

# CURRENT MAGAZINES

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## THE CIANO DIARIES

### A STUDY IN TEMPERAMENT

**The Ciano Diaries**—Mr. Vincent Sheean, in the *Saturday Review of Literature*.

**Fascism's Survival Power**—Editorial, in *Il Mondo*.

**The Ciano Diaries**—Mr. Del Vayo, in *The Nation*.

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A RECENT extraordinary book, whose discussion in current magazines has supplied a motive for the present article, closes with a sombre paragraph:

In this state of mind, which excludes any falsehood, I declare that not a single word of what I have written in my diaries is false or exaggerated or dictated by selfish resentment. It is all just what I have seen and heard. And if, when making ready to take leave of life, I consider allowing the publication of my hurried notes, it is not because I expect posthumous revaluation or vindication, but because I believe that an honest testimony of the truth in this sad world may still be useful in bringing relief to the innocent and striking at those who are responsible.

This is dated "December 23rd., 1943, Cell 27 of the Verona Jail". The writer was awaiting execution within a few days. His father-in-law, Benito Mussolini, who had been rescued (according to the official Italian story) by German parachutists from the Italian police, was being held "in protective custody" by German forces. For once this sinister descriptive phrase was correctly applied. Mussolini, as his ultimate fate showed, had need of the utmost German vigilance to protect him from the Italian people whose record he had disgraced. In the interval between his downfall and his execution there were not many gratifications which his Nazi friends could bestow upon him, but they were at least willing to amuse him with the delights of personal vengeance upon such of his countrymen as he specially hated and who were within their reach. His master-motive of revenge cried aloud for the blood of Count Ciano, who had taken a conspicuous part six months before at the Fascist Grand Council which deposed him.

It was a grim destiny. Ciano had certainly not been lacking in loyal service to his Chief, up to and indeed far beyond the point at which such service could be reconciled with duty to his country. The *Diaries* show everywhere the sort of mood

ascribed to Stalin in his early devotion to Lenin—"like that of a dog to his master". But, in the summer of 1943, the war in which Ciano had never believed and which he had done his utmost to prevent was manifestly lost for Italy, and as the relentless march of the allied forces after their landing from Sicily brought them ever nearer to Rome, it was obvious that the only hope for an armistice lay in eliminating Mussolini. With him as spokesman the victors would never negotiate. It was doubtless with keen relish that his German custodians at once slaked the thirst of Mussolini for personal vengeance and settled accounts for themselves with an Italian leader whose opposition to the war alliance between Germany and Italy had been notorious.

Through the five years, from the beginning of 1939 until the end of 1943, Count Ciano kept diaries, and his widow, by artifices of amusing ingenuity, managed to elude the vigilance of the Customs at the Swiss frontier as she passed through with the manuscript. Mr. Sumner Welles, to whom Ciano showed the record, so far as it had advanced in the spring of 1940, has pronounced this book one of the most valuable historical documents of our time. What are the qualities which have elicited this estimate?

## I

Mr. Welles had no prolonged intimacy with Ciano: they met first in Rome on February 25, 1940, and last on March 19 of the same year, dates separated by not much more than three weeks. That was a period, too, when an Italian Foreign Minister, knowing that the Duce was moving fast in the direction of war, might be expected to be very much on his guard in contact with President Roosevelt's special representative on a mission of search. But on the matters of fact with which these *Diaries* are concerned, we have copious evidence from elsewhere to confirm them. And where they are concerned with disputable opinion, they provide such a record of the writer's judgments and feelings and wishes, entered from day to day, as may well convince one that he did judge and feel and wish in just that manner: they are so remote from what he could have expected to commend his personality or to redeem his fame. It is this self-attesting candor—what one satirist has called this "indecent exposure of the mind", that constitutes a chief merit in what he has given us.

