

CHAPTER I

THE REVOLUTION THAT NEVER WAS

§ 1: *The Post-War Neurasthenia*

ITALY, like every other country, in 1919-20 suffered from what may be called 'post-war neurasthenia.' This disease was at its worst in the defeated countries; but it reached a dangerous pitch in those that were victorious, and did not even spare those that had remained neutral. In Italy, it was aggravated by certain peculiar circumstances.

Italy had not been unexpectedly invaded like Belgium and France. Her people were not suddenly pitchforked into war, without time for reflection, like those of Germany, Austria-Hungary, and England. For nine months, from August, 1914, to May, 1915, the question of war or neutrality was argued threadbare. The Socialists and the Catholics almost all declared against war. The governing groups split up into 'interventionists' and 'neutralists,' and remained divided during the whole of the war. This division of opinion prevented the working-classes from clearly grasping the reason for, and the necessity of, the war. They felt they were being forced to face death unnecessarily, and when the war was over, they came back with a deep feeling of bitterness against all those in power.

During the war, and especially during the last year, the politicians made extravagant promises to the soldiers in order to keep up their fighting spirit. Peace was to be ensured for their children and their children's children; youth was to replace old age in public life; land was to be given to the peasants; a root-and-branch reform of laws and customs was to prove the country's gratitude to those who had shed their blood for her.¹ When the war was

¹ On November 20, 1918, in a speech to the Chamber of Deputies, the Prime Minister, Signor Orlando, boasted: "This war is at the same time the greatest political and social revolution in history, surpassing even the French Revolution!" The same day, an ex-Premier, Signor Salandra, who was to become one of the god-fathers of the Fascist movement, proclaimed: "The war is a revolution, yes, a very great revolution. Let no one think that after the storm it will be possible to make a peace-

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over, the politicians found out that none of these promises could be kept, and promptly proceeded to forget them. But the people remembered: the capitalist, they said, had got the substance, and the soldiers, the shadow.

If impossible promises could not be kept, unnecessary pain at least need not have been inflicted. But as it was, the pensions to the families of the killed and wounded, and the medical examination of wounded-claimants, were granted only after exasperating delays. This was partly due to the disorder in which the soldiers in all countries keep their papers, and partly to the fact that the office staffs protracted their business as long as possible to avoid demobilization. The poor victims had the impression of being robbed of their rights by the malevolence of the 'Government' and of the *bourgeoisie*.

At the same time the country was in the throes of a severe economic crisis. During the war, and in the first post-war months, agreements were come to between the Allied powers and the Italian Government which prevented or restricted the fall of the lira. But in the second half of 1919 the Italian Government had to fall back on its own resources. As a result Italy passed through a financial crisis similar to that of France in 1925-6.¹ Prices rose accordingly.² There was a real economic upheaval. To meet the rise in prices, the workers, in town and country, struck for higher wages, and the Civil Servants followed their example.

The process of demobilization threw into the labour market, able return to the old order. Let no one think that the old habits of leisurely life can be resumed.³ If this was the declared opinion of two Prime Ministers, one of them belonging to the Extreme Conservative Right, we can easily imagine how extravagant were the expectations of the revolutionaries of the Extreme Left.

¹ The average cost of 100 Swiss francs was 130 lire in December, 1918; 152.32 in June, 1919; 241.67 in December, 1919; 308.48 in June, 1920; 441.02 in December, 1920.

² Taking as 100 the Italian average prices in 1913, the index number during 1919 and 1920 ranks as follows: 1919, June, 451; December, 576; 1920, January, 639; February, 701; March, 758; April, 836; May, 831; June, 795; July, 761; August, 778; September, 825; October, 829; November, 844; December, 825.

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in the course of 1919 and 1920, some 160,000 discharged officers. The better elements among these went quietly back to their homes and sought for work like the anonymous masses of demobilized workmen and peasants. But it was not easy for some of them to find a livelihood. Called to the colours at the age of nineteen or twenty, they had learned no trade but war. Many, who before the war had been clerks, professional men in a small way, or small shopkeepers, had won the rank of officers. They had grown accustomed to having a fair amount of money to spend, they had acquired a taste for command and for a life of adventure. On their return home, they could not adapt themselves to the uneventful and obscure labour of a postman, a shop assistant, or a clerk. Being hungry and discontented, they imagined themselves revolutionaries, and hung about the towns, eaten up with idleness, dissatisfied with themselves, their neighbours and the world in general. Restless chimerical spirits, thirsting for adventure, they were capable alike of heroic acts and frightful crimes, stirring up revolt as long as they lacked a means of livelihood, but once having secured that, ready to turn into violent reactionaries. Many of them threw in their lot with the Socialist movement and were called 'War-Socialists.' Others formed in 1919 and 1920 the first nuclei of the Fascist Party. War-Socialists and Fascists are to be found at the head of all the worst disorders of the past nine years.

In the midst of this universal unrest there crept in the propagandists of Bolshevism, preaching strikes, local and general, the occupation of factories and of the land, sabotage and obstructionism, and hoping thus to pave the way for the 'dictatorship of the proletariat.'

To all these causes of post-war neurasthenia was added another — the worst of all. The war was hardly over when the General Staffs of the army and the navy, and the Foreign Office, organized a systematic propaganda to convince the people that President Wilson and the Allied Governments of France and England were robbing Italy of the fruits of victory, and that the sacrifices made in the war were in vain, since the Government could not carry out, in its entirety, the programme of territorial expansion that it

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considered necessary. The authors of this hysterical campaign and the Nationalists and Fascists who were their agents hoped to keep alive the war spirit of the Italian people, and to bring pressure to bear on the Allied Governments and President Wilson, during the interminable peace negotiations. The Allies and Wilson paid no heed to their threats, and the General Staffs and the Foreign Office succeeded only in working up a great part of the Italian middle and intellectual classes to a state of frenzy. Thus was generated the state of mind which resulted in D'Annunzio's raid on Fiume in September, 1919. Thus the spirit of sedition was fostered in the army and the Government became incapable of suppressing disorder.

Among the working-classes this short-sighted policy had a disastrous result. Having been forced against their will into an appalling war lasting three and a half years, and disappointed in all the promises that had been made to them, the Italian people were now told that they had shed their blood in vain.

The French Government also did not succeed in obtaining at the Peace Conference all that it desired – as, for instance, the immediate annexation of the Saar, the permanent military occupation of the left bank of the Rhine and the dismemberment of Germany. Notwithstanding this, the French people did not pass through a crisis of exasperation like that which made many Italians lose their heads completely. The reason was that MM. Poincaré, Clemenceau and Foch did not start a campaign of wild recrimination like that initiated by Signor Orlando, Baron Sonnino and the General Staffs of the Italian army and navy. What would have happened in France, if nearly all the newspapers, deputies and ministers on whom had fallen the responsibility of the war, for two years, had unceasingly protested that France had been robbed of her victory, that France was ruined, that France had to prepare to make war on her allies in order to seize what these allies had refused her? Would the French soldiers have returned contentedly to their homes, or would they have slain the deputies, the journalists and the ministers who had made the war and who now declared themselves powerless to safeguard the 'vital interests' of the nation?

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Those who profited most by the propaganda of the Nationalists and Fascists were the Socialists. They could affirm, in the very words of the men who were in favour of the war, that, after all the blood that had been spilt, another war was imminent—a war of which D'Annunzio gave the signal by occupying Fiume at the very moment when the country was in the midst of the parliamentary elections of November, 1919.¹

These elections took place in an atmosphere of revolutionary excitement. The new Chamber was divided into three sections: 156 Socialists, 100 Christian-Democrats ('Partito-Popolare') and a body of 250 deputies split into many political groups. No single section of these three had a majority. The Cabinets were formed by a part of the 250 deputies, who belonged neither to the Socialist nor to the Christian-Democrats. This small minority was supported by the Christian-Democrats, who lent some of their men to the Ministries, but never found a basis for a permanent agreement. And these weak coalitions had to withstand the opposition not only of the Socialist deputies, but also of those non-Socialists and non-Christian-Democrat deputies who remained outside the Coalition.

Such a situation could only lead to the paralysis of parliamentary institutions. And this parliamentary paralysis showed itself at a time when the exaltation left in people's minds by the war accentuated the need of a firm government. Post-war neurasthenia made the regular workings of Parliament impossible, and the breakdown of Parliament increased the post-war neurasthenia.

For all these reasons, Italy in 1919–20 seethed with continual unrest. The soldiers, reading the revolutionary papers, no longer obeyed their officers. The officers no longer obeyed the Government, but favoured D'Annunzio. The Ministers had forfeited all moral prestige, and moreover had not enough force at their com-

¹ On the disastrous effects of the Nationalist propaganda and of D'Annunzio's expedition to Fiume, see Novello Papafava, *Appunti militari*, 1919–1921, Ferrara, S.T.E.T., 1921, p. 143; Guglielmo Ferrero, *Da Fiume a Roma*, Milan, Ed. Athena, 1923, p. 12; and Edgar Ansel Mowrer, *Immortal Italy*, New York and London, D. Appleton & Co., 1922, pp. 275 and 315.

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mand to maintain order; they were swayed this way and that by the threats of anyone who succeeded in frightening them. Trials for political crimes were postponed by the magistrates who lacked the courage to pronounce sentence. Strikes on the most trivial pretexts were frequent, many of them exasperating, especially those which occurred in the essential services, such as the railways, tramways, postal and telegraph facilities, and the light and food supplies of the large towns.¹

§ 2: *Mussolini in 1919-20*

Apologists for Fascism, in explaining why there was no Bolshevik revolution in Italy in 1919-20, give the credit to Mussolini and the *Fasci di Combattimento* (Fighting Groups) which he began to gather round him in March, 1919. 'Fascism'—they say—'stamped out Bolshevism in Italy. Had Bolshevism conquered Italy, the rush of the Communist revolution would have been irresistible and all Europe would have collapsed in social disorganization and destitution. In saving Italy from Bolshevism, Mussolini saved European civilization from shipwreck.'

'Such an appeal for self-sacrifice'—writes the *Morning Post*, September 13, 1926—'can only be made at a moment of imminent peril, and for Italy that moment came when the post-war anarchy seemed to have won the final victory. It is to Signor Mussolini's undying glory that he made that appeal when all seemed lost.'

