

# The "Re-education" of Italy

*There May Be More to Italy Than Meets the Eye*

STEPHEN NAFT

**T**O all the cheap and ignorant gibes against the Italian people the supreme insult is added by the grave debates of solemn would-be-statesmen about what to do with Italy and how to "educate Italy for democracy" after the war. We should, of course, not omit Italy in our plans for educating peoples for democracy, if we are going to do this for the Burmese, the Malayans, and the Zulus.

Some of these serious thinkers and political analysts were undoubtedly for so long idolaters of the *Weltanschauung* of castor oil and "trains running on time" that it did not occur to them that before Mussolini Italy was one of the most democratic nations in the world, not only in her institutions but also in the social life of the people. One third of all Italian municipalities had socialist administrations. Next to the Socialist Party, which had about 150 deputies in Parliament, the strongest party was Don Sturzo's democratic "Popular Party," which, though attached to the Catholic traditions, sponsored most of the reforms advocated by the Socialists. It was not a clerical party and its activities were occasionally disclaimed by the Pope. These two parties alone represented almost half of Italy's population.

Powerful coöperatives functioned throughout Italy. One of the largest shipping companies was a coöperative of the maritime workers union. Many hundred thousands of the workers and members of the middle classes belonged to industrial, housing, agricultural marketing, and insurance coöperatives. The freedom of the press was complete.



—From the Philadelphia Inquirer  
"How to make friends and influence people."

Italy was well on the road to a free democratic coöperative commonwealth, with as little interference from the monarchy as in the Scandinavian countries. There was not a trace of anti-semitism, one of the first seeds of fascism, which lurked in almost all other countries long before Hitler.

Shortly before World War I, Italy's Prime Minister Luigi Luzzatti, the War Minister Zanardelli, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Sonino, and the Mayor of Rome, Nathan, were Jews, though there were less than 50,000 Jews among that country's forty million people. If this coincidence was ever mentioned at that time in Italy, it was only as a curiosity, as if, for instance, it would be mentioned in America should half the members of the United States Government be of Dutch origin.

An instance of democracy in social life may serve as an illustration. At that time I was employed in Rome in an international government institution. Called one day to the office telephone, I found to my surprise that Prime Minister Luzzatti himself was on the wire. He asked me to come over to his house to "render him a little service." (By the way, Professor Luzzatti did not discontinue his classes in political economy at the University of Rome during his incumbency as Premier.) The apartment house in which he lived had a self-service elevator. On the fourth floor I found the apartment marked Luzzatti. When I pressed the bell, the door was opened by the Prime Minister himself. He showed me a letter addressed to him and told me that, as nobody in the Foreign Office was able to recognize the script, he thought that I, as a linguist, perhaps might be able to assist them. It would be interesting to know whether it would be as easy to approach the fourth secretary of the third assistant of the Second Under-Secretary of Commerce in an Anglo-Saxon democracy.

From the period in Italy before the unification, a host of titles of its several independent states with place of nobility remained, in addition to those awarded by the Pope for "services to the Church" (pecuniary and otherwise). But though every "Count" from Albania or "Prince" from Azerbaijan, stupid as he may be, is, in America, besieged with invitations to the best houses and opportunities to marry the richest heiresses, nobody pays any attention to these titles in Italy. It often



—From the Worcester (Mass.) Gazette.  
"Honestly, Hermann—sometimes I feel certain Der Fuehrer is crazy."

happens that, working for months in the same office or printing plant, one by chance discovers that his colleague was a count or a marquess to whom it never occurred to mention this accident.

Two excellent and extremely timely books\* have appeared which should be read particularly by those who speak of "educating Italy for democracy." The books, indeed, may contribute to educating these readers themselves for democracy. They will be reminded how the Anglo-Saxon democratic countries helped to buttress fascism in Italy when it was not yet firmly in the saddle, at a time when Italy's latent democracy would still have been able to overthrow Mussolini before it was too late. The authors of "What to Do with Italy" are counted among the most prominent contemporary historians. Gaetano Salvemini, who was Professor of History at the University of Florence, has been teaching at several universities in this country since his escape from fascist Italy in 1925. Professor LaPiana taught Church history at Harvard and is considered the greatest authority on this subject in the United States.

Apparently the book of these two Italian authors is being treated as badly as Italy itself. One cannot resist the impression that it is being gently silenced. First it had the disadvantage of being so extremely timely (it came out a few days before the overthrow of Mussolini) that many events predicted therein happened shortly after. Other pessimistic predictions were superseded by events

\*WHAT TO DO WITH ITALY. By Gaetano Salvemini and George La Piana. New York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce, Inc. 1943. 301 pp. \$2.75.

THE FRUITS OF FASCISM. By Herbert L. Matthews. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co. 1943. 341 pp. \$3.

which surpassed the worst fears of the authors. These two facts may cause some to believe that it is out of date. To this reviewer it is a book of permanent historical value, which will never be out of date. It is precisely because of the historical section of the book that it had a rather cool reception. It tells too many disagreeable truths.

