

**CLASS
CONFLICT
IN ITALY**



KARL WALTER

APPENDIX

(For an interpretation of the present validity and significance of the Labour Charter, see page 38.)

THE LABOUR CHARTER

(1927)

THE CORPORATIVE STATE AND ITS ORGANISATION

I

The Italian nation is an organism whose life, aims and means are greater in power and duration than those of the individuals and groups of which it is composed. It is a moral, political and economic unity, which is integrally realised in the Fascist State.

II

Labour, in all its forms of organisation and enterprise, intellectual, technical, manual, is a social duty. By that title alone it comes under the guardianship of the State. From the national point of view the complex of production is unitarian; its objectives are unitarian and are summarised in the welfare of the individual and the development of national strength.

III

Trade union or professional organisation is voluntary. But only the trade union or association which is legally recognised and regulated by the State has the right legally to represent that category of workers or employers for which it is constituted, to safeguard their interests in respect of the state and other professional institutions, to enter into collective labour contracts obligatory for the whole of that category, to exact contributions from them, and on their behalf to exercise the delegated powers of a public body.

IV

The collective labour contract is the expression of solidarity between the various factors of production, through conciliation of

the conflicting interests of employers and employees, subordinated to the higher interests of production.

V

The Labour Judiciary is the organ by which the State intervenes for the settlement of labour disputes, whether respecting the observance of contracts and other existing agreements, or arising out of the determination of new conditions of labour.

VI

The legally recognised trade unions and associations provide juridical equality as between employers and employees, maintain the discipline of production, and promote its improvement.

The Corporations constitute the united organisation of the factors of production, and integrally represent its interests.

By virtue of this integral representation, the interests of production being national interests, the Corporations are recognised by law as organs of the State.

As representatives of united interests of production, the Corporations can prescribe regulations governing labour relations and the co-ordination of production, whenever they are authorised to do so by their constituent trade unions and associations.

VII

The Corporative State regards private enterprise as the most efficacious method of production and the most serviceable in the interests of the nation.

Private organisation of production being a function of national interest, the organisers of enterprise are responsible to the State for the conduct of production. Collaboration in production implies a reciprocity of rights and duties. The employee—technical, clerical or manual—is an active collaborator in the enterprise; its management rests with the employer, and his is the responsibility for it.

VIII

The employers' associations are under obligation in every way to promote the increase, improvement, and reduction of costs, of production. Representative bodies of the artistic and liberal professions and associations of public employees, safeguard the interests of the arts, sciences and letters, the improvement of production, and the moral aims of the Corporative order.

IX

Intervention of the State in economic production takes place only when private initiative is lacking, or is inadequate, or when the political interests of the State are at stake. Such intervention may take the form of control, assistance or direct enterprise.

X

In collective labour disputes, judiciary action can only be invoked when the Corporative body has exhausted its own process of conciliation.

In individual labour disputes concerning the interpretation or application of collective contracts, the vocational associations can act as mediators for conciliation.

Such disputes otherwise lie within the competence of the ordinary judiciary, with the addition of assessors nominated by the vocational associations concerned.

COLLECTIVE CONTRACTS AND THE RIGHTS OF LABOUR

XI

The vocational associations have the duty of regulating by collective contracts the labour relations between the employers and employees in those categories which they represent.

The collective contract lies between associations of the first degree, under the guidance and regulation of the central organisations, save in those cases for which the laws and statutes approve the substitution of associations of a higher degree.

Every collective contract, under penalty of being invalid, shall contain precise regulations regarding disciplinary relations, the trial period of employment, the amount and payment of remuneration, and working hours.

XII

The action of the trade unions, the conciliatory offices of the Corporative bodies, and the authority of the Labour Judiciary, guarantee wages in conformity with the normal requirements of a living and the possibilities of production and labour-values.

The determination of wages is not bound by any general standard, but rests entirely within the competence of the parties to collective contracts.

XIII

Data regarding the conditions of production and labour, the situation of the labour market, and variations in the workers' standard of living, provided by public authorities, the Central

Institute of Statistics, and the recognised vocational associations, and co-ordinated and defined by the Ministry of Corporations, provide the criterion for harmonising the interests of the various categories and of the classes among themselves, and their interests with the higher interests of production.

XIV

Wages must be paid in a manner the most consistent with the convenience of the worker and of the enterprise.

When wages are based upon piece-work, and payments are made at intervals greater than a fortnight, adequate weekly or fortnightly payments on account must be made.

Night work, not comprised in regular periodic shifts, must be paid a percentage above the day schedule.

When wages are paid by piece-work, the rates of payment must be calculated in such a manner as to permit the diligent worker of normal working capacity to earn a minimum increase over the basic rate.

XV

The worker has a right to a weekly day of rest, corresponding with Sundays. Collective contracts will apply the principle, taking into account the provisions of existing laws and the technical requirements of an enterprise, and, within the limits of these requirements, will likewise provide for the observance of civil and religious holidays in accordance with local custom. The working time-table must be scrupulously and exactly respected by the worker.

XVI

After a year of continuous employment in an enterprise giving regular employment, the worker has a right to an annual holiday with pay.

XVII

In an enterprise giving regular employment, if labour relations are terminated by dismissal not due to his fault, the worker has the right to an indemnity in proportion to his years of service. Such indemnity is also due in case of the death of the worker.

XVIII

In an enterprise giving regular employment, the transfer of a business does not terminate a labour contract, and its employees retain the same rights in respect of the new owner. Nor does the illness of a worker, not exceeding a determined period, invalidate

a labour contract. A call to arms or to service in the Militia cannot be made a cause of dismissal.

XIX

Violations of regulations and acts disturbing the moral conduct of an enterprise committed by the workers, are punishable according to the gravity of the offence, by a fine, by suspension from employment, or by immediate dismissal without indemnity. Cases must be specified in which the employer can impose a fine, suspension, or dismissal without indemnity.

XX

Workers engaged in new employment must serve a trial period during which there is a reciprocal right to terminate the agreement, with payment only for time actually worked.

XXI

The benefits and regulations of collective contracts are extended to home workers. Special measures will be taken by the State to provide for the inspection and hygiene of home work.

LABOUR EXCHANGES

XXII

The State ascertains and checks the fluctuations of employment and unemployment, joint indices of the conditions of production and labour.

XXIII

Labour exchanges are established under the joint control of the Corporative organs of the State. Employers are under the obligation to employ their workers through these agencies. They have the option in choice of registered workers, with preference for those who are members of the Fascist Party and trade unions, according to priority of registration.

XXIV

The vocational associations are under the obligation to exercise a selective activity among the workers, directed towards a constant increase of their technical ability and moral worth.

XXV

The Corporative organs supervise the observance of the laws for the prevention of accidents and labour inspection, by members of their constituent associations.

PROVIDENCE, RELIEF, EDUCATION, INSTRUCTION

XXVI

Provident organisation is a high manifestation of the principle of collaboration. Employer and employee must carry their proportional burdens of it. The State, through the Corporative organs and vocational associations, will co-ordinate and unify, as much as may be possible, the provident system and institutions.

XXVII

The Fascist State proposes to undertake:

1. The completion of accident insurance;
2. Improvement and extension of maternity insurance;
3. Insurance for vocational diseases and tuberculosis as a road towards general health insurance;
4. The completion of unemployment insurance;
5. Special forms of endowment insurance for young workers.

XXVIII

The workers' associations defend the interests of their members in administrative and judicial proceedings regarding accident and other social insurance. When technically possible, collective contracts will provide for the establishment of mutual health insurance funds, with contributions from employers and employees, jointly administered by their representatives under the supervision of the Corporative bodies.

XXIX

It is a right and a duty of the vocational associations to provide relief for those whom it represents, whether members or non-members. They must undertake these functions of relief themselves, directly, and cannot delegate them to other bodies or institutes, excepting for reasons of public policy when wider interests than those of their own categories are involved.

XXX

The education and instruction of those whom they represent, members and non-members, and especially vocational instruction, is one of the main duties of the vocational associations. They must take their place in line with the activities of national leisure organisations and other educational movements.

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first years of political unity, through Anarchism, Socialism and Syndicalism, the author having taken part in the movement in those days, living among the workers there, as he is to-day. In a detailed description of the later evolution and constitution of the workers' organisations, he attributes the present changes taking place in the Fascist regime to a continuance of the revolutionary impetus in them which is making them the foundations of a co-operative trade union state.

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THE CLASS CONFLICT IN ITALY

CLASS CONFLICT IN ITALY

BY
KARL WALTER

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Much that one people called good, another called scorn
and dishonour; thus I found it . . .

Keep your eye pure from their FOR and AGAINST!

Thus spake ZARATHUSTRA.

Ever men say: Here lies the ³ truth; there lies the truth—
Take this, cast that aside . . .

Yet I feel that in the end I must accept all,
And shall be content with nothing less than all.

EDWARD CARPENTER.

For myself, I do not believe overmuch in these ideals;
but I do not exclude them; for I do not exclude anything.

BENITO MUSSOLINI.

FOREWORD

THIS work was prompted by George Lansbury's visit to Rome last year, the first gesture of goodwill and faith in the Italian people to come from English labour quarters in many years. It seemed to indicate that the time was ripe for an account of what labour has been doing here, meanwhile, behind the hate-screen of anti-ideologies. My qualification for undertaking it is that of a resident in the country, and among labouring people, during several years under both past and present regimes. My interest in reporting their social and political movements dates from 1904, when it was stimulated by such visitors as Grinling of Woolwich, Keir Hardie, and Edward Carpenter, here in our home in this picturesque slum to which we returned after an interval of some years in America and England. I wish to express my gratitude to many Italian friends, old and new, Fascist and otherwise, who have helped me in these recent years to renew my intimacy with their people and my faith in their democratic genius, and especially to Odon Por, veteran comrade of many social experiences.

K. W.

BORDIGHERA VECCHIA,
Easter, 1938.

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CHAPTER I

IN THE CHILDHOOD OF A PEOPLE

THE Italian people, the nation, was born within the lifetime of many and the memory of some still living. The American people was already nearly a hundred years old. Another generation will pass before the Italians celebrate their centenary. One can imagine the veterans of the Great War who will take part in that celebration, marching along the Via Imperiale, a small band of old men, all of them over 70, born when the nation was in its thirties, in its childhood.

We need not turn back very far, then, to look for the emergence of that self-conscious conflict of class interests whose present scope and methods are to be described when we have traced its antecedents. For we are not concerned with the stresses which have always existed in the social structure but only with the deliberate alignment of a class, the working class, in pursuit of its own interests, moral, economic and political; and prior to 1870 there could be no such thing. There was no alignment, no challenge, no contest. Nobody thought about "the condition of the workers" except the charitable foundations in the cities. In the country the workers suffered and starved, and when they could stand it no longer they revolted, here and there, spasmodically, as from the touch on a raw nerve, and were shot down or left to starve, whichever was more convenient. "Feudalism and mortmain have been abolished," wrote an English observer in 1888, "but the rural population have had no place in history ever since the Second Punic War."

Not that all of Italy, even when Italy was merely

"a geographical expression," was in such a savage state; there were islands of content in the mediæval ocean of suffering, small family mills in the North where the workers were regarded as human beings, estates where the peasants as well as the animals were valued, artisans in the towns who still preserved some of their corporative pride and dignity. But savage conditions continued well into the period after 1870. Children sold for four or five pounds each to work for the rest of their short lives in the sulphur mines of Sicily, sleeping in the mines in winter, outdoors in summer; agricultural workers in the more civilised north earning a few pennies a day, decimated by pellagra—35% of the cases in Verona hospitals leading to insanity; peasants in the Romagna sleeping with the cows, in the Appennines with the goats and pigs, for warmth in winter; the lowlands in the grip of malaria, gangs of shivering workers conducted to and from the infested fields by overseers on horseback; mud-huts built by a speculator in the centre of Rome and immediately occupied, fifty of them, four or five persons in each ten-foot hovel; these and many similar observations belong to the first decade of the nation.

The Italian people was born in the Dark Ages and only slowly did its eyes begin to open to the degradation of its poorest members, only slowly during the first twenty years did the feeling of class solidarity take recognisable form. The problems of the political unification of the country overshadowed all others, and in the darkest fold of that shadow lay the question of social reform for a generation. The Government of the first six years was an honest one, but was too busy learning to drive the new vehicle to care what it carried. Power then passed to unscrupulous politicians who called themselves "Left"—Depretis, Crispi, Giolitti, busy from the first exploiting all the opportunities of office. When Minghetti, at the beginning of the second decade, pointed out that public money, distribution of offices, direction of railways and public works,

and the administration of justice itself, were all under the influence of party men and the party spirit, it was proposed in the Chamber to take action against him for "failure to respect the dignity of Parliament." But apart from abuses, the existence itself of Parliament was questionable, even with a Senate to restrain the popular assembly—"the chamber which represents the people, and conveys to the Government the roarings of the beast, that is, the requirements of the lower classes."

Some of the most humane and enlightened men of the new kingdom, men of quite evident goodwill, like Minghetti, Ricasoli, Sella and Luzzatti, whose great work for Co-operation had already begun, soon became apprehensive about the working of a system which had so quickly fallen into corruption. Others questioned it on principle.

The parliamentary system [wrote the economist, Pantaleoni, then a senator of the new Kingdom] founded upon the opposition of two parties who keep one another in check and successively attain power, is a dream of the Anglo-maniacs. It is a temporary expedient, not a solution. It is based upon a misreading of history and a fallacy of science; it is immoral in practice, and in any case impossible in our day. In this age of open enquiry and universal change, when questions have so many different aspects, you cannot hope to enrol the various opinions in two strictly disciplined armies which will fight continuously without destroying each other, like the Romans and Carthaginians at the theatre.

The state was conceived as a combination of forces to maintain political unity and social order. The people had not yet come into the picture, nor as a political entity into the polite conversation of the day. Discussion all turned upon forms of government, how to govern the people—that was the only function of the people, to be governed—so that production and profits might continue. Any pretence of social reform was resented. When Depretis in 1882 said that it was time to consider the social problem seriously and "to diminish the sufferings of the disinherited classes by wise reparative

measures," he was reproached with having raised the banner of State Socialism. What was feared was the "socialism" of Bismarck. Socialism among the people themselves was not yet felt to be the menace, but rather Republicanism and the radicalist talk about universal suffrage; apprehension was on the political not the economic plane. There was also grave moral concern for the relaxation of popular discipline owing to the political defeat which the Church had suffered, and the humiliation imposed upon it.

In these conditions the first expressions of class consciousness naturally took regional and isolated forms. Any political leadership by middle-class sympathisers was difficult; the first Socialist party, founded by Anarchists and Socialists in Milan (1885), excluded it. Workers' mutual aid societies were the characteristic organisation of the period, and Co-operation for various purposes made a rapid growth. Socialism came slowly even in these natural fields of propaganda, and for this there were other reasons than the obsession of the intellectuals with the problem of political unity. The Communist Manifesto had been issued twenty-two years before the birth of the Italian people; the doctrine did not come to them with the freshness it had carried elsewhere; dissensions at the centre had already marred the impressiveness of its rousing call for working-class unity. Chance also helped to make a hero, not of Marx, but of his chief opponent, in the eyes of the first Socialist leaders of Italy. Bakunin had been expelled from the International some years before, and his later hope of an Anarchist revolution in France had been brought to nothing, when he went South. But he arrived in Italy with all the glamour of his mysterious moral authority and with a doctrine more appealing to the Italian temperament than Marxism. His revolutionary activity in the country is a pathetic story of futile plotting; the revolt that was to be the signal for a world revolution came to a farcical end in Bologna; yet his influence upon Italian Socialism in his own and the

following generation is impressive. The sanguine temperament which believes that it is only necessary to destroy the authority of existing society for a better social order to grow up in its place, received his doctrine as gospel. His teaching of local initiative, of action and violence, in contrast with the mass discipline and inevitability of Marx, was an easy lesson for those who had seen political unity achieved by violence but still felt the spur of regional leadership which that unity threatened to suppress. We shall see later what an important part was played in the final outburst of Socialist revolt by this innate regionalism under Anarchist influence. Here we need only note in passing that Bakunin's doctrine, in so far as it took any shape applicable to the political problems of the day, was not very far removed from that of the extreme Liberals who were helping to shape the policy of the new kingdom. They did not wish to abolish the state, as he did, but they desired to see its functions at a minimum and progress was to be judged by further reductions of that minimum. The State, for both Anarchists and Liberals, was a thing extraneous to the people. We shall come upon this conception of it again, accepted by the Socialists in the days of national crisis.

The last decade of the century, the third of Italian unity, was a period of awakening. A lively and peaceful development of co-operative societies, including credit societies and people's banks, mainly promoted by the mutual aid societies already mentioned, reached the proportions if not the consciousness of a national movement. The most notable development in labour organisation showed also the influence of regionalism, in the establishment of Labour Chambers, town or city unions joined by all grades of workers. Among a score or so of this period, one or two assumed some of the social service functions of trade unions; but for the most part they were centres of discussion and agitation, where the first constructive ideas of a Labour movement were being hammered out.

Meanwhile other labour organisations more recognisably trade unions were appearing, but very few as yet in any permanent form. Combinations of workers arose spontaneously under pressure of some local problem, or in protest against some special grievance, dissolving again when the matter was settled. There was a strike in the Como silk mills at this time in which ten thousand unorganised men and women workers acted on such improvised discipline. The engineers of Milan made another impressive but unsuccessful demonstration of the same kind. There were many smaller strikes or half-hearted revolts of agricultural workers, whose attempts in various provinces to form associations were frustrated by the landowners. For by this time Socialist propaganda was becoming more dangerous than the plotting of the Bakunin Anarchists. A pamphlet published in 1882, and widely circulated for some years, described the aim of agrarian revolution as: "Collective ownership of the soil and federation of the agricultural communes."

Bologna continued to be a centre of this and other propaganda, but by the next decade (1891) Socialist ideas of organisation had reached Sicily, and it was there that arose the first serious movement against which the Government, already distracted by its own dishonesties and ineptitudes, exerted its full force. The movement consisted of groups organised in all parts of the island, known as *fasci*, and they seem in fact to have resembled in some features the *fasci* of a later period. Bolton King and Thomas Okey give the following description of them in *Italy To-day*, published in 1901:

The *fasci* were founded and controlled by men of the middle class and a few young nobles; they were religious, almost clericalist in their tone; they opened schools and aimed at developing Co-operative societies and popular libraries; in their club-rooms sometimes hung a crucifix, and by the side of Karl Marx and Mazzini portraits of the King and Queen. In the troubled times that followed, their leaders always tried, and often managed, to keep order, and it was only a few of the worst organised *fasci* that had any hand in the disturbances.

The troubles began with a boycott of the workers who were members of the *fasci*, and a demand for their suppression by the landowners and the secret societies through which the latter controlled the strings of Government. A march of peasants to dig the land they claimed as theirs by communal right, provided the excuse for an incident; a detachment of soldiers fired on them and killed several. Similar incidents were frequent during that year, 1893. A hundred or more were killed, including one soldier. Giolitti—ominous name in the history of Italian politics—was in office. When the confusion was at its worst, he was succeeded by Crispi, of more distant but not less infamous memory. Martial law, mass arrests, and the violent dissolution of the *fasci* and Co-operative societies followed. The Central Committee of the *fasci* were charged with conspiring to sell Sicily to a foreign power. That charge failed but they were condemned on others (including advocacy of the "moral and material emancipation of the labourers"), and along with eighteen hundred of their associates were sent to the islands.

By this time also trouble was brewing in the North. It was mainly of political and municipal origin but had also a strong element of working-class discontent in it. To the agitation of the Clericalists and Republicans had been added that of a new Socialist party, and all these forces of revolt were united when the disaster of Adowa in 1896 aroused popular resentment almost to the pitch of revolution. Respect for the central government sank to a low ebb everywhere and the Government failed to regain it by coercion. Special laws, passed for dealing with the Anarchists, were used indiscriminately against the Republicans and the Socialists. Throughout the country men were sent to the islands for such offences as singing the Labourers' Hymn, or on the merest suspicion of "exciting class hatred." Labour Chambers were dissolved, agricultural unions prohibited. Riots in many parts of the country were caused by a sudden rise in the price of bread toward the end of 1897, due

to the effects of the Spanish-American war. The Socialist leader Turati wrote about the possibility of "a provisional Republican Government for Milan"; Clerical journals referred slightly to "Savoy princes" and "the Savoy policy"; Radicals described "the vote and the carbine" as the necessary weapons of the people. The watchword of the Socialists was, "Spread the Discontent."

But in fact, it was not so much this wordy if well-founded agitation against a corrupt and planless government, but rising prices, strong feeling over a municipal question, and an unintentional shooting, which precipitated the *Fatti di Maggio* of 1898 in Milan. Again about a hundred people were killed, including one soldier, during three days of Government hysteria. Strikers had joined in the demonstration which provoked it, and barricades were raised in the streets by men who, however, seem to have been unarmed. None of the party leaders showed any sign of being prepared to lead a revolution. But weak as had been the demonstration, by any revolutionary standard, it struck terror in the hearts of the Government and the capitalist classes. Republican and Socialist societies, Labour Chambers and Co-operative societies, were dissolved and their property sequestered. Absurdly severe sentences were pronounced on the leaders—who had not led. Few, if any of them were carried out, however, and by the end of the decade (and the century) there was a strong disposition on both sides to forget the tragedy. The Government could not hide its guilt. The workers were angry but disillusioned by their first experience of organised revolt.

The only gainers by these and other less tragic events of that year were the middle-class Socialist leaders. They had been picked out by the Government for the most savage sentences, and this gave them a higher standing in the eyes of the people. Moreover, the futility of direct action by an unorganised mob, when faced by a government prepared to make ruthless use of

the armed forces, had impressed the workers, damping for a time that tendency in the Socialist movement and driving many of its otherwise anarchistic members to follow the leaders of the constitutional party. Further deviation of popular feeling in this direction was occasioned by the assassination of King Humbert by an Anarchist, misled by an *agent provocateur's* information that the King personally had ordered the massacres.

Thus, at the beginning of the century, the class conflict seemed to have been safely canalised into the peaceful stream of parliamentary activity. The Socialists had separated from the Anarchists in 1892, soon after the first Socialist Congress. They rejected an alliance with the Republicans two years later. But the exclusive doctrine of Marx was shed by degrees as its various postulates were found inapplicable to Italian conditions; indeed little of it was left when the Party revised its programme after the *Fatti di Maggio*. Political collaboration was thus for a time made possible. In the next elections the Party doubled its representation in the Chamber, and with its 33 members formed an alliance of the Extreme Left with the 29 Republicans (who followed Mazzini much as the Socialists followed Marx) and the Radicals, who had 34 seats and a programme which, for practical purposes, differed from those of the other two parties mainly in its acceptance of the monarchy. Arrayed against this popular front was a Constitutional Right, crippled by loss of its earlier statesmanlike leaders, and a weak and demoralised Constitutional Left. To all appearances the future promised a steady development of the popular forces, the ultimate triumph of the Extreme Left and the comprehensive measures of social reform advocated by its leaders.

In the first years of the century, however, direct action revived, with a new and fateful idea behind it. The conversion of the workers to parliamentary action was less widespread than it had seemed, and although their support of the Socialist Party increased, it did not grow

in proportion with a revival of the suppressed forces of direct action which now took place. So long as these were defended and encouraged by the Party, the two elements worked together. But the Party was by now dedicated to a policy which involved it in all the subtleties of parliamentary procedure and compromise. The difference between the popular speeches of its leaders and their actions in the Chamber, made the Party an easy mark for the cynical comments of the Anarchists. In a few years its own unity, rather than that of the workers, became the urgent problem of the Party, with revolutionists pulling in one direction and reformers in another.

In these problems of parliamentary party discipline the workers were not vitally interested. Elections rallied them to the political cause, but these were only occasional events, while the problems of their own professional organisation, of their own class efforts for better conditions of life and labour, now became the live subject of daily discussion in workshops and cafés, at the Labour Chambers, and in the local centres of the new trade unions which were at last being systematically organised. Syndicalism, the politico-social theory of trade unionism, the new idea in the Socialist movement, was at first only vaguely apprehended as an aggressive form of trade union activity which might run on parallel lines with the political action of the Party, supporting and driving it on. For a short time, the first few years of the century, it was, in fact, a uniting influence; Socialists and Anarchists could find common theoretical ground in its first principle, class action, and in the practical application of its revolutionary doctrine, the organisation of the workers in professional groups for the ultimate purpose of taking possession of the instruments of production and distribution—practical example of which had already been provided by the glassworkers. Indeed, this early Syndicalism may be said to have acted as an absorbent of Anarchism, which begins to lose its identity from this point, although we shall see its influence later; the An-

archist-Socialist League, which combined a large number of groups, was active for another two decades.

The first considerable test of collaboration between the parliamentary Party and the new and now better disciplined forces of direct action, was discouraging for the politicians. There had been another series of bloody incidents in the South, and in their new consciousness of working-class solidarity the Northern labour organisations were roused to protest against this renewal of Government brutality. In Genoa, one of these demonstrations led to bloodshed, two men were shot by the soldiers. For the first time, instead of disorderly rioting, the workers came out in a general strike, which rapidly spread from Genoa to other cities, towns and villages—an impressive national protest, and not less so for the absence of violence on the part of the strikers. The Socialist party leaders did not approve the extension of the strike beyond Genoa, but they followed it up in the Chamber with a demand for a discussion of it and the policy which had provoked it. The Government refused to allow this and the whole Party in protest, resigned, then offered themselves for re-election in their constituencies, and lost two seats.

