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Europe, after the collapse of Italy.

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EUROPE, AFTER THE COLLAPSE OF ITALY

The fall of

Italy's ~~collapse~~, as any major development in history, has various aspects and implications. I do not feel qualified to gauge and analyze the strategic consequences of Marshal Badoglio's unconditional surrender; our responsible and expert leaders may decide if, or to what extent, the Italian disaster is apt to influence, or to facilitate, our operations against Hitler's Fortress. What can be understood by anybody, however -- and what may turn out to be the most significant result of Italy's moral and military ~~fall~~ ^{collapse} -- is the psychological effect it will inevitably have on the other nations of Europe.

We must not forget that Italy is the country in which Fascism was first established -- indeed, where the very idea of Fascism was originally conceived and then materialized. Hitler started his career by aping Mussolini. In the early days of Nazism, the German pupil imitated -- consciously and consistently -- the gestures and the tactics of his Roman master. True, the more powerful Hitler grew, the more pitiful became Mussolini. His prestige may have dwindled, during the past few years. Still, he remained the grand old man of Fascism -- the Founding Father, so to speak, of the unholy movement. ~~His eclipse signals and guarantees the imminent end of his fellow-dictators.~~

No wonder, then, that Hitler is sincerely and deeply grieved by what he called "the undignified and shameful treatment" of this "greatest son of the Italian soil since the fall of the ^{old} Roman empire." The speech in which the Nazi boss thus praised and pitied his bankrupt Italian colleague, was indeed a most revealing piece of oratory: exceptionally short - somehow breathless - , and remarkably sombre -- echoing, as it were, all

kinds of sinister forebodings and apprehensions. Happily, there were also humorous touches. The Fuehrer was very funny when he declared -- unsmilingly, so it seems -- that he has "not learned to change his opinions from case to case and to deny his friendships." That's a good one, indeed! -- coming from the man who is for years in the habit, not only of breaking pacts and betraying principles, but also of murdering his friends and followers, as soon as they become inconvenient to him. Captain Roehm, Gregor Strasser, and other victims of Hitler's "loyalty", would surely have a good laugh, if they could hear their ^{friend} ~~pal~~ and murderer boast of his faithful friendship.

~~However~~, On the whole, however, the tenor of Hitler's pronouncement was definitely on the dreary side. No doubt, he realized that the same kind of misfortune now experienced by Signor Mussolini may be in store for him too. And when Hitler's day comes, there will be no foolhardy paratroops to kidnap him to temporary safety, as it ^{allegedly} happened to Mussolini. When the Fuehrer falls, he is doomed -- hopelessly, definitely.

He is doomed, even now. The collapse of Fascism anticipates and prepares the end of Nazism. The peoples of occupied Europe -- including the ~~E~~ Germans themselves --, who witness now the Duce's tragedy, cannot but draw certain conclusions from so pathetic and ~~so~~ astonishing a spectacle. They see that it is possible to get rid of a dictator. It can be done! -- in fact, it doesn't even seem difficult. What a discovery! What a comfort! It must be tremendously encouraging to the subjugated men and women, from Helsinki to Athens, from Warsaw to Marseilles. Especially in the Latin countries -- in France, Spain, and Portugal -- the popular reaction is likely to be sweeping and profound.

Of course, it is essential to realize, and to keep in mind, that the Italian surrender is not due primarily to a spontaneous upheaval of the Italian people but to our military superiority. The columnist Raymond Clapper was completely right when he pointed out, in a recent article: "Mussolini was not overthrown until after Sicily was invaded and the Allied victory there was an imminent certainty. Whatever the Allies were able to do with psychological warfare to facilitate his overthrow gained its effectiveness because of the background of military force which was being brought to bear."

It would be a dangerous mistake to think that Mussolini might have fallen anyway -- even if our armies in Tunisia and Sicily had been less courageous and less efficient than they actually were. But it would be equally erroneous to believe that his collapse could have been brought about in so short a time, if it had not been for the war-weariness, the anti-German feelings, indeed, the latent anti-Fascism of the Italian people.

We will conquer Germany, not mainly in virtue of any psychological appeals, but mainly thanks to our, and our ~~2~~ allies', military strength and brave determination. But our victory will be decisively speeded and facilitated by the moral and material support we may expect from the European nations -- first from the present victims of Nazi occupation, and in the end maybe even from the more reasonable elements among the misguided Germans.

What has happened in Italy -- or what is happening there, at this very moment -- may prove to us that the European peoples are potentially our allies, and it may prove to those suffering, exasperated peoples that we know how to fight, and that we fight as their friends.

September 14, 1943

The terrible battle still raging around Salerno, the ~~hard struggle~~ ^{fight} in Italy against the Nazis ~~inadequately~~ ^{proves} how formidable Hitler's armies still are. It will be a tough job to link them,

and it may take longer than many of us would like to believe.