And Mr. Winston Churchill solemnly proclaims to the Roman Fascists in January, 1927:

'If I had been an Italian I am sure I should have been entirely with you from the beginning to the end of your victorious struggle against the bestial appetites and passions of Leninism.'

¹ A fair-minded résumé of the causes of the general unrest is given by Giorgio Mortara, *Prospettive economiche*, 1923, Città di Castello, 1923, pp. 421-2; see also Mowrer, *Immortal Italy*, pp. 317-29. This book of this intelligent and honest American eye-witness was written before the Fascist legend was concocted; it is therefore a valuable and trustworthy source of information.

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These opinions are in no way justified by facts.

Until the outbreak of the Great War Mussolini was a Revolutionary Socialist of the Extreme Left. Moreover, breaking with the official traditions of Socialism and leaning towards Anarchism, he even approved of the worst Anarchistic outrages.

In July, 1910, an Anarchist threw a bomb at the Colon Theatre in Buenos Ayres. Mussolini wrote in the newspaper *Lotta di Classe*, of which he was editor, under the date of July 9, 1910:

‘I admit without discussion that in normal times bombs do not belong to Socialist methods. But, when a Government – be it Republican, Imperial or Bourbon – gags you and puts you beyond the pale of humanity, then one cannot condemn violence in reply to violence, even if it makes some innocent victims.’

In the number of July 16, 1910, he insisted:

‘In the Colon Theatre, on that famous gala evening, all those present represented Government reaction. Why call the bomb-thrower a coward, simply for disappearing in the crowd? Did not even Felice Orsini attempt to hide? And did not the Russian terrorists, when their *coup* had been carried out, try to avoid arrest? Are they heroic-madmen who carry out individual action? They are heroes nearly always, but scarcely ever insane. Was Angiolillo a madman? Was Bresci a madman? Or Sofia Perowskaja? No! Their behaviour drew words of admiration even from bourgeois journalists of high intelligence. In judging these men and their acts, we must not place ourselves on the mental plane of the bourgeois and the police. It is not we Socialists who must cast a stone. Let us acknowledge instead that individual acts have also their value and sometimes are the first signals of profound social transformations.’

Angiolillo was the Anarchist who, in 1897, killed the Spanish minister Canovas del Castillo, and Bresci was the Anarchist who killed King Humbert in July, 1900.

After the assassination of the Russian minister, Stolypin, Mussolini wrote in the *Lotta di Classe* of September 23, 1911:

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'A just Nemesis struck him down. He was an oblique, sinister and blood-thirsty individual. He deserved his fate. The Russia of the proletarians is now exultant, and waits for dynamite to shatter the bones of the Little Father of the blood-stained hands. The tragic end of the minister of Nicholas II is perhaps the beginning of a new period of revolutionary action. We hope so. In the meantime, all honour to the Avenger who has fulfilled the sacred rite.'

In March, 1912, the Anarchist Alba attempted to shoot the present King of Italy, now Mussolini's 'cousin,' wounding instead a cuirassier in the royal retinue. A group of Socialist deputies led by Bissolati went to congratulate the King on his escape. At the National Socialist Congress in the following July, Mussolini censured them severely, and had them expelled.

'On March 14' — he said — 'a mason fired his revolver at Victor of Savoy. There were clear precedents for this — that of Bresci and that of Elizabeth of Austria. It might have been hoped that nowadays no Workers' Organization would hang out flags on such an occasion. Clever people should not have let themselves be influenced by sentiment. An attempt on life is an accident which happens to Kings just as falling off a bridge is an accident which happens to masons. If we are to shed tears, let us shed them for the masons. Instead of which we had an acrobatic performance. . . . Bissolati went to congratulate the King.'¹

When the Great War broke out in 1914, Mussolini, then editor of the *Avanti*, the official organ of the Italian Socialist Party, preached for two months that the workers ought not to let themselves be swept into the 'bourgeois war,' but to be ready to bring about the social revolution as soon as war had launched the 'crisis of capitalist society.' His neutrality was the neutrality of Lenin and of the Revolutionary Socialists. In October, 1914, he suddenly declared himself in favour of the intervention of Italy

¹ Speech pronounced by Mussolini at the sitting of July 13, 1912, and published in the newspaper *Letta di Classe*, July 23, 1912, edited by Mussolini.

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in the Great War on the side of the Entente.¹ In November, 1914, without a penny in his pocket he founded a daily paper: *Il Popolo d'Italia*.²

During the war he continued to call himself a Socialist and a Revolutionary, extolling the war as the way to a subsequent social revolution. When the war was over, he left off calling himself a Socialist, but continued to proclaim himself a Revolutionary, casting fuel on the flame of unrest and discontent and making a hodgepodge of ultra-Revolutionary and ultra-Nationalist propaganda.³

The programme of Mussolini and his Fascists, who began to organize themselves in the 'Fighting Groups' ('Fasci di Combattimento') in March, 1919, included demands for a National

¹ See Note A at the end of this chapter.

² More than once he has been publicly accused of having obtained the necessary capital from the French Government. A Milanese weekly paper, *L'Italia del Popolo*, in its issue of May 3, 1919, definitely accused Mussolini of 'having cashed patriotic cheques from the French Government,' and challenged him to bring the matter into court, concluding: 'We hold proofs of all that we have said and written.' In March, 1925, during the trial of Bonomini, murderer of the Fascist Bonservizi, at the Paris Court of Assizes, Maitre Torrès openly accused Mussolini of having, in 1914, 'trafficked' with the French Government over his change of attitude towards the War, and reiterated the charge in an interview which was published in the leaflet *Guerra di Classe* (single edition, Paris, March, 1925): 'The first sum paid to Mussolini was fifteen thousand francs, after which a monthly payment of 10,000 francs was agreed upon. The first sum was handed over by M. Dumas, secretary of the Minister, M. Guesdes. Thus the *Popolo d'Italia* was launched with an interventionist programme. This genuine account of the fact no one dares to deny, for fear of even more crushing documents.' The French Socialist deputy, M. Renaudel, wrote in the *Quotidien* (November 9, 1926): 'Many of us remember well that the first issues of the *Popolo d'Italia* were published thanks to French money. Marcel Cachin knows all this, although he does not like it to be talked of.' (M. Cachin became a Communist after the war, but during the war he was a member of the 'Union Sacrée,' and made some semi-official journeys to Italy.)

³ See the posthumous pamphlet of Giacomo Matteotti, *Il Fascismo della prima ora* ('The Early Days of Fascism'), Roma, Tip. Italiana, 1924; and Carlo Avarna di Gualtieri, *Il Fascismo*, Torino, Gobetti, 1925, pp. 14-29.

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Constituent Assembly, which was to be the Italian section of the 'International Constituent Assembly of the Peoples'; the proclamation of an Italian Republic; the sovereignty of the people exercised by means of universal suffrage for both sexes; the abolition of the Senate; of all titles of nobility and of compulsory military service; international disarmament; an elected magistracy; the dissolution of limited liability companies and banks and the suppression of the stock exchange; the registration and limitation of private fortunes; confiscation of unproductive capital; land for the peasants and the transferring of the management of industry, transport and public services to syndicates of technicians and the workers. 'All the after-war platitudes, all the most extreme and absurd expectations of that neurotic period were embodied in the programme of the nascent party.'¹

When the Socialists demanded the eight-hour day, Mussolini's organ, the *Popolo d'Italia*, proclaimed that the forty-eight hours was a betrayal of the proletariat. In March, 1919, when 2,000 workmen in Dalmine, a town in the province of Bergamo, who were engaged in a wage dispute with their employers, occupied the workshops of Messrs. Franchi and Gregorini, this, the first of such disorders, was actually promoted by Mussolini's followers and he himself went to Dalmine and addressed the men, praising their fine achievement.

'The Dalmine experiment' – said the *Popolo d'Italia* of April 1, 1919 – 'is of the greatest value as showing the potential capacity of the proletariat to manage the factories themselves.'

The food riots which unsettled many Italian towns in June and July, 1919, were promoted by the very same men who now form the staff of the Fascist Party, while the Socialist organizers, though taken unawares by the outbreaks, did their best to restrain them. Mussolini at the time wrote in the *Popolo d'Italia* of July 4:

'In Romagna the people have revolted vigorously against the greed of the speculators and have already succeeded in obtaining a great reduction in prices. Requisitions and control of prices are

¹ Carlo Avarna di Gualtieri, *Il Fascismo*, p. 17.

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having the desired effect. We are witnessing the revolt of the working classes against those primarily and directly responsible for the intolerable food situation. It is not the Socialist Party which has provoked and directed these demonstrations. It lacks the will to lead a movement which may disrupt the parliamentary game of trickery, past and present. For our part we explicitly affirm the fundamental justice of the popular protest.'

And on July 5:

'I hope that the masses in the exercise of their sacred right will strike at the criminals, not only in their goods, but in their persons. A few food-hogs hanging from the lamp-posts would be a good example. The Fascist Central Committee proclaims its absolute solidarity with the masses who have risen against the famine-makers, welcomes the movement of requisitioning by the people and pledges the Fascisti to promote and support the agitation.'¹

On January 1, 1920, the outbreak of a national railway strike was welcomed by a contributor to the *Popolo d'Italia* (who is now

¹ Signor Villari, *The Awakening of Italy* (London, Methuen and Co., 1924), is very hard on Anarchists, Communists and Socialists, to whom he imputes all the responsibility for the post-war troubles. He is very severe on the moderate Socialists, who 'swam with the tide' (p. 79). He writes: 'Turati advocated the slow process of penetration into bourgeois institutions with the object of transforming them into organs for the welfare of the community instead of trying to erect a Socialist State by revolutionary means; even the more moderate Socialists who did not desire a revolution or who disbelieved in its possibility, such as Turati and Treves, were too much afraid of losing popularity with the masses to speak their minds openly' (pp. 51, 74, 116). But he has no word for the ultra-revolutionary attitude of Mussolini and his friends in these years when the tide was at its highest. He writes only: 'The numbers of the adherents of the Fasci were still too limited to give the movement that national importance which it was afterwards to assume, nor had it yet developed its social policy of reconciling capital and labour: for the moment its chief function was to oppose Bolshevism by force' (p. 105). In drawing so modest a veil over all that Mussolini did to swell that tide, he can allow the whole weight of his honourable condemnation to fall on the moderate Socialists who did not dam the tide with sufficient energy.

