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FASCIST FINALE

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The Partisans of northern Italy didn't wait for Allied liberation; they ran their own revolution. In the process, they made a good beginning for Italy of the future

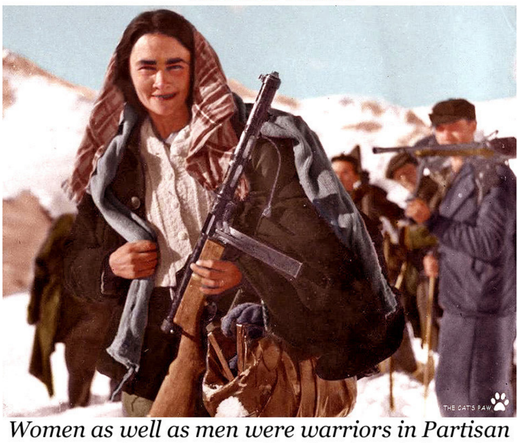
RADIOED FROM MILAN

A LONG burst of bullets from a tommy gun slashed across the cathedral square in downtown Milan. Slugs splattered along the curbs or bored through shop windows. Several scores of persons, with a hop, skip and jump, ducked into side streets and then almost good-naturedly popped their heads out from around corners. A jeep carrying American correspondents pulled up to the curb on Rastrelli Street, and its occupants scrambled into a doorway out of the line of fire. A Partisan with a red bandanna around his neck stepped up. "Aren't you going to the hanging?" he asked, smiling.

"Who's shooting?" he was asked.

"We're just shooting at some Fascists down here, but the hangings are over that way. Let me take you to a hanging."

The correspondents climbed into the jeep and went zigzagging off to a far corner of Milan. The day was Saturday, and Milan was having a revolution by permission—Allied permission. It was a revolution in the



Women as well as men were warriors in Partisan groups: this school teacher fought side by side with her husband

purest sense of the word; people who had been oppressed by Fascists for so many years had risen up and now were taking vengeance. The revolutionists were in complete power in Milan and had been for several days. American troops were all around Milan but were not to enter the city for two more days. Meanwhile the Partisans were eliminating in their own fashion a lot of folks that responsible Allied authorities would have found troublesome to deal with.

A few correspondents were the only Americans in the city for several days and they were cheered everywhere. As their jeep rolled up to the hanging place they saw several hundred persons standing around, but no gallows.

"Viva gli Americani," someone yelled, and the crowd swarmed around us. They had been peering at the bloody body of a man sprawled on the sidewalk.

"Oh, it's all over. They shot him instead of hanging him," complained the red-bandannaed Partisan, with some disappointment.

"Who was he?"

"Just a Fascist. Let's go someplace else," the Partisan replied.

As they drove away, the dead Fascist's blood flowed off the sidewalk and dripped into the gutter.

A few blocks away, 300 Germans at the Regina Hotel and another 250—mostly officers—at the Gallia Hotel (Nazi headquarters for Lombardy) comfortably awaited the American Army's entry into Milan so they could surrender to them instead of to the Partisans. The Partisans, in turn, intent on hunting down Fascists whom they hated more, were content to let the Germans remain undisturbed.

Nazis in Role of Spectators

Like an audience at a play, the Nazis sat on the hotel balconies and watched the activity below. Partisans waving huge Communist banners or their own battle streamers raced through the streets in captured German vehicles. At least 60 per cent of these Partisans professed to be Communists and another 10 per cent Socialists. While the so-called Communists often failed to believe in collective ownership of farms and factories, they looked to Moscow for spiritual guidance and plastered Milan with posters saying "Down with the monarchy!"

There was nobody to challenge them. Fascism, like a rotten tooth in northwestern Italy, had been extracted by Partisans, and now Italy was bleeding. The American attitude seemed to be that it was a wholesome bloodletting. The tooth which was yanked had been prodded and loosened during the past fall and winter by Partisans living in the mountains around Milan as well as in the city where Fascism was born.

Perhaps the first major incident came early last November in the foothill village of Voghera, thirty miles south of Milan. A German officer was challenged by an Italian sentry just as he was entering his own barracks. "Surely you recognize me. I'm a Ger-

A typical Italian Partisan soldier. Note that the clothing he is wearing has been captured from Germans

man," the officer complained.

"Certainly you recognize me—I'm a Partisan," came the reply.

