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Is Italian fascism dying?, 1941.

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IS ITALIAN FASCISM DYING?

The Collapse of a Great Imposture



By

Dr. Abba Hillel Silver



At
The Temple

On
Sunday morning, April 6, 1941

No war, my friends, is won or lost until it is over. This war is now in its early stages not in its last stages. And it is therefore premature to announce the collapse of one or the other belligerents. It is premature to announce the collapse of Italy as an effective belligerent. It is likely that Italy will be kept going by her Axis partner, and her Axis partner has as yet suffered no military defeat. It is clear that the Nazis have taken over Italy. They will keep her in the war as long as it suits their purpose and as long as they can.

A situation may arise where the Italian people will get out of hand when their sense of humiliation, disillusionment and their suffering will drive them to revolt. It is conceivable that a powerful opposition may someday arise in important quarters in Italy. But all this is not likely under rigid control, espionage and censorship, and it does not seem likely that such things will happen before the Nazis suffer a major military defeat.

For the comforting propaganda which is now spread among the Italians is that the Nazis will restore whatever Italy has lost and that the series of military defeats of the Italian people are only incidents in a war which the invincible Nazis will win. And then the final victory will obliterate all the temporary defeats.

That propaganda will be effective among the Italian people because it is welcome. Until their confidence is shaken by a Nazi defeat it is not likely that the Italians will revolt. Then they will strike out to win back their freedom and the respect of the world.

The Italians are not a docile or a subject race. The Italians have fierce a/sense of pride and glorious memories. We should not permit the events of recent months, recent years to cause us to forget all this.

All through the 19th century the Italian people fought valiantly,

sacrificially for their freedom, independence and national unity. They were led by great statesmen and fighters: Mazzoni, Garibaldi and. The brave deeds of the true patriots of Young Italy, of the Carbonari, of many of the troops of Italy who laid down their lives for freedom of their country constitute the immortal story of the whole Risorgimento, the Resurrection of the Italian nation in the 19th century.

It is to be hoped that twenty years of the spiritual death of Fascism have not entirely extinguished these fires among the Italians, although from careful observations some have begun to fear that this might be the case.

Recently, John P. Whittaker, a careful observer of Italy for many years wrote: "The nation has been debauched by 19 years of Fascism. Few Italians accepted that system without compromising their intelligence and their conscience.

"The strength of the Italian lay in his healthy cynicism and his common sense. He had to give up both to be a Fascist.

"Nineteen years of daily compromise has done something to his soul. He is less a man than he was. The sudden realization that Fascism was a lie, not a new national movement but merely a technique for keeping a small clique in power has crushed his spirit."

I hope that that is not so. I trust that the spiritual reservoirs of the people have not entirely been broken or dried up by the last twenty years of Fascism. The Italian people are not cowards and they are not afraid to fight, and recent defeats have led many people to a hasty conclusion. When they have a real cause to fight for, a cause close to their hearts, they fight bravely and when ably led, they fight victoriously.

It is true and it is to their eternal credit, that the Italians have no heart for fighting for the fight's sake. They are not Prussians. They are not militarists. They do not look upon warfare as the supreme

career of a nation or of any people. The Italian people as a whole has no ambition to conquer anyone or to rule the world. Mr. Mussolin's romancing imperialism has left the Italian people by and large cold. They do not want to die to build up a new and greater Roman Empire. Their heart was not in it when Mussolini forced them into the Ethiopian war. Their heart was not in it when they were forced to intervene into the Spanish Civil War. Their heart was not in it when Mussolini forced them to invade and seize Albania in 1939. Their heart ^{was} ~~is~~ certainly not in it when Mussolini catapulted them into the present war.

The Italians, next to the Greeks, are the heirs to the oldest political and cultural tradition in Europe. They were civilized and they ruled the world when the rest of the world, with the exception of Greece, were barbarians. Unlike the Germans who never ruled a great empire, the ancestors of the Italians ruled the whole world and they know from past history all the glitter, cost and mirage of empire building.

Through the ages the Italians fought in a hundred lands and on a thousand battlefields. They have had enough of it. They are fed up with war. The heroics of war no longer intoxicate them as they intoxicate their empire-hungry axis-brothers of the North.