The next occasion which called for vigorous parliamentary action found the Party demoralised by this experience and divided on the issue, a bill for the re-organisation of the railways. Again the direct actionists took the lead. A general strike of the railwaymen caused the withdrawal of the bill, and after some changes in the Government a new bill was presented containing better terms for the workers.

From this point the breach between parliamentary Socialists and Syndicalists widened, until in 1907 a Syndicalist Congress, representing about 100,000 members of the new movement, decided with few dissentients to secede from the Party.

The characteristics of Syndicalism now took definite form as a brand of Socialism distinct from the doctrine of the Party. Not only was parliamentary action aban-

done, but the Italian Syndicalists, in agreement with the doctrine of Sorel which their leaders began to disseminate, rejected also the conception of a state based upon parliamentary representation. In other words, it is important to note in the light of much later events, they definitely turned aside from the main road of political progress along which the Italian people, somewhat reluctantly, had been led hitherto, and renounced parliamentary, in favour of functional, democracy. Some of the early Syndicalist propaganda is in terms which give the impression that there was little difference between Syndicalism and Anarchism; in its attitude towards violence, for instance, and its condemnation equally of the bourgeois and of the Socialist parliamentary state; but the Syndicalists were never anti-authoritarian, and they had their own conception of the state as the functional synthesis of trade union activities, the political co-ordination of production by the workers' own organisations. Their ultimate aims, if not their immediate activities, were thus opposed to those of the Socialist Party, although they continued to have many sympathisers in it, men and women who joined it in the days when not to be a Socialist meant having neither desire nor hope for a better world.

It is interesting to note also that the Syndicalists were less anti-clerical than the Socialist Party. They appealed less to animosity than to reason. Their literature was more interesting. There was a freshness of thought in it, a wider field of enquiry into the conditions of labour, the various possibilities of social re-organisation, the aspirations of the workers. Unlike the gospel of Marx, which arrived in Italy already somewhat worn and lacked outstanding Italian interpretation, the doctrine of Syndicalism came dripping from the pen of Sorel in those years and had brilliant exponents and adapters in Enrico Leone, Arturo Labriola, A. O. Olivetti, Alceste De Ambris, and others. Their publications were aimed at the upper working class rather than the mob. They preached revolution with violence, but not the violence

of a blind proletarian revolt. They introduced a new tone into revolutionary debate, an echo of the earnestness and responsibility which had distinguished the constitutional debates of the leaders of Italian thought in the first years of the nation. Much of their writing was over the heads of the masses. Nor must the influence of Syndicalism in those days be exaggerated. It was only one among many divergent tendencies of the class conflict which were manifested in the first fifteen years of the century, too numerous to be examined here. Workers' organisations, trade unions, Co-operative societies, were rapidly increasing in number and in variety of political allegiances, by no means all Socialist. There was no single rallying point for the working class.

In the summer of 1914 there were widespread strikes and insurrections, bloodily repressed, the *Settimana Rossa*. The workers were tragically learning the need of class solidarity. Then the question of Italy's future as a nation cut sharply across all the divisions that weakened them. In the spring of that year there had been a *rapprochement* between the Syndicalists and the revolutionary faction of the Socialist Party, led by a young Socialist who in four years had risen from the obscurity of a village schoolmaster, to be, first, secretary of a provincial federation, and then, in 1912, editor of the Party daily, the *Avanti*. This prodigious young man, Benito Mussolini, had shown very clearly, and on many occasions, that his sympathies were rather with the Syndicalists than with the parliamentary leaders of his own party. When the War began, a common attitude toward it united him once and for all with the Syndicalists. He shared their belief that the War created a revolutionary situation, and that, in order to carry out the revolution as a complete and decisive national action, it was necessary for the Italian people to learn, by participation in the War, the first lesson of popular national unity; for Regionalism, in fact, was still a powerful factor in public life.

The Socialist Party, however, stuck to its pacifist

principles; and its opposition to intervention was for many months effective because other parties, for less worthy reasons, were on its side. The Catholics certainly supported neutrality on humanitarian grounds; but the decisive section, Giolitti and the political elements he controlled, did so for purely materialistic reasons, for the interests of profiteers, and as a speculation on neutrality becoming a still more valuable commodity in the international market as the War progressed. Mussolini resigned his editorship in October of that year and in the following month was expelled from the Party, when he started another daily, the *Popolo d'Italia*, to promote interventionism, supported by the Syndicalists, now the nationalist section of the trade unions.

Groups of action and propaganda, known as *Fasci Interventisti* and *Fasci d'Azione Rivoluzionaria*, were organised by the National Syndicalists. Aligned with them were Republicans, followers of Mazzini, many intellectuals and university students, some from revolutionary, some from purely nationalist, motives. As the national controversy grew, the attacks of the *Fasci* and the counter-attacks of the Socialists passed beyond argument to invectives and accusations of bad faith on both sides, of being in the pay of France, England, Germany, Austria, sowing seeds of unforgettable bitterness. Month by month the country drifted towards civil war; month by month the humiliation of knowing that their Government was bargaining with the belligerents over the price of Italian neutrality struck deeper into the national conscience, driving many otherwise peace-loving people into the ranks of the Interventionists, whose motives at least were not mercenary. It is safe to say that the mass of the people in their hearts did not want to fight—when do they?—but they were split into two antagonistic sections, divided by a new issue. The class conflict was cut across by the division into "Nationalists" and "Anti-Nationalists," a division of deep, but as yet unrecognised, importance to the whole social and political progress of the nation. For never

again could the class conflict be resumed without the consciousness of that issue overlying it, never again in the innocence of unconscious nationalism, as in the childhood of a people.

CHAPTER II

IN ADOLESCENCE

THE first popular war waged by them as a nation was a bitter and confusing experience for all classes of the Italian people, and especially the workers. The newly felt solidarity, a reality in spite of its many different labels, had been shattered during the months of neutrality and was not restored by common suffering and sacrifice. The feud between Interventionists and Neutralists continued, embittered by every changing aspect of the War, defeats and victories only intensifying the antagonism between them. Socialists, even those willingly doing their duty once war was declared, were despised and insulted as if they obeyed only necessity, jeered at when things went well, blamed when they went badly. The patient masses remained outside the controversy, but depressed by it. They suffered for lack of food a great deal more than we, their allies; much more than we ever knew; villagers walked miles to the towns every day to join the bread queues; many districts were crippled by starvation.

The desperate circumstances of civil life to which the men came home from the army, partly explain why they so readily formed themselves into protective bands and Co-operative societies of ex-soldiers, thousands of them, with no political label or any motive beyond the necessities of the local situation. Once more the impulse was regional rather than that of a national movement. There was no national unity. The menace of calamity towards the end of the War had not brought it.

By that time, 1918, a new factor of disunion was appearing. The Communist theory of defeatism came from Russia as a new hope of justification and revenge to

the more embittered and outraged Socialists, and was aggravatingly revived by them later when the fruits of victory proved illusory. They opposed and ridiculed the desperate venture, led by D'Annunzio and supported by the re-organised Interventionists, to secure for Italy by force what the peacemakers denied her. The fatal division of the workers between Interventionism and Neutralism became more sharply defined as between Nationalism and anti-Nationalism, with the latter strongly in the ascendancy, gathering to itself much of the traditional regionalist sentiment of the country. The Syndicalist Interventionists were justified: the War had created a revolutionary situation, but a situation in which, for many unforeseeable reasons, revolutionary nationalism was submerged.

The War did not bring unity of purpose, but it created the desire for unity, the desire to be associated. We have mentioned the non-political organisations of ex-soldiers; they are significant examples of the new urge, but they were only like pools of water left behind by the flood of enrolment that swept into the trade unions and Co-operative societies, into political parties old and new, and organisations for all manner of purposes. If, before the War, working-class organisation had been rather like that of children in a playground, grouping themselves for whatever game took their fancy, the impulse now was rather that of young people not very clear and very much divided about what they wanted, but in deadly earnest, and well aware that, whatever the object, it could not be reached except in combination with one another. The variety of popular purposes and tendencies, always remarkable, became chaotic, united only in the desire to be united, and in the darkening shadow of tragic events to come. This chaotic character of the period is particularly evident to anyone who tries, but will try in vain, to discover how many different types and colours of trade unions and Co-operative societies existed in those days. They were fostered by every shade of political party, to whose moral and financial support they contributed; and

some had religious as well as political ties; some had neither; some achieved federation, many did not attempt it; some were exclusively for ex-soldiers, some did not admit them to membership. Any man could be a member of several without offence, and thousands were, defying for all time the statistician, even were records available. For records, as well as subscriptions, were largely nominal, and administration, as may be imagined, was irregular.

But neither irregularity nor incapacity, the wildest intransigence nor any extravagance, could frustrate this movement, this new desire to be part of something, this adolescent fever of social intercourse, reckless of what was to be the result, but furiously bent upon the creation of a community out of a people which had hitherto known only an imperfect political unity,—in defiance of that imposed unity, indeed rejecting all that had made it a nation. It was an adolescent revolt against family discipline, inspired by wider and rosy-clouded horizons, by the vision of a greater society; and nothing could withstand it; certainly not the grandmotherly Government, which it did not so much attack as ignore.

When the successive events of the revolution can be judiciously correlated it will be seen that, in fact, nothing did withstand it—that whatever was jettisoned in its labours before the outline of a new community became visible, the purpose of the revolution was accomplished, a new society was born, as ugly as any other infant at first, but later recognisable by the features of its revolutionary parentage. For the moment, however, what was jettisoned seems of more importance, and interest in this period lies, not in the outcome of the revolution, but in the interweaving and conflict of purposes within it.

The revolution had many things to get rid of before it could begin to find or forge a common purpose, before the workers could resume the advance towards unity which nationalism had thwarted by dividing them. Regionally, indeed, working-class unity was rapidly achieved in scores of autonomous centres. Towns and

villages and rural districts hoisted the red flag. For many months the Anarchistic tradition prevailed, denying the authority of the state or ignoring it. The movement was wildly anti-nationalist; police, soldiers, and ex-soldiers were attacked; there were a number of victims long before counter-violence was organised. The Labour Chambers became seats of revolutionary authority. Had there been any outstanding leadership to link up these successful provincial revolts, the political character of the revolution might have been settled in the first year, as Federal Socialism. A scheme of this kind was indeed formulated by the Socialist Party. But the ambitions of the actual leaders of revolt do not seem to have extended beyond their limited geographical spheres of interest. Units of a Red Army, formed here and there, also lacked any co-ordinating leadership, although the influence of the new Communist section of the Socialist Party was growing and was directed towards this purpose as well as towards giving the successful local revolts an imprint of foreign Sovietism.

Leaders with a national outlook were busy elsewhere. The Socialist Party, enormously reinforced, retained the loyalty of many of them. They continued to preach the Socialist revolution, and to wait for it, while the revolution was taking place under their eyes. They could not recognise it, because they would not at first admit the validity of the local revolts and, later, found themselves manœuvred into opposing the Communist effort to convert the piecemeal insurrection into Sovietism on a national scale.

At the Socialist Congress of 1919 in Bologna the Party pledged itself to "the revolution"; in the subsequent elections it secured 156 seats in the Chamber, giving it a controlling influence there. By this time the Socialists and Communists together controlled more than 2,000 communes and 25 provincial governments. The central government was weak and conciliatory; almost any concessions could have been wrung from it if the parliamentary Socialist leaders had wished to consolidate the

victories of the proletariat as the basis of a Socialist revolution. They interpreted their rôle, however, in the strictly partisan and legalitarian sense: they would have nothing to do with the responsibilities of government until the revolution was made by a Socialist parliamentary majority. The effect of this policy was to hamper or obstruct all legislative reform, to leave all the gains of direct action unconsolidated.

The expectation of the Party was that, after the disorderly revolts had subsided, after direct action had been fully tried and been found wanting, the Socialist impulse would return as before to the constitutional channel; and the revolution could then be quietly and decently made by a duly elected Socialist Government. At any time from this point, until the Communists seceded in January, 1921, the Party could have taken office, in alliance with the Catholic Popular Party and other democratic groups, and carried out a revolutionary programme in support of what the workers were winning for themselves. The state and the capitalists would have put up no serious opposition in Parliament. They were completely overawed by events that were taking place outside. The failure of parliamentary Socialism was not due to any opposition but to a narrowness of revolutionary outlook and the mistaken strategy based upon it. In 1922 the Party expelled its moderates, who formed another party. The General Confederation of Labour (the Socialist trade unions) severed its connection with the Party in that year. A year later, in 1923, when its leaders had confessed the errors of its missed opportunities, there was an unsuccessful attempt by the Party to amalgamate again with the Communists. But it was too late. Parliamentary Socialism, deriding national unity, expired in three irreconcilable factions.

In those overwhelming events which had terrorised the Government and the capitalists, yet another wave of the revolution was approaching the "test to destruction." The trade unions had grown in membership even more rapidly than the parties, and with a greater ferment of

ideas. They were divided in their political allegiances, but in many of these now powerful bodies the earlier seeds of Syndicalism had taken root, as we have seen, before the War, and this more violent type of Socialism now rose in action to greater importance than the other three main types we have seen passing simultaneously through their revolutionary trials—the regional type, the parliamentarian, and the mixed foreign type of Communism. Theoretically, the aim of Syndicalism was the trade union state, or in the terminology of France and Italy, the Syndicalist State. It was also in the Syndicalist movement, as we have seen, that the then schismatic notion of nationalism took root. But in the first revolutionary period both the theoretical national aim and Nationalism itself were lost sight of in the blind resort to the methods of Syndicalism, the exercise of direct action to its logical conclusion, expropriation by the trade unions and continuation of production and distribution under their control and ownership.

There was nothing essentially contradictory between this method and Nationalism, and in fact the Nationalist Syndicalists, chief exponents of the theory of Syndicalism before and after the War, now took part in its revolutionary application. The *Fasci Interventisti* and *Fasci d'Azione Rivoluzionaria* had had many losses in the War, notably Corridoni, but apart from this, they were re-organised under the same Syndicalist leadership, with Mussolini at their head, in the spring of 1919, under the name of *Fasci di Combattimento*. They were of little revolutionary importance at this time; they were more involved in the Fiume adventure of D'Annunzio than in events at home; but some of them joined in the occupation of factories when this movement began. On one occasion, at Dálmine, and possibly on more than one, workshops were occupied in that year with Mussolini's personal encouragement, approving on principle a stay-in strike "that does not interrupt but continues production," after the classical example of the glassworkers. Even when the movement began to take on a character that was

more Anarchist-Syndicalist than Nationalist, and, culminated in the following year with the seizure of hundreds of factories and workshops, in which at least half a million workers were active, Mussolini did not discourage it.

What fighting there was at this time between Fascists and Socialists was a continuation of the Interventionist-Neutralist feud; it was not "ideological." The first Fascist programme, of 1919, was revolutionary, and in some respects went beyond that of the Socialist trade unions. The Fascists demanded the participation of the workers in the control of industry in general, and that industrial production should be confided to labour organisations capable of undertaking it; and among other popular measures in the programme were women's suffrage, a capital levy, confiscation of 85% of war profits, abolition of the Senate, and the calling of a National Assembly instructed to create the basis of a Syndicalist Constitution. Joint control of industry by workers and employers was also the main demand of the leaders of the Confederation of Socialist trade unions, which at this time subordinated its policy to that of the parliamentary Party but could not formulate the more ambitious objective of its own run-away leaders, or make them obey.

Action, indeed, ran far and wide ahead of all programmes, of all discipline. A gallant attempt was made by the workers to continue production in the occupied factories and workshops. Steamers were seized and run by crews under elected officers. Train crews asserted their independence of national time-tables. In all parts of the country there were popular and sometimes ceremonial invasions of the land; some led by Socialists, Communists, Syndicalists, under the red flag; some led by priests with sacred emblems. Opposition vanished before such a multitudinous insurrection, and in the face of an economic depression so severe that many agricultural and industrial proprietors were willing enough that the workers should take charge of the property if they could keep it going. This was a possibility of which there was ample individual evidence in co-operative glass,

pottery, printing and other work, and collective farms. But there was no revolutionary plan for doing so on the large industrial scale the situation required—no co-ordination, no national leadership.

The movement was defeated by these two things—by the depression, and by its own incapacity. The Anarchistic influence was widespread, but the Anarchist miracle did not take place; the state and the capitalists were beaten; the field was clear, but the new society did not arise out of the ruins of the old. Some big schemes appeared after the impulse had passed—for the syndicalisation of the state railways and the post and telegraphs, for instance; and the marine workers' shipping guild, the Garibaldi Society, was (and still is) flourishing. But the insurrection itself won only an empty victory. Giolitti, by now a weak old man at the head of an impotent government, was ready to concede all the workers could ask, and did concede promises of immunity for all and the joint control of industry by labour and capital. It was safe to promise anything; the Left parties were still too divided to grasp the power that lay under their hands. By the end of that year, 1920, the Anarchist-Syndicalist wave of revolution, along with those of regional, parliamentary and foreign Socialism, had spent itself; and in the choppy sea of their confusion another wave was rising to overwhelm them: the long-suffering middle classes were in revolt and had seized upon the *Fasci*, the working-class creations of the Nationalist Syndicalists, for their instrument of counter-attack.

This unforeseen alliance was made possible by changes that had taken place on both sides. The Italian middle classes were not anti-Socialist before the War. The attempt to build up an exclusively working-class party, the Workers' Party of 1885, had long ago failed, and the Socialist Party that supplanted it was inspired and led by lawyers and professional men and drew a considerable part of its support from the bourgeoisie. It was only after the War, reacting against the influences of a narrow Communism, anti-patriotic violence, and the menace of a

dictatorship of the proletariat which hung over the country for many months, that middle-class sympathy was alienated and began to constitute a separate class-consciousness, roused at last to a fury of desperation and revenge by insults to its patriotism, by the ruinous futility of the Socialist insurrection, and by the incompetence of the Government. On the other hand, patriotism had overshadowed the original class impulse of Syndicalism in the *Fasci di Combattimento* under the exasperation of President Wilson's "betrayal" of Italian interests. Their members had flocked to the private army of D'Annunzio which took possession of Fiume in September, 1919; the Fascists remaining at home were the only body which approved or indeed understood the idealistic constitution established by the poet-commandant of the "Free State of Fiume." Mussolini's share in writing the constitution of this short-lived Guild State is evident on the face of it; in spirit and in some details it anticipates the main principles of the greater Corporative State to come. The Fascists, however, accepted the Treaty of Rapallo, little more than a year later, which settled the fate of D'Annunzio's romantic realm. By that time the wave of Socialist, Communist, and Anarchist-Syndicalist insurrection had spent itself, the masses were disillusioned, Socialist violence was being met by the armed violence of Fascist volunteers returning from Fiume, re-organised as party legionaries and drawing to themselves other ex-soldiers and the most unruly elements of the newly aroused middle classes; the revolution was passing into its worst phase of civil war.

The methodical violence of the Fascists as a deliberate policy dates from November, 1920, when the Socialist-Communist majority on the Municipal Council of Bologna went armed to its opening session, anticipating the threats of their opponents. One of the latter was shot across the Council table. The fight spread from the Chamber to the streets, and from Bologna throughout the country. In a few places "red" units of the army that had never been mobilised defended themselves; others

deserted a cause that was hopeless and joined in what soon became a one-sided campaign, reversing the previous contrast. There was a heavy death-roll on both sides, however, for the Socialists and allies did not at first realise their weakness and the reprisals of the Fascists were unmerciful wherever there was resistance; the property of many Socialist and other Left party branches, and of some of the Co-operative societies and trade unions under their control, was ruthlessly destroyed, their members terrorised and disbanded. Socialist and Communist leaders and administrators were thrown out or resigned without fighting, and were replaced by Fascists in the workers' organisations and the local governments. The conquest of the provinces went on apace. The state was as impotent as ever; the parties of the Left, which together might have given it the moral backing to maintain order, were still bickering. In May, 1921, the Socialists lost seats in the disorderly elections, and a group of Fascists was formed in the Chamber, Mussolini leading them. One of his first actions in Parliament was to call for an end of the violence that was still harrowing the country and shocking the outside world. A month later, in August, 1921, the President of the Chamber convened a meeting of Socialists and their allies with the Fascists, at which a peace agreement was signed.

It is quite evident that at this point the Fascist leaders, including Mussolini, considered that they had won the day and that the time had come to centralise their provincial victories by constitutional action in Rome, and consolidate their original trade union forces with those which were now ready to join them, either voluntarily or by reason of the new leadership forced upon them. Figures generally accepted by all parties at the time, give an indication of their proportions. The Fascist trade union claim of 100,000 members, in the period of the occupation of the factories when the dividing line was obscured by events, was a conservative estimate. In June, 1921, when a Fascist trade union executive was formed under the leadership of Rossoni, organisations

comprising 300,000 members were represented; at the first national congress which assembled in Bologna six months later, the number had grown to half a million, of whom only about one-fifth, however, were members of the recently formed Fascist Party. The million mark was reached by the trade unions shortly after the March on Rome, and by the end of the following year, 1923, the membership of trade unions in the Fascist Confederation was more than two million.

Before following the fortunes of this new army in the class conflict, however, we must return to the failure of the political truce of August, 1921, which date significantly comes just a few weeks after the establishment of the new national executive of the Fascist trade unions. For in that re-organisation, trade union discipline had been restored, and on that discipline, and the military obedience of the legionaries, Mussolini and the political leaders of Fascism based their hopes of a loyal observance of the truce by their followers. But the *Fasci* and the legionaries had fallen under other influences. "All sorts of wretches have taken refuge in Fascism, cowards who were afraid of us, or afraid of others. Greedy selfish people, who have no understanding of national conciliation, have wormed their way in among us; some have even taken advantage of the prestige of Fascist violence to seek their own selfish ends, or have turned from an only half-understood policy of violence, to violence for its own sake." Thus Mussolini, after resigning in disgust from the Central Fascist Council, when he discovered that not only was discipline lacking among the legionaries, but that local federations of the *Fasci* deliberately repudiated the truce; and his scorn and anger grew, as every day his own paper, the *Popolo d'Italia*, recorded fresh violence and outrages committed in the name of Fascism.

Fascism is no longer liberation, but tyranny [he wrote in that paper], no longer the safeguard of the nation, but the support of private interests and of the most grovelling and uncomprehending classes in Italy. . . . The peace treaty is the test . . . The Socialists have stood that test better than the Fascists. We do

not find among them discussions, schisms and denunciations, but an admission of the *fait accompli*. . . . In the Fascist field things are very different—hole and corner meetings, local congresses and repudiation of the treaty.

And a few days later, after saying that, if Fascism could do without him, he could perfectly well do without Fascism, his tone becomes ominous.

How is peace to come about? Perhaps you think you can get it by wiping out the two million citizens who voted for the Socialist Party. But are you not running the risk of having to submit to a Socialist peace to-morrow, owing to some other quite probable turning of the tables?

Fascism had split on the familiar line of cleavage of all popular movements, between the politicians and the direct actionists. Being more violent than any other movement, it would have inevitably foundered, had it not been for a third element, the traditional vehicle of working-class direct action; the trade unions under Rossoni's leadership remained loyal and refused to be drawn into the degenerate violence of the unruly legionaries. Thus the hopes of Mussolini and his first associates had not been entirely misplaced; the heart of the original working-class Fascist movement was sound. Around this nucleus now, in the last days of 1921, the movement was re-organised and converted into a National Party. In a list of 151,000 members of the new party, 64,000 are members of trade unions, and 138 Co-operative societies are listed.

In the first programme of the Party, together with a number of reactionary capitalist measures, such as the handing over of the railways, the Post Office, and other Government monopolies to private enterprise, none of which was ever carried out, the following trade union demands were included: a statutory eight-hour working day, health insurance and old age pensions, workers' representation in the management of all industries, and the assignment of industries and public services to labour organisations whenever trustworthy and technically qualified for the purpose.

The founding of the party, the re-organisation of the legionaries as a party Militia, and the political prestige acquired by its leaders, enabled them gradually to obtain control of the insurgent elements in the old movement, and eliminate some of the most disreputable. The crimes of these years were not all on one side—for instance, the murder of the Fascist deputy, Casalini, a popular trade union secretary. But a policy of violence continued for some time under local Fascist dictators who had supplanted the “red” ones, and was not purged from the central body until the murder of Matteotti, in 1924, revealed its persistence in a manner that could not be ignored. This worst of all the deeds of violence committed by either side, was also the most shocking, because the country had by then accepted the Fascist peace established after the final bloodless victory. Only once again after the founding of the Party had its opponents tried to offer any serious resistance. The general strike which the Republicans, Popularists, Socialists, and Communists called in July, 1922, was a misguided and ill-fated protest against the Government’s failure to curb the Fascist usurpation of public authority. The Fascists replied with an ultimatum to the Government to assert its authority and suppress the strike within 48 hours, “or Fascism will take the place of the State that has once more shown its impotence.” The strike dragged on for a week, providing an excuse for a renewal of “methodical violence.” The Government of Milan and other cities was seized. The remaining political and social organisations of Socialists, Communists, Popularists and Republicans were attacked with indiscriminating fury. The conquest of the provinces was systematically completed. Meanwhile the Fascist national leaders, realising that nothing but action on a nation-wide scale could now secure their authority over their own followers, and seeing the Government tottering to a fall from which the Left parties still refused to save it, were planning the March on Rome.