As the German slowly raised his hands, a group of Partisans tiptoed into the barracks, where they awoke, one by one, sixty Italian Fascist and German soldiers. Every man in the barracks gave up without a shot. Back in the hills the Partisans laughed and joked about how their new leader "Eduardo" planned the successful Voghera operation; how Eduardo's men pedaled up and down the road on bicycles pretending to be innocent villagers but actually scouting and protecting the truckloads of Partisans who removed the Fascists and Germans to the hills.

The smooth operation convinced these Partisans that Eduardo was their man, although they knew almost nothing about him except his battle name of Eduardo. His real name was Pietro Italo and he was typical of any number of mountain Partisan leaders who began leading forays against the Germans about this time.

Eduardo's cheeks were hollow but his head wasn't. The son of a country doctor, lithe, black-haired Eduardo had studied law before being drafted into the Italian army, where he became a captain in the crack Alpine troops. After Italy's surrender to the Allies his hatred for Fascism grew steadily, until finally, a year ago this spring, he took to the Apennine hills to aid the Partisans.

At that time, they were split into tiny, quarrelsome factions, with the commander for the day being determined by who got up first in the morning. Eduardo gave up in disgust and joined a Communist Garibaldi "brigade." From only a hundred men, by November it had grown to 1,000 and Eduardo was chief. That was when they captured the garrison at Voghera.

A Rebuff to the Colonel

Before long the Partisans had complete control of seventy-two square miles of mountains south of Milan. They began to call this "my country," with the rest of the German-Fascist-occupied northern Italy called "enemy country." One day a German colonel drove into the Partisans' area prepared to give Eduardo a free zone, which the Nazis would not enter. Eduardo smilingly agreed. The boundaries of the proposed free territory, he said, would stretch from the American lines in the south to the Brenner Pass in the north.

The German colonel fumed at this suggestion to deliver all northern Italy over to the Partisans. He threatened to attack. On No-

Italian Partisan fighters

vember 15th he did, with 8,000 soldiers.

The German troops had mules and artillery, and they forced Italian villagers to carry supplies. There was little the Partisans could do against such opposition; they fell back into the snow-covered mountains. There the Germans tried to hunt down individual Partisans, tracing them by footprints in the snow.

That winter, fourteen of Eduardo's men froze to death while others were captured and executed when they went into the villages for food. An American captain who passed through German lines twice arranged with Eduardo to have American aircraft parachute arms and ammunition, but each drop was followed by Fascist-Nazi attacks on the area where the supplies fell. Eduardo's men were scattered and beaten like the other mountain bands.

As for the city Partisans, it was a case of plot and counterplot—probably the most concentrated intrigue throughout the long history of northwestern Italy. Each Milan bank, shop and factory had its own Committee of National Liberation. Generally they included representatives of five or six political parties but always there would be Communists and Socialists. Scores of Fascist agents tried to join these Partisan groups, and if they were successful, the Gestapo and OVRA soon would begin arresting.

When Partisans discovered a Fascist in their midst, they would hand over his name to their special *Squadre Azione Patriottica;* before long the Fascist would meet a violent end. Four or five Fascist spies died weekly in Milan throughout the winter. Probably the most frequent means of execution was for a *Squadre Azione Patriottica* member to ride a bicycle up alongside the victim, fire several shots into his head, then speed off.

A Partisan identification card did not bear the name of its holder, but included a picture of Matteotti the Socialist whom Mussolini had murdered, and his words: "You can kill me, but the ideal in me you can never kill." These words were like a burning light to Partisans who were arrested and tortured by Fascists, including the notorious band of Doctor Piero Koch, an Italian police commander.

Koch operated in Rome until that city was about to fall to the Allies, then moved to a big fifteenth-century mansion at 17 Via Paolo Uccello, Milan. It was inside this flower-surrounded villa that members of the band took morphine and cocaine before burning their victims' breasts with lighted cigarettes or branding them with red-hot needles. Among Koch's elegant associates was the beautiful Luisa Ferida, one of the two most prominent actresses in Italy. Her madly vain actor-husband, Osvaldo Valenti, also could be seen striding into the mansion wearing his favorite yellow-striped sweater with a bandoleer of cartridges over his shoulder and a huge pistol strapped to his waist.

