

THE OPEN FORUM

THE POSITION OF ITALIAN EXILES

SIR: Judging from Kingsbury Smith's article in *THE MERCURY*, "Our Government's Plan for a Defeated Italy," the State Department wants a "new leadership" in Italy. But "it wants to see it emerge from within the country." "We are not disposed to impose upon the Italian people some political movement that has flowered in exile," Mr. Smith reports.

If the State Department stopped at this point, no objection should be raised. Italy has been afflicted with infinite misfortunes during this terrible war. But she has at least been spared the curse of a "government-in-exile." Exiles have no right to impose upon their own people any movement or régime concocted abroad with the help of foreign powers. If the exiles returned to Italy as pro-Allied Quislings, they would commit moral suicide. The new leadership of Italy has to arise in Italy among those who are on the spot.

The State Department, however, does not stop with indicating that they will never set up any government-in-exile for Italy. While telling us that the new Italian leadership must emerge from within, they themselves designate the group, the Army Chiefs, from among whom the new leadership has to arise, and in addition, they know that such Army Chiefs "will be far more representative of the Italian people than some of the exiles who are scheming for personal political power, and hope to achieve it with the aid of Allied bayonets;" the American Government is not "disposed to help liberate Italy in order to make it safe for political exiles to return and stage a bloody revolution under the protection of the Allied armies of occupation;" "the lives of American and British boys are not being sacrificed to make Europe safe for

anarchy;" "we believe the Italian people will prefer to support leaders who have been through the ordeal at home with them, and who have had the courage to rise up within the country and help lead them out of slavery."

The truth is that a good many of the Italian anti-fascist political exiles are no more revolutionaries than Lord Halifax and Mr. Cordell Hull. And those who are revolutionaries, or think they are, never expected or needed any American protection. They can take care of themselves. What the Italian exiles expect and have the right to expect is that after so many resounding proclamations about the "four freedoms everywhere in the World," the commanders of the Allied Armies and the stuffed shirts of the Foreign Office and the State Department do not "freeze" the present Fascist leaders in authority, but as soon as possible re-establish in Italy freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and freedom of association, and while enforcing public peace, they give the Italians a chance freely to choose their own local and national leaders through regular elections, even if they throw out of the window, those army chiefs who have been chosen by the above-mentioned stuffed shirts to act as leaders emerging from within the country.

What the exiles are entitled to demand from the above-mentioned stuffed shirts is that they should not keep them "frozen" in America while the Fascists are "frozen" in authority in Italy. After being forced by Mussolini to go into exile, they should not be kept in exile by President Roosevelt acting as Mussolini's trustee. The exiles have no right to rule Italy from America. But they have the right to return to Italy as soon as they can, at their own risk and peril, as

private individuals, and as such to have their share in local and national activities. If they are adopted as local and national leaders, they will have to be accepted as "emerging from within the country."

If the wise men of the State Department had no other aim than preventing "chaos and anarchy" from spreading over Italy, they would "freeze" in America communists, anarchists, and other authentic revolutionaries. This would not be in keeping with the principles of the American Constitution, which do not entitle them to worry about revolutions arising in other countries. But it would be logical from the standpoint of the conservative internationale, the only internationale which really works. However, the State Department intends also to prevent men like Sforza or Don Sturzo from returning to Italy. These men are neither communists nor anarchists, but they would never have a hand in the hoped-for dealings between the Italian Darlans and the American and British stuffed shirts. This is why they also have to be charged with hankering after chaos, anarchy, and bloody revolutions.

Last but not least, the exiles are entitled to tell those British and American wise men who, until yesterday, dwelt on friendly terms with Mussolini and took part in Ciano's beach parties in the pleasant company of Ciano's blondes, that they should learn that modicum of self-respect which is indispensable not to smear people who are denied the opportunity for rebuttal. Each one of those men and women, in fighting Mussolini in Italy before going into exile, had to possess greater personal courage than the British and American diplomats needed while stroking the legs of Ciano's blondes on the beach at Ostia. If the exiles left Italy and suffered distress and poverty, they did so because there was for them no other way of saving their liberty, nay, their lives, and persisting in their fight. There is no doubt also that those men would be happier today if they were on the spot to fight the King and Badoglio. But the last people entitled to charge them with cowardice for not being on

the spot are precisely those who have decided to keep them in America and not to allow them to go back to Italy.

