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# **A NEW ITALY ARISES!**

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**By Giuseppe Berti**

## NOTE

Giuseppe Berti, the author of this pamphlet, has a long and distinguished record of active leadership in the struggle of the Italian people against fascism. Imprisoned by the Mussolini regime for his anti-fascist activities as a working class leader in Sicily, he escaped to France, where he became one of the editors of the daily Italian newspaper *La Voce degli Italiani*. He is also the author of a biographical study, *Garibaldi: The Unification of Italy*, and is at present one of the editors of *L'Unita' del Popolo*, progressive weekly Italian-American anti-fascist newspaper in New York City.

## PREFACE

AT THE moment of writing, historic events of far-reaching significance are unfolding in Italy. Bowing to the will of the Italian masses, the Badoglio regime signed the armistice with the British-American-Soviet governments. Italy is no longer at war with the United Nations.

But Nazi Germany has utilized to its best advantage the five weeks lost by the negotiations between the British and Americans and Badoglio. The first to suffer from such a policy have been the British and American soldiers. Allied forces could have occupied Italy rapidly and with minor losses; they could have counted on the ready assistance of the Italian people and the Italian army in the war against Hitler Germany if, after July 25, Great Britain and America had only supported the popular movement with immediate military and political action.

Today, instead, Allied armies are gaining a foothold on the Neapolitan coast slowly and with difficulty, while large sections of Italy are being terrorized and devastated by the Nazis. Mussolini, moreover, has been freed by Hitler and is now once again seeking to organize all reactionary forces in Italy with the aid of the German Gestapo.

Nonetheless, a new Italy is irresistibly arising. No one can bring back the fascist past. The gains which the Italian masses have made during their heroic struggle cannot be easily wrested from them. At present, the Italian anti-fascist forces are following the policy of uniting in a solid bloc all elements which are truly determined to conduct the

war against the Nazi hordes which have invaded and occupied Italy.

This pamphlet is designed to throw light on the background of the crucial events now unfolding. Its aim is to reveal the inner conflicts and contradictions which accelerated the downfall of the Mussolini regime, and to bring to Americans a better understanding of the formation and program of the five-party Italian National Front which is today playing a truly historic role in rallying and uniting the Italian people for the struggle against the Nazi invaders and for the final destruction of the fascist regime which had enslaved Italy for more than two decades.

The Italian people will unite their efforts with those of the Allied troops of liberation until a decisive victory has been won.

GIUSEPPE BERTI

September 15, 1943.

# A NEW ITALY ARISES

BY GIUSEPPE BERTI

**M**USSOLINI has fallen; the Italian people are in revolt. In Turin, Milan, Genoa, Bologna, Naples, Taranto, and Bari they are storming the headquarters of the Fascist Party, seizing the government controlled newspapers, and showing wherever possible their deep hatred of the fascist regime which enslaved them for twenty long years. The people are joyously taking up arms to fight for their liberty.

In Milan the people stormed the central headquarters of the Fascist Party and the offices of the fascist newspaper, *Il Popolo d'Italia*. Their righteous vengeance vented itself against the fascist hierarchs. In this city alone 200 fascists, including the federal secretary of the party, were killed. In Bologna four of the most prominent fascist leaders were hanged in the main city square and left there for some time to symbolize the public indignation at the crimes perpetrated by the fascist overlords.

In Turin ninety-five fascists barricaded themselves in the central headquarters of the Fascist Party, armed to the teeth with machine guns, bombs and rifles. For three hours they fought against the popular forces, but in vain; eighty-four were killed, eleven captured.

The democratic and the popular forces in Italy have come into their own, therefore, despite the martial law which established the death penalty for anyone who attempted to

appeal to the masses. The Italian National Front has truly become a guiding political force of the nation, especially in the industrially advanced regions of the north. From the ruins and the sorrows of the war a new Italy has been born.

We must pay tribute to the Italian people who have gloriously overthrown the government of Mussolini, to the hundreds of thousands of fighters who have come to the forefront in Turin, Genoa, Bologna, Milan, and have faced death, unafraid, in order to ensure the rebirth of freedom in their beloved Italy. We must pay tribute to those patriots who have led the masses of the people against the fascist regime in this decisive moment in the history of the world.

The latest developments in the Italian situation clearly demonstrate that the same fascist elements who shamefully led the country to ruin are now attempting to save the old, infamous regime as much as possible.

Forced by the will and the pressure of the people, the Badoglio government at first condescended to issuing a few anti-fascist decrees. Now it is attempting to reforge the shackles of the past by a continuation of fascist tyranny.

The Italian people, however, are confident masters of their own fate—they will not allow the Badoglio government to betray them. The people will assume those liberties which Badoglio refuses to give them: they will march forward, led by the Italian National Front, until every vestige of fascism and reaction in Italy has been liquidated.