In the Middle Ages, at the time of the Renaissance, the Italians were the most civilized, the most prosperous people in Europe. They opened the doorways to the modern world. Art, literature, science, scholarship flourished among them and the cold barbarians from the North used to come down to the sunny cities of Italy not only to receive their religious dogmas, but also to learn the amenities of decent civilized living. They do not love war. They love life, not death. They love to enjoy life. Unlike the Nazis, they do not prate about the glory of death.

They love music, and the vocabulary of music is Italian.

The shame of Fascism is that it did violence to this spirit of the Italian people. It forced a false and alien philosophy on the people. It made them do what their spirits revolted against. The Germans like regimentation. The Germans like to be ordered. The Germans like to be militarized. The Germans like to fight. The Italians do not. Fascism has forced a political destiny upon the Italians which they resent. That is why at every real test in the last few years Fascist Italy breaks down. The Italians will not fight because the things they are asked to fight for they do not want. In the last analysis it is the spirit of a people which determines whether that people will win or lose.

Another very competent report and observer of the international scene, Mr. Leland Stowe, recently wrote: "After having seen hundreds of Italian prisoners from one end of the Albano-Greek front to the other, I say this with conviction: paralyzing lack of belief lies naked in their eyes and a great many of them do not hesitate to express it verbally. When I was in Cairo, American correspondents brought back identical reports from the Libyan front. The Fascist soldiers did not want to fight because it was not their war and they had no faith in it. Most of them were too shrewd to criticize Mussolini, but you could read their thoughts."

The Italians were not interested in annexing Ethiopia. They knew that before Fascism, Italy possessed a colossal empire in Africa eight times the size of Italy and had no use for it. It didn't know what to do with it. Italians were emigrating by the hundreds of thousands but were going to the United States and to South America, not to Libya or Italian Somaliland. Italy did not need Ethiopia nor were they particularly interested in the kind of a regime which Spain had. They knew that these wars and adventures into which they were being compelled ^{hoped largely} ~~to~~ to increase the prestige of

Fascism or to satisfy the megalomania of the Italian Duce. Nor were they proud of the "stab in the back" which they gave prostrate France a few months ago which was the act of a gangster and not one worthy of a proud race.

Twenty years ago the Italian people permitted itself to be beguiled and misled by Fascist propaganda. Italy at that time was torn by bitter industrial strife. Communists incited by Bolsheviki were throwing all industrial life into chaos. Furthermore, though the Italians emerged victorious out of the last war, it felt, nevertheless, that it did not get enough out of the peace settlement. Many felt discontented. The Fascists capitalized on the dissatisfaction and resentment and through Fascist propaganda persuaded the Italians to sacrifice their constitutional liberties to meet the temporary emergency.

The Fascists promised the people as all dictators do, to bring about peace, order, security and national greatness. Steadily during the last twenty years, the Italians have seen their liberties abrogated, their rights abolished, have seen themselves subjected to the most relentless and unscrupulous terrorism and coercion, their standard of living progressively lowered, and plunged into one military adventure after another until the last one which brought upon them their greatest military disaster since 1870. Italy has experienced a shameful defeat at the hands of the small people of Greece and it has rankled them. They have seen the whole African Empire which took three-quarters of a century to build up, torn into shreds in the last few months. They witnessed their navy into which they have poured so much of the wealth of their relatively poor country beaten over and over again in battle. They saw their mare nostrum ~~converted~~ converted over night from an Italian Lake to a British

Lake. And when the nakedness of Fascism was uncovered they saw their armies unprepared. They saw the graft and corruption which left their soldiers unequipped in spite of hundreds and millions of dollars which were squeezed out of the Italians for military preparedness. And worst of all, the most bitter pill of all to swallow was to see the Germans come and see to it that the Italians stay in the war and do not make a separate peace. They were now witnessing the whole life of the Italian people --their military establishment, their industrial organization, taken over by aliens whom they feared and many hated.

