MODERN ITALY

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MODERN ITALY

by

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CONTENTS

	Preface	*Page* 7
Chapter I	Introduction	9
II	Population and Poverty	18
III	Constitution and Government	40
IV	Political Parties	57
V	The Roman Catholic Church in Italy	75
VI	Education	82
VII	Industry	100
VIII	Agriculture	114
IX	Agrarian Reform	127
	Appendix: Table I. Regions and Provinces of Italy, 1951	147
	Table II. Employment	148
	Table III. Manufacturing Industries, November 1951	149
	Table IV. Agrarian Reform	150
	Bibliography	151
	Index	155
	Selected list of books available in this series	160


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PREFACE

This small book is the outcome of ten years' special study of economic and political conditions in modern Italy during and after the war of 1939–45 superimposed on a love of the country inspired by my father, A. J. Carlyle, and strengthened by frequent visits to Italy from 1920 onwards.

I owe much to the training and encouragement given to me by Dr. Arnold Toynbee and Mr. E. J. Passant for whom I worked during and after the war, but I was well aware when I was asked by Professor G. D. H. Cole to write this book that my knowledge of post-war Italy was much too exclusively paper knowledge. I therefore wish to express my deep sense of gratitude to the Italian Government for their award of a scholarship which enabled me to spend the first four months of 1955 in Italy studying conditions at first hand.

It is impossible to name all those who showered help and kindness upon me in Italy, but I owe a special debt of gratitude to Professor Manlio Rossi-Doria of the Agrarian Faculty of the University of Naples, who not only spared time to talk to me about agricultural and social questions in south Italy but gave me introductions to the Presidents of the Agrarian Reform Associations who in turn arranged for me to see the work being done in many very varied areas of the south. In this connection I should like to thank particularly Dr. Novi of the *Ente per la riforma fondiaria in Puglia e Lucania*, his assistant Dr. Romagnuolo and the Director of the estates near Lucera, Dr. Fafoglia, who enabled me to talk to many of the newly settled farmers, and Dr. Delmonte of the *Ente per la valorizzazione della Sila.*

Thanks to the kindness of Dr. Molino of the Presidency of the Council and of Senator Zanotti Bianco, I was able to see some of the social work which is being done both by the

Government and by private bodies in the south, and thanks to Dr. Bauer of *Umanitaria* in Milan and to Mr. Auty of the British Council there I saw something of the interesting educational and social experiments being carried out in Milan.

It is again impossible to mention all those who helped me to acquire some practical knowledge of Italian schools, but my special thanks are due to Professor Codignola of the University of Florence and to Dr. Varano, the *Provveditore agli studi* in Florence, to his inspectors Dr. Manzotti, Professor Landi and Signora Nozzoli, to Dr. Marchetti, Inspector for the Commune of Florence, and to the various teachers, especially Dr. Antezza, Professor Greco and Ingegnere Riccioli in Florence and Dr. Libretti and Professor Cremaschi in Milan, who gave up much of their precious time in order to let me see their schools. Finally I want to thank my Italian friend of thirty years' standing, Princess Santa Hercolani, who took me in her car for a month's travelling in southern Italy, and whose knowledge of her country and kindly criticism have taught me more than I could ever hope to learn from books. My conclusions are my own and with some of them she would not agree, but I could never have formed them or ventured to give them expression but for our frank discussion of many of Italy's most pressing problems.

MARGARET CARLYLE

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

NO ATTEMPT will be made in this small book to give a history of Italy, it is concerned with some of the main political and economic developments in the country since 1945, but it is of course true of Italy as of other countries that some knowledge of her history is needed for an understanding of the present, and for a sympathetic though not uncritical approach to her many problems. It is above all necessary to remember that Italy has been a united country for less than a hundred years, and that during that short time in the life of a country she was involved in two great wars and for twenty years suffered under a despotic government, which, though not comparable in brutality to Nazi rule in Germany, drove many of the country's best citizens to imprisonment, death or exile, and denied to a whole generation any training in political or economic self-government. Twenty years is a long time in the life of an individual, and when Mussolini was finally overthrown, Italy's leaders were many of them elderly men tending to look back to the years before 1914 as a golden age to which the new Italy should conform as far as possible, or young men with no experience of practical politics. The remarkable fact is not that there are still so many unsolved problems, but that in the first ten years after the end of the 1939–45 war Italy achieved so much ; she had a reasonably stable government and set on foot a great movement of reform which though confined to certain areas is likely to affect the economic and social conditions of the whole country.

The second important fact to remember is that Italy is not only an overwhelmingly Roman Catholic country but that it includes within its borders the small independent state of the Vatican City, ruled by the head of the Roman Catholic world, who is surrounded by a hierarchy which is largely Italian. The special position of the Pope in Italy was the greatest difficulty

facing the founders of Italian unity and lies behind many of the problems of the middle of the 20th century, although the official relations of Italy and the Vatican State and of Church and State in Italy were settled by the Lateran Pacts of 1929.

Both Italy's past history and her present difficulties are closely connected with her geography, particularly in regard to the contrast between north and south[1] which appears in every aspect of Italian life and forms the main theme of this book. The chief characteristic of the long peninsula sticking out in the middle of the Mediterranean and of the islands large and small is their mountainous nature. In the north is the great barrier of the Alps, and right down the centre of the country run the Apennines—Italy's backbone—continued in the high barren mountains of the south and islands, leaving only a narrow strip of plain along each coast except in a few places like the fertile volcanic land round Naples, or the Conca d'oro behind Palermo in Sicily. Less than one-quarter of Italy is plain, and most of this lies in the great valley of the Po, the only large navigable river in Italy, which rises in the western Alps and flows right across north Italy and into the Adriatic south of Venice.

The first thing to notice about the long mountainous peninsula is that its climate is very varied, and that the famous 'Mediterranean climate' is in fact confined to a few favoured areas like the Ligurian riviera, the coast round Naples and Amalfi, parts of Sicily and some of the smaller islands. There is a great contrast between the climatic conditions of the north and centre on the one hand and those of the south and islands on the other. In the north they are much like those of central Europe with cold, wet winters and hot summers, but with an adequate rainfall reasonably spread over the year. Milan, for example, resembles some of the northern industrial towns of England not only because of its flourishing factories but because of the rain and fog which make the winter months cold and gloomy. The climate of the south is marked by long,

[1] Throughout the book the south includes the islands of Sicily and Sardinia unless they are specifically distinguished from the southern mainland.

extremely hot summers, when the land lies parched and brown, and by a low rainfall confined to a few winter months. This is, however, to give a false impression of the south where over great stretches of country the heat of the summer is matched by the bitter cold winters of the high plateaus of Apulia and Molise and the deep snow of the hills and mountains on which so many of the towns of the Abruzzi and Calabria are built.

An infinite deal of nonsense has been talked about the effect of the climate of southern Italy on the people, who have so often been described as idlers encouraged by an enervating climate to lie in the sun and be satisfied to eat the food which grows at the cost of little effort on the part of man. Nothing could be more unlike the truth. In the first place the areas which easily produce fine crops are limited in number, and where they exist, for instance near Naples, the land is split up into tiny holdings, where an enormous amount of work is needed to make the ground produce the large number of successive crops which alone make it possible for the farmer to live off such a small piece of land. In the rest of southern Italy the industry of the peasant must be seen to be believed; in many places only the fear of starvation could make men try to cultivate the land with the resources available to them before the coming of the land reform. Above all, the sight of young, able-bodied men hanging about the towns and villages is a sign of Italy's most tragic problem, unemployment. For a great part of every year there is no work for the teeming population of the south.

Even to the most casual observer the differences between the various parts of Italy are striking. The tourist, making a hurried round of some of the great towns, Milan, Florence, Venice, Rome, Naples, cannot fail to notice the differences in the landscape, the architecture, even the appearance of the people he talks to in the streets and shops, while if he stays longer and visits Calabria, or Sicily, or perhaps above all Sardinia, he will feel that he has reached a different world. The greatest contrast is that between the north, including part at least of the centre, i.e. the regions of Tuscany and Umbria,

and the south. The north is obviously comparatively prosperous with its industries, many of them on a large modern scale like Fiat of Turin or Ansaldo of Genoa, and its highly developed agriculture where modern machinery is in great measure replacing the ploughs drawn by magnificent oxen. Both for passenger and goods traffic the north is closely linked by rail through the Alpine passes with France, Switzerland, Austria and northern Europe, and by sea through the great harbours of Genoa in the west and Venice and Trieste in the north-east with North and South America and the eastern Mediterranean. The south on the other hand is still almost wholly agricultural, and except in a few places, and since 1950 in the areas of agrarian reform, its agriculture is still so primitive that often donkeys turn the grindstones and the ground is worked with a spade in places where no plough can go. Even where the ground is ploughed it is often done by what has been described as a piece of wood with a nail at the end of it, the use of manure is practically unknown and there are no cows and few animals at all except sheep pastured on the rough hill grazing in summer and on the marshy lands near the sea in winter, and mules. The one thing common to north and south is the overwhelming importance of agriculture which still employs nearly half the population of the country and far more than half in the south.

Climate and geography alone do not account for the great differences in economic prosperity and conditions of life which make some northerners say that the south is more foreign to them than many other western European countries. The history of the different regions has had an immense effect on their economic development and on the habits and character of their inhabitants. In the north are the towns which in the Middle Ages were self-governing communes whose industry and trade made them centres of a wealth and civilization famous all over the world, whereas the south and islands, after suffering a series of invasions by Arabs, Normans, French and Spaniards, lay crushed and impoverished under the despotic rule of the kingdom of Naples and Sicily, and between north and south were the Papal States governed absolutely by Rome.

Even in the north three centuries of despotic government by local princes and foreign rulers had produced their effect, so that the 19th-century movement for independence of foreign rule and for a united Italy was not a popular movement, but was conceived and carried out by a small number of middle-class people, among whom the greatest were the thinker and writer Mazzini, the man of action Garibaldi, and one supremely great statesman Camillo Cavour, with Victor Emmanuel II of Piedmont as the central figure. There was no system of popular local government on which to build, but government and administration had to be imposed from the top downwards instead of growing gradually from below, a disastrous state of affairs from which Italy still suffers.

Unity was the great ideal which inspired the men of the Italian Risorgimento in the 19th century, but the fear of losing something which had been so hard to win and the form which unity took after the death of Cavour in 1861 brought evils which still persist. A highly centralized form of government, which had worked well enough in the small kingdom of Piedmont, was imposed on the whole country and proved much too inflexible for adaptation to totally different regions like the Abruzzi or Sicily. Italy became and remained one country and no one would wish to see it otherwise; but few Italians even in the middle of the 20th century have sufficient confidence in this unity to be willing to risk any large measure of freedom from control by the central government, although unity was in fact turned into uniformity first by Cavour's successors and later and with more dangerous results by Mussolini. For a short time at the end of the 1939–45 war there seemed to be a chance of some decentralization, but except in the case of the four outlying regions of Valle d'Aosta, Trentino-Alto Adige, Sicily and Sardinia,[1] fear of destroying the country's unity has so far prevented effective action.

From the first, unity brought a great growth of prosperity to the north with rapidly increasing industrialization which was able to absorb a great part at least of the population, so that the life of the northern industrial and agricultural workers

[1] See pp. 50–4.

was very like that of workers in other western and central European countries. Meantime the south stagnated and remained sunk in poverty, and the cleavage between the two parts of the country became more conspicuous. The north tended to regard the south as a millstone round its neck, the south envied the north and thought that the Government in Rome was wholly biased in favour of the north. Various enquiries were made into economic conditions in the south, some of them producing most valuable information like the great report of Franchetti and Sonnino on Sicily in 1876,[1] but no action was taken, and the result was merely to increase the south's suspicion of Rome, and to destroy the belief of the ordinary man in any hope of improvement. In some respects the conditions of the agricultural worker grew worse, for many of the big landlords left their estates to the care of the worst type of agent and lived in Rome or in the great towns of the north on the rents screwed out of their half-starved tenants.

This cleavage between north and south persists in the middle of the 20th century. The south cannot possibly solve its economic problems by its own unaided efforts, and the north, with honourable and increasing exceptions, does not see why it should have to shoulder this heavy burden, particularly when life for most people in the north is far from easy. Poverty is by no means confined to the south, and the accounts brought back to England of the comfort and wealth of Italy cause distress and anger to Italians, who are struggling to raise the general standard of living, and who know that the class of wealthy Italians is an extremely small one. The poverty of the agricultural workers in some of the Alpine mountain valleys or in parts of the Veneto is comparable with that in the south, and the bulk of the very considerable industrial unemployment with its resultant poverty is in the north, in Lombardy, Liguria and the other northern regions. But in the north the big industrial towns and factories provide a variety of employment and there is hope of change and improvement. In the south there is

[1] L. Franchetti *e* S. Sonnino: *La Sicilia* (2nd edition, Florence, Vallecchi, 1925).

as yet practically no alternative to agriculture for a population which is far too large for the land to carry.

This is the central problem of the Italian economy, over-population, particularly in the regions least able to support it. In the first eighty years of Italian unity the population grew rapidly from 27 million in 1871 to over 47½ million in 1951 and it is still growing at the rate of 400,000 a year, with the main increase in the south. Before 1914 and from 1918–23 a solution of a kind existed in mass emigration overseas and also to other European countries, but for thirty years emigration on a scale which bore any comparison with the growth of population ceased to exist, and although it has increased since 1950 it still only meets a fraction of Italy's needs.

It is in an effort to meet this problem that the Italian Government since 1945 has devoted a large share of the country's income to public works of various kinds, particularly road-making, extension of electricity supplies, land development and above all to the great scheme of agrarian reform of which some account will be given in the last chapter of this book. It should perhaps be pointed out that the best of the agrarian reformers are well aware that agrarian reform alone, even in its widest sense which involves a social revolution in many areas, cannot solve the problem of southern over-population. The introduction of industry will provide some employment, but in the end there are too many people in the south, particularly in Calabria, and the future well-being of the population must ultimately depend on the departure of many people from the poorest districts and in a decline in the birth-rate, which is expected by the experts. Meantime much is being done to give the poorest peasants a tolerable standard of living and above all to give them hope and a belief in the good intentions of the Government to carry out practical improvements.

It may seem that too much emphasis is laid throughout this book on conditions in the south and on the urgent need to improve those conditions. It is true that over 20 million of Italy's population of 47 million live in the eight northern regions and that the main source of the country's national

income is the north where an intelligent and industrious population has created a flourishing industry, in spite of the lack of raw materials, and an ordered agriculture which at its best can stand comparison with that of any country. Education and social services of all kinds are seen at their best in the north, and the great body of organized labour was for many years before the coming of Fascism and is again since its fall a very strong force in politics and economics, as the unorganized agricultural labour of the south cannot yet be. On the other hand northerners have begun to realize that if they are to prosper they must in their own interest, at least, help to redeem the south which can provide larger home-markets, on which the future of Italian industry must to a great extent depend.

In a sense a new unity is being created in Italy. The old unity was a political unity created by a few men of vision and imposed on a people many of whom had no understanding of its implications. The 20th century is seeing the growth of an economic and social unity, which is also being forced on the whole country, but which should in time create a more real and stable unity. The awakening of a sense of the material benefits to be expected from the existence of a more prosperous south combined with the practical efforts of agrarian reform has already resulted in an effective start being made in the creation of that prosperity. Another force is at work, internal migration. The war brought many southern refugees, fleeing before the advancing armies, to the north. Not only have many of them stayed in the north but the movement continues. The northerners, from workers to housing officers and educationalists, grumble at the difficulties caused by the arrival of the illiterate southerners in their towns, but the social importance of the movement is great, and if the north rises to the situation the next generation may see a great change in the relations between north and south.

Italians are naturally proud of their country's great past, but for most of them Italy is a modern country with present-day political and economic problems, many of which are made more complicated by their consciousness of the past. They are

passionately anxious to interest people of other countries in the conditions of modern Italy, and extend a most generous welcome to all serious enquirers, while between visits to new housing estates or power stations they will make sure that the guest does not miss seeing a Romanesque cathedral. Sometimes, it must be owned, they feel impatient with English people whose interest in some aspect of Italian history and love of Italy's past seem to stand in the way of their appreciation of the present. They feel that the knowledge of many English people never gets beyond the work of Garibaldi and Cavour in creating modern Italy. The best present-day Italians are working day and night to make their country worthy of the great founders of its unity. They are grateful for outside interest and for the financial help given to them by the United States in particular, but they know that the most important work must be done by Italians themselves, and they have already achieved far more than the outside world, or indeed many of their fellow-countrymen, realize. It is the aim of this book to give some impression of what the problems are and of what is being done to solve them.

CHAPTER II

POPULATION AND POVERTY

IN THE introductory chapter over-population was said to be the central problem of the Italian economy. This chapter will try to explain this statement, to describe the effect of over-population on the life of the people and to indicate how Italy is facing the problem. It is not a new problem, though it has new aspects, and it is an exceedingly thorny one, but the encouraging fact is that since 1945 the Italian parliament and Government have faced the problem and are trying to find ways of solving it, although they admit that to do so they need the help of other countries. There is a tendency among Italians, particularly among intellectuals, to say that political pressure accounts for the Government's interest in the problem. This is a most unjust aspersion on Italy's statesmen and on the officials engaged in carrying out their policy. Political pressure undoubtedly exists—fear of communism was a useful spur in getting a measure of agrarian reform rapidly under way—but there is a widespread feeling that the national interest demands active measures in face of a poverty which cannot be regarded with equanimity by the citizens of a progressive western country in the middle of the 20th century.

The truth is that many decent Italians are at last beginning to know something about the conditions in which many of their fellow-citizens live, and to realize the widespread effect of these conditions. Statistics have always been available showing the rapid increase of population and the low agricultural yields of the south, but few people look at statistics and in any case figures alone do not reveal the bare, grinding poverty, the cruel lack of the necessities of life, the absence of medical care, the neglected condition of children quite apart from the absence of regular schooling, and the terribly high rate of infant mortality. Nearly fifty years ago a few young north Italians, Senator Zanotti Bianco and his friends, having seen these things in the

south, devoted their energies to doing all that private individuals and a private society, the *Associazione nazionale per gli interessi del Mezzogiorno* (National Association for the Interests of the South),[1] could do. Many of their activities were suppressed by the Fascists, but the work went on and has increased enormously since 1945. In 1946 Carlo Levi published his autobiographical novel *Cristo si è fermato a Eboli*[2] which describes the degrading poverty of a southern agricultural hill-town, and his artist's vision aroused the sluggish imagination of many Italians as well as foreigners. But it is almost more impressive to read the books and articles of a scholar like Professor Rossi-Doria of the University of Naples, where every page shows sympathy and understanding based on knowledge and pain that such things should be.[3] Until recently, however, knowledge of social conditions and particularly of the extent of unemployment throughout the country was incomplete and ill co-ordinated. In 1951 two parliamentary Commissions were appointed, one on unemployment,[4] the other on poverty (*miseria*).[5] In 1953 their reports were published containing valuable factual accounts by ordinary members of parliament as well as by professional economists, students of social questions and humanitarians, all supplemented by clearly set out tables of statistics. The reports leave no excuse for ignorance, at least among members of parliament, or for failure to take action.

Among the points brought out in both reports is the fact of the existence of extreme poverty in the north and centre of Italy as well as in the south. Poverty in the south is more striking, more widespread, possibly more picturesque, and

[1] Referred to hereafter as The Association for the South.

[2] Turin, Einaudi, 1946; English translation by F. Frenaye: *Christ stopped at Eboli* (London, Cassell, 1948).

[3] See e.g. his *Riforma agraria e azione meridionalista* (Bologna, ed. Agricole, 1948), a collection of writings and speeches.

[4] Repubblica Italiana. Commissione parlamentare di inchiesta sulla disoccupazione: *La disoccupazione in Italia* (Rome, Camera dei Deputati, 1953), referred to hereafter as *Inchiesta sulla disoccupazione.*

[5] Camera dei Deputati: *Atti della commissione parlamentare di inchiesta sulla miseria in Italia e sui mezzi per combatterla* (Rome, 1953), referred to hereafter as *Commissione sulla miseria.*

more generally accepted as inevitable just because it is so prevalent everywhere. The account given of the poverty in some of the northern Alpine valleys, for instance in those known as the Valli Bresciane or in the valleys near Cuneo, is quite as depressing as those of some of the bad areas in the south. Poor land and backward methods of farming, lack of good local roads, poor water supply, absence of drains, bad housing, overcrowding, malnutrition, all these characteristics of rural poverty are found in the Lombard and Piedmontese valleys as well as in Apulia and Calabria. Moreover, such conditions are not confined to the high valleys; the Po delta (*Delta Padano*) has all the marks of a depressed area, as the Italians now call the poorest districts. There are large stretches of undeveloped land, agriculture is backward, capital is lacking and there is no mechanization. Housing conditions are often appalling. In Comacchio, for instance, the rooms of the one-storey houses are below street level in a district often liable to be flooded, and there is no sanitation. In many of the villages there is a lack of drinking water which has to be bought from water vendors. Communications are bad, and medical care consequently unsatisfactory, as the few doctors often have difficulty in reaching their patients and there is a shortage of clinics and hospitals. There is a great deal of sickness, particularly among women who suffer from the effects of water-carrying and from the heavy work in the rice-fields. 'The average income of a large number of families is absolutely insufficient to ensure a minimum standard of living and presupposes the . . . intervention of public assistance'.[1]

This poverty of the north is all the more striking because it exists in such close proximity to the prosperous regions of north Italy. This is markedly true of the poverty in Milan,[2] where the splendid shops and big cars of Italy's greatest industrial city give the casual tourist an impression of immense

[1] *Commissione sulla miseria*, vol. VII, p. 68. A large part of the Delta Padano is covered by the Agrarian Reform law (the *stralcio* law, see p. 130) and conditions will undoubtedly improve rapidly.

[2] Ibid., vol. VI, pp. 143–88.

wealth. It is, however, only necessary to read the chapters on Naples in the Poverty report[1] or those on Basilicata and Calabria in that on Unemployment[2] to see that ultimately there is no comparison. In the north real destitution is confined to a few districts though poverty is widespread, while in the south great masses of the population still live only just above starvation level. Above all, in the north there is always hope of finding a job ; it is in fact this hope which causes the migration northwards of the southerners, who often constitute the poorest elements in the population of the northern towns and are the cause of many social problems. The attitude towards these immigrants held by many respectable Italians is not unlike that of some Americans towards the Puerto Ricans, who are not subject to the immigration laws of the United States because they are American citizens. In both countries the situation creates real problems, but in north Italy the difficulties caused by the migrants have perhaps helped to awaken a number of people to the situation in large areas of their own country,[3] and to the need to take action in their own interests, if for no better reason.

It is now necessary to try and relate these accounts of poverty to a few figures. Enough has perhaps been said to indicate the danger of making general statements about Italy or of accepting 'average' figures for conveying an accurate picture of social conditions, but it is particularly important to remember this danger when considering the country's vital statistics and density figures. In 1951 the total population was 47,515,537 (including 297,003 in Trieste), 23,264,740 males and 24,250,797 females, an increase of over 20 million since 1871 and of 4½ million since the last census in 1936. Since 1951 the population has continued to grow by about 400,000 a year. The real significance of these figures only emerges when they are broken down among the four main divisions of the country. Between 1936 and 1951 the population of the north rose from

[1] *Commissione sulla miseria*, vol. VI, pp. 11–66.

[2] *Inchiesta sulla disoccupazione*, vol. III, tom. 4, pp. 139–220 and pp. 225–382.

[3] Compare the effect on English country people of the advent of the East End London evacuees in 1940.

20·1 to 20·8 million, that of the centre from 7·6 to 8·7 million, that of the south from 10·2 to 11·8 million and that of the islands from 5 to 5·8 million. The density of inhabitants rose from 139 per square kilometre of the national territory in 1936 to 157 in 1951 and in the four divisions from 156, 131, 140 and 101 to 174, 148, 163 and 115 respectively. Thus the biggest percentage increase took place in the south and islands, where the natural conditions are least favourable and where the possibility of absorbing part of the predominantly agricultural population into other activities is still almost negligible. The density figures are, however, misleading in another direction, if those of the individual regions are examined. The comparatively prosperous industrial regions of Lombardy and Liguria have densities of 276 and 288 to the square kilometre respectively, while those of the Abruzzi and Basilicata are only 110 and 63; yet over-population is not nearly as serious a problem in the northern regions although there is industrial unemployment.

As in other countries the increase in population is due to a drop in the death-rate and not to an increased birth-rate. In Italy the birth-rate fell from 32·5 per 1,000 in 1901 to 18·5 in 1951, although this is still a fairly high figure compared with that of other western countries, but the death-rate also dropped from 22 per 1,000 in 1901 to the low European level of 10·3 per 1,000 in 1951. The most marked and most encouraging decrease in the death-rate is that of infant mortality, which fell from 166 per 1,000 in 1901 to 106 per 1,000 in 1938 and to 66·1 per 1,000 in 1951, although this is still a high figure compared with 31 per 1,000 in the United Kingdom and 21 per 1,000 in Sweden. The national figures for births and infant mortality hide great discrepancies in the different regions. The variations in the general death-rate figure are not large, but the birth-rate in 1951 ranged from 10 per 1,000 in Liguria and 10·9 per 1,000 in Piedmont, in both of which regions there were more deaths than births, to 18·3 per 1,000 in the Veneto, 25·6 per 1,000 in Apulia, 26·6 per 1,000 in Basilicata and 27·9 per 1,000 in Calabria. The infant mortality rate in the south is still very high, rising to the horrifying figure of 120·4 per 1,000

in Basilicata, to 85·6 per 1,000 in Calabria and to 89·1 per 1,000 in Apulia,[1] although even these figures are a great improvement on 156·5, 123·7 and 133·2 per 1,000 respectively as recently as 1938.

Even figures like these cannot convey the impression made on a British or even a north Italian tourist[2] by the sight of the conditions in which these babies are born, or by the realization that the large average-sized family of 8 to 10 people, father and mother and 6 to 8 children, would be a family of 12 to 14 if it were not for the deaths of babies and young children. To talk with the mothers of peasant families in the south or in some of the remoter parts of the north calls up the picture of 17th-century family tombs in English churches where the parents are surrounded by large numbers of living children and often by still larger numbers of those who died in infancy. The wonder is that so many babies manage to survive.

Many of these children are born in the crowded hill towns which house the rural population of the southern regions. All over the south conditions are bad and it is difficult to imagine anything much worse than the cave-dwellings of Matera in Basilicata, where over 3,000 families live in caves in the side of the hill on which the town is built, but some of the villages on the Ionian side of Calabria leave an even more haunting impression on a northerner, partly because their existence is taken for granted by most people and familiarity has bred not contempt but despair of improvement. The roads from the coast wind up into the magnificent barren mountains of Calabria until they reach these remote, isolated towns, perched 2,000 or 3,000 feet up on the side of the mountains and containing from 4,000 to 10,000 inhabitants, all of whom are agricultural workers. Some are owners of tiny farms, consisting of scattered strips of land, quite inadequate to support a man and wife and two children, let alone seven or eight; others are day-labourers (*braccianti*) who only find work for about 100

[1] The rates in the three regions fell to 102·8 per 1,000, 81 per 1,000 and 85·2 per 1,000 respectively in 1952.

[2] See the account of the impression made on a north Italian woman in *Cristo si è fermato a Eboli*, pp. 79–83, English version pp. 81–6.

days in the year and often at wages well below the legal minimum, because if a man refuses the offered wage the employer can find six others to take his place.

The towns, for they are not villages in a northern sense, consist of houses piled one on top of the other on the steep slope of the hill with streets running between the houses so narrow that no wheeled traffic can go along them, only a mule or donkey. Anyone meeting a mule must flatten himself against the wall if there is no convenient doorway at hand. Many of the ground-floor rooms get light and air only through the door and are shared by the people with their animals. The mortality among babies under a year old is heavy, but the risks for toddlers are almost as serious. Many of the women start from their homes at 6 or 7 in the morning and walk for a couple of hours to work in the distant fields, leaving their tiny children to play in the streets. The Association for the South does a great deal for these 'abandoned' children, as they are called, and has nursery schools in many of the remote villages, but it can only cater for a fraction of the children. In the nursery schools the children are fed and taught the elements of orderly civilized behaviour, for when they first come in they are like little wild animals.

The disastrous result of the steady growth of population in a country like Italy, where industry and agriculture have not proved able to absorb the increase, and where for nearly thirty years there was no outlet for the surplus population, is the high figure for unemployment, which in September 1952 amounted to about 1½ million people who had either been formerly employed or were in search of their first job. In view of the fact that September is a month of high employment, particularly in occupations like agriculture and building, the average figure for the year was probably considerably higher. Moreover this figure takes no account of under-employment which is such a serious feature of agriculture, particularly in the south.

About 60% of the unemployment is industrial and nearly half of all the unemployed are in the north, where much of the industrial unemployment is due to the unnatural expansion of

heavy industry immediately before and during the 1939–45 war and to the need to reduce it to conform with a peace-time economy better suited to Italy's natural resources. This is particularly the case in Liguria, the region of big firms like Ansaldo engaged in heavy engineering and of the dockyards of Genoa, Savona and Spezia. Workers poured into Liguria both before and during the war, and in the five years from 1947 to 1952 about 12,000 men had to be dismissed. These troubles were especially marked in Liguria, but the region also has a share in the serious feature of almost all Italian unemployment, the lack of any special qualifications among the unemployed and also the high degree of partial if not total illiteracy. It must be remembered in connection with the high unemployment rate in the north that large numbers of the unemployed are not northerners and in any case do not come from families of industrial workers. Many of them are former agricultural labourers, and the majority are classed in the Labour Exchange lists as general unskilled labourers. All over Italy, as in other countries, urbanization has been rapid during the last thirty years, though it has been accentuated in Italy by the great difference in prosperity between north and south and especially by the lack of industry in the south. Rome itself has been one of the worst sufferers from this tendency, particularly since 1943, when people of all kinds poured into the city and its suburbs in front of the advancing armies. Many of them never went back and have added a heavy burden to the city's housing problem and other social services. Rome provides an outstanding example of a type of migrants found in most towns, people who are registered at the Labour Exchanges as unskilled or general workers. Owing to the war they have no special qualifications but are not physically strong enough to do heavy work. According to the Unemployment Commission many of them have been to technical schools and now live in a grey world between that of worker and employee and try to get jobs as watchmen, caretakers, etc.[1] This lack of training is so serious among the teeming population of Lazio that, in spite of local unemployment, workers have to be brought in from

[1] *Inchiesta sulla disoccupazione*, vol. III, tom. 3, p. 258.

other regions for many different jobs. The building trade, for instance, has to find masons and carpenters outside Lazio, for they are non-existent among all the registered unemployed of Rome.