When the Italian consuls left the United States in 1941, they gave their agents instructions to the effect that they should subscribe to war bonds, take part in demonstrations for "national unity," make a display of 100 per cent Americanism, shout long life to Roosevelt, but give no truce to the anti-fascist exiles, smear them, demand that the American government keep them down. Mussolini's and Ciano's personal friends installed in the State Department are loyally carrying out those instructions. This is to the credit of neither their moral complexion, which does not matter to diplomats, nor their intelligence, which should matter even to diplomats.

The present writer is no longer an exile. He took, in dead earnest, his oath of allegiance to the Constitution of the United States, and therefore cannot have any schemes for personal political power, even if his age did not tell him that he must have other cares to worry about than political ambitions. But as an honest American citizen he feels the duty of protesting against the insulting insinuations of the spokesman for the State Department against the Italian political exiles who, as guests of this country, are not in the position to give a lesson of decency and fair-mindedness where it is so urgently needed.

GAETANO SALVEMINI

*Cambridge,
Massachusetts*

JUSTIFYING WASTE

SIR: Every time Senator Harry F. Byrd, or some other economical Daniel in the lion's den, speaks out against waste in government, several noted liberals can be depended upon to answer him at length — in defense of waste! This makes it seem that all liberals are in favor of being liberal with our needed manpower, money and materials. As the country lawyer said: "I deny the allegation and defy the alligators." Since when has it become

necessary for a liberal to believe in waste — even by the government?

Those who condone waste point out that we are fighting a war on a scale hitherto unequaled in our history; that our government today is performing functions for the voters never hitherto dreamed of, and that a certain amount of waste is inevitable. All this may well be true, but *no honest citizen can overlook pertinent facts that are most germane today.* England, with approximately one-third our population, has only one-sixth as many civilian employees as our nation. Literally hundreds of our 2240 peacetime government agencies still are on a peacetime basis, with as many employees as ever, although their functions might have been taken over *in toto* by new war agencies.

Most damaging of all the facts which implement Senator Byrd is the large number of new agencies being set up, apparently without rhyme or reason, unless you consider the political implications. I could name many of these agencies, but two should suffice. The first is the Board on Geographical Names, with 135 employees and more to come, whose sole function seems to be to teach us how to pronounce geographical words correctly. The other is the Committee on Congested War Areas, whose highly-paid directors in each congested area will simply "coordinate" the activities of other government agencies in sight, although ostensibly the Office of Civilian Defense, the War Manpower Commission and any number of other agencies already are "coordinating" one another to a fare-thee-well.

Washington citizens who are honest know that the present duplication in efforts among dozens of agencies is not only conducive to soul-killing lethargy, but spreads cynicism and despair among all who try to remedy what one magazine calls "the withering blight of bureaucracy." I, for one, am convinced that if we cannot learn to govern ourselves efficiently, certainly we will never learn to help a world government pass through the elementary steps. If it is liberal to waste energy, time, manpower and money during

wartime, I am afraid you are going to have to write me off as a black reactionary.

LARSTON D. FARRAR

Washington, D. C.

THE VULTURE

STR: Referring to Alan Devoe's splendidly written article, "The Vulture, Emblem of Death," in the May issue, I wish to take exception to his remark that "A vulture detects earth's dead by sight, not scent," and present three personal observations which would seem to prove that this bird also detects his food by his sense of smell:

(1) I have frequently discovered vultures, or "zopilotes," feeding on dead animals lying hidden in the dense vegetation of tropical Mexico where it is impossible for the carcass to be seen from the sky above due to the interlaced foliage overhead.

(2) In the regions of petroleum exploration of this same country where large accumulations of oil often form in depressions or pits from oil seepages or careless drilling methods, animals will often be entrapped by the oil during the night and by morning are entirely covered after their struggles are ended. By mid-day the location will be surrounded by vultures waiting for the body to become so decomposed that the gases will raise it high enough above the surface where they can feed on it.

