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# ITALY TO=DAY

BY

*Friends of Italian Freedom*

Outwitting the Fascists

By

EMILIO LUSSU

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MARCH, 1931

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Edited by MRS. V. M. CRAWFORD

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The author of the following narrative served as an officer throughout the whole of the war on the Austrian front in the famous Sassari Brigade. He was wounded twice and earned four decorations for acts of valour; later he was elected to the Chamber of Deputies both in 1921 and in 1924.

His narrative appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly*, June and July, 1930, and is reprinted here by the courtesy of the Editor of the American periodical.

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## OUTWITTING THE FASCISTS

By EMILIO LUSSU

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### Part I

#### A THOUSAND TO ONE

On the afternoon of October 31, 1926, an attempt was made in Bologna against the life of Mussolini. A few hours later, throughout the whole of Italy, the Fascists started to sack the headquarters of anti-Fascist newspapers and associations and the private dwellings of opponents of the régime.

That day I was at Cagliari, in the island of Sardinia. In the morning I had pleaded before the jury the cause of a young man accused of murder at the Court of Assizes, and my client was acquitted. Before returning to the mountain village where

he lived, he came to my house to thank me, accompanied by all his relations, who had come to Cagliari for the trial. On leaving, the eldest of them, an eighty-year-old patriarch, who was wearing the costume of the Sardinian mountaineers—coat of black wool, white linen trousers, and tight black gaiters—invoked, in Biblical phrases that I cannot recall without emotion, the blessing of Heaven upon me, the saviour of his innocent son. The clock of a neighbouring church struck half-past nine.

I had scarcely stepped out of my house when one of my friends appeared, breathless, to warn me that the Fascists were sounding their summons to battle. I locked my office and went out to see what was happening.

In the street another friend informed me that the news of an attempt against Mussolini had reached the Fascists and the Prefecture.

"I have been able secretly to obtain a copy of the telegram. The boy who fired at Mussolini at Bologna was lynched on the spot by the Fascists. Here they have been summoned for immediate reprisals. Your house and your life are in danger. Leave the town and hide yourself in some safe place."

While he spoke, from all sides could be heard the bugles summoning the Fascists together in the different quarters of the city.

I returned home, and sent the servant away. My mother, fortunately, was at our country house, and I had only myself to think of. I went downstairs again, and met in the street other friends who had hurried to warn me that the Fascists were gathering at their headquarters, that motors were to be used as rapid means of transport, and that shouts of "Death to Lussu!" were already to be heard.

I went to dine at a restaurant a few yards from my house. As I was eating, news reached me by degrees: the theatres, the cinemas, all public resorts had been closed; armed Fascist gangs were going about the streets; a punitive expedition against me was being organised at the Fascist headquarters; the leaders were exhorting the rank and file with inflammatory speeches; I was the appointed victim; in half an hour the work was to begin.

The waiter who attended me had served under me during the war. He had subsequently become a Fascist, but he could not forget his loyalty to his former officer. He was very much embarrassed that evening, and hardly dared to speak to me. Though he tried once or twice, I did not encourage him. Finally he said: "Signor Capitano, I know what orders have been given. I beg of you not to return home; leave here at once. It will only be a matter of a few days. Then everything will be normal once more."

"Do you think," I asked him, "that I am right or wrong?"

"You are right," he replied, reddening, and mechanically standing at attention in the military manner.

"Then why should I beat a retreat?"

My question embarrassed him still more. He did not reply. As I went away I said to him: "Why did you turn Fascist?"

"Things are so difficult. They made me many promises. . . . Who can live in opposition to the Fasci?"

"I live well enough," I retorted, and left him. But I had not told the truth. I could not honestly say that I lived well.

In a moment I was at home again. I occupied an apartment on the first floor, of which five windows faced the square. Next to me, on the same floor, lived an associate judge of the Court of Appeal, Cavalier Tanchis. I went to his door and rang the bell, wishing to appeal to his conscience as a judge in order that, whatever happened, he should bear witness to the violence used against me. Although he was at home, he made no sign of life; he was terrorised. In the upper floors of the building everything was silent. The occupants had hastened to seek refuge elsewhere.

The square, which was the most central one in the city, was deserted; houses, shops, all were closed. From afar came the strains of the Fascist songs.

Then I prepared to defend myself. I had a sporting rifle and two army revolvers—munitions enough. Two war trophies in the form of weighted clubs, taken from the Austrians, hung upon the wall.

The memory of many others who, during the last six years, had had their houses sacked, their families dispersed, flashed into my mind; of those who had been killed, unarmed, in their homes, under the eyes of their helpless wives and children, I remembered, and seemed to see before me, poor Pilati, my comrade in the war, in which he was wounded, and subsequently my colleague in Parliament; he had been murdered in his bed beside his wife. And I was conscious of immense and tragic compassion for my country.

Two young friends ran up the stairs and announced to me that a large column of Fascists were marching toward my house and demanding to lynch me. When I told them that I did not intend to escape, they offered to help in my defence. I had to force them to leave.

Hardly had the heavy door giving on to the street closed behind them when I heard my name threateningly shouted from the advancing column.

"Now for it," I said aloud. "One must set an example."

I half-closed the shutters and put out the light. I could thus see without being seen, and observe what was happening in the square, which was brilliantly lit.

In the street to the right of my house was the printing press of the Christian-Democratic newspaper, the *Corriere di Sardegna*. The Fascists invaded and sacked it.

Then it was the turn of the neighbouring office of the lawyer Raffaele Angius.

Angius came of humble family. His parents had suffered the most heroic privations to maintain him at his studies. He had gone through the whole of the war, and had greatly distinguished himself. As a lawyer he had laboriously built up for himself an excellent reputation, and his family owed their present ease to his work.

Furniture, books, legal documents, all were thrown into the street and burned. In a few minutes the Fascists destroyed, that evening, the work of a lifetime.

During the following days the lawyer's clients, in despair, went to demand their scattered documents. Angius left Cagliari, and died a year later at Milan, leaving his aged parents in poverty. He was scarcely thirty-five years old.

These two preliminary feats having been successfully carried out, the column turned toward my house.

"Down with Lussu! Death to Lussa!"

## II.

The column was commanded by the lawyer Giovanni Cao, Count di San Marco, a member of Parliament, and leader of the local Fascists. He had been a fellow student of mine at the University, and my companion during the whole of the war; afterward he had been a member of my own political party, and as a lawyer had worked in my office: he had been among my most affectionate friends up to the time of the March on Rome. After the March on Rome, however, being unable to resist both threats and flattery, he became a Fascist. I had to request him to leave my office, since my position as an adversary of Fascism made it impossible for us to continue to work together. He never spoke to me again. Nevertheless, I was surprised, that evening, to see him personally conducting the attack upon me.

I recognised others among the aggressors. One, a certain Baldussi, had become famous on account of other "punitive expeditions." He was known to me personally, for I had been his lawyer once when he was indicted as the author of a somewhat sensational theft. He appeared among the most eager against his former defender.

I was no less astonished at the presence of another, a man named Foix, from Cagliari. An organiser among the maritime workers, a syndicalist-anarchist, and violently anti-Fascist, he

had been many times attacked and arrested by the Fascists. When the Fascists occupied the headquarters of his organisation, he found it impossible to earn his living. He wanted to emigrate to France, and I gave him introductions to friends there, that he might find help and work. Before leaving he had come to my house to see me, and had talked with me at length of his difficulties and of his family, which consisted of a wife and three children, named Libertà, Spartaco, and Libero (Liberty, Spartacus, and Free). In despair at not finding work in France, he had returned to Cagliari and had joined the Fascio toward the end of September, thus being able to take over again the direction of his former organisation, now become a Fascist one. He excused himself to his former comrades by adducing the necessity of supporting his children, but he let it be understood that his syndicalist-anarchist faith remained unshaken.