First they sacrificed their personal liberties to Mussolini. Now they were sacrificing their national liberties to Hitler. They know what it means because they are an old and wise people. Win or lose, the Italians are lost. If Germany is defeated, then of course Italy will be defeated. If Germany wins, Italy remains a vassal state, not a sovereign and independent state. Mazzini warned his people: "Hope nothing from foreign governments."

What tragic prospects face the Italian people, and what a dread alternative they face. That is what twenty years of Fascism have achieved for the Italian people.

And what a morass this blustering braggart Mussolini has led his people into. What an inflated imposter this son of a blacksmith has turned out to be. How he has troubled the earth with his ranting and his threats. And how he has lied and betrayed and dragged the honor of his people into the dirt. He should have known better because Mussolini is not the ignoramus that Hitler is. He is an educated man, a cosmopolitan man, a former editor of a socialist paper.

How sad it is to behold great countries fall into the clutches of petty men with large lusts! What a miserable time-server and opportunist he

turned out to be!

I recall, nearly eight years ago, in an interview which I had with him in Rome, discussing the Jewish problem in Europe. He was known as a friend of the Jews. He expressed himself time and again contemptuously about the Nazi attitude towards the Jews. I asked him in 1933 what he thought was responsible for the rise of anti-Semitism. He said it was due to the unsettled economic conditions and that when conditions would become more normal, anti-Semitism would wane. It is a false and illogical theme, he said. Five years later, when Berlin compelled him to join the Axis he went through the Nazi procedure of adopting ^{ir} ~~the~~ same program and the same anti-Jewish Nuremberg Laws. Since 1938 his newspapers have been repeating those lies, those stupidities which he himself contemptuously rejected a few years before. Italy had not room for 44 thousand Jews. That is all there are among 44 million people. 44 thousand Jews could not find asylum in Italy under this regime. But 10 million Italians can and have found asylum in other countries.

Arch of Titus commemorating the victory of Titus over Judea in the year 70 of the Common Era. That is of course one of few things that survived from Ancient Rome... Titus thought that he had scored a victory over the Jews and he erected a monument to tell future generations. Titus is now dead and so is his Empire. But the Jews live nineteen centuries later. And the monument that Mussolini built for himself in his Empire is already being torn down in Africa, Lybia and elsewhere. And he too has persecuted the Jews. And he too will soon pass away like a storm like a blight and he too will remain only a sickly memory.

The Jews will live. Fascism is discredited. The Duce is discredited regardless what victories the Nazis may win today or next

week or next month. Fascism is discredited among the Italian people not to speak of among other people of the world.

The Italian poet and dramatist of the 18th century, Alfieri, in one of his poems said this: "To eradicate

"Those seeds of liberty by nature placed
"In every human breast, no little art,
"And management, besides a length of time
"Are requisite: these seeds may be suppressed,
"By spilling human blood, but not extinguished.
"And oftentimes from blood they shoot again
"With fresh luxuriance."

The seeds of human liberty can not be permanently eradicated. The Italian people are beginning to experience the urge and the prompting and the longing for those liberties which they so blindly and foolishly in the hope of better things with quick results sacrificed a few years ago. And I pray that they, together with the rest of the world may soon recover all their lost liberties. Fascism is dying in the world.

men to go out and die, heedlessly and magnificently, for a counterfeit cause. What Mussolini has done is to make it horribly plain to the average Italian soldier, in Albania and in Libya, that the cause of Fascism is a counterfeit.

✓ **A**FTER having seen hundreds of Italian prisoners from one end of the Albano-Greek front to the other, I say this with conviction: paralyzing lack of belief lies naked in their eyes and a great many of them do not hesitate to express it verbally. When I was in Cairo, American correspondents brought back identical reports from the Libyan front. The Fascist soldiers did not want to fight because it was not their war and they had no faith in it. Most of them were too shrewd to criticize Mussolini, but you could read their thoughts.

Italians of all classes have an extreme dislike and frequent

show those Anglo-Saxons.

These are the feelings to which the propaganda machine plays not altogether successfully, but with some results.

Debauched by Fascism

In the third place, the Italian collapse and defeat have been so crushing that the whole nation lies in a coma of disillusionment, humiliation and distrust. There is no leader, no man and no ideal to turn toward.

