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Information Outgoing - Education

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Education

~~Examination University~~

The University of Catania, the first Italian university to reopen following the interruption brought to Italy by warfare on its own soil, resumed last week. ^{6/Nov/64} Officials of the Education section of Amgot, who had an active part in bringing about the resumption of activities at the University were represented, and sent messages of good will.

In sending greetings to the Rector and faculty of the ^{and} university, as well as to the student body, Lt. Col. C. H. Gayre, Educational Adviser for Amgot, expressed the hope that the occasion might mark the beginning of a resurgence of real education in Italy, and that the country might again be able "to walk freely in the tradition of that culture which formerly made her great in the world of letters and of art."

"Before that can be done," Lt. Colonel Gayre said, "much work lies ahead. Fascism must be purged from within your walls, notorious fascists removed, and fascist chairs abolished. As this work is progressively carried out and your walls are rebuilt you will see arising before your eyes a new Italy."

Speaking at the ceremonies, Lt. Col. T. V. Smith, ~~member~~ of the Amgot Educational staff, congratulated ~~on~~ the University of Catania upon its "will to rebuild".

Present plans of the Education section are for the reopening of the University of Palermo in December, and the University of Messina in January.

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EDUCATION.

An entire generation of Italians has been indoctrinated with anti-Democratic, Fascist philosophy through the schools of Italy. With the re-opening of some of those schools, now scheduled for December 1, a start will be made toward eradication of that poisoning of millions of Italian minds.

Educational specialists in the Allied Military Government began their work on the Italian education problem long before the invasion of Sicily last July, and have been doing practical work in the field since that time. They found that the educational system was in a chaotic condition. Some school buildings had been destroyed or damaged by bombing, others were being used to house troops, civilians bombed out of their homes or refugees from other areas. Libraries and equipment were scattered or had to be rehoused. Teachers and school administrators had fled the cities to escape bombing or because they were known to be Fascists, and either could not be found or were unwilling to return. Textbooks were infused with Fascist propaganda and required rewriting. These and other problems called for solution before the schools could reopen.

Not all of the problems have been solved as yet, but much progress has been made. A graduated system of schooling is being evolved, under the direction of experienced Allied educational staff officers, from the elementary schools through the intermediate school to the ginnasia and liceo, in keeping both with Italian tradition and with urgently needed modern currents of thought. Private schools, which have been the centre of such resistance to Fascism as existed, are being permitted to continue their work, and church schools are being permitted to open for the first time. The Church has been instructed to appoint its own director of education, who will be instructed by the Educational Advisor on the curriculum and examination standards in these schools.

The universities, weak in their resistance to Fascism, were nevertheless upholding some degree of independence in internal action and thought. Reorganization of these institutions is being guided with special consideration for the contributions they can make to the rebirth of democracy in Sicily, and eventually in all of Italy. General adult education is being re-examined, also, for the aid it can give in the same direction.

Chief problems confronting A.M.G. educational staff officers upon arrival in Sicily were that the teachers and administrators had been appointed by the Fascists or were obliged to bow to Fascist orders in their work, plus the fact that all of the textbooks in use had been planned to instill Fascist ideology. It was necessary to survey the teaching staffs to eliminate ardent Fascists and to replace them with qualified and acceptable teachers; also to revise the textbooks to rid them of Fascist and anti-democratic propaganda. This twin task requires time and painstaking work, and is not yet completed.

To illustrate the kind of indoctrination to which Italian school children have been subjected for 20 years, the book used as the basis of instruction for children about seven years old includes stories on such subjects as "The Little Sentry," "The Little Soldiers," an account of armoured weapons, and a bland assumption of Italy's right to dominate the Mediterranean. Such articles are interspersed with other stories on "Tears of the Virgin," and "The Sign of the Cross," giving equal weight to political and military themes and to moral and religious themes.

