¹ *Rassegna Italiana*, January, 1927.

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§ 8: *Molinella*

The characteristic methods of the Fascist Dictatorship are most clearly exemplified in the rural centres of the valley of the Po, where, as in all districts formerly most deeply penetrated by Socialism, the strongest efforts were needed on the part of the Fascists in order to subdue the workers.

The case of Molinella will give a typical illustration of the life to which the people are now condemned in Italy.¹

Molinella is a commune of 15,000 inhabitants, 20 miles from Bologna. The population consists chiefly of agricultural labourers. Up to the time of the Fascist reaction, Molinella was regarded in Italy as one of the most impregnable strongholds of Socialism, the local Socialist organizations comprising a total of 4,700 members.

By thirty years of iron discipline, the workers of Molinella had created a co-operative system which aroused the admiration of all those who went to see it. A wide area of land was cultivated by an agricultural co-operative organization, to which was added a co-operative building society, and a central co-operative store, with seven branches, which did all the wholesale and retail buying and selling for the needs of its members. The co-operative organization had a reserve of a million lire in the bank, in addition to its buildings, machinery and stock.

Molinella was one of the last Communes conquered by the Fascists.

The fight against the Socialist workers was directed by the Secretary of the Fascio, Augusto Regazzi. Before attaining glory as a Fascist leader, Regazzi had been condemned to a fortnight's imprisonment for striking and wounding, and had been prosecuted (but acquitted for lack of evidence) for alleged fraud in connection with military supplies.

The offensive began in September, 1922. The local landowners

¹ A list of the acts of violence committed by the Fascists from November, 1922, to October, 1923, in Molinella is to be found in Matteotti's book, *Un anno di dominazione fascista* (English abridged edition: *The Fascists exposed*, pp. 103-9). Here we only give the most serious incidents.

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organized themselves in a Fascio, decreed a general boycott of all the workers belonging to Socialist associations and cancelled all outstanding contracts with them. Workers were brought in from the neighbouring regions of Ferrara, Bologna and Venetia, in order to reduce the local workers to destitution; the newcomers were paid more than the local rates of wages. So far, nothing had been done which went beyond the rights of owners engaged in an economic struggle with the workers.

On September 12, 1922, the Fascists began pillaging and burning. On the day after the 'March on Rome' (October, 1922), the premises of all the organizations, including the people's library, were confiscated by the Fascists, who took over the buildings and installed their offices and their members in them. The leaders of the Socialist organizations had to fly in order to escape death. The landowners issued a notice announcing that they would give out no work except to workers belonging to the Fascist Unions.

In March, 1923, two English journalists, Mr. Aubrey Waterfield and his wife, having heard vague stories about the Molinella co-operatives, and about struggles between Fascists and Socialists, in which the whole population of Molinella was reported to have passed over to the 'National' flag, were prompted by curiosity to investigate the happenings on the spot. Only Britons could have conceived and carried out such an enterprise.

This is the account of their visit as given by Mrs. Waterfield in the *Observer* of March 18, 1923:

'I had heard about Molinella, a village some eighteen miles from Bologna, practically run by Co-operation: Nationalists and others had told me about Massarenti, "the red baron" and the Socialist tyrant of Molinella, and I had received a vivid impression of a remarkable man. I had read about the feud between Fascists and Massarenti's followers in the *Resto del Carlino*, and my one desire was to go myself to the spot. I told Dott. Cacciari of my intention, the head of the Fascist Syndicate of Agriculture, who had given me a most interesting account of this new organization. My husband had put aside his painting to study

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'Sindicalismo Nazionale' and was determined to accompany me.

"There lies the village of suffering," said the guard of the train, pointing to a long line of houses, a crooked campanile, and a mediæval tower set in a vast expanse of corn and rice fields.

"But surely there is peace now that the Fascists are in charge?"

"Every other night there is trouble: *è un brutto posto*," he answered gloomily.

I entered into conversation with some country-woman, who, with the usual courtesy of the Italian people, welcomed my suggesting that we should rest in their house. The Fascists told us later that we had spoken with the families of the leading Socialists of the neighbourhood. To us they only seemed a crowd of respectable, hard-working country-folk.

"I have heard that Massarenti, the red baron, is a thief, that he ground you down, and now does not care to show his face among you. Is that true?" I asked.

"No," they all shouted, "It is a lie. *Gli vogliamo bene*."

"Let her speak," said some of the women, pushing one of their companions forward.

Freeing her head from her heavy black shawl, which fell like a hood, she stretched out her hand towards me and said: "Massarenti was our *Parrocco* (our Parish priest), our benefactor. If ever you see him tell him this from us: tell him that the Proletariat will never abandon him, never; tell him that we will sooner live by eating the grass on the roadside than enter the Fascist Syndicate."

No one spoke for a time and the silence was only broken by the sobs of some of the women. Then one old woman, bent and haggard, tottered towards me: "It is slavery here now. Our men are beaten with great sticks, and women too, and we must look on."

There was a violent knocking at the door. "The Fascists," whispered the women, but nobody stirred. I insisted upon opening the door which was just at my back, and as I did so I was confronted with the muzzle of a revolver. Hastily removing my nose I tried to explain matters to the young Fascist, but he

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refused to listen, and pushing forward, he swept the room with his weapon: "Hands up, or I fire!"

'No one moved, and we continued to drink our hot milk. Faced by a crowd of peasant women who gazed at him stolidly, he was evidently disconcerted. Fascists with stout sticks and Carabineers with rifles protected him in the background. To our protest that a man should threaten to shoot women, a Fascist replied: "He did right."

'A courteous young lieutenant, enveloped in an immense cloak, strode in. When he had examined our papers duly signed by the Italian police, he strode out again murmuring: "I don't understand."

'Presently a representative of the local government authority arrived, and on the grounds that our papers were not in order we were marched off to the barracks of the Carabineers under the escort of the Fascist who had threatened us, and who mounted guard over us for some time in company with the Carabineers.

'It was unfortunate that owing to the fact of the authorities taking some seven hours to discover that our papers were in perfect order, we were prevented from hearing the other side of the question. So far as our own experience went, "persuasion by violence" dominated the situation at Molinella. Instead of interviewing Fascist workers, we sat in a small bedroom, marked *disciplina*, in company with two Carabineers who were also under arrest.

'At about six we were taken in separately and subjected to severe cross-examination by the Chief Commissioner of Police, who had come from Bologna for the purpose. He acknowledged that our papers were in perfect order, and yet we were not allowed to catch the last train back to Bologna, the reason given being that he was anxious to make our acquaintance! Neapolitan politeness is certainly a special brand. Upon my suggesting that his personal acquaintance with us had evidently not removed the impression that we were dangerous revolutionaries, he affected horror at such a suggestion. No, we were not accused of anything, and he had quite realized we were not Soviet envoys with full purses.

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“Yet we are detained?”

“But no, you are not detained.”

‘The word “detained” seemed to grate upon his sensitive ears. We were not detained, and yet we were not free.

‘At the eleventh hour Dott. Cacciari arrived from Bologna, having just heard of our plight, in order to offer us the use of his car, but the Chief Commissioner wished “to have the pleasure of taking us back in the special motor which the Prefect was now sending us.” We shall never forget the kindness of Dott. Cacciari and also the feeling of confidence and relief which his mere presence brought us.’

In the *Manchester Guardian* of April 5, 1923, Mr. Waterfield gave further and still more striking details:

‘We heard how over 3,000 workers had signed a petition to Mussolini for the return of the occupied institutions and for the liberty of organization; the signatures had been obtained in the dead of night, and the messenger was only able to get through to Rome by the skin of his teeth. Bentivoglio, the leader held responsible for the petition, was soon afterwards set upon by an armed band of Fascists in the streets of Bologna, as he was going to his work, and now lies in hospital with a fractured skull. . . .

‘Now that the important moment of the year has arrived for the cultivation of the rice fields, a desperate attempt is being made to drive the peasants into the Fascist organization, either through starvation or by fear of the *manganello*, the Fascist club, often heavily weighted with lead. In addition to arbitrary arrests made only a few days ago by Carabineers, and also by the very Fascists who had tried to murder Bentivoglio, a further campaign of violence was begun to prevent the peasants from cultivating the land. On March 22, two punitive armed expeditions visited two farms where the labourers, who still clung to Co-operation, were at work; they flogged men and women, even a girl of fifteen. Meanwhile the official representative of the Government on the spot continued the forced sales of the private property of the Co-operatives without any sanction from the members. On March 25, the oxen belonging to the ‘Co-operativa Agricola’ were

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sold at forced sale prices to local shopkeepers and landed proprietors, to re-sell at enormous profit. The case of the Spada property gives an idea of what is going on. It has been seized from the Co-operative who rented it, and leased to the Fascist leaders who sublet it to the starving workers at a fantastic figure. "It is slavery now at Molinella," the women all told us. The authorities have made it almost impossible for the poor people to get medicine or medical attendance, and have arbitrarily closed the charitable institutions which take the place of our Poor Law relief.'

On August 9, 1923, Regazzi led a punitive expedition against the family of a farmer named Pietro Marani. In court, Pietro's father described the affair as follows:

* "That afternoon I was with my family: my wife and three sons and two daughters-in-law. We were working in the fields. About 4.30, I suddenly heard a motor-car; it stopped at Manardi's house and Fascists got out of it. Expecting one of the usual punitive expeditions, we all hurried indoors. Soon after, forty Fascists arrived; they must have been armed with guns or revolvers, for they fired several times. One of them told us to come out, because he meant to knock us down. We did not go out, but told them that they had no right to call us out as we were in our own house. They stopped talking and began trying to tear down a door and a window.

'My sons were armed with their tools, but we were helpless in face of the violence of the aggressors. We fled to the upper story.

'The Fascists then climbed on to the roof, beat it in, smashed the ceiling and began throwing tiles into the room. We were frightened to death and hid under the beds. In the room in which the crime was committed my wife and I were under the big bed with our son Augusto; Pietro had hidden under a smaller bed.

'While stones and plaster continued to rain through the roof, the entrance door gave way, leaving the assailants a free run of the house. In a few moments four men came into the room in which

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we were hidden. At first I only recognized Domenico Bussi, who overturned the little bed under which my Pietro was hiding. At that moment another Fascist, whom I recognized as Regazzi, fired the shot which killed my son, almost instantly. The noise of a motor-car going off post-haste, indicated to us that the assailants were making off.'

In court, the dead man's widow gave the following account:

'I heard the Fascists' threats. In my fright I took my nineteen-months-old baby in my arms and sought refuge in the upper story in the room of my mother-in-law; both of us were terrified. When we heard them beginning to break up the roof, we took refuge under the beds, clasping the children against our breasts; they were in danger of being stifled by the dust of the plaster. I heard two shots, and then a cry from my mother-in-law: "They have killed Pietro." I forced myself to keep up my courage; I got on my bicycle and went for the doctor. But on the way, one of the Fascists came up to me and threatened to hit me with his bludgeon, shouting that he would send me into the next world to keep company with my husband; so another woman had to go for the doctor.'

On August 12, 1923, the Fascists went round the fields and farmhouses striking at everybody with their clubs—men and women, youths, old men, women and children, all members of four families. On the following day a peasant woman, Albertina Galliani, was taken to the Fascist head-quarters; there she was threatened with death, whilst her sick husband was dragged from his bed in her presence, and bound hand and foot to a chair.

