



PETRO BADOGLIO, DUKE OF ADDIS ABABA, MARSHAL OF ITALY, FARMER'S SON, NOW 72, HAS FOUGHT IN ALL ITALY'S IMPERIAL WARS FROM 1896 ON

ITALY LOOKS IN DESPERATION FOR A STRONG MAN

If ever a nation needed a first-class leader, it was Italy last week. And he was hard to find, after 21 years of Fascist extermination of honest men. The King's candidate was Pietro Badoglio, seen above. The King and his Premier were both over 70, and both of the race of Piedmont in the north. Badoglio has been a capable officer for 47 years. He has had a reputation for being plain-spoken and trustworthy. But his first week in charge of Italy called for a great deal more than that.

For huge events were fulminating under the old soldier. The German Army had up to ten divisions

in Italy, as against only 19 Italian divisions at home. It was Hitler's decision, not Badoglio's, as to whether Italy would be defended or abandoned. The Allies were knocking at the Messina Strait. General Eisenhower had offered "honorable conditions" of surrender, qualifying the previous "unconditional surrender," if Italy would safeguard Allied prisoners from the Germans. The Italian people were in a mind to riot, not to fight. Whichever way Badoglio jumped he was in trouble. And events might blow him sky-high before he made up his mind.

His first acts were to dissolve the Fascist party,

promise elections four months after the peace and declare, "The war goes on." This canceled out and added up to nothing at all. What he obviously hoped was that the rest of the world would forget all about the crimes of Fascist Italy and give "reformed" Italy a clean pardon. All Italian political groups hastened to try to load the whole burden of guilt on the departed Mussolini and to maneuver for allied backing after the armistice.

The Allies wanted just one thing: surrender. And the hope was strong that if Italy should fall, Bulgaria, Rumania and Hungary would quit Hitler too.