

ITALY AT THE CROSSROADS

BY FILIPPO BURZIO

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RECENT events have proved that the Italian monarchy still serves a purpose; and at the same time that critical danger threatens the stability of our governmental institutions. To these two primary phenomena a third is added: the rising resolution of the bourgeoisie to assert their political demands — a resolution that has manifested itself with disconcerting rapidity and has imposed upon the country the dictatorship of an antidemocratic élite of wealth. While this dictatorship has prudently accepted the monarchy, it has made the throne feel the weight of its hand.

We must suspend judgment at present regarding the two all-important features of this situation: the ability of the monarchy to tide us over the governmental crisis, and the likelihood that our middle-class dictatorship will prove either constructive or destructive.

Fascismo has accepted but one condition from the old régime — the monarchy. The attitude of the throne has been: Let us avoid a resort to force; let us negotiate. Regarded from the standpoint of temporary expediency, this seems a happy policy. It is as if we were to say: Do not stick at unessentials. Do not enslave yourself to custom. Avoid false heroics. Bow to the exigencies of the situation. The Fascisti are, after all, a strong body of Italians. What they propose to destroy — the old parliamentary Cabinet and the old popular Parliament — is, after all, a failure: as a mouthpiece of the people, it really has little value. The

times are critical. Crucial problems have been delayed too long. We must not procrastinate another moment. Fascismo is a new force. It presents serious uncertainties, but it embodies an energy that, if repressed, may explode and tear us to pieces; but that directed into useful channels, may save us.

Let us, therefore, give the Fascisti a chance to show what they can do. Why not? The monarchy has sworn to uphold the constitution. But repeated invasions of the constitution by Parliament's statutory usurpations are quite another thing. Parliament's February vetoes were designed still further to curtail royal prerogatives, to Italy's harm.

For the stabilizing factors in the Government are already too weak. Parliamentary Government is merely a familiar expedient that has served a useful purpose in the past, but we must not make a fetish of it. The great violation of the constitution does not consist in the King's refusal to proclaim martial law at the demand of the old Cabinet, nor in the eventual formation of a non-Parliamentary Cabinet, but in the disregard of civic rights and the defiance of Government authority that preceded these.

Therefore, it would be historical irony, legal pettifoggery, political hypocrisy, to argue that the Crown should have defended the Parliamentary system to the last ditch, when Parliament proved helpless to defend itself. The Fascisti were driven by the logic of

facts to ally themselves, not with Parliament, but with the King. Thus the formal continuity of the Government is preserved.

This is the way the situation presents itself to an Italian, if in his effort to get a more general view, he omits all negative factors. Admitting that a Parliament paralyzed by Party factionalism was not worth defending, what are we to say of the institution that has taken its place? Here the plot begins to thicken. A definite and constructive political intention, aiming to remedy the failure of our governmental institutions and to restore the authority and stability of the State, has not yet emerged clearly to the vision of the nation from the whirlwind of interests and passions that has accompanied the birth of the new system — providing that it has been born at all.

All that we discern with certainty at present, is a seething sea of unbridled Nationalist megalomania, devoid alike of political sagacity or moderation of language, and scarce concealing in its turgid depths the monsters of class-hatred and brute passion. If our psychological intuition is exact, we may venture to say that the Fascisti movement, as represented by Mussolini and his political policy, has been forced to yield too much to that other aspect, represented by D'Annunzio and his florid rhetoric. It is the predominance, at least up to the present, of these negative elements in the Fascisti movement — political immaturity, unreflecting passion, exaggerated rhetoric, and the feud spirit — that gives pause to our approval. While its leaders are apparently eager to push forward constructive measures, conflicting interests are plainly at work — the interests that have put in power a plutocratic élite. To be sure, this kind of backing may be necessary for the moment, because a governing group, drawn from

eager and aggressive business-circles, may achieve positive political results that will stabilize and strengthen the public authority. But if peace is to result, it is all-essential that this egoism be at least intelligent.