For another year or two after that event, the political

parties of the Left clung to their diminishing prestige, still bickering among themselves, still hoping that some unexpected event outside themselves would restore them to life. Their members were busy saving what they could out of the local wreckage; they were beaten, weary, and disillusioned, and had no heart for party politics. For a few years longer the workers remained divided in competing trade unions of different political colours. But the controversy that had cut across all their many divisions, the question of nationalism, had been settled: the Italian workers were becoming nation-conscious as well as class-conscious. Other labour organisations were once again tolerated; but the tide had turned towards national and nationalist, rather than regional or sectarian, organisations. The future history of the class conflict lies mainly in its adjustment and development within that growing consciousness of an adult community.

CHAPTER III

THE NEW PHASE

HAD the parliamentary Socialist leaders been able to seize power when opportunity offered, they intended to carry through the revolution *seriatim* at their own tempo. This is what now took place under other leadership and behind a misleading veil of class peace. Exhausted by three years of insurrection and civil war, the country submitted to the ex-legionaries, converted into a Party police. The rival armies of the workers themselves seemed to have laid down the arms of labour. To all outward appearance the class conflict had been suppressed. In fact it was in its most acute stage.

For now the employers were grasping at the prize they thought they had won in advance by their support of Fascism, which only the new trade unions and the extraordinary skill and patience of Mussolini prevented them from seizing. Like many foreign observers, the employers thought that the fine words of Mussolini about Fascist trade unionism were merely so much bait for a new trap into which the workers would fall as readily as into that of the old political leaders. And if the workers also had taken that view, the employers might well have had their way. Nothing is clearer now, in retrospect, than that the whole venture of Fascism, as it was conceived by Mussolini and his first associates, was staked upon trade union support in these anxious years, as in the beginning. By them, Fascism was never intended to serve a reactionary counter-revolution, whatever might be the purpose of some of its later supporters. Sharp encounters with the possessing classes had already occurred; for instance, in the uncompromising rebuff to

the Agrarian Party early in 1922; and over and over again, as Prime Minister, Mussolini reasserted in one form or another the principle stated in the early days of the movement: "In the matter of economic democracy, we stand on the ground of national trade unionism." Few employers, however, took this part of the programme seriously, and those who did so were confident of their ability to thwart it. Apart from a few serious incidents, all through this period, until the Trade Union Act of 1926 and the Labour Charter of 1927 set the stage and raised the curtain on a more systematic conflict of class interests, the main struggle went on behind the scenes. The employers sought by every available means to capture the citadel of the new regime, while its occupants, none too confidently at first, counted upon and encouraged the Fascist trade unions to demonstrate, by their growing strength, that such capture would not only be illusory but would throw the country back into the industrial strife from which it had only recently emerged.

The Fascist trade unions were encouraged; the others, still under Socialist or other anti-Fascist leadership, were tolerated—they also were playing a part, unintentional but important, as potential reinforcements in this critical phase of the revolution—in determining, in fact, whether the revolution should go on, or should be converted into a counter-revolution of liberal capitalism. Some solid if temporary concessions to the capitalists gave them confidence in the victory they felt they had won; for the desperate economic conditions of the country urgently needed their willing collaboration with the Government, harrassed by monumental debts and uncertainly looking for revenue from the devastated resources of industry and agriculture. The wonder is, not that the new regime gave the impression abroad of being engulfed in capitalist reaction, but that it avoided this fate, if the urgency of its national problems, apart from those with which we are concerned here, is taken into account—in a word, reconstruction of the whole economic life of a sabotaged state and a distracted country. Thus, above all things, in-

dustrial peace had to be maintained; and the balance of power, thanks very largely to Rossoni's able leadership of the Fascist trade unions, was in the hands of the new regime. A welcome proof of this was soon given to the employers. They were beginning to be apprehensive, in 1923, about the growing influence of the two million members now enrolled in the Fascist trade unions, when a conditional truce was signed between the latter and the employers' federations at the Palazzo Vidoni, the Party's headquarters, in the last days of that year.

The fate of this truce is the first prominent milestone in the course of the silent battle that was going on behind the scenes, between the powers of labour and those of capital, for the orientation of Fascist labour policy. Did the truce mean submission of the workers? Were its conditions binding only upon them, and not upon the employers? Many of the employers were evidently under that impression. Every time any concession was made to them, they recovered from shocks which some of the tendencies of the regime were already giving them, and repeated among themselves that they could trust Mussolini, the renegade Socialist, to make everything right for them. So they did not take it too seriously when they were presented with threats of a national strike of engineers—because, the workers said, they had not kept faith—in March, 1925; strikes had been "fixed" before, and threats of one under Fascist leadership left them cold. The strike took place, and was won by the men. (The leader of it, Amilcare De Ambris, brother of Alceste and also one of the pre-war revolutionary syndicalists of the Corridoni group, is to-day Vice-President of the Industrial Workers' Confederation.) The employers had not the influence to prevent the strike; they next discovered that they could not even get it condemned. When the matter came before the next meeting of the Grand Council of Fascism, already in fact and later by law the supreme authority of the regime, the strike was approved. Further, if any doubt was still left in their minds, Mussolini praised the conduct of the strike, in an article pub-

lished in *Gerarchia*, for showing "a new and timely mobility" in Fascist trade unionism, "for, if collaboration is not going to be reciprocal, it is only a phrase and a mystification."

There were other strikes led by the Fascist unions in this transitional period, and many minor incidents. One of the latter will serve to illustrate the undercurrent of events. A worker employed by the great Montecatini chemical industry was transferred to a job in which his earnings would be lower than what he was getting, as part of an economy plan. He reported to his (Fascist) trade union and was advised to resist the change. He was dismissed; the provincial joint committee of his union and the Fascist Party supported him. Montecatini still refused to reinstate him. His union appealed to the Ministry of Corporations, an amorphous body then but already exercising authority. An order was made for reinstatement of the worker in his original category, with payment of wages for time out, twelve months, in the name of Fascist collaboration between capital and labour.

Class collaboration was a tenet presently to have elaborate development, but a clearer definition of the new trade union principles, and a revision of union law, had to come first. It was high time for definite action. There were many highly-placed Fascists who would have liked to abolish the freedom of association which still existed in respect of trade unions, Fascist or otherwise. Some would have abolished out of hand all but the Fascist trade unions; some would have made membership in these compulsory. Readers who have not lived under the Italian "dictatorship" may imagine that the whole country, including workers immediately concerned in them, stands mutely waiting until such issues are decided by Mussolini. This is not even figuratively true; every trade union problem has been and is keenly and often hotly debated in the trade unions themselves, by the workers and their elected representatives who carry their opinion up to higher quarters, as in most trade union movements. Throughout these experimental years the

issues referred to were debated in this way, and it was with the full consensus of trade union opinion that the decisions on them and many other problems of organisation were embodied in the basic Trade Union Act of 1926.

By that Act freedom of trade union association was maintained—for the existing unions and the formation of others—but it was determined, as a necessary measure in the new and ambitious plan of contractual labour-employer relations, that only one national union for each trade or category of workers could have the new legal status conferred by the law—namely, the power to negotiate collective contracts with the appropriate employers' associations, contracts which were themselves to become laws governing the relations of the two parties and interpreted by specially created Labour Courts. The qualification for legal recognition was put low enough quantitatively to assure a rapid process of organisation—a membership of 10% of the workers and employers eligible for their respective associations; qualitatively, the unions were required to show that they were adequately organised as voluntary associations with an electoral constitution and competent welfare and educational services. Freedom of association as between local and national syndicates was also maintained, with the same reservation as to juridical status. Voluntary membership is still maintained as a fundamental principle, even in the greatly changed circumstances of to-day.

This settled once and for all the problem of competing unions; other syndicates could continue for a time, but the Fascist unions had by now won a numerical as well as a political claim to the national mission which had inspired them in the beginning. The most sweeping innovation of the Act of 1926, however, and the one which went furthest in persuading the workers that their leaders, including Mussolini himself, were in earnest, was the provision extending the full protection of a collective contract to all workers in the trade or category covered by it, whether members of any union or not. Thus, at

one stroke, the contentious problem of the "open shop," source of so much wasteful strife, was solved—but neither by direct compulsory legislation; nor by unionist pressure upon non-unionist; nor by "company" unions. The Act was an enabling act; the actual laws under which, trade by trade, the benefits of unionisation were to be extended to all workers, were the collective contracts. In effect, the state delegated the authority of legislation, for their own affairs, to each labour union in collaboration with its respective union of employers.

Competing unions, the "open shop"—two important sources of weakness and strife in the labour movement were thus removed; they would no longer give rise to industrial disputes, to strikes and lock-outs. But was it necessary to retain these arms of violence at all? Must the final appeal in the class conflict always be to force? Was it even compatible with the new juridical status assigned to the unions?

The whole country, workers as well as employers, was sick and tired of domestic violence, and wanted no more strikes, not even "Fascistic strikes," which had been defined and approved by Mussolini as "strikes with a definite objective and not merely gymnastic exercises for a proletarian revolution," a definition more outspoken but not far removed from that which was given to the legal strike in England in those days, by the Trades Disputes Act of 1927. But the Italian workers are not different from others; the legal right to strike was as jealously guarded by them as by any. As, for instance, by the French Confederation of Labour in the negotiations over the new trade union law which has been passed while this is being written. But the French legislation makes no radical changes; the new law does not go beyond compulsory arbitration and super-arbitration, an elaborate postponement of direct action, with some concessions to the unions to compensate for the obstacles it puts in the way of a strike; the two parties remain fundamentally in the same situation, in which the ultimate appeal must be to force, since their contracts are not statutory laws

governing all contingencies of their relations and upheld and interpreted by a state judiciary, as in Italy.

Compulsory arbitration had often been discussed and rejected by the Italian unions. It is contrary to the theory of Syndicalism which they received from France and through painful experience and sacrifice adapted to their own conditions; it would certainly be rejected by them to-day as a substitute for their present status. For the Italian law of 1926, corner stone of the corporative edifice, went much farther than legalising the machinery of reconciliation: it provided, as an enabling act, for the continual and progressive development of labour-capital relations through the constantly changing complex of specific laws, the collective contracts.

Details of the negotiation and enforcement of these contract-laws will be found in a later chapter; here it is only intended to trace to the end the disappearance of strikes and lock-outs from the technique of the daily class conflict. There was no bargain between the workers and employers, trading strikes for lock-outs; and to represent it as a weak and one-sided surrender, while this may account for much of the incomprehension of other labour movements, is an unworthy disparagement of their Italian fellows, and ridiculous to those who know them. Some provision against extra-contractual action had to be made, if the contract-laws were to be respected by employers and workers; but it was not until 1928—that is, after the Labour Charter—that provisions against strikes and lock-outs were included in a special industrial section of the penal code. A comparison of the penalties is not without interest. Individuals taking part in lock-outs and strikes promoted for ordinary limited or sympathetic purposes, are punishable by a minimum fine of 10,000 lire for a lock-out and a maximum of 1,000 lire for a strike; if for political purposes, similar fines, and twelve months imprisonment for a lock-out, six months for a strike; if directed against the public authorities the penalty is the same for either—two years' imprisonment.

The most serious contingency, however, under the new

conditions, was the possibility of obstructionism on either side in the negotiation of collective contracts, and particularly of new contracts to replace those denounced. For if that possibility remained, the employers could hold the workers indefinitely under a contract which had been denounced, and vice versa. There was a stronger case here than anywhere else for the retention of the right to strike, as the means of last resort, and the law which replaced it is proportionately severe and explicit. It goes beyond the actual delinquent, whether person or association, and reaches any person who by word or act seeks to persuade or incite any other person to such action; the penalty is a maximum imprisonment of three years, or from two to seven years if threats or constraint are proved. In practice, this appears to have been effective in preventing obstructive crises. Severe penalties were also created in support of the new Labour Courts, a section of the Court of Appeal, in which disputes unsolvable by negotiation are dealt with by a simplified and economical procedure.

The strike as a means of class advancement was abandoned because it had served its purpose—and it had served its purpose well. Neither those Socialists who think that the Revolution ended in failure in 1920, nor certain Fascists who think it was divinely born in those years, springing fully armed from the brain of Mussolini, will accept this interpretation of events; but to the outside observer it is clear that the new position of Italian labour, given legal status in 1926, was won by the strikes of 1919–20; it was impossible to go back to the old line after that smashing attack on capitalist privilege, even if it took six years to consolidate the position won. And the line had meanwhile been further advanced beyond the point at which the old political parties of the Left might have established it in those days; for they did not contemplate giving the trade unions the political status secured by this and subsequent laws. Settlement at that time must have been on the lines of the present French advance, concessions in the economic sphere without any

political alteration, nothing revolutionary, nothing to justify abandoning the legal weapon of the strike. No open road to political and economic power.

But this is precisely what the Italian organisations now saw before them—open country in which there were no obstacles to their advance requiring land-mines for their removal, no more entanglements requiring artillery barrage; 1926 was zero hour for the infantry advance. And if their behaviour was at first rather like that depicted in the unkind story of the War—of an enthusiastic company who dropped their rifles to applaud their commander's leap over the top—it was not surprising; they had been used to trench warfare so long, and to the noise and theatricality of great engagements, that they could not immediately adopt the new technique or see the supreme importance of their own part in it. In other words, there was unquestionably a disposition at first to let the leaders do everything. In the following chapters, an eye-witness description of the labour front, we shall see how different things are to-day, after twelve years of further progress, and see more clearly why strikes are no longer needed to maintain the advance; why it is time also to abandon these metaphors of a class war. But there is another important milestone to be examined first, from which the field of action during most of that intervening period can be surveyed, as well as the nature of labour's new position.

The Labour Charter of 1927 has already passed into the historical background of the movement; it is regarded there with something like our own antiquarian reverence for Magna Charta. But, while in many particulars of organisation and legislation, and some of considerable consequence, its postulates have been superseded, it is still the standard of reference in the Labour Courts for the interpretation of ambiguous points in contract-laws whenever the guidance of a principle is required. Thus it retains some practical importance. The historical character of the document must be emphasised, however, because foreign writers have sometimes taken it as the

permanent measure of the status of labour in Italy. This is far from the truth; indeed, so rapid are the changes, that not only is it out of date for this purpose, but even the great volume published by the Industrial Workers' Confederation last year, to celebrate the Charter's tenth anniversary, has also been outmoded by more recent legislation—for instance, regarding the labour exchanges and piece-work.

With this proviso in mind, the Labour Charter is worthy of close examination. By internal evidence it appears to be the work of many hands and one not severely editorial brain. It consists of thirty articles, some of which are broad statements of principle, while others are simple declarations of specific rights and duties. The dual purpose of the document appears as (1) to specify certain rights already won by labour, and (2) to define the new position of the trade unions in the state and lay down the general lines of future progress. Let us take the former, the more simple purpose, first.

Some of these new rights of Labour are inherent in the juridical status of the unions secured by the basic Act of the previous year and are re-stated in Article III, in which the voluntary character of their membership is also re-affirmed. The next three articles briefly refer to the collective contracts, the Labour Courts, and the equality of workers' and employers' organisations before the law. Article XI records the extension of the collective contracts to cover all workers, what we have seen as the complete unionisation of labour, trade by trade, category by category; and contracts are declared invalid which do not specify hours of work (an eight-hour-day law had been passed in 1923; the 40-hour week came later, in 1936) and the rates and methods of wage payments, among other normal items. The right of all workers to an annual holiday with pay is declared in Article XVI. Among the articles whose implementation by specific provisions in all collective contracts was made obligatory, is also the following: "In an enterprise giving regular employment, if labour relations are terminated by dis-

missal not due to his fault, the worker has the right to an indemnity in proportion to his years of service." Also in case of death. Illness not exceeding a determined period, and the transfer of a business, are excluded as reasons for loss of this and other rights. In practice, this indemnity has been one of the most profitable acquisitions of the workers and the source of greatest complaint among the employers. The amount of indemnity specified in collective contracts varies from one week to one month, for each year of employment. Thus an employee with twelve years' service may be able to exact a whole year's pay, even if the employer is turning men off because of a slump in his business, a serious additional liability for enterprises facing insolvency, as it ranks with wages. We shall see something of the remorseless and almost automatic system by which the trade unions collect these and other dues on behalf of their members—and non-members. Joint control of the Labour Exchanges (Article XXIII) was another gain highly prized at the time; but sole control and management of them has since been secured by the trade unions. Similarly, the Charter's provisions for more extensive social insurance and for the regulation of piece-work rates (Article XIV) have been superseded.

The other part, the political and dynamic purpose of the Charter, is more difficult reading. It is difficult not only on account of the novelty of the innovations which it proclaims, but also because the authors themselves have not envisaged their consequences; they are presented in generalisations and only the barest outline of the economic structure which they seek to adumbrate. The first section is ambitiously entitled "The Corporative State and its Organisation." One looks in vain for anything definitive here, or indeed in contemporary discussion of the subject. The Corporative State is still a name and an aspiration; the Corporations themselves are as yet little more than echoes of D'Annunzio's Guild Constitution of the Quarnero; the blue-print still has as much blank space as that of the English Socialist state. But the project is

authorised, the foundations have been laid and building has begun in the Left wing. Many other plans have been considered and rejected—for instance, the possibility of mixed associations of employers and workers; and the Labour Charter has taken their place, definitive in principle. Any pretence that the class conflict of interests does not exist, is abandoned; at the same time the necessity for the productive collaboration of all classes of workers—financial, administrative, technical, clerical, and manual—is lifted out of the obscurity into which proletarianism had thrown that natural assumption, and is stated as the basis of the community life. But the basis of organisation of that life is the trade union, and the employers are put under obligation to form similar class organisations of their own. This bilateral organisation has its permanent meeting ground in the Corporations. It has a dual purpose, a peaceful pursuit of the class conflict, and productive collaboration between the employers and the wage-earners, or rather the salariat, the now united class of all paid workers other than directors and managers.

The Charter is, and was intended to be, a one-sided document from the old capitalist point of view. The capitalist, as financier and investor, did not come into the picture. He was not seriously alarmed by that. In those days he still felt an assurance which to-day he can only enjoy as an active promoter and director of enterprise. He had failed to recapture the wide field of state enterprise, the promise of which he had been able to write into the first programme of the Fascist Party; but he had not yet felt the whip which Article IX of the Charter holds over him, the business intervention of the state "when private initiative is lacking or is inadequate." This threat has since been carried out, notably in his own field of finance, as well as in the taking over of neglected agricultural estates, of which the first example was given in the following year, 1928, in the province of Rovigo.

Even as promoter and director of industry, the capitalist is no longer the free agent that he is elsewhere. While

private enterprise is still regarded as the most efficacious method of industry, its organisers, Article VII declares, "are responsible to the State for the conduct of production." And it is significant that it was thought necessary in the same Article to state that, while the employee is regarded as "an active collaborator" in an enterprise, "its management rests with the employer." It was necessary to state this for various reasons. For the first time, the workers were meeting their employers on terms of political equality; there might well have been a tendency to rush the position in the first flush of this experience; and even to-day it is uncertain what the ultimate effect of it will be. Also, the declaration in Article XII, that remuneration must correspond "with the normal requirements of a living *and* the possibilities of production and labour-values," naturally invited the wage-earner to some investigation of the latter; which, in fact, is now systematically conducted by the trade unions.

The peculiar constitutional character of the Labour Charter itself naturally aroused much controversy. Was it, or was it not, a law? And if not, what were the limits of its influence upon the interpretation of existing laws? Most of the tribunals accepted it as "an authoritative criterion" in respect of all labour laws; some limited its influence to matters regarding which existing laws were silent. The highest court, the Court of Cassation, made a series of pronouncements on the question, tending to give the larger judicial scope to the Charter, going so far in this direction that finally, in 1935, the Court had to make a definite stand in self-defence, and refuse to allow any appeals to its own authority based solely upon "infractions" of the Charter. Even this decision, however, seems to have been set aside by the Council of State, which, in the following year, 1936, itself upheld an appeal in favour of employees who claimed a right to indemnity for dismissal, not otherwise provided for, based upon the appropriate article in the Charter.

Meanwhile, by that time, a great number of new laws had given statutory effect to all the more simple declara-

tions of the Charter; a great national complex of contract-laws governing industrial relations had been drafted and adopted by the many *ad hoc* legislatures of workers' and employers' representatives; and, after long national debate not excluding much keen controversy, the Corporations were beginning to emerge and to show some prospect of fulfilling the constitutional aspiration of the Charter, the creation of the Corporative State. Workers' representatives had also taken their places in the highest Council of the existing State, by right of leadership in the class conflict within the national collaboration of classes.

We are not so much concerned here with the collaboration, which in any case is not so far advanced, organisationally, as the conflict; its full implication cannot be known until the Corporative State has reached a further stage of development. What limit there may be to the influence of the trade unions in that state, is not yet clear; but, to quote an article in a recent issue of the monthly *Rivista del Lavoro*, chief official organ of the Industrial Workers' Confederation:

The position of the workers' organisations in the new state is secure and their influence depends entirely upon two conditions—the lively and disciplined support which the workers give to their unions and the capacity of their leaders to become Corporative statesmen. . . . The position of the "Left" is secure; its future depends upon its aptitude for the direction of public affairs.

With that we may leave this attempt to trace the revolutionary antecedents of the present phase, and turn to the actual field in which Italian workers are using the new instruments of their class. We shall want to see behind the scenes of the stage so carefully set for class collaboration, and above all to ascertain whether there is in fact free play for the conflict of class interests on that stage. The scene to be described may not be so moving as the story of strikes and civil war; these dramatic elements are lacking in the technique of social progress which Italy has evolved, a method of domestic peace. Yet this alone may

command our interest, even our envy, if investigation bears out the other anticipations of this chapter; but must leave us indifferent, if it does not. It was in this mind that the investigation was undertaken.

CHAPTER IV

THE SOCIAL BACKGROUND

ANY description of working-class life in Italy divides into two natural fields, agricultural and industrial, but they actually intermingle extensively. Only in the largest industrial centres do the workers lose contact with the land; in the smaller ones the wage-earner commonly retains some interest in it, either directly in a share of the peasant property which other members of the family may be working, or indirectly, through them. The highest official of the industrial trade unions, for instance, spends his holidays working on the small peasant farm which his family has cultivated for generations, and still cultivates. The mass of town workers are, like him, only one generation removed from the soil, and return to it willingly enough when opportunity offers. With the improvement of agricultural working conditions which is now going on, particularly in securing better facilities for an independent holding, the problem of a rural exodus may be avoided in Italy, in spite of the rapid development of industry in recent years and its further encouragement by a policy of autarchy.

First, then, a glance at the social background of the small towns and villages, where the wage-earner often has a bit of land of his own in reserve, a corner of olives, a vegetable patch, a few vines, some peach or other fruit trees. It may be nothing more in money value than an allotment, but morally and socially it is more important. It gives him a footing of his own and a slightly different standing in the community, not so much because he is better off, but because those who have not this little

root in the local soil are probably "foreigners," people from some other province.

Life in the small town is not as exciting as it used to be when every little café was a parliament and debates on Saturday night might end in a fight *in piazza*, or a gay tipsy chorus in the small hours. The cafés are still open without restriction; the cloud of the twenties is passing; talk often drifts back to the old days now, as they and their controversies fade into a distant past which only the older men can speak of with authority. Just what Socialism really meant to be and do, is a recurring topic—but a less animated post-mortem than that of the last hand of *scopa*, best of all card games. There is much shaking of heads, with praise of the past, criticism of the present. The town was a livelier place in those days, but we didn't have this and that, it goes. We didn't have, for instance, the home for the incapable poor; ragged and barefoot, they used to sleep in stables and live on a crust, beg for a cast-off jacket; now they are decently clothed, wear white socks and shoes, eat cooked food twice a day and go to the barber's for a shave twice a week. We didn't have free meals for schoolchildren, or the *rancio del popolo*, the people's mess, the communal daily meal, provided by the *Fascio*, in quality and in quarters emulating those of the neighbouring *trattoria* and not scorned by some who cook their own meat on Sundays. We didn't have all those evening classes of the junior organisations, keeping our young people busy. Or *Dopolavoro*, that great competitor of the cafés, itself a glorified café, a people's club, where you can drink and play cards, billiards, tennis in the summer evenings, where there is dancing your girls can go to alone—but alone!—and feel at home, peasant, shopkeeper, labourer, whatever their father may be, and regardless of membership.

