

FOUR YEARS
OF
FASCISM

BY
GUGLIELMO FERRERO

Translated from the Italian
"DA FIUME A ROMA"

BY
E. W. DICKES

WITH A FOREWORD BY
C. J. SQUIRE SPRIGGE

LONDON :
P. S. KING & SON, LTD.,
ORCHARD HOUSE, 2 & 4 GREAT SMITH STREET,
WESTMINSTER

—
1924

Made and Printed in Great Britain by The Campfield Press, St. Albans

FOREWORD

DURING the fifty years which followed the capture of Rome in 1870, British interest in Italy was concentrated upon any rather than the political aspect of the country's development. A land so richly endowed with natural charms, a race so gifted with the qualities which make life interesting and pleasant, had no cause, it was felt, to venture into the grimy and prosaic arena of politics to vie with less fortunate nations obliged to seek in such contests the excuse for their existence. When we had occasion to greet some notable Italian visitor to our shores, we seldom inquired how Italy was governed, or what were the aspirations of her governors : our compliments laid emphasis rather upon Italy's heritage of art and song than upon her sturdy ambition to become in more than name a "Great Power." Certainly we never dreamed of any one setting up Italy as a model for the political development of our own or any other nation.

A sentimental illusion ! The close student was not deceived by the popular notion that Italy was a land of moonlight and mandolins, unaffected by the political maladies that for a century had been disturbing the social foundations of the wealthier and more powerful nations. If any thought that the colonial disasters of the 'nineties had more than momentarily damped the ardour of Italian expansionism, the outbreak of the Italo-Turkish War in

1911 should have undeceived him. But that war passed comparatively unnoticed by the British public, and the average man has long forgotten its circumstances. In 1915 for a few weeks Italy, as an impending entrant into the Great War, loomed considerable in our thoughts. But the importance of her participation was largely not understood, and where understood soon forgotten. It is true to say that until 1922 the British public deemed Italy a minor unit in the European system, whose services as second or third string might be useful on occasion, but from whom political initiative was neither to be desired nor to be expected.

In 1922 with surprising swiftness the centre of our interest in Italian affairs shifted. Italian politics, home and foreign, took on a sudden significance in the public eye. Our newspapers began to write of Italy's zest for colonial expansion, of her domineering diplomacy, of the steely vigour of her administrative system, and, strangest of all, to contrast her liveness with our own lethargy in these respects. It is now impossible to refer to the beauties of Italy's landscape, or the glories of her artistic tradition, without offending Italian susceptibilities. At the last Assembly of the League of Nations M. Hymans, the Belgian delegate, was forced to make some unpalatable comments on the Italian attitude in the Corfu crisis. He sought to sweeten the dose by reference to Italy as the goal of all pilgrims of love and beauty. Nothing could have been more tactless. Signor Salandra indignantly reminded the Council of Italy's true titles to consideration—her

inflexible will, her ambition fired by memories of an imperial past, her might, her vigour, her lion heart. To shower the traditional compliments upon the "New Italy" is as undiplomatic as to impute womanliness to a "New Woman"; and Europe has learnt in a remarkably short space of time not to do one or the other.

One cannot mention the New Italy without at once evoking the thought of Fascism. What is Fascism? A new religion of law and order, liberating its faithful from the shackles of a political creed outworn? The last savage struggle of a doomed caste to keep its grip on the sources of wealth and pleasure, to thrust back the awakening masses into their secular sleep of submission? Or perhaps just a side-track from the main current of progress into which Italy has let herself get shunted? Not only can the average man with difficulty choose between these rival interpretations: he has no notion how to start assessing the various factors. In vain he seeks a criterion to guide him through the chaos of conflicting theories. It is in search of such a criterion that Signor Ferrero has passed his whole life; now pursuing profound and difficult investigations into the life of the Ancient World, now surveying with an equally dispassionate glance the vast field of modern history; always inquiring whither civilization is tending, what progress is, what decay, and wherein these two types of social change differ. It is from this broad standpoint that the illustrious historian surveys in the present volume the last four years of Italian history.

Two portrayals of Fascism are current in Britain. Perhaps the more popular in informed circles is that which approves Signor Mussolini as saviour of his country from an imminent and catastrophic collapse into Communism, lauds him to the skies for his suppression of the strike nuisance, and piously wishes a similar redeemer could appear to rescue our own troubled society from its present embarrassments. There are those—such as the editors of the *Spectator* and the *Observer*—who go further and find in the “Duce” the architect of a great moral revival, the Guardian of Christian ethics and of the family, the pitiless enemy of sloth and corruption in every form.

The other portrait of Signor Mussolini displays a traitor to the working masses, turned hireling of the possessing classes; an instinctive persecutor of the underdog, glorying in brutality and aggression, governing the country by lawless violence, his weapons the bludgeon and the castor-oil bottle, his agents raw and reckless youths drawn from the embittered middle classes, his masters sly princes of finance and industry who take care to keep well in the background. Fascism in this picture becomes a brutal reaction against the striving of the masses towards economic emancipation and international brotherhood: Mussolini, the vicar of an invisible tyrant, cynical and pitiless.

In either portrait there is some truth and much falsehood. The wholesale admirers of Fascism have to blind themselves to a good deal that is ugly and unwholesome. Freedom may be, as we are told,

an overrated commodity. Yet without some security for those who profess beliefs out of harmony with those of their governors, can any country hope to attain the spiritual grandeur which Fascism so often boasts it has conferred upon Italy—or even to avoid spiritual stultification? Has Mr. Strachey endeavoured to obtain a copy of the *Corriere della Sera*—a great newspaper of much the same political complexion as his own *Spectator*—in Florence, and discovered that all copies had been burnt on the station platform, on arrival, by the local Fascists? What, one wonders, does he think of the unpunished bastinading, without any provocation, of two of the leading politicians of a moderate Liberal persuasion, Signori Nitti and Amendola: what of the outrage committed upon Professor Salvadori for writing an article critical of Fascism in an English weekly paper? In certain respects Fascism has reduced Italy to the cultural level of a Balkan State. Who, again, can see spiritual progress in the change from the broad European policy of Count Sforza to the narrow diplomacy of aggression and bluff of which Corfu has so far provided the classic example?

Those who take the opposite view, however, neglect the real advantages secured to Italy by the pursuance of a resolute economic and financial policy, though in finance the Fascists must allow that excellent spadework was done by their immediate predecessors. They forget further to mention the share of responsibility incumbent upon the Socialists, on the one hand, and on the post-war Premiers of Italy, on the other hand, for letting a

situation come about from which dictatorship seemed to provide the sole possible exit. It is ludicrous for the Communists and Left Wing Socialists to blame the Fascists for having reaped where they sowed ; while the disgruntled men of the " old régime " should begin by asking themselves why they had not the courage, being in the possession of power, to use it for the purpose of bringing Italy under the reins of discipline without throttling her soul with them, as Fascism is doing.

Fascist pros and cons could fill and have filled many books. Signor Ferrero spares the reader more than a minimum of such tedious quantitative valuation. Unlike most critics of Fascism, he has a criterion, other than personal prejudice, by which to judge it. Is Mussolini's Government legitimate ? he asks. The question is startling in its simplicity—has perhaps a quaint old-world flavour about it. Legitimacy is in the general mind bound up with questions of hereditary succession and eighteenth century dynastic wars. How can one allow or deny legitimacy to a Cabinet of top-hatted gentlemen (whether their shirts be black or white) presiding over a modern State ?

Signor Ferrero replies that the stability of society depends upon the moral weight which Governments carry in the eyes of the governed. This moral weight is engendered by the sense that the Government is legitimate : and in each stage of history there is some principle of legitimacy from which a Government cannot too far depart without losing moral weight.

What that principle is in Europe to-day, what it was in 1914, and how the change has been accomplished—these are questions to which Signor Ferrero gives answers which not only help to comprehension of the present phase in Italy, but are singularly stimulating to the intellect when it strives to grapple with the baffling problems of Europe's and the world's future.

CECIL SQUIRE SPRIGGE.

LONDON, 1924.

PS.—The abduction and presumed murder of Signor Matteotti occurred just after these words were written. They have revealed to many people for the first time the uglier side of Fascism. Signor Mussolini's position, but a month ago deemed so impregnable, is shown to be in reality weaker than that of any other European premier. Nobody doubts his personal desire to dissociate himself and his party from ruffianism and assassination. But as yet there is little sign of his succeeding in doing so. As the *Temps* recently pointed out in a striking article, Mussolini's parliamentary majority is formed of candidates who were selected by a committee of five persons, three of whom are now under serious suspicion of complicity in the crime.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

• In my "Tragedia della Pace"¹ I collected the best of what I had written since 1919 on the vicissitudes of the false peace in which Europe is going to rack and ruin. In the present volume I am reprinting my occasional comments during the same years on our civil disorders from the Armistice to the present day; connecting them by a succinct narrative of the events which prompted each article.

"Labour in vain" will be the comment of certain critics on this volume, as on its predecessor. There is a philosophy prevalent to-day which glories in awarding the crown of merit to whatever succeeds, finding in the *fait accompli* its own implicit justification. It is a philosophy fit for slaves, whose one concern is to stand well with all their masters. But these articles were written and are now collected precisely in order to express contempt for that slave philosophy; in order to set over against that which has succeeded that which ought to have succeeded, in the service of an ideal standard which the author acknowledges as true and compelling, and for which he is ready to suffer.

Without these ideal standards there can be

¹ Milan, 1923. Edizioni "Athena."

no art, there can be no government and no order; without them morality and science fade into emptiness. Precisely because these ideal standards have lost authority, a terrible hour has struck for Europe; she is totally at a loss; her peoples can no longer distinguish good from evil, wisdom from folly, madness from sanity, poison from healing remedy; right from wrong, light from darkness.

This book has been written for those who believe that intelligence and knowledge still have rights in the world. For that reason it has been written *sine ira et studio*, without anger and heat. The author has nothing to hope or to fear from the new rulers, just as from the old ones neither good nor harm could come to him. If he is not infallible, he is disinterested in the conflict of interests and passions which for a decade has devastated Italy. If only those who will bombard this book with invective could say as much! For it is only too evident that if there was never such a display of patriotism in speech and ceremony as in these days, there have never been so few to serve their country without asking in return either honours or power or wealth. The reader need not search in the pages of this book for the inspiration of the patriotism which instead of seeking to serve demands to be served.

G. F.

FLORENCE, *October 1, 1923.*

CONTENTS

	PAGE
*FOREWORD	v
AUTHOR'S PREFACE	xiii

PART I

THE LAST DAYS OF THE *Ancien Régime*

I FIUME	3
II THE GREASY POLE AND THE IMPATIENT URCHIN	11
III A LITTLE HISTORY	16
IV SOCIALISTS AND <i>Popolari</i>	31

PART II

THE COLLAPSE

I SIGNOR GIOLITTI AND THE WAR PROFITEERS .	45
II THE EXPLOSION OF FASCISM	57
III THE LAST MOVE AND THE LAST MISTAKE OF AN OLD STRATEGIST	63
IV THE CATASTROPHE	72

PART III

WHAT NOW? A GLANCE AT THE FUTURE

I WAS IT A TRUE REVOLUTION? YES, AND NO	91
II CONCLUSION	101

POSTSCRIPT

THE ELECTION OF APRIL, 1924	123
---------------------------------------	-----

PART I

THE LAST DAYS OF THE *ANCIEN RÉGIME*

I

FIUME

THE popular discontent which had long been fermenting exploded after the Fiume expedition¹.

While the public was still bewildered and deafened by the bursting of this thunderbolt, I endeavoured to discuss it dispassionately in an article published on September 27, 1919, which I reproduce here. It was called :

SIXTY YEARS AFTER

The Fiume adventure has at once been glorified as Garibaldian. Those who are content with a super-

¹ Fiume was not assigned to Italy by the Treaty of London ; but it is of Italian character and bitterly anti-Slav. On the conclusion of the war the town council of Fiume voted annexation to Italy ; this was telegraphed all over Italy, and created a demand for the incorporation of this " most Italian city " into the Kingdom. D'Annunzio, always on the look-out for a new histrionic attitude, welcomed the chance offered. On September 12, 1919, at the head of some Italian troops whom he had induced to join him, he entered and took possession of the town.

Experience of D'Annunzio and his friends at first hand soon killed Fiume's Italian enthusiasms, and at the only free election held in Fiume since then the party advocating annexation to Italy was severely defeated. The Treaty of Rapallo (1920) neutralized Fiume, and established machinery for autonomous government, which was undoubtedly what the citizens desired. But though D'Annunzio evacuated Fiume, his legionaries largely drifted back in Fascist uniform, and instituted a reign of terror which rendered the execution of the Treaty impossible. The elected representatives of Fiume had to flee into Croatia, where they still (June, 1924) are. In January, 1924, the Rapallo Treaty was scrapped in favour of a Treaty which gave Italy full sovereignty in Fiume, reserving to the Jugoslavs the suburb of Sushak and certain rights in the port.—C. J. S. S.

ficial resemblance may certainly recall 1860. But there is no resurrection for heroes, even if a credulous generation keeps watch around their sepulchres, waiting for the stone to be lifted. What is being taken for a re-incarnation of history is just an anachronism.

When one compares the two expeditions it is easy to discover where they differ. The expedition of 1860 was prepared and carried out by private citizens, and with the Government's approval. The Fiume expedition was carried out by elements of the army which have defied the law, and against the wish of the Government ; or at all events of part of it, and of the very part whose consent would have been necessary in order to turn promptly to account, if that were possible at all, the *fait accompli*.

I know that the world will not believe in the good faith of the Government ; but once more it will be in error. The Government was trying to unravel the knot by other means ; and its plans, good or bad, have been upset by this *coup de main*. This is the true position.

It is not necessary to be a great statesman to appreciate the difference. It will be more useful to indicate certain differences arising out of the primary one. In 1860 the Piedmontese Government stood to lose nothing if the expedition failed, as it could disown it ; while it was certain of an immense gain if the expedition succeeded. Garibaldi was a hero, a true hero, precisely because he took upon himself all the risks of the expedition, and was prepared to be disowned if fate betrayed him ; his success was profoundly embarrassing to the European Powers, as it challenged them to send an expedition to Southern Italy to restore the Bourbons. The Fiume expedition was such that whether it succeeds or fails it has placed and will continue to place the Italian Government in grave embarrassment, much more than the Allies.

A few days' experience is already eloquent of this. If my information is correct, one of the Allied and

Associated Powers wanted to receive the expedition with gunfire. Let us suppose that this had been done, and that the expedition had been defeated and repelled by superior force. Would the Government have been able to wash its hands of it? The Government would have been in this dilemma: it would have had either to accept the defeat and submit in the presence of the country to a bitter humiliation, or else to declare war on the whole world.

It appears that one of our Allies, our nearest neighbour and our closest ally in the past, intervened with the less patient ones.

The expedition has succeeded in installing itself in Fiume without bloodshed; but in what situation does Italy find herself placed? The Allies have courteously retired; but they have turned to the Italian Government with a smile and said: "You are a loyal Ally, and we do not want to touch a hair of the head of any of your subjects. . . . We believe you when you say that you have had no part in this expedition; but these men in Fiume are soldiers of your army. You have the right of command over them. Use it. We are waiting for you to persuade them to withdraw." The result is that the Government is now placed in a difficult position. It has not sufficient authority to be able to persuade these nine or ten thousand men to turn back, and it has not the power to compel them; but it must honour its pledges to its Allies.

It is a grave predicament. If the Government is unable within a short period to give satisfaction both to the national sentiment and to our Allies, as is demanded of it, we may be marching with the whole of Europe towards a catastrophe. But to give satisfaction at the same time to national sentiment and to our Allies, even if it is not, as the ancients said, "a problem of Archimedes," is a difficult business. It would be a terrible matter if any of the Allies were to make a settlement of the Fiume question the prior condition of

its assent to our just claims. It would be a different matter to holding a Crown Council !¹

This expedition is an anachronism. In 1860 Piedmont was able to pursue a policy of *faits accomplis*, because she was bound neither by formal pledges nor by indissoluble bonds of interest or responsibility to any of the Great Powers ; a small and weak State, she was able to rely on the sympathy of stronger States, and on their mutual jealousies and rivalries. Italy in 1919 is one of the five Great Powers which are deciding at Paris the fate of all the world. She is sitting as a judge in a tribunal whose decisions, good or bad, are binding on her. She is stronger than in 1860, but she is more tied. Garibaldi, by offering himself as a sacrifice, was able to free the Piedmontese Government of all responsibility towards the Great Powers for the Sicilian expedition, for the Government's responsibility was vague and tenuous and ill-defined. No man and no expedition can to-day make a similar sacrifice and so annul the pledges and the responsibilities of Italy towards the other Powers, in virtue of which she took part in the war and is now taking part in the peace negotiations. It is understandable and only human that the small States, old or new—Poland, Bohemia, Roumania—which are the subjects and not the makers of decisions, should have shown fight against certain judgments of the Peace Congress. But Italy, a party to its decisions like Great Britain, France, the United States, and Japan, as well as a party affected by them, cannot elude her responsibilities as a member of the tribunal when she rebels against one of its decisions. To do so would be to abdicate from her rank as a Great Power, and once more to cast into the centre of Europe the bomb of an anarchist.

It will be useful, however, to call the attention of the

¹ A Crown Council was held a few days after the occupation of Fiume, the King presiding, to decide what should be done. It came, however, to no decision.—Trans.

public to another point : the revolutionary spirit which is inspiring and arming the Fiume expedition. What a difference from 1860 !

The Thousand set sail because Piedmont *could not* openly affront Europe by declaring war on the King of Naples. And as I have already said, they were all private citizens, free of all but a plain citizen's duties and liabilities. When the Fiume expedition started it declared that the Government *was unwilling and incompetent* to defend the rights of Italy ; and as we have already seen, it is an enterprise of portions of the army which have ceased to obey the law.

Many of the papers have discovered with surprise and regret that the first appeals for the expedition, all inspired with love of country, were followed by others inciting the Italian people to rise against the " vile and ignoble " Government which at present rules our destinies, and the Italian army to carry out a *coup d'état*. It is an ingenuous surprise, and it will be a sterile regret. What good does it do to shut our eyes to danger ? Up to now Europe has seemed to be threatened with revolution by the Reds. Italy is the first of the victor countries to find herself, as she did a week ago, between the fires of Red revolution and White revolution. The attempt is being made in certain quarters to forge the army into a battering-ram for use in civil war.

I do not wish to exaggerate. I am persuaded that the evil is not yet deep-seated. But it seems to me that if it is to be cured it is important not to deceive ourselves in our diagnosis. I am persuaded that, despite appearances, Italy is the one country in Europe which has least reason to fear a Red revolution. Not one of the revolutions which have convulsed European society in past centuries was our work. Our revolutions have all been imitations of foreign ones, sometimes imposed from abroad. It does not seem credible that now of all times, when the old order of things is supreme once more in Central Europe, the masses can desire to make an end of law and order

in Italy and reduce the country to chaos. But suppose the example of casting down the tables of the law were to come from above? From the classes and the political parties which ought to be the first to respect the laws, since it is they who made them and imposed them on the masses? Undeniably in the game of revolution, as in any other, he laughs best who laughs last.

This Fiume expedition cannot greatly surprise those who have long been saying that the war would be followed by a long era of "spiritual disorder and political anarchy."¹ But for this very reason it seems to me to be disquieting. Western civilization is to-day in the throes of terrible disorganization. Everything is out of joint: industry, trade, agriculture, administration, the State, and the things of the spirit. No country can revive and recover quickly without the aid of the State. But everywhere governments have been weakened and rendered impotent by the war, at the very time when there was need for alertness and intelligence and vigour.

The war was not won either on the Piave or the Isonzo or the Meuse or the Rhine, in Champagne or in Belgium; for it has not been won yet. It will be won by the people or peoples which succeed in rescuing from the universal anarchy some fragment of authoritative and efficient government. These peoples will to-morrow be the masters and perhaps the lords of Europe.

Re-reading this comment now, after four years have passed, I ask myself once more, and once more in vain, What was the motive of those who engineered the expedition? No one will wonder that to many young men Fiume should have seemed to be a new Jerusalem appealing for liberation, in order that with her all Europe might be freed; and no one will want to be too severe in judging them.

¹ *La vecchia Europa e la nuova*, p. 34. (Milan, Treves, 1918.)

Youth is very ready to imagine that it is doing something heroic and generous, simply because that is its ambition. But can a like illusion be credited to those who prepared and directed the enterprise? What responsible and reasonably well-informed person could suppose that the coalition which dominated Europe in 1919 would capitulate before the insurgents of Fiume? It was said that Fiume had been occupied in order to spur on the Government of the day to her annexation. But if the Italian Government had been able to do so it would have annexed Fiume of its own accord, without waiting for the expedition; the will was not wanting. Annexation, however, would have been a declaration of war on half the world.

There remains only one explanation: that the expedition was aimed against Rome rather than Paris. Civil war, which had flared up during the European War through weakness and irresponsibility in high places; the Fury which had appeared spontaneously in Rome in May, 1915, to force a decision between peace and war—keeping then in the background and rigidly holding herself in as though frightened of herself, until we had been compelled to enter the war—had reappeared the day after the armistice in a yet more formidable shape; every day she fell in a convulsion in one or another of the ancient market-places of Italy. Peace had been discussed, Orlando had been hurled from office, and Nitti had assumed power, in the midst of turbulent scenes which recalled those of May, 1915. Several times in the spring of 1919

popular demonstrations had attempted to intimidate the Crown, Parliament, the Government. Nitti had had to form his Ministry amid uproar and riot and cavalry charges. But he had formed it, and was preparing to go to the country, to the dismay and indignation of all those who would have preferred to see another man in control of the elections, either because they would have regarded it as better for the State or better for their own pockets and ambitions ; of all those, in other words—and their name was Legion !—who, feeling that the State was ill-defended, dreamed of making themselves masters of it on the pretext of restoring it. It is not improbable that this rather free imitation of the Garibaldian exploits aimed also of set purpose at delivering a mortal blow against the Government ; if it was, the blow was certainly struck with a firm hand and a steady aim. But it did not strike only the Government in power—far from it !

