

violently as the Democratic press. Both parties feared my candidacy. With an honest "labor first" policy at Washington we had an excellent chance of beating them both. As it is, the result of the election was the exchange of one reactionary for another, and "opening the eyes of the workers"—but to the fact that they cannot trust their leaders. They see that the people in sweeping the Democrats out of office and putting the Republicans in, were like the mice who elected a white cat to rule them, and who were soon so exploited that they demanded a change. A majority was persuaded by their leaders that all that was wrong was the color of the cat, so they put the white cat out and elected a black one in his place. Nevada labor leaders saw the truth of this parable in the election, and five thousand of the people saw it. More will see it in 1922. The growing independent vote is bound to be a factor in all future elections. One of my staunchest supporters, a high official of Nevada railway labor, told me the other day:

"I registered this year as a Democrat, but from now on I'll have nothing to do with either party. They both exploit us. When I boosted for the Plumb Plan League and got subscriptions for *Labor* in the shops and on the road, I thought I was helping to start an independent labor movement. But our leaders only wanted to use us as an annex of the Democratic party. We're through! Do you know where the boys at headquarters put the stacks of papers they send us from Washington every week? In the stove. The game our national leaders played in the election, putting the Democratic Party first and labor second, has finished them and their paper—our paper—with us. They tried to make us reelect a railroad lawyer, simply because he's a Democrat. They forgot we fellows out here knew all about him. Debs is right. We can't trust our leaders. They try to steer us into the parties, which are dead against labor; but their scheming is of no avail. One big union for us!"

## The Seizure of the Land in Sicily

By GIUSEPPE PREZZOLINI

THE seizure of the land by the peasants in Italy is far more important than the seizure of the factories by the workers, because Italy is eminently and by tradition an agricultural country in which industry is relatively recent. For this reason everything which concerns agriculture touches the most sensitive cords of Italian social and economic life. But for the same reason the agricultural problems are most difficult to understand.

In the first place there is no uniformity; the country is long and variegated. Northern Italy has a climate and soil similar to that of Central Europe, but Sicily and southern Italy are more like Northern Africa than any part of Italy. In northern Italy there are fertile plains, furrowed by canals and perennial streams of water, green meadows, rich and fertile soil, snow which covers the plains in winter and lasts for six months, and abundant rain. In southern Italy there is an absence of woods and snow on the bare mountains, dryness which lasts for months, swift-rushing streams which expand when it rains, but are dry for months, hills, stones, and rocks everywhere, clay and compact dirt and few very fertile regions. In northern Italy the peasants live in the country; in southern Italy they live grouped together in regions, hours and hours away from their places of work. In northern Italy the air is good, there are many roads, and the railroads are developed; in southern Italy, a great many of the inhabitants succumb to malaria. There are very few roads, and the settlements up in the mountains are far away from the railroad. In northern Italy people can travel with safety; in southern Italy men and herds are always in danger if they are not armed.

Hence the economic conditions are very different indeed. In northern Italy the management is of an industrial type, either farmers in associations or tenant farmers who till the soil themselves, and many small industrious landowners. In southern Italy large estates in the hands of absentee owners who enjoy unearned incomes in the city, tenants who sublet from others, peasants who work by the day, now in one place and now in another, who do not own anything, not even a house. In northern Italy, intelligent proprietors, technically equipped with machinery and ma-

nure, organized in powerful associations, and on the other hand closely united in unions, either socialist or Catholic. In southern Italy, backward proprietors, ignorant of modern agriculture, with no fluid capital, disorganized masses which are drawn together only by the stimulus of electoral excitement or misery.

Naturally these distinctions which I am making are not entirely true to life. There are regions around Naples and on the coast of Sicily which are extremely fertile, and are divided up among small landowners, and in Venetia there are regions where malaria and large landed estates prevail. In general, however, the distinctions are true and characteristic of the agricultural revolution which is going on.

