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Monday, Dec. 23, 1940

ITALY: Most Solemn Moment

"This is the highest and most solemn moment of our war," Italy's chief labor newspaper, *Lavoro Fascista*, said last week. "The time has come to say to our open and hidden enemies that we have never been prouder of being Italians and Fascisti. . . . That goes also for those Italians who are falsier than Greek money and, doubly bastardized, who have not the heart to hold out to victory and who are not worthy of it. With them, fortunately, the accounting is near."

In such passages as this, rather than in the censored dispatches of foreign correspondents, could be read the true picture of Italy last week. Correspondents cabled that news of British victories in Egypt was withheld in Italy, that prices of necessities had almost doubled, that sometimes housewives "get impatient" waiting in queues for rations of charcoal and olive oil. But on the growing social unrest in Italy they could only quote the papers.

This unrest, it seemed clear from the tone of the press, was displayed chiefly by the well-to-do and the fairly well-to-do, those elements which have always been, at best, lukewarm supporters of Fascism. They are the elements which have been most loyal to King Vittorio Emanuele, who at the time of the Ethiopian crisis was supposed to have said: "If Italy wins, I will be Emperor of Ethiopia but if Italy loses, I will be King of Italy." He may have been thinking along the same lines last week. There were rumors that Crown Prince Umberto had offered to resign the Army command he shared with Marshal Badoglio, that *Il Duce* had refused his resignation.

Against this opposition zealous Fascists demanded violence. "This war has assumed all the characteristics of a political and social revolution," wrote *Popolo di Roma*, proposing "some beatings-up" for those who read the French-language Swiss press. "These are the prophets of disaster, the professional alarmists, the convinced pessimists, the empty brains and the sour stomachs who still exist among us here and there." Referring to Benito Mussolini's recent order to jettison "the remaining petty bourgeois ballast," *Popolo di Roma* suggested that nothing remained but to begin.

To the fore again came that Fascist firebrand, Roberto Farinacci, onetime Secretary General of the Fascist Party and now editor of *Regime Fascista* and the monthly *La Vita d'Italia*. He accused Badoglio of "frequenting salons, hunting preserves and groups which received favors from him, saying he did not favor the [Greek] undertaking." As to rising prices, Editor Farinacci demanded: "With things increasing at this rate, are wages and salaries to remain unaltered? ... Is there anyone who imagines that profiteers have disappeared while the mass of the people are submitting to limitation in their standard of living?"

Italian anger at Italians had grown so violent that there was little vigor left to damn the British. Example (from an Italian broadcast): "The Italian is a light-hearted and easygoing fellow until he is aroused. . . . The British ought to remember this."

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