

forces by satisfying their demands for reform. In such a case what would be the attitude of the Socialists and their representatives in Parliament? I might answer this question by saying I do not personally believe, as circumstances are at present, that we can have such peaceful evolution, or that we can recover in this manner from the disintegrating effects of the war. But I do not wish to deal with the suggestion in so summary a fashion.

Even though political and economic institutions in Italy might undergo a pacific and essentially legislative transformation, that could never occur unless inspired or directed by the two most vital and powerful forces in the country — Socialism and Catholicism. Although the impossibility of an actual revolution in Italy might be demonstrated, the task of social reconstruction could not be committed to any party without the constant support of the Socialists and the Catholics. This makes it important to determine how far it is likely that the Catholic People's party and the Socialists could combine in this labor.

Personally, I do not think that it is practicable. The People's party and its representation in Parliament, from the very character of the sources from which it draws its strength, is always conservative at heart, no matter how progressive its pronouncements. A certain proportion of its members in Parliament are known to represent the interests and passions of the bourgeoisie. We are justified in assuming that several of these delegates have joined the People's party for the express purpose of watching over such interests, because they distrust the capacity of the old Liberal and Conservative parties to do so. It would only be in case that those elements of the People's party which represent proletarian groups organized on a

class basis, should separate themselves from the contingent representing bourgeoisie and Conservatives, that the way would be open for eventual coöperation between the former elements and the Italian Socialists. But I consider such a possibility very remote.

In conclusion, the Socialist delegation in Parliament will continue its present uncompromising attitude and refrain from taking any part in the government, until the day when the Socialist party and the proletarian organizations are able to assume full control. Until that time the Socialist party will devote itself in Parliament to increasingly vigorous attacks upon the ruling classes, in order to force them to introduce radical reforms: There are very influential Bolsheviki among us to-day, who advocate throwing our strength in the direction of bourgeois reform, because they believe the effect will not be to make the bourgeoisie more capable of bringing about reform than they have been in the past, but to demonstrate to all the world the absolute incapacity of that class to improve social conditions. It remains to be seen whether such a policy will develop from the existing crisis a situation that renders Socialism inevitable, or whether it may not result in a progressive betterment, a social reconstruction that will ultimately enlist the influence and coöperation of the Socialist party.

[*The Neue Freie Presse* (National Liberal Daily), January 25]

II. *Agitated Italy*

BY LUDWIG BIRO

ROME, in January.

A FEW weeks ago the electric trams in every large city in Italy suddenly stopped running about mid-day. Immediately afterward business houses

were closed, and holiday quiet settled upon these towns. There was a general strike. An English friend darted an understanding glance at me from a neighboring café table, and came over to convince me with despairing satisfaction that 'the thing had started.' Of course, that is the way it would start and everyone recognized that trouble was coming. The English Press Service had prophesied that the Italian revolution would begin within a few weeks. Since then I have frequently discussed that possibility with my English friend. He was firmly convinced that the English Press Service could not make a mistake in such an important matter. I am willing to acknowledge that the English are experts in judging sentiment in foreign countries, but I insist vigorously that the English Press Service in this case is betting on the wrong horse. Unhappily, I am a first-hand expert in revolutions. I have had experiences which I can match against the theories of any authority; so I insist on disbelieving in an Italian revolution.

The first afternoon of the general strike passed. Toward evening wild rumors arrived that the water works had been destroyed, though I was still getting water without interruption. Another day passed: it was a very quiet one. It was far quieter than any Sunday in Italy, for on Sundays the fruit shops and barber shops are generally open. Then the strike was over, and life resumed its usual round. The revolution did not occur. My English friend admitted that I was right for this once. But belief in an Italian revolution persists so obstinately throughout Western Europe that the Italian Premier considered it necessary, several weeks later, to give an elaborate interview to the foreign correspondents in Rome, pointing out why a revolution could not occur in Italy.

The arguments of the Italian Premier were very good ones for the people to whom they were addressed; but a man who has actually lived through a couple of revolutions in his own country has a much better argument. Italy did not go hungry for five years of war, and is not now starving. In those days in 1918 when the line of people waiting to get bread in Vienna, Budapest, and Berlin was constantly growing longer, any man who knew the history of the classical prototype of all revolutions — that of France — could see clearly something to which the rulers of Austria, Hungary, and Germany were blind; that serious things were brewing and we were going to have a general turnover.