That is perhaps the greatest difference in small-town life—the greater freedom and activity of the young women, brought up now from childhood as if they were just as important as boys. It is a revolutionary change

to those who can look back to the old days; and by no means generally approved by them. Girls are getting too free, the old people say, here as elsewhere. But it seems to make little difference of the kind they apprehend; moral customs are much the same; one hears more talk about "stepping out" before marriage, about engagements being somewhat more intimate and somewhat less binding. Openly, certainly, there is more experimenting. Yet in religion the young women do not seem inclined to follow the young men, who were always farther away from the Church; the proportion there is much the same as it used to be. The men, if not much more devout, are more respectful. Socialist propaganda in the old days anticipated all the smart vulgarity of Russian blasphemy; to-day common oaths with *porco (corpo)* in them are banned, and are seldom heard; but one can still swear by Bacchus! Loyalty to the civil organisations does not conflict with faith in that other hierarchy, the local Saint and all the host of Heaven. Materially, the Church is poorer, however. There are other calls for pence. It is not so much that the parish priest has lost the influence he had, as that his parishioners are growing up in a changed world, under influences which appeal to a side of their intelligence which was dormant.

If life is less exciting in the cafés and *in piazza*, it is a very much busier life than it used to be, especially for the girls. But also for the boys. Sports are now highly organised. The youths go away on military service, as before, and in addition have pre-military training for a year, weekly, and occasional post-military duties. If they want to join the *Fascio* when they are of age, they must belong to the junior organisation; and most of them do. Lads who show some independence of spirit, inherited perhaps from Liberal or Socialist or Anarchist fathers, have a difficult time deciding whether to join or not. They are under two kinds of pressure to do so: their own knowledge that they will otherwise be political outsiders, and that which is brought to bear upon them by members

of the *Fascio*, sometimes stupidly but more often, and more often successfully, by progressive members who sincerely want recruits of that character for the best motives. But, like any political centre, the rôle of the *Fascio* in the life of the people is limited, excepting in small villages where it may be the centre of everything; elsewhere it is a much less intimate one than that of *Dopolavoro*, and very much less than that of the "syndicate." A largish fraction of the workers may have direct relations with the *Fascio* (annual subscription, six shillings), a large majority with *Dopolavoro* (one to two shillings), but everybody at some time or other goes to the "syndicate," subscriber or not.

This "syndicate," in a small town where there is no industrial or agricultural concentration of labour, may be no more than a single room with a desk, typewriter, filing cabinet and telephone, in charge of one man, the communal trade union delegate of the Provincial Union. But this is the centre to which every working man and woman goes to regulate his or her position in the labour world; for a job, to begin with; for information about the national or provincial collective contract ruling the conditions of the job; for any claim resisted by the employer, and insurance claims—although no money passes through this or any other trade union office. Foreigners, real foreigners, sometimes hear about the "syndicate"; if a servant thinks she is dismissed without good reason or full payment of wages due; if you are giving up the villa and with it a faithful gardener. "I thought," said a friend of the writer in such circumstances, "that a present of five pounds would be generous, but the 'syndicate' says I owe him thirty!" Indemnity calculated on years of service. The "syndicate" is no respecter of persons—or organisations—where trade union rights are concerned. The *Dopolavoro* café manager in a small town took on a man for the busy week-ends; seeing him loaf about there during the week, he casually used him for odd jobs on other days, which were not paid for; after a year or so there was a quarrel, and the man demanded

three thousand lire for those unpaid days; the "syndicate" upheld his claim; the political secretary of the *Fascio*, ex-officio President of *Dopolavoro*, intervened, but it had to be paid.

The small centre has few if any trade union meetings, except possibly semi-annual meetings of the agricultural workers' union. It is unlikely to have a Co-operative shop of its own, although in one or two provinces village societies are numerous; more probably it will be served by a branch, and if the parent society is run on the new rules which provide for primary and secondary assemblies, there will be branch meetings. If there is a fishermen's Co-operative, or a creamery, the regular meetings will be well attended. In rice, grain and silk districts there will also be seasonal and lively gatherings. Here and there, other kinds of Co-operative societies may give life and character to a small town—a pottery works, a printing shop, a collective farm, a small ship-building yard. But only in rare cases do any of these compete with the "syndicate" as the focus of working-class interests, the channel through which trade union members and non-members alike come into relation with the labour regime.

Very similar to the attitude of these workers in the small centre towards the "syndicate," is that of the non-member in the larger towns. He gets the full protection of the union to which he is eligible, and goes freely to headquarters for all purposes excepting those connected with the management of the union. He does not attend meetings at which the executive committee of the union is elected; nor can he vote, although he may be present and speak, at meetings called to consider knotty points in the negotiation of contracts. He does not pay the small annual membership subscription, formerly ten, now only one lira; but, willy-nilly, he contributes to the service funds of the union. There is a general levy (*contributo sindacale*) of one-third of 1% on all wages, deducted alike from those of members and non-members at the time of payment, along with all

insurance dues made obligatory either by state or contract-law. These premiums on the average amount to 1% for health insurance, and 3.75% for unemployment, disability and old age pensions. Accident insurance premiums are paid by the employer; even if they are not paid, a worker's claim is good, and back premiums together with a fine are collected from the employer. Thus the weekly contributions for trade union and allied services, paid by any worker earning, say, forty shillings a week, are: 1.6 pence for the general levy, 4.8 pence for health, and 18 pence for other insurance—in all, a fraction over two shillings. 5.08%

Other small levies for special purposes are sometimes voted by the trade unions—for instance, a levy over a limited period for the children's holiday fund, which varies from $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1% on wages; and this is willingly paid by non-members, too. In some places this special levy is imposed also on the employers; but not usually, their contributions for this purpose more often going through the Party, which co-ordinates and manages all the various activities that result in about one million children having a free month at the sea-side or in the mountains every year. Many trade unions and some Co-operative societies have their own summer homes to which their children go. The care of this multitude of children is undertaken by volunteers, young men and women Fascists, and admirably they do it. Nobody who has seen these gay companies from the cities and the hot plains swarming down to the sea in July and August can forget it, or fail to admire the cleanliness and high spirits of the children and the good nature and devoted efficiency of their young nurses. The public schools, it may be added, also show this spirit, and their standard has won the patronage of all classes, as in America; even irreconcilable intellectuals send their children to them.

The social background varies considerably in detail from province to province. The chief difference is roughly between North and South. The agricultural

unions are doing an extensive work of education (technical as well as cultural) in the South, and wherever land settlement projects are being carried out, either through land reclamation or by the breaking up of large estates, the social status of the workers is rising. Both processes introduce Co-operative methods only sparsely practised by the Southerner, excepting in Sicily, which is noted for organisations of all kinds. The South still has many backward areas, but the contrast may not be so much due to the difference between an agricultural and an industrial population as is sometimes supposed; for the north-eastern province of Udine, far from any of the large industrial centres, is one of the most advanced, from the social point of view we are taking. The Fascist innovations mentioned have there been grafted upon a highly developed community already rich in Co-operative societies and other popular organisations. This is one of the provinces where villagers can lead a completely Co-operative life, their societies serving them with all their household and professional needs—housing, light, transport, clothing, food and drink, and the processing and marketing of their produce. And that province has an overflowing population. On the other hand, at the western extremity of the north, in the one-time Socialist province of Imperia, which was and still is lacking in Co-operative development, the rural population is dwindling, its villages sinking into the state of picturesque degeneration more characteristic of the old Italy than the new.

In the cities there is more working-class social activity than there used to be, although those who do not join their trade union or other civic organisation here also miss the political excitement of the old days—and they are numerous, as we shall see. The general aspect of city life is much more sober. Visitors find it lacking in diversions, other than opera and drama. Picture theatres are less inviting than elsewhere, and the kind of gaiety which depends upon the existence of an underworld has almost disappeared. Prostitution in musical disguise,

as also in professional resorts, has been reduced to an obscure and expensive minimum. "We've left a few houses for the old men," was the way a young Fascist put it. It was another of his kind who thus compared the evolution of morality in Italy and elsewhere: "We have all accepted a single standard of morality for the two sexes, but you in England and America have adopted that of the men, and we, that of the women." He was thinking less of the workers than of the freedom of Bloomsbury and Greenwich Village in such matters, and it is not for lack of this particular freedom that the Italian intellectuals suffer. The restrictions of the regime have been felt by them more than by the working class, and literature and art show it, although there is now some revival and a new and larger educated class is rising.

This leads to a natural question. In what proportion is the working class divided between members and non-members of trade unions, between those who are convinced supporters of the regime and those who are not? The lines of comparison here suggested are not an identical boundary—there may be many reasons why a worker does not pay even such a small subscription as ten lire, other than indifference or lack of political sympathy. He gets all the benefits of the unions, anyhow, without the responsibility of membership; and many non-members look at it in the same way as the private who has no desire to be corporal. Local records show great variations. Those of the industrial Provincial Unions are, in any case, more significant than the global figures; for in some provinces there was evidence of a regular campaign to enrol members; in others, and those the busiest, none; men join up fast enough, it was said, when they have had some personal experience to be grateful for, and make better members so. And not only is membership voluntary by law, but there are severe penalties for anyone using any kind of pressure upon a man to join his union.

In the agricultural unions the provincial variations as

between North and South are quickly disappearing, due to the systematic campaign of education and unionist propaganda which has been mainly responsible for an increase of more than a million members in the last four years. In these unions the membership was 61% of the eligible workers last year; in the industrial unions, 72%, at the end of the year. But in trying to make deductions regarding opinion in the social background from these figures, one meets such contradictory variations as these: in the new province of Littoria, enthusiastically Fascist, the proportion falls to 69%; in the province of Milan, birthplace of the movement, to 60%; while in the province of Rome itself, with all its political activities, only 58% is reached; whereas in the distant province of Turin, with French influence at hand, and that of Bologna, age-long centre of revolt, the proportion of membership is 80%. Or again, the old province of Udine, very loyalist and highly developed Co-operatively, shows only 56% membership, while its neighbours on either side, the "redeemed" provinces, have a 70% membership. In Mussolini's native province of Forlì the high figure of 98.8% is understandable, and the record of the town of Forlì itself, only a few miles from his birthplace, 99.95%. Apart from this single instance, it was not possible to account for the differences by local variation of political feeling. Observation showed them to be due, in the main, to three factors: the comparative development of social services, the keenness of the conflict of class interests, and the variable interest in the matter of membership taken by the official organisers of the different Provincial Unions.

As has been indicated, there is no financial incentive for the provincial officials to make a specialised membership campaign; the Provincial Unions have assured ample annual resources from headquarters, whose income is freely spent in services, since reserves are not needed for strikes or other crises. In any case, there is no reason to doubt the sincerity of the policy of toleration. On only one occasion are workers, claiming trade union

services, called upon to show their union card—at the labour exchanges, and the difference it makes, as we shall see later, is fractional. The trade union officials regard non-members as an indifferent mass which can only be enrolled by degrees.

What may be thought more interesting, however, is the attitude of non-members themselves towards the unions, why they do not join. Living among some of them, it is evident that the main restraining cause is simply indifference. Few regard the matter politically. The trade unions are not so much identified with the regime, in the eyes of the uneducated, as in those of its theorists; on the contrary, the trade unions are still frequently considered (quite mistakenly) as something distinct from the regime, and membership (more rightly) as a gesture against some of its tendencies. One also occasionally finds this instinct of opposition in members of *Dopolavoro* who take pride in the greater numerical strength of that body, compared with the Party. The great majority of the non-members, it may be safely reckoned, are non-partisan, although like our own indifferent mass at election times they will shout with the loudest on occasion.

Individuals belonging to the conscious and conscientious minority, opposed to any contact with the regime or its approved organisations, are easy to find; it is more difficult to estimate their number. A negligible fraction of them are members of the few Communist groups rather cruelly kept alive from abroad by those who run no risk themselves; the pamphlets they get into the country have no effect, and punishment others get for distributing them is disproportionately severe. But Communism is not taken so seriously in the workshops as it is in the police courts. Half a dozen men on structural work were preparing a frame for some decoration; asked what emblem it was to be: "That's what we should like to put," said one of them, and drew a large sickle-and-hammer on the target. The others laughed. Returning later for a talk with the man, the drawing was still

there; the man turned out to be a loyal member of his union and of the Fascist Party.

The irreconcilable Socialists are, comparatively, much more numerous; they account for most of the older workers among those who for conscientious reasons hold aloof. The revolutionary Syndicalists are all in the unions, and one still meets a good old-fashioned argumentative Anarchist, both in and outside of them. The few Socialist leaders still among the irreconcilables, are inactive as such. They regard the situation as having passed far beyond any opportunity of their leadership, and acknowledge that the trade unions have won more for the workers than they themselves hoped to be able to do in the old days. They sigh when they read statements by Socialist leaders in England, as at the time of the Eden crisis, that "the regime is tottering," admitting that only the most obstinate "wishful thinking" could suggest this possibility; revolutionary developments within the scope and intention of the regime, is another matter.

In this connection one other aspect of the background is interesting. Granted that the trade unions represent the workers' side of the class conflict, that they are progressive and even revolutionary in policy, and strong in influence—what is their position in relation to the Party? How many trade unionists are Fascists, how many Fascists trade unionists? Here also provincial variations were found, but in this case it is the global figures that matter, being a question of national influence. As might be expected, the proportion of trade union members who are enrolled in the Party was found to be considerably more than that among the workers at large; on the other hand, which is more important, the proportion of Party members who are also members of trade unions is surprisingly high—the lowest figures obtained, in a non-industrial province, showed slightly less than 70%; in more active centres, about 90%. For the whole Party, 85% of its members are also members of trade unions. The complementary percentages in all cases may be

assumed to represent membership of the employers' associations, thus giving a dependable picture of the class character of the Party. A graph of trade unionist membership in the Party, from the foundation of the *Fasci di Combattimento* in 1919, to the present, 1938, shows a curve, falling rapidly in the years of methodical violence from 95% to below 50%, and thereafter steadily rising to 85%. When we know more about the trade unions, this may seem more significant than any other process that has taken place in these nineteen years since the revolution began, either in the changing social background of Italy or in her institutions.

CHAPTER V

THE TRADE UNIONS

TURNING now to examine the internal structure and character of Italian trade unionism, we shall do well to clear up at once a confusion into which other commentators have fallen. The scheme of organisation is clearly divided between that part of it which is electoral, and that which is appointive. The first comprises the trade unions, local, provincial and national; the second, as we shall see in the next chapter, constitutes a labour civil service, paid and controlled by the unions and serving them exclusively, but under sanction of the State.

These two parts, the electoral and the appointive, are separate and distinct in function, with a single exception. This is in the smallest labour centres. Elsewhere the unit of organisation is the local union of trade or craft; but in centres too small for these to be constituted we find the "syndicate" mentioned in the preceding chapter. All the workers in the small communes are regarded as forming communal unions; in practice, these are makeshift paper unions which only come to life when the workers of any trade are sufficiently numerous to form active units of their own. Until then, the local communal secretary is a delegate of the Provincial Union, not elected but appointed.

The members of a local trade union elect their executive committee in special triennial assembly, all members being eligible regardless of any other qualification. Out-of-pocket expenses, but no salaries, are paid to members of committees and their secretaries. Local unions of the same trade or craft in a province constitute a provincial unit (*not* the appointive Provincial Union) with a com-

mittee elected by the local unions. The members and officers of these and higher committees must be members of the Party. The provincial units of a single trade form a national union, and the national unions of allied trades constitute a Federation. Federations may have temporary Commissioners appointed by the Minister of Corporations pending an election, but apart from these occasional officials all committees and officers up to the Councils of the Confederations, are elected without state intervention. In the industrial unions, for instance, about 40,000 workers, men and women, hold these elected posts.

The office of a President of the big workers' Confederations, however, is a political one; among other high duties, he is *ex officio* a member of the Fascist Grand Council, a rank politically above that of a Minister. The practice is that the Council of a Confederation nominates its candidate for the office, and he is then appointed (or rejected, although this has never happened) by the Head of the Government. The President of a Confederation is thus the connecting link between the electoral unions and the civil service of the Confederations. The latter are described in the following chapter.

The central bank of the trade unions and their various social insurance institutions is the National Labour Bank. The amount paid into the trade union accounts alone during the year ending December 31, 1937, was 2,541 million lire (about 27 million sterling) and payments from those accounts were 2,407 million lire. Savings department deposits amounted to 497 million lire. The Labour Bank also does a large business with other social institutions and is banker for the Co-operative societies, assisting financially in their promotion. For instance, in the development of the fishing Co-operatives, the Bank had made advances of 33 million lire on its own account last year before it was appointed as agent of the Government for the control of special state credit made available for those Co-operatives last year. In some of the central fish markets established by the Co-

operatives jointly with municipalities, the Labour Bank has branch offices. Agriculturally, also, the Bank assists the financing of Co-operative enterprise. At the end of the year the following agricultural co-operative loans were outstanding: to Co-operative marketing organisations, 500 million lire; to Co-operative processing societies (creameries, oil mills, etc.), 300 millions; to Co-operative farming societies, 200 millions.

By an ingenious plan, based upon the current accounts system of the Post Office, the method of collection of trade union funds is officially controlled. The contributions already mentioned are deducted at the source, from each payment of wages; the employer is responsible to the Government for depositing them, together with those for which he is liable, at the local post office. The credits go to a special (provincial) government account at the district (provincial) post office, where they are checked and the legal deductions for national welfare funds are made and passed on to them. The funds are then transferred by government order to the National Labour Bank for account of the Confederations, which check the bank advices by direct reports from the provinces. There is no handling of cash by trade union officials. All payments are made by draft, and a continuous accounting is maintained by multiplication of all receipts and payments. The Secretaries of the Federations are the paymasters of the unions.

The allocation of funds is subject to an elaborate system of budgeting. The council of each Federation makes its own estimates, which are presented to the council of the Confederation by the elected Federation representatives who form that body. Sitting as such, these same representatives of the Federations budget for the needs of the Confederation, including their individual budgets, according to its ascertainable resources. In the case of the industrial workers' Confederation, this means that there are twenty subsidiary budgets to be reconciled with its own requirements. The compound budgets of the Confederations are included in the public Esti-

mates of the Ministry of Corporations submitted to the legislature.

In the agricultural workers' Confederation (2,542,216 members in January, 1937, representing 4,164,840) there are four national Federations: (1) technical and administrative workers in agriculture and forestry; (2) share-farmers of all kinds, including the great class of *mezzadri*; (3) labourers, including all wage-earners; and (4) specialised workers employed in the various kinds of educational institutions and experiment stations.

In the industrial Confederation (2,639,663 members today, out of 3,667,812) are 20 Federations of national unions: (1) clothing, (2) water, gas and electricity, (3) food, (4) woodworkers and decorators, (5) paper and printing, (6) chemicals, (7) building, (8) mining, (9) engineering, (10) fishing, (11) textiles, (12) public entertainments, (13) glass and pottery, (14) electrical transport, (15) road transport, (16) chauffeurs, (17) dockers, (18) auxiliary transport workers, (19) merchant marine, (20) aviation. The railwaymen, as employees of the state, have a separate union, not affiliated with any Confederation.

There are three other Confederations with which we are less concerned here: (1) all workers in commercial offices and warehouses, with (1937) 405,495 members; (2) employees of banks and insurance companies, 41,823; and (3) scientific, artistic and professional classes, 122,862 members in 22 national unions. Some of the latter, as we shall see in a later chapter, have relations of great social importance with the workers' unions, namely, those of the doctors, nurses and pharmacists.

In order of numerical importance the larger industrial Federations are: building trades, 627,058 members (representing 873,130); engineers, 496,302 (652,018); textiles, 427,189 (503,854); clothing 174,885 (309,328); chemicals, 179,279 (229,572); food, 124,050 (161,967); woodworkers and decorators, 98,136 (152,189); and mining, 105,889 (141,215). In order of percentage of members they rank as follows: above the national

average of 72%—textiles, 80%, engineers, mining, chemicals, food; and below the average—building (one point below), woodworkers and decorators, and clothing (56%).

In addition to the 40,000 or so elected officers of the industrial unions, there are several thousand shop stewards, also unpaid, one for each small factory and each shop of larger establishments. They have no separate organisation but act as liaison officers between the unions, and between the workshops and the Provincial Union. They are usually elected in shop meetings, although in some provinces it was found that they are nominated either by trade union committees or by the secretary of the Provincial Union. One of their duties is to make an occasional verification of wage payments; word goes round in a factory or workshop some pay-day, for everybody to turn in his or her envelope; these are all taken by the shop steward to the office of the Provincial Union and checked for errors in rates and calculations. In one small piece-work factory visited, a verification of this kind had just been made; there were 84 on the pay-roll, out of which no less than 24 had been underpaid—many of them very small amounts, but the inquiry would go back to previous pay-days and the total receivable by some of the underpaid would be considerable. In this case, as often, the errors were largely due to complicated methods of calculating piece-work which a recent law has abolished. At another larger factory the total amount obtained by the union for its members (and non-members) after a similar verification was 125,000 lire.

The most important function reserved to the trade unions and their elected committees is the negotiation of the collective contracts, the contract-laws which provide trade union conditions for nine million manual and other workers. The present system of negotiation was not born in a day, however. There were several years of experimentation and controversy, inside and outside the unions, before the proper powers of negotiation were

established for the different units of the unions which claimed them. The question also became confused with that of the enrolment of the trade unions (and the corresponding employers' associations) in the Corporations. The debate continues, but the present basis of employer-worker contractual relations is not likely to be changed.

Collective contracts may be local, provincial, inter-provincial, or national, and are negotiated by the elected representatives of the appropriate union—local, provincial or national. All local or provincial contracts, however, must be submitted by the contracting section of the union to its national committee for verification of its conformity in principle with existing national contracts. Of these national contracts, in the industrial field, there are 192 at present effective, while the provincial contracts number 5,300, those affecting more than one province, 104, and 557 local contracts. In all, they govern in a completely detailed manner the working conditions of 3,418,493 industrial workers, men and women. Less complete contracts regulate the conditions of a further 155,472, and there are another 37,468 workers whose wages are not specified in their contracts. In agriculture 606 contracts regulate in detail the working conditions of 4,164,840 labourers and share-farmers.

The procedure of negotiation is the following in the case of a provincial contract. The initiative nearly always comes from the trade union, the provincial section of it, prompted in the first place by the dissatisfaction perhaps of some local union with the existing contract, which can be denounced at any time but remains effective until date of expiry or replacement by a new one. Sometimes, if the moment is considered opportune, or a new contract is unsatisfactory, it is denounced the day after it is signed, and negotiations are resumed. In the monthly list of notices it is rare to find one denounced by the employers. After a preliminary discussion with the employers' committee, the union committee drafts an agreement, aided by an official of the Provincial Union, who acts as an assessor in the proceedings but

has no contractual authority. There is a similar assessor for the employers, and legal experts of the organisations may also be brought in by either side. The workers themselves are kept fully informed on the progress of negotiations; any obstinate point of disagreement is taken back to them by their representatives and discussed in a general meeting. In such cases, if the difficulty is technical, the meeting may elect other expert workmen as additional members of the committee. In case of a more serious difficulty, a national official of the union may be invited, or the aid of the powerful Confederation may be invoked; the Federal (provincial) Secretary of the Party or the Prefect (governor) may be asked to intervene; finally the Minister of Corporations. Beyond this lies appeal to the Labour Court, where the matter is settled in accordance with the expressed intentions of the Labour Charter. An incidental incentive for the employers to get on with the negotiations is that wages are payable for "time lost" by the workers' representatives. When agreement is reached, the signed contract is sent to union headquarters for verification, after which a copy goes to the Ministry of Corporations and to the Prefect (governor) of the province for publication in the official gazette, making it a law of the province.

The geographical distribution of the provincial contract-laws varies from 158 in the province of Milan to two in the recently created province of Littoria. The provinces of Turin, Vicenza, Rome, Genoa, Mantua, Naples, Novara, Palermo, Florence and Ancona, also have more than a hundred each. The others, with some rural exceptions, have between 30 and 80. Standardisation of the form of contracts has been a gradual process, which is now well advanced, many of them concerning the same trade being identical in form in all provinces, excepting where local practices have to be taken into account, traditions regarding working conditions, method of payment, local holidays. Rates of wages are specified in all provincial contracts and vary in accordance

with the cost of living in different provinces, usually with a minimum limit secured by a contract of the national union, the specification in a provincial contract reading as a basic rate plus $x\%$ per hour.

This combined time-rate is now taken, under a new general law, as the minimum basis of piece-work earnings, and in many other ways the new law simplifies the extremely complicated reckonings of piece-work rates found in existing contracts. It should be noted, also, as a sign of the times, that the new law, by the alteration of a single word has radically changed one of the propositions of the Labour Charter. In the Charter it is laid down that the conditions of piece-work must "permit" the earning of a minimum increase over the time-rate by the worker of normal capacity; under the new law the word is "guarantee." The provision, "normal capacity," source of much controversy, also disappears; if a piece-worker is not earning the minimum, he notifies his union or the shop steward, and steps must be taken for the piece-rates to be raised. Group-reckoning of piece-work, with checkers employed by the management but paid out of earnings, and various other systems, mystifying or prejudicial to the worker, are abolished. This law, which in various centres trade union officials estimated as effecting an increase of from 5 to 15% of earnings, was the result of local experience and the constant efforts of the unions to write better provisions for the piece-worker into the contract-laws, which had already, for instance, put an end to the Bedaux system in 1935. In this way the contract-laws are continuously the forerunners of state-law, local initiative leading when necessary to national action.