From 1860 to the present time, from the days of our old unquestioning obedience to the days of defiant disobedience typified by D'Annunzio, Government authority in Italy has steadily declined. Unerring political instinct is required accurately to diagnose such a disease. A mind captivated by the unthinking optimism and quasi-Socialist theories of the pre-war period, interpreting all political phenomena in terms of technical or economic progress, is as incapable of comprehending this, as is the Nationalist rhetorician of to-day. After the great, inspiring epoch of the *Risorgimento* there was a disastrous let-down. The backbone of Italy — the political intelligentsia of the North — was overburdened by the weight of the vast, inert body of old Italy then annexed to Piedmont. The new territories added no new vitality, but merely new honor to the Government. What followed was like the dilution of a strong liquor with water. The Left grew weaker than the Right. Crispi's megalomania prepared the ground for Rudini's régime, with its virtual abdication of Government authority. The last attempt to assert the power of the Government failed in 1898. Giolitti's political instinct taught him to place the slightest possible strain upon the weak organism of the State. As early as 1914, after our Tripoli fiasco, the 'Red Week' showed how critical conditions were.

Let me recapitulate my points once more: First came Giolitti's Ministry, then the Monarchy, to-day Fascismo.

Consider our intervention in the War. Advocates of neutrality justified their policy ethically and politically by

their consciousness of the organic weakness of our Government, of the national peril involved of exposing it to the strain of war. Compared with their sense of sober responsibility, the superficial recklessness of the war-agitators is painful to contemplate. A providential victory forestalled in part a complete catastrophe. But the effects are seen in our post-War crisis. The disintegration of the State has been hastened, the growing weakness of the parliamentary caste has been aggravated. In Italy the last real display of governmental energy was Giolitti's resolute action in the case of Fiume. But this brief spasm of authority was followed by the Communists' seizing factories, by the exploits of the Fascisti, by Bolzano, Naples, and the march on Rome. We had an armed revolt; the army was hissed; and purely negative forces finally gained the upper hand. This victory without striking a blow, this occupying the Government in a parade without meeting real resistance, was a symptom of senility, of the corruption of death. How vastly different such an episode from the steady progress of great reform-movements in England, from the delirious violence of a French Revolution! These things suggest sad memories in our history: the *particolare* of Guicciardini; the *corruttela* of Macchiavelli; Venice at Campoformio. The spectre of the 'Carnival Nation' again rises before us: the Venezuela of Europe!

The relations between the champions of the Fascisti and their enemies reproduce the relations that existed before the War between advocates of intervention and advocates of neutrality. The only difference is that the pro-Fascisti now have a somewhat better case, because during the interval our problems have become better defined. We witness the manifestation of a new force in our race. Beneath the scoria of

our senility there is obscurely moving the germinating life of a coming era. From 1860 down to the present, we have had repeated evidence that step by step with the decadence of the Government something youthful and vigorous was forming in its place. The Risorgimento has not been barren. The industrial development in North Italy, the re-blossoming of our culture are positive facts. Everywhere are symptoms of a new vitality, though for the time being it manifests itself in excesses. We must wait for it to ripen. We failed to see the true meaning of the European War; we blundered both in our way of entering the war and in our conduct of the war; we were not unaided victors in that conflict; we failed to develop great military leaders; none the less, the Italian people themselves fought valiantly. That is a capital fact. No State can survive without military qualities.

We have also given evidence of social vitality. The Socialist movement itself, though based upon an imported doctrine, though falling in with our ancient Italian vice of hostility to the State, is notwithstanding a mighty movement. It stands for the first awakening of the masses, the vehicle through which the proletariat is becoming the people. The early conquests of Socialism have been premature. Its political prestige passed with 1919 and 1920. Our unexpected reaction to the threat of Bolshevism revealed the essential vigor of other classes, that are better fitted as yet to furnish the rulers of the people. Meanwhile, the Christian Socialism of the Popular Party made rapid headway among the peasants. I do not mean to say that all went well, that such movements represent positive progress in every respect. Cross-currents and back currents invariably are present in such evolution. But the phenomena I de-

scribe are not without pertinence and meaning. They are symptoms of processes of organic reconstruction working at the base of society. . . .

Some signs are favorable, others — the reverse. The wisdom of the Fascisti in accepting the monarchy, the readiness their leaders have shown to assume responsibility, the apparent moderation of their foreign policy, their general recognition that institutional crises are in Italy an organic necessity, if we are ever to reach political stability, are all to the credit of the new régime. Its first ministerial acts are too recent to be judged upon their merits. They seem to predict a financial policy dictated by a plutocratic caste, but perhaps by an energetic and efficient one.

