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Italy

The following article was written by an Italian Socialist; in our view he is one of the few people who have really learnt from the experiences of the last twenty years.

The article was written at the end of December 1943, but it is still as topical as ever.

The Political Problem in Italy

The vacuum in the field of Italian politics caused by the downfall of Fascism was immediately filled by the figures of the Italian King and his military government of the country. The Allies therefore recognised it for the purpose of concluding an armistice, thereby gaining the great advantage of securing the Italian fleet without a blow. They obviously hoped that this government would be able to organise resistance to the enemy and thus be of help to the Allied military operations. But it collapsed, lamentably, and took shelter behind the Allied Lines, a poor shadow of its former self. At the moment, one cannot say that Italy has a government in the sense of a political and administrative machine which can direct the people.

There are only two candidates for power, the Committee for National Liberation and the Monarchy. This situation is, of course, not peculiar to Italy. It occurs in practically every country where Nazism has effected the downfall of regimes that were already in decay, and where the Allies are confronted with the formidable task of political reconstruction. This article will attempt to analyse in some detail the nature of these problems as they exist in Italy.

At the Moscow Conference the United Nations declared that they proposed to give the Italian people every opportunity of creating political institutions on a democratic basis, and that they had no intention of restricting the Italian people's right to choose their own form of government. It is due to the confidence which progressive Italians have placed in the intentions of the United Nations that their sympathies have gone out to the Allies ever since the beginning of the war. The Italians are convinced that the British and American armies will bring liberty and not servitude. We must, however, examine that problem realistically in order to try to outline the policy which the best elements in the Italian people hope the

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United Nations will adopt towards their country.

In some countries, such as Holland, Norway and Denmark, the term "liberation" is capable of fairly simple and precise definition. In these countries there existed on the eve of the Nazi invasion healthy and free political institutions. For them liberation means little else in the political sphere than the restoration of the previous civil liberties. This is

not the case with Italy. This country is emerging from a despotic system which has lasted for nearly a generation. In addition the military operations on Italian soil have created and must continue to create havoc in a country which is naturally poor, and which has been still more impoverished by the political megalomania of Mussolini.

As a result, post-war Italy will have to face political problems of an extremely difficult social and economic character. The Italian people will be practically devoid of political education, and those who will have to tackle these problems will be full of faith and enthusiasm but will lack practical experience in government.

This means that in Italy, as in other European countries, the first steps towards a new life of freedom cannot be taken without the help of the United Nations. The Italians know this. The best among them consider that this help should preferably come from the most civilised nations among the Allied Nations.

The United nations will have lost the Peace if they do not realise that their contribution to the reconstruction of Europe must be political as well as economic.

The Two Alternatives

In Italy, therefore, it is not just a question of calling upon the Italian people to state which form of government they prefer. It is a question of finding out which political class is to guide the people and educate them for a civilised life. It is much more the question of administrative personnel than of popular elections. The downfall of Fascism did not leave the political scene completely empty. Two opposing teams quickly lined up as claimants to the succession. They are, as we said, the Monarchy with its military government and the Committee of National Liberation.

As Italy is split into two areas, one occupied by the Germans and the other by the Anglo-Americans, the two adversaries have not yet come to grips, as the Badoglio [1] Government is in one area and the Committee in the other, Northern and Central Italy being politically more important and more active than the South. But this situation will no longer exist when Rome is occupied.

The British and American Governments will shortly have to decide to which of these two forces they intend to entrust the reconstruction of Italy. Up to the present it has been thought possible in certain high Allied quarters to reconcile the two. Certain English statesmen, and even the Moscow Conference invited Badoglio to extend the basis of his government by including representatives of the anti-Fascist parties. This attempt failed and was bound to fail.

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There was first of all a profound moral distaste for the persons constituting the monarchical régime. No Italian can forget the part played by the King [2], his family and Marshal Badoglio in the Fascist régime, or the shameful way in which they led the country into total disaster. The recent declaration of the Committee of national liberation sets out the opinion of all anti-Fascists on this point quite clearly.