Another change which can be observed as taking place through local initiative is of a broad social character. In meetings, and in articles in labour papers, the question is being put: why should the manual worker be paid on a daily basis, thus losing on all Sundays and feast days, while the clerical worker is paid by the month, and in addition gets his "thirteenth month"? In effect, one

finds in some of the more recent provincial contract-laws that the desired change is taking place. In several of them the time basis of wages is weekly or fortnightly; in those of the Naples printers, and in various electrical workers' contracts, it is monthly. There is a demand for a weekly basis and a "fifty-third week." All contracts contain specific provisions for an annual holiday with pay, and for indemnity according to years of service on dismissal. Four statutory holidays are paid.

The moral effect of the preservation of local initiative is one of the most interesting points of observation, moving from one provincial centre to another. It has retained some of the best elements of regionalism in the Italian working-class organisations. Ravenna, Padua, Perugia, Bologna, Florence, Pisa, Mantua, Cremona—all these and dozens of other ancient citadels of popular tradition, North and South, still have pride in their local characteristics, and a sense of individual dignity in their organisations. Their workers have themselves taken part in formulating the labour laws of their province, negotiated and signed by men and women at work among them; and in every meeting with them, one is struck by this consciousness of power and responsibility, by a self-assurance which indeed makes many of the well-to-do shake their heads in apprehension. Yet it is not the self-assurance of a mob, of a proletariat conscious of its numerical power and only waiting for a leader's word to turn things upside down, but rather that of craftsmen who realise through experience and growing capacity the wider scope of their responsibility and authority. It is a conflict, a clear-cut conflict of interests, but also a great competition of ability, *una lotta di capacità*. Many workers, especially the paid and unpaid officials, talk in this strain. "The employers have nothing to fear as long as they can do their job better than we can," said one of the latter, adding, "and as long as they don't expect to be over-paid for the job!" This is the kind of sentiment that comes from the contact of thousands of workers with their employers on terms of civic equality.

Literally thousands, for in the negotiations of each of the six thousand odd collective contracts now in force, not just a few trade union secretaries, but anything from six to a dozen wage-earners have sat at the table on equal terms with their employers—say, 50,000 workers raised to the dignity of secretaries, indeed, of legislators in their own labour world. If anything, the estimate is too low, because the unions observe an excellent practice, known as the “changing of the guard” in higher circles; they do not automatically re-elect their committee members, but on principle try to extend as widely as possible the experience of three years in office.

The attendance at meetings varies much as elsewhere. At routine meetings between 30 and 40% of the members is usual. At special meetings for election of officers, about collective contracts, or when some dispute is in question, an attendance of 100% is common. On all occasions voting may be either by show of hands or by secret ballot. Discussion at these meetings is outspoken, often vehement, and as class-conscious as any Marxist could desire, apart from generalisations. It is significant that, whereas in all other public meetings nobody but the orators are heard, in trade union meetings the workers speak freely; this is where they let off steam, the more effectively for being well-informed, and more to the point for being concerned with facts. The participation of such a large number of members in the practical business of labour relations is creating a large body of technical and critical opinion among them; it demands all the time and brains of the higher officials to keep up with it.

Taking as an average the meetings held during the months of special observation, the number of general and extraordinary meetings of industrial unions in the year would be 11,316, and the number of committee meetings, 10,392. In addition to these there are special consultations of committees and shop stewards with the organisers of the Provincial Unions; for instance, when there is some demand afoot affecting general conditions—

such as the two occasions in the past eighteen months when a national increase in wages was obtained, or for the discussion of some general matter like the recent sweeping reform of piece-work regulations.

Detailed consideration of the conduct of labour disputes can be left for a later chapter, since it lies within the field of the unions' civil service, but it would be a mistake to leave it to be assumed that all disputes depend upon the intervention of appointed organisers. The denunciation of a collective contract, even if the new negotiations do not take place under threat of a strike, is still the major operation in the class conflict; and this rests entirely with the elected officers of a union, instructed by its members. Also, the action can spread sympathetically without any restraint, except the obligation to enter at once upon negotiations and to respect the existing contract-law until the new one comes into force. Enquiry was made as to whether the workers feel that the employers take advantage of what appears to be an obvious opportunity to maintain as long as possible conditions which the workers have declared their intention of altering. Many long-drawn negotiations in the first years of the system were cited—some of them lasting twelve months before every resource had been exhausted; but nowhere was there found any disposition or wish to return to the strike method. Socialists and syndicalists of the old school have made careful reckonings of losses to the workers from delayed negotiations, and in no instance were they as much as would be lost in a fortnight's strike, apart from other undesirable effects of it. Moreover, the whole mechanism of negotiation, including that of abortive negotiations up to the final decision of the Labour Court, has been greatly speeded up in recent years. From all that could be gathered from employers, also, there is no desire to sabotage a system upon which the domestic peace of the country depends.

Nor is there any disposition in the unions to question the intervention or influence of the appointed organisers in these matters. In fact, everywhere it was observable

that the organisers play the normal rôle of urging the unions on in calm weather and steadying them in a storm. The elected committees and officers look to them confidently for support and expert advice in all matters of local issue; they have their own offices, but those of the group organisers of a province, in the Provincial Union building, are also used by them for meetings of local officers and shop stewards, especially when matters affecting more than one union are in question. In the smaller centres and backward provinces, leadership clearly lies with the organisers; they have greater knowledge and assurance than the local elected officers. In the larger centres there was evidence that the unions themselves take the lead.

The main characteristic of the unions, then, is that of "pressure organisations." In a system from which violence in the class conflict is excluded their efficiency is high and is increasing. Their class solidarity is real, and is encouraged from top to bottom. It is also encouraged by their financial system, made possible by absence of any need for the accumulation of reserve funds for pressure purposes; there are no rich and poor trade unions; action does not depend upon the level of a union's bank account. (The reserve funds necessary for insurance purposes are held separately by the national bodies administering them, joint bodies with trade union managers.) Their financing is automatic and fair to all, and the spending of contributions for their designated purposes is uninterrupted. Their political representation is also automatic, through their provincial and national elected representatives in the Corporations, and in the higher councils of state through the Confederations. The local and provincial committees are concerned solely, as such, with the working conditions of their members, although acting by delegation on many other local bodies, and as labour law-makers of the province jointly with the employers.

Whether such emphasis upon the aggressive aspect of the class struggle in the life of the unions is desirable,

leaving their social services only indirectly under their administration, is at first sight open to question. Without compensating factors such concentration of the pressure motive would undoubtedly lead to intransigent demands and social conflict on a grand scale. But the restraining factors are there in plenty—in the contract-laws especially, and in the control of union funds ; but also in the worker's own increasing knowledge of business conditions, of the affairs of his employer, of the real values of production. Another important conciliating factor is the political position assured to the unions in the State and in the growing structure of the Corporations, their equal status with the employers' associations in the necessary collaboration of production. And the workers are well aware, without violent demonstrations, that the solidarity of their own unions is more easily maintained, being more natural, than that of their employers in a still competitive system and harassed by a watchful and exacting State. Compared with the circumstances of the adversary, those of the unions, though lacking the legal freedom of appeal to force, are definitely advantageous. Nowhere in labour circles, large or small, was there any doubt as to the way the class conflict is going.

CHAPTER VI

A LABOUR CIVIL SERVICE

THE Provincial Union is the administrative unit of a Confederation, and is not to be confused with the provincial section of a national union. (In Italian the distinction is clear: one is the *Unione Provinciale*, the other, *Sindacato Provinciale*.) The Confederations, as we have seen, are formed by the Federations of national unions of allied trades. We are only concerned with two Confederations, those of the agricultural and industrial unions, and their Provincial Unions, agricultural and industrial, established in the 94 provincial capitals. In his dual capacity, the President of a Confederation is the political delegate of his unions in the highest councils of state; but his administrative authority in the Confederation itself (the Federations are autonomous) derives from his appointment by the Head of the Government. Thus, while he ranks in the State politically higher than a Minister, his position in his own field is that of a Minister of Labour, and his staff, appointed by him at headquarters and in the provinces, is a Labour civil service, but financially dependent upon the unions which they serve, and subject also to their guidance in the Provincial Unions.

It is an extensive but economical civil service. The salary of a President is £500 a year, that of his departmental chiefs and the Secretaries of Provincial Unions is £400, and of organisers, £300. Headquarters have all the appearances of small ministries. The agricultural Confederation has a fine new building of its own on a boulevard. The industrial Confederation is temporarily housed in a *palazzo* in the Via Nazionale while planning

a building large enough to accommodate its own and all its allied activities. All the Provincial Unions either already have or are planning to have similar centres for all trade union services, according to their means and requirements. Some of the new buildings have architectural interest—the new Milan edifice, for instance, with its whole basement skilfully used for a great assembly hall surrounded by shallow brick steps interrupted by spreading groups of structural girders. But it is in the smaller towns that modern Italian architecture seems to be most alive; travelling off the beaten track one is frequently struck by some beautiful work of to-day that has unassumingly but fittingly taken its place among the monuments of a great past—for instance, in such a small place as Faenza. Many of these remarkable new public buildings are designed, built and owned by trade unions and Co-operative societies.

Among the medium size centres, the industrial Provincial Union headquarters at Vicenza may be taken as typical of the complete plan in organisation as well as architecture. Its offices are the top floor of a compact new building of simple modern design erected by a combination of four trade union mutual insurance societies—those of the building, textile, and silk workers' unions, and a mixed society. Their amalgamated offices and clinics occupy the two lower floors. At the back of the building is a large open meeting ground where a public hall is to be built. The Secretary of the Provincial Union, who is also a director of the amalgamated insurance society, has twelve specialised assistants and organisers, serving 66,651 workers, of whom about 28,000 are women, through the union committees and shop stewards, together numbering 1,120.

The executive committee of a Provincial Union is composed of the (elected) secretaries of the (provincial) trade unions and the two labour representatives on the provincial Government Council and Council of Corporations. The committee meets monthly with the Secretary of the Provincial Union as chairman. Similarly there are

connections with all other social and civic organisations. In university towns there are usually close personal relations between the faculty and the Union. In smaller centres there may be a staff of only three or four; in the larger ones as many as forty, in Turin, with 1,950 elected officials, and fifty in Milan, with more than 4,000 elected. Besides his multiple official duties in connection with his own and other organisations, the Secretary must find time for the reception of any individual workers, men or women, who wish to see him. This is a practice in which he rivals any fabulous American boss, for to the workers it is no formality but a privilege freely exercised.

The work of a Provincial Union is departmentalised as follows, apart from extra services which the union is free to initiate: (1) organisation, (2) contracts, (3) disputes, (4) general welfare, (5) education, and (6) the administration of the Labour Exchanges.

(1) The scheme of the organisation department is that every group of allied trade unions should have a "group leader" on the staff of the Provincial Union; in practice, the parts have to be doubled, except in the larger centres. The group leaders must have an intimate knowledge of the working conditions of their group, as they are the first persons in the Confederation civil service to whom controversial and inter-union problems of all kinds are referred. They are now recruited entirely from among the elected officials, their positions thus being, for the capable trade unionist, the first rung on a ladder of promotion alternative to that of the electoral system. They may also act as assessors, or clerks of the court, in the negotiation of collective contracts, deputed by the contracts department.

(2) The contracts department keeps a complete record of all negotiations; in its files the full history of a contract is documented, from the preliminary discussion of its terms to its final legislative publication, with a record of all actions taken in the matter by the department—information furnished to the negotiators, advice tendered, representations made to statistical and other authorities,

reports of workers' meetings and their decisions, minutes of disagreement in case of breakdown, subsequent proceedings, and so forth. In the larger Provincial Unions there is a legal department which at this point comes into action, but is also concerned with the whole body of labour law as well as that of the contracts. Another usual adjunct of the department is an Economics Section, which compiles dossiers of all businesses in the province, their capital, reserves, profits, wages, cost of raw materials, prices of finished articles, financial relations with other businesses, etc.—information available and invaluable to the negotiating committees of the trade unions.

(3) The department which everywhere seemed to be giving particular satisfaction to its officials was that which deals with disputes, and especially disputes about wages. The great ledgers in which the latter are recorded were shown with indeed some justifiable pride. The records are remarkable, not only for the amounts obtained for the claimants, but for the large proportion of claims settled without recourse to the courts, and in both cases for the almost negligible number of results adverse to the individual claimants. Indeed, several of the Provincial Unions visited had scored 100% in this respect—no claim had failed or been substantially reduced either by negotiation or the court. In the last three years for which the complete figures of industrial disputes are available, 1934-6, the number of disputes settled out of court were, year by year: 64,936—63,959—54,894; and in chambers or by judgment of the court: 9,482—9,043—7,752. The total amounts obtained in the three years were: out of court, 119,537,714 lire; by legal process, 26,791,972 lire. The former amount was for 1,001,112 workers (members and non-members), the latter for 51,550; the respective averages being 119 lire and 520 lire per individual. The cost of these 210,066 disputes to the claimants was nothing.

The distribution of disputes among the trade unions follows approximately the order of their numerical importance. The building trades in the last year obtained

about 8 million lire in settlement of 22,587 disputes, the engineering trades about 6 million in 6,773 disputes, textile workers under 4 million; and other national federations over 1 million each in the following order: chemicals, marine, mining, food, clothing, printing, public utilities, carpenters and decorators.

Reference of individual disputes is primarily to special labour magistrates sitting in the ordinary local court. Disciplinary and other individual cases arising out of labour relations, over which the lower courts have jurisdiction, also can be appealed from the local labour magistrates to the Labour Court, as the proper section of the Court of Appeal.

Collective disputes, arising between the workers' and employers' associations, are divided into two classes: those concerned in the application of collective contracts, and those concerning the negotiation of new ones.

Regarding the latter class of cases, the judiciary appear to have been doubtful about the desirability of such an innovation, which throws upon them the responsibility of prescribing *ultima ratio* the establishment of new conditions of labour. Without it, however, the whole juridical edifice of industrial peace-by-negotiation would have been roofless. In practice the Corporations, as arbitrators, have been able with few exceptions to settle such cases of deadlock without going to court. Out of 131 cases reported to the Ministry of Corporations in a year, only 15 proved so obstinate as to require reference to the Court. In enforcing the observance of the contract-laws, besides the vigilance of the unions and shop stewards, and that of the Provincial Union, exercised through its organisers, the inspectors of the Ministry of Corporations (factory inspectors) have an active and often conciliatory rôle.

(4) The welfare department of the Provincial Unions is a combination of an information bureau and a stop-gap for dealing with all the problems of the workers which do not come within the scope of the other departments or of the autonomous social services of the unions to be

described later. It is used as much by men as women workers, but is entirely administered by women. "They are more tactful in personal matters," was the explanation; and nearly all the questions which cannot be referred elsewhere are of a personal and sometimes intimate nature. In the printed schedule of reports from this department there are 73 subjects listed, and the completed reports are interlined with many others, unclassified, arising out of daily applications for advice and assistance. A day spent in one of these offices would be a bewildering experience for anyone not conversant with the complexity of social services to which they are the open door. It is not surprising that a year's training in the National School of Social Service is required before a woman can qualify for the work. She must have a good grounding in labour law, in provincial and communal administration; she must know all the ins and outs of trade union rules and customs, everything about social insurance, and the obligations and privileges of the various Party organisations; she must know how to go about getting every kind of permit and certificate in all civil eventualities—marriages, births, deaths, funerals, separations, legitimisations, military service; and give advice about pensions, loans, mortgages, applications to the patent office; about police court and other proceedings, rehabilitation after penal servitude, passports; and about all manner of domestic entanglements, following up these cases especially with domiciliary visits. Many of these "universal aunts" are perforce matchmakers; shy men and women, widowers or widows with children, are among their clients; and not infrequently they have to follow up such cases to the friendly point of becoming godmothers. Through them, also, come a number of shy recruits to the educational classes of the Union. And they must have some training in industrial psychology—in cases, for instance, where it is desirable to find a more appropriate job at the labour exchange for some ill-adjusted or handicapped worker.

The problem of the handicapped worker, however, is the subject of specialised study and service, an interesting

development due to the local initiative of the Provincial Union of Turin, one of the many centres in which there are close relations between the Union and the University. A simple study centre established some years ago at trade union headquarters by Professor Gatti, whose death this year is a great loss to science and the Labour movement, has developed into an important department of the Provincial Union, working in connection with the Welfare and Education departments and the Labour Exchange. A doctrine of industrial psychology rather different from ours, since it takes into account the aims and amenities of a trade union community, was taught by Professor Gatti, and is being applied at this and other centres. The work is based upon individual psychophysiological analysis. The department has a record of remarkable discoveries of special aptitudes in dissatisfied workers, for which scope has been found through the Labour Exchange. But the greater number of cases are those of handicapped workers, whose lives have been transformed by a careful estimate of their actual capacity and the finding of work appropriate to it. This is a growing service, and its social importance is fully recognised in a labour community whose contract-laws do not permit, as elsewhere, the underpayment of the handicapped worker.

(5) The education department of Provincial Unions, in relation with the welfare officials and the Labour Exchanges, is the major agent for the adjustment of both these types of workers—those with special aptitudes and those with handicaps. It provides vocational teaching, as well as general cultural courses and trade union and civic propaganda. Crowded evening classes were seen in which the humblest workers of a craft were learning its theory and higher processes—bricklayers studying the æsthetic and professional elements of architecture, learning to read and then to make architectural drawings; steel and iron workers getting some first notions of metallurgy and physics; men and women who repeat a single mechanical operation all their day, were having the whole

technical field of mechanics, engineering, textiles, opened up to them. The other classes of general culture are also well attended and are found to be of just as much importance to those handicapped workers whose commonest psychological limitation is a sense of inferiority; when the tactful welfare officials detect this, they often prescribe such a course with good results.

Records of cultural and technical classes are kept separate from those of propaganda, so it is possible to make some comparison of these two activities. Within the period and field of observation there were about 300 of the former and more than 400 of the latter, a proportion which appears to be general. The propaganda courses were not found to be as narrowly partisan as might be expected. They contained a good deal of fairly presented history of the class struggle in various countries, leading up to the adaptation of revolutionary Syndicalism to the necessary and conscious class collaboration for production. The history of Socialism was coloured by depreciation of its parliamentary activity and its vague internationalism, as in effect anti-nationalist, but apart from this it was given due credit, as a class movement necessary in its day, and for rousing the ambition of the workers for better conditions, social and economic—a decidedly better informed and much less prejudiced account than one could find about Fascism in similar English quarters to-day.

Special propaganda meetings, however, do not keep up to the standard of these informative courses. Speakers of the earlier Fascist manner apparently fail to realise that a trade union audience to-day is much more critical than a holiday crowd. Mere oratory about Fascism does not go down with them any better than exuberant Socialist oratory at a Trade Union Congress. The Italian workers are, in the mass, more Fascist than our trade unionists are Socialist; but, similarly, the approach to it must be through trade unionism, if they are to follow. The trade union leaders, both elected and appointed, know this well enough, and avoid rant.

Another sign of the recognition that the labour con-

stituency does not want rant was found in the character of most of the trade union publications, which also come under this department in the provinces as at headquarters. Here, again, the Provincial Union of Turin leads with the best labour weekly in the field, *Il Maglio*. Two or more of its newspaper pages consist of short articles by wage-earners, signed with name and occupation, very objective class-conscious communications, most of them. In a pile of about fifty articles sent in for that issue and not published were found several gushingly Fascist ones; some of the others were merely dull; some too badly written to print; one or two were simply abusive. All these contributors would get a card inviting them to call on the editor; the gushing Fascists would be told how to translate their enthusiasm, if it was real, into something more interesting than echoes of oratory; the dull and inarticulate would get hints on brighter journalism; the abusive would be shown a better way of denouncing abuses than by abuse. A topical cartoon, also by wage-earners, is published every week when a good enough one is available. A recent one depicted the employers' disregard of the no-smoking rule in factories, with recognisable caricatures of the Fiat and Lancia general managers puffing away at pipe and cigar in a workshop. When good propaganda points are made by a worker-contributor, they are taken up editorially; for instance, when one of them complained that while the employers could fine the worker for unnecessarily slacking on the job, the law gave the worker no means of punishing the employer for similar delays. There are a number of local papers also of the agricultural unions, pretty outspoken upon objective topics, too, besides the many publications of the two Confederations in Rome. The *Rivista del Lavoro*, the organ of the industrial workers, has a quality and reputation as high as any monthly magazine. The trade union daily, *Il Lavoro Fascista*, has won a general rather than a working-class public, and deserves more attention than some of the papers which correspondents habitually quote. The Labour press has developed a better

technique for the circumstances of limited freedom, takes a longer view, and gives a more dependable foreshadowing of events, for those who have the patience to read it. Many of the surprising decisions of the regime have been anticipated in its pages, for example, regarding corporative organisation and in such longdrawn controversies as those about piece-rate regulation and the Labour Exchanges.

(6) The legalisation of trade union control of the Labour Exchanges this year, ends a long and typical struggle, one or two points in which are worth noting. The Labour Charter in 1927 postulated joint control of them by the employers' and workers' associations. In the following year there was a dispute over the employers' claim to make their own choice of individuals on the unemployed register; the Fascist Grand Council confirmed the principle of action by joint agreement, also in this particular. The employers further tried to maintain their hitherto unquestioned right to engage any unemployed person, whether on the register or not; but in 1930 it was made obligatory, as foreshadowed in the Labour Charter, for all agricultural recruitment of labour to be done through the Exchanges, selection being left to joint agreement, and in 1931 this obligation was extended to industrial employers. There was considerable confusion at the time, including duplicate registration, owing to the existence of separate exchanges for different classes of labour. Their amalgamation was the subject of a lively debate in the National Council of Corporations in January, 1933, in which the proposal was supported by Mussolini, who also said that the proper location for the united Exchange would be at provincial trade union headquarters. It was not until 1934, however, that amalgamation was effected; the combined Exchanges were then put under the direction of provincial joint committees presided over by the Federal (provincial) Secretary of the Party.

The final phase of the dispute was not fought on class principles. It is significant of the whole complex process into which the class struggle is now passing, that the

appeal in such matters, whatever the urge behind it, is to principles of responsibility for the general welfare; and for these, Mussolini has supplied an ample armoury of texts, in sayings which we quite wrongly dismiss as worth no more than the political bait of our own party demagogy. Being responsible for the management of the Labour Exchanges as instruments of social equity, the unions based their claim to sole control of them upon the difficulties experienced in co-ordinating all the services connected with them, indicated in preceding paragraphs, under divided authority. The function of the Labour Exchanges was not to be limited to the purpose of bringing employer and worker together; the Exchanges were "to exercise a selective activity among the workers, directed towards a constant increase of their technical ability and moral worth," in the words of the Labour Charter—words which at the time seemed open to a variety of interpretations. The unions have given them their own interpretation, which has prevailed; in order to permit them to fulfil their responsibilities efficiently, the Central Corporative Committee, in December, 1937, finally ruled that the Exchanges should be transferred to the control of the unions.

In practice this had already taken place in many progressive centres; other plans had been tried—for instance, in the province of Udine, where the Exchanges had been confided to the Municipalities. But we cannot better describe the system, which is already widespread and will now become general, than by an account of the administration of the central Labour Exchange of the province of Turin, as observed at the Provincial Union, pioneer in the development of this as in several other innovations.

An employer requiring labour makes his application to the Exchange and accepts the workers who are sent to him, excepting in the case of the higher grades of skilled workers, when two or three may be sent to him for selection. On the worker's side, let us note at once, there is no queuing up for jobs, no hanging about the Ex-

change, once he has registered; when there is a job for him he receives a post card inviting him to call at the Exchange; precedence among his fellow-workers is automatic and he does not need to report again for three months (for revision) or until notified, unless there is a material change in his circumstances, financial losses, additional family responsibilities, and so forth. Details required on registration are comprehensive, and include schooling, training, military service, time and place of previous jobs, family members and resources, trade union and Party membership. Several of these are used in determining each person's numerical rating of precedence for employment, by application of the following formula:

- (F = total number of persons in family.
 D = duration of employment in units of quarters.
 R = total resources of family in units of thousands of lire per annum, beyond the first 2,000.
 P = personal invariable coefficients.)

$$\frac{F \times (D + 2)}{R + 2} + P = \text{Rating by majority of points.}$$

The invariable personal coefficients are as follows: if handicapped by war or civil war wounds, 0.5 of a point; if previous job was lost owing to illness, 0.25 of a point; if returned from abroad, 0.25; for ex-soldiers (active service), for war decoration, for war widows and orphans, for membership of trade union, Fascist Party (or junior organisations), the militia, and the March on Rome, 0.25 of a point each.

Thus preference is given, other circumstances being equal, to those who have a majority of personal points; but the other circumstances are overweighing. For example, a man (A) out of work for six months, with a wife and three children, having no other resources and no personal points ($5 \times 4 \div 2 = 10$) will have precedence over (B) with wife and only two children, unemployed for the same period, even if (B) is an ex-soldier, a member

of his union, the Fascist Party, and the militia ($4 \times 4 \div 2 = 8 + 0.25 + 0.25 + 0.25 + 0.25 = 9$). If the only difference between their variable coefficients is one unit of time (three months) the rating figures give the same precedence to (A). For unmarried men, however, the unusual disproportion of personal points given in this example tips the scale, if there is a difference of only one unit of time unemployed.