Now the converse of the idea I have just suggested is equally true. As a broad generalization, no country will start a revolution as long as the common people are well fed. The question is whether the Italian common people have enough to eat. To be sure, you can read bitter attacks upon the food administration in some newspapers. Prices have risen 50, 100, and, in cases of a few articles, 150 per cent. But wages have risen likewise. We see not only in the newspapers of Austria, but also in the bourgeois papers of Italy, that street sweepers have larger incomes than school teachers. The Italian workingman is not really starving. During the day of the general strike, I spent hours wandering around the suburbs of Florence. I tried to read the countenances and the eyes of the men I met — to see whether they were really alight with the fire of revolution. It was just after the mid-day meal. Small groups of Trade Unionists stood round on the streets smoking. They warmed themselves in the mid-day sun: and they stood round quietly and smoked. Most of them smoked cigars — for cigarettes have

become rather scarce and cigars have taken their place. Let me repeat, these men were 'placidly *smoking cigars*'. Does anyone who knows revolutions first hand imagine that men smoking cigars will ever start one?

The Italian Socialist party is probably the only Socialist group in Central and Western Europe, outside of Austria, which takes internationalism seriously. Its attitude in international questions is inspired by an extraordinary sense of moral responsibility. The party is prompted by a high conception of its mission for all humanity, and the members of that party honestly feel that every fellow workingman beyond their political boundaries is also their brother. This party certainly would not hesitate a minute to do what it considers its duty; but it does not consider its duty is making revolutions. Although it won much ground at the last election, it still controls less than a third of Parliament. It is opposed by a bourgeois group which has been weakened in some ways,—the same ways as in England and France,—but in other respects has been materially strengthened. A throne, a church, capitalism, a petty bourgeoisie, small land holders, a whole nationalist middle class, a constabulary, a police, a military caste with a strong *esprit de corps*—with all these intact, what hope of success would a revolution have? How would men set about making a revolution? If a sudden and determined revolt should succeed at points, how long could it maintain itself? If, contrary to all probability and all reason, a revolution should spread over the whole country, how long could Socialist Italy exist in the midst of capitalist Europe? I might multiply arguments indefinitely, but it is unnecessary, for there is not the slightest indication that the Italian Socialist

party is planning a revolution. On the contrary, all signs indicate that the party is substantially averse to such a measure. When *Avanti* talks of revolution, it adds immediately that it does not advocate the workingman taking up arms, building barricades, and seizing the government by force. Both the leaders of the workers, and the rank and file, would oppose such a revolution. The only men who advocate violence are what the Italians call *teppe*. Our word 'mob' is not a good translation of that term: 'hoodlums' comes nearer. The 'hoodlums' may start revolutionary riots at isolated points, but they cannot start a revolution.

Who else would back up such movements? The country has ample provisions; factories are running full time. The disinclination to labor, so generally complained of in the belligerent countries, is here hardly in evidence. The demobilized Italian soldiers are eager to get back to the plough and the bench. There are some unemployed, but their number is surprisingly small. Workingmen insist on higher wages, but general strikes for industrial objects have not occurred. The political strikes have lasted but a day or so. Exchange has fallen during the war, but public sentiment is practically unanimous in favoring radical remedial measures to improve the country's financial situation, and these will eventually react upon exchange. So upon what basis are you going to start a revolution?

My English friend used to reply to this question by saying solemnly 'D'Annunzio.' We must admit that D'Annunzio's adventure has produced a critical situation, and is in a sense a danger point. But I used to reply to my English acquaintance by pointing out the tact and patience which the government had shown toward that