The Milanese began to refer to No. 17 as *Villa Triste,* the Villa of Sorrows. Word of the tortures spread until even the Fascists disclaimed any responsibility for deeds carried out there. Eventually the Partisans

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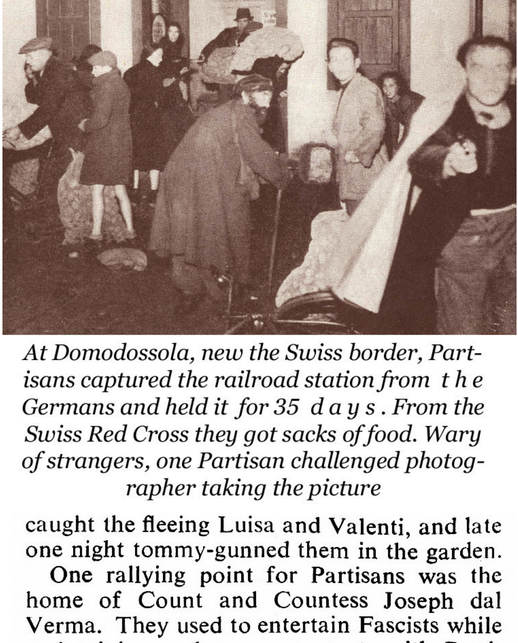

At Domodossola, new the Swiss border, Partisans captured the railroad station from the Germans and held it for 35 days. From the Swiss Red Cross they got sacks of food. Wary of strangers, one Partisan challenged photographer taking the picture

caught the fleeing Luisa and Valenti, and late one night tommy-gunned them in the garden.

One rallying point for Partisans was the home of Count and Countess Joseph dal Verma. They used to entertain Fascists while maintaining undercover contacts with Partisans. After the Fascists fled, the couple honored fifty tough bewhiskered Partisans at their huge banquet table where roughly dressed Partisans put elbows on the glistening tablecloth and sang to Mussolini's death. As one Partisan put it: "Dal Verma doesn't deserve to be a count—he's a good man."

After loosening the Fascist tooth all winter, the Partisans began to extract it on Tuesday, April 24th. Three thousand workers at O. M. Motor Factory suddenly seized the plant, imprisoned thirty Fascist employees and turned the buildings into a series of fortresses. The Germans sent an armored train charging toward the factory but other Partisans mined the rails and wrecked the train. That was the Germans' last move to hold Milan. After that they remained quietly in their barracks.

As soon as the Partisans learned on April 26th that Mussolini had fled, they burst into the city hall and sounded a steady blast on the air-raid alarm, the long-planned signal that the Partisans had seized the government offices. Milan reverberated with exploding bazooka shells and the crash of tommy guns as Partisans made their business calls.

For the first time in Italy, Allied authorities had encountered Partisans who were calmly efficient about killing their enemies. There was considerable flag-waving and singing and promiscuous shooting, too, but the Partisans didn't let their celebrations interfere with their grimmer job. South of Rome the Allies had received no Partisan support except for Intelligence purposes. North of Rome up to Florence and Bologna, the Partisans had repeatedly offered their assistance, but when the shooting started, they were not too dependable.

North of the Po—well, that's where Partisans knew how to run their own revolution. They killed Mussolini and his henchmen. They killed 1,000 persons in five days in and around Milan. Some Partisans thought the city was still not cleaned of Fascists when the Americans finally entered on Sunday afternoon April 29th and by their presence ended the assassinations. The fighting was about over; the even more difficult struggle for stability was already beginning but with less excitement.

At the Palazzo del Governo, there is a cobblestoned courtyard, and up a flight of stairs, there is a long, high-ceilinged chamber that had been Mussolini's office. There behind a large and well-ordered desk sat Riccardo Lombardi, the new prefect of Milan Province. When he rose he was tall and lanky, with a slight stoop to his broad shoulders, and a lean, tanned face.

"We all welcome you," he said. "Whatever you want we will get you."

He was reminded that the American Army

The se Italian Partisans were among those who liberated their own city of Milan in April - a feat celebrated by the capture and execution of Mussolini and numerous other Fascists.

was not yet in the city—only a few correspondents.

"Correspondents are quite enough. We liberated our city by ourselves and we can run it," he came back, half smiling.