But we do not wish to dwell on this aspect of the question. The choice to be made involves a still greater issue. The whole destiny of Italy is at stake. Monarchy or Liberation Committee means an Italy either reactionary and profoundly anti-democratic, whatever its external form, or an Italy that is progressive and democratic. The possibilities of the compromise established between the Monarchy and the forces of

Democracy after the Risorgimento have been completely exhausted. Thanks to Cavour [3], the Monarchy won a certain reputation which allowed it to remain at the helm, although based as it was on military cliques, it was a permanent obstacle to all attempts at creating a popular, democratic Italy. There were many politicians who still thought that the Monarchy might once again throw its might into the balance in favour of the progressive forces as in 1859. But this capital has been spent. Every sentimental tie has been broken. There is the same void around the House of Savoy [4] as there was around the Bourbons [5] in Naples a century ago.

The three main dangers springing from a monarchical régime in Italy are those of authoritarianism, militarism and reaction.

Fascism has demonstrated the danger of regarding the State not as an instrument for satisfying the collective needs of its citizens, but as an entity to whose glory and power the citizens are subordinated. The Italian monarchy is in essence the incarnation of this belief. It is in consequence an abomination to the minds of the political élite of Italy, which have become profoundly republican.

Secondly, the main force behind the Monarchy has always been the Army, and although Italy will certainly be disarmed after the war, as long as the Monarchy exists it will be the centre for all attempts at remilitarisation and revenge. Progressive forces in Italy that hope to see their country incorporated into a peaceful comity of nations have not the least interest in preserving such a potential source of militarism.

Finally, the Monarchy is the shield for all those privileged, reactionary classes who have consistently opposed all efforts to democratise Italy. The democratic forces are fervently set on a course which will create a new Italy, and they will not tolerate the restoration of the old order of things, dominated as it was by parasitic classes. For these reasons any conciliation between Monarchy and Democracy in Italy is henceforward impossible. If the Allies support the Monarchy and entrust it with the task of rebuilding Italy, they may be able to keep it alive as long as they are in occupation. But it will never again enjoy the sympathy or support of the leaders of Italian Democracy, and its fate will be sealed the moment the occupation armies depart. The Monarchy would immediately be overthrown, and the Italian people would be confronted with all the difficulties and dangers which

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characterise revolutionary developments. Should this happen, the present sympathy which is felt for the Allies would be superseded by a profound aversion for those who would then appear to be the protectors of Italian reaction. If, on the other hand, the Monarchy were able to retain power by strangling Democracy, the main object of the war would be lost, as far as Italy was concerned.

The Committee of National Liberation

The only alternative to this disastrous course is offered by the Committee of Liberation. This Committee has still its strongest forces in the German-occupied part of Italy. That is why it cannot make its voice heard in Allied circles, although everything that is done or said or printed illegally in Northern or Central Italy comes from the members or parties of the Committee. These men are anonymous, partly because of the nature of their illegal activities, partly because they are known only to militant anti-Fascist circles. Nevertheless, these are the men of to-morrow. It is the Committee which

has organised resistance to the Germans in occupied Italy. It is they who have endured persecution, exile, prison and banishment in the struggle on behalf of the liberty of the Italian people. This is a guarantee of moral and political rectitude which no "Emperor of Ethiopia and King of Albania", no "Duke of Addis Abeba" can supply. But however important those questions of integrity may be, again we do not rest our case on them alone.

We prefer to explain briefly what these forces represent and to show that if a development towards Italian Democracy is to be guaranteed, the only way to do it is to create an "emergency" government based on this Committee, but operating under the provisional control and with the help of the Allies.

It is not our purpose here to sing the praises of the political elements which go to form the Committee. We do not speak as Italians who are reluctant to disclose the weaknesses of their country. We are Europeans who are concerned that their country, with all its weaknesses, shall share the common fate of free and civilised peoples. It is without hesitation that we indicate where our weaknesses lie, as they will be the weaknesses of the Italian Democracy of the future for some time to come.

