

# ITALIAN SCENE

BY CARLO BIVANCO

Three years after the fall of Mussolini and the Armistice, Italy presents a picture of ever-increasing misery. The conditions under which the vast mass of the people are living deteriorates from day to day. Hampered by the uncertainty of the future, and the economic and political demands which will be imposed on the country by the Peace Treaties now in process of drafting in Paris, there is further stress and strain in an economy already weakened and devastated by a war fought throughout the length and breadth of the Peninsula. Hunger is prevalent! Inefficiency and corruption in distribution adds to the hardships imposed by a hopelessly inadequate scale of rations. This is the background to the series of strikes which has paralyzed Italian industry and commerce during the past two months.

### Starvation Rations

The basic bread ration is 200 grammes (about 7 ozs.) a day. One of the first acts of the De Gasperi Government was to reduce the percentage of flour in bread. The use of flour for sweets and cakes was prohibited and the ration of spaghetti and rice, both staple items in the Italian diet, was cut from 2 kilograms to 500 grammes (17 ozs.) a month. The sugar ration is 200 grammes and salt 300 grammes (10 1/2 ozs.) a month. Children under three years of age are allowed about half a pint of milk daily. The rest of the population are allowed officially, only 1 fluid ounce.

There is no regular ration of fats and oils. These are distributed in small quantities when available. There is no butter ration.

Because of the chaotic system of distribution and outright racketeering, even rationed goods are not always obtainable in the stipulated amounts and often not at all. In parts of Italy milk can only be had on two or three days of the month. There are days when it is impossible to buy bread—except on the black market.

While the poor starve, the rich, the war profiteers and Fascist racketeers live in comparative luxury. The windows of the more exclusive shops are filled with the necessities of life and even "luxury items" such as butter or cheese. All this gives a superficial impression of prosperity, eagerly seized upon by the Tory press, but far from a true picture.

Dominating the country's economic life, is the Black Market. Goods scheduled for rationing find their way into the hands of the black marketeers. Here there are no shortages. Everything can be bought—for a price. But what working class family can buy on the Black Market when even in the open market butter is sold at 350 lire (400 lire to £) a pound, and meat at 150 lire a pound.

### 3 Million Unemployed

Estimates of unemployment vary between two and three millions. The larger figure is probably nearer the mark. Only the agreement between the Trade Unions and the Northern industrialists, which compelled the latter to retain their workers on part-pay, even where the factory was closed, prevented this figure from shooting up. Obviously, this state of affairs cannot last indefinitely. Italian capitalism, already struck a crippling blow by the lost war, cannot "afford" to pay wages to non-productive workers. Their reserves cannot stand it. The Trade Union leaders, over the heads of the rank-and-file, have now signed a new agreement with the industrialists giving the latter the right to sack their workers after giving three months notice of their intention to do so.

The fact that the Northern worker is receiving money wages does not materially improve his position. His part-pay is not sufficient to enable him to buy on the Black Market. He has to content himself with the inadequate rations—when he can get them.

One would expect the peasant to be slightly better off than the urban worker, for he can, to some extent, live off the land. Such would undoubtedly be the case if normal conditions prevailed in the national economy. But the chaotic conditions of roads and transport makes it extremely difficult for their products to reach the towns. A great proportion of agricultural goods is diverted into the Black Market. Barter is at a premium. No one has any faith in the huge quantity of paper lire in circulation.

Further, the peasant is completely dependent on urban industry for certain of the necessities of life. The extra money he makes by selling his produce to the Black Market is absorbed by the inflationary prices he has to pay

for the goods he buys from the towns. Lack of fertilizers, the thousands of acres rendered useless by the still-existing mine-fields and the unrelenting extortions of the landlords and money-lenders keep the peasant in effective poverty.

Only a complete change in the land system—the abolition of the *latifondi* (large landowners), and the re-distribution of the land among the peasantry; only the introduction of scientific methods of agriculture, possible only through collective farming, can overcome the problems confronting the peasantry.

The De Gasperi Government has drawn up an elaborate scheme for industrial revival, but is confronted with formidable obstacles in its path. Italy, always lacking in raw materials, is today confronted with a desperate shortage because she is practically cut off from all her pre-war sources of supply. This is especially true of the fuel situation. Before the war Italy was almost wholly dependent on the Ruhr for her supplies of coal. Now only a trickle arrives from this source. From the United States only 120,000 tons per month enters the country. It is estimated that a minimum of 800,000 tons per month is required to keep Italian industry running. From this the precarious state of the country's productive resources can be judged.

