

# THE LIVING AGE

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## A WEEK OF THE WORLD

ITALIAN politics seem to be simmering down to a period of comparative quiescence after the excitement of the last election; and even the new life put into the Adriatic crisis by President Wilson's recent notes may produce little disturbance in public sentiment: The Fiume question has been before the public so long that it has lost some of its former interest. Before President Wilson intervened, the neutral and liberal press of Europe was almost unanimous in condemning the remarkable volt-face made by Lloyd George and Clemenceau in their note of January 27, which brusquely demanded that the Belgrade Government consent to a settlement which a previous memorandum of December 13 to the Italian Government had proved, point by point, to be undesirable and unjust.

About the same time that this note was dispatched the question of Italy's joining France and England in a new Triple Alliance was mooted in the former country. It was suggested that Italy might take the place of America in such a combination. Several Nationalist and Jingo papers, like *Messaggero* and *Giornale d'Italia*, supported that policy, although Mr. Clemenceau was said to be distrustful of Italy

since the last election had given the Socialists and Catholics control of Parliament.

The organs of the latter parties vigorously condemned such an alliance. *Corriere d'Italia*, which is the official organ of the Catholic Peoples party, said: 'The Italian nation is unalterably opposed to entering into any sort of agreement looking toward a revival of the old Balance of Power and military conventions. These were the things that caused the present war. If such an alliance is proposed, it will not be endorsed by the Italians.' Naturally, *Avanti*, the official organ of the Socialist party, was equally emphatic in its condemnation: 'The people are tired of political adventures and have no desire to become the tools of France.' *Resto del Carlino*, a Bologna paper having the largest circulation in Central Italy, also denounced the proposal. It objected that, 'Such a Triple Alliance would make the Italian people the jailers and mercenaries of the Entente and force them to prepare for new wars with nations against whom they have no grievance—against Germans, Russians, Austrians, Hungarians, Bulgarians, and Turks. It is proposed to conclude this Alliance with the French and Eng-

lish at a time when Clemenceau and Lloyd George are violating every principle of human liberty along the Rhine, in Alsace-Lorraine, in Turkey, in Egypt, and in India; while English generals are slaughtering Indian insurgents and crucifying them, and while French troops in the occupied territories are treating German citizens in the way slave drivers treat negroes. . . . How many Italians would fight to maintain such a tyranny?’

These suggestive lights upon the sentiment of the two parties that constitute a majority in the Italian Parliament toward Italy's former allies, may explain the recent solicitude of Clemenceau and Lloyd George to propitiate that nation in the Adriatic settlement.

IN both Italy and France the Railway labor problem has assumed an acute form. Italian railways showed a deficit of 400,000,000 lire — at par exchange, \$80,000,000 — last year, although rates were increased during the war and have been trebled since the armistice. The growing cost of operation is due largely to the increase of wages. That item has risen from 300,000,000 lire to 1,000,000,000 lire. Railway employees received the highest compensation paid to any workers by the government; locomotive drivers earn from 10,800 to 16,000 lire a year — \$2240 to \$3200 — and firemen are paid from 6000 to 9000 lire. Station agents receive as high as 20,000 lire. Nevertheless, the agitation for still more pay continues, combined with demands for an eight-hour day and direct representation of the employees in the railway management. These new demands caused the recent strike, which has been compromised so as to grant the administrative changes demanded, and to postpone an increase of wages.

IN no country in Europe, not even

Great Britain itself, are the authorities dealing more resolutely with factious labor disturbances and labor slacking than in Germany. Perhaps we should except Russia, from which we receive reports indicating heroic, though apparently ineffective, measures to restore labor efficiency. Recently the Prussian Minister of Railways closed thirteen important repair shops, and announced that he would not reopen them except under a new agreement with the employees. For many months the output per worker had been steadily declining and the employees had offered passive resistance to every measure intended to secure greater efficiency.

The authorities believed that they had made generous allowance for the fact that machinery and materials had deteriorated and that the men were under-nourished. In at least some of the works, not only had the output fallen to an unreasonably low point after taking into account these conditions, but public property had been stolen and destroyed. The official announcement stated that: ‘The number of workers will be considerably reduced and only those will be re-employed who agree in writing to work upon a reasonable piecework basis, and to work a full eight hours daily.’