I still wonder why he too, that evening, was demanding my lynching. I know that he has since changed the names of his children. It is not wholly improbable that in the future, when times have changed, he will rechristen them with their original names.

Probably I should have been able to identify other old acquaintances of the same kind had I had time to do so. But the street door had been broken in, and the staircase was filled with a shouting crowd up to the door of my apartment.

I had made arrangements for defence in the belief that the door would immediately give way. Instead, it held. Warned by me that I was waiting, armed, within, the Fascists, after their first efforts to break it down, thought perhaps that there was no necessity for any excess of zeal.

The column in the square thereupon divided into three. One part remained to support those who had invaded the staircase; a second began to scale the five balconies facing the square; and the third went to the back of the building and endeavoured to enter my apartment from a courtyard.

I had not foreseen such military strategy, and found myself in much embarrassment as to how to defend myself from three separate and simultaneous attacks. I was forced to go rapidly from one side to the other in order to be in time to confront the first to make a breach. I confess that I have found myself in more pleasant situations in the course of my life.

The yells in the square were demoniacal; the crowd was furiously inciting those who were making the assault upon the windows.

One balcony was reached. I fired at the first to appear, and the unfortunate man fell backwards into the square below.

Terror invaded the crowd. In a flash the square was deserted; not a soul remained on the staircase. Several times Count Cao attempted to reorganise the column and to lead it

again to the attack, but in vain. My house was as though bewitched.

Half an hour later the police turned up, followed by the Carabineers in large numbers. They stood guard over my house. Finally the Chief of Police appeared, together with many commissioners and the Colonel of the Carabineers.

When my house had been surrounded and the whole square occupied in a military manner, the Fascists slowly reappeared, at first silently, by ones and twos, then yelling and shouting, in a crowd. They had recovered their courage. The police did not interfere with them.

There came a blow at my door.

"Open, Onorevole!" It was the voice of the Chief of Police. "On my honour, on my family, on my children, I swear that I am here to defend you."

The rest all echoed in chorus: "Yes, we are all here to defend you!"

I explained to the Chief of Police, through the door, that I found myself in the unfortunate position of not being able to trust his word.

"If you wish to enter, do so. But I warn you that the light is out, and that my revolver is loaded. Enter only with your hands up."

"Impossible! A chief of police cannot enter with his hands up!" The poor man groaned and sighed.

"Very well, then, send a commissioner." And I suggested the name of one of those with him whose voice I had recognised.

"An excellent idea," said the Chief of Police. "Signor Commissario, you go."

I opened the door and let the victim in; then shut it once more and turned on the light. The Commissario was holding his hands up, pale and upset. I put down my revolver and told him not to be afraid.

He explained to me that they were come to arrest me. They really did intend to protect me from the Fascists; as a proof he adduced the large number of Carabineers that surrounded my house. He convinced me of his sincerity. Shortly after, I opened the door to the Chief of Police also.

This gentleman, somewhat embarrassed, communicated to me the order for my arrest. I opened the Penal Code, and read to him the part concerning legitimate defence and a state of necessity. I told him that it was the duty of the authorities to imprison the attackers, not the attacked; the violent invaders of a private dwelling, not the citizen exercising a right sanctioned by the law. But the Chief of Police explained to me that he had a painful, a very painful, duty to fulfil—that of arresting me. At the same time he anxiously observed that I should do well to remove myself from the lighted window,

right in front of which I was standing; some evilly disposed person might have a shot at me from the square, and the shot—though this he did not actually put into words—might make a mistake between myself and him.

Seeing that the penal law was no use, I appealed to constitutional law. I was a member of Parliament. Parliamentary immunity from arrest was laid down in the Statute, an immunity which members enjoyed while Parliament was in session. All in vain. The Chief of Police had a painful, a very painful, duty to perform.

I was handcuffed and conducted to prison by a squad of Carabineers.

The following day, acts of violence were continued in the city. All supporters of the opposition were arrested; Fascists sacked and destroyed their homes.

My house alone remained unscathed, protected by numerous cordons of Carabineers and even soldiers. This astonished me not a little. However, I understood the privileged treatment accorded me when I was reminded that my furniture and belongings were insured against damage committed for political reasons. The Insurance Society had lost no time in setting in motion all the authorities in order to avoid the looting of my home and the paying of the premium.

Those arrested remained only a few days in prison. On their liberation, the Chief of Police explained to them that he had deprived them of their freedom because their lives were in danger owing to excessive excitement on the part of the Fascists, and prison was the safest shelter for them. As a matter of fact, one of them, Dr. Sanna, had found a perfectly safe refuge for himself in the house of his mother-in-law, in a village one hundred and fifty miles from Cagliari, amid a devoted population that would have defended him from all aggression. The police considered this asylum insufficiently secure. They sent Carabineers and soldiers to arrest him, and brought him laden with chains to Cagliari. His father, years before, had been Under Secretary of State to the Ministry of Justice in a Democratic Cabinet, and this was a hereditary blemish to the discredit of the son.

The Government ordered that the funeral of the Fascist whom I had killed should be an imposing affair. All public employees, the pupils of the state schools, the Fascist Militia and members of all the provincial Fasci, representatives of the navy and the army, the entire magistrature, the Prefect, and the general commanding the Sardinian Army Division were all present. The dead man was compared, in the official speeches, to the martyrs of the Risorgimento. The population kept away from the ceremony.

The dead man's family received the pension accorded to

soldiers killed in war. At present a legion of Fascist Van-  
guards bears his name.

On the occasion of the opening of the juridical year, the  
Attorney-General for the province stigmatised, with inspired  
eloquence, "the detestable crime committed by a politician  
against a young man full of love for his country," and invoked  
exemplary justice on his behalf.

Count Cao di San Marco, the leader of the punitive expedi-  
tion against me, was shortly afterward nominated Under  
Secretary in the Ministry of Transport, as a reward for his good  
intentions in organising the enterprise, if not for its success.

### III.

Throughout the first night that I spent in prison, and for  
many succeeding nights, the Fascists passed to and fro outside  
singing insulting songs about me. They had certainly regained  
their self-confidence.

In the cell next that which I occupied there was an  
old acquaintance of mine. A few months previously  
he had killed his young wife and had entrusted to  
me his defence, but he insisted on basing this on the  
plea that his wife had been unfaithful to him, which  
was untrue. He was a pathological case, in whose unbalanced  
brain jealousy has become a fixed idea, leading him to  
crime. Unable to endorse his line of defence, I refused to  
take his case up, but he bore me no malice. It was he who,  
having been some time in prison and being acquainted with the  
habits of the place, informed the other prisoners of my arrival,  
by means of the mysterious systems which exist in prisons.  
The member of Parliament for Cagliari in prison! The  
prisoners were proud to be in such company. I had been the  
defender of many others among them—that is to say, for them  
I was the most outstanding personality in their world. What  
an undreamed-of surprise, to see one's own defending counsel  
ending in prison himself! Modesty apart, it was quite an  
historical event for the prisons of Cagliari.

The following morning, when I was taken to the open air  
for half an hour's exercise, I found my name written upon the  
walls together with good wishes toward me. One of these  
inscriptions read: "Long live Lussu!" It was signed: "The  
Amalgamated Society of Safe-Blowers!" This proof of  
popularity was most flattering to my vanity.

When I was once more in my cell, notes wrapped around  
pebbles were thrown with great skill through the bars of the  
window opening. They all said more or less the same thing:  
"Courage. If you have need of anything, we are here. Burn  
this at once."