The Fascio issued a proclamation, on August 12, granting to 'the Trade Unionists still belonging to the Socialist League a twelve hours' truce to enable them to submit: after that'—it was declared—'the struggle will be resumed without mercy.'

On April 6, 1924, during the elections, a worker named Angelo Gaiani, 60 years of age, who declared he would vote for the Socialists, was attacked as he came out of the polling booth,

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and killed instantly with a bludgeon. The murderer, Oreste Ciuti, was a member of the Fascist Militia (*Voce Repubblicana*, October 14, 1924).

On August 14, 1924, Augusto Matarelli, formerly a butcher in the co-operative store, was flogged in bed, where he had lain since an earlier beating. A few hours later he was found hanging in his stable. Dr. Tonini, in charge of the post-mortem, having expressed a suspicion that this might be a cleverly camouflaged murder, was flogged in his turn and had to flee the country.

On September 12, 1924, a young man, Angelo Frazzoni, was mortally wounded by gunshot. No one ventured to go out into the dark to help him. His father tried to go out, but was followed by a Fascist and turned back. His mother cried out: 'You traitors, you have killed my son and you want to kill my husband too.' The Fascist answered, 'Shut the door,' and remained on guard to prevent any neighbours from going for the doctor.

Under this system of oppression the population of Molinella took up an attitude of passive resistance, which it maintained with wonderful solidarity, as long as possible.

The labourers remained loyal to their Unions and refused all work offered by the Fascist labour exchange. It meant destitution. In order to live, or at least to eat, the strikers collected edible snails in the hedges and valleys, or they went into the fields, already harvested, in order to glean a few ears of wheat or maize. Gleaning is the poor folks' customary right. The peasant carefully collects even the most miserable fruits of the earth. But this gleaning was considered a revolt. By collecting a sack of rice or wheat, one can live without having to eat the bread of the Fascist Unions. The gleaning women were chased away, pursued, their ears boxed, their faces smeared with black. Five women who had been struck, complained on September 26, 1924, to a non-commissioned officer of the police. They were threatened with arrest. A hundred women then gathered in front of the police station, declaring that they also had committed the same offence and should therefore be arrested as well.

One day in September, 1924, the poor people arranged a secret meeting amidst the reeds of a marsh. Two hundred and fifty

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day-labourers working within reach were told of the projected meeting at the last moment. The women had been away since the morning, their gleaners' sacks on their backs, and they had covered thirty kilometres on foot. The organizers had arrived on bicycles during the night, and had hidden in the reeds until 2 p.m.

The meeting discussed and passed a resolution in which the workers demanded the restoration of political liberty. They protested against the acts of violence which had been committed and once more affirmed their loyalty to their Unions.

This meeting, and the fact that an interminable list of signatures had been published in honour of Matteotti's memory, made the Fascists fear that the Socialist organizations were coming to life again. They appointed two agents with the purpose of crushing every sign of opposition. The agents forced the landowners to dismiss the last of their non-Fascist workers; they stopped all works which would allow non-Fascist workers to gain even the barest livelihood; they increased the measure of beatings and pillagings. Every reported outrage in the papers, every word of criticism, every protest, brought forth fresh episodes of violence.

During the night of October 31, 1925, a Fascist squad, after shouting songs until 2 o'clock in the morning under the windows of Erminio Minghetti, an ex-service man, set fire to his house.

'It was nearly 3 a.m. when Minghetti's little daughter, nine years old, rushed into her parents' room, crying "Mother, the house is on fire!" Minghetti jumped out of bed, ran to his little girl's room and saw the roof already in flames. He rushed to the stairs to try to get out, but the staircase was on fire. He ran back to his children, the little nine-year-old girl, and a baby of six months, and to his wife and his old mother, whose leg was broken. All were suffocated by the smoke. It was impossible to escape by the stairs: the tumble-down old house was in flames. Minghetti jumped out of the window in his shirt, found a ladder, ran up it, and came down with his children on his back, then his wife, then his old mother. Neighbours came and gave shelter to the wife and children and the old woman, all shivering in the cold.

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The neighbours brought Minghetti clothes of some sort to put on. He sat there on a chair and watched the destruction of his home, his only possession, while women put compresses on his legs, which were terribly injured' (*Voce Repubblicana*, November 5, 1925).

In three days alone in November, 1924, 142 persons were imprisoned, many of them women (*Corriere della Sera*, November 28, 1924). The town was placed under the supervision of an imposing armed force.

After Miss Gibson's attempt on Mussolini's life (April 7, 1926) there ensued days of still more acute oppression. Five working men were kidnapped by Regazzi and other leaders and dragged to the former head-quarters of the Socialist Co-operatives, now commandeered by the Fascio. They were first questioned by a captain of the Carabinieri and the police commissioner. These authorities then having left the room, a squad of Fascisti rushed in and bludgeoned the captives. By the time the Carabinieri put in an appearance, one of the workmen, Bagni by name, was lying unconscious on the floor, bathed in blood. This was the seventh beating he had received. Among Socialists and Trade Union organizers in Molinella it has become quite a topic of conversation to recount how many beatings each has received and to discuss whose record is the longest. In the night of April 7, police and Fascists searched a number of houses and arrested sixty-three working men whom they dragged off handcuffed to prison at Bologna. On the 9th, fifty-five of these men were released, eight, among whom were Bagni and the others beaten the previous day, being detained until the 12th, the aggravating circumstance against them being the beating they had received.

This nightmare state of affairs still goes on. By these means the workers of Molinella are being 'reconciled with their country' - in the terminology of the 'new era.'

We often read that Mussolini and his 'Black-Shirts' are building up a 'new civilization.' In Italy, the Fascists understand quite well the sinister meaning of this term. Outside Italy they leave it unexplained and ordinary folks are incapable of grasping

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its true significance. In Italy the Fascists say: 'Well done.' Outside Italy, they say: 'It is not true.' They are not courageous enough to proclaim frankly to the outer world what their civilization actually stands for. They qualify the anti-Fascists as cowards for not answering force by force; but as soon as any anti-Fascist attempts to use violence, they treat him as a criminal worthy of every kind of reprisal.

Up to a certain point it is understandable that such should be the mentality of the Fascists, in the heat of the struggle. But when we see people in highly civilized countries not involved in the same struggle and yet sharing the same hysterical mentality and speaking of 'a new epic of Fascism' (*Morning Post*, Sept. 13, 1926), we are forced to recognize the saddening truth that a high standard of moral conscience is hard of attainment and easy to lose - even outside Italy.

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Note A to Page 185

Signor Villari (*Fascist Experiment*, p. 90) states that the account of the outrages in Florence published in various foreign periodicals 'were the most monstrous travesties of the real facts.' He takes good care not to explain what these 'monstrous travesties' were. One has to take his word. In his own narration he omits to say that the Fascists had been bludgeoning Freemasons for four days before one of these killed Luporini. Only thus can he maintain that 'the event which gave origin to the trouble was the murder of a prominent Fascist, Luporini.' Writing about the reprisals which followed, he withholds from his readers in what abominable circumstances Pilati and Consolo were murdered, and contents himself with the innocent words:

'After, Fascists seized the opportunity to murder two Communists, who had nothing to do with the affair.'

The Fascist Senator, Signor Corradini, writing in the *National Review* (December 1925, p. 525), also avers that everything the non-Italian papers published in October, 1925, on the Florentine outrages was much exaggerated:

'If my readers want proof of exaggeration, I will refer them to the fact that none of these foreign pilgrims - English, American and others - thought it necessary to cut short their stay in Florence. You may be quite sure that if half of what the newspapers write had been true, they would have run away from Florence and got out of Italy as fast as their legs could carry them. Do you ask for a better proof?'

The Fascist Senator does not grasp that foreigners, knowing that they had nothing to fear personally, had not the slightest reason to 'run away'; but neither had they the same reason as the Fascist Senator for not seeing what was happening under their eyes and telling what they knew.

The Italian Consul at Manchester tried to discredit my account (in the *Review of Reviews*, Nov. 15, 1925) by publishing in the

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Manchester Guardian of January 2, 1926, a letter received from 'an eminent English scholar living in Florence' whose name he did not disclose. The letter stated:

'(1) The official version entirely corresponds to the truth; as everyone here may find out for himself, Signor Bandinelli is known to members of the British colony, and has given his version of the story.

'(2) The attack on the Fascists was quite unprovoked in the first instance.

'(3) With regard to Farinacci's orders for reprisals to cease immediately, the town was placarded with them the following day, so there was no disputing that matter.

'(4) The account of the whole affair was fully and correctly reported in the *Nuovo Giornale* of Florence, as well as the *Corriere della Sera*, the Liberal paper of Milan, and many other journals, which should confute the charge of the official suppression of the news.

'(5) Contrary to many statements the shops were all open as usual on Monday the 5th, except at the moment of Luporini's funeral, when the shutters were generally put up in sign of mourning.

'(6) To talk of a "reign of terror" is ridiculous. The aspect of the city was quite normal and business went on as usual.

'(7) As for the shops that were looted, several belonged to Fascist families; they were sacked by gangs of ordinary criminals, who took advantage of the riot and excitement on the night 3rd-4th, in order to commit burglary.

'(8) Those Fascists who got out of hand are all in prison; those guilty of minor charges have already been sentenced - eighteen of them in all, I think - to terms of imprisonment varying from nine to fifteen months.

'(9) Those charged with the murder of the two Communists Pilati and Consolo will be tried in course of time.'

(1) The 'eminent English scholar' swallows the official version and overlooks important details: (a) The official version is silent as to the organized bludgeonings of the Freemasons by the Fas-

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cists during the last days of September; the absence of any reference to these previous outrages puts in a misleading light the act of the Freemason who killed one Fascist and wounded another on the evening of October 3. (b) The official version lies shamelessly in asserting that 'at 2 a.m. on Saturday order was re-established; on Sunday, October 4, a few isolated incidents occurred in the morning, but nothing more.' In actual fact the trials of November 21 and 24, and December 11, 1925, clearly proved that several other serious crimes were committed during the morning of October 4. (c) The official version so mixes up and mutilates the record of what took place on the night of October 3, that it is impossible to make head or tail of it. (d) The official version tries to show that the police used every endeavour to suppress disorder, but all the records, even those emanating from the Fascist side, agree that it is impossible to name a single person who was arrested during the outbreaks. If the 'eminent English scholar' accepts a document of this kind as the whole truth and nothing but the truth, he must be a 'scholar' whose critical sense is easily satisfied.

(2) The 'eminent English scholar' does not tell us what version was given by Bandinelli of the story. And since this alleged version has never been given us from any source by any newspaper or any pro-Fascist propagandist, it is impossible to argue about it.

(3) After a storm of bludgeoning has raged for four days, two Fascists visit a man who has been beaten by their comrades the previous evening; in the course of an altercation a friend of the bludgeoned man loses patience and fires. The 'eminent English scholar' is convinced that the attack on the Fascists was quite unprovoked 'in the first instance.' It would be interesting to know if this 'eminent scholar' would reason in the same way if he or his wife had been bludgeoned.

(4) I never denied that Farinacci had issued orders that reprisals were to be stopped; but I pointed out that this order was issued, not on September 26, when the outrages began, and when it might have stopped them, but on October 4, when they had already degenerated into looting and murder. The 'eminent English

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scholar' does not deal with this crucial point, but diverts attention by disputing a detail about which no question arises.

