

*Also by Henri Michel*

THE SHADOW WAR

Henri Michel

# THE SECOND WORLD WAR

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*Translated by Douglas Parmée*



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they disagreed with the Moslem policy of the President of the French National Liberation Committee. As a result, Farhat Abbas became reconciled with the Ulemas and Messali Hadj. The manifesto became the charter for Algerian demands. The 'Friends of the Manifesto' soon numbered some several hundred thousand supporters and they launched a weekly paper, *Egalité*. The Algerian nationalists were turning from the peaceful and law-abiding development which they had been advocating hitherto to plans for violent action.

Black Africa was not moving so quickly. The French National Liberation Committee decided to hold a huge conference in Brazzaville to study its future. At the beginning of 1944 it was under the chairmanship of René Pleven and General de Gaulle took part in the final session and announced its conclusions. The conference had worked out a vast programme of social and economic reform to ensure gradual advancement for the natives; this programme aimed at africanising the administration and granting internal autonomy to territories for the future by providing them with assemblies which would gradually take over the running of the country. But there was no thought of granting any of these territories independence; in any case, the only people attending the conference had been colonial administrators.

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Apart from its military consequences, the end of the war in Africa had thus brought France back into the concert of nations. At the same time this comeback was the beginning of a profound change in the political, economic and imperial structure of France. In the midst of her misfortunes, France was turning over a new leaf; her liberation would also be a rebirth. Nevertheless, the meaning and purpose of this development were not yet very clear, nor were they unanimously accepted; the only definite conclusion to be drawn was that the Vichy régime had been condemned, its laws abolished and its leaders punished. On the other hand, the Allies still did not look upon France as an equal, nor did they regard the French National Liberation Committee as her legal government. The Italian campaign was going to enable the Committee to establish itself rather more firmly and set its sights a little higher, thanks to the expeditionary force which was to have a share in the Allied victories.

## CHAPTER 2

### Italy Surrenders

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#### I THE SICILIAN CAMPAIGN

IN May 1943 in Washington, at the suggestion of the British and in spite of American reluctance, the Allies decided to follow up their success in Africa by putting Italy out of action. However, because of shortage of shipping and lack of experience, in order also not to jeopardise the major landing across the Channel, which still had priority, an operation of minor importance was planned; any landing near Rome or even at Naples was considered too risky and the idea was ruled out; an operation in Sardinia would have had the advantage of making it possible to follow up by bombing the industrial centres of northern Italy; but since it was open to converging counter-attacks both from Corsica and from the Italian coast, it seemed too hazardous.

They therefore settled for a landing in Sicily; this would have the main advantage of ensuring a completely free east-west passage through the Mediterranean. Throughout June there were raids on both Sicily and on the little island of Pantelleria, fifty miles from Tunisia and some sixty miles from Sicily. Mussolini loudly boasted that Pantelleria was impregnable; but on June 12, 1943 the garrison's 12,000 men surrendered merely as a result of air raids, after losing only 56 dead and 196 wounded. This hardly showed a strong will to fight on the part of the Italians.

Operation 'Husky', the code name given to the landing in Sicily, needed very intricate gearing, for it involved the Army, Navy and Air force, and both British and American troops - the French did not take part. The dispersal of the general staffs showed how complicated it was: the American General Eisenhower, the interallied commander, was in Algiers; but the British General Alexander, who was responsible for the operation, had established himself in Tunis, while the naval general staff were based on Malta and the Army set up its own base in Sicily as soon as the landing started. All this did not make communication any easier and caused delay in making the decisions. But the Allies were sufficiently well co-ordinated for an American naval officer, for example, to take command of a sector which had been allocated to the British fleet.

The landing took place during the night of July 9-10, 1943, and al-

though it could not achieve any surprise effect, it was nevertheless virtually a complete success. An army of 160,000 men, half Americans under Patton and half British and Commonwealth troops under Montgomery, set foot on land without meeting any great resistance. They were covered by 1,000 aircraft and transported by 3,200 ships – among which use was made for the first time of landing craft, flat-bottomed boats which could be beached without damage and were provided with a swing-door in the bows. They also were supported by 1,700 guns and 600 tanks, while paratroopers seized airfields inland. The timing of the convoys had been so well co-ordinated that a Canadian division from Scotland took over its landing barges which had come from Tripoli at 1.30 a.m. as planned, within sight of the Sicilian coast. The only difficulties arose from 'false beaches' which they had failed to detect or banks of pebbles not properly reconnoitred, on which some craft were smashed; some paratroopers were dropped too soon and fell into the sea.

But there was virtually no reaction from the enemy. And yet the Italians had ten divisions in Sicily; it is true that their strength had been reduced and that half of them belonged to the type called 'coastal', that is to say that they consisted of older men. The Germans had sent 70,000 men to northern Sicily, one of which was a crack division, the Hermann Goering ss Division. However, the coastal batteries did not open fire; the Italian headquarters were destroyed by raids and the base of Augusta was abandoned the day before the British arrived.

Accordingly, the troops landed and advanced without much trouble. In the west, on July 22 the Americans occupied Palermo; in the east, the British seized Syracuse on the 12th, but were stopped outside Catania; nevertheless on the 21st they joined up with the Americans. In his usual presumptuous and boastful way, Mussolini had declared that 'no enemy will leave the island alive'; in actual fact the Italian troops had stampeded; only the Germans clung on to Etna long enough to enable their troops to be evacuated from the island, a move which for once Hitler himself had decided upon, since he was anxious not to let the enemy coils close around them as in Tunisia.

On August 5 the British entered Catania; on the 16th the Americans entered Messina. Although they achieved their objective, their success was not complete because the Germans managed to bring back almost all their troops and equipment to the Italian mainland, that is to say 50,000 men and 10,000 vehicles; the 200,000 prisoners were Italians.

Being unable to prevent this evacuation was the only comparative failure of the Allies in this Sicilian campaign. Once again they had proved over-cautious; they had thought it impossible to land in the north-east of Sicily, which was the only way they could have reached the Straits of Messina before the Germans could cross it. They had also not dared to

send their battleships to the straits in case they came under fire from the powerful batteries on both sides. In addition, they made mistakes which with better co-ordination could have been avoided; for example, the big bombers which would have done a great deal to hinder the evacuation had not been concentrated in time; General Alexander had not even called his subordinate commanders together to make an overall plan of action.

In short, the Allied force proved irresistible only against the Italians; with the Germans it was a different matter. Hitler made no secret of his apprehensions to Mussolini, whom he met at Feltre on July 19. It was absolutely necessary that Italy should hold on, he said, now that the Soviet offensive had been launched. The Duce promised everything the Führer wished; but he was no longer in a position to prevent the collapse of Fascist Italy. And his days were numbered.

## II THE COLLAPSE OF FASCIST ITALY

By July 1943 there was no longer any shadow of doubt that the war was a disaster for Italy. Not only had she not achieved any of the objectives for which she had entered it but she had lost her empire; her Navy had been driven out of Mare Nostrum and was not safe even in the bases in the northern part of the country where it remained immobilised; the industrial centres were being flattened by increasingly massive raids; the enemy had conquered Sicily and the whole length of the peninsula was vulnerable and open to attack; the enemy's only difficulty was to choose where to thrust home.