The nation has been debauched by 19 years of Fascism. Few Italians accepted that system without compromising their intelligence and their conscience.

The strength of the Italian lay in his healthy cynicism and his common sense. He had to give up both to be a Fascist.

Nineteen years of daily compromise has done something to his soul. He is less a man than he was. The sudden realization that Fascism was a lie, not a new national movement but merely a technique for keeping a small clique in power has crushed his spirit.

Wounded Cry for Revenge

A military doctor told me about a

John T. Whitaker

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1) No war is won or lost until it is over.

This war is in its early - not its last - stages.

It is premature to announce the collapse of It. as an effective belligerent in this war.

It. will be kept going by her Axis partner, and her Axis partner has as yet suffered no military defeat.

The Nazis have taken over It. - and they will keep her in the war as long as it suits their purpose, or as long as they can.

A situation may arise when the It. people will get out of hand - suffering, humiliation, disillusionment revolt - or a powerful opposition will arise in important quarters - Not likely under rigid control, espionage, censorship. Nor until Nazis suffer a major defeat.

For comforting purpog. to-day is that Nazis will restore whatever It. have lost. The series of military defeats are only incidents in a war, which the invincible Nazis are bound to win - And then - the final victory will obliterate all the ^{temporary} ~~defeats~~.

Once that confidence is shaken - Italians will revolt. They will struggle out to win back their freedom, their self-respect, and the respect of the world.

They are not a docile, subject race. They have

(2)

brave deeds and glorious memories.
All thru 19c. they fought valiantly for their freedom,
independence and nat. unity. They were led by
great fighters, states men and revolutionists: Mazzini,
Garibaldi and Cavour.

The brave deeds of the "Carbonari", of "Young Italy"
of ^{the many} fine, true patriots who laid down their lives for a
free and united Italy, constitute the immortal story
of the whole "Risorgimento" - the Resurrection of the
Italian nation.

It is to be hoped that 20 yrs. of the ^{dead not} ~~disruption~~
of I. have not entirely extinguished these fires.
(Lurk)

4) Nor are they a coward people, afraid to fight.

When they have a real cause, close to their hearts,
they fight bravely, and, when ably led, vicoriously.

They defeated the Austrians at Magenta and Solférino
when they chased them out, their country.

They have not heart for fighting for a phantom sake.

They are not Prussians. Warfare is not their life's
career and chief interest. They are not imperialists.
They have no ambition to conquer and rule the
world.

His imperialistic maneuvering have the Italian people cold.
They do not wish to die to build up a new and
greater Roman Empire.

- Their heart was not in it when M. forced them into the Eth. war, or into intervention into Sp. Civil War, or into ^{+ seizure} invasions of Albania¹⁹³⁹, or into present war.
- The Italians, next to the Greeks, are the heirs of the oldest H.M. & cultural traditions in Europe. They were civilized and world-rulers, when the rest of Europe was ^{still} barbarous.
- Unlike the Germans, who never ruled a great empire, the ancestors of the It. ruled the world. They know fully the glitter, the cost and the mirage of empire building.
- Through the ages their sons fought in a hundred lands, on a thousand battle-fields. And the heroics of war no longer make that ~~dramatic appeal~~ which they do to the super-hungry Axis - but there, the North.
- In the Middle Ages - at the time of the Renaissance they were the most civilized and prosperous people in Europe. They opened the door-ways to the modern world. Art, liter. scholarship etc. flourished there, and the cold barb. from the North came to the sunny cities of It. - not only to receive their rel. dogmas, but also all that they achieved of the amenities of civilized living.
- No, they do not love war. They love life not death. They love to enjoy life. Unlike the Nazis, they do not fret of the flow of death. They love music, and the ^{vibrant} ~~happy~~ music of Italian.

3/ The shame of F. is that it has done violence to It. soul and It. life. It forced a false, alien philo. & regimen upon them. Made them do what their spirits revolt against. Forces a pol. mission & destiny upon them which they resent.

