

THE WORKERS' DREADNOUGHT

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ITALY and the REVOLUTION.

"Italy is already in a state of Revolution," said a Hungarian comrade who took an active part in the revolutionary agitation which preceded the creation of the Hungarian Soviets.

"Italy is to-day what Hungary was last year. The same revolutionary types are emerging. There is the same high cost of living, the same scarcity of necessities, the same unemployment, the same disorganisation in every department, both civil and military."

The struggle for Fiume, he declared, will hasten the military disorganisation; soldiers who wish to desert will go to Fiume or, more often, allow it to be thought that they have gone there. The excuse will be acceptable to the officers, who approve the annexation. D'Annunzio has set with impunity an example of insubordination which others will follow. The Army and the Government have taken opposite sides upon the Fiume question; therefore a wedge has been driven between the Government and its military forces, which may lead to a wide gulf. The nationalist spirit of Italy has been aroused, and that spirit will eventually break loose from restraints and dash onward to the formation of a nationalist Republic. Thus will come the bourgeois revolution. After that Italy, suffering under the blockade which the other Allied nations will apply by way of punishment, will pass on to the rising of the masses, the dictatorship of the proletariat, the Soviets, and Communism.

Fiume is coveted by Italian capitalists, because the possession of this port would facilitate Italian trade with Central Europe and the provision for Italy of coal, oil and other needed raw material. Italian Imperialism probably thinks also that an Italian Fiume may be the jumping-off place for future conquests. Italians believe that British Imperialists are opposed to the Italian possession of Fiume, because Britain could secure more control over the port and the territory behind it if it were held by a weak newly-created Slav nation than by Italy.

Therefore Italian nationalism, stimulated by the press, flares up on the Fiume question. Even some of the Italian private soldiers are asking: "Of what use is the League of Nations when it allows Britain and France to make great gains by the war and refuses this to Italy?"

On the other hand, Socialist comrades speak also of other tendencies. Italy was but recently a nation; there is a movement in her component parts to break away under the debts and scarcity which are the harvest of the war. Should any part of the old kingdom break away, it would repudiate its share of the war debts of United Italy; that is an inducement to disunity. Should one of the old kingdoms break away, it would call itself a republic and make a pretence of setting up a democracy; that is a necessary pretence of the present day. But there is no half-way house to democracy in times of scarcity; it is either share and share alike, or the rich seize the major portion whilst the poor die of want

In face of famine and danger there are only two alternatives—the Soviets or the dictatorship of the rich.

Whilst in Italy the capitalist State is struggling with the overpowering difficulties created by the war, the movement of the proletariat is growing apace in numbers, in strength, in coherence, and in strength and definition of purpose.

THE WORKERS' MOVEMENT IN TURIN. THE SOCIALIST PARTY.

In the city of Turin the Socialist Party has 1,000 members, of whom about 50 only are women. The members' subscription varies according to the occupation of the member; students and manual workers pay 70 centesimi* per month, professional men pay 5 lire a month. Every member must belong also to the national Socialist Party, for which the subscription is 2 lire a year. Those who desire to join the party must sign its programme, and no one is received as a member who has belonged to any capitalist political party within a year at least. Members of the Socialist Party must belong to a Trade Union if there is one which they are eligible to join.

SOCIALIST CLUBS.

In addition to the Socialist Party of Turin, there are 25 Socialist Clubs which together have a membership of 5,000. Every member of the Party must belong to a Socialist Club, but members of the Clubs need not join the Party. The Clubs are in fact recruiting and training centres for the Party. Each Club has its own premises and comprises 3 divisions:—

1. Adult men.
2. Youths between 14 and 25 years.
3. Women and girls over 14 years.

At present the position of the girls is being debated; it is pointed out that no special attractions are provided for the girls, and the question as to whether they should join the youths, or have special circles of their own, is under discussion.

YOUNG SOCIALISTS.

The 25 Socialist Clubs of Turin are linked together in a city federation, and the youths' sections of these clubs are also linked with the national Young Socialist organisation. The branches of the Young Socialist movement in the towns and villages are grouped in provincial federations, which, in turn, are joined together nationally. The Young Socialist organisation has a membership of 27,000, and a weekly organ with a circulation of 1,700 called the "Vanguardia." A children's newspaper called "Germoglio" was published before the war and is about to be resurrected after a period of suspension. In some backward agricultural districts, where no adult Socialist movement exists, there are already strong branches of the Young Socialist movement, and amongst the youths are to be found some of Italy's keenest Socialists.

