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The Last Stronghold Of Slavery

By Prof. G. C. BARAVELLI, of the Rome University

LIEE URGE, NOT IMPERIALISM

Expansion at a pure loss: emigration - Increase of Italian population - Poverty of Italian soil - The agricultural inquiry of Stefano Jacini - The climate and agriculture - A titanic undertaking: integral land reclamation - Mussolini does more in eleven years than the old governments in fifty - The Wheat battle - The Italian tenor of life - Not yet sufficient.

But however lofty these reasons may be, they are not the sole motives for Italy's occupation of Eastern Africa. There is an irrefutable fact which justifies her aspiration and that is her necessity for expansion.

Having attained her unity at a late stage, when the rest of the world was already under the dominion of other nations, she was obliged to content herself with impoverished and unprofitable lands. For many years, for too many years, her sons have been forced to emigrate, bringing their work and labour to foreign lands in distant continents. More than ten million Italians live far from their Mother country. Emigration was at one time a painful necessity, inflicted upon us by circumstance and the injustice of history. But to-day even these possibilities with which no country, aware of her duties towards her sons, and conscious of her mission should console herself, are lacking. After the World War the economic crisis and general unemployment which raged everywhere, closed the doors of all foreign countries.

The Italian nation which at the present day has a population of 43 million inhabitants, with an increase of approximately 450 thousand a year, can no longer ignore so vital and formidable a problem of existence. The great Statesman who rules the destinies of the Italian people, Mussolini, examined the situation of Italy in all its multiple aspects in a memorable speech some ten years ago, and pointed out the extremely urgent need for remedy. Changes have been brought about with great energy but no one harbours illusions concerning their future efficacy. The integral bonification, the battle of wheat, both undertaken with that energy of which only Mussolini is capable, could not continue to uphold for long the tranquillity, peace and labour of the Italian nation.

A few data can here give an idea of the difficulties encountered by Italy and of the superhuman efforts made in a calm and objective vision of present and future reality.

It is generally believed that Italy is a privileged country. That is an error. Whosoever desires a demonstration of the fact truly remarkable for its historical, geographical, geological value, should read the famous 'Agricultural Inquiry' by Stefano Jacini, published 1884. It is a classic work, known all over the world, praised by economists of all nations, a perfect model of scrupulous research

and scientific objectivity that perhaps may be equalled but never surpassed. Senator Jacini was head of a committee of twelve members, selected for their competence in agricultural economy. A few phrases suffice to prove that which we have stated above.

"Italy — writes Jacini — is a mountainous country, like no other in our continent, excepting Switzerland, and our mountains are high, in many parts bare, and inhospitable. Of the 288,538 square kilometres of surface almost two-thirds are taken up by the Alpine Chain and the Apennines, and of these two-thirds 56,000 square kilometres at least are snow-covered, rocky, or gravel, refractory to every vegetable production. That is due to Nature. If only at least, she had rendered the remaining part of those two-thirds productive! But they are only productive in places, and then poorly. They possess only meagre pasturing fields suitable for nomad pastoral industry during the summer. There are very few high forests even in the most remote valleys; there are somewhat larger woods upon the slopes of the lower mountains; for the rest there are spaces of no value, naked, upon which an occasional tree and some straggling grass grow."

"As regards the hills and highlands, these are almost always provided with meagre garden-mould and frequently there reigns a gravel deposit left there by retreating ices of prehistoric times. The summer aridity of the Italian climate does not permit of that spontaneous grass vegetation which constitutes the natural richness of the highlands and hills which extend along the German side of the Alpine Chain.

"There remain only the plains. We possess, it is true, the great basin of the Po, and the minor ones which extend along the Tirreno, in the Pisa, Grosseto, Rome and Campania territories; and along the Adriatic in the table-land of the Puglie, and likewise the Calabrian coasts, as well as the Sicilian and Sardinian ones, which occupy a minor space. The enquiry has made clear the fact that production of the plain of the Po is entirely artificial, since the soil there does not in any way compete with the richness of alluvial deposits of the Schelda and Rhine basins of Flanders, the Elba (Holstein), the Seine (Normandy), the Danube (Banate and Roumania), the Black Countries of Southern Russia, nor with a great part of England.

"As far as the world famous Italian climate is concerned, it would be disastrous if Italy were to rely upon that alone, without having recourse to other factors of production. The dominating summer dryness thwarts all forage and cultivation which require moisture as nourishment. Do not the forages constitute one of the foundations of any rational agriculture? And would not this alone suf-

fice to establish a decisive superiority in the matter of simple agriculture for the Northern side of the Alps, where the sun does not burn so forcefully, yet is not lacking, and where the frequent summer rains help to develop a more luxuriant grass vegetation?

"Therefore it would seem that Italy, as an agricultural country, is one of the least favoured through spontaneous liberality of nature. In comparison with her area she possesses very little tillable land and even this has yet to reckon with aridity and malaria".

That is the exact situation of Italian agriculture. Yet Mussolini, with the daring courage of belief, has not hesitated to face a most disastrous state of affairs, even against the judgment of technical experts who asked one another in amazement upon what unknown forces the Duce was relying for his purpose.

Here are the proofs. Mussolini desired integral land reclamation; he wanted to redeem a considerable part of Italian soil. And with what results?

From 1870 to 1922 the State accomplished land reclamation works over an area of 1,390,981 hectares.

Within the last eleven years since the Fascist Regime, this total area has risen to the amount of 4,275,611 hectares.

In matter of expenditure, reducing the figures to the present gold rate, one sees that from 1870 to July 1933 public works of drainage and land bonification have been performed to the total value of 5,248.3 millions, of which 3,527.8 belong to the Fascist Era and 2,032.4 to the last four years, in application of the Mussolinian law for Integral land reclamation.

When one considers the difficulties encountered during the execution of this work, one realises what a titanic effort has been made. In eleven years Mussolini has undertaken colossal irrigation enterprises upon a territory twice as big as that to which the former governments