The popular movement in Italy is guided by mature and powerful political forces. The struggle will continue, therefore, until peace has been made, until the last German soldier has left the Italian soil, until the promises of democracy and liberty have been transformed into tangible, concrete reality for the Italian people.

Mussolini's downfall—precipitated by the ever-increasing wrath of the people—is not an event purely Italian in scope or interest; it is a clarion call loud and clear which urges all the oppressed peoples of Europe to revolt. Occurring in the most decisive period of the war, the downfall of the self-heralded Duce and the powerful revolt of the Italian people becomes a political event of momentous international significance.

In recent years Mussolini had become a mere servant of Hitler, but in history he preceded Hitler and furnished him with ideological weapons and with financial backing at the inception of the German Nazi movement. For years the names of Mussolini and Hitler have been indissolubly linked as the two living symbols of world fascism.

Mussolini, the founder and the initiator of fascism in Italy and in Europe, has met the disastrous political demise which long awaited him; and Adolf Hitler will soon share his fate.

Throughout Europe the repercussions of the downfall of Mussolini are tremendous. They are being felt in all the vassal countries of Hitler Germany, who now see the shadow of defeat lurking over them; in the occupied countries where the people, profoundly moved by the events in Italy, also begin to transform their dreams of liberation into reality, and in Berlin itself, where the fall of Mussolini, the victorious summer counter-offensive of the Red Army, and the appeal of the German National Committee of Liberation must resound like a death knell in the ears of the Nazi leaders.

For more than twenty years Hitler and Mussolini reiterated that their social system was the last word in historical development. They characterized fascism as a po-

litical system destined to conquer the world and to rule forever afterwards through the centuries.

Current events in Italy, however, present an altogether different picture. Italian Fascism has become a political wreckage; the democratic Italian parties, which had so often been declared dead and buried, have arisen more alive and more powerful than ever.

This spells doom not only for Italian Fascism but also for the so-called European "New Order," a collapsible edifice built by Hitler on the quicksands of greed, brutality and oppression.

The struggle of the Italian people for peace and liberty, therefore, has shaken the very foundations of this unstable fascist structure, not only in Italy but in all of Europe.

The time for the opening of the long-awaited Second Front has arrived. The United Nations must take advantage of this opportunity in order to crush with all their might an enemy which is already weakened by the knowledge of inevitable defeat.

## THE FALL OF MUSSOLINI AND THE FIGHT FOR THE DESTRUCTION OF THE FASCIST REGIME

Now that Mussolini has fallen, and the rotten, unstable structure of the fascist regime in Italy is about to collapse, many are wondering what the immediate and remote causes of this speedy ruin really are.

How did it happen that a regime which seemed to have built its system of oppression on a solid foundation of propaganda, terror and training of twenty years, crumbled into a heap of shambles in a few days, as soon as it was assailed by the fury of the people? What political forces strove for the culmination of this crisis? Who led the Italian people



in this glorious struggle? Once fascism has fallen, what will happen to Italy?

Amid the factors which have brought about the downfall of fascism, the importance of the external, military operations cannot be minimized—the terrific defeat and the complete destruction of the Italian expeditionary force on the Soviet front, last winter, the German-Italian disaster in Tunisia, and above all the invasion of Sicily and the threat to the Italian mainland played a powerful role in hastening the political crisis in Italy.

The immediate internal causes of Mussolini's downfall seem to have evolved as follows: Mussolini submitted his resignation to the King, but this does not imply that he renounced his powers voluntarily. Some time previously, in fact, Mussolini had proposed to the Supreme Fascist Council a plan mapped out together with Hitler, at Verona. In case of an Allied attack, all Nazi and Italian troops in Italy would retire behind the boundary of the Po River in Northern Italy. Since neither Italy nor Germany had sufficient forces to defend the Italian peninsula at a time when the Soviet Union was advancing victoriously on the Eastern Front, and the threat of Second Front attacks from various parts of Europe was growing stronger, it seemed advisable to the two dictators to abandon all southern and central Italy.

Mussolini had explained to the Supreme Council the military factors which led to this decision; namely, the necessity of establishing a defensive front in the essential regions of northern Italy and at the same time preventing the extension of the Axis internal lines of communication. But not even the Fascist Supreme Council could stomach these so-called military necessities, which would have entailed the

loss of two-thirds of Italian territory, to the obvious advantage of Hitler's strategy.