(5) The account of the whole affair published in the *Nuovo Giornale* in Florence and the *Corriere della Sera* in Milan is simply the official version. It was given to the newspapers by the police and they were forbidden to publish any other. When the 'eminent English scholar' says that this account should confute the charge of official suppression of news, we can only conclude once more that he is easily satisfied.

(6) I stated in the *Review of Reviews* that all the shops in Florence were closed during the funeral of the murdered Fascist, because if they had not been so closed, they would have been wrecked. The 'eminent English scholar' replies that the shops were only closed during the funeral and were open the rest of the day: here again he avoids the crux of the question to discuss an unimportant detail.

(7) The 'eminent scholar' must have been endowed by Nature with a most heroic soul: for he finds it ridiculous to speak of terror in a town where the police stood invisible while houses and shops were pillaged and citizens murdered in their beds. Another Englishman who was in Florence at the same time wrote in the *Manchester Guardian* of October 17, 1925:

'In all Florence this week it has been literally impossible to persuade anybody, at least of the better classes, to talk about the week-end's events or what has led up to them. Just as innocent travellers on the railway are liable to be disturbed by some officious interfering members of the Fascist Party, so in every house and office and gathering there is always likely to be a spy. Delation is universal and the terrorism is complete - more complete than I knew it in Budapest after the overthrow of Bela Kun.'

This Englishman obviously had not the intrepid soul of the 'eminent scholar,' his fellow-countryman.

(8) The 'eminent scholar' does not explain how it happened that not a single one of these 'ordinary criminals' was arrested in the course of the Fascist operations.

(9) The farce of the trials is dealt with in Chapter IV of the

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present book. Pilati and Consolo were 'Socialists' – not 'Communists.' The 'eminent scholar' interchanges the words, because, perhaps, it seems to him natural that 'Communists' should be murdered before the eyes of their wives and children.

To give an idea of the shameless audacity with which certain pro-Fascist residents in Italy, when writing or speaking to people in England, contradict even the most notorious facts, a single instance may suffice. The former Secretary of the Christian-Democratic Party, Don Luigi Sturzo, who lives now as an exile in London, writes in his book, *Italy and Fascism*, p. 140:

'The man in the street, if on the passage of a Fascist pennant with "Me ne frego" (I don't care a damn) written across it, has not hastily raised his hat, has run the risk of a crack on the head from a Fascist bludgeon.'

This Fascist usage gave rise to so many revolting incidents that in November, 1926, the Government itself found it necessary to put a check on the abuse. It issued a decree which categorically laid down in what cases citizens are bound to raise their hats. *The Times* (Nov. 15, 1926) commented on the new measure in the following terms:

'Englishmen who have not uncovered their heads at the passing of Fascist forces have found their hats unceremoniously laid in the dust at their feet. A Fascist order now establishes the correct procedure to be followed by citizens and foreigners alike at the passing of a Fascist procession. "The standards of the Legions and the *gagliardetti* of the Fasci" – it declares – "are the only colours for which the act of homage should be executed." The pennants of the *Avanguardie* (Fascist youths from 15 to 18), *Balilla* (Fascist boys from 8 to 14), and sporting associations need not be saluted. Experience will soon enable the foreigner to distinguish between the *gagliardetto* and a pennant, and it is hoped that misunderstandings will in future be avoided.'

Yet in reviewing Don Sturzo's book, the Director of the British Institute in Florence, Captain Goad, writes:

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'It is most surprising for us "men in the street" to learn from an exile residing in London, that if we do not raise our hats at the passage of a Fascist pennant with any ribald motto written on it, we run the risk of a crack on the head from a Fascist bludgeon! We have watched so many scores of Fascist processions without dreaming of acting otherwise than we should act in England! Perhaps it is just as well that we never knew our danger until now.'¹

The primary rule of propaganda is to assert or contradict with barefaced audacity according to the needs of the moment, leaving to the other side the onus of proving the contrary. There will always be people whom the lie will reach and not the proof of its falseness.

Open glorification of crime is better than this kind of lie. Here, for instance, is what Sir Percival Phillips, special correspondent of the *Daily Mail*, wrote in 1923:

'A public act of disloyalty is in Italy to-day a form of suicide. The man who wishes to jeer at the Italian flag should first make his will. An insult to the King assures painful meditation in a hospital, if not the seclusion of the grave.'²

Note B to Page 200

The foreign newspapers affiliated to the propaganda either ignored all that happened in Italy during those terrible days or gave only vague indications. In compensation, they published on November 25 an official communiqué proclaiming:

'The Head of the Government is quite satisfied with the state of order generally prevailing since the attempt made on his life on October 31. He is now personally investigating the causes of *some* of the outbreaks in the provinces, in order to determine their exact nature.'

¹ *Journal of the British Institute of International Affairs*, March, 1927, p. 121.

² *The Red Dragon and the Black Shirts*, p. 12.

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The text of the communiqué published in Italy (*Corriere della Sera*, Nov. 27, 1926) was different. It ran:

'The public peace which had been disturbed after the episode of October 31, was everywhere promptly restored.'

It was not possible to publish in Italy that 'the Head of the Government was quite satisfied with the state of order generally prevailing since October 31.'

The result of the 'personal investigations' of the Head of the Government was as follows:

'In more than sixty provinces there was no incident of any consequence, while in the remainder there were, here and there, episodes against persons and property; but many of these have been exaggerated, and small, harmless fireworks have become bombs and high explosives. There have been reports of destruction, but these have never been verified.'¹

The Pope, however, was not of the same opinion. And in his Allocution of December 20, 1926, he strongly deplored the acts of violence and devastation committed against the clergy and the Catholic organizations.

'Regardless of the sanctity of the churches, the venerable dignity of the bishops, and the sacred character of the priests, the best among the faithful Catholics were persecuted, together with their organizations and their Press. The fairer and more promising the harvest, the more grievous the damage, the ruin, the loss. Flourishing organizations and works, the fruit of the conscientious labour of many years and of untold sacrifices, have been in a few hours destroyed, damaged, and compromised.'

The Pope's words are all the more significant when one considers that His Holiness does not concern himself with outrages against people who were not 'faithful Catholics.'

In a speech in the Chamber on May 26, 1927, Mussolini declared:

¹ Mussolini's statement at the Cabinet meeting of December 6, 1926.

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'The petty local bullying is at an end. Likewise acts of lawlessness. In these first three months of 1927 disputes resulting in woundings number 11 for the whole of Italy. Last year they were 99.'

Ninety-nine: neither more nor less! If you do not believe this figure, go to the spot and count for yourself. But if you come to a different result, be careful, or you will find yourself interned.

In the same speech of May 26, 1927, the Duce protested against the statement that Fascism is a reign of terror. 'Do you know what Terror is?' asked the Duce. — There is terror when at least 20 people are guillotined a day, when thousands are drowned in the rivers, and thousands buried in the prisons, as happened in France 'between 1789 and 1793' (the chronology is the Duce's). In Italy there has never been anything of the kind. 'Sometimes there has been the destruction of a lawyer's offices or a professor's library.' Therefore in Italy there is no terror: 'the Fascist Revolution simply does its duty: it defends itself.'

It is not surprising that a man who reasons thus has no liking for freedom of speech and of the Press, and wants a Chamber without an Opposition — that is, a Chamber without discussion.

Note C to Page 202

Signor De Stefani, then Minister of Finance in the Fascist Government, speaking on May 13, 1923, stated that the Militia cost only 25 million lire, whilst the Royal Guard had cost 285 million.

To arrive at this latter figure, he must have added together the total expenses of this body for the three years of its existence, including the outlay for initial equipment. In the budget for the fiscal year 1923-4 which the Fascist Government presented to the Chamber in November, 1922, the expenses for the Royal Guard were estimated at 84 million lire.

As for the Militia, the untrustworthy nature of Signor De Stefani's statement is shown by the fact that an Order in Council (No. 917) of April 19, 1923, assigned 46,730,000 lire to the

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Militia. This is only a month before Signor De Stefani declared the expenditure to be only 25 million lire.

In a speech to the Senate on December 4, 1924, General Tassoni said:

'Last year, a little ingenuously perhaps, a question was asked in this House as to the cost of the Militia. The Minister of Finance in reply gave the figure of 25 million lire. The same sum is now before us for the financial year 1924-5. The official report remarked that this answer was received with signs of hilarity. With a little less humour they would have been called signs of incredulity. The fact is, no one in this House believes that this figure is correct.'

* In 1924, in his book, *The Awakening of Italy*, Signor Villari tried to make out that the Royal Guard 'proved enormously expensive' (p. 213), while the Militia was far cheaper (p. 226). In his next book, *The Fascist Experiment* (1926), he writes:

'The total cost of the Militia is 35 million lire per annum, although certain special detachments and services are paid for by other departments' (p. 167).

The word *total* clashes with the word *although*!

According to an official communiqué in the Fascistized *Corriere della Sera* of April 11, 1926, the Militia costs 40 million lire a year. But it is well known that a large part of the Militia outlay is borne by the Budgets of other Departments, such as the railways, postal services, forests, etc. Hence the mystery of its cost remains unsolved.

In December, 1926, the following additional credits were allotted to the Militia: 1,528,000 lire for 'services of special importance'; 30 million for the Militia guarding the frontier; 33 million for the secret service (*Corriere della Sera*, Dec. 21, 1926). These 64½ millions must be added to the 40 millions avowed some months previously.

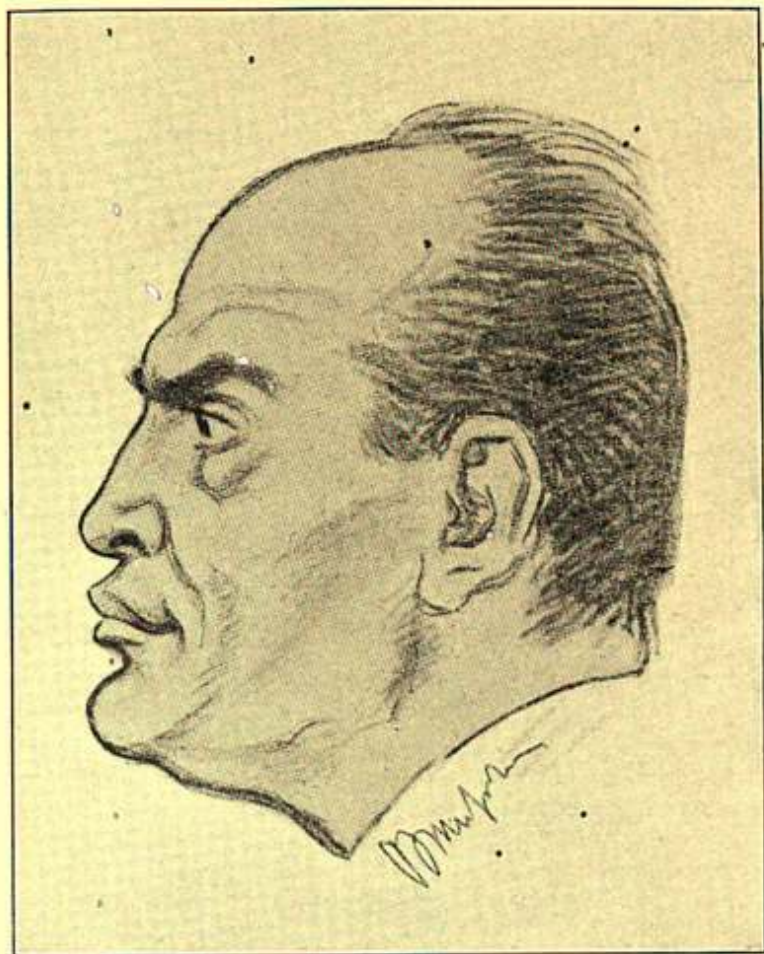
In the budget proposals for 1927-8 estimates for the expenses of the Militia amount to 61 millions, 7½ millions being for Militia

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on service in the ports. Thus the Militia proper would cost 53½ millions!

