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Why Fascism Won

Errico Malatesta

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Material force can prevail over moral force. It can even destroy the most refined civilization, if it doesn't know how to defend itself with appropriate means against the offensive returns of barbarism.

Any ferocious beast can rip a gentleman to shreds, even if he is a genius, a Galileo or a Leonardo, if he is naive enough to believe that he can curb the beast by showing it a work of art or announcing a scientific discovery.

But brutality hardly triumphs, and in all cases its successes have never been general and lasting, when it fails to achieve a certain moral consensus, when civilized men recognize it for what it is and, even if powerless to eradicate it, move away from it as a dirty and repugnant thing.

Fascism, which summarizes in itself all the reaction and calls back to life all the dormant atavistic ferocity, has won because it has had the financial support of the fat bourgeoisie and the material aid of the various governments who wanted to use it against the pressing proletarian threat; it won because it found against itself a tired mass, disappointed and made imbellic by a fifty-year-old parliamentary propaganda; but above all it won because its violence and crimes, although provoking hatred

and spirit of revenge in the offended, have not aroused that general reproach, that indignation, that moral horror that seemed to us should arise spontaneously in every gentle soul.

And unfortunately there will be no material fight back if there is no moral revolt first.

Let's say it frankly, no matter how painful it is to see. There are also fascists outside the Fascist party; there are some in all classes and parties: that is, there are people everywhere who, although not fascists, even anti-fascists, have a fascist soul, have the same desire of abuse that distinguishes the fascists.

We happen, for example, to meet men who call and believe themselves revolutionaries, and perhaps anarchists, who in order to resolve any question affirm with a proud frown that they will act *fascistically*, without knowing, or knowing too well, that this means attacking, without concern for justice, when one is sure of not being in danger, or because one is much stronger, or because one is armed against a defenseless person, or because one counts on many against only one, or because one has the protection of the public force, or because one knows that the victim is averse to denunciation — in short, it means acting as a *camorrista* and a policeman. Unfortunately it is true: one can act and often one acts *fascistically* without having to join the fascists; and it is certainly not those who act or propose to act in this way that can cause the moral revolt, the sense of disgust that will kill fascism.

And don't we see the men of the *Confederazione* [Confederation], D'Aragonese, Baldesi, Colombino, etc., licking the feet of the fascist rulers, and then continuing to be considered, even by political opponents, as gentlemen and noblemen?

These considerations, which we have made many times, came to our mind when reading an article in "*L'Etruria Nuova*" [*The New Etruria*] from Grosseto, which we were amazed to see complacently reproduced by "*La Voce Repubblicana*" [*The Republican Voice*] of August 22. It is an article by "its valiant director," the good Giuseppe Benci, the dean of republicans

of the strong Maremma (just to use the words of the "*Voce*" [Voice]), which seemed to us a document of moral baseness, which explains why the fascists were able to do in Maremma what they did.

The brigand exploits of the fascists in the unfortunate Maremma are known. There, more than anywhere else, they vented their evil passions. From the brutal murder to the bloody canings, from the fires and devastations to the petty tyrannies, the small harassments that humiliate, the insults that offend the sense of human dignity, they have committed everything without knowing limits, without respecting any of those feelings that, as well as being a condition of all civilized life, are the very basis of humanity inasmuch as it is distinct from the lowest bestiality.

And that proud republican from Maremma speaks to them in a humble tone and treats them as "people of faith," and begs for their tolerance and almost their friendship for the republicans, citing the patriotic merits of the republicans themselves.

He "admits that the government (*the fascist government*) has the right to guarantee the free development of its action" and suggests that when the Republicans come to power they will do more or less the same thing. And he protests that "no one will be able to admit that from here (from Grosseto) the republican party has attempted by any act to obstruct the experience of the dominant party" and boasts about "not having hindered the action of the government at all, even withdrawing from the electoral struggles to wait for the experiment to be accomplished." That is, to wait for the accomplishment of the experiment of domination over the entire Italy by those people who have tormented his Maremma.

If the state of mind of that Mr. Benci corresponded to the state of mind of republicans and the fate of the fascist government were to depend on them, Mussolini would be right when he says he will remain in power for thirty years. They could even remain for three hundred.