Let us examine the South first of all and particularly Sicily where the struggle is greater and carried on in the open. In Sicily large landed property prevails. One-sixth of the island is owned by 173 people in a population of four million inhabitants; one-third is owned by 787 people. The agricultural class (725,000 people over ten years of age) possesses almost nothing. The landowners in general live away from their lands in the Sicilian towns, in Rome, abroad. They rent their lands to people peculiar to Sicily called *Gabelloti* who advance them the money for the year's crops, frequently rerenting to others who in turn sublet. Thus the peasant has to pay three or four middlemen. The *Gabelloto* is the financier of the agrarian management of the proprietor; he is usually a peasant who has grown rich, a usurer without scruples, who tries to get what profit he can from the land without improving it, not being sure of having it again and running the risk also of losing the harvest by the frequent droughts. He employs a personnel of tyrants (rural guards, superintendents, etc.) to keep the peasant under strict guard for fear that he should eat the seed instead of sowing it or rob the harvest or go to work on other lands. The *Gabelloto* pays the master and the peasant in advance, but he cannot rob the master and he can rob the peasant; and out of the advance payments which he gives the peasant he takes from 30 to 50 per cent of the interest. It is not to be wondered that the

*Gabelloto* is the most despised and hated person in Sicily.

The seizure of the land on the part of the peasants is principally a revolt against the *Gabelloto*, and the occupation began with those properties administered by them (*feudi dati a gabella*). Naturally a few at a time they went from uncultivated lands to the semi-cultivated and even to those well cultivated; from properties administered by the *Gabelloto* to lands cultivated directly by the owners themselves. The Duke of Bivona, a Spanish grandee, owns a large estate in Ribera, given over to taxes. He came to Italy last year to sell it to his *Gabelloto*. At Rome he found envoys of the Catholic cooperatives and of the unions of ex-soldiers who offered him three million lire for a part of it. He did not accept, but went to his estate to secure better terms. During the night the Catholics and soldiers made an agreement, attacked the fortress with stones, besieged and invaded it, and forced the duke to agree to give up the land they wanted. This, I can say, has been the only act of violence of the whole agitation which has already brought about the occupation of no less than a third of the island. It must be recognized that the Sicilian peasant has a pretty good disposition. The occupation already sanctioned by the Italian Government, according to a statement by Minister Micheli, amounts to a hundred thousand hectares, forty thousand of which are around Rome.

The seizures have indeed taken place in a peaceful manner. Crusades of peasants from the crowded cities would leave for tenures six or eight miles away, walking in fours, preceded by their leaders and flags, sometimes red, sometimes black, sometimes tri-colored, and sometimes all three kinds. On foot and riding on mules the population would take possession of the land, planting their banner and stationing their guards there. They would go back to the land, accompanied perhaps by gendarmes who prevented disorder but had not been able to stop the invasion, and from there they would telegraph the King or the Prefect, announcing their taking of possession, and asking for the authorization even to defend the land against the owners by means of the gendarmes. There is often an agreement between two neighborhoods, between two associations. Only once did a conflict break out between two neighborhoods which had built trenches on disputed territory.

There has never been violence against the proprietors. The Sicilian peasant, accustomed to centuries of feudalism, still has respect for the master. The proprietors on their part have been rather revengeful against the leaders of the peasants. The owners who did not find that they had the support of the Government, which had been persuaded to leave a beneficial social movement alone, allied themselves with the *mafia* and intrusted their own defense to it. Giovanni Orsel, head of the socialist peasants of Palermo, fell a victim to some unknown person, but all maintain that he was a victim of the proprietors.

The awakening of today is due to the war. In the first place all the peasants who stayed at home became rich. Those who fought became accustomed to a rather better standard of living. Wine and coffee entered into their menus. Then the war accustomed them to organization and discipline. It was easy for the officials who went home to find their soldiers and organize them in associations and soldiers' cooperatives. The years of discussion created a ferment in all minds. The phrase of a Sicilian deputy, the Hon. Drago, to a Socialist-Reformist Congress in 1919,

"The Land for the Peasants," spread everywhere. The promise made by the Government during the war, the rewards announced to the faithful defenders of the country, had their effect indeed. In fact one of the characteristic figures of the agitation is a certain De Rysky, formerly a major in the army; and the Catholic who led the first invasions in the province of Palermo is a Dr. Terranova, also a soldier.

