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LA MORT DU DUCE
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Italy lived through one of its darkest days of its millenary history. After a brilliant career, at the end of an unfortunate war, the leader who since 1920 had appeared as the living symbol of the deepest aspirations of the Italian people, Mussolini, was the victim of a horrible ending.

Nevertheless, his entire life was only a moving and tragic attempt to awaken Roman victories, to convert Italy again into a great power. Often, when he addressed young Italians in order to stir them, Mussolini loved to ask the question: "Isn't it preferable to die in battle than to succumb to illness?" As a matter of fact he did not aspire to die between two bed sheets. He would have liked to die in the trenches or, even better, in a cloud of a glorious sky.

But the daughters of Hades, the Parches, masters of the destiny of mankind, they refused to grant him the treatment equivalent to his exceptional life: a death worthy of him.

After wanting so often to force destiny in order to earn the privilege of dying a hero, he fell as a martyr.

He died in order to defend his ideals and his political faith. He died for Italy. He was never a weakling in the framework of his civil, military and patriotic actions. He never despaired. Even to the end he was heroic and loyal. In July 1943, even though he was struck harshly by injustice and by the weakness of men, he never let himself go. From the day following liberation, in spite of the painful and chaotic situation, he went back to work. He recaptured his superhuman strength for the salvation and resurrection of Italy. Within a few weeks he rebuilt a government, an administration, renewed the structure of the party, set up the base of a new army, reformed the state. But it was not to be up to him that the land of his forefathers would be saved. He gave all his strength, his entire heart to his country. He gave it his life. He fought up to end in order to let Italy keep the right to recuperate in the world its place of honor and glory acquired at various intervals, during many centuries, with the sacrifice and the blood of forefathers.

He personified, up to the last minute, the hope and fortunes of the Fatherland. His dramatic death reflects still the ideals of his life.

Many Europeans who had admired him have learned with sadness of his death. Many taken from deep pain wept. Today they can do him honor in their prayers and testify in his favor with the fidelity of remembrance. After several years of anarchy and chaos, he had managed to restore order and rhythm to the entire life of modern Italy.

He was besieged. Every day, there were tens of requests for audiences which had to be turned down. On the other hand, audiences were very brief. And at the end, the majority of those that met him, during their stay on the shores of the Tiber, did not have time to either understand or interpret him. They often captured an erroneous image of him. Thus a legend was born: that of the stout dictator, with broad shoulders, hard face, dominating and decisive. I do not know which reporter dubbed him also with: "the classic head of a tyrant." He certainly bore the sign of his strength and greatness. And it was for this reason that he would often exercise over those who approached him a true phenomena of suggestion.

The statesman, the leader often prevented one from seeing the true Mussolini. Because, deep down, he was inspired by a true humanitarian spirit.

All those who could be near him in a constant manner could testify to the same.

Born in a small village, the son of a blacksmith, he remained simple and sensitive throughout his life. He had not grown up in a city. He did not possess any bourgeoisie or refined training. Disdainful of all riches, he always lived modestly.

Driven almost directly to the position he held, he had kept intact not only his natural simplicity but also his rural and primitive freshness of impression. During his life he continued to have a genuine attraction for the humble, for peasants and for laborers. Every time he was among them, he would gladly speak with them.

We saw him in the Pontine marshlands speak face to face with an old farmer, on whose shoulder he would place his friendly hand.

Those who at any cost wish to make him out to be an intractable, rude and hard as granite man are completely wrong.

In 1932, during his first trip to Genoa, when the battle cruiser he was in entered the gulf and got near the city, the crews of the ships in port and thousands of people on shore, on rooftops and on hillsides greeted him with triumphal acclamations, with flags waving and ringing of all the church bells, those who were close to him that bright morning saw tears roll one by one down his cheeks..... Mussolini cried openly the old fashioned way, without any false modesty or attempt to hide his feelings. Also when "Horace" was given at the forum, the immortal verses of Corneille brought tears to his eyes more than once.

Power did not spoil him at all. He kept intact his emotional spontaneity throughout his life.

It is impossible to enumerate his good deeds. These include also his old enemies. The old socialists who had fallen into bad times were helped many times. One can count by the thousands the writers and artists who, by ingenious manner, were assured a decent living. Moderation and dignity inspired the least of his deeds.

When he was freed at Gran Sasso by a team of paratroopers, their leader, Skorzeny, asked him what he should do with the men who held him captive and he calmly answered: "Let them go...!"