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a Fascist deputy) especially because 'it had been declared without the knowledge of either the Socialist Party or the General Confederation of Labour.'¹

'The strike is' – he wrote – the 'work of a formidable mass of employees, acting in undeniable good faith and convinced that they are in the right. In the Railway dispute the Socialist Party and the General Confederation of Labour are leaving the railwaymen to themselves till they are near defeat. After so many years of Socialist domination these strikes are the first which have been planned and carried on outside and in spite of the tyrannical will of the Socialist Party. The days of working-class violence have a revivifying value and are a thousand times superior to the paltry methods of the mischief-mongers.'

In the *Popolo d'Italia* of April 6, 1920, he wrote as follows:

'I start from the individual and strike at the State. Down with the State in all its forms and incarnations. The State of yesterday, of to-day and of to-morrow. The bourgeois State and the Socialist State. In the gloom of to-day and the darkness of to-morrow the only faith which remains to us individualists destined to die is the at present absurd but ever consoling religion of anarchy.'

At the same time Mussolini was urging the masses to overthrow their weak and worthless Government. They should be ready, he said, to lend a helping hand to the vanquished nations, Russia, Germany, Hungary and Bulgaria, which he called the proletarian nations, in promoting a new revolutionary war against

¹ In Italy before the victory of Fascism the workers' unions in a given trade were organized into National Federations, some of which were under Socialist, others under Christian-Democrat control. The National Federations controlled by the Socialist Party were united in the 'General Confederation of Labour' (*Confederazione Generale del Lavoro*) which had a permanent central office analogous to that of the T.U.C. in England. The National Federations controlled by the Christian-Democrats also formed an 'Italian Confederation of Workers' which also possessed a permanent central office. In the same way the Unions controlled by the Revolutionary Syndicalists and by the Anarchists were united in an 'Italian Syndicalist Union.'

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those which he termed the capitalist nations, France, England and the United States, which had prevented Italy from annexing Fiume, Dalmatia, Asia Minor and the colonial Empire necessary to her existence.

By means of this chaotic mixture of revolutionary and nationalist propaganda Mussolini endeavoured to win over the workers and peasants from the Socialist Party. The military authorities distributed the *Popolo d'Italia* gratis to the soldiers in 1919 and 1920, hoping they would absorb nationalistic ideas and reject revolutionary ones. The soldiers, however, absorbed the revolutionary and rejected the nationalistic ideas. Then the military authorities threw the blame on 'Bolshevist' propaganda, instead of blaming themselves for their own stupidity. And Mussolini only succeeded in rallying round him a part of that 'intelligentsia' which had been so hard hit by the demobilization. In the parliamentary elections of November, 1919, in the province of Milan, only 4,795 votes were given to Mussolini's list out of a total poll of 346,000.¹

But in those two years the work of Mussolini and his followers contributed more than a little to increase the post-war restlessness.

Men of four widely differing types of mentality came together in what was at that time called the 'Bolshevist' movement: (a) the Anarchists and Revolutionary Syndicalists; (b) the Communists proper, who were in close touch with Moscow; (c) the 'Maximalist' Socialists, who, in England, would be half-way between the I.L.P. and the Communists; and (d) the 'Reformist' Socialists, corresponding to the right wing of the Labour Party. The first group had behind it the 'Italian Syndicalist Union,' with a membership of about 300,000 workers. The Communists and the 'Maximalist' and 'Reformist' Socialists were then still united in the 'Italian Socialist Party' and controlled the 'General Confederation of Labour,' which had a membership of about 2,150,000. The Anarchists, the Revolutionary Syndicalists and the Communists were always in the forefront in economical or political strikes and riots, which frequently resulted in bloodshed. The 'Reformist'

¹ Mussolini, *La nuova politica dell'Italia*, Milano, 1925, p. 17: "Throughout 1919, the number of Fascists in Italy did not total 10,000."

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Socialists, amongst whom were all the most influential leaders of the 'General Confederation of Labour,' strove to restrain unjustifiable strikes and disorderly demonstrations. The 'Maximalist' Socialists, who included the greater part of the 'War Socialists' and who carried on the official organ of the party, *Avanti* ('Forward'), made a considerable display of revolutionary catchwords without having any precise plan of action. They went from right to left and from left to right according as their followers were pushed towards the left by the Anarchists and Communists or seceded to the right after having experienced the inanity of disorder.

Mussolini and his followers poured their scorn particularly on the leaders of the General Confederation of Labour and on the 'Maximalist' and 'Reformist' Socialists, calling them 'mock revolutionaries,' 'inefficient revolutionaries' and 'blacklegs.' When Enrico Malatesta, the well-known Anarchist, came from England to Italy, putting new strength into the revolutionary movement, Mussolini sent him a 'cordial welcome,' contrasting him with the 'imbecile and infamous Socialists' as a man who 'was ready to die for his faith' (*Popolo d'Italia*, December 27, 1919). He devoted a whole column of his paper on December 31, 1919, without protest or reservation, to a speech made by Malatesta at Mantua against the Socialists, who had declined responsibility for the grave disorders which had taken place there a few weeks previously: while the Socialists drew a distinction between themselves and 'hooligans and jail-birds,' Malatesta on the other hand proclaimed the 'solidarity of all.'

Confronted with this extremist campaign of Mussolini's, the Anarchists, Communists, and Maximalists were spurred on to show that they could be even more revolutionary. As a consequence the attempts of the Reformist Socialists and the leaders of the General Confederation of Labour to check the restlessness of the people were rendered more difficult.

To sum up, if in these two years a fatal crisis was averted, the credit cannot be given to Mussolini and his 'Black-Shirts.' The reason why a 'Bolshevist' revolution did not take place in Italy must be sought elsewhere.

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§ 3: *Why a Bolshevik Revolution did not Occur in Italy*

There are several reasons why a Bolshevik revolution did not take place in Italy. The most important among them are the following:

(A) A revolution of the Communist type was and is, technically speaking, impossible in Italy.

Italy is not Russia. Russia is a sparsely populated country. Before the war there were very few really small landowners in proportion to the area of available land. In 1919 the Russian peasant-soldiers deserted from their regiments in confusion, and on their return to their villages, expropriated the existing large landowners. Italy on the contrary has a dense population. Save in some parts of the South and in Latium there are few big landowners, and what passes in Italy for a large estate is ridiculously small compared with those formerly existing in Russia and still found in England. The Italian peasant-soldiers at the end of the war were formally discharged, and did not come home as the result of a revolution. The land to which they returned had for centuries been divided among many very small owners whom no one thought of disturbing in their tenure, if only for the reason that they would stubbornly have resisted expropriation.

As for the industrial workers, these knew well, then as now, that the Italian population cannot subsist without importing from abroad all the raw materials necessary for its daily life: corn, coal, iron, cotton, petrol and copper. They would be starved in a few days if a Communist revolution deprived the country of foreign credit. Even if a Communist revolution were ever possible, Italy would be the last country in which it could be carried out.¹

¹ When the news reached Russia in September, 1920, that half a million workers in Italy had taken possession of the factories, the Russian Communists celebrated the event as the long-looked-for beginning of the revolution in Italy. Angelica Balabanoff—she told me this herself,—who shared the general enthusiasm, was once speaking to Lenin about Italian affairs. He interrupted her suddenly, saying: 'Comrade, has it ever struck you that Italy has no coal?' The great Revolutionary summed up in this query all that could be said against the dream of a Communist revolution in Italy!

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The Italian workers never entirely lost their sense of this fact and its implications. They wished to make 'the rich men who had willed the war' pay dearly for it; they went on strike capriciously; they threw stones at motor-cars and voted for the Socialist candidates at elections. But even in their wildest moments a fund of common sense held them back from committing irreparable absurdities.

(B) The older and more influential deputies and organizers in the Socialist Party and the General Confederation of Labour – Turati, Modigliani, D'Aragona and others – recognized the impossibility of a Communist revolution. They ostentatiously made use of revolutionary phraseology, because such phraseology is part of the obligatory ritual of their propaganda; and besides, if they had used any other, they would have been ousted by the 'War Socialists' and would have lost touch completely with the excited populace. But at the critical moments they worked constantly to restrain the hot-heads, to postpone dangerous resolutions, and to avoid decisive struggles.¹

Ludovico D'Aragona, the Secretary of the General Confederation of Labour, in an address given at Milan in September, 1922, to the Reformist Socialists, said:

'We are perhaps responsible for having given way too much at the time of the Bolshevist madness. But we know we did all

¹ Luigi Villari, *The Awakening of Italy* (London, Methuen and Co., 1924, p. 79), states that the Socialist programme was 'to promote strikes in the public services with the object of disorganizing the economic life of the country in the hope that starvation would goad the masses to revolution.' If the Socialist general staff had had a 'revolutionary programme' as imagined by this Fascist propagandist, the effect would have been apparent in some attempt to co-ordinate the strikes which should have developed according to some organized plan. But, in reality, they occurred sporadically and without co-ordination. When a strike on any considerable scale broke out in some private industry, or when political disorders spread over any large part of the country, the public services did not strike; when a great public service came out on strike, private industries remained quiet; the postal employees' strike ceased when the railwaymen's began; the towns struck while the country remained quiet; strikes spread in the country while the towns were free from them.

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in our power to restrain the extremists. It is our glory and our pride that we prevented the outbreak of the revolution which those extremists desired. And then after we had the honour of preventing a revolutionary catastrophe – Fascism arrived.'

Mussolini therefore had good grounds, when in 1919–20, he accused the leaders of the Socialist Party of being *buoni a nulla*, i.e. 'ineffectual revolutionaries.' And Communists and Anarchists in Italy and abroad are not wrong when they accuse the older Socialists, Turati, D'Aragona, Treves, Modigliani and others, of having helped to make the revolution impossible.¹ But they should ask themselves the question: Was revolution possible in any case?

(C) In the spring of 1919 a new party came into the field which endeavoured energetically to draw the masses away from the Socialist Party, especially in the country districts. It took the name of the 'Partito Popolare Italiano' and its programme was a Christian-Democratic one. In a few months this party had gained some 1,200,000 adherents, of whom about 920,000 were peasants, while the General Confederation of Labour, controlled by the Socialists, had no more than 750,000 rural workers among its 2,150,000 members.

The Fascist propagandists often accuse the Christian-Democratic Party of having shared in the guilt of 'rural Bolshevism' in the year of the 'Bolshevist madness.' The accusation is not without grounds, if it means that the members of the Christian-Democratic Party were not less excited than the Socialists, and that many of the Christian-Democratic organizers themselves indulged to excess in apocalyptic promises. It was the malady of the moment: every one promised everything to everybody: Mussolini and his followers more than all the rest.