leader and his enterprise, and the general disposition to insist upon discipline and national loyalty manifested by all parties. The bourgeois democracies of Western Europe are now fully alive to the fact that majorities are not entitled to tyrannize over minorities, but must treat them with firmness tempered by consideration. My friend would not admit that such a policy could succeed. Thereupon I recalled to him — what he had completely forgotten — that as recently as 1914, in a country which proved itself later thoroughly sound at heart and powerful, an eminent public man, who was later to become Cabinet Minister, had organized a small minority to oppose armed resistance against the government, and that the government when called upon to defend its sovereignty did not order its troops to fire. Such an order all Europe would have construed as a sign of weakness. The country where this happened was England; the statesman who organized armed resistance was Carson, the question which the English Government smoothed over (without shedding the blood of its citizens) while enforcing due respect for its sovereignty, was the Ulster question. The Fiume question holds about the same position in Italy that the Ulster question held in English public opinion. In any case, they both have a common characteristic. The Italian people revolted with abhorrence from the idea that Italian soldiers should fire upon Italian soldiers at Fiume. Consequently, after D'Annunzio had taken that city there was no other way to deal with the matter except the one that the Italian Government chose—to wait, to negotiate with D'Annunzio, to settle the whole incident, which is a painful thorn in the side of Italian sentiment, by negotiation. The negotiations continued a long time without

success, but this does not indicate lack of discipline in the Italian army, or the failure of Italian citizens to respect their government.

The Italian army has very good discipline; but a different kind of discipline from that we had in Austria and Prussia. Italian officers and Italian citizens recognize also a categorical imperative, but it is irrational to expect them to conceive this categorical imperative in the Prussian manner. The Italian Government is not weakened a particle by the fact that it did not hasten to hale the Fiume legionaries before a court-martial; quite on the contrary, its delay and patience merely demonstrate its own reserve strength, and proves that a majority, or at least a better element, among the Italian legionaries are not only loyal soldiers but also conscientious Italian patriots.

If complications should arise at Fiume, the people really responsible will be in Paris, Berlin, or Washington. Italy is one of the victorious powers, but its allies have hitherto shown little comprehension of its needs and interests.

Revolution? Unless all Europe is swept by revolution, Italy will not be. The Italian people like the rest of us are restless and nervously on edge; but Italy itself is strong and sound. The Italian people are working and at heart want nothing but peace and quiet. The future political constitution of their country will be variously conceived by different parties, but there is not at this moment in the whole kingdom a single group of appreciable importance which desires anything else than to make Italy the pillar and stronghold of peace. You cannot find among the Italian people the slightest trace of bitterness or hatred toward their recent enemies. You find no evidence of that other temper—almost

equally portentous elsewhere—which manifests itself in dark prophesies that hostilities may be resumed.

Italians as individuals do not cherish deep prejudices, and there is no more interesting political reading in Italy—nothing more characteristically Italian—than the pacifist platform of the former Nationalist party at the time of the last election. This desire for peace manifests itself also in the eagerness to get back to useful work, and the tendency to admire and honor business enterprise and successes. No international hatred can survive where such a spirit prevails. Italy is absorbed, now that she has attained her national ideal, in raising herself to a more important place in the economic life of Europe and the world. Unless all signs fail, the influence of that country will be exerted in favor of conciliatory policies and international coöperation. When Italians call themselves Latins, they do not thereby disparage other races. One reason why they cherish their Latin ancestry is that it brings them closer to other countries.

A revolution? A revolution cannot begin to-morrow because it has already begun some time ago. We are really in the midst of a tremendous revolution, of which the war was merely a symptom, and Russian Bolshevism is another symptom. Structures of greater endurance and deeper foundations than empires have been overthrown. World ideals, and the attitude of nations toward each other and toward the social problems they must meet, have been revolutionized. Men face their fellow men, and governments face governments, hesitating, uncertain, helpless. Humanity regards the social chaos which surrounds it with bewilderment, and no one can find again his familiar place. Religion, science, economic life, social standards are all embraced in this revolution. It affects all civilized mankind. We have no more knowledge of whither we are drifting than those ancient Northmen, who entrusted themselves to the unknown ocean in their Viking ships and were driven without their own design from continent to continent.

TRADING WITH RUSSIA

[*The Berliner Tageblatt* (Liberal Daily),
January 29]

1. *What Has Russia to Sell?*

BY HANS VORST

THE Pendulum policy of the Entente toward Russia has again swung to the other end of the arc. What a short time it has been since Germany was officially instructed to join the blockade of Russia! And now the Supreme Council has decided to inaugurate an

exchange of products between Russia and the Allied and Neutral Powers through the agency of the Russian Coöperatives! The British Government has already appropriated seventeen million pounds sterling to insure its merchants against losses in the trade, and a vast interchange of products is said to be in contemplation.

If this is not simply a diplomatic manoeuvre, it means really lifting the whole blockade against Russia and not merely relaxing it. The fact is not