In his speech of May 26, 1927, Mussolini stated that the Militia guarding the railways, ports, post and telegraph offices and roads consisted of 10,000 men, while those watching the frontiers numbered 2,800. The Militia forest-guards number 5,500, according to figures published in *Milizia Fascista*, April 16, 1927, by Signor Melchiorri, Vice-Secretary General of the Fascist Party. These special detachments number therefore altogether 18,000 men. If the 2,800 Militia troops on frontier duty cost 30 million, it follows that the 18,000 cannot cost less than 190 million. Besides these special detachments, there is the Militia proper, with its officers whom Mussolini in the same speech computes as numbering 20,000 (*sic*), and with its 10,000 men in permanent service (Mussolini's interview with the *Daily Express*, Jan. 24, 1927), i.e. two officers for every man! These 30,000 men can hardly cost 53½ million if the 18,000 already mentioned cost 190 million. In this, as in so many other points, the figures given by the Fascist Government are undoubtedly false.

In *The Times*, August 27, 1927, Signor Villari, forgetting the official declarations made by Mussolini himself in his speech of May 26, 1927, contradicts the statement of *The Times* correspondent that the Militia contains at least 20,000 salaried officers, and endeavours to make out that 'the total strength of the Militia, all ranks included, is 190,000, and the budget amounts to 53,000,000 lire, i.e., 279 lire (about £3) a year per man.' He arrives at this latter figure by dividing the total up equally amongst the 20,000 salaried officers and the rank and file who are paid by the day as wanted!



MUSSOLINI AS THE FASCISTS SEE HIM

(From the volume *Fascismo Liberatore*, Florence, Beniporad, 1923)

Facing page 238.

THE RIGHT TO KILL

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

This 'will no longer be possible' tells enough.

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

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

¹ *Avanti*, June 23, 1926.

² See p. 184.

³ *Stampa*, November 22, 1925.

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

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

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

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

¹ *Review of Reviews*, September-October 15, 1927.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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because he had just heard that his friend and colleague the deputy Signor Frontini had been assaulted in his own house. For some months I could hear nothing from my lawyer; my letters were left unanswered. After the murder of Matteotti (June, 1924) and as a result of my article in the *Mondo* of July 2, 1924, the magistrature began to move. I and my son were interrogated in Switzerland by proxy for the Public Prosecutor of Florence. The two Fascists, Nenciolini and Fantozzi, whom I had accused in my deposition, were called before the Examining Judge of Florence. Having no news of my Counsel, I sent a trustworthy friend of mine, himself a lawyer, to Florence, to ascertain what was happening. He sent me a report on October 19, 1924. Signor Tempestini had been threatened, among other things, on account of my case. "He is sure" - says the report - "that as soon as your enemies know of your return, they will get active and take you by surprise before the Examining Judge confronts you with your assailants, and will warn you not to recognize them on pain of . . . all kinds of penalties." Signor Tempestini had not even dared to bring forward the case. I left for Italy on the evening of December 18, 1924, having been summoned to appear on the morning of the 19th. At that moment, the Fascist regime seemed thoroughly shaken by the indignation roused by the Matteotti crime. I thought I might possibly obtain justice. I was questioned by the Examining Judge, but though he seemed willing to do his best, his efforts could not go very far. Signor Frantini, who had taken the place of Tempestini, had his office looted on December 31, 1924.¹ He found it impossible to get witnesses. The Examining Judge could not even trace the policeman to whom the Fascists had handed me over; the police were evidently hand in glove with the Fascio. A lady who had witnessed the assault at Ponte S. Trinita, did not dare give evidence. I insisted that the judge should question my son and confront him with the aggressors. The judge objected that it was difficult and almost impossible to make confrontations, saying: "We may hear him at the trial." "The order must have come from Rome," he said. My wife asked the judge why the deposition of her son was not heard. The judge looked at her with wonder,

¹ See above, page 176.

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

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

'In September, 1922' - writes Signor Labriola - 'a few days before the Fascists took over the Government, the Fascists of Giugliano, a small town near Naples, belonging to the constituency which I represented in Parliament, had forbidden me to enter the town. Notices to this effect were posted on the walls throughout my constituency. Though the Fascists were not then in power, the authorities took no steps. To me the notice was sent by telegram as follows: "Labriola, Naples. Order issued by the Fascists of Giugliano: Up with cudgels against Labriola. Signed, Giuseppe Cante, Secretary." The Examining Judge opened an inquiry, and questioned me. I produced the telegram which bore the signature. The magistrate closed the inquiry, stating the author of the threat to be a "person unknown," although Signor Cante was perfectly well-known and is still alive.'¹

It was 'persons unknown' who, in October, 1924, bludgeoned Don Grandi, the parish priest of Preta (Piacenza), so that he died in the hospital of Piacenza on October 19, 1924. The *Osservatore Romano*, October 22, 1924, the pro-Fascist organ of the Vatican, reporting the death observed: 'Thirty-six other priests of the same province were victims of the same kind of aggression.' These beatings were ordered by the Fascist deputy Barbiellini, 'Ras' of Piacenza and the neighbourhood. The Fascists of one town were mobilized to beat the anti-Fascists of another town, and so it was difficult to identify them. The Fascist Lertua, before himself being killed for having become a dissident Fascist, declared that 'even the beating of Don Grandi was ordered by Barbiellini.'²

¹ *Review of Reviews*, September-October, 1927.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

§ 2: *The Travesty of Justice*

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

¹ The National Federation of Catholic Elementary School-teachers.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

'JUDGE: Are you sure of that?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹ *La Stampa*, November 22, 1925.

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§ 3: *Moral Anarchy*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

fare a me l'organizzatore la sanza la
storia, l'egualità accantato Balbo, marcia
donna in qua l'ordine di l'invito dal come
fatto ciò intesse con il mio e implora
mente di l'placante temperato ed iplora
finita) meglio unito dire che tutto
quanto è raccolto è arrivato sempre
per la storia di l'atto e per l'effusione
e per la completezza del Duce. Alludo alla
L'istituzione Annunziata - ^{ordinata da Mussolini}
l'ini, nel giorno di ^{la giornata da Cuneo} De Bonis, alla festa
dona Mussolini - ^{organizzata da Balbo} su
impegno di Mussolini - ^{all'occasione}
a me da Mussolini ed ^{ordinata} Balbo a me
esito con l'invito, alla l'invito come
il primo unito, alla recente l'invito
giorno con la l'effusione ^{ordinata da Mussolini}
della a Franchi, alla l'effusione ^{ordinata}
da Mussolini al l'invito per la l'invito
Rovato alle la meritata l'invito in
seguito alla tua l'effusione, alla l'invito
la l'invito in l'invito ^{ordinata}
Mussolini a maggio, ^{ordinata}, e ^{ordinata}
me, ^{ordinata} ^{ordinata}; ^{ordinata} ^{ordinata}
mente il Comune ^{ordinata} ^{ordinata}, ^{ordinata}
intelligente di Mussolini di ^{ordinata} ^{ordinata}

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

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

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

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

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

Amongst the most shameless acquittals let some instances be cited.

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

¹ *Secolo*, July 22, 1925.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

When the case opened at Bologna against Regazzi, and the

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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confusing an episode of our revolution with ordinary crimes of common law.'¹

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹ *Cremona Nuova*, March 7, 1925.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

'NATIONAL MILITIA GENERAL HEADQUARTERS.

ROME,

August 31, 1923.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

³ *Corriere della Sera*, November 28, 1924.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

'Al mondo paura non ha;
Per lui giustizia non c'è.'¹

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

§ 4: *The Florence Outrages*

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹ He fears nothing in the world; for him justice does not exist.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹ Pronouncement of the Accusing Section, November 30, 1926, p. 23.

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

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

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

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

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

¹ *Giustizia*, October 26, 1925.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹ *Corriere della Sera*, May 17, 1927.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The method was still going on in 1926.

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

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

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

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

¹ Pilati was a builder.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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§ 5: 'He governs firmly and justly'

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Here are some specimens culled from his speeches of 1923:

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

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

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

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

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

Mussolini.—'We will make more, if necessary!'¹

Cesare Rossi, the head of Mussolini's Press Bureau,² affirmed

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

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

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

'All that has occurred was done by Mussolini's orders, or with his concurrence. I mean the bludgeoning of Amendola, for which Mussolini gave orders to De Bono² without my knowledge and which was carried out by Candelori;³ the bludgeoning of Misuri, which was organized by Balbo, at Mussolini's instigation; the attack on Forzi, for which Mussolini gave me orders in a state of excitement, and which I organized together with Giunta; the

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

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

² General De Bono was one of the generals who prepared and led the 'March on Rome.' Mussolini appointed him Commander-General of the Fascist Militia, and Director General of the Police, and made him a Senator. As head of the police, De Bono prevented any serious inquiry from being made, whenever a political crime had been committed by Fascists (see pages 259 and 280). In December, 1924, Signor Donati, editor of the Christian-Democratic paper, *Il Popolo*, accused him of having had a share in the Matteotti murder and other crimes. By Italian law a senator can be tried only by the Senate. Thus a Commission of Inquiry was set up to make preliminary investigations into the charges. De Bono was acquitted by the Commission, though the verdict of acquittal recognized that as Head of the Police he had side-tracked judicial inquiry. (See Appendix B on *The Finzi Memorandum* at the end of the present volume.) After his acquittal he was appointed, in the summer of 1925, Governor of Tripolitania.³

³ Consul of the Militia.

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attack on Nitti's house, and the recent demonstration against the opposition groups, for which Mussolini gave instructions to Foschi.¹ It was Mussolini who proposed to the Quadrumvirate (the Central Committee of the Fascist Party) that the Fascist deputy Ravazzoli should receive the lesson his lack of discipline deserved. It was he who gave orders to Signor Maggi, the Fascist deputy, to destroy the Christian-Democratic clubs in the Brianza, and afterwards repeated the orders to me with complacency. I must add that Commendatore Fasciolo received daily from Mussolini the names of subscribers to the *Voce Repubblicana*, the *Avanti*, the *Giustizia*, the *Italia Libera*, the *Unità*, and other anti-Fascist papers; Fasciolo was to forward these to the local branches of the Fascist Party, so that the persons indicated might be bludgeoned, and forcibly dosed with castor-oil.²

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

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

It may be argued that Cesare Rossi sought to blackmail the

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

² See Appendix B on the *Finzi Memorandum*.

THE RIGHT TO KILL

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

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

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

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

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

'Such incidents have always occurred in Italy, especially during

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

THE FASCIST DICTATORSHIP

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

di un campo elettorale, i socialisti, i repubblicani, non
 per ispiri di principio ma per motivi personali,
 hanno fatto il gioco di tutte le opposizioni, hanno
 girato a tutti i nemici, sebbene, hanno
 compiuto un'opera propria molto obliqua
 opera di tradimento, nel momento in cui
 - Ma con un immane nemico - il partito
 superano la loro lottiglia.