That is why - at every real test - F. breaks down. It will not fight here. they ~~do not know what they are fighting for~~ ^{the things they are asked to} - and fight for - are not the things which they really want. (Jew)

They were not interested in annexing Eth. They knew that before F. Italy possessed a colonial empire in Africa, 8 times the size of Italy - and did not use it to any purpose. Italians were emigrating by the hundreds of thousands but were going to U.S. - A.S. - Aus. but not to Syria, or Estonia or It. Somaliland.

→ knew Eth. would mean nothing to them; except satisfaction by ~~imperial domination~~ ^{imperial domination} of the Duce. Spain, Albania

They were not proud of "a tab in the breast" - France, worthy of a conqueror, not of a proud race.

4) 20 yrs. ago they permitted us to be beguiled & mis-led by F. propaganda. It was torn by ind. strife. ~~For~~ ^{For} ~~con~~ ^{con} ~~men~~ ^{men} ~~to~~ ^{to} ~~be~~ ^{be} ~~made~~ ^{made} by Bols. were creating chaos. The European victors - did not get enough - Dissatisfaction and resentment. - F. capitalized - Permeated It. to merge their constitutional spirit - Temp. Emergency -

Would bury them Bae - Orde - Nat. Leather.

65

5/ Steadily then there lost 20 yr - I feel have seen their liberty
destroyed, rights abolished, subjected to unconfined methods
of corruption, of immigration, standards being lowered, &
plunged from one military adventure to another - until
now - the worst military disasters of their history since
1870; Defeat - shameful defeat - never.

African Empire torn into shreds.

One Naval despatch after another - Mar. Norfurn is

man will an St. Pauli auf a Br. Platz

Un preparations - Ergebnis - inspektieren - kommission

And must / all - naked / hand / secrets, now
marked in their own country - Controlling / part -
military / Secn. / of / their / nations. | Keep them from
rebelling - making

- First they lost their ind. freedom to A. separate people
- Now they have lost their Nat. to Nazis.

6. They know what it means: Win or lose - they are lost
as a nat. indep. power. a defeated gen. means

of course, a defeated H. A Victorius for means

a puppet ^{Gen.} domination over it - a satellite & dependency
a sovereign kind. State - "Hope nothing from foreign
9th - Washington

What a tragic prospect - What a dreary alternative!

7/. And what a murder this ^{blatant} haggard ^{of} T. has led his
people into? What an inflated imposter this son
of Boethius has turned out to be! How he crushed
the earth with his threats this morning! Pegler

Had he loved them: "He who wants everything, loses all" (Joseph Israel)
8/ And how he lived and behaved and dropped the banner, his
country into the dirt. This man who should have known better,
for he is not an unlettered ignoramus like Hitler. He is
an educated man - a former editor of a for. paper - a
conservative.

How sad it is to behold great countries fall into
the clutches of petty men with large lusts!

9/ What a miserable turn-server & paper durant he turned
out to be!

(London, Frank, Munich,
Geneva, Paris, Brussels,
Rome, Madrid, Barcelona)

Jews - interview - 1933 . 1938 - April - Race

Italy cannot bear to put any more to 46,000 Jews

10 M. Italians have ordered & needed any more in other lands

10/ There stands in Roman Forum - Arch, Tiber - the throne

white test.
the throne

Tiber are Jews.

M. we just contemplate that ancient Arch here!

Tiber is dead - & so is her Empire - only a memory

Jews live!

Arch & Statue which M. has erected for himself

are also beginning to fall.

(pan-stem - Reyn)

He, too, preserves the Jews!

He, too, will soon

be a pretty memory. The Jews will live!

11/ F. is discredited - The Imperial Duty is discredited.

12/ Hope. (Israel) 9 Months of war - Civilian Disorder

To eradicate
"those seeds of liberty by nature placed
in every human breast, no little art,
and management, besides a length of time
are requisite: these seeds may be suppressed,
by spilling human blood, but not extinguished,
and often times from blood they shoot again
with fresh luxuriance". Alfieri. 18c.

"Woe to thee that spoilest, and thou was not spoiled.
And dealest treacherously, and they dealt not
treacherously with thee!
When thou hast ceased to spoil, thou shalt be spoiled;
And when thou art weary with dealing treacherously,
they shall deal treacherously with thee" - Is. 33