The Young Socialists of Turin hold meetings and social gatherings, sell papers and organise excursions into the country. Their Red Cyclists' brigades, in groups of a hundred or so, ride into the villages and hold meetings, distribute literature and seek to form Socialist clubs and branches there.

The Socialist Clubs as a whole perform a most important work for the movement, meeting constantly they carry on much of the daily propaganda work. It is sometimes said that their members devote too much energy to dancing and amusement, and indeed the Young Socialist section of the club at San Paolo, one of the working-class districts of Turin, withdrew from the club for a time, because the youths thought that, under the influence of the adults, too much time was devoted to recreation, and too little to study and propaganda.

*There are 100 centesimi in a lira.

It is however pointed out that if recreation were too rigidly circumscribed, recruiting from amongst the less educated members of the proletariat would be retarded.

SOCIALIST ORGANISATION FOR DISCHARGED SOLDIERS.

Upwards of 300 000 discharged soldiers have been organised into a Socialist organisation for disabled soldiers. This work has been largely done by the Young Socialists. It was found that there was a natural tendency for the discharged soldiers in the villages to meet together to discuss their war experiences, and since they belonged to all sorts of varied occupations—cobblers, blacksmiths, and so on—and as many were unable to work at all, it was found easiest to link them together in a discharged soldiers' organisation for Socialism. There is also a bourgeois organisation for discharged soldiers.

TRADE UNIONS.

There are 80,000 organised workers in Milan, some of whom are organised on an industrial, others on a craft basis; in the printing and allied trades both principles are combined.

As in England, there are shop stewards in the metal industry, but their organisation has hitherto been upon a curious and unsatisfactory basis. The engineers had an arrangement with the employers, by which shop stewards were elected by the workers in the shops from a list put forward by the engineers' Executive. The unskilled workers and the members of allied trades had no voice in the nomination of the shop stewards. There is now a movement on foot to enable the shop stewards to be elected from amongst all the workers in the shop during working hours, and this plan is being adopted in all factories.

The Trade and industrial Unions have no friendly benefits. They are purely fighting organisations. That is a very important point.

THE CAMERA DEL LAVORO.

All the Trade and Industrial Unions are affiliated to the Camera del Lavoro, which was formed twenty or twenty-three years ago. The Lega Mista (mixed League), which comprises those who can join no other Union, is also affiliated to the Camera.

Though the Trade Unions provide no friendly benefits, there exists a benefit Society called the Mutua, which even workers may join individually and which is also affiliated to the Camera del Lavoro. Members of the Mutua are entitled to sickness and accident benefit, free medical attendance and midwifery and free legal assistance.

The Co-operative Society is also affiliated to the Camera, and the Mutua and Co-operative Society have between them formed an alliance—the Alleanza Co-operativa Torinese. The Alliance has now a capital of 45,000,000 lire. The Mutua has 20,000 members, the Co-operative Society only about 1,000, as only the original shareholders are members. The Executive of the Alliance is elected each year by the members of the two organisations from a list of nominees put forward by the Socialist Party. This is neither obligatory nor official, other nominations may be made, but as a fact it is always from the list put forward by the Socialist Party that the successful candidates are chosen.

The Socialist Party consistently opposed the war, and after the Turin rising against the war some pro-war members of the Co-operative Society and Mutua, most of whom were railway workers, endeavoured to capture the Executive. In order to do so, they made two very alluring offers. The original shares of the Co-operative Society cost 50 lire, and a dividend amounting to 1.50 per share is paid on that amount; the shares are now worth, however, 600 lire each. The Jingoists promised that if their nominees were elected, interest would be paid for each share, not on

50 lire, but on 600. They also promised that the Co-operative Society should sell its goods only to members, a very important question, for as the shortage of food was then great, the exclusion of outsiders would have meant that the actual members could buy more food. But in spite of these promises, the Socialist Party's nominees were elected by an overwhelming majority of more than 3 to 1.

The Alliance has also an Alpine and a sea-side colony, where the children of its members may go free of charge. As all the children cannot be accommodated, they are chosen according to medical need.

The Camera del Lavoro has a great headquarters, in which the central offices of all these activities are housed. There is a large hall, there are several smaller halls for public meetings, a café and theatre holding 1,200 people and run by the Co-operative Alliance, and a circulating library, also run by the Alliance. There are offices for the Socialist Party, the Young Socialists, the Trade Unions, the Mutua and the Co-operative Society, the doctor and oculist of the Mutua, the midwives who are in attendance and may be called upon both night and day. It is a very imposing building; Labour has nothing like it in this country. Each evening the place is thronged with workers, the café, where tea, coffee, beer, wine, ices, and so on may be bought, is crowded. One feels that this is no house of cranks and unusual people, but a home for the mass of the Turin working people: a part of their life and a factor in their evolution.