*Vorwärts* disputed the justice of the claim that the workers in these establishments were slacking, and presented elaborate figures from a single shop to prove its statement. On the other hand, so liberal a daily as the *Berliner Tageblatt* commented soon after this measure went into effect: ‘This radical step of closing several railway repair shops, involved dangers, but it proved a success in practice. It was speedily demonstrated that the fall in output was due to terrorism exercised by a small minority of the employees. More than ninety per cent of the workmen report-

ed for duty, under the new conditions, and accepted piecework payment.'

ALL Europe has been startled by the reversal of the Entente policy toward Russia implied in the proposal to reopen commercial relations with the people of that country. The conservative press of France, and the bourgeois press of Germany are equally hostile to this programme.

Hans Vorst scouts the suggestion that the Bolshevik Government will make a sincere appeal to the people of Russia for support through the means of a general election. He believes, to be sure, that: The only way of ending the internal conflicts of Russia is by the ballot. The only principle under which the government can become stable is the will of the majority — the principle of democracy. If the parties still disputing for power agree, therefore, to settle their rivalries without employing force, they can only settle them in this manner. 'But for the Bolsheviks to agree to this sole, possible solution would not be a mere concession toward conservatism, but absolute capitulation. The Bolshevik system is fundamentally anti-democratic; it stands and falls with a dictatorship by a minority. It cannot possibly compromise with democracy and the principle of majority rule. To fancy that the Bolsheviks will voluntarily surrender in this fashion is to indulge in the most unfounded visions.' Even if the leading men among the Bolsheviks were fully convinced that the days of their power were limited and that the reign of terror was drawing to a close, and if this belief should incline them toward surrender on the best terms possible, they would be unable to do so. For the question of retaining control of the government is a question of life and death, not only for the Bolshevik leaders, but for the host of

their followers. 'The Bolsheviks must stick to the helm to the last moment, for they have so embittered the people against them by their terrorist methods that the hemp would tighten around their necks the moment that they released their hold of the government, or proposed to turn over their power to a democratic administration.'

Dr. Joseph Jahn, an economic writer in the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, takes a more optimistic view, and believes that the policy of the Bolsheviks is really being modified under the stern lessons of experience. He interprets the measures proposed by the British Government as an effort to anticipate German competition. However, he considers that while Germany cannot participate directly in this trade — at least for some time to come — it will derive indirect advantage from it. Moreover, a large number of German and Austrian war prisoners have remained in Russia and have become an important influence in the industrial and commercial life of the Soviet republic. According to a Moscow newspaper, they are permitted to operate in 'almost a capitalist manner,' because they have contributed so effectively to increasing production. Eventually, the influence of these people upon Russian commercial relations with Germany will be felt.

Meantime, the countries nearest Russia refuse to believe that real peace with that country is at hand. They are profoundly impressed with the increasing efficiency of the Russian army and the apparent resumption of normal economic life in that country. The Stockholm *Dagblad* says: 'Our absolute, but well-grounded distrust compels Sweden to keep constantly in view the prospect of a new war in the East, which will not be confined to Asia, but will be directed likewise against Western Europe.'

ERZBERGER'S retirement under attack as Minister of Finance, and the preceding attempt to assassinate him in Berlin, are dramatic climaxes in what has been one of the most dramatic political trials ever held in Germany. Early in the war, when he was already a leader of the Clerical party in the Reichstag, Erzberger was a pronounced annexationist. Later, however, he supported the peace resolution of July 17, 1917, and he is accused of negotiating secretly and without authority with the Prince Sixtus group at Vienna and with clerical dignitaries close to the Vatican in an effort to hasten that event. None of these facts is denied, but the motives that inspired Erzberger are variously interpreted.

The main point at issue is the propriety of Erzberger's methods. He was a close friend of the great iron manufacturing family of Thyssens. While a parliamentary leader he was a member of the board of directors of the Thyssen Company and received a fee of 100,000 marks in that capacity. He was an ardent advocate of annexing the Briè-Longwy ore fields, and while the Germans held that district appears to have been a party to negotiations to have certain French mines there assigned to the Thyssens, either in perpetuity or for the period of the war. Helfferich charges Erzberger with acting from improper motives, and the trial is bringing the whole question of the relation of big industry to politics before the court of German public opinion.