The participation of the Catholics is very important. They were the first to incite the peasants against the lands, and the other parties had to follow them in order not to be conquered themselves. Not only the laity, but even priests and monks led the invasions. In Alcano, Padre Ferrantelli, a Dominican, led the struggle against the *Gabelloto* and the proprietors. In Calabria a nervous young priest, a certain De Cardona, always threatened to burn houses and woods; to which one of his hecklers said: "I'm sorry, I am not of his opinion because I am a Christian!"

The Government has made several decrees authorizing the occupation of the lands not under cultivation, provided they should be passed on by a commission made up of proprietors, peasants, and representatives of the Government, and finally Minister Micheli has recognized the right of breaking the contracts of the *Gabelloto* when they have been sublet. Thus a greater victory was gained.

Except in a small triangle of about 10,000 hectares in the province of Trapani, the harvests have been reaped regularly and the work goes on. In that triangle alone the Socialists who are anxious to obtain the lands to work them collectively dominate, which is repugnant to the mentality of the Sicilian peasant and the proposals of the Government. There is no political revolution in the rest of Sicily and southern Italy. It is a question of the rising of the peasants who are gaining consciousness against age-long extortionists. The press and the conservative parties themselves have greeted the movement sympathetically. It is the end, it is hoped, of the *Gabelloto* and his abuses, and the rising of a class of small landowners whose neutrality can only be conservative.

The agricultural problem in the South cannot be considered solved, however, even if a great step forward has taken place. The large landed property, indeed, is not only a large estate, it is an economic organism which is caused by lack of water, by malaria which prevents men from living where they work, by lack of roads and safety which necessitates keeping flocks and herds in the country, and by the lack of capital which forces the farmer to run into debt. The Government must help the spontaneous movement to divide up the large estates not only by giving legal form to the profitable invasions, but also by remedying the disordered conditions prevalent in Sicily today which has frequently forced the inhabitants to form secret organizations (*mafiaocesca*) to obtain that defense of person and property which the Government does not guarantee. Too frequently it has been the custom of all Italian governments to consider Sicily as a province where bad officials are sent as a punishment, where the carrying of arms has been allowed for electoral reasons, where whoever is an adversary of the administration is sure of never having justice at the hands of the deputy who votes for the government. A policy of energetic impartiality and useful public works can alone prevent the conquests of the peasants which have just taken place from becoming useless in the next few years.



## A Voice From the Past

By GEORGE P. WEST

THE president of the Chamber of Commerce, who was also a director of the Better America Federation, chairman of the Law and Order League, and vice-president of the Society for the Promulgation of Patriotism and Right Thinking, laid down his pen, leaned back in his mahogany office chair, and lit a cigar. The muscles of his face relaxed. He had just placed his O.K. on six publicity statements and a form telegram which was to be sent that night to every member of Congress. It demanded a new law for the establishment of a psychological bureau in the Department of Justice, by which subversive thinkers too crafty to disclose their seditious cerebrations by either writing or speaking might be detected and adequately punished. As he sat there, in momentary repose, he allowed to glow in his brain the pleasant consciousness that he had done his full duty as a citizen that day. But almost at once he recollected that republics are not grateful, and he frowned slightly. Was it all worth while?

Suddenly he looked up, startled, and saw standing across the flat-topped mahogany desk from him a tall, commanding figure in a tri-cornered hat and a uniform of blue trimmed and lined in buff. The hair was powdered, and he started as he recognized the features. There could be no mistaking them.