II

THE GREASY POLE AND THE IMPATIENT URCHIN

ON June 28, 1919, when Nitti was forming his Ministry, I wrote an article from which I take this extract :

Who can still deliberately shut his eyes to the situation? Who can fail to see that the present Ministerial crisis is no petty storm in the Montecitorio teacup, but the beginning of an ocean tempest?

The world war, itself a monstrous tangle of paradoxes, has produced one supreme paradox. It is true that with the fall of Divine Right in Russia, Austria, and Germany, the war has brought the victory of the rival principle of authority, the sovereignty of the people, expressed through the universal suffrage of men and women, rich and poor, learned and ignorant. The peoples now command, or should command, all over Europe. But peoples can only exercise their sovereignty through representatives and delegates. Now, therefore, the representative principle is triumphant—at the very moment when all forms of representative government are thoroughly discredited.

This is the explanation of the disorder now raging in Europe. To escape from this fatal dilemma, the peoples will seek new media for the expression of their will; but how much time will be spent, how much labour and perhaps blood, before the peoples again find their will faithfully expressed through institutions universally recognized as legitimate? The Workers', Peasants', and Soldiers' Councils are a first sample of the tempestuous novelties lying in wait for us.

It is only too certain that the test will be a terrible

one in Italy. Representative government, which the Liberal revolution gave Italy, has been dying since 1911, under the famous Giolitti Ministry. A few expert observers—not many—have recognized this since that date; the majority were exultant at the deceptive smoothness with which matters were running. But even the clearest-sighted pathologists thought that the dissolution would be slow and almost painless; the day would come when life would gently pass out of this decrepit body through senile decay. Instead, there came the world war. . . .

The Nitti Government suffered from the first from this disability; and still more because it was unaware of it. Have you ever seen a village enjoying the fun of a greasy pole? A fine smooth pole is erected in the *piazza*, and smothered in soap. A prize is hung from the top of it, and the young and adventurous are invited to climb up and get it. The game is hardly started before some impetuous little chap comes along innocently to the assault of the pole; he wriggles and struggles, and at the cost of taking the skin off his hands and thighs he gets up a few feet; at last he slips and falls exhausted on the ground. Meanwhile those who have been bit before stand round in solemn silence, surreptitiously grinning while the youngsters, impatient for glory, get, at all events, the worst of the soap off the pole. Nitti played the part of the impetuous, inexperienced youngster; coming into power shortly after the armistice, he made the first onslaught on the pole; he did not and could not know either his own powers or the difficulties of the task.

Who was he? A parliamentarian first and fore-

most, a clever player of the Montecitorio game, as it was played in the pleasant times of peace; superficial, frivolous, astute, sceptical, demagogic, as it is necessary to be in order to play this game well; but also able to hide the vulgar demagogy needed for the game beneath a light and glistening varnish of refinement and culture and self-confident superiority which impressed mediocre intelligences and not too tender consciences. He was also an economist; in other words, a one-eyed man, like many devotees of the science which studies man as he works and produces and saves, casts up his accounts and accumulates wealth, and which so falls an easy prey to the error of supposing man incapable of doing anything else, incapable of idleness and destructiveness, waste and impoverishment and madness.

He was not without qualifications for taking over the mantle of Signor Giolitti, if only his country had still been enjoying the prosperity of the first peaceful decade of this century, the decade which took pride in its easy conquests of the civilization of the wholesale age, as though they were the most hard-won achievements of which the spirit of man is capable in its struggle towards perfection; the decade which was satisfied that it was serving as a second Redeemer of the human race in providing an abundance of telephones and baths and wash-places. But what attitude would a politician of this temper take up towards the world war? The Germany of 1910, which for him (as for every one) had been a pattern to the world, had unchained war, not only to the general ruin but also, and above all,

against her own interests ; the war was thus an inexplicable blunder, an extraordinary case of a madness only too contagious ! Nitti lacked alike the profundity of thought and the austere serious temperament for a right attitude towards the war and the ruin which it had brought. Nor could he make good the double deficiency through what—it is due to him to say—he had : the sincerity of the actor who lives the part he recites, and plays any part with pleasure so long as the public applauds him—hero or hangman, brigand or saint or buffoon.

He had come into office with the mentality of an alienist, rather disinclined by study and temperament to make use of the strait-waistcoat ; preferring to smile at the whims of the patients in his asylum, to pretend to humour them, to let them exhaust themselves, to cure them with bromides and narcotics, so long, at all events, as they did not threaten to burn the house down. On July 3, 4, and 5, 1919, he had given the public its head, to let Communists and *combattenti* (ex-servicemen) work off their anger at the rising prices over their glasses and in the factories and shops ; a little later he had accepted Proportional Representation, without believing in it ; and he was making ready to botch up the peace as best he could, when one troublesome morning he was caught by the surprise of Fiume.

This seemed to him an access of insanity worse than any that had come before, a case for the strait-jacket ; and he was surprised into saying so in Parliament, with the result that next day he had to unsay it. But from that day he no longer governed.

What ought to be done? No one knew. There were long discussions in Parliament, and finally a Crown Council was convoked; but to no purpose, for there were only two possible strong courses, either to countenance the expedition and annex Fiume in defiance of Europe, or effectively to disavow it by isolating it. The first course contained terrifying potentialities of foreign intervention, and the second of disturbances at home. It was preferred to take no definite action, to see without seeing, to talk and say nothing, act and do nothing—to temporize; accordingly, the question was discussed whether the people should be consulted to ascertain what it thought about all these complications. Was not the people sovereign under the new dispensation? Let it decide! At this moment, all were afraid of their responsibilities and no one dared to give any advice; all were anxious to abdicate and lay their mandates at the feet of Her Majesty Queen Plebs. She gave her answer on November 16, 1919, by sending to the new Parliament 150 Communist Deputies and 100 *Popolari*¹.

If not an actual revolution, these elections were the beginning of one. To appreciate it, it is necessary to give, if only in broad outline, a little history.

¹ Deputies of the democratic "Catholic Popular Party."—Trans.

III

A LITTLE HISTORY

A CENTURY ago, in 1821, in Piedmont, the middle classes and army officers—the latter nearly all ex-officers of the French army who had passed into the service of the King in 1814 and had been eating their heads off in enforced idleness since the peace of the Holy Alliance—rose and attempted to induce the army to revolt, demanding a constitution and war against Austria. Militarism, Nationalism, and Liberalism had formed the first alliance against the treaties of 1815; and had formed it—this was the important thing—in accord with the cadet branch of the reigning house. Charles Albert, Prince of Carignano and heir to the throne, had been aware of the conspiracy, though not openly in touch with it; and his cognizance of it had been regarded both by the conspirators and their adversaries as encouragement of it.

What had happened to lead the heir to one of the most faithful thrones in the Holy Alliance, seven years after the Treaty of Vienna, to countenance and assist a revolutionary attempt of such importance? One day, some time before, the young Prince, wandering alone in the woods of Racconigi, which had seen the rise and the decay of his ancestors, had suddenly heard an invisible voice. Whose this invisible voice was, it would be impossible for any

historian to say with certainty ; and it would be in vain to make search in public or secret archives to discover it. Some will have it that it was an invisible genius or daemon of the lords of Carignano, which manifested itself now and then to their inward soul when the Princes stood in need not of a Council of Ministers, but of graver counsel ; some such spirit as the famous " White Lady " of the Hohenzollerns, who appeared in Potsdam Castle whenever Death was lying in wait. After long study and patient research, and industrious consultation with many learned Germans, we are inclined to believe that the voice was the voice of a great spirit then in its youth, the spirit of the insane and glorious, cynical and heroic, wicked and sublime, brilliant and stupid nineteenth century ; the spirit born on the field of Waterloo, to die a hundred years later riddled by German and French fire on the banks of the Marne.

Whether it was the genius of the lords of Carignano, or the spirit of the nineteenth century, that spoke to the Prince, is conjecture. But what the voice said is known. It said :

Are you a Prince or a man ? You ought to be a man ; for the revolution was hardly born when it washed you free of all the scales of royalty in the raging current of the times. You were cradled as a Royal Highness and Prince of Carignano ; but before you had learnt to talk you had become plain Signor Carlo Alberto Carignano ; a dozen years later, by the kind though not, perhaps, wholly disinterested grace of the usurper Napoleon, you were made Count of Carignano and owner of an imperial estate worth 100,000 francs or so.

Now you are once more Prince of Carignano, but no one quite knows whether a Royal or only a Most Serene Highness. You have eaten the bitter bread of exile, with the usual relishes of privation and humiliation; you drank in the milk of revolution at Geneva, as a pupil of Doctor Vaucher, and in Paris among the Jacobin nobles, to whose service you brought your sword and your appanage; you have travelled in the boot with servants, and even now you cannot go about with more than a single attendant following you; for only Royal Highnesses are allowed two, and though you are expecting a throne you still appear to be only a Most Serene Highness! When you become King, there will be those who will remember kicking you as you slept in their bed in the college of Geneva, where a disciple of Jean-Jacques, and a Protestant at that, educated you; you, the heir to a Catholic throne!

No, you are not to be taken in by the masquerade of the Restoration which Talleyrand and Metternich have staged. Victor Emmanuel and Charles Felix may be—they are two legitimate kings of the eighteenth century—embalmed alive for the necropolis of the *ancien régime*! But not you, a living man. The peoples no longer believe in God, and why should they believe in the King? In ruling them could *you* rely on the two great illusions of the Restoration: the Church and the Nobility? The Church and the Nobility, despoiled of their estates and their privileges, are now two mercenary hirelings, living on your smile and your alms. They are profitless servants, for no servant is of value unless he is also a little dangerous; unless, in the measure of his talents and his strength, he is also something of an overlord of his own master.

Ye kings who have escaped from the cyclone of Revolution, place no trust in your thrones! For you are alone. There is no replacing in its socket a tooth that has been drawn. A sapling can survive replanting, but not an ancient tree. The Restoration is an attempt

to put back the drawn tooth, to replant the old oak that has been dug out of the soil and its roots scorched by sun and dust. The common people and the middle classes, who until the French Revolution were such docile servants of the monarch and the prelates and the nobles, are now *athcciate*¹, as the southerners say: they have tasted blood; that is, equality and supremacy. Abandon the hope that they will return to the old obedience and humility. An age is now opening which will witness the kindling of the most extravagant ambition, the most insane pride, the most insatiable greed in the masses who lay inert until yesterday; and will see all the ideas and doctrines which the Holy Alliance most fears—nationality, liberty, democracy—making this greed and ambition their tool.

All of them: even nationality. There are many peoples groaning under the sense of oppression. Be not deceived: each of them, hardly master of its freedom, will have no thought but to conquer and oppress other peoples. The examples of Britain and France are contagious. It is not peace that Europe wants, not liberty, nor equality, nor fraternity, nor justice: she wants world empire. So the Holy Alliance, which imagines that it is conquering her with the gift of peace, will discover!

Shall I reveal to you the *arcana regni* of the age now beginning, the golden rules for the future monarch? They are these: Let no opportunity pass to bend the knee with filial reverence before the Church. Feed and clothe, and cherish as a favourite son, the Nobility. Keep at a distance the new classes, with their greed and ambition; affect to fear and loathe their ambitions and the revolutionary doctrines which are the means for their satisfaction. But at the decisive moment, do not hesitate: always sacrifice Church and Nobility to these ambitions. In these rules are fortune and power.

¹ Sturdy, large limbed —Trans.

To have no fear of revolutionary doctrines—this is the only way to have no need to fear them. If you fear them they will pounce on you like the hound which pursues and grips the fugitive. If you do not fear them they will serve you with more docility than prelates and nobles, even though you will be in some danger from them. But I have said it already: there is no true and profitable servant but he who is also, in some respects, something of a bully and a danger. Never take revolutionary doctrines too seriously as doctrines; but always watch keenly the passions raging beneath them; for if the doctrines are hollow the passions are real and momentous. In the revolutionary parties you will find a few great men and hosts of deluded ones; and among both types, many hungry and ambitious ones, whom you will find opportunities of winning over with a smile or a decoration or a commission. Make your peace quietly with these last, and use them to isolate the few great from the deluded crowd. This rule will never play you false.

Make use of the revolutionary doctrines and parties to extend your frontiers at the expense of the little dynasties which imagine themselves in security beneath the lightning-conductor of legitimacy. They are beasts for slaughter. Centuries before the revolution there were many of you; there are still a few dozens—too few in one regard, too many in another. Before another century has passed you will be reduced to so tiny a number that you will be all counted on the fingers of two hands. Then you will get at one another's throats until only one of you survives, the heir of a sort of world empire.

Will he be your descendant? I hope he may.

Inflamed by this exhortation, Charles Albert encouraged, by his silent consent, the revolution of 1821. But in vain. The movement failed; Victor Emanuel I abdicated; and Charles Albert went

into exile at Poggio Imperiale, to meditate on the danger of giving heed to the invisible voices that whisper beneath the trees of an ancient princely park. Twenty-seven years passed before the spirit of the nineteenth century showed further signs of life. In 1831 Charles Felix died, the last of his line, and Charles Albert succeeded to the inheritance of the elder branch. He made his peace with Metternich, and became the watchful sentinel of the Holy Alliance by the Western Alps. But in February, 1848, when the revolution in Paris had turned out the July Government, the invisible spirit suddenly made its voice heard again in the royal palace at Turin; and once more Charles Albert obeyed it: on March 4th he granted the constitution which goes by his name, and three weeks later he declared war—he, the King of little Piedmont—on the Empire of Austria, on the Holy Alliance, on the Treaties of 1815. Militarism, Nationalism, and Liberalism, the alliance of 1821, entered the lists once more. David stood forth against Goliath, with the pebble of the revolution in his sling.

But once again the invisible voice had betrayed Charles Albert. The pebble of the revolution scarcely grazed the head of Goliath, instead of striking him on the temple.

This voice that claimed to be the spirit of the age seemed to come from an evil and a treacherous genius; it might have been expected to be no longer able to gain a hearing. Instead, after Novara, it spoke almost every year and everywhere: in the royal palace at Turin; in the neighbouring Mon-

calieri and Racconigi castles, at the Palazzo Pitti¹, at the Quirinal¹. And with what results !

Victor Emanuel II resolutely turned his back on absolutism, on the prelates and the nobles who had served the legitimate monarchy with such zeal ever since the French Revolution ; he placed himself with enthusiasm at the head of those among the nobles and the upper middle class who had adopted the Liberal and secular theories of the State ; he ruled as a constitutional sovereign, with a Chamber (elected on an exceedingly restricted franchise) and a Senate (nominated by the Crown), and with a free press ; and he took over the cry of 1821 : to drive the Austrian out of Italy. The time was now ripe. Victor Emanuel died in Rome, thirty years later, King of Italy by the grace of God and the will of the nation.

But the political movements proceeding from the doctrine of popular sovereignty follow one another in waves, piled up on one another, each higher and broader and crashing louder than the last. Scarcely has a party lifted its voice in the name of the people when another comes forward, proclaiming itself a truer and more faithful representative of the people, as the mouthpiece of wider and more numerous orders of society. The Right, a restricted oligarchy of the rich and cultured noble and middle classes, is soon opposed in Italy by the Left, with greater numbers and more democratic supporters, half monarchical and half republican ; the Left is succeeded by Radicalism, by Socialism, finally by Communism.

¹ The Royal palaces at Florence and Rome.—Trans.

So it happened that while his father had governed with the Right against the party of absolutism, Humbert governed against the Right with the Left, which claimed to be the "true voice of the nation," its proof being that in 1882 it had crowned as the sovereign people many millions of electors, including all the horny-handed citizens who had studied a *sillabario* or child's reading book and at least knew how to handle not only a plane and a hammer but a pen. From the cultured, wealthy, Anglicizing aristocratic liberalism of the Right, the State took the first step towards Democracy, which no longer views the common people with disgust but smiles at them, claps them cordially on the shoulder, embraces them, and meanwhile steals their purse. The novelty is not the end but the means. Democracy was to take the place of Liberalism, which had been exhausted by its alliance with Nationalism and Militarism since 1821, henceforth a quadruple alliance through the accession of Industrialism: of the industrial and banking interests which by 1880 had captured and put to use an important part of the nation's capital, and had enlisted in their service that part of the middle and educated class which was not in the service of the State, in the liberal professions, or in commerce or the crafts.

The democracy of the Left was then to strengthen and increase the army and navy, to make the first essays in colonial policy, to impose and maintain the duty on corn, to serve with discretion and ability the interests of the new plutocracy, to conclude the Triple Alliance, Bismarck's new edition of the Holy

'Alliance : a dynastic alliance to maintain peace and strengthen the monarchical principle. But to prevent the democracy from falling a victim to the fads and vagaries and melancholy scruples which every now and then took possession of it, when it remembered its youth, and Lake Geneva, and the dreams and languishings and tears of sensibility of its upbringing, a few wise and subtle men in Humbert's reign changed the face of Parliamentarism from the English model to which, until then, it had had a certain family resemblance, and surreptitiously reduced it to a new shape of "dictatorial parliamentarism," with this main element of originality, that it was to affect not to be that at all, and to try to appear more indistinguishable from British parliamentarism the more it diverged from it. Under the Right, Parliament, through its two parties, had actually ruled, because then it had thought and willed. Dictatorial parliamentarism was to be government by a single man, leaning on the Court, and supported by a strong personal party following, that is to say, a clientele of common interests and sympathies; he was to corrupt the sovereign people by all the arts of official pandering, and to reduce Parliament to a mindless and apathetic confusion of parties, a docile organ of obedient constitutional approval and nominal control. He alone, with a few trusted confederates, was to manage all important affairs of State.

This esoteric method of government rested on the paradoxical principle that the greater the powers of popular sovereignty became in theory, the more the

organ of this sovereignty—Parliament—should be stripped of authority and reduced to impotence.

Agostino Depretis was the talented inventor of this type of parliamentarism, the existence of which is not yet known to the professors of constitutional law. Crispi should have followed him; but he was too bitter, too ambitious, impetuous, uncertain; and he failed. This is the true secret of his fall, sought in vain by the historians. Meanwhile the Left and Democracy were beginning to fail before the growth of Radicalism and Socialism. Humbert was in terror: he feared that Socialism could never be converted into an ally, but must remain always an enemy; not soft words but repression was his remedy for it, as it had been the remedy of the Holy Alliance for Liberalism. What happened is well known.

With the passing of Humbert, tradition, which had gone astray for a moment, found its way back, and retraced its steps through the confusion of the period. The new Minister of the old tradition, who was to bring into the old alliance of 1821 not only Radicalism, but, though only clandestinely, Socialism, was Signor Giolitti. This was the secret of his fortunes, a mystery to the majority as had been that of the fall of Crispi.

Signor Giolitti's policy contained such manifest and daring contradictions that at times his Government seemed a veritable parody of itself.

He invited the Radicals and the Socialists to power, but he made of foreign affairs a Government and Court secret as impenetrable as in the times of

Metternich ; neither in Piedmont nor in Italy had such secrecy been known since 1848. He wanted peace, and he reduced the military expenditure as much as he could, but he encouraged the imperialist infatuation of the public, and he made one of those conquests of which Italy, like every liberated nation, had long been dreaming : he invaded Tripolitania, for no better reason than that it was a tempting morsel for Italy. He gave the people universal suffrage before it demanded it ; he recognized the will of the people as the first principle of sovereignty ; but in Parliament he emasculated and paralysed this will by crippling the parties at birth, and refusing to touch the mummy of the Senate in its sarcophagus of the Albertine constitution.

Thirty million men, governed by thirty persons for the benefit of three hundred thousand families : so might the democracy be defined of which Signor Giolitti was the head and the lord. The Senate a nonentity, the Chamber apathetic, the revolution tamed in the antechambers of the Ministers, the Ministries formed *en famille* from among friends and clients, the country's attention distracted from public affairs by the claims of the day's work, except for an occasional wave of hysterical fury over some scandal of halfpence, some wretched prosecution, or other such trivialities : such was Italy from 1904 to 1914. It is difficult to imagine public affairs at the mercy of a smaller number of persons or of a group more immune from opposition ; an oligarchy efficiently disguised under the most democratic forms of popular government. This invisible oli-

garchy governed easily, unhated and unadmired, and successfully exacted the obedience of a people ignorant of its very existence, because in concealing itself it had succeeded in leaving the country under the illusion of self-government and at the same time saving it all the cares and perplexities of government ; because it was mild, good-natured, indulgent, a master of the art of leaving everybody moderately satisfied ; not too punctilious in regard to its prestige and always ready to sacrifice a little of it for a little extension of power ; convinced that man is half angel half devil, and that to govern him it is necessary now and then to give the devil in him a little run. All the actual forces of government were occult, and therefore invulnerable, or virtually so ; the visible authorities, with the exception of the head of the Government, had no part in the direction of affairs, and so could be abandoned without danger to the indignation and derision of the people, which in ill-treating them enjoyed the illusion of sovereignty and so gave more docile obedience ; feeling itself free and master of its destinies because every now and then, without serious public loss, it could give free rein to the anarchical instinct always latent, and to some of those evil passions which represent the civic rights of the Devil in the community. The period was one of greater prosperity than had ever before gladdened the human race ; every year the total wealth was mounting up by leaps and bounds ; governments were steady, public order was secure, the world was at peace and free to all, and the ambitions and aspirations of the nations

were reasonable, at all events in comparison with the present day. The State had nothing very great to its credit, but neither did it do any great harm; every year it spent more, but, thanks to the increasing wealth, without increasing the taxes; it satisfied its protégés and the dominant oligarchy without exhausting the masses; it was governing in actual fact without control, but it was not abusing its semi-absolute power too much. The press was altogether free, but it never dealt with any question of importance, preferring to discuss China and Japan.