Erzberger has been an object of passionate political attack for a considerable period. His enemies call him the *Reichsverderber* — his country's destroyer. This hatred dates from the time of the peace resolution already mentioned. It was increased by the discovery of his intrigues with the Austrian nobility for peace, and the

part he played at the time of the armistice. He is charged with responsibility for the fact that the Allies got hold of Count Czernin's ominous memorandum, in which the Austro-Hungarian Premier predicted the speedy collapse of the Central Powers. He is charged with having unnecessarily sacrificed German advantages in the armistice negotiations. He is blamed for not resisting more resolutely the surrender of Germany's merchant fleet. He is suspected of all sorts of mysterious, subterranean intrigues in the service of the Vatican. Serious charges are made against his personal character. He did not add to his popularity by assuming charge of the national finances at a time when they were in hopeless chaos. Many of his measures have proved serious mistakes, and have done immeasurable harm to the business of the country. His personal attitude toward his opponents has never been conciliatory.

Helfferich — who was one of Erzberger's predecessors in the post of Finance Minister — had a brilliant official career under the old régime. He is described as almost a nervous wreck at the present trial — 'pale, with unsteady glance, constantly walking up and down between the president of the court and his opponent, and nervously twirling a pencil in his fingers.' 'Whenever he disagrees with a witness — which is very frequently — the blood mounts to his cheeks, he springs from his seat and makes a gesture as if to interrupt, then controls himself, and rapidly scratches down a memorandum which he erases a moment later. Frequently he must be called to order by the presiding officer. Indeed, he seems on the verge of hysteria and nervous collapse.'

Erzberger is a man of more callous temperament. But recently he has been attacked not only by the opposi-

tion parties, but also from within the ranks of the clericals. His policy of financial centralization was one of the reasons why the Catholic Peoples party of Bavaria recently withdrew from parliamentary coöperation with the Centrists. The Centre party itself recently felt compelled to assume a non-committal attitude toward Erzberger's private conduct, while endorsing his political leadership. The new financial programme which he recently brought forward has been bitterly criticized by leaders of the radical democrats, who are, in general, firm supporters of the present coalition ministry. His resignation will not unlikely be followed by important changes in Germany's fiscal programme.

BELGIUM seems to be recovering its economic equilibrium as speedily as any other country engaged in the war. A recent census of its industries showed that in December, 1919, the number of factory employees was seventy per cent of what it had been six years before. The number employed in the transportation industries was seven per cent more than in 1913. Around Liège where the recovery has been most rapid, eighty per cent of the normal peace force now has employment. All that prevents a full resumption of industry is the shortage of raw materials and coal. However, the coal mines are now producing ninety-four per cent of their pre-war output. Metallurgical industries do not show such rapid progress, partly because their workers are still engaged in reconstructing and repairing machinery worn out or destroyed during the period of German occupation.

The new Parliament consists of 74 Catholics, 70 Social Democrats, 34 Liberals and nine members of minor parties, as compared with 99 Catholics, 44 Liberals, 41 Social Democrats, and

two Christian Democrats in the former Parliament.

ANTI-TIPPING Laws are one of the by-products of the labor agitation that has accompanied the present revolution in Europe. Statutes prohibiting tipping have been enacted in Italy, France, Spain, Austria, Germany, and Russia. One has recently been proposed in Zurich: These laws have been inspired by the working people themselves, apparently under the impression that it is beneath the dignity of emancipated labor to receive gratuities.

However, experience with these acts is proving that the dignity of labor is a matter of personal sentiment rather than of legislation. For instance, in Berlin ten per cent is added to a customer's bill in lieu of tips. Either the proprietor includes this in his charge, or the waiter adds it when presenting his check. The public has no option but to pay that ten per cent. However, if we may believe recent reports from that city, a person who does not surreptitiously add something over and above this ten per cent, receives very poor service and becomes conspicuously unpopular with attendants. Under the old system, the waiter felt obliged to express his gratitude for a tip. Under the new system he does not dare to do so, since this super-tip is more or less illegal. Consequently, customers find it expedient to continue tipping, but are deprived of such satisfaction as they may have formerly received from the acknowledgment of this generosity.

HUNGARY recently held its first election under the new Liberal Suffrage Law. Hitherto, the workers and peasants were practically excluded from elections. The 'Christian National Union' and the 'Small Farmers,' each with nearly the same number of

votes, have an overwhelming majority. Many Social Democrats and Liberals refrained from taking part in the elections. Indeed, the Socialists have been so badly discredited by their participation in the Communist régime that in any case they would have been seriously weakened. The peasants seem to have played a decisive part in the election. They did not send many members of their own class to Parliament, preferring to be represented by journalists, lawyers, teachers, and engineers. This Parliament is distinguished from its predecessors under the Hapsburgs by the practical elimination of the old aristocracy and gentry, who formerly dominated that body. The new legislators are mainly from the middle class, and the government is bourgeois throughout. Sentiment was in favor of selecting a member of the Hapsburg family as head of the state; but such a project has been vetoed by the Supreme Council at Paris.