Nevertheless, this Committee represents the only hope for a democratic regime in Italy. A democratic government implies the participation of the masses in the political life of the country. This participation can only take place through party organisations. The only parties which are organised on this basis are those which adhere to the Committee of National Liberation. Liberal Reconstruction, Democracy of Labour; Action Party; Socialist Party; Communist Party. The picture may appear at first to be rather overloaded. It is simplified by the fact that the first two groups have virtually no political significance. They represent a handful of old politicians from the Giolitti [6] era who have succeeded in getting themselves included on the Committee. They are more phantoms from the past than real political figures.

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The Christian Democratic Party

The papal veto on Catholic participation in political action kept the Catholic forces from the field for a long period, but they reappeared after the last war and gained considerable strength. They combine very heterogeneous elements, ranging from extreme Conservation to a quasi-Collectivism. Their common bond was the desire to give a confessional character to the Italian State, which it had hitherto evaded owing to the nature of its formation. Fascism produced a schism between the two wings. The Conservative wing always envisaged a strongly Conservative State, patron of the Church. In the Fascist State they thought they had found this patron - Mussolini's first Cabinet included ministers from the Catholic Party. Even when this attempt failed the Vatican did not break off relations with Fascism. On the contrary, it signed the famous Concordat and the Lateran Treaty, which obtained for the Church exceptional privileges. The Fascists gained in return the Church's powerful support. As Fascism started to weaken, one observed the resurrection of the Catholic Left wing, which formed the Christian Democratic Party. This Party wishes to infuse a Catholic spirit into the State by relying not on the patronage of a Conservative régime, but on the mass support it can organise. This section, which hopes to create a Catholic movement on the Belgian model, has a programme which appears very democratic, decentralist and pro-socialist. In a Coalition government the Catholic Party would help to secure the participation of large masses of the people in active political life, particularly in rural districts, which are

not reached by the non-confessional parties. In thinking of to-morrow, this Party has to be taken into account as a constant political factor. But it has by its very nature to be likened to a poison which is salutary in small doses but dangerous in excess. If the Catholic Party became too large in the near future, it would represent one of the greatest dangers to Italian liberty. In spite of its democratic label, it has a strong odour of ecclesiastical discipline. We know that the hierarchy in general, and in Italy in particular, are fundamentally opposed to Liberalism and Democracy. As a matter of fact, the Vatican to-day is playing a double rôle: On the one hand it has its representatives in the Committee of National Liberation; on the other hand, it is intriguing to save the antidemocratic régime of the Monarchy.

In a single-confessional country like Italy, there is no opportunity in the religious field of developing a counterweight to the theocratic tendencies of the Catholic Church, as there is practically no competition from the Protestant Churches. This counterweight can only be developed in the political field, where the parties that are truly liberal and democratic must insist on the separation of State and Church, and must organise sufficient secular forces in the country to be able to hold the persuasive influence of the Catholics in check.

The Action Party

The Party which in my view is the main force for Democracy and progress in Italy is the Action Party. With it is connected Count Sforza and the Free Italy Movement, that was born in America. This Party was formally constituted in Italy a few years ago, and has already acquired a reputation through its journal "Italia Libera" [7]. It considers itself the heir of

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those republican forces of the Risorgimento which were not content with the military and dynastic unification of Italy, but which aimed at creating a "Popular" Italy according to the formula of Mazzini [8]. It reunites those progressive democratic forces which struggled against Fascism, and which were known abroad chiefly through the organisation "Giustizia e Libertà" and its leader Carlo Rosselli [9], who was murdered by Fascists in 1937.

The Action party to-day has its greatest influence among intellectuals and the middle classes. The majority of the political brains of the younger generation support it, and its high cultural level is the best guarantee of its future.

The Action Party has in two important aspects a profoundly different outlook to that of the old Italian Liberalism of which Giolitti was the typical representative. Giolitti considered that the rôle of Liberalism was not to be a political guide to the nation, but to be the passive recipient of initiatives which drew their inspiration from sources outside the field of Liberal thought and action. The Liberals opened their arms to the Socialist, Catholic and Fascist movements, accepting certain of their proposals and trying to emasculate them by a policy of concessions. They succeeded fairly well with the first two, until the third destroyed the Liberal State itself.