It tells how the boundless enthusiasm of almost the whole American press for Mussolini's "New Order,"—how the speeches and lectures of bankers and professors and ambassadors and our leading citizens,—and our loans at the rate of \$200,000,000—put fascism on a firm basis in Italy, and then stimulated imitation in other countries. Could there be greater encouragement for imitation than admiration and praise and financial help from the two richest countries of the world?

The Italians never had great enthusiasm for fascism, as appeared from the jubilation all over Italy when Mussolini was overthrown. But in America even now there are still some who are convinced that the only bad thing about fascism is that Mussolini joined Hitler instead of us. Was not this opinion frankly expressed after Pearl Harbor and after Mussolini's declaration of war against us by our reputedly most beautiful legislator in Washington, who is endowed with a "globalony" knowledge of foreign affairs?

Even the suggestions of the authors about what to do with the criminal gang who caused untold disaster to Italy and indirectly to the world, will not meet with general approval. We are too softhearted when it comes to judge those above. Our callousness is reserved for those on the bottom.

A NOT less competent but quite different book is that of Herbert Matthews. While the authors of "What to Do with Italy" were mainly concerned with the external factors which contributed to the rise and success of fascism, and our present attitude toward fascism and Italy, Matthews's book presents a historical, social, and economic analysis of the growth and the results of fascism in Italy from its very beginning to its inevitable end. The two books not only do not overlap but complement each other exceedingly well.

Herbert Matthews lived for so many years in Italy, part of the time as head of *The New York Times* Rome bureau, that he came to consider that country as his second home. It was his home during the Fascist regime, where, protected by the American flag and the semi-diplomatic status of foreign correspondents, he could live in

comfort and safety at least until Mussolini's declaration of war on the United States. He did not have to flee from his country like the authors of the other book. It is therefore comprehensible that he is less bitter and recriminating, and that to American readers, to whom fascism was only just another foreign political system, his book may appear more serene and historical. Sometimes he leans so far backward—to be fair to the Fascists, of whom he once, as he admits, was "an enthusiastic admirer"—that the impression is rather disconcerting to those who would never condone destruction of liberty.

Though he is now bitterly opposed to fascism and all its results, he nevertheless calls "genuine revolutionists" the knights of the "manganello" and castor oil, who, during the struggle for the advent of fascism, burned the houses of coöperatives and trade unions and killed thousands of socialists, liberals, and trade unionists.

His impartiality goes so far that he finds expressions of praise for certain accomplishments of the regime, and he even suggests that fascism would not have been so bad for Italy if it had stayed at home . . . which again is in flagrant contradiction with the main thesis of his book, that fascism inevitably must lead to disastrous foreign adventures. In spite of all this it is an excellent, informative, and extremely honest book. It is perhaps because of this wish to be perfectly fair that such apparent contradictions occur.

Matthews analyzes all the political and social factors which brought about the advent of fascism. He shows the guilt of the Socialists, who, at the time when Italy was ripe for socialism, had not the courage to act. He

quotes the Anarchist writer Luigi Fabri, who said:

It seemed as if the Italian proletariat was awaiting the renewal of the miracle of Jericho; that the bourgeois Bastille, the capitalist State, should crumble only at the sound of revolutionary hymns and the waving of the red flag.

While the activities of the Socialists were limited to voting and singing revolutionary hymns (which are very beautiful and melodious indeed) the Fascists acted. Matthews writes: "No distinctions were made; violence was used against all. Among the dead workers were Catholics and Anarchists, republicans and Socialists, Communists and reformists, or just workers of no particular persuasion."

It seems that only the role of the Fascist legions in Spain during the Civil War shook him out of his Olympian impartiality behooving a *Times* correspondent. That his conversion was complete appears from the moving words he wrote about the struggle of the Spanish people against fascism:

That was one of the things for which history must forever be grateful to the Spanish people. They fought our fight, while we and England and France were appeasing the Axis. The glory was theirs and the shams ours, and nothing will ever wipe one or the other off the slate of history.

Matthews recalls a typical Mussolinian phrase, most appropriate for the characterization of fascism. It appeared in Mussolini's *Popolo d'Italia* after the famous "stab in the back" of prostrate France: "Compassion is the negation of fascism."

These words should be remembered in the final reckoning.



U. S. soldier brings news to Italians in Sicily.

# Furious Thoughts of the Peace

"MEET MR. BLANK." By R. G. Waldeck. New York: G. P. Putnam Sons, 1943. 179 pp. \$2.50.

Reviewed by GUSTAV STOLPER

THE trouble with reviewing books like this of Mrs. Waldeck is that one does not know exactly whether they are meant to be pleasant jokes. Possibly the author, in the twilight of her personality, has not the answer herself. The subject of the book is serious enough: with whom, in a defeated Germany, will the Allies be able to make peace? It is a sensible and amusing idea to put on a parade of possible and impossible candidates. And the book has many sensible and amusing remarks to its credit. But the parade which Mrs. Waldeck stages for us is a Hollywood product with such defects of taste and knowledge that it rather obfuscates than enlightens the mind of the reader.