From the economic point of view, industrial output had dropped by 35 per cent since 1939 and agricultural output by 20 per cent; imports had decreased by 78 per cent and exports by 54 per cent; the national debt had risen from 146,000 million lire to 405,000 million and currency circulation from 28,000 to 79,000 million. The state budgetary deficit, which reached 12,000 million lire in 1939, had risen to 87,000 million in 1943 and income now covered only 36 per cent of expenditure. Thanks to strict control, prices had theoretically only doubled, but a black market in every commodity was flourishing in all regions; and the population was suffering from a growing scarcity of foodstuffs. Corn was being sown in public squares; by this symbolic gesture, which those in power extolled as an assertion of the will to fight, the country was proving the depth of misery created by inefficiency and neglect.

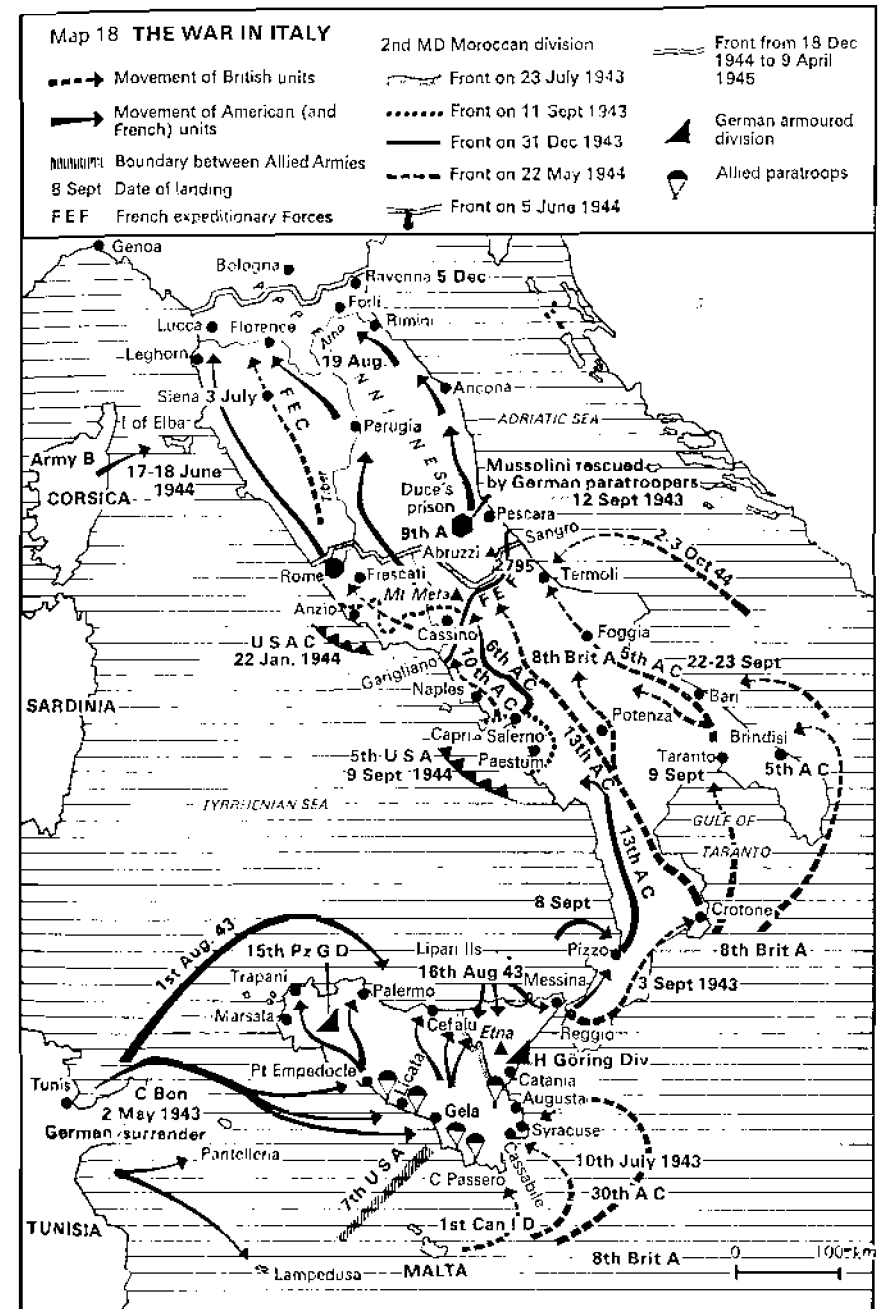
This disaster was shown in the Duce's physical condition. His stomach ulcer made him anxious and nervous and necessitated a debilitating diet and long periods of rest which were not really compatible with a position of absolute power. He had less will-power and even his reflexes seemed to

have slowed down; his relatives were astonished to see a strange inertia, an almost complete apathy come over the old warrior; he seemed to be more and more indifferent, as if resigned to what was happening to him and to what lay in store for him. He retained the demagogue's confidence in words; he continued to believe that a speech was action; he took refuge in commonplaces and superficial judgments; he excused his failures by lashing out against the Italian people who had to be 'driven into battle by kicks up the behind'.

The régime which Mussolini had created had fallen into a similar decline; the sixty-year-old Duce was setting an example of moral corruption by flaunting his love affair with the young Claretta Petacci, who was burdened with a family greedy for honours and wealth. All around him things were breaking up. Senise, the chief of police, painted a picture of permanent public despondency, of impotence and chaos among those in power and of disobedience at every level. Only the militia and some young Fascists still believed in the régime and its leader; the most intelligent officials turned from ironic criticism to scepticism and moral defection; they were wondering how to desert the sinking ship in time with their weapons and kit. 'Fascism was dead long before 1943,' wrote Guido Leto, the chief of the Fascist secret police, the OVRA.

Everyone was full of grievances against Germany and these were frequently justified. She had not kept her promise to provide Italy with coal and the Romanian oil which she had agreed to send her had arrived only in dribbles; for her the war in the Mediterranean had always taken second place and she had refused to provide the resources for the capture of Malta, which could have had far-reaching consequences; in the USSR the Italian Eighth Army which had had 220,000 men when it had arrived now numbered only 80,000, and the Wehrmacht had no scruples in assigning it dangerous tasks, at the same time covering it with sarcasm. The humiliating thing was that both in Greece and in Africa it was only the last-minute intervention of the Germans which had saved the Italian troops, and this the Italians found difficult to swallow. Relations between the two armies were characterised by a display of arrogance, brutality and contempt on the part of the German officers which the Italians' pride and sensitivity found impossible to tolerate. Personal diplomatic relations were no better. And on top of that the Germans no longer made any bones about their designs for annexing the Italian Tyrol.