The index of the cost of living stands at 2,000 (100 in 1943). As against this, the wages of industrial workers have risen from 100 in 1943 to 1,000. Salaries of clerical workers and State employees have only risen to 500. Currently, the release of manufactured goods, hoarded during the war years, has temporarily halted the rise in the cost of living. When these stocks are exhausted, it will once again climb upwards with seven-league boots. To combat this inflationary tendency, the Partito Operaio Comunista, Italian section of the Fourth International, is pushing to the forefront of its programme of economic demands the slogan "A Rising Scale of Wages to meet the Rising Cost of Living."

To prevent the growth of unemployment and to absorb the present workless in productive labour, the Italian Trotskyists are demanding the nationalisation of industry, under workers' control. They call for the setting up of Distribution Committees of Housewives and Trade Unionists to ensure fair distribution of commodities and as the only effective method of fighting the Black Market. Above all, they stress that there can be no lasting solution to Italy's economic and social ills while capitalism lasts. The way out lies through a Socialist Italy within the United Socialist States of Europe.

*\* There are today 285 billion lire in circulation compared with 22.5 billion in 1938. Of this total nearly one-quarter—65 billions—is currency issued by the occupying regime, and the unresolved dispute over reparations still to be paid by Italy has so far prevented the Government from even attempting to work out any financial policy.*

# PALESTINE

## The Trotskyist Answer PUBLIC MEETING

August 19th

Commencing at 7 p.m. prompt.

AT KING'S HALL  
COMMERCIAL ROAD

Speakers :

DAN TAMARY (Palestinian)

AJIT ROY (Indian)

Jock HASTON (Secretary R.C.P.)

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# PALESTINE SOLUTION

(Continued from Front Page.) The immigration of 100,000 Jews into Palestine, which is a country about the size of Wales and with about the same population, if considered in proportion to the population would mean an immigration of 8,000,000 into America or 3,000,000 into Britain. It is clear that an immigration of this character should only take place if the Arab people agree and freely give their consent. And this they will never do while they feel that the Jews are being used by British imperialism to split Palestine, to partition it and to maintain a force which, in the long run, will be used against the Arabs in the event that they struggle against British imperialism for national freedom.

### Socialist Settlements Terrorized

One of the Labour M.P.s, Mr. Wilkes (Newcastle-on-Tyne), revealed the curious policy being pursued by the military authorities in Palestine, which cannot be construed in any other way than deliberate provocation: "If the intention is to capture these people (terrorists) why, when the Jewish agency was closed down, were the offices and headquarters of the Revisionist Party (Jewish Fascists—E.G.) who control the Irgun (terrorists) left open? Why is the Revisionist Press, certainly up to 24 hours ago, allowed to go on with its aggressive, militant, racial propaganda? When in June and July these outrages were committed, certainly in the large majority of cases by the Irgun, why were the Socialist settlements searched? Was it expected to find the Irgun in settlements organised and run by Histradruth? Why is the only paper in Palestine now closed down so far as my information goes, a paper called "Haaretz", which is a Liberal paper and which, indeed, has often attacked the Jewish agency for being too militant?"

Measures like this could only help to inflame the position and further embitter the Jewish masses in Palestine against the army authorities.

And the army authorities use the terrorist attacks to inflame and embitter the struggle against the Jews. In the struggle against the Arabs in 1936-39, when the latter were demanding their independence, the army authorities posed as the protector of the Jews and incited the troops against the Arabs. In reality, the troops are used to do the dirty work of British imperialism in Palestine and the Middle East. This is not in the interests of the worker-soldiers, or of the native peoples under British domination.

The capitalists press is shedding crocodile tears about the strain on the British troops. But what are the troops there for? To keep "law and order" i.e. to guard British strategic-economic interests.

### The Immigration Problem

The cause of the struggle has been over the question of immigration of 100,000 victims of the Nazis, still living in camps, the concentration camps where they had been thrust by the Nazis. But the whole futility of Zionism is shown by the tragic impasse in which the Jews in Palestine find themselves at the present time. Even if 100,000 Jews were admitted, this could not solve the problem. But it would inevitably arouse the violent antagonism of the Arabs in Palestine and the whole of the Middle East. Antisemitism would merely be transferred from Europe to the Arab countries. And only a small percentage could gain even temporary respite thereby.

The Imperialists close their own doors tightly but insist on deciding for the Arabs.