If this appearance had been merely the then President of the nation, John Smith would have remained entirely at his ease. He knew how to treat these political fellows with just the right blending of ironic respect for the office and the slightest possible contempt and condescension for the man. As it was, his *savoir faire* failed him only for a moment. It was not for nothing that once a month, at finance committee meetings, he was accustomed to meet and propitiate the doddering old figure whose billions towered over the destinies even of Smith himself. And it was with the bow reserved for that sacred figure that he now acknowledged the presence before him.

The blue-and-buff figure jerked his head slightly in impatience of ceremony. Standing there with his arms folded under his cloak, he said:

"You are John Smith, I believe?"

Smith bowed.

"You are president of the Chamber of Commerce, and director of the Better America Federation, and chairman of the Law and Order League, and vice-president of the Society for the Promulgation of Patriotism and Right Thinking?"

Smith's breast swelled and his chin rose a little in spite of himself.

"I am," he replied with admirable simplicity.

The voice resumed. "And I am to understand—the excellent Hamilton told me only this morning—that the policies urged by yourself and your colleagues have been completely successful? I am to understand that you have succeeded in getting a quite unanimous approval and acceptance of your principles, of the standards of thought and conduct set forth in the constitutions of these societies of yours?"

Controlling his voice and trying not to speak boastfully, Smith replied: "We have been eminently successful, Your Honor." (Here Smith referred to a notebook, which he drew

from his pocket.) "The ideals of 100 per cent Americanism as laid down by us have been universally accepted. Forty-five State legislatures have enacted our entire program of laws regulating speech and the press. In thirty-eight States the penalty for speaking disrespectfully of the least of our principles is twenty years in prison. We have procured the dismissal of 68,000 school teachers and 23,000 ministers on charges of teaching or preaching un-American doctrines. We have censored thousands of sermons and as many college lectures. We have rebuked more than 900 newspaper editors, and disciplined others by advertising boycotts organized by us. Our lecturers have spoken directly to over 40,000,000 persons, and our literature has been placed in the hands of every man, woman, and child in the country. We have assisted the Department of Justice in 18,000 prosecutions, and the prison sentences if they ran consecutively would cover the period from the beginning of the Christian era to the present day."

Smith paused for breath.

"We have a very capable young publicity man," he said. "I am giving you his figures. They are in round numbers, you will understand."

"Just so," spoke the figure standing before him. "In a word, the American people may fairly be considered today a product of your teachings. Its young men and women have grown to manhood and womanhood steeped in the traditions, grounded in the principles, that you and your colleagues have chosen for them? Every contrary influence has been proscribed and suppressed?"

"I can answer, without boasting, yes," said Smith.

He began to realize now the size and importance of his own task. The figure before him took shape now as the quite out-of-date leader of a mere three million colonists. As he answered, he tapped the mahogany desk a little impatiently with his lead pencil.

The blue-and-buff figure resumed speaking. The voice that issued from it now was pitched in a solemn and judicial key.

"My duty then is plain. I have come to you after completing a tour of the country. Please understand this: I demonstrated during my last term in the Presidency that I have no illusions regarding the populace and their need of a strong hand. It is entirely of your results, not your methods, that I am to speak.

"Those results I have closely regarded. I have mingled with the people. I have traveled on the trains. I have attended the moving-picture theaters. I have visited the industrial suburbs of Pittsburgh and the stock-yards district of Chicago. I spent an entire evening listening to your jazz orchestras and watching your young people dance. I have watched the children leaving your high schools and have stood at the doors of the—do you call them beauty parlors?—and there watched them enter and go through the process of rouging their cheeks and plucking their eye-brows. I have visited the haunts of your most eminent bootleggers. I have even read the stories in your popular magazines and listened to the speeches of Representatives in Congress—men whose candidacies were indorsed by you. I have seen a representative Southern lynching and have watched young men of the American Legion tar and feather an organizer for the Non-partisan League. I have seen other young men station themselves on lonely street corners or even in crowded thoroughfares and rob, slay, and assault. I have looked down on the Stock Exchange and the Chicago wheat pit. I have attended