¹ See the accusations of the Anarchists and Communists against the Reformist Socialists collected in the volume entitled *Sempre! almanacco di guerra di classe 1923–1924*, 2nd edn., Berlin, January, 1923; in Luigi Fabbri, *La controrivoluzione preventiva*, in the volume *Il Fascismo e i partiti politici italiani*, Bologna, Cappelli, 1924, pp. 11–19; and in Armando Borghi, *L'Italia fra due Crispi*, Paris, Libreria Internazionale, 1924, pp. 125–296.

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But the Christian-Democratic Party split the Italian rural population in two. Had they not done this, the Socialists would have won 250, instead of 156, seats in the elections of 1919. The great ladies of the aristocracy and the big landowners, business men and bankers, who patronized the Christian-Democratic movement in 1919 and 1920, did not do badly out of it. They lent their capital and their religious faith (unexpectedly adopted for the occasion) at the highest rate of interest. When the so-called 'Bolshevist danger' was past, thanks in part to the efforts of the Christian-Democratic Party, the magnates found themselves to be possessed of a new religion - the 'national faith.' They therefore abandoned the Christian-Democratic Party and transferred their money and their consciences to the service of the Fascist movement, styling themselves 'National Catholics.' And now they ungenerously pour scorn on the party to which they yesterday belonged.

(D) The disturbed minds of the people, both in the towns and in the country, found in Universal Suffrage a legal method of relieving their feelings, and in Proportional Representation, a legal obstacle which kept their excitement within bounds.

It is probable that, had it not been for the safety valve of Universal Suffrage, the mass of peasants and workers, incited by the Anarchists, would have had recourse to direct action. But, instead of taking a revolutionary course, they waited for the new Parliamentary elections of 1919; and when these had been held, they waited all through 1920, to see what the newly-elected deputies would do. Thus the two most dangerous years of the post-war excitement were tided over.

In estimating the effects of Proportional Representation it is necessary to bear in mind that, given the unpopularity of all the political groups responsible for the war, under the single member system almost all the seats in northern and central Italy would have fallen to the Socialists or to the Christian-Democrats. The other groups would not only have been much weakened, they would have survived only in southern Italy; and a dangerous antagonism would thus have arisen between North and South.

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Proportional Representation prevented these evils or reduced them to a minimum.¹

Mussolini and the 'Fasci di Combattimento' were in favour of this system in 1919. Mussolini threatened the government of that time with immediate destruction if it did not give way to the demand for Proportional Representation. The Nationalists, who have subsequently joined the Fascisti, were at that time foremost in demanding this.² Thanks to Proportional Representation they saved themselves from complete disaster when they were a minority.

If we take into account all the above-mentioned factors: the economic impossibility of a Communist revolution; the moderating influence of the Reformist Socialists in contrast with the provocative action of the Communists, the Anarchists and Mussolini; the resistance of the Christian-Democrats to Socialist pressure; the electoral system, steadying and curbing the people's excitement—we can understand why in Italy during 1919 and 1920, there were many disturbances, strikes, riots and much confusion, but no fatal crisis.

§ 4: 'The Sanguinary Tyranny of Bolshevism'

There was much talk in those years of a formidable propaganda carried on all over Italy by agents of Russian Bolshevism. Excited imaginations saw sinister Bolshevist agents everywhere. There is no doubt that the Russian Government had a certain number of agents in Italy, as elsewhere. But it is difficult to estimate the precise extent of the Russian ramifications. One

¹ Francesco Ruffini, *Diritti di Libertà*, Torino, Gobetti, 1926, p. 10.

² Vincenzo Nitti, *L'opera di Nitti*, Torino, Gobetti, 1924, pp. 111–20. Luigi Villari, *The Fascist Experiment*, London, Faber and Gwyer, 1926, p. 29, asserts that the method of Proportional Representation 'had been imposed on Nitti by the Socialists and Christian-Democrats.' He suppresses the fact that it was the Nationalists and the Fascists who upheld this reform with the greatest violence. He shows that he does not possess even that minimum of critical sense necessary to understand facts, when he attributes the increase in the Socialist seats in the elections of 1919 to Proportional Representation rather than to the war and the post-war crisis.

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of the most active agents, a certain Ferrari, who spoke several languages, had huge funds at his disposal, and was on intimate terms with several Socialist deputies, formed the subject of a question asked in the Chamber by the Nationalist deputy, Signor Federzoni: Why did the Government leave this dangerous Bolshevik at large? The Government gave no reply. But one fine day the Socialists discovered that this most dangerous Bolshevik was a secret agent of the Italian Police.

In many towns the food riots of July, 1919, were stirred up not only by the revolutionary press and by revolutionary agents, but by newspapers and individuals who, as soon as the riots had ceased, started 'anti-Bolshevist' leagues. In Florence, for example, on the evening of July 2, 1919, Signor Francesco Giunta, now one of the leading personages of Fascism, waved a pair of shoes at a meeting of ex-service men, shouting that he had had to pay 48 lire for them, and urging his comrades to sack the shops. On the morning of July 3, the ultra-conservative *Nazione* published a furious article 'against the food-profiters':

'Truly it is an unsavoury task to give vent to our indignation against people who for good or ill still belong to the Italian family. But disgust and anger raise our gorge. Is it possible that even to-day, after the terrible lesson of the war, we find men so obstinate and persevering in evil-doing? Do these wretches realize nothing of what is happening around them? Do they not know that the patience of the people has its limits, behind which lie the most cruel and unknown possibilities? Have they brains, have they blood, have they nerves, these maleficent citizens? We will add no more. We have still a vague hope that certain examples of yesterday may bring more wisdom to these perverted individuals. If this hope also proves vain, then indeed we should not be the ones to deplore an outburst of collective indignation, provoked, as it would be, in every possible manner.'

Riots against the 'food-profiters' started at Forli on July 1, and from there spread to other towns. These were the 'examples' which were to bring wisdom to the perverted. When an ultra-conservative paper wrote in this manner, what else could the

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crowd do than follow the 'examples' indicated? The sacking of shops, and the 'requisitions' in the country around actually began the very afternoon of July 3 and lasted for three days. When the storm had blown over, it was precisely the *Nazione* which launched the proposal of an 'anti-Bolshevist alliance,' Signor Giunta being one of its prime leaders.

A young anarchist, who was a student of mine at the University of Florence in 1920, told me that in that year a man who claimed to be an anarchist and a secret-service agent of England, while being, at the same time, an officer of the 70th infantry regiment, offered the anarchists funds for their paper *Il Grido della Rivolta*. The anarchists of Florence kept a watch on him and discovered him to be a Government spy. Shortly after a senior officer of the Florence garrison offered a Florentine republican assistance in bringing off a *coup de main* against a military barracks, on condition that he was told the names of the men willing to take part in the operation. The republican told the anarchists of this offer, but they, suspecting a trap, did not act.

During and after his raid on Fiume, D'Annunzio was a great promoter of disorders everywhere. His agents, real or professed, organized theatrical plots which the police always unmasked at the right moment.¹ Of two rabid revolutionaries, Mingrino and Ambrosini, who in 1920-21 made a show of starting an armed organization called the 'Arditi (shock-troops) of the people,' Mingrino was in 1926 revealed as an *agent provocateur* and the other, in 1922, was suddenly found in the Fascist ranks. Whatever authentic Bolshevist propaganda there was in Italy, there was also a trumped-up 'Bolshevism' intended to serve as a pretext for reaction.

The Italian Fascists and their friends in other countries are continually referring to the outrages perpetrated in the 'mad outbreaks of Bolshevism' of 1919 and 1920, to the amnesty granted

¹ A significant indication of these 'Bolshevist' activities of D'Annunzio's is to be found in the anarchist Armando Borghi's book, *L'Italia fra due Crispi*, pp. 193, 234; 'There was a time when D'Annunzio endeavoured to present himself as the champion of Socialism and of the Social Republic, making speeches with a Bolshevist flavour, and even concerning himself in railway strikes.'

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to deserters, to raids on land and to the occupation of factories in September, 1920.

It is undoubtedly the case that in those years riots and threats of violence were frequent and often exasperating. Unless we take these brutalities into account we shall not be able to understand the ferocity of the Fascist reaction.

In considering these 'Bolshevist' outrages, however, it should be borne in mind that according to a pamphlet published by the Fascist Party in the spring of 1921,¹ the number of murders in 1919 and 1920, up to the occupation of the factories (September, 1920), was no more than thirty.

A careful survey of the *Corriere della Sera*² for that period, made by a friend of mine, gave 65 murders committed by 'Bolshevists,' applying the term, arbitrarily to say the truth, to all kinds of people who took part in disturbances. Among these 65 victims 35 came from the ranks of the police.

To appreciate these figures it should not be forgotten: (1) that in Italy unhappily human life is held less sacred than it should be in a civilized country; and (2), that the Italian people, in 1919 and 1920, had just returned from the war, where it had certainly not learned respect for human life. The Fascists of Turin on December 18, 1922, murdered in a single day twenty-one persons. It would be well for people to remember these circumstances when they hear talk about the 'sanguinary Bolshevist domination' of 1919 and 1920 in Italy.

For the same period, the friend who made the above-mentioned

¹ *Barbarie rossa: riassunto cronologico delle gesta compiute dai socialisti italiani dal 1919 in poi*; edited by the Central Committee of the Fasci Italiani di Combattimento, Rome Tip. Sociale, 78 Via E. L. Visconti, 1921.

² To enable those who may doubt the accuracy and the good faith of this survey to verify the facts from the same source, I give here the dates of the numbers of the newspaper from which my friend drew his information: 1919, April 17, 18; September 29, 30; December 3, 4, 7; 1920, January 2; March 26; April 13, 15, 20, 29; May 3, 4, 5, 6, 26; June 5, 13, 24, 26, 27, 28, 30; July 1, 2, 13, 26, 30; August 10, 17, 30; September 7, 11, 23, 24. Between 1919-1922, the *Corriere della Sera* vigorously withstood the so-called 'Bolshevist' tide. Its record of 'Bolshevist' outrages was very carefully compiled and it is hardly possible for many cases to have escaped its watchfulness.

