

PATHFINDER

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Italy: Anti-Fascists

Since the ill-fated Matteotti affair of 1924 the supposedly impregnable Fascist government of Benito Mussolini in Italy has been conspicuously immune from serious opposition. Disappearance of democracy under Il Duce's strong-arm system caused the outside world to believe that hostility to his dictatorial reign had vanished. But last week the surprised world learned that the totalitarian empire had other troubles besides the concerted Anglo-French demands on the Mediterranean (see page 7) and strong uprisings in Ethiopia. Though perhaps politically insignificant, that there was still opposition to Il Duce became evident.

As the Fascists prepared to celebrate the 15th anniversary of Mussolini's accession to power, proceedings of the drumhead secret tribunal for defense of the Fascist state were reported publicly for the first time since the Ethiopian war. They revealed that within the short period of 24 hours the tribunal had sentenced 26 leaders of a conspiracy known as the "United Anti-Fascist Front." Termed "young intellectuals," the conspirators were convicted of plotting to overthrow Mussolini's regime.

Those sentenced included Socialists, Communists and Republicans. Their organization, it was said, was first discovered by Mussolini's secret police in the autumn of 1936. For a year the anti-Fascists had operated in Milan and Bologna under orders from a central organization with headquarters in Paris, long a haven for Fascism's foes. While the two men alleged to have been the leaders of the plot escaped to France, more than a score were sentenced to prison terms ranging from 18 years to six months.