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ITALY

"THE POLITICAL EXILE IN HISTORY."

(Lecture Organized by the Council of the Freedom International.)

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On Sunday, March 13 1955, a lecture on "The Political Exile and History" took place at the ROME Press Club. Many Italian and foreign journalists were present, including representatives of the free press of the countries now behind the Iron Curtain.

The first speaker was the President of the Hungarian Freedom International, Mr. Cristoph KALLAY, who gave a brief outline of the work of this organization, which is composed for the most part of men who have sacrificed everything for the cause of liberty and their oppressed homeland. Its members are among the persons most hated and persecuted by the Communist regime, because the true social democracy which they represent is the real basis of liberty and is therefore the natural enemy of Communism. These political exiles have found a second country in Italy because its people have a great understanding of exiles, through the sufferings of their own history.

This historical theme was developed in a lecture by the principal Italian speaker, Professor Paolo ROSSI, who holds a Chair of the University of GENOA and is a Deputy of the Italian Social Democrat Party (P.S.D.I.) He spoke giftedly and eloquently and expressed real sympathy and a humanitarian comprehension of the political exiles.

"The political and moral history of Italy is full of

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illustrious examples of political exiles," said the speaker. The world's greatest poem, "La Divina Commedia" of DANTE, was conceived and written in exile and, to quote a single classic example, the political and moral doctrine of Giuseppe MAZZINI was born in exile. Throughout the centuries, beginning with the legendary Aeneid, the eternal theme of longing for one's homeland has been repeated, a theme which was expressed by DANTE in the sonnet:

"O dolci colli dove io partendo lasciai me stesso,
da dove io partir non posso....."

Another famous exile, MAZZINI, left Italy when he was 25 and lived far from his beloved country for forty years save for some rare clandestine visits. He returned to his homeland under an assumed name at the end of his life, and died here, still an exile even in his own country.

These are the most famous examples of the very many which filled the pages of Italian history before the Union of Italy. From 1870 to the beginning of the Fascist era, political exiles disappeared almost entirely from Italian history. Their existence began again with Fascism. Thousands of Italian citizens who loved liberty were forced to live abroad. The most well-known political exile was Count SFORZA who died a short time ago; SARAGAT, who is now a member of the government; the famous atomic scientist FERMI, and famous artists such as TOSCANINI. Among those who died in exile were Giovanni AMENDOLA, Claudio and Turati PEREZ, Carlo and Claudio ROSETTI.

With its liberty regained and after ten years of consolidation of democracy, Italy has no more political exiles but has opened its doors, in spite of its poverty, to receive many exiles from the countries from behind the Iron Curtain. Under Article 10 of the Constitution of the Italian Republic, Italy assures the right of exile to all those who are prevented from exercising their fundamental rights and liberties in their own land.

"You exiles," continued the speaker, "honor Italy by your presence. Your being here is a proof that this is a really free country and that its government is truly democratic and not anti-liberal, as Communist propaganda would have people think."

Passing to the international field, the Hon.ROSSI made a brief comparison between the free world and that which lies under the yoke of Communism. TOGLIATTI, in his speech at the Italian Communist Party Conference said "The Iron Curtain is an illusion because there are millions of Communists on this side of it." This is a true, and it is a practical demonstration of the way liberty is applied and practiced in Italy, while behind the Iron

Curtain there no longer exists a single person who can openly oppose the Communist regime. This last statement was received with loud applause by the listeners.

Millions of men who live in the shadow of a dictatorship, the most totalitarian and ruthless which has ever existed, would give half their lives to be able to get to the free world. Why is this? Because democracy is a powerful attracting force. The most obvious example is that of the United States, to which country millions of persons of every race and creed have gone from all over Europe. There is no country in the world which, in the course of 150 years, has increased its population of 5,316,000 inhabitants in 1802 to the 160,000,000 counted at the last census. In the last 50 years alone, the USA has received 50,000,000 immigrants.

Soviet Russia, on the other hand, which has a greater area than the United States and even greater natural resources, and has a population density of only half that of America, does not attract anybody. On the contrary, many have left it and many more would escape if they could. It is not simply a question of passport visas being forbidden. If, after a period of violence and terror, the revolution had been an accomplished fact, there would have been nothing to prevent emigrants from returning home en masse. There was the example of the French Revolution and the return of the exiles within a period of nine years, whereas exile from Russia still goes on. In spite of the enormous control apparatus, it has not been possible to hide the fact that there is a struggle going on between the various groups which are avid for power, and that the dictatorship is forced to acknowledge that there is a decline in industrial and agricultural production and a general inertia in ideology.

The speaker concluded by referring to those who have been martyred along the arduous road toward liberty and added, "You who have saved and safeguarded the light of freedom, by your exile serve the moral history of your countries, which you will one day see again in the sun of liberty and social progress."

The last speaker was Minister St. LOZORAJTIS, head of the Lithuanian Diplomatic Service abroad. He spoke of the rights of the countries which are oppressed by Bolshevism, and said that the sufferings of their peoples are the cause of the present international tension.

The paradox of our times is that while the colonial system is declining in the west, Russia is creating millions of slaves. This, too, is the cause of international crisis. While these millions of people remain enslaved, it would be a delusion to imagine that the crisis would cease if Russia agreed to the arms veto,

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or was forced (something impossible in a dictatorship) to accept an armaments limitation and reduction.

"We are realists," said the minister, "and our interests are those of the Free World which must help us in our desire for liberty. Every compromise with Russia finds its sorrowful echo in our countries which are waiting for their liberation from the West. We beg our friends not to disillusion us in our hopes and to respect our sacred right to freedom. We are convinced that International order may be preserved only under two conditions. These are:

1) That the political position which has been created among our peoples since the war should not be accepted by the free world in the field of international law.

2) That in its own interest, the free world should repair this situation.

Amid the applause of all those present, the speaker concluded by addressing warm words of greeting to all the peoples of the oppressed countries.

End.