Mussolini chafed because he had become Hitler's henchman, no longer had any active say in joint decisions and had to dance attendance on the Führer. However, the personal bonds between the two men remained firm; disaster had not impaired their friendship nor affected their trust in each other. They realised that their fates were sealed. Hitler, in spite of the Duce's setbacks and his own irritation at some of Mussolini's decisions



which had been particularly inappropriate, continued to admire his ally; he wrote to him that 'by carrying on his heroic struggle he had become a symbol for the whole world'. But their staffs were coming to hate each other more and more, whether it was Ciano and Ribbentrop – the former described the latter as a criminal – the general staffs or the leading officials of the two parties. And for the Italians themselves the word *tedeschi* was once more taking on a pejorative meaning.

How could Italy continue the fight? She was desperately short of resources. Mussolini had decided to raise a million men; national service was made compulsory for men between the ages of fourteen and seventy and for women between fourteen and sixty; but these measures were carried out rather unenthusiastically and they would have been effective only if the Italians had been willing to fight; but they were weary and becoming more and more indifferent to the 'Fascist war', from which they dissociated themselves. The government had been reshuffled by the dismissal of those ministers who took least trouble to hide their dissatisfaction – Ciano and Grandi; but those who had been ousted were quite naturally turning to open hostility. The Party had been given a new secretary, Carlo Scorza, a man who was devoted to the Duce. But what could he do about the fact that Allied submarines were making it difficult to transport lead and antimony from Sardinia, that tank production had dropped almost to zero and that the metallurgical industry was short of ore and electrical power?

The only obvious solution was *sganciamento*, a breakaway from Germany. Could Mussolini persuade Hitler to agree to Italy's becoming non-belligerent again? How would he even dare to ask him, when the war was *his* war and the alliance with Germany *his* alliance? To withdraw from the one or to break the other would be tantamount to a denial of himself. All that he could do was to try to persuade Hitler to put an end to the fighting in the USSR. On March 25, 1943, he wrote to him to this effect: 'I think I am right in saying that the Russian chapter can now be brought to a close, if possible by a separate peace or by setting up a strong wall in the east which the Russians would be unable to cross. . . . We cannot carry on summer offensives and winter retreats without reaching a state of exhaustion which, even if mutual, will in the end benefit no one but the British and Americans.' The Duce was encouraged in this course by the Romanian Foreign Minister and by the Hungarian government. In Salzburg, where he had met Hitler in April 1943, he had tried to convince him without success. In Feltre, on July 19, he was so overcome by a feeling of shame at the Italian setbacks and of resignation at his powerlessness that he had not even dared to repeat his suggestions.

Was there any hope of the Allies being more understanding? As early as December 1942 Franzoni, the Italian minister in Lisbon, had made dis-

creet approaches to Eden and Cordell Hull, with the approval of Ciano, who had not consulted his father-in-law; this contact had been maintained up to July 1943 without any result. In July 1943 Bastianini, the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, had returned to the attack; he thought he was acting with the tacit approval of Mussolini, since the latter had not replied to his request for permission. It was a matter of saving the Duce. The British categorically refused; what other answer could they have given after the decisions reached in Casablanca?

Moreover, in the Allied camp it was the British who were keeping up 'the hard line' towards Italy; they did not think that there was any other solution to Fascism; they wanted the disturbances in Italy to be sufficiently serious to warrant the intervention of the Wehrmacht; it would thus help the British 'peripheral strategy'. For the same reason, they were in favour of intensive air raids, which Allied propaganda said were caused by the presence of the Germans in Italy, so as to stir up the Italian population against the *tedeschi*.

The Americans were said to be in favour of less hostile measures, in order to make it easier for Italy to join the Allied camp; they would have liked to restrict the bombing and to reassure the Italians as to their intentions once the Fascist régime had disappeared. This was the point of view expressed by Roosevelt, who was more inclined to be well-disposed towards Italy, the foe, than towards his ally, Free France.

The USSR was happy to stir the pot in this discussion. She intended having her say in the decisions about Italy; she continually accused her partners of wanting to present her with a *fait accompli* and on the whole she had much in common with the British point of view. The debate ended with the Allied bombing of Rome on July 19; it aroused intense emotion in all Italian circles. It proved that the approaches made by the Fascist régime to the Allied side had no more chance of success than Mussolini's suggestions to Hitler. It was up to the Italians and the Italians alone to find a solution to the two interrelated problems of the existence of Fascism and of Italy's participation in the war; and as a necessary prerequisite, Mussolini had to be ousted.

### III THE ITALIAN RESISTANCE

Since the King, the aristocracy, the Church, the industrialists, the big landowners and a large part of the liberal middle classes had given their support to Fascism, for a considerable time the opposition had been confined to a few thousand scattered refugees leading a precarious existence in France, England and the United States. For a long time Musso-

lini's successes made the Italian people turn a deaf ear to their propaganda; their action was limited by the French and British policy of friendship with the Duce before the war; and the final factor which paralysed them completely was their own internal divisions.

However, three factors had helped them to regroup. The first was the work of a group of intellectuals led by the Rosselli brothers – who were murdered near Bagnoles-de-l'Orne by hired assassins of OVRA. They founded a movement called 'Freedom and Justice' whose aim was to use anti-Fascism to bridge the gap between Marxists and liberal democrats. The second factor was Stalin's anti-Nazi policy during the years 1935–8; this brought the Communists – who, moreover, in Italy, with Gramsci and Togliatti, had constantly displayed a certain amount of independence with regard to Moscow – closer to other political parties. The Spanish war was the final melting-pot in which they mingled together; 3,100 anti-Fascist Italians fought in the International Brigades; fighting in a sort of civil war on foreign soil, it was they who repulsed the 'black shirts' at Guadalajara; 700 of them were killed and 1,000 wounded.

'The Popular Union of Exiles' in France comprised 70,000 supporters and its newspaper, *La Voce degli Italiani*, even penetrated into Italy, where hitherto only the Communists had maintained an underground network which OVRA had not succeeded in breaking up. Communists, Socialists and supporters of 'Freedom and Justice' joined together to form an 'Action Front'; the Christian Democrats with Dom Sturzo remained on the fringe, since the behaviour of the Pope and the high Italian clergy made things awkward for them – Dom Sturzo had advocated peace in Spain. While the Action Front declared itself republican, since the King was both upholding Fascism and profiting from it, the Christian Democrats and the liberals who were hostile to the régime but had remained in Italy set their hopes on the monarchy and the Army to overthrow it.

The Action Front was broken up by the German-Soviet pact; some Socialists, like Saragat and Tasca, became irreconcilable opponents of the Communists. Then Italy's entry into the war plunged everyone into a moral dilemma: was opposing the government not the equivalent of treason? France's defeat was nothing short of a disaster; the exiles who had settled there were imprisoned or had to hide or even escape to America. There as elsewhere the Wehrmacht's invasion of the USSR brought the Communists back into the paths of righteousness; three times a week on Radio Moscow, Togliatti urged the people to unite with the Allies in the name of peace, freedom and independence. Once again, notably in France, common fronts were formed between Communists and Socialists like Pietro Nenni or Silvio Trentin. In all the Allied countries the anti-Fascist exiles worked to persuade the governments and

public not to confuse the Italian people with the régime which was oppressing it. They tried not to restrict themselves to purely destructive action; in New York Count Sforza drew up an 'Eight-Point Manifesto', a programme for post-Fascist Italy, which had the unanimous approval of the 'Pan-American Congress of Free Italians' which met in Montevideo in August 1942.