In general, this lack of training and often semi-illiteracy is at least one of the reasons for the melancholy number of young unemployed in search of their first jobs, a number variously estimated at 500,000 or 670,000.[1] The Government has set up a number of training courses all over the country, but opinions vary as to their value. Some local authorities think well of the courses, but many industrialists think they are of little use and are trying to turn out good, specialized workers in the impossibly short time of a few months. A foreigner wonders whether the Government would not be well advised to enforce the law on schooling up to 14 and to provide free technical education for a large number of children for two or three further years, thus reducing the pressure on the labour market and raising the standard of professional training.[2]

One and a half million unemployed out of a total population of 47½ million and out of a labour force of about 19 million is a sufficiently heavy burden for Italy to carry, but the Unemployment Commission produced weighty evidence of a yet heavier burden for which no exact figures can be produced, that of under-employment. The bulk of this under-employment is in agriculture, which accounts for the fact that full agricultural unemployment is assessed at only about one-third of industrial unemployment in the country as a whole and even in the south only reaches about the same level as industrial. This fact provides a good illustration of the impossibility of forming a correct idea of a social situation from figures only. Thus the unemployment figures expressed in percentages of the population of the Abruzzi and Basilicata were lower than those for north Italy or for the whole country while those of Calabria were only 0·11% higher, and yet it is the impossibility of finding

[1] The higher figure was obtained from the sample survey made by the Italian Institute of Statistics in 1952 and includes a number of professional people who do not register at the Labour Exchanges which provided the lower figure.

[2] Cf. p. 94.

enough work to support life which drives the inhabitants of the Abruzzi, Calabria, Basilicata and the other southern regions to migrate northward and so add to the number of unemployed in the towns. The statistics of course represent only those actually unemployed in September 1952, they take no account of agricultural under-employment, the curse of these regions, nor of the fact that there is practically no alternative to agricultural work.

Mention was made above[1] of the fact that for nearly thirty years there was no outlet for the surplus population of Italy. Before 1914 and from 1919–24 emigration provided a safety valve and was encouraged by the Italian Government. Not only did a great many Italians find work abroad, but their remittances eased the poverty of those whom they left behind, besides contributing to Italy's trade balance. Between 1900 and 1914 net emigration, i.e. the number of emigrants less those who returned, totalled 3½ million. More than half the emigrants went overseas and over two-thirds of the overseas emigrants both before and immediately after the 1914–18 war went to the United States, an average annual number of 266,000 between 1906 and 1910 and over 300,00 in 1920. It is therefore not difficult to appreciate the effect in Italy of the passing of the American immigration laws of 1921 and 1924 which limited the quota of Italian immigrants to 3,845 a year. Argentina also took a great many emigrants, about 90,000 a year from 1906–10, rising to over 100,000 in 1913 and again in 1923. In addition to the overseas emigration about 270,000 emigrated annually to European countries; this was mainly temporary emigration and much of it seasonal, although there were large permanent settlements of Italians in France.

These were the years of the mass emigration of unskilled agricultural workers, unemployed or under-employed then as now, mainly from southern Italy, although many went also from the Veneto, which included the poor mountain valleys of Friuli. Undoubtedly emigration on this scale mitigated the effects of agricultural over-population and many emigrants prospered in their new homes, particularly those in the United

[1] See p. 15.

States; but there were others who found conditions in the new countries, particularly in Latin America, quite as bad as, if not worse than, those from which they had come. The attitude of the big landowners in Latin America—many of them Italian by origin—to their labourers was much the same as that of the *latifondisti* (big landowners) of Sicily; many emigrants found they had leapt from the frying-pan into the fire, and the Italian Consulates were besieged by people trying to get home to Italy.

After 1924 emigration declined rapidly, partly owing to the attitude of the countries of immigration, especially the United States, partly to the policy of the Fascist Government, which held that the loss of political and military strength resulting from emigration could not be compensated by economic gain. In the 1930s the growing agricultural population, whose standard of living was in many cases even lower than before, and barely above starvation level as a result partly of the general economic crisis, partly of Mussolini's policy of self-sufficiency, was presented with the cruel delusion of colonial expansion. Apart from the moral questions involved, the invasion of Ethiopia destroyed all possibility of the peaceful settlement of Italians in the one African country where there was room for agricultural workers in reasonably good climatic conditions. In Libya, although the native inhabitants were robbed of the best land, the country could never have carried more than a few thousand Italian farmers. The vast sums of money spent on developing the country, building roads and sinking deep wells, excellent work in itself, and establishing European types of farms, could have been used to much better purpose on some form of agrarian reform in south Italy on the lines of what is now being done. As it was, the Fascists aroused great hostility among their African subjects and unhappily also succeeded in creating much bitterness even among educated Italians against the Allies, particularly the British, for increasing the problem of over-population by depriving Italy of all her colonies except Somalia, which admittedly can never support more than a handful of European colonists. The longing to find any kind of relief for the pressure of agricultural

population induced a widespread belief, which still persists, in the myth of African colonization as an outlet.

After 1945 various agreements on emigration were made with other countries, the most promising of which seemed to be those with France and Argentina, but the results have been disappointing. There are many problems connected with the standard of living in other countries. Even before 1940 French workers complained that the employment of Italians made it impossible to enforce wage agreements. On the Italian side there have been difficulties about the transfer of wages and family allowances. Some of the difficulties can probably be solved by patient negotiation, but there are many real problems. South Italians are accustomed to such low standards of life that they are often prepared to put up cheerfully with living conditions which are no longer tolerable to British workers in particular. An Italian may rent a house and then sublet to other Italians whose large families are prepared to sleep and eat in one room, and they cannot understand why the local British Medical Officer of Health should interfere. Quite apart, however, from questions of wages and living conditions in European countries, mass migration on the old lines to Latin-American countries is no longer a thing which can be contemplated, much less encouraged, by the Italian Government. The settlement of Italian colonists overseas is now a costly process for their Government, which is too poor to embark on any large schemes. In some of the Latin-American countries there is a demand for agricultural labourers, but the conditions of life are very hard, and it is easier to bear extreme poverty at home than in a foreign country. Elsewhere the demand is mainly for skilled labour, and there is none to spare; Italy has not enough skilled labour for her own industrial expansion, and as has been said above her unemployed are mainly untrained and often illiterate.

This somewhat gloomy picture does not mean that no emigration is taking place. Some Italian workers are going overseas. Both Canada and Australia are now taking more Italian immigrants than ever before; in 1953 the number rose to over 21,000 migrating to Canada and over 12,000 to

Australia. On the other hand the numbers going to Argentina dropped from 98,200 in 1949 to 18,800 in 1953, and the total overseas emigration in 1953 was only a little over 97,600—a small number from a country with 1½ million unemployed and a population increasing by 400,000 a year. The Italian Government would like to see much greater freedom of movement for workers in western Europe. But the demand in other western countries is likely to remain one for skilled labour, of which Italy will not have any considerable supply to spare for some years at least. The urgent problem is to find work for the mass of unskilled, largely agricultural workers.

The most hopeful long-term answer to the problem seems to lie in an extension of the scheme of agrarian reform combined with increased industrialization to which the Italian Government is devoting so much thought and financial support, and in the provision of more and better training of the country's natural resource of man-power. A later chapter will try to give some account of the work being carried on by the agrarian reform institutions;[1] meantime something must be said of what is being done to improve social conditions generally and to mitigate distress.

It would be a serious mistake to think that Italy was ill supplied with social services. The Commission on Poverty pointed out that the amount of the funds spent by private and public charitable institutions puts Italy among the countries with the highest *per capita* expenditure on charity in relation to national income.[2] The problem both for government officials concerned in the administration of public funds and for social workers is that there are too many agencies, both public and private. There is a lack of co-ordination between the various public and private charitable institutions which results in what the Commission described as 'a disorderly distribution of help'[3] and in an expenditure which the Italians themselves do not consider commensurate with the results obtained. A further difficulty is that the funds available to both public and

[1] See pp. 127 ff.
[2] *Commissione sulla miseria*, vol. I, p. 214.
[3] Ibid., vol. VII, p. 77.

private institutions are quite inadequate and that means are most lacking where the need is greatest, that is as usual in the south.

There is, however, one official co-ordinating body which comes under the control of the Presidency of the Council, the *Amministrazione per gli aiuti internazionali* (Office for international aid). This body, known as A.A.I., originated as the committee to which the Italian Government delegated its relations with UNRRA and which at a later date handled the various forms of American aid. Since 1950 A.A.I. has figured in the national budget among the financial responsibilities of the Presidency of the Council and has been recognized as a regular part of the system of public assistance. A.A.I. is still responsible for seeing that Italy carries out international agreements such as those connected with foreign refugees, but the main part of its work now lies in the provision of aid for poor children and old people. This is done by making regular allocations of food for school meals, for children's and old people's homes and for holiday camps, by providing professional training for older children in institutions, and by giving special grants for holiday camps for children in the south. A.A.I. also makes grants to social training schools, a very recent development in Italy, and since 1951 has employed a number of newly qualified social workers from the schools in its own offices.

Among its administrative officials the A.A.I. fortunately has some civil servants of the finest type, who realize to the full the urgent need to co-ordinate all forms of social and charitable work. Through their control of allocations of aid to all kinds of institutions for children, and in a minor degree through the social workers who owe so much to their encouragement, some co-ordination is beginning to take place. The need for this co-ordination is amply illustrated by the remarkable volume published by A.A.I. giving an account of the various public and private charitable institutions in Italy.[1]

The result of over-population combined with war destruction is that housing presents one of the most serious social

[1] *Organi ed enti di assistenza pubblica e privata in Italia* (Rome, 1953), reprinted as a document in the *Commissione sulla miseria,* vol. XIII.

problems in post-war Italy, which the Italian Government and Parliament, like those of other countries, have recognized as one which must be tackled by the State. Housing presents a particularly difficult problem in Italy, where not only were incredibly bad housing conditions made still worse by the war, but the idea of national responsibility for the houses of the workers and of the need of Government control over building was almost unheard of except in the case of land settlements of a colonist type. In the years immediately after 1945 it was horrifying to an English visitor, only too well aware of the difficulty in this country of getting a building licence to do the most modest repairs, to see luxury flats and magnificent new banks going up in Rome and other big towns, while practically no workers' houses were being built. This was particularly noticeable in and near Rome, where respectable people, whose homes had been destroyed by the advancing armies in 1943 and 1944, were still in 1948 living in Roman tombs along the Via Appia. All over the country numbers of people were living in cellars, or caves, or ramshackle lean-to huts (*baracche*) built of bits of wood, tarpaulins and old petrol tins. In 1952, seven years after the end of the war, the Commission on Poverty estimated that 2,800,000 families were living under over-crowded conditions (that is, over two persons to one room), 870,000 of them living more than four to a room or in cellars, huts, caves, etc.[1] Apart from the Veneto, the worst conditions were in the south, where 615,000 of the 870,000 families lived, but even Milan still had 5,000 people living in *baracche* on the outskirts of the city.[2]

By 1952, however, the Government was tackling the problem and its main re-housing scheme was well under way. In 1949 Signor Fanfani, at that time Minister of Labour, introduced a law which would provide employment and at the same time build houses for workers. Under this seven-year plan the Government intends to build 160,000 dwellings in 4,400 communes, one-third to be in the south. A special branch

[1] *Commissione sulla miseria*, vol. II, pp. 33–4.

[2] A large number of the people in the Milan *baracche* had been rehoused by 1955.

of the *Istituto Nazionale Assicurazione* (National Institute of Insurance) was set up to deal with the finance of the scheme, which is therefore known as *INA-CASA* (*casa*=a house). Funds are provided by a levy on all wages and salaries, on the wages bill of all employers and by a State contribution. Rents are moderate, ranging from 4,500 to 4,700 lire (under £3) a month for a house of three rooms, kitchen and bathroom, and priority is given to the homeless and to people living in condemned premises such as caves and *baracche*.

By the end of 1953 INA-CASA had completed nearly 91,000 dwellings. These are usually grouped in housing estates on the edge of towns and an effort has been made to vary the type of blocks of flats, and even to include some cottage-type houses. At Isolotto, for instance, on the outskirts of Florence, there is such an estate, and although the blocks look rather grim and gaunt the flats are well-planned with good-sized rooms, and the pride of the tenants is great. The cottages are not always regarded with approval. The tenants are apt to consider the stairs—one short flight, as the houses consist of ground and first floor only—as adding greatly to the work of the house and as making it cold and draughty. One interesting new feature of some at least of the INA-CASA estates is the provision of various social services on the estates themselves. Trained social workers (*Assistenti sociali*) are given 2 or 3 rooms, where they run children's libraries, boys' clubs and other activities among the tenants, and work in close collaboration with the *Assistente sanitaria*, the trained Health Visitor who helps to run the clinics for mothers and babies.[1]

Among various smaller national schemes, concerned mainly with housing people rendered homeless by the war, particularly refugees from former Italian territories, the most interesting is perhaps that known as UNRRA-CASAS, a confusing name to a foreigner. CASAS stands for *Comitato amministrativo soccorso ai senzatetto* (Committee for providing aid for the homeless) which was originally, as the other half of the name suggests, an Italian committee working with UNRRA. By the end of 1952 UNRRA-CASAS had built about 696 houses and

[1] See pp. 35–6.

had 585 others under construction in addition to having repaired a large number of war-damaged houses. The number of houses built is very small compared with Italy's needs, but UNRRA-CASAS has not only been building for the very poor but is also carrying out a social experiment which is new in Italy. UNRRA-CASAS builds pleasant small groups of houses and employs social workers, whose job it is to help the refugees and other homeless people to adapt themselves to a new life and to develop a sense of belonging to a social group. When UNRRA-CASAS obtained a large grant from the European Relief Fund (E.R.P.) in 1950 it embarked on a larger experiment of the same kind, the building of villages in the depressed areas which should contain not only houses but all the buildings needed to create a complete village community—a church, surgery, schools, shops, a cinema, club rooms and so forth. The first of these villages is La Martella near Matera in Basilicata, built to rehouse some of the cave-dwellers of Matera near the land assigned to them under the agrarian reform scheme for the area.[1]

While it is true that the number of houses being built by INA-CASA, UNRRA-CASAS and other bodies is very small compared with the need, it must be remembered that in all the areas subject to the agrarian reform laws large numbers of peasants are acquiring new houses on the lands assigned to them and that these peasants in most cases come from the agricultural towns where overcrowding and housing conditions are worst.

It is impossible in a book of this size even to list the public and private bodies concerned in the relief of poverty; all that can be attempted is to indicate two of the most important national bodies. The central public institution is the *Ente comunale di assistenza*, *E.C.A.* (the Public Assistance Authority of the Commune). The E.C.A. exist in every commune, and are independent bodies, not subject to the local authority, nor local branches of any Ministry, although their main financial support now comes from a State grant. Their duty, laid down by law, is to deal with immediate and pressing need by giving

[1] For a further account of the Matera scheme, see pp. 136–7.

temporary help. Such help usually takes the form of food, clothing and bedding, rarely money. The field of action of the E.C.A. is not strictly defined and they can therefore make experiments in the social field; but their funds are limited by the financial position of each individual commune and consequently so are their experiments, except in the case of the richer and more progressive communes.

The E.C.A. must by law provide for the immediate needs of orphans, abandoned children, the blind, the deaf and dumb in all cases of urgent need, until provision can be made through one of the many charitable bodies. Many E.C.A. however go much further and run their own children's homes, provide cheap canteens, public dormitories, etc., and have their own holiday camps of different kinds.

Another nation-wide institution is the *Opera nazionale per la protezione della maternità e dell' infanzia, O.N.M.I.* (the National Society for the Protection of Mothers and Babies). It was established in 1925, and was the first body to try to secure complete protection of mothers and young babies in Italy. It has very comprehensive powers, as it exercises a watching control over all public and private institutions for mothers and babies and in case of need has authority to get such institutions closed by the proper authorities. All poor or deserted pregnant women and mothers and babies under five come under its care, while physically and mentally abnormal children, abandoned children and young delinquents remain in its care until the age of 18. O.N.M.I. is possibly best known for its preventive care both before and after the birth of the baby; it functions largely through local clinics for mothers and babies very like English Baby Welfare Centres. In one of the very poor districts of Florence, for instance, O.N.M.I. has a delightful centre to which the mothers bring their small children for advice. One of the doctors from Florence's children's hospital attends the clinic twice a week for about an hour, helped by an *Assistente sanitaria*, who weighs the babies and hands out baby foods or medicaments ordered by the doctor and given free to those who are too poor to pay. The need of medical advice may be illustrated by the case of

a woman whose first baby was a very poor little thing when brought to the doctor at about a month old. She had been feeding him on bread soaked in olive oil since he was two weeks old—thanks to O.N.M.I. he was a flourishing young scamp of three in 1955. The good advice given in the clinics is rubbed in during frequent home visits by the *Assistente sanitaria*, who is given a good general social training and is able to report on home conditions and so to be a most useful assistant to the doctor.

Italy has a great tradition of private charity. Not unaturally in a country where 98% of the population are Roman Catholics, most of the charities are in the hands of religious bodies; orphanages, convalescent homes, old people's homes, etc., are mainly run by religious orders of monks or nuns. The idea of trained lay social workers is very new, and consequently the staff of charitable institutions were and still are in many cases monks and nuns, even if the institution was not a church foundation. The most striking example is the continued use of nuns as nurses in hospitals as well as in convents where patients are received. In many ways they make excellent nurses, but they are not always adaptable to modern methods, and many are unwilling to take the full nursing training. This is a cause of complaint in the famous Meyer hospital for children in Florence, which can never get enough fully trained nurses and finds the nuns unsatisfactory substitutes. It is by contrast rather remarkable that in the small modern hospital of Melito in the far south beyond Reggio di Calabria a very intelligent nun is the sister in charge of the X-ray department.

In the south most of the institutions belonging to the Association for the South have hitherto been run by nuns, though a change seems to be beginning, possibly partly connected with the increase in the number of trained lay workers. Most of the Children's Homes and Nursery Schools belonging to the Association are in very remote places, and a real sense of vocation is needed to enable the teachers and the staff of Homes to endure the difficulties and isolation of their lives. From an educational point of view the work done by many of the nuns in the Calabrian nursery schools may often be out of date and

sometimes of a low standard, but the social training of the babies is remarkable. The Children's Homes are old-fashioned, and in spite of the kindness and real affection of the nuns too institutional compared with e.g. the best Dr. Barnardo's Homes in England. But the revolt against 'institutions' is of recent date in this country and has hardly begun in Italy, where many of the Homes for Children are enormous, although many people concerned with children, both officials like those of A.A.I. and private individuals, are aware of the need for small family groups.

Italy like England has profited in some cases from the readiness of private people to experiment in new methods, which are often adopted later on by public authorities. One of the most remarkable experiments made after 1945 was the creation of the *Villaggio di ragazzi* (Boys' village) for boys taken off the streets. Many towns and particularly Naples and Rome were haunted by large numbers of children, mainly boys from 8 to 14 years old, who had lost their homes and families, and picked up a living as shoe-blacks or by selling cigarettes at the corners of the streets. Several 'villages' were started by a remarkable monk for these boys, who ran their village with an elected mayor and council, organized their own work, and besides ordinary schooling received a thorough training in one of several crafts. They were even free to go to the nearest town —some of the boys at the village near Civita Vecchia would go to Rome for a day or longer—and almost always they came back of their own accord.

Criticism of private charity in Italy is aroused not by inadequacy of funds for the work attempted nor by the use of old-fashioned methods of nursing or teaching, but by the attitude of a good many of the well-to-do towards poverty and charity. In spite of article 38 of the Constitution, which speaks of 'the right to social assistance', this attitude is still that of the lady bountiful with her soup and red flannel petticoats. The best side of Italian charity is seen in any sudden emergency, an earthquake or a flood, like the terrible floods near Salerno in 1954, when money and practical help pour in. It is the refusal by many Italians to recognize the right to a minimum standard

of life, their inability to face the continuing problems of poverty and unemployment, which make a student of social problems feel that the rich are living in an unreal, early 19th-century, world and that one day they may find the ground opening at their feet. There are of course notable exceptions to this view of society; nothing could be more remote from it than the attitude of the Association for the South or of the great society *Umanitaria* in Milan. In any case it is unbecoming in an English writer to criticize too harshly an attitude which was common in this country until the bitter years of mass unemployment in the 1930s awakened many of us to the desire and need of self-respecting people for work not charity.

In addition to the great number and variety of charitable institutions Italy has a full complement of social insurances, old age, sickness, accident, disability, tuberculosis, unemployment, etc., but unfortunately the system is not in general satisfactory. The workers pay no contributions; the employers complain that their burden is unduly heavy, and maintain that the high costs of Italian production, which react unfavourably on sales in foreign markets, are in great measure due to the weight of insurance contributions which amount to about 25% of the industrial worker's wage. On the other hand the benefits received by the workers are very low, and it is the view of many people concerned with social questions that the bulk of the large sums contributed is swallowed up by the bureaucratic methods of the great insurance companies which handle social insurance. It is certainly remarkable that only about one-tenth—probably much less—of the unemployed get unemployment benefit.[1] One insurance works on the whole satisfactorily, the tuberculosis insurance. Italy has fought and is fighting a great battle against tuberculosis, and although it is still a deadly enemy there has been a great decline in the number of victims; in 1951 they were down to nearly half the number of 1938. There are excellent sanatoria and provision is made through the anti-tuberculosis committees of every province for all those who are not covered by insurance. Above all, a great deal is being done both by public and private bodies

[1] *Inchiesta sulla disoccupazione*, vol. II, tom. 2, pp. 301–4.

to protect children by sending those who have had the disease or have been exposed to infection to homes with schools attached to them in the hills and for long holidays by the sea.[1]

The problems facing a country with so few natural resources and such a large and growing population are enormous, and the poverty of so many Italians must be a cause of distress to all thoughtful people, both Italians and foreigners, but there are three things which encourage Italy's friends to believe in a better future. First, as was suggested at the beginning of this chapter, a considerable number of people now know something of the reality of the poverty and can no longer tolerate the attitude of those who shrug their shoulders and say 'it was always like that in south Italy'. Secondly, action based on knowledge has been taken, and the southern peasant has begun to believe that the future holds a hope of better things. Thirdly, and perhaps most important of all, a great deal is being done everywhere for children, and although in many cases children become workers too early, the care which is shown for their physical, moral and mental welfare is remarkable in a poor country where teachers and social workers alike can often only help the children at the cost of enormous personal sacrifices.

[1] Cf. schools for children with T.B. tendency, p. 90.

CHAPTER III

CONSTITUTION AND GOVERNMENT

THE determining factor in Italy's 19th-century struggle for unity and independence was the part played by the kingdom of Piedmont in the person of Victor Emmanuel II, who was able to gain the submission even of a staunch republican like Garibaldi. Victor Emmanuel's grandson, Victor Emmanuel III, was a brave soldier, and for a short time during the 1914–18 war was respected by his people, but his acquiescence in Mussolini's seizure of power in 1922 not only lost him personally the respect of many of the best Italians but did irreparable damage to the monarchy. The failure of the Crown to separate itself from any activities of the Fascist Party and the personal unpopularity of the king and of the crown prince Umberto led many anti-fascists to hold the view that when Fascism ended the monarchy should disappear also. On 25 July 1943 Mussolini fell, but the king with Marshal Badoglio at his side took control and the hopes of the anti-fascists were dashed by the opposition of the Allies to any change, particularly by that of Churchill with his belief in monarchy and his fear of additional disorder arising from a change of régime. As it was, Badoglio's proclamation of 25 July announcing that the war would go on caused widespread confusion. There followed a period of dreadful uncertainty throughout the country while the German grip tightened, until the flight of the king and Badoglio from Rome to Brindisi on the declaration of the armistice on 8 September 1943 dealt a final blow to the prestige of the Crown.

The possibility of a regency for the king's small grandson, who was free of any taint of Fascism and whose mother would have been a popular regent, was considered, but there was little support for the suggestion and regencies in times of national crisis and general instability involve grave difficulties. Finally on 16 October 1943 the Committee of National Liberation of

Rome, containing representatives of all the important political parties except the Republicans, who refused to accept even the temporary continuance of the monarchy, wrung from the Allies a pledge that on the fall of Rome Umberto should take over from his father as Lieutenant-Governor. Rome did not fall as soon as had been expected, and it was not until 5 June 1944, the day after its occupation by the Allies, that Victor Emmanuel handed over his authority to Umberto. Three weeks later, on 25 June 1944, Umberto issued a decree law promising that Italy's form of government should be chosen by the Italian people as soon as possible after the liberation of the whole country. Ten months after the end of the war in Europe a decree law of 16 March 1946 announced that a referendum to decide on the question of monarchy or republic would be held on 2 June 1946, the day of the elections to the Constituent Assembly. On 9 May 1946 Victor Emmanel III abdicated and was succeeded by his son as Umberto II. On 2 June 1946 the Italian people decided in favour of the establishment of a republican form of government by 12,718,641 votes as against 10,718,502 given in favour of retention of the monarchy. Umberto II and his family at once left Italy and on 28 June Enrico De Nicola[1] was elected by the Constituent Assembly provisional head of the State.

It was clear that there was still strong support for the monarchy and an examination of the voting showed, as had been expected, that most of the support came from the south and islands, apart from Piedmont, the home of the House of Savoy. In the south the monarchy obtained 67·4% of the votes compared with 35·2% in the north and 36·5% in the centre. But although many Italians would have liked to retain the monarchy the new Constitution contains a strong expression of anti-monarchist feeling in article 139 which says: 'The republican form of government cannot be subject to constitutional revision.' The monarchist political party only obtained 2·8% of the votes in the elections to the 1948 parliament, and although the vote increased to 6·9% in the 1953 elections there

[1] De Nicola had been the last freely elected President of the Italian Chamber of Deputies, the lower house of parliament.

is no evidence that the country as a whole wishes to return to monarchical government.

The Constituent Assembly elected on 2 June 1946 drew up the new Constitution to replace the Statute of 1848 under which first Piedmont and then Italy had been governed. The Statute had been amended from time to time, but had remained unaltered in essentials, until Mussolini showed how easily its provisions could be adapted to the establishment of the Fascist dictatorship. The new Constitution was approved by the Assembly on 22 December 1947 and came into force on 1 January 1948 with De Nicola as first President of the new republic.

The Constitution is a rigid one which can only be amended by a lengthy and complicated procedure. It contains, like many modern constitutions, a number of articles dealing with social and economic subjects, such as the right to strike, the right to a living wage, the protection of mother and babies, which to English people seem to have little to do with constitutional law and practice. It must, however, be remembered that the eminent lawyers and politicians who drew up the Constitution had had twenty years' experience of Fascism and of unconstitutional government, and that they were determined to secure the liberty of the subject by every means in their power and to present a Constitution which should not be easily adaptable, as had been the Statute of 1848, to the demands of a Dictator.

The personal liberty of the subject had been violated in every possible way by the Fascist Government; many Italians had suffered exile or long terms of imprisonment and had seen their friends executed or tortured, and consequently a considerable section of the Constitution is devoted to securing the fundamental freedoms of the individual and the citizen—freedom of the person, inviolability of a man's home, freedom of speech, freedom of religion, secrecy of correspondence, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly. Italian citizens are also declared free to move about inside Italy and to settle where they please. This provision ought to imply the abrogation of the Fascist law restricting this right, but it is unhappily

the case that the law is still sometimes enforced against unemployed people from the south who migrate to the northern regions in search of work. This is only one instance of the failure to abolish various Fascist laws, a failure deplored by thoughtful Italians not only because the laws are objectionable and often cause suffering, but because evasion of a particular law induces disrespect for law itself.

The liberty of the subject is further protected by the constitutional position of the Judiciary. Here again the Fascist use of special courts had produced a strong reaction. The Constitution affirms the independence of judges, stating that they are subject only to the laws, and forbids absolutely the creation of special courts or special judges. The liberty of non-Italian subjects is specially provided for by a clause which promises that the Republic will safeguard the rights of linguistic minorities. This provision may prove important in the regions with a special form of local autonomy, particularly Trentino-Alto Adige, where the German-speaking population of Alto Adige (South Tyrol) may well need to appeal to this clause in the Constitution.