The Action Party has its fundamental basis in Salvemini [10] and his democratic opposition to the Giolitti theory. It does not propose to adopt the rôle of political weathercock. It realises that Democracy can only become a reality in Italy if there exists a profoundly democratic and progressive party in direct contact with the masses. It will

have to qualify itself as a serious political force by undertaking the large-scale social changes that are necessary to secure a just social order in Italy.

Italian Democracy in the past did not realise that from the moment the masses participate in the political life of the country a technique has to be employed to prevent it being swamped by popular parties which are at bottom theocratic or despotic. Conditions in Fascist Italy were not such as to permit a party organisation with elements reaching into every social stratum of the population. But the Action Party has learnt its lesson and is making serious preparations along these lines, so that Italian Democracy can count on the support of well-organised popular forces, and will thus not be reduced to the rôle of a juggler balancing himself on sword points.

The Action Party realises that certain fundamental social changes, as outlined in the Atlantic Charter, must be brought about in Italy as in other countries. All parties favour agrarian reforms which will transfer the ownership of the land to those who work on it; industrial reforms which will nationalise or control the vast and complex monopolistic industries, and which will raise the status of the factory worker; there must be trade union reforms which will restore to the workers their right to form trade union associations; administrative reforms which will decentralise the State machinery; educational reforms, etc. The old democratic theory of Giolitti left the initiative

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in such measures to the Marxists [11] and the Catholics. The Action Party is aware that the real aim of the Catholics is to set up a corporate régime under the auspices of a confessional State, that the aim of the marxists is to install a totally collectivist State with its inevitable corollary of a despotic bureaucracy. The programme of social changes sponsored by the Action Party, which they prefer to call "Liberal Socialism" in order to distinguish it from the classic Marxist conception of Collectivism, is in fact the sole programme that is fundamentally inspired by the ideas of liberty and justice.

This Party is safeguarded by its secular basis from the danger of sliding into Catholic reaction. By its social programme it is safeguarded from the danger of a despotic Collectivism. It has certain weaknesses; the chief one is that it is the Party of liberty and democracy in the midst of a people which has little acquaintance with either. If Italy is left to her own devices in a hostile world it would be very easy for the Italian people to lose all confidence in Democracy and to turn towards mass anti-Liberal tendencies.

The Socialist Party

We are now left with the Marxist parties. In Italy, as elsewhere, there are two Marxist parties, the Socialist Party and the Communist Party. But in Italy, as distinct from most other countries, the Communist Party is the more important of the two. The present Socialist Party is only the residue of the old. They try to distinguish themselves from the Communist Party by their conception of a Socialist Order which, whilst it is completely collectivist, will be neither despotic nor bureaucratic. These fine points of distinction have not been sufficient to give the Party any clear-cut character. For years they have been haunted by the fear of being out-stripped by the Communists, and the main concern of their leaders has been to retain the friendship of the Communists, and continually to urge upon them the need for the unity of all proletarian forces. They have recently concluded a special pact with them for unity of action with the intention of arriving later at complete fusion. One cannot say whether this fusion will materialise, or whether at the last moment the opinions of those who cannot accept the jesuitry of the

Communists will prevail. It is not even possible at the present time to foretell whether, when trade union liberty is restored, the Socialists may not recapture some of the influence which they have lost to the Communists. It does not seem very likely, however, as it is not the old trade union organisers that direct the Party, but on the contrary, they tend to be cold-shouldered by the more extreme Left-wing elements. In the political field the Italian Socialists are decidedly inferior to the Communists, who are much more flexible in their tactics and much more competent in mass organisation.