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survey for me, found 109 'Bolshevists' killed by the police in street fighting and 22 'Bolshevists' killed by other people.¹ The 'Socialist domination,' as Fascist propagandists call it,² was not so absolute as they would have us believe.

Another legend is that the disorders of 1919-20 were invariably started by the 'Bolshevists.' The period of the most serious disorders runs from June, 1919, to September, 1920. The burning of the printing office of the *Avanti* by groups of followers of Mussolini, belongs to April, 1919, when the proletarian turbulence had hardly begun. On November 13, 1919, at Lodi, some followers of Mussolini fired revolvers into an election meeting held in a theatre, killing three and wounding eight.

Four days later in Milan a Socialist procession was marching along Via San Damiano celebrating their victory in the parliamentary elections. An 'Ardito,' a certain Virtuani, accompanied by Albino Volpi, one of Mussolini's bravos, hurled a bomb at the procession. Cesare Rossi, then sub-editor of the *Popolo d'Italia*, had seen Mussolini and Volpi putting their heads together at the office of the *Popolo d'Italia* shortly before the bomb was thrown.³ A few weeks later, two other sub-editors of the *Popolo d'Italia* revealed that Mussolini 'hired by the day bands of civilians and "Arditi" (ex-service men formerly belonging to the shock troops) for the purpose of terrorizing and committing acts of violence.'⁴

¹ For reference see the following numbers of the *Corriere della Sera*, from which the facts were taken: 1919, June 12; July 8, 9, 10, 14; August 8, 12; October 10, 11; November 10, 14, 15, 18; December 3, 4, 7, 18, 29; 1920, January 13; February 25; March 1, 2, 6, 13, 24, 25, 26; April 1, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 20, 23, 25; May 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 14, 22, 25, 26, 27; June 10, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30; July 1, 2, 15, 16, 26, 27, 28; August 3, 4, 10, 12, 17, 24, 30, 31; September 3, 7, 9, 11, 12, 13, 21, 22, 23, 28. Luigi Fabbri, *Controrivoluzione preventiva*, p. 25, estimates, from April, 1919, to September, 1920, a total of 320 dead among the rioters. I am not in a position to verify these figures.

² Luigi Villari, *The Awakening of Italy*, p. 56.

³ Rossi, Memorandum of Feb. 11, 1925 (Appendix A, § XXXVI, at the end of the present volume) and unpublished Notes of Aug., 1927, in my possession.

⁴ Pronouncement of the Arbitration Committee of the Lombard Journalists Association, in the *Secolo*, Feb. 14, 1920.

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As regards the amnesty for deserters, it must be borne in mind that, during the war, courts martial had dealt out in a barbarous fashion sentences of death and penal servitude for crimes of desertion, which in many cases were wholly imaginary. At the end of the war 1,100,000 trials for desertion were in course. The senseless ferocity of these condemnations had branded as deserters a fifth of the total number of Italians capable of bearing arms. In the country districts of southern Italy and Sicily, between 130,000 and 150,000 of these unfortunates lay in hiding. Many of them had been decorated for valour, but they had been declared deserters because of a few days' delay in reporting to their superior officers after regular leave. Twenty-eight thousand policemen had to arrest these 130,000-150,000 deserters, and there were not prisons enough to hold them all.

The Decree of Amnesty (September 2, 1919) was drawn up by the Ministers of War and of the Navy, the heads of the Military Courts, and the Minister of Justice - these were not 'Bolshevists'! It did not apply to 'those guilty of desertion to the enemy, or of armed desertion' (Art. I); it was conceded only to those whose period of desertion had not exceeded six months. In other cases the penalty was commuted or remitted, but there was no true amnesty. Under Art. I, 18,000 men were excluded from the benefits of the amnesty. Mussolini published the announcement of the amnesty in the *Popolo d'Italia* of September 3, 1919, under the heading: 'Exclusion of cowards who deserted to the enemy.' And in the issue of September 6, he wrote:

'We do not regret that the Decree should not apply to the veritable cowards and traitors who deserted to the enemy. Instead we deplore that it is limited to penal offences and does not cover disciplinary shortcomings.'

Such is the so-called 'amnesty granted to deserters.'¹

Regarding the land raids and the occupation of the factories - so often quoted as the most dangerous example of Italian 'Bolshevism' - it is well to consider the facts of the case.

¹ See Vincenzo Nitti, *L'Opera di Nitti*, pp. 1; 1-73; and Giacomo Matteotti, *Il Fascismo della prima ora*, pp. 22-4.

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The first cases of land raiding occurred in August, 1919, in the province of Romé, and were the work, not of 'Bolshevists,' but of ex-service men, who marched with the Italian flag to the sound of patriotic music.¹ In the next few months the raids spread to southern Italy: some were undertaken by Socialist organizations, but the greater number were carried out by ex-service men who had nothing to do with Socialism. Those who seized the land always undertook to pay an annual rent to the owner.² Altogether the whole of Italian 'rural Bolshevism' amounted to the seizure without the consent of the owners of 74,000 acres of land, 34,000 being in the province of Rome, and of about 172,000 acres after friendly agreements with the owners.³ And this in a country with 74,000,000 acres of land! Mussolini had been during the war one of the loudest propagandists of 'the land for the peasants,' and he gave the post-war land-raids his full approval.

'The peasants who rise up to-day to solve the land question' – he declared on May 25, 1920 – 'must not meet with our hostility. They may perhaps commit excesses, but I beg you to remember that the War was fought by peasants.'⁴

The occupation of the factories was characterized by the same type of 'Bolshevism.' The engineers, having threatened a strike for about a month, began, on August 20, to practise ca-canny methods. On August 30, one of the firms declared a lock-out.

¹ See contemporary newspapers, *Resto del Carlino*, August 27, 1919; *Avanti*, September 1, 1919; *Secolo*, September 1, 1919.

² Villari, *The Awakening of Italy*: 'In Sicily many landed estates were seized, but the conflicts were usually the result of action by the ex-combatants' association and by organizations of labourers who really wanted land to cultivate: settlements were sometimes effected by agreement with the landlords' (p. 101).

³ Interview given by Signor Micheli, Minister of Agriculture, to the *Tribuna*, October 22, 1920. See also Rocca, *L'occupazione delle terre incolte*, in the *Riforma sociale*, May-June, 1920; Bachi, *L'Italia economica nel 1919*, Città di Castello, 1920, pp. 274 ff.; Bachi, *L'Italia economica nel 1920*, Città di Castello, 1921, pp. 296 ff.

⁴ Giacomo Matteotti, *Il Fascismo della prima ora*, pp. 13-14, 44-46.

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The men's leaders, fearing that all the employers would follow suit, called a 'lock-in.' The movement spread from the metallurgical to other industries. Half a million men were set in motion (August 31-September 3), both government and employers being powerless to offer resistance.

During the weeks spent in negotiations with the industrialists, Mussolini supported the demands of the workers; and approved their obstructionism. When the occupation of the factories took place, Michele Bianchi, then one of Mussolini's chief lieutenants, and now a prominent figure in the Fascist regime, wrote as follows in the *Popolo d'Italia*:

'Our attitude from the first moment has been one of sympathy with the masses . . . To-day, we say the occupation is a formidable mistake, unless the organizers know how to use it as a stepping-stone to another and infinitely vaster scheme. Must it be used for a social upheaval? If so, it would be a proof of admirable political sense and would be logical. But Buozzi, Colombino and Guarnieri have too *terre à terre* a mentality.'¹

Mussolini's own behaviour is illustrated in the following account given in the *Giustizia* of December 13, 1923:

'After the occupation, Mussolini sought out Bruno Buozzi, the leader of the movement. Their meeting took place at a hotel in Milan, in the presence of Manlio Morgagni of the *Popolo d'Italia* and his colleague Guarnieri. Mussolini made no "offer" of any kind, but asked to be informed of the aims of the movement. He expressed the opinion that the workers ought never to be ejected from the factories again by force. If the aims of the agitation were purely economic, the Fascists would care little whether the factories belonged to the employers or the workers, but they would oppose with all their strength any experiment in Bolshevik government.'²

¹ Giacomo Matteotti, *Il Fascismo della prima ora*, pp. 59-63; and Carlo Avarna di Gualtieri, *Il Fascismo*, pp. 26-8.

² This account was textually reproduced by the *Corriere della Sera* of May 15, 1923, in a controversy with the *Popolo d'Italia*. Mussolini was not in a position to contradict it. Signor Buozzi, in the spring of 1926

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Had the leaders of the General Confederation of Labour and of the Socialist Party wished to strike a decisive blow, here was the opportunity: they would have seized not the workshops but the government offices, the postal and telegraph services, and the railways. The bankers, big industrialists and big landlords waited for the social revolution as sheep wait to be led to the slaughter. If a Communist revolution could be brought about by bewilderment and cowardice on the part of the ruling classes, the Italian people in September, 1920, could have made as many Communist revolutions as they wished.

But the more prudent leaders of the General Confederation of Labour and of the Socialist Party fiercely opposed the proposal made by the Anarchists and Communists to extend the scope of the crisis and to give it definitely revolutionary aims. On September 11, after a day and a half of heated discussion, the Reformists defeated by 591,245 votes to 409,606, the revolutionary proposal of the Extremists.¹

'The workmen's leaders' - wrote a scholar to whom we owe an objective account of the whole affair - 'tried to prevent acts of violence, sabotage and theft. Acts of violence against individuals were not numerous, but some of them were of exceptional gravity.'² Subsequently it was ascertained that the material damage to plant

in London, assured me of its accuracy. It is not clear what Mussolini meant in threatening to oppose an experiment in Bolshevik Government after saying that he did not care whether the factories belonged to the workers or the employers. Probably he was keeping a foot in either stirrup. If things were to go well for the workers, he would recall the first part of his speech to prove that he had been in favour of the workers; if things went ill with them - as actually happened - he could claim the merit of having opposed the Bolshevik danger.

¹ See the *Corriere della Sera*, September 29, 1920: 'Italy has been in peril of collapse. There has been no revolution, not because there was anyone to bar its way, but because the General Confederation of Labour has not willed it.'

² In Turin the strikers murdered a young Nationalist, a prison-warder, three Royal Guards and a Carabineer. For these crimes, the two first of which were of a peculiarly atrocious nature, eleven people in March, 1922, received sentences ranging from one year to thirty years' imprisonment. (Royal Guards were a corps of military police.)