The important question of relations between Church and State is covered by a provision without parallel in any modern Constitution. These relations are considered to be based on the principle of the co-existence of two independent sovereigns and are declared to be regulated by the Lateran Pacts drawn up between Mussolini and the Pope in 1929. Although an amendment to the Pacts may be carried out by common consent by ordinary legislative methods, any modification of the relations between Church and State not agreed to by the Church, and constituting a repudiation of the Concordat by the State, involves the complicated procedure demanded by revision of the Constitution. This provision aroused great bitterness among many Italians who, though good Catholics, were anti-clerical, and brought from the great liberal philosopher Benedetto Croce the scathing comment 'I consider the insertion of the Lateran Pacts in the Constitution a legal monstrosity'.[1]

The danger of giving excessive power to the executive was

[1] *Due anni di vita politica italiana* (Bari, Laterza, 1948), p. 121.

strongly in the minds of those who drew up the 1948 Constitution. The Constitution of 1848 had failed to establish the control of the legislature over the executive in face of attack by an able and unscrupulous dictator like Mussolini. Ministers had been declared responsible in 1848, but without any mention of to whom they were responsible. In practice they had been held to be individually responsible to Parliament, but by a law of 1925 Mussolini specifically declared that they were individually responsible to the King and to the Head of the Government, that was to say himself. Under the Constitution of 1948 executive power belongs to the Government, i.e. to the President of the Council and to the Ministers who together constitute the Council. They are responsible collectively for the acts of the Council, and individually for those of their respective Ministries, and the fact that the Government must have the confidence of both houses of Parliament is considered by Italian lawyers to establish the responsibility of Ministers to Parliament.

Parliament in fact is the centre of the constitution. Article 1 declares that Italy is a parliamentary democracy and affirms the principle of popular sovereignty. Parliament consists of two houses, a Chamber of Deputies and a Senate; members of the Chamber are elected by direct adult suffrage, one member for every 80,000 inhabitants; the Senators represent the regions and are elected by the direct votes of everyone over 25, one Senator for every 200,000 inhabitants, except for the Valle d'Aosta, which has only one Senator. The two houses meet in joint sesson for the election of the President, for the impeachment of Ministers, and for the election of one-third of the Supreme Council of the Judiciary. Legislative power belongs to the two houses collectively. Laws can be initiated by the Government, by members of either house, and by public bodies on whom this right may be conferred by constitutional law. The general body of the people can also initiate legislation by presenting a draft bill supported by at least 50,000 electors. Bills can be introduced in either house but must be passed by both; a bill amended by one house goes back to the other and the process continues until an agreed text is found; the law is

then promulgated by the President of the Republic. The power of the Government to legislate by decree is strictly limited. This method of legislating had been much abused by the Fascists in order to impose their system on the country. Decree laws can now only be issued under special, carefully defined conditions and must be immediately converted into law by Parliament or they become retrogressively void.

The Constitution introduced one innovation in regard to legislation, the possibility of holding a referendum for the abolition of a law or part of a law (laws dealing with taxation, the Budget, amnesties and the ratification of international treaties are exempt), if demanded by 500,000 electors or five regional councils. Some doubt of the wisdom of this provision was felt at the time of its adoption; it was feared that it might prove to be a means of stirring up political unrest, especially in the early years of the new Constitution when Italy badly needed a period of quiet development, political as well as economic, but these fears proved unfounded in the seven years after its passing as no request for a referendum was made.

The position of the President of the Republic is very carefully defined. He is elected for seven years by secret ballot in a joint session of the two houses of Parliament; a two-thirds majority is required for his election, but if this is not obtained in the first three votings an absolute majority suffices. Italians were only too well aware of the need to insure against any risk of a dictatorship and of the danger of the supreme power in the State falling again into the hands of one man, but at the same time they realized the need of a stabilizing, unifying influence in the country. The President is not a mere figure-head, but he does not govern; no act of his is valid unless confirmed by the Ministers concerned, and he is not responsible for any action taken by him as President unless he commits high treason or attacks the Constitution. His powers are various: he is head of the State and the symbol of national unity; he can dissolve one or both houses of Parliament and give notice of the holding of new elections; he promulgates the laws; he is commander-in-chief and declares the existence of a state of war; he is president of the Supreme Court of Justice and has the

right of pardon ; he nominates the President of the Council and on the President's advice the other Ministers. Ultimately, his power is probably largely personal, and it was Italy's good fortune in the difficult years after the coming into force of the new Constitution to have in the person of her first two Presidents, Enrico De Nicola and Luigi Einaudi, two men of absolute integrity who inspired general confidence, although Einaudi's economic doctrines were regarded by many people as being too rigidly orthodox.

Local government in Italy is highly centralized. Cavour had a profound appreciation of the importance of local government in political education and had set up a committee to consider the question ; but when he died in 1861 the somewhat mediocre politicians who succeeded him had not a strong enough belief in the strength of the country's newly won unity to venture to introduce even the most moderate form of local autonomy. The task of organizing the administration of Italy was indeed an immense one in view of the great differences between the component parts of the country. Apart from the natural difficulties caused by the geography of a long narrow peninsula divided by high mountain ridges, there were difficulties caused by the political diversity between an area like Piedmont governed by native princes with a measure of parliamentary government, others which had been despotically governed for centuries by native or foreign princes, and others again like Lombardy, only recently freed from Austrian rule. Finally there were the economic differences which from the very beginning of unification aroused bitter dislike in the South for the comparatively prosperous North, and tended to make the North regard the South as a barbarous and uncivilized land which hindered Italy's political and economic progress.

Early in the 19th century Piedmont had taken over the French system of local government with its rigid control exercised by the central government through prefects. This system was extended by Cavour's successors to the whole of Italy without any regard for the varying needs of the different parts of the country. Centralization deadened interest in local government, except in some of the great towns, and at its worst

aroused dislike of far-away Rome, which was accused of interfering without understanding local needs and preferences. Decentralization had been one of the chief objectives in 1919 of the Popular Party, the predecessor of the Christian Democrats, but Mussolini found the old system admirably adapted to securing a stranglehold over the whole country, and the recognition of this fact led his opponents to demand a large measure of decentralization and local self-government. This demand found expression in the new Constitution of 1948, in particular in the creation of the region as a new political entity between the State on the one hand and the commune and province on the other.

Communes and provinces alike are defined by the Constitution as not only self-governing bodies within limits defined by general laws but also decentralized administrative units of the State. The communes form the basis of local government. They are the old administrative units of Italy and every inch of national territory forms part of some commune. At the time of the 1951 census there were 7,804 communes, ranging in size from tiny towns with less than 500 inhabitants to great cities like Rome and Milan with over a million. Local government is run on pre-Fascist lines laid down in a consolidating law of 1915, and every commune whatever its size has a popularly elected council, an executive committee (*giunta*) and a mayor (*sindaco*) elected by the council from among its own members for a period of four years. Apart from their duty of administering national laws, all communes are responsible for certain local services, public health, lighting, fire precautions, local police and public works. These services are financed by local funds which come either from ownership of lands and buildings or from taxes, the most important of which is a commodity tax (*imposta di consumo*).

Many of the larger and wealthier and perhaps for that reason more progressive communes are concerned in a large number of activities, the scope of which is often only limited by Italy's general lack of funds. Florence, for example, is much occupied with the care of children. The city's education department runs a number of Nursery Schools and also various

centres where classes open to all children are held in dancing, drama, art, etc. There is no regular afternoon school in Italy and teachers and local authorities alike are anxious to keep the children happily employed and off the streets. There are also a number of special public libraries for children where they can come and read in pleasant surroundings. They cannot take books home, as English children do, for again the idea is to keep them off the streets, and to let them read in quiet, a real luxury for children whose housing conditions often make reading at home impossible even in the northern towns. Many towns are particularly active in the care of delicate children and there are a number of schools[1] to which such children are sent for long periods, besides the summer holiday camps (*colonie*) run by the communes as well as by all kinds of private bodies.

The reverse side of the picture is presented by the poor communes everywhere, but particularly in the South, which cannot afford to provide the barest necessities of public health for their citizens, so that many of the agricultural towns of the South with 10,000 or 12,000 inhabitants have no drainage system and could never undertake any serious public works at their own cost. This poverty is very obvious in the elementary schools. The State supplies and pays the teachers, but the commune is responsible for providing the buildings, often with dire results. Even country schools lying within a few miles of Florence but belonging to other small, poor communes are housed in very unsuitable buildings and depend on the inventiveness of teachers and children to supply even the basic materials for art lessons.

The provinces were artificial creations of United Italy in 1861 and bore no relation to any pre-existing districts. Their number has varied from time to time, generally for reasons of administrative efficiency or owing to changes in the Italian frontiers; in 1951 there were 90. Like the communes, the provinces are responsible for certain local services and each province has an elected provincial council (*consiglio pro-*

[1] See p. 90 for the school at Montepiano, Tuscany, run by Florence, and for the *Casa del Sole* at Milan.

vinciale), varying in numbers according to the size of the province, and an executive committee (*deputazione provinciale*) for carrying out these duties. The council has charge of public buildings and other property belonging to the province, and is responsible for poor relief, public health, provincial roads and bridges and some public works; the necessary funds come partly from property in land and buildings, partly from taxation and loans.

As administrative areas of the state the provinces have another set of official bodies with at their head the prefects, who are high-ranking salaried civil servants appointed by a decree of the President of the Republic, on the recommendation of the Minister of the Interior approved by the whole Cabinet. The prefect is supported by a Council of three paid officials (*consiglio di prefettura*), presided over by himself or his deputy and by an executive committee (*giunta provinciale amministrativa*) consisting of two officials from his council and four persons elected by the provincial council from its own members. Through the council the prefects exercise strict financial control over all the activities of the communes and provinces, as the council examines all contracts into which they enter involving more than a very small sum. The executive committee keeps a strict watch over the administration of their real estate.

The prefects have been the subject of much discussion in Italy. The view of most anti-Fascists at the end of the 1939–45 war was that the office should be abolished. The prefects stood for so much of the worst side of Fascism and it was through them that Mussolini had exercised a rigid control over local affairs. It is indeed difficult to see how any substantial policy of decentralization can be realized as long as the prefects remain. As in France, they are charged with the administration of national legislation and of decrees issued by individual Ministries, and with the increase of legislation on all kinds of subjects their duties have become more and more comprehensive. One of their most important tasks is the joint supervision of public security with the provincial head of the police, and in case of need they can call on the help of the armed forces.

Only justice, the armed forces, and the railways are exempt from their control over the public services. The prefects have great authority in both provinces and communes since all deliberations of the councils and executive committees must be submitted to them and they can annul decisions which they consider contrary to the law. Above all they are responsible only to the Minister of the Interior and free from any legal restriction by local government bodies. They are not in fact mentioned in the Constitution, whose authors were to some extent obsessed with the idea of the establishment of the region as the main source of decentralization with a consequent reduction in the power of the prefects or even their total disappearance; but in the confused state of post-war Italy it proved too difficult to embark on such a big administrative change as their abolition would have involved.

The Constitution created 19 regions[1] and a large number of articles are devoted to defining their position and powers within the state. The name region was not new; statistical and other information, such as population figures or descriptions of Italy for tourists, had always been given under the names of different regions such as Piedmont, Tuscany, Campania, or Sicily, but the region had been only a convenient name for an area including a group of provinces carrying with it no implication of administrative or legislative functions. The hope of the authors of the Constitution was that the creation of the region would be an effective means of promoting decentralization; there was never any idea of creating any kind of federation of regions and emphasis was always laid on the unitary nature of the state and on the over-riding power of national legislation. The fear of destroying Italy's unity still, however, persists, and the very real difficulties, particularly financial ones, involved in the establishment of the regions were so great that in 1955 the region remained a constitutional abstraction except for the four[2] special regions of Sicily, Sardinia, Valle d'Aosta and

[1] A list of regions will be found in the appendix, Table I at the end of the book.

[2] The Constitution created a fifth special region. Friuli-Venezia Giulia, but this had not been set up by 1955 owing to difficulties connected with the position of Trieste, which only returned to Italian sovereignty in 1954.

Trentino-Alto Adige, which all received grants of autonomy under special constitutional laws on 26 February 1948. These are all regions with marked characteristics. Geographically they are all distant from Rome, but they are even more remote when considered from the economic and political angles which have raised different problems in each of them.

The background of regionalism in Sicily is unlike that of the other three regions. The political history of Sicily, invaded through the centuries by Greeks, Carthaginians, Arabs, Normans and Spaniards among others, produced a people differing greatly in character and habits from the inhabitants of the mainland, and these differences were accentuated by the fact that for long periods Sicily was under different rulers from the mainland. In 1860 the Sicilians accepted incorporation in Italy and the constitutional monarchy; but the political institutions of Piedmont were ill-adapted to the remote and even foreign province of Sicily, and the rigidly centralized control imposed checked any possibility of local self-government. There was no active political separatist movement, but there was a feeling of discontent and a widespread belief, still prevalent, that the interests of Sicily were being sacrificed to those of the rapidly developing North. Economic unrest took the place of political and remained the chief aspect of the Sicilian question.

This feeling of neglect and isolation produced the separatist movement of 1943 which flourished in the unsettled conditions arising out of the fall of Fascism and the Allied occupation. It gradually became clear, however, that what most Sicilians wanted was not separation from Italy but a large measure of self-government; this was granted to them in the statute of autonomy of 15 May 1946, converted unchanged into the constitutional law of 26 February 1948.

There was no evidence of a widespread, popular demand for self-government in Sardinia. The island's special autonomous position seems to be largely the accidental result of its war-time isolation. In February 1944 the Italian Government appointed a High Commissioner for Sardinia, as it had done for Sicily in January 1944, in order to keep some definite

contact with these outlying parts of Italy cut off by war and by Allied occupation. In May 1946 Sardinia was granted autonomy by an amendment to the Sicilian Statute. The constitutional law of February 1948 establishing Sardinia's autonomy was not, however, a mere variant of the Sicilian law; it was drafted by a Sardinian regional council and considerably amended by the Italian Parliament, and the autonomy granted was much more restricted than the Sicilian.

In the Valle d'Aosta an autonomous régime was recognized by the Italian Cabinet in August 1945; two decrees, one containing a statute of autonomy, the other various economic provisions, came into force on 1 January 1946 and were incorporated in the constitutional law of February 1948. The autonomy of the Valle d'Aosta and that of Trentino-Alto Adige have one common feature—in both cases the constitutional law makes special provision for the linguistic minorities and reverses the policy of complete Italianization followed by the Fascist Government. The fact that the French-speaking population of the valley were loyal Italians had had no effect on the Fascists, who prohibited the teaching and official use of French and filled administrative posts with officials drawn mainly from South Italy. The 1948 law consequently made special provision for the use and teaching of the French language and raised it to complete equality with Italian.

The minority problem facing the Italian Government in the Trentino-Alto Adige was a very different one. Whereas the vast majority of the inhabitants of the Valle d'Aosta are loyal Italian citizens and have no wish to become French, the South Tyrolese, who constitute over 80% of the inhabitants of Alto Adige (the northern half of the region), are a German-speaking people who had never ceased to regret their separation from Austria under the Treaty of Versailles in 1919 and had hoped to see this province returned to Austria in 1946. By an agreement, signed by Austria and Italy on 5 September 1946 and included in an annex to the Italian Peace Treaty of 1947, Italy undertook to assure the complete equality of the German and Italian-speaking population of the province and further promised to grant the population 'the exercise of autonomous

legislative and executive regional power'. The South Tyrolese had hoped that this would mean the creation of an autonomous region of Alto Adige alone, but this was more than the Italians were prepared to concede and a joint region consisting of the two provinces of Trento and Bolzano was set up. An attempt to meet the case of the South Tyrolese was made by giving some autonomous authority to each province, by providing for the representation of the German-speaking minority in the regional council and by alloting the Presidency of the region to each language group in turn. Italian is the official language of the region, but the use of German in public life is guaranteed and special provision is made in the province of Bolzano for teaching children in their mother tongue. The Italians think that they have made large concessions to an unreasonably hostile minority, but the South Tyrolese cannot forget the treatment meted out to them by Italians in the inter-war period and know that on any ethnic question they can always be outvoted in the regional council since in the region as a whole they are a minority of the population.

The instruments of government are the same in all four regions; they consist of a council or assembly, an executive committee (*giunta*) and a president elected by the council from its members, but their powers vary. Sicily has in all respects a larger measure of self-government than the other regions. Each of the four presidents represents his region, promulgates regional laws and directs the administrative functions of the region, but the Sicilian president also represents the national government in the region. Both the Sicilian and the Sardinian presidents have the right to attend meetings of the national Council of Ministers and to speak, though not to vote, when questions concerning their respective regions are under discussion; the Sicilian president has the additional right of ranking as a Minister at such meetings. The Sicilian president and the *giunta*, who together constitute the government, have one supremely important executive function—the maintenance of public order by means of the national police, whose use in the region they control. All four regions have certain legislative and administrative powers. They can promulgate legislation

within the limits of the fundamental principles laid down by the state laws, but only on a limited and specified number of questions of strictly local interest such as the organization of local police, the provision of public assistance and medical services, local communications, etc. Sicily's powers are wider. The Sicilian regional assembly controls elementary education and its legislative powers in regard to higher education, including university education, are only limited by the need to conform to the general principles of national education. Above all, without prejudice to the Italian Parliament's general plans for agrarian and industrial reform, the Sicilian assembly has the exclusive power to legislate on all questions regarding agriculture, land reclamation,[1] industry and commerce.

All four regions have administrative powers in the matters on which they can legislate, and where the state retains administrative functions, it is the duty of the central government's commissioner to co-ordinate these functions with those belonging to the region, and thus to respect the autonomy of the regions in the administrative field.

The financial arrangements made by the state vary for each region, but the over-riding principle is the same—to give each region as large a measure of financial independence as possible by providing a regular source of income and not to make the regions dependent on subventions or grants-in-aid with the inevitable concomitant of state control. Each of the four regions raises its own taxation but the state makes a definite contribution of varying kinds and in addition will give special grants to meet unforeseen calamities or 'acts of God', which frequently make heavy demands on local and national resources in a land of volcanoes, earthquakes, avalanches and torrential floods. Since 1950 Sicily and Sardinia have obtained large grants from the new fund for reconstruction in the south, the *Cassa per il Mezzogiorno*.[2]

In 1948 Italy set up the apparatus of a parliamentary democracy, but it is too soon to judge whether the democracy

[1] Thus it passed its own agrarian reform law in December 1950. See p. 130.

[2] See p. 129.

will in practice prove satisfactory. The political problems, quite apart from the economic, facing the country are immense. In the first place the country contains a great mass of politically uneducated citizens; there is a serious lack in all classes of society of that general political understanding on which a parliamentary democracy must be based, and there is still a failure to understand the political responsibility of every individual citizen. In the political field, as in the economic, there is a great cleft between North and South. In the North the large working population of the big towns is reasonably well organized and interested in political problems and there is a small but politically active middle class of lawyers, journalists, business men and professional people. In the South, with a few exceptions, the population consists mainly of very poor, almost illiterate, agricultural workers, labour is hardly organized at all and there is practically no real middle class.

In the second place all Italians have much to learn about political self-government; they have had no training in local politics owing to over-centralization, and they have had very little experience of the working of parliamentary party government. The Italian political philosopher Ferrari pointed out in 1928[1] that when Cavour died in 1861 he had achieved the unity of Italy, but that the parliamentary system had not begun to function properly. There was no real party system with great parliamentary political party leaders to follow him, and Depretis (Prime Minister 1876–89) with his policy of shuffling and reshuffling of cabinets (*Trasformismo*) created the dictatorship of the Cabinet or its President and of the bureaucracy. Ferrari held that Giolitti (Prime Minister at various times between 1892 and 1920) carried on and strengthened this system, so that even when Italy instituted adult male suffrage in 1918 there was only the appearance of popular rule, not the reality. Finally, from 1922–43 there was Fascism with its one-party system and no organized opposition after 1926. The effect of this period and of the years of German occupation on the future leaders of Italy's republic was two-fold. Firstly they had no practical experience of normal political life, secondly they

[1] Ferrari: *Le Régime Fasciste Italien* (Paris, Editions Spes, 1928).

had too much experience of underground politics. This was markedly true of the members of the Communist Party in Italy as in other countries. Quite apart from their activities in the resistance movement, often described as a bad preparation for political life in peace-time, socialist and communist opponents of Fascism spent the formative years of their youth or their best middle years in illegal activities in Italy, in prison, in exile, or in working for other very different countries, the U.S.S.R. and Spain.

Possibly the most important political lesson for Italians to learn is the meaning of majority and minority rule in a parliamentary democracy and the place of a true opposition prepared to govern in its turn. Since 1948 the great difficulty has been that the largest opposition party has been Communist and that a Communist government is regarded with terror by many Italians as meaning primarily government by a foreign power.

CHAPTER IV

POLITICAL PARTIES

THE most important political parties in Italy during the years immediately after the 1914–18 war and before Mussolini's triumph in October 1922 were the *Partito Popolare*, the People's Party, founded in 1919, and the Socialist Party, which then as now contained a number of conflicting groups; the other smaller but important parties were the Liberal and Republican. The Communist Party, created by the pro-Bolshevik left wing of the Socialist Party, was only founded on 21 January 1921 after the Socialist conference in Leghorn. By the end of 1926 all parties except the Fascist had been broken up and most of the leaders had gone into exile. The only party which continued to maintain a shadowy form of organization was the Communist, although many of its leaders like Togliatti were in exile, while others, like Gramsci, went to prison and death. Many of the exiles were in France and on the fall of France in 1940 most of them fled to the United States, with the result that from 1940–43 their contacts with Italy were rare and unorganized. Inside Italy there were a number of anti-fascist groups but they consisted largely of leaders with no popular following.

By the beginning of 1943 there were signs that an anti-fascist movement was alive in Italy; the great strikes of industrial workers in Milan and Turin in March were said to be economic strikes organized by the Trade Unions, but were in fact political. There was a general feeling that the régime was shaky, and the Committees of National Liberation (*Comitati di liberazione nazionale*, the C.L.N.) were coming into existence. On the fall of Mussolini on 25 July 1943 they came out into the open and the central committee then in Rome, presided over by Ivanoe Bonomi, who had been Prime Minister from June 1921 to February 1922, and was to be Prime Minister

from June 1944 to June 1945, demanded a break with Germany and the end of the war. When the Armistice was announced on 8 September 1943 and the Germans occupied Rome, the C.L.N. of Rome and the north went underground; in the south the C.L.N. were openly organized in Bari and Naples.[1] In the north the committees contained representatives of five political parties, Christian Democrat (the successor of the People's Party), Socialist, Communist, Liberal and Action; in the south there was a small sixth party, the Democracy of Labour, consisting mainly of older men like Bonomi who had once belonged to the reformist Socialist Party. The C.L.N. in the south were not particularly effective, though they contained many eminent men, chief among them the old liberal Benedetto Croce, whose house in Sorrento was a centre of politicians planning a government for Italy. In occupied Italy the C.L.N. carried on various forms of underground activity and were ready and eager to take over control as the country was liberated by the Allies. In occupied Rome the central committee was able on 16 October 1943 to demand a decision by the people at the end of the war on the fate of the monarchy[2] and in the meantime, on the liberation of Rome, the establishment of a provisional government made up from representatives of the anti-fascist parties of the C.L.N. Such a government was set up with Bonomi as President of the Council, or Prime Minister, on 9 June 1944 after the king had handed over his power to his son Umberto as Lieutenant-General.

Although the Action Party (*Partito d'Azione*) had ceased to exist before the holding of the elections to the Constituent Assembly in June 1946, the part played by its members in the resistance movement, in the C.L.N. and in the Government during 1945 was so important that something should perhaps be said at this point about its origin and political ideals. The Action Party was a new party formed in 1942 by the union of

[1] For a remarkable account of activities in the south from July 1943 to June 1944 see B. Croce: *Quando l'Italia era tagliata in due* (Bari, Laterza, 1948), translated by S. Sprigge with the title *Croce, the king and the allies, extract from a diary July 1943 to June 1944* (London, Allen & Unwin, 1950).

[2] See pp. 40–1.

two political movements, *Giustizia e Libertà* (Justice and Liberty), founded outside Italy in 1929 by Roselli,[1] Lussu, Tarchiani and other exiles living in France, and *Liberal-socialismo* (Liberal Socialism), consisting of a group of young intellectuals inside Italy who had no personal knowledge of pre-fascist Italy or of exile. The *Giustizia e Libertà* movement contained democrats, republicans and socialists who were convinced that the old political parties were inadequate to meet the problems of the middle of the 20th century. It was organized inside Italy as well as among the exiles, and drew its members from anti-fascists of all kinds who were unwilling to join the Communists, the only other clandestine organization functioning inside Italy.

The founders of the Action Party intended to create a new party which would break away from the old political traditions and would be the instrument of a 'liberal revolution'. Their aim was to unite the workers and small middle-class people who had been particularly open to Fascist propaganda in the early days of Fascism, when they had been irritated and frightened by the Socialists and had easily succumbed to the Fascist appeal of the 'party of order'. The Action Party leaders held that the workers and small middle-class men must be taught to see that they had a common enemy in big business which was the ally of all the traditional conservative forces, the monarchy, the aristocracy, the higher ranks of the army and civil service, and the higher clergy. The party was not inspired by doctrinaire theories, but believed that economic and social problems should be faced and settled one at a time on concrete lines to the advantage of workers, consumers and the poor generally.

Until the fall of Rome in June 1944 the Action Party led the struggle against the royalist government of Badoglio, but soon after the establishment of Bonomi's government the weakness of the party began to appear. Its leaders included some of the finest Italians, men like Feruccio Parri, Prime Minister from June to November 1945, Ugo La Malfa, Minister for Trade under De Gasperi, and Riccardo Bauer, head of *Umanitaria*, Milan's Toynbee Hall, all men with practical reformist

[1] Murdered in France in 1937.

sympathies but untouched by Marxist theories. The party, however, had no great popular appeal; the hold of the old Socialist and Communist parties on the mass of the workers proved to be much stronger than the Action Party founders had contemplated, and it never succeeded in attracting any strong body of middle-class support. Immediately after the liberation of north Italy in 1945 new life was infused into politics with the intervention of the C.L.N. for north Italy (C.L.N.—*Alta Italia*), and Parri, who had been in command of the party's resistance forces (the *Giustizia e Libertà* partisans), was made Prime Minister by general agreement. But there was no real cohesion in the party itself, which was split into two sections, one which considered the party's programme to be socialist and wished to line up with the other socialist forces in the country, and another which stressed the importance of democracy and believed in concrete reforms and no theories. In addition the party got no solid support from the Socialist and Communist parties. The result was that when Parri's government was attacked by the Liberals with the silent support of the Christian Democrats it fell in November 1945. In the course of 1946 the supporters of democracy and reform, including Parri and La Malfa, joined the Republican Party while most of the rest of the party entered the Socialist Party.

Parri was succeeded as Prime Minister in December 1945 by De Gasperi, whose government was similarly based on the C.L.N. until the elections to the Constituent Assembly in June 1946 established him as President of the Council of Ministers of an elected parliament.

By the time of the elections to the first parliament of the Italian Republic in April 1948 the main political parties were the Christian Democrat, the Communist, the Italian Socialist Party, the Liberal, the Republican, the Socialist United Party (consisting of Saragat's Party of Italian Workers[1] and other socialists opposed to union with the Communist Party), the Monarchist and the small neo-fascist party called the Italian Social Movement (*Movimento sociale italiano*). Something must now be said about each of these parties, however pre-

[1] P.S.L.I. See p. 65.

sumptuous it is in a foreigner to try and explain the character of parties often understood with difficulty by Italians themselves.

In 1919 a number of Catholic associations founded the *Partito Popolare* which was led by a remarkable Sicilian priest, Don Sturzo, who was still in the 1950s an important member of Parliament serving on Government Commissions. The *Partito Popolare* was not an official Catholic Party because of the refusal of the Holy See to be mixed up in Italy's internal politics, but it represented the entry of the mass of Italian Catholics into political life in an organized form with a definite policy and was sanctioned by the Vatican. The party stood for individual and family liberty, for social and political reform, for decentralization and a certain degree of local autonomy. In the 1919 elections the party obtained 100 seats in Parliament and the Liberal Government of the day was forced to come to terms with it in order to avoid giving control to the Socialists. Even in its early days the party was divided: one section was strongly clerical and conservative both in politics and economics, the other, consisting of the *Democratico-cristiani*, banned by Pope Pius X before the 1914–18 war, was by 1919 much the more active section, determined to abandon conservatism and to carry out sweeping social reforms in the interests of the peasants and artisans particularly.

In 1943 the party revived as the *Partito della Democrazia Christiana*. It contained a number of able leaders, some of them older men like De Gasperi, who had worked in the Vatican library during the years of Fascist rule, Rodinò, Gronchi, elected President of the Republic in April 1955, and Achille Grandi the Trade Union leader, but also younger men, new to politics, like Scelba, Prime Minister from 1954–55. These men, among others, were active in the C.L.N. both in the liberated south and in the north; they organized their party rapidly and based its policy on the old ideals of the *Partito Popolare*, social reforms, local autonomy, which by 1945 had taken the special form of regional autonomy, and the rights of the family in matters like education. In 1944 a new problem faced the party, that of monarchy versus republic, but the majority view

emerged clearly at the party congress held in Rome in April 1946, when a 75% vote was given in favour of a republic.

Led by De Gasperi as Prime Minister from December 1945 onwards the power and influence of the party, a centre party opposed to both extremes, grew steadily. In the Constituent Assembly, which sat from June 1946 to March 1948, the Christian Democrats held 207 seats out of 556 and were often able to impose their views in the debates on the new Constitution, although it is worth noticing that without the support of the Communists they would not have succeeded in obtaining the inclusion of the Lateran Pacts.[1] In the first parliamentary elections held under the new Constitution in April 1948, when 92% of the electorate went to the polls, the party won an immense victory. They obtained over 12,700,000 or 49% of the votes and 305 out of 574 seats in the Chamber of Deputies, i.e. an absolute majority. In the Senate too they were the largest party with 48% of the votes and 148 seats out of a total of 333, though they did not win an absolute majority. No such position had ever been held by any one party in non-fascist Italy. The left-wing opposition, the Popular Front (*Fronte democratico popolare*), formed by a league of the Socialist and Communist parties, obtained over 8,100,000 or 31% of the votes and 183 seats in the Chamber.