The Communist Party

Although the Comintern has been dissolved by Stalin, Communists of all countries still keep their eyes fixed on Moscow. If to-morrow the U.S.S.R. were suddenly to withdraw from the field of European politics, it is quite likely that the Communist Party would overnight become an extreme revolutionary party, as it was, for instance, from 1939 to 1941. If such were the case, the Party would become anti-constitutional, and might cause considerable disturbance, but it would have no prospect of gaining power. The rôle of a constitutional Marxist

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party would then be taken by the Socialists. But this is an improbable hypothesis. It seems more probable that whatever serious rivalries may exist between Russia and the Anglo-Saxon Powers, the necessities of reconstruction and the general exhaustion will force upon both a certain degree of international collaboration. In such circumstances the Communist Party will not be called upon to break with all democratic forces and institutions. As a great constitutional party it will probably be one of the most interesting phenomena in Italian politics, and not in Italian politics alone.

Under Fascist tyranny, the Communists were extremely active opponents of the regime. They filled the prisons and the penal settlements on the Italian islands. Their own past record and the present achievements of the Soviet armies have won them a great deal of sympathy, not only among the workers, but also in certain intellectual quarters.

The Communists have also gained from the widespread and confused aspirations towards social reform. In Italy, however, there are not very marked leanings towards a Soviet mode of life. There is a profound conviction that a "limited" revolution is necessary, that is to say, reforms which are very radical and which change the structure of society, but which do not try to destroy it at a blow or violate the basically individualistic outlook of the Italian people. The Communists have noted the existence of this profound obstacle to the achievement of their aims, and although they have not abandoned their programme, they no longer talk about the total elimination of Capitalism. Extreme anti-capitalist propaganda is nowadays only to be found among little groups of dissident Communists, but not amongst the Communists themselves, who, on the contrary, are very moderate and prudent.

Neither their maximum nor their minimum programme explains the influence they exercise. It is rather to be explained by the religious character of their movement, by the intense devotion which characterises most Communists and by the efficiency of their organisation, which has all the qualities and all the faults of the Society of Jesus. A country which has had so little education in freedom, which has been so accustomed to the regimentation of Fascism, can well provide mass support to a party which promises social changes and which offers all the attractions of an organisation which, like a

religious order, demands obedience and the spirit of sacrifice.

The observation which we made regarding the Catholics apply equally to the Communists. The Communist Party has been, and in the near future will remain, the political school in which the spiritually undeveloped masses learn the first elements of political struggle and political discipline. This function can be valuable, however, only if it is kept in check by predominantly democratic forces. The fundamentally illiberal spirit of the Party would render it increasingly dangerous the more it succeeded in becoming a dominant influence. A really audacious and intelligent policy of socialist reforms undertaken by a party which is liberal and democratic in spirit, and aims at strengthening the democratic basis of society, is the only possible way of preventing too large a proportion of the population from falling under Communist influence.

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The International Basis of Italian Democracy

All those Italians who understand their country's problems are convinced that the sole final guarantee for the maintenance of freedom in their own country, as in many others, can only be secured by an international organisation of peace. During the first post-war years, this guarantee will be supported by the will of the United Nations. But the fundamental causes of militarism and war can only be eliminated by an international political organisation which will abolish the absolute sovereignty of States by means of an international Police Force which will have the power to enforce international law.

The League of Nations is not popular in Italian democratic circles, as they have seen that it was completely impotent when opposed by national egoism and the violence of totalitarian States. But Italians would accept a genuine Federalist solution with complete confidence.

Editorische Anmerkungen

1 - *Pietro Badoglio (1871-1956), italienischer Marschall, Generalstabschef (1925-1928), Generalgouverneur von Libyen (1928-1933), Oberbefehlshaber im Krieg gegen Äthiopien (1935-1936), wieder Generalstabschef (ab 1939), Rücktritt nach Streit mit Mussolini (1940), Ministerpräsident (1943), Abschluss eines Waffenstillstands mit den Alliierten (1943), Verurteilung wegen Begünstigung des Faschismus (1945), Rehabilitierung (1947).*