Il partito è chiaro e refrattario.
 Quanto alle opposizioni tutte corrono a parte
 rivoltate - prima si fanno nelle più immense
 inferni - come il nome di Lenin ha
 battuto non siamo i nemici, ma i socialisti.

I socialisti necessitano come
 stati cristiani e migliori e molti di essi fratelli
 faremo sapere ristampare per tutti.

Che haifa, perche! ~~frase~~ ~~com-~~ ~~int-~~ 1° p.

Naturalmente tutti i partiti dell'opposizione sono stati perseguitati
nel caso di Roma, e sono partiti tutti i suoi dirigenti
alla Direzione di Milano, per mettere la parte generalissima
fascista, spacciata e disprezzata!

I fatti parlano chiaro. Il T. N. Ruffini è
stato con ben più - siccome fu - partiti di
opposizione e cioè nel partito comunista, nel partito
socialista, nel partito unitario, nel partito repubblicano,
nel partito popolare, nel partito democratico italiano.

Ma il disingano è tutti i partiti, i
gruppi più o meno organizzati, come quelli degli
anarchici - le fette di pasta - e altri elementi
più o meno definiti, ma espressamente politici.

Ma che cosa è accaduto?

Che in un momento delicato - quello quello

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

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

THE RIGHT TO KILL

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

This article was written by Mussolini himself.¹

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

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

¹ See facsimiles facing pages 290 and 291.

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

THE FASCIST DICTATORSHIP

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

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

'After the murder of the Fascist Geri¹ in Paris, the Prime Minister, in agreement with Signor Bastianini, the Secretary for Fasci abroad, ordered Dumini, Putato, Volpi and others to go to Paris and give a lesson to the anti-Fascist *émigrés*. The police head-quarters issued three passports with false particulars.'

Amerigo Dumini corroborates:

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

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

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

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

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

² The Santoro Proposals.

THE RIGHT TO KILL

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹ The Santoro Proposals.

THE FASCIST DICTATORSHIP

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹ See facsimile facing this page.

THE RIGHT TO KILL

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MUSSOLINI.'

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

² This letter was published in the clandestine press in Italy in the spring of 1925.

³ See facsimile facing p. 296.

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

THE FASCIST DICTATORSHIP

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MINISTERO
DELLI
AFFARI ESTERI

TELEGRAMMA N.
In partenza

U.S.

Oggetto

Indirizzo a

prefetto - Torino

Roma li

192 ore

Spese a

cipri
mb.

Creare mi si inferisce che noto gobetti sui fl.to
recentemente parigi e che oggi sui piedi stop
prop. infrazioni e vigilan per rendere
nuovamente difficile vita questi iniel
oppositore governo e fascista.

Mussolini

'TO MAKE LIFE DIFFICULT' (see page 295)

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

[Facing page 296.]

THE RIGHT TO KILL

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

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

§ 6: *Mussolini's double game*

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

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

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

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

THE FASCIST DICTATORSHIP

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

'Thus it can happen that he touches the hearts and rouses the admiration of the Roman crowds in Piazza Colonna on April 10, (1924), by crying "Let our faction perish, if the country is saved!"¹ having, a few minutes earlier, said to me he hoped the Fascists would put their opponents back in their proper place. By turns he is cynical and sentimental, impulsive and cautious, irritable and calm, generous and cruel, quick to decide and slow to move, uncompromising and conciliatory. All the qualities of heart and mind have in him contradictory aspects, but in his activities as Head of the Government and of the Fascist Party, the tendencies which predominate are duplicity, superficiality and improvisation. In an interview with socialist trade-unionists he talks as one who has no confidence in the Fascist Unions, whereas he answers Rossoni² that he only gave the interview so as to compromise these men with their own party. Officially he makes a show of endorsing the policy of Signor De Stefani,³ whereas he refuses the latter's request to stop the publication of the newspaper *Il Nuovo Paese*, because, as he says, "in the journalistic key-board it is expedient for him to have also that note of personal opposition to De Stefani." He is present at De Stefani's speeches at Milan,⁴ and later, in conversation with myself, Acerbo and Finzi, gives vent to his anger against De Stefani, complaining that "the Ministry of Finance has become the arsenal of anti-Fascism." He officially sends amicable messages to Farinacci, while urging me to get the Party to stop the grumblings of that same gentleman; and when a current of opposition to Farinacci becomes apparent in the Cremona town council, Mussolini expresses the hope that he will be able to "prick that blister too" (i.e. Farinacci).

¹ Mussolini, *Nuova politica dell'Italia*, 1924, p. 44.

² Secretary and chief of the Fascist trade-unions.

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

⁴ March 15, 1923; May 30, 1924.



THE CINEMA ARTIST

Facing page 296.]

THE RIGHT TO KILL

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

THE FASCIST DICTATORSHIP

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

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

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

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

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

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

MINISTERO
AFFARI ESTERI

TELEGRAMMA N.
in partenza

Indirizzo a

prefetto -

milano

Roma, h

122 ore

Spazio a

cfm
mh
(T. 100)

ritirarsi ultima volta abrogare arrovant.

longini per atteggiamento insolente giornale

socialpunitista e la ripresi suboriniana

depo la carta padre giorni con una

ambrosiano ordinato applicazione migliore

già addebito carta giornale communita legge

muscolini

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

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

Facing page 300.]

THE RIGHT TO KILL

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

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

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

- (1) The 'attempt' would be a good pretext for a fresh pogrom against anti-Fascists;
- (2) The French Government could be accused of complicity in the plots of Italian refugees in France.

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

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

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

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

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

Suddenly, on November 3, the French police arrested Ricciotti

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MINISTERO
DEI
AFFARI ESTERI

TELEGRAMMA N.
In partenza

di
M
M
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ai prefetti	
Firenze e Pisa	
Roma, 6	1923

come data informazione sparsa in vari club
incidenti anti-cattolici sarebbe ben che
Sedici locale per. per. si
verga ufficialmente etc. Anzitutto
prefetto spiegazioni rimando alle
alt. rispetto proprio per religione cattolica
mentre

TO PLACATE THE VATICAN (see page 305)

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

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

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

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

MUSSOLINI.¹

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

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

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

¹ See facsimile facing page 304.

² See *Corriere della Sera*, July 17, 1923, and *Il Popolo*, July 21, 1923.

³ See Appendix A, § XXXIV, at the end of the present volume.

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

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

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

After the outrage, De Bono told Rossi:

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

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

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

¹ On December 26, 1923, Mussolini was in Milan for the Christmas celebrations.

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

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

§ 7: Fascist Heroism

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Looking at the other side, Giacomo Matteotti, in his book, *Un Anno di dominazione fascista*, records about 150 deaths from November, 1922, to November, 1923.¹ During the five months from June 25, to December 2, 1924, the Press Bureau of the

¹ English version, *The Fascists Exposed: a Year of Fascist Domination*, published by the I.L.P.

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

Dead, 36.

Severely wounded, 77.

Houses invaded or looted, 74.¹

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

Note A to Page 284

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Note B to Page 300

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

THE MATTEOTTI MURDER¹§ 1: *Matteotti and his Murderers*

GIACOMO MATTEOTTI was a young man of 39 belonging to a well-to-do family of landowners.² He was an organizer of Trade Unions and Co-operatives among the agricultural labourers of the Po₄Delta. 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.³

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.

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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 gallows 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.

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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

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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 terribile che l'epiteto, dopo tutti
 i clamori, è dantesco di "masnada" lancia
 dall'or. suinta: la maggioranza è "lutar
 tranquilla" - un perfetto stile - per ben 22
 minuti intesi e al pubblico fu pervasi
 della stessa, nell'emiciclo del Gran Palazzo
 da un primo atto profetico, al
 popolo italiano bisognava come si dice
 e mente, un impero grande e per questo
 di ogni cosa, con quella sua
 anima insieme mettendole le mani
 il più e per il bene e in. Mussolini.
 Confessioni inconfessate e tutti dicono
 e tutti - X più di migliaia di suoi uomini
 di ~~...~~ e sufficienti angeli.

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

Facing page 320.]

Il signor Goren

questo e altri simili e meglio piuttosto di tutti
le ragioni giuridiche anti-fasciste, comincio a leggere
e profino in un numero del *Welt* fu il minime
e il probato. Niente di più probato, ad esempio,
del commento che questa mezza cartolina
deve all'incidente di Mussolini nel quale
commento si parla di Joppi contro di Mussolini,
di ideali infanti di Mussolini e simili altre
pacciosate stampate. On signor Joppi
è un contadino e gli ideali infanti come i politici
li stampi sul proprio occhio sono
che delirano i Melli. Basta dire allo
sintore stampato che Mussolini ha
tenuto in troppo longanime ^{la cartolina} di
maggiore della Camera, perché i on.
Matteotti ha tenuto in questo misteriosamente
promotore che mette molto più che

MUSSOLINI'S THREATS AGAINST MATTEOTTI (see page 319)

Facsimile of the article against Matteotti (*Popolo d'Italia*, May 31, and *Impero*, June 4, 1924)
in Mussolini's handwriting. Original in the hands of Signor Fasciolo.

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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.

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'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.

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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 'is 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.

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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

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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, *Fascist 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 counselors 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.

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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.

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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.

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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.'

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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,

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(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.

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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.

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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

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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.

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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

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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.

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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.

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saw^y 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 cumbrous and expensive machinery and have a deputy abducted merely as a 'practical joke.'

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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; Depositions of De Bono, July 9, 1924; Bruti, June 25, 1924; Trieri, 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.

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‘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! 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

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'When Mussolini learned that even Fasciolo had been informed¹—thus Fasciolo told Rossi, who repeats it—he burst forth: "Why, everybody has been blabbing! Already all Rome knows!" 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.

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‘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.

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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.

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"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!"'

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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.

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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.

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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 Carabinieri 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, 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 kidnappers themselves were apprehended.'

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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.

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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.

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.

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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 manoeuvres 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.

'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 Mattreotti was kidnapped.

Facing page 356.]

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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.

tion, was looking for to attack the Government. The manœuvre 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 reassure 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.

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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. Amerola 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 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.

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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.

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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 *Comunisti* 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.

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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.

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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 Milicia, nor the Militia to the Press.

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

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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.

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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

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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.

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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.

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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,

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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 unflinchingly 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.'

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§ 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.

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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.

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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

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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, 1926, 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, unanimately 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.'

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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

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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.

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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*,

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(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).

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'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

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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.

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Justitia regno;um 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.

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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.

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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,*

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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 Pinaridi, 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.

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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.

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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'Amico, 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.

V

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.

VIII A

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 ludgeoning 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 'Ras.' Though expelled from the Fascist party, he still had a large following in Naples.

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-Bencivenga 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 himself 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 Igliori, 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 'squadristi' 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.

³ Reformist-Socialist deputy of Turin.

² See above, p. 290.

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.¹

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 Cheka, committed arbitrary and untimely actions, this does not lessen the responsibility of the one who proposed the institution of the Cheka, i.e. Signor Mussolini. To attribute the responsibility solely to Rossi and Marinelli is the climax of effrontery and childishness.

XXII

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.

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 Matteotti 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 *Stren* 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 Colómbino, D'Aragona, Belevi, 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.

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 expressed 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 Vanzi how to harass them in his paper, *Il Serenissimo* (Vanzi afterwards avowed to me having received these directions). In the same speech of January 27, 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.

