

S O MUCH MYSTERY enshrouds the rise of the Mussolini Government in Italy and the triumph of Fascism over all parties through bloodless revolution, that various kinds of queer misconceptions have got abroad about the meaning and aims of the organization of strong-arm reformers, all ex-service men, who have "put an end to the long, hopeless months Italy has suffered since the days of the Armistice." To shed light where there is darkness, from the very obvious mistake of considering Fascism synonymous with Ku Kluxism, or the more serious error of thinking that Mussolini outranks the King in the new order in Italy, THE LITERARY DIGEST has asked the Italian language press of the United States and Canada to present their interpretation of the Fascisti triumph and the prospects of Italy under Fascisti methods. The home papers in Italy are said to be controlled by a censorship. We regret that not all the replies received can be reproduced, merely for lack of space and because many of them are so uniform with others; but they are all significant as showing that the Italian language press, while looking at the problems of Italy with affectionate regard, look at them from a strictly New World standpoint. In the main the argument is that the Fascisti, as opponents of Bolshevism and ultra-red socialism have finally put all parties into the discard and have started a new movement of United Italy whose main objective is "peace and work at home, prosperity and dignity abroad, in accordance with the high traditions of the Italian nation."

FASCISM'S TRIUMPH EXPLAINED BY ITALIAN WRITERS



It is the belief of the Reading (Pa.) *Popolo* that the fortunes of the political power of the Fascisti are assured "independently of the luck that Mussolini's present cabinet may have," for the movement of Fascism is "deeply rooted in the national and international conscience of the Italian people." To look for the theory of Fascism, this newspaper tells us—

"We must go back to Mazzini, the spiritual father of modern Italy, to Garibaldi, the Chevalier of Humanity, to Alfredo Oriani, the latest and the most powerful advocate of the same program as the Fascisti. In Fascism is the resurrection of the best there was in Mazzini and Garibaldi and could not before now express itself in terms of national history. Given such fathers, the offspring was bound to win the flowery revolution of the past week and is bound to win all along the line. Not a spice of 'Chauvinism' is in the Italian Nationalists, and none is in their brother extremists the Fascisti, for the reason that they are the spiritual children of such men as Garibaldi and Mazzini. Besides, Italy

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(image added)

has never been imperialistic and never will be. Mussolini's motto, 'Grander and Greater Italy' is harmless and means only that Italy must 'rewind the World War, since the Peace Conference was held with Italy practically excluded and compelled to treat with the conquered enemy on terms of equality and to accept the enemy's terms through the dictation of the Big Three. The greatness of Italy Mussolini has in mind is more spiritual, moral, artistic than made of material interest. It matters not what these interests may be. Mussolini's dream is the same with which Mazzini started, that is, to make of Italy the center of activity to bring about a federation of nations insuring peace and happiness to all and representing the greatest economy in the struggle for existence and progress. It is the old Roman idea made up to date: Unity of the nations through freedom and independence of each and every one. . . .

"No reactionary purpose can be served by Fascism and it is worse than useless that in Germany and in Austria they try to imitate what is the most militant organization meant for progress. The would-be imitators of Fascism in other countries lack the essentials to form an imitation of the Italian movement."

But other newspapers think very differently, and the New York *Follia* says that the war produced the Versailles Treaty and it produced Bolshevism, both of which are "anachronisms." Fascism has "risen to destroy these anachronisms," and "when its task is completed it also will die." In the meantime it is "triumphant," and this newspaper adds:

"The Fascisti revolution in Italy—have no doubt that it is a revolution—is more than a mere political upheaval. It is more than a mere Latin-American adventure. Those who see it only in that light fail to understand the deep underlying currents and heated passions that are causing the European eruption. The Fascisti reaction is the protest of innocent generations who were made to pay the price, in the trenches and in the home, of the ambitions, the mistaken and unjustified ambitions, of the order that is dying. It is more than an Italian phenomenon. It is a world phenomenon. The Fascisti Frankenstein threatens every nation in Europe. It threatens every continent of the globe."

The *Pueblo Unione* declares: "We strongly oppose the Fascisti movement in Italy, and for this reason we also oppose the new Italian Premier. We consider him a renegade and an opportunist." On the other hand the *Kansas City Stampa* calls attention to the fact that the Fascisti are all former service men who are opposed to reactionary forms of government, and it adds that their leader Mussolini deserves the study of the American people who also "fight consistently for the right and for high ideals." According to this journal the accession of the



THE FEAST OF VICTORY.