The immigration of 100,000 Jews into Palestine, which is a country about the size of Wales and with about the same population, if considered in proportion to the population would mean an immigration of 8,000,000 into America or 3,000,000 into Britain. It is clear that an immigration of this character should only take place if the Arab people agree and freely give their consent. And this they will never do while they feel that the Jews are being used by British imperialism to split Palestine, to partition it and to maintain a force which, in the long run, will be used against the Arabs in the event that they struggle against British imperialism for national freedom.

British socialists and especially the Jewish socialist youth, who are faced with the terrible dilemma of millions of Jews in Europe—still suffering the horrors of concentration camps—and who wish to see the Jewish refugees given a home and succor, cannot insist on the entry of the Jews into Palestine while the Arab people are themselves enslaved. Only of a free people is it possible to demand and insist on the right of asylum.

### A Cowardly Evasion

For the major part of the Labour movement, and especially the Jewish "left" the demand for immigration into Palestine is, as a rule, a cowardly evasion of the real problem: opening up the gates of

Britain and allowing the refugees to freely enter.

Palestine is a long way off, and in any case is inhabited by a backward people, nobody is likely to kick up a fuss here. This is how these people reason. These people fear that to conduct a real campaign to open up the gates of Britain will arouse an anti-semitic mood among the people. And they prefer to evade the issue. This is the real reason why they demand that the gates of Palestine be opened.

The sanctimonious horror with which the Allied rulers regarded the extermination of the Jews is revealed as completely hypocritical. Had Stalin represented the genuine interests of socialism, he would have signified the willingness of the Soviet Union to accept those refugees willing to seek shelter in Russia, especially as there is an acute labour shortage. But the doors of the Soviet Union remain tightly shut. So Britain and America, despite their enormous riches and resources are not prepared to give the democratic right of asylum to those who seek it. They suggest, instead, the palliative of Palestine. And at the same time have failed to conduct a systematic programme of rehabilitation, both material and psychological, of the displaced Jews which would help them to reintegrate themselves into their own countries of origin.

The working class must demand that the Labour Government claiming to represent socialism, give an example to the world. The demo-

cratic right of asylum must be granted in Britain and the Dominions. Equal rights for all in Europe, without distinction of race or creed. Open the gates!

But the problem of Palestine remains. The Jews are being used as a tool of Anglo-American imperialism in the Middle East. At one time Britain "supports" the Arabs; at another time the Jews then she swings back again.

Such a policy acts against the interests of both Arabs and Jews who are thus balanced against each other by British imperialism.

The Arabs oppose immigration because by this in many areas they have been driven from the land to make way for Jewish settlers, as has happened with colonisation in many countries in the past. Thus, the effect of the limited immigration which British imperialism has allowed, has been to sidetrack the anti-imperialist struggle of the Arab masses, and turn it into anti-semitic channels. The British workers must demand the withdrawal of the troops from Palestine. Palestine must gain its independence. The Jewish and Arab workers can co-operate, as the recent strike has shown. Palestine must be joined to the rest of the Arab countries to form a Federation of Arab States in which the Jews as a minority must be given full and equal rights.

Withdraw the troops! No plan of partition! For an independent Palestine! Open the gates of all countries to the oppressed Jews! For equal rights in all countries for all races, colours or creeds.

# PARLIAMENTARY REFORMISM

(Continued from page 3.)

uprising against the capitalist order of government. In this warfare of the masses developing into a civil war, the guiding party of the proletariat must, as a general rule, secure any and every legal position making them its auxiliaries in the revolutionary work, and subordinating such positions to the plans of the general campaign, that of the mass struggle.

11. One of such auxiliary supports is the floor of the bourgeois parliament. The argument that parliament is a bourgeois government institution cannot be used against participation in a political campaign. The Communist Party enters such institutions not for the purpose of organic work, but in order to destroy the whole bourgeois governmental machinery and parliament itself from within (for instance, the work of Liebknecht in Germany, of the Bolsheviks in the imperial Duma, in the "Democratic Conference," in the "Parliament" of Kerensky, and, lastly, in the "Constituent Assembly," and also in the "Municipal Dumas," and the activities of the Bulgarian Communists).

12. This work within Parliament—which consists chiefly in making revolutionary propaganda from the parliamentary platform, denouncing enemies, the ideological unification of the masses, who still look up to the parliamentary platform, captivated by democratic illusions, especially in backward countries, etc.—must be fully subordinated to the objects and tasks of the mass struggle outside parliament.