The evening of November 1 the examining judge and the  
public prosecutor came to interrogate me. There were many  
expressions of grief at my situation. Both affirmed that it  
was a matter merely of formalities indispensable at this stage;  
the whole city had been a witness of the assault committed  
against me; my action had been legitimate; my liberation would  
be a question of a few days. Handshakes and renewed  
compliments.

I nominated as my defender a lawyer named Marcello, a  
personal friend of mine, and a teacher at the University. The  
following day, the second of November, Marcello was arrested.  
It was not a safe time for lawyers.

To avoid further trouble for Professor Marcello, I entrusted  
my defence instead to a young friend of mine named Calabresi,  
who was getting his training in my office. At the moment he  
was in Rome, and I therefore believed him safe from local  
ill-feeling and reprisals. I was mistaken. On his return  
journey to Cagliari, my friend heard in time that the Fascists  
were awaiting him at the station, and in order to avoid arrest  
he turned back. His house in Cagliari was sacked. He had  
to remain for a long time in hiding, now in Rome and now in  
Sardinia.

My cell, which was on the ground floor and measured three  
metres by two, was very cold, and badly lit by a small barred  
window which gave on a courtyard. A table, a chair, a fold-  
ing bed fixed to the wall, a straw mattress, and one or two  
other objects completed its equipment. When the door was  
opened, a strong draught was formed between it and the  
window, which during the winter was like an icy douche.

I was in the army during the whole of the war, and in the  
trenches I had ample opportunity for increasing my entomolog-  
ical knowledge. Nevertheless, a good many varieties of the  
insect race were as yet unknown to me. Those who do not  
specialise in natural science never come in contact with them.  
But they flourish in Italian prisons, and, although the Penal  
Code makes no reference to them, they constitute a very real  
augmentation to the prisoner's sufferings.

The prison rules allow those who are awaiting trial to  
obtain better cells upon payment. I applied for one, and my  
request was immediately attended to and complied with. On  
the door of my cell a placard was fixed bearing the words:  
"Paying Room"; but the cell remained the same. In  
deference to truth, however, I must admit that when my cell  
was thus promoted to the dignity of a paying one a woollen  
mattress, a washstand, a jug of water, and a tumbler were  
added to it.

Living for a year under these conditions, I fell a victim to  
bronchitis and pleurisy, although I had been in the best of  
health at the time of my imprisonment.

#### IV.

My case gave the local bench a great deal to do. Under Italian legal procedure, the inquiry into the facts of the case is made by an examining judge assisted by the public prosecutor. When the inquiry is finished, the Attorney-General for the province presents his conclusions—that is, proposes that the accused should be recognised as innocent or sent to public trial. A commission of three judges, called the Accusing Section, examines all the evidence and the proposal of the Attorney-General, and pronounces whether the accused is innocent or whether he is to stand trial by jury. In the latter case, the commission also formulates the charge to which the accused must reply. After this first sentence is passed, the public trial by jury takes place.

The inquiry into my case lasted till April, 1927—that is, five months—as though it were not a question of a public incident all the details of which could have been ascertained in a few hours! Meanwhile I remained in prison.

When the inquiry was concluded, the Attorney-General requested the commission to impeach me on a charge of intentional manslaughter, a crime punishable under the Italian Penal Code by from eighteen to twenty years' imprisonment. He deposed that I had acted with brutal malice, having "under the stress of ambition, and on seeing my hopes of political power shattered, basely committed murder."

The indignation of all honest people in Sardinia was tremendous. The father of the man I had killed refused to appear at the trial, and sent a message to me in prison to say that he grieved not only at having lost a son in a criminal enterprise, but also to see that in the name of his family a great injustice was being committed against me.

In May, 1927, the three judges of the Accusing Section pronounced sentence of acquittal for legitimate defence.

Before the sentence had been registered at the Chancery, and thus made effective, the Chief Justice in the province intervened to obtain its modification. One of the three judges refused to make any concession. The Chief Justice therefore, availing himself of a right accorded to him by law, himself took the place of this judge in the Accusing Section, and deposed that the sentence must be altered and that I must stand my trial according to the request of the Attorney-General. The other two judges resisted. After a fortnight of conflict, the two judges finally consented to modify the sentence, and decreed that I should be tried for "excess of defence," but they refused to alter the definition of the crime. "Excess of defence" constitutes attenuating circumstance and diminishes the penalty by two-thirds.

The Attorney-General was still dissatisfied. He appealed to the Court of Cassation, demanding that my sentence should be revoked and that I should appear before the Court of Assizes on a charge of intentional manslaughter. The Court of Cassation could not countenance such a flagrant act of injustice. It confined itself to annulling the sentence, and decreed that the case should come up again before the Court of Cagliari itself, to be re-examined by other judges.

This persecution levelled at me was so outrageous that it is said an influential personage in the Fascist Militia, General Zirano, in speaking about it to the Duce, expressed the opinion that the scandal was too great, and damaging to Fascism itself.

I am told that the Duce replied that I should be judged by impartial judges outside Sardinia, at Chieti in Abruzzo, and the General was dismissed from his post.

Had I been brought to trial at the Court of Assizes of Chieti, I should certainly have been sentenced to the maximum penalty. The Fascist Government tries all the most scandalous cases at Chieti. The Fascists who murdered the member of Parliament Signor Matteotti in June, 1924, were condemned to the minimum penalty by the jurors of Chieti in March, 1926. The Fascists who, during the night of October 3, 1925, in Florence, shot and killed the lawyer Ernesto Consolo under the eyes of his wife and children, and the ex-member of Parliament Pilade Pilati, surprising him in bed beside his wife, were acquitted by the jurors of Chieti in May, 1926.

My three new judges at Cagliari put up a really heroic resistance to the pressure brought to bear upon them by the Chief Justice. They acquitted me for legitimate defence, drew up the sentence, and had it immediately registered at the Chancery before the Chief Justice had time to intervene, as he had done the first time.

This example of courage I record in honour of the Italian bench, while so many judges, especially in its higher ranks, and beginning with the President of the Supreme Court, have entirely submitted to the will of the political power.

#### V.

As a result of my acquittal, I ought immediately to have been set at liberty. The order was, in fact, communicated to me in due course, but at the same time the prison authorities were ordered by the Prefect to keep me where I was, for political reasons which would be communicated to me at an opportune moment.

During these days I was suffering from a chronic high fever, and irritation of the bronchial tubes and the pleura obliged me to remain in bed. I was transferred from my cell to the infirmary, under increased supervision, for they were afraid that I should attempt to escape. They telephoned from the Prefecture even at night to make certain that I was still there.

After ten days I received a half sheet of typewritten paper, from which I learned that the Provincial Internment Commission had sentenced me to internment for five years, as a person "dangerous to the régime, a confirmed adversary, and one harmful to public peace." The Commission was careful to point out in a footnote that this decision had been taken by a unanimous vote—this unanimity being naturally of especial satisfaction to me!

I never had the pleasure of seeing my latest judges; I was never called to defend myself. They inflicted the maximum penalty upon me, and informed me of the fact by means of that half sheet of typewritten paper. That was all. The efficiency of the Fascist régime was undeniable.

There is such a commission in every province, which condemns the opponents of the dictatorship to the confino—that is, internment. Each commission is composed of five members: an attorney-general, an officer of the Carabinieri, an officer of the Fascist Militia, the chief of police of the Province, and the prefect, who presides. The political adversary is arrested, sent to prison, and kept there until the commission has decided his destiny—that is, until a piece of paper reaches him with the communication that he is to be set at liberty or sent to the confino.

The provincial internment commissions were originally set up on November 6, 1926, and I had been in prison since the end of October. Since the day on which the new law had come into force, I could not have committed any new misdemeanour, and was sentenced for activities which had taken place before the new law had been thought of. Not even a single day was allowed me in which to prove that I was not dangerous to the régime.