Ciano was Foreign Minister from the beginning of 1936 until February, 1943. When one recalls Italy's share in world affairs during that period of seven years, one thinks of her action in Abyssinia, Spain, Albania, France, Yugoslavia, Greece. The *Diaries* begin January 1, 1939, so it is perhaps unreasonable to expect that they would contain any reference to the Abyssinian adventure which had been closed more than two years earlier. But the writer's acceptance of the office of Foreign Minister, when that escapade of unspeakable treachery and cruelty was at its height, may be taken as evidence that he was ready to prosecute it, and the acts of conscienceless aggression which he not merely promoted but initiated elsewhere make one feel that he was through-and-through a Fascist. We now know how to regard the long drawn-out imposture called "Non-Intervention in Spain". The *Diaries* show Ciano in raptures of delight over the triumph of the Italian forces there, and the successful befooling of various nations. They show how, as consolation to Mussolini for Hitler's seizure of Czechoslovakia, he engineered such insurgent disorder in Albania as would constitute a pretext for Italian invasion and conquest of that country. They show how with like design, with like absence of scruple, but not with like success, he fomented insurrection by the Croats against the Government of Yugoslavia, to instal a puppet regime at Zagreb under Pavelik (the gangster chief sent by Mussolini to murder King Alexander at the Marseilles railway station in 1934).

This book makes clear in detail (what was indeed otherwise known in general, and could not safely have been accepted on the evidence of the *Diaries* only) that Ciano was against Italy's entrance into the Second World War. But he was against this solely on the ground that she would have little chance of winning, and no chance at all, even in the event of victory, to emerge in any better position than that of Germany's obedient satellite. It will please many readers to find that he was so wholehearted in hatred of the Nazis; that the alliance constituting the "Axis" was accepted by him sorely against his will, on peremptory orders from his Chief; and that all through this record runs the conviction of deliberate systematic deceit of Italy by a Germany bent on making her yet another vassal. But one looks in vain for any evidence that the inherent injustice of Nazi proceedings, rather than Italy's bad luck in getting so slight a share of the pillage, was the determining thought in his mind. And how could it have been? Italy had

acted towards country after country just as Germany was acting. How could a Foreign Minister who had undertaken office in the midst of the Abyssinian War, with Badoglio and his poison gas outraging every vestige of the international code, pretend to be shocked by a Nazi Concentration Camp? How could the aggressor in Albania blame the aggressor in Norway?

To do Ciano justice, it must be acknowledged that in the *Diaries* he makes little pretence of the kind.

## II

On the sequence of events during the dread five years concerned, there are disclosures that are startling in this book. For example, the intense Italian hatred of France, which at the very beginning of 1939 the Fascist leaders were deliberately inflaming. Here is a characteristic entry, under date January 14:

Mussolini indirectly inspired a violent editorial in the *Times* entitled, "Spitting on France". Tomorrow I shall propose to him that wide publicity be given to a lengthy speech by Campinelli in a hotel in Bastia, reported to me by two of our Corsican secret agents, Guimedi and Pietri . . . I think that if properly used by the press, this report will go a long way toward creating a tremendous sensation, and at any rate will increase the wave of hatred against the French, which in Italy is already impressive.

When, little more than a year later, Ciano was at his wits' end to discover some means of diverting Mussolini from his project of declaring war on France, he may well have repented his own advice.

Throughout the early entries of the year 1939, the diarist is much occupied with the achievement of Italian troops fighting for Franco in Spain. No hint in these passages of membership in a "Non-Intervention Committee"! Fascist Italy was intervening indeed, and when her "volunteers"—as Mussolini facetiously called them—encountered Italians who were genuine volunteers on the Spanish Republican side, there was the usual Fascist contempt for usages of decent warfare. In the *Diaries*, under date, February 20, 1939, we read:

The situation in Catalonia is good. Franco improved it with a very painstaking and drastic housecleaning: many Italians also were taken prisoner: anarchist and communist. I informed the Duce about it, and he ordered that all be shot, adding, "Dead men tell no tales".