There were various reasons for this great victory. Partly it was due to the international situation and in particular to the announcement of the Marshall Plan with its enormous importance for Italy, but the main cause was the fear of communism. Many Italians voted for the Christian Democrats for fear of splitting the anti-communist vote, which was thought to be a serious risk in view of the strength of the Popular Front. The negative nature of this support was one of the main causes of weakness in the policy adopted by the Government after the elections; mere numerical strength was not enough to solve Italy's difficulties.

In a parliament faced by Italy's most serious problem, over-population, particularly agricultural over-population, with all that this involves of unemployment, under-employment and

[1] See p. 43.

dire poverty, and the consequent need of agrarian reform, the heterogeneous nature of the Christian Democrat vote of April 1948 was quickly revealed. Those who voted for the party included many who, like their leader De Gasperi, realized the danger as well as the immorality of Italy's social conditions, and were resolved to embark on big schemes of agrarian reform and to encourage industrialization. But the party's supporters also included large landowners of the south, who were bitterly opposed to land reform, and important industrialists. The industrialists were beginning to prosper with the help of Marshall Aid, were opposed to any kind of State interference unless it promised them immediate advantage and in particular were bitterly hostile to any reform of the fiscal system. There was also a division between moderate, liberal Catholics, who hoped for democratic government under the aegis of the Christian Democrat Party which they regarded as a bulwark against a communist state, and more thorough-going Catholics, who considered the party's triumph as one for the Church and who were active, for example, in promoting the interests of Church schools.

By the time of the June 1953 elections the situation had changed considerably. On the one hand, the Government had made a beginning with various reform measures, though they had not achieved a great deal. They started out with a general and very comprehensive law on agrarian reform, but this had to be dropped for the time being owing partly to the violent opposition from many of their own supporters. Two important agricultural measures were, however, put through Parliament, the law for the development of the high land of the Sila in Calabria and of large areas of plain lying between the mountains and the sea, and the interim (*stralcio*) law which assigned certain definite areas of land for development and distribution to landless peasants.[1] They also made a great contribution towards the financing of various schemes for developing the south by the creation of a special fund known as the *Cassa per il Mezzogiorno*[2] (fund for the south),

[1] For both these laws see Chapter IX on Agrarian Reform.
[2] See p. 129.

which is independent of and additional to ordinary treasury grants.

On the other hand, the economic situation in the country as a whole was unsatisfactory. Industry and commerce were in difficulties, tax reform had not been carried through, although a beginning had been made, unemployment and under-employment were not down even if they were not up, and there was a general feeling of discontent with the Government, although perhaps this did not amount to much more than the usual feeling against any Government which has been in power for several years. Probably the main change lay in a decline in the fear of communism. There was a feeling that there was not the same need for a closing of the ranks as in 1948, and some people held, wrongly as the event showed, that the communist vote had reached its maximum. In the elections the Christian Democrat vote fell to 10,870,000, a loss of 1,860,000 on the 1948 poll, the Communists and Socialists together (they did not vote as one block as in 1948) polled 1,410,000 more than in 1948. The main Christian Democrat loss, however, was to the right-wing parties; the Monarchist vote was two and a half times as big, the Neo-fascist three times as big as in 1948, whereas the votes given to the three small parties of the Social Democrats, Liberals and Republicans all showed a large drop. The Christian Democrat remained the largest single party; even together the Communists and Socialists obtained 1,300,000 fewer votes and held 218 seats in the Chamber compared with 262 Christian Democrat seats; but the Christian Democrats no longer had an absolute majority in the Chamber, and even in coalition with Liberals, Social Democrats and Republicans only had a majority of 16 over left and right parties combined.

The Italian Socialist Party (*Partito Socialista Italiano*, or P.S.I.) was founded in 1892 and grew steadily in numbers and influence until in the elections of November 1919 it returned 156 members to Parliament, the largest number of any party, 56 more than the *Partito Popolare*, the next biggest. The first serious crisis in the party's existence came in January 1921 when the communist section seceded and formed the inde-

pendent Communist Party of Italy. In the succeeding elections of May 1921 the P.S.I. only obtained 124 seats. In spite of an ever-growing need of unity those who remained in the Socialist Party were divided into the maximialists led by Serrati, and the reformists led by Turati, Treves and Modigliani; even in face of the growing violence of the Fascist squads the party proved unable to take any definite decisions. The two groups put up separate candidates at the elections in April 1924 and only won 46 seats, 24 of which were held by the reformists.

Organized socialism practically disappeared in Italy after 1926, but it was well represented among the exiles in France and was a movement rich in leaders. On the fall of Fascism they proved to be too theoretical and intellectual a group to make any general appeal to the old socialist workers. The threads of the old P.S.I. were gathered up by some of the older leaders like Nenni, Romita, and Buozzi, former secretary of the Italian Confederation of Trade Unions, who was finally murdered by the retreating Germans in June 1944.

By August 1943 the party had been reconstructed and in the following months it took an active part in partisan warfare and in the Committees of National Liberation, particularly in the north where the party had been strong before Fascism. In the early years after the war the party had the support of large masses of the workers and of small shopkeepers and other middle-class people, but from the first it suffered from grave differences of outlook which finally led in 1947 to a serious split and to the creation of a separate party under the leadership of Saragat, known first as the Socialist Party of Italian Workers (*Partito Socialista dei Lavoratori Italiani*, P.S.L.I.) and later as the Social Democrats. The problem facing the socialist leaders was how to preserve the unity of the working people while avoiding absorption in the Communist Party. Many people believed that lack of unity among the workers was one of the main reasons for the easy triumph of Fascism in the early years from 1922–26 and were determined not to sacrifice lightly the unity which had grown up in the fight against Germany, during which Socialists and Communists had made a pact of unity in 1943, renewed in 1945. They hoped to

maintain a working alliance without sacrificing Socialist independence.

In 1946 the party was still outwardly united, and in the elections to the Constituent Assembly in June 1946 it obtained 20·7% of the votes and 115 seats in the Assembly, making it the second largest party with 11 more seats than the Communists, and it then held Ministries in De Gasperi's Government. There was, however, no real unity in the party, which was divided into three or four groups, and after a party congress held in Rome in January 1947 Saragat formed his new Reformist Party, the P.S.L.I. already mentioned, and was followed by 50 of the 115 Socialist Deputies. In February 1947 the Socialist Ministers left the Government. Relations with the Communist Party grew closer and at the 1948 elections Communists and Socialists put up under the name of the Popular Front a joint list of candidates which obtained 31% of the votes. There was, however, no general wish among party members for complete fusion with the Communists. The figure of Nenni, the leader of the Socialist Party, has always been a mysterious one for English people, who have never been able to make up their minds whether he is very astute and a secret believer in fusion or whether he is simply an orator of the type not infrequently produced by the Romagna, his native region, with no very clear political views. There can be no doubt that he understands his socialist workers and their conception of themselves as representatives of a native Italian socialism with no wish to be subject to the decisions of international communism. The secession of Saragat and a large number of the middle-class intellectual supporters of socialism has thrown the leadership of the party into the hands of men like Lizzadri, the socialist secretary of the General Confederation of Labour (the C.G.I.L.), who as Trade Union leaders are keenly aware of the need for working-class solidarity. Over-population and unemployment make united action by the workers a matter of primary importance, and the economic necessity which unites Communists and Socialists in the C.G.I.L. unites them also in the political field, which in Italy, as elsewhere, cannot be separated from the economic.

The C.G.I.L. was set up immediately after the liberation of Italy when the need for a strong body to represent the workers was obvious, and like the Committees of National Liberation it represented workers of every shade of political opinion. The predominating influence of the Communists, however, soon made itself felt, and in 1948 the Christian Democrats created the Italian Confederation of Free Trade Unions (C.I.S.L.) with Achille Grandi as its secretary, succeeded in 1946 by Giulio Pastore. Their example was followed by the Social Democrats, who dislike the Christian Democrat flavour of C.I.S.L. almost as much as the communist one of C.G.I.L., but their Italian Labour Union (U.I.L.) is small and relatively unimportant compared with C.G.I.L. with about 5 million members and C.I.S.L. with about 2 million. In C.G.I.L. the Socialists have recently improved their position and are well represented on the main committees, but on Trade Union questions Socialists and Communists alike are only too well aware of the weakness of Italian workers, and in many cases C.G.I.L., C.I.S.L. and U.I.L. work together to obtain better conditions.[1]

The Italian Socialist Party may be wrong in thinking that it can work with the Communist Party and yet retain its independence, but for the present it is determined to think so. Before the general elections of 1953 the mass of the party demanded a separate list of candidates. The party obtained nearly 3½ million votes or 13% of the total, 75 seats in the Chamber and 26 in the Senate, compared with the Communist Party's 6,120,000 votes and 143 seats in the Chamber; 57½% of the Socialist Party's support came from north Italy, 79% from north and centre together, and the party's main stronghold was still, as it had always been, Lombardy.

It is difficult to give an estimate of the importance of the Social Democrats, partly because many of the party's difficulties seem to be due to the personal characteristics of leaders, whose

[1] For an account of the difficulties of the Italian Trade Unions faced by employers who make unscrupulous use of the existence of grave unemployment see the chapter *I Sindacati* by Emilio Lussu in *Dieci anni dopo, 1945–1955* (Bari, Laterza, 1955).

undoubted abilities have been dissipated in quarrels among themselves. Even after the big break with the Socialist Party in 1947 Saragat was unable to keep the Reformist Socialists together; they split into a number of small, antagonistic groups, which could only be united temporarily under the pressure of the parliamentary elections of 1948 and 1953.[1] A negative attitude of no fusion with Communists is not a sufficient bond to hold argumentative intellectuals together nor is it an adequate base for an appeal to socialist workers. A general policy of independent socialist activity needs to be endorsed by a programme of specific socialist reforms. The Social Democrat Party has not produced any programme capable of rousing popular enthusiasm and it has in consequence remained a party of idealist leaders who have some middle-class support but no mass following among the workers. While it is true that the Social Democrats can give full support to some of the Christian Democrat Party's plans of reform, they have probably damaged their own cause by entering governments whose clerical policy they are unable to modify. In the Constituent Assembly, after the break with the Socialist Party, Saragat had a following of 50 in the Chamber; in the 1948 elections his party of *Unità Socialista* obtained 7·1% of the votes and 33 seats in the Chamber, in 1953, as Social Democrats they secured only 4·5% of the votes and 19 seats.[2]

Although the Communist Party was only founded at Leghorn in 1921, there had long been inside the Socialist Party a Communist group which from 1917 onwards gave unreserved support to the Bolshevik revolution. This communist movement had always been particularly strong in Turin, where there was a remarkable group of intellectuals, prominent among them Antonio Gramsci, Umberto Terracini and Palmiro Togliatti. Unlike some, at least, of the intellectual Socialist leaders, these men were in close touch with the

[1] For the purpose of the elections they were temporarily united in 1948 under the name of Socialist Unity, in 1953 as Social Democrats.

[2] Since this was written there has been a definite trend towards the reunion of the Socialist Parties. There have also been signs of a break between the Socialist and Communuist Parties. This divergence found open expression during the Hungarian crisis in November–December 1956.

working-men of Turin and promoted the general strike of April 1920 and the occupation of factories. At the first parliamentary elections in May 1921 after the foundation of the Communist Party the number of Communists in the Chamber fell from 18 to 13, but rose again to 18 in the 1924 elections, when for the first time the party got some support in the south, which returned 3 of the 18 members. When the Fascists destroyed the political parties the Communists succeeded in maintaining underground scattered groups of workers; communist cells continued to exist, directives were brought to them at great risk by people from outside Italy, and congresses of the Italian Communist Party were organized and held at Lyons in 1926 and near Cologne in 1931. Nearly all the leaders were in exile or prison, and after the arrest and condemnation in 1926 of Gramsci (died 1937) and Terracini (President of the Constituent Assembly in 1946), Togliatti was recognized as the leader of the party.

The Communists were mainly responsible for the big strikes in March 1943, and on the fall of Mussolini in the following July were better prepared to reorganize their party than the other anti-fascists. They were very active members of the Resistance and in some areas, notably Venezia Giulia, where they worked with the Yugoslav resistance movement, gave much more effective help than any other underground groups. Until the spring of 1944 it was uncertain, however, whether they would work with the monarchical government in the south. But in April 1944 Togliatti returned to Italy and announced a policy of collaboration with Badoglio's Government; from that date the Communist Party was represented in every Government until it joined the Socialist Party in opposition at the end of May 1947. In the elections to the Constituent Assembly the Communist Party obtained 19% of the votes and 104 seats in the Assembly, that is, it was still only the third party with 11 fewer seats than the Socialists, but during the next two years its strength in the country increased steadily, particularly in the Trade Union world, where it had rapidly become the predominating influence in the General Confederation of Italian Labour (C.G.I.L.).

Italy in the years immediately after the war certainly offered a fair field for the spread of communism. The physical destruction was enormous, much more serious than most English people realized; there was a shortage of food, and prices were far too high for the vast majority of Italians. There was also a bitter sense of disappointment and frustration, a feeling that though Fascism had gone the spirit which had animated the Committees of Liberation had been dissipated and that there was no national movement that looked to the future. Too many of the politicians had been too long out of Italy and tended to look back to pre-fascist days instead of tackling the urgent problems of the present and future. Workers' wages were low, the cost of living was high and rising, and there were no signs that the big landowners had realized that the question of land-hungry peasants had got to be faced.

By 1948 the Communist Party had over two million inscribed members and was the largest Communist party in Europe outside Russia. It is not surprising that many Italians were afraid of a victory by the Popular Front of Communists and Socialists combined in the April elections. The Christian Democrat triumph was complete, but the Popular Front constituted a formidable opposition. It polled over 8 million or 31% of the votes and obtained 183 seats in the Chamber and 72 in the Senate. In 1953 the solid strength of the party in the country was shewn by the fact that, in spite of all the difficulties for every Communist Party caused by the death of Stalin and the general international situation, the Communists alone polled over 6 million or 22·6% of all the votes in the elections and obtained 143 seats in the Chamber. Their strength is undoubtedly partly due to the economic situation in Italy. It is easy to sneer at communist propaganda and to talk of deluded peasants whose lot under a communist régime would be worse than it is now, but when conditions are as bad as they are in many parts of the south people will listen to anyone who holds out hope of improvement. The influence of Gramsci's writings on the party's leaders is strong and Togliatti has pointed out[1] that Gramsci's political theory was based on

[1] *Il Ponte*, September–October 1951, pp. 1085–9.

a profound study of the economic and social facts of his own region of Sardinia, a study later extended to the economic structure of Italian society as a whole. Southern Italy offers a wide field of study to economists and for years the Communists have concentrated a great part of their energies on winning over the south.

Two of the smaller parties, the Liberal and the Republican, have old traditions going back to the time of the union of Italy. The Liberal Party is a party of individuals. Even before Fascism the parliamentary leaders known as liberals from Giolitti to Salandra and Facta were not members of the Liberal Party. There were a number of liberal groups in Parliament, but it needed the danger of Fascism to weld them into two main bodies. Amendola, Sforza and other left-wing liberals formed the National Democratic Union (*Unione nazionale democratica*), while the Liberal Party proper was led by Benedetto Croce, Giolitti, Orlando, Salandra, Luigi Einaudi and Francesco Ruffini, a remarkable group of men of outstanding intellectual ability and with strong anti-clerical views. The party disappeared like the others in 1926, but liberal beliefs and a liberal attitude were kept alive through twenty years of Fascist tyranny by Croce and his disciples, whose historical and philosophical writings contained thinly veiled attacks on contemporary politics.

In 1943 liberal groups were being formed, inspired by Croce, whose magnificent scorn of Fascism found vigorous expression at the first congress of the reconstructed Liberal Party held at Naples in June 1944: 'Fascism was a giant evil genius . . . which made bad taste a science. It had a senile cunning in evil; it does not deserve to be honoured by invoking the mythical figures of Ahriman or Satan, for it deserves another name, more apt and not imaginative but prosaic. It should be called human folly.'[1] Like other parties the post-war Liberal Party was divided. Croce himself was inspired by a passionate belief in liberty and considered himself and all true liberals as belonging to the Cavour tradition and as having nothing to do with the

[1] B. Croce: *Per la nuova vita dell' Italia* (Naples, Ricciardi, 1944), pp. 77–8.

old degenerate Liberal Party which in his view had been contaminated by conservative and royalist preconceptions. There was a great division between the younger liberals of the north, who were strongly in favour of a republic and devoted disciples of Croce, and the southern liberals, who constituted the great majority of the party and were monarchists and in many cases reactionary conservatives. The result of the conflict between various groups is that the voting power of the party has declined steadily since the war. Even in the elections to the Constituent Assembly in 1946 the more progressive section led by Croce, Orlando and Bonomi as the *Unione democratica nazionale* only obtained 6·8% of the votes and 41 seats in the Assembly; in 1948 standing as part of the *Blocco Nazionale* they got 3·8% of the votes and 19 seats in the Chamber; in 1953 standing in its own name, *Partito liberale italiano*, it got 3% of the votes and 14 seats and fell far below the growing Monarchist Party. The main decline in its fortunes has been in the south where the vote fell from over 700,000 for the first two combinations to 330,000 for the Liberal Party in 1953.

In general the party stands for the maintenance of the unity of Italy, and is therefore strongly opposed to the idea of regionalism, and for a lay state. Consequently, the alliance with the Christian Democrats in various Governments since the war has not been easy to maintain and has indeed raised grave doubts among the finer spirits of the party. At the same time, the more conservative elements of the party are bitterly opposed to the Government's plans of agrarian reform, not because they are bad or absentee landlords—many of them in fact are progressive landlords interested in improving the land and the conditions of the workers—but because they are deeply suspicious of State interference and any form of socialism. This attitude of many landlords provides a good illustration of the tragedy of the Italian Liberal Party. Its leaders and many of its ordinary members are some of the finest people in the country, but mentally the majority are still living in the 19th century, particularly in regard to economics and to the relations between economics and politics.

The Republican Party, as its name suggests, clung to the

Mazzinian ideal of an Italian republic. Even before 1914 it was a very small party, but it always had a few representatives in Parliament and its supporters were mainly to be found in Liguria, Romagna, the Marche, Umbria and Lazio. It came to life again in 1943, but though its members were active in the Resistance they refused to join the C.L.N. because of their rigid opposition to the monarchy. With the triumph of the republican cause in June 1946 the chief reason for the party's existence came to an end. It has, however, continued to exist, but with ever-dwindling numbers : in the 1946 elections it had just over one million votes, 4·4% of the total and 23 seats in the Assembly, in 1948 650,000 votes and 9 seats in the Chamber, in 1953 only 438,000 votes and 5 seats. Like the Liberal Party it contains a number of remarkable individuals who have not felt able to join any of the main parties. The Republican Party was represented in several of the Coalition Governments from 1948 to 1955, and stands for a free economy at home and for European union abroad; like the Liberal Party it is anti-clerical.

As a result of the 1953 elections the Government was confronted with a much stronger right-wing opposition, consisting of the Monarchist and Neo-fascist parties, than had existed in the 1948 Parliament. In 1953 each of these parties polled more than the Social Democrat Party. In 1948, in spite of the large vote for retention of the monarchy in the 1946 referendum, the Monarchist Party only secured just over 700,000 or 2·8% of the votes and 14 seats in the Chamber; in 1953 it obtained over 1,800,000 or 6·8% of the votes and 40 seats. In 1953 moreover 33% of the votes were given in north and central Italy compared with less than 17% in 1948. There is, however, no reason to think that this increase in the monarchist vote implies a corresponding increase of desire for the return of the monarchy or even growing support for the Monarchist Party. It seems rather to be due to a decline in the position of the Christian Democrats caused partly, as was suggested on p. 64 above, by a diminished fear of communism, but partly by fear and dislike of the Christian Democrat social policy, particularly in regard to the land. The president of the party,

Achille Lauro, is a big ship-builder of Naples, a self-made man with the conservatism and anti-Socialist views of many self-made men, and he has the support of many wealthy land-owners in the south who hate the Government's scheme of agrarian reform.

The Neo-fascist Party, *Movimento sociale italiano*, also increased its vote from just over 500,000 or 2% of the total in 1948 to 1,580,000 in 1953 giving it 29 seats in the Chamber, but few Italians regard the party as having any great importance. This kind of openly expressed nostalgia for Fascism can safely be ignored, and was bound to find expression when the first feelings against even minor Fascists had subsided and economic difficulties confronted people who had prospered under Fascism. On the other hand the Monarchist and Neo-fascist Parties together held 69 seats in the 1953 Chamber compared with 38 held by the three small parties of the Government coalition, Social Democrat, Liberal and Republican, or 33 without the Republican, and if this situation continues every Christian Democrat Prime Minister will be faced with a demand from the right wing of his own party to form a coalition with the parties of the right instead of with those of the left.

CHAPTER V

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH IN ITALY

It is now necessary to try and form some idea of the part played by the Roman Catholic Church in the life of the Italian people, for no account of the country's political, economic and social conditions can be intelligible which fails to take into consideration the immense importance of the Church and the effect of past and present relations of Church and State on the individual as well as on the political parties. The Roman Catholic religion is not merely professed by 98% of the population of Italy, it is a living force and it is therefore essential to realize the gravity of the conflict which exists for many Italians between their strong Catholic faith and their political and social ideals. This conflict was the personal tragedy of many Italians in the 19th century, whose joy in the creation of United Italy was marred by the refusal of the Pope to recognize the kingdom of Italy. In the middle of the 20th century it is the tragedy of many Italian Communists and Socialists in view of the fact that communism is the chief enemy of the Church and every attempt at conciliation has been condemned by the Church authorities. The 19th-century quarrel between Church and State was settled by the Lateran Pacts of 1929 (a treaty, concordat, and financial convention), but it is not possible to make the present difficulties intelligible without giving a short account of the history of past relations, always remembering that many of the difficulties are accentuated, when they are not caused, by the physical presence of the Pope and the Vatican State inside Italy.

The most bitter enemy of the union of Italy was the Pope. In 1870 Italy deprived the Pope of his temporal power, leaving him only the Vatican and Lateran palaces, including the two great churches of St. Peter's and St. John Lateran, and the papal villa at Castel Gandolfo in the Alban hills near Rome.

The Pope on his side never recognized the kingdom of Italy and the vesting of the crown in the House of Savoy, proclaimed by the first Italian Parliament in 1861. He never renounced his sovereignty over the Papal States which had stretched over central Italy from the Tyrrhenian to the Adriatic Sea, and remained the voluntary 'prisoner of the Vatican' for nearly sixty years rather than acknowledge the existence of Italian territory. For many years the Pope refused to sanction the participation of Italian Catholics in politics. In 1874, on the eve of the first parliamentary elections after the occupation of the Papal States and the removal of the Italian capital to Rome, Pius IX pronounced that it was inexpedient (*Non expedit*) for Catholics to stand as candidates for Parliament or to record their votes, a recommendation which was converted into a prohibition in 1886. The prohibition was never obeyed and concessions were gradually introduced, but it was not officially revoked until the end of 1919 after the founding of the *Partito Popolare*. For over forty years the *Non expedit* troubled the tender consciences of many Catholics and confirmed many patriotic Italians in their anti-clerical views.

A further consequence of the Pope's refusal to recognize the kingdom of Italy was that no concordat existed regulating relations between Italy and the Roman Catholic Church, and in consequence questions regarded by that Church as supremely important, such as religious instruction in schools and the State's refusal to recognize the legality of a Church marriage, were settled unilaterally by the State.

This was the situation which was ended by the signature of the Lateran Pacts in 1929. The great majority of Italians had long ceased to be interested in this seventy-year-old question, which had for most people passed into insignificance compared with the problems arising out of the 1914–18 war and the triumph of Fascism, but it was recognized as a moral triumph for Church and State to have settled at last 'the Roman question'. Under the Treaty (*Trattato*) the Papacy declared that the Roman question was finally settled and recognized the kingdom of Italy under the dynasty of the House of Savoy with Rome as the capital. Italy recognized the *de iure* terri-

torial sovereigny of the Pope over the new state of the Vatican City, which was slightly enlarged to include the great square of St. Peter's, and under the financial convention agreed to pay over a large sum which would form the capital endowment of the new state. The Concordat was a comprehensive one settling the many vexed points which had been dealt with unilaterally by Italy since 1870. The most important articles for Catholics were those which recognized Church marriages as legal, provided for religious instruction in secondary schools by priests (this had already been done by the Fascists in elementary schools), allowed pupils from church schools to take the State examinations,[1] and left the appointment of priests and bishops to the Church.

Before the war of 1939–45 many Italian anti-fascists believed that the fall of Fascism would at the very least cause serious trouble to the Papacy in view of its collaboration with Mussolini in the Lateran Pacts. Events proved this to be a complete mistake. There was no great wave of anti-clericalism after July 1943, and not even Croce, the only Senator to vote against the Pacts in 1929, or the Communist leader Togliatti, suggested the suspension of the Pacts. For the next two years good relations existed in the main between the Church and those who were struggling to establish democratic government in Italy. Liberals, Socialists and Communists alike hoped that there would be no return to the old anti-clericalism. They recognized the help given to political refugees by many of the clergy both secular and regular, particularly in Rome during the German occupation, and joined in the demonstration of gratitude to the Pope on the liberation of Rome in July 1944, when red flags with the hammer and sickle could be seen waving in the square of St. Peter's. Meantime, in the occupied north the Committees of National Liberation contained representatives of all parties, who were concerned with the future economic and social problems of Italy rather than with what seemed to them to be outworn theoretical questions of Church and State. During these two years no action displeasing to the Church authorities was taken by the central or local

[1] These schools are known as *parificati*.

government, while the friends of the Catholic Party were conciliatory, asking for freedom for the Church but not insisting on privileges.[1]

From 1945 onwards, however, the atmosphere gradually changed until the debates on the inclusion of the Lateran Pacts in the Constitution[2] revealed how great a division of opinion existed between the Christian Democrats on the one side, and the Socialists, Communists,[3] Party of Action and Croce's followers on the other regarding the position of the Church. It must be clearly understood that there was still no wish on the part of any political party to denounce the Pacts or to seek a new Concordat, it was their inclusion in the Constitution, what was known as their 'canonization', which aroused a storm of opposition and a suspicion that on this question the Christian Democrats were acting under orders. The Constitution finally included the Pacts, and this particular aspect of the Church question ceased to arouse any interest, though the problem of Church interference in political and social matters is unfortunately a live issue.

It is of course true that the Christian Democrat Party is not an official Church party and that it is independent of Church authority, but it is also undeniable that the Church exercises a strong influence on the party's policy, particularly in home affairs, and that there are close personal links between the Vatican and many of the party's leaders, apart from the fact that the party contains a group of very conservative, orthodox Catholics for whom the Church is the supreme authority in politics as in other sides of life. Clerical influence has been markedly noticeable in education, where the failure of the Government[4] to suppress inferior church schools and institutions, or to force them to raise their standards, or to give

[1] A. C. Jemolo: *Chiesa e Stato in Italia negli ultimi cento anni* (Turin, Einaudi, 1948), p. 690.

[2] See p. 43.

[3] The Communists eventually voted for the inclusion of the Pacts. Cf. p. 62.

[4] The Ministry of Education was held by conservative members of the Christian Democrat Party from 1948 to 1955 except for the brief tenure of office in 1954 by the Liberal, Signor Martini, afterwards Minister for Foreign Affairs, 1954–.

adequate financial support to the state schools, which need it badly, has caused great bitterness among people of many different kinds and varying political views from parents, teachers and school inspectors to university professors and politicians who had hoped to see liberal education flourish in the new Italy.

Another link between the Christian Democrat Party and the Church is undoubtedly the attitude of both to communism. One of the chief difficulties of the political situation for liberal-minded men of all parties after the war ended was the rapid development of the Christian Democrat Party into an enormous mass party supported by large numbers of the most conservative landowners and business men in the country and even by many ex-Fascists. By the time of the 1948 elections many of its supporters were in fact people who had ceased to regard Fascism as a serious enemy and had reverted to the view, held by so many people both inside and outside Italy in the early 1920s, that communism, which for many included any form of socialism, was the principal enemy of all decent people. This view was, and is, endorsed by the Church authorities, whose condemnation of communism knew no limits, so that they rejected outright, for example, the Christian Communists, a group which included men of the highest character, pious Catholics who condemned the materialistic doctrines of communism.

A comparison was drawn at the beginning of this chapter between the troubled consciences of the 19th-century anti-clericals and those of some present-day Communists. It is important to remember that, apart from the fact that the Italian Communist Party has over two million enrolled members, more than six million Italians, or 20% of the whole electorate, voted communist in 1953[1] in spite of the Church's denunciation of communism. The great majority of these communist voters are Catholics, many of them pious Catholics. As an intelligent old socialist woman of peasant stock said in 1948, 'All the inhabitants of my native Tuscan village vote communist, but they are all good Catholics and go to Mass

[1] See p. 70.

regularly.' A great deal of Italian communism is undoubtedly economic communism, that is to say most of its supporters are not moved by Marxist or Stalinist doctrines, in fact they probably have no idea as to what are the theoretical principles of communism. They are Communists because they are, or have been, so desperately poor and often so badly oppressed by landlords, employers and moneylenders that they are ready to support any party which offers some hope of material improvement in their lives. This is particularly true of the landless agricultural labourers of the south, whose communism tends to vanish when a tangible hope of a better future comes to them with ownership of a small farm under the agrarian reform laws. The communism of the industrial north is more deeply rooted and of much longer standing, but there too in many cases it has flourished because it has seemed to offer the best hope of improved economic conditions. Unhappily the Vatican has not hitherto seemed able to distinguish between this kind of communism and the political creed which the Church abhors.

