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Stalin and the “Democratization” of the Badoglio Regime

STALIN INTERVENES TO SAVE BADOGLIO Stalinism has completely unmasked its counter-revolutionary visage in Italy. Two closely linked moves mark the Kremlin’s direct and forcible intervention against the Italian revolution. First came the recognition of Badoglio and the House of Savoy. This paved the way, under Stalinist auspices, for the “reconstitution” of Badoglio’s utterly reactionary government through the inclusion of the representatives of the six parties comprising the so-called Committee of Liberation, otherwise known as the “democratic” bloc, or Junta. For the Kremlin, these are only preparatory steps in a general offensive against the revolutionary masses. An integral part of the plan is to clear the way for the untrammelled operations of the GPU murder squads on Italian soil. Stalin hopes to assassinate the Socialist revolution in Italy as he did in Spain.

These are desperate measures to meet a desperate situation. That there is apprehension in the Kremlin over the Italian developments is clearly evident from a long article which appeared in **Izvestia** on March 30. This article states flatly that: “It is well known by now that the moral and economic situation in southern Italy is disastrous.” (**Daily Worker**, April 1.)

The situation is no doubt disastrous so far as the plight of the masses is concerned. But this is not what **Izvestia** has in mind.

By its entire record the Stalinist bureaucracy has long ago revealed that the only disasters to which it is sensitive are those that threaten its own interests and privileges.

WHAT **IZVESTIA** REALLY FEARS After pointing out that “matters in Italy have clearly run into a ‘cul de sac’,” **Izvestia** goes on to conclude that the existing situation is leading “Italy to an exhaustion of forces and threatens to ruin her.” Here we already come to the nature of the “disaster” that is alarming the Kremlin. On the lips of the Stalinists Italy’s “ruin” means one thing and one thing only – the triumph of the proletarian revolution. It ought to be noted that **Izvestia**’s words are an eloquent confirmation of the fact that the revolutionary crisis in Italy has yet to reach its peak.

No less noteworthy is the Kremlin’s estimate of the effect of Allied policies. **Izvestia** attacks Churchill’s plan of letting the “situation stew” and insists that this “only deepens the crisis instead of solving it.” The same thing is true of the AMG. According to **Izvestia**: “The rule of the Allied Military Government ... has done more harm than good.”

What about the resources of the Italian ruling class? Here, too, **Izvestia** paints a dismal picture. There is no one to cope with the crisis. In its opinion: “Neither the Badoglio government nor the Committee of Liberation by themselves can solve it.”

The situation in Italy must indeed be critical – for capitalism – if the official organ of the Stalinist government becomes so outspoken about it. There can be no question about it: mortal fear of the revolution has spurred Stalin into action. He hopes to achieve the “solution” of the Italian

crisis by amalgamating the two bankrupt combinations which represent the forces of capitalist reaction; and by utilizing the “united” cabinet, with Stalinists in government posts, to provide the GPU with a most convenient facade for its operations. Those who spread the slightest illusion about the role of Stalinism or the “reconstituted” Badoglio government are guilty of aiding the bitterest enemies of the Italian people.

CHURCHILL’S INTERVENTION IN FAVOR OF THE MONARCHY The Kremlin’s actions came at a time when the opposition to Badoglio was reaching new heights. On February 22, only a few weeks before Stalin’s intervention in favor of the King, Churchill declared in the House of Commons that the monarchy constituted the “only legitimate government” of Italy. This declaration of the Tory chief provoked such anger and indignation that the parties of the “democratic” Junta were compelled to head the movement of protest. They first called for a general strike in Naples and then, after reducing it to a token demonstration of 10 minutes, called it off, under Allied pressure; but they did hold a public meeting.

On March 11, the day after the Naples protest demonstration and in the midst of the great general strikes against the Nazis in northern Italy, the Kremlin announced its recognition of Badoglio. This timing was deliberate. In order to intensify the surprise and the confusion, Moscow confined itself in the beginning to semi-official explanations, pretending that nothing more than a diplomatic technicality was involved. On March 24 the **New York Times** reported that what Stalin had in mind was “establishing direct contact with that (Badoglio) government rather than actually according it diplomatic recognition.”

GPU’S HIRELINGS CAUGHT UNAWARES The hirelings of the Kremlin – who are never consulted or informed on really important shifts of policy – were everywhere caught completely unawares. While the negotiations with Badoglio were being consummated, the Stalinists in Italy, as well as in England and this country, continued to attack Badoglio and the King.

Even after the news of Stalin’s recognition of Badoglio was released, the Stalinists denied they would therewith alter their policy. In this country, the **Daily Worker** swore on March 15 that Moscow’s action “in no way affects the desire ... to dispose of it (the Badoglio regime) fundamentally.” Italian Stalinist leaders went even further. According to dispatches from Naples:

“Eugenio Reale, secretary of Italian CP, said the action would have no effect on the party’s opposition to Marshal Badoglio and its demand for the abdication of King Victor Emmanuel.” (**New York Times**, March 14.)

C.L. Sulzberger cabled on the next day from Naples that:

“Communist Party leaders here announced that they would intensify their efforts to overthrow King Victor Emmanuel and Marshal Badoglio’s government.”

Sulzberger went on to specify that Paolo Tedeschi, leader of the Italian Communist Party, had publicly issued a pledge to “agitate more strongly” against the universally hated King and his

Marshal.