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THE FINZI MEMORANDUM

§ 1: *The Resignation of Finzi*

Giorgio Schiff-Giorgini, one of the witnesses interrogated by the Examining Judge on July 4, 1924, and by the Senate Commission of Inquiry in December, 1924,¹ made the following deposition, which was fully confirmed by Carlo Silvestri and Guglielmo Emanuel:

'After the murder of Matteotti, I went [on the afternoon of Saturday, June 14] to see Finzi. He had resigned his post as Under-Secretary in the Home Office and was suspected and accused by public opinion and by many newspapers of being responsible for the crime.

'Finzi told me that on Friday or Saturday,² Signor Acerbo [Under-Secretary in the Prime Minister's department] had come early to his house, saying that he was commissioned by the Prime Minister to obtain from him (Finzi) his signature to a letter of resignation already written. In this manner, Finzi was to prove his immense devotion to the Prime Minister by allowing the country to hold him responsible, although innocent, for what had occurred. Thus he would enable the Prime Minister to regain control of the shaken situation, by offering himself as a scapegoat. The Prime Minister, Acerbo had said, believed that in a short time he would regain absolute control of the situation, and promised to reward Finzi's devotion by reinstating him, and even appointing him to no less a post than that of Home Secretary. Finzi had replied to Acerbo that so grave a request must be made personally by Mussolini. This the latter actually did, confirming what Acerbo had said, and appealing to the brotherly³ friendship which Finzi had always shown towards him. Finzi, in his unlimited faith and loyalty to the Prime Minister, had agreed to sacrifice himself temporarily, but it was quite clear between him

¹ See above, p. 124, n. 2.

² The date was certainly Saturday, June 14: see Acerbo's deposition August 4, 1924. The chronology in this deposition is somewhat confused.

and Mussolini that if, after forty-eight hours had passed, Mussolini had not fulfilled his promises of reinstatement and promotion, he, Finzi, should consider himself free to take whatever action might seem to him best in the defence of his honour. On this understanding the resignation was written.

'But twenty-four hours had already passed¹ and Finzi was going through extreme anxiety while waiting to hear from the Prime Minister. He began to doubt whether the promises would be kept. He was also afraid of some act of violence, and was torn between projects of revolt and hopes of amicable settlement. Mussolini, he declared, could not do otherwise than keep faith, for he, Finzi, had it in his power to disclose things which would blow up Italy (*fare saltare l'Italia*).

'The following day, Sunday morning, I returned to see Finzi again. The forty-eight hours having now nearly passed,² he was certain he had been betrayed. He had become quite calm. He said he considered it his duty to make known to the Italian people his innocence, and at the same time to indicate those really responsible. He was counting on me, as a member of the Opposition, to inform the most important personages of the Opposition about the contents of a "memorandum-letter" which he had written to his brother Gino. He said he had made several copies of this letter and had entrusted them to persons in whom he had complete confidence, with instructions that they were to be made public in the event of violence being used against him. He had warned Senator De Bono and Acerbo of the step he had taken.

'From a case, which lay on his writing-table, he handed to me an envelope, on which was written: "To my brother Gino." The latter was staying with him at the time. In the envelope was a

¹ The witness, misled by the erroneous idea that Finzi had resigned on Friday, June 13, thought that on the Saturday when he went to see Finzi, twenty-four hours had elapsed since the resignation.

² The forty-eight hours were up, not on the Sunday, June 15, but on Monday, 16. Emanuel and Silvestri both agree in placing the Schiff-Giorgini and Amendola interview on Monday. Schiff-Giorgini went often during these days to see Finzi, and he mixes up conversations of different dates.

sheet of four pages, all covered with Finzi's writing. He said that he had had other copies typed; some he had given to trusted friends, and others he had deposited in a safe, in the Bank of Novara. This letter, which I had in my hands for about half an hour, I read and re-read with much care. Finzi asked me to go and see Signor Amendola and Senator Albertini to make known to them the contents of the letter, and to beg them to arrange a meeting with him. Exasperated with the position in which he found himself, he intended to place himself entirely at their disposal.

'I pointed out to Finzi the extreme gravity of the commission with which he entrusted me. But he seemed unshakable in his decision, and persisted in his request.

'I made known these facts to Signor Amendola, who told me that he would probably be lunching at the Grand Hotel with Senator Albertini.

'I went thither to confer with them both [Monday, 16]. Senator Albertini, already in some measure made aware of the facts by Signor Amendola, expressed his approval of Finzi's attitude, but did not consider it prudent for Finzi at the moment to have an interview with himself and Signor Amendola. He proposed that Finzi should confer with one of his trusted envoys (*fiduciari*); Carlo Silvestri or Guglielmo Emanuel.

'Finzi, understanding perfectly the attitude taken up by Signor Amendola and Senator Albertini, declared himself ready to receive their envoys. Silvestri consequently went to see him for the first time that afternoon [Monday, June 16] towards 5 p.m., and returned there again with me towards midnight. Emanuel had a meeting with Finzi's brother at the house of common friends towards 6 p.m. Aldo Finzi related to Silvestri, and Gino Finzi to Emanuel, all the facts and the contents of the memorandum letter.

'But from that moment ¹ I had the impression that Finzi had

¹ 'From that moment' means from midnight on Monday, 16, as is shown by the subsequent paragraph beginning with the same words: 'From that moment.' It must be borne in mind that the Schiff-Giorgini deposition was not written by himself in the calm and leisure of the study. It is the record of what he said before the Senate Commission of Inquiry. A

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lost the self-confidence and boldness of the morning, because he asked me to beg Signor Amendola and Senator Albertini not to make public the revelations made by him, as he wished to wait another twenty-four hours.

'Towards midnight on Monday, Finzi was summoned¹ by the Prime Minister to his house in the Via Kasella and I waited for him at his home. He returned after about half-an-hour, extremely agitated and pale. Mussolini, he said, had declared that, thanks to the breathing-space that the Opposition parties had given him 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 one another."

'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 utterly 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 there his followers. The words: "we understand one another" had completely thrown him off his balance.

'The same evening,² towards six o'clock, I returned 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 immediately and made no further efforts to get into touch with him.'³

document of this kind cannot but show traces of untidiness, the result of interruptions, cross-questioning, and all the distractions of a court of law.

¹ Finzi was not summoned. He himself asked for the interview through Senator Morello and went to it not towards midnight but at 10 p.m. (See above, pp. 353-7.)

² 'The same evening' must mean some evening subsequent to the Monday night on which the interview between Mussolini and Finzi took place. Silvestri gives the afternoon of Thursday, June 19, as the date of the decisive change in Finzi's attitude.

³ The Santoro Proposals, and depositions of Silvestri, September 30, 1924, and Emanuel, October 2, 1924.

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As the Finzi Memorandum began to be mentioned in the Press a few days later, Finzi, in his deposition of July 4, 1924, denied having written or communicated to anyone 'a supposed Memorandum said to contain revelations regarding the Matteotti case.' But on October 2 and October 24, 1924, two witnesses appeared, who confirmed the existence of the document. They were the journalists Francesco Maratea and Gildo Cioli, who said Finzi invited them to his house on the night of June 15, and communicated to them the same facts as he made known to Schiff-Giorgini, Silvestri, and Emanuel (see above, page 354). Maratea said:

'Finzi took Cioli into another room. . . . When we were in the street, Cioli told me that Finzi had shown him letters addressed to friends, asking them, in case, as he feared, he was suddenly put out of the way, to go to the Courts and declare that he, Finzi, was in no way responsible for the death of Matteotti.'

The other witness, Cioli, admitted that Finzi had taken him aside and made him read a letter to his brother Gino.

Subsequently, before the Senate Commission of Inquiry, two other witnesses, the Fascist Senator Morello and the Fascist deputy, Signor Grandi, both called by Finzi himself, confirmed the evidence of Schiff-Giorgini and Silvestri as to the existence of the Memorandum and the reasons which Finzi had for writing it (see above, pp. 355-6). Even General Piccio, another of the witnesses called by Finzi, though denying having read the document, did not deny its existence and added that 'Signor Finzi had seemed to him for no apparent reason to be alarmed about the possibility of being put out of the way.'¹

Finzi himself on November 15, 1924, before the Inquiring Judge, had to admit that he had written a 'short letter' to his brother, giving him 'precise instructions as to what to tell the judges in the event of any violence being used against him.' He re-affirmed having written the document before the Senate Commission of Inquiry also. In consequence even the Attorney-

¹ The Santoro Proposals.

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General, Santoro, could not but admit that the 'Finzi Memorandum undoubtedly existed and possibly still exists.'¹

The evidence of Schiff-Giorgini, Silvestri and Emanuel, with regard to the pressure by which Mussolini obtained Finzi's resignation, is confirmed by Signor Acerbo himself in the following deposition made on August 4, 1924:

'On the Saturday morning, towards eight o'clock, I was rung up by the Prime Minister, from his house. He told me to find Finzi and Rossi immediately, and to request them to tender their resignations: Finzi because he was the object of attacks on moral grounds, though independently of the Matteotti crime, and Rossi because all Rome was crying out that he had been on intimate terms with Dumini. The Prime Minister dictated to me in detail the exact formula of the letter which Finzi was to sign. Signor Finzi, although disconcerted, declared that he would obey. But about an hour later, at the Palazzo Chigi, he begged the Prime Minister not to insist on his resignation, as he was entirely unconnected with the case. But the Prime Minister repeated that his resignation was absolutely necessary to satisfy public opinion, although he admitted, in fact explicitly affirmed, that Finzi had been entirely innocent of the whole affair.'

Is it possible that Finzi's resignation, obtained at this particular moment, could serve any other purpose than that of side-tracking

¹ Signor Villari asserted in a letter to the *Review of Reviews*, March to April, 1926, that the Finzi Memorandum 'is known of only by hearsay, the persons, who declare they have seen it having been proved absolutely unreliable as witnesses by the examining magistrates. The very existence of this document is, in fact, extremely doubtful.' In his *Fascist Experiment*, p. 70, he writes: 'Reports were spread about concerning a memorandum which Finzi was said to have written containing a series of charges against various Fascist leaders, including Mussolini himself, but it was never produced, and no one even had actually seen it, except a certain absolutely unreliable witness (Schiff-Giorgini), who had been formerly a friend of Nitti, and had since become an ardent Fascist. As not one of the many statements he made proved on judicial inquiry to be based on facts, no much credence was attached to his account of the Finzi Memorandum, the existence of which even Finzi himself denied.' *Et voilà comment on écrit l'histoire.*

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public excitement towards Finzi? If any shadow of doubt remained, it is dissipated by Finzi's letter of resignation, which, as Acerbo stated, was prepared by Mussolini, and by Mussolini's answer (see above, pp. 349-50). In addition there is a letter written on June 15, from Finzi to Acerbo, in which we find the following:

'I am calmly and resolutely keeping to all that I yesterday promised Signor Mussolini. I am proud that my gesture has succeeded and that I am proving an excellent target, drawing the fire on to myself in these most difficult circumstances . . . I am awaiting instructions, and hope that you are keeping your head as well as I am.'

§ 2: *The Contents of the Finzi Memorandum*

What were the contents of the Finzi Memorandum?