A police commissioner, who declared that he was sent by the Prefect himself, came to see me and told me with extreme courtesy that, in consideration of my state of health, I was to be allowed the exceptional privilege of choosing the place in which I wished to pass my five years of internment, provided that it was outside Sardinia. He spoke sincerely, and in perfect good faith. I realised it when, on leaving, he held out his hand and I did not give him mine; he was embarrassed, and reddened at the unexpected affront.

My medical certificates stated that sea air would be harmful to my health. Nevertheless, on the afternoon of November

16, 1927, the director of the prison informed me that I was to spend my five years of internment upon the island of Lipari, in the midst of sea air.

I was in bed with fever. The prison doctor declared it impossible to move me, and the prison regulations direct that if the doctor considers it harmful to a patient to move him, his removal must be postponed. During the whole evening, conversation on the telephone between the Prefecture and the prison authorities was continuous. The doctor was repeatedly pressed to change his opinion and not oppose my departure; the political authorities assumed the responsibility of any possible complications or consequences. One cannot deny that they had a certain courage. The doctor would not change his mind, however. Italy is full of these humble and unknown heroes who put their duty before all else.

At night another doctor came to see me, sent specially by the Prefect. He carefully examined my tongue four times, and treated with contempt the sister of charity who suggested an egg beaten up with Marsala for me. The following day, at twelve o'clock, I received the order to get up from my bed and to leave.

A closed motor awaited me in the prison yard. "The Chief of Police," said a police commissioner, "has ordered that you should go to the port by car, and not in the prison van."

I was moved by such kindness, and took my place between the Carabinieri. The city was in a state of siege; I saw nothing during the drive of half a mile except Carabinieri, police, and armed Fascist Militia. When we arrived at the port, the marshal of Carabinieri, to whom the prison authorities had consigned my money and papers, paid for the motor at my expense. My gratitude for the kindness of the Chief of Police became somewhat modified.

The port was deserted and all traffic was suspended. Sentinels and patrols were everywhere to be seen. As I went down toward a police boat, there sailed swiftly in before the breeze a fishing boat, which passed in front of me at a distance of a few yards. A young and sun-bronzed fisherman recognised me and understood what was happening. Springing upright upon the prow, he cried: "Viva Lussu! Long live Sardinia!" It was my island's farewell to me.

The patrols on the quay threw themselves upon the boat as it landed; I had barely time to see the fisherman surrounded by the armed throng and disappear.

Political prisoners travel as though they were common criminals. Handcuffed, without water to drink, foodless, they are conveyed in "cell carriages" by trains that stop every evening at a station to allow the prisoners to be given food and



to sleep in the "transit prisons," or else they are crowded in the hold of a steamer, beside the cattle.

In my state of health such a journey was literally impossible. They would have had to convey me on a stretcher. So I was permitted to travel second class, paying for my own ticket and for those of the Carabineers accompanying me.

## VI.

The journey from Cagliari to Trapani takes eighteen hours. The steamer was small, but the sea calm, and after a year in prison to find myself in the open air, on the sea, gave me a sense of exultation. Exultation and fever never left me.

From Trapani the same steamer took me to Palermo. The morning of November 18 we passed by the island of Ustica, where the worst and most incorrigible of the common criminals are interned. Among them there were at that time a large number of political prisoners. A few months before, one of them, Spartaco Stagnetti, had been killed by a common criminal, whom he had found in the act of stealing. General Bencivenga, who was General Cadorna's secretary during the war, and later, in 1925, was my colleague in the Chamber of Deputies and president of the Italian Press Association, was there until a few months ago; he is now on the island of Ponza.

We arrived at Palermo on the evening of the eighteenth. A police commissioner with his men awaited us, and he shouted with a voice which rivalled a megaphone: "Where is the arrested deputy? Where is the arrested deputy?"

The people on the quay stopped. The spectacle of an arrested member of Parliament was not one to be seen every day.

"Where is he?" "Which is he?" "What has he done?" "Is he the one from the bank?" "He'll have put the money in some safe place." "What bank?" "What money?" "Who is he, then?"

"Political police!" shouted the commissioner.

The crowd became mute.

"We understand," said a voice, lost in the throng.

I made my way through the respectful crowd. As the steamer, by reason of the rough weather encountered during the last hours of the journey, had arrived very late, the Carabineers conducted me straight to the railway station. I was thus spared the torment, of which all the interned speak with horror, of remaining for a certain time in the prison of Palermo, which is the most frightful of all the prisons in Italy.

I travelled by train from Palermo to Milazzo, where I arrived late at night. The prison was at some distance, and I should have had to reach it on foot; but I had a high fever,

and obtained permission from the Carabineers to pass the night in one of the rooms at the station.

Some railwaymen were clearing up the room, which had just been used for a *Dopolavoro* (a kind of night school) ceremony. There had been a small party and a lecture. When I entered, the men were grumbling at having had to pay five lire a head for two bottles of syrup and a worthless lecture. All wore the Fascist badge, and gave the Carabineers the Roman salute.

I did not speak until one of them asked me who I was. When they knew my name, they gathered round me, prepared me a sofa with cushions to lie on, and offered me hot coffee. Then came confidences. Mussolini should disguise himself as a political prisoner in order to learn what his railway employees think of him personally and of his régime.

The next morning, with as much circumspection as if they were handing me a bomb, they offered me a small bunch of flowers.

I boarded the ship for Lipari. With me was being conducted a woman who had with her a baby two years old. She was worn out with suffering, but the baby was fat and rosy. The woman told me her story.

"I am the wife of Sergio di Modugno. He fled to France, because the Fascists never left him alone. He wanted me and the child to join him, and he went over and over again to the Italian consulate in Paris to ask for our passport. They put him off from one week to another; they kept him for hours at a time waiting for an answer, and then told him to return another day. This went on for six months, and finally he lost his head. He fired at the consul and killed him. I knew nothing of it. How should I know what my husband was doing in Paris? They arrested me with my child and are sending me to Lipari for five years. For a month I have been sent from one prison to another. Do you know anything of my husband?"

She continued to tell me of all that she had endured. Of what use to speak of it here?

At last we came to the *Æolian Islands*. There was Lipari, the queen of the archipelago. From a distance it is enchantingly beautiful. To the east, Stromboli, with its smoking volcano, stands out against Calabria, like a sentinel. To the south-west the little island of Vulcano guards the way to Milazzo.

Lipari appeared much larger than the other islands. The sun was shining upon a long line of mountains behind the little city by the sea.

I landed, handcuffed with a double chain.

"This is a place to get out of as soon as possible," I thought as I stepped ashore.

It was my first thought. Other considerations came later.

## Part II THE FLIGHT FROM LIPARI

### I.

When I landed on Lipari, the director of the colony did not address a single word to me, but stood with bent head, as though ashamed of my situation and his office. My handcuffs were removed and I was given a booklet containing the regulations in force. The Carabineers who had accompanied me from Cagliari to Lipari appeared glad that their mission was accomplished; they had treated me with much kindness.

The director took charge of my money, leaving me three hundred lire. When this was gone I could draw the rest, little by little, giving each time an account of how it had been spent.

On leaving the director's office, I found friends who had been awaiting my arrival. Just as in prison, everything is known at the internment camp; news travels by mysterious ways and spreads swiftly. There were waiting to greet me with open arms a group of exiled members of Parliament; Beltrami, deputy for Como; Morea, deputy for Fabriano; Basso, deputy for Venice; Volpi, deputy for Rome; Picelli, deputy for Parma; Repposi, deputy for Milan; Rabazzana, deputy for Turin; Grossi, deputy from the Romagna, Benotti, deputy for Genoa. These were difficult times for members of Parliament! The lawyer Domizio Torrigiani, Grand Master of the Freemasons, also took part in the reception. For Freemasonry, too, the times were none too easy.