Mussolini had returned empty handed from his meeting with Hitler at Verona. No military reinforcements had been granted to him, not one single army division, not even an encouraging promise of badly needed help. According to reports, the Fascist Supreme Council rejected the Mussolini-Hitler decisions by a vote of 19—6. It was at this moment that all the opposition forces, which had been maturing for some time in the very leadership of the Fascist Party, in the army and monarchical circles, decided to eliminate Mussolini in an effort to save what they could of Italian imperialist positions. Thus it was that they gave the reins of government into the hands of Badoglio and the King.

The profound crisis which had developed in the very ranks of Italian Fascism, and in the powerful monopoly capital and industrial groups, was, therefore, one of the immediate causes of Mussolini's resignation. But it was not the fundamental or primary cause. The basic and essential explanation for Mussolini's sudden fall is that, hard pressed and facing an acute crisis, he realized that he could not muster the support of the Italian people, that he could not even depend on their passive hostility—which, although manifest for many years—had still permitted him in the past to find a way out of even the most crucial situations. The spirit of the Italian people had changed. During the past two years they had already given more than one sign of active opposition to the war and fascism.

In the past five months, moreover, the anti-fascist movement had grown by leaps and bounds. The first important sign of its patriotic activity was the first manifesto issued at the first conference of the five underground anti-fascist

parties, which was held, not on foreign soil, as in the past, but right in Italy itself, in Milan, in December of 1942.

In the light of later events, the Milan Manifesto issued in December, 1942, by the Party of Action, the Christian Democratic Party, the Communist Party, the Socialist Party, and the Liberal Party of Reconstruction, represents a milestone on the road toward the liberation of the Italian people. (Certain prominent Italian political figures in America contested the authenticity of the underground Milan conference and its Manifesto; they refused, moreover, to apply the principles of unity adopted by the Italian Underground, as the guiding tenet for Italian-American political activities, thus seriously failing the Italian people.)

During March, 1943, the program of action evolved by the Italian National Front, coupled with the drastic conditions prevailing in Italy, inspired the first important mass movements. In Turin a strike of 30,000 workers occurred in the Fiat automobile plants, whose workers have always been in the foreground of the anti-fascist struggle. Mass movements and strikes occurred in Milan, Spezia, Venice, Naples, Taranto, Bari and among the peasants of Tuscany. The National Front Committee composed of Catholics, liberals, Democrats, Communists and Socialists, operating from its center in Milan, formed branches in all the principal cities of Italy. Two illegal newspapers were published during the period between January and July, 1943: *La Nostra Voce* (Our Voice), a Communist organ, and *L'Italia Libera* (Free Italy), a liberal organ.

Hundreds of thousands of leaflets were distributed during this time to factory workers throughout Italy; the text of two of these leaflets, dated June, 1943, was transmitted from Berne to the Office of War Information and was re-

cently published here. One of these leaflets was signed by the *Committee of Action of the Five Parties* in Milan and the other by the *Anti-Fascist Peasant League* in Tuscany. When the American and British troops decided to invade Italy and began the occupation of Sicily, they found, therefore, a very ripe and very favorable political situation; entire army divisions surrendered without firing a single shot; the Allied forces were welcomed everywhere. The soldiers of the Tenth "Bersaglieri" Regiment, for example, not only didn't fire their guns, but greeted the Yankee officers who were approaching to establish the terms of surrender, with ironic but enthusiastic cries of—"You have only landed now? We have been waiting for you for a long time."

These then, are the immediate causes for the downfall of Mussolini in Italy; the most significant, obviously, and the prime cause, is the action of the Italian masses. An analysis of the more remote causes, however, is also necessary in order to better clarify the Italian situation.

## TWENTY YEARS OF FASCISM IN ITALY

More than twenty years have passed since Benito Mussolini left the sleeper of the Milan-Rome Express and presented himself to the King to accept the position of leader of the Italian Government. There was no actual military march on Rome. The march on Rome was just a parade. The ruling classes had a deadly fear of the working class revolutionary movement which spread throughout Italy immediately after the first World War. They, therefore, chose Benito Mussolini as their savior and entrusted him with the abominable task of crushing the democratic aspirations of the workers with an iron hand.

When it became known that thousands of Blackshirts had mobilized in the vicinity of Rome in order to march against the capital and usurp all political power, one of the leaders of the Italian Army assured the King that the miserable gang of criminals and cutthroats led by Mussolini could be annihilated within ten minutes simply by using the local police force (carabinieri). All that was needed was an order from the King.

This order was not forthcoming, however; the most reactionary elements in the powerful financial circles had already exerted sufficient pressure on the king, who wished to retain his throne and his crown at any cost. Not only did he acquiesce to the idea of making Mussolini the new leader of the Italian Government, he did not move a finger to stop the miserable advance of the Blackshirts. Instead, he secretly circulated the order that Mussolini and his band of gangsters should be allowed to continue onward undisturbed. The Blackshirts entered the capital without encountering any opposition, after an uneventful promenade.