This mediocrity both disgusted and satisfied the public, which abused it every day but would have been in despair if it had disappeared, since the only trouble it cost was a journey every three or four years to the polling booth to mark a ballot paper; many shirked even this if the election came on a fine day.

A government, to sum up, to the taste of an epoch which reduced every excellence to the level of the general mediocrity, and of a people which, even when it had contracted a feverish aspiration for glory and national power, continued, blind to the contradiction, to appreciate Governments of the old pattern which cost it no trouble! The pity of it was that in the fifteen years that this Government lasted every class in the country, imagining that it was governing instead of being governed, entirely lost the sense of what representative government and democracy are. Who can say how long this strange régime would have lasted but for the earthquake of 1914? How many of those who ran to the piazza

in May, 1915, shouting "Down with Giolitti!" realized that they were not stoning a man, but demolishing a political system of which the origin dated back to 1821 and to Charles Albert? That they were smashing one of the corner stones of the new Italy? If the invisible powers are generally invulnerable, on the other hand the people can destroy them unwittingly. In May, 1915, the clique which had ruled the State for more than ten years was deprived of its leader, terrorized and dispersed; and the network of interests in which it had held the sovereign people—the body of electors—captive, was torn and thrown into the Tiber. The war did the rest. The masses, roused by the earthquake, bled and enriched by the war, heard the cry that the people is henceforth master, and began to believe it. After the wrecking of the parliamentary dictatorship and the system of occult forces which had governed until 1915, there was no longer any real government until 1919; partly because the plenary powers and the Ministerial combinations of the years of war had been merely temporary expedients; partly because the fall of the Hohenzollerns, the Habsburgs, and the Romanoffs left the surviving dynasties, including our own, isolated on the margins of Europe; partly because, when the war had ceased to buttress the Ministries and they had once more to begin to maintain themselves by their own strength, Signor Nitti, persuaded that the world had gone mad, and feeling sure of nothing since Fiume, neither of the army nor of public opinion nor of his own speeches, fatalistically abandoned to its own

resources that which until then had been the sovereign people only in joke.

So it was that on November 16, 1919, the sovereign people was for the first time in Italy really sovereign, amid the discomfiture of the occult powers which had governed it until then. For the first time elections were held in Italy with the Government a passive and timorous spectator; and the people, in exercising its sovereign rights, followed, if not an idea, a feeling, simple but clear, of its own. For the first time, on the ruins of the parliamentarism of Depretis and Giolitti, the people burst into the State, an excited and bawling sovereign, shouting to the frightened oligarchy which for so many years had held it in subjection, shouting to Europe, which had never before seen its face or heard its voice—

Peace, peace, peace! I, I am master!

If destiny wills that in future Italy shall govern herself democratically, history will trace the first beginnings of her genuinely democratic government in the elections of 1919, in which a frivolous intellectualism and a number of publicity-shunning interests saw nothing but a saturnalia of demagogy. In any case, the people had forced its way into the State, through the medium of the two parties which had best expressed its will to peace and its desire to make its voice at last heard a little: Socialists and *Popolari*.

IV

SOCIALISTS AND *Popolari*

THE Socialists entered Parliament like madmen, singing "The Red Flag," giving cheers for Lenin, and hissing the King. They had grown too much in number and had grown badly, bringing in rough elements, among whom the former members, Deputies who wore a little collection of medals¹ on their watch chain, looked around dubiously, as though asking themselves "What is this crowd? What have we come to?" Old parliamentary foxes, long convinced that the grapes of Revolution were so sour that they could never ripen, but familiar with all the burrows, crevices, passages, and cats' holes that gave them entrance unseen into the Government fowl-house to drag off a hen, wondered nervously whether the young foxes really believed that their little legs were long enough for their snouts to reach the grapes. The young foxes, to tell truth, did want to eat grapes, but not to have to jump for them; and wagged their tails and made little hops and skips in the vineyard, imagining that the north wind would shake the ripe grapes and pitch them on the ground, where they could be eaten in comfort. This new and rather immature generation of disciples

¹ Every Deputy receives a gold medal, of the size of a Napoleon, each time he is elected or re-elected to Parliament. It is the custom to accumulate these little medals on the watch chain.

of Marx had not grasped either what had happened in Russia or what was happening in Italy ; consequently they were expecting what good sense would have told them it was useless and ridiculous to expect. In Russia three generations of Socialists had been outlawed, *interdicti aqua et igni*, by a pitiless autocracy. In Russia to enter the Marxist flock had meant, for half a century, to aspire to imprisonment, to exile in Siberia, to poverty and dishonour and the gallows. Once Socialism had forced its way into power, it was understandable that it should apply the *lex talionis* to the Government which had visited it with persecution and murder, that it should put beyond the pale the ruling class which had never allowed it any rights. It was the rule of the game in the struggle between the parties : an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. But in Italy, for thirty years past, to wear the bearded image of Karl Marx in the buttonhole had implied a candidature for one of the following sweets of office, according to the luck, the sharpness, or the shamelessness of the wearer : a quiet little job in some Red league or co-operative ; a seat as municipal or provincial councillor ; a Parliamentary mandate, a senator's robe, a Ministerial portfolio, the Premiership, the Collar of the Order of the Annunciation. In a single decade the editorial offices of the *Avanti* supplied two Prime Ministers, if not three (Signor Bissolati may count himself as one) ; two Collars of the Annunziata and one Knighthood of the Order of Malta. What other paper can boast so brilliant a record ? That is the ferocity with which the

infamous Italian bourgeoisie tried to extirpate Socialism! And because they had suffered a little injustice and ill-treatment during the war, the Socialists declared to the bourgeoisie that it should be punished for its barbarity by the loss of its property and its liberty, it should be removed from the number of the living, extirpated by fire and sword in the fashion of Moscow, buried alive in the convict prisons of the proletarian dictatorship!

The *Partito Popolare*, the Catholic Popular party, was of a different type.

If to-morrow the papers announced that during the night a crater had opened on the summit of the Janiculum, the surprise of the Romans would be hardly greater than that of the majority, four years ago, when one fine morning the Popular party appeared in Parliament, a hundred strong. Who had ever heard of such a thing?

Yet the surprise had been in preparation for a long time. Those who are interested to learn how and why, should read *Il movimento cattolico in Italia*, by Ernesto Vercesi. He will see how the few remaining among the faithful of the old Italy, destroyed in 1859 and 1860, cautiously reassembled between 1860 and 1880 in congresses for the defence of the Church; a small and prudent handful, under the leadership of old aristocratic families. He will see issuing from the first congresses the *Opera dei Congressi*, recording the rapid immersion of the Catholic movement in the interests and aspirations of the middle and working classes, with rural saving banks, workmen's societies, banks, diocesan and

parochial committees, young men's societies, and university groups. He will see the first conflict between this movement and the Liberal State in 1898; he will see the growth and spread, mainly through the efforts of Giuseppe Toniolo¹, of the Christian Social school, an earnest school which aims at subjecting to moral discipline the turbid eddyings of our quantitative civilization; he will watch the slow and heavy toil, when the movement reached the Vatican under the pontificate of Leo XIII, which was crowned with the issue of the famous encyclicals "*Rerum novarum*" and "*Graves de communi*"; he will learn how, in the generations which have arisen since 1870, there was born and grew into strength the new Catholic movement, no longer content to confine itself to the negative task of protest and self-defence, but going out to action.

Then came the pontificate of Pius X. Of humble origin, and for that reason responsive to the influence of the upper classes, Pius X made the first breaches in the "*Non expedit*,"² in order that Catholics might come to the assistance of the so-called constitutional parties. But at the same time there was born a true democratic and Catholic party; the meteor of Romolo Murri flared up and spent itself; Christian democracy was saved from the danger of engulfment in the quicksands of theological modernism, towards which a few imprudent pilots and many ill-intentioned adversaries were heading it; and the

¹ Professor at the University of Pisa.—Trans.

² The papal decree of February 29, 1868, enjoining Catholics to abstain from voting in Parliamentary elections.—Trans.

first Catholic Deputies entered Parliament, as an extreme Right wing . . . until the outbreak of the war and the ascent of Benedict XV to the Papal throne.

It may be that fifty years hence our sons will realize that under the pontificates of Leo XIII and Benedict XV the Church broke away from its alliance with the parties of absolutism with which, since 1789, it had made common cause against the Revolution ; and recognized representative institutions as the legal and legitimate form of government in our time. The event is perhaps one of the most important in the past half-century. But who noticed it ? Until 1919 the Catholics were not a danger to any electoral stronghold ; the Liberals, therefore, who never for a moment lost sight of the Socialist Party, never had time to watch the operations of the Catholics ; and they were dumbfounded when the time came to see them sailing in in their midst as a party which had been born full-fledged into the world. There were a small number who realized what this meant ; hardly more than a dozen. And these few asked themselves whether this was not the first sign that it was possible once more to hope for salvation.

Let us not be misunderstood. We do not suggest that the Catholic Popular Party possessed some miraculous virtue lacking in the other parties. Socialists, Republicans, Radicals, *Popolari*, Liberals, Nationalists, Fascists, leaders and officials of all parties alike, are born of the same father and the same mother, sired by our own time, brought into the world and reared by the middling and upper

bourgeoisie. All are under the sway of the same vital interests, in culture they differ little, they have the same qualities and the same defects. In a certain sense it might be said that these parties are the four or five elements of one and the same social order, which is at issue with itself in all of them. But in this segregation it has fallen to the lot of the Popular Party to be not only a party with a vigorous organization and a doctrine shaped literally through centuries, but, a more important matter, *a centre party with a large popular following*. It recognizes the monarchy, but desires to see it supported and limited by a true representative régime, with all its organs—parties, local organizations, universal suffrage for men and women alike, proportional representation, and an elective senate. It admits the sovereignty of the people, it respects the flag, it recognizes the rights of property, but it subordinates all three to a higher moral law, so that none of them shall become a divinity above good and evil. It desires peace and reconciliation between peoples, it desires the protection and the education of the humble, but without proposing to refashion the world *ab imis*.

In a time of universal madness, when the world was seized with evil spirits which tore it and lacerated it, the spirits of irreconcilably warring extremes, Italy was fortunate in finding this party standing ready to aid her; a party which had actually achieved the impossible, the combination of strength with moderation; and to find it without spending a farthing, without raising a finger, without labouring

for a single day. This party was a good gift which Providence or Destiny had sent Italy for the day of peace. It is true that it had a drawback—we shall come to that. But the gift was so unexpected and so novel that at the moment of its arrival no one dreamed that it was a gift. Meanwhile the Socialists, in the exhilaration of their success, thoughtlessly pricked the bladder of the winds, if only with little pin-pricks, and gradually let loose over the whole peninsula an enormous tempest of revolution, Masaniellesque; a strange popular revolt, without the strength, or even, perhaps, the intention, to turn the land upside down, but aiming at subjecting it to the most outrageous indignities which vassals in revolt and unchained after centuries of obedience could imagine for their deposed lords. The multitudes had no desire either for capital or land or for dictatorship; all that they wanted was to revenge themselves for the inhuman oppression of the war on authorities that they no longer feared or respected; they showed their contempt for all authority, from the gendarme, who now turned the other cheek like the just man of the Evangel, to the god Terminus, who still claimed to set boundaries on the face of the earth between *meum* and *tuum*; from the intelligence and wisdom which until then had been revered, to flaunting wealth, once admired but now despised, stoned, pelted with mud amid the popular fury, the moment it ventured to show its face. Engine drivers and guards had the courage to abandon their trains at the stations when their load was adjudged to be

political contraband ; and the civil and penal codes of law were simply suppressed in many provinces and replaced by the caprice of Socialist leagues.

The Government looked on with folded arms. Uncertain of the army, weak in the Chamber, compelled to endure the many indignities to which the direct actionists of militarism and Nationalism were subjecting Fiume and, through Fiume, the law, Nitti was unable, with 150 Socialist Deputies on the left benches at Montecitorio, to deal roughly with the insurgent masses ; that is easily realized. The two elements of disorder were joining hands against the common enemy, the Government. But Nitti not only did nothing to restore some sort of order at once—there was nothing that he could do—but he did not even do anything to make it possible for the Government to restore order later ; and this it was his duty to have done, for the Prime Minister of Italy is not a Sultan who can suspend the legal code when he pleases ; he is a servant of the law, obliged to apply it. When he has not the means he must provide them, and his energy in searching for them is his justification amid the momentary and involuntary inertia of the law. Nitti failed to see at once that the *Popolari* were a centre party capable of withstanding revolution on right and left ; it was some months before he summoned them to power, and his position then was desperate. He let himself be intimidated by the Socialist shouts for bread, and continued to toss to the populace milliards of lire in wasteful bread subsidies, to be squandered in revelries. As usual,

feeblenesses alternated with imprudences. He failed to compel the railwaymen to transport the troops as ordered by the Government, or the workers to respect the legal working hours; yet he enacted a property tax and proposed to call up the army by royal decree. Disheartened by the impossibility of arresting the disintegration of the State, he showed irresolution even in the peace negotiations; he yielded, yielded continually, so that there began to be grounds for fear that he would yield too much. And he did not hesitate to be the first to denounce his own errors. The day after he had concluded at San Remo the agreement which became the Treaty of Sèvres, he confided his fears to an American journalist, for him to proclaim them to the world. What he feared was just what happened; the fresh Turkish war, the ruin of Greece, and disaster to European influence in Asia Minor. He judged rightly; but if that was his view, why had he concluded that peace? And if he had been compelled to accept it, why did he publicly denounce it? At all times it has fallen to the lot of many statesmen to be compelled to accept treaties which they regarded as fatal; only one has yet been known to cry out to all the world as he left the conference room, "Gentlemen, I have concluded one of the most fatal and calamitous treaties in history!"

On May 8, 1920, I gave expression to my fears. I wrote:

Do you hear, do you hear this crackling of gunshots for months past, not at one spot but everywhere? It is the beginning of a long civil war; only the blind and

deaf can fail to realize it. Until fifty years ago, States battled with one another in a field of a few square leagues, and between dawn and sunset the issue of the battle was decided. Then the phrase for going out to battle was "to come to 'the day.'" In the world war, battles lasted weeks, months, years, and extended from the mountains to the sea, from frontier to frontier.

To-day it is the same with civil wars. In the nineteenth century, a few thousand insurgents attacked the government in the capital; in two, three, four days the battle was over; either the government surrendered or the revolutionaries were routed. Now these intestine battles in turn have been spread out and prolonged; they last months and years, and are fought in fragments all over the country in an infinite number of skirmishes: in hundreds of towns and villages, in mountain and plain, in field and piazza. A battle of this type began in Italy some months ago; and one day it will come to an end, like those battles that seemed interminable in the world war. The revolution of 1830 lasted three days, July 27th, 28th, and 29th. At the present moment we may regard ourselves as having reached the evening of July 27th, when, in the streets of Paris, the first barricades were being erected and the first musket shots heard, and when the tricolour of Valmy and Austerlitz was beginning to show itself here and there.

What *we* are witnessing is the unfurling of red flags in every part of Italy. The immense tumult which is filling town and country is harmful and dangerous because it is fed by no great idea. It is an immense whirlpool of fear and greed, rancour and hatred, dragging into its eddies the bodies of doctrines and ideas long since dead. Faced with mortal danger, the possessing and governing classes and the intelligentsia seem unable to move; they are no longer occupying themselves with any serious problem; they are making no preparations, they are refusing any longer to take thought; and while the piazze are full of open threats to overturn

the throne and to confiscate private property, they are no longer able even to make up their minds whether to throw down the Nitti Ministry or to maintain it in power!

The multitudes are in uproar, striking, stoning the *carabinieri* and the guards, acclaiming Lenin and Russia, trying to recommence in the streets the fine games learnt in the trenches. But what do they want, apart from capricious reprisals in vengeance for ill-defined wrongs? Apart from the satisfaction of abusing all the authorities that they have respected for so many years, they actually imagine that they have discovered the beginning of a new blessedness in the agony of Russia. This Job among empires, lying naked on a dungheap, abandoned by all the world, and covered with every plague—hunger and pestilence, foreign and civil war, tyranny and corruption and false money—is being perversely admired, as though it were imagined to be living in health and happiness!

Meanwhile, what is Parliament doing? Speech-making, shouting, intriguing. Is it, then, blind and unable to see the hour on the dial of history? Does it imagine that it is still living in the times in which its greatest pride was to fawn upon the King? Has it not learnt that the monarchical principle collapsed in Europe in 1917 and 1918? Does it not know that for all that the Chamber is discredited and feeble and the Senate withered and dead, Parliament represents after all the only principle of authority which still retains any prestige and credit—the will of the nation? Apart from this there is nothing left but force; but who could say to-day on which side the superior force lies? On that of the *regia guardia* and the army? Or of the organized workers, who are stopping trains and suspending newspapers at their will? Or of the populace that is spurning the restraints of public order?

If the Italian Parliament does not get down seriously to work, there is no possible cure for any of the evils which are insidiously undermining us. The clearest

proof of the incapacity of Nitti and his Ministry is their proposal to set the finances and the army in order by means of decrees. Is a Government which cannot enforce the legal working hours to be allowed to confiscate individual property by decree? Actually decrees are daily following and devouring one another; yesterday there were fifteen army corps, to-day ten are to suffice; yesterday the duty on wines fell upon every one's shoulders, to-day landowners and *métayers* escape it; yesterday all fortunes, even miserable properties of 20,000 lire, were to pay a levy spread over thirty years, but in two or three weeks' time small fortunes up to 50,000 lire will be exempt. Is this governing or torturing? Has the Government become a vivisectioning room? Can a Government which claims to be a model of democracy arrogate to itself fiscal powers more unbounded than those of an eighteenth century absolute monarchy?

In the end the tired nation remembered that there had once been a time—whether recent or distant it no longer knew—when it had enjoyed peace and happiness, even though it used to grumble, under Signor Giolitti's rule; and it turned again to him. Those who unwittingly had snatched the magic wand from his hands and broken it up, turned again to the old wizard, in order that he might repeat his past enchantments.

PART II
THE COLLAPSE

I

SIGNOR GIOLITTI AND THE WAR PROFITEERS

GIOLITTI succeeded Nitti in June, 1920. On the 20th of that month I published an article from which I reproduce the principal part below. It was called :

MIRACLE OR TRAGEDY ?

After fifteen years of obedience to him, after twice overthrowing him and trampling him in the dust and thrice acclaiming him its hope and salvation, Italy is still unable to determine whether this enigmatic personality is a great man or an astute intriguer. Why? Because it does not know that he is of the lesser breed of three generations of political leaders, beginning with Napoleon and continuing with Napoleon III, Cavour, Victor Emanuel II, Wilhelm I, and Bismarck; it does not know that all these generations, the first just as the second and the third, of which Signor Giolitti is a member, had a common plan, though their resources and their instruments were different: to master the revolutionary forces generated, with inexhaustible fecundity, by the disturbed times, and to exploit them as instruments of power and domination.

Napoleon followed this plan in taming and exploiting for some years the revolution of 1789. Cavour and Bismarck, Victor Emanuel and Wilhelm tamed and exploited the revolution of 1848. "Liberalism is childish babble; revolution is a force," said Bismarck. Giolitti had to face Socialism, one of the most revolutionary of the many revolutionary doctrines which arose in the last century, because it proposes to reshape the hemisphere on a new plan!

The task of breaking in this wild beast and harnessing it to the car of State to serve as a patient beast of burden might seem a very arduous one. It proved not so difficult, at all events until 1914, because Socialism was divided up into many schools, and the school with the largest following in Italy was the most accommodating one. I have said elsewhere that Marxism is a doctrine which looks as firm as bronze but is as pliable as junk. By means of the artifices familiar to every one, Giolitti succeeded in a few years in making Socialism the instrument, only partly conscious, of an oligarchical policy, and of a personal rule of the Cabinet and the nation. His refined and at times slightly ironical mastery of this type of statecraft, pursued with apparent enjoyment of its paradoxical nature, became manifest to all who were not blind—then, as always, a small minority—in 1911 and 1912, when, after offering a tiny particle of power to the Socialists, Giolitti made at a single stroke the conquest of Tripolitania and the revolution of universal suffrage, beating down the enemies of the war with the promise of the franchise and the enemies of the franchise with the promise of Tripolitania.

Who could deny it without doing violence to truth? Between 1900 and 1914 Signor Giolitti had succeeded in gathering around him, partly by patient adroitness and partly by good fortune, the elements of good success: the confidence of the Crown, the secure mastery of the still restricted electorate and of Parliament, an exchequer overflowing with funds through the prosperity of the period, a Europe that was or seemed solidly based on the predominant power of Germany. For it must never be forgotten, and it is useful, therefore, to repeat it: this Government, full of contradictions and antagonisms, needed a strong Germany. So long as there towered up in Central Europe, square and massive, the impregnable Germany of Bismarck and the Hohenzollerns, so long as it was flanked by the empires, solid, if not of granite, of the Romanoffs and the Habsburgs,

the Kingdom of Italy and its Prime Minister could play with danger and domesticate revolutionism without fearing that the wild beast would bite. The ordered society of Italy was solidly built into the European society, which was not to be shaken by the speeches of the Socialist Deputies, the articles of *Avanti*, or a few "red weeks" in the restless Romagna!