Hitler's despatch of invading forces to occupy Bohemia (March 15, 1939) was no surprise to Ciano. The purpose of

completely obliterating Czechoslovakia had previously been disclosed by Ribbentrop to the Italian ambassador in Berlin, and when the official explanation of the grounds for it came as a routine message to Rome, it was received there with impatience and even anger. Mussolini refused to issue it to the public. "The Italians," he said, "would laugh at me. Every time Hitler occupies a country, he sends me a message." Ciano confided his own sentiments that night to his diary:

The Fuehrer sends word that he acted because the Czechs would not demobilize their military forces, because they were continuing to keep their contacts with Russia, and because they mistreated Germans. Such pretexts may be good enough for the Goebbels propaganda, but they should not use them when talking with us.

As the cynical old prelate says in *The Soul of a Bishop*, to a less sophisticated young colleague who had quoted Scripture to him, "It isn't done, Serope, not among professionals".

Not a word does Ciano say about the monstrous treachery of Hitler's action, about its dishonoring of pledge after pledge, except that world opinion on the matter was "very depressing", that in conference with Belgians and Americans he had not found it easy to justify the German action, and hence had allowed them to infer that the Italian government was in agreement or had at least been informed. But, he quaintly adds, "it is such a nuisance to lie".<sup>1</sup> In view of the diarist's entry of three days before, I am at a loss to see where the lie came in on this particular occasion. In any case, practice should surely have begun to render it less irksome.

But two days later he begins to discover that Hitler is not what he had supposed him to be. An amazing paragraph breaks this news to the reader:

The events of the last few days have reversed my opinion of the Fuehrer and of Germany. He, too, is unfaithful and treacherous, and we cannot carry on any policy with him.<sup>2</sup>

How did Ciano find that out? Not, apparently, from what Hitler had done in betrayal of Czechoslovakia, but from what he apprehended Hitler might probably do to acquire also Croatia. On getting this province from Yugoslavia as an Italian vassal state Ciano had set his heart. "The Duce," he wrote, "has ordered a concentration of forces on the Venetian

1. *Diaries*, March 17, 1939.

2. *Diaries*, March 19, 1939.

border. If the Germans think they can stop us, we shall fire on them. I am more than ever convinced that this may take place." In consultation with Mussolini he had decided to send a telegram to Belgrade warning the Yugoslav government of how Italy had called a halt to German designs of fomenting Croat insurgence. As to what else was in the Italian purpose for that part of Yugoslavia, there was no need yet to go into particulars.

At this stage, if we may trust Ciano's statement, there was such resentment against Germany in his own breast and in the Duce's that they even thought of a possible understanding with the Western Powers. Mussolini felt that British anger this time was deep, and gave a curious reason for thinking so. He said, in intimate talk with his son-in-law:

We must not forget that the English are readers of the Bible, and they combine a mercantile fanaticism with a mystical one. Now the latter prevails, and they are capable of going into action.<sup>3</sup>

But it was not Croatia, it was Albania, that Ciano had immediately in mind as consolation pillage for the Duce's jealous rage at a co-dictator who this time had scored first. The rights of King Zog and the Albanians were no more to Ciano than the rights of Czechs had been to Ribbentrop. Mussolini was beside himself with jealousy and must be soothed—at some nation's expense. So the next part of the *Diaries* is taken up with a record of how demonstrations of internal discontent with King Zog's rule were arranged and promoted by Italian agents, how the appropriate propaganda proceeded, how negotiations of apparent good faith and generosity were begun with the King and so conducted as to provide at the right moment plausible pretext for a quarrel. In short, the whole technique of Hitler in his previous dealings with Schuschnigg of Austria and with Benes of Czechoslovakia!

The *Diaries* begin at a date two years after the great boastful speech from a balcony of Milan Cathedral, when Mussolini worked into paroxysms of exultation a vast audience in the city where he had been in past years notably, and at times dangerously, unpopular. The first entry is just three months subsequent to the Munich Conference at which, according to the story propagated with tireless emphasis throughout the western world, he had intervened when the eleventh hour was almost spent, to stop the horror impending on mankind.