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and the waste of raw material and manufactured goods had been rather extensive, but the very nature of the industries concerned, and the timely measures taken by the Union leaders, kept theft within relatively narrow limits.¹

As the days passed the men saw that without technical guidance, raw materials, or the confidence of foreign markets, the occupation of the factories was useless. By shutting themselves up in the factories, they had shut themselves in a trap. The government had only to wait till the men were tired. And it did. On September 25, the men went home.

In the *Popolo d'Italia* of September 28, 1920, Mussolini commented on the events of the previous weeks in the following terms:

'What has happened in Italy in the September that is now ending has been a revolution, or, to be more precise, a phase of the revolution started — *by us*² — in May, 1915. There has been no street fighting, no barricades, nor anything of the theatrical appurtenances of revolution such as thrill us in Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*. But a revolution has none the less been achieved, and we may add, a great revolution. A right, which has been sacred for centuries, has been broken down.'

The reverse was the truth. The occupation of the factories was a great practical lesson, in politics and economics, for the Italian working classes, which may be compared, in its sobering effect, with that of the General Strike of May, 1926, in England. The Italian workers were brought up against the hard fact that their manual labour in conjunction with machinery was not enough to produce wealth. They needed technical direction, credit and commercial organization.

¹ Bachi, *L'Italia economica nel 1920*, p. 347. Cfr. A. Borghi, *L'Italia fra due Crispi*, pp. 248-96; Mowrer, *Immortal Italy*, pp. 329-34; Odon Por, *Fascism*, London, Labour Publishing Co., 1923, pp. 66 ff.; Cailton Beals, *Rome or Death: The Story of Fascism*, London, John Long, 1923, pp. 35-8; Pelham H. Box, *Three Master Builders*, London, Jarrolds, 1925, pp. 135-7. (See Note B at the end of the present chapter.)

² The italics are Mussolini's.

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‘The failure of the experiment’ – wrote the above-quoted observer a few months later – ‘had a conspicuous historical importance. The working classes have learnt much in these weeks.’¹

After the occupation of the factories in September, 1920, the idea spread among the people that the revolution had failed, and they grew discouraged. As always happens in defeat, mutual recriminations grew bitter between Reformist Socialists, Maximalist Socialists and Communists.

In the autumn of 1920, a commission of Socialists and Trade Union leaders who had gone to Russia in the previous spring to discover the promised land, came back with a harrowing tale of conditions among the Russian people. The Lenin myth then received a severe set-back.

On the other hand, in Italy, as elsewhere, an acute industrial crisis had begun to make itself felt as the artificial boom created by the war died away. This crisis led to unemployment, and increasing unemployment, as always happens, undermined the fighting spirit of the workers’ organizations. Moreover, the frequent and capricious strikes of the previous two years had caused a feeling of weariness among a growing number of workers. This strike weariness coincided with the beginning of a new economic period in which the lira began to find stability. Prices grew steadier, and thus the fundamental causes of the strikes disappeared.

Mussolini, with that sense of the psychological moment which he possesses in a high degree, remarked in the *Popolo d’Italia* of November 16, 1920, that ‘the Italian domestic situation is improving daily.’ In the issue of December 31, he wrote as follows:

‘It is honest to add that during the last three months – to be exact since the referendum which led to the ending of the occupation of the factories and since the return of the Mission to Russia – the psychology of the working classes in Italy has changed profoundly. The wave of idleness and shirking seems to have died down. The working masses seem convinced that the fundamental problem of the moment is that of production. A clear symptom

¹ Bachi, *L’Italia economica nel 1920*, p. 348.

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of this state of mind is the comparative ease with which agreements lately have been reached after peaceful negotiations in the important trades of textiles and chemicals.'

The *Corriere della Sera* on December 31, 1920 said:

'In the last few months, a spontaneous reaction on the part of the Italian people has succeeded in greatly diminishing Socialist tyranny. The high-water mark of revolutionarism, represented by the occupation of the factories, has been followed by a rapid decline.'

Riccardo Bachi wrote at the same time:

'Certain wounds inflicted on our productive system by the war are healing with remarkable rapidity. After a long phase of psychological upheavals and disturbances, a feeling of calm and serenity is returning gradually to the nation's mind.'¹

1919 and 1920 had been a period of revolutionary excitement, though without real danger of revolution. Towards the end of 1920, even the excitement began to calm down. The worst of the crisis was over.

§ 5: The 'Economic Paralysis'

Fascist 'propaganda' spreads the legend that in 1919 and 1920 Italian economic life was profoundly disorganized and that production was completely paralysed on account of the 'Bolshevist' disorders.²

The truth is, the disorder never was great enough to paralyse production nor was it attributable entirely to 'Bolshevism.'

¹ *L'Italia economica nel 1920*, p. xi; *L'Italia economica nel 1921*, p. 335.

² Sir Ernest J. P. Benn: 'In 1919 and 1920, the class war began in earnest, and production almost stopped. Things were desperate. The common necessities of life were in danger of disappearing. To a people in such a plight, Mussolini offered the only way out.' (*Star*, April 6, 7, 8, 1926.)—Mr. Thomas Lamont: 'The industrial situation had become badly disorganized through an epidemic of strikes, with workers seizing control of the factories, and with widespread unemployment. There had been a virtual breakdown of railway and other Government services,' etc., etc. (*Survey Graphic* of New York, March, 1927, p. 723).

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The fundamental cause of the crisis must be sought in the economic after-effects of the war, and in the difficulties which accompanied the transition from war to peace. Luigi Einaudi, one of the most distinguished Italian economists, certainly not suspected of sympathy for Bolshevism, writes:

‘During the four years of war, owing to the requirements of the army, labour, fertilizers, machinery and means of transport were all difficult to obtain, and agricultural produce was requisitioned at fixed prices which were far too low to compensate for the many months of laborious toil. Faced by all these difficulties, and by the necessity of slaughtering large numbers of cattle, and cutting down the forests for military requirements, Italian agriculturists have achieved a great feat in surmounting this troubled period, without experiencing an excessive diminution of crops, cattle and forests. The greatest difficulties, however, came in the next years, 1919–22, when the effects of the great deterioration of the soil during the war period were felt; the supply of fertilizers was still very scarce, and cultivators suffered from the uncertainty of prices, the constant disputes with the wage-earners, and the high cost of transport. . . . After the armistice, an industrial crisis was brought about by the necessity of substituting other industries for those of the war period, and the difficulties of forecasting demands were intensified by the shortage of raw materials, and by a fierce struggle for the control of associated and subsidiary products. The workers’ desire for a ‘new order’ which should give them control of the factories, provoked a number of conflicts and strikes.’¹

Thus strikes were not the sole, or even the chief cause of the crisis: they were one of many elements in the crisis. Nor should we see in them only a consequence of ‘Bolshevist’ machinations. Giorgio Mortara, a distinguished economist free from political bias, writes about the post-war strikes:

‘The unrest among the working classes in the early post-war period, was not a special malady of Italy. All the countries that

¹ Luigi Einaudi, *Italy*, in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1926, pp. 573–574.

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took part in the war and several which had remained neutral also, suffered more or less extensively from it. The difficulty of returning to regular and steady work, after years passed in idleness, though among dangers and hardships; the laziness caused by exhaustion of the over-taxed will-power; the reaction against rigid army discipline so long endured; the irritation roused by the non-fulfilment of promises lightly bestowed on combatants, to spur them on to the greatest sacrifices; the revolt against the display of ill-gotten wealth:—these were the chief factors in the discontent which filled the minds of the people. This discontent fostered by unscrupulous agitators, using it as a means of self-advancement, sometimes exploded violently in strikes and the occupation of factories, sometimes smouldered in less open forms as sabotage and ca-canny hindering the renewal of productive activity, already difficult enough owing to the destruction of wealth and the dislocation of trade caused by the war. The continual rise in the cost of living was another source of restlessness among the masses. Monetary inflation soon brought its train of consequences.

'The rise in prices was accelerated by the impatient demand of the public, eager to make up for the lean years of the war, while on the other hand supplies were scarce. The rise in the cost of living, increasing the hardships of the working classes, drove them to press continually for higher wages. The economic stress was augmented by political pressure designed to bring about the dictatorship of the proletariat.'¹

'Bolshevist' manœuvres, therefore, were only one among many factors in the strike-epidemic.

As a measure of the abyss of Bolshevism into which Italy had fallen, propaganda brandishes in front of the bewildered readers the statistics of the strikes.

Year.	No. of strikers.	No. of working days lost.
1919	1,554,566	22,214,746
1920	2,313,685	30,569,218
1921	723,862	8,110,063 ²

¹ Mortara, *Prospet'ive economiche*: 1927, p. 415.

² Villari, *Fascist Experiment*, p. 152.

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If these figures showed that in those years Italy was at the mercy of Bolshevism, it follows that England was still more 'bolshevized' than Italy, since its statistics are higher still:

Year.	No. of strikers.	No. of working days lost.
1919.	2,401,000	34,970,000
1920	1,779,000	26,570,000
1921	1,770,000	85,870,000

It is, particularly railway strikes which give grist to the mill of propaganda.

In the course of 1919 only two strikes occurred, neither on important systems: the first, from May 4 to May 10, on the secondary lines belonging to private companies throughout Italy, with 35,000 strikers; the second from December 9, 1919 to January 9, 1920 in Calabria and Basilicata (Southern Italy).¹ For July 20 and 21, 1919, the Socialist Party, then dominated by the extremists, called a general strike as a political move, in protest against the Treaty of Versailles. The Central Executive of the Railwaymen's Union declared that its members would not take part in the strike. The Turin branch broke away from the Central Executive, but out of 193,000, only 5,000 railwaymen in all joined the strikers.² Such was the degree of Bolshevization in the Italian railways in 1919.

In the year 1920 the unrest was considerably greater. I give here the list of strikes which were of more than local importance, as I have been able to compile it from the daily Press and other available sources.³ An asterisk marks the sympathetic strikes and those declared for political reasons:

- (I) January 6-20: all over the country, especially in Northern and Central Italy, 84,000 men involved, out of the total of 193,000.

¹ *Bollettino del Lavoro*, XXXIII, p. 374; XXXV, pp. 11-39.

² *Almanacco Bemporad*, 1920; and Amministrazione delle Ferrovie dello Stato, *Relazione per l'anno finanziario 1919-20*, Roma, 1921, p. 12.

³ *Almanacco Bemporad*, 1921; *Corriere della Sera*; *Bollettino del Lavoro*, Vols. XXXIII-XXXV; Reports of the State Railway Board, 1919-20 and 1920-1.