If clemency depended only on him no member of the Gran Consiglio would have been shot.

In spite of an absurd rumor, he always demonstrated exceptional tolerance when faced with intellectual opposition. His most implacable enemies must themselves recognize

his policy of clemency and generosity. As head of the Social Republic and for various reasons Mussolini was fascinating. For years all important foreigners that came to Rome had no other interest but to meet the man who, in extreme conditions had to meet “resistance” head on and many times he forgave the partisans. History will recognize his great heart.

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“One thing is certain: The balance of the Mussolini dictatorship is terribly deficient”: That is how one of our friends states it in a letter sent to us the day after Mussolini’s death. We do not believe that history can ratify this judgment. For now it is not the balance of Mussolini dictatorship that we are dealing with, but the balance of Badoglio’s coup d’etat.

After this war, Italy will not only lose Eastern Africa and Libya, but also the Dodecanese, Dalmatia, Fiume and probably Istria, Trieste and Gorizia on which the Yugoslavian and Pan-Slavic hand is already extending. But we all must recognize that had the coup d’etat of July 25, 1943, national disaster and perhaps the catastrophe of the Axis could have been avoided. The Italian people would have avoided not only its actual ordeal but also the total break-up of its armed forces, the disintegration of the state and above all the fratricidal war. The actual Italian disaster is thus not the balance of Fascism. It’s that of Anti-Fascism.

But it could be said, if Fascist Italy had not gone to war, all that would not have happened. “It would have been advantageous for Mussolini *not to make a move*” an Israeli pen writes us. Evidently, Italy could have remained neutral in this war. It could have, as a small nation, remained out of the mix. By remaining non belligerent it could have enjoyed great financial and commercial advantages. But Mussolini concluded that the honor of a great nation could not coincide with only material profits. Italy had already proclaimed its vital right, and had placed before the conscience of the world its birth, food expansion natural resources, labor, and production problems. To confine itself in a neutrality based on profit would have meant nothing more than a definite renunciation of its centuries-old aspirations.

On the other hand we know what happened, in this war, to Turkish neutrality, Portuguese neutrality, Argentine neutrality. And each one of us understood, from some foreign radio broadcasts, the threats against Franco’s Spain, along with also the possibility of a declaration of war.

By keeping its neutrality with its position in the middle of the Mediterranean, Italy would have been lowered to the rank of a small South- American nation. So we can affirm with full peace of mind that whoever would have been in power in 1940 would not have prevented Italy from taking part in a conflict where the fate of Europe was at stake and from which a new world equilibrium was to appear. The historic and geographic position of the peninsula demanded the struggle. She had to either renounce the position of a great nation and resign itself henceforth to becoming a country of tourists and honeymooners, or risk everything, audaciously, in order to achieve definite independence.

So war was supposed to free Italy from any embarrassment and give her a worthy place in the world. “*Not to act*’ would have meant to remain for centuries in definite political, economic, social and moral inferiority. Thus the mistake that Fascism made was to try and make Italy a free, great and prosperous nation. Mussolini dared... but what

would have become of Italy if tiny Piemonte, in 1848, had not dared challenge the powerful Hapsburg Empire? No one reprimanded Cavour at that time for having “dared to act”. Of course one would need to be always sure of victory. But all belligerent powers, no matter who they are, and especially those who declare war, are “a priori” always sure of succeeding.

Fascist Italy defended the fate of the future generations of the peninsula up to the end. Today the war is finished. Nevertheless situations of limited greatness remain. They could take on an unforeseen development. What will it mean tomorrow for England and the United States to win together over Russia? The end of the war will not resolve the problems already in place. More terrible ones could appear.

The balance of Fascism?

After centuries of silence and decline, Italy spoke and acted again. After the march on Rome, along the road of its destiny, imposing millitary rocks signaled, for almost a quarter century, its struggle and its achievements. They have a name: roads, highways, railroads, irrigation canals, electric plants, schools, stadiums, sports, airports, social hygiene, hospitals, sanatoriums, redevelopments, industries, commerce, economic expansion, struggle against malaria, wheat battle. Littoria, Sabaudia, Pontinia, Guidonia, Work Permit, collaboration of classes, corporations, Working Men's Clubs, Maternity and infants programs, School Cards, Encyclopedias, Academy, Mussolini Codes, Lateran Pact, Conciliation, pacification of Libya, merchant marine, navy, air power, conquest of Abyssinia .