We quickly exchanged accounts of our different careers. It was pointed out to me at once that I was closely followed by plain-clothes men. This exceptional measure was applied only to Torrigiani and myself. Mussolini was afraid that international Freemasonry would abduct Torrigiani from Lipari; he was ignorant of the fact that Freemasonry is not a maritime power. No armoured lodge ever came to carry Torrigiani away from the Mediterranean. The discovery that I too was being treated as a person of international importance flattered me not a little.

To be constantly shadowed seems a matter of little moment. It is, however, extremely irritating and painful. One's nerves have to be pretty sound to prevent one from becoming neurotic. To leave one's house, and to be followed; to approach a friend, and to be followed; to speak, and to be overheard; to stop, and know that the other too has stopped; to enter a café, a shop, a house, and always see the same face at the door; not to be able to smile, not to be able to shake hands with a

passer-by, without your shadow taking note of it—all this becomes an oppression, a burden.

How many times, day and night, when in my own room I believed myself free at last of patrols and watchers, have I found myself face to face with my "shadow," who had made his way in to make sure of my presence indoors!

The surveillance was so vexatious that many of my friends advised me to complain. But where could one lodge a protest? The agents were carrying out superior orders, and were only doing their duty. The orders came from Rome; I should have had to appeal to the Duce, in his capacity as Minister of the Interior. I have always thought no spectacle more humiliating than that of impotence protesting. I refused to complain, and comforted myself with the thought that one fine day they would come to find me and I should not be there.

Accompanied always by my escort, I explored my new dominion, and made the acquaintance of all the others interned there. The zone beyond which we were not allowed to go was confined to about one square mile.

There were over five hundred people interned on Lipari, of whom about four hundred were political prisoners from all parts of Italy and belonging to all parties.

Among the hundred or so who were not political prisoners many figured as members of that party to which the authorities of their province thought well to ascribe them. A number of workmen from the Lazio and the Romagna, arrested for hostility toward Fascism but not belonging to any party, were officially assigned half to the communist party and half to the anarchist. Twenty citizens of Monterotondo (near Rome) were deported to Lipari for having attended the funeral of a workman well known as a socialist. Among them were two women—one the mother of five children, the other of three. They had never concerned themselves with politics, and had attended the funeral simply because they were relatives of the dead man. The police designated them all as the "Monterotondo communist group," and sent them to Lipari. A man who has set up a small shop for selling flowers, fruit, and fowls on the island was sent there because the police sergeant of his town passed him off as a communist, though the man himself has no idea what communism means. But the sergeant was his wife's lover. So the man says, and so say all his acquaintances, and everyone believes it.

Then, too, the brother of the boy Zamboni, who was lynched at Bologna for having made an attempt on Mussolini's life, had never been concerned in politics. He was doing his military service at Milan at the time of the attempt, but he was tried by the Special Tribunal for the Defence of the State, together with his father and his aunt. The latter were sentenced to thirty years' imprisonment because twenty years previously

they had been active in the anarchist movement. The brother was acquitted, there being no evidence against him, but he was sent to Lipari for five years. His only fault was that of belonging to his family. What is most dreadful is that there is a general conviction in Italy that young Zamboni was innocent and that the attempt against the Duce was simulated.

Others in Lipari had been sent there, like Zamboni, by the Special tribunal. This exceptional court, formed not of regular judges but of officers of the Fascist Militia, almost always sentences to prison, as a matter of course. If, however, the accused person is acquitted, it is a regular thing for him to be sent to the islands. The mere fact of having appeared before the Special Tribunal makes him a danger to the régime.

A group of young men—lawyers, teachers, and engineers—were denounced to the Special Tribunal for having endeavoured to form a secret society with the aim of reviving parliamentary institutions in Italy. The Tribunal intended to condemn them all, with or without proofs of their guilt, but several senators and ex-ministers were implicated in the affair and to avoid too glaring a scandal the Tribunal acquitted them, and the police sent them to the internment camp.

The others on Lipari were common criminals—dishonest doctors and midwives, usurers, and the like. Besides them there was a small band of dissident Fascists—individuals who, having been too unruly or loquacious, had been removed by the political authorities in their districts for fear of their upsetting discipline. They committed the crime of revealing party secrets, and paid for the indiscretion by internment. Some of them had been sent to the internment camp as *agents provocateurs* and spies. The political prisoners despised and avoided them.

In 1928, the news spread in Italy that one of these dissident Fascists, Amerigo Dumini, had been put to death in prison. He was the leader of the gang that murdered Matteotti, but got off at his trial with only a few months more of imprisonment still to be served. Once free, he had the ill-fated idea of making allusions to the Duce's complicity in the crime, and was condemned to prison for fourteen months for disparaging the Prime Minister. Having served this new sentence, he was given a concession of land in Somaliland by the Government, on condition that he should make no further appearance in Italy. Not finding the life of a farmer in Africa to his taste, he returned to Italy and was arrested at Naples on landing, since when no more has been heard of him. A man who came to Lipari from the island of Tremiti, nowever, assured us that Dumini was by no means dead, but interned on that island, guarded night and day by police agents.

The mail of the interned is always opened, censored, and

often confiscated. In this matter the police are implacable. The friends who correspond with the political prisoners have their names added to the lists of political suspects, and have no further peace. I therefore never wrote to anyone except my mother, or friends who, being already interned or imprisoned on other islands, had nothing to lose. To send letters except through the police is to incur the risk of imprisonment up to six months.

The five hundred people interned on Lipari are guarded by four hundred officers and men of the Fascist Militia, the Carabineers, the police, and the naval guards. In so small a space, the guards are thus to be seen on every hand. On the confines of the area reserved to the interned are stationary and flying patrols. The Fascist Militia is on guard day and night on the ramparts of the Castle, which is an old citadel containing the prisons, the Militia barracks, and rooms for the interned. A motor boat equipped with a gun, *mitrailleuse*, and wireless, three racing motor boats, and six oil-driven ships control the sea, and in the Castle there is wireless communication with the naval bases of Messina, Palermo and Trapani.

The political prisoners are the real colony at Lipari. Brought together by the same fate, they lead the same life. The Government offers them free lodging together in large rooms in the Castle, but even the poorest undergo every privation to be able to live in a little room of their own, however squalid. It is permitted to rent apartments in the town, provided they are within the special zone. The Government allows each interned person ten lire a day, and the large majority have to procure food, lodging, clothes, light and water with this sum. Water is brought to the island in summer by tank ships. Very few of the interned can avail themselves of private means or financial help from relatives, and very few can find work in the place—only one or two mechanics, shoemakers, tailors and masons. About a hundred have been permitted to have their wives and children with them; in such cases the whole family lives as best it can on the ten lire a day.

The interned are not allowed to receive monetary assistance except from their own families; anyone helping them without being a member of the family commits a political crime and may be tried as a "subversive" and opponent to the régime. The Republican Baldazzi of Rome was condemned to five years' imprisonment for having sent a sum of money to the sister of Lucetti, who, in September, 1926, made an attempt against Mussolini's life.

The interned therefore have to help one another as best they can, and secretly. It is a life of wretched poverty, endured with dignity. Certain of the poorest families apply to the Ministry of the Interior to ask either for work or for monetary help. Now and then a subsidy of a few hundred

lire is allowed them, and when this happens the newspapers announce the fact under the title, "The Duce's Generosity."

## II.

The crowd of five hundred men, unable to work, found relief in walking, talking, and reading.

Torrigiani, who suffered from incipient blindness and had to read as little as possible, became the king of the streets, and was known as "the talker." By walking up and down the same street of five hundred yards in length, I am certain he did not cover less than twenty-five miles a day. Around him there was always a confused crowd, moving in all directions.