**BULGARIA**, according to recent reports, is gradually recovering from the political restlessness and economic distress produced by the war, although the wounds to its national pride remain unhealed. Some disorders occurred among the peasants in January, on account of the unsatisfactory price fixed by the government for grain. But they did not support the general strike, called by the Bolsheviks and Socialists, who united for this purpose. That disturbance soon collapsed, after martial law had been proclaimed and several labor leaders, including some members of Parliament, had been arrested. Troops are kept under arms to suppress possible future Bolshevik uprisings in the towns. The young King, Boris, is said to be personally popular. Food prices are very high; and the peasants have plenty of money.

Grain and tobacco are abundant.

**GERMAN** merchants in the Argentine are complaining bitterly because important exporters in the homeland are giving their business to South American firms that were pro-Ally during the war. The Italians have been particularly successful in securing the right of representing German manufacturers and exporters. The Bentz motor cars, for instance, are handled by an Italian firm, which, until recently, financed an anti-German newspaper. That firm, however, was in a position to give a single order for five hundred automobiles to the home factory immediately upon receipt of authority to act as its agent. Certain German wine exporters are also dealing principally through Italian houses in Buenos Aires. These complaints may throw light upon Germany's trade policy in neutral countries — as they indicate a way to overcome the possible aversion of customers of German goods.

AS we go to press, eventful news again comes from Germany, and it is impossible to predict just what course affairs will have taken in that country by the time this issue reaches our readers. At the present moment it looks as though Germany were experiencing a prætorian revolt. Apparently a few thousand Baltic troops, forced by our own governments to withdraw from Courland, and imprudently allowed to encamp near Berlin, have suddenly taken the government of that city into their hands rather than be demobilized and deprived of a chance to continue in their chosen profession of arms. In one sense this is a D'Annunzio enterprise on a larger and more serious scale. Still, at a time when old social forms are decadent and political institutions are dis-



organized, as they are in many parts of Europe to-day, a small military force may change the course of history. Clovis is said to have had but eight thousand troops when he gave the final stroke to Roman power in Gaul and founded modern France.

The present Pan-German enterprise in Berlin is a criminal attempt to defeat the will of the people as expressed at the last election. The Fatherland party is a very small minority of the German nation, having its stronghold in the East Elbe region. It does not represent the German masses. It is ready to ally itself with a monarchist movement in Russia, whereas in Germany the revolution has employed extensively the military agents of the old empire.

Under another aspect the present revolt is the attempt of a group of property owners, whose wealth is in a form that cannot escape taxation, to avoid paying their losses in the gamble of a war they promoted. It would have been better had a competent financier like Dernberg been kept in

control of national finances, instead of placing the most important department of the government in the hands of a man of uncertain character and still more uncertain ability like Erzberger, whose presence in the cabinet has been a constant moral liability for the government. But any finance minister who honestly addressed himself to the task of providing for Germany's monetary obligations would have had to propose measures likely to inspire revolt by the great landlords of the East Elbe country. On the other hand, if the little group of Pan-Germans, at the present moment exercising military dictatorship in Berlin, should ally themselves as a last resort with the extreme radical dissenters in the Socialist party, and thus fortify what promises at the moment to be but a transient lease of power, we might have a situation very akin to that which is developing in Russia, where the adherents of a dictatorship of the proletariat and of a dictatorship of a ruling caste, have made joint cause against democracy.

## POLITICAL STABILITY IN ITALY

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### 1. *The Italian Socialist Programme*

BY FRANCESCO CICCOTTI

PUBLIC attention has been directed more strongly than hitherto toward the Socialist party by the results of the recent elections. The attitude and programme of that party are followed and discussed with an interest sharpened by anxiety. When definite facts

fail by which to infer the probable action of the Socialists in a possible crisis, or their attitude toward any question, individual fancy is substituted for authentic information, and our people are treated to the wildly distorted imaginings of ill-informed journalists. This proneness of the public to be misled, and the recent spread of radical ideals, closely allied with Bolshevism, among the rank and file of our party, have produced the impression both at home and abroad