Italy's defeats brought the exiled leaders back to their own country. All were agreed that if Italy retained her ties with Germany she had lost the war in any case, for a victorious Germany would bring her under her yoke. The only way out was first to get rid of Fascism and then to side with the Allies. But how could this be done? Some Christian Democrats continued to hope that the King would recover his constitutional powers and bring about a legal revolution which would cut the losses and avoid chaos by making the whole of Italy swing over to the Allied cause in the hope of not losing any of her territory.

But this was not the opinion of the Socialists and the new Action party which had been formed by the merging of 'Freedom and Justice' with young liberal intellectuals, and had a republican and socialistic programme. The Communists took up a more flexible line; they were trying above all to unite the anti-Fascists. In 1943, on their initiative, a liaison committee of the six anti-Fascist parties was formed – Communist, Socialist, Action party, Christian Democrat, Liberal and Democrat Labour – this last party consisting merely of a few of Bonomi's friends. The programme was simple: to destroy Fascism and to hold over the solution of political problems until after the Liberation.

Thus in Italy, unlike France, the Resistance was not formed into new bodies of separate Resistance movements but incorporated into the former political parties, with the addition of the Action party. The strength of these parties varied greatly. Only the Communists had any sort of military organisation; the Christian Democrats could count on the lower clergy and 'Catholic Action'; but the Socialists had greater difficulty in re-forming their party, while the Action party was only a skeleton structure made up of intellectuals; as for the Liberals, virtually their only asset was the prestige of having Benedetto Croce as a member. Although the strikes in northern Italy in March 1943 had shown that anti-Fascism was becoming popular, in July 1943 the Italian Resistance was not a force to be reckoned with; it had not taken root throughout the country; it had no institution similar to the National Resistance Council in France; it had no armed forces; it had not really infiltrated the Italian civil service; and if one adds to this the fact that it was not known to the Allies and that it had not played any part in Sicily, it is obvious that it was incapable of overthrowing and replacing the Fascist régime on its own, however shaky and discredited the latter might be.

## IV THE PLOT AGAINST MUSSOLINI

Since the underground Resistance was not in contact with other organisations, three groups were going to endeavour to bring down Mussolini. They made no attempt to co-ordinate their action; they each had only a few scraps of information about the plans and programme of the others; as a result, though the operation succeeded it was going to cause chaos all over Italy, split the country up between various authorities and lead to civil war.

The first and weakest group was the one formed by former politicians from pre-Fascist days; in actual fact there were two of them, Orlando and Bonomi. The former still had a great reputation abroad but in his own country his prestige had fallen considerably; the King referred to him as a 'ghost from the past'; but he had a great name which was likely to win the Allies' confidence; he was also only one man. Bonomi, on the other hand, had woven a spider's web; he was linked with the underground Resistance – he was relying especially on the Christian Democrat de Gasperi – but he was equally welcome at the royal palace and he had not broken with a few Fascists who were on the road to repudiating their party, realising that the cock would soon be crowing for them.

King Victor Emmanuel had the constitutional power to dismiss Mussolini – after all, the Duce was only the president of the Council summoned by him – and he was the titular commander of the armed forces which, if they followed him, would be capable of controlling any possible violent reaction by the last hard core of Fascists. But Victor Emmanuel had seriously compromised himself with the régime and he had never at any time protested against its excesses. On the other hand, he was a very cautious and secretive man; he would advance only by stealth, after making sure that all the odds were on his side and without revealing anything of his intentions. Amongst his entourage, Duke Acquarone, the minister of the Royal Household, was a safe and loyal henchman, more resolute than his sovereign.

On the military side, the ringleader was General Castellano, the Deputy Army Chief of Staff, an excellent look-out man who was aggressively anti-German. His first successful move was to get rid of Cavallero, the new scapegoat for Italy's failures, and to replace him by General Ambrosio, who had not compromised himself too much with Fascism, had a well-established reputation for honesty and was highly thought of by the King; the Duce's dismissal would depend on his resolution. It is true that at the very top of the military world there was still Marshal Badoglio, who was no longer playing any active part but his prestige remained great: if he took sides, the Army would follow him.

The third group was formed by anxious Fascists who had been ousted – Ciano and Grandi in the van, supported by the 'principal secondary characters' Bottai, Federzoni, Farinacci. Ciano was the most active, and also the most rash; he was in contact with General Castellano. Grandi, who had been ambassador in London, thought he enjoyed the confidence of the British and Americans; he was hoping to become Foreign Minister of the new government and thus make it easier for Italy to change sides. These Fascists were, of course, relying on benefiting from the national union which would follow their leader's downfall; they would thus save their skins and perhaps their portfolios.

The King had tried to contact the Allies. In the summer of 1942 the Italian consul in Geneva had spoken to his British counterpart, on behalf of the Duke of Aosta. As proof of the plot against Mussolini the British demanded that a prince of the House of Savoy should set up a government in Sardinia ready to collaborate with them. It is not known what Victor Emmanuel thought of this condition but it was not followed up. The Princess of Piedmont, the wife of the heir to the throne, had for her part approached the British Minister to the Vatican. Then she had asked Salazar to act as mediator, which the Portuguese dictator had agreed to do. The Allies had remained very cautious towards these advances, no doubt because the decisions they had taken in Casablanca compelled them to be firm; but they had not turned their back on a change of government made on the King's initiative; although they had not wanted to disclose their intentions and had not co-operated in any way, their silence was calculated to encourage Victor Emmanuel.

The defeats in Sicily speeded things up; urgent action was necessary before the war set the whole of Italy ablaze. This was what Bonomi went to explain to the old King: they must dismiss Mussolini and arrest him, he told the King – Castellano had worked out a plan to this effect – to form an anti-Fascist cabinet under a military man, denounce the German alliance and make contact with the Allies. If Germany did not react, Italy would return to a state of neutrality; if Germany attacked Italy, the latter would go over to the Allies. Half-convinced, the King took a few more days to think it over; on July 13 he summoned Badoglio; he seemed to be merely sounding him but the two men understood each other without spelling things out.

The failure of the Feltre interview on July 19 had caused Ambrosio to make up his mind once and for all and he controlled the Army, which was the engine-room of the plot. The Führer had continued to insult the Italians, while at the same time refusing them the aid they were pleading for – besides, he did not know where to get hold of the 2,000 aircraft for which they were asking. The Italians, said Hitler, had to decide to make war like the Germans, 'with a fanatical will to win'. Bastianini, Alfieri and

Ambrosio had vainly laid siege to the Duce to make him admit to Hitler that Italy could no longer continue the fight; Mussolini said not a word. He could definitely not be relied upon to rescue Italy from her hornet's nest; the only answer now was to get rid of him.