He, we were told, and he alone could do it: he was the saviour of civilization. Do not we recall, with however mingled feelings, Neville Chamberlain's tribute, when he returned from the fateful meeting, to the service rendered by "the Chief of the Italian Government"? All contributed to cement the legend which the great advertiser knew so well how to use. When Singapore fell, Mussolini said to Ciano, "I should like to know the effect four English officers presenting themselves with a white flag to surrender has had upon those whimsical Orientals".<sup>4</sup> He no doubt remembered what a difference had been made by like surprising change of fortune to whimsical Italians.

In nothing, perhaps, are the *Diaries* more suggestive than in the picture they give of Mussolini's contempt for the Italians, his deliberate exploiting of prejudices and hatreds, of passions and fears for which he had no vestige of respect. Royal Family, Church, nobility, middle class, Italian peasant, Italian artisan, all alike intrinsically worthless, but with peculiarities which a Machiavellian Chief might make subservient to his own purpose! King Victor Emmanuel's doubt about the wisdom of seizing Albania elicited the comment from his faithful Minister that "If Hitler had had to deal with a nincompoop of a King, he would never have been able to take Austria and Czechoslovakia".<sup>5</sup> A year later, in another outburst, he said to Ciano, "After the war is over, I shall tell Hitler to do away with all of these absurd anachronisms in the form of monarchies".<sup>6</sup> In another mood he threatened to liquidate the Vatican, declared his surprise that Hitler had not abolished Christmas as a holiday, prohibited Italian newspapers from mentioning that season of the Christian year, and made a specially long list of appointments for "December 25th".<sup>7</sup> At times he would include Royal Family and Church in a single blast of anger. "The Pope," he exclaimed (May 12, 1940), "need not think that he can seek an alliance with the monarch, because I am ready to blow both of them up to the skies at the same time."<sup>8</sup> Italy, he often said, was Ghibelline, so that this design to blow up the Church would be quite practicable, but it was not even yet without its Guelf contamination—the priest-ridden type of layman. "I hate priests in their cassocks," he told his son-in-law, "but I hate even more and loathe those without cassocks,

4. *Diaries*, p. 449.

5. *Diaries*, p. 53.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 261.

7. *Diaries*, pp. 418, 425.

8. *Diaries*, p. 248.

who are vile Guelfs, a breed to be wiped out.”<sup>9</sup> Even his chief Fascist collaborators were despicable in his eyes when they differed from him: Balbo becomes the democratic swine of a Masonic Lodge:<sup>10</sup> de Bono had always been an idiot but at length his idiocy had been intensified by his old age:<sup>11</sup> Graziani was the sort of man with whom he could not be angry “because I despise him”.

A sweeping characterization of his countrymen as a whole leaves us to consider how it is exemplified in some specific manner by each of the groups on which he had separately delivered his mind:

It is the material that I lack. Even Michelangelo had need of marble to make statues. If he had had only clay, he would have been nothing more than a potter. A people who for sixteen centuries have been an anvil cannot become a hammer within a few years.<sup>12</sup>

### III.

One might well hope to discover in such a daily record as this, written by a close and intimate associate over a stretch of five years, some clue to the enigma of Mussolini's strength. Few now promulgate the legend, so popular ten years ago in anti-Socialist circles, that he won the gratitude and admiration of his countrymen by “saving Italy from Communism”. The Communist menace, such as it was, is now known to have vanished there at least a year before the famous “March on Rome”: Mussolini himself acknowledged this. Probably enough the fear still remained for many, long after there had ceased to be ground for it, but there is at least as much evidence of a Communist movement inspired from Moscow in Germany as of any such movement in Italy, and yet those in Great Britain whose fear of insurgent Labour made them confide to each other in whispers “We need a Mussolini” were not given to similar longings for a Hitler.

Much scorn has been poured by anti-Fascist Italian exiles, especially by the group issuing *Il Mondo* in New York, upon Mr. Churchill's appeal to the Italian people against the policy which “one and one only man” had imposed upon them. They point out that Mussolini derived his strength from the eager co-operation of great Italian interests, the owners of great estates in land and the directors of great industries, just as

9. *Diaries*, p. 494.

10. *Diaries*, p. 50.