One of the sad results of the Church's reactionary attitude in both politics and economics is the inability of many good Catholics to accept at their face value the proclamation by the Vatican of the need for the adoption of new principles of social justice and social services by Catholics. The present Pope, his Holiness Pius XII, has spoken on various occasions of the urgent need to improve social conditions in Italy, and a great deal of excellent charitable work is done by various church bodies, as has been pointed out,[1] but the Church as a whole seems unable to seize its opportunities. Thus, when the Government's draft bill for General Land Reform was published in 1948, church lands were among the few which it was proposed to exclude from the scheme. It would have been a great opportunity for the Church, which had once again become a great landlord, to have set a fine example by showing its readiness to share in the burden imposed on landlords for the sake of the poorest inhabitants of Italy.

And yet in spite of all difficulties the Catholic Church

[1] See p. 36.

remains supremely important in Italy and retains a strong hold on the individual lives of the majority of Italian citizens. The political and social problems caused by the existence of the Vatican State inside Italy and by the relations of this state and of the church authorities with the largest Italian political party are grave, but it is essential always to remember the relation between the Church and its ordinary members. It is easy to be critical of the political side of organized religion and to overstate the importance of anti-clericalism, which in fact is mainly confined to a small class of intellectuals, generally the heirs of the old liberal tradition, and to the theoretically anti-religious leaders of the left-wing parties, though even they are far removed from the old 19th-century anti-clericals. It is also easy to adopt a snobbishly intellectual attitude to the religious observances of the mass of the people, or to think that the somewhat casual, and to northern eyes disrespectful, behaviour of Italians inside the churches even on the occasion of great church festivals means that they have little real feeling for religion. It is true that in remote villages anthropological scholars can find close resemblances between local church festivals and old pagan rites, and that at the other end of the scale British Protestants often find the great ceremonial services remote and devoid of religious significance. But none of these approaches lead to an understanding of the immense importance of the Roman Catholic Church and faith and of the very real piety of a great many Italians in all ranks of society and in every political party, a piety which finds expression not only in charitable works of all kinds but in the pilgrimages to various local and national shrines, when people of all classes may be met travelling on foot separately or in groups, often walking all through the night to reach the sanctuary at dawn.

CHAPTER VI

EDUCATION

THE Italian system of education offers a good field in which to study some of the country's most serious economic and social problems. The contrast is striking between the large number of flourishing elementary schools run on modern lines in even the poorest districts of the great northern industrial cities and the lack of any similar schools in the south except in a very few towns. The serious problem of unemployment among professional people is illustrated by the large number of unemployed teachers, 120,000 elementary teachers alone in 1954, and by the effect of unemployment among teachers on educational policy. The fundamental problem of over-population combined with limited national resources is one of the chief reasons for the desperate shortage of schools all over the country, particularly in the south, and in addition produces serious difficulties in school administration, owing to the influx into northern and central towns of emigrants from the overcrowded, backward, agricultural areas of the south. Above all, unemployment and low wages and the general lack of resources of the Italian State have nullified that part of a law of 1923, incorporated in the Constitution of 1948, which made education compulsory for eight years, from 6 to 14,[1] with the result that about 200,000, or 40%, of the children who annually obtain their passing-out certificate (*licenza*) from the five-year elementary schools go no further in their schooling.[2]

Education in Italy is highly centralized; there are State schools of every grade, elementary and secondary, and 22 of the 27 universities are State universities. There are a considerable number of private schools, mainly run by religious orders, but the percentage of children attending them is small, only

[1] Part of the educational reform introduced by the philosopher Gentile as Minister of Education.

[2] *Inchiesta sulla disoccupazione*, vol. II, tom. 1, p. 72.

about 5% of those in the elementary schools in 1950–51, and all pupils must take the various State examinations in order to qualify for higher grades of schools and eventually for the universities and for the professions. The administration of elementary schools is the prerogative of the communes, whose most important function is the provision of school buildings, a doubtful privilege, particularly after 1945 when war destruction, lack of materials and the large increase in the population of school age seriously increased the shortage of classrooms, already severe in 1939. Even in the towns of north Italy schools were still being used in 1955 for different groups of children in the mornings and afternoons, while in the south, particularly in the Abruzzi, Basilicata and Calabria, the shortage was disastrous.

Education, both elementary and secondary, is in the hands of the *Provveditori agli studi*, Directors of Education, one of whom is appointed to each province by the Minister of Education. The only exceptions to this centralized control are the special regions of Sicily, Sardinia, Valle d'Aosta and Trentino-Alto Adige, which are authorized under their constitutional statutes to issue statutory legislation for the application of national laws to both elementary and secondary schools. Much depends on the personality of the *Provveditore* and on that of the inspectors through whom he works. In a country like Italy, where a province often includes a mountain area as well as a great town, inspectors need to be persons of considerable physical energy as well as of intellectual and moral standing. In the province of Florence, for example, one of the inspectors has to visit a number of schools which can only be reached by an hour's mountain walking, even in these days of excellent country bus services and of official cars.

Under the inspectors of elementary schools Italy has a group of officials unknown in Great Britain, *Direttori didattici*, teaching directors, who may be men or women. These *Direttori* are the heads of groups of elementary schools. The unsuspecting foreigner, who calls on the head of a large town school containing 800 to 1,000 pupils, is startled to find that this school is only the largest of those under the head's rule and contains his central office, and that he is the headmaster of

some 50 schools which may lie at considerable distances apart in the surrounding country, in each of which a senior master or mistress is in charge of day-to-day routine. This system means that even with the help of a good secretary the unfortunate *Direttori* are snowed under by the vast amount of paper work demanded by the Italian bureaucracy. In spite of this the good *Direttori* have an amazing knowledge of the schools in their care, of the large number of teachers involved, and even of many individual children—possibly mainly of those who are markedly intelligent or markedly troublesome. A province like Florence, which includes an important town with large schools, employs both kinds of headmasters and headmistresses, the ordinary head of one school known as *Preside* or *Direttore*, and the head of a group of schools ; they tend naturally to belong to rather different types of person, as the second kind of post involves so much administration.

For those *Direttori didattici* who are not content to be mere administrators the work involved is very heavy ; many of the schools are in remote villages as difficult of access for them as for the inspectors. They do, however, find compensation for their unremitting labours in the variety involved in running a big well-equipped school in a comparatively wealthy town and a tiny village school belonging to a poor agricultural commune, which has no funds for providing educational accessories. The difficulty of the *Direttore* is to find time to visit the schools sufficiently often. The school year is short, October to May inclusive, and most heads complain that they can only visit each school once during the year and have to keep in touch through written reports. But again the best *Direttori* do far more than this. They are always ready to take interested visitors to see some of the smaller country schools in their charge and to point out what remarkable work is done by their teachers under difficult conditions. The welcome given to the *Direttori* by teachers and children alike—a welcome often expressed by the gift of a bunch of wild flowers even to a headmaster—shows that their visits are regarded as a privilege and in no sense as a thing to be feared.

Nursery Schools, *asili infantili* or *scuole materne*, for

children of 3 to 6 years, do not come under the State. Many of them are run by the communes, where public funds are available, but the majority are supported by private societies both lay and clerical. In 1950–52 there were 12,995 nursery schools in Italy, 3,322 of them in the south, and in half of them (three-quarters in the south) the children got a free mid-day meal. There is widespread recognition of the need of these schools in a country where, owing to poverty and unemployment among men, the number of women at work has rapidly increased. Over 7,000 schools are in the industrialized north, but the need is even greater in the poverty-stricken, agricultural towns of the south, and there a magnificent work is being carried on by the Association for the South,[1] which in 1951–52 had 25 nursery schools, many of them in remote mountain villages of Basilicata and Calabria and in the islands both large and small; there is, for instance, a flourishing school on Stromboli. The women of the villages often leave home at 6 or 7 in the morning to walk long distances to work in the fields, and the small children have to be left alone all day to play in the roads. When they first come in to the school they are like little animals, dirty, ragged and underfed, but it is wonderful to see the change wrought in two or three months. The schools built by the Association for the South are pleasant, simple, well-lit, small buildings with as a rule two or three classrooms, well-equipped cloakrooms, and a small kitchen where the children's food is prepared. Most of the teachers are nuns, and their teaching methods are sometimes old-fashioned, but to anyone who knows something of the homes of the children the results achieved are remarkable. Perhaps the most striking thing is to watch a group of tiny children of four, who probably come from a home of one room shared by a family of seven or eight besides a goat and some chickens, laying the tables for the mid-day meal, and then waiting solemnly on the ninety or one hundred other small children who have learned excellent table manners in an incredibly short time. The number of Nursery Schools in the south is increasing steadily, apart from the new ones opened every year by the Association

[1] See p. 19.

for the South, for the officials of the Agrarian Reform realize their value, and temporary quarters for schools are opened as soon as the peasants are sttled on their new farms in the various areas under control of the Reform authorities.

At the age of 6 children enter the elementary schools, and from 6 to 11 education is free as well as compulsory. The general lines of education for each of these five years are laid down by the Ministry of Education, which prescribes the use of a general text-book containing arithmetic, history, geography, botany, etc., for each class, and also a reading-book with short stories and poems. But inside what appears to be a highly centralized system, controlled by a series of annual examinations, there is a great deal of freedom, and all kinds of interesting experiments are carried out under the eyes of discriminating *Provveditori* and inspectors.

During the twenty years of Fascism education was, in theory at least, strictly controlled, and the interest of the State was to train young people to accept certain ideas handed down from above and to indulge in all kinds of mass activities; the child who wanted to think for himself was not encouraged. The fall of Fascism brought a wholesome reaction, and in the better elementary schools great stress is laid on the importance of the individual child, on self-expression, and on leaving the child to find things out for himself. Children all keep diaries in which they are encouraged to write down and to illustrate all the ordinary happenings of their everyday life at home as well as at school. Many of these diaries make entertaining reading, though it is sometimes natural to wonder how a parent likes having his reaction to a bad attack of toothache ruthlessly revealed to his child's teacher. One fact is bound to strike a British visitor to Italian schools, the amazing speed with which the children learn to read and write, so that after only three months at school an average child of six can read a simple story quite well and is beginning to write down short sentences in an elementary diary. The teachers put this down mainly to their use of what they call the 'global'[1] method of teaching, but

[1] *I.e.* the process of learning to read a whole word at a time, known to English teachers as 'the look and say' method.

they also admit the great advantage of the fact that Italian is written as it is pronounced, so that spelling is not a nightmare as it often is to British children.

While on the one hand teachers are convinced of the supreme importance of the individual child, on the other hand many of them are much preoccupied by the thought of the place of the child in society. A widespread interest in social studies and in their practical application is a comparatively new thing in Italy, although some excellent work was done both in the field of thought and of practice before and even during the Fascist period. Teachers and educationalists generally are deeply concerned with the social importance of schools, and are anxious to train their children for the kind of life which they may be expected to lead. At present this seems to imply practical rather than intellectual training, a big swing of the pendulum in Italy, where on the whole education has tended to be somewhat narrowly bookish, and one which has scarcely reached the secondary schools. This new tendency has led to a great expansion of handwork of various kinds, printing, woodwork, modelling, besides drawing and painting, particularly in the town schools of central and northern Italy, where even quite small children show a skill in handling materials which must have come down to them from generations of Europe's most highly skilled craftsmen. In the open-air school called *Casa del Sole* in Milan children of 9 and 10, taught by a remarkable artist, have produced reliefs in beaten metal, which might come from the workshops of the great mediaeval craftsmen.

Considerable emphasis is laid on the educational value of singing, acting and physical exercises. The less said of the singing the better. The children naturally love it, but even in the best schools the standard is very low. The songs chosen have no musical value, and the teachers, with rare exceptions, seem to have no knowledge of producing children's voices. The teaching of physical exercises, or gymnastics as they are proudly called, is also generally very old-fashioned, and mainly consists of a few breathing and bending exercises, some marching and running, and a great deal of jumping to

attention, even when a school possesses a gymnasium. There is nothing like the delightful games with balls, hoops and skipping-ropes of British primary schools. But acting is a totally different matter. Possibly Italian children have a special gift for drama, certainly their gestures even when reciting a short poem are delightfully free and unselfconscious. The dramatic shows given by the schools, usually at Christmas and at the end of the school year in May, are important events. In the big schools elaborate performances are staged with the aid of the inventive powers and self-sacrifice of the teachers, who are amazingly good at producing wonderful properties and clothes from the most unpromising materials. The small country schools are sometimes even more remarkable, for poverty forces them to rely on the acting powers of the children and on their imagination, so that, for instance, a group of big boys of 11 and 12 will give a spirited performance of an orchestra on instruments made of cardboard. Many schools make use of puppets, which offer excellent opportunities of co-operative work by boys and girls; the boys make the puppets and the girls dress them, sometimes to designs produced by the boys.

Some schools are trying to bring their teaching into close touch with the social surroundings of their pupils and to base it on knowledge of the various features in the life of the town or village where the children live. In one Milan school,[1] for example, the teaching of the second form of seven-year-olds is all connected with the story of the suburb where the children live. They go into the shops and question the shopkeepers, they talk to the peasants in the fields which lie just beyond the school, and in their turn the shopkeepers, local police, and workmen come into the school and talk to the children about what goes on in their district. The older children of the fifth form settled down in 1954 to a study of Milan's gas supply. They visited the city gas-works, and on their return to school made a working model of a gas-works, including a gasometer containing real gas. Many schools, like the *Scuola Città* in

[1] The *Cabrini* School, situated in a very poor quarter, where unemployment and crime are rife.

Florence, founded by Professor Codignola of the University of Florence, are training the children in the principles of citizenship and self-government through the use of committees consisting of a president and councillors, elected by the different classes and responsible for the discipline, hygiene, games and other activities, including the raising and spending of money, of their school-fellows. This is not a new idea for British schools, but it is remarkable to see such young children, the oldest being 11 or 12, moving the adoption of a proposal with the fluency and gestures of a practised orator. One delightful variant of these councils exists in a very poor school, the *Scuola Mazzini*, in Florence. There the council is called the *Fratellanza* (Brotherhood), and exists for the purpose of helping pupils in the school or their immediate relations. Every child in the school brings 10 lire (about 1½*d.*) a week, or more if possible, and out of the fund so formed grants are made on the proposals of class representatives voted on by the whole council. Gifts may range from a pair of shoes or a length of dress material for a school-fellow to a basket of fruit for a sick father or mother. The proposer has to give good reasons for making a grant, but the information on which grants are made must be treated as confidential. Although the headmistress is present at council meetings and gives her advice, the chair is taken by the elected president, aged 10, and the voting of the council is free.

The attention given to the physical well-being of the children is impressive. The school medical service is still rudimentary in villages everywhere and in many towns in the south, but in the northern towns it is magnificently organized. Most of the schools have a well-equipped first-aid room, where a trained nurse deals with minor ills and keeps the children's medical records. In the big schools a doctor attends at least two or three times a week, and in addition there are visiting specialists for eyes, ears, throat and nose, etc., besides a regular dental service. To a few of the biggest schools the commune also attaches one of its Health Visitors, an *Assistente sanitaria*, whose special duty it is to visit the children's homes and to link school and family together on all health questions.

Probably one of the most important contributions to the children's health is that made by the widespread provision of free school dinners for a large number of poor children. Most of the big schools have their own kitchens, where excellent, appetizing meals are prepared, while a mobile canteen service provides for many smaller schools, even for some tucked away in the Apennines. The supervision of the children during these meals often provides a little work for some of the thousands of unemployed teachers.

Apart from the regular medical care provided for all the children, some communes have opened special schools for delicate children, particularly for those with any tendency to tuberculosis. Florence, for example, has a delightful residential school at Montepiano, 2,000 feet up in the hills, where about 80 delicate children are sent for the eight months of the school year or for longer if necessary, and where lessons go on at a leisurely pace and the important things are good food, long hours in the open air and plenty of sleep, a thing of which few Italian children of any class get enough. Milan was a pioneer in this as in other forms of social work, and in 1922 started the open-air school called *Casa del Sole* referred to on page 87 above. The school stands in a large park, known as *Trotter* because trotting races used to be held in it, and consists of 10 scattered houses each of which holds four classrooms, a refectory, and cloakrooms, so that the 1,100 children who are brought to it each day by bus from all over the city work and play in small groups, which is felt to be much better for delicate children than the noise and pressure of one enormous school. This school provides education for children from 3 to 14 years, that is from Nursery School through elementary to the end of the first three years of secondary school.

Unhappily many of the most encouraging features of the northern schools cannot be found in the south, where even in the towns conditions are very difficult. One of the worst stumbling-blocks to progress is the appalling shortage of schools. In the south the number of children enrolled in State elementary schools went up by over 125,000 between 1936–37 and 1951–52, while in the north it dropped by over 600,000,

whereas the number of classrooms in the south only increased by about 7,000 as compared with 9,200 in the north during the same period. In addition mere figures do not give any adequate idea of conditions in the south, where in many villages there is no proper school building at all, and children of all ages and stages have to be taught together in a small cottage room, where often the door is also the window and therefore the only source of light as well as air. Not only is there no school building, there is often nowhere for the teacher to live; most families in the villages are already living from 6 to 10 in one room in addition to their pig and some hens. The result is that the teacher has to travel to and from the nearest town, and school hours are bounded by the somewhat erratic local bus services. This question of the local residence of the school-teacher is a very difficult one. Even in Tuscany the teachers in the small hill villages plead every kind of excuse in order to obtain permission from their inspectors to live in the nearest town, and in the remote villages of Calabria and Basilicata a young teacher needs great courage to face life alone in the very primitive conditions prevailing. Moreover a very large number of the teachers in the remote southern villages are young and inexperienced, for owing to the great surplus of teachers there are usually at least 40 applicants for every post in the towns, and the young must either take the remote posts or join the ranks of the unemployed. The Agrarian Reform organizations (*enti*) are helping to meet the need of both pupils and teachers by building schools and houses for teachers; but houses for the peasants had to come first, and in 1955 children and teachers were still in temporary quarters and the teachers' isolation was still severe.[1]

One of the difficulties facing progressive Head-teachers everywhere is to find assistant teachers willing and able to carry out new experiments. This is probably a difficulty in all countries, but perhaps it is particularly marked in Italy where the teaching in the Training Colleges is still largely old-fashioned and too theoretical. The young teachers are full of high-flown theories and have little or no knowledge of practical

[1] See also p. 133.

difficulties, the older teachers are apt to be set in their ways and are also often unconsciously influenced by twenty years of Fascism, which in teaching as in politics inevitably produced among the less intelligent teachers what Italians call a Fascist mentality. One of the most remarkable and encouraging features of the elementary schools is the way in which Head-teachers, including the *Direttori didattici*, helped by good inspectors, are overcoming this difficulty and training up enthusiastic believers in the new methods. The result is that a large number of children in the elementary schools are receiving an education which need not fear comparison with that of any other country.

The tragedy of Italy's educational system begins when elementary schooling ends, for with it ends schooling of any kind for the majority of children, in spite of the law and the Constitution. The Government Report on Unemployment stated that in 1952 67% of all the children of 11 had no more schooling,[1] while, as already noted on page 82 above, 40% of those who obtained their elementary school-leaving certificate went no further. It might be expected that country children generally, and particularly the children in the south, would leave school early, but it is lamentable to find the same thing happening in a comparatively wealthy town like Florence, where for instance only about 12 out of over 150 school-leavers aged 11 and 12 from one of the very good, though poor, elementary schools went on to any kind of secondary school in 1954.

Undoubtedly one of the main reasons for this sad state of affairs, which sends children of 11 to work, is poverty, poverty of the parents and poverty of the Italian State. Secondary education is not free, although in the ordinary State secondary schools for children of 11 to 14 the fees are almost negligible, amounting to less than £2 a year; but the cost of school books is high, rising from £20 in the first year to £30 or more in later years. This is an enormous sum not only for a working-man but for large numbers of the employee class, e.g. for an elementary schoolmaster, whose salary starts at 32,000 lire a

[1] *Inchiesta sulla disoccupazione*, vol. II, tom. 1, p. 62.

month (about £220 a year) and rises to a maximum of 45,000 a month (about £310 a year). It is true that in every commune there is a *Patronato Scolastico*[1] or school committee, whose legal duty it is to help poor children by providing books, copy-books, shoes, spectacles, school dinners, country holidays, etc., in addition to setting up school libraries, organizing out-of-school activities such as *Doposcuola* (classes in arts and crafts out of school hours), and providing special schools for retarded children; but the funds available for these various purposes are totally inadequate. The law of 1947, which fixed the duties of the *Patronati*, also fixed the ludicrous sum of 2 lire (about ½*d.*) per head of the population to be made available to the *Patronati* by each commune, and even although help is available from the Ministry of Education, the inadequacy of the fund is obvious in areas like Friuli in the Veneto or in Basilicata, where 95% and 72% respectively of the school population have to be helped. In fact in many of the bigger towns school dinners are provided by the commune. In view of the calls made on the *Patronati* by the elementary schools, it can easily be imagined that there is not much money to spare for children in secondary schools, and the number of scholarships available from any source is negligible; there is no system comparable with that existing in Great Britain.

Children under 14 cannot be employed in factories, and there is a law of 26 April 1934 which forbids their employment altogether unless in exceptional cases; but the fact that there is much evasion of this law is shown by the fact that in September 1952 202,700 children under 14 were registered as employed.[2] Many of these children were employed in dead-end jobs in towns, or working on the land, while others were learning various handicrafts working under bad conditions in the dark little artisan workshops of their relations. Plenty of Italians can still be found who take the old-fashioned view that working with relations does children no harm, but the

[1] Cf. *Commissione sulla miseria*, vol. I, pp. 196 ff.

[2] Statistics of the Istituto Centrale di Statistica quoted in *Inchiesta sulla disoccupazione*, vol. 1, tom. 1, p. 35.

more enlightened realize the dangers arising for children working in conditions which are bad for everyone, and where control is extremely difficult.[1]

The natural result of this early end of schooling is a high figure of illiteracy, estimated at 11% of the whole population of Italy in 1948, but rising to 30% in Basilicata and 32% in Calabria, with an average for the whole south of 24%.[2] Moreover, this figure does not cover the large number of semi-literates, many of them young men of 20 to 35, who left school at 11, often without having risen higher than the third elementary class, and who now feel the need of more education in view of the demands of modern industry and agriculture.

The poverty of the State is often adduced as a serious obstacle to the enforcement of education up to 14. In October 1950 the Italian Minister of Education stated that compelling children to stay at school till 14 would involve the construction of 70,000 new classrooms at a cost of over 200 milliard lire (approximately £120 million), a heavy burden for the State and communes to shoulder.[3] The answer to this objection must surely be that even this large sum would be outweighed by the advantages, moral and financial, of reducing the pressure on the labour market. As long ago as the economic crisis of 1931 the International Labour Office proposed the raising of the school age for this very reason,[4] and it is sad that, faced with the terrible problem of nearly two million unemployed, the Italian Government had not by 1955 taken action in this sense, as was suggested by some members of the Commission on Unemployment.[5] Enforcement would at least involve the immediate employment of some of Italy's unemployed teachers.

Secondary education is divided into lower education from 11 to 14, and higher education from 14 to 19, and there are further divisions within these two main ones. The ordinary

[1] *Inchiesta sulla disoccupazione*, vol. IV, tom. 5, pp. 185–6.
[2] Svimez: *Statistiche sul Mezzogiorno d'Italia 1861–1953* (Rome, 1954), pp. 769–70.
[3] Quoted in *Inchiesta sulla disoccupazione*, vol. II, tom. 1, p. 30.
[4] Cf. ibid., vol. IV, tom. 2, p. 205.
[5] Ibid., vol. II, tom. 1, p. 81.

lower secondary school, the *scuola media unica*, gives a general education on academic lines, consisting of religious instruction, Italian language and literature, history, geography, mathematics, one modern language, generally French, Latin, drawing and physical training. These are the schools which are most bitterly criticized by Italians themselves, and it must be owned that this criticism seems justified, though in fairness it should be added that the same criticism could be brought against some English grammar schools. Among the most remarkable features of the best elementary schools are their vitality, the encouragement given to the children to express themselves freely, and the absence of any feeling of pressure to accept the teacher's views. (There are of course exceptions: in one of the biggest elementary schools in Rome the children sit at their desks with their hands behind their backs, as used once to be seen in English infant schools, answering questions put to them by the teachers on what they have learned.) All these virtues seem to be lacking in most secondary schools, and this is the complaint brought against them by the elementary school-teachers, who feel bitterly that what they have striven for five years to give to their children is lost immediately in the frigid atmosphere of the secondary school. On a first visit a foreigner is impressed by the amount of knowledge, particularly perhaps knowledge of history and geography, possessed by children of 12 and 13, and by their readiness to express it. But slowly it dawns on a suspicious observer that in most cases the children are not eagerly describing what they have read or observed for themselves, but are relating the views of their teachers, often in fact quoting verbatim from dictated notes. Learning by heart, particularly poetry, is an admirable habit, even the old-fashioned Latin gender rhyme had much to commend it, but to learn by heart and to reproduce verbatim a teacher's prosaic version of Nausicaa's meeting with the shipwrecked Odysseus is the negation of intelligent teaching. There are of course schools where this kind of thing would never happen, but unhappily it seems to be in general true that in the secondary schools, both lower and higher, the acquisition of certain kinds of knowledge and not the training

of the intelligence and character is what matters. This tendency in the secondary schools is strengthened by the existence at every stage of the school career of examinations which insist on the possession of information. Only the pupil who successfully passes the final examination of the *scuola media* can go on to a higher secondary school, and so after further examinations to the university and the professions.

Besides the *scuola media* there are *scuole di avviamento professionale*, schools with a vocational bias, industrial, commercial, agricultural and nautical, which were intended to give a slightly more practical education to children of 11 to 14 who did not want the purely academic teaching of the other schools. Many Italians, however, feel that most of these schools fall between two stools; on the cultural side, the standard is rather lower than in the *scuola media*, while the practical teaching of about 10 periods a week is not good enough to give the children any special qualifications for jobs. Moreover, children who complete the course and obtain their leaving-certificate, as only about one-third do, think that they have been educated for something better than manual labour.[1] There are some exceptionally good schools in the big towns, particularly in Milan and Florence, where the general education given is excellent and many of the pupils go on to the new *istituti professionali* (professional institutes) started in 1950 for both boys and girls, which turn out specialized skilled workers after a two-year course; but the serious objection to the *scuole di avviamento* is that their pupils cannot go on to any higher schools except to those which give a purely technical education.

In 1951–52 there were 795,720 children in the lower secondary schools. In the industrialized north 55·5% went to the *scuole di avviamento*, but in the south only 40·1%. In the north far more parents realize the importance of schooling beyond the age of 11 even for workers in industry, agriculture and commerce, and they hope that their children may learn something of practical value in the *scuole di avviamento*. In the south the majority of parents see no point in more education

[1] *Inchiesta sulla disoccupazione*, vol. II, tom. 1, p. 119.

than that given by the elementary schools for children who are going to work as labourers, and those parents who want more for their children think that only the purely academic schooling leading to higher education and clerical or professional jobs is worth the sacrifice required to obtain it.

Higher secondary education is provided in three main types of schools: in the classical and scientific *licei* (grammar schools), in *istituti magistrali* (institutes for training teachers), and in technical institutes. Teaching in the classical *licei* is still based on Latin and Greek, though a high standard is also demanded in Italian literature, history, geography, mathematics and philosophy; in the scientific *licei* the emphasis is on mathematics and science, and a modern language takes the place of Greek. After five years the pupils take the *diploma di maturità* which admits them to the universities. The *istituti magistrali* provide a four-year course in Italian, Latin, history, mathematics, natural science, philosophy, music, art and education, and their diploma qualifies students to compete in the State examinations for teaching-posts in the elementary schools or for entry to the *magistero* (education) faculty of the universities and eventually for posts in the secondary schools.[1]

The same criticism applies to these schools as to those of the lower grade. The pupils work extremely hard, the standard of the *diploma di maturità* is high, and those boys and girls who obtain it undoubtedly amass a great deal of information; but in general the schools are not interested in the training of character and intelligence. This conception of a school as only a place for acquiring information is strengthened by the fact that informal relations between masters and pupils barely exist. The teachers' salaries are so low that they can only afford to spend the minimum time required in school. They give their lessons, set the homework, and go off to a second job.

[1] It should be noted that a large number of girls go to the *istituti magistrali* without any intention of proceeding to a teaching post. Often in the south they are the only secondary schools available for girls. Cf. *Inchiesta sulla disoccupazione*, vol. IV, tom. 2, p. 218.

In 1951–52 there were 434 technical institutes, 88 industrial, 49 agricultural, 276 commercial including surveying, and 21 nautical, besides 39 (1950–51 figures) institutes for girls only, where they are trained as teachers of domestic economy. Nearly three-quarters of all the institutes are in the north, where the standard of teaching and practical work in the best industrial institutes is very high. The courses last for five years, and in some institutes, e.g. the magnificent *Leonardo Da Vinci* of Florence, include six months' work in a local industry. The small number of agricultural institutes is noticeable, particularly in the almost wholly agricultural south, where there are only 16 altogether, 7 of them in the islands of Sicily and Sardinia, 1 only in the Abruzzi and none in Basilicata. This shortage has already made itself felt, and is likely to do so increasingly in view of the large demand for trained agronomists by the various land reform agencies.

The distribution of pupils among the different kinds of higher secondary schools shows the same contrast between north and south as that of the lower schools. In 1951–52 there were 364,762 pupils in the higher schools; in the north 23% went to the classical *licei*, 13% to the scientific *licei*, 18% to the *istituti magistrali* and 44·9% to the technical institutes; the corresponding figures for the south were 42·8%, 7·2%, 25·1% and 24·8%.