The bombing of Rome on July 19 acted as a spur. On July 22 Grandi visited the Duce; he tried to persuade him to resign of his own free will; he found him convinced that Germany was soon going to win the war with the aid of a new weapon. That same day Acquarone and Castellano met: the King had decided to act. On July 24 Acquarone, Ambrosio and Castellano visited Badoglio on his behalf and told him that the King had decided to place him at the head of the government. They handed him the declaration which he had to read and which Orlando had drawn up at the King's request. Badoglio approved and said: 'Everything's all right.' The die was cast.

Two distinct plots were thus developing simultaneously, each only partly aware of the other; true, one alone was enough to bring down the Duce, who was both gullible and overcome by inertia. But what about afterwards? They had at one and the same time to avoid civil war, prevent or forestall the wrath of the Germans and win the confidence of the Allies. Was this not attempting the impossible? Hypocrisy and secrecy could not be the complete answer, even though Victor Emmanuel seemed to be establishing a kind of record for duplicity; on July 22, having already decided to have Mussolini arrested, he told him that he would be 'the last person to desert him'.

#### V THE FALL OF MUSSOLINI

On July 23 the Fascist rebels drew up the motion which Grandi presented the next day at the meeting of the Fascist Grand Council; Mussolini had been warned. It was clear that if this text was adopted the time had come for him to disappear from the scene. Yet he passively waited to see what would happen.

At 5.15 p.m. on July 24 the members of the Grand Council met attired in Fascist ceremonial dress – the dress of the political movement whose demise they were plotting – black tunic, grey-green breeches and boots. Mussolini's statement was a long, rambling lukewarm speech in his defence; those present were struck and perhaps encouraged by the Duce's weariness, his ashen face and his obvious resignation. Mussolini's conclusion, however, was quite clear: the grave failures had been due to the fact that the Army had not always obeyed him.

Grandi replied with an indictment of the way in which the régime, which, he said, was completely out of touch with the country, was

slowly collapsing and disintegrating. He held Mussolini responsible; he accused him of failing to give any real direction to his policy through having taken on too many minor tasks. He then read his motion, which suggested 'a return to the Constitution' in order 'to unite all Italians morally and materially in this hour of crisis for the nation's future', that is to say that the King should again take over actual command of the armed forces and 'complete initiative in any decisions'. Mussolini would devote himself solely to being leader of the Party; he would make it once again into a 'block of granite' which would one day be able 'to overcome their difficulties'.

The régime's senior officials were therefore not bent on self-destruction; they were trying to extricate themselves from dire straits by changing their navigator. It was not for them but for the King to decide whether or not Mussolini continued to be Prime Minister; they probably reckoned that the King could not break completely with a régime to which he owed so much. Moreover, they all solemnly protested their friendship for the Duce whose burden they said they merely wished to lighten. Mussolini could have proposed an amendment to the motion and even refused to let it be put to the vote. He did no such thing; the result of the vote, which was taken verbally, was nineteen in favour and eight against with one abstention. Mussolini did not seem to have any illusions about its meaning. He stated: 'You have plunged the régime into a state of crisis,' and he refused the traditional 'Salute to the Duce' when he closed the meeting after ten hours of dramatic discussion. It was 2.30 in the morning and July 25; what was he going to do?

This was only the first act. After all, an opposition group of nineteen people – even if important figures – was still not the whole party. One faithful supporter, Galbiati, the commander of the Fascist militia, suggested having the nineteen arrested – a few of them had taken fright and gone back on their vote – calling in the Germans under Himmler and moving the front back to the lower Alps; he produced this surprising formula: 'Just as France, by fighting on, will save the honour of the French, so a Mussolini movement will save the honour of the Italians.' Mussolini refused. In the afternoon he meekly answered the royal summons; he was therefore placing his fate in the hands of his King, who owed him so much and had always continued to show him friendship – even though he took a malicious pleasure in humiliating him by taking precedence over him when they were both present at official ceremonies.

Victor Emmanuel knew what had happened at the meeting of the Grand Council – Grandi had told Acquarone about it. He knew that from now on Mussolini was alone, abandoned by everyone and weary of everything, and that he could now strike at him without risk. To make himself look taller, this dwarf of a man put on military uniform for the occasion.



Mussolini trusted the King implicitly and came without any special protection; he had completely failed to grasp what was happening that day; he was not only paralysed but blind. The interview lasted twenty minutes. The King informed the Duce that he was dismissing him and replacing him by Badoglio – the Grand Council meeting had put him one day ahead of his schedule. Then, under the pretext of ensuring his safety he had him arrested in the Quirinal gardens by a captain of the *carabinieri*; the Duce meekly got into the car which left the Quirinal by a back exit while his escort was waiting calmly at the main gate, convinced that the King had invited his Prime Minister to stay to dinner. For his 'safety', Mussolini was to be imprisoned first in one of the Lipari Islands and then in a chalet in the Gran Sasso in the Apennines.

What were his followers going to do? At 11.30 Galbiati learned that the Duce was no longer in office, that Senise, who had previously been dismissed by him, had taken over again as Chief of Police and that Scorza, the party secretary, had fled. The chief of the militia summoned his friends and collaborators; only two of them suggested 'punitive action' which Galbiati brushed aside with the simple question: 'Against whom?' And without even trying to call together or even warn the members of the militia who were scattered around Rome, without appealing, as he had one moment thought of doing, to the armoured division of the militia, which was considered to be absolutely loyal to the Duce and was stationed some twenty miles from the capital, Galbiati meekly allowed Badoglio to oust him from his command. Fascism was well and truly dead.

For the nineteen it was a Day of Dupes. For Grandi, who thought that he was back in favour with the King and did not know that the latter had decided to call Badoglio, there was nothing to do but flee. Ciano did the same but had the unfortunate idea of taking refuge in Munich, right in the mouth of the German lion. Both men were doubtless afraid of bearing the brunt of the people's anger after the outburst of joy in the working-class districts of Rome at the announcement of Mussolini's fall. They had not collected their thirty silver pieces and several of the nineteen were going to pay for their betrayal with their lives.

The King had successfully brought off his palace conspiracy. But Italy was at war and it was no longer up to him to decide her fate; this depended on two formidable unknown quantities: how were the Germans going to react and what did the Allies want?

#### VI THE ITALIAN SURRENDER

Mussolini's fall was a great moral and political victory for the Allies; it had considerable symbolic significance – had not the Duce, the founder of

European Fascism, declared that the twentieth century would be Fascist? The Italian Resistance had achieved its objective; it was in the logic of events that Italy should once again become a democracy in which the political parties would alternate in power. But the King did not wish to move so quickly; he confined himself to freeing the anti-Fascists who had been imprisoned and to restoring the trade unions, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly. Badoglio formed a purely military ministry which could be no more than a caretaker government and bore no resemblance to the face of post-Fascist Italy; besides, its members had been instruments of the fallen régime.