FASCIST: "Now, Mother Italy, you can take the peace statue out of the chest where it has lain so long, and set it up in confidence."

—*Il Trattato* (Rome).

Mussolini Government is an "epoch-making episode, second only in its world-wide effect to the French Revolution of 1789," and it adds:

"The advent of Benito Mussolini, the Fascisti leader, to the Premiership of Italy, marks the passing of a generation of statesmen, whose exact cognition of other people and general world's affairs was woefully lacking. Many and serious were the mistakes made by those statesmen, which eventually hurt the best interests of their country. Their failure to place before the world the true facts made possible the discounting of Italy's immense contribution to the final victory in the late World War. They were men whose wisdom and statesmanship belonged to a glorious past, but which could not and can not meet the requirements of a twentieth century statesmanship.

"The world now knows that there is no room in Italy for radicalism and Bolshevism, and we may expect to see at an early date the Italians engaged in the pursuits of the arts of peace; under the best and most enlightened government that ever existed. Let us focus our attention on the happenings at Rome, for much, very much, will happen there, which will be of material interest to humanity."

Il Carroccio (New York), known as an American organ of the Fascisti, points out that Mussolini "governs with the will of the King and people associated together—and that means, Italy governs." The Mussolini Government "takes a more firm control of things, more constitutional, more energetic in the orbit of laws and in the true functions of the State," according to this monthly, which stresses the point that "no laws have been violated by the change, and it has not been necessary to change any laws in order to assure a pacific, normal condition." We read then:

"Every one sees that the nation has emerged victoriously from the trials of these last few years, as in 1918 on the Piave, after a year of misfortunes, formidable against the enemy and a decisive factor of the victory in war and in peace. Behind Mussolini, who governs, is the whole nation purged of its unfortunate errors, proof from all treasons and delusions, and to-day entirely devoted to order and peace. There is no nation in the whole world which can compare with Italy to-day as a unit of compact force, of determination and of leadership.

The New York *Popolo* hails the advent of Mussolini as blazing a new trail for the future destinies of Italy, and it adds:

"We gladly salute this great event. Free from any ties that bind us with the Fascisti party, but ever desirous to see Italy disentangle itself from uncertainty and weakness, our immense pleasure is merely the logical consequence of a wish to see Italy enter this new phase of political activity. Such has been our desire during all the period from the neutrality of Giolitti to the uncertainty of Facta. We believe that the coming to power of the Fascisti will have as an immediate consequence the internal pacification and tranquilization of Italy."

In a country like the United States where the conservative element maintains with all its means the historical predominance of its doctrines, remarks the New York *Progresso Italo-Americano*, every political innovation is "looked upon with a suspicious eye," and so Fascism appears "either as a revolutionary phenomenon or a phenomenon of dictatorship, and so purely subversive in character." For instance, this daily points out that—

"An editorial in the New York *Tribune* referred to the Fascisti as the 'Ku Klux Klan of Italy.' Whoever is familiar with the spirit of this American institution and above all with the external forms in which it is manifested, will not find it difficult to note the falsity of such a comparison when the actual character of Fascism is exhibited. In the first place there is no sectarian tendency in Fascism. The narrow-mindedness of American Klanism prevents it from being identified in any way with such a noble institution as, for instance, the American Legion. This institution advocates and teaches 100 per cent. Americanism with the same views, for the same goal, and along the same lines as Fascism advocates pure Italianism. If America were in the same condition as Italy was, the American Legion would or should do what Fascism has done for Italy. Fascism showed signs of high fever in its eager task to save Italy, but fevers with high temperature are not always dangerous. In this case it was the passing through the ante-chamber of death into a new and better life."

The advent to power of the national Fascisti party, says the Montreal *Italia*, "constitutes one of those historical events that mark the beginning of a new era in the life of a people," and it adds:

"It is the old state of things that has fallen to give life to a new state, by the admirable fusion of forces and energies joined in the holy idea of country and toil. It is the triumph of the Italy of Vittorio Veneto. It is the epilog of a terrible fight against internal enemies, against fomenters of disorder, against the vile preachers of false doctrines and of Utopian social conceptions."