The popular movement was not able to block or even seriously hinder the development of fascism because its forces were divided; the Social-Democrats were following a line of capitulation. Typical of the leaders of the Socialist Party was Filippo Turati; characteristic of the sentiments of his party was his answer to the peasants of Andria, in the region of Le Puglie, who objected to the fascist policy of violence and wished to know how to combat it. Turati consoled them with this famous phrase—"Be good, be holy, be cowardly."

Another significant occurrence which has already been recorded in the annals of history is the signing of the famous "Pact of Appeasement" by the leaders of the Socialist

Party, the unions, and the fascists, wherein they pledged to cease all strife and violence toward each other. The Communist Party was left alone in the struggle against the fascist hoodlums and was pitilessly crushed. Those who had signed the "Appeasement Pact," however, soon realized the inevitable consequences of their mistake. It was the usual fascist strategy of divide and conquer, of crushing all enemies, one by one. After having defeated the Communist Party, in fact at the same time that the Communists were being persecuted, and the workers' and peasants' organizations led by them liquidated, the ground was being prepared to destroy the opposition of the Socialists, the democrats, the Catholics, the liberals, the Masons, in short, all opposition no matter how moderate.

Yet, by methodically adhering to the policy of divide and conquer, Mussolini and his party, aided and abetted by all the reactionary elements in the country for three years, succeeded in assuming complete power in the political life of Italy.

The democratic opposition rallied its weakened forces and began its anti-fascist struggle after Mussolini had usurped all powers. It was much too late. Fascism had already become too strong. Not only was it nurtured by the group of adherents which it had been able to bribe after usurping power, but also by the continued anti-revolutionary sentiments of the democratic opposition. True, these elements finally understood that the "Appeasement Pact" had been a lurid trap; true the opposition was struggling valiantly under the leadership of Matteotti and Amendola (both of whom were later assassinated by the fascist murderers); in reality, however, these forces had not completely abandoned the idea that it was extremely dangerous to include

the masses in their fight against fascism. They were haunted by the spectre of civil war.

After the murder of Matteotti in 1924 the democratic opposition left the Parliament but, instead of mobilizing the masses, it merely abstained passively from participating in the actions of the Chamber of Deputies and waited for the King, perilously perched on his throne, to take repressive measures against Mussolini.

Even though these more or less democratic elements accepted a common program of action with the Communist Party, they refused to take into consideration the Communist proposal to arm the people, to wage open warfare, and thus overthrow the fascist government. This would surely have been possible during the period when the murder of Matteotti provoked a wave of intense indignation against the Mussolini regime throughout the masses of Italian people. But it did not happen. Fascism could not be stopped by a vacillating policy based on distrust of the people. The result was that Mussolini consolidated his power once again.

Until 1926 there were many restrictions on civil liberties but the newspapers and the organizations of the opposition parties had not yet been declared illegal. After the decrees of October, 1926, all parties were liquidated, all newspapers suppressed; the prisons and the Italian Devil's Islands were jammed with anti-fascists. Mussolini created a special tribunal composed exclusively of officers of the fascist militia. His government became an uncontrolled personal dictatorship, completely totalitarian.

#### FASCISM AND THE NATIONAL INTEREST

Obviously, the breath-taking events which are now taking place in Italy demonstrate that the Socialist and democratic

education which Mazzini and Garibaldi imparted to the Italian people during the period of national unification called "Il Risorgimento" (an education which had also been continued by the Italian Socialist and Communist movements), was not completely lost. The Italian proletariat has shown conclusively in the last few weeks that it has not forgotten its historic struggles in the movements developed during the period between 1894 and 1898, the extensive strikes in 1911 and in 1914, and the colossal mass movement which spread throughout Italy in 1919-20. This democratic and Socialist education, which has instilled in the hearts of the Italian people a true love for liberty and democracy, may have been repressed by twenty years of fascist brutality, but it was stronger than any tyranny; it could not be destroyed.

Nonetheless, it remains true that during a long period of time fascism was able to make definite inroads among the masses. How could it happen that such a regime, a monstrous enemy of the common man, could have any success whatsoever amid the people?

One of the chief reasons for this phenomenon is that the fascist policy was presented to the masses as a policy of *national advancement*, whose triumph had to be assured by the sacrifices, the privations, the sufferings of all the Italian people. Under the guise of promoting the welfare of the nation, all civil liberties were suppressed, salaries and wages were cut in half, the peasantry was impoverished to the great advantage of the rich landowners, small tracts of privately-owned land were confiscated, industry was concentrated in the hands of a few magnates, small businessmen were ruined.