On the military plane, Mussolini's fall brought no benefits, for the Allies failed to take advantage of it. In order to appease the Germans and gain time, Badoglio declared that the war would continue; he wanted to avoid any violent German reaction which would be impossible to fend off and 'back out' only once he was sure that the Allies would be able to land considerable forces and reach Rome first. So on August 6 in Tarvis, Guariglia, the new Foreign Minister, met Ribbentrop who made no secret of his anxiety – according to the interpreter Schmidt he was even afraid of being kidnapped. Unruffled, Guariglia gave his companion his word of honour that Italy was not negotiating with the Allies and was remaining on Germany's side; yet he knew quite well that it had been decided to send an Italian emissary, General Castellano, to Lisbon to 'contact' the Allies. He added, however, that Italy was at the end of her tether. Badoglio just as bravely gave the same reassurance to Kesselring.

But Hitler was not taken in. Even before the Feltre interview, in the course of a naval conference on July 17, he had not concealed his distrust with regard to 'undesirable Italian elements'; a sort of court martial, he said, would have to be set up in Italy. And he laid down what measures were to be taken if the worst should happen. He regarded the fate of his friend Mussolini as a personal insult. Without more ado the German troops replaced the Italians guarding the railways and bridges – a sign of how quickly they would intervene if the occasion arose; one Panzer division crossed the Brenner. Hitler had contemplated abandoning the south of Italy but the Allies' inactivity made him decide to hold on there.

Badoglio, however, had succeeded in gaining time. On August 5 secret negotiations with the Allies had begun in Sicily. On August 18 in Quebec, Churchill and Roosevelt had drawn up the Allies' policy and strategic plans with regard to the new Italian government; Eisenhower was to seize Corsica and Sardinia and secure air bases close to Rome and if possible beyond; but at the same time, paradoxically, units and boats were taken away from his command, the former for the great attack across the Channel and the latter for the Pacific. In these circumstances Eisenhower thought it impossible to achieve the objectives which he had been set.

On the diplomatic level, there was a difference of views between Americans and British. The Americans would have liked to leave Eisenhower a free hand to impose a military armistice on the Italians as he thought fit, in order to retain the possibility of securing their help and to ensure the most favourable conditions for landing on the peninsula. But the British, who agreed with the Soviets on this point, attached scarcely any importance to Italy's contribution to the Allied war effort; they wanted to inform Italy straightaway of the harsh punishment she deserved – the desire to secure control of the sea in the Mediterranean was not far from British minds.

They compromised. Eisenhower was to deliver a brief and strictly military text to the Italians. A second document consisting of forty-four articles and containing the political and economic terms would be communicated to the Italian negotiators in Malta on September 29; in the meantime the landing would have taken place and the Italians put to the test.

But in any case, whether long or short, the armistice was a *Diktat* in which the Italians had no say and which was presented to them on August 31 in the form of an ultimatum; it was take it or leave it. This was a blow for the King and the Badoglio government: they were being no better treated than Mussolini would have been; however, they submitted; they were hoping that the Allied landing would take place north of Rome and that the capital would be occupied by an airborne division. The Allied general staff insinuated that this would be the case; but it mistrusted these Italians who had changed sides so easily and refused to lift the veil on its intentions; yet it knew perfectly well that with the forces at its command, there was no hope of reaching Rome.

On September 3 the armistice was signed in Cassibile; the terms remained secret; they would not be disclosed until the day of the landing. The Italians thought they had several days in which to find their feet and make preparations; they hoped particularly to separate the Italian troops from the German troops who were around Rome and to take control of the airfields on which the expected Allied division would be dropped. And on September 8 the Allied general staff suddenly informed Badoglio that they would announce the armistice that very evening and invited him to do the same on his side. During the night the landing took place, but a long way from Rome, south of Naples, in Salerno.

It was obvious that the Allies had merely wished to avoid being fired on by the Italians, but they were in for a nasty shock, for they found the Germans forewarned and firmly ensconced. As for Badoglio's government, it was caught off-guard and as far as it was concerned the affair was a failure. It considered that it was in no position to defend Rome against the Germans, who occupied it immediately; Badoglio himself left for

Brindisi with the King. Worse still, on September 16 ss commando went to free Mussolini in the Gran Sasso: the *carabinieri* who were guarding the Duce let the planes land and the ss advance towards them without firing a shot. With German support Mussolini was to try to reunite the last followers of Fascism on the side of the Germans in a movement which he called 'Fascist, Republican and Revolutionary'. Italy was going to be ravaged by civil war.

Guariglia was not wrong to hold the Allies responsible for the failure of the Italian 'secession', and it quickly proved a total failure. The hundreds of thousands of Italian workmen who had gone to work in Germany became so many hostages; suspects were imprisoned; those presumed to be dangerous were confined in concentration camps.

Almost everywhere the Italian troops, demoralised and abandoned, allowed themselves to be disarmed and captured; in Toulon several thousand soldiers were made prisoner by a handful of German sailors. But on the Greek island of Cephalonia, the Italian units, when consulted by their leader, General Gandin, decided to break with the Axis; fighting broke out between the former allies, with the Germans gaining the advantage after seven days, thanks to their air superiority. All the Italian officers, including General Gandin, were massacred after they had surrendered; nearly 3,000 soldiers were packed on to pontoons in an area that was mined and died in the resulting explosions.

The hardest fighting took place in the Dodecanese. In Rhodes the 7,000 Germans, who were better armed and concentrated in a main striking force, overpowered 36,000 Italians, though not without a fight and not until after the Italian ships had left the island. On Leros the British were able to land 4,000 men; they were bombed without being able to defend themselves properly and in November they surrendered to enemy paratroopers. The British also sent small garrisons to Cos and Samos; they fared no better. The British were putting into practice their conception of peripheral strategy, hoping in this way to influence Turkey. But General Eisenhower was against using large forces; by the end of November 1943 all the Cyclades were occupied by the Germans; Campioni and Mascherpa, the two Italian admirals who were in command there, were handed over by the Germans to the special tribunal of the Fascist Republic, which sentenced them to death for desertion.

Only the Italian war fleet was able for the most part to escape from the Germans because as early as September 6 the admirals knew the clauses of the armistice and the part they were supposed to play; the large ships were ordered to go to Malta, the smaller ones to Palermo. The Germans captured a few units which were tied up in harbour, under construction or being repaired – 3 cruisers, 8 destroyers, 22 torpedo-boats and 10 submarines. Their aircraft attacked the large ships which had set out from La

Spezia and sank the battleship *Roma*. But the ships based at Taranto and Pola came into harbour safe and sound – that is to say, two 35,000-ton battleships, three 24,000-ton cruisers, 8 fast cruisers and 10 destroyers, in all 126 units, plus 90 merchant ships, one of which was a liner, 300,000 tons of shipping in all. Except for the cruisers, all these ships that had escaped were to be used by the Allies in the Atlantic.

Italy was too heavily committed in Hitler's war to withdraw from it without loss. For her, the armistice brought anything but peace; for eighteen months, throughout its length and breadth, the peninsula was to be the theatre of desperate fighting between the Allies and the Germans, but also between the Italians.