HOW THE “DEMOCRATS” ALL FOLLOWED SUIT Needless to say, these contemptible flunkies reversed themselves swiftly enough. Moscow made doubly sure by rushing one of its most notorious CPU agents Palmieri Togliatti, alias Ercoli, to the scene. The flip-flop of the liberals, “democrats” and “socialists” in Italy was no less sudden and abject than that of the Stalinists. The colleagues of this shabby crew in this country forget to mention this trifle. By placing the entire blame on the Kremlin, they seek to exonerate the despicable role of all the six parties who have played the game of opposition to Badoglio and the King since the downfall of Mussolini. No, these gentlemen will not succeed in hiding their own crimes behind the crimes of the Kremlin. They will deceive very few, least of all in Italy.

Nothing could be more fraudulent than the claim that the Badoglio government has been “democratized.” Its character has not been altered in any essential way by the inclusion of the Stalinists, the liberals and the Social Democrats. It has been reinforced in this way in order to enable it to continue to deprive the people of their elementary democratic rights and to prevent them from organizing a government of their own choosing. The caricature of a “People’s Front” is nothing but a cloak for a regime which remains a police and military dictatorship, resting on Allied bayonets, and now to be propped up also by the pistols of the GPU.

The Badoglio regime emerged as it did after the downfall of Mussolini not out of choice but of necessity: the years of fascist rule had destroyed all the other traditional mechanisms and levers of capitalist rule.

THE ROLE OF “COALITIONS” In the heyday of capitalism a shift of ministers or cabinets was of little moment to the bourgeoisie. As a matter of fact such shifts became the customary means of enabling the ruling class to extricate itself from untenable positions. By the middle of the nineteenth century, after the 1848 revolutions, the bourgeoisie elaborated a special technique of ministerial shifts as a means of duping, dividing and weakening the workers. This device is the so-called “coalition” government, that is, a cabinet consisting of members of the bourgeoisie and renegade working class leaders. For decades the “socialist” leaders of France, Germany and other European countries have provided in this way a convenient cover for the capitalists, enabling them to surmount one crisis after another. After the overthrow of Czarism, the Russian bourgeoisie tried to save itself through just such a trick – a coalition with the SR’s and the Mensheviks. Kerensky’s provisional government was a “People’s Front” in its classic form. Kerensky and the Mensheviks actually wielded the state power – in the interests of the Russian bourgeoisie. Stalin subsequently repeated this abysmal treachery of the “People’s Fronts” in the period prior to the outbreak of the second World War (France, Spain).

The “People’s Front” concocted in Italy is a miserable caricature of the classic form. Badoglio and the King remain in the saddle; the “coalition” members are impotent captives.

We see expressed here the progressive decay of the capitalist system which has been enormously speeded up by the war. The arena for political maneuvers, already greatly restricted in the pre-war period, has been still further narrowed down. The experience in Italy has already shown that in countries subjected to fascist rule ministerial shifts are in and of themselves pregnant with the

gravest political consequences. Far from surmounting a crisis thereby, the capitalist class may find itself facing the abyss. The Italian capitalists hoped to stave off a catastrophe by sacrificing Mussolini and a few other figureheads; instead of subsiding the revolution thereupon sent its billows throughout the entire land. What would Badoglio's removal entail? Or the abolition of the monarchy?

A NAKEDNESS THAT MUST BE COVERED The urgent need of maintaining the *status quo* politically, poses all the more urgently the need of a cover. If any regime in history ever needed a cover it is that of Badoglio and Victor Emmanuel who because of their direct association for twenty years with Mussolini stand all too nakedly exposed before the masses. Virtually from the beginning, Badoglio has dangled cabinet posts before the parties of the "opposition" in order to secure at least a semblance of "coalition." It is no secret that such negotiations were in progress long before Stalin's intervention. Even **Izvestia** acknowledges that Badoglio and the King had "on more than one occasion stated their readiness to include new elements capable of uniting the progressive forces of Italy." (**Daily Worker**, April 1) Hitherto these overtures have been rejected only because of the fear that individuals and parties accepting such posts would immediately lose all credit with the people. Today the "progressive forces" hope to escape the consequences of their actions by mutual support and mutual amnesty. Just the reverse will happen.

IT IS SUPPLIED BY THE KREMLIN Stalin utilized the prestige of the Soviet Union and the victories of the Red Army to constitute the caricature coalition which now masks the reactionary and impotent regime of Badoglio. If the Italian events have demonstrated anything at all, it is the complete corruption and bankruptcy of bourgeois democracy. Nine months of AMG's rule in Italy have driven this lesson home to the masses in the country. The reactionary role of Churchill and Roosevelt, especially through their support of Badoglio and the King, is no longer a secret to them. They are now receiving their direct lessons about the true nature not only of Stalinism but also of the domestic brand of capitalist "democracy." At one stroke all the parties in the camp of capitalism have revealed their true nature. The road has been cleared for a rapid political education of the masses and the consolidation of the working class vanguard in a genuine revolutionary party.

ALL THE PROBLEMS REMAIN UNSOLVED The Badoglio regime is doomed. Italy has long been bankrupt. Inflation, the terms of the Allied armistice and the turning of the country into a major battlefield are completing its economic ruin. The Italian people want and need bread and peace. The "reconstituted" Badoglio regime can offer them only more starvation and further slaughter. Every one of the six parties capitulating to Badoglio is compromised by its open betrayal of the Italian people.

There is only one force in Italy and throughout the world that is really progressive and capable of solving the unpostponable problems confronting mankind. That force is the working class united under the banner of the Trotskyist party and its program of the socialist revolution. In the interval between the two world wars many favorable revolutionary situations were lost for lack of a revolutionary party and program. This cardinal lesson of the past has not been forgotten by millions of Italian workers who, we are confident, will build such a party in the days ahead.