Such a domestic policy, aimed to check popular revolt at



its very inception, needed as its mainstay an organized system for controlling the people. From this basic precept evolved the infiltration of fascism in all sections of the population by the establishment of an immense network which included every type of organization—children's clubs, youth societies, girls' social clubs, recreation groups, charity groups, etc. The membership of these organizations mounted daily; the ranks of the Fascist Party were thus swelled.

Fascism wanted to walk hand in hand with the people, in the home, in school, in church, at work, and at play, in order to enfold them inextricably within its ideological snares. The forces in power wished to transform the Italian people into a blind, passive instrument of a reactionary, plutocratic, and imperialistic policy. The reactionary elements wished to put into practice the teachings of certain self-aggrandizing schemers who debased the masses by characterizing them as a brute force, as soft clay which can be molded at will by an elite, by a ruling class dedicated to violence and devoid of all scruples, whose only aim is to mobilize the people in support of the myth of a mystic cult; this time, this all-embracing theory happened to be called fascism.

However, war is a concrete reality. After a few months of war, this carefully constructed edifice of hypocritical oppression was destroyed and was revealed to the masses in all its barefaced hideousness.

According to fascist propaganda, its national policy was going to solve the basic social problems and needs of the Italians (expressed by one simple word "Bread!") and bring them well-being through the conquest of "a place in the sun" for Italy, the conquest of a great empire, of Mediterranean supremacy, etc.

The advent of war brought this policy to the test. The trial by fire revealed it to be the most detrimental *anti-national policy* in the Italian history. Instead of victory came defeat. Instead of an empire—the loss of territories which had been acquired by Italian imperialism through great losses of men and money. Instead of the long-awaited day of glory—universal contempt and disgrace. Instead of the expected growth of *national prestige*—the shameful submission to Germany and the loss of the dignity and national independence for which many heroic Italians had fought during the last few centuries.

A regime which encounters such undeniable setbacks reveals to the blindest of people the fallacies in the fundamental theories of its political program—and a crisis necessarily follows.

Once the nationally destructive character of the fascist policy became clear, it was inevitable that the numerous contradictions within the Fascist Party, and the regime itself, would cause violent clashes. And the broader the mass base of the Fascist Party, the deeper the crisis was bound to be. The war thus revealed that fascism had created a fictitious *national unity* which crumbled rapidly at the first blow. Moreover, the national anti-fascist front, established at the secret conference in Milan a year ago, and which now leads the Italian mass movement, clearly indicates that the national unity which fascism for twenty years vainly attempted to establish under its banners is in reality being formed against fascism today. In this decisive hour all Italians, regardless of political affiliation or social standing, are united in a *truly national front* that truly corresponds to the country's best interests; that opposes the Nazi oppressors and Mussolini and his gang, and fights for peace and freedom.

Herein lies the political significance of the Italian National Front. It is therefore only stupid, narrow minds that can believe that this movement is merely a Left-wing maneuver or a Communist attempt to gain control of the Italian nation.

### THE WAR AND ITALY'S NATIONAL INTERESTS

Mussolini's campaign in Ethiopia, which cost the Italian people seven billion liras, initiated a new cycle of wars in Western Europe. The lame justification offered by the fascists for this policy of aggression was that Italy had to find a coveted "place in the sun" by conquering an empire. Many Italians and Italian-Americans were deceived into acclaiming this imperialistic demagoguery. Following Ethiopia, came the intervention in Spain in 1937, which cost Italy ten billion liras; this war was less popular because fascism could not fabricate any plausible excuse for invading Spain. The development of Ethiopia as an Italian colony cost Italy an additional 50 billion liras.

Assuming enormous proportions, Italian war expenditures basically weakened the entire country; Italian economy was ruined, the people subjected to ever-increasing taxes and fantastically high prices. This was the chaotic condition of the Italian nation on Sept. 1, 1939, the fateful day chosen by Hitler to initiate the realization of his dreams of world conquest.

Nonetheless, the Italian plutocrats, who had amassed tremendous profits in the wars for colonial expansion, did not place any obstacles in Mussolini's path of aggression. Encouraged by the imminent fall of France, spurred on by a belief in an early and rapid victory, Mussolini plunged the already impoverished and woefully unprepared nation

into the abyss of a new world war. The result of this policy soon became evident.

The Italian Army was annihilated in East Africa, and in Cyrenaica; it was thoroughly crushed in Greece and Albania; it continued to suffer an uninterrupted series of shameful defeats. Fascist Italy, which had shouted its glorification of war as the savior of humanity, "the new hygiene of the people," revealed itself militarily impotent. While incompetence, corruption and the disorganization which existed in the Supreme Command of the fascist hierarchy contributed to this state of affairs, it arose chiefly from the hostility of the Italian people, and hence of the Italian army, toward Mussolini's wars of conquest. The same masses which had followed fascism and had trusted its lying nationalistic propaganda were profoundly affected by the military defeats in 1940-41, which offended their national pride and aroused an intense feeling of disillusionment.