11. *Diaries*, p. 53.

12. *Diaries*, p. 267. The occasion was that of the unpleasant announcement that an Italian general had surrendered in Libya.



similar interests made Hitler in Germany, and they speak of the laughter it must have stirred in his Italian audience when Mr. Churchill named among the Duce's silenced opponents some locally known as his most enthusiastic collaborators. Yet it is hard to suppose that the information on which the phrase "one and one only man" was based came from advisers either wholly mistaken or disposed to mislead. *The Ciano Diaries* confirm the view that entrance into the war in May, 1940, was indeed the personal decision of Mussolini, and that such was the autocratic strength he had acquired as to make it hopeless for any differently-minded member of the Fascist Grand Council to resist him on a project. How was such dominance obtained? No doubt in the first instance (like Hitler's) by the support of great interests, landed and industrial, whose leaders saw their chance at a time of post-war restlessness and discontent to strike a blow at the parliamentary system they hated. But, as in *Frankenstein*, the monster which ingenuity was adequate to build proved beyond the same ingenuity to control. Having got his chance, Mussolini proceeded to use it in a spirit quite contemptuous of those who had so rashly advanced him. He stirred popular passion for imperialist enterprizes abroad, in preparation for which, incidentally, there would be abundant employment for all. When these were crowned with success, when another Roman Empire rapidly established and consolidated by Italian arms in Africa had forced the 56 members of a first menacing League to "eat their bold words of warning" and to acquiesce, there was a thrill of popular enthusiasm for the Duce. Like the new self-consciousness at Tokyo when the Russian fleet had been destroyed by the Japanese a generation before. It was, above all, his triumph in Abyssinia that made Mussolini irresistible. Like the surrender to Hitler at Munich in September, 1938, the acknowledgment at Geneva in 1936 that the Sanctions policy had been a mere threat which, when defied, its authors dared not execute, silenced among his previously critical or dissentient countrymen the last murmurs against the Chief. Italy, like the restored Germany, had advanced through him at a bound to a power which the proud British and French could not presume to challenge!

It was on this newly awakened spirit of a conquering people that Mussolini played with the dexterity of a born demagogue. Whatever other talents may be denied to him, no one can question the skill with which he divined the racial weakness on which he could most effectively trade, and the

methods by which it could be made to serve his purpose. He saw how Italians might be intoxicated with a vision of empire, how they might be enraged against a representative who had come back from Versailles with so slight a proportion of the pillage available at the close of the First World War, how instead of the rôle of a waiter "napkin on arm" at international conferences, Italy might and should become again worthy of the traditions shaped by "the fateful hills of Rome". Such boasting would have achieved little but for the manoeuvring and counter-manoeuvering of the discordant Powers, Great Britain and France, that so soon were each other's diplomatic enemies after the First World War, while the United States was altogether outside European disputes. Mussolini's capacity for taking advantage of this chance was like nothing else so much as the capacity of Sultan Abdul Hamid a generation earlier to make the different Powers (in the Association named with exquisite facetiousness *Concert of Europe*) obstruct each other's designs for rescue of the Armenians. As they watched him thus win for Italy a place of commanding European importance, as they read of his successful defiance of the League over the Greek affair in 1923, as they noted the new deference paid their country in British and French press when he represented her at Conferences, as they heard how leaders of western democracies were freely expressing their doubt whether "after all" the regime of an autocratic *Duce* had not shown considerable improvement on the old regime of parliament, above all when the fifty-six nations tried and failed to stop the Abyssinian War by applying Sanctions, there was no longer a voice of the least importance in Italy that could be raised against the Chief. Full well he knew these sources of his strength. In such matters he was a psychologist indeed. He knew what a thrill it brought to Italians when it was even whispered that the reason for the amazing offer in the Hoare-Laval plan to partition Ethiopia was British fear of the Italian fleet!