All that Fascism accomplished is recorded in history. And nothing will be able to erase this astonishing evidence of an indomitable will of creativity and reconstruction.

In the field of foreign affairs, in 1932, At Geneva, we witness the Mussolini project aiming at the abolition of heavy artillery, tanks, war ships, submarines and war planes.

In 1933, a new proposal for peace: the pact among the four, whose acceptance would have saved Europe. A few months later another suggestion for the immediate stoppage of arms buildup. In 1934, the proposal of a new system of pacification of our continent.

The same year, at the inauguration of Littoria, at the heart of the Pontine swamps freed from their mosses and their malaria, the famous declaration: “We have acquired a new province. We had to fight, but this war, the peaceful war, is the war that we prefer.”

In 1935 there are the Franco-Italian accords of Rome. In 1938 there is the Gentleman's agreement with England. In 1939, at the eve of the present war, with the Duce's suggestion: Monaco is the last attempt to avoid conflict. This naked truth is the answers to all the deformations of slogans.

Certainly Mussolini - we indicated the reasons - entered the war voluntarily. But he did not want it. In a document that we will release soon he states with precise words: “In the spring of 1939 - he writes in the third person - the Italian construction boom was full of enthusiasm and Mussolini felt from the beginning that one should not challenge destiny too much. He realized that a long period of peace was absolutely necessary for Europe in general and for Italy in particular and that war, once begun, would have interrupted everything, compromised everything and perhaps ruined everything. With his

opposition to war there were also political and moral reasons, like the feeling that the fate of Europe, as a civilization building continent, was in jeopardy.... No, Mussolini did not want war - He could not have wanted war; he saw it drawing closes with terrible anguish. He felt that this was a question mark for the entire future of the Fatherland.” 1)

1) The balance of Fascism?

Here are the statements that M.W.Churchill made to the Italian media on January 1927, during his trip to Rome.

□Your movement has rendered a service to the entire world. It seems that what distinguishes all revolutions is a constant progression towards the left, a kind of inevitable slide towards the abyss. Italy has demonstrated that there is a method of fighting the enemy forces that could fool the masses and that these, led properly, can appreciate the value of a civilized society and defend honor and stability.

And it is Italy that has given us the necessary antidote against the red poison.□ (The Decay of Liberal Europe “pg. 178 M. Bertrand de Jouvenel).

The God of battles has already expressed his supreme sentence. At the end of this gigantic struggle, the rich populations, well provided with all the earth's wealth, defeated the underprivileged populations with high demographic potential. Germany and Italy are defeated. Both had asked, as a right to life, what they considered legitimate.

For the right of possession, for cultural and sacred egoism, the other powers refused to grant them. Who was right, who was wrong? We ~~we~~ leave the difficult decision to future generations.

For the peninsula, the Mussolini era ended. One day, history will pronounce the glorious harvest, weapons at hand, under the emblem of the fasces. Even though she had to fight in extremely difficult conditions, even though the naval superiority of England made great victories impossible, Mussolini's Italy, before its setbacks, had unquestionable successes. Its armies left their mark from the torrid sands of Libya to the icy fields of Russia. Its horses drank from the water of the Guadalquivir, the Dnieper and also from the sources of the Nile. Its flag flew on the Atlantic up to near the English Channel. After an epic run along the African shores, its battalions arrived up to the gates of Alexandria and, for the first time since antiquity, the land of the Pharaohs again saw the insignia of Rome.

Therefore, in the entire world, the Italian and Fascist cause certainly did not lack incensers. But only a change in the wind was needed for the cowards and pusillanimous to bring their miserable incense to the opposite camp. And it was within Italy itself that the phenomena took on its most revolting aspect.

Even the same victory of the other war had been threatened, from 1919 to 1922, by a group of defeats, saboteurs and quitters. 1)

This time the rottenness took on a national characteristic.

Italy surrendered because of the loss of its sons rather than because of the fighting valor of its enemies; she defeated herself, because of its defeatism attitude.

Italians have a terrible defect. Besides possessing the highest of qualities: quick and acute intelligence, personal courage, a natural propensity pushes them towards skepticism, doubt, minimal effort.