The number of students in Italy's 27 universities (including Trieste) increased enormously after 1945, as it did in other countries, reaching a grand total of 248,083 in 1946–47, nearly three times the number in 1936–37; and though there was a slight decrease after 1948–49, to 226,543 in 1951–52, there is no sign of any great change. Thoughtful Italians, like people in other countries, are disturbed by the increase in students for whom so few jobs are available when they have taken their degree, particularly as so many of them take degrees in literary subjects in the hope of obtaining posts in the civil service, including teaching. This inclination is particularly marked in the south, where in 1951–52 54·7% of the students were enrolled in the faculties of law, economics and politics, letters and education, compared with 44·4% in the north. In the

faculty of law there were nearly twice as many students in the southern universities as in the northern. The University of Rome resembles the universities of the south, nearly one-quarter of its students belonged to the faculty of law. The two universities of Rome and Naples had over 32,000 and 28,000 students respectively in 1951–52. These two cities attract students as they attract all kinds of people, and their universities have more than trebled in the last twenty-five years.

It is easy to criticize parents, particularly parents in south Italy, who despise practical avocations like engineering and agriculture for their children; but many of Italy's most remarkable thinkers and statesmen have come from the south, and the mountains of Calabria like those of Scotland seem to produce men who are willing to accept low living if they can be trained for high thinking. It should also be remembered that until the De Gasperi government seriously tackled the question of land reform and the development of the south there were no visible prospects of posts in agriculture or industry. It may not be unduly optimistic to hope that the work which is going on in the south will prove to parents that there are better things to be done than working as a clerk in a bank or even a government office, and that the future prosperity not only of the south but of the whole of Italy depends partly on the supply of highly trained technicians, whose schooling must be brought into line with the splendid training of intelligence and character begun in the elementary schools.

CHAPTER VII

INDUSTRY

In the later Middle Ages the great Italian cities were not only the homes of artists and poets, their craftsmen and merchants were famous all over Europe, their silks and velvets, glass and metal work were unsurpassed. But industrialization on the big scale came late to Italy; even after the union of the whole country industrial development was slow until the beginning of the 20th century, and only made rapid progress during and after the war of 1914–18. The two main raw materials of big industry, coal and iron, are almost entirely lacking, and Italy remained, as it still does to a great extent, a country of small industries, often family undertakings with only one or two outside employees, with a great tradition of skilled craftsmanship—*artigianato*—particularly in textiles, leather and glass. It was the discovery of the possibilities of water-power that made big-scale industry profitable, while recent exploitation of Italy's natural gases, particularly *metano*, during and since the war of 1939–45 should make it possible to reduce the amount of imported fuel, especially if the hopes of considerable deposits of oil in Sicily and the Abruzzi materialize.

In spite of the progress made in the last fifty years industry still employed far fewer people than agriculture in 1952. The 1936 census had shown 5·4 million people, or 29% of the occupied (*attiva*) population, engaged in industry; by 1952 the numbers engaged in industry had only risen to 5·6 million, or 31·7%,[1] although the Italian population had increased from

[1] These figures emerged from the sample survey made by the Italian Institute of Statistics (*Istituto Centrale di Statistica*) in September 1952. They are not exactly comparable with those of 1936, as they represent the number of those actually employed on the date of the survey. Employed and unemployed workers in industry together amounted to nearly 33%. See Table II at end of book.

43 million to over 47½ million. Moreover these are average figures for the whole country, and give no idea of the extent of industrialization in the north or of its almost complete absence in some of the southern regions.

Most of the big industry is carried on in the northern regions of Piedmont, Lombardy and Liguria, where it is centred in the great cities of Turin, Milan and Genoa, with their large factories like those of industrial cities all over western Europe; in these regions almost half of the employed population is engaged in industry. In the Marche in central Italy 62% of the employed population still work in agriculture and only 22% in industry, while in the south generally the respective percentages are 55% and 26%, and in Basilicata the figure for industry falls to 18%. The industrial census held in November 1951 also illustrated this concentration of industry in the north; more than half the firms were in the north, only one-third in the south, although the census included small as well as large firms; 65% of the industrial workers were in the north compared with 15% in the south.

Everyone interested in the problems of over-population and under-employment in south Italy has long recognized that this state of affairs is disastrous for the south; southerners complained from the early years of united Italy that their interests were ignored and that such industry as existed was sacrificed for the benefit of the north. The difficulties of producing goods at prices which can compete on the international market have persuaded not only statesmen and economists but enlightened northern employers that the north needs the south as a market, that for this purpose a poor and almost entirely agricultural south is useless, and that only some degree of industrialization, combined with improved agriculture, can raise the standard of living in the south and so increase the consumption inside Italy of the industrial goods produced in the north.

Even in north Italy very few industries are organized on a big modern scale, the great Fiat works in Piedmont and the Ansaldo works in Liguria being among the most notable

exceptions. In 1951 76% of the firms engaged in industry had two or less workers, 94% ten or less, and only 0·7% over one hundred. Only 740 out of a total of 711,554 had more than 500, 49 of these 740 being in the south. Calabria offers a good example of the difficulties of industry in the south and of the effect of the existence of tiny undertakings. The experts who drew up the report on Calabria for the Government Commission on Unemployment pointed out that it was not the fact of the existence of small firms which was disastrous for the Calabrian economy; small firms with modern equipment, knowledge of local requirements and the capacity to satisfy them could serve a very useful purpose. They would employ more workers for relatively less capital expenditure—an important consideration in view of the superabundance of labour and general shortage of capital. Unhappily, the existing small firms were not efficient, their equipment was out of date, and the high cost of money with interest rates at 8–10% made modernization almost impossible. Labour available in Calabria is not only plentiful but hard-working, but the report stated that returns were low in relation to wages. In the view of these experts the cost of living was so high and the workers lived so poorly that they could not produce much.[1] The result of these conditions, which are general in the south, is that local industry cannot compete with the north even in providing for local industrial needs, 85% of which in Calabria are met by northern industry. The tiny local concerns can only deal with local needs of food and clothing at a high cost of distribution and with very low returns.

Small firms are not, however, confined to the south. Home industries, quite apart from skilled crafts, which will be considered separately, exist everywhere, and there have even been complaints from big wool manufacturers in Tuscany and Piedmont that competition from home workers has deprived them of the profits which they should have earned as a result of modernizing their factories and machinery. Weavers have bought up old looms scrapped by the big factories and set

[1] *Inchiesta sulla disoccupazione*, vol. III, tom. 4, pp. 221–382.

them up in their own homes, where no factory acts or trade unions control hours or working conditions.[1]

Generally speaking, there is a lack of well-organized, up-to-date, medium-sized industries; there are either these small, domestic businesses or else enormous firms like Fiat, or Montecatini, the great chemical manufacturers. There are of course exceptions, outstanding among them the firm of Olivetti, which makes typewriters and every kind of calculating machine. Olivetti have always believed in the beneficial effect of good working conditions; their factories are modern buildings, their machinery is up to date, and they were one of the first firms to set up nursery schools for the children of their employees, many of whom are women, and to provide canteens and health services of a very high order. Unfortunately, as Italians themselves point out, Olivetti are not a typical firm in any respect. It is perhaps a good omen for the development of southern industry that Olivetti were among the first northern firms to open a branch in the south.

In addition to the small industrial concerns there are still a large number of handicraft workshops, nearly 650,000 in 1954, employing over a million craftsmen. Italy's craftsmen (the *artigiani*) are unsurpassed, they still possess the skill which has made their work famous for centuries.[2] The briefest visit to Italy cannot fail to show a tourist some of the work produced by men working in dark little shops, where even in Tuscany the only light apart from electricity comes in at the door, or by women sitting on their doorsteps chatting with their neighbours while they plait straw at incredible speed for hats and belts or do exquisite embroidery on household linen or women's clothes. Crafts of various kinds exist all over the country. Some are well known to foreigners, Venetian glass and beads, Tuscan embroidery and leather-work, Tuscan and Umbrian pottery;

[1] As might be expected, the clothing industry is still largely in the hands of small business or individual craftsmen. The 1951 industrial census gave the number of workers engaged in the clothing industry as nearly 413,700. Only about 50,000 worked in factories, 150,000 were craftsmen working at home, the rest were domestic workers to whom the work was farmed out by the manufacturers.

[2] Cf. the skill of schoolchildren in handicrafts, p. 87.

others are less well known, e.g. the fine basket-work of Naples, the tiles of Amalfi, or the pottery of Calabria, where in the village markets vases are sold from two inches to three feet high still possessing the same lovely shapes of the Greek vases of more than two thousand years ago. The skill of the craftsman and his good taste, when his art is not commercialized like so much modern Venetian glass with its poor design and over-elaboration, are above praise, but the prevalence of these crafts is unhappily an indication of the country's poverty. The money paid for these things is rarely a fair recompense for the labour involved; in many cases, particularly in women's work, it is regarded as extra earnings, pocket-money.[1] It is still possible, for instance, to get beautiful hand-embroidered linen at prices which ordinary professional people can afford to pay, if the purchaser knows a worker and buys direct. It is the old problem of hand-made versus machine-made goods, but it appears in an acute form in a country which is part of western Europe, and where the workers, even the women, are increasingly aware of western wages and standards of living. There is still a market for these lovely things in the United States and South America particularly, but quite apart from the question of the workers' earnings, there is always the uncertainty as to how long this market will last.

In many places, and particularly in the south, the skill of the women is still used to supply their own household needs with no eye to markets at home or abroad. In the new village of La Martella, where some of the cave-dwellers of Matera in Basilicata have been rehoused,[2] the wife of a peasant showed to visitors in 1955 great rolls of beautifully woven face-towels, white, pink, blue and green. There was no idea of selling any of them, they were part of the marriage portion of her five daughters, each of whom would have at least three dozen towels. But even in such cases the continuance of the work is mainly due to the fact that there is no outside work for most of these women in their over-populated country, and 5 or 6 adult women cooped up together all day even in a modern

[1] Cf. women tobacco workers on farms, p. 121.
[2] See p. 136.

cottage instead of in a cave are thankful to have some kind of definite occupation.

The end of the 1939–45 war found Italian industry at a very low ebb. Mussolini's policy of making the country self-sufficient as far as possible, combined with the effects of nearly ten years of war economy, dating from the preparations for the Abyssinian campaign of 1936, had forced industry into wrong channels by encouraging heavy industry, particularly the production of war material. The conversion of heavy industry to a peace-time economy was especially difficult in Italy because of its unsuitability to Italian natural resources, while the country's financial difficulties were increased by the transfer of large sections of moribund industry to state control as the only means of avoiding the total collapse of many big undertakings with a consequent increase of the heavy burden of unemployment. Recovery was slow. The report on unemployment pointed out that by 1950 industrial production was only 9% greater than in 1938, an increase that was unsatisfactory in view of the country's increased population and in comparison with the improvement achieved in other western European countries.[1] During the next three years, however, the situation improved considerably, and by the end of 1953 industrial production was 55% above that of 1938.

Reference was made at the beginning of this chapter to Italy's poverty in raw materials, particularly coal. Mussolini invested considerable sums of public money in the Sardinian coal mines, but the coal produced is of so poor a quality that it is scarcely worth the cost of transport to the mainland. A very small quantity of anthracite is mined in Cogne in the Valle d'Aosta, but the total production of coal and lignite only amounted to about two million tons in 1953, and Italy still has to import about nine million tons of coal annually. In view of this lack of coal and of any considerable amount of iron, Italy's most prosperous industries have been those like mechanical engineering and textiles which make use of her

[1] M. Parassi and G. Ruffolo: *La disoccupazione in Italia* (Bologna, Zannichelli, 1954), pp. 13–36. [This is a useful summary of the findings of the report.]

two most important industrial assets—a reasonably good supply of hydro-electricity and plentiful man-power. The exploitation of natural gases during recent years has added a third asset of which the possibilities can hardly as yet be accurately estimated, although Italian enthusiasm has described their discovery as the beginning of an industrial revolution similar to that produced by the discovery of coal in England.

The hydro-electric power industry developed rapidly between 1919 and 1940, and its growth since 1945 has been remarkable. Over three-quarters of Italy's installed power is hydro-electric, and about two-thirds of the hydro-electricity comes from the Alps. One of the main sources of supply is the Tyrolese Alps. Important developments took place in this area after the acquisition of Alto Adige (formerly South Tyrol). By 1940 one-eighth of all Italy's hydro-electricity came from the Alto Adige, and Cardano (near Bolzano) was the biggest power-station in the country. This source of supply is very important for the industry of the northern plain, and as such proved to be one of the strongest arguments for Italy's retention of the province after 1945. Development has continued since the end of the war, and in 1953 production in the province had risen to nearly one-fifth of Italy's total, in spite of the increase in stations elsewhere. Italy is fortunate in having another source of supply in the Apennines, for the water supply reaches its maximum at different times of year in the two mountain ranges; in the Alps the supply is greatest in summer when the snow melts, in the Apennines in winter when the rivers fill up.

In 1948 there were 1,191 hydro-electric stations with installed power of nearly six million kilowatts; five years later in 1953 the number of stations had risen to 2,748 with installed power of nearly 8,900,000 kilowatts. All the Government's plans for developing the country include the building of more stations. About three-quarters of the power-stations and of the installed power are in north Italy and only 10% of the stations and 13% of the power in the south, where lack of a regular water-supply involves the construction of reservoirs at great expense and the distribution of electricity by high-tension

transmission wires. But although the amount of power available is low in the south progress is being made. The number of stations rose from 102 to 247 in the southern regions and from 18 to 46 in the islands between 1948 and 1953 and the amount of installed power nearly doubled; hydro-electric schemes are among the most important undertakings financed by the *Cassa per il Mezzogiorno*.[1]

Much attention has also been paid since the war to the development of thermo-electric power. In 1948 there were only 154 thermo-electric stations altogether, and of these only six were in the south and thirteen in the islands. By 1953 the total number had risen to 807, and the increase was specially marked in the south and islands, where the numbers rose to 84 and 94 respectively. Use is made of natural steam deposits for generating electricity, and recently power-stations fired by natural gas have begun to be constructed. This opens up many new possibilities and may also prove to be the beginning of an attack on the virtual monopoly exercised by a few private companies like Edison which control about 75% of the power generated, whereas supplies of natural gas are controlled by the State.

The exploitation of this new source of power was in fact due to the promotion of research by the State. Before 1940 the Fascist Government had begun to explore the possibilities of natural gas, generally known in Italy as *Metano*, which constitutes about 90% of the gas deposits in the Po valley; but it was not till after the war, when the Government backed the researches carried out in the Po valley by the state-owned *Azienda Generale Italiana Petroli* (Italian General Petrol Company, known as AGIP), that production on a large scale took place. By 1954 the only deposits tapped were those of the Po valley with two main centres, one in the Piacenza-Cortemaggiore-Cremona-Lodi area, the other in the Delta, but a network of pipe-lines covered the whole of Lombardy and the Veneto and parts of Emilia, Piedmont and Tuscany, and the experts held out hope of other deposits in the Marche, Basilicata, Apulia and Sicily.

[1] See p. 129.

The gas is used for domestic purposes and is transported all over the country, so that even in remote parts of the south the new houses put up by the Agrarian Reform have gas-rings in addition to charcoal- or wood-burning stoves, and small coal dealers are heard to complain that their business has been destroyed. The main importance, however, of *metano* lies in the possibility of substituting it, in part at least, for coal imports for industry. This practice had already begun by 1954, when *metano* was being used by the important firms of Fiat, Pirelli, Montecatini, Richard Ginori and others, who claimed that it was responsible for a saving of from 20% to 50% on the cost of fuel. AGIP considers the application of *metano* to the production of electric power to be a matter of the highest importance. Even with alternative sources of hydro-electric power in the Alps and Apennines there are always difficulties in maintaining a regular supply unaffected by seasonal variations, and in addition the possibilities of increasing the supplies of hydro-electricity have probably nearly reached their limit, while the demand continues to rise with growing industrialization. The practicability of the expectations of AGIP in this respect seems to be confirmed by the attitude of the big firms engaged in the ordinary production of electricity. Private enterprise took very little interest in the early exploitation of *metano* deposits, but now that the future holds so much promise they are anxious to share the exploitation of *metano* resources with the State.

The most important industries in Italy are the mechanical and engineering, which employ about 920,000 workers, or more than one-quarter of all those engaged in the manufacturing industries,[1] and provide about one-seventh of the national income. There are great possibilities of development, as there is a good demand for Italian engineering products and the industry has considerable unused capacity. The chief difficulty is the high cost of production, due partly to lack of the capital needed for modernization of plant, partly to the shortage and high cost of steel and other raw materials. Increased production since 1945 has consequently all taken place in light and highly

[1] Industrial census of 1951. See Table III at end of book.

specialized engineering, where the cost of steel is of comparatively little importance and where use can be made of Italy's two chief natural resources, electric power and skilled workers.

The most important branch is the motor industry, of which Turin is the main centre. Fiat, the biggest firm in the industry, started with 50 employees in 1899 and by 1952 had nearly 70,000; it manufactures everything from primary parts to the finished product, and produces every kind of motorized vehicle from cars and tractors to aeroplanes and jet-machines. The number of cars in use in Italy is still small compared with that in other western countries, but it is increasing, and there is a considerable and valuable export trade. The demand for tractors grows annually in close connection with agrarian reform. One of the most successful branches of the industry is that which manufactures motor-cycles of every kind and particularly motor-scooters, of which the most popular both at home and abroad are the Vespa and Lambretta. The demand for motor-cycles and for light vans, including the little *furgoncino*, a tiny van perched on a motor-cycle, has grown steadily since 1945; in 1954 the motor-cycle industry provided work for 50,000 people and about one-fifth of its production was sold abroad. On the home market this is one of the sectors of the mechanical industry which is already profiting from even the small improvement beginning to take place in the south. The number of cycles and the demand in the south are still small, but the annual growth is remarkable; in 1953 the demand from Basilicata was 55% above that of 1952 and in Calabria only a little less, compared with an increase of 23·3% in Lombardy and 30% in Tuscany. English tourists are apt to complain that Vespas make the streets of Florence impassable and the nights hideous with noise, but few Italians can afford cars and Vespas are a good substitute. Sewing-machines and typewriters are other products of the mechanical industry which are being produced in steadily growing numbers. In 1953 nearly 400,000 sewing-machines were produced, more than three times as many as in 1938; nearly half were sold on the home market, where there is a big demand from the south.

Exports increased steadily in the 1950s, particularly to the United States, the chief market for Italian machines in spite of being the home of Singer's.

The electrical engineering industry is important; its products are known all over the world and it consequently makes a valuable contribution to Italy's export trade. In 1951 there were about 500 firms employing 100,000 workers; the units were mainly small, but many were being modernized, and the skill of the workers found a ready market abroad for generators, transformers and all kinds of electrical equipment, particularly in Switzerland and the South American countries.

One of the chief industries is the chemical. In 1939 it was the fourth largest in Europe, employing about 185,000 workers. It expanded considerably during the war, and although about 70% of it is in north Italy only 10% of the plant was seriously damaged. The industry recovered rapidly, factories were modernized, the output of many products increased to two or three times that of 1938, and by 1951 the numbers employed were about 219,600. Thanks to Italy's supplies of sulphur and pyrites the production of sulphuric acid had always been considerable and increased steadily after the war, reaching about 2·3 million tons in 1951 compared with 2·1 million in 1939. There has also been a large increase of organic products, particularly synthetic dyestuffs, and there is a considerable production of nylon and plastics. The demand for fertilizers grows steadily with improved methods of agriculture, particularly in the areas of agrarian reform, where the use of fertilizers was formerly unknown. Increased production is able to meet the home demand and to have a surplus available for export.

The textile industries are vitally important to the Italian economy both for the home market and because of the large contribution which they make to the export trade. In 1938 textile exports were valued at 30% of all exports, and by 1950 they amounted to rather more than one-third of the total. About 647,000 people, 73·5% of them women, are employed in the various sectors, a number second only to those engaged in the engineering and mechanical industries. Every kind of textile is produced, from the finest dress and furnishing

materials to cheap cottons made for export to the Middle East.

The cotton industry is the largest of the textile group, employing about one-quarter of a million workers. It is mainly situated in Piedmont and Lombardy, although there are also a number of mills in Naples. Efforts have been made to grow cotton in Italy, but the bulk of the raw cotton has to be imported and comes chiefly from the United States and Egypt. The industry exports large quantities of yarns and piece-goods as well as covering all home needs.

Wool is a very old industry in Italy—the *Arte di lana* was well established in Florence in the 13th century, but it long remained a handicraft and was only fully mechanized late in the 19th century. Once mechanized, however, it developed rapidly. It is widely distributed over Italy, but most of the big factories are at Biella in Piedmont and at Prato in Tuscany. After 1945 the industry benefited greatly from the installation of modern machinery, even if it was this installation which enabled small weavers to buy up the old looms and set up in competition with their former employers. In 1951 the industry employed about 125,000 workers. The chief problem is the supply of raw wool. Italy only produces between 5% and 10% of the industry's needs—Italian sheep are grown chiefly for meat and milk,[1] and raw wool has therefore to be imported at considerable cost from Australia (the principal source), South Africa, South America and the United Kingdom. Production had reached 80,000 tons of yarn and 50,000 tons of fabrics by 1952, an amount much larger than that required by the home market. Italian consumption of wool is low, amounting to not quite 1 kilogram per head annually compared with 3 kilograms in the United Kingdom and Switzerland, consequently the industry needs to export between 20% and 30% of its output. The manufacturers complain that it is difficult to find foreign markets, partly because of the high cost of the Italian product, partly because of the restrictive, protectionist policies of many countries.

The other old textile industry is silk, for which Italy was

[1] See p. 123.

famous in the Middle Ages. Beautiful silks are still produced, but the industry is in a bad way, chiefly because of the increasing use of artificial fibres following severe competition well before 1939 from Japanese silk. The raw material has always been produced in Italy, where the silk-worms fed on innumerable mulberry trees planted among the corn and vines of the plain of Lombardy in particular. The silk industry was, and still is, concentrated in Milan and Como, but the production of silk cocoons drops lower every year and with it the manufacture and export of silk.

The artificial fibre industry expanded rapidly during the 1930s, encouraged by the government policy of reducing imports as much as possible. Most of the cellulose, the main raw material, had to be imported, but the cost was only a fraction of the cost of raw wool or cotton. By 1939 Italian output was exceeded only by that of Germany, Japan and the United States. The industry recovered rapidly after the war, but the productive capacity of the factories has not been fully used, particularly in the production of staple fibres used as substitutes for cotton. By 1951 about half of the total output was being exported, but as in other cases the cost of Italian products makes increased exports difficult. Once again the manufacturers have realized that the future prosperity of the industry depends largely on an increased home market and that this means to a great extent an increased demand from the south.

It has only been possible to mention a few of Italy's most important industries, but the main points discussed in relation to them are generally applicable. Italian industry can only flourish if its products are widely acceptable in foreign markets. This is only possible if Italy can produce goods at competitive prices, which for various reasons she has failed to do in many cases. The outstanding reason for this failure is lack of a large and steady demand from the home market. The standard of living of large numbers of the population is much too low, the unemployment figure much too high. Real wages are low, but labour costs are high. It is some years since the post-war order forbidding the dismissal of workers was repealed, but

employers have in many cases not felt able to dismiss all their redundant labour. It is also true that the cost of social insurance to industry is high, although the benefits to workers are low.[1] Industrialists have begun to realize that by some means or other the home demand must be increased if unemployment and with it labour costs are to decline, and some of them have seen that only increased prosperity, or rather a decrease in abject poverty, in the south will increase the home demand. This is the main theme of the Government's ten-year plan of 1955–64 for increasing employment and income in Italy, the so-called 'Vanoni Plan'.[2] Already by 1955 there were signs that the first steps had been taken in the right direction. Agrarian reform began seriously in 1950 with the passing of the Sila and *Stralcio* reform laws, and each year the demand from the south has increased for the industrial products of the north, from tractors and fertilizers to sewing-machines and rayon clothing. If only industrialists will follow the example of a few employers like Olivetti or Marzotto, the big Venetian industrialist who has opened up the south to tourists by building his Jolly[3] hotels, unemployment will decrease more rapidly and the north as well as the south will profit.

[1] See p. 38.

[2] Signor Ezio Vanoni was Minister of Finance when the plan was was drawn up in 1954–55.

[3] This is really their name; it is not a descriptive adjective, though it well might be.

CHAPTER VIII

AGRICULTURE

CHAPTER II was concerned with the pressure of population in Italy and with the efforts of the Government and of various social services both public and private to mitigate the resulting poverty; this chapter and the one following it will try to give some account, though a very summary and incomplete one, of agriculture, the chief occupation of this superabundant population, and of the attempt to improve production and the conditions of agricultural workers.

Most English travellers in Italy have been so much interested in the history of some great movement like the Renaissance or the Risorgimento or in the works of art produced in the mediaeval towns, in themselves so often beautiful works of art, that they have tended to think of Italy as a land of towns surrounded by lovely country, and have failed to realize the overwhelming importance of agriculture and the very close links between most Italians, even inhabitants of great towns like Milan, and the land. This is markedly true of the south, as the British soldiers learned on the long march up through Italy, for the southern towns of 8,000 to 10,000 inhabitants are in fact overgrown villages, huge conglomerations of agricultural workers. Even in the north, famous mediaeval towns like Mantua, Ravenna or Siena are now only market towns packed with argumentative farmers on market days, but otherwise living largely on tourists who come to visit the splendid buildings erected in the days when these towns were centres of industry as well as agriculture.

In the middle of the 20th century agriculture is still far and away the most important industry of Italy. The last employment census, that of 1936, showed that 48% of the working population was engaged in agriculture and that the agricultural population amounted to over 18½ million or nearly 45% of the whole population of Italy. The sample survey taken by

the Italian Institute of Statistics in September 1952 showed nearly 7½ million people or 42·5% of the working population still occupied in agriculture. These figures for the whole country give little idea of the overwhelming importance of agriculture in some regions. In 1936 the percentage of 42 employed in agriculture in the north rose to 58·3 in the south with figures of 67·3 in Calabria, 74·2 in the Abruzzi and 75·4 in Basilicata. This preponderance of agriculture in Italy's economy is further attested by the large contribution which it makes to the National Income. It has been estimated[1] that in 1952 one-quarter of the National Income came from agriculture, compared with 41% from industry, and that even in the industrial north the figure for agriculture was 21·6%. Moreover rather more than half of agriculture's contribution comes from the north, where the land is more fertile, farming methods more modern and yields consequently much higher than in the almost wholly agricultural south, where it is hoped that agrarian reform will improve the lot of the agricultural workers and at the same time increase production.

It is certainly essential for Italy with her annual growth of population to increase agricultural production both for home consumption and for export, but this can only be done by improving farming methods. There is little land left which can be brought into cultivation. In spite of the fact that 39·9% of Italy is hilly, 38·6% mountainous, and only 21·5% plain, all but 7·8% is considered as productive and only 4·5% of the productive land is left uncultivated. Almost every inch of land is used, and to English eyes one of the remarkable features of the landscape, both in the north and the south, is the wide stretches of cultivated land unbroken by hedges. Where hedges exist in the south they are usually prickly pear, eaten with apparent enjoyment by southerners, or in Apulia enchanting low-clipped hedges of rosemary grown along the main roads as well as between the fields. The standard of what constitutes productive land is certainly low and in the eyes of some agriculturalists is being driven well below an economic level by

[1] Guglielmo Tagliacarne: *Calcolo del reddito privato e della publica amministrazione nelle provincie e regioni d'Italia nel 1952* (Rome, 1953).

the agrarian reformers, who in the desperate need to find land for the peasants have even succeeded with the help of bull-dozers in levelling and ploughing some of the barren clay ridges known as *calanchi* among the hilly lands taken over by the *Ente di Riforma* near Crotone in Calabria.

Apart from such extreme cases, however, the incredible industry of generations of Italian peasants has made it possible to farm land which in a richer country would be regarded as unworkable. The steep terraced vineyards of the Tuscan hills are familiar to many people, but the lemon groves of the Amalfi coast of Campania are perhaps less well known. There the lemon trees are grown on the face of precipitous cliffs on tiny terraces, which seem only accessible by goats, where the soil has often to be carried up in baskets, an arduous toil which is not easily reconcilable with the idea of the idle southerner who loves to lie in the sun doing nothing. In Apulia, where the endless dry-stone dykes recall the hill-sides of Westmorland and Cumberland, vines and olives are grown on land from which years of back-breaking toil cleared the stones of which the walls are built.

The lack of uncultivated land, the industry of the peasants, and the supreme importance of agriculture are common to every region, but in other respects it is absurd to talk of 'Italian Agriculture' except in the most general terms. Its variety is infinite, whether as regards crops, land tenure or methods of farming. The broad division between north and south is immediately obvious, but there are such great differences not only between different regions but within each of them that only the most important aspects can be indicated in a book of this size. In Calabria, for example, a traveller by car can pass in a couple of hours from the narrow strip of fertile coastland on the warm Tyrrhenian coast, where a tiny holding can provide a reasonably good living, to the hill towns whose peasant inhabitants scrape a bare existence from scattered fragments of land lying at a distance of two or three hours' walk away from the town, and on to the high lands of Aspromonte or the Sila 4,000 feet and more above the sea, where the Government is encouraging forestry and dairy-farming.