A general sentiment of dissatisfaction spread throughout the country; it pervaded all classes and groups. The conviction that the fascist policy was detrimental to the best interests of the nation, that it would eventually submerge the country into a state of complete ruin, became widespread. It was at this time that Mussolini attempted to save his rapidly dwindling prestige by calling upon the assistance of the Nazi forces.

He desperately sent Nazi soldiers into Greece to reinforce the Italian armies which had refused to advance, and placed the Italian army in Africa under Rommel's command. At his explicit invitation, the Gestapo and the Nazi troops marched into Italy.

But the cure was worse than the illness. The Italian people resented the servitude imposed by the Germans and

began to manifest in every possible way their hatred for the new Nazi masters.

In June, 1941, obeying Hitler's orders, Mussolini declared war against the Soviet Union, while at the same time Hitler began his bloodless conquest of the Italian peninsula. In Italy there was deep-rooted sympathy for the Soviet Union. Russia had always been considered as the traditional friend and ally of Italy. No Italian could be convinced that this attack against Russia was motivated by any possible advancement of Italy's national interests. All Italians knew that there were no common frontiers between Italy and the Soviet Union, that history had revealed no conflicting interests between the two countries. Mussolini himself had been one of the first European heads of state to recognize the Soviet Union; for many years the two countries had followed a policy of commercial cooperation.

They were bound, moreover, by a non-aggression pact diligently sued for by Mussolini himself. The sending of an Italian expeditionary force to Russia, therefore, had no political explanation other than blind obedience to the orders of Hitler Germany.

The complete destruction by the Red Army of the Italian Expeditionary forces had a tremendous effect; 175,000 Italian soldiers were killed, wounded or imprisoned in this ill-fated campaign—the Italian army was completely exterminated. The news of this defeat, the aerial bombardments executed by the British and American air squadrons, the ensuing destruction of Italian cities during the winter of 1942 and the spring of 1943, drove home very clearly to the Italian people the knowledge that Italy had undergone another Caporetto, that the war was lost and that the only way out was to overthrow the Mussolini regime, to oust the

German troops, to break the Axis Pact and to make an immediate, separate peace with the United Nations.

The impending disaster, the dissatisfaction and unrest within the Fascist Party itself provoked the internal shake-up of the fascist regime. Mussolini in rapid succession placed at the head of his party two common criminals, two professional thieves and murderers, Vidussoni and Scorza. In February, 1943, however, Mussolini was again forced to reorganize the whole government, to assemble a completely new ruling clique. He eliminated his opponents and utilized people less compromised by obvious misuse of power; but even this internal change was fruitless. Italy continued to be bombarded, its population suffered the unreasoning pangs of intense hunger. The nation was incredibly disorganized—on the verge of total collapse. A small group of plutocrats and fascist profiteers, who continued to accumulate wealth by exploiting the people, were charged with doling out to the hungry masses a small ration of 150 grams of bread a day.

In the period from October, 1942, to February, 1943, the Fascist Party had lost 2,000,000 members; its ranks continued to diminish with ever increasing rapidity. At the beginning of the summer of 1943 there was a mass withdrawal from the Fascist Party. The ship which was about to sink was hurriedly being abandoned.

The victorious conclusion of the Allied campaign in Tunisia, the occupation of Sicily and the victorious counter-offensive of the Red Army on the Eastern front were the drops which caused "the bitter cup to run over," and hastened the normal course of events. Mussolini and the Fascist Party had been repudiated by the Italians for a long time. At the Verona meeting Hitler had to confess to his Italian

vassal that he did not have sufficient forces to terrorize the Italian people into a renewed acceptance of the fascist regime to check the onslaught of the Allied forces. Mussolini could no longer hope to retain his power, no matter what new trick he attempted. And, in fact, events swept him away from the political scene.

The King chose as his successor Marshal Badoglio. Despite the new government's appeal to the masses not to indulge in any acts of "recrimination" against the fallen regime, the King and Badoglio had to heed the pressure of the masses and apply certain measures against the toppling fascist hierarchy.

The political organization which really represents Italy and its people is the Italian National Front, which in every city of Italy is formed of representatives of the Christian Democratic (Catholic) Party, the liberals, Communists, Socialists and the Party of Action.

In the name of the Italian people, the Italian National Front has already acquainted the Badoglio government with the will of the people concerning the necessary democratic steps to be taken to insure the real and effective suppression of the Fascist Party, the arrest and punishment of the fascist leaders, the revocation of all totalitarian laws and the establishment of complete freedom of speech, press and assembly.

