

Mussolini—Favorite Target of Assassins

Il Duce Dares Death, but His Guard Is Strong

● This is the second of a series of articles on methods used to guard Europe's dictators from murder clubs and assassins. A previous article disclosed the way in which Adolf Hitler is protected.

By WILLIAM J. MAKIN

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PERHAPS the dictator who ignores precautions more than any one else is Mussolini. Yet he has suffered more from attempted assassinations than any of the other dictators. Time and again the bullet intended for him has missed or not proved fatal. But even if news films show Mussolini striding forward vigorously and apparently unprotected, every movement of Il Duce is carefully watched.

A special police force of 300 men is responsible for the safety of Mussolini. These men are all in plain clothes. Together with uniformed Royal carabinieri, they guard the Villa Torlonia, where Mussolini lives with his family. They also guard the Palazzo Venezia, where he has his offices. I once elected to stay in a hotel facing Mussolini's workshop. My credentials were closely scrutinized before I was permitted even to book a room at the hotel.

From my hotel window I was able to look down upon the square facing the Palazzo Venezia. Except for two Fascist militiamen on sentry duty outside the main door there appears to be no obvious guard. But every one in that square is on the move. Should a stranger loiter for a few moments a member of the private guard approaches and moves him on.

But the guards' greatest fear is bombs. Because of this they have had all the sewers in the streets of Rome closed with gratings. Special guards also closely scrutinize every letter or parcel addressed to Mussolini, lest death should come through the post. And every letter or parcel is opened before it reaches the dictator.

Yet Mussolini himself laughs at these precautions. He likes to give his guards the slip and play Haroun al Raschid in the streets of Rome at night. And he may also be glimpsed riding a motorcycle at full speed on the road between Rome and Ostia, going for his daily sea bath in the summer. He also upsets his guards by deciding suddenly to join in the dances of peasants and enjoying himself with the fullest freedom.

Once Mussolini achieved

power, he saw that the police force in Italy was one of the strongest in the world.

"Before my régime," he has stated, "the Italian police, while possessing many noteworthy accomplishments, was poorly organized and lacking in the necessary equipment for its work. We stiffened the backbone of the police force and made it free from the interference of local politicians who had hitherto exercised a sort of veto power over any action the police undertook. We made the police responsible to the central authority; it proceeded with the enforcement of law and the control of crime and the criminal. I myself in open



(Wide World photo.) Above: The carabiniere who arrested a bomb-throwing assassin stands near the spot (indicated by arrow) where Duce's life was endangered.

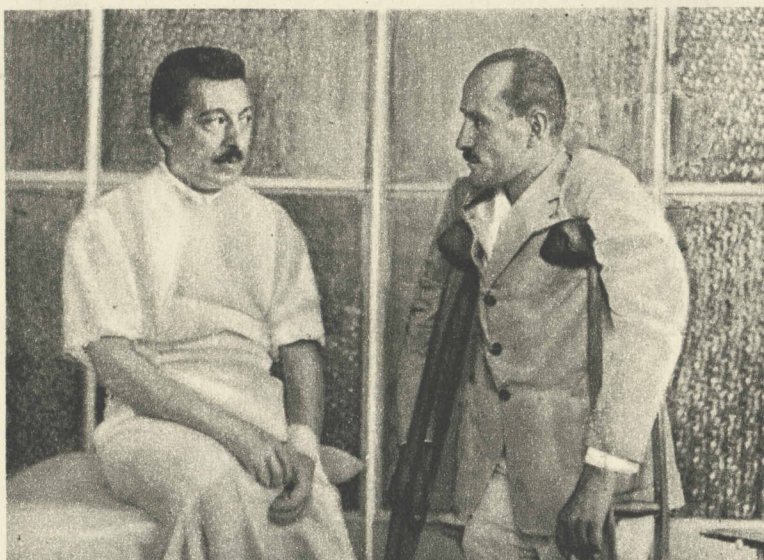
(Acme photo.) At right: Wounds during the World war and escapes from danger while recuperating have left Mussolini a bit cynical about the assassins.

parliament, in order to give the necessary moral prestige to the institution, declared that I was chief of the police."