The "means test" as divisor is a heavy drag for the head of a family of ordinary size, as may be seen in the case of (A), if one of the children is earning, say, 3,000 a year ($5 \times 4 \div 3 = 6.66$). With this family income (A) would have to have five children to rank above (B) with two children and no income. But by that time (A) would be getting 1,000 lire a year family allowance while (B) got 400, besides other privileges reserved for larger families.

These personal records of registration are kept in large card indexes, grouped in trades and crafts, with the ranking numbers prominent; one can see at a glance the number of persons available for every subdivision of industry; a separate index shows the unfilled applications of the employers, thus providing a constant conspectus of the labour market. When an unemployed person gets a job, his card is transferred to another similar index, a permanent record of all persons who at any time have been unemployed. Duplicate registration is made for workers qualified for more than one kind of job. In such cases, a further notation, made on each card, in three grades of capacity, which however are not reckoned in ranking for precedence in employment, serves as a guide for encouraging the worker to register in the more skilled category, for advising him which cultural or vocational classes would be most useful to him, or suggesting other technical instruction available during unemployment. The employees of the Exchange are all chosen from among elected union officials. There are branches of the Provincial Exchange in the secondary centres; in the villages the work is done by the communal representative of the Union.

Besides supervising the work of these six departments, the Secretary of the Provincial Union has various other duties. He is *ex officio* a member of the civil and economic boards of the province, together with elected representatives of the unions, and as leading labour representative, in his political association with the Prefect (governor), he has a status similar to that of the Federal Secretary of the Party. He is not dependent upon hierarch or Prefect, being officially responsible solely to the President of his Confederation. During these formative years the Secretary of a Union has frequently found himself obliged to stand out against these authorities regarding some turn of provincial policy detrimental to labour; or, if he has not done so, he has heard about it from his President.

Even on wider issues he must know how to lead. When the soldiers began to come back from the Abyssinian war, for example, they did not get all the soft jobs they expected, and in some places tried to make use of terrorism, listing people who stood in their way, to be driven out of town; and in some places the Political Secretary of the Fascio was either compliant or powerless. In one of these, where a few individuals had already been savaged, it came to the knowledge of a Provincial Union Secretary, that several workers, foremen in a factory, were on the list, and that the Fascists (of his own Fascio incidentally) were waiting to attack them in force outside the works when the whistle blew. He went down to the gates, put himself at the head of the men as they came out from work, and defied the unruly Fascists.

This was an unusual case, but it illustrates the initiative and responsibility expected in a Union Secretary. He is expected to withstand, on his own responsibility, any attempt of an employer of labour to impose upon union or individual, no matter what powerful political allies he may have to face. He can act with the full authority of the Confederation, and he is expected to use it, and report results. His monthly reports are, in fact, enough to keep any head office busy, coming as they do from 94

provincial capitals, voluminous and comprehensive in detail, personally and departmentally.

The provincial departmental organisation described, has its counterpart at Confederation headquarters, with appropriate modifications and extensions. A General Services Department brings within its national scope all the welfare, educational and publicity activities we have noted. Besides these domestic functions, it has an intelligence section that gathers from all countries information about trade union development, labour conditions, social insurance, etc., and circulates it throughout the union organisations. Foreign correspondents also keep this department informed on other aspects of international politics, and frequent visits abroad by its chief further enable him to keep the President posted on foreign affairs.

Staff and accountancy come under an Administration Department. Another department is charged with all matters of direct relations between the workers' and employers' associations, with the union insurance bodies described in the following chapter, and with the organisation of workers in Africa. The legal section occupies itself with the whole body of labour law and the promotion of new legislation. The sections dealing with contracts and disputes keep a tutelary watch on the whole field of labour relations. If some provincial monthly report shows an exceptionally large number of disputes traceable possibly to a single big business, representations are made to the appropriate employers' Confederation that its member should be warned that he is making too much trouble; in case of a "difficult" or refractory employer, the matter is referred to the Trade Union Office of the Party.

The Economics Department also has wide functions. It checks all governmental statistics concerning the life of the workers, by direct information from the Federations and the Provincial Unions; it documents the trade union case for or against the licensing of new enterprises; it coaches labour representatives for their official work in

the Corporations, a matter of growing importance as the Corporative State comes into active being. A close watch is kept upon the fluctuations of real wages, and upon all reports from the provinces for any mention of union demands or discontent on that ground. Thus, last year, before any general demand could be formulated for it, the need of a national wages increase of 10% was perceived by the Confederations, carried with their guidance by the Federations in the Corporations, approved by the Grand Council, and decreed by the Head of the Government.

We have seen how the contract-laws governing all conditions of labour in special fields are negotiated by the unions; the Confederations have similar initiative for agreements in the national field. In this capacity they are the pioneers of many important labour reforms. Their action may be illustrated by the case of the 40-hour week. The shortening of working hours had long been recognised by the logical Latin mind of the Italian worker as a more solid road of progress than that of increasing wages; it was a deeply rooted principle in the Syndicalism that was parent of the present unions. In their negotiations, the time schedule was often hotly contested, and considerable local progress had been made when, in 1934, the industrial workers' Confederation recognised that it had become a national issue. National negotiations were therefore initiated with the industrial employers' Confederation, which resulted in an agreement, in October of that year, upon the principle of the 40-hour week for all industries. More than fifty contract-laws, negotiated in 1935 by the unions, gave effect to the decision, the State only acting at the end of the following year, 1936, when the ground won by the unions was consolidated in a decree-law.

There was an interesting sequel to this in another pioneering reform initiated by the industrial workers' Confederation. Wages were by no means immediately and in all cases adjustable to the shorter working time, and this was used as a good reason for introducing

another measure for which there was popular demand as well as higher sanction in the population policy of the state, namely, the payment of family allowances. Again the workers' Confederation negotiated with that of the industrial employers, and in 1935 obtained an agreement to establish a fund for that purpose, on the contributory basis of 4% on wages—2.5% paid by the employers, 1% by the workers and 0.5% by the State. The weekly sum receivable on account of every child under 14 is worth about one shilling. The scheme was extended to agricultural workers in 1936. The fund is administered by a joint committee, with an employers' representative as president, and a trade unionist as general manager, under the National Welfare Institute.

Many instances could be given of such initiative on the part of a Confederation, but enough has been indicated to show how this peculiar semi-official creation of Italian trade unionism works, like a Ministry in its own world, and with its specialised labour civil service distributed among all the provinces. The examples given have been industrial, but in its own sphere the agricultural workers' Confederation, with so much handicap to overcome in its larger and more backward constituency, might have furnished even more striking illustrations of this method of conducting the class struggle. Its main problems are less familiar, however, owing to traditional characteristics of the agricultural system; they are long-distance problems, too, involving great social changes.

In organisation, the agricultural unions vary in activity more than the industrial unions. In some districts they are more dependent upon the appointed officers of the Confederation, while in others, for instance, in Ravenna, the labourers' union is as strong and active as any industrial union. Watching closely the use that is made of the land is a union function, and intervening aggressively if this falls below a demonstrably attainable level of cultivation. In such cases, two measures are sanctioned. Property is assessed by the local authority in regard to the proper complement of workers to be employed on it.

Negligence is assumed, if the number of workers on an estate falls below that number. In such case the union can oblige the landlord to employ additional men through the Labour Exchange, if these are available, up to the full complement. This measure of *lavoro imponibile* is extensively enforced, and is justified as being in accordance with a sound national policy of maximum employment and maximum use of the land. On a large farm in Lombardy employing 120 men, for instance, it was found that 20 of them were in this category of *lavoro imponibile*, labour imposed upon the landlord in addition to his own estimate of his requirements. Under the other and more drastic measure, prescribed for persistent neglect of a property, the proprietor is ousted from its management, and cultivation is confided to a public Consortium. This also has been resorted to in many provinces, sometimes as a penalty, sometimes as part of a larger land reclamation and settlement scheme.

There exists in some provinces an ancient right of the labourer to a plot of land by which he can become a share-farmer instead of a wage-earner. The agricultural Confederation is actively promoting this as a right to be acknowledged throughout the country, and the process of settlement by this means is widespread and continuous, actively assisted by the Party. A guaranteed minimum remuneration for the worker, already provided in some of the regular share-farmer contract-laws, is being advanced as a national policy by the Confederation. The status of the traditional *mezzadria* peasants has been greatly raised by standardisation of their contracts and by proper farm accounting, in which instruction and supervision is given by their own union.

The policy of the agricultural workers' Confederation is thus to raise the labourer to the more secure position of share-farmer (with guaranteed minimum), and to fortify the position of the share-farmer so that he may become tenant or owner of the property which, in many thousands of cases, untold generations of his family have cultivated. The agricultural labourer is not an asset of any party;

nobody wants to perpetuate, still less increase, the class. On the contrary. "Socialism tried to redeem the agricultural labourer as wage-earner," the President of the workers' Confederation wrote in a recent article, "Fascist trade unionism is going to transform him into a partner in national production." All kinds of voluntary association are good for that purpose, collective farms, Co-operative holdings, reclamation for settlement, expropriation, if necessary. For some time the Confederation has been making a national survey, commune by commune, as part of the campaign to abolish absentee landlordism, among other objectives. The claim of the workers to the exploitation of these lands, it is declared, "does not rest in ancient traditions, feudal powers, or dusty documents, but is a Fascist right." And these lands will not be simply invaded, as in the old days, but, after survey, are being planned, claimed, reclaimed, settled, systematically cultivated with expert advice, and with a long-term credit policy that requires a generation of peace.

CHAPTER VII

SECURITY AND LEISURE

SECURITY and leisure give the latitude and longitude of social progress, a security from which the baser anxieties of life are banished, a leisure in which the desire for amusement or whatever higher aspirations one may have can be satisfied. And we travel a long way upon the first line before feeling the need of orientation by the other. So it was with the Italian workers. Long before they thought of leisure improvement, even before they thought of improving their material lot by trade union action, they began to devise their own method of winning some security against the most common disasters of the poor, especially the dread combination of illness and unemployment.

(1. *Security.*) The idea of mutual aid societies goes back to Corporations of the Middle Ages, whose members in this way sometimes provided themselves with health insurance; and this was one of the main purposes of later societies whose individual origin is lost in the dark of Italy's decadence before the Risorgimento. They come to sight thereafter as an innate social custom and as the first sign of emergent consciousness of working-class solidarity in the childhood of the Italian people, the first scattered efforts to attain a national unity from which the workers in all but mere political formality were excluded. The mutual aid society was the workers' rallying point for all social purposes, his bank, his credit union, his club, besides providing relief in illness and unemployment; and when a society prospered, as hundreds of them did, it became the parent of other voluntary bodies, Co-operative societies that still exist, libraries, schools, trade

unions. There were irregular and variable independent groups, anticipating in practice some of the theory of Anarchist-Socialism. A heavy paternal law of 1886, which was intended to standardise them, checked their growth at first; then they largely ignored it and their numbers increased at the rate of several hundred a year. A Government report of 1904 notes the existence of 6,535 societies, of which 1,548 were registered. Half of these latter had less than a hundred members; only a tenth of them had more than three hundred. From this year they decrease in number, owing partly to amalgamations, with specialisation of functions, but also to new tendencies in working-class organisation and social insurance. An employers' liability law was passed in 1904. A comprehensive health insurance scheme was drafted by a Government Commission at the end of the War, but was abandoned in 1919.

It was left to the voluntary initiative of the societies themselves, and to the trade unions with which they had become more and more closely associated, to construct a national health plan out of their own material under the auspices of the new regime. Some of the societies affiliated with political parties, like other organisations similarly committed, suffered from the onslaught of Fascist violence. The Fascist government also began at once to systematise some of the branches of social insurance with which the societies dealt piecemeal, improving the accidents law, adopting a national scheme for old age and invalidity insurance in 1923, and for tuberculosis insurance in 1927. But in spite of both violent and solicitous intervention, there were still 4,249 mutual aid societies in 1933, of which 2,119 were affiliated to the Co-operative Union.

At one time it had seemed as if the whole system of mutual insurance might be co-ordinated within the Co-operative Union; but the more important societies were connected with and managed by trade unions, and the Trade Union Law of 1926, which gave the latter a new status also invested them with greater initiative in this

matter. From that date the inclusion of joint contributory social insurance provisions in collective contracts had force of law, rendering such insurance obligatory upon all the workers and employers concerned. Health insurance was thus definitively assigned to the field of the trade unions, to be conducted in collaboration with the employers' associations, and this has now become effective. The health societies, about 2,100 of them, with 4,300,000 members, continue their autonomous existence, but unite their funds for the administration of the health services in each province, as we have seen in the joint action of the societies of Vicenza. An equalisation fund, controlled by a Federation of the industrial societies, assists new and backward societies. There is a separate Federation for the agricultural societies.

The administration of the health services by so many provincial groups of autonomous societies, with different traditions and specialisations, naturally does not give uniform treatment throughout the country, although in essentials this has been very nearly attained. Taking 3,376,150 as the total of industrial workers at the end of 1936, nearly three million—2,933,885—were insured in societies providing all the services, to be described. Of the remainder, 383,324 were members of societies with limited services, and 58,941 were uninsured, isolated workers in different trades. Most of these have since been brought within local schemes by the contract-laws, while in agriculture the workers' Confederation has already succeeded in extending the scheme to the whole rural population. In all, some seven million workers are insured. There are differences in the organisation of the agricultural societies, but their general activities are similar to those of the industrial ones to be described.

The custom varies, but by preference there are no "panel" doctors, possibly because any special assignment of them seems too much like an extension of the system, creditable enough in its day, under which a physician is commissioned in each commune to look after the poor. When the trade unions were designated as the controlling

agents of health insurance, they asserted the principle that the worker has as much need and right as anyone else to choose his own physician, and this was approved by the medical profession. Provincial agreements with the National Medical Union—collective contracts, but in this case with the trade unions as employers—assure to the worker in many provinces a complete freedom of selection among general practitioners, and among specialists according to their advice, while pharmacy and hospital agreements extend his right to a choice among pharmacies and all hospitals and registered nursing homes for operation or treatment. Payment is made by the Society. Certification rests, however, with the appointed medical officers at the clinic of the society.

One's first impression on looking at the financial accounts of the health societies is that the doctors' union must have made a very bad bargain regarding fees—records of 1,872 industrial societies' funds show that the physicians only received as an average 14% and surgeons 2% of the total expenditure; including clinical expenses, these items in some districts amount to 30%; the pharmacy expenditure was 2% and for hospitals about the same. But the health policy of the movement explains these figures, for the aim is definitely preventive. The societies themselves, or combinations of them, have elaborate clinics in provincial capitals and other urban centres, connected with the Provincial Unions. The industrial societies alone have 300 clinics. To these the worker goes, not only for preliminary diagnosis in case of illness, when able, but is encouraged to go for the investigation of any mild indisposition. In either case, diagnosis is made with equal thoroughness, the patient passing from one to another of seven or eight specially equipped diagnostic laboratories until the complete picture has been obtained. In several of the medium size provincial capitals visited, the number of patients thus examined annually was fifteen or twenty thousand, something between one-fourth and one-third of the workers.

Few of the well-to-do can afford such extensive and specialised care. The usual medical staff found in daily attendance included one or two general physicians and three to five specialists. The up-to-date apparatus for diagnosis and treatment is impressive. In some clinics the oculist issues free orders for glasses. Free dental examination and simple treatments are always included, but small charges are usually made for special material used: a schedule showed thirty-six shillings for a complete set of teeth, twenty-one for upper or lower, twelve for a bridge. Cleaning was on the free list, but one dentist explained that it became so popular in his district that a charge had to be made, about two shillings.

The prophylactic work of the clinics is gradually being standardised, also for agricultural workers in all districts, and figures show that the expense of it is becoming a heavy charge on the societies. But the largest item of expenditure is still for financial relief during unemployment. This varies in different provinces; the norm is 50% of regular earnings. The item appears to be decreasing—it varies from 50% to 30% of total expenditure—leaving more for clinical expenses.

Even so it is not surprising to find that the level of contributions is rising, and must rise further with the proposed extension of the services to all members of the family of an insured person, say 30 million in all. The usual basis of contribution is not a flat rate but a percentage of wages received, varied at will by the societies, acting through the trade unions in agreement with the employers, who contribute equally with the workers. In 1935 it varied as widely as between 3% and 5% of wages for different societies; the weighted average was 1.68%. To-day the extremes are much closer, and the average has risen to 2%. These contributions are listed with other deductions on the pay-envelope, the employer's equivalent is added, and the total amount is paid to the society. The accounts are submitted annually to a general meeting of the members. The average annual cost of administration for 1,872 societies in 1934 was

5.9 lire per member, then about two shillings, and average benefits, 35.12 lire, about 11s. 6d. Reserve funds averaged about 30 lire per member.

The main differences in the organisation of the agricultural health societies is that they are territorial and automatically take in all workers, including share-farmers, who register for that purpose with their respective local unions. A different plan of contribution also has been adopted. The percentage on wages received is paid in the same way by the worker, but the employer's share, while it remains equal in global amount, is paid individually according to the labour requirements of his property, whether he actually employs the labour or not, resulting from the labour assessment referred to in the preceding chapter.

In both agriculture and industry the application of accident insurance is now effective. Under various Acts dating back to 1904, but extensively evaded, this was obligatory, the entire cost being borne by the employers. The progress effected in its enforcement, on behalf of the agricultural workers alone, since 1919, is indicated by the amount of premiums paid in that year, about ten million lire, compared with 152 million lire in 1936. In all, 512,199 claims were paid in that year, amounting to nearly 250 million lire. Present efficiency is mainly due to two reforms of recent years. In 1926 the private companies handling this insurance were liquidated and the business transferred to a single National Accidents Institute, jointly controlled by the workers' and employers' associations. The Institute also organises first aid services, clinics and hospitals. The comprehensive character of the Institute made it possible to provide that no neglect on the part of an employer could prejudice any claim of a worker, the claim stands and the employer pays a heavy fine.

Further, the second reform was the creation of a free legal aid Institute, initiated in 1925 and completed in 1935, somewhat cryptically named *Patronato Nazionale*, for the service of workers in making their insurance

claims. It is controlled by the trade unions, but the employers and the State contribute to its finances. Branches in all the provinces are connected with the Provincial Unions. The figures for 1936 show how much its services were needed. In that year it won the following claims: for accidents, 139,462 cases, amounting to 172,771,462 lire; on old age and invalidity pensions, 17,294 claims for 12,380,232 lire; and smaller amounts for life, maternity and tuberculosis insurance. The number of cases defended in court by the employers in that year fell to 6,365 from a much higher figure in previous years. Something over ten million lire was also obtained for workers' claims in East Africa, where this as well as other trade union activities are being extended.

Old age and invalidity insurance is compulsory, including domestic servants. Being also subject to specification in the contract-laws, practice varies. Some contracts provide for pensions in proportion to wages, 70% in some cases. According to others, pensions are in proportion with premiums paid, the minimum formula being: annual premium multiplied by 5, plus three-tenths of total premiums paid, plus 100 lire of state contribution, with an addition of 10% of the total for each dependent child under 18. Old age pensions usually become payable at 65, or optionally at 60 with a 37% reduction, and in the intervening years proportionally. Pensions now in force number 429,471, with total annual payments of 366 million lire, and a reserve fund of 7,750 millions. The central authority is a section of the jointly controlled National Welfare Institute, under which come also family allowances and the separate maternity, tuberculosis and unemployment schemes.

Tuberculosis is excluded from general health insurance in order that a more extensive campaign may be conducted against it, as well as to facilitate the special provisions required for its treatment. The very small compulsory fees collected from all insurable workers, including domestic servants, do not meet all the expenses of the fund, about 500 million lire per annum; it is augmented

by collections and contributions from other sources, especially the organisations of the Fascist Party. Large sums are being spent on sanatorium building, some 15,000 beds in 42 institutions being now in service. The clinics of the health societies notify all incipient cases to the special tuberculosis organisation, which then takes charge of their treatment. The campaign initiated in 1925, ten years later had won for Italy the leading place among the nations in reduction of the death-rate from the disease: Italy, 42%; United States, 38%; Germany, 34%; Great Britain, 32%; France, 17%. In 1937 the diminution was 47%.

Besides maternity insurance to cover all expenses, and various grants available from local and national sources, special maternity regulations are found in all trade union contract-laws where women are employed. Typical of these provisions are: 20 days full pay before and 20 after childbirth, continued security of employment, provision of crèches by the employer, time off for nursing hours without any deduction of pay. On account of these or similar provisions, a lower time rate of wages for women doing the same work as men is sometimes allowed; an accepted ratio is $7\frac{1}{2}$ to 8. So many facilities are available in the towns—excellent maternity homes were seen where the total inclusive charge is about a shilling a day—that less interest is taken there in maternity insurance than by the agricultural unions, which have a total of about 600,000 women insured for all requirements. Claims average 45,000 a year in all, and payments, seven million lire.

Simple unemployment insurance is less advanced. It is not regarded as an adequate policy in itself. Only since 1935 has it been obligatory for all industrial workers in regular employment. About 100,000 agricultural workers were then also brought within the scheme. Domestic servants and employees of public bodies are not included. Weekly contributions are shared equally by employer and worker and are based upon a graduated scale of wages received, if these fall below a certain

minimum, with a normal fixed contribution of 1.05 lire (about 2½d.). Payment of this for 48 weeks qualifies for three months unemployment pay at the rate of 26.25 lire a week (about 5s. 6d.), and for a further month if 72 weekly premiums have been paid.

Of necessity a somewhat complicated impression has been given of the means by which the many agencies connected with the trade unions provide for social security. In some of its parts the system is still incomplete, and there is inevitably some overlapping. As in so many other fields of social and political development in this totalitarian state, one is surprised by the quite untotalitarian method of progress, the remarkable extent to which it is left to local and voluntary initiative, indeed, more so, on the whole, than in countries which regard that method as in some way exclusively connected with parliamentary democracy. Yet the policy behind the complex movement is fairly plain, and is consistent with the general domestic policy of the regime. The state only intervenes when private initiative is lacking or inadequate, or when an institution has already shown that it can exercise its function on a national scale. Even then it is not taken over by the state, but is given an exclusive charter, usually establishing it in name and government as already constituted. In this way the state has created or confirmed three national authorities, managed by the trade unions and presided over by the employers' associations, in the field of social security. It may leave the matter in somewhat less confusion to mention them again: The National Accidents Insurance Institute, the National Welfare Institute (old age, invalidity, tuberculosis, maternity and unemployment insurance), and the National Health Institute, with its two federations of health societies. In addition, jointly financed, but under the single control of the unions, is the extensive organisation of the *Patronato*, providing free legal aid for the workers.

Finally, before turning to leisure, an example can be opportunely given to show the relative cost of these welfare services in the accounts of the employers. The

annual report of Montecatini, the great mineral and chemical combine, employing 56,112 men under no less than 71 contract-laws, reveals the following figures for last year, 1937: net profits, 48,571,699 lire; taxes, 14,929,016 lire; social insurance contributions, 31,300,000 lire; and a further contribution of 1,000,000 lire was made to the welfare fund of the Party.

(2. *Leisure.*) The leisure organisation, *Dopolavoro*, also a creation of the trade unions, was given the status of a national institution by royal decree on May Day, 1925. The Secretary of the Party is *ex officio* its President, and this relationship is maintained regionally; otherwise it is a separate body with its own board, on which the trade unions are represented. Many of its activities are duplicated for the younger people in the junior organisations of the Party. It is, in effect, a federation of 19,554 recreational and cultural centres, all of them (again, we find) dependent upon local initiative and having many variable local characteristics. But essentially they are all clubs for the working man and woman, their children and their friends, where they can meet for simple social ends, or to form groups for special purposes. Ships' crews have their *Dopolavoro* club rooms on board.

In some places *Dopolavoro* has its own extensive premises, with playgrounds adjacent; some are palatial establishments built by generous employers. One of these visited at Valdagno, an out-of-the-way little factory town in the foothills of the Venetian Alps, was as spacious and well-appointed as any American Athletic Club and made the R.A.C. look stuffy—a great swimming-pool, tennis courts and gymnasium, glass-enclosed in winter, under a single span of roof so high that you forget it, with tiers of dressing cabins and showers and spectators' galleries; a café, card room, billiard room, bar, library, theatre, writing-room—all on the same scale, furnished in the steel-and-glass style. Nearby was also a model crèche in which one seemed to enter a "brave new world," where not only the beds and tables and chairs of its many rooms were graded in size for the many groups of

uniformed infants and toddlers, but also the modern lavatory furniture. And a model clinic, a model maternity home, a model Old People's home—bright and airy as a club—all built by the employers. When the local trade union secretary was asked whether such generosity of the employers did not have, if not an ulterior motive, at least some embarrassing ulterior effect, he replied: "Well, we won a case against them last year for 700,000 lire."