In his deposition of September 30, 1924, before the judge charged with the preliminary inquiry into the Matteotti case, Carlo Silvestri, who had taken notes of his conversations with Finzi, reported the contents of the Memorandum as follows:

'(A) He (Finzi) attributed the disappearance of Matteotti to a secret organization which had arisen inside the Fascist Party, in close contact with the Government and which he called the "Cheka." This organization had existed in embryo when Fascism first came to power. It received definite shape at a secret meeting of a Committee of Public Safety held on January 10, 1924, at Mussolini's initiative. Besides the Prime Minister, there were present Giunta, De Bono, Forges-Davanzati, Cesare Rossi and Giovanni Marinelli. Although Italo Balbo, in his capacity of Generalissimo of the Militia, was a member of the Committee, he was not present. The Committee resolved definitely to organize the Cheka under the command of Cesare Rossi and Marinelli, the latter of whom was to have charge of the finances. These were to be supplied from the secret funds of the Premier's department of the Home Office, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Fascist Party. The organization was to be directly responsible to the Prime Minister, and its task was to defend his person, the Government and the Fascist Revolution.'

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(B) It was the Cheka, both before and after January 10, 1924, which had carried out the outrages on Amendola, Nitti and Forzi. Dumini had been in Paris as its agent. For the expenses of the journey to Paris, Finzi was ordered to hand over 30,000 lire to the Deputy Signor Bastianini. According to Finzi, the acts of violence which had caused the most scandal had been organized by the following: Italo Balbo arranged the bludgeoning of the Member of Parliament Misuri; De Bono that of Amendola; Giunta and Rossi that of Forzi; and Polverelli and Iglioni the looting of Signor Nitti's house.

(C) During the days when the debate on the Speech from the Throne was taking place (June 3 to 7, 1924) Mussolini gave orders to the Chiefs of the Cheka that the most prominent leaders of the Opposition, beginning with Matteotti, should be put out of the way, secretly and for good.

(D) Finzi hinted at a discussion which had taken place in the room reserved for Ministers at Montecitorio (the House of Parliament), in the course of which Rossi had opposed the arrest of Dumini which had been decided on by the Prime Minister. Rossi had maintained that, if the arrest was carried out, the responsibility of those in the highest places could no longer be concealed.

This version given by Silvestri corresponds almost exactly with that given by Schiff-Giorgini in his deposition of July 16, 1924, except that in the latter the facts referred to under (D) are lacking.¹ Guglielmo Emanuel also, in his deposition of October 2, 1924, briefly but entirely confirmed what Silvestri had said of the Cheka, simply saying as to the rest of the Memorandum, that Finzi's brother confirmed its contents in the 'very words of Schiff.'

When forced to admit the existence of his Memorandum,

¹ It is possible that this particular was told Silvestri by Finzi in the verbal explanations which accompanied the reading of the Memorandum or in the conversations of the days between Monday and Thursday. By a slip of memory, Silvestri may have believed it to be part of the written memorandum. Had the story been a concoction of Schiff-Giorgini and Silvestri, their accounts would have coincided in a much more marked degree.

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Finzi shifted his position; he repudiated the evidence of Silvestri, Schiff-Giorgini, and Emanuel, not only as to the reason of his resignation and his threat to Mussolini, but even as to the contents of the Memorandum.

The Attorney-General, Santoro, accepted Finzi's denials, and refused credence entirely to the evidence of the three witnesses, declaring their depositions to be sheer invention. The evidence of Maratea, Cioli, Morello, Grandi, Acerbo, as to the motives of Finzi's resignation and as to his threat against Mussolini, all counts for nothing. Finzi's own admissions count for nothing. Even Finzi's letter to Acerbo of June 15, 1924, counts for nothing: on the contrary Santoro takes it as a proof that Mussolini had made no promises to Finzi! Yet he reproduces, without in any way casting doubt upon its veracity, the statement by Finzi:

'I wrote the letter to my brother Gino before the forty-eight hours were over within which the Prime Minister had assured me that I should be fully rehabilitated and entirely acquitted of any suspicion of responsibility for the disappearance of Matteotti.'

The Finzi Memorandum must have contained accusations capable of causing Mussolini serious embarrassment if made public; had it been otherwise, the threat to publish it would have had no reason. To this point also Santoro was wilfully blind.

He was blind even to the following facts which would have opened the eyes of anybody else.

(A) Section A of the Finzi Memorandum, according to the witnesses to whom Santoro denied all credence, referred to a 'Cheka,' that is, a 'secret organization which had arisen within the Fascist Party, and in close touch with the Government.'

Finzi himself supplied the best confirmation of this fact, by bringing forward as witnesses Signor Morello and Signor Grandi, who having read the Memorandum, were to corroborate his denials. But on the contrary Morello deposed that in the document read by him, Finzi 'declared as solemnly as in a last will and testament that he was absolutely without knowledge of the Mat-

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teotti crime, and that *the Prime Minister might know more about the Cheka than he, Finzi, did,*¹ and Grandi admitted that in the document there was 'some mention of a Cheka of which Rossi and Marinelli were members.'

The journalist Maratea also deposed that Finzi spoke to him and to Cioli of the Cheka:

'The Cheka was an organization recognized by the Government and directed by Cesare Rossi. When Dumini was arrested, Rossi went to De Bono and said that the arrest was a great mistake.'

Cioli, the other witness of this nocturnal conversation, corroborated that 'Finzi spoke of an organization which existed at the Viminale and which was above the law and the civil service and outside the ordinary rules of morality.'²

Still further evidence is available to prove the existence of a gang of cut-throats which in the high quarters of the Fascist Party was known as the Cheka. This gang had no definite organization with official leaders and regular salaries, but Dumini was its pivot, and it worked under the orders of Mussolini.

(a) Filippo Filippelli declared in his Memorandum of June 14, and in his examination of June 18 and July 26, 1924, that Amerigo Dumini had confided to him that he belonged to a 'special organization founded by the Quadrumvirate (Central Committee of the Party) and directed by Rossi and Marinelli'; and that Rossi and Marinelli had admitted the existence of 'a branch of the secret police,' to which was entrusted the taking of 'energetic measures against the more uncompromising opponents.'

(b) Cesare Rossi repeatedly maintained that the Cheka existed, but declared that it had never received a definite form, although Mussolini himself had several times insisted that it should be properly organized.³

¹ Morello makes no further references to the contents of the Memorandum, or at all events the Santoro Proposals quote no more of his evidence on this subject. But the Memorandum obviously must have contained more than this one fact.

² Deposition October 24, 1924.

³ Examination, July 29 and December 17, 1924; Memorandum of February 11, 1925: see above, pp. 406-7.

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In his Unpublished Notes of August, 1927, Rossi adds the following particulars:

'The Directorate of the Party dealt with this proposal, in a meeting, held if I remember right, in January, 1924. The proposal had been insistently brought forward by the Duce again and again. Signor Giunta, who was then General Political Secretary of the Party, also warmly maintained that 'the Party needed its own Tcheka to protect the regime and carry out its vendettas.' The motion was passed unanimously. It did not even seem necessary to specify the objects and boundary lines of these illegal activities, which the Fascist regime was ready to carry out by means of special funds and men. As Mussolini had discussed this matter in particular with the General Administrative Secretary of the Party, Marinelli, the latter was entrusted with the task of organizing the Tcheka, in agreement with the Duce, and of directing its normal functioning. Signor Maraviglia, who took part in the sessions of the Directorate in his capacity of Head of the Propaganda Bureau, commented on the task entrusted to Marinelli, saying that he had become the Lord High Executioner of the enemies of Fascism.'

Rossi denies having ever been charged with the leadership of the Tcheka, in collaboration with Marinelli:

'I never took the constitution of the Tcheka seriously' - he writes - 'just as I did not take seriously so many other of Mussolini's dangerous schemes. The old Directorate, whose chairman was Signor Giunta, and the new "Quadrumvirate" appointed in April, 1924, were never informed either by Marinelli, Mussolini, or anyone else, of what Marinelli was doing in the carrying out of his instructions. But from time to time, where any manifestation hostile to the regime took place, there was an outbreak of fury on the part of the Duce, who deplored the weakness and insensibility of the Party. He often repeated: "When the devil is this Tcheka going to get to work?"'

Laying aside all discussion as to Rossi's personal responsibility,

one fact emerges from these disclosures: that Schiff-Giorgini, Silvestri and Emanuel were not telling fairy-tales when they spoke of a session of the Directorate of the Fascist Party held in January, 1924, at which the instruction of a Tcheka was adopted. Only a high Fascist personality could have given them exact information of so secret a nature.

Their source of information could be nobody but Finzi.¹

(P) Section B of the Finzi Memorandum, according to Schiff-Giorgini and Silvestri, accused Mussolini of ordering all the acts of violence which had caused the greatest scandal during the preceding two years.

Cesare Rossi, in his Memorandum of June 15, 1924, and February 11, 1925, raised the same accusations.² The reader will find, in Chapter IV, section IV, of the present book, the documents

¹ In his speech of January 3, 1925, Mussolini declared: 'It is said that I have founded a Cheka. Where? When? How? Nobody can say. The Italian Cheka has never existed. Had I founded it, I would have done so according to other standards. Violence cannot be excluded from History. But if violence is to be conclusive, it must be surgical, intelligent, and chivalrous. On the contrary, the exploits of this so-called Cheka have been always unintelligent, orderless, and stupid.' If all criminals could be acquitted on the grounds that their crimes were unintelligent and orderless, very few of them would be sentenced! The propagandist of the Fascist Government in England (*Fascist Experiment*, p. 84) writes that there has never existed 'a scrap of evidence of the Tcheka.' He was more prudent in a letter published in the *Review of Reviews* (March to April, 1926), in saying that the 'Accusing Section proved the non-existence of the famous Cheka, the secret Fascist Committee alleged to have organized many criminal actions, about which the Opposition Press waxed eloquent.' Considering the methods used in the Matteotti case, even if the Accusing Section had pronounced against the existence of the Cheka, the pronouncement would have carried no moral weight. But the facts are these: (1) The Attorney-General, Santoro, denied the existence of the Cheka; (2) The Senate Commission of Inquiry made no explicit pronouncement on the question, confining itself to the declaration that De Bono had not belonged to any form of Cheka; (3) The Public Prosecutor of the Accusing Section at Rome (Farinacci's brother-in-law) lied in his proposal in affirming that the Senate Committee of Inquiry had denied the existence of the Cheka; (4) The Accusing Section, at Rome, made no pronouncement of any sort as to the existence of the Cheka.

² See above, pp. 287-8, and Appendix A.

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which bear out the affirmations of Finzi and Rossi, and the contents of this part of the Finzi Memorandum.

(C) Section C of the Finzi Memorandum, according to Silvestri and Schiff-Giorgini, stated that Mussolini gave orders that Matteotti should be put out of the way. According to Silvestri, the order was given between June 3 and 7, 1924; according to Schiff-Giorgini, the order was given 'during the final sittings of the Chamber' (June 7). In Chapter V, sections II and III of the present book, the reader will find the proofs that this part of the Memorandum cannot have been invented by Schiff-Giorgini, Silvestri, and Emanuel. De Bono, and Finzi himself, admitted that Rossi and Marinelli had both attributed the order to Mussolini.