The regulations state that "it is forbidden to talk of politics," on penalty of imprisonment up to six months. And what else should political prisoners talk of? Of everything. Even of politics, provided the terminology is appropriate. When they speak of politics they have recourse to every metaphor to be found in treatises of rhetoric. It is quite possible to talk of Fascism for hours on end, for instance, without ever mentioning it by name. If you are a novice, you require some enlightenment; but after a little practice you will have learned the art.

I believed at first that my friends were discussing the growing of shellfish; instead they were referring to the Monarchy. For the King a terminology hardly flattering is reserved, and for the Duce (to speak disrespectfully of whom is to incur imprisonment up to three years) an infinitely richer and more highly coloured nomenclature is used. By means of this veiled language the most dangerous subjects can be touched on.

All the same, if the police should come and stand within a yard of you, you would do well to talk of something else.

All branches of human knowledge had a place in our discussions. Torrigiani, who had specialised in philosophy, would range from the *Summa* of Saint Thomas Aquinas, the expression of the mediæval spirit, to the pragmatism of William James, a product of modern industrial mechanism. With Torrigiani these two subjects provided material enough for a millennium of history and twenty miles of road.

The most scrupulous of the police agents intervened one day and inquired, in the name of the law, who Signor James was, and where he lived. It was explained that he was a most respectable person, who did not concern himself with politics, and that not one of us knew whether he was alive or dead. The policeman made a note of the fact and referred the matter to his superiors to make inquiries.

When Torrigiani obtained permission to be transferred, still under special surveillance, to a clinic near Viterbo, on account of his increasingly bad eye trouble, peripatetic philosophy lost many of its disciples on Lipari.

According to their different vocations, the interned have divided themselves into groups, among the most important being the historians, the literati, and the spiritualists, each group with its own leader and its own adventures.

To the historians only a few centuries are allowed as field for research. The interned had collected together, at their own expense, a small but well-selected library, but one fine day an inspection ordered from Rome discovered in it many things dangerous to the régime. Hundreds of volumes were confiscated: all the volumes on the French Revolution and the Russian Revolution; all those that contained the word "revolution" in their titles; all the Russian literature, including Turgenev, Tolstoy, and Chekhov; all freethinking writers, among them Voltaire, Mazzini, and even Anatole France. Bernard Shaw was religiously respected, but it was a bad moment for his admirers. The historical group was not a little disconcerted by this incident, and recovered from the crisis by turning, almost en masse, to archæological studies.

Nearly all of the spiritualist group ended in prison, because they were surprised in "doubtful attitude" around a table. This was expressly forbidden by the regulations. It is difficult to explain what a "doubtful attitude" is, according to the regulations, but it incurs six months of imprisonment. In this particular case, however, the spiritualists were able to demonstrate the legality of their attitude and got off with three days in the prisons of the Castle.

The group of literati is made up of the men quietest in character, but it had the most violent discussions. It produces many poets who comment in verse upon the incidents, both sad and gay, of the colony. As always happens with art, the contemporaries have little appreciation for works of genius, and only posterity will render justice to the misunderstood masterpieces.

In the evening, when the bugles of the Castle sounded the retreat, each man would shut himself into his own dwelling, and in solitude think over the day that he had passed. Very unalluring was the prospect then of five years of such a petty life.

On the whole, I cannot say that the Militia made the surveillance worse by actual provocation, but small vexations were not lacking. There was one serious case. A certain Del Moro was constantly being made the victim of the jibes of the Militia; wherever he went, he was stopped and insulted. One day he lost patience and struck the captain of the Militia in public, knocking him down, whereupon he was arrested and

horribly knocked about. We learned a few months later that he died in a madhouse in Sicily, although he was a man perfectly normal mentally and of exceptional physical fitness. His family was not informed of his death, and wrote to us for information concerning him.

After this incident the demeanour of the Fascists became less arrogant, but not a week passed without someone being arrested upon some futile excuse or other. When a motive was lacking, one was invented.

Christmas of 1927 was approaching, and the colony was preparing to celebrate it; Christmas trees and presents for the children were ready. Suddenly a warship arrived one night. There was general astonishment at this unusual occurrence. Two hundred Carabinieri, Fascist Militia, officers, and police commissioners landed, together with the public prosecutor of the Special Tribunal. Two hundred and fifty of the interned were arrested during the night and taken to the Castle and the next day the town appeared in a state of siege. The arrested men were all interrogated during the following day, and late at night two hundred of them were set at liberty. Only then was the mystery explained. A "plot" against the safety of the State had been miraculously frustrated: four hundred political prisoners, closely guarded on an island, had endangered the security of the State!

The fifty most under suspicion were taken on board the man-o'-war next day. Squads of them, handcuffed and chained together, were marched through the town, and the rest of the interned were forbidden to see them off or to approach the quay. But the atmosphere was electric; all defied the order and thronged toward the wharf, and the cordon of armed police was powerless to prevent them. It was the first collective revolt against superior orders on the island.

When the fifty arrested men boarded the boats which were to carry them to the warship, one of them, raising his hat with his fettered hands, cried with a loud voice: "Long live liberty!" A great chorus echoed his cry, from the boats, from the quay, from the houses, from the street. Silence followed this unexpected acclamation. The cordons of armed men raised their rifles, and the sinister metallic sound of the clicking of triggers was heard. Pale, and with an unsteady voice, a police officer ordered: "Back with you, in the name of the law!" Everyone remained motionless and silent.

A tragedy seemed imminent. Only the half-suppressed weeping of some women and children broke the stillness. But the officer did not give the order to fire. The ship left with our friends, and the crowd slowly dispersed.

After a year the Special Tribunal closed the case against these fifty men by acquitting them all. Two spies had brought accusations against them in the hope of reward, but the impos-

ture was too flagrant. After their year in prison, the fifty took up once more their life of internment.

Following upon these arrests, the co-operative eating houses which the interned had organised for the sake of economy were suppressed, together with the classes at which they took turns teaching various subjects, and the small sports clubs. Life became harder.

Two men, above all others, I came to know, admire, and love during my internment: Carlo Rosselli and Ferruccio Parri.

Carlo Rosselli comes of a family of patriots; Giuseppe Mazzini died in the house of his grandparents at Pisa in 1872. At thirty years of age, Rosselli is a veteran of anti-Fascism. His house in Florence was sacked by the Fascists in July, 1925, and a few months later he was assaulted, unarmed, at Genoa, while on his way to lecture at his school. In the spring of 1926, when the opposition newspapers were everywhere being suppressed and their editors and their staffs imprisoned, Rosselli had the audacity to found an anti-Fascist weekly. In order to devote all his time to this he resigned his post as teacher of political economy at the School of Economics at Genoa. During the night of October 31, 1926, reprisals took place in Milan, as at Cagliari and other towns in Italy, and Rosselli's house in Milan sheltered several of the men who were being sought by the Fascists. His paper was suppressed in November, 1926, together with all the other opposition papers that had resisted up to that time. In December, 1926, he organised the escape from Italy of Filippo Turati, the leader of the Reformist (right-wing) Socialist Party.

Ferruccio Parri was a young teacher of history in the secondary schools before the war, during which he was wounded twice and received four decorations for valour on the field of battle. He ended with the rank of staff major, having begun the campaign as a second lieutenant. He then joined the staff of the great Milanese daily, the *Corriere della Sera*, where he remained till the Fascists succeeded in getting rid of the editor, Senator Albertini. Then Parri, who had no other means or income, resigned. He was not a socialist; in England he would have been a follower of Mr. Baldwin; but he was indignant at the treatment meted out to the socialists, and he co-operated with Rosselli in organising the flight of Turati.