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- (II) March 10: on three lines having their junction at Bologna; 500 men involved.
- (III) *March 8-24: Verona, station staff.
- (IV) *March 26: Genoa, station staff.
- (V) *April 6-9: Bologna, station staff and those employed on the lines Modena-Bologna and Bologna-Poretta.
- (VI) April 12-14: Sardinia, all lines involved.
- (VII) *April 14-24: Turin, station staff; *on April 15 at the station of Leghorn a train of Royal Guards bound for Turin was held up*; on April 17 the strike spread to the station staffs of Santhià and Novara and on 18th and 19th to the station staffs of Asti, Alessandria, Tortona, Novi; on April 22, at the stations of Pavia, Domodossola, Novara, *the railwaymen refused to convey the troops summoned to Turin to restore order there*; at the stations of Florence and Rome there was a stay-in strike.
- (VIII) *May 1: traffic practically suspended almost all over the country.
- (IX) May 9-June 2: Strike of employees of the Compagnie Internationale des Wagons-lits.
- (X) *May 15: Casale Monferrato, station staff.
- (XI) *May 22: Verona, station staff.
- (XII) *May 24-27: Udine, station staff.
- (XIII) *June 6-9: Bari, all the lines of the province.
- (XIV) *June 8-24: the railwaymen of Cremona station *refused to convey a train of war-ammunition which they thought was destined for Poland*; a station official managed to get the train dispatched; the strikers demanded his transfer to another station; this demand having been refused, the strike spread to Milan and to Eastern Lombardy; the strike ended without the transfer being obtained.
- (XV) June 8-20: Genoa and Rivarolo Ligure, station staffs, 1,120 strikers.
- (XVI) *June 20-August 10: in sympathy with a strike on the small line Brescia-Edolo, 35,000 men on the secondary private lines all over Italy went out on strike.

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(XVII) *September 9-11: at Trieste and in Istria and Friuli traffic brought to a standstill.

To these strikes of an extensive nature must be added about 30 others of a local and trifling nature.¹ This may seem a formidable list, especially if we bear in mind that a strike in a railroad centre like Verona, Turin, Genoa, Bologna, even though it be merely local, disorganizes the service on all the lines radiating from that centre. But it must be noted almost all these strikes were of short duration, and spread over a period of nine months. In England, in September, 1919, half a million railwaymen went on strike for nine days, entirely paralysing the traffic throughout the country, and the number of less important railway strikes for that year was not inferior to that of Italy the following year; but it never occurred to Englishmen to fall into convulsions of fear that England was going 'bolshie.'

The reader will have noticed that the cases of trains of soldiers, carabinieri, royal guards, munitions being held up by the 'Bolsheviks' were relatively few. So much fuss has been made about this kind of disorder that it makes me wonder whether other cases occurred, which escaped my notice in reading the newspapers and official reports. But I was living in Italy at that time, and my memory is good, and though always subject to correction, I maintain that between the spring of 1919 and the autumn of 1920, there were not more than a dozen cases of this kind. These cases became a commonplace of anti-Bolshevist propaganda, and people, hearing them eternally talked of as an intolerable scandal, ended by believing that the scandal happened every day. I have no wish to excuse these senseless disorders, I merely wish to present in its true proportions the railway 'Bolshevism' of that ill-famed year 1920.

Certainly things would have gone better if there had been no epidemic of strikes. But when we begin talking about 'ifs,' we have no right to stop at the first one which suits our thesis. We

¹ e.g. January 26: 185 employees struck for one day on the branch line Naples-Cuma; March 7-23: 129 employees struck at the station of Vicenza; March 14: 200 employees struck on a branch line near Naples; April 25-8: 74 employees struck on the Vomero branch line, Naples, etc.

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must go back farther and say: *if* there had not been the war, *if* the Italian ruling classes had not committed so many blunders during and after the war, *if* in fact there had not been these and many others *ifs*, the post-war neurasthenia would never have existed, or at any rate would not have been so acute. The social life of a country is not an electric bell which begins or stops ringing immediately the diplomats, generals and profiteers press or release the button.

One powerful cause of trouble in these post-war years was the scarcity of coal in Italy. On the eve of the war, in 1913, Italy imported 11.5 million tons of coal; during the war, in 1917, importation fell to 5 million tons; this was not the fault of the 'Bolshevists.' In 1919 when the war was over and 'Bolshevism' arrived, importation rose to 6.1 million tons. It fell again to 5.5 million in 1920, but in that year the coal cost 800 lire (£8) a ton in Italian ports, while only costing 200 lire (£2) a ton in England. This, and not 'Bolshevism,' was the cause of grave industrial difficulties. In 1921 the price of coal fell to 250 lire (£2 10s.) a ton, and importation rose to 7 million tons. In 1922, imports rose to 9 million tons.¹

The decrease in coal importations was accounted for by the wider employment of electricity and of oil. In 1913-14 Italy consumed 2.3 milliard KWH; in 1919-20 she consumed 4.7 milliard. In 1910-14 Italy consumed yearly 1,378,000 quintals of petroleum, benzene, and residual products; she consumed 2,260,000 quintals in 1915-18; and 2,310,000 quintals in 1919-21.²

Another cause of the economic troubles of these years was inefficiency of railway transport. Strikes and the post-war wave of lassitude, and the 'Bolshevist' lack of discipline among the railway employees certainly contributed to this inefficiency; but there were two other causes which should not be overlooked:

¹ Mortara, *Prospettive economiche*: 1922, Città di Castello, 1922, pp. 207-18; Einaudi, *Italy, Economic and Financial History* in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 1926, p. 575.

² Einaudi, *Italy*, in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 1926, p. 575; Vincenzo Porri, *L'evoluzione economica italiana nell'ultimo cinquantennio*, in the volume *I cavalieri del lavoro*, Rome, 1925, p. 171.

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firstly, the bad condition into which rolling-stock had fallen during the war years, and secondly the bad quality of coal which the railways were forced to use.¹ In spite of these unfortunate conditions, the State railways, which in 1913 had carried 93 million passengers, and in 1918 only 65 millions, now in 1919 carried 102 millions, and in 1920 110 millions.²

The following table³ gives the number of limited companies in the year 1918, when 'Bolshevism' had not yet arrived in Italy, as against the years 1919 and 1920, in which, according to the Fascist legend, Italian production was 'paralysed by Bolshevism.'

	Number of Companies.	Capital.
1918	3463	7,257 million lire
1919	4520	13,014 " "
1920	5541	17,784 " "

The following table⁴ gives the amounts deposited in the postal and other saving institutions, banks, credit banks and people's banks, etc.:

1918	7,906 million lire
1919	10,643 " "
1920	13,213 " "

The postal services show the following statistics of letters:⁵

Year.	Letters.
1918-19	2,371 millions
1919-20	2,126 " "
1920-21	1,808 " "

A distinct fall is visible from 1918-19 to 1919-20. Was it due to 'Bolshevism'? No, it was due to demobilization. The

¹ Mortara, *Prospettive economiche*: 1922, p. 309.

² *Annuario Statistico Italiano*: 1922-25, p. 401.

³ *Credito Italiano: Società Italiane per azioni. Notizie Statistiche*, 1925, 10th edition.

⁴ *Annuario Statistico Italiano*: 1918-1921, p. 509.

⁵ De Stefani, *Docurrenti*, May 13, 1925, p. 417; *Annuario Statistico Italiano*: 1919-21, p. 508.

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men demobilized in 1919-20 no longer needed to send letters to their families, nor to receive letters from them.

The fall of 1920-21 is attributable to another cause: on January 25, 1921, a rise in postal tariffs came into operation. A new rise in postal tariffs, after the seizure of the Government by the Fascists, caused a further fall from 1,809 millions in 1921-22 to 1,730 millions of letters in 1922-23.

The following are the statistics of the motor-cars registered in Italy: ¹

Year.	Private cars.	Public vehicles.	Commercial vehicles.
1918	15,592	1,235	5,547
1919	21,759	2,124	10,613
1920	28,604	2,862	17,410

Neither must we over-rate the ill-results of the parliamentary paralysis. It is true that the three sections into which the Chamber was divided, could not form any stable and effective ministerial coalition. It is true that the Chamber, thus disorganized, was not capable of voting on estimates, or discussing bills. But the Ministers made laws and approved estimates by 'royal decrees' (Orders in Council); and never has Italy known so many laws by royal decree as in the years of parliamentary paralysis.² The administration was carried on by the same high State officials, who have continued to manufacture decrees under the cloak of the Fascist dictatorship, just as they did at the time of the 'Bolshevist madness.'

A national loan floated in January, 1920, brought in 18 milliards - a sum far in excess of any war loan.³

In November, 1919, government taxation and local rating were radically reformed. The effects could not follow at once, for

¹ *Annuario Statistico Italiano*, 1919-21, p. 377.

² From 1895 to 1913 the number of royal decrees varied from a minimum of 1 to a maximum of 24 a year. The war augmented the number of these exceptional measures. Thus there were 100 in 1914; 221 in 1915; 173 in 1916; 337 in 1917; 318 in 1918; 1029 in 1919; 350 in 1920. (Debate in the Senate, Dec. 12, 1925.)

³ De Stefani, *Documenti sulla condizione finanziaria ed economica dell'Italia*, Roma, Libreria dello Stato, 1923, p. 367.

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administrative machinery had to be created for the application of the new measures.¹ But the revenues, which for the Budget of 1918-1919 brought in 9,675 million lire, brought in 15,207 million lire in 1919-1920, and 18,820 million lire in 1920-1921.²

At the same time the government was re-organizing the forces for the maintenance of public order. When the war ended, the Carabineers numbered only 28,000. By June, 1920, their numbers had risen to 60,000. Moreover, an auxiliary police-body, the 'Royal Guard,' had been created, which in June, 1920, numbered 25,000 men.³ One Socialist deputy, a carter by trade, earned great popularity by interrupting the Ministerial speeches in season and out of season with the cry; 'Dissolve the Royal Guard!' But the Royal Guard continued to increase.

