

The Fascist State takes more than
a paternalistic interest in them

Italy Recruits Her Artists

By RETO ROEDEL

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THE WORD "autarchy" may sound strange in a discussion of art, but it is necessary to use it when dealing with the contemporary Italian school. The visitor to an exhibition in Italy will discover that while one painter may have a special manner of distributing space—may be an outspoken cubist, for instance—and another emphasize pure color values, both are endeavoring to follow Italian rather than foreign models. When, in 1935, the Italian Government found it necessary to establish a far-reaching autarchy in the economic field, it sought also to strengthen autarchy in the spiritual domain—in other words, complete independence of Italian spiritual life, including art, from foreign countries.

It was not easy to establish this autarchy in painting, because it was the general opinion, even in Italy itself, that the last great schools of painting of the end of the nineteenth and the

beginning of the twentieth centuries originated in France rather than Italy. Certainly, Italy too had its great painters during this period, but what is the name of A. Fontanesi, an excellent landscapist, compared with that of Manet? How does that of J. Fattoris, leader of the Tuscan "Macchiaioli" school, compare with that of Cézanne? As late as 1932, at the biennial exhibition in Venice, there was a room devoted to an "Exhibition of the Italians in Paris" (De Chirico, De Pisis, Severini, Campigli and others). It is only since then that these painters have returned to their own country, where they are now engaged in creative art.

True, Italian art in its new aspirations has relaxed its bonds with other countries, but it is still relaxation only, not complete severance. For painters are men with open eyes and everybody must desire that they remain so. But it is also true that Italian painters give evidence of their intention and their

feeling of obligation to establish more than ever before the expression of Italian spiritual life and Italian forms. And since Italy's spiritual achievements are so great and so universally recognized, embrace such a wide domain and are in no way inferior to those of any other country, one can say that if any nation has a right to establish this obligation, it is Italy. For Italian art, which was in danger of losing itself in a vague infinity, such an obligation can mean only a return to itself, the possibility of drawing new strength from its own soil.

In addition to the official corporation of artists, two ministries are active in the development of today's artistic forces—the Ministries of National Education and for Popular Culture. These are tireless in organizing magnificent artistic events, to mention only the Venetian exhibition of Titian, Tintoretto and Veronese, the exhibition of Ferrari's painting, the Piedmontese Baroque and the Tuscan Cinquecento. As one may think that this series of brilliant events might be intended chiefly for tourist propaganda, it is proper to recall also others which these administrative bodies have initiated which are of a more definitely creative character. Among these are the contests of San Remo, Bergamo, Cremona, etc., mainly for younger artists, and the yearly contest of the *Littoriali della cultura e dell'arte*, for university students.

Obviously, all these organized efforts are to further art with a historic-political background and purpose. This may shock over-sensitive aesthetes, but it will not disturb those who

believe that a newly awakened spiritual power must also aspire to a creative reaction on the material world. Did not the Romans give the relief sculptures and the monuments to Trajan, from Nerva to Commodus and under Constantine, an epic character with the unconcealed intention of glorifying the emperors? Did not the Church, in the most brilliant period of its history, use art for the purpose of religious education? And, at the time of the Counter-Reformation, for passionate propaganda? Were Michelangelo, Rafael and Titian prevented from creating masterpieces because their patrons demanded the representation of certain motifs?

IT IS known that the Italian Government gives out large orders for artistic productions. Besides establishing substantial prizes for artistic achievement and organizing contests for new monuments, it also requires that the walls of all public buildings be adorned with frescoes, relief sculptures or mosaics. Perhaps a new Italian style is being developed in this way, working with bright colors and the composition of masses, similar to that of the Quattrocento, a style reminiscent of Massacio but nevertheless modern. These fresco paintings will, perhaps, testify to a great and typically new Italian art. Although this mural art is still in its beginning, it should not be underrated. For obvious reasons, it cannot be shown in ordinary exhibitions, but in the Zurich Exhibition it was represented by two samples, a fresco by G. Leone and a bas relief by Rito Valla, both very young.

American criticism may be valid but
it does not consider all the facts

Britain Explains the Censor's Role

By ROBERT POWELL

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BRITISH press censorship, which has long had its critics in the home field, has recently come in for sharp comment from foreign correspondents in London, particularly from American pressmen, whose accounts of the system's defects have lacked nothing in downrightness. That such criticisms have been allowed to be transmitted to the ends of the earth clearly indicates a freedom on the part of the British authorities from any attempt to curb expression of opinion, and denotes a marked difference between censorship control here and in the Third Reich. Such a possibility would have been unthinkable even in pre-war Nazi Germany, without its logical consequence of expulsion for the writer of such criticism. And in wartime, any statement as to the truth or emptiness of an official communiqué would probably have even more disastrous results.

But this point need not be stressed,

since among free peoples it is only a contrast, never a comparison, which is made between totalitarian and democratic methods of censorship. It is inevitable that British censorship should be measured against a background of peacetime freedom of the press, and not against the obvious shortcomings of the German, Italian, or Russian systems. Freedom of expression is acknowledged as the inalienable right of the Anglo-Saxon on both sides of the Atlantic; censorship is alien to him, and its restrictions are irksome and repugnant to the journalist who has to heed them. It is an institution which the democrat would like to see removed altogether. Nevertheless, most people agree as to its being essential in war. Differences of opinion arise rather as to how it should function, particularly as to whether its powers are being used in the best interests of the nation, or merely to bolster up bureaucratic inefficiency or shortsighted-