Actually there is a secret section of this police force known as the OURA, or political section. This large organization operates through Italy and in foreign countries. It is responsible for the personal safety of Mussolini. Because of the growth of anti-Fascist organizations outside Italy and the temptation of Mussolini to receive any foreign journalist seeking

an interview in Rome, the OURA have persuaded the Duce to be more circumspect. Most of Mussolini's office hours are spent in receiving visitors. He often says that the whole of Italy flows through the enormous room in the Palazzo Venezia in which he sits as dictator. Nevertheless it is undeniable that he has become much more difficult to call upon than when he came into office. He is increasingly hard to get at.

Usually he is at his desk at an early hour. He is met by secretaries, who review the day's



(Acme photo.)

Letters published in this department should be written on one side of the paper. If you wish a personal reply please inclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

Voice of the Movie Fan

Dear Miss Tinée: I have been a movie fan and have read your column since it first appeared. I have been going to write to you all this while, but just put it off. You have never let me down. I could always depend upon what you said about every picture, and whenever I did go to some which you did not recommend I agreed perfectly with your remarks about them.

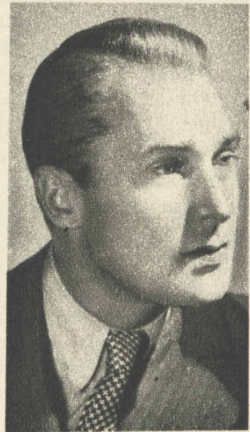
There is one picture which I saw lately, and I just must tell you how I feel about it—"Juarez." Wasn't Brian Aherne a darling? He just radiated love, and I am a better woman for having seen it. Must also mention the marvelous acting of Bette Davis and Paul Muni; they were and always are the tops.

Here's to you and your column and our movies. Always a fan, E. C.

Editor's note: Here's to you—and your enthusiasm! Come again!

Dear Miss Tinée: I've been reading your column for a long time now, and it gets better every week. It's so interesting to hear what other fans have to say about Hollywood and its stars.

I have a favorite, just like every other moviegoer has. But I'm afraid not many people are acquainted with her. She's not a star, she never had a leading rôle, yet she attracted my attention in a very small rôle. The young lady is Frances Robinson. Why her studio can't see her qualities is more than I can understand. She has



BRIAN AHERNE Called a darling by one who saw "Juarez."

looks, poise, a lovely speaking voice, and, above all, she's a very clever little actress. I'd like to see her get the break she deserves. I think with just one good rôle and a little publicity she will rise to stardom. Come on, Universal, give Miss Robinson a chance, please! Sincerely yours, MARY AGNES MORONEY.

Editor's note: So glad you like the column! And Miss Robinson's going to be so glad to know you like HER! (Always supposing she's a frequenter of our column.)

Dear Miss Tinée: I have just seen "Clouds Over Europe." Laurence Olivier's starring rôle inspires me to write my first fan letter. I didn't think it is picture was quite as good as "Wuthering Heights," but that was not Mr. Olivier's fault, I'm sure.

Anyway, I want to see and hear a lot more of him in the near future, and I would consider it a special favor if you would tell me something about him, including, of course, his age, etc. Thank you very much. NICKIE.

Editor's note: Glad to oblige. Mr. Olivier was born in Dorking, England, May 22, 1907. He's 5 feet 10 inches tall and has brown hair and eyes. Stage career started in 1925 and since then he has appeared in many stage productions in London and New York. Married Jill Esmond, English actress.

Dear Miss Tinée: Although it is, a rather late date to congratulate Brian Aherne on his wonderful performance in "Juarez," I have just seen "Captain Fury," and when I think of the difference between the two rôles—one serious, one light—I know, as everybody should know, that Hollywood has one of the finest actors of the time in Brian Aherne!