The standing weaknesses of the Fascisti reside in the D'Annunzio spirit, which is widely diffused even among our plutocrats. Their greatest handicap is the method by which they have won power. Their victory rests on their illegal military organizations, their 'Fifth Estate.' Such methods are never safe from degenerating eventually into a prætorian dictatorship and chronic Mexican revolution, instead of evolving into a wholesome, sober, constitutional Government.

If there is to be a constructive policy, the Fascisti must not abuse their victory. However, Mussolini's first delivery in Parliament seemed to promise the contrary; it was a glorification of military methods. . . . Parliament is not to have the right to appoint and recall Cabinets, but merely to debate, approve, and amend statutes. In order that we may have authority, responsibility, vigor, and consistent public policies in Italy, the Cabinet must be more or less autonomous. Mussolini evidently advocates a constitution, like that of Germany before the war, under which he can inaugurate his

Cromwellian régime. But on what will he found it? In Germany there were the Hohenzollerns, the Junkers, the army, Prussian feudalism. During our momentary emergency the monarchy, the plutocratic élite, and the Fascisti militia may be enough; but to-morrow? Italy is a fickle country. Her political structure, her historical traditions, her monarchy based upon the will of the democracy, cannot be brushed aside with a mere oratorical gesture.

A reform Parliament, brought up to the point of maximum efficiency, would perhaps be the best solution, especially if we could reinvigorate the Senate by giving our important industrial and labor groups direct representation in that body. Let us not impair any power of the State. Let us not weaken any force in the community, especially that of the working people who are already too hard hit.

After all, Fascismo is but an episode. . . . The essence of that movement may be defined by its worthiest function: the suppression of Bolshevism. Here, again, extremes meet. We see in Russia a Bolshevik élite overwhelmed with its own blunders, crimes, and errors, still standing intact, emerging slowly from the lowest depth of misery, holding the country firmly in its grasp, taking the first faltering steps toward reconstruction. The men who charge Russian Bolshevism with denying its own principles, who assert that Western capitalism has conquered, see no deeper than the surface. Bolshevism has not been destroyed, because it is not mere idealism, not mere Communism; it is a *fascio*, a bundle of vital forces, of tremendous political energies that, regardless of the means it uses, smashes a path through to its historical goal. Behold its still defiant challenge to the West, its titanic labors in Asia. Bolshevism is an indigenous organism whose heart throbs at Moscow.

In a more modest and far less tragic way, with all our Macchiavellian variations of race, whatever is vital and forceful in contemporary Italy has rallied to Fascismo. That, too, is a whirlpool of violence, but it is not heedless and destructive alone, not without future service. Italy, like Russia, is not a Central America. It is not segregated from European history. Of all the forces that have manifested themselves in Europe since the war, Fascismo is the only one that forms the negative pole to Bolshevism. Like Bolshevism, it, too, is a myth-maker; it, too, has its hierarchy; it, too, radiates forces far

beyond the frontiers of the nation. The Fascisti are obscurely conscious of this when they proclaim the world-wide significance, the imperishable historical significance of their movement. But this is not true to the extent they imagine. If France, and England, and America are immune to Fascismo, as they are immune to Bolshevism, it is not because they lag behind us, but because they are ahead of us. Their government and society are more stable, their evolution has attained a higher level. We are now suffering from a crisis of growth; but it is better thus to suffer than not to grow.

RUSSIA'S POLICY IN CHINA

BY A. A. JOFFE

[We print the address delivered by the Soviet Ambassador to Peking on the fifth anniversary of the Russian Bolshevik Revolution, as an official statement of the programme and propaganda of his Government in Eastern Asia. The North China Herald comments, in printing it: 'The attempt to reconcile the Soviet's determined grip on Mongolia with the plea that it is not a land-grabber, is instructive in its duplicity and amusing in its clumsiness.']

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ON this day five years ago the Russian workers and peasants won a victory over their oppressors and took the power into their hands. One of the first steps of the new Workers' and Peasants' Government was the well-known Decree on Peace: in this decree those principles were laid down for the first time in history, with whose substantiation alone true peace is possible on earth, and a real friendly coöperation of peoples, instead of permanent mutual strife and enmity.

Having declared that every people

has itself the right to decide its own fate, and having proclaimed the right of all the peoples — of those even on whom the so-called civilized nations look as barbarians — to self-determination going as far as severance from the State to which they had formerly belonged, the Russian Republic was perfectly consequent during the five years of its existence in carrying through this policy and putting it into life.

You all know, gentlemen, that New Russia has never forced the will of