The most important crop is wheat, which is also the one cereal crop grown almost everywhere, even where climate and soil are unsuitable. The great wheat-lands are, as they have always been, Emilia, the Veneto and Lombardy in the north, Apulia in the south and Sicily, but the yield per hectare varies greatly. About one-seventh of all the land under wheat is in Sicily, but the yield averaged 9·8 quintals per hectare for 1952 compared with an average of 16·8 for Italy and 31·3 for Lombardy. Wheat is grown not only in every region but on every type of farm, from the big well-run 'capitalist' farm to the extensively farmed *latifondi*[1] of the south, and the tiny peasant's holding, for it provides the basic food of the people to an extent difficult to realize in countries with a balanced diet of meat, milk, sugar and vegetables. English people tend to think at once of macaroni, and of course a great deal of hard wheat is grown for *pasta* (the Italian word covering every variety of macaroni and spaghetti), but in large areas of southern Italy even *pasta* is a luxury eaten only once or twice a week. Bread is the all-important food. It is eaten in large quantities even by well-to-do people in the north, but in the south it is the staple food. The midday meal of the southern peasants is usually bread dipped in oil, and their main meal in the evening vegetable soup accompanied by more bread. Mussolini's great 'wheat campaign' had political as well as economic motives, and his success in finally producing eight million tons of wheat annually and so being able to dispense with an import of some 2½ million tons was achieved at the cost of reducing still lower the standard of life of the workers. On the other hand, his agricultural experts did show that production could be improved by better methods of farming, particularly by the use of deep-ploughing, manures and seed selection. These are practises which have been long in use on the intensively cultivated fields of northern and central Italy and are now being introduced by the Agrarian Reform on the new peasant holdings. It is a thrilling experience to pass from the dreary stretches of extensively farmed wheat-lands of the Tavoliere of Foggia in Apulia to the new, intensively cultivated,

[1] See p. 124.

small holdings of Lucera in the same province. On the great extensively farmed plain not a house is to be seen for miles; the peasants only go out to the distant fields at certain times of the agricultural year for the ploughing, sowing, hoeing and reaping, and the wheat crop is poor and thin and full of weeds. Near Lucera the wheat yield already amounted in 1954 to about 20 quintals per hectare, and wheat was only one of various valuable crops grown on each farm.

Other cereals are important, but tend to be confined to certain areas of the country. Maize, for example, is mainly grown in the north, particularly in Piedmont, Lombardy and the Veneto where *polenta* (maize pudding) takes the place of *pasta*. Rice also is practically confined to the north. More than three-quarters of the country's average crop of about 700,000 tons are grown in Piedmont and Lombardy, where the rice-fields can be flooded with water from the Po and its tributaries. On the other hand twice as much barley is grown in the south as the north, most of it in Apulia and Sicily.

To a northern visitor Italy appears to be a land of corn and vines and olives, and rightly so, for after wheat vines and olives provide her most valuable crops; they constitute an important part of everyone's diet and also make a considerable contribution to the export trade. The statistical tables showing how Italy's productive land is cultivated give no idea of the extent of tree and bush crops, for the figure there shown of nearly 2½ million hectares, or 8·9% of the whole productive area, only refers to the land on which trees and bushes are grown exclusively (*colture specializzate*), whereas fruit trees of all kinds are much more generally grown in combination with other crops. In the Po valley, for example, vines are festooned between elms or mulberry trees standing in lines between the fields of wheat or maize, while in Tuscany and other regions olives grow scattered over hillsides sown with wheat. Over 3·9 million hectares are planted with vines grown either alone or together with other crops, 2·3 million hectares with olives, and altogether 15·3 million hectares, or 55% of the whole productive area of Italy, carry fruit trees of one kind or another.

Vines are grown in every region of Italy, though there are various ways of cultivating them. Some grapes hang from long sprays between supporting trees, while others grow on the low stumpy vines, which give the hills of central Italy such a bare, formal look in the spring; table-grapes grow on the vines which with their two main branches sprouting into twigs look like the dancers on a Greek vase. The specialized cultivation of vines is more common in the south, especially in Apulia and Sicily, and also in Sardinia, where they are never grown with other crops. Great varieties of wine are produced, from the light sparkling wines of Piedmont to the famous Chianti of Tuscany, the strong heady wines of the Roman Campagna and the country further south, and Sicily's Marsala, but the only ones exported in any large quantity are Vermouth, Chianti and Marsala. The production of table-grapes is increasing. About two-thirds of these grapes are grown in the south, nearly one-quarter of them in Apulia, and this is a crop which deserves encouragement, for owing to their early ripening they command a good price in the export market. The loss of considerable parts of their land under the agrarian reform scheme is driving the better landlords to make the best of the land left to them and in Apulia they find that the production of table-grapes rapidly repays the cost of cultivation. Land valued before planting at 200,000 lire per hectare is estimated to be worth 8 million lire after five years ; it produces 30 to 40 quintals of grapes per hectare in the fourth year from planting, rising to about 200 in the seventh and eighth years.

Olives grow in every region except Piedmont, the Valle d'Aosta and the Veneto, but the traveller who has only seen the olives of Liguria or Tuscany has no conception of the magnificence of the olive trees of the far south. Apulia produces about one-third of Italy's olive oil, about three times as much as any other region, and the main road from Bari to Brindisi runs for miles through olives with only rarely a crop of beans growing beneath them and not a house to be seen. The finest individual trees are in Calabria on the narrow strip of plain west of the mountains. At Gioia Tauro, north of Reggio di Calabria, there are veritable forests of enormous,

immensely old trees, which vanish in the distance in seemingly endless colonnades. Sicily comes nearest to Apulia in the number of hectares planted with olives, 349,600 compared with Apulia's 514,600, but in Sicily other crops are grown under the olives on about three-quarters of this land. The south and islands together produce about 73% of Italy's oil.

A good olive harvest is very important, for oil is the main fat in the Italian diet as little butter is eaten except in the north, and although Italy's oil production is second only to that of Spain (but less than two-thirds of Spain's) it is not large enough to meet the country's demand. Olives are planted on most of the small peasant holdings in the south, but it is an act of faith, for the trees do not come to full maturity for nearly thirty years.

Citrus fruits, particularly lemons, provide Italy with a valuable export, and the sight of the orange and lemon trees of the riviera coast of Liguria gives many travellers their first sense of having reached a southern country. Most of the citrus trees, however, are grown south of Rome in Campania, Calabria and above all in Sicily, where over 300,000 tons of oranges and 260,000 tons of lemons are produced on the average every year. Nothing perhaps gives a stronger feeling of southern luxuriance than the sight and scent of a Calabrian orange grove lying between the Tyrrhenian sea and the mountains on a warm spring morning when the trees are laden with fruit and flowers at the same time, and the ground beneath them is ablaze with wild flowers. All kinds of other fruit like peaches, apricots, figs and almonds grow in abundance and are exported in large quantities, as are also apples and pears, for since the annexation by Italy in 1919 of the province of Alto Adige (formerly South Tyrol) there have been considerable quantities of good quality apples and pears available both for home consumption and export.

Excellent vegetables of all kinds are grown everywhere, and owing to the great variety of climate they can be produced profitably in different parts of the country throughout the year. But to see vegetables in their full glory it is necessary to travel through the country near Naples between the lower slopes of

Vesuvius and the sea. Every inch of land is planted, crop after crop can be grown, and even the beauty of Andrew Fairservice's cauliflower in the moonlight fades into insignificance beside the magnificence of the Campanian artichokes in February. Tomatoes are one of the most important vegetables; large quantities are produced for export, fresh, tinned or in the form of *purée*. Considerable attention is being paid to improvement of methods of producing and preserving both fruit and vegetables, particularly in the south where they can be grown profitably for the early market, and where preserving is one of the industries which can be easily established and help to relieve southern unemployment.

Italy has only three industrial crops of any importance, sugar, hemp and tobacco. The main sugar-beet producing regions are the Veneto and Emilia; production in 1952 was nearly double the average for 1936–39, more than enough for the home market, but *per-capita* consumption is one of the lowest in Europe. Fine quality hemp has always been an important crop and is mainly grown in Emilia. Tobacco is grown in every region except Liguria and the Valle d'Aosta; production rose from an average crop of about 425,000 quintals in 1936–39 to one of 757,000 in 1949–52. Where soil and climate are suitable, landowners find that it is a profitable crop, but it may be questioned whether this is not sometimes due to the possibility of employing female labour at low wages. In Apulia, for instance, women are employed to pick the tobacco leaves because, according to the employers, the stooping posture involved is less trying to them than to men. Women are also used to sort and pack the leaves ready for sale to the officials of the Government Tobacco Monopoly. For this work they are paid about 420 lire (roughly 5*s*.) a day. This miserable wage is justified by the employer on the ground that as the work only lasts for 3 or 4 months in the year any money earned can only be regarded as pocket-money and the low wage is therefore perfectly adequate—reasoning valid only in a society where agricultural unemployment and under-employment make starvation wages better than no wages at all. It may be interesting to notice that whereas

Apulia produces more tobacco than any other region, about 150,000 quintals a year, the yield is one of the lowest in the country.

For years Italian agronomists have been seriously preoccupied by the low density of cattle in the country generally and by the difficulty of adding to their number without first increasing the very small amount of fodder available. In the mountainous areas of the country and particularly in Apulia, Basilicata, Calabria and Sardinia there are great stretches of rough pasture where sheep and goats can pick up a poor living, and in the northern regions of Piedmont, Trentino-Alto Adige and the Veneto there are fine Alpine pastures suitable for dairy-farming.[1] But except in Piedmont, Lombardy, Emilia and the Veneto there is very little good meadow land anywhere, and in 1953 61% of the cattle were in these four regions. In the southern regions and islands fodder crops have been almost non-existent, and one of the exciting changes brought by the Agrarian Reform is the introduction of fodder crops and cattle in areas and to people who have never known either.[2] In spite of all the difficulties and in spite of devastating losses during the 1939–45 war the number of cattle in the country is growing steadily and by 1954 there were about 1¼ million more than in 1938. Moreover, in the south cattle are beginning to be bred for milk, not only for work as used to be the case. Most of the dairy herds are in north Italy or near Rome, and it is difficult to imagine a greater contrast than that between the modern equipment, pedigree cows and prize bulls of a farm like Torre in Pietra north of Rome, with a head cowman whose knowledge of cows and their needs is infinite, and the tiny cow-sheds with two precious cows of the Brown Alpine breed where the southern peasant is painfully learning the basic needs of a cow with the help of the Agrarian Reform officials.

There are still enormous numbers of sheep and goats in the south and islands—Sardinia alone has over two million sheep

[1] For Alpine farming on the Agrarian Reform lands of the Sila in Calabria, see p. 138.

[2] See p. 134.

and nearly half a million goats—and perhaps more than anything else the method of herding them gives a traveller from an industrialized country like England a sense of the primitive conditions of life and agriculture in Italy's over-populated south. The flocks are always under the watchful eye of a shepherd, sometimes a boy who is herding sheep instead of going to school, but more often a man, wrapped in a dark cloak swung over one shoulder and looking as if he had stepped out of a mediaeval painting of the Adoration of the Shepherds. The sheep spend the summer months in the mountains where the shepherds live among them in little huts, but in the autumn they come down to the lower hills and plains and can be seen browsing under the olives of Calabria and Apulia or hurdled on a field that forms part of a farm in the Roman *Campagna* below the Alban hills. For centuries the sheep moved from the hills to the plains and back along established tracks known as *tratturi* 30 feet or more wide, and opponents of agrarian reform complained that often the land allotted to peasants formed part of the *tratturi*, and that the reformers were thus destroying an important element in southern rural economy. From the point of view of the archaeologist and historian it is melancholy that these age-old roads should disappear under the plough, but the economic argument is scarcely valid, as for many years sheep have mainly been transported in motor lorries by motor roads. It is also true that in some parts of the country it is desirable to reduce the number of sheep, but it cannot be done hastily for sheep are bred for meat and particularly for milk, from which large quantities of cheese (*pecorino*) are made, as well as for wool.

The other characteristic animals of the south and islands are mules and donkeys. There are a considerable number of horses in Campania, Apulia and Sicily, but mules and donkeys are much more common; they are well adapted to the steep mountain tracks, which are still the only means of access to many hill towns, and they are easier to feed than horses. A mule or a donkey is a valuable possession for a man who has 8 or 10 miles to go to work in the fields, and consequently the animals are on the whole well looked after. It is a remarkable

sight to see a whole procession of mules coming home in a late afternoon of spring, each with a great load of brushwood and the owner usually perched behind the load. The women of the family generally trudge behind the mule. It is easy for anyone who meets a couple of peasants wrapped in long black cloaks with slouched black hats on top riding up a narrow mountain road to understand why the belief in a south populated by brigands continued to exist abroad; these hard-working underpaid peasants still look exactly like those in romantic paintings of the early 19th century.

Types of land tenure, size of farms and methods of farming vary enormously in different parts of the country, and because public interest inside and outside Italy is often concentrated on the need for agrarian reform, involving the break-up of big estates in the interests of land-hungry peasants, it is important to remember that a great deal of land is excellently farmed both on large and small properties, and that there are many small proprietors and tenant farmers earning a reasonable livelihood from the land.

The number of large properties of 100 hectares (about 250 acres) and over is small, only 0·3% of the total number, though they occupy about 38% of all the productive land, and they include totally different types of farm. In the north there are the big industrialized farms of the Po valley in Piedmont and Lombardy. These consist of intensively cultivated, irrigated lands, where large numbers of labourers are employed at reasonable wages on yearly contracts (the *salariati*) and modern machinery is widely used. In the south and particularly in Sicily there are the large properties which have never been industrialized and are extensively farmed, the so-called *latifondi* given over to cereals or to rough pasture. Some of these are cultivated by *salariati* with the use of machinery, but the majority, generally owned by absentee landlords, are let in tiny holdings to peasants, or in extreme cases left uncultivated and used for rough shooting once or twice a year by an owner who lives in Rome or even Milan. Much of this type of property was acquired by the Government for distribution to peasants under the agrarian law of 1950 known as the *Legge*

stralcio,[1] under which it was possible to carry out agrarian reform in certain areas where it was urgently needed without waiting for Parliament to pass a general measure of reform.

There are many different kinds of tenancy, but the most common in northern and central Italy is the *mezzadria* (share-tenancy), which is particularly characteristic of Tuscany, Umbria, the Marche and the hill-country of Emilia. In 1950 about 1¾ million or 23% of the people engaged in agriculture were share-tenants.[2] In this form of tenancy the landlord provides the house and farm-buildings and directs operations, the tenant and his family give their labour ; livestock, seeds and manure are their joint responsibility, though in some areas the landlord provides the livestock. Produce used to be divided equally between landlord and tenant, as the name *mezzadria* implies, but since 1946 the proportion has been fixed at 47 and 53 respectively. The basis of the tenancy is the family, and in intention at least the size of the farm is adapted to the size of the family.[3] The tenancy is an annual one, but generally it passes from father to son, so that in many cases a particular family has been settled on the same piece of land for time out of mind. On good land and under a wise and progressive landlord, who is not only anxious to improve his land, but is prepared to consult his tenants and to get their co-operation, the system can work well. But there are many areas where the farms are too small to support a family, and where in a bad season even 53% of the crop is a totally inadequate return for the family's labour, and the tenants are consequently heavily in debt to their landlords. Even when the tenant is financially prosperous, as he is in some places, he is not his own master, and this sense of dependence is certainly one of the reasons for the dissatisfaction felt by many prosperous *mezzadri*, though good landlords cannot understand why a system which has

[1] See p. 130.

[2] *Annuario dell' agricoltura italiana 1950* (Rome, Istituto nazionale d'economia agraria 1951), vol. IV, pp. 379 and 382 (quoted in *Inchiesta sulla disoccupazione*, vol. II, tom. 3, pp. 10–11).

[3] For an account of the difficulties in Tuscany after 1945 arising out of the control of leases, see *Inchiesta sulla disoccupazione*, vol. I, tom. 2, pp. 223 ff.

apparently worked well for generations should now be regarded as undesirable if not positively oppressive.

Primarily, however, Italy is a land of small and medium-sized holdings; about one-third of the people engaged in agriculture own their own land, and over 90% of the owners work the land themselves. Unfortunately many of the holdings are far too small to support a family; 8,389,000 out of a total of 10,091,000 are less than two hectares (5 acres), while 5,415,000 or 54% are less than half a hectare. Some of these small holdings are those intensively cultivated in Liguria, Campania or on the coast of Sicily, where a succession of vegetable crops or the presence of fruit trees can provide a livelihood from a very small bit of land; but the majority are dwarf holdings scattered all over the country, and particularly common in the southern regions, in the interior of Sicily and in the centre and south of Sardinia. In all these areas they constitute what is known as the *latifondo contadino*, that is, land extensively farmed by the peasants partly as owners, partly as tenants of various kinds. The owners and tenants of these tiny holdings are miserably poor, their bits of land are often scattered and lie three or more hours' walk away from the hill towns where they live, and they are forced to eke out existence by joining the overcrowded ranks of the day-labourers (*braccianti*) and working on the bigger farms. The day-labourers are the most wretched of all the agricultural workers, of whom they form about one-quarter; in the north they can hope to find work as unskilled labourers in industry, but in the south until recently there was nothing for them but emigration abroad or to other parts of Italy, or semi-starvation on wages well below the legal minimum earned on 100 days or even less in the year. These are the people to whom at last Agrarian Reform is bringing some hope of better things through ownership of a farm big enough, when cultivated on modern lines, to support even the large families of southern Italy.

CHAPTER IX

AGRARIAN REFORM

In April 1948 Signor De Gasperi became Prime Minister with an immense majority behind him, but he was confronted with the need to take immediate measures, inevitably regarded with suspicion and dislike by many of his supporters, in order to relieve the poverty and unemployment existing in the country particularly in the south, where his chief political opponents, the Communists and Socialists, had made good use of the disastrous economic conditions described in the preceding chapters. It was clear that the only possible immediate solution of the problem, however partial and inadequate, must be sought in some form of agrarian reform and the original scheme drawn up by Signor Segni, at that time Minister of Agriculture,[1] was one of general land reform applicable to the whole country. Signor Segni's draft law provided for the expropriation of land from persons owning more than a certain amount, for payment mainly in government securities and for distribution of the land to landless peasants or to those with tiny holdings incapable of supporting a family. This far-reaching scheme proved to be impossible of immediate realization at all events, not only because De Gasperi's supporters included a large number of big landowners who were bitterly opposed to reform, but because many of the most ardent believers in the need for reform considered the scheme too sweeping and impracticable and likely to have a disastrous effect on agricultural production and so on Italy's struggle for economic recovery.

For political reasons, however, prompt action of some kind was essential in face of Communist promises and propaganda which had led in some cases to illegal occupation of land by the peasants. Fortunately the Government could count not

[1] Prime Minister 1955.

only on considerable moral and political support for a definite localized measure of reform but on a great fund of knowledge of agricultural conditions and possibilities amassed during the previous twenty-five years by economists and others who had had no hope for the time being of seeing their hopes of reform materialize. Agrarian reform and land development were of course not new ideas in Italy; land reclamation (*bonifica*) has gone on for centuries, while Mussolini took care that the whole world should know of the Fascist reclamation and settlement of the Pontine Marshes near Rome. This reclaiming of the Marshes was an excellent thing in itself as far as it went, but as was the case with other grandiose Fascist schemes it may be doubted whether the cost of this comparatively small scheme bore any relation to the crying need of reclamation and agrarian reform all over the south.

In 1948 agrarian reform meant something far more important than the drainage of about 70,000 hectares and the settlement of a few thousand selected peasant families on the land so acquired.[1] Nor did it mean simply taking away land from big landowners, whether bad absentee owners or good owners whose only sin was that they held too much land, and dividing it up among the peasants. Such a view implies a misunderstanding of the whole basis of the scheme embodied in the Sila and *Stralcio* laws passed by the Italian Parliament in 1950 and in the Sicilian regional law passed in the same year, and shows a failure to understand the general economic situation in the south. The reformers knew that what was needed was a change in the whole social structure of the south with its teeming population desperately trying to extract a living from land which was unable to provide it. It was not just a question of big estates at one end of the scale and landless day-labourers at the other; the chief characteristic of a great part of the south was that it was extensively farmed by large owners and peasant owners or tenants alike with no capital investment, so that agronomists now apply the term *latifondo*, which originally meant 'large estate', to the type of

[1] Rather more than 3,000 farmers were settled on 60,000 hectares in the Pontine Marsh area.

extensive farming practised by big man and peasant alike, which merely scratches the surface of the soil and seeks to raise a crop of wheat on land which is often totally unsuited to wheat-growing. Professor Rossi-Doria has pointed out that were it not for the pressure of population much of the south could be made into good pasture-land like that in some of the American states, but in order to live men turned to the most 'absurd' crop for a southern region, wheat, which needs the winter rest and the long slow ripening of regions further north to give a high yield.[1]

While it is true that agrarian reform alone cannot redeem the poverty of the south, it is also true that it must form the basis of the reorganization of society. There must be a growth of industry as well, but industrialization can only come gradually and must depend to a great extent on a better organized agriculture in these regions, where the raw materials of industry are practically non-existent and there are no great ports linking the countryside with the outside world. The Government understood the need of an organized long-term plan of development and with this in view created in 1950 the essential financial instrument in the *Cassa per il Mezzogiorno* (Fund for the South), which provided a sum of 100 milliard lire a year for a period of 10 years, extended in 1952 to 12 years, for land reclamation, irrigation works, road building, electricity development, mountain conservancy, etc., which must go along with and in many cases precede agrarian reform. For it must be remembered that the physical difficulties presented by the areas involved in reform are enormous. Except for the Tavoliere of Apulia, plains are few and small, most of the southern mainland and islands is mountainous or at best hilly, the deforestation of the mountains is a national tragedy, everywhere there is a shortage of water, and the low rainfall occurring almost entirely in the three winter months makes successful farming an operation requiring careful planning. It is with these difficulties in mind as well as the overwhelming problem of providing for the vast surplus of population that an attempt

[1] *La struttura e i problemi fondamentali dell' agricoltura meridionale* (Naples, Istituto Editoriale del Mezzogiorno), p. 14.

must now be made to consider the value of the work being done under the agrarian reform laws.

There are three of these laws. The first was the so-called *Legge Sila* passed by the Italian Parliament on 12 June 1950, which took its name from the high mountain area called the Sila in Calabria although it formed only part of the territory subject to agrarian reform. The *Stralcio* law,[1] passed on 21 October 1950, dealt on similar lines with large areas in Apulia, Basilicata (sometimes called Lucania) and Sardinia and with parts of Campania, Lazio, the Abruzzi, Molise and the Romagna, in all of which immediate action in favour of the peasants was felt to be desirable for social and economic reasons. The Sicilian Regional Assembly passed its own comparable law at the end of the year. Under these three laws about 755,000 hectares (1,900,000 acres) were expropriated and by the end of 1954 about two-thirds had been distributed to nearly 89,000 peasant families.[2]

Expropriation and redistribution, however, are only one part of the agrarian reform plan which in fact constitutes a great social experiment in the widest sense. Each scheme began with the creation by Parliament of what is called a *comprensorio di riforma* or area of reform. These are large tracts of country, each of which is administered by an *Ente di riforma* or reform agency, which is subject to the Ministry of Agriculture but also constitutes a small Ministry in itself; such, for example, are the *Opera per la valorizzazione della Sila* (Organization for the development of the Sila) with headquarters in Cosenza, or the *Ente per lo sviluppo dell' irrigazione e la trasformazione fondiaria in Puglia e Lucania* (Organization for the development of irrigation and for land transformation in Apulia and Lucania) with headquarters at Bari.

Italians are apt to complain of the excessive bureaucracy of these great administrative organizations, and it is possible that in consequence of the large numbers of unemployed white-

[1] 'Extract' law proposed as an interim measure to come into force immediately, while Parliament considered a scheme of General Agrarian Reform at its leisure.

[2] See Table IV at end of book.

collar workers in Italy an undue number of officials have been found jobs in some of the offices of the *Enti*. But the task undertaken is enormous, and a visitor who studies in the office the various aspects of the work going on and then goes out into the field to see the plans being put into operation cannot fail to be impressed by the enthusiasm and diligence of the great majority of the officials. Some idea of the work involved may perhaps emerge most clearly from an account, however brief, of the work done by the *Ente* for Apulia, Lucania and the Molise, and by that for the Sila.

The *comprensorio* of the Apulian *Ente* covers the enormous area of over 1½ million hectares spread over three regions, Apulia, Basilicata and parts of the Molise, with great varieties of soil and climate and a population of 1,543,000 of whom the vast majority are engaged in agriculture—52% of the working population in Apulia, rising to 75% in Lucania and 80% in Molise. Throughout the area there were big properties given over to extensive farming—mainly wheat and some rough pasture—with little capital investment, employing large numbers of very poor day-labourers who only found work for 100 to 150 days in the year. The peasants live in big agricultural towns from which they go out to work in the distant fields at certain times of year only, for the ploughing, sowing, hoeing and harvesting. It is a strange and depressing experience to travel by car in spring across, for example, the Tavoliere (tableland) of Foggia, where for miles the roads run between badly farmed wheat-fields with no one in the fields and not a house to be seen for miles.

The *Ente* expropriated[1] about 200,000 hectares and could legally have waited for three years before handing over the land to the peasants, using the intervening period for land-reclamation, including deep-ploughing the land and building houses for the future owners. But as was also the case in Calabria the poverty and land-hunger of the peasants were so

[1] The term 'expropriation' is perhaps hardly the right one to use in view of the fact that the landowners receive compensation based on the taxable value of their land in 1938. Compensation is paid in 5% State Bonds redeemable in 25 years.

great that assignments of land began as soon as the first expropriation decrees were published in December 1951, and by January 1955 over two-thirds had been assigned to nearly 23,000 families whose contracts of purchase are spread over a period of thirty years. The size of the holdings varies; an average of 2½ hectares is available, but the farms range from a minimum of 0·4 hectares of good land suitable for market-gardening to as much as 14 hectares on the high Tavoliere of Apulia. About two-thirds of the new owners were landless labourers or tenants of tiny holdings for money rents, the rest were mainly small owners whose land was totally insufficient to support a family. All alike were desperately poor and ignorant of the basic principles of good farming. They had never seen deep-ploughing or manuring, they knew nothing about cattle, and except for certain areas near Bari and in the Salento peninsula, where olives form the principal crop, their experience was confined to raising cereal crops, chiefly wheat, and to the use of rough pasture mainly for sheep and goats.

In view of the disastrous effect on farming of the habit of living in the hill towns, the Government envisaged the settlement of each peasant in a house built on his own piece of land. This is the scheme most commonly adopted, and in the southern part of the *comprensorio*, in the district round Metaponto and on the coastal land near Brindisi, there are neat little white cottages dotted about the countryside each on its own bit of land. The majority of the *Ente's* cottages are one-storey buildings containing a good-sized living-room-kitchen, two bedrooms, a store-room, an indoor lavatory and bath or shower, and built on to the side of the house with access from inside as well as from outside a good-sized stall for 3 to 4 animals, usually two cows and a horse or mule. Most holdings also have a pigsty, hen-house and small silo.

The Government and their advisers had, however, no intention of leaving the peasants isolated on their farms, and every scheme includes a plan for the erection of various types of rural centres. The largest of these, known as *borgate rurali* (country villages), will contain a church, elementary and

nursery schools, shops, a post office, police barracks, a room for meetings of the peasants, club-rooms and lodgings for teachers and other people working in the centre. Several of these *borgate* were in various stages of completion by 1955, and schools were already functioning, though usually in temporary premises. The *Ente* has plans for 22 of these *borgate* in the *comprensorio*, but naturally their erection must take time, for it was more important to get the peasants settled in their houses first and to provide some kind of temporary buildings for schools and clinics. There will also be about 100 smaller centres, each serving an area of 1,000 hectares, where there will be a chapel, school, clinic, shops and club.

The Government is certainly determined to provide educational facilities both for children and for the illiterate peasants, many of whom realize that modern agriculture demands at least a minimum standard of literacy, but the difficulties are enormous and much is demanded of the teachers. Social workers from the north are many of them inspired with a real missionary spirit which is taking them into some of the remote parts of the south; the whole idea of lay social service is so new in Italy that the difficulties are faced in the spirit which usually moves the pioneers of a new movement. The position in the teaching world is different, although of course there are a great many teachers whose spirit of devotion and self-sacrifice cannot be over-stated. But it is difficult to get experienced teachers to work in the remote schools of the *Ente* estates and consequently the teachers available are mainly young and inexperienced local people who take the posts because they can get nothing else and mean to use them as stepping-stones to something better. It is not surprising, for their isolation is often great and the children little better than small savages when they first come from one-roomed hovels to the wonderful new cottages.

The same difficulty of finding suitable teachers also exists in the case of the *Corsi popolari* (classes for the people) for illiterate adults. In 1953–54 there were about 140 of such courses running in the Apulian *consorzio* attended by about 7,500 peasants, the majority aged between 20 and 30; but the

courses do not seem to have been so successful as had been hoped, partly owing to the fact that young, inexperienced girls do not make the right kind of teachers for such pupils.

The *Ente* also provides specialized agricultural education in the new type of farming, a fact which needs special mention because critics of the reform constantly affirm that, once the peasant obtains his land, he is left to his own devices and given no help in mastering all the strange new difficulties which confront him. This criticism is directed particularly against the *Ente's* policy of introducing cattle wherever possible and of allotting two cows, usually of the Brown Alpine or Simmenthal breeds, to each peasant. Certainly the cows caused great trouble and dissatisfaction in the beginning; most of the peasants had never had any dealings with these monstrous beasts, they found them troublesome to manage, and considered that they gave very little milk in comparison with the work involved in looking after them. The director of several of the *Ente's* estates round Lucera in northern Apulia described to the present writer a meeting of the peasants in his area in 1953, when they put up one of their number to tell him that he must remove these horrible animals, which were merely a burden and wholly unprofitable—the use of manure was still almost as much a mystery to them as the cows who produced it. The director persuaded them to give the cows another chance, and in 1954 the spokesman was photographed as the proud owner of the prize-winning cow at a local cattle show. Moreover the peasants have not been left to struggle alone with the terrors of calving or sickness in cattle. The *Ente* has brought down expert cowmen from the Marche and established them in various centres throughout the *comprensorio*; they are taught not to go round telling the peasants what they ought and ought not to do, but they are always at hand to give advice and to prevent any serious injury to the animals due to the owner's ignorance. No doubt there are still not enough of these advisers; the social workers of Matera had horrifying tales to tell of things they had had to do because their trained intelligence was greater, though their ignorance was no less, than that of the peasants.