(3) A certain refinery in this country purchases lard oil in five-gallon cans for the manufacture of certain greases. After being dumped, the empty cans are temporarily thrown on the ground outside the grease plant building. There is no animal life within the square mile occupied by the entire oil refinery, yet on the days the cans are dumped, the area is surrounded by vultures fighting over the fragments of lard left remaining in the empty cans. As no bird ever alights on the discarded kerosene or oil cans of similar appearance lying on piles near by, the only explanation is that they must certainly detect their food by their sense of smell.

It is also my opinion that these birds must also have an extra sense which enables them to

detect impending death. They never approach live and healthy animals but immediately surround the locality of a wounded or dying animal or human being and wait patiently for life to leave the body. The first points of attack are the eyes and tongue and later the entrails which begin to bloat up almost immediately after death in this tropical country.

FRED DEAN SMITH

New York City.

SIR: The question of whether vultures find their food by sight or by scent has been argued among naturalists for many years. Darwin was convinced, by his experiments, that smell is of no importance and that sight leads the birds to food. Charles Waterton, an experienced observer of vultures and a convincing controversialist, was equally positive that the olfactory sense is the guide. There are massive, and confusing, accumulations of evidence on behalf of both theories.

My own guess, on the basis of such field observations as I have made, is that when vultures soar and circle at a great height — perhaps their commonest procedure when hunting — they rely on sight, not scent, to reveal the corpses on the earth far below; for there is abundant evidence of the extraordinary eyesight of many birds of prey, and little evidence to suggest that any creature can detect the odor of a small dead animal from a height of thousands of feet (much less, of course, detect *dying* animals, which naturally give off no odor of putrescence). But, when vultures fly at low altitudes, as they sometimes do, or when they alight in forest tree-tops, it seems probable enough that their large (and presumably acute) nostrils inform them of the whereabouts of the dead.

Mr. Smith's letter is a valuable addition to the evidence. Have other readers any observations they would care to send me?

ALAN DEVOR

*Hillsdale,
New York.*

GIDEON PLANISH

SIR: As long as icons continue to be worshipped, the time for iconoclasm, contrary to

Maxwell Geismar in his review of *Gideon Planish* in the May *MERCURY*, has not passed. And so it is good to have somebody like Sinclair Lewis, a specialist on the subject, volunteer to help us recognize an icon when we see one; the more so, as the method of instruction in iconology employed by him is rather pleasurable.

S. LOMANITZ

*Oklahoma City,
Oklahoma.*

CORRECTIONS

SIR: Much to my regret, I learn that I made an error in the use of a name in my article, "Dark Day in New England," in the April *AMERICAN MERCURY*. Actually it was Col. *Abraham* Davenport, and not John Davenport, as I had it, who demanded that candles be brought and that the Connecticut Senate proceed with its business when Hartford was blanketed by sudden darkness on May 19, 1780.

I slipped on that point through the misreading of an encyclopedia sketch of John Davenport, son of Abraham. The error was brought to my attention by another John Davenport, formerly of Connecticut, now of Miami, Florida, who is a great-great-grandson of the courageous Colonel.

My apologies to the Davenport family and to *THE MERCURY*.

JOHN NICHOLAS BEFFEL

New York City.

SIR: In the September Clinical Notes, I stated that Leopold Stokowski had been entirely without experience as a symphony conductor when he was appointed head of the Cincinnati Symphony. I was wrong. It was a case of "almost" rather than "entirely." I have since found, to my dismay, that the gifted Leopold did in fact conduct a few summer concerts of minor importance in England before receiving his Cincinnati appointment.

WINTHROP SARGEANT

New York City.

an opinion about opinions...

IN THIS opinionated land of ours, there are many magazines of opinion. Which is all to the good. But some opinion is just talk—and other opinion is the kind *that makes things happen*. That is the only kind that interests THE AMERICAN MERCURY.