AN ADMIRING FAN.

Editor's note: Suah can act!

Dear Miss Tinée: I am one of your ardent admirers, and I can't stand to see some people write complaints in to you. If they don't like your reviews they shouldn't read them. I am one of Jackie Cooper's fans, and I would like to see more of him on the screen. He is just as good and better than Mickey Rooney. And please tell me how old Clark Gable really is. Thank you. BETTY KELLAR.

Editor's note: Everybody can't agree with you and me, Betty. That just wouldn't be na'ter. But I'm glad Jackie and I have such an ardent admirer. Clark Gable was really 38 years old on Feb. 1.

Dear Miss Tinée: A STAR is born. The star is 11-year-old recently saw in "The Under-Pup." I also had the pleasure of seeing her in person. She was very pretty on the screen, but she was really adorable on the stage. It is a pleasure to listen to her singing, and I hope to hear her again soon. Would you please tell me where I can reach her? I would be very pleased if you would put her picture in your column. Loads of success to you and Gloria Jean. Thank you.

MARION CAPRARO.

Editor's note: You can write to Gloria care of Universal studio, Universal City, Cal. Here's a nice photo of the little "star" for your album. Thanks. Come again.



GLORIA JEAN "A star is born," says her ardent fan.

Dear Miss Tinée: Some time ago I saw the picture "The Little Princess." I enjoyed the acting of Sybil Jason so much. I have never seen her in a picture before, but in this picture I enjoyed her immensely. I wish we would have more pictures with her in them. I wonder if you could tell me something about her. I have never liked Shirley Temple, who was starred in this picture. She has always seemed to me to be a little mamma's girl who never does anything bad. Of course, this would be impossible, because all children are bad sometimes. She did splendid acting, though, in "Heidi" and "Wee Willie Winkle." I for one would like to see her play in more pictures like these.

Yours always, M. F.

Editor's note: Sybil's been in a number of pictures. She played in "Little Big Shot," "I Found Stella Parrish," "The Singing Kid," "Changing of the Guard," "The Captain's Kid," and "The Great O'Malley." She was born in Cape Town, South Africa, Nov. 23, 1929. Screen career started when she was 3 years old. As for Shirley, I never have thought of her as an Elsie Dinsmore. I imagine your letter will draw replies from some of her fans. Watch the column!

Dear Mae Tinée: Please settle an argument that has been going on now for three years. The question is, at what downtown theater in Chicago did "Moonlight and Pretzels" play, and who was the star in this picture? I think this picture played in June, 1933.

RUBY MASS.

Editor's note: Imagine caring enough about anything to argue over it for three years! Whew! Why do you let things drag along like that when I'm here to help you? "Moonlight and Pretzels" was shown at the Palace theater, Chicago, in August, 1933. The leading players in this film were Leo Carrillo, Mary Brian, and Roger Pryor.



(Acme photo.) Mussolini, his nose bandaged, appears on a balcony in Rome shortly after the attempt on his life by Violet Gibson.

work with him. He is a voracious reader of the newspapers, especially the foreign ones. Everything in his enormous mail is opened by other fingers, which move gingerly when confronted with parcels. There is little fear of poison, since Mussolini does not dine out socially except occasionally in the foreign embassies. But bombs may easily be sent through the post, and it is this danger that a small group of clerks have to face when opening parcels.

There have been no fewer than six attempts to kill Mussolini. As early as 1923 he was shot at in Rome by a discharged member of the Royal guard. The shot missed him. Then a year later his chauffeur was killed beside him near the Colosseum. Mussolini himself shot the assassin. Then there came the occasion in 1926 when the Hon. Violet Gibson, a daughter of the first Lord Ashborne, fired a revolver point blank at him on Capitole hill. The bullet wounded Mussolini in the fleshy part of the nose. The wound was more painful than dangerous. The Duce was due to set out in a battle cruiser for a visit to Tripoli the next day. Every one wondered whether he would go. Mussolini went aboard the cruiser the next day in a bowler hat, with his nose covered with pink sticking plaster. He may have looked ridiculous. The crowds did not think so. Italians, Arabs, Greeks, Turks, Armenians, and

logna who fired shots as the Duce went by. The boy was lynched on the spot. Mussolini reorganized his secret police. His spies were everywhere; every movement against his dominance was strangled at its inception. Mussolini, who had once been a Socialist plotter himself, knew all the methods of the murder clubs. He used those same methods himself against his former Red companions. To the Lipari Islands, the Islands of Confine, went those who were suspected of murderous plots.

