

# Italy's Catholic Action Faces Post-Victory Job

By REV. FRANCIS J. MURPHY, C. S. C. (Written for C.W.O. News Service)

Rome (NC) — No one knows better than Prof. Paolo Veronesi, president of Italy's Catholic Action, and the legions of young men and women called "round girls," that their task after the April 18 elections will be a heavy one.

As one by leader put it shortly after the April 18 elections: "We have just won the first crucial election. The vote was like the American beachheads at Anzio and Salerno. We have started our march on Rome, but there are still 8,000,000 communist votes between us and final peace."

Italy's Catholic Action, which has been the main force in the Christian front in Italy, Catholic Action adhered to its traditional position of not being interested in politics or in the political issues as such. Its aim was to bring about "Catholicism in action." It was primarily interested in securing Catholic Italy to fulfill its obligations at the polls — and to fulfill its moral.

Now Catholic Action must meet the task which is before it.

These men, however, the leaders of Catholic Action decided to preserve fully the identity of their organization. For this purpose, a national civic committee was established. Its main task was to see before the country's voters the real nature of the political issue at stake: Christian communism.

Clearly, this was the field for the Catholic Action, but what Catholic Action could do immediately was to drive itself into the fray to the point of making a choice in the election of voting the vote so clearly itself upon the side of Christianity or atheism. It was on this basis that its main victory was formulated: abstention from the polls was asked as the immediate remedy.

IMMEDIATELY, THEN, committees were formed which set to work making organizers into

## FIRST ARMY CHAPLAIN?



A former Army chaplain, Rev. Lawrence J. Kiddy, O.F.M., professor of history at St. Bonaventure College, Allegany, N. Y., is shown examining an interesting document: "The Love of Our Country," a sermon preached by Rev. John Hurt of the Virginia Troops, who, according to some is "considered the first chaplain in the army of the United States." A hand-drawn triptych, and afterwards made from empty shell-cases, used by a St. Bonaventure chaplain in a Marine chapel in New Guinea, form the colorful background. The booklet, dated April 30, 1977, was recently discovered among some old books by Fr. Irenaeus Herscher, S.F.M., college librarian, who points to a Franciscan, Rev. Francis J. LeBlond, as the first accredited military chaplain, of any regular denomination, to serve in the armed forces of the United States. Father LeBlond received his official appointment from the Continental Congress a few days after the signing of the Declaration of Independence. (NC Photos.)

## Christianity's Revival Urged

London (NC) — Leading political figures of Western Europe have called for a revival of Christianity at an interdenominational rally in London's Albert Hall attended by 7,000 persons.

They included important representatives of Britain, France, Italy, Germany, Holland, Belgium and Sweden. His Eminence Cardinal Griffin, Archbishop of Westminster, the Protestant Archbishop of Canterbury, leader of the Church of England, and the Moderator of the Free Churches were all on the platform but they left the floor of this lay meeting to 11 men and one woman speaker.

The purpose of the crowded meeting was to mobilize Christian effort to ensure that the attempt to unite Western Europe shall have a sound Christian basis. Its outstanding feature was that none of the speakers was a cleric.

Lord Halifax, Britain's Foreign Minister when she declared war on Germany in 1939, presided. Sir Stafford Cripps, Socialist Chancellor of the Exchequer (Finance Minister), one of the most important men in the British Government, was among the speakers.

## Reds Blame Catholic Action

Rome (NC) — What is termed "the intervention of Catholic Action" is listed by Italian communists as the "number one" cause of their defeat in the recent elections. The Communist party organ L'Unita published a report presented by Palmiro Togliatti, communist chief, to his party's central committee, according which, after Catholic Action the emergence of the anti-communist Socialist Unity party and the loss of more than 1,000,000 leftist votes when compared with the 1946 elections were the other main contributing factors to the outcome of the ballot.

## Nazi Destroyed First Colored Photos of Pope

Freiburg — Nazi SS troops destroyed several thousand copies of a reproduction of what was said to be the first color photo ever made of the Holy Father, according to information now obtained here by the Herder publishing firm.

Herder states that a color picture was taken by Frau Else Heddenhausen, formerly of the publishing firm of Ullstein of Berlin, in 1941. Herder acquired the exclusive publication rights of this picture and subsequently had all the reproductions stored in a small Black Forest village, where they were found by SS agents and destroyed.

## Disease Sweeps Germany Charities Survey Shows

Freiburg (NC) — An average of 200,000 persons now die of tuberculosis annually in Germany, according to a survey by Caritas, official organ of the German Catholic Charities organization, which has its headquarters here. In 1946, more than 152,000 died of tuberculosis, compared with 42,000 before the war.