The Mr. Blank of the future peace must not be a "nice German," but "a strong fellow and an extremely capable one." The "nice German" with whom the Allies dealt in 1918 was Matthias Erzberger who is introduced as a sort of unhappy clown. This man who fell as one of the first victims of Nazi fury was actually one of the bravest and strongest fighters of German democracy. As early as 1916 he forced the Imperial Government to the conciliatory gesture of a peace offer, and in the fateful first years of the Weimar Republic as Finance Minister he was responsible for the most vigorous attempt to stem the tides of inflation. What Mrs. Waldeck decrees "we" must not do again (who is "we"? ) is to deal with the Erzbergers. They "are not representative of the German people. They cannot speak for them." Yet in the freest elections held by any people Germany backed the three democratic parties in 1919 and 1920 by a more than eighty per cent majority. If these spokesmen were not representative, the word has obviously no meaning at all. How fortunate would the world be if after the collapse of the Hitler regime there were any men in Germany as representative as the early leaders of the Weimar regime.

But who will Mr. Blank be in Mrs. Waldeck's opinion? Her pageant is led by the Hohenzollerns, and her candidate for emperor is Prince Louis Ferdinand who for a time worked for Henry Ford and who has "sex appeal." Then come the generals. Among them the palm goes to Erwin Rommel. About the moral and intellectual virtues of the German officers' corps

she waxes almost lyrical. But there is no general alive who is not an accomplice in the beastly crimes of this abominable phase of German history. The generals who objected were either murdered or have disappeared mysteriously. Schleicher, Bredow, Hammerstein, Groener, Fritzsche, Beck, and many others. Of the bureaucrats only two are presented as typical: Dr. Gauss, the legal adviser of the Foreign Office, and Dr. Clodius, who negotiates the German trade agreements. But Gauss never had or sought any influence on policy making, and Clodius is a specialist. The German bureaucracy on the whole is undoubtedly deeply demoralized and corrupted by ten years of Hitlerism.

Then come the industrialists, represented by the inevitable legendary Thyssen. This legend survives by sheer repetition. Fritz Thyssen's autobiography, which was published in America by the title of "I Paid Hitler," offers the definite proof that he never paid Hitler; but who cares? The Vereinigte Stahlwerke of which he was titular chairman is called "the largest mining trust in the world" (poor United States Steel Corporation!) and Thyssen's creation, which is simply not true. Of the real structure of Germany industry Mrs. Waldeck has obviously but rather a dim notion. To her, German industrialists are "fundamentally stupid men, lacking in political foresight and in standards of conduct," which is sweeping enough. But Mr. Blank will be no German businessman anyway. He will not be a socialist labor leader either.

Of the refugee politicians Mrs. Waldeck believes in only two, both at present in Canada. One is Dr. Spieker, the former Reich's Press Chief, belonging to the Catholic Cen-

ter Party, a man whom one would like to see in a postwar government, but who scarcely could be taken as the spokesman of the German people. The other, most shockingly, is Otto Strasser, to whom she devotes five pages and whom she describes as an important German leader, which is simply grotesque. For the existence of any following in Germany for that charlatan there is not a shadow of evidence except his own allegations, and if the following existed it would be found in the most rabid and bloodthirsty wing of the Nazis.

The issue of German communism is of such paramount importance that it would have deserved more than the few intelligent pages the book has to offer. The close coöperation and the old ideological ties between Nazism and German communism require a more explicit and detailed analysis. There is a strong possibility, according to Mrs. Waldeck, that Germany the morning after Hitler may go communist. But her real candidates for the role of peacemaker are either a German Fouché or a German Talleyrand. For the first she recommends with ill-concealed sympathy Hermann Goering, who is pictured as a sort of bon-vivant who apparently did the wholesale butchering just for fun because he has, after all, "no convictions," and though he perpetrates atrocities second only to Himmler's, and indulges in oratorical excesses second to none, he is said to have "paid only lip service to Hitler's anti-semitic policies." But above all, there is Talleyrand-Hjalmar Schacht, of whom she knows that "he knows that the world considers him the smartest man in Europe." She does not tell us who "the world" is of which she speaks. The biographical sketch of Hjalmar Schacht to which we are treated is full of factual mistakes. There is not a single word in this book mentioning the possibility of an occupation of Germany by Allied armies and of the particular influence such a minor factor might have on the future of the German regime. But speculations of this sort might have disturbed the Hollywood parade.



## SOLUTION OF LAST WEEK'S DOUBLE-CROSTICS (No. 499)

THE NEW YORK TIMES:  
EDITORIAL  
(DENMARK VICTORIOUS—  
SEPT. 1, 1943)

The Nazis took Denmark. . . . Contemptuous, superior, correct, the Danes kept their unwelcome guests at arm's length for over three years. . . . In form the Danish government collapsed. . . . In spirit it took on immortality.