

THE CRISIS OF ITALIAN FASCISM (FAENZA AND MILAN)

This much is certain—the economic crisis in Italy is growing more acute every day. The phases of this worsening are not the common manifestations of the crisis of capitalism to which the influence of foreign capital or some displacement in the international constellation of the "state of industry" might bring temporary relief, artificially reviving this or that branch of production. On the contrary this intensification of the crisis assumes the form of a reckoning to which we once applied the term, "the balance sheet of the blood and misery of the Italian proletariat".

Besides this sanguinary adjustment of the balance of class forces, fascism is faced with problems that a mortal crisis impose on the capitalist regime of every country. The fascist solution of these problems is to guide industrial development along the lines commanded by the lenders of capital who have come to the support of the Italian industry in difficulties, through the action of the world exchanges, because their interests demand it, or rather because the contradictions between the rival imperialist groups force such a course on them.

Agriculture, on the other hand, which has been orientated towards the alleged possibilities of Italian independence from foreign exports, has reached the limits of its natural resources and is moving in a closed circle—a condition from which the state-subsidized financiers and big land-owners derive all the advantages, leaving the losses to be borne by the middle and impoverished strata of the "rural population".

The Economic Stages of Fascist Development

Elsewhere capitalism has been able to solve economic problems by virtue of the important factors of colonial possessions or the possibility of expanding the apparatus of production. In Italy, where these factors are lacking, capitalism can find no way out other than by the increasingly intensified exploitation of the working class. After the initial triumph of capitalism over the workers' agitation of 1922, came the second stage of the capitalist offensive preceded by the consolidation of the bourgeois power (march on Rome) which marked the capitalist success as against the agitation of 1924-25. Following the second stage came a third, opened by the strengthening of the political domination of capitalism by means of the exceptional laws which violently strangled the working class in 1927.

This latest phase has now ended with the presentation of the balance sheet of fascist economic policy from 1922 to 1929. One must add that this economic policy has not even the merit of originality: it is a caricature of the economic policy inaugurated and defended by the "anti-fascists". It is Nitti who is the recognized engineer of the "anti-Fascist concentration". The only difference lies in the fact that Mussolini accompanied this policy with his system of violence and terror while the anti-fascist would have applied the less expensive and surer method of democratic deception of manoeuvring with the middle classes and backward section of the proletariat, limiting repression to the proletarian vanguard.

Nitti or Mussolini?

That it has been Mussolini and not Nitti who for seven years has represented the Italian bourgeoisie is due solely to the fact that only terrorism could ward off the revolutionary menace to capitalism. This does not prevent capitalism now, however (thanks to the results obtained by seven years of terror and the plight to which the Communist movement has been reduced by Centrism) from believing itself capable of successfully intervening in the working class movement by attempting to substitute Nitti for Mussolini, or to engineer a combination of Nitti and Mussolini.

After the first victory of capitalism, there was a second and then a third. At the very moment when Italian capitalism is obliged to present its economic balance, the classic proletarian belt has had to be tightened to its last notch. But after this balance, what is the outlook for capitalist economy? A radical change is impossible. This is implied not only in our general thesis of the mortal crisis of capitalism, but also in view of the actual and specific conditions of Italian economy which can live only by the intervention of foreign capitalism and the bloody attack on the living standards and wages of the workers.

Let one of these two conditions (the in-

tervention by repeated spurts of foreign capital) begin to fall, and where will Italian capitalism turn? The answer to this question is obvious—the re-inforced oppression of the working class, at the very time when the inevitable sharpening of antagonisms will furnish the propitious condition for a movement of organized resistance to fascism and the bourgeoisie.

The "Concentrationist" (Anti-Fascist) Aim for a Social-Democratic Government

In good time we outlived the terms of this problem—and were continually repulsed by the Centrists who have turned not their first and not their last hand-spring. We tried to show that the essential factors in the manoeuvring of fascist policy (Vatican, plebiscite, tentative overtures to the concentration) and the internal dissensions of the fascist party were to be found in the economic reasons which forecast in the near future a new offensive on the miserable wages of the Italian workers.