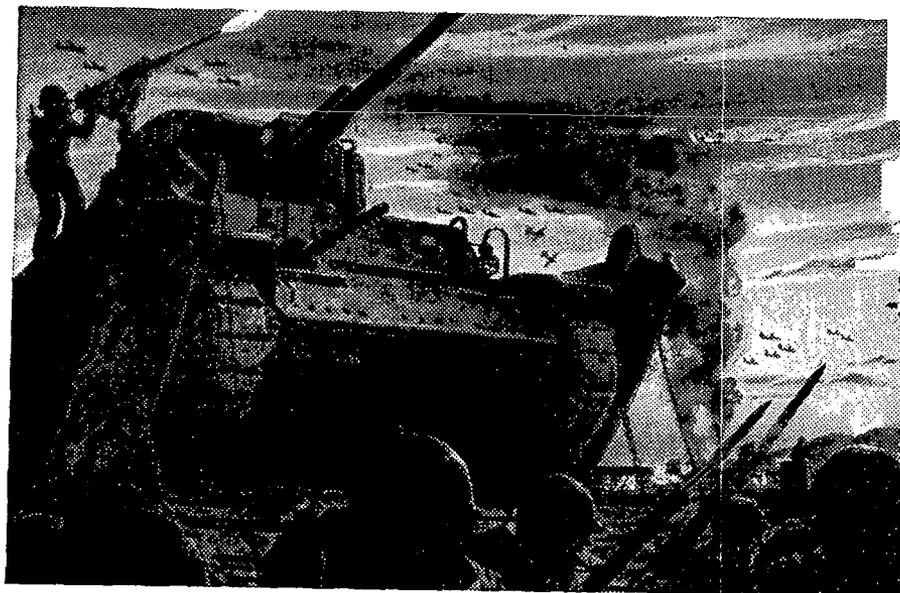
Dorothy Thompson's piece in the September issue, "What Will Happen When Nazism Collapses?" was a perfect case in point. She was not just reporting, she was not writing just pure fact, she was writing *opinion*. And it was such informed, documented and dynamic opinion that it was bound to start argument, rebuttal, wide discussion in editorial columns, in radio debates, in the government itself. THAT is opinion that makes things happen.

Major Seversky, with his AMERICAN MERCURY articles on "Victory Through Air Power," also was writing opinion that makes things happen. Dozens of other great public issues first saw the light of day in the pages of THE AMERICAN MERCURY and dozens of others will, in the months and years to come.

It is no fluke, no lucky accident that it is so. For THE AMERICAN MERCURY believes that one of the best products of a free press is the article of ideas—the *opinion that makes things happen*. And authors—as well as readers—know that.

Lawrence E. Spivak

PUBLISHER



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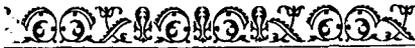
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We'll do it partly because of the look that would come over the faces of our fighting men if we should fail. We'll do it partly because the cheapest, easiest way out of this whole rotten business is for everybody to chip in all he can and help end it quickly. We'll do it partly because there's no finer, *safer* investment in the world today than a U. S. War Bond.

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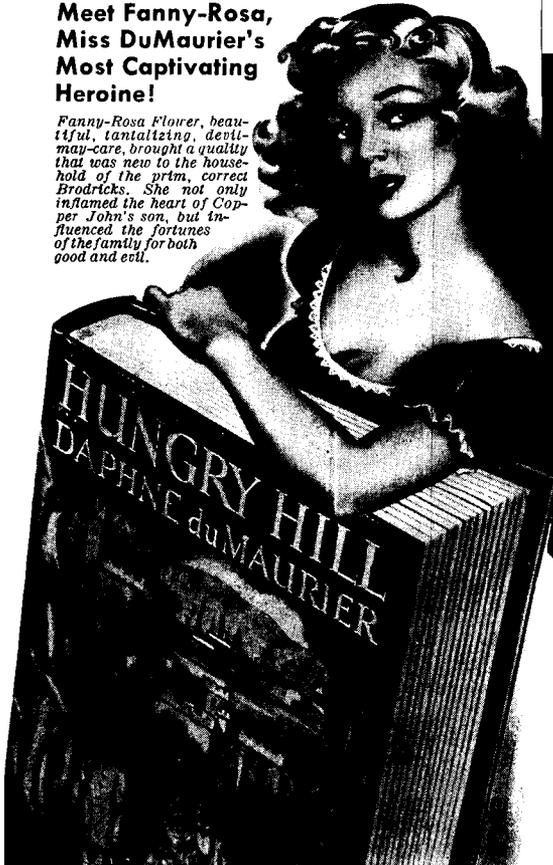
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