The two "accomplices" were arrested for this "crime." At the trial, which took place at Savona in September, 1927, instead of defending themselves they took up the attitude of accusers. They reasserted their right to save from the fury of the Fascists their seventy-year-old friend, who had dedicated his life to the service of his country. In the most dramatic moments it seemed as though Rosselli himself had become the president of the Tribunal which had to try him.

Parri declared that after what he had seen in the last few years he had a desire to tear off all the decorations he had won in the war and fling them in the face of the Dictator. A voice from the people cried: "Bravo!" It was Parri's old father. The accused were condemned to ten months' imprisonment, followed by five years of internment.

To find myself with these two men on Lipari was compensation enough in my eyes for all my misfortunes; they were the personification of generosity, unselfishness, and daring.

### III.

I mixed little with the others who were interned on Lipari. I intended to escape, and from the first day I had to regulate my life with this end in view. No one interned on the island had ever succeeded in escaping, and what was difficult for the others was more than ever difficult for me, subjected as I was to special supervision.

A week after my arrival I picked out two spots on the coast within the zone reserved for us. Approach to the sea was intercepted by steep cliffs. No one ever attempted to break his neck by descending those precipices; and even if one had reached the sea, what could one have done? It was impossible to get away, because these two points were visible to the guards all along the coast. In consequence, the police wisely kept no sentinels in these places, but confined themselves to watching the access to them. Therefore I concluded, once reached, it was from here alone that escape could be attempted.

I went to live in a house a few hundred yards from both points. Should it be necessary to give up the idea of one, the other would still remain. I could escape from the house by way of the neighbouring roofs in four different directions, and there was also a high terrace giving on to the sea. This choice subsequently proved to have been an excellent one.

I accustomed myself to leaving the house only twice a day—at noon, for exactly half an hour, and in the afternoon at five in the winter, and seven in the summer, for exactly one hour. If the weather was bad, as it often was in winter, I did not go out. I kept strictly to this schedule for a year and a half, and no one ever saw me outside my house at any other time. My friends used to say that the inhabitants of Lipari set their watches by my outings, as the people of Königsberg did by the walks of Immanuel Kant. I thus obtained two results: first, I was regarded as a man who for no reason in the world would change his life of study and his habit of sticking to a certain schedule; secondly, my guards came to think of me as a poor invalid who was afraid above all things of taking cold.

On my walks I always went the same way, along the principal and longest street of the town and on along the beach crowded with boats. The police considered this spot best adapted for an escape, and therefore made it an object of especial vigilance. Their suspicions were further aroused by my long pauses here, and they trebled the guards. But the place I had chosen for an attempt was in precisely the opposite direction.

Two weeks after my arrival I had already settled upon a plan of escape with two friends. It was to take place on Christmas night; I thought that at that time the surveillance would be less strict. As one of these friends of mine is now in Italy, I cannot divulge the details of our plan, which would have been relatively easy, swift, and audacious; but it fell through, owing to two unforeseen events. One of the friends, who was indispensable to the undertaking, was arrested for the "plot" of the two hundred and fifty, of which I have already spoken, and I had a return of my pleurisy; on Christmas night my temperature was over a hundred degrees. News of my death reached the Fascists of my city, and they made great celebrations.

My illness prevented my flight for the moment, but it made it more easy for the future. Everyone was now convinced that I was a physical wreck, and I alone knew what reserves of strength I could count on. The watch upon me slackened. While I was forced to remain in bed, the police used to come to see how my malady was prospering, to be sure; but on the other hand my bedroom was the undisturbed scene of new plans of escape. Many times the doctor found me with a map of the Mediterranean in my hand, only to attribute my obsession for the sea to my longing for my own island home. Many times I fell asleep upon the lines which I had traced between Lipari, Milazzo, and the Straits of Messina.

When my illness was at its worst, in January, 1928, Carlo Rosselli was brought to Lipari. The first time that we were alone together we discovered that we had the same idea—to escape. We took two others into our confidence—Francesco Fausto Nitti and another whom I will call Caio.

Nitti is a Southern Italian, and a nephew of the former Prime Minister. In December, 1926, he was condemned to five years' internment on suspicion of having wished to form a secret anti-Fascist society; but his chief fault was that of bearing, without apparent embarrassment, the name of one of the men most hated by Mussolini. He belongs to the Italian Methodist Church, of which his father is one of the leaders.

Of Caio I will only say that he was to have been one of my companions in the escape which had already failed.

We undertook, on our honour, not to reveal our intentions

to a living soul; in these matters confidences are the worst of dangers. For an Italian to be silent is, as a rule, somewhat difficult. But we kept our word. No one had the slightest suspicion of our intentions.

We thought of taking Parri into our enterprise. Who more worthy than he? But he had with him his wife and child, he was always unwell, his parents were old, and other family circumstances forced him to remain in Italy. He could not take part in the attempt. We held a small council of war and decided to tell him nothing.

In the spring of 1928, Professor Salvemini succeeded in getting in touch with us from abroad. For Salvemini, Mussolini reserves a hatred without quarter, and the professor, it must be said in justification of the Duce, certainly does his best to deserve it. To the list of all his other "crimes" against the régime he thus added that of concerning himself with us, and in helping us he was able to rely on three of his trusted friends, one of whom acted admirably as chief of staff in the enterprise.

Given this external help, we abandoned all our former plans. The one intended for the previous Christmas was no longer possible; the others presented various difficulties of a complicated kind. We directed all our efforts towards the realisation of the scheme our friends from afar were proposing.

Our plan was very simple: to throw ourselves into the sea at one of the two points I have designated, which were not watched, and to get picked up by a boat coming from the open sea.

The sun, disappearing at sunset behind the heights which dominate the city and the port to the west, left the latter in deep shadow, and from land nothing could be seen of what was happening a few hundred yards away on the sea. The two points I have mentioned were precisely within this area of shadow. We ascertained this by making innumerable observations, and checking them carefully one with another.

The zone remained in darkness only when, in the place of the sun, there was no moon to light it. It followed that the only time suitable for the undertaking would be the week after full moon, in which the moon did not rise from the sea until after sunset.

But after sunset we were obliged to retire into our houses, at seven o'clock from November to February, at eight in March, April, September, and October, and at nine from May to August. Half an hour later began the visits of inspection—that is, the rounds made from house to house in order to ascertain that everybody was indoors. To be seen in the streets after that hour was to be sent straight off to the Castle. The only time during the whole twenty-four hours that was suitable

for the escape, therefore, was the half-hour between the disappearance of the sun behind the hills and the visit of inspection. The boat that was to take us off would have to arrive in the port of Lipari from the open sea neither before nor after that half-hour. Should it arrive before, it would be seen; if it arrived after, it would be too late for an opportune escape.

There was also the danger of the motor boats on guard, whose ways we studied carefully and reported to our friends. The boat which was to come and take us off must have a speed of at least twenty miles an hour; the motor boats which might follow us would attain at the most eighteen miles. Only if we had half an hour's advantage could we become unreachable and a difficult target for the machine gun, but we could count on this half-hour even if our escape were discovered immediately, for a certain interval of orders, counter-orders, and disorder was inevitable between the discovery and the pursuit.

The friends who came to fetch us would carry arms and munitions with them; if we were attacked, we should defend ourselves. Chance or luck would in any case have to play its part.

The plan was perfect; and, in fact, it succeeded. But it succeeded a year later. The first attempts failed.

#### IV.

In March, 1928, I resumed my daily walks at fixed times, but they were shorter, as I was convalescing from my illness. In public I always appeared muffled up to the ears, but at home I accustomed myself by means of cold douches to the long immersion in the sea which was to be an indispensable part of the new plan of escape. We hoped to get away in June.