And the news recently made public clearly shows this capitalist offensive against which transpired the episodes of resistance in Pouilles, Sulmona, Turin, Faenza and Milan. The "Concentration" (anti-fascist) press which is anxious to prove to the bourgeoisie the utility and dangers of fascism, and the benefits and advantages of a social-democratic government, tried to point out that these incidents, which followed each other in rapid succession, were without any inner connection. But the "Concentration" deceives itself when it pretends that the substitution of an anti-fascist for a fascist governing personnel can take place as a pacific transfer of power from one hand to another. In actual fact, however, the "Concentration" for whom this perspective is bound up with its direct and indirect relations with the foreign powers, and the forces of Anglo-American imperialism, understands perfectly that the perspective which would permit its accession to power is very different.

The Proletarian Insurrection Only Can Defeat Fascism

The struggle against fascism can only be settled by a proletarian insurrection; it is therefore in the proletarian camp that it is necessary for the "Concentration" to conquer such positions so that, in the course of the insurrection, it could intervene to direct the proletarian movement from its revolutionary development and into the channel of the conservation of the capitalist regime. This explains why a considerable element of the Centrist anti-fascist ideology of the Italian Communist Party has found its way into the "Concentration" (popular revolution, constituent assembly, Labriolism of the latest cut). The fact, moreover, that many of the political views of the Left Communists have been fraudulently adopted by Centrism—for domestic requirements in the struggle against us—can only increase the confusion. Far from acting as a stimulus to the struggle, Centrism is an element of disintegration, leading the workers to doubt the correctness of a proletarian policy instead of getting them to realize that what they ought to doubt, by unmasking its artificial shifts of scenery—is Centrism itself.

The evolution of the "Concentration", owing to the necessity of deceiving the proletariat and that of Centrism from the need of fighting the Left—these are the political barriers between which the movements of resistance and rebellion against Italian fascism, are condemned to oscillate. They are the political barriers upon which the events of Pouilles, Sulmona, Turin, Faenza and Milan supervened. One thing is sure: either the workers will succeed in smashing these barriers, or their movements will follow an extremely bloody and painful course, permitting Italian capitalism to register new successes.

The two most recent movements, the character of which we must closely analyze are those of Faenza and Milan.

The Outbreaks at Faenza—a Signal of the Future

At Faenza the collisions occurred at two different times. In the first, Donati, who had reached the breaking-point of endurance, killed a few of the most notorious fascists. Thereupon the fascists immediately mobilized their forces; their objective was not, however, as on many other occasions, to wreak general devastation, but to cover the ground with corpses by means of floggings. During this fascist

mobilization, a family in the suburb of Santa-Lucia, offered up heroic resistance and some of their assailants were killed. These two incidents bear not the character of an explosion of individual hatred, but of an encounter which fits in with events, which elsewhere too, preceded and followed it. These peasants aimed to make a breach in the apparatus of brutal repression of the living conditions of the workers. By their sacrifices, they demonstrated that only violence could make this breach.

It is interesting to observe what was the reaction of the defensive mechanism of fascism, and why it did not have recourse to the usual form of reprisals. The present plan of Fascism is to "individualize" the reprisals on the peasants who resist and are already at the disposal of the Special Tribunal. It is consequently because Fascism understands that, if mobilization and carnage in any given locality may still be possible—the conditions now exist (verified by the simultaneous character of the recent anti-fascist incidents) which could transform an expedition into one or several districts into a revolutionary movement.

Faenza showed that the possibility of enduring fascist persecutions has now reached its extreme limit; that against these persecutions violent and aimed resistance is developing; and that the apparatus of repression, instead of pursuing the familiar tactic of collective reprisals, is hesitating, and from fear of the growing unrest, is "individualizing" its reprisals.

The Economic Causes of the Milan Movement

At Milan, the motives which occasioned the manifestations of Sesto and Miani-Silvestri, rise more or less directly from the economic situation.

It is a familiar fact that capitalism, before or in the course of an offensive for wage reductions, embarks on dismissals. To effect these staff reductions, in connection with the reduced possibility of the sale of commodities, the employers have decided on wholesale let-outs. The workers set themselves in motion to prevent this plan of the bosses from being put into effect with a struggle—the scope of the movement and the conduct of the dispute again proved that fascism did not resort to the system of wholesale violence and destruction out of fear of the consequences that would follow a fresh massacre. The federal secretary of the Milan Fascist Organization, speaking of the workers' movements of Miani-Silvestri, tried to prove that the workers were not guilty of the manifestations attributed to them. The old Fascist tactic would have been to mobilize the apparatus of repression against the "adversaries of the regime".