As the child grows older and advances in school, he is subjected to more intense indoctrination, subtly interwoven with accepted fact and moral subjects. The textbooks describe the "March on Rome," "Exercises of Tomorrow," "The War of the People," "The Servants of Mussolini," "The Duce," "The Balilla," and other topics. Even the arithmetic and science books are made avenues for propaganda

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concerning the basic organization and assumptions of the Italian Fascist state. Textbooks in the secondary schools and universities present a further intensification of this indoctrination.

In meeting this problem, the A.M.G. Educational Advisors decided that six of the elementary school books could be used after the removal of a number of pages, but the rest had to be withdrawn entirely from use. To replace them new books have been planned and are being written. For the period until they are ready, mimeographed instructions have been prepared for teachers as to how they may conduct their classes.

The teachers themselves, long dependent upon Fascist primers and textbooks, required to teach Fascist doctrine, have come in for searching examination by the A.M.G. educational staff. Many political appointees to teaching and school administrative posts had vanished when the Allied troops came in. But that was not true of all, and it is difficult to determine whether a teacher is a Fascist, a sincere anti-Fascist, or an opportunist ready to climb on any bandwagon which will enable him to earn a living. It is not easy to tell whether a teacher or administrator is occupying a post by reason of merit and ability, or whether he is a political appointee or the beneficiary of the old Italian system of nepotism.

In separating the sheep from the goats, both politically and academically, the Educational staff officers acknowledge the help of the Political Intelligence Department of the Army. They also have devised a series of questionnaires to be filled in by all teachers. Skillfully planned, these may be analysed and cross-checked, and have helped to eliminate some of the worst elements in the schools. Personal interviews also help both in eliminating undesirable persons and in finding suitable replacements. Officials have found, however, that they must be on guard at all times to avoid doing injustice to innocent persons denounced by enemies as Fascists, and also to avoid being deceived by insincere declarations of anti-Fascist sentiment or devotion to the democratic idea. Again, they encounter a conspiracy of silence to protect Fascist incumbents.

Any notion in Allied nations that Fascism was only skin-deep in Italy is denied by the Educational Advisor of A.M.G., who points out that the entire school system had been brought under political control, and that a generation had been educated in these Fascist schools. Apart from the administrators themselves, the teachers might not have included a large proportion of politically-minded persons, but they often had managed to indoctrinate themselves in Fascism after teaching such assumptions for years.

University professors presented a rather special problem. The number of notorious Fascists is estimated at about 10 per cent of the average university faculty, but the number of anti-Fascists is believed to have been not over 5 per cent. That left 85 per cent of the faculty who might lean in one direction or the other, and there always was the difficulty of determining whether they should be removed and, if so, who should be appointed to fill vacancies.

It has been recognized that unless appointments of qualified persons are made to teaching and school administrative posts, they cannot and probably should not outlast A.M.G. occupation of Italy. This would prove an injustice to appointees, and would lay them open to a charge of "collaboration" with the occupying forces. To meet this problem, A.M.G. officers have sought to abide by the laws and customs governing such appointments and dismissals as well. The Educational Division of A.M.G. actually employs Italian professors of law to examine the statutes of all institutions so that changes will be in accordance with the processes of law.

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In actual fact, a considerable number of Fascist-minded instructors have fled or have been removed or dismissed. Most notable perhaps was Giuseppe Maggiore, professor of the philosophy of law in Palermo University and for a time its Rector. His policies, and his book, "La Politica," used as a textbook in the law school, were hostile to the democracies and especially to the United States. Yet, in the removal of such men and in the abolition of undesirable chairs, such as the "History of the Doctrine of Fascism," and the "Corporate State," A.M.G. officials have preferred to avoid too hasty action lest injustices be done and mistakes be made requiring later adjustments.

At present only a limited number of schools are ready for reopening, and teaching staffs are not complete, nor are textbooks available to the extent required. Nevertheless, the A.M.G. organization recognizes that only through education can the minds of a new Italian generation be schooled in the ways of real freedom, only through education can the minds of adult Italians be re-directed into wiser political channels. For this reason, the group of officers and educationalists now devoting themselves to these tasks believe they are not only serving their own Allied Military Government, but that by their work they are enabling Italian culture to rise again.

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