But to those Italian-American newspapers that find much to criticize in Fascism, it is "a phenomenon that the bourgeois landholders encourage and exploit for their own benefit." According to this view, Fascism derives its strength from "reactionary landholders, unemployment conditions, and the middle class." We are told also that:

"The majority, if not all the Fascisti, have no national vision and that is why they are able to deal only with local situations. Their aim is to destroy leagues, Socialist organizations and Red or subversive administrations. They attack all the Socialists in their path; and to them 'freeing



MUSSOLINI'S
"FIGHTING FACE."

Italy's Fascist Premier, who is described as "neither a philosopher nor a theorist, but simply an organizer of great ability."

Italy from Bolshevism' means to attack the Socialists from the municipal palaces of factions who never had anything in common in the past.

"It will be impossible to keep the Socialist movement excluded entirely from public affairs and the affiliation that Mussolini had with that party not long ago will make the situation worse if the Socialists are not given some attention. Italy will never stand for any policy leading to conflicts of any kind, and if the Fascisti will not bring about the return to work of the population it will not be a success."

The verdict of the Chicago *New Comer* (*Il Nuovo Venuto*) is that the Fascisti have "saved Italy from foreign enemies and from internal ones." Without them Italy "would have lost on the Piave" and after the war without them Italy "would have become a colony of Bolshevist Russia." The Fascisti have "saved Italy twice and they seem perfectly determined and capable of saving it again," but this daily points out that—

"A revolution is always a revolution. It implies bloodshed, loss of prestige, terrible economic loss, perhaps injustice or mob rule. No revolution was ever free from excesses. And the Fascisti are, no matter how upright they may try to be, human beings exposed to human passions and to that dangerous element which is known as human ambition.

"The Italian Government is behind the times. Italy was unified in 1860 and it has progressed very little in the matter of education. Agriculture, public works, education, justice, have been obliterated. The immigrant that comes to this country is a fair specimen of the rural inhabitant of Italy. There is much room for improvement, but such improvement can not come from the present system.

"The Italian people are patient, hard-working, thrifty, courageous, intelligent. But they have been kept in ignorance and in superstition. And when over sixty years have been insufficient to introduce much needed reforms, there is no hope that the same system may be able to accomplish such a purpose in the future.

"The campaign of the Fascisti may be beneficial and useful to the extent of saving Italy from ruin, if it shall end in reforms that have been long needed and never attained.

"The Fascisti have in mind appropriate reforms tending to the confiscation of ill-gotten wealth, the nationalization of all public utilities, the development of education, and the removal of grafters and favorites from public office. Such reforms are badly needed.

"If they shall be accomplished, with or without mob rule, the Fascisti will be hailed as the real saviours of Italy and the best friends of civilization.

"The end justifies the means, said Machiavelli. And a good end may induce liberty-loving people to forget the origin of the power and the legality of the methods used to accomplish it."

Altho *Il Messagero* (Steubenville, Ohio) concedes that "the Fascisti stroke is in substance a great revolutionary act, in accordance with the will of the Italian people to end a government in which they had no direct share," nevertheless—

"It would be better perhaps to call it Socialism in correct action. In fact Fascism has destroyed all the formal and artificial assets of political subversion by substituting itself violently at the helm of the government. The liberal middle classes have applauded these flaming archangels who broke the suspense in which the

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The Newport (Rhode Island) *Alba* tells us that the keynote of the Fascist movement was to destroy the Communist and Socialist movement in Italy, and it adds: "The Communists and Socialists are people with unsettled minds, and their attitude is to demoralize the people, but any one who wants progress and living these days knows that the Communists and Socialists have no place in this world."

The youth of Italy have started upon a crusade, eloquently declares the *Boston Gazette del Massachusetts*, to "liberate the altar of the fatherland, desecrated by her tormentors within and without her boundaries, the sacred altar of which Rome is the custodian," and it proceeds:

"For us Italians, who know our temperament and fully feel our sense of art, what has happened in Italy is not even a 'movement,' in the historic significance of the word: it is a *picturesque and fascinating spectacle*. As by a harmonious pact, not subscribed on paper, but sworn with the oath of the soldier and the word of the gentleman, the whole youth—the most flourishing force of a nation—has arisen; from the squares and streets of its cities; from the countryside, from the mountains; from the shores! Not in arms, but to call the Fatherland upon the main road of her destiny; to awake her from her lethargy: to galvanize her benumbed members: to warm up her dormant heart: to gather her remaining vital energies: to recompose, in sum, her most beautiful virtues, which had been fading away in four years of fratricide struggles—from the bloody incursions of Asiatic Bolshevism to the factional medieval guerrillas upon the squares of her cities and villages."