Proof that the Italian National Front can become the leading political force in the country is given by the general strikes occurring in Turin and Milan and by the movements of revolt in Genoa, Bologna, Trieste, Florence, Naples, Bari and Taranto and by the adherence given the movement by the most powerful working-class organizations.

We do not yet know by name all the Italian patriots of the different anti-fascist parties and groups which have taken

the leadership of the people's movement. However, the news services report that among the signers of the manifesto in Turin is Giovanni Roveda, a member of the Central Committee of the Italian Communist Party and national secretary of the Cabinet Makers Union, who was sentenced in 1928 to twenty years and four months imprisonment for Communist activity. Reports from Milan reveal that one of the leaders there is Giorgio Amendola, leading underground Communist Party member.

The Italian National Front is by no means made up exclusively of Left-wing groups: it includes the Christian Democratic and Liberal Parties, which have traditionally followed a moderate and conservative line, and which today are united with the Party of Action and the Socialist and Communist Parties in the supreme interests of the country. The attempts made by certain gentry here to characterize the popular movement in Italy as "anarchy" and "chaos" must, therefore, be deplored. It is the character of the present Italian government, which has done nothing to restore democracy in Italy and to throw out the Germans—it is this government, composed of ex-Fascists and pro-Fascist bureaucrats who have no influence over the people—which has given rise to the demands of the mass movement for liberation among the Italian people.

It is natural that the Communists—who for twenty years have been in the vanguard of the anti-Fascist struggle in Italy—should be part of the Italian popular front. By virtue of their fighting spirit and their heroic sacrifices, the Italian Communists enjoy a large following and great popularity among the people throughout Italy.

Their strength consists not only in their numbers, but most of all in the fact that they identify themselves with the



struggle for the national liberation of Italy. Their strength derives not so much from their illegal organization—which twenty years of Fascist dictatorship never succeeded in smashing—as from the fact that they have known how to work in common accord and complete fraternity with other anti-Fascist groups and parties, and even with those Rightist forces which were willing to struggle for Italy's liberation. Finally, the strength of the Communists derives not only from the fact that in every city (and, in northern Italy, in every village as well) there are groups of Communists known to the people as heroes of the underground who have suffered imprisonment and banishment more than once in the course of twenty years, but also from the fact that the democratic forces in Italy have learned through bitter experience that division means the triumph of reaction and therefore this time, in this final struggle, they will not permit division in their ranks.

The Italian people understand the need of uniting all the forces capable of saving the country, at this moment when the overthrow of fascism and its final destruction need to be carried out to completion.

Should the strange idea of excluding the Communists from the National Front ever occur to anyone in Italy, an analysis of recent events in that country would show how impossible it would be to carry that idea into effect. Together with the Christian Democrats, the Liberals, the Party of Action and the Socialists, the Communists in Italy fight for a democratic regime and they have demanded the convocation of a constituent assembly and free, general elections within a brief period after peace with the United Nations.

This is the situation in Italy today. If it is true that Hitler troops are preparing to invade the country and occupy the

Po valley, there can be no doubt that the Italian National Front—from Catholics to Communists—will form a solid bloc against the traditional enemy of Italy and will prevent him from devastating further Italian soil.

While there is no need to deal here with problems which can arise only in the future, perhaps it would not be out of place to comment here on the Allied military administration of occupied areas, commonly known as AMGOT. At this writing, the AMGOT in Sicily has so far availed itself of local Fascist elements (who have undergone a political change more or less, only because of the Allied occupation) in its administration of the island. AMGOT has also availed itself of local priests, and the well-known pro-Fascist Cardinal Lavitrano is—so far as we know—the only personality taken into consideration for the political administration of Sicily. At the same time several government agencies have let it be understood that no organization and activity of the anti-Fascist parties and political groups will be permitted to function in the occupied area, nor will anti-Fascist exiles now living abroad be permitted to re-enter Italy.

It is evident that these questions will have to be clarified and undergo re-examination by the British and American authorities. AMGOT has already taken a series of worthwhile measures in Sicily, such as the suppression of the Fascist Party and the Special Tribunal, and the release of political prisoners. It is clear that AMGOT cannot do less than recognize the forms of organization and democratic political life which the Italian people have given themselves on their own initiative. It is clear, too, that the Italian people, arisen to a new life, will not consent, certainly, to be governed by fascists whom they have already ousted

from power, nor by any other force which did not come from their own free will and choice.

The democratic forces of the Italian masses have matured from one end of the peninsula to the other; they are active and organized, and it would be a dangerous illusion to think that they will submit to an administration other than one they have already chosen. It would be utopian to believe that resurgent Italy could be governed by any other than the Italian people. No one can turn back the tide.