But what is there left now of this system?

The exchequer is empty and the finances are in danger. The chain of interests which the expert trainer had thrown round the neck of revolutionism is in pieces. Reserves are dissipated and hopes pledged. The electorate is a victim of St. Vitus's dance, against which the exorcisms of the Palazzo Braschi¹ will be impotent for long years. Nitti found so, to his cost. The German Empire, the Russian, the Austro-Hungarian—the three buttresses of the European order—are fallen. Half of Europe is in revolution and half of Asia in revolt. And amid the universal disorder, amid the discredit into which all the principles of authority have fallen in which Europe still believed six years ago, amid the horror of the unexampled slaughter of which the masses have, for the first time in history, been spectators as well as victims, amid the anxieties of threatened ruin and destitution, the revolutionary spirit of Socialism, lulled to sleep during the fat years of peace and prosperity, has awakened in fury.

It is Giolitti's lot now to be hailed as saviour at the very moment when all the instruments and means of action of which he has made use all his life have been shattered. The man who returns to power to-day for the fifth or sixth time, and in whose experience Italy is placing her trust, is as inexperienced in the present conditions of power as any novice. He will be able to succeed in his task only in the measure of his practice of the almost superhuman virtue of forgetting all his past experience; and of his erection on the ruins of his

¹ The office of the Ministry of the Interior, until 1920.

life's work of a vast new edifice, the barest outlines of the plan of which are hardly yet perceived by the acutest minds.

Miracle, I said, or tragedy. It will be a miracle like that of Augustus if this latest disciple of the Napoleonic school succeeds in initiating the first beginnings of the new policy which is to repair the ruin which that school has made. It will be a tragedy if he, too, like his predecessor, is unable to find his way amid the chaos.

It is only too clear that I made no mistake. The miracle failed to appear; there came the catastrophe.

A middle-class Liberal of the nineteenth century, of an old Piedmontese stock, who prepared himself for statesmanship by the study of law and by the administration of local octroi duties: so one might sum up Signor Giolitti. No more than his predecessor had he possessed a key to the nature of the world war. What might be called a "pacifist" by conviction he never was. In agreement with the middle-class Liberalism of the nineteenth century, which the Holy Alliance had sought to asphyxiate in the peace of the Restoration, he recognized war as an *instrumentum regni*, useful in certain contingencies; but war in reason, war costing little in blood or money, war which does not dissipate the resources of the State into thin air, does not strike terror into the masses; war which brings a rich harvest of territory and prestige, such as 1859 brought Piedmont, or 1866 Prussia; in a word, war with carefully calculated ends and means, justified as a bold and shrewd Act of State. Even into the conquest of Tripolitania he was only to be dragged by the hair:

it seemed a perilous and none too profitable adventure. But a terrible plunge like that of 1914 and the years that followed could only appear to him as a gigantic folly of a few of his colleagues—Ministers and Sovereigns—of Vienna and Berlin: a hateful folly, since it had destroyed his work and his power, mown down his country's fortunes just when they were beginning to flourish, destroyed for who knows how many generations the wise equilibrium of fortunes and forces in which Europe had prospered for two decades. He was temperamentally an enemy of all adventures and of all adventurers, even of the adventures and adventurers of modern finance, and one of the most revolting incidents of the war in his view had been the new sack of Rome, the colossal robberies by army contractors, the fortunes made out of the blood of the victims who fell in the trenches, they knew not why.

He came into power, therefore, with two firm intentions: to make peace and, as far as he could, to make the profiteer vandals of the war disgorge their ill-gotten gains; as Galba in Tacitus, *inde repeti, unde inopiae causa erat*.

The impartial historian will give high praise to Signor Giolitti for his determination and his success in making peace with Jugoslavia. This time he was not at fault, as too often happened, in his selection of the man to negotiate the peace: Count Sforza, a diplomatist whose ability was not mere vulpine shrewdness, the type that almost always miscalculates; a man of clear vision, of wide resource, firmness, and dignity. And having chosen him

Giolitti trusted him, left him freedom of action, supported him loyally, and circumvented the intrigues of the few but powerful enemies of peace. Even the treaty of Rapallo is not perfect, but it is perhaps the best of the peace treaties ; one of the few that hold fast to reality, because it is in harmony with the results of the world war, which *increased the security but reduced the power of the victors.*

Equally praiseworthy was Giolitti's bread price legislation, which removed one of the most stupid and expensive hypocrisies conceived for falsely representing war as a benefactor of the people.

It is more difficult to pronounce judgment on the legislation through which Signor Giolitti aimed at despoiling the spoilers : the inscription of securities, the inquiry into war expenditure, the confiscation of war profits, the probate duties, and so on. The intention was humane. Until now the war has enriched the majority, and impoverished the few in very varying measure : landlords a little, pensioners and public officials a good deal more, State and private creditors a little. These alone have borne a small part of the cost of it. But as no people can go on for long living on its capital, we too shall have one day to decide either to pay the bill for the war or surreptitiously to go bankrupt as Austria and Germany have done ; and if we are to pay we must all pay : rich and poor, according to the capacity of each one. Only two States, Great Britain and the United States, have made a serious beginning with the payment of the cost of the war ; they have not shirked the task of flaying both rich and poor, and

the rich more pitilessly than the poor. There is no other way out.

It is contended that if the rich are despoiled all will suffer. It is very true, since savings will run low, the accumulation of capital will be retarded, employment will diminish or not increase, wages will drop. It is quite true, moreover, that the probate duty is disguised confiscation of property. But who, save for some irresponsible rhetorician, dreams that a people can squander its capital in wars and still have it accumulating for land and labour? The pacifism that is so derided was born with large scale industry and the quantitative civilization, for a nation cannot feed and clothe and educate a teeming population if industry, agriculture, and trade are not reinforced every year by fresh savings and capital investment. It is impossible to spend and save at the same time. The "capitalist" State should incur few debts, limit its expenditure, and respect the poor man's purse and the rich man's safe. Western civilization is now in danger because it has violated this first principle.

Either, then, the rich will meet the liabilities contracted, and industry, trade, and agriculture will suffer accordingly for a generation; or the nations will suffer State bankruptcy. That the middle and working classes should be able to pay for this little trifle of a war by their own labour, leaving the capital of the rich intact; that the peoples, while paying for this little trifle of a war, should continue to grow rich as before 1914, is a child's dream of the type of that other childish illusion, that Germany would

sweat for half a century to redeem her debts. Signor Giolitti's plan was a wise one. But was it practicable? The Italian State was attempting semi-expropriation of the rich classes, a sort of sugared Bolshevism. But to threaten and frighten the rich has in all ages been a dangerous operation, which no Government should attempt unless it feels thoroughly sure of its own strength and resources; for wealth, even stupid wealth, has many weapons of defence and offence, open and occult. Did Signor Giolitti measure his own strength and that of his adversary before committing himself to this war against the war plutocrats? For success in an operation of this nature, would it not have been necessary to be sure of the Socialists? Was it not a risky movement to attack the war plutocracy while the Socialists were threatening trouble? Especially as the Socialists were continuing their wild opposition to everything and everybody, even to the legislation aimed at despoiling the rich to save the masses, without considering that if a little Parliamentary group of a few dozens can serve the State by setting itself in opposition on principle to every Government, a party holding one-third of the mandates cannot; its systematic opposition inevitably develops into an obstruction that permanently threatens the social order.

In actual fact it was after this legislation that the *fasci di combattimento*, which had been spurned by the electorate in 1919 under universal suffrage, and had dragged on a wretched existence in obscurity and impotence, began to be regarded with a friendly

eye and assisted by the war plutocracy, which until then had concentrated its attention on Bolshevism. A further difficulty for the Government, and a quite unanticipated one, was that the law concerning the inscription of securities, combined with the overburdensome probate duties, was a threat of indirect and consequently all the more unjust confiscation against the religious Congregations. The result was a certain repugnance to these laws on the part of the Popular Party, which was likely to be reinforced surreptitiously by opposition of a more resolute and less disinterested character from other quarters.

There is no question, however, that this Giolittian legislation was the first and only attempt made since the war, to this day, to find a way out other than the usual one of squeezing the largest and poorest class of the population. In discussing these laws, therefore, in the summer of 1920, Parliament was at last beginning to get seriously to work : a first sign of grace, on which I commented in an article published on August 11th :

PARLIAMENT AND DICTATORSHIP

The Chamber has at last tired of declamation and disorder, and begun the work of legislation.

It is what I said when the Nitti Ministry was approaching dissolution : whether the Chamber were good or bad, if it was to save the country it must conquer its inertia. The advice was so simple that I cannot understand why so many of the papers, and not a few even of the Deputies, regarded it as chimerical. The function of the laws is to apply such stability as they have to control the torrent of interests and passions raging around them. But the strength and stability for this are only attainable from the fount of legality : the will

of the sovereign in the old-time absolute monarchies, the will in our day of the people and the Parliaments which are its mouthpiece. Even this source, as the older one, is polluted: who will question it? But there is no alternative to it except force. The choice is between Parliament and Dictatorship.

For some time during the war there was a case for governing by decree instead of legislation, by the will of the Government instead of that of Parliament, or rather of single persons within the Government who step by step monopolized the functions of the Government, thinking and willing and acting, commanding and threatening for it: a few Ministers, officials, or generals. These persons were often unseen and unknown, but their sole will was supreme because in those years it was supported by the apparatus of military force, and this in turn was animated by the spirit of dictatorship diffused through the nation. The nation was willing then to obey these invisible guides, even when it suspected that they were mistaken. But when the armistice came this spirit of dictatorship was dispersed; the force which imposed it was destroyed or enervated; the people no longer heeded the decrees, however formidable they appeared. One of Nitti's mistakes was to imagine that he could re-summon the army or confiscate part of the national wealth by decrees, when the organs and the spirit of dictatorship no longer existed.

So, then, we have a Parliament once more. The ancient fount of legality has not dried up. Signor Giolitti has convinced the sceptics by the argument of facts. This has been our gain in recent months from the new Ministry.

But for this there would be no reason to believe that the State has recovered from the malady afflicting it—the failure of the guiding principles of authority in Europe. The fiction, or, to use a more high-sounding phrase, the mystical principle of the will of the people, which is the basis of the authority of Parliaments and

of the whole political system of the present day, is greatly discredited. After many hesitations Europe has recognized the organ of the national will, through which the people delegates its powers to Parliament, in universal suffrage on the widest possible basis—that is, the suffrage of all adult men and women. But what institution, or principle, or doctrine, or tradition, can presume to-day, not only to dominate or direct, but even to divine the true will of these multitudes, assembled every now and then to rejuvenate by a single, simple act of will the guiding principle of the authority to which they are to be subject on the next day? This will, appearing now for the first time in history, is an enormous force, understood by none, not even by itself, and by its very nature imprecise, erratic, oscillating. It should rule the world, yet it is at the mercy of the most fugitive impression; it is mistress of the earth, and it is in daily danger from the wiles of a handful of adventurers who flatter or intimidate it. Of how many interpretations it is capable! In how many ways it can be bluffed, entrapped, abused, subjected to pressure!

Protected by their ancient Parliamentary systems, the peoples of Western Europe are still living under the rule of equal and liberal laws. But the spirit of violence and domination is raging tempestuously everywhere, threatening the ancient legalities; the sense of good and evil, of the true and the false, of beauty and ugliness, is being lost amid the confusion of a sort of universal delirium; no community knows any longer what it wants. Among the dangers threatening this old Europe of ours, there must be counted the perversities of universal suffrage, and the rivalry of parties and political groups for the fruits of these erratic movements of the collective spirit.

The legal order under which we live might thus run grave risks precisely because it is ancient. It must be strengthened as much as possible by the replacement of the defective and the renewal of the obsolescent.

It is time to consider again the reform of the Senate, begun two years ago but then abandoned. In our constitution there is a lack of balance between the two Chambers which has lasted too long. Alongside a Chamber which I might almost call futurist, elected on the widest franchise possible and on the proportional system, there is a Senate of the age of Louis Philippe. These two assemblies, separated now by almost a century of history, are incapable not only of collaboration but even of conflict. The difference of age is too great. One cannot imagine a youth fighting a nonagenarian.

The Senate of Charles Albert was able to be of service after 1848 to the Court and the Government, as a drag on the over-impatience or over-boldness of middle-class Liberalism, then newly admitted to participation in government. It would be useless to the Government of to-morrow as a defence of the State if the electorate, in an access of ill humour, made some wild blunder that threatened to ruin the State. Only an elective Senate, representing an indirect, a more considered, and a weightier expression of the popular will, could have the strength to resist at a critical moment a passing wave of fury in the electorate; to give it time to return to calmness, and so to save the State from damage by a public opinion in an epileptic condition.

France has succeeded in enabling the popular will to act through two political bodies of which one can in certain cases serve as a corrective to the other. . . .

II

THE EXPLOSION OF FASCISM

ON the other hand, Signor Giolitti followed his predecessor only too well in allowing the mobs to give vent with impunity to their violent passions, while the gendarmerie, the administration, and the magistracy were compelled to look on without stirring a finger. He, too, arrogated to himself the powers of a sultan, treating the laws as his own preserve and applying them or not as he thought fit. In some provinces the *carabinieri* joined the crowds in invading the large estates with banners waving, as though to legitimize these lynch law expropriations. In other provinces tenants no longer paid rent to the owners, who turned in vain to the authorities, the gendarmerie declaring that they had not sufficient forces to carry the magistrates' sentences into execution. The civil and penal codes were simply records for antiquarians. Here and there a few signs of returning sanity began to appear. In the autumn of 1920 there was a split between the Communists and the Socialists. But the disorder grew more widespread and more furious, until in the autumn it culminated in the famous metal workers' strike and the occupation of the factories. "We are in for it!" thought the rich, in fear and trembling. Even then the Government did not

support Capital, which demanded to be replaced in possession *manu militari*; it treated with the revolutionaries as between one power and another, even promising to legalize a certain measure of workers' control in the factories! Yet the movement was no more than a revolutionary carnival parade, carried out by a few young men and eccentric women, all the more serious among the workers holding aloof and going into the country to wait for the storm to pass over, while the leaders of the trade unions and the Socialist Party hesitated. Russia was too distant a model, too debatable, too little known, too constantly misrepresented in enthusiasm or detestation for Italians to trouble to think seriously of imitating her in Rome. The invaders abandoned their conquest, and the official writers of current history were able once more, for the last time, to praise the wisdom and the good fortune of the head of the Government.

But the triumph was only apparent. It is understandable that with Fiume on his hands, with no choice but to tolerate an admiral in command of a fleet declaring publicly that he intended to obey the Commander of Fiume and not the Rome Government, Signor Giolitti was unable to bring guns to bear on the invaders of the factories. Every instance of weakness in the face of the naval revolutionaries had to be balanced by weakness towards the Reds, and vice versa. But amid the universal anarchy, opinion in the country was entirely at a loss. I described the general bewilderment in an article published on October 28th, entitled :

APPROACHING THE SUPREME TEST

A month ago I said to a friend who was frequently seeing the Prime Minister and had been explaining to me his course of action in the metal workers' strike :

" Many of these reasons have some weight : I do not deny it. On the other hand, it is not to be denied that there are things about which a Government cannot bargain even for the highest motives, without a sacrifice of authority, and without jeopardizing not only its own existence but that of the whole State. The Nitti Ministry was no longer able to govern after it had allowed the Fiume expedition to run its course and had permitted the railwaymen to reduce its orders to futility by stopping the transport of troops. Its obstinacy in clinging to power which it was no longer able to exercise brought the nation to its present desperate plight. I am afraid that the present Ministry may be marching towards the same fate. Can a Government, by tolerating them, lend countenance to the occupation of factories, the invasion of *latifundia*, and the seizure of merchant shipping on the high seas or in the ports, without destroying the community ? "

I have been justified only too well by the facts. Public opinion, already disturbed by the growing disorder, is completely at a loss to-day. The air is heavy with concern and exasperation, a sure sign of an approaching tempest. No one is any longer confident of anything amid the universal vacillation of the laws ; some call for a man to save the country ; some want to hoist the Socialists to power even over the dead body of the dynasty ; some place their hopes in Fascism, in a palace revolution, and in a military dictatorship.

Ravings, all too plainly ! The day the Socialists leapt into power, whether under a republic or a monarchy, the masses would go mad ; they would believe themselves the arbiters of the State, omnipotent as gods ; they would demand all the good things which the most fiery of the Socialists had promised them,

things which at present they have no belief in ever obtaining. After a few weeks the Socialists would be compelled, if they were not to be dispossessed by the mob, either to carry through a quasi-Bolshevist revolution or to post in the streets the last remaining champions of order : the machine guns.

No less dangerous is the chimera of illegal violence as a means of the restoration of legality. To those who abandon themselves to this dream, General Korniloff could give some good advice. The soldiers are none too well disposed, and the recruits march to the barracks singing " The Red Flag " ; but the army is still faithful, and it may be taken for granted that it will abide by its oath so long as it is employed within legal limits. Legality exercises almost invincible authority over armies, for the very reason that it is their function to defend it. The armies are few that have given the signal for revolutions. But what if any one were to succeed in inducing the army to step outside these sacred limits ? What authority would the leaders of rebellion have over a soldiery already discontented and perverted by the example of their disobedience ? Who could expect for long to strike terror into the organ of force by the use of force ?

What, then, is to be done ? To remember that we still have a king, a parliament, an administration ; generals, admirals, officials, prefects, professors, judges, clerks, constables. That we have a conscript army and a mercenary army—gendarmes and guards ; that we have a legal code which provides for every contingency ; a store of munitions which at other times would have terrified the world ; an exchequer overflowing with milliards. . . . And amid all these, with such resources, in a time of extreme danger, ought we not to find the few capable men needed for a government which can enforce respect for the two commandments " Thou shalt not kill " ; " Thou shalt not steal " ? Which can enforce respect for the rights of property, not as the convenient

privilege of a small number of fortunate people, but as what they are, and have been through all history, the necessary prior condition of all labour and of civilized society? Failing that, what hope of salvation should we have left? The return of order is the earnest of recovery. Such widespread despair can only be the result of a moment of complete bewilderment. I am no optimist, I have long thought that Italy's governing *élite* are full of defects, and that she has been involved in enterprises for which she was not ready. But I believe that she is doing herself less than justice in declaring herself impotent to maintain an ordered society, the only society that can endure. It must be insisted on, over and over again, that if the social order, which is to-day tottering, falls, Italy will fall a victim in her turn to a hateful tyranny, White or Red; she will be isolated in Europe, ruined, and in a few years moribund.

Is it possible that Parliament and public opinion should allow such ruin to be brought on the country and should lift no finger to prevent it, some through timidity or weakness, some through punctilio and pique, some through suicidal mania?

These pessimistic previsions were only too soon to be confirmed. The strain increased until the rope snapped. In some parts of Southern Italy, where property had been outlawed, the owners, abandoned by the State, began to take the law into their own hands, breaking into the offices of the workers' associations, burning them down, beating the leaders, scattering the members, and forcibly rupturing the bonds of intimacy by which the leaders had held the membership together. Could the authorities, which had failed to defend property against the criminal assaults of the masses, bring the law into applica-

tion when property took up the cudgels in its own defence? Under the eyes of the passive authorities, force replied to force; and in a few days the Socialist Party was routed.

It was an illegal but not illegitimate defence of property after it had been abandoned by the law to pillage. Amid the universal confusion there developed in a few weeks a revolutionary offensive, backed by armed force, against the Socialist Party. Employers and Nationalists, the surviving followers of the old parties and the rich landowners, all who hated Socialism and the new spirit among the people and universal suffrage, believed that they had at last found the club that would dispatch the monster. A horrifying massacre at Bologna awakened angry passions. The movement spread like wildfire. In a few weeks, urged on and directed by the *fasci di combattimento*, it flooded the provinces in which the rich classes had been proscribed or molested. Then began the armed attacks on the newspapers, clubs, co-operatives, and trade unions belonging to the Socialist Party. The passivity of the administration and the Government changed to sympathy and concealed partiality.

III

THE LAST MOVE AND THE LAST MISTAKE OF AN OLD STRATEGIST

By the end of 1920 the Government had succeeded in making peace with Yugoslavia and in clearing the legionaries out of Fiume; two achievements which had increased its prestige in the country. The Treaty of Rapallo was greeted immediately with universal praise, even from those who were later to denounce it as parricide. At last the Government had its hands free, and could once more take up the sword against those who were defying the law. In Parliament there sat a strong Centre party which by doctrine and from interest and, so to say, through its own geographical position on the political atlas, was an opponent both of the Red revolution which flamed around its left flank and the White revolution on its right; around this party there wandered uncertainly, *sine lege*, split up under various leaderships, the fragments of the former vassal army of the Prime Minister. The hour had struck for severe measures. The head of the Government should resolutely have placed himself at the head of this Centre party, buttressed it with the remains of his own following, created a centre power, and with it driven the Socialists on the Left and the Fascists on the Right back to legality.