#### VII THE WAR IN THE ITALIAN PENINSULA

On the same day on which the armistice with Italy was made known, two divisions of the British Eighth Army had crossed the Straits of Messina under the protection of four battleships and 400 guns, which started firing as soon as they left the coasts of Sicily; they occupied Reggio and gained a foothold in Calabria. Other units landed in Taranto and advanced on Bari and Foggia.

But it was further to the north in Salerno that the main Allied effort took place, with General Clark's American Fifth Army; this spot had been chosen because it was at the limit of the radius of action of the fighter air force based in Sicily. In theory Clark should have found himself confronted only by Italian units which had been neutralised by the armistice; he was reckoning on having no difficulty in making his way to Naples – a large port which was vital for receiving supplies – and in cutting off the enemy's route to the heel and toe of Italy. But this time the Germans had detected the convoys at sea and had dug themselves in; the landing troops were greeted by a hail of gunfire and were counter-attacked before they had taken up their positions.

On the 10th Clark nevertheless captured Salerno; but on the 13th, because of the raids by the German Air Force based in Foggia, things had come to such a pass that he was almost compelled to re-embark; Admiral Cunningham's fleet had to come in very close to support him and commit the whole of his naval air force. However, the Germans had been tied down by the running sore of Salerno; they had withdrawn in the south and on September 27 the Eighth Army occupied the Foggia airfields – from where raids could be carried out on Austria and south Germany. On October 1 the Germans evacuated Naples.

Once again the attack had not been a surprise; but the Allies had had a little more practice in amphibious landing operations. In Tunisia and

Sicily, the commander of the ground troops had complained at the belated arrival of support from an air force which was not under his control and with which communications were rather unreliable. After the Salerno landing, where this lack of co-ordination could have been fatal, a first attempt towards a solution was made by bringing the Army and Navy headquarters closer together; this was developed further by placing a certain number of aircraft at the armies' immediate disposal but with most of them remaining under the overall command of the Air Force.

The successive stages in the tactical use of the Air Force had now been worked out: up to D-day-7 the attacks were concentrated on the enemy airfields in order to achieve mastery in the air; from D-day-6 to D-day-1 their aim was to isolate the area under attack and rain bombs upon the enemy positions; on D-day all the available air forces supported the landing units; a varying percentage wrecked the lines of communication leading to them. From D + 4 onwards only twenty per cent of the aircraft continued to support the landing; the rest were engaged in tasks required by the extension of operations.

The Italian campaign thus became a test for the crucial operation across the Channel; but in Italy itself the Allies were going to make slow progress because their plan was to attract and tie down as many German troops as they possibly could; and these troops were able to dig themselves in very skilfully on the mountain barriers and behind the deep valleys which had been cut by the rivers at right angles to the coast. The Allies had only two tactics to choose from: a frontal attack, which would not make the most of their tank superiority, or a landing behind the enemy lines; but the narrow beaches and steep coastline prevented them from deploying their troops in great numbers and breaking through. In both cases their advance was slow and very gradual. However, by October 14 the Fifth Army had captured Capua, established its lines on the Volturno some thirty miles north of Naples and joined hands with the British Eighth Army on its right. It was going to be a long, long way to Rome.

#### VIII THE LIBERATION OF CORSICA

The Germans had regrouped their troops at the crucial spot in order to meet the danger; as early as September 9 they had begun to evacuate Sardinia via Corsica and Leghorn. The French were not going to let a chance like this slip through their fingers.

In Corsica public opinion was unanimously against the Italians, who had had 80,000 men occupying the island since November 1942. The Corsicans did not consider themselves in the least as Italians and had no wish to become so. Fred Scamaroni, one of General de Gaulle's envoys, had been sent from London to work on this grist to the Resistance mill; he

had been arrested by OVRA and had either committed suicide in prison or else was tortured to death.

It was easier to help the Corsican Resistance from Algiers than from London, and General Giraud took over the task. The submarine *Casabianca* under Commander Lherminier, which had escaped from Toulon when the fleet had been scuttled, carried out several missions to put agents and weapons ashore. Without referring the matter to the French National Liberation Committee, since he considered it to be a military operation which depended on him alone, General Giraud armed only one Resistance organisation, the National Front, without realising that it was Communist-inspired. At the same time he had formed a 'shock battalion' under Commander Gambiez, as the advance guard of a French Army landing which he had asked General Juin to plan – without referring the matter to General Eisenhower and knowing full well that the latter did not want it.

On September 9 the National Front announced the Corsican uprising; it set up a Liberation Committee in Ajaccio; the Corsicans laid a few ambushes for the German troops who were retreating northwards from the south; they were obviously not very strong. It is true that the *Casabianca* had transported a few hundred men and that the 'shock battalion' was at the ready as early as September 14. But General Eisenhower refused to deplete the Allied pool of ships in order to transport to the island the expeditionary force which Giraud had placed under General Martin; he also refused to lend any aircraft.

The liberation of Corsica was therefore a purely French affair. The French troops arrived without any heavy equipment in merchant ships and also in warships – which, in the Allies' opinion, could have been put to better use by keeping watch on the area round Bastia in order to hinder the Germans' evacuation of the island. The latter had recaptured Bastia; they held the whole of the route across the plain; they had tanks. All that the *maquisards* and shock battalions could do was threaten them from the passes of the mountain ridge. One thing in their favour was the attitude of General Magli's Italian troops who, without attacking the Germans, helped the French by placing lorries, radio links, mules and ambulances at their disposal.

The landing troops advanced towards Bastia through the mountains, guided by the whole population; not until after September 24 were they supported by a few aircraft. The Germans were blocking the Golo valley and defending Bastia to protect their evacuation. Preparations were made to attack the town, with the French and Italians co-operating; the American air force then intervened at the last minute to make things easier – and destroyed Bastia just as the enemy was abandoning it; only the harbour was captured undamaged before demolition of it had begun.

The liberation of Corsica was only a minor feat of arms – the French lost 70 dead and 270 wounded. But it had considerable repercussions in France; the island had been liberated, symbolically, by the joint effort of internal resisters and French forces from outside; the BCRA immediately made it a base for sending agents to the south of France.

In Algiers this personal initiative on the part of General Giraud did not improve his relationship with General de Gaulle, even less so as, to everyone's surprise, Corsica, which before the war had had only a tiny minority of Communists, woke up to find that the National Front had given it provisional Communist municipal councils voted in by acclamation in the public squares. Communist propaganda used Corsica as an example of how a popular rising could be successful at very little cost.

On the military plane, thirteen airfields were equipped, and although the island had very few plains, and these were small ones, she became a springboard for air raids against northern Italy and Bavaria; she was also a base for the landings on the French Mediterranean coast.

Corsica, moreover, was not the only region in which the Italian armistice had helped the Allies. In Yugoslavia Tito's followers had seized many of the stores belonging to the Italian occupation troops; they thus grew into an army of more than 200,000 men; they had been joined by a few Italian units and many individual volunteers. Tito now felt that he was strong enough completely to overthrow Mihailović, whom the British decided to desert; in November 1943, in Jajce in Bosnia the second session of the Yugoslav Anti-Fascist Council decided that the future state of Yugoslavia would be a Socialist democracy organised on a federal basis; it conferred the title of Marshal on Tito and forbade King Peter II to return to his country until the people had made up its mind about his fate. The Yugoslav Resistance felt that it had come of age and acted accordingly.