This may be a show place, although singularly badly located for that purpose, like Schio, hidden away in a neighbouring valley, and other old-established family manufacturing businesses with a tradition of civilised treatment of their workers; but the workers themselves are not a bit less ambitious about the scale and good taste of their own club buildings. Nearly every small town has by now its *Casa del Fascio*; they are getting their trade union headquarters and clinics; the next item on the social building programme is for leisure clubs everywhere. Meanwhile many of them are still temporarily housed as best can be managed, and handicapped by having to pay rent—four or five hundred a year even in small towns, since a suitable location means a central one. The annual subscription is less than two shillings and the cost of joining special groups is also nominal; but there are no salaries for officials and all the work done in connection with group activities is also voluntary. Also there are nearly three million members, and there is a profit on bars and cafés, and local units frequently have individual donations or endowments, or from trade unions and employers' associations. Funds are pooled provincially for the benefit of the poorer clubs.

The formation of special groups depends entirely upon personal initiative. The local secretary is usually too busy with general management, which calls for an unremunerated devotion of all his spare time, to do more than attend group meetings occasionally. But he has to control and certify all their demands for books, musical instruments, skis, tennis rackets, footballs, and transport

and other equipment, at the reduced prices available to members. These special activities last year included: 6,427 libraries, 6,328 orchestras, 3,405 brass bands, 686 choirs, 1,519 dramatic societies, 772 cinemas, besides a diversity of study clubs, sports groups, and so forth.

Some of these activities are also found in the junior organisations of the Party for boys and girls up to 21; but physical training is here the first consideration. There are over 6 million members in all (annual subscription about one shilling), of whom more than 3 million took part in 7,000 provincial and national gymnastic displays last year. Among the host of workers are 3,000 (paid) gymnastic instructors and 12,000 volunteer sports directors, with 8,600 playgrounds and a record of 900,000 classes held last year, including swimming, ski-ing, and other sports. The junior organisations have several hundred brass bands; more than 2,000 drama groups produce plays. In rural districts there are between two and three thousand special groups of young people, somewhat similar to our Young Farmers' Clubs, who have special instruction and take part in competitions for the raising of garden crops and the care of animals.

A more recent movement of rapid growth, which resembles our Women's Institutes, was initiated by the agricultural workers' Confederation in 1933 and was taken over as a special women's section of the Party in 1935. Its educational activities are still directed by the workers' union. It is called *Massaie Rurali*, literally rural housewives, and from a membership of 30,000 in its first year has now passed the 900,000 mark. There are 8,127 branches with 11,264 local groups. Last year 6,088 courses of instruction in various rural activities were given, with an enrolment of 239,615, besides 16,395 propaganda meetings. The organ of the movement, *L'Azione delle Massaie Rurali*, is published by the agricultural workers' Confederation.

This outline of leisure organisations would not be complete without referring again to the supreme achieve-

ment in this field, the provision of a summer holiday by the sea or in the mountains, for the children of the workers. The aim is that not a single child, in the cities and in the towns of the hot plains, shall be left out, and that aim this year will come very near to achievement. The participation of the unions in this great work has been mentioned. From the beginning they have taken a leading part in it, long before it had grown to such dimensions as to appear to be a matter of regimentation, something so vast that it could only be accomplished under central authority, like the ordering of an army. But that is not the nature of it at all even to-day. We cannot excuse our lack of enterprise by saying that such methods are only possible for a totalitarian people. The methods used are exactly the same as those by which we send a few thousand children for their brief glimpse of the sea, while the Italians send hundreds of thousands for a month of it. The whole thing is due to voluntary local initiative, gradually growing into a national movement, and only then co-ordinated, supported, improved and extended by the devoted service of thousands of volunteer workers in their own specially constituted section of the Party.

CHAPTER VIII

THE CO-OPERATIVE MOVEMENT

UNLIKE trade unionism, Co-operation is nowhere essentially the instrument of a class, and especially not in the kind of co-operative enterprise we know best in England, consumers' co-operation, with its fundamental principle of membership open to all irrespective of class. But the working-class origin of the movement and the predominant character of its membership give it a class character, which is further emphasised by political allegiance. In Italy this methodical class distinction is even more definite, because the political alliance is not with a party of mixed social character, but with the trade unions. There are other reasons also for including the movement in a survey of the class struggle. Special class interests can be served by the adoption of co-operative technique, as in the case of agricultural co-operation, which everywhere well serves the interests of the farmers. But in Italy it is not only the farmers who have discovered this; the workers in their own various fields of labour have adopted it. They have found that Co-operation is a means of escape from the wage-system. Indeed, co-operative labour and production, not as a capitalist enterprise dependent upon a consumers' society but as a venture managed and owned co-operatively by the workers engaged in it, has always been and still remains a distinguishing feature of the Italian movement.

In its business policy the Italian consumers' movement also has a more proletarian character than ours. There are good reasons why the English movement has not maintained a policy of price competition with the private and multiple shops; accumulation of capital by the

ordinary process of profit-making is necessary for extension, especially, of great manufacturing enterprises; so the English movement is a competitor only within the unavoidable methods of the capitalist system; it has a standard of business which cannot cater for the poorest section of the working classes. On the other hand, by pursuing the original policy of the Rochdale pioneers, the Italian consumers' movement has inevitably handicapped its capitalist development and has, in consequence, made comparatively little progress in subsidiary manufacturing enterprises. (But all retail societies of sufficient size have their own bakeries and bacon and sausage factories.) At the same time, this policy has won for the societies an unassailable position in the community, despite their daily challenge to private enterprise. The report of an investigation made by the private traders' association last year estimated at 77 million lire the annual amount of profit lost to the shopkeepers, or saved to the workers, by the Co-operative societies.

Price-cutting had long been the policy of the consumers' societies before the great opportunity to demonstrate its national value was afforded by the economic siege known as "sanctions." The possibility of surviving the boycott of fifty-two nations depended primarily upon the stabilisation of domestic prices. This was not done by arbitrary decree, but by provincial committees. The regular price-lists of the retail Co-operative societies were found to be so useful that in many provinces they became the official standard for the determination of retail prices, a difference that varied considerably, but usually approximated 5%, being integrated in the prices proclaimed as the legal maxima in each province.

The situation was the occasion also for a rigorous national investigation of internal price relations and intermediary costs, in which the Co-operative Wholesale Society played a critical rôle. As a result of the investigation, the Wholesale offered to demonstrate the complete Co-operative trading technique in the reduction of retail prices of certain staple articles which were being

imported under licences. The licence system was discontinued in respect of these articles, and importation of them was reserved to the Wholesale. Foreign payment was effected by the export of Co-operatively produced goods, of which the principal articles are fruit, cheese, sausages and silk. Among the reductions effected in prices of imported articles of common consumption were the following: stockfish (salt cod), wholesale price, from 95 lire per quintal to 78 lire, and retail, from 102 lire to 80 lire; maize (Indian corn), wholesale, from 280-300 to 145; corn meal, retail, from 350-400 to 170-220. The quantities imported and retailed through the societies during the experimental period, were: stockfish, 3,524,180 pounds; maize, 125,298,800 pounds. Something over 2 million pounds of coffee was among other goods imported by the Wholesale in the same period; and, on behalf of the farmers' requirements societies, phosphates and potash to the value of about 12 million lire.

A united consumers' movement was built by the Co-operative Union out of existing non-political societies and a revival of the sectarian societies whose political affiliations drew upon them the methodical violence of the early Fascists. There are now only 217 consumers' societies outside the Union. During the past year, 67 new societies began business. The number of affiliated societies increased by 127 during the last four years for which complete statistics are available—to 3,465 at the end of 1936—and there was a large increase of turnover—from about 20 million pounds sterling to 33 million. Membership rose from three-quarters to just over one million. Annual sales in three provinces—Varese, Trento and Trieste—were over £3 per head of population, or higher than in the area of the big London societies; in five other provinces—Como, Belluno, Lucca, Vercelli and Novara—they were over £1 per head of population.

There has been no change in the autonomous and democratic constitution of the societies. The chief problem encountered in these years has been one that is

familiar to the English movement, namely, how to preserve the democratic functioning of a society which has grown too large or too extensive for a general meeting of members. This difficulty has been met by an enactment which gives such societies the option of holding secondary or regional meetings at which delegates are elected, the assembly thus formed having the delegated authority of a general meeting. Thirty-seven societies, serving 600 different communes through their branches, qualify for this reform, to be made effective by amendment of their rules.

The position of the Wholesale Society was greatly improved by its experience under "sanctions," both in its foreign trade and in its relations with the retail societies; 2,115 are now affiliated with it, as compared with 1,232 four years ago. It has its headquarters in Milan, and in 1937 took over the administration of the large retail society of that city with which it was closely connected. The management of its 32 branches is said to be serving a useful purpose in checking its relations with other retail societies. Besides several factories of its own, the Wholesale is provided with specially created brands of articles manufactured for it by private factories on commission. The tendency is for these factories to become dependent upon it and come under its control, thus converting private capital to Co-operative uses. Total sales in 1937 were 115.5 million lire, an increase of 15 million lire over the previous year. Of this total, 42.5 million lire was for imported goods, including colonial produce, a decrease of 2.5 million in imports, mainly due to a better maize crop. Retail societies in Italian East Africa had sales of about 50 million lire last year.

The preservation of the labour and industrial societies, in the early days of the regime, presented even greater difficulties than that of the consumers' societies. The power of the Fascist trade unions grew more rapidly than that of the new Co-operative Union, and their claim to control these societies was somewhat better founded than

in regard to the consumers' societies. Indeed for several years the Co-operative Union had to defend itself and its societies on two flanks—against the trade unions and against the classification of Co-operative societies as employers in the new social order. The most contentious aims of its policy, valiantly maintained in those difficult years, were (1) to maintain the principle of open membership (not limited, that is, to Fascists and trade unionists), and (2) to form a united front with the trade unions against capitalism. The first aim was realised when the union was given national status, and removed from Milan to Rome, in 1926; its charter was amplified and confirmed in 1931. The realisation of the second aim was completed only two years ago, when all issues between the Co-operative movement and the trade unions were settled and a "treaty of alliance" was signed.

The most obstinate problem had been with regard to the labour and industrial societies. They asserted their right to regulate their own conditions of labour, particularly regarding members' share of profits, which the trade unions contended were wages and should be subject to the regulations of the contract-laws, like those of any other workers. The Co-operative argument was that, since the labour societies are not employers, their members could not be regarded as wage-earners. The societies finally agreed to maintain standard rates of remuneration, but otherwise they dispose of their collective earnings as they like, and retain their character of workers' guilds, which Mussolini recently, in referring to them, called "the perfect type of a Corporation."

The greatest variety of labour and industry is undertaken by these societies. The labour (contracting) societies do everything from simple road and land work to elaborate hydraulic engineering and bridge-building, for which they bid against private contractors and annually secure contracts amounting to six or seven hundred million lire. The industrial societies do some of the finest work of the country in ceramics and glassware. There are also societies of metal and wood workers

which supply building materials, re-build railway wagons, build boats, re-fit ships; other societies own fleets of tugs in the larger ports, and run ocean and island passenger services¹; Co-operative printing works do a big business for trade unions and other Co-operative societies, and get a fair share of local and national government orders. The report of the Ministry of Corporations for 1937 lists 913 of these labour and industrial societies, affiliated with the Union, and 344 transport societies. In that year 174 new societies were registered.

There are two kinds of building societies, the more numerous being associations of persons formed to plan and order the building of houses and flats which eventually become their private property. Some of these are small middle-class groups; through others are carried out extensive re-housing schemes by the wage-earners themselves, sometimes with financial assistance, sometimes with their own credit only. The other kind are working builders' societies, contracting societies whose members comprise all the crafts necessary for construction. At the end of 1936 there were three hundred of the latter societies, whose total amount of building was valued at 1,500 million lire. During last year, 48 new societies were registered. A type of society in which a mixed membership of producers and consumers is sometimes found, is the electricity society, either for production and distribution or for the latter only. These have made a rapid growth during the last four years, from 57 to 197. Mutual aid societies affiliated with the Co-operative Union increased from 2,119 to 3,823.

The number of affiliated fishing societies has risen in four years from 65 to 112, the industry being now fairly well organised in all the larger fishing centres. There are also many small societies in fishing villages which are of the simple mutual aid type, or friendly society, taking care of members' savings, providing credit for

¹The "Garibaldi" co-operative shipping society has a fleet of 37 steamers, 260,000 tons, half of them owned by the society.

tackle, and so forth. The larger societies fish and sell their catch collectively in a number of large and well-appointed markets, jointly controlled by them and the municipalities. Some societies have contracts with canning factories. An interesting example of this kind of arrangement also illustrates the collaboration between trade unions and Co-operative societies. Arising out of a dispute between fishermen working for a big canning business on the Adriatic, the Secretary of a Provincial Union two years ago undertook to obtain better conditions for the workers, especially in a district too remote to benefit by the regular factory demand. He secured an agreement with the canning company to build a factory there and take the whole catch at a fixed price throughout the year—about $2\frac{1}{2}d.$ per pound, the canners providing boxes and salt. The price now being received is an improvement of about 15% over what the fishermen were getting last year; the factory gives regular employment to 350 persons, many of them from the fishermen's families; their Co-operative society is adequately financed by a deduction of 1% from payments received, before distribution, health insurance by 2%, and old age insurance by a similar amount. The canners also provide a certain amount of credit, free of interest, for tackle and boats.

Agricultural societies are included in the same Union as the other societies. A useful classification of purposes, however, would divide them between the kind of agricultural co-operation which we know in England, farmers' co-operation, and that of agricultural workers, which is peculiar to Italy and some other continental countries, finding its most famous development in the collective farms of Russia. This complete form of co-operative agriculture is also encouraged in Italy, especially in the widespread process of land settlement and in the breaking up of big estates, although the more general tendency is towards family individualism in the cultivation of the land, even if it continues to be held in common ownership.

Here, again, there is a long history of controversy between the Co-operative movement and the trade unions, only recently concluded. The unions, in Italy as elsewhere, are naturally on their guard against any form of labour combination which takes the worker away from their influence and protection, and might lead him to accept a lower standard of remuneration than they seek to maintain, even if he does so in the hope of creating conditions eventually much better for himself. There had been plenty of instances of such debasement of his standard of living in the effort to keep a collective farm going, for instance, in Sicily. But the policy of the agricultural labourer's union, as we have seen, is not to keep him for ever a wage-earner, but to prepare him for, and assist him in taking advantage of, precisely the kind of opportunities for independence which voluntary collective farming most economically affords. For such enterprises need, in effect, both Co-operative guidance in developing their business, and the economic protection of a union, not to mention the technical instruction and advice which is freely available through other channels. The present collaboration between the Co-operative Union and the labourers' trade union makes possible this combination, and has been the subject of a number of provincial agreements between the local representatives of the two bodies, notably in Sicily and the South where it was most needed. Co-operative farming is now being promoted there by joint action, and also in connection with the Ex-soldiers' Association, which interests itself especially in securing land for its members. Not all these societies are affiliated with the Co-operative Union, whose statistics in any case do not cover the last year of renewed activity in this field. Those published last year showed an increase of affiliated farming societies from 314, in 1933, to 350 at the end of 1936, with an average membership of 110 and an average of 570 acres under cultivation.

The trade union relations of these agricultural societies and their proletarian character, set them apart from the

new tendency of some other agricultural societies, namely, to be drawn away from the Co-operative Union towards the Ministry of Agriculture, reversing a process of organisation that has been active during the last four years. In that period, after much unofficial controversy and official debate, the whole question of Co-operative affiliation seemed to have been settled once and for all. Affiliation with the Union was the sure sign that a society was qualified to enjoy the privileges accorded by law to properly constituted non-profit-making societies, whatever might be their functional purposes. The privileges are not materially very great, but they include exemption from some minor forms of taxation, as well as accountancy services and other facilities available at the provincial offices of the Union, and were sufficient to win the voluntary affiliation of several thousand agricultural societies during these years. In 1933, the Union had only 459 Co-operative dairies on its register; by 1937 they had increased to 3,470, without any increase in the total number of these societies. Wine-making societies showed an actual increase in number, from 158 to 179 in that period, all of them now affiliated, instead of only 34 as in 1933. Other new affiliations added 15 out of the 20 olive-oil mills, and 13 flour mills, an increase of only three mills in all, although the olive growers badly need more. In 1933 there were 288 farm requirements societies affiliated, out of a total of 540; there are now 729 of these societies, all affiliated; and the number of registered live-stock insurance societies increased from 195 to 990.

A natural division of the societies now affiliated with the Co-operative Union would be in two classes, then, those which serve what may be called proletarian interests, 9,156 societies, and those which serve the farmer, 6,743 societies. (In all, 15,899, compared with 9,068 in 1933.) In completeness of organisation for the service provided for these two classes, however, the agricultural societies are far ahead. And to those mentioned must be added all the agricultural marketing organisations,

just as co-operative in character but not affiliated with the Union—for the collective marketing of wheat, silk, rice, beetroot and tobacco, all on a national scale and regulated by boards more or less as we know them, but based upon local organisation; besides the less developed Co-operative sale of fruit, internally and for export.

The Co-operative organisation of all agricultural business—processing, marketing of staple crops, and the purchase of requirements—is so far advanced, in fact, that it would be comparatively easy to-day to complete it nationally by compulsory measures. And this is the root cause of the new tendency, the point at issue between the Co-operators and the socialistic bureaucracy of the State, in this case, the Ministry of Agriculture. Last year, for instance, the Ministry prepared a scheme which would, in effect, have nationalised the purchase of farm requirements, virtually constituting the societies as agents of a national board; a Bill was presented in the Council of Corporations, but in face of the opposition of Co-operative representatives and others, was withdrawn. One argument in favour of it was the difficulty of maintaining control by the members of large societies, the impossibility of convening a general meeting of, say, 100,000 members. The recent measure which allows large societies to confer the power of a general meeting on an assembly of deputies elected by secondary or local general meetings, was intended to meet this difficulty. But to-day it seems more than ever likely that the requirements societies, which already manage the national wheat-pool, will pass out of the sphere of voluntary co-operation, and that their non-profit-making services will be made a monopoly under some form of national control.

It is impossible to foresee how far this socialistic tendency will go. There might be just as good a case for national control of the Co-operative dairies, for instance, and eventually every branch of Co-operation might find itself faced with nationalisation, in one form or another, as the bureaucratic finish of all its voluntary

endeavours. And this, it is felt, would have a chilling effect upon the spirit of voluntary initiative and local enterprise, upon which the progress of Co-operation depends. The members of labour societies do not want to become employees of the State; the retail societies would revolt against compulsory purchase from the Wholesale, or if that body were made an organ of the State. Thus the issue is, in effect, if not in name, between Co-operation and Socialism, between the voluntary and the compulsory principle, between free association and nationalisation. And this issue is much more acute in Italy than it is with us, because the power of capital is declining. The socialistic and co-operative forces are free to fight it out, for they no longer feel so much the need of uniting against capitalism. That battle has been won; the power of capital has been subordinated to that of the nation; with the materialisation of the Corporative State, its control will be transferred to the joint authority of the workers and managers of agriculture, industry and commerce.

The policy of the regime is to avoid equally the dangers of oppressive capitalism and bureaucratic socialism. The Co-operative Union is loyally serving the national purpose, as well as that of Co-operation, in withstanding what is to-day the greater danger of deviation. It is in a strong position to do so, politically and economically; its representatives sit on all the Corporations and their provincial and national councils; it has won the confidence and esteem of the Party. By its continued diligence and the progress of its societies, it has made Co-operation the economic criterion of the new State of which the trade unions are the social and political foundation, whose course thus lies nearer to the vision of Kropotkin than of Marx.

CHAPTER IX

POLICIES AND PROSPECTS

THE rise of the Italian working class was traced in the earlier chapters and its present institutional position in the community has been described in the later ones. The policy, results and general prospects of the movement may now be considered. What has been the guiding or underlying principle of all this complex growth of social and economic organisation? What are the real achievements of it, in what manner has it altered the daily life of the working man and woman? Test question of all pretensions to material progress—has it effected and is it still effecting a redistribution of wealth, allowing the worker a more equitable share in the product of his industry, or has it only secured a minimum of betterment for him beyond which the way is barred? Is the industrial peace of Italy a real peace, a way of doing things, a peace with freedom of initiative, or only a submissive one? And where is it leading, at home and abroad? What kind of community is emerging from behind the façade of so much patriotic discipline, what is likely to be its character and rôle in the larger community of the nations?

These questions will be discussed in the following order: (1) labour policies, past and present; (2) results observable in the social background; and (3) an estimate of the position of labour in the future Corporative State, and the kind of foreign relations which are likely to ensue from the nature of that State.

(1. *Policies.*) All labour movements originate in revolt against oppression. Whatever ideal aims it may enunciate or adopt later, the primary and distinctive aim of a labour movement is revolution. When it abandons

that inclusive policy it ceases to be the labour movement of the country and produces one or more parties—the Social Democrats in Germany, the English Labour Party, the Italian Socialist Party. The distinctive revolutionary impulse is left behind in minor offshoots of the movement, while the party fights its way to office by one compromise after another; the movement is divided against itself. History justifies the Communist strategy of a united front led by an active minority, for it is only when a labour movement is united that it can serve a revolutionary purpose. Revolution is essentially totalitarian in purpose and in effect, either including all classes or liquidating them. But the preoccupations of party, and a diversity of aims and shibboleths, make it difficult for a fractionised labour movement to unite. History justifies the Anarchist doctrine that only an event can do this and create a revolutionary situation, and that only action can precipitate the revolution.

An experience of our own may help to clarify that of Italy. We were on the eve of a revolutionary situation in England in May, 1926; the event occurred, the general strike, but it did not unite the labour movement. The parliamentary party's moderating influence prevailed—that is the usual way of accounting for the failure of labour's most successful demonstration of solidarity. A more exact account would admit that there was no need of moderating influence, once the attitude of the party showed that labour was not united; no action could have precipitated a revolutionary situation which, in fact, did not exist; and the Government—a strong Government—knew it. The Government had a single policy; labour had many.

The labour movement in Italy had suffered a similar fractionisation when the event occurred—in this case, the War and its immediate consequences; but there were important differences between their situation and ours. A weak government not only allowed unlimited time for the influence of the event to gather force, but did not even intervene to put an end to the revolutionary situation

which the event created. The situation persisted for many months, lacking a political action to precipitate the revolution. As it was to be in England some years later, the demonstration of popular solidarity was impressive, the parliamentary leaders stood apart, the labour movement was not united. Instead of totalitarian revolution, there was only regional insurrection. Nor was there any outside pressure to impose a provisional policy, a Kerensky policy, on the different political leaders of the working classes. Even if the different parties had been able to agree on a policy, there might have been great reforms, but it would not have been the revolutionary policy of labour.

What had happened to that policy, desired but unformulated by the insurgent masses, can best be seen by leaving out the other parties, and considering only the fate of the Socialist Party. Leaving aside also all ideological refinements, we can see that the Party, when at last faced with a revolutionary situation, was of two minds about what kind of revolution to make. National, totalitarian, it had to be in any case, and imperatively so if it was to bring order out of the chaos created by insurrection and a paralysed government; but was totality to be achieved by including all classes, or by the liquidation of all except the working classes? By the latter method, said one section, and seceded, without any preparation or real hope of being able to liquidate the bourgeoisie, leaving the Party weakened and equally powerless to make a revolution of all classes.

The only section of the labour movement which had faced the technical problem of revolution before the War, were the Syndicalists. They had a policy based upon working-class organisation, not for the elimination of all other classes, however, but for their integration in a new social order to be based upon the unions of workers, technicians and administrators—the trade union state. The method of their policy was to be direct action and the seizure of power for the forcible unification of the state on that basis. In this they differed from the Anarchists,

whose optimistic theory of a voluntary reconstitution of society after a destructive revolution they rejected, as a whole, although rejecting also, and more completely, the contrasting theory of state socialism, or Communism, in favour of functional economic autonomy. They were clear about the essentials of revolution—that it must be nationalist and totalitarian, violent in its first phase, and authoritarian but patient in the next one, in reconstruction for that increase in production which alone could maintain and justify it.

There were two weak points in the strategy of the pre-War Syndicalists: they rightly estimated the War as leading to a revolutionary situation, but did not foresee that it would make the masses anti-nationalist; and they could not realise that, especially in such circumstances, a totalitarian revolution of all classes would have to depend so much upon the middle classes. The formation of patriotic revolutionary groups by the Syndicalists, outside their trade unions but maintaining these intact, was their way out of these difficulties, leading inevitably, as we have seen, to difficulties inherent in such an alliance of violent forces and calling for an infinitely greater patience in the pursuit of their trades-union-state policy. One has to look behind the bogey-man of Fascism to recognise that it was only by Mussolini's supreme genius of patience, through all the exigencies of violence and victory, that unity was finally achieved and the revolution made with that trade union policy as the guiding principle of the regime.

Italy is a trade union state in the making, and the process is far advanced. The unions have the constitutional position which Syndicalist policy postulated for them; they have their elected representatives in "big business"—for instance, on the board of directors of the Industrial Reconstruction combine (I.R.I.). The employers' associations have lost many of those capitalist privileges which English and American employers regard as a birthright, and are rapidly becoming the Syndicalist complement of the workers' unions, the necessary collaborating unions of technicians and administrators.