At the age of 56 Mussolini feels that he is beyond the reach of the killer, that he bears a charmed life. As an example of that charmed existence he likes to tell the story of how he nodded to death during the great war. A faulty hand grenade burst in a group of Bersaglieri. Four men were killed. From Mussolini were extracted forty-four pieces of the bomb. He had twenty-seven operations. Twenty-five were without anesthetics. Meanwhile shells were falling around the hospital. Having survived those experiences, he can afford to be contemptuous of the solitary individuals who would try to kill him.

But the determination that Mussolini shall die at the hand of an assassin still exists among the Italian émigrés in Lausanne, Paris, and London. Even in Soho, in London, a murder club whose object is to remove the Duce from this earth is known to meet on occasions and discuss possible plans. But even Mussolini knows of the byways of Soho, although you will find no mention of that Alsatia in his autobiography.

In 1908 Mussolini was a shabby Socialist, just released from prison and under Italian police surveillance. London being then an anarchist Mecca, young Benito judged it a convenient place to visit. He was befriended by one of Soho's most successful residents, one Riccioni, a pioneer of macaroni manufacturers in England. Mussolini used to sit in a small Soho café, his favorite chair being at the side of a penny-in-the-slot machine piano. He sipped coffee from a glass, refused wine, and was never seen to smoke. He rarely entered into conversation, but he listened. If the trend of talk displeased him he would stalk out of the café. "Napoleoni" jeered his compatriots after him. They little knew.

The last attempt on the life of the dictator of Italy occurred in 1936. Four men were arrested and brought for trial. The prosecution alleged that anti-Fascist refugees in France had offered \$85,000 to any one who would kill Mussolini. The four in Italy decided upon the attempt. Their first act was to explode a bomb in St. Peter's one day in June. Though the bomb which exploded did little damage, it was stated at the trial that it was intended to release sufficient poison gas during a beatification ceremony to asphyxiate the pope and all others present at the ceremony. It was alleged that other bombs were to have been used to murder Mussolini.

A chemist who gave evidence stated that gas bombs found had been made according to a formula found in the possession of one of the prisoners, Buccigliani. They would cause instant death if exploded within four walls. The special tribunal for the defense of the state before whom the four men appeared delivered sentence. Sentenced to thirty years' imprisonment were Renato Cianca and Leonardo Buccigliani. Claudio Cianca, Renato's son, was sentenced, owing to his youth, to only seventeen years. Pasquale Capasso was acquitted. He burst into tears of joy on hearing the decision. The others seemed surprised that they had escaped the death sentence. But even dictators at the height of their success can afford to be magnanimous.

NEXT SUNDAY—The barricade around Stalin.



(Acme photo.) Occasionally Il Duce speeds along Italian highways on a motorcycle, unguarded.

Jews cheered him madly. One has to admire the courage of the Italian dictator.

Another close attempt on his life was arranged by a general. The military officer had a telescopic rifle ready to level at Mussolini the moment the dictator appeared on the balcony of the Palazzo Chigi to harangue his followers. The general with his rifle was discovered in time and sentenced to thirty years' imprisonment.

He has also escaped bombs. One was thrown at his car in that fateful year of 1926. It missed Mussolini, exploded in the road, and wounded eight people. Again it was his car, in which, fortunately, he was not traveling, which attracted the shot of an assassin. This time it was Mussolini's secretary who was wounded.

There was also the boy of Bo-