From November 1943 the Italian troops were evacuated from Albania via Valona. There again Communist supporters had taken advantage of the fact that they had been disarmed and had enlisted a few of them in their ranks; it was the same in the Greek *maquis* with a few survivors from Cephalonia.

Italians were thus showing that they had not changed sides merely out of opportunism; they were taking up their positions on the battlefield itself. However, the situation in Italy had become too confused for any common line of conduct to be adopted throughout the country.

#### IX THE DIVISION OF ITALY

By the autumn of 1943 the whole of the southern part of Italy was clear of Germans. It was under Allied military control, but administered by the

legal Italian authorities: the King and Marshal Badoglio's government. Although this government had been reshuffled in November by the admission of civilians, it continued to consist of top-ranking officials and technical experts, without any representatives from the political parties. However, these parties had built up their strength again in the area and were asking to be admitted to the government; but they were pursuing their propaganda in the politically and socially least developed part of Italy and it was not fostered by the xenophobia and patriotism which the presence of the Germans aroused behind the front line. By definition there cannot be a Resistance in an area where there is no Occupation; Naples, moreover, was the only place where from September 27 to October 1 the people had revolted at the news that the Germans wanted to deport male adults and destroy the harbour. Nowhere else had any action been taken to prepare the ground for the Allied troops or make it easier for them to advance.

In these circumstances the Liberation Committees which had been set up by a coalition of anti-Fascist parties could take action only in internal politics; with varying degrees of enthusiasm they attacked the King and the government, whom they saw as the aftermath of Fascism; they thus made the impression of being revolutionary organisations in the eyes of the local population who had remained very much under the thumb of a conservative Church and over whom the big landowners had a great deal of influence. They also worried the Allies, particularly Churchill, who was anxious for Italy to remain a monarchy. Concerned above all to avoid disorder and ensure security, the Allied military command had formed a body of officers, 'the Allied Military Government of Occupied Territories' (AMGOT), which administered the territory and took care of the essential matter of supplies for the population. The Allies had drawn up a list of eminent Italians whom they considered to be deserving of a political role, but their choice was not always to the liking of the anti-Fascist parties.

Since the King and Badoglio were continually proclaiming their goodwill and giving increasing proof of it, they were gradually granted more and more actual power. On September 30, the Allies formally recognised the new Italian government's position as 'co-belligerent in the war against Germany'; and on October 13, 1943, this government declared war on Germany. How could it now be refused the attributes of a sovereign power? The Allies granted it permission to raise an army of limited strength, without, however, making any promise about Italy's future; and they allowed it to extend its powers equally to occupied Italy.

But in this region the government's departure had left room for the Resistance. Because of the presence of the Germans, the Resistance no longer confined itself to internal political action: its first objective, the

fall of Fascism, had been achieved; from now on it was fighting to liberate the country from foreign occupation; it thus resembled the other national Resistance movements of occupied Europe. The anti-Fascist leaders had remained in Rome and they formed the 'National Liberation Committee' under the chairmanship of Bonomi, representing the Action party, the Christian Democrats (Gasperi and Gronchi), the Socialists (Nenni and Saragat), the Workers (Ruini), the Liberals (Soleri) and the Communists (Amendola). Regional Liberation Committees were set up in all the occupied provinces.

The resisters had taken up the struggle against the occupier more or less everywhere; when the Germans had occupied Rome, fighting had broken out even in the city streets and civilians had taken part. In the Abruzzi, in Umbria, the Marches, the Ligurian Apennines and the Slovenian Carso, groups of supporters had been formed by disbanded soldiers and anti-Fascists freed from jail, joined by young men from the towns.

The National Liberation Committee could feel that it was representing the living forces of the country; moreover, it had its seat in the capital. On October 16, 1943, it demanded that the struggle be directed against the Germans and the Fascists; this was tantamount to calling for the King to step down and the dissolution of the Badoglio government. But the Allies did not see it in this light; they fully accepted help from an Italian Resistance but on condition that it restricted itself to military action which was in keeping with their views and did not encroach on the political sphere. They did not sympathise with the Liberation Committee's revolutionary designs and since they considered that it was itself illegal and had only the authority which it had arrogated to itself, they did not grant it recognition. In addition, they wanted the Resistance to confine itself to carrying out small acts of sabotage on their instructions and they distrusted a general uprising, which in their eyes was synonymous with weakness and anarchy.

The King and Badoglio also had no intention of giving up their authority; they created a 'Military Intelligence Service' (SMI) which was set up in the centre; in Rome itself an underground military group under Colonel Montezemolo continued to be attached to the regular Army and not to the Liberation Committee. Finally, the latter's prestige was diminished by the authority of the Holy See; the Pope was making great efforts to have supplies provided for the population. He gave refuge to many anti-Fascists who were being pursued. He intervened with the Allies to prevent the city from being bombed. The people were growing used to the idea of Rome being governed from the Vatican.

Thus although Bonomi was a judicious chairman and was attempting to reconcile all Italians, the National Liberation Committee was not the

major authority in the city, despite its title. Its counterpart in Upper Italy, which had its seat in Milan, was not at all the same sort of thing. True, it had the same structure as the one in Rome and in theory it agreed to take its orders from it; but the situation and social context were completely different.

Northern Italy was in fact the seat of the great Italian industrial centres. Here Communism and Socialism had long been firmly rooted. What they did could influence the masses, who followed them faithfully. Whereas the great Italian political movements, starting with the Risorgimento, had been the work of the bourgeoisie alone, for the first time workers, artisans and peasants became aware through and in the Resistance of the part they had to play.

This was going to make a tremendous difference to the Resistance. As far as the fighting was concerned it was going to be able to assert itself even in the cities, by means of mass demonstrations, acts of industrial sabotage, attacks on the enemy and strikes. But it did not limit its objectives merely to freeing territory; it had social and economic revolution in mind, the first stage of which was the struggle against the republican Fascists. In southern Italy the Resistance castigated the government; in Rome it claimed to be the government; in the north it was engaged in a patriotic and revolutionary civil war. It is true that the Liberation Committee of Upper Italy, whose authority extended as far as Florence, was joined by men of all views and from all walks of life; but it was not moderates like Bonomi who were in control of it but Communists and revolutionary intellectuals of the young Action party; and although some of the military continued to look to the Brindisi government, it was too far away to be able to govern effectively; and as for the Allies, at the end of 1943 they were preoccupied above all with their fighting in central Italy.

Thus not only did the Liberation Committee of Upper Italy become the leading wing of the Italian Resistance but it provided the framework for a vast revolutionary movement which was rousing the masses in Florence, Milan, Turin and Venice and laying the foundations for an Italy very different from the pre-war one, which in the south of the country continued to exist unchanged.

#### BOOK FOUR

## THE DEFEAT OF GERMANY