The industrial feudalism of the United States, with union fighting union to decide which of them shall abolish it, and the country subject any day to violent labour disputes, as in Italy after the War—the more orderly fight in England for the complete unionisation of labour, for holidays with pay, and other privileges already won by the Italian worker—the French trade unionists still sacrificing themselves and the State in the struggle to derive some benefit from their insecure collective contracts and super-arbitration schemes—it is not surprising that the Italian trade unionist, looking abroad and seeing the older democracies still in these pre-revolutionary stages, should discount the comparative poverty of his own country and think more of the secure position which he and his organisations enjoy in it.

For the State is already trade unionist enough to make him feel this, that morally the battle is won, and economically is being won, and that politically the future is his. In one form or another, orthodox or unorthodox, this feeling of social confidence permeates the labour movement and passes outside its institutions to workers who may be members of none of them but benefit from all. Sometimes the confidence is inflated by nationalistic pride, a swollen pride of citizenship that is not yet a generation old—that same pride which in the naturalised generation of United States citizens converts exiles overnight into one-hundred-per-cent Americans; for the Italian working classes were exiles in their own land, as their anti-nationalism testified in the days when political unity was a thing outside and above them. More generally, however, the feeling of social confidence is a sober and responsible sentiment, based upon the security provided by those laws and institutions which have been described. Every working man knows that he has rights, and every woman, which their parents never knew, as well as duties, and a labour organisation for each one personally to see that he and she get their rights according to the law of the land and the contractual obligations of the employer—a minimum wage, a maximum time schedule, clear and fair

piece-work rates, holidays with pay, indemnity for dismissal, re-employment in due order, and all the various benefits of social insurance and leisure.

(2. *Results.*) Materially, what do these rights amount to? There would be little point in quoting recent increases of wages, most illusory of trade union gains, yet less illusory in Italy than elsewhere, because the unions now take an equal part with the employers in the Corporative regulation of prices. Reference has been made to their independent assessment of the cost of living, and their close watch on its relation with wages. But even the statistics of real wages, especially in terms of foreign currency and international indexes, are deceptive, judged by the experience of living in the country among the wage-earners themselves. Direct observation over a long period suggests that such statistics do not give a complete economic picture—that they inevitably leave out, for instance, many frequent sources of increment not included in wages, ownership of the home, a patch of land, free services not available elsewhere, subsidies, free holidays for the children, cheap travelling and amusements. They correctly show that Italian wages are comparatively low; but we have seen, in the case of trade union officials, which is typical, that salaries also are low; the whole income level of the country is very much lower than, for instance, in England. There are thousands of middle-class families in Italy living comfortably on little more than twice the income which thousands of English working-class families get on the dole; and the position of an unmarried Italian labourer earning only a few shillings a week more than his English brother gets on the dole, is not to be compared with that of the latter; he lives well.

But such foreign comparisons mean little and in precise figures would be confusing. The only valid comparison is between the standard of living yesterday and to-day; and the significant and most obvious fact about that is, that the standard of the lowest, the poorest, the unfortunate and handicapped class, has been raised far above what it was, taking the level of either fifteen or thirty years

ago. As an outcast class, it is vanishing. Where the trade unions and the Party are active, the hunger and physical suffering of poverty have been abolished. There are still patches of abject poverty, especially in the South, and there are neglected districts—for instance, the tourist province of Imperia, whose dying villages are in tragic contrast with the luxury of San Remo, competitor with Monte Carlo as one of the four permitted gambling resorts of the country. And in the Italian cities, as elsewhere, there is always a submerged section of the poor whose ignorance of their rights still makes it necessary for charity to seek out the needy. Gradually these casual workers are also being drawn into the class struggle, in which hitherto they never took any part unless as victims of blind revolt. In the class immediately above them, the unskilled workers, where lately anxiety for the future of the young and the aged darkened a million homes, there is confidence and security against this, and against the worst combination of misfortune, illness and unemployment; everywhere there is in this class evidence of better food, better clothing, steady improvement in housing; and a wider field of interests and amusements has been brought within the means of the humblest. In the upper classes of labour the improvement in conditions has not been so striking, but is proportional to needs.

Apart from the greater efficiency of charity, such economic improvement in social conditions can only be due to either or both of two causes: a general increase of national wealth, or a more equitable distribution of it. In the case of Italy there is no question which of these causes is the more active; Italy is still a poor country, and is to-day making great sacrifices for the future, like any business that is expanding. It is all the more remarkable that the other cause should still be operative, that the workers should in fact be receiving a larger share of the product of their labour. This is not entirely due to the pressure of the trade unions, for it is a development also favoured by national policy; but to the unions must go much of the credit for the sustained and well-reasoned

demand for better labour conditions as the true basis of national progress, as well as for the daily championship of their own classes in the negotiation of contracts and the unceasing prosecution of the workers' rights. For these things, it may be well to remind the reader again, are not done by dictatorial decree. Only rarely does the State intervene in such matters, and then only when there has been adequate preparation by experiment and debate, as we have seen in the case of labour exchanges, the piece-work reform, and the recent general increases of wages.

Seen from within the labour movement, the visible constant pressure and its daily results are more impressive than these occasional gestures of authority, recording as they do what was foreseeable except from the outside. And perhaps for that reason one is inclined to underestimate other national measures which elsewhere are regarded as the supreme means for the redistribution of wealth; in particular, a levy on capital. The Labour Party toyed with the notion in England some years ago and then hastily buried it out of sight. The Socialist Government of France waved that flag in the face of its two hundred wealthy families, but only ran it up to the peak when the ship had foundered. In Italy there has been a 5% levy on real property and a 10% levy on share capital in the last two years (with exemption for co-operative societies), and the small private traders and manufacturers, whose capital was only indirectly taxed by these measures, are expecting a well-aimed blow to fall upon them at any time. But the initiative in these instances did not come from the labour movement; the measures were adopted for purely financial reasons; and although they were naturally welcomed by the wage-earners with some jubilation, as an earnest of a new conscription of wealth to match the conscription of men which has always been, they did not arouse anything like the popular interest that was shown in the forty-hour week law of 1936 and the more recent reforms we have mentioned.

This difference of attitude is mainly due to a new

capacity for discrimination between gains that are absolute and those that are relative, which is noteworthy in the policy and teaching of the trade unions. Capital can be replaced, even the incidence of a levy will be passed back to the wage-earner if his trade union is not vigilant, just as an increase in wages can be lost in a rise in prices. These are relative gains; whereas shorter hours, and every step in the control of industrial conditions, are absolute gains. The winning of these are regarded as labour victories; the winning of a higher wage as just a quantum result of the daily pressure. Thousands of wage-earners, through experience in negotiations, through increasingly intimate knowledge of their employers' affairs, and through their union courses in economics, are getting clearer ideas about capital-labour relations than most workers elsewhere. They know that the only victory about wages worth celebrating is the raising of the minimum, and not the relative economic minimum, but the absolute social minimum, which is also something more than a standard of real wages.

The workers are claiming and getting a larger share of the wealth they produce, and with more exact knowledge of what that share can and cannot be; but this is not the whole doctrinal result of their progress; there has been a radical change in their attitude towards industry. Mr. Seebohm Rowntree was recently reported in *The Times* (April 7, 1938) as saying that in England: "Every-day workers of all grades were becoming more insistent in their demand that industry should be conducted and co-ordinated so as to serve the needs of the whole community. If the public-spirited members of the industrial army let things drift," the report continued, "they were playing into the hands of the extremists, Right and Left, and, instead of evolutionary progress, there would be a bitter struggle, the end of which no man was able to predict." That was precisely the demand which caused the bitter struggle of the post-War years in Italy, and, unsatisfied, survived it—the demand which finally, after much tearing off of old labels, once again united the

whole labour movement in revolutionary strength. And it is only because that demand was recognised and recorded in the Labour Charter, accepted as the right and proper attitude of the workers, and given practical satisfaction, that there is industrial peace in Italy to-day. Through the five years preceding that formal recognition, the battle between Right and Left went on behind the scenes, under the rigid discipline of the new regime, without which it would have been fought out in the open to its chaotic finish. There are still remnants of the old extremists of Right and Left; there are capitalists who are not satisfied (to quote Mr. Rowntree again) with "a return equal to that paid on gilt-edged securities, plus an insurance premium to cover the risk run"—which exactly describes the principle upon which profits are regulated in Italy; there are still a few profiteers who escape this regulation, taking a much greater risk; and, on the other hand, there are a few, but very few, Communists. But the day of these extremists, Right and Left, is past; there is no longer between them any conflict for discipline to suppress, they do not meet at any point, and their influence upon policy is nil; as would-be wreckers, the law comes down heavily upon both. Nor is it by such discipline that the labour peace is maintained, but by the self-control of industry.

(3. *Prospects.*) This does not imply, however, an absence of divergent or even conflicting tendencies in following the accepted policy—the co-ordination of industry to serve the needs of the whole community. Co-ordination is not an ultimate state of things; it is a continuous organic process of adjustment to an end which itself varies with the changing resources and needs of the community. No single mind can foresee what these will be, or direct that process; no single interest, party, group or authority. Dictatorship is a denial of such a process, whether it be in the name of the proletariat, the king, or the people; for dictatorship—either by an individual, group, or parliament—means the imposition of a will extraneous to the process, and the suppression or dis-

tortion of those tendencies upon whose autonomous interaction the validity of the process depends. If the process is to be effective, free play must be given to the divergent tendencies and conflicting interests which are its coordinates. The factors are autonomous but not automatic; the interests at stake are vital factors, the conflict is real, and the totalitarian expression of them can only be the result of a daily struggle to bring them into harmony with the needs of the community, judged by the changing resources and requirements of the community and not by precepts or plans of any dogmatic Utopianism.

This is the basic doctrine of the Corporative State, which cannot therefore be expressed in terms of a dogmatic Utopianism in which the conflicting purposes of human nature are presumed to have been either suppressed or outgrown. Such a destination is not excluded, but it is not a postulate of Corporative theory. Among the economic doctrines familiar to us, this theory most nearly approximates to that of Co-operation as taught in the English movement, in which production is determined by the requirements of the community, production for use. But the limitations of Co-operation in practice are evident, even in Italy where its principles have been more variously applied, and although it provides "the perfect type of Corporation" there. Personal initiative runs ahead of it, and the economic problem is not how to suppress or limit this, but how to give full scope to what enriches the community, while banning the unsocial practices to which capitalism gives license—for instance, the creation of fictitious capital and the payment of high dividends out of exorbitant profits. Such obvious abuses of the money-power, tolerated or admired in England, are abolished by law in Italy. It is not permitted, for instance, that capitalists should fatten on the profits of distributing milk, as in London and New York.

But legal restraint, while it can protect society from the offences of ruthless Capital, as from those of any other criminal outlaw, does not convert it to the service of the community; that is a process too intricately organic for

legislation, if private initiative is to be preserved. Credit has been brought under national control; that is only a protective measure—it does not direct the application of credit, much less initiate the enterprises for which credit is required. The trade unions and the employers' associations jointly control its application. Every project for expanding an enterprise or starting a new one is submitted to them, and is not licensed unless it first has their approval; and it may be significant that since the trade unions shared this responsibility, the percentage of rejections has fallen from 33 to 16. In any case the workers can and do bring to the future development of industry a new point of view, a wider knowledge of the needs of the community, a really democratic guidance of capital.

Similar in effect, though exercised through different channels, is the rôle of the trade unions in current industry, agriculture and commerce—for the scope of the Corporations includes the whole economic cycle in their respective spheres. A great deal has been written about them, many volumes in many languages; and had our purpose been to describe the class conflict from more than one point of view, several more chapters would have to be added. We should have to examine the many debates and controversies through which the original conception of the Corporations has been moulded to its present form, and the many tentative stages of organisation through which they have passed to the diversified patterns they have now assumed in accordance with the different elements in each industry. But in one matter, the one with which we are concerned, the Corporations are all alike: the trade unions take their place in them on equal terms with the associations of employers.

At first sight the Corporations would thus seem to be the centre of the stage for the conflict of class interests. The alignment is clear, workers on one side and employers on the other, as definite a confrontation of Left and Right as could be devised. But to assume that their proceedings must therefore be held up by endless disputes, as in

the case of balanced forces in parliament, or that the alternative to this is a servile collaboration, would be equally mistaken. We have already seen that the field of labour disputes does not, in fact, lie here, but in the widespread and detailed encounters of the two sides where such disputes originate, in the daily contact between them and their contractual representatives. The negotiation of contract-laws and the settlement of disputes are not functions of the Corporations; these matters are normally dealt with elsewhere; the two sides meet here in differently constituted aggregations to discuss their industries as going concerns. An illustration is suggested by the recent debates on the Coal Bill in the House of Commons. Supposing that that Bill had been drafted for, and debated and passed through all its parliamentary stages by, a Committee composed of the group of miners' representatives in the House, and representatives of the owners, distributors and exporters (and their employees), each side having equal voting power, and—an important element which is always included—representatives of the consumer, as well as the Mines Department; then such a Committee would have been a close if temporary approximation to a Corporation. It would not be concerned with whatever disputes might be in progress in the coalfields. Some clash of interests would still be there, in the Committee, but would be subordinate to the interests of the industry as a whole, and to the service of the industry to the community.

In what, then, consists that higher clash of interests which survives in the Corporations? A fight for the control of industry? The trade unions are better organised and have a more natural solidarity than the associations of employers; they are beginning to know as much as the other side do about the conduct of industry, they have popular sentiment behind them, and a secure position in the regime. But just because they have this knowledge and the self-assurance which these things give them, the struggle for supremacy is not so much a matter of principle as of occasional encounter, not so much a

fight—the fighting is done elsewhere, if we must use these words of war—as a rivalry of ability, the accepted *lotta di capacità*. In the Corporations, as in the State, the future rôle of the workers depends upon their ability to manage public affairs (and industry is in that category when represented by the Corporations) in the interest of the whole community. Some contrast of principles is inevitable. The abolition of absentee landlordism, for instance, present in our political memory if not in our practical politics, is a principle of the agricultural trade unions; and the abolition of absentee industrialism, which might be recommended to a party in need of a slogan, is a declared aim of the industrial unions. But, barring political accidents, and unless private initiative breaks down, there will not be any violent seizure of control; the representatives of the workers, even if still inspired by the old Syndicalist spirit, know that the industrial machine would not survive violence, and they are not wreckers. Short of that, anything is possible. They bring a willing collaboration and a spirit of emulation to the Corporations, which is met in kind by the technical and administrative representatives. In its highest expression, the class conflict is a contest of service to the community.

Barring political accidents. What springs to the imagination, especially of anyone who knows the part that Mussolini has played in leading the trade unions into office and acknowledging their share of power, is obvious. Time will claim him some day, and even resignation is not inconceivable in a man whose eyes are so much on the future that he might want to have the sight which that would give him of it. But in the trade unions there is no apprehension on their own account about the eventuality of his passing; although he has always been their champion, it is rather the other side who are afraid of what might come; they know—both sides know—that any successor who upset the present balance would be inviting disaster or a one-sided trade union dictatorship which nobody wants to-day. But the point is academic, for it is a foregone conclusion that no one person will inherit his

offices, much less the authority with which his popularity and genius endow him, but rather a group in which the trade unions will have ample representation.

Meanwhile a new people is coming to birth, a new economic democracy. A new state, securely based upon the broad foundations of trade unionism, has taken its place among the great nations. The character of the people has not greatly changed; they still love to lie in the sun, sing their own songs, wear bright clothes, and generally maintain the appearance of that operatic tradition which casual visitors admire. But to all this innate picturesqueness have been added other popular aspirations. No longer exiles in their own land, the impulse of emigration, checked also elsewhere, has given way to an intense love of that land and a passion for every aspect of its development. This passion, and not the regimentation which is only a superficial expression of it, is what is changing a slovenly people into an efficient one. In England we do not know such patriotism as that which is accomplishing this miracle. It is the motive force of all the development and reclamation schemes—social, agricultural, industrial—sweeping aside traditions of a thousand years for their fulfilment. A million children at the seaside, millions of acres redeemed, factories in which the workers take a technical and possessive pride—to name only a few symbols of this last phase of the *Risorgimento*—these things do not happen without changing the character of a nation, much more than individuals change.

The new spirit causes, and the new community requires, a more systematic method of national house-keeping than that which satisfied the old plutocracy. It is no longer a question of maintaining conditions fit for the making of profits by the few, but conditions in which the many can rise; and this means increasing production, increasing as near as may be to capacity; so that, in the first place, there may be more domestic wealth to share; and then, by an industry which nature has not endowed with any raw material the world requires, so that there

may be a sufficient surplus to purchase abroad the things which a rising and growing people must have but cannot make for themselves.

This is the whole meaning of Italian "autarchy," which is not a policy of illusory self-sufficiency, but an orderly programme with those aims. Only fear or malice can interpret that policy as an antagonistic one. Aggressive it is and will be in world commerce, for a community which knows its own resources and its own needs is a better bargainer than one which goes to market not knowing what it has to sell, and without a shopping list. Naturally such a policy better serves also the interests of national defence, than one in which the domestic and foreign trade of a country is dominated by speculators and profiteers; and that is its justification to those who do not see, or do not like, the social and economic policy of which it is the logical consequence. But to say that its purpose is war, is nonsense. Indeed, we might as well say that war is the purpose of that basic social and economic policy itself, and that all the progress we have reviewed has no other end. The whole investment of the people is in a peaceful future. Italy needs a generation of peace, her people desire it and their policy demands it. And they have learned how to maintain peace at home—not by an institution to enforce it; not by the alliances of collective security; but because they have found a way of doing things that is a way of peace.

APPENDIX

(For an interpretation of the present validity and significance of the Labour Charter, see page 38.)

THE LABOUR CHARTER

(1927)

THE CORPORATIVE STATE AND ITS ORGANISATION

I

The Italian nation is an organism whose life, aims and means are greater in power and duration than those of the individuals and groups of which it is composed. It is a moral, political and economic unity, which is integrally realised in the Fascist State.

II

Labour, in all its forms of organisation and enterprise, intellectual, technical, manual, is a social duty. By that title alone it comes under the guardianship of the State. From the national point of view the complex of production is unitarian; its objectives are unitarian and are summarised in the welfare of the individual and the development of national strength.

III

Trade union or professional organisation is voluntary. But only the trade union or association which is legally recognised and regulated by the State has the right legally to represent that category of workers or employers for which it is constituted, to safeguard their interests in respect of the state and other professional institutions, to enter into collective labour contracts obligatory for the whole of that category, to exact contributions from them, and on their behalf to exercise the delegated powers of a public body.

IV

The collective labour contract is the expression of solidarity between the various factors of production, through conciliation of

the conflicting interests of employers and employees, subordinated to the higher interests of production.

V

The Labour Judiciary is the organ by which the State intervenes for the settlement of labour disputes, whether respecting the observance of contracts and other existing agreements, or arising out of the determination of new conditions of labour.

VI

The legally recognised trade unions and associations provide juridical equality as between employers and employees, maintain the discipline of production, and promote its improvement.

The Corporations constitute the united organisation of the factors of production, and integrally represent its interests.

By virtue of this integral representation, the interests of production being national interests, the Corporations are recognised by law as organs of the State.

As representatives of united interests of production, the Corporations can prescribe regulations governing labour relations and the co-ordination of production, whenever they are authorised to do so by their constituent trade unions and associations.

VII

The Corporative State regards private enterprise as the most efficacious method of production and the most serviceable in the interests of the nation.

Private organisation of production being a function of national interest, the organisers of enterprise are responsible to the State for the conduct of production. Collaboration in production implies a reciprocity of rights and duties. The employee—technical, clerical or manual—is an active collaborator in the enterprise; its management rests with the employer, and his is the responsibility for it.

VIII

The employers' associations are under obligation in every way to promote the increase, improvement, and reduction of costs, of production. Representative bodies of the artistic and liberal professions and associations of public employees, safeguard the interests of the arts, sciences and letters, the improvement of production, and the moral aims of the Corporative order.

IX

Intervention of the State in economic production takes place only when private initiative is lacking, or is inadequate, or when the political interests of the State are at stake. Such intervention may take the form of control, assistance or direct enterprise.

X

In collective labour disputes, judiciary action can only be invoked when the Corporative body has exhausted its own process of conciliation.

In individual labour disputes concerning the interpretation or application of collective contracts, the vocational associations can act as mediators for conciliation.

Such disputes otherwise lie within the competence of the ordinary judiciary, with the addition of assessors nominated by the vocational associations concerned.

COLLECTIVE CONTRACTS AND THE RIGHTS OF LABOUR

XI

The vocational associations have the duty of regulating by collective contracts the labour relations between the employers and employees in those categories which they represent.

The collective contract lies between associations of the first degree, under the guidance and regulation of the central organisations, save in those cases for which the laws and statutes approve the substitution of associations of a higher degree.

Every collective contract, under penalty of being invalid, shall contain precise regulations regarding disciplinary relations, the trial period of employment, the amount and payment of remuneration, and working hours.

XII

The action of the trade unions, the conciliatory offices of the Corporative bodies, and the authority of the Labour Judiciary, guarantee wages in conformity with the normal requirements of a living and the possibilities of production and labour-values.

The determination of wages is not bound by any general standard, but rests entirely within the competence of the parties to collective contracts.

XIII

Data regarding the conditions of production and labour, the situation of the labour market, and variations in the workers' standard of living, provided by public authorities, the Central

Institute of Statistics, and the recognised vocational associations, and co-ordinated and defined by the Ministry of Corporations, provide the criterion for harmonising the interests of the various categories and of the classes among themselves, and their interests with the higher interests of production.

XIV

Wages must be paid in a manner the most consistent with the convenience of the worker and of the enterprise.

When wages are based upon piece-work, and payments are made at intervals greater than a fortnight, adequate weekly or fortnightly payments on account must be made.

Night work, not comprised in regular periodic shifts, must be paid a percentage above the day schedule.

When wages are paid by piece-work, the rates of payment must be calculated in such a manner as to permit the diligent worker of normal working capacity to earn a minimum increase over the basic rate.

XV

The worker has a right to a weekly day of rest, corresponding with Sundays. Collective contracts will apply the principle, taking into account the provisions of existing laws and the technical requirements of an enterprise, and, within the limits of these requirements, will likewise provide for the observance of civil and religious holidays in accordance with local custom. The working time-table must be scrupulously and exactly respected by the worker.

XVI

After a year of continuous employment in an enterprise giving regular employment, the worker has a right to an annual holiday with pay.

XVII

In an enterprise giving regular employment, if labour relations are terminated by dismissal not due to his fault, the worker has the right to an indemnity in proportion to his years of service. Such indemnity is also due in case of the death of the worker.

XVIII

In an enterprise giving regular employment, the transfer of a business does not terminate a labour contract, and its employees retain the same rights in respect of the new owner. Nor does the illness of a worker, not exceeding a determined period, invalidate

a labour contract. A call to arms or to service in the Militia cannot be made a cause of dismissal.

XIX

Violations of regulations and acts disturbing the moral conduct of an enterprise committed by the workers, are punishable according to the gravity of the offence, by a fine, by suspension from employment, or by immediate dismissal without indemnity. Cases must be specified in which the employer can impose a fine, suspension, or dismissal without indemnity.

XX

Workers engaged in new employment must serve a trial period during which there is a reciprocal right to terminate the agreement, with payment only for time actually worked.

XXI

The benefits and regulations of collective contracts are extended to home workers. Special measures will be taken by the State to provide for the inspection and hygiene of home work.

LABOUR EXCHANGES

XXII

The State ascertains and checks the fluctuations of employment and unemployment, joint indices of the conditions of production and labour.

XXIII

Labour exchanges are established under the joint control of the Corporative organs of the State. Employers are under the obligation to employ their workers through these agencies. They have the option in choice of registered workers, with preference for those who are members of the Fascist Party and trade unions, according to priority of registration.

XXIV

The vocational associations are under the obligation to exercise a selective activity among the workers, directed towards a constant increase of their technical ability and moral worth.

XXV

The Corporative organs supervise the observance of the laws for the prevention of accidents and labour inspection, by members of their constituent associations.

PROVIDENCE, RELIEF, EDUCATION, INSTRUCTION

XXVI

Provident organisation is a high manifestation of the principle of collaboration. Employer and employee must carry their proportional burdens of it. The State, through the Corporative organs and vocational associations, will co-ordinate and unify, as much as may be possible, the provident system and institutions.

XXVII

The Fascist State proposes to undertake:

1. The completion of accident insurance;
2. Improvement and extension of maternity insurance;
3. Insurance for vocational diseases and tuberculosis as a road towards general health insurance;
4. The completion of unemployment insurance;
5. Special forms of endowment insurance for young workers.

XXVIII

The workers' associations defend the interests of their members in administrative and judicial proceedings regarding accident and other social insurance. When technically possible, collective contracts will provide for the establishment of mutual health insurance funds, with contributions from employers and employees, jointly administered by their representatives under the supervision of the Corporative bodies.

XXIX

It is a right and a duty of the vocational associations to provide relief for those whom it represents, whether members or non-members. They must undertake these functions of relief themselves, directly, and cannot delegate them to other bodies or institutes, excepting for reasons of public policy when wider interests than those of their own categories are involved.

XXX

The education and instruction of those whom they represent, members and non-members, and especially vocational instruction, is one of the main duties of the vocational associations. They must take their place in line with the activities of national leisure organisations and other educational movements.

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