The probability that this move would have succeeded may be inferred from the ease with which Fascism beat down the Socialist disorders. If in a few months some thousands of amateur gendarmes, private citizens armed with sticks, succeeded in restoring order, who can suppose that the State would not have succeeded if it had done its duty? Three months of martial law in eight or ten provinces would have sufficed. History will tell how the Liberal State stuck at trifles. I myself was right when I wrote, in September, 1919, that the Red peril in Italy was less formidable than it looked. In any case, I do not think I am being unreasonably wise after the event in saying that that move was the most obvious and simple and reasonable, and if not the safest the most promising. Instead, in the spring of 1921 Signor Giolitti dissolved the Chamber and proceeded to fresh elections, fixed for May 15th, in order that the people might declare its repentance of its errors and its emergence from the delirium of 1919. And to persuade it to repent he concluded an alliance between the constitutional forces, which were almost all represented in Parliament by remnants of his old following, and the young movement of revolutionary Fascism; an alliance not only against the Socialist but the Popular Party. Instead of interposing himself between the two extremist parties by means of an alliance of centre parties, which could successfully have fought on both fronts, he made an alliance of a centre party with one extreme against the other centre party and the other extreme.

This, in my view, was the fatal error which ruined the good work which this Ministry had done, and led us to disaster. There has been much speculation as to Giolitti's reasons for taking this line, and it is not easy to determine which of the guesses have come nearest to the truth. There is no doubt that the violent passions that filled the country had great influence over the head of the Government. In those months the banking and industrial and land-owning interests, the clubs and the intelligentsia, were all exultant at the imagined discovery of a wordless argument, directly to the point and of lightning efficacy, which would convince the electorate in an instant of the rightness of their ideas. What was the use of speeches and argument, parties and programmes? All that was necessary was to send into every town a handful of these youthful sympathizers, with the executioner's emblem in their buttonholes (the lictor was a hangman); youths who did not talk but just hit hard, and knew how to make an example, when called for, by a bit of arson! Was it not an everyday experience to find that one of these handfuls had but to put in an appearance in a town, and the Socialists would turn tail and abandon everything, the municipal government, their charitable institutions, the leadership of the trade unions, everything? Well, then!

Probably the real explanation of the secret rupture between Signor Giolitti and the Popular Party in the 1921 election lay in one irremediable incompatibility. The Popular Party was, it is true, a centre party; but it was a true party, not a personal

following, whereas the head of the Government had been used for too many years to ruling the State through personal adherents or vassals. In addition, the Popular Party had alienated the landed interest by showing rather too much sympathy for the peasants, even in some of their less justifiable claims. But I do not think that these reasons would have been decisive without the one incompatibility at which I have just hinted. The Popular Party was, it is true, a centre party, legalitarian, a bulwark of public order, so far as a party with a large following could be in those disturbed years. But there was that soutane of Don Sturzo. Behind the Popular Party there stood the Church. The odour of the sacristy and the perfume of incense were too little to the taste of a nineteenth-century Liberal like Signor Giolitti.

The Liberals and the *Popolari* were not to be deceived: amid their dogged struggles of years past there were gradually growing up not only the mutual rancour and fear inspired in the laymen and ecclesiastics, the Catholics and Liberals, by the revolutions and civil wars of the nineteenth century, but actually a modern resuscitation of the old struggle over investiture, the great contest between the Papacy and the Empire, the cross and the sword, Caesar and Peter, reborn in the twentieth century out of the ruins of the war. The difficulties arising out of the laws on ownership and inheritance, as they affected the property of the Congregations, were the first of the set-backs that the times held in store for nineteenth-century

Liberalism, which imagined that it had sealed for ever in the tombs of the past all these questions of mortmain, congregations, tithes, and canon law! Why did the undisputed leader of Liberalism, amid the approval of the classes of society most interested in the buttressing of the existing order, assume the responsibility of refusing an alliance with a Catholic party, at a moment of crisis when the alliance might have saved all and everything, and although that party had given sufficient pledges of its readiness not to reopen past quarrels? Because the Liberal State, weakened by the war and by its embarrassment at the flat contradiction of its doctrines by actual experience, feared now as never before that the Church might regain sufficient authority to win the upper hand not only for the interests which it represents, but for the doctrines which it has professed for so many centuries. Rather than that, let there be dictatorship, let there be Socialism! This is the tragedy of Italy.

So it was that in the spring of 1921, encouraged by the Government, and favoured by the enthusiasm of Liberal circles and of the richer classes, the Nationalist coalitions closed their ranks everywhere against the political system of proportional representation. This onslaught seemed to me to be dangerous, and I said so on April 14th, in an article entitled :

HOW TO SAVE OURSELVES ?

May 15th : a day that, perhaps, will decide the history of the new Italy! On that day the new Chamber will be elected by universal suffrage to accomplish some

difficult tasks which can no longer be evaded : to restore the reign of law, making an end of bombs and the invasion of estates and occupations of factories, of extortion and boycotts, punitive expeditions, invasions of local Labour Party offices ; to prevent the open or masked bankruptcy of the State ; to save the administration, jeopardized by the desperate condition of so many public officials, who must steal or starve. Procrastination is no longer possible. If the new Chamber proves incapable of giving birth to a Government, *within a year we shall find ourselves in a situation irre-mediabile except by revolution*¹, for it will not be possible to appeal a third time to the electorate. Either the new Chamber will do its duty, or Italy will find herself shortly with her back to the wall, at grips with a political crisis much vaster and graver than that through which we have already passed. The question is, then, how a new Chamber can be elected that will do its duty.

Many believe that it will be enough to exterminate the Socialist Deputies, by any means you like ; even the jawbone of an ass. But this remedy is too simple. Glance at the last Chamber. Was its sterility due to the number of its Socialists ? The power of the Socialist Party decreases in proportion as the number of its Deputies grows. In no earlier legislature was the Socialist group so inactive as in the last, in which it was so strong. What has it done except make scenes and rant ? What serious opposition has it attempted ? For a year past the real difficulties in Parliament have arisen from the discords and indecision of the other political groups, on which the Government ought to be able to rely. The Government is impotent because whatever it decides on it runs the risk of arming one of the sections of its majority against the other. The new system of State examinations, in itself and through the incapacity of Croce, set the *Popolari* and the Left against one another. The peace of Rapallo led the

¹ The reader will note that I was four months out.

*Rinnovamento*¹ and the Nationalists into the temptation to make an alliance even with the hated Socialists against the Government. The workers' control² in industry disturbed every group in greater or less degree. Then came the intrigues of Nitti and his clique. These mutual discords and suspicions of the groups weakened them, in turn, in face of the Government. So it was that they failed to compel the Government to strangle our new medievalism *à la* nitro-glycerine at birth.

Not even the total extermination of the Socialists would be of any avail if the new Chamber were to reproduce these vicious characteristics of its predecessors. Our only salvation will be either through the predominance in the new Chamber of a single strong and compact group over the rest, a group able to maintain the Government unaided; or through a truce and agreements between a number of groups.

It is not improbable that Signor Giolitti hopes and will attempt to reconstitute around his person the group which was faithful to him from 1904 to 1915. There are many signs that suggest that Signor Giolitti is a little behind the times. I find it difficult to imagine universal suffrage delegating the power in 1921 to a personal dictatorship resting on the support of a group of interests.

There remains, then, only the agreement of a number of groups. Is this possible, and how?

It should be possible. But for it to succeed, it would be necessary to take the very opposite path to that along which parties and groups are rushing tumultuously to-day, fashioning in furious haste Nationalist coalitions against the Socialists. Each group should go down independently into the electoral arena. Afterwards, in Parliament, agreements should be struck between the groups, each of which will have been elected on its own programme.

¹ A political group which was formed in the Parliament of 1919. It was composed almost entirely of ex-combatants and interventionists. After a few months it was dissolved.

This is the real advantage which compensates for the many inconveniences of proportional representation. Only after exhibiting their true strength in the electoral arena can groups and parties come to loyal agreements in Parliament, because they then all know the measure of each other's forces in the country, and accordingly of the extent to which each group and party is justified in making sacrifices to arrive at mutual accord; those with the lesser followings being naturally bound to make the lesser demands and the greater concessions. If Fascists and Nationalists, Radicals and Reformists, are all mixed up now in the same coalitions, all will regard themselves on the morrow of the elections as equally representative of the national will; and then, why should one group yield to any other in questions in which it believes itself to have the right to speak in the name of the country, which will, in truth, have given no mandate to any one? *It might then prove that these conditions had become the matrix of revolution.*

These were once more words to the deaf. On May 15th the coalitions, preceded by the flying squadrons of Fascism and directed by the arch-strategist of the Palazzo Viminale¹, gave battle not only to Socialism but to the Popular Party, the party which ought to have been regarded as one of the pillars of social order. And the Government had not only prepared and directed the assault, but had given *carte blanche* to the light troops of Fascism and actually armed them: armed them with pistols, rifles, bombs, motor lorries, and such-like means of grace, for employment in the great slaughter. And employed they were, mostly against the

¹The Palazzo Viminale is the new office of the Ministry of the Interior. Signor Giolitti was Minister of the Interior as well as Premier.—Trans.

Socialists, but also to some extent against the Catholics.

The spirit of the nineteenth century had spoken again at the Palazzo Viminale, and perhaps elsewhere, as a century before it had spoken to Charles Albert. But that only meant that Signor Giolitti was behind the times. The nineteenth century ended in 1914!

IV

THE CATASTROPHE

It is customary in Italy to treat the people with scant respect, as a child that will never grow up, a child to be kept good with little stories and lolly-pops and occasional beatings. To judge from the elections of 1919 and 1921, in which it had for the first time some freedom to say what it wanted, it might claim to have more clearheadedness and good sense than its guides seem generally to possess. In 1919 it elected a large number of "duds"; but was it its fault? The lists of Socialist candidates were not drawn up by the people. In 1919 the people gave its preference to Socialists and *Popolari* because these were the two pro-peace parties; and it would have filled Parliament with all the talents if their possessors had been entered on the lists by those who should have discovered them. But it is only fair to remember that if to-day Italy is engaged in no Ruhr adventure of her own, some of the credit is due to the much abused elections of 1919. At the elections of 1919 the people cried "Peace," and at those of 1921 "Order, and equal justice for all."

The Government and governing circles were bitterly disappointed by the elections of 1921. The *Popolari* gained a few seats; the Socialists lost seats through the Communist split, but with 120 members

were still the strongest group in the Chamber. It was the constitutional parties that paid for the feast, losing a certain number of seats to the Fascists through the alternative vote.

The success of the Socialists came as a general surprise, since in many districts they had left the masses to their own devices for fear of violence. Once it had been the party shepherds who had guided their flocks and saved them from the wolves. In these elections the flock had saved the shepherd. All the mistakes and excesses and bravado of the Socialists, which had so alienated the masses, had been forgotten in their disgust at the violence for which they had for some time been the target—the burnings of local Labour Party offices, and co-operative stores, and offices of the Labour co-operatives. In their terror and indignation at these violent illegalities, the masses turned back spontaneously, without needing to be asked, to the party from which they had begun to stream away. It is true that this time they preferred those candidates in the lists who were the most moderate, the old parliamentary hands ; while the Benjamins of the nationalist coalitions were the new revolutionaries, the Fascists. The parts were reversed, Socialists and Conservatives exchanging rôles : the parties of revolution appealed to the arm of the law ; the parties of social order flirted with revolution.

The sovereign people had spoken clearly, at least for all who had ears to hear : it demanded the equality of all before the law, and a just but firm government which would compel respect for the

civil and penal codes. This was the universal desire. But how to satisfy it? The foremost parliamentary leader had broken with the strongest of the constitutional parties and had compromised with one of the two revolutionary parties, which now needed holding in. Nor was it possible to set over against the alliance of constitutionalists and Fascists another alliance of legality and revolution; for although Socialists and *Popolari* had been fought by the same enemies and with the same weapons, if not with equal violence, it was impossible for them to agree between themselves so long as the Socialist Party maintained its supreme distrust of the bourgeoisie. It is easier for a legalitarian party to hold out a hand to revolution than for a revolutionary party to assist in the restoration of order. Such entente as had existed, moreover, flaked and split to pieces in Parliament, the very place where it should have solidified, because it had been initiated at the time when the parties should have preserved their individuality, namely during the elections. Among the old and inharmonious constitutional groups, some clung to Fascism as their last hope, some stood apart, fearing its revolutionary violence, and inclined to the *Popolari* or even cast smiling glances at the Socialists; the Fascists complained of betrayal by their allies; quarrels started over the services rendered at the elections, the constitutionalists affirming that had the Fascists had no help they would have gathered in no more than the crumbs and fragments at the feast of universal suffrage, and the Fascists retorting

that they had saved the constitutionalists by the extreme audacity of their assault on the enemy positions. Both were right. It began to be evident that the coalitions would, as had seemed likely, be the matrix of the revolution, because each group was claiming the whole credit of the common victory.

The Government collapsed. Giolitti resigned, being unable to govern any longer after the tacit rupture with the *Popolari*. But he abdicated under a false impression, imagining that he would return in the cool of the autumn or with the winter winds, as in the golden days when Eve span; so difficult is it for a man to realize that the times have changed when his interests lie in their remaining immutable. The old statesman did really imagine that after a little absence he would once more be wanted by the whole nation—by the Socialists, whom, with justice, he had not forgiven for their failure to help him to make the rich pay for the war; by the *Popolari*, who were nursing a grudge against him for his effort to injure them; and by all the other parties, within which his old and faithful followers were working. He was succeeded by Signor Bonomi¹, who endeavoured to strengthen the threatened dyke of the laws against the Fascist inundation; but what could he do so long as the Socialist group stood united in revolt against the social order, threatening revolution, even if only in words? How could he defend liberty and legality, at the risk of civil war, through a party avowedly determined to turn liberty and the law upside down and to set up

¹ Leader of the Reformists.—Trans.

the dictatorship of the proletariat, or rather of its own members ?

Encouraged by the weakness of the Ministry and the errors of the Socialists, lavishly subsidized by the rich, assisted by a thousand surreptitious favours from the public Administration—police, prefecture, army, magistracy—Fascism grew daily in strength. Many torrents, large and small, flowed from every point on the horizon to swell the crashing rapids. The principal ones were these :

(1) Patriotic feeling, outraged by the exaggerated internationalism of the Socialists and by the brutality with which the masses, to demonstrate their hatred of war, indiscriminately cursed war and victory, the defenders of their country and the war profiteers.

(2) The terror with which the rich perceived the threat to their property ; the anxiety alike of the new rich and the old at the Giolittian legislation, and at certain other legislation demanded by the Popular Party, such as the bill concerning *latifundia*.

(3) The hatred of the middle class, impoverished by the depreciation of the currency and the dearness of everything, against the workers and peasants, enriched by the war, on whom they laid the blame for their own misfortune. The hatred of the Socialist Party as the protector and abettor and flatterer of these insolent privileged classes, these "oppressed," who could eat fowl and drink Chianti and Barbera¹ every day while decent officials and their children went hungry, and who even so were not satisfied but

¹ A Piedmontese wine.—Trans.

complained of victimization and poured forth gross and violent abuse of their country, the State, and the hierarchy on which they were dependent.

(4) The hunger for conquest which continually afflicts Italy, in common with other European nations which, to their misfortune, have a certain power; a hunger which not even the European War had satisfied. The fixed idea that Italy had been betrayed by disloyal allies and despoiled of a rich booty with the complicity of the renunciators, the internationalists, and other such fancied traitors, invented by the credulous public of the *salons*. The sterile revolt of the national *amour propre* against the inexorable decree of destiny that in this war the vanquished should be destroyed and the victors reduced and enfeebled. The disillusionments of victory, more tormenting for us because it was our first great victory after long waiting. The need for a scapegoat to do penance for destiny, since destiny is an agent beyond the comprehension of the impassioned mob.

(5) The disquietude of the groups and factions and occult forces which had governed the State before the war, at the growth of the Socialist and Popular Parties. The fear of the epileptic seizures of universal suffrage. The hope against hope of the oligarchy which had ruled until 1915, under the guise of democracy, that it need not die yet, that it would recover, with the aid, perhaps, of the magician's¹ wand, from the wounds which it had inflicted on itself in May, 1915.

¹ Giolitti — Trans.

(6) The instinct of order and the instinct of disorder: of decent citizens exasperated by the inundation of Masaniellism and the virtual complicity of the do-nothing Government; of desperate men for whom, in Tacitus's phrase, *compositis rebus nulla spes, omne in turbido consilium*.

(7) Bourgeois pride, offended by the insolence of the lower classes in revolt.

(8) The loss of faith in the old leaders, and the long-standing unpopularity of Parliament, revived by fresh accusations; concern at the disorder of the finances and the falling currency; exasperation at bureaucratic delays, the disorder in the public services, the instability of the Ministries, and the corruption which had entered into the most sensitive tissues of the social organism.

(9) The spiritual débris of the dying nineteenth century — Nietzscheism, imperialism, amoralism, idealism, anti-Christianism—fermenting in the heat of the times. The rehabilitation of all the German doctrines and ambitions which had been most universally denounced during the war, through their maladroit and impotent imitation by the victor States. Violence and exaggeration, become incurable habits of the will and mind; the idea of domination, become a doctrine; all the fruits of thirty years of false national education, still further falsified by the war.

(10) The first stirring of the true modern spirit, beginning to blow softly over the world. For example, the recognition, if still vague, confused and incomplete, of what the old parties never realized:

the vital importance to the world of the principle of authority.

(11) The general political inexperience, no one knowing what is the nature of the representative régime or how a modern State is governed ; so that it was generally believed that a people and an age can choose and change between principles of authority and forms of government, as though both were variable like the season's fashions, whereas both are fixed for generations and only to be changed from within by slow obsolescence and renovation.

(12) Hysterical novelty and miracle mongering. Ignorance, swollen by the pride of unmerited wealth, and rendered ferocious by the fear of losing it.

It was a booming and thundering tidal wave of varied passions, some generous, some subversive, which caught in its eddies, uprooted and tossed amongst one another the limbs and trunks of the most opposite doctrines: authoritarianism and anarchism, conservatism and revolutionism, sapling doctrines and doctrines rotten with age. Against any sound breakwater the wave would have broken with an immense roar and torrents of iridescent spume, but without doing any damage. But there was none. When the Bonomi Ministry, unable to continue to govern, resigned in February, 1922, it was clear that in view of the tacit rupture between Signor Giolitti and the Popular Party no alternative Government could be set up. The *Popolari* would not hear of Giolitti as Premier ; in interviews with journalists he was compromising himself more and

more with Fascism and virtually offering to lead the Nationalists, who were denouncing the Treaty of Rapallo as a national betrayal ; and there was still the acute difference with him over the inscription of securities and the religious Congregations. But Samson's locks had grown again a little : Giolitti had become sufficiently strong, after a year of a Government during whose term of office the Socialists had been his unwitting accomplices through their methodical abstention, to be able to prevent the creation of any Ministry in which he had no say. The Ministerial crisis lasted some weeks and was a fearful matter. It was clear that the State was in its death agony ; and so I wrote, in despair, in an article published on February 10, 1922, from which I take the following short extract :

Much time, much time has been lost, and with it what wealth ! But if it is a question of avoiding irreparable ruin, then indeed better late than never. And not only wealth but the social order and the very existence of the nation are at stake. At such a pass have we arrived. Is it possible that the instinct of self-preservation will not be reawakened even at the moment of supreme danger ?

Those in whom this obscure instinct of self-preservation is to acquire consciousness and so change to will, are but a few hundreds.

Can it be that these few hundreds, who will be the initiators and leaders, are so blinded by their own interests, so enervated by scepticism, so hopelessly the prisoners of the passing moment, its passions and its illusions, as not to realize that failing the most energetic effort to retrieve the public fortunes they will all suffer shipwreck on the same terrible reef ? As to lose time in heated discussions whether, after Caruso, Pope

Benedict XV shall have the honour of commemoration in Parliament ?

Two years ago every one was in terror lest the Bolshevik peasants should one day or the next be overturning the existing order of things. To-day the Bolsheviks are lying low or in hiding, and even the most timorous are reassured. One of the commonest errors of those who are ignorant of history—and great is their number—is precisely the idea that revolutions are made by revolutionaries, and that this type of man is accordingly greatly to be feared. But neither the French monarchy nor the empire in Russia, nor any obsolescent government, was ever overthrown by a revolution; *all fell through internal causes*; through the organs of State, struck by moral paralysis or ataxy, refusing to function. Ageing governments fall either through foreign attack or suicide. The weakest, so long as they refrain from suicide, are always a thousand times stronger than the strongest revolutionary party.

I do not know what those whose task it is to reconstruct the Government may be thinking of the present state of affairs. I do know that they will be making a mistake if they harbour the illusion that matters are going better to-day than in 1919 or 1920. The peril is greater for the very reason that the cohesion of the State has diminished. There is no longer a minute to lose. But is this also to be another address to deaf ears ?

The appeal was unheard amid the clamour. After a number of vain attempts there was set up a Ministry of Pier Soderini¹. It deserves no other name. The pride of its head brought to naught the efforts of some capable Ministers who deserved a better fate.

Catastrophe was inevitable. From this moment

¹ Pietro Soderini was elected in 1502 to be *gonfaloniere* of Florence, for life; but was deposed in 1512.—Trans.

the Fascist movement made a frontal attack both on Parliament and on universal suffrage, which the Government weakly abandoned to its fury. From this moment inertia was the one condition of existence for governments, because every attempt at action frightened powerful interests, and increased the confusion in men's minds and the instability of the political groups. The discussion of the bill concerning *latifundia*, for example, ended in veritable chaos. In July the Socialists opened their eyes, at last saw the danger, came to an understanding with the *Popolari* at the cost of a fresh scission, and overthrew the "Soderini Ministry." A year before, perhaps, if this alliance had been possible, it would have saved the State. Now it was too late. There was no leader; the strange general strike called by the Socialists was a fresh piece of good fortune for Fascism; the most foolish and ridiculous of the Prime Ministers of the kingdom was enabled to persuade the Chamber to desist from a vote of no confidence. The Fascist movement marched forward irresistibly, openly preparing the *coup d'état*. On September 3, 1922, I published an article on these preparations which I reproduce in full below, because it supplies the key to present and future difficulties. It was called:

—AND THEN WHAT?

