

Mussolini in Power

Errico Malatesta

1922

To crown a long series of crimes, fascism finally took over the government.

And Mussolini, the *Duce*, just to distinguish himself, began by treating the deputies in parliament as an insolent master would treat stupid and lazy servants.

Parliament, what was to be “the palladium of freedom”, has given its measure.

This makes us perfectly indifferent. Between a bully who insults and threatens, because he feels safe, and a host of cowards who seem to delight in their abjection, we don't have to choose. We simply note — and not without shame — what kind of people are those who dominate us and whose yoke we cannot escape.

But what is the significance, the scope and the probable result of this new way of coming to power in the name and service of the king, violating the constitution that the king had sworn to respect and defend?

Apart from the poses that would seem Napoleonic, and are instead nothing but operetta, when they are not acts of a brigand leader, we believe that nothing will have fundamentally changed, except that, for a certain time, there will be a greater police pressure against subversives and the workers. A new edition of Crispi and Pelloux. It is always the old story of the brigand who becomes a gendarme!

The bourgeoisie, threatened by the rising proletarian tide, unable to solve the urgent problems caused by the war, unable to defend itself with the traditional methods of legal repression, found itself lost and would have greeted with joy any military man who had declared himself dictator and drowned in blood any attempt to fight back. But in those moments, in the immediate postwar period, that was too dangerous, and could precipitate the revolution rather than break it down. In any case, the savior general did not come out, or only the parody did. Instead, adventurers came out who, not having found in the subversive parties sufficient field for their ambitions and appetites, thought of speculating on the fear of the bourgeoisie by offering them, for an adequate compensation, the aid of irregular forces which, if sure of impunity, could indulge in all excesses against workers without directly compromising the alleged beneficiaries of the violence committed. And the bourgeoisie accepted, urged and paid their services; the official government, or at least part of its agents, thought of providing them with weapons, helping them when they were about to get the worst of an attack, ensuring their impunity and preventively disarming those who were to be attacked.

The workers did not know how to oppose violence to violence, because they had been educated to believe in legality, and because, even when all illusions had become impossible and the arsons and assassinations multiplied under the benevolent gaze of authorities, the men they trusted preached them the patience, the calm, the beauty and wisdom of getting beaten “heroically” without resisting — and therefore they were defeated and offended in their possessions, persons, dignity and the most sacred affections.

Perhaps, when all the workers' institutions had been destroyed, the organizations disbanded, the men most disliked and considered most dangerous killed or imprisoned, or otherwise reduced to impotence, the bourgeoisie and the government wanted to put a stop to the new praetorian guards who now aspired to become the masters of those they had served. But it was too late. Fascists are now the strongest and intend to get paid for the services rendered... And the bourgeoisie will pay, naturally seeking to pay for itself on the shoulders of the proletariat.

In conclusion, increased misery, increased oppression.

As for us, we have only to continue our battle, always full of faith and enthusiasm.

We know that our path is sown with caltrops, but we chose it consciously and voluntarily, and we have no reason to abandon it. So let all those who have a sense of human dignity and compassion, and want to devote themselves to the struggle for the good of all, know that they must be prepared for all disappointments, all pains, all sacrifices.

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Because there is never a lack of those who let themselves be dazzled by appearances of strength, and always have a kind of secret admiration for whoever wins, there are also subversives who say that “fascists taught us how to make a revolution”.

No, fascists have taught us nothing at all.

They made the revolution, if one wants to call it so, with the permission of the superiors and in their service.

Betraying one's own friends, denying every day the ideas professed yesterday, if that suits one's advantage, putting oneself at the service of the bosses, ensuring the acquiescence of political and judicial authorities, having one's opponents disarmed by the carabinieri and then attacking them in ten to one, preparing militarily without need to hide, indeed receiving from the government weapons, means of transport and military items, and then being called by the king and putting oneself under the protection of God ... that's all stuff we could not and would not want to do. And that's all stuff that we had foreseen would happen the day the bourgeoisie felt seriously threatened.

Rather, the advent of fascism should serve as a lesson to legalitarian socialists, who believed, and alas! still believe, that the bourgeoisie can be overthrown by means of the votes of half plus one of the electors, and did not want to believe it when we told them that, if they ever reached a majority in parliament and wanted — just to make absurd assumptions — implement socialism from parliament, they would be kicked out in the butt!

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