The 25 Socialist Clubs of Turin are each running a local centre for the working class movement on a smaller scale than the central Camera del Lavoro. At San Paolo we saw one of these Club-houses. In the largest room a dance was in progress and there was card playing in a room adjoining. In another room some of the members were choosing books from a circulating library; there was a large flat roof which served as a tea-garden. In the office were photographs of members of the Club killed in the Turin rising. San Paolo is one of the most revolutionary centres of Turin, and was nick-named the Republic of San Paolo.

In Turin the Majority Socialist movement stands for the Soviets, and believes in the necessity of insurrection. In the Camera del Lavoro, a meeting was being held the night we were there, to discuss the military organisation of the workers.

There are three main currents in the Italian Socialist movement:

1. **Those who believe that Socialism can be won through Parliament, and desire to obtain a Parliamentary majority for the Socialist Party.**

2. **Those who wish to establish the Soviets, and desire to use Parliamentary action for propaganda purposes only, who believe that Socialists should not aim at securing a majority; they consider that eventually an insurrection will be necessary.**

3. **Those who believe in abstaining from Parliamentary action altogether and in bending all energies now towards preparing for the Soviets and the insurrection.**

In Turin the last two factions predominate, but it is important to notice that all three sections belong to the one Socialist Party.

Pietro Rabuzzana, the Secretary of the Turin Socialist Party, and Gramsci, the Editor of "L'Ordine Nuovo," a new pro-Soviet weekly, both advocate Parliamentary action for propaganda purposes.

Rabuzzana and others are agitating that it shall be a rule of the Party that all Socialist Members of Parliament, as a condition of their candidature, shall place in the hands of the Party Executive a signed letter of resignation from Parliament, which the Executive may at any moment send to the Government, and thus secure the withdrawal of the M.P. if the Party thinks that he has deviated unduly from the policy of the Party. This plan, it is contended, would preserve Party discipline amongst Socialist Members of Parliament and would insure their adhesion to the principles of the Socialist Party.

Gramsci, on the other hand, though not a single Italian Socialist Member of Parliament is satisfactory from his standpoint, thinks little of this proposal. He rightly says that should a Member of Parliament betray the Socialist Party, and the Party then cause resignation, the forces of reaction would combine to support him, and he would probably be returned. Gramsci bases his advocacy of Parliamentary action, rather on the argument that if the Socialists abstain from such action, the workers who are not yet advanced enough to look beyond Parliament will drift away from the Socialist Party and come under capitalist influences. He urges also the propaganda value of election work, saying that the censorship has checked propaganda, but that election propagandists need not fear the censorship.

The time of the election contest is the time, he declares, in which the workers are most revolutionary. The instances of coercive manipulation of the elections cited to us made this easy to understand.

At Iglesias, in Sardinia, we were told, the miners supported a Socialist candidate. The police went to one of the miners' meetings, and slipped knives into the pockets of Socialist enthusiasts, marking the coats of these same men with chalk. The men whose coats were marked with chalk were presently arrested, and as they were of course found to be in possession of illegal weapons, they were imprisoned until after the election day. At Gioia del Colle between 500 and 600 Socialist electors were imprisoned over the day of the election. In another district a table was placed across the entrance to the ballot box. Supporters of the Government were allowed to enter by crawling under the table, opponents of the Government were beaten back with sticks and prevented from voting.

Gramsci thinks that the Italian revolution may break out during an election, but we put it to Gramsci that such cases as these are splendid arguments, to be used precisely during elections, to rouse the workers to direct action against the entire bourgeois Parliamentary system and for the Soviets.

The Italian General Election has been called by the Prime Minister, Nitti, because he cannot solve the Fiume question to the satisfaction both of the Italian bourgeois opinion and of the Big Four.

Gramsci and others believe that the result of the present election will be the return of a larger band of Socialists, the elimination of the Liberals, an increase in strength for the parties of reaction, including the Christian Socialists, whom they allege to be more reactionary than the Liberals, and who they believe will secure a large number of seats by promises which they will be unable to fulfil. A strongly militarist Government is anticipated and it is believed that this may goad the Italian workers to insurrection.

E. SYLVIA PANKHURST.

The "Dreadnought" can be obtained from all Newsagents. If you experience any difficulty write to 152, Fleet Street.