It might be supposed that we were living somewhere between 1850 and 1870—in those years which saw so many "To Let" notices posted up on the doors of Parliaments, so many Deputies dispersed by musket fire, so many majorities humiliated by royal decree, so

many abdications, spontaneous or forced, of universal suffrage.

Parliament has become the pet Aunt Sally. Democracy and universal suffrage are being held up to contempt, together with the laws and all who think of respecting them, as lumber for the dealers in antiquities. The *coup d'état* is being openly called for, and the men who are supposed to be willing and able to achieve it are subjects of adulation. The preparations are being openly discussed, and there is even discussion of who is to have the glory of directing the great enterprise. Fancies? Legends? Exaggerations? It may be so. But it is an ugly sign that such discussions are going on in cafés and clubs, and that the anxious impatience for the constitutional earthquake is most pronounced precisely in quarters where, amid wealth and power, there ought to be an ounce or two of brain to be found.

Despite these dog days, we seem to be groping in the treacherous mists of Brumaire or slipping on the blood-stained mud of December¹.

But it is madness. Nothing can alter one fact, that between 1850 and 1870 Parliament and the electorate were only part of the State, a sort of outer colonnade added to the old building and capable of being demolished without injuring it. If Parliament were dispersed and the electorate gagged, there still remained an ancient, powerful, venerated, legitimate institution capable of governing the State unaided through a few trusted Ministers: the monarchy. *Coups d'état* were then possible under the protection of this ancient institution.

But where is this ancient institution now? Have those whose dream is to turn Montecitorio into a kinema show realized that the few monarchies still remaining along the margins of Europe are now reduced to precisely the same position of modest subordination which, between 1850 and 1870, was that of the Parliaments? Have they asked themselves what would happen next,

¹ Louis Napoleon's *coup d'état* of December 2, 1852.—Trans.

if in Italy Parliament were suspended and the electorate gagged for a few years by a *coup d'état*?

Is there a single person in Italy who believes that the King can assume, even for a few years only, the whole responsibility of ruling the State; of appointing Ministers, directing home and foreign policy, balancing the budget, bringing the country out of the present confusion? And if the Monarchy cannot govern alone and it is not desired that an assembly elected by universal suffrage shall govern, where on earth is a Government to be found which shall appear legitimate in the eyes of the nation and to which the nation will concede the right to command? And if no legitimate Government is possible, who will save us from a Terror, the *ultima ratio* of illegitimate governments which have forced their way to power?

For a century past the peoples of Europe have recognized only two principles of authority: the dynastic and the democratic principles; the historic right of reigning families and the will of the people as expressed through universal suffrage. They do not yet recognize as a principle of authority the open dictatorship of any organized minority, either of the proletariat or the trade unions or the saviours of their country. Now that the world war has virtually destroyed the dynastic principle, there remains only one pillar on which the machinery of modern civilization can rest, the democratic principle of the will of the people. Outside this principle there is nothing but the reign of force, and terrorism, Red or White.

This is so true that even the most fanatical partisans of the *coup d'état* would be glad to see it legitimized by the will of the nation. Why is the Chamber the target for so much abuse? Because, say those who want to strangle it, it no longer represents the will of the people. Even the enemies of democracy are compelled to recognize that to-day a Government is not legitimate (that is, it has not the *right* to command, even if it has

the *power*) if the people does not desire that it shall be in power. But where can this supposed will of the people reside if not in the majority; and how can this will of the majority be expressed if not by the choice of delegates under certain rules which all loyally respect?

Italy is a part of Europe, and Europe is exhausted by wars and revolutions. She has had too many of them from 1789 to now; and every fresh war or revolution embarked on to unravel the tangles made by its predecessors has only made them worse. If there is one truth that an independent writer can declare with an easy conscience to-day to the masses it is this: that however many and troublesome may be the difficulties in which Europe is struggling, neither wars nor revolutions will serve to overcome them. They will only make them worse.

Was ever a war or a victory greater, and more sterile, than the European War and the victory of the Entente? Would not all the evils from which Europe suffered in 1814 seem to us a bed of roses beside the red-hot gridiron on which we are chained? Have not all the evils which drove the Russian people to rebel in fury against the Tsar's government and destroy it been multiplied a hundred times by the revolution? This is not to say that the world war and the Russian revolution could have been avoided. Certain events in history are not dependent on human will or judgment. But it does mean that our modern society is able to destroy but not to rebuild on its ruins; and that it cannot build up on the ruins because for a long time it has been following a mistaken plan. If it is to save itself it must discover and correct its error.

Revolutions and *coups d'état* can only set up illegitimate and tyrannical governments, dependent on terrorism, which sooner or later must end in confiscation, as in Russia. Lenin did not set up a tyranny because he desired to confiscate property, he was forced to confiscate property because he had set up a government

without a legitimate basis, and because, beaten in the election of the Constituent Assembly, he had done violence, through a *coup d'état* similar to that which many are now deliberately hastening on, to the voice of the people which had pronounced against him. In order to maintain himself despite his lack of title to govern, he has given the land to the peasants, securing their support of his tyranny by a huge act of rapine. Sooner or later the *coup d'état* in Italy would be compelled to imitate his example.

I know that the legal forms which we have inherited from pre-war times are old and debilitated, but they are the only ones that can live ; if we destroyed them we should have later to recreate them. If Italy and Europe are to be saved, we must not destroy the old legal forms but inform them with fresh life, so that the legitimate government may also be an intelligent government.

This should be noted by those who are untouched by the main argument : All legitimate governments tend to grow corrupt amid security in power ; hence every now and then revolution breaks out, promising a better government. Sometimes the promise is kept, sometimes not. This time it certainly would not be ; hence the supreme necessity of saving the legal government, while curing it of the progressive imbecility which afflicts it. But it is not to be cured by violence but by intelligence, clear views, good will, civic enthusiasm, and a little love of country, sincere and enlightened and disinterested.

Vain admonitions ! On all sides there were people who hoped to make use of this revolutionary movement to serve their own ends : Giolitti, to compel the *Popolari* to effect a reconciliation with him ; Salandra and his band of faithful, to break down the barrier which the Socialists had erected against his return to power ; the constitutional parties, to save themselves from the deluge of universal suffrage.

Meanwhile the Socialists continued to split into factions, and the *Popolari* were more isolated than ever. Until one fine morning Mussolini entered Rome, acclaimed as the saviour and rebuilder of society, especially by those who had opposed him : *effusus qui noluerant*. This time the revolution had worked for its own ends. The nineteenth century had died in 1914 ; and its spirit had spoken a last time from the tomb, in vain ravings which led astray the unwary who had placed faith in it, believing it to be still living as in 1860.

PART III

WHAT NOW? A GLANCE AT THE FUTURE

I

. WAS IT A TRUE REVOLUTION? YES, AND NO

THE constitution was violated and overpowered : an act of revolution. But it was not overthrown ; the revolution was thus not complete. Once more the Aurelian walls witnessed the strange phenomenon, not entirely strange to them, of a revolutionary movement proving impotent to overthrow the existing order, which in turn was impotent to bring the movement within the control of the law. The duel between these two impotences ended in a deal. The constitution remained, but tolerated the existence of a revolutionary duplicate of itself. There was a reduplication of the principal organs of the State : Parliament and Fascist Grand Council, army and Fascist National Militia, prefects and Fascist delegates.

Where the reduplication will end it would be rash to attempt to divine. It is too soon yet to estimate the first effects of this semi-revolution. If I may be allowed to give my impression, I should say that it seems to be a semi-revolution made by journalists who are adept at taking words for deeds. The facts of the revolution do not appear to come up to the speeches. The foreign policy of the country remains substantially that of Count Sforza, but shows less resolution and a certain timidity ; and it falls into certain errors which Count Sforza

would have avoided. Does, then, the revolution intend after all to persevere in the betrayal of the nation for which it threatened to hurl its predecessors over the Tarpeian rock when it first entered Rome? Nor does the "reconstruction" work of the revolution, about which there is so much discussion, seem greatly to surpass the achievements of preceding governments (whose difficulties were greater in certain respects) either in boldness or novelty or efficacy. In any case, before a final judgment becomes possible, it will be necessary to await the statements of revenue and expenditure: actual, not anticipated revenue, and actual expenditure, not that of the budget estimates. The country is a little more tranquil, and the public services are in slightly better order; this is incontestable. On the other hand, the representative régime seems to have become a farce. A just summing up would be that the new Government has made no great mistakes but also no great achievements; and it has mainly concentrated its attention on securing its continuance in power. In this last respect the Fascist revolution has not been behind so many others in diligence and ingenuity; for the rest, where the country's interests and not its own were involved it has done what it could; in other words, not much.

It has done little because, I say again, it could only do little. If all that a revolution needed in order to discover the "reconstructor" or restorer of the country were that it should be firmly in the saddle! But many other cries and pains will be necessary before the times give birth not to the

reconstructor but the reconstructors, for they will need to be legion! Many got it into their heads a year ago that Parliament was the great impediment; with Parliament once set aside, we should see wonders done. But the hands of the old Government were tied not by Parliament, but by warring interests who made use of Parliament to impose themselves on the Government. The new Government is learning this to its cost every day. For the very reason that it has gagged Parliament, it is to-day the prisoner of the middle classes and of high finance, which combined to help it to power and are necessary to it if it is to remain in power. High finance is the agent which secures to the Government the good offices of the press; a vital service, since this Government has banished the fear of Parliament only to tremble before public opinion to a degree that no other government has ever done. As for the middle class, its rank and file supply the "black shirts" of the Fascist National Militia. Both are indispensable, but they are frequently at issue with one another; for example, over the question of rents. The Government wanted to content the rich classes, who demand that rents shall be placed on the same basis for all alike, and are better justified in this claim than in that for fiscal immunities, which the Government has granted them. But the Government was compelled first to retrace its steps, then to hunt for intricate methods of conciliation, then to draw back from these in order to guarantee better the lodger's privileges; for on this point the middle classes are

intractable. They are ready to serve God and the country ; but they insist on a roof above their heads !

Difficulties of the same nature are likely to arise out of the Government's educational reform, which aims at cutting down precisely what the middle class most strongly insists on : abundant schools and an easily mounted educational ladder. Will the Government get its bill through ? We shall see. •

For the same reason, again, I doubt whether the public finances can hope for any striking innovations and relief from the new order of things, at least in the absence of a miracle. There has never yet been seen a revolution that managed its economy like a good housewife, careful in her accounts and determined to keep them crystal clear. Revolution and Dilapidation are sisters. The present one has, fortunately, been only a semi-revolution ; but with two armies to maintain and a host of faithful to content ; with a middle class, the main support of the militia, which must not be overloaded with taxation, and a wealthy class which helped it in order to be spared the necessity of making sacrifices—what else can it do but glean here and there in the budget one and another small saving, and try, once it feels sure of Parliament, some duty on articles of widespread consumption, a duty which will produce little in the already overburdened country ? This Government will live like its predecessors on borrowing ; and it will totter the day its credit totters.

Meanwhile it has made a gift of semi-immunity from taxation to floating capital, by abolishing the law on the inscription of securities ; and it has

liberated wealth from the death duties. In times of prosperity these measures might perhaps have been wise and useful ; but when the State is staggering under a deficit of several milliards of lire they are likely to be fatally rash, both for the State which initiated them and the social orders which profit by them.

• The bindweed of vested interests, which is suffocating the modern State, climbs just as boldly and tenaciously over revolutionary governments. A revolutionary government is always stronger than a legal one, because it has released itself from the observance of certain laws and traditions ; but it is always weaker through its lack of "legitimacy." This significant word, buried for half a century in the common grave of dead words, the dictionary, I disinterred myself at the end of 1918. At first people either failed to understand or merely smiled ; to-day the word is current coin. The main difficulty of the present Government is exactly the difficulty which I predicted, before the *coup d'état*, in the article of September 3, 1922, reproduced on page 82. Fascism carried through a *coup d'état* against Parliament, but did it, so to speak, in the void, without being able to secure the support of the Crown. I showed this in a long article published on June 13, 1923, called "The Old Story," and written as a comment on the speech made by Signor Mussolini to the Senate in the early days of that month. I reproduce here a few extracts from this article :

In the Prime Minister's recent speech it seems specially worth while to note a lacuna, plainly visible to

a trained eye, where he referred to the relations of the Ministry with the other powers in the State. Under every régime, of course, Ministries are responsible to a higher power which selects, appoints, and dismisses them: in absolute or constitutional Monarchies, the Sovereign; in many American republics, the President; in France and Great Britain, the Parliament. Where and what is this power, or should it be, in Italy according to the Prime Minister?

Not the Parliament. "Should the Government," he asked, "be in tow of Parliament? Should it be at the mercy of Parliament? No, no, no!"

The Crown, then? Apparently not. The Prime Minister referred to the prerogatives of the Crown, which are to be respected, but he referred to them only in vague terms, without expressly including among them the faculty of choosing and recalling Ministers, which would make the King of Italy a semi-absolute King.

Are, then, those observers right who are attributing to the head of the Government the idea of creating a plebiscitary democracy? Under this scheme the people would choose the head of the Government and he would be in control of public affairs over the head of the whole legislature, himself appointing and recalling Ministers. The Prime Minister would be an American President. But the King? What function would remain for him, other than the opening of exhibitions?

On this point the ideas expressed by the head of the Government are nebulous. Yet it is the vital point, on which all else depends. What is the explanation of this uncertainty? It is that we have here the greatest weakness of the Fascist "revolution."

Last autumn the Crown assumed the grave responsibility of cutting short the duel between the constitutional order and the Fascist revolution, assigning to the latter the palm of victory. It is clear that it does not wish to go further, since in the year of grace 1923,

in the presence of a Europe almost entirely republican, it could not risk the reconstitution of a semi-absolute monarchy by arrangement with a handful of ex-revolutionary Socialists. Neither, however, does the party dominant to-day want to recognize Parliament as the power from which the Ministry derives its authority. And since there are only these two principles of authority, the dynastic, represented by the Crown, and the democratic, represented by the elective bodies, to choose from, the Government remains suspended in mid-air, with no clearly defined authority, aware that it must depend on some other power but not clear what. If it fails to escape from this menacing dilemma, it will have to resort to force; to attempt to set up in Rome a military dictatorship, dispossessing and reducing to museum specimens the two constitutional sources of power in the past, the Monarchy and Parliament.

This defect in its vision of the course of events is, in my view, one of the principal weaknesses in Fascism. It reappears in the Prime Minister's speech in the passage referring to Parliaments. He says that trade unions and newspapers and the development of modern life "have lessened the enormous importance which used to be attributed to Parliaments." This is both true and untrue. It is entirely true that in the last half-century the forces directing modern society have greatly increased in number and variety; and that Parliaments, just as Monarchies, should govern in accord with these new directing forces and should take their wishes into consideration. But on the other hand, after the catastrophe which overtook the monarchical system in 1917 and 1918, the only principle of authority now remaining in Europe is the will of the people, of which the elective bodies are the organs. If the technical importance of Parliament has diminished, its political importance has increased immeasurably, Parliaments being the only fount of legitimacy that can now be relied on. To-day a Government has not the *right* to command except in

the measure in which it can say that it is doing what the people wills. The Prime Minister himself never misses an opportunity of repeating that the people, the whole people, is with him. But how can the will of the people find expression save through the medium of representative institutions? Any other medium is an imposture.

The great problem of the moment is this. We are in danger of losing our way, in a search for the bases of authority where it is vain to look for them. No age can discover them where it wants them to be; they must be sought where history has planted them. If we persist in this error, we shall fall in our turn headlong into the realm of pure force, of unending disorder and violence.

These pages may contain obscurities for many readers. But it is impossible to explain them to those who cannot understand them unassisted. For such readers, the explanation must be provided by the course of events, which will not be a slow one. Far from being moribund, democracy is hardly yet more than new-born in Europe; these years of unrest are its kindergarten, in which it will learn through the object lessons of experience the elementary notions which will be most necessary to it; it will learn, for instance, that legitimacy is the vital question for every régime. Even the present Government, especially when the period of plenary power is over, will have to emerge from its present uncertainties and either become one of those governments of pure force which openly defy legitimacy, or seriously legitimize itself in the only way open to a modern State, by regularizing its relations with Parliament, whether with the present or another Chamber. But both alternatives bristle with diffi-

culties. To change itself into a Government of pure force, the present Government would have to effect a revolution within the country, overturning the dynasty and with it the whole of the legal government which depends on it : a tall order, and an adventure of which I should like to hope that no-one is thinking. But neither will it be easy for this Government to secure legitimization through Parliament, even if the new elections perform the miracle which is hoped of them, of giving birth to a docile, docile Chamber ; because—a new trouble which for a year past has tormented us on top of all the rest—the *Parliamentary game has been falsified* since October. For a Parliament to be able to legitimize a Government, it must itself be legitimate ; and its legitimacy cannot be universally admitted unless in its election and in its deliberations certain principles, rules, and customs are respected, in which all parties and interests recognize the conditions and guarantees of its legitimacy.

On the whole these conditions were respected until a year ago ; it never occurred to any one to contest the right to rule even of Pier Soderini. But since 1920, and especially since last October, too many things have happened which furnish passion and interest not only with pretexts but with sound reasons for contesting the legitimacy of the next Chamber and its acts, and so robbing it of its quasi-sacred faculty of legitimization ! Who could venture to hope that passion and interest will not avail themselves of this ? Our victory in the war assured us, in common with our allies, the privilege, denied

to the vanquished nations, but precious to all, of ability to retain intact the Constitution of the State. We have jettisoned this privilege; we have destroyed the unquestioned legitimacy on which the existing régime depended. I should like to think I am wrong; but its restoration will be a longer and more difficult task than is imagined by the frivolous optimism of the satisfied classes and the weak class that likes to deceive itself.

The greatest difficulty will be the Fascist National Militia. The representative régime has no place for armed parties, still less for parties armed at the expense of the State. On October 18, 1922, on the eve of the march on Rome, I published an article, "The Grain of Dust," in which among other things I wrote:

A Parliamentary democracy with a small private army in its midst, at the disposition of one party, is an absurdity which cannot have a long life. . . . This small army is the grain of dust amid the springs and wheels of a watch, which stops it. That watch is the Constitution. So long as this small army dominates so large a part of the nation, the State will be a watch which will not go.

And at that time the "black shirts" were a small, illegal army, recruited, as Augustus would have said, *privato consilio et privata impensa*. To-day, when they are the militia of a faction and at the same time a part of the legal forces, maintained at the expense of the State, the difficulty is still greater. The grain of dust has become a small stone visible to the naked eye. The decree instituting the National Militia, if it did not abolish the Albertine constitution, suspended it. It will be no easy matter to restore it.

II

CONCLUSION

I AM not a party man ; and I have never had any ambition for power. I am too well acquainted with the falsities and vices of our contemporary liberty and democracy, ever to have desired to be a member of any legislative assembly. I have defended our historic constitution, although I know it to be decrepit and in the worst hands, because I believe that to-day in Europe a revolution is a waste of time, when it is not a jump to disaster. I hope nothing and fear nothing personally from the new Government ; like its predecessors, it can do me neither good nor evil. I have never hesitated to declare my opinion on political questions, because I consider that an historian and philosopher who in these times has nothing to say to his own country is either a comedian or a fool ; that for a man who is not entirely destitute of knowledge, who desires to give tangible evidence of his love of his country and who has no ulterior motive whatever, it would be wrong to be silent when all the indolent thinkers and retailers of fourth-hand platitudes are pontifically laying down the law in the market-places.

The public may rest satisfied that if I am not infallible I am at least disinterested. How many others can say as much ? And since I am no crier of pleasant illusions I close this little book by

repeating to my fellow-citizens that the country is in extreme peril. Do not heed the hireling mouth-pieces of an imbecile optimism! By our participation in the World War we honoured a bill which we had accepted in 1859, when we reintegrated the scattered members of our race, profiting by the discords which divided the dominant Powers. From then onwards we were enmeshed, whether we desired it or not, as participants in all their struggles, up to the last terrible general armed struggle; in which only the Powers which had stood apart since 1815, as lookers-on at the play of European rivalries, were able to declare themselves neutral. We won a great victory which at last, after so many centuries, has made of Italy a nation assured of her independence; but at the cost of what sacrifices! The fortune of the country, won by the sweat of the brows of three generations, is in ruin, and above it there totters the edifice of 1860, the Liberal State. At the moment when her geographical unity is completed, her moral unity has been wrecked by a furious explosion of hatred between classes, provinces, parties, interests, social groups. At times it seems as if the Middle Ages had been reborn, with factions within the municipalities, with exiles and proscriptions, with the streets and squares splashed with the citizens' blood, with a perennial oscillation between tyranny and anarchy. Peace, which is of such vital necessity to us, is endangered over half of the earth; the world is in process of comminution, with enclosures everywhere shut in by the barbed-wire-entanglements of the fiercest class and national

egoism. In order to repair her fortunes Europe ought to have liberty and peace: exchange, unrestricted and facilitated, parties and peoples reconciled, States and spirits disarmed. Who can fail to see it? Instead—after engaging half our fortune in the War, our country, thickly populated, neither naturally rich nor poor, is languishing under the oppression of the insensate exacerbated protectionism of our own and other States, and under the enforced maintenance not of one but two armies. How is she to support such burdens? At times we are asked whether Italy is destined—bitter fruit of such sacrifices!—to become a convict settlement in which thirty millions will labour beneath the whip to enrich three hundred thousand families! She is not, but it looks to-day as though she might be.