A Far Western organ of the Fascists is the Stockton (California) *Sole*, which

points out that the first task of the Mussolini Government will be to restore the finances of Italy, and the only logical procedure toward this end is under way, according to this newspaper, which relates that—

“The Government will turn over to private enterprise its railroads, telegraphs and telephones, possibly also the tobacco monopoly. In this manner the treasury will realize a sum probably sufficient to cover its war debt and at the same time it will give new impulse to a businesslike management of such public utilities, excluding from them all political pressure which often hampered their proper functioning. But besides the practical end of such a move it indicates forcibly the sound individualistic spirit of ‘Fascism’ as opposed to deleterious, government-ridden Bolshevism.

“The great political movements of the age are Bolshevism and Fascism; the first is frankly materialistic, but the latter is intensely spiritual, it is almost mystic. For it is only on the assumption of an almost mystic exaltation that we can understand the spirit of sacrifice which animates the Fascisti. ‘What is death to us?’ they ask in one of their songs (their phrase is indeed quite a little more crude), and they have defied death, they have died with the simplicity, with the serenity of martyrs, **note of the fact that Fascism has destroyed the Socialist aristocracy, while at the same time it has inherited all their problems of a political and economic nature which were set up by Socialism and left unsolved.**

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“The Fascisti are the only large body of men in the world of to-day who for the welfare of their country are ready and willing to suffer and die. We believe that this spirit of sacrifice is catching, we believe that the Latin soul will feel the warmth of this new rising sun, and it is with this profound belief that we are going to undertake a magnificent task for the honor and the welfare of Italy.

“We are going to propose that all those who love Italy in this great American commonwealth, especially those connected with Italy by the tie of birth or descent, show in a practical manner that they want to do something to carry forward the great purposes of the new régime. We are going to ask all those who are in possession of Italian bond issues to burn them upon the altar of the country. We shall establish a national organization to take care of this undertaking. We shall collect in the hands of trusted men all the Italian bonds that people are willing to offer; then in one great day, possibly on the 28th of May—anniversary of Italy’s entrance into the war—

a solemn *auto-da-fe*, an act of faith and of love for Italy will take place throughout this land. The children and the lovers of Italy will wipe out their credits toward that nation, and the fire that will consume those scraps of papers will be the light of a new era.

"We acknowledge that we are but weak imitators in this. The Fascisti of Piacenza, who surely will be followed in this by their co-workers through Italy, have taken a vow to deprive themselves for one year of all precious objects and to offer them to worthy causes of civic beauty and usefulness—they have asked for the privilege of working without compensation for the welfare of the country. We appeal to the same spirit in this country; we ask an heroic act that will show that the heroism of the world was not all spent in battle. Our offer has been already wired to Mussolini and we expect grateful acknowledgement from the one who has now the destiny of our country in his hands."

La Tribuna Italiana of Portland (Oregon) sees two meanings in the Fascisti victory, which it sets down as follows:

"First, the logical and evident one is to give Italy a strong and courageous government, which, with a firm hand, assumes a sane national policy in order to make sure the fruits of victory and establish internal peace. Thus the latent forces of Italy may develop unhindered and the country be rehabilitated.

"The second and deeper significance of the Fascisti victory is that it shows Italy once more the teacher of the world, as it will always be, serving as a beacon light to all the nations of all ages."

Various additional Italian-American journals may be mentioned as affording material from which the foregoing article has been compiled, and among these are the Los Angeles *Italio-Americano*, Sacramento *Capitale*, San Francisco *Voce del Popolo*, and the San Francisco *Corriere del Popolo*, the St. Louis *Pensiero*, the Chicago *Italia*, the Trenton *Italio-Americano*, the Trenton *Secolo XX.*, the Middletown (Connecticut) *Italia Nuova*, Mount Vernon (N. Y.) *Cronaca Illustrata*, Scranton *Minatore*, Youngstown, (Ohio) *Nuova Italia*, Detroit *Tribuna Italiana d'America*, the New York *Eco del' Italia*, and other representative organs of the Italian language press, to which THE LITERARY DIGEST is indebted for this opportunity to present the Fascisti triumph as seen by Italian-American editors throughout this country.