

# ROL

## UNDER THE AXE OF ITALIAN FASCISM

By

DR. EDUARD REUT-NICOLUSSI

Translated by

K. L. MONTGOMERY

Fascism is one of the most extraordinary phenomena of present-day Europe. This book, which deals primarily with the tragedy of the Tyrol, gives us a vivid glimpse of Fascism at work, shows us Fascism deliberately stamping out native tradition and culture in South Tyrol; German schools were closed, priests forbidden to pray or hear confession in German, shop-signs were translated, names—even on old gravestones!—were Italianized, murders and assaults on the German population went unpunished. Dr. Reut-Nicolussi was a member of the Bozen bar and of the Tyrolean Parliament, and leader of the People's Party in South Tyrol. He tells the story of his own life after a secret war in the mountains over the Italian-German frontiers, and draws a picture of the most dramatic conditions in the once

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OF ITALIAN FASCISM**



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*By*  
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## FOREWORD

I remember it as if it were to-day.

A slender young fellow from the Lower Inn Valley, blue-eyed and fair-haired, stood beside me in the half-destroyed trench. The dark shadows of a dark night, filled with the Shadow of Death, retreated before the morning light flooding the Dolomite crags, behind our position, as with molten gold; speechless and rapt, we stood in the unwonted pause of the fight before the ethereal scene. Insensibly a cry broke from me, "This land is worth shielding with our bodies!" That same evening, after renewed fighting, was I, myself with a shattered arm, borne past the corpse of my young comrade.

Now, as I begin this book on Good Friday, 1928, my thoughts linger on that fallen lad and the life sacrificed by him in the Tyrol mountains. I think also of those other dead on the Tyrol Front, over whose bodies the foe did not succeed in pressing onwards into their country, until in the armistice we had had orders to stop hostilities.

Those thousands of dead stark on the borders of Tyrol had not been filled with dreams of conquest; rather had their souls been dedicated to the defence of the Homeland, such dedication as later misfortune did nothing to shake. A Viennese who himself has stood with us in those Tyrol trenches recently wrote to me from America: "I have had the good fortune to take part in the War for the one undoubtedly righteous cause in the whole European turmoil, that unspoilt part of Europe, the German Alps, unspoilt, and as I believe, the noblest."

The lofty cause for which we wagered our lives in the trenches lies in the dust. Not alone the freedom of the Tyrolese Motherland has been lost, but the human dignity of her people has been made the plaything of alien wantonness and malice, her patriots go in mourning and bitterness. Yet underneath the ashes is a smouldering glow. Despite

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the oppression meted out to the Tyrolese, not a man among them in the last ten years of foreign domination has for an instant thought of surrendering the country. Belief in the Homeland—in the sense of a Tyrol one and undivided—is as it were a heritage of History, innate in the soul of a people. This is why the Innsbruck provincial Government has still preserved the name of Tyrol for the truncated remnant on the Inn and the Drave still left to Austria, and has chiselled on the walls beside the grave of the “Sand” innkeeper, Andreas Hofer, the certainty of our birthright. No less immovably is rooted that certainty in the hearts of the South Tyrolese; the heavier the blows of the Italian rain down on us, the more intensely burn our longings and the firmer grows our conviction—“The hour of our freedom will strike at last.” All that we have gone through—subjugation and spiritual deprivation on the one hand, growth of indignation and bitterest estrangement on the other—well deserve to be described after the lapse of these ten long years by a Tyrolese. Paul Herre has written an excellent book on the subject, indispensable for the student of facts, but none the less a voice from the battlefield—the voice of the persecuted Tyrol Homeland—is not superfluous.

May it, then, speak to my own people, the people of South Tyrol, as also to the whole Teutonic nation, who may well take pride in this mountain race. To him also with instinctive love for liberty and hatred for the “Might is Right” policy, may this illustration through facts—of which its reliability is its only merit—bring vividly before his eyes that frightful caricature made by the “World Peace” of those ideals for which all that was best in youth offered itself up in the World War.

If, then, one honourable man or one spirited woman, stirred by the knowledge that a brave and loyal people are enduring, guiltless though they be, all shameful indignities, should enrol themselves on the side of the Tyrol struggle, these pages will not have been written in vain.

E. R-N.

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NOTE.—In the following pages the word *Deutsch* is necessarily translated as "German", there being no precise English equivalent to express the peculiar racial development of the 'German' peoples. It has therefore been thought better to use "German" in various passages, though as Dr. Reut-Nicolussi himself has pointed out in a footnote, in his pages the expression has a totally non-political and wider sense than what is usually ascribed to the word 'German'.