For all these dangers and perils, I confess that I myself know of no sure remedy. It is a confession, amid all these “reconstructors” who offer to guide us, shouting “Have no fear; *we* have come on the scene!” But what will you? Every one does what he can. I will content myself, therefore, by way of conclusion, with defining a few criteria, which have served me until now to determine my attitude amid the grave disturbances of recent years; in the hope that they may be of service also to those who do not desire to be at the mercy of the tempest and destitute even of a compass. May these few pages be so of assistance to those who are disinterestedly in search of the public good! For no other purpose has this little book been written.

(1) You will hear frequent discussion in coming

years of democracy, Parliament, universal suffrage ; authority ; and, more frequently and with greater vehemence, liberty. One first and urgent counsel is this : never confuse liberty with the decrepit, sceptical, undependable, timorous, opportunist Liberalism of the nineteenth century. Keep carefully in mind, if you do not want to be misled by frivolous and interested sophisms, that whatever may be the defects of democracy and of representative government, the only principle of authority universally recognized in Europe to-day is the will of the people ; that universal suffrage and representative institutions are not merely the more or less defective organs of a certain family of governments, but actually the sources of legitimacy from which those governments draw the *right* to command. How many questions which the interests love to obscure, become clear when considered from this point of vantage ! As for liberty, a Liberal government can be defined in no other way than as *one which recognizes the right of opposition*, and recognizes it, be it observed, not out of a morbid love of chimerical utopias or philosophic doctrines, as the market-place gramophones suggest, but as a necessity of State, of advantage no less to rulers than ruled. Liberty, understood as the right of opposition, is neither a doctrine nor a utopia nor a toothsome morsel thrown by magnanimous governments to the people when it is being good ; *it is a vital organ of the modern State*. Those who strike it down mortally wound the State. I showed this in an article published on April 18, 1923, entitled :

THE RIGHT OF OPPOSITION

Let us recall the past, since many have forgotten it.

The French Revolution ended in 1815 with the triumph of Monarchy. It had given it the formidable weapon of the right of conscription ; it had beaten down around it all the powers which had formerly restricted and stifled it—the privileges of the aristocracy and the clergy, the rights acquired by the bureaucracy, the corporations, the cities, the public administrations. In 1815 a score of dynasties were master of Europe, standing above the Church, the Aristocracy, and the Administration, which were all reduced to serving them as docile instruments for the government of the peoples : of the crowded herds collected under the rod of these few shepherds.

The triumph was immense ; but it was too great. One of the few profound thinkers who have appeared in European politics since the time of the French Revolution, Talleyrand, had advised the European monarchs in the Congress of Vienna to grant representative institutions to the peoples ; that is, the right of opposition. He had said that only by summoning the peoples to their aid would the crowned heads be able to cope with the responsibilities of government, which had grown enormously with the growth of power. And there and then, at Vienna, the wise advice was, to all appearance, accepted. At the Congress of Vienna, in direct contradiction of current legend, the greater number of the Powers were favourable to representative government.

For reasons which it would take too long to describe here, these Liberal tendencies of the Courts gave place, between 1815 and 1822, to their opposite. Among the continental Powers only France and a few minor States adopted representative institutions. In the rest of the States there was absolute government. But everywhere the peoples claimed, through the medium of an *élite*, the right of opposition : freedom of thought, freedom of the press and of association, representative government,

the convocation of Parliaments elected to express the will of the people. The revolution of 1848 was a great struggle for the conquest of this right ; a struggle sterile in appearance but in reality pregnant with consequence, for since 1848 absolutism has come to terms all over Europe and has made continual concessions to Liberalism, to democracy, to the principle of popular sovereignty, concessions of increasing importance as the century has grown older.

Why ? Through the seduction of false ideologies, as the modern philosophers of dictatorship, of nationalism, of imperialism would have it ? But the generations which lived in the second half of the nineteenth century were able to discriminate between the true and the false, the useful and the harmful, at least as well as the present generation. The reason lies deeper. The right of opposition, with its organ representative government, and the liberties which are its necessary instruments, overcame, during the second half of the nineteenth century, all political and philosophical adversaries because it proved capable of reconciling the apparently opposed interests of peoples and dynasties.

No longer protected by the weakness and imperfect mechanism of the old-time absolute monarchies, the peoples felt the right, and were determined to assure themselves the means, of making their own will prevail, in order not to be entirely at the mercy of the uncontrolled omnipotence of the State. The need for this grew after 1830 as, with the growth of industry and finance, the European States added to their armed power that of their financial resources.

But if opposition was a right of the peoples, it became a necessity, a vital necessity for governments, as the affairs and interests of the world grew in complication and immensity. The absolute dynasties found in the right of opposition conceded to the peoples a means of sharing with them the responsibilities of government, a protection from the tides of popular discontent, a

gymnasium for training a new political personnel, which might prove of service on occasion ; a second and not unimportant legitimization of their own power.

This explains why some dynasties—the Hohenzollerns and the house of Savoy, for example—at certain moments donned the Phrygian cap of republicanism. In times when no one any longer seriously believed that a king could be the anointed of the Lord and the delegate of the Almighty for the government of mortal men ; in times which were set on passing everything through the sieve of the carping malcontent Reason, absolutism was becoming an exceedingly dangerous encumbrance. Nicholas II and his family proved it in their own persons. The popular will was a convenient lightning conductor, a powerful *instrumentum regni*, a new chrism not without its virtues even for the oldest dynasties.

If these are the two prime interests which brought to triumph in Europe between 1848 and 1914 what is now depreciatingly called “ Liberalism ” in Italy, we know a sure method of determining whether this “ Liberalism ” is as obsolete and dead a thing as is claimed. All we need do is to ask ourselves whether these two interests—those of the people and the governments—no longer exist, or no longer coincide. The question is answered as soon as asked.

Is it possible to suppose that the peoples can to-day place such blind trust in their governments that they can dispense with the right of opposition ? Now when all is tottering, the law, the administration, Parliament, the Government, the public fortunes, and individual fortunes ?

Is there any sign in Italy or in any other country of Europe of an institution, a party, a man, that has given such proofs of wisdom and genius and goodwill as to be able to say, “ I am infallible, and I need accordingly neither discussions nor opposition : I alone will do everything, I alone will resolve every tangle, I alone will

cure every evil, will salve every wound" ? And if this man, this party or institution, does not exist, and if it is proposed not to recognize the liberties which are the basis of the right of opposition and of representative government, how is it proposed to govern the world ?

Do you want to know the simple truth ? Italy is suffering, not because Liberalism and democracy are obsolete and dead, but because they are hardly yet born and are in danger of dying in the cradle from an obscure infantile disorder.

We in Italy have never known a true and genuine representative system. The democracy which to-day is on its trial was a fraudulent imitation, which cloaked a personal dictatorship and the rule of a small clique, and never more so than under the long régime which has taken its name from Signor Giolitti. The people has never made use of its right of opposition, except in fits and starts, capriciously, without clearly knowing what it wanted.

This explains the scarcity of political personalities which afflicts us. One of the greatest advantages of the representative system is the preparation which it gives to a large governing personnel among the various parties. The Giolittian dictatorship, for the very reason that it was a falsification of the representative system, has left no successors ; hence we have been obliged to improvise them for two years past. But statesmen are not to be improvised. History will tell how the two first Parliaments which, however crudely, were vitalized by a confused and turbid popular will, travailing to express itself, the two in which the representative system was painfully beginning to develop into effective reality, were none other than those of 1919 and 1921. They were, for many reasons, two long scandals ; but primarily because they were the expression of a confused and turbid popular will at variance with itself.

But no political system ever matured without the travail of painful preparation. No one who is familiar

with the history of representative government will wonder at these scandals. If at the first difficulties and disillusionments we lose patience and smash the system of government to which we are looking for rescue, we shall live always in anarchy.

Remodel our doctrines and laws and constitutions as we may, we shall never find a way out of this dilemma. Either we may have a crude military dictatorship, submitting to what may be good enough to content a semi-barbaric empire like Russia ; or a government which will permit opposition as a *right* of the people and a *necessity* for itself. When you want to determine whether a political doctrine belongs to our times and to Western civilization, or is a philosophical fantasy coloured more or less by splashes of Orientalism, put to its advocate this question : Do you admit, yes or no, the right of opposition to the Government, and to what degree ?

Hic Rhodus, hic salta. All the political problems around which discussion is confusedly raging, are summed up to-day in this question.

(2) You will often hear maledictions of political parties, maledictions of the Socialist Party and violent maledictions of the Popular Party as a plague threatening the whole world. Every revolution, whether of palace or market-place, hastens to kill, if it can, its possible successors. My own views of these great political associations, which have been brought together and are at work within the community, I expressed on November 15, 1921. I reprint the article below : it was called :

UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE AND PARTIES

A century ago the great dynasties, victorious over Napoleon, found themselves with a whole continent to govern. Those were days when statesmen were still

aware that a government cannot rule without authority ; and that authority cannot exist without a guiding principle observed with a certain consistency and loyalty. The victors took as their guiding principle in the reconstruction of Europe the historic right of dynasties, against which the Revolution had so furiously waged war.

Many of these dynasties, however—the smaller ones—had lost their States in the great remodelling of sovereignties carried out by the Revolution and by Napoleon. After the lapse of so many years, many of these changes had become irrevocable. It was impossible to reinstate all the sovereigns who had been dispossessed by their former States ; but if they were not restored, would not injury be done to legitimist doctrine by the recognition so accorded to acts of revolutionary violence ?

For this difficulty the Congress of Vienna found an elegant solution. It recognized sovereignty as something indestructible and independent of the possession of a State ; it retained the titles and the rank of all the sovereigns to whom it was impossible to restore their State ; it created a dynastic reserve of princes "on tap," who enjoyed such distinctions and wealth in Germany and Austria until November, 1918 ; the States which it could not restore to their former lords it distributed among the few remaining dynasties, as compensation for the former legitimate realms which they could no longer recover ; of all the legitimate dynasties it made one large family, in which a small number of leading dynasties were virtually delegated to exercise sovereignty on behalf of the rest ; and it founded the new order of things on an agreement between these dynasties and on mutual respect for their historic and contractual rights. This was the Holy Alliance.

It was an organic conception ; and it endured for a century, though not without many shocks in a period

which was insatiably devouring the past. It required a world cataclysm to make the final breach in it. It is impossible to realize what is happening to-day without realizing that from 1815 to 1914 Europe was governed by Courts; and that during these hundred years the dynasties were the pillars of the social order all over Europe, except in Switzerland and, since 1870, in France. For a century war and peace, if not entirely dependent on them, were always connected by open or concealed threads with the agreement or disagreements of the dynasties, just as the broad lines of home government were influenced by the characters of the successive sovereigns.

Neither the Revolution of 1848 nor the wars which the houses of Savoy and Hohenzollern waged to form the Kingdom of Italy and the German Empire, nor the opening in the second half of the nineteenth century of so many Parliaments, nor the almost universal recognition of the popular right to control policy through elections, destroyed this powerful framework of the European system. The German Empire was scarcely founded when Bismarck endeavoured to close the temple of Janus, which had been reopened at the time of the Revolution of 1848, and to reconstitute in Europe the dynastic order and the dynastic peace of the Congress of Vienna. The Triple Alliance was the second edition of the Holy Alliance, a mutilated Holy Alliance without France and without Russia, reduced and adapted to the times. The Courts still governed Europe, even though they were only able to maintain peace at the cost of the growing burden of armaments, and though, in order to govern, they had to consult the Parliaments. Peoples and the Parliaments and parties representing them had only a restricted and inconsiderable function. In high quarters there were those who considered public affairs without even the knowledge of the peoples. The office of the Parliaments was reduced to superficial and indolent observation. Parties and Parliaments were less

the organs of the will of the people than the organs of the important interests.

Suddenly, between March, 1917, and November, 1918, this system which had governed Europe for a century collapsed. The peoples found themselves of age owing to the unexpected death of their guardians. Even the few remaining dynasties tottered in their isolation; universal suffrage was crowned sovereign *malgré lui*, at the very moment when it least expected it; and this time it will be unable to abdicate as in 1848.

Hence the necessity for parties, that is, for great organizations *held together not only by interests which from their nature are inconstant, but by bonds of principle endowed with a certain stability*. The guidance which for a century came from above has failed or been debilitated; in future direction must come from below, that is, from the electorate. But abandoned to itself the electorate loses its way, loses its cohesion, and gives place sooner or later to military dictatorship. Parties are necessary to-day, not only, as classical constitutional theory assumed, to play the British game in Parliaments, the rather quaint game of Ministry and Opposition, *but to support and guide the electorate*. Their power should compensate for the destruction or debilitation of the monarchical principle.

Now that the great machine of the Congress of Vienna has been destroyed, the peoples have no choice but to govern themselves; a harder task than submitting to government from above, but for the future an inevitable task.

The very act of creating and giving life to parties is part of the process of world reconstruction. There are many who regret the rapid progress of the Popular Party. In reality it should be a matter for congratulation that there appeared at once in the midst of this chaos a party which was able to canalize part of the revolutionary alluvium which threatened us! But for the Popular Party, universal suffrage might have been responsible in

1919 for some irreparable folly, and the governing classes might in that year have thrown themselves precipitately into the arms of revolutionary Fascism. I do not know what destiny awaits the *fasci*, but I am sure that if they succeed in founding a party with any serious and coherent basis they will have rendered to the country a greater service than through their punitive expeditions.

I will add that while it might be more convenient to have the parties reduced to two, alternatively in power, no country can any longer count on this happy simplification. There are too many people in the world, there is too much diversity and confusion of passions, ideas, and interests. Every country will be split up into at least three or four great parties; some even more. The national vigour of a people, its civic maturity, will be shown by its capacity to reconcile this variety of parties with the necessary unity in action; not, however, by an official, coerced, rather ridiculous unanimity in electorate and press and Parliament, such as that which arouses the complacency of the party dominant to-day in Italy, as the outward and visible sign of its power. It was possible for official unanimity to be a sincere condition, and so a tower of strength, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; to-day it is a mere artificiality, a plaster patch on a tower that is crumbling; the first shocks will reduce it to dust.

And finally I should just add, in regard to the Socialist and Popular Parties, that they are the only parties which have a basis of doctrine which explains the world war, its emergence and its destructive-

ness. The doctrine of the Socialists is simple, superficial, inadequate, and contains no more than a glimmer of truth ; a glimmer it does contain. The doctrine of the Catholics is more profound, complex, and adequate, for all that it stops half-way ; since if it rightly attributes what has happened to the prevalence of certain sentiments and ideas, it does not go on to explain the essential question, How these sentiments and ideas came to have such strength in the past centuries. In any case, both these parties have a doctrine concerning the ills of the world and the remedies needed ; an inestimable advantage over the Liberal Party and Fascism, which have none !

(3) Place no trust in dictatorship : it is an empty phrase. The race of dictators is as extinct as the ichthyosauri.

What is dictatorship ? An arm, not a head ; an organ of action, not mind and thought. It is not set up to discover ideas as yet unborn or to clarify ideas as yet inchoate, but to put into execution plans already mature. When a man or a group has a definite plan and is unable to carry it out because the constitution stands in the way, this man or group, once in possession of power, can carry out the plan dictatorially. On a few rare occasions, at certain turning-points in history, it has been done. But if there is no plan, what is the use of dictatorship ? It is an effort to operate *in vacuo* ; and sooner or later it falls into the same errors as a legal government.

The evil from which all the States of Europe are

suffering is just this: that none of them knows exactly what it wants. Every party, every class, every political school and institution and State, I might almost say every sentient being, save for a very few persons, is prey to a mass of conflicting doctrines and aspirations and interests. What do we want? It is a mystery which we cannot even reveal to ourselves, for we are always wanting the opposite of what we want. We want peace and war, power and justice, tyranny and liberty, parsimony and squandering, solvency and debt, security and adventure. No epoch was ever more greatly at issue with itself.

Our times are incensed against parliamentary régimes and democracy, which are being blamed for the weakness of governments. But these weaknesses arise from the confusions and contradictions of the modern spirit, not from the defects of this or the other form of government. Until we ourselves know clearly what we want, all governments, of whatever form or colour, will be weak and vacillating.

Under present conditions the dream of dictatorship is a romantic masquerade of disheartenment. Many are anxious for a dictator because they hope that he will know what all are ignorant of, will find what all have sought in vain: the remedy for the ills of the world. The dictator, Red or White, of whom men dream would need to be a miracle-worker. And miracle-workers do not exist.

(4) Place no trust either in the axe or the *fascēs*, or the other *instrumenta regni* related to them,

such as the gallows. The modern State has not too little but too much power, too many arms, too much money ; that is why it is so dangerous to itself and to the rest. What it is short of is intelligence, wisdom, justice, rectitude, dignity, moderation, modesty ; and, because of that, authority. The more it abounds in arms and money, the worse use it will make of them. When people tell you that they want to see the State strong, answer that you want to see it intelligent, wise, just, and authoritative.

(5) Place no trust in revolution, nor in the miraculous transfigurations which it promises.

The chroniclers of the nineteenth century magnify a revolution which in a few decades changed the face of the world, and they are not mistaken. Between 1789 and 1848 Europe resolutely destroyed a solid crust of institutions and traditions, in order to liberate the latent energies which were in ferment beneath it. Destruction was the task of the times ; and revolution was the servant it needed. But now that between one revolution and the next, between one war and the next, all has been destroyed ; now that the State no longer exists, nor the family, nor morals, nor laws, nor aesthetics ; now that if we only knew how, we should in very truth start " reconstruction," what would be the use of revolution ? None of the revolutions which have happened since 1914, in Russia, Germany, the Austrian Empire, and so on, and none that can happen in the future, have been or can be like the French revolution, explosions of over-compressed creative force ; they have been only a sinking into the abyss of decrepitude

States, gradually undermined by invisible subterranean currents and for a long time unwittingly suspended above caverns and gulfs. I have been saying so since 1919, and have not simply changed my views because of the Fascist revolution. The best quality of this in my view is that it is only half a revolution. If it had been a whole one, poor we!

The nineteenth century died in 1914. To-day revolution can only destroy, not create. It can no longer serve, therefore, as an instrument of government, a reinforcement of authority; as the nail on which sovereigns and demagogues may hang up first the portrait of Karl Marx and next the Collar of the Annunziata. It is not a mere chance that the present reaction is directed by one who was once the hottest of Bolsheviks. The new generations must learn to appreciate and intelligently to preserve the remnants of the old world, which have now become of great value; since if the world is not rebuilt on the old model, it will be rebuilt by working in and adapting to the times certain old materials—doctrines, principles, and beliefs. The futurism of the nineteenth century will have after all to retrace its steps a little, and see whether in the long experience of the human race, which it has been despising and relegating to the attic reserved for old rubbish, there may not be some remedy for these present evils which are defying all its wisdom.

(6) To those who single-mindedly sacrificed themselves in the war, pay the deserved tribute of your homage and admiration and gratitude; but do not deceive yourselves with the illusion that it is possible

to build up on the memory of the war the edifice of the new times. The world war was the earthquake which dismantled a social order already a century out of date ; it is impossible to build upon a heap of ruins. Europe, and with her Italy, will spiritually be born again all the sooner into the new life, if as she advances towards the future she throws from her shoulders the passions and the illusions of the war.

(7) Struggle against disheartenment, and in particular that agitated form of it which is impatience, by repeating seven times a day that the ills from which the world is suffering can only slowly be cured, and that all the doctors who are in a hurry are ignoramuses or quacks. I know that patience is difficult, because the vices of the times are horri-fying. But they are the last results of a slow deterioration, which for the modern quantitative civilization is the very principle of its existence. In 1914, seven months before the great crash came, I wrote of Italy, and with a few slight changes I could say again of Europe and America :

For fifty years the history of Italy has virtually been dominated by a law of degradation of standards or, if you prefer it, vulgarization of ideals ; a degradation and vulgarization which, in government as in culture and in industry, have brought forward facile and short-sighted ideals in substitution for distant and difficult ones. We have enlarged the basis of the State until we have achieved universal suffrage. We have increased the total wealth, and increased it greatly, bearing in mind the original poverty of our soil. We have spread education among the middle and poorer classes. But all the standards of perfection towards which Italy

turned her eyes and on which she bent her mind in the past, have been lost to view or confused—from humanism, the last sparks of which were barbarously quenched in the universities, to the traditions of our most ancient and glorious arts. Under the name of liberty there has prevailed an intellectual anarchy, through which, with the decay of its standards and the weakening, if not the destruction, of all the spiritual authorities which held sway over it, the nation has lost the clear notion of excellence in every intellectual activity; and now, too lightly following ephemeral fashions, and deceived by charlatans who have gained credit through palming off on it sophisticated imported philosophies, it has lost the courage and the endurance for great achievements; it has contented itself, in art and science, in industry, in law, with cheap and scrappy mediocrity, lyrics and short stories in literature, monographs in science, expedients in politics—for all that they do not satisfy it, for all that in its heart it aspires to the sublime and grand and noble; only it no longer knows by what precise standard to recognize it and with what prize to crown it¹.