2 - *„King“ = König Viktor Emanuel III. (1869-1947), konstitutionell regierender italienischer König (1900-1946), sah sich nach dem „Marsch auf Rom“ gezwungen, Mussolini an die Spitze der Regierung zu berufen (1922), dem er danach frei Hand in Innen- und Außenpolitik ließ, Kaiser von Abessinien (1936-1941) und König von Albanien (1939-1943), Übernahme des Oberbefehls über die italienischen Streitkräfte und Absetzung Mussolinis (1943), Abdankung (1946).*

3 - *Camillo Benso Graf von Cavour (1810-1861), italienischer Staatsmann, gemäßigt Liberaler nach britischem Vorbild, trat für die Einigung Italiens unter dem Haus*

- Savoyen ein (seit 1847), Gründung der Zeitung „Il Resorgimento“ (für Liberalismus, Konstitutionalismus und Einheit Italiens), Sitz in der sardischen Abgeordneten-Kammer (1848), Minister für Landwirtschaft und Handel (1850), Finanzminister (1851), Ministerpräsident des Königreichs Sardinien (1852), erreichte durch sein diplomatisches Geschick die Einigung Italiens (bis auf Venetien und Rom).*
- 4 - *„Haus von Savoyen“: stellte seit 1861 die Könige von Italien.*
 - 5 - *"Bourbonen", französisches Herrscherhaus mit einem Zweig in Neapel-Sizilien („sizilianische Bourbonen“), der dort 1715-1806 und 1815-1861 regierte.*
 - 6 - *Giovanni Giolitti (1842-1928), italienischer Politiker, liberaler Abgeordneter (seit 1882), mehrfach Minister (ab 1889), Ministerpräsident (1892-1893, 1903-1905, 1906-1909, 1911-1914, 1920-1921), Versuch der Integration der Faschisten und Rücktritt als Premierminister (1921), Aufruf zum Widerstand gegen die faschistische Wahlrechtsreform (1928).*
 - 7 - *„Italia Libera“, Zeitung der „Partito d’Azione“ („Action Party“), die 1942 gegründet wurde und auf den Ideen der italienischen Freiheitsbewegung „Giustizia e libertà“ aufbaute.*
 - 8 - *Giuseppe Mazzini (1805-1872), Jurist, geistiger Führer der radikalen Richtung des Risorgimento, Gründer der Bewegung „Giovine Italia“ (Junges Italien) im französischem Exil (1830), der „Vereinigung Junges Europa“ von der Schweiz aus (1834) und Mitgründer des „Europäischen demokratischen Komitees“ vom Londoner Exil aus, im Exil Anstifter mehrerer erfolgloser Aufstandsversuche in Italien, Ablehnung der Einigungsbewegung von Camillo Cavour, mit seinen republikanischen und europapolitischen Auffassungen seiner Zeit weit voraus.*
 - 9 - *Carlo Rosselli (1899-1937), italienischer Politiker, Antifaschist, Vertreter eines liberalen Sozialismus, nach „Europe speaks“ Führer der Organisation „Giustizia e Liberta“.*
 - 10 - *Gaetano Salvemini (1873-1957), italienischer Historiker, lehrte an den Universitäten von Messina, Pisa und Florenz, Parlamentsmitglied (1919-1921), Verhaftung wegen Antifaschismus (1925), einer der Begründer der Bewegung „Giustizia e Liberta“, Exil in den USA.*
 - 11 - *Karl Heinrich Marx (1818-1883), Philosoph und Nationalökonom, zusammen mit Friedrich Engels Begründer des wissenschaftlichen Sozialismus, Abwendung von der idealistischen Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie und Hinwendung zum Historischen Materialismus und zum revolutionären Sozialismus (etwa ab 1843), Mitglied des Bundes der Kommunisten (1847), für den er mit Engels „Das Kommunistische Manifest“ schrieb (1848), nach dem Scheitern der Deutschen Revolution Ausweisung aus Preußen, Übersiedlung nach London, hier Erarbeitung der ökonomischen Gesetze der Entwicklung von Gesellschaften und Schaffung seines Lebenswerkes „Das Kapital“ (Band 1, 1867, Bände 2 und 3, hrsg. von Friedrich Engels, 1885-1894).*