A Man Capable of High Service

He spoke Italian as it should be spoken, with the precise diction and melodic cadence that marks a man of education and self-control. He had clear eyes and a restrained, courteous manner, with an air of concentration but without the cold, impassive expression that makes so many would-be revolutionary leaders look ruthless. He had the steady gaze of an honest man and the assurance of a man who knows what he's about. At this stage in the revolution, it is too early to say definitely who will emerge on top or what kind of men they'll turn out to be, but Lombardi seems to be a man who is bound to play an important role for the good of his country.

At the moment his position seems to be one of the most important among the executives of northern Italy. He was one of the three who negotiated with Mussolini on the ex-Duce's last day in Milan and tried to persuade him to surrender. Of the other two, one was General Raffaele Cadorna, then supreme commander of the Partisans' military organization in northern Italy, called the *Corpo di Volontari Della Libertá,* who has since been named commander in chief of the Italian armed forces. Cadorna is the son of General Luigi Cadorna, one of the heroes of the first World War.

The third negotiator, representing the political side of the revolution, as Cadorna represented the military and Lombardi the executive, was Achille Marazza, lawyer and member of the *Comitato di Liberazione Nazionale Alta Italia* (Committee of National Liberation for Northern Italy). Marazza, an austere and determined man, is a member of the Christian Democrat (Catholic) Party, which represents the conservative viewpoint but includes a strongly Socialist wing.

The Communist influence seemed to be less evident in northern Italy than confident predictions of the Communists in Rome would have led one to expect. The Committee has its Communist member, like the local committees of every town, province and region of Italy, north and south. He is Emilio Sereni, a man of medium height and stocky build, with a scar on the right side of his face and an air of intense concentration. Sereni said the Communist system was the only salvation for Italy, but that it should be achieved in democratic fashion by an election in which the Communists would undoubtedly win. That, of course, is the opposite of what the other parties expect.

How much influence the Communists will ultimately have in the new Italy only time can tell. At the beginning they were cooperating so closely with other parties and following the forms of Western democracy so faithfully that the line between Communist, Socialist, Actionist and Republican was very hard to draw.

The snow-clad peaks of northern Italy, along the French border, have been a battleground for patriots warring against Fascism from as far back as 1927. More recently their targets have also included the German troops occupying Italy

Communism—with Restrictions

The Communists have won a certain reputation among workers and farmers, which the other parties are trying hard to catch up with and surpass. It does not seem likely that the Communists of Italy will try to impose a proletarian dictatorship on this country or try to go much further than the other democratic parties toward socializing means of production and abolishing private property. Undoubtedly they wouldn't succeed at present, and there seems to be little danger of civil war—provided the economic revival of Italy takes place fast enough to avoid the disorders that come from mass unemployment and starvation.

The Communists don't have any monopoly on the idea of socialism; most Italians seem to want it in one form or another, and the recent Fascist government of northern Italy took several steps toward installing it. There are at least three other political parties which offer the Italians a kind of semi-Socialist state.

The Action Party is the one which made the biggest splash in Milan during those first days with its newspapers, wall posters and dramatic slogans. The Action Party demands an Italy without the monarchy, without the Bonomi government and with the means of production controlled by the workers. Riccardo Lombardi, the prefect, is an Actionist. But the Actionists are no proletarians, and many members of the party are from rich families, in contrast to the usual conception of Partisan revolutionaries. The party's offices are now installed in a beautiful apartment in a fashionable section of Milan, where expensive black-market dinner parties are held amid all the accouterments of wealth and comfort: indirect lighting, roses on the linen tablecloths, uniformed butlers and maids and—priceless luxury anywhere in Italy—hot water in the sunken bathtub.

The conversation is polite and even includes the fashionable prejudices of the unenlightened aristocrat—one woman who hates Negroes, and another who fears Bolsheviks. These are the people, of all classes and all political complexions, who are co-operating with the Communists in northern Italy, because they hope these Communists won't turn out to be Bolsheviks.

The purge of the Fascists is the first stage of what the Italians call *epurazione*. In northern Italy as in the south, it is the men who ran the Fascist regime and the peculiarly corrupt and ruthless way they did it that the democratic parties are revolting against. The conception of a centralized authoritarian government, which Fascism took over from older Italian traditions and developed to an extreme, hasn't yet been seriously challenged by most Italians. What there was of Socialism in the Mussolini system, the Italians want to keep and extend; but the governmental processes and social viewpoint of the Western democracies are strange to the Italians. As yet, there is no indication that Italy is

prepared to make much use of them.