### FOR THE UNITY OF ITALIANS IN NORTH AND SOUTH AMERICA

As far back as October 31, 1942, *L'Unita' del Popolo*, New York anti-fascist paper, pointed out to the Italian-Americans and Italian anti-fascist exiles in the United States the historic importance of the establishment of an Italian National Front. We declared:

"This is the most important political development of the moment; it is an event which can and will change the course of Italian history.

"We anti-fascists must fully understand this development and draw the proper conclusions. The task of all the democratic and progressive elements is to become the organizing force of the whole nation. The National Front in Italy can become a reality which will be able to change the course of events not only in Italy but throughout Europe."

Unfortunately many Italian anti-fascists in the U.S.A. did not choose to recognize the political lessons and significance of the Italian National Front; even the best of them, those who claimed they were for unity, continued to pursue false mirages instead of immediately supporting the movement in Italy and establishing a united Italian-American movement.

There was a double reason for this lack of understanding. First there was a great reluctance to profit from the lessons of the past, and especially to recognize the guiding principle which had given strength to the Popular Front in Spain and in France. The one motivating force which strengthened these movements, to the point where they were almost able to change the relationship of forces between reaction and democracy, was precisely *the loyal and determined collaboration extended by the working class to all progressive elements*. It would be madness to attempt to solve the tremendous problem of the freedom and independence of Italy without making an effort to bring about at the same time the greatest possible unity, and to include in this united movement the working class and its most able representatives among the Communists and Socialists.

The other reason for misunderstanding the significance and role of the Italian National Front lay in the widespread concept that the liberation of Italy would come as the result of outside military intervention. There was a complete lack of faith in the Italian people, a thorough disbelief in the possibility of a mass movement for national liberation within Italy itself.

Because of these misconceptions, Italian anti-fascism in America did not succeed in taking the same firm stand assumed by the leaders of the illegal Italian movement and remained divided, unable to fulfill any positive function either in Italy or in the Italian-American communities in North and South America.

It is an unfortunate fact that up to the present the 10,000,000 Italians of North and South America, and especially the Italians in the United States, have not been able to reach the same level of political consciousness as that

revealed by the people of Italy in these historic days. Even without considering the Red-baiting, anti-Soviet group led by Luigi Antonini, which has become the center of Trotskyite and ex-fascist elements, difficulties are still encountered among the more healthy forces of Italian-Americans, both in North and South America. For example, the inconsistent, defeatist theory that the Italian people could not and would not revolt against fascism and, therefore, that only an appeal to "passive resistance" could be directed at them, was advocated not only by the reactionary, corrupt gang around Luigi Antonini but by well known liberals, like Count Sforza. The damage wrought by this theory and practice of passivity at a moment when the maximum unity of the Italian anti-fascist forces in Italy and abroad was necessary to make a common appeal to revolt to the Italian people, can well be imagined.

To split still more the Italian anti-fascist forces, there were the ignoble actions of Cianca and Tarchiani, of the Mazzini Society leadership, who for years systematically fought and sabotaged any form of unity. It is an incontestible fact that, at the time of the Milan Conference, the anti-fascist and progressive forces who rally around *L'Unita' del Popolo*, in the United States, the Garibaldi Alliance in Latin America, and the Honorable Ennio Gnudi in Canada, were the only ones to hail that event, and the manifesto issued then by the five anti-fascist parties, as a historically important political fact; and they were also the only ones who proposed to the other anti-fascist groups in exile to adopt the Manifesto and its program of action as the common platform of action among the Italian masses of North and South America.

Even at this late hour, the only course possible for the

Italians of America is to unite on the basis of the political platform contained in the Manifesto of the five anti-fascist parties of the Italian National Front; to support the heroic action of the Italian people with every means at our disposal.

Unity is necessary for many reasons. There is the problem of the immediate repatriation of the exiled Italian anti-fascists. There is the problem of Italian-American aid to the people of Italy in the form of funds, clothing, food and other necessities for the relief and rehabilitation of the war-torn areas. There is the need for mobilizing all the strength of the Italian-American masses for the immediate opening of the Second Front, for the whole war effort. This must be done despite the disruptive maneuvers of Luigi Antonini, and support must be given by the Italian-American workers to the position taken by many of their union leaders, notably the Amalgamated Clothing Workers Union leaders, who have come out in open condemnation of Antonini's disruptive tactics.

The Italian-American masses should be proud of the Italian people, who by their heroic struggles of the past weeks have earned the respect and admiration of the free peoples of the world. The example given by the Italian National Front, which unites all forces from Catholics to Communists, must serve as the inspiration for the action of the Italian-Americans.

In this decisive moment of the war, every force must be mobilized and organized for the final and rapid destruction of the common enemy, for the final and complete victory of the United Nations.

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