Frederic Harrison saw a Dantesque spirit in what he called "the strange *Fascismo* movement in Italy": he thought it a recoil from the internationalism that was being so widely proclaimed after the First World War, and that threatened the sacred ties of kindred, of nationality, of ancestral custom and tradition.<sup>13</sup> Harrison did not live to see what *Fascismo* would yet become, and he had some ground for his early guess. Mussolini knew how to exploit the Dante spiritual heritage as well

13. F. Harrison, *National and Social Ideals*.

as very different heritages, especially the Ghibelline spirit which he declared to be that of the Italy of the twentieth century. The *Ciano Diaries* thus exhibit the Duce as at heart no less bitterly secularist, no less a hater of the Church even after the *Lateran Treaty* had been signed, than in his old editorial chair of thirty years earlier, writing diatribes of furious obscenity against the whole Christian account of life. Count Ciano often records his own cautious effort to stop an open conflict with the Vatican. Often he was made uneasy as his Chief raged against *Catholic Action*, denounced priests who dared disapprove of his new race laws meant to co-operate with Hitler's anti-Semitism,<sup>14</sup> or sent a message to the Papal Nuncio that *Osservatore Romano* would be forbidden circulation in Italy if it continued its covert anti-Axis propaganda.<sup>15</sup> Ciano heard with much alarm of the Duce's project to erect a mosque in Rome, and could not see why this was needful, even though subjects of the Italian Empire had come to include 6,000,000 Mohammedans, reported to his Chief that the project had been received with horror at the Vatican, and suggested a timid compromise—that the mosque should be erected in Naples, since that city constituted a bridge with Italy's African Dominions.<sup>16</sup> But it was a hard job to influence in this way a leader to whom offence of the devout was a tempting motive rather than a deterrent—a leader whose spirit was exemplified by the deliberate choice of Good Friday for his assault on Albania.

In the world address delivered by Pope Pius XII on occasion of the last Consistory, great emphasis was laid on the dangers of "Imperialism". His Italian listeners would be sure to think of the designs and methods of the late Duce, for whom Empire was so intensely a secular ideal. The *Diaries* have many passages which illustrate this. Ciano records how lightly his Chief esteemed Neville Chamberlain and his associates who came to Rome in a mood of the most obsequious courtesy. "These men," he said, "are not made of the same stuff as the Francis Drakes and the other magnificent adventurers who created the Empire. These, after all, are the tired sons of a long line of rich men, and they will lose their Empire."<sup>17</sup> How far at that time the appeasement policy had gone, and in what spirit it was being received, may be seen from one incident. Ciano records that Neville Chamberlain sent, through the British

14. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 111.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 64.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

Embassy in Rome, the outline of a speech he had prepared to deliver in the House of Commons, inviting suggestions for its improvement. "I believe this is the first time," said Mussolini, "that the head of a British Government has submitted to a foreign government the outline of one of his speeches. It is a bad sign for them."<sup>18</sup>

## IV.

This book should serve for not a few, in various countries where the Fascist regime was admired, as a sort of penitential reading. Here is a frank disclosure of the sort of government which approval, and at times applause, freely bestowed by public opinion abroad, helped notably to strengthen at home. In *The Ciano Diaries* it is easy to see how Mussolini played upon the vanity and greed of his fellow-Italians, how intoxicating to a people accustomed only to the rôle of a subordinate Power was its sudden international elevation. But though the arts by which he was becoming so popular in Italy produced among the more honest and discerning abroad a deep distrust of him and a suspicious watchfulness of his policies, there was a powerful foreign press that seemed almost as ready as the press he directed in Rome to extol his personality, to magnify his achievements, to explain away or even to vindicate his outrages on justice. One thinks with scorn of the mob in Milan, accustomed in the period of his power to fill the air with rapturous applause of the Duce, and later, when he had fallen, competing in obscene mutilation of his remains. But have we not a like spectacle as we watch the vocabulary of denunciation now overtaxed to abuse him by a foreign press which only a few years ago seemed to be at his beck and call? One remembers, surely, with shame the efforts by speakers as well as newspapers in free countries to show that a despotism was wholesome and needful in Italy; that it was dangerous "subversives" who were exiled (under quite tolerable conditions) to Lipari and Lampedusa; that the demands on Abyssinia were in the cause of extending civilization; that the "poison gas" used against Hailé Selassie's tribesmen was a much maligned and in truth a merciful instrument of desert warfare; that the Fascist support of Franco in Spain was a Christian crusade; that the Munich interposition of the Duce at the eleventh hour was a service to all mankind by the noblest as well as the most influential of the world's leaders! Such was the legend, disturbed for those

18. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

who propagated it only when they found to their amazement that neither English nor French would be spared, any more than Greeks or Ethiopians, if they stood in the way of the Duce's purposes. Suddenly a new perspective of values began to show itself. One heard less of the conventional tributes—about suppression of the Mafia, construction of motor roads, draining of Pontine marshes, improvement of railroad and hotel service for tourists. As it became plainer and plainer that the supposed contrast between Fascist and Nazi purposes had been a delusion, as the anti-Comintern Pact was seen to involve a single policy, the intrinsic character of despotism began to be emphasized again even by editors and speakers who had forgotten it. Most diverting of all was the explanation one began to hear, that Mussolini had at first had excellent purposes, but had changed, that his was a case like that of Warren Hastings in Macaulay's description—a kind and generous nature perverted "by the rage of conquest and the lust of dominion". As if the massacre at Corfu, the murder of Matteotti, the crushing of every institution of a free people, had not been among the very earliest features of the system! As if the article "Fascismo" from Mussolini's own hand, in the *Encyclopedia Italiana*, had been a product of his period of late decline! To anyone familiar with dates, this myth of a Duce at first noble but afterwards corrupt is like the account given by the persisting anatomists of the Hippocratean tradition when confronted with the discoveries of Vesalius. They argued that organs inside the human body must have changed their relative positions since Hippocrates wrote of them!

For those so unscrupulous as to perpetrate or so credulous as to accept such imposture, this book is one of painful but wholesome revelation. It exhibits convincingly, from inside, the character of the Fascist regime, the authentic lineaments of its Chief and of his intimate circle, the motives by which it was really being directed and the methods it was really using at a time when it was fashionable in not a few groups, British and American, to laud that regime to the skies. It was so lauded by those ready to condone, even to justify, anything whatever in a system redeemed for them by its antagonism to the three objects of their own special hatred and fear—organized Labour, Socialist politics, and Soviet Russia. The heyday of Mussolini's success was that in which a popular title for a magazine article was "The Bursting Bubble of Democracy", when Mrs. Lindbergh could commend amid loud applause the passage from

popular to autocratic control as "the wave of the future", and when the *Daily Mail* correspondent in Rome could solemnly argue to his readers that Duce and Fuehrer were more truly representative of the real will of the people they led than any popularly elected Prime Minister in Great Britain or in a British Dominion!

That mood—at least that particular expression of a mood—is past. A book such as *The Ciano Diaries* should so arouse the general reader as to make it more difficult for the deceit to be practised again. And it may well have a further beneficial effect. No doubt a time will come when some poor remains of virtues, or quasi-virtues, in the men who led the Fascist or the Nazi movement to such notable temporary success will have to be recognized and re-assessed by the critical historian. Attention will be drawn to qualities of magnetic command, of vigour and decisiveness, of power to organize and stimulate aggregates of otherwise inert humanity—qualities with no moral character, but worth contemplating and analyzing, just as one studies the "Satan" of *Paradise Lost*. They are the qualities Mussolini had in mind, and quite justifiably regarded as his own, when he quoted with such zest his favorite line from Dante's *Inferno* about the doom of the irresolute—

those ill spirits both to God displeasing  
And to His foes. These wretches who ne'er lived.

It is safe to say that such more just assessment of Fascist leaders will be made not by those for whom but yesterday the word of Mussolini might have stood against the world and who are now ashamed to acknowledge respect for any aspect of his record. It will be made in a spirit equally removed from the fanaticisms of the earlier cult and from the precautions of the subsequent reaction. *The Ciano Diaries* will help to promote it.

H. L. S.