

ADDITIONS, INTEGRATIONS, CORRECTIONS AND SUPPLEMENTS
TO THE BIBLIOGRAPHY OF ARNOLD JOSEPH TOYNBEE*

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Addition to Part I,
Works by Arnold J. Toynbee

1931

Arnold Joseph Toynbee, *The Fascist Terror*, Letter to the Editor of «The New Statesman and Nation», July 11, 1931, p. 42.

* *A Bibliography of Arnold J. Toynbee*, compiled by S. Fiona Morton, with a Foreword by Veronica M. Toynbee, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1980.

THE FASCIST TERROR

A Letter to the Editor of «The New Statesman and Nation»

SIR, – I have just read, in your issue of the 27th June, the article on *The Fascist Terror* from a correspondent recently in Italy. Having spent the second half of May in Rome myself, I find that my impressions of the present situation in Italy are rather different from your correspondent's.

This was my first visit in Italy under the Fascist regime, and I went in the expectation of finding (in your correspondent's words) that «a certain section of the community», having been roused by the Fascist Government «to a belief in violence (...) to-day in some form or other dominates almost every sphere of Italian life». To my surprise, this was not at all the impression I actually received. Of course, under an authoritarian regime, it is peculiarly difficult for a foreigner on a brief visit to probe down to the realities beneath the appearances; and, though I do not happen to have come across any facts of the kind which your correspondent describes, I also have no first-hand evidence that is contradictory to, or incompatible with, your correspondent's statements of fact in detail. What I am rather inclined to question, in the light of my own experience, for what it may be worth, is whether the general picture of contemporary Italy, which seems to emerge from your correspondent's article, is in the right focus and proportion, even on the assumption, which I am making, that all his statements of particular facts are correct.

I think it is possible that, if your correspondent and I were Italians, we should come into collision with the Fascist regime and should find ourselves in prison or in exile; and obviously a state of affairs in which these are the penalties of independent-mindedness in politics is a still greater misfortune for the country in which it exists than for the individuals who suffer from it personally. I do not at all wish to minimise this evil; but at the same time I believe that a very great majority of the men, women and children of Italy to-day are living their lives and going about their business with as little consciousness of living under an oppressive regime as people have to-day in Great Britain or in France. I believe this because I know, from having travelled, within the last two years, in Turkey and Russia, what the atmosphere of "the police state" is. From the moment when he set foot in either of those two countries

nowadays, the foreign traveller becomes aware, at every turn, of the people's uneasiness *vis-à-vis* the Government authorities. I can only say that, contrary to my expectation, I felt nothing of this very distinct and unmistakable Russo-Turkish atmosphere in Italy this last May.

Again, I attended two sittings of the Special Tribunal for the Defence of the State at Rome during the trial of a group of Milanese Liberals who were accused of conspiracy against the Fascist regime. This public trial was, of course, subsequent to the preliminary investigation or "instruction" in camera which precedes the public trial in the legal procedure of Italy, as in that of some other Latin countries. I do not know what these prior proceedings were like, or how far the course of the proceedings which I witnessed was pre-determined by them. I was struck, however, by the following small points which did come within my own direct observation. First, though I presented myself at the door of the Court without previous notice and without any credentials (even without my passport), I was admitted by the usher straight away, without any demur. Secondly, the trial was conducted without any brow-beating or high-handedness. When the prisoners' counsel or the prisoners themselves wanted to speak, the President of the Court always gave them a courteous hearing and never cut them short. Thirdly, when I mentioned afterwards, on two or three separate occasions, to Italian acquaintances, who were strong supporters of the Fascist regime, that I had been attending the sittings of the Special Tribunal, they at once expressed pleasure at my having done so, without waiting to hear what my impressions had been. I concluded (I think, rightly) that the Fascists believe that, in the public proceedings of the Special Tribunal, they have nothing to lose and something to gain by the presence of foreign lookers-on.

As a result of my fortnight in Rome I have not come away with any comprehensive positive judgment about Fascism (on the basis of a fortnight's rather superficial observation such pretension would be absurd). But my previous expectations have been so far falsified by such facts as I was able to observe that I do now suspend judgment pending further investigation. – Yours, etc.,

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Terrington, York.
July 2nd.

ARNOLD J. TOYNBEE