Participation in the electoral campaign and the revolutionary propaganda from the parliamentary tribune has a special importance for winning over those elements of the workers who, such as, perhaps, the agricultural workers, have stood far away from the revolutionary movement and political life.

13. If the Communists have a majority in local government institutions, they must: (a) Carry on a revolutionary opposition against the bourgeois central authority; (b) do all for the aid of the poor population (economic measures, establish or attempt to establish an armed workers militia); (c) point out on every occasion the barriers which the bourgeois State power erects against really vital changes; (d) develop on this basis the most active revolutionary propaganda without fearing a conflict with the State authorities; (e) under certain conditions substitute local workers councils for the existing municipal administration. The whole activity of the Communists in the municipal administration must therefore be part of the general work of destroying the capitalist system.

14. The electoral campaign must be carried on not in the sense of obtaining a maximum of votes, but in that of a revolutionary mobilisation of the masses around the watchtowers of the Proletarian Revolution. It must be conducted by the whole party membership.

## Revolutionary Communist Programme :

- Nationalisation, of the Bank of England, the Big Five Banks and land, the mines, transport and all big industry without compensation; and the operation of these enterprises under the control of workers' committees.
- Confiscation of all war profits; all company books to be open to inspection by trade unions and workers' committees to counter the financial and economic sabotage of Big Business.
- Distribution of food, clothes, fuel and other consumers' goods in short supply under the control of committees elected from the co-ops, distributive trades, factories, housewives and small shop-keepers.
- The control and allocation of existing housing space in the hands of tenants' committees; a state financial national house-building plan directed by the building trades unions and tenants committees.
- A rising scale of wages to meet the increased cost of living with a guaranteed minimum and full maintenance for the unemployed; turnover of Government and other war plants to the production of consumers' goods; a sliding scale of hours to absorb the unemployed without wage reductions.
- Abolition of the Monarchy and the House of Lords; full

electoral rights from the age of 18 years; and full political rights for men and women in the forces; the immediate repeal of all strike breaking and anti-labour laws.

7. Clear out the reactionary anti-labour officer caste from the armed forces, for the election of officers from the ranks.

8. Abolish conscription; for the dissolution of the standing army and its substitution by a workers' militia organised under control of workers' committees; for the establishment of military schools by the Trade Unions at the expense of the State for the training of worker officers.

9. Unconditional defence of the Soviet Union against all imperialist powers; full economic co-operation, credit grants and other aid for the reconstruction of Soviet economy.

10. Full and immediate freedom for India and the other colonies to choose their own form of government; the immediate withdrawal of British troops from all colonial countries.

11. Against secret diplomacy and a peace of vengeance and plunder; against race hatred—anti-semitism, Vansittartism and the colour bar; for the withdrawal of British troops from Europe and Asia and for a peace based upon the self-determination of the peoples of Europe, Asia and the World.

12. Full support and active co-operation with the European workers for the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of the United Socialist States of Europe; unity with the workers and exploited masses of all lands in the struggle for World Socialism.

attempt at a division within the Communist Party united on the aim as a crime against the Labour movement. The Congress calls upon all elements that are in favour of the mass struggle for the proletarian dictatorship, under the direction of a centralised Party of the revolutionary proletariat gaining influence over all the mass organisations of the working class, to strive for the complete unity of all Communist elements, notwithstanding any possible disagreement on the question of utilising bourgeois parliaments.

## Non Unionists First Strike

On July 31st some 250 workers at the South Wales Switchgear, Trefores came out on strike for the principle of non-unionists first in cases of redundancy. Two trade unionists had been sacked as redundant while a number of non-unionists remained in the works.

This strike is only one of a number of such strikes during recent months in which the working class have reacted correctly to attacks upon their organisations. In the days ahead the working class will have to face attacks upon their standards of living all along the line. They can meet such attacks only by the most determined resistance. In preparation they must close their ranks now, eliminating all sources of weakness, not giving up a single point that they have gained. This, of course, means that they must struggle now for the right to drive out the scabs from the workshop, i.e., non first.

In fighting for such demands, they are fighting the advance battles of the coming struggle, and should be backed by the support of every class conscious militant in industry.

## Trotsky Memorial Meeting

LIVERPOOL  
Friday, 23rd Aug.

at 7.45 p.m.

Cooper's Hall

Speaker : Roy Tearse



Contents —

Articles on :  
PALESTINE  
DEMOCRACY AND  
BONAPARTISM  
MALAYA

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