With such a large area under its control with great varieties of soil and climate, the *Ente* has not been content with improving traditional crops like wheat and olives, but has established various experimental farms on which many different crops from sugar-beet to fruit trees are grown and livestock stations where different breeds of cows, pigs and hens are produced under the most up-to-date conditions. It is certainly surprising to find model pigsties complete with baths for the pigs in a remote part of Basilicata and to listen to the farm manager rhapsodizing over the beauty and virtues of enormous British middle-white pigs. All the information acquired on the experimental farms is passed on to the peasants, and only visits to the holdings can make credible the enormous achievements of the first three years of the reform.

The preliminary work of breaking up the ground, often removing mountains of stones, of building roads and sinking wells, of deep-ploughing and manuring was enormous, but after that had been done it required and requires the patient industry of the Italian peasant backed by friendly advice and help from the *Ente* to make his farm prosper. What can be accomplished may be illustrated by the case of a farmer in the Metaponto area. This man was a landless day-labourer, a leading local Communist in 1950. In the spring of 1955 he was proud to take visitors round his holding and his pride was understandable. He was lucky enough to have a small stream on the edge of his farm and his ground was reasonably fertile. He had sown enough wheat to feed his family, and otherwise had planted various kinds of fruit trees, some vines, a fodder crop for his two cows, and a variety of vegetables. In two years by dint of endless hard work, mainly his own, for his children were young, his wife rather inefficient, and his father too old to do more than very light jobs, he had saved enough to buy a Vespa motor-scooter, on which he took his vegetables several times a week to sell in the Taranto market. Incidentally, he is now an ardent Christian Democrat.

While the majority of the new peasant owners in the Apulian *consorzio* have been settled in cottages built each on their own bit of land, the *Ente* agreed to co-operate in a

different experiment to be made in the neighbourhood of Matera, where over 3,000 families live in caves in the hill on which the town is built. Matera has become a by-word in Italy and abroad for its housing conditions, although it is by no means the only place in Italy where human beings live in holes in the rock.[1] The proportion of the inhabitants of Matera doing so is, however, very high, some 15,000 out of a population of over 29,000, and this is not the result of war damage or of the increasing population but has been an accepted way of living for centuries. Some of the cave-dwellers are desperately poor agricultural day-labourers living in very sordid conditions, but others are comparatively well-paid workers, whose caves contain good furniture and are spotlessly clean even when shared by the mules.

UNRRA-CASAS has planned the building of four villages in the country on different sides of Matera and about five miles distant from the town; in them agricultural workers from the worst cave-dwellings will be housed close to the land assigned to them under the agrarian reform. The first of these villages, La Martella, was built by UNRRA-CASAS working in close co-operation with the *Ente* and with a grant from the *Cassa per il Mezzogiorno* to finance the erection of the village's public buildings. UNRRA-CASAS planned the village to meet the social needs of its inhabitants on the basis of a careful study made into the conditions of life in Matera. The village is a complete unit with its own church, schools, hall for public meetings, clinic, police-post, shops and social service centre, besides the attractive cottages of the peasants grouped so as to give them a sense of forming a community. One of the great difficulties confronting the agrarian reformers is that of overcoming the sense of loneliness and isolation felt by the peasants, particularly the women, who have spent all their lives in the crowded but friendly proximity of the hill towns. This was a particularly pressing problem in the case of the peasants of Matera, which is a real town, a provincial capital, although the great majority of its inhabitants are landworkers.

UNRRA-CASAS has included in La Martella houses for

[1] Cf. p. 32.

craftsmen, carpenters, metal-workers and so forth, with a well-lighted workshop built on to one side of the house where the peasant's house has a stable for his animals. These houses are intended for some of the craftsmen living in Matera caves condemned for human habitation, but it remains to be seen whether regular craftsmen from a sizeable town will be content to live in a village.

The work done by the local social workers in helping the people to settle is undoubtedly very important, particularly as they spent months in Matera studying local conditions before the actual move to La Martella took place. There is much to be done for the women and girls particularly, for whom at present there is no work outside the home, and the classes in needlework and simple handicrafts are eagerly attended by girls of 12 years old and upward who find village life dull and for whom there is little to do in a small modern cottage presided over by a capable mother.

The *comprensorio* of the *Opera per la valorizzazione della Sila* covers over 500,000 hectares in Calabria, of which about 75,000 hectares have been expropriated, all from properties of over 300 hectares. There are great varieties of territory in the *comprensorio*. It includes besides the mountainous land of the high Sila, which averages a height of over 4,000 feet and rises to over 6,500 feet at its highest point, the low marshy land of the Marchesato di Crotone and of the lower valley of the Neto valley and a large hilly area all round the Sila plateau from Squillace in the north to the eastern slopes of the plain of Sibaris.

The tragedy of the whole Sila area has been deforestation. This was one of the few areas of Italy where there were once great forests, but during the last hundred years deforestation proceeded apace with practically no replanting and reached a climax in the cutting carried out by the armies in the later years of the 1939–45 war. This process not only destroyed a valuable national asset but was a cause of the terrible soil erosion of Calabria, where the mountain torrents sweep down to the sea on both sides of the peninsula during the rainy season with nothing to break their violent course. Much afforestation is

now at last going on, and the steep hillsides present an astonishing appearance with their elaborate terracing for the planting of trees.

In the highlands the agrarian reformers have established farms of an Alpine type and the cottages are grouped in small, attractive mountain villages. The mainstay of these farms is cattle-breeding, particularly the Brown Alpine cows which can winter in the high hills, but various types of crops are also being successfully grown. Wheat giving an average yield of 14 to 15 quintals per hectare is now produced where it used to be thought that only rye with a yield of 5 quintals per hectare would grow, and excellent crops of potatoes are also raised, particularly seed potatoes which find a ready market.

The problems presented by the other areas expropriated were and still are very serious. The Marchesato in particular was largely in the hands of big absentee proprietors who owned about 83% of the land, and the soil was in general so poor that they felt no incentive to sink money in an effort to develop it. Great parts of the area consisted of rough woodland or marshy land full of stagnant pools, elsewhere the usual poor wheat crops of the extensively farmed *latifondo* were grown. The mass of the people were desperately poor day-labourers living in agricultural towns with no drainage and inadequate water supplies. The largest landowner lived for most of the year in north Italy, only visiting his property for about a month in the year, when he came down for wild-boar hunting in his woods. His attitude to the peasants who worked on his estate was thus described by an official of the Apulian *Ente*, who had spent three unhappy years as manager of the estate, 'first dogs, second horses, third men'. The animals were fed but the men were half-starved.

The expropriated land required to have so much done to it before rational farming was possible that the agricultural experts had drawn up plans for draining, levelling, road-making and deep-ploughing before distributing the land to the peasants, but this was one of the districts where social unrest was most prevalent, leading in some cases to illegal occupation of land, and the *Ente* therefore allocated the land first and then

used some of the new owners in the work of reclamation and later in the building of the farm-houses. A small number of trained workers were employed, but the bulk of the work has been and is being done by the desperately poor labourers who are thus steadily employed on the land at a living wage, instead of working for about a hundred days in the year on wages far below the legal minimum.

By 1955 the low-lying ground had been mainly drained, artesian wells sunk, aqueducts constructed, and everywhere there were good roads, both tar-macadam main roads and local roads linking the farms, in an area where three years before there had been only a few mule tracks. On the higher land many of the great clefts made by torrents had been filled in with the help of bulldozers, the torrents brought under control, and the land levelled and ploughed. Already the new fields had produced good yields of wheat and beans; the land expropriated and farmed by its new owners and the land sometimes adjoining it but still left in the hands of the old proprietors presented a striking contrast. Scattered all over the landscape are the new houses each on its own land, but so grouped that each house lies only a few hundred yards or so from its neighbour.

The peasants here are at a very low level of civilization, about 50% of them completely illiterate with everything to learn about the new way of farming and of civilized living. The greatest difficulty at first was to win their confidence. Politicians of every breed had for long made sweeping promises, but the people had been left in their poverty and isolation. By 1955, however, the *Ente* official in charge of the area was able to point to a change; for him one of the greatest achievements of the reform was to see the dawn of hope and faith in the peasants, even among those who had not yet got their houses and whose land still needed to have a great deal done to it.

In the hill zone of the *comprensorio* the expropriated land was so scattered and the population pressure so great that the type of land reform which has been described was not possible. Here the peasants were many of them tenants or owners of tiny holdings broken up into small fragments. In view of this

situation and of the desperate poverty of the peasants all that could be done for the time being at all events was to give a small piece of land to each family, a proceeding which aroused much criticism among people ignorant of the local situation. Professor Rossi-Doria attacks this refusal to understand the difficulties. He has pointed out that neither agrarian reform nor land reclamation can solve the problem of this kind of zone, where the land is in fact only suitable for afforestation but is inhabited by a dense population who must be helped 'to resist starvation' until industrialization or emigration brings a real solution.[1]

One criticism brought against all the *Enti* is that they have failed to set up the co-operatives which are compulsory under the law and without which the peasant owners cannot obtain adequate supplies of manure and good seed or the use of tractors and other agricultural machinery. Here again the critics have not troubled to seek exact information. The reformers were well aware that the question of co-operatives needed careful handling; these illiterate peasants are suspicious of anything that looks like interference—an attitude not unknown among British farmers. The *Enti* have moved carefully and began by introducing the idea of co-operatives for providing manures, seeds, tools, etc., and for selling the surplus products of members, extending their scope gradually to operating machinery, harvesting, and processing farm produce. By the beginning of 1955 there were 12 co-operatives with over 1,300 members in the Apulian *consorzio* with definite plans for 120 in a few years, and in the Sila there were 38 co-operatives with 5,000 members. Regular congresses are held for educating co-operators in all the practical problems of administration and for teaching them some simple economics.

Possibly the most serious charge brought against all the *Enti*, and one which is confirmed even by some of the most active supporters of agrarian reform, is that their approach to the peasants is too autocratic, that the officials do not under-

[1] 'Vicende e problemi della riforma fondiaria alla luce del secondo anno di esperienza in Calabria' in *Atti della Accademia dei Georgofili*, 6th Series, vol. XVI, 1952.

stand the need for the peasant to stand on his own feet and to make his own mistakes, and that, for example, in some cases they even force him to take over cattle for which he has to pay without allowing him to exercise any choice in their selection. A criticism of this kind must be treated respectfully by a foreigner, but there are certain considerations which may be urged in defence of the *Enti*. In the first place the profound ignorance of the peasants must be remembered, an ignorance which is in no sense their fault and is not stupidity; their adaptability to the new kind of agriculture demanded of them gives ample proof of an intelligence which only needs friendly help and advice. At the same time it is very difficult for an ardent reformer, particularly a young one, and many of the officials are both young and keen, to stand by and watch a promising experiment fail to come up to his expectations because in the cause of self-development in a democratic republic he must not interfere.

A great deal must also depend on the attitude and character of the official 'in the field', and while there may be cases where these officials are mainly anxious to see the farms running reasonably well without caring very much for the creation of independent farmers, many of them are possessed by the finest ideals of the reformers and are working to make the farmers who come under their special care able to do without them as soon as possible, while being prepared to enter into all their difficulties and to give them every kind of help until they are able to stand alone. The Government promised when the reform laws were passed that when once the *Enti* had carried out their tasks they would disappear, but it must be hoped that this disappearance will not happen too soon, as their help will be needed for a long time to come. Perhaps one of the most important things that has come out of the reform is the new relation between the peasants and officials. 'For the first time,' wrote Professor Rossi-Doria in 1952, 'the Calabrian peasants find young technicians alongside of them every day as fellow-workers, counsellors and friends.'[1]

This is certainly the case on the estate of San Giusto near

[1] 'Vicende e problemi della riforma fondiaria', cit. p. 25.

Lucera, where the same Director who persuaded the peasants to give their cows another chance knows every individual family so well that on a house to house visit with the writer he was welcomed everywhere as a family friend to whom all the latest news of the family as well as of the farm had to be poured out at once. He had even lent his car to bring a bride to Lucera for her wedding, as there was as yet no church near the new farms.

It must also be remembered that while Fascism produced a large number of officials prepared to carry out Government orders without question, it had the exactly opposite effect on its opponents, particularly on the best type of liberal reformer (using the phrase in no narrow political sense), and these people cannot help suspecting the cloven hoof of State-interference in every kind of action taken by a public body. A good deal of the criticism of the *Enti* also comes from social workers, who are doing splendid work, but who undoubtedly suffer from the same complaint as many English social workers and voluntary institutions have done, a deep-rooted suspicion of anything undertaken by the State.

This great experiment in altering the centuries-old structure of a society provides excellent material for a tentative appraisal of the virtues and faults of the new Italy and of future possibilities. The opponents of Fascism were inspired by high ideals of service and by belief in the principles of democratic government, but inevitably perhaps a certain feeling of disillusionment overtook many of them when they were faced with the difficulties of establishing orderly government in a country which had suffered the horrors of invasion and had had a full share of the troubles caused by the existence of a resistance movement, and when they realized that some of the finest spirits of the opposition to Fascism and Germany, particularly many members of the *Partito d'Azione*, were not the kind of men to govern the country in the troublesome days of peace. There was, however, no lack of ideas as to the form of government which the country should have or as to the economic reforms which must be instituted if Italy was to take her place among the more progressive western nations, and there was also a

number of practical, able men, foremost among them Signor De Gasperi, Prime Minister from 1945–53, who were prepared to govern the country and to introduce legislation which would give practical expression to such reforms as the country was ready to accept. It has been seen that this was what happened with agrarian reform when the large general measure was quickly dropped and immediate steps taken to introduce the reform in those parts of Italy where it was most urgently needed.

Every visitor to Italy in the first years after the war was impressed by the immense amount of practical work going on for the restoration of the country's essential services, railways, roads, bridges, water and electricity supplies, etc., and this same energetic action is one of the remarkable features of the agrarian reform movement. As soon as the laws were passed action began and it is almost incredible how much was done in the first five years. There is a great feeling of vitality in the country, certainly not least in the south, where hope and the absence of malaria, which sapped men's energies for so long, and the realization that they are working for themselves and their families have given added vigour to the natural industry of the peasants. One of the tragic features of the terrible unemployment is the inability to make use of this industry and to increase production which is so often low because the worker is underfed. Here again agrarian reform is immeasurably important not only because it is giving work to thousands of unemployed and under-employed workers, but because it is already raising the demands of the southerners and so helping to create a better home market for the products of the north with its unemployed industrial workers.

One of the interesting developments in modern Italy is the growing value put on social service in the best sense of the term. People have begun to realize that the provision of orphanages and almshouses, however well run, or the creation of social insurances to meet special needs and emergencies is not enough, but that there is a great need, particularly in a poor country, of the service of people who have knowledge and sympathetic understanding of the difficulties of the

poorest members of society, and who are therefore fitted to help them in many different ways. This is the kind of service which is being given all over the south, and like the help given by the technicians of the *Enti* in farming difficulties it is bringing something new to the peasants, a sense that there are people genuinely interested in their problems and anxious to help them with no ulterior motives.

To an English visitor, however sympathetic to Italian difficulties and admiring of their achievements, the tendency to seek political motives everywhere is distressing and sometimes annoying. It has already been mentioned that twenty years of Fascism made many people suspicious of any kind of State control, but this question of 'politics' is rather different and seems to prevent some of the finest and most progressive people in Italy from giving their full support even to a great scheme like agrarian reform which in principle they believe in. It is undoubtedly true that the Government with its great Christian Democrat majority pushed ahead with the reform laws partly because they feared the spread of Communism in these southern areas, where the appalling poverty of the majority of the inhabitants was enough to make anyone vote for a party which solemnly promised to take action. It is also true that the Christian Democrats—those of them who are not big landlords—now take the credit for the great achievements of the reform, but this is not only natural but justifiable in the party which was largely responsible for the passage of the laws through Parliament. This does not mean, however, that those responsible for carrying out the reform are actuated solely, or even mainly, by political motives. No one who talks with the officials of the *Enti* can doubt that they are possessed by the desire to see this great scheme succeed and bring the possibility of reasonable livelihood, if not prosperity, to the peasants and increase the wealth of the whole country. In any event this scorn of political motives is not wholly intelligent or desirable. A wise measure of reform does not cease to be admirable because it has been promoted by an opposition party, and just as some of the more sensible landlords have been spurred on to improve their land by fear of expropriation, so it is not a

bad thing for Italy that the Christian Democrats and their allies in the Government have been encouraged to embark on a measure of reform which if wisely and gradually extended may save the country from revolution and lead it towards a greater prosperity than it has ever known.

APPENDIX

Table I

REGIONS AND PROVINCES OF ITALY, 1951

Regions	Provinces
Piemonte	Alessandria
	Asti
	Cuneo
	Novara
	Torino
	Vercello
Valle d'Aosta	—
Liguria	Genova
	Imperia
	La Spezia
	Savona
Lombardia	Bergamo
	Brescia
	Como
	Cremona
	Mantova
	Milano
	Pavia
	Sondrio
	Varese
Veneto	Belluno
	Padova
	Rovigo
	Treviso
	Venezia
	Verona
	Vicenza
Trentino-Alto Adige	Bolzano
	Trento
Friuli-Venezia Giulia	Gorizia
	Udine
Emilia-Romagna	Bologna
	Ferrara
	Forlì
	Modena
	Parma
	Piacenza
	Ravenna
	Reggio-Emilia
Toscana	Arezzo
	Firenze
	Grosseto
	Livorno
	Lucca
	Massa-Carrara
	Pisa
	Pistoia
	Siena
Marche	Ancona
	Ascoli Piceno
	Macerata
	Pesaro e Urbino

Regions	Provinces	Regions	Provinces
Umbria	Perugia	Puglia	Ionio (Taranto)
	Terni		Lecce
Lazio	Frosinone	Basilicata	Matera
	Latina		Potenza
	Rieti		
	Roma	Calabria	Catanzaro
	Viterbo		Cosenza
			Reggio di Calabria
Abruzzi e	Campobasso		
Molise	Chieti	Sicilia	Agrigento
	L'Aquila		Caltanissetta
	Pescara		Catania
	Teramo		Enna
Campania	Avellino		Messina
	Benevento		Palermo
	Caserta		Ragusa
	Napoli		Siracusa
	Salerno		Trapani
Puglia	Bari	Sardegna	Cagliari
	Brindisi		Nuoro
	Foggia		Sassari

Table II

EMPLOYMENT[1]

Occupation	Census 1936	Sample Survey 1952
Agriculture and Fishing ...	8,842,785	7,494,300
Industry	5,375,152	5,609,800
Transport and Communications	702,201	659,100
Commerce	1,504,820	1,732,200
Banking and Insurance	100,543	149,900
Public Administration	808,866	1,044,000
Various Activities and Services	1,011,065	998,700
Total	18,345,432	17,688,000

Inchiesta sulla disoccupazione, vol. I, tom. 1, p. 44.

[1] See note, p. 100.

Table III

MANUFACTURING INDUSTRIES NOVEMBER 1951

Industry	Establishments	Persons Employed	Installed Power (in h.p.)
Food	69,355	357,982	1,494,798
Tobacco	541	55,780	14,604
Leather and Skins ...	6,352	37,775	110,374
Textiles	36,359	647,604	1,213,740
Clothing	216,712	413,687	76,558
Wood	110,744	287,210	541,478
Paper	1,817	59,061	419,878
Printing	6,996	76,586	75,928
Cinema and Gramophone	5,415	10,727	5,674
Metallurgy	694	150,389	1,792,722
Engineering	124,523	920,168	2,074,674
Manufacture of Non-metallic minerals	15,852	201,167	727,324
Chemical	5,434	219,624	1,261,527
Rubber	1,618	43,861	198,225
Miscellaneous	3,681	52,875	80,707
Total	606,093	3,534,496	10,088,211

Table IV

AGRARIAN REFORM

Amount of land expropriated under the Sila, Stralcio and Sicilian laws of 1950	Amount of land allotted to peasants by 31 Dec. 1954	No. of peasant families
Hectares	Hectares	
Delta Padano ... 45,697	24,815	4,518
Maremma and Fucino 207,397	149,722	25,977
Apulia, Lucania and Molise ... 199,368	139,535	22,772
Campania ... 15,134	6,672	1,889
Sila[1] 74,895	77,037	19,148
Sardinia 92,024	20,308	1,946
Sicily 120,546	56,193	12,745
Total 755,061	474,282	88,995

Istituto Nazionale di Economia Agraria:
Annuario dell' Agricoltura, 1955, p. 508.

[1] The *Opera per la valorizzazione della Sila* acquired an additional 10,142 hectares by purchase.

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INDEX

ACTION PARTY (*see* Political Parties)
Agriculture:
  Crops, 117–22
  Landlords and reform, 63, 72, 74, 127
  Land tenure, 124–6
  Land use, 115–16
  Livestock, 122–4
  Population employed, 114–15
  Wages, 121, 126
Alto Adige, 106, 120
Ansaldo, 101
Anti-clericalism, 77–8, 81
Armistice of 1943, 40, 58
Associazione nazionale per gli interessi del Mezzogiorno, 19, 36–7, 85

BADOGLIO, Marshal, 40
Bauer, Riccardo, 8, 59
Bonifica, 128
Bonomi, Ivanoe, 57, 58, 72
Braccianti, 23, 126
Buozzi, Bruno, 65

CASSA per il Mezzogiorno, 54, 63–4, 129
Cave dwellings, 23, 32, 136–7
Cavour, Camillo, 13, 46
Centralization, 13, 46–7
Chamber of Deputies (*see* Constitution: Parliament)
Charities, 36–8
Children:
  Employment, 92–4
  Homes for, 35, 36–7
  Libraries, 48
  Summer Camps, 48
  (*See also* Education and Schools)
Christian Communists, 79
Christian Democrats (*see* Political Parties)
Committee of National Liberation, 40, 57–8, 59, 77
Communes (*see* Constitution: Government, Local)
Communist Party (*see* Political Parties)
Concordat (*see* Lateran Pacts)
Confederazione Generale Italiana di Lavoro, C.G.I.L., 66, 67
Confederazione Italiana di Sindacati Liberi, C.I.S.L., 67
Constituent Assembly, 41, 42
Constitution:
  Church and State, 43, 75–8
  Government, Central:
    Executive, 43–4
    Parliament, 44–5
    President, 45–6
  Government, Local:
    Communes, 47–8
    Prefects, 49–50
    Provinces, 48–50
    Regions, 47, 50–6, 83
  Judiciary, 43
  Liberty of subject, 42–3

Constitution :—*cont.*
Minorities, 43, 52–3
Referendum, 45
Type of, 42
Co-operatives, agricultural, 140
Corsi popolari, 133–4
Croce, Benedetto, 43, 58, 71–2, 78

De Gasperi, Alcide, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 99, 127, 143
Delta Padano, 20
Democracy of Labour (*see* Political Parties)
De Nicola, Enrico, 41 and note, 46
Depressed areas, 19–21

Education :
Administration, 82–3
Directors (*see* Provveditori agli studi)
Direttori didattici, 83–4
Early leaving-age, 82, 92–4
Examinations, 96
Inspectors, 83
Medical services, 89–90
Patronato scolastico, 93
Provveditori agli studi, 83
(*See also* Corsi popolari, Schools, Teachers, Universities)
Einaudi, Luigi, 46, 71
Emigration, 15, 27–30
Ente Comunale di Assistenza, E.C.A., 34–5
Ente di Riforma, 130–1

Fanfani, Amintore, 32
Fascism
and agriculture, 117, 128
and education, 86
and industry, 105
and local government, 47, 49
general influence of, 9, 42–3, 55–6
Fascist laws, survival, 42–3
Fiat, 101, 103, 109
Florence, 33, 47–8, 88–9, 90, 92, 98

Garibaldi, Giuseppe, 13, 40
General Confederation of Labour (*see* Confederazione Generale Italiana di Lavoro)
Gentile, Giovanni, 82 note
Giolitti, Giovanni, 55, 71
Giustizia e Libertà, 59
Government (*see* Constitution)
Gramsci, Antonio, 57, 68, 69, 70
Grandi, Achille, 61, 67
Gronchi, Giovanni, 61

Handicrafts (*see* Industry)
Housing, 23, 32–4, 136–7

INA-CASA, 33
Industrialists and reform, 63
Industrialization in the south, 15, 101–2, 113, 129
Industry :
Chemical, 110
Coal and iron, 100, 105
Cost of production, 112–13
Distribution, 101
Electric power, 106–7
Engineering, 108–10
Handicrafts, 100, 103–5

Industry :—*cont.*
Heavy, 105
Home, 102–3
Natural gas, 100, 107–8
Oil, 100
Population employed, 100–1
Size of firms, 101–3
Textiles, 110–12
Vanoni Plan, 113
Infant mortality, 22–3
Italian Social Movement (Movimento Sociale Italiano) (*see* Political Parties)

Judiciary (*see* Constitution)

La Malfa, Ugo, 59, 60
La Martella, 34, 104, 136–7
Lateran Pacts of 1929, 43, 62, 75, 76–7, 78, note 3
Latifondo (*see* Agriculture: Land tenure)
Lauro, Achille, 74
Levi, Carlo, 19
Liberal Party (*see* Political Parties)
Libya, 28–9
Lizzadri, Oreste, 66

Marzotto, 113
Matera, 23, 34, 136–7
Mazzini, Giuseppe, 13
Metano (*see* Industry: Natural gas)
Mezzadria (*see* Agriculture: Land tenure)
Migration, internal, 16, 21, 42–3
Milan 10, 32 and note, 48, note, 59, 87, 88, 90
Minorities (*see* Constitution)
Monarchist Party (*see* Political Parties)
Monarchy, attitude of Italians to, 41, 58
Montecatini, 103
Mussolini, Benito, 40, 42, 44, 47, 49, 57, 77, 105, 117, 128

Nenni, Pietro, 65, 66
Neo-fascist Party (*see* Political Parties)
Non Expedit, 76
North and South, contrasts, 10–16, 21–3, 26–7, 41, 46, 48, 55, 72, 82, 90–1, 96–7, 98, 101–2, 115

Olivetti, 103
Opera nazionale per la protezione della maternità e dell' infanzia, O.N.M.I. (Baby Welfare), 35–6
Orlando, V. E., 71, 72
Over-population, 15, 22, 24, 27, 28–9, 39, 82–3, 101, 129

Papacy, 9, 75–7, 80
Parliamentary Commissions, 19
Parri, Feruccio, 59–60
Pastore, Giulio, 67
People's Party (Partito Popolare) (*see* Political Parties)
Piedmont, 13, 46
Political Parties:
Action (Partito d'Azione), 57–60, 78, 142
Christian Democrat, 47, 58, 60, 61–4, 78, 79, 144–5

Political Parties :—*cont.*
Communist, 56, 57, 58, 60, 64, 66, 67, 68–71, 78, 79–80
Democracy of Labour, 58
Italian Social Movement (Movimento Sociale Italiano), 60, 64, 74
Liberal, 58, 60, 64, 71–2
Monarchist, 41–2, 60, 64, 73–4
Neo-fascist (*see* Italian Social Movement)
People's Party, 57, 61
Popular Front, 62, 66, 70
Republican, 60, 72–3
Social Democrats, 65, 67–8
Socialist, P.S.I., 57, 58, 60, 64–7
Socialist Party of Italian Workers, P.S.L.I., 65 (*see also* Social Democrats)
Socialist United Party, 60, 68
Popular Front (*see* Political Parties)
Prefects (*see* Constitution : Local Government)
Provinces (*see* Constitution : Local Government)
Public Assistance (*see* Ente Comunale di Assistenza)

Regions (*see* Constitution : Local Government)
Republic of Italy established, 41
Republican Party (*see* Political Parties)
Risorgimento, 13
Roman Catholic Church and Christian Democrat Party, 78–9
and Communism, 75, 79–80
Roman Catholic Church : —*cont.*
and Education, 76, 77
and Land Reform, 80
and Marriage, 76, 77
and Social Services, 80
and the State (*see* Constitution)
Rosselli, Carlo, 59
Rossi-Doria, Manlio, 7, 19, 129, 140, 141

Salariati, 124
Saragat, Giuseppe, 65, 66, 68
Sardinia, 10, note, 50, 51–2, 53–4
Sceiba, Mario, 61
Schools :
Church, 78–9
Elementary, 86–92, 95
Nursery, 84–6
Parificate, 77, note
Secondary, 94–7
Shortage of buildings, 82, 83
Technical Institutes, 98
Segni, Antonio, 127
Sforza, Carlo, 71
Sicily, 10 and note, 14, 50, 51, 53–4, 128, 130
Sila, La, 63, 128, 130, 137–8, 140
Social Democrats (*see* Political Parties)
Social Insurance, 38–9, 113
Socialist Party, P.S.I. (*see* Political Parties)
Socialist Party of Italian Workers, P.S.L.I. (*see* Political Parties)
Socialist United Party (Unità Socialista) (*see* Political Parties)
Social Services, 30–8

Statistics, Vital, 21–3
Statute of 1848, 42, 44
Stralcio law, 63, 125, 128, 130
Sturzo, Don, 61

TEACHERS:
Housing, 91
Salaries, 92–3, 97
Training, 91–2, 97
Unemployment, 82, 91
Terracini, Umberto, 68, 69
Togliatti, Palmiro, 57, 68, 69, 70, 77
Trade Unions (*see* C.G.I.L., C.I.S.L., U.I.L.)
Training courses for unemployed, 26
Trentino—Alto Adige, 51, 52–3
Tuberculosis, 38–9

UMANITARIA, 8, 38, 59
Unione Italiana Libera, U.I.L., 67
Universities, 98–9
UNRRA-CASAS, 33–4, 136–7
Unskilled labour, 25–6, 29–30
Urbanization, 25

VALLE d'AOSTA, 50, 52
Vanoni Plan (*see* Industry)
Vatican City, 9
Victor Emmanuel II, 13, 40
Victor Emmanuel III, 40, 41
Villaggio di Ragazzi, 37

ZANOTTI BIANCO, Umberto, 7, 18

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