These facts, and many others I could quote, enable one to judge whether Dr. Nicholas Murray Butler, President of Columbia University, New York, gave a correct description of conditions in Italy during the post-war years, when he said:

'Anarchy, bankruptcy and powerlessness had apparently seized upon that great people. Six (?) million Italians were one day without water to drink or with which to cleanse themselves, the railways had broken down, the postal service was wrecked, the roads were in disrepair; brigandage, anarchy and crime were rampant everywhere.'⁴

In short, parliamentary paralysis did not mean the paralysis of the government. There were exasperating disturbances; there was no irreparable anarchy. The post-war 'neurasthenia' was called 'Bolshevism,' because the Russian revolution had made 'Bolshevism' the fashionable word. Every one called himself a 'Bolshevist,' but no one knew what 'Bolshevism' meant. For ninety-nine out of a hundred of the Italian post-war 'Bolshevists,' their 'Bolshevism' was nothing but an incoherent protest against

¹ Flores, *Eredità di Guerra*, Naples, Editore Ceccoli, pp. 129 ff.

² Bachi, *L'Italia economica nel 1921*, pp. 258 and ff.

³ Vincenzo Nitti, *L'opera di Nitti*, p. 165.

⁴ Speech on April 13, 1927, reported in the *New York World* of April 14, 1927.

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the aftermath of the war and the high cost of living. But the politicians who had made war badly and peace worse, the profiteers who roused general indignation by their insensate luxury, the bureaucrats, civil and military, who exasperated the ex-service men by delaying pensions, the Nationalists and Fascists who planted the seeds of sedition in the army by the occupation of Fiume—all these found it convenient to explain the people's unrest as the result of 'Bolshevist' propaganda. In politics, as in other matters, we do not like to look for the causes of evil in our own faults: it is always more comfortable to attribute the responsibility to others.

The people who with bated breath and upturned eyes speak of the 'Bolshevism' under which Italy was labouring in 1919-20 are for the most part not insincere. They were in a state of panic during those years. Panic, like wine, makes men sincere. But just as it is not advisable to take the word of a man under the influence of wine, it is also not advisable to take the word of a man under the influence of panic. If the psychological reflexes of the post-war crisis are checked by the objective indices of economic and social life, every unprejudiced inquirer must come to the conclusion that the so-called Italian 'Bolshevism' of 1919-20 was nothing worse than an outbreak of unco-ordinated unrest among large sections of the Italian people, to which the worse elements of the ruling classes replied by an exhibition of cowardice out of all proportion to the actual danger.

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· Note A to Page 23

When Signor Villari speaks of Mussolini's life before Italy's intervention in the Great War, he avoids mentioning that, up to 1914, Mussolini was a rabid advocate of the theory that the proletariat had no concern in national defence. He only asserts that 'from the moment war broke out, Mussolini instinctively understood the necessity for Italian intervention, and never wavered in his conviction' (*The Awakening of Italy*, p. 19). The truth is that Mussolini preached 'absolute neutrality' and preparation for a revolution during August and September until October 8, 1914. It was not till October 18 that he swung round and began to preach intervention in the 'revolutionary war' (see the paper *Avanti* directed by Mussolini up till October 20, 1914).

Another example of the legends circulated about Mussolini in England, the United States, and France, is to be found in Umberto Morelli's article in the *English Review*, February, 1926: 'Mussolini: a patriotic Socialist.' Among other extraordinary things it is stated:

'In the beginning of the war, all Mussolini's efforts were concentrated against the Nationalists, who were inclined to favour fighting against France, and he paralysed their machinations; and when he had succeeded in compelling Italy to remain neutral, he *immediately* began to work for the war of liberation of the two provinces - Trento and Trieste; then the war came and Mussolini joined the army and received forty-two wounds' (p. 207).

Referring to these injuries, the *Daily Mail* (Nov. 2, 1926) writes: 'He was also terribly wounded in the war'; and the writers of the *Morning Post* cannot recall these wounds without becoming light-headed:

'Signor Mussolini' - they write on October 4, 1926 - 'fell on the Italian front with as many wounds as Cæsar, and when lying, swathed in his bandages, had no doubt ample time to consider the true philosophy of peace.'

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Every one in Italy knows well that all the parties, except the Nationalists, decided in favour of neutrality in the first days of August, 1914, and all, including the Nationalists, gave their adhesion to it when declared. It is throwing dust in people's eyes to attribute to Mussolini a decisive influence on the course of events during this period.

The Italian Government declared its neutrality on August 4, whereas Mussolini went on preaching, not intervention, but neutrality à la Lenin up until October 1914. It is not true therefore that 'immediately he began to work for the war.'

When the war came (May 24, 1915) Mussolini joined the army only when called up with his class on September 1, 1915; he was not wounded in action but injured in a bombing practice on February 23, 1917; when recovered from his injuries (June, 1917), which were not dangerous (see *Popolo d'Italia* of February 24, 1917) he asked exemption from further military service, as being indispensable in the management of the *Popolo d'Italia*.

Note B to Page 42

Sir Percival Phillips, special correspondent of the *Daily Mail*, in his book, *The Red Dragon and the Black Shirts: how Italy found her Soul: the true (sic) story of the Fascist Movement*, London, Carmelite House, 1923, p. 13, says:

'Communist policy is flinging men alive into blast-furnaces, as was done by a Red tribunal composed of women at Turin.'

I do not know whether in Russia or anywhere else Communist policy ever flung men alive into blast-furnaces. What I do know is that at Turin no such thing ever happened. It is bad enough that during the occupation of the factories there a Red tribunal should have talked wild words about throwing two unfortunate men named Scimula and Sonzini into a blast-furnace, before it sentenced them to be shot (*Corriere della Sera*, March, 2, 3, 4, 1922). Why exaggerate facts in themselves terrible? It would be fairer to note that in a movement of 500,000 men all over Italy, there were only six men murdered, all in Turin.

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The French paper *L'Oeuvre*, November 18, 1926, reproduced from a French weekly a description of an incident which never took place:

'The March on Rome, which put an end to this terrible regime, is due to M. Fiat. The workers, not content with occupying his factory, gagged the great Italian industrialist, and outraged his wife and daughters before his eyes. Indignant, the great industrialist placed at Mussolini's disposal the necessary funds for overthrowing the regime.'

L'Oeuvre observed that M. Fiat is no other than the F(abbrica) I(taliana) A(utomobili) T(orino) (The Italian Motor-Car Company of Turin) and this company had neither wife nor daughters who could have been outraged. The journalist paid to write this piece of propaganda evidently knew nothing of the world-famous motor factory.

As regards Signor Agnelli, manager of the Fiat Company, no one ever broke into his house, nor was he or his family attacked in any way.

On September 30, Signor Agnelli went to the main factory ('Fiat Centro') to take it over again from the 'Internal Commission' which had managed it during the occupation. The *Corriere della Sera*, October 1, 1920, writes:

'His arrival was greeted with applause. On the table of his office lay a large bunch of red carnations (the Socialist emblem). On one wall was the Soviet emblem, the sickle and hammer.'

Signor Agnelli did not consider the applause sufficient compensation for the Communist sickle and hammer, and announced in the papers that he would resign his position of general manager of the company. A month later his mother died. We read in the *Corriere della Sera*, October 31, 1920:

'Three thousand workmen of the Fiat followed the funeral. In sign of mourning the trade-union leaders called a stoppage of work during the funeral in all the 14 factories of the concern. As the coffin was carried out of the church, one of the members

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of the "Internal Commission" of the main factory, who is a Socialist member of the county council, went up to Signor Agnelli and said so that all could hear: "Do come back to us." A representative of the clerical staff on behalf of all his fellows expressed the same desire. Signor Agnelli, overcome with emotion, did not speak, but gave a long hand-shake to the two men.'

An American manufacturer, owner of a large plant in Northern Italy, told Mr. Sandford Griffith:

'The workers were simple enough to believe that in occupying the factories they had started a world revolution. At our place they did no malicious damage to the machinery. They tried to run the factory instead. During their theatricals I went out to play golf every day. Though I crossed the factory district in my car I was not molested.' (*Survey Graphic* of New York, March, 1927.)

Such was Italian 'Bolshevism' in 1919-20. A childish bacchanal of applause, red carnations, communist emblems, strikes, demonstrations, etc., lasting over twenty months and stained with the blood of 200 people killed in the disorders.

Signor Villari, in *The Awakening of Italy*, pp. 94-7, while describing the crisis of the occupation of the factories, omits, as usual, any reference to the writings and actions of Mussolini and his friends in those days. Instead he would have us believe that the Socialists regarded this form of direct action as the beginning of practical collectivism and of the long-hoped-for dictatorship of the proletariat. He states: that the occupation of the factories was ordered by the Communist Deputy, Bombacci, and other leaders of the F. I. O. M. (Italian Federation of Engineering Workers); that the proposal to give the occupation a revolutionary character was defended by the 'Socialist Party' and opposed by the General Confederation of Labour; that as a result of the crisis 'the value of the lira on the Swiss exchange fell to 25 centimes: it had been 74 at the beginning of the year.'

The statement that the Communist deputy, Bombacci, together with other leaders of the F. I. O. M., ordered the occupation of

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the factories, is sheer invention. Bombacci was not among the leaders of the F. I. O. M., and took no part in the unfortunate decision.

Signor Villari should have informed his readers that the leaders of the F. I. O. M. and of the General Confederation of Labour, who opposed the Anarchists and Communists, were right-wing Socialists, and within the Socialist Party they protested against the attitude of their Executive which sought to give a revolutionary trend to the movement.

The propagandist should have compared the rate of exchange of the lira in September and October of 1920, not only with January of 1920, but with the intervening and following months. He would then have shown that the lira had been falling steadily ever since 1919, owing to continual inflation, and in September and October, 1920, its fall was no more precipitous than the previous and following months. The purchasing price of 100 Swiss francs in Italian lire was: 1919, March, 132.30 lire; June, 151.32 lire; September, 174.86 lire; December, 241.67 lire; 1920, March, 321.24 lire; April, 410.50 lire; May, 352.78 lire; June, 309.98 lire; July, 305.53 lire; August, 341.98 lire; September, 373.74 lire; October, 408.33 lire; November, 427.55 lire; December, 441.02 lire; 1921, March, 446.86 lire; June, 339.64 lire. (Bachi, *Italia economica*, 1919, p. 106; 1920, p. 119; 1921, p. 100.) Taking the economic movement of 1913 as 100, we find that the exports of motor-cars and other vehicles of the same kind amounted to 105.7 in 1919, and to 794.51 in 1920. (Bachi, *Italia economica*, 1920, p. 22.) The crisis of the occupation of the factories was grave above all in the motor-car factories.