(D) Finally, Carlo Silvestri told the judges that Finzi related how Cesare Rossi tried to prevent the arrest of Dumini, for fear that he might reveal Mussolini's responsibility.¹ This discussion between Cesare Rossi, Marinelli, De Bono, and Finzi, concerning the arrest of Dumini is attested by De Bono, Rossi, and Finzi. We have already reproduced the testimony of De Bono and of Finzi. (See Chap. V, section II.) Rossi's account of the meeting is as follows:

'On the night of June 12 (Wednesday), I had an interview at the Viminale with Marinelli, De Bono and Finzi. Marinelli and I

- (1) reviewed the responsibility in the matter of illegality of the Prime Minister and consequently of all of us who were in power;
- (2) recalled that Dumini, Volpi, and others (particularly Volpi in matters more closely concerning Mussolini) had been employed on other previous acts of violence;

¹ Silvestri said the discussion took place in the Parliament building, during the afternoon, and not at night in the office of the Home Secretary. This is doubtless a slip of memory in making notes some hours after the conversation. Those who are experienced in weighing evidence know how frequently mistakes of this kind occur, even with the most intelligent and conscientious witnesses.

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- (3) recalled that the Prime Minister had urged that a 'Fascist Police' must definitely be organized and set to work;
- (4) pointed out that Dumini's name had been accepted with special readiness by the Prime Minister as one of the chief members of this body;
- (5) added that the kidnapping of Matteotti, the consequences of which were so grave, would best be treated as an untimely and arbitrary enterprise undertaken without the knowledge of any of us, Marinelli having been away from Rome, and I myself having, some days previously, broken off all relations with Dumini;
- (6) concluded that, since it would be difficult to escape from a common indirect responsibility, it would be well to proceed with extreme caution in the matter of arrests and judicial investigation. The party ought not to allow the event to be exploited by the Opposition.

'I remember Marinelli saying that undoubtedly the great blunder had been committed by Dumini and his companions, but investigations must be suppressed, since the methods of illegality and the persecution of opponents which had led to the present crime, were part of the plan of defence of the Fascist régime. The régime must (as the Duce threatened from time to time) set its firing squads to work, since its opponents did not come out into the streets to attack it, but confined themselves to Press and Parliamentary criticism.

'I also remember saying to De Bono with reference to the Amendola affair: "It was you who organized that assault, by the Prime Minister's order. This affair will also be exposed, and the Paris affair, and the Forni and Misuri affairs, and other acts of violence committed under orders from the Prime Minister."

'All this was perfectly well known to De Bono and Finzi, as they were in constant touch with the Prime Minister, and knew his temperament, and the methods used in the Fascist struggle. We noticed no sign of surprise on their part. De Bono even assured me, as we were leaving, that he was going to telephone at once to Milan to suspend the arrest of Putato, and that, as

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regards Filippelli's car and the chauffeurs, he had already taken the necessary steps.¹

Let us now conclude.

On June 16, Schiff-Giorgini, Silvestri and Emanuel communicated the contents of the Memorandum to the Senator Albertini and Sforza, the Deputies Amendola and Turati, and to Signor Torrigiani, the Grand Master of the Freemasons; on July 16, Schiff-Giorgini repeated his statement in his deposition before the Examining Judge.

Rossi's Memorandum of June 15 was not known to the leaders of the Opposition until early in August; Filippelli's Memorandum of June 14 became known to them towards the end of July,² two weeks after Schiff-Giorgini had referred to the contents of the Memorandum before the Examining Judge. Giunta's circular ordering the assault on Forzi only became known in November, 1924. Vico Perrone's letter confessing that he had organized the assault on Amendola under orders from Mussolini, De Bono and Candelori, became known in January, 1925. As Schiff-Giorgini's deposition before the Examining Judge is of July 16, 1924, it is clear that none of the above documents can have served him as sources of information. Hence the facts which he asserted to have been contained in Sections A, B, and C of the Finzi Memorandum, and which the above documents confirm, could not have come to his knowledge except through the Finzi Memorandum.

Silvestri's first deposition, which is of September 30, 1924, might have drawn upon not only that of Schiff-Giorgini but even the Memoranda of Rossi and Filippelli, which by then were undoubtedly known to him. But Silvestri affirms that there was in the Finzi Memorandum a Section D, of which not a word is mentioned either in the deposition of Schiff-Giorgini or in the Memoranda of Rossi and Filippelli. Yet the contents

¹ Rossi's examination July 23 and December 17, and Memorandum, December 28, 1924.

² Letter from Amendola in the *Review of Reviews*, February-March, 1926.

of this Section D were overwhelmingly corroborated by De Bono, Rossi, and Finzi, whose accounts only began to be known through the Santoro Report in the spring of 1925, and were completely disclosed only at the end of 1925, when the records of the Preliminary Inquiry into the Matteotti case were no longer a secret. Therefore this section also is not an invention of Silvestri.

If Schiff-Giorgini, Silvestri, and Emanuel had themselves invented the contents of the document, how did it happen that their testimony was subsequently confirmed by evidence of which all were ignorant when the alleged invention was made?

§ 3: *A Legal Farce*

With the Attorney-General, Santoro, and the Senate Commission of Inquiry¹ all these proofs counted for nothing. There is none so blind as he who will not see.

To give some idea of the care with which the Commission closed its eyes, let us take two instances.

(1) The Commission admitted as an undisputed fact that General De Bono had removed papers and other articles belonging to Dumini, which should have been laid before the judges as evidence. Having made this admission, they acquitted De Bono of this charge on the grounds of 'want of evidence.'

(2) General De Bono was charged with having ordered the assault on Amendola on December 26, 1923. Vico Perrone's letter

¹The propagandist of the Fascist Government in England (*Fascist Experiment*, p. 74) writes that 'the Senate Commission was composed of seven Senators the majority of whom were anti-Fascists, including the Chairman.' - No! On June 26, 1924, immediately after the Matteotti murder all the seven members of the Commission (Zupelli, D'Andrea, Grosoli, Calisse, Castiglioni, Gioppi, Sinibaldi) voted in the Senate in favour of a resolution of confidence in the Government. In a similar resolution of December 6, 1924, four of them voted for the Government (D'Andrea, Grosoli, Calisse, Gioppi), two abstained (Castiglioni, Sinibaldi), only one (General Zupelli) voted against. The reason of his vote is that, at that moment (December, 1924) the high military authorities were in disagreement with Mussolini over the Militia and the organization of the Army.

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was cited in support of this accusation.¹ It was obviously the duty of the Commission to inquire into the authenticity of this document, which was in the possession of a certain Major Vagliasindi. When the latter was examined by the Commission he stated that copies of this and other documents had been seized by the police in a raid made on his house on the night of December 30, 1924, and added:

'I propose to produce the original documents when I have definite assurance that the law will take its course, and that the reprisals to which I have been subjected for a long time will be stopped. Finally, I should like to observe that it would be much to the point if the High Court were to call for all the documents which were taken from me, as amongst them, others might be found of very great interest.'²

* If the judges who heard this evidence had wished to get to the bottom of the matter, what steps would they have taken? Obviously, they would first have ordered Vagliasindi to produce the original documents; and secondly, they would have demanded the production of all those papers which the police had seized from him.³ Instead of taking this obvious step, the Commission, offended at Vagliasindi's scepticism as to the law taking its proper course, went no farther in the matter. They thus turned in safety a dangerous corner.

But there remained Vico Perrone, the writer of the letter which the Commission took such pains not to discover. Perrone had sought refuge in France, and on March 25, 1925, he wrote from Nice to both Mussolini and De Bono asking to be absolved from any responsibility for the assault on Amendola, on the grounds that he had simply carried out their orders. On April 15, he wrote from Nice to the President of the Senate Commission declaring that the letter in Vagliasindi's possession was authentic, and that he had presented himself at the Italian Consulate in Nice at 1.30 p.m. on March 30, to place himself at the disposition of the

¹ See above, p. 289.

² The Santoro Proposal.

³ Among these papers the Commission would have discovered the letter from Guido Narbona of November 24, 1924. See above, p. 295.

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Commission. He sent him a copy of the same letter from Milan on May 2, 1925.

The Commission was as little eager to inquire into Perrone's statements as into those of Vagliasindi. It confined itself to asking the Italian Consul at Nice to forward information about Perrone. The Consul of course replied that he had never heard of Perrone, and the Commission, conscientiously noting this reply, let the matter drop.

When De Bono was acquitted, Perrone protested in a letter dated September, 1925, which the Italian papers were not allowed to publish, but which was circulated by the clandestine Press. In this letter he repeated that he had visited the Consulate on March 30; the Consul could not deny all knowledge of him, since he (the Consul) had visaed his passport on December 5, 1924, and could have obtained his address from the French authorities who had issued his identity card. 'If the Consul did not find me,' he wrote, 'it is simply because he did not look, and did not wish to look for me.'¹

The essential evidence having thus been eliminated, General De Bono was forthwith acquitted of having ordered the beating of Amendola, on the grounds of 'want of evidence.'²

¹ *Amendola: fatti e documenti*, pp. 27, 36-7.

² Signor Villari wrote in the *Review of Reviews* of March to April, 1926: "The Senate Commission acquitted De Bono on all the graver charges for "inesistenza di reato" (non-existence of the crime) or "per non aver commesso il fatto attribuitogli" (for not having committed the action in question); it acquitted him for insufficient evidence on three minor charges only, and these are: De Bono's insufficient activity in arresting the persons accused of the assault on Amendola; in having the luggage of Dumini, after his arrest, brought to his own office for examination; and of having, two years previously, issued a passport to Dumini under another name. The truth is that the Commission acquitted De Bono for want of evidence on the following heads: (a) Complicity in the bludgeoning of Amendola; (b) Undue favour shown to the man who bludgeoned Signor Misuri; (c) Undue favour shown to Dumini in the Matteotti case; (d) issuing of passports under false names and dates. These, for the propagandist, are minor charges against a Chief of Police! In his book, *The Fascist Experiment*, p. 75, speaking of the journalist Donati, who had brought forward the denunciation against De Bono to the Senate, the propagandist writes

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If the Commission was so careful not to get to the bottom of the question of Perrone's letter, it is not surprising that it refused credence to the testimony of Silvestri, Schiff-Giorgini, and Emanuel as to the contents of the Finzi Memorandum.

Whatever manoeuvring and jobbery took place behind the scenes in order to extract from the Commission the verdict it gave, will probably never be known. But something can be guessed from the following fact.

On March 17, 1925, a denunciation was brought forward against seven men for complicity in the loss of the 'Leonardo da Vinci,' a dreadnought which sank during the war on the night of August 2, 1916, in the harbour of Taranto. Amongst the seven accused was Cesare Santoro (*Corriere della Sera*, March 19, 1926, and *Avanti*, March 20, 1925), brother of Senator Santoro. In other words, while Senator Santoro was acting as Attorney-General in a case on which the fate of the Fascist régime depended, his brother was under a charge of treachery. After the first news of the denunciation against Cesare Santoro, nothing further was ever allowed to appear in the Press about the case up till November 3, 1925, when the papers announced that all the accused had been acquitted. The very next day, the so-called discovery of Zaniboni's attempt on Mussolini's life took place, and in the crisis consequent on this event (see above, pp. 186 ff.) the acquittal passed unperceived.

that Donati took refuge in France, fearing 'that he might be prosecuted for libel.' Every one knows that a prosecution for libel would have obliged the judges to re-try publicly the whole case, and De Bono knew better than to face such a danger. Donati left Italy because he was threatened with death, and because a Christian-Democrat Member of Parliament, Signor Anile, who later passed over to the Fascist Party told the leaders of the Christian-Democrat Party that the Home Secretary could not guarantee Donati's life.

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