The total number of patients now afflicted with the disease is estimated at 1,000,000.

The situation is worse in Berlin where five per cent of the population are reported to be suffering from tuberculosis. Some 120,000 cases are reported in the U. S. occupation zone alone.

According to Caritas, the main causes of the appalling situation are undernourishment and the lack of hospitalization owing to the shortage of bed linen, soap, medications, housing space and fuel.

The breakdown of all hospitalization in Bavaria is an immediate possibility according to a survey of the Hospital Association there, unless arrangements are made to supply urgently needed requirements. Bavaria alone has lost 13,000 hospital beds through air-raids.

The surgical clinic of Munich, which had facilities for 420 patients before the war, has now but 23 beds available.

There is general shortage of the most essential supplies, and hardly one change of linens available for each bed. In some

## Vandals Smear, Blast Churches

Cleveland (NC) — Vestibules of two Cleveland Churches were defaced with black paint or ink this week, the third and fourth such acts of vandalism against Catholic institutions here in the last three weeks. At St. Francis Church, a painting and a statue in a vestibule shrine were marked, while at St. Peter Church the marble wainscoting was smeared.

Recently St. Philip Neri school was broken into, books were torn and scattered, and the words "The Young Commies" and "Forever Russia" scribbled on blackboards and walls.

Blond, Wis. (NC) — Damage to St. William Church here was estimated at \$3,000 following an apparently deliberate dynamiting of the sacristy. Windows were smashed, statues toppled from their bases, candlesticks broken.

## Mexican Bishops Ask Recovery Aid

Mexico City (RNS) — Forty members of the Mexican Catholic hierarchy have signed a joint pastoral letter urging the clergy and faithful to assist civil authorities in carrying out the government's program for economic recovery. The program is directed especially toward the 70 per cent of Mexicans who live in rural areas and have the lowest standards of living.

The bishops' letter declared it is the duty of the Church to promote a true social justice and, in accordance with its doctrines and apostolate, to promote the common good.

It reminded the clergy they are ministers of peace, and said it is necessary to promote peace in the countryside and discourage associations which "thrive on conflict and the division of groups."

ON THE SUNDAY night of the two-day elections, the local committees spent the evening checking the lists of those who had voted, and they button-holed the absentees to make sure that they went to the polls on Monday.

Thus was the election battle in Italy won — so far — as the civic activity of the Catholic Action committees is concerned. But it must not be forgotten that it was the prayers and sacrifices of almost the whole of Christendom that obtained for the members of Catholic Action the grace and the courage to carry on to victory.

And yet, with all this, some eight million Italians, almost all reputedly Catholics, voted the communist ticket. Why? The answer to that question is the real task that confronts Catholic Action in Italy now.

With the practical experience gained in the last three months, the leaders of Catholic Action are now setting themselves to an almost equally tremendous task. They want to find out, individually, why each of those eight million Italians voted communist.

## Pope Lauds Australian Church Rise

Melbourne (NC) — A message from His Holiness Pope Pius XII lauding what he termed the well nigh miraculous growth of the Church in the Melbourne archdiocese highlighted the Pontifical Mass in St. Patrick's Cathedral here which opened the celebrations marking the centennial of this See.

Together with the Pontifical Mass a Liturgical Reception was held for His Eminence Francis Cardinal Spellman, Archbishop of New York, who spoke at the ceremonies.

Others in attendance included Archbishop Gerald T. Bergan of Omaha; Archbishop Joseph Walsh of Tuam, Ireland; Bishop James E. Walsh, former Superior General of the Maryknollers; Msgr. Fulton J. Sheen of the Catholic University of America and former Premier Eamon de Valera of Ireland.

IN HIS SERMON, Cardinal Spellman conveyed his greetings from New York to Melbourne, a city, which, he said, "because of wise planning and good building ranks among the world's most beautiful and cultural centers." He called Melbourne the cradle of the Church in Australia and compared the qualities of its pioneer priests and settlers with those of the people who emigrated to America.

"The past 100 years bear brave testimony to inspire you with fearlessness for the future," the Cardinal said. "May you continue valiantly in the spirit of fidelity to Christ and His vicar the Pope, the guardian of the good against the goddess. No man ever followed more closely in his Master's footsteps than Pius XII. Only the beauty of his soul outshines the brilliance of his mind. Only his love of Christ outshines his deeds for Christ."

Monsignor Sheen, who is busily engaged in making radio appearances, is stressing the need for personal regeneration and sanctification to overcome the materialistic influence of communism. Commenting on Australian characteristics, the Monsignor related that he envisages the Almighty welcoming the nations to Paradise and exhibiting in Himself their own characteristics. For the Australians, he said, the Almighty will offer a smile to portray their good nature.

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