The whole economic picture in northern Italy is much more hopeful than might have been expected. Because the Germans didn't withdraw from Milan, they didn't indulge in their usual wholesale destruction, and they surrendered without ruining the huge hydro-electric plant in the Alps, from which Italy gets most of its power. Some factories have been hurt by bombing; some machinery and some railroad tracks are missing. But according to Herman Targiani, local manager of the General Electric Company, the factories of northern Italy are ready to work at 90 per cent of capacity as soon as they get coal and transportation.

Some railroads are still running, and the damage they've suffered is small compared to that in the south. Except along the main lines through the passes to Austria, which the Fifteenth Air Force kept under steady bombardment, few railroad bridges or tunnels have been damaged. Nor have roads suffered. Probably several thousand German trucks have been captured intact and can help Italy's strained transportation system when gasoline is provided.

Farming also continues virtually unimpeded in the area which is Italy's breadbasket. The battle moved so fast that, except in vineyards, orchards and truck gardens between Ravenna and Bologna, where the Eighth Army spent the winter, there has been little destruction.

Northern Italy has always been the richest part of the country and now its margin of superiority is greater than ever. The people here know it. They're full of confidence and they expect to have the deciding voice in Italy's political affairs. Soon after Americans arrived here, a delegation from the Committee of National Liberation of Northern Italy went to Rome to tell Bonomi's cabinet what is expected of it.

When Prince Humbert made a tour of northern Italy he tried to sound out local reaction and gain some popular support by making public appearances. The Bonomi Cabinet refers to him respectfully as *Luogotenente*—lieutenant general of the realm and personal symbol of the monarchic tradition. In Milan the Partisans refer to him somewhat derisively as the Prince of Piedmont—the little mountain state from which the House of Savoy originally came.

Humbert got a terrifically enthusiastic reception in Bologna where he stopped first. From there, he went to Verona, Mantua, Parma, Brescia, Bergamo and several other smaller towns, sending his aide-de-camp before him to see whether he would be well received. Finally he came secretly to Milan, but after the house where he was staying was machine-gunned, presumably by extremists opposed to the monarchy, he went away again. He is somewhat in the position of a political candidate campaigning for election.

If the royal house is finally overthrown, it is likely to be not so much a gesture of political revolution as another stage in the *epurazione* process—vengeance on a family which allowed Mussolini to get his start and is still suspected of shielding high-ranking Fascists from punishment by the Partisans.

The Partisans themselves present a problem, but it is less formidable than it looked before northern Italy was liberated. The Partisans are immensely romantic; most of them are young and handsome, and they enjoy swashbuckling about with their rifles shooting into the air and showing off before their friends and families. Many of them are excellent soldiers; others are mere show-offs.

As soon as the insurrection was over in Milan, Lombardi ordered all arms to be turned in to the various Partisan headquarters and threatened prompt punishment for looting. After their first few days of exuberance, many of the Partisans turned in their weapons and went home—those that had homes to go to. Disarmament for the rest is to be accomplished in the usual fashion

by holding a parade at which all Partisans will stack their arms and receive certificates from the Fifth Army. These certificates will entitle them to wear service ribbons and receive bonuses, subsidies and other public assistance for themselves and their families, all of which is being arranged by Mauro Scoccimarro, Communist Minister for Occupied Territories, through the Bonomi government at Rome. Those Partisans who want to continue army life are being inducted into the Italian army.

Basically an Economic Problem

The Bonomi government, through Scoccimarro, has undertaken to find jobs as fast as possible for demobilized Partisans, giving them the same advantages as members of the regular Italian army and giving them whatever assistance they need until they get the jobs. Ultimately the Partisan problem, like everything else, resolves itself into getting the Italian economy back on its feet.

All these are matters for which the Allies are going to find themselves accepting some responsibility in the coming months. Although there won't be any army of occupation for Italy, Allied troops will be stationed here to secure the lines of communication and supply with occupation troops in Austria.

Similarly, AMG has found northern Italy so well organized economically and politically that its problems are less complicated than in the south, but AMG will have to function for several months at least.

Lastly there remains the material aid—coal, oil, gasoline, trucks, ships and other things—which Italy is impatiently waiting for the Allies to provide. Probably the greatest, and most hopeful difference between northern and southern Italy is that up here in Milan, people don't spend their time asking the Allies for help. They seem to know how to help themselves.

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