Each fresh violent shock, yesterday the war, to-morrow a *coup d'état* or a real revolution, can do no more than hasten this deterioration, never retard it. To retard and reverse it, the defiled and time-worn intellectual standards must be cleaned and restored and brought up to date; the prestige of the authorities which guarded them and taught veneration of them must be renewed; generations must be accustomed to the effort necessary for their imitation; a heavy and very tedious task, which will be acquitted only in the measure in which time brings the capacity for distinguishing true from false authorities. How many generations that will

¹ *La Vecchia Europa e la Nuova* (Milan, 1918); pp. 193-4.

call for ! Meanwhile we must work tenaciously, and suffer patiently if we do not desire to see everything hurled into chaos : even those things which we should risk our lives to save !

(8) Remember always, because it is the keystone of our whole history since 1860, that Italy has never been governed by herself through the democratic institutions granted on the achievement of unity, that since 1860 she has always been governed by small invisible or nearly invisible oligarchies, partly because she willed it so, but still more because *she has been unable* to summon the strength necessary to set the democratic institutions going. Self-government, full or partial, is a labour for a people, a burden and an expense which oligarchical governments spare it. Since 1860 Italy has been compelled to refashion her industry, her agriculture, her trade, her schools, her culture and habits and traditions, the essence and the environment of her family and public life ; she has been condemned to forced labour to maintain a great State and educate a pullulating population ; and she has left the burden of her government on the shoulders of past and present authorities which have succeeded in working the State and the Constitution without demanding any trouble or sacrifice from her beyond the payment of taxes. Be not deceived : beneath this resounding clamour of arms and oratory in Italy to-day, the experts easily detect the effort to set up a fresh parliamentary dictatorship, under which a small minority will relieve the country of the burden of self-government. In the Parliaments of 1919 and

1921 service was being rendered to some false doctrines, and some evil passions now almost extinguished; but in those Parliaments there showed itself for the first time, if only confusedly, a response to the desire of the people to govern itself. And it is possible to believe that if a new parliamentary dictatorship were to succeed in setting itself up the country would gladly submit to it. But could it succeed? That is the great question. I do not believe it could, for the times have changed too greatly. Consequently, the country has simply no choice but to learn to govern itself a little if it does not want to fall under the domination of an illegitimate government of pure force. It will not be the richer for its self-government, it will only have a new duty and a new burden. But suppose this is the only price at which the country can be safe?

(9) Remember always that democracies excite hatred between rich and poor, between high and low, and that this hatred is a constant weakness and danger to them, sometimes even their ruin: a danger yet graver to-day, when the world is living solely on hate, on class hatred, party hatred, religious hatred, international and inter-racial hatred.

(10) Finally, never forget that to-day no government is legitimate—indeed, no government is anything more than tyranny and violence—except by virtue of the representative principle; but no State can be securely based on the representative principle if political differences are leading through active violence, or simply through furious hatreds, to a war of extermination. With the legionaries

let loose against it, even the Senate of Rome, the Senate of Scipio, of Caius Gracchus, of Marius, of Sulla, of Caesar, of Cicero, of Augustus, Agrippa, Tiberius, Vespasian, Trajan, drooped like a scarecrow. What claim could a modern Parliament enforce? If Italy is not to wear herself out in long and exceedingly cruel civil wars, she must learn to restrain her discordant factions sufficiently to secure respect and loyalty to the rather artificial rules of the constitutional game on which representative government depends; a game of which the least falsification means the end of legitimate government. Watch, then, lest there flame up once more the ashes of the civil turbulence of the middle ages and the religious struggles of the nineteenth century! Do not forget that the revolutionary delirium of the Socialists is not the only thing which can precipitate us into our present evils; the first reawakening of the old jealousies and conflicts between Emperor and Pope can work fully as much woe. Let the Catholics think well on this, let the Liberals and the free-thinkers, the Socialists and the Fascists; and let them look well to discern their duty, knowing the peril and desiring before all things not deliberately to plunge their country into it.

POSTSCRIPT

THE ELECTION OF APRIL, 1924

I

IN the general election which has just taken place the *coup d'état* of 1922 has had its legal consummation. We have in Rome the latest successor not of Caesar or Trajan, but of Giovanni Giolitti, Francesco Crispi, and Agostino Depretis. As in the times of Giolitti and Crispi and Depretis, Parliament is once more the creature and instrument of the head of the Government, who instead of obeying it commands it and instead of being its chief servant is its master.

To this return to the past were we led on April 6, 1924, by the Fascist revolution (perhaps it is more exact to say *coup d'état*). After nine years in the wilderness, after long wanderings through the thicket of riots and strikes and civil war, we have returned to the system of personal government under which, as I have shown in the preceding chapters, Italy lived until 1915. To any one at all familiar with the history of contemporary Italy, the new master is an old acquaintance, easily recognized even in the fez and black shirt which are fashionable to-day. He is the man who has achieved once more what Giolitti and Depretis very successfully achieved before him, and Crispi half achieved; he is the man who, having by hook or by crook secured power,

has made use of it to create a personal party, and therewith to make himself master of the cardinal organ of legal government, Parliament.

History constantly repeats herself, but always with a difference. Into every repetition she introduces a few little variations, which are the essence of the change of its character from its predecessor's ; it is these little variations which turn the replica of a thorough success into a failure, or vice versa. What are the variations in the present instance, and what may one hope or fear from them ? Let us see if we can answer this question.

II

In all elections the Government endeavours to delude the sovereign people and to force its hand a little, with flatteries and promises and a little intimidation. It is an abuse which the corrupt standards of our day allow in a certain measure ; enough, namely, to round off the Government majority without invalidating the legitimacy of the elected Parliament. The intrigues and violence, which imposed on an unwilling people a manifestly illegitimate Parliament, with a dishonestly achieved majority, would recoil sooner or later on the heads of the Government or party responsible for them.

The three dictators who preceded the present one were none too like the Cato of Cicero's description, the cleanser of Rome and Platonic philosopher-king. But for all their employment and abuse of the art of administrative pressure on the electorate (especially

in Southern Italy), they knew how to keep within the limits of a legitimacy which on the whole it was impossible seriously to challenge. To cite a single example, many would have been glad if Signor Giolitti could never have been charged with "making the elections" in Southern Italy by means of corruption and violence; but his worst enemies have not dreamed of suggesting that if in 1909 or 1913 the Minister of the Interior had gone to sleep during the weeks of the election contest the country would have sent to Montecitorio a Socialist or Nationalist or Sonninian majority.

The tale is different this time. Every one knows how the elections were "made." First there was extorted from the last Parliament, by dint of open threats of violence, an electoral law which gave a statutory basis to the absolute predominance of the strongest minority, making it a sovereign power of the type made familiar by the Soviet Republic. When the election campaign began under this law, the head of the Government publicly indicated the Deputies of the future majority, and the Opposition parties were gagged and bound throughout Italy, from the Alps to Cape Passaro. None but the Government party could speak or move, print manifestos, hold public meetings, make use of the posts and telegraphs, or show itself to the sovereign people. In some places, and even in one or two of the large cities (as Genoa), attempts were made to prevent the Opposition from carrying out the necessary preliminary formalities; there were actually instances of the offices of the returning officers being

invaded. The beatings, expulsions, threats, kidnappings of Opposition candidates and of their friends and supporters, were beyond counting. One candidate (a Maximalist Socialist) was killed, at Reggio Emilia.

Not only was Opposition campaigning suppressed everywhere, but the polling was not free either of constraint or danger except in a few of the principal cities in Northern Italy. In the country districts, the large boroughs, the smaller towns, the secrecy of the ballot was infringed in a hundred ways; the timid and ignorant elector, left to look after himself, defenceless, protected only by a law that was impotent—such was the general condition—was tricked, bluffed, deluded, and terrorized by every form of direct and indirect pressure. The instances of the miraculous resurrection of the dead to vote, and of the miraculous presence of voters who could be proved to have been in America at the time, were innumerable. In numberless places in and around Naples and further south (and in not a few in Central and Northern Italy), the voter was simply deprived of his right to vote, the election officials taking possession of his ballot paper and using it for him. There is daily increasing ground for the suspicion that in many places, where intimidation was impossible or had proved insufficiently effective, the results were corrected. Quite horrible things were done in Southern Italy, where even authorities less ravenous than the rest for majorities at any price were guilty of malpractices.

And yet, in spite of all this, out of less than seven

million electors who voted well or ill, two and a half millions, without counting spoilt votes, disdainfully turned their backs on the dominant party. In 1913, at the first consultation of the electorate under universal suffrage, under the mild governmental pressure of which Signor Giolitti was a master, out of the five millions of the electorate which formed the sovereign people one million voted for the Opposition, represented almost solely by the Socialist Party. And this was an Opposition of phrase-making rather than one of heart, for at that time the revolutionary rhetoric of Socialism meant no more to the masses than one of the various Sunday amusements. In vain, in those years, did the ardent Mussolini strain at the bellows of this rhetoric to kindle a real revolutionary fire in the masses. The Socialist trade unions and co-operatives and political clubs were the matrices of a petty bourgeoisie of contractors, employees, professional men, and civil servants, who, in the midst of their threats to overturn the tables at the feast of Belshazzar at which the bourgeoisie were revelling, were only too pleased to take their places at the modest table which Signor Giolitti prepared for them in a room adjoining the hall of those scandalous revels, and to wait there for the attendants to serve them with the scraps from the principal table.

The Giolittian dictatorship was thus maintained by the consent, albeit a little grudging and anything but disinterested, of the nation. Even without the pandering, the occasional undue pressure, and the hypocritical wriggings of official intrigue, the

results of the elections would have been much the same. Good or bad, the nation accepted this Government, if only by a process of exclusion rather than by positive approval; no better Government was to be had, and there was something to be got out of this one. So true is this, that even at that time Mussolini was beginning to preach the divine right of fists and of the minorities that knew how to use them.

The new dictatorship, on the other hand, is opposed by a minority so numerous, so resolute, and so confident, that it may be tempted to regard itself as the true and legitimate majority of the country. Every one of those two and a half millions of Noes is a deliberate and determined act of resistance on the part of the rightful sovereigns of the nation to the claim of the fist to rule; and together they form a silent, impersonal, formidable force which can mutely challenge the four millions odd of Ayes: "Who are you? Where have you sprung from? What do you stand for beyond the blind force of numbers? If the ballot boxes had spoken with sincerity, it is we who should have been the lawful majority."

III

The three earlier dictators were selected; freely, after mature examination, from among expert, proved, faithful persons. This time——. The contrast is so manifest that there is no need to spend time in pointing it: all who have eyes can see it.

IV

Giolitti, Crispi, and Depretis were able to dominate Parliament, and through Parliament the country, because they rested on the solid support of a dynasty, itself firmly based on the rock of Central European monarchism ; of an Administration endowed with a certain measure of cohesion and vigour ; of authority so unquestioned that all the revolutionary doctrines of the century were no more able to shake it than a fluttering swarm of butterflies can shake an oak ; of a public feeling which scepticism, good sense, and a certain bourgeois limitedness of outlook, if not any higher sense of proportion, still kept balanced and stable ; of a Europe of dolomitic solidity, in which the might of the German Empire buttressed the social order of the Kingdom from without. In Italy, as throughout Europe, the adventurous spirit and imagination, defined in the elegant philosophic language of the period as "voluntarism," were doubly chained up ; a great advantage for the personal Governments of those times, which had no need to fear revolutions from within and were not forced to engage in perilous adventures abroad. Giolitti and Depretis (especially the former) had the great advantage of a period of national prosperity ; Crispi suffered greatly from the financial adversities of the State and the private citizen between 1888 and 1900, as well as from the relics of revolutionary "voluntarism" which had been transmuted in him into an ambition for war and conquest.

The situation is now entirely changed. All Europe is in varying degrees of ruin through an

earthquake whose shocks have not yet ceased. Many age-old edifices have fallen, others still standing have yawning gaps in their walls; and how long will the convulsions last? No one can say. Perhaps for years, perhaps only for a few more hours. A fresh shock might come to-morrow and leave the most solid of our existing structures a heap of ruins.

We have suffered enormous injury from the earthquake. Nothing is left that is sound and strong and dependable, that rests firmly on solid foundations—neither the dynasty nor the political institutions, nor the administration, nor the forms of law, nor the State treasury, nor private fortunes, nor the currency, nor public opinion, nor culture. Everything is deliquescent, shifting, unstable; everything is fluctuating on the vague confines of the real and the illusory.

It is the absence of all resistance amid this universal instability that made it so easy for the new dictatorship to establish itself. But only where there is resistance can there be potential support. The new dictatorship met with no resistance, but it has found no serious support outside its own militia. This is the whole secret of the new Government; of its accesses of terror, more violent after each succeeding triumph; of the outbreaks of violence to which it abandons itself when good sense should warn it that they are unnecessary; of its continual alternations between the appeal to consent and the appeal to force. It is a Government in the void; around it there is neither resistance nor support.

V

What will happen can in some degree be foreseen.

All personal Governments are weak; and their weakness is the greater in proportion as their legitimacy is the more doubtful and open to challenge. The Governments of Giolitti, Crispi, and Depretis were weak; the dictatorship of Mussolini will be exceedingly weak. Like all dictators, Mussolini in his turn will be bound and gagged and betrayed by his own people: by his most faithful friends, by his most ardent admirers, by his Ministers and officials. There will begin—there has begun already—between him and those who should be the executors of his will, the customary play between all dictators and their servants: all responsibilities will be thrown on the dictator's shoulders, while all effective power will subtly slip out of his hands and into those of his underlings. The leader will have to think of everything, to watch everything, to decide every question the moment it becomes thorny and difficult and a responsibility; but he will have no means of compelling his executive instruments to obey his will and command. The moment the dictator's attention is distracted from them by some new question, his responsible assistants—friends, admirers, Ministers, officials—will do what seems best to them, not what they were commanded. To be responsible for everything and at the same time impotent—this, in the modern bureaucratic State, is the punishment of the men who dream of dictatorship. The last of them will suffer the fate of those who have preceded him.

And he will be chained to power in a degree in which his predecessors were not. Mussolini might say of his dictatorship what Tiberius said of the Empire offered him: *Lupum se auribus tenere*, he would hold the wolf by the ears. Giolitti (and it was the proof that, weak as it was, his dictatorship was stronger than that of Crispi or Depretis) was able twice to abandon power in order to rest, and to resume it *ad nutum*, at a nod, without any difficulty. The third time the game was not a success, for the caretaker left in the house took possession of it and shut the door in his face; meanwhile, however, the world war had broken out. The new dictator will be unable to demand a moment's rest and remission. He is holding the wolf by the ears; if he lets it go for a single moment it will turn on him and rend him asunder.

Weak intrinsically and through the overwhelming difficulties of the times, destitute of reliable support, surrounded by ruins which threaten to crumble and bury it, this dictatorship is trying to maintain itself by promising much more than ever its predecessors promised, although they were stronger. It has even promised to satisfy the old ambition which has allowed Italy no rest since 1830: the ambition for territorial aggrandizement and for an increase of power which may give her a real share in the rapacious supremacy of Europe over the other continents. The victory of Vittorio Veneto lent a great deal of weight to these promises by seeming to justify them to the popular sense of logic: "What is the use of winning a war if there is not a good

booty at the end of it ? ” is a very general attitude in Italy as elsewhere.

Unfortunately the popular sense of logic has insufficient historical premises to work on : history is not always so easy that he who runs may read.

The world war was not simply useless carnage, as many aver ; it has secured immense results, but all of them negative, for it was a great war of liquidation. “ The victors will fall in mortal agony upon the corpses of the vanquished,” I predicted as long ago as 1916. In the world war there flew in pieces the monstrous sword with which Europe had for a century intimidated and levied tribute on half the world. If the survivors of the war want to commit suicide by nailing to their flesh some of the fragments of that sword, there is nothing to prevent them from doing so ; but the craftsman who will weld the fragments together does not exist and never will.

Nineteenth century European militarism lies prostrate, destroyed for ever. That monster, vomited to earth by a revolution, and fed on human flesh, and steel and gold, and rhetoric, by dynasties and Parliaments, poets and ironmasters, philosophers and journalists, had become the terror of the universe. But it has exploded—after an attack of indigestion due to devouring alive the most splendid and powerful civilization in all history. It is dead and will never come to life again ; and posterity will date from the world war the end of the great European world adventure which began in the fifteenth century—with exploration, the opening up of continents, the revolt of Islam, the dismem-

burment of great empires — and the slow, but salutary return of Europe to her old self. Where can be the calendar which this dictatorship is consulting, when it chooses this of all moments to promise Italy an empire ?

It is the weakest of dictatorships, and overwhelmed by tasks beyond its strength ; a dictatorship weaker than its predecessors, faced with heavier tasks : this is the variation introduced in our time by History as she repeats herself. That is why I believe that those will be deceived who are expecting to find in the new master the old one over again : the able, smiling, courteous, ingratiating, good-humoured corrupter, who satisfied and disappointed every one, and, by dint of creating a Government which was a compromise between Socialism and Nationalism, stood above the void as firmly as on a granite pedestal.

For the very reason that he has no clear and legitimate credentials ; that he secured power by force, and by the ferocious persecution of his adversaries ; that, rightly or wrongly, he is violently opposed and hated by great multitudes who are inaccessible to the flatteries and blandishments of leaders ; that he has no firm and solid support either in sound national finances or in a strong bureaucracy or in legality, no firm support either in parties or doctrines or alliances ; it is to be feared that *volens nolens* the new dictator will be compelled to rely on the extremists among his followers. A Centre Government such as Giolitti's seems impossible to-day. A dictator is a man who always does the

opposite of what he intends. The times seem ripe for a second Crispi rather than a second Giolitti. What, if this prevision is not mistaken, we have to expect both in home and foreign affairs is easily imagined.

VI

• Ere long the future will unfold its cloak and reveal to us the gifts which it has in its lap for the justification of some of us and the confounding of others. Pending that moment, let us draw our own conclusions.

The large landowners, the great industrialists, the bankers, the subversive Conservatives, the heretical Liberals, the malcontents among the bureaucracy and the cultured and middle classes, have lost their way. Imagining that they were achieving a great revolution, they have merely brought Italy, after a wide circuit, back to the pre-war type of government. They have turned back just when a resolute step forward should have been made towards the régime of the future.

Peoples and Governments are failing to realize what is happening, parties and dictators, journalists and philosophers, are at a loss, statesmen and financiers are imagining a vain thing, because they have all remained on the farther bank. I mean that they have not yet brought themselves to cross the abyss which opened in the history of Europe after 1914. The Socialists are still reading Marx, the Republicans Mazzini, the Liberals Cavour, John Stuart Mill, and the Constitution of Charles Albert ; Signor Giolitti is

re-reading the speeches of his youth, Signor Mussolini the works of Georges Sorel, to whom he paid homage before the Senate as his first teacher, and of Alfredo Oriani, of whom he recently pronounced a eulogy before all Italy. They are estimable authors, all of them, sometimes delightful and always instructive to read. But all of them lived and wrote before 1917; and consequently they were unable to take into consideration an unexpected and awkward development which occurred in the twenty months from April, 1917, to November, 1918; namely, the collapse of the framework of Europe—the monarchical system—through the fall of the Romanoffs, the Hohenzollerns, the Habsburgs, and the minor German dynasties; or to appreciate the fact that with the fall of the monarchical system there fell, or are reeling, all the political forms intermediate between divine right and popular sovereignty—constitutionalism, chancellorship, parliamentary dictatorship, and so on; that Europe to-day no longer has any choice except between a régime of force and true democratic government, the government of the people by itself through universal suffrage and the organization of parties.

When will Europe, when will Italy open her eyes and realize this situation, simple and clear as a mathematical theorem? With the monarchical system, the bulwark of the mixed systems, either fallen or in a precarious situation, the only principle of authority which subsists to-day is the will of the people, and the only valid title to power is delegation by the people. Either, then, this delegation will

be a sufficiently serious reality to be generally recognized as valid and legitimate; or it will be an imposture, and in that case, failing any other principle of legitimacy, there will no longer remain anything but force—as in Russia—force with all its horrors and all its weakness. The peoples which will not or cannot govern themselves, by means of a representative system which is not a farce, may get some idea of the fate in store for them from a perusal of the history of the republics of Southern and Central America in the fifty years which followed the fall of the Spanish dominion; a half-century in which the Governments were no longer supported either by the authority of the old monarchy, which had fallen, or of the new republican principle, which had not yet obtained recognition.

For many peoples, including our own, the test will be of the harshest. It will be a different matter to hanging out flags every day! In this test we are staking not only the fruits of victory but all that we have achieved and won since 1815. That self-government is a laborious task for a people, and one full of dangers, is true. That it is much more comfortable to be ruled by an upright, wise, and legitimate Government, existing, working, and enduring by its own strength, who can doubt? But from now onwards upright, wise, and legitimate Governments, ruling by their own strength, no longer exist; and it would be in vain to try to perpetuate the illusion of their existence by dressing up the first people who come along in a few old swallow-tailed

coats and cocked hats of the Napoleonic epoch, picked up as historic souvenirs in the second-hand dealers' shops.

For a century the peoples have been proclaiming their majority and their intention to be their own masters ; and history has now taken them at their word. As the French Revolution imposed on us the burden of armaments, and the industrial revolution made us work with new instruments and by new methods, so the world war is compelling us to learn to govern ourselves a little more. It is not a gift but a task ; but only by fulfilling it shall we be able to escape from a long and violent period of anarchy, which will leave us helpless in the face of the peoples that show themselves capable of self-government. Whoever comes between us and this task, though he promise us empire over the world, is making us lose precious time.

THE END