They are easily liberal with nice reassurances, but too often there is a lack of

continuity between words, between thought and action. They become easily partisan. They are dominated by personal interests. They do not possess the cult of civic obedience. Furthermore, raised in the heart of catholic universalism, they remained for centuries devoid of a true military spirit and completely indifferent to the glory of their fatherland. The truth is that, either because of the mental sub-strata of its people, or because of its history, "...Italy was never able to become a nation like the others". 2)

- 1) One could write a high interest history essay that would prove that the Italian defeatist of 1915 – Germanophiles then – were the Germanophobes of 1940-1945
- 2) The sentence is from Renan.

Nevertheless the Italian war would have kept its normal attitude up to the end if the about-face King and the Joint chiefs of Staff had not acted as fermentation of madness and decay.

Having lost its cohesion, distorted its conscience, the country, in great majority, gave in to laxity, to indifference, to misunderstanding. It lost control of its nerves.

It forgot that what was in play today was not only a political doctrine, or a luxury object, but the inheritance of the forefathers, the future of the race, the land for its children, the daily bread, dignity, honor, freedom, national independence. And it's because of this that the future will probably direct a sharp accusation against those responsible. Future generations will repudiate them for deliberately bringing the country to the brink of disaster and for having prevented, perhaps for centuries, its free and worthy return to the field of great history.

But if there is a name that, in this entire drama, will remain pure and immaculate, it will be that of Mussolini.

In all circumstances and in the most atrocious hardships, IL Duce kept unassailable firmness. He did not commit any errors. He remained faithful to his honor up to his death: he did not capitulate.

And it's because of this reason, without speaking about his faithful followers, the enemies themselves – if they maintained in their heart the notion of human nobility – cannot help but pay homage to his tomb as a sign of respect and admiration. Especially in Switzerland, his death must ring out painfully in the hearts of all those who remember how much this man loved our country, to the point that multiple times his voice was raised in our favor and at times of hardship he placed himself fraternally at our side.

During the time of success and glory, our authorities named him "doctor honoris causa" of the University of Lauzanne, and he was offered, in a solemn display, a copy of the bust of Marcus Aurelius recovered in Avenches. An official publication, the Historic and Biographic Dictionary of Switzerland, mentions him along with Romain Rolland, among the foreigners that honored our country. So we too can, at this painful hour, without any reservation, direct an emotional thought as we remember this man of great intelligence and action. He suffered terribly. He was betrayed by his own people. The same ones, who had exalted him and who marched under the shadow of his glory, sold him out for thirty pieces of silver. Among the millions of fellow countrymen to whom he had given the pride of being

Italian, not one of them was there, at the supreme hour, to cover him piously with the shroud and close his eyes. It is the fate of great men to be crucified, stabbed, cast into deserted islands. He was among the greatest. From high above he dominated all who surrounded him.

He was greater than Italy and he tried to raise her above herself, to raise her at the level of the greatest empires. But neither the lungs nor the heart of his countrymen were strong enough. Italy's weakness paralyzed the strength and the charge of its leader.

Had he won this war, he would have been crowned a universal genius and divine and his fatherland, in spite of its many wounds, would have found not only its full territorial integrity and its empire, but also the halo of glory which had surrounded her in antiquity.

Defeated, he is destined to submit to contempt and the radios of the world proclaimed him the antichrist, Lucifer, or Cesare da Carnevale. Just like Napoleon when he died.

But time places everything back in its place. History will not be able to vilify his memory and it will render him justice. His blood will not have been shed in vain. More than anything else it is that of martyrs that nourishes the life of the people. In life, Mussolini had already his legend; it will grow.

But, following the renaissance, Italy tasted so much vitality as during the great period under IL Duce.

In institutions, in the Mussolini codes there was like a thrill of a new world. Then, from the Alps to the Nile, from Spain to the Volga, the scorching blood of Italian soldiers inundated this land. In the air there shone a sun full of glory. Well, no matter what happens in the future, this past will not die. The excitement that he poured not only in Italian veins, but in the arteries of the world, will continue to boil. To the people in turmoil he pointed out one of the roads to salvation. Defeat makes one retreat along the same road taken before. Others, later, will take again this great main road, the Appian Way of history. Innumerable fruits will spring forth from his experience, from his faith, from his martyrdom. One day Mussolini will become an image and idea. He came to know triumph and adversity. He reached fame. He will continue to live in the mind. He will be asked for examples, lessons, a doctrine. The prestige of his name will remain intact. He will remain one of the greatest architects of the transformation of Europe and the world. He will appear in future centuries as one of the most efficient revolutionary forces of history.

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