In May four prisoners escaped from the Castle, hoping to take ship for Calabria. But their confederates failed them, and the fugitives remained on the island hiding in the country. The whole garrison was in arms; motor boats and sailing boats searched the seas; flying squads beat up the island in every direction. After a day, two of the fugitives were recaptured, and shortly afterwards the other two; the four unfortunate men paid for their temerity with imprisonment. After this the nocturnal visits became more frequent, and the surveillance on the island more intense.

As soon as the police heard of the escape, the detectives rushed into my house; I was held under great suspicion. But my undeviating walks lulled their misgivings.

During June, July, August, September, and October, our plans fell through. Each time, on the appointed day, some diabolic obstacle intervened. All our plans had to be remade,

and a new and favourable phase of the moon awaited. My terrace became an observatory, and I learned to know all the constellations. How slowly pass the phases of the moon!

One night Nitti and Caio carried out a reconnaissance in the neighbourhood of the first of the two points which we had selected for our departure. They only just avoided being discovered. We were afraid that the suspicions of the police had been aroused, so we changed our plans and chose the other point.

In September another prisoner attempted to escape. He secured a canoe, hoping to reach Sicily, a distance of thirty miles. A very strong swimmer, he relied largely on his powers of resistance, even if the canoe should fail him; but he had not taken into account the currents of the Straits of Milazzo and Messina. After a few hundred yards the canoe capsized, and the current forced him to return to the island. The alarm had already been given; it was impossible for him to return to the colony, and he disappeared into the bush. They searched in vain for a month. One night he plunged into the sea, and reached a German steamship laden with pumice stone. Climbing up by the chain of the bow anchor, crushing his chest in the ascent, he reached cover; but the captain did not dare to harbour him, and handed him over to the Fascists. He was condemned to three years' imprisonment in addition to the five years' internment.

The surveillance became closer than ever.

Our nerves were on edge, for on November 17 another attempt was to be made. We were due to meet our rescuers at 6.30 p.m., and by different routes we all reached our rendezvous. Owing to my change of attire, I slipped through my guards without being recognised, and the others were not suspected. We threw ourselves into the water and swam a hundred and fifty yards. The water was icy and the sea rough; the weather was as bad as it could be. We stayed in the water for over half an hour with only our heads above the surface, diving whenever a suspicious sound made us fear discovery. I never as a rule take spirits, but I was obliged to swallow brandy to resist the cold. We waited for half an hour.

Our rescuers did not come. What a disappointment! We returned in silence, profoundly discouraged. The bugles from the Castle had already sounded, and a few minutes later the control watch passed our house. In spite of our misfortune we could still consider ourselves lucky, for neither detectives nor prisoners knew anything about the attempt. We passed a despairing night, however; a whole year of waiting had ended miserably in failure.

The following morning we took every precaution to hide or account for the bruises and cuts we had received on the rocks.

Rosselli had a black eye and looked like a defeated boxer; Nitti had a bruised hand; I had grazed my face, and had a cut on my left hand which took two months to heal. But I was none the worse for my icy dip.

Two days later, as had been arranged, we made another attempt, but we had little hope. Nevertheless we tried. Nitti and Caio went into the water, but Rosselli and I waited on the shore for the prearranged signal, for it was both useless and dangerous for us to expose ourselves when the chances of success were so small. This time, too, our luck was out.

If we had exercised more discrimination we should have realised that during those ill-starred days a storm such as had not been experienced for many years was raging in the Mediterranean. The violence of the sea was too much for a small boat. To those who were prepared during those days to risk life and liberty for us we shall remain eternally grateful, even though fortune did not smile upon their efforts.

The fair-weather season had passed, and the winter winds had taken possession of the Straits. We were obliged to give up all hope of escape for months. The usual surveillance went on, the usual schedule, the usual miserable life.

Caio finished his sentence that winter and returned to Italy. He volunteered to pass the frontier secretly, to organise another attempt, and to come himself to fetch us. No one knew as well as he our anxiety, the difficulty of the undertaking, and the geography of the place. He made this offer, so fraught with risk, very simply. He and the pilot of the motor boat are the real heroes of our enterprise.

When Caio returned home he was put in prison twice as a suspect, the suspicion being based upon his previous internment, which in turn had been the result of earlier suspicions. He did not wait to be arrested a third time, but passed the frontier.

To get secretly across the Italian frontier to-day is as difficult an undertaking as to get unseen into the strong room of a bank. Those found violating the law of expatriation are condemned to anything up to six years' imprisonment, if they escape being shot in the act by the Black Shirts who guard the frontier.

We arranged to make our next attempt in June, 1929, and beguiled the time in making other plans in case this one also failed.

On the appointed evening—no longer four, but three in number—we retraced our steps of November, 1928. We entered the water, swam out, waited vainly. Complete failure.

"It is written in the book of Fate," said Nitti, dripping wet, "that we shall die on this island or in prison. It is a brilliant career; why should we change it? I protest against



this absurd obsession to die free. I shall not take another step. I refuse to become mad."

We learned afterwards that the motor boat had broken down en route. We had arranged with Caio to make a renewed attempt on July 27.

On the morning of the 27th, Rosselli came round to our house. Nitti was there. Rosselli related a dream he had had.

"I do not remember where I was——"

"In prison," interrupted Nitti, gloomily.

"Suddenly a lion with a mane leaped out of a shell."

"Africa!" I cried, joyfully. "That means Africa!"

"The mane was an extremely fine one. Suddenly, while I stood cleaning my nails with the broadsword of a Marshal of France——"

"It was really a Marshal of France?"

"Yes, without doubt a Marshal of France."

"Excellent! From Africa to France. Second step."

"While I was cleaning my nails," he went on, "I found myself playing roulette."

"Roulette!" I interrupted again. "Paris—third step."

It is all very well to smile, but, given desperate straits, even a dream will reawaken hope.

I took my two walks as usual; I saw my guards and the little world of the prisoners. Rosselli was profuse in his salutations of the authorities. Nitti was gloomier than ever.

At sunset Rosselli and Nitti walked across the central square discussing philosophic problems like good, law-abiding prisoners; then they separated. Once back in my rooms, I disguised myself in a second; and the detectives who ordinarily knew me a mile off, did not recognise me again this time. We arrived late at our rendezvous, for both Rosselli and I had found the patrols blocking our way. Rosselli had risked arrest.

The sea was exceedingly calm when we plunged in. There was nothing but darkness and silence. Then, suddenly, scarcely perceptible at first, there came across the water the throb of an engine, and a motor boat drew near. The signal given was ours and Caio was in the bow, but we did not exchange a single word. One after the other, by means of a rope ladder, we climbed on board. Describing a narrow circle, we shot away, leaving behind us a white, shining path on a sea as smooth as oil.

With doused lights the motor boat passed rapidly through a fleet of fishing vessels. We changed our dripping clothes for others which our friends had provided; dressed as sailors, we took up our duties on board. As the motor boat slid

forward, Nitti passed up petrol tins to Rosselli, who kept the tank filled; I pierced the empty tins with a knife and threw them into the water. These were our instructions. The pierced tins filled at once and sank, leaving no trace to assist pursuit.

Soon the moon rose. For many hours there was still a possibility of being overtaken. But little by little, as the engine drank up the petrol, the lightened craft increased her speed, and after a time all chance of pursuit was left behind.

There remained only the danger of being intercepted from one of the naval bases along our route, warned by wireless of our escape. From dawn until 8 a.m. we lived in constant fear of this; glasses were passed from hand to hand, and the horizon scanned. Only the dark, silhouette of a ship appeared afar off; we altered our course and disappeared from its view.

Finally, blurred by mists, the longed-for land was sighted. Danger, anxiety, and suffering were forgotten in the joy of victory. The tiny band of prisoners threw discipline and discretion to the winds and gave themselves up to unbridled rejoicing over their hard-won freedom.



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