Italy is gripped in the frame-work of an economic policy which has no other possibility of development than a new offensive against the standards of the workers, the safety valve of capitalism in the sharpening economic crisis. What are the conditions which could enable the proletarian movement to uproot and crush the capitalist dictatorship?

The Proletariat Must Lead the Struggle Against Fascism

We have always protested against the pretended analogy between the fascist and Tsarist dictatorship. In Italy you have a dictatorship of capitalism; in Russia you had a government of the class which preceded the bourgeoisie in its historic role and which one cannot confound with the bourgeoisie at all. For this reason, in Russia the break-down of the Tsarist machine could result from a workers' and peasants' movement, and also from the conflict and friction between capitalism and the feudal classes. In Italy on the other hand, the overthrow of the fascist apparatus can only be brought about by proletarian movements. If these movements do not develop, if they are not gathered together and coordinated, the enemy apparatus will maintain its repressive force. This very aspect of fascism as a representative of the interests of capitalism, and the specific conditions and social relations in Italy, where the proletarian revolution is on the order of the day, bring into relief the regime in Poland or the Baltic countries, differences between the Italian regime and

In view of the weakness of its political position, Centrism would like to maintain its prestige by procuring the following species of "revolutionary theorem" to the masses: "the more perfect the operation of the repressive apparatus of capitalism,

the more is the political path we choose correct." This curious childishness, applied to the Italian situation, would mean that the road of the revolution is one that proceeds not through the weakening of fascism, but through its consolidation until the happy day when capitalism can appeal to all its imposing fascist and social-democratic forces, and set in motion all the forces at its disposal in the present situation of balance of class forces. On that day the machine-guns of the proletarian vanguard will be recognized by the enemy as in the right.

For Marxists, however, the road of the revolution runs through the consolidated blocs of all the leading forces of capital, fascist and social-democratic; to the point where their control disintegrates and the proletariat can advance and conquer.

Policy of Centrism Has Been Ruinous

Practically speaking, the crumbling of the enemy forces depends on two essential factors: the economic situation and the activity of the proletariat through the channel of its Party. In the present Italian situation, the element of "economic crisis" exists—what is lacking is the activity and capacity of the proletariat. In place of a real capacity for struggle by the Party, we have in reality the political obstacles which have been mentioned—the action of the social-democracy and the ruinous effects of Centrism on Communist policy.

As regards the social-democracy, the experience of the Italian proletariat these last ten years speaks for itself.

As for the Centrists, in their analysis of the Sulmona and Faenza events, they put themselves to needless trouble when they try to infer from a distribution of leaflets etc. the existence of an organization able to lead the movement.

In the present situation, where organization is illegal, the elements permitting of the establishment of an organized force or of a force capable of creating an organization, when the situation will permit, are those who show the capacity of a Party to politically envisage events, and assuring the confidence of the mass in the Party, a confidence capable of assuring leadership and development to the movements that arise.

Influence of Stalinized Communist Party at Minimum

Faenza, Sulmona and Milan show clearly that the influence of the Party as an organizing factor in the masses has been reduced to its minimum. If individual militants in the Party fight very actively in the movement, that is not enough to replace the enormous loss of prestige of the Party as an organization. This loss flows from the international mistakes of the movement, and particularly from the fact that those who ought to be leading the revolution in Italy are at the same time helping to exercise their repression on the revolutionary vanguard in Russia.

There are numerous indications that many elements of the Party are opposed to the disastrous tactic of Centrism and are evolving in the direction of our group. The Centrist bureaucrats are greatly mistaken if they believe that plenty of money and plenty of lies can perpetuate their leadership. The latter arises not from our "will" but because there are revolutionary reasons and requirements, as recent events prove.

The fact that Sulmona and Faenza preceded Milan, the fact that the manifestations of violence were of a much clearer character in the former than in Milan, raises the question of the relative influence of workers and peasants in the development of the situation.

The Policy of the Left Unites the Masses for Struggle

The well-known thesis of the Left is that the sole path to liberation lies in the unification of the workers' and peasants' movements under the leadership of the proletariat. This central position is again brought into full relief by the assassination of Gorton. But the fact that it is the peasants' movements which have been the most violent by comparison with the feeble movements in Turin and Milan, shows in itself the seriousness of the situation.

The development of the revolution in Russia also taught us a lesson on this head. If the beginnings of the revolution were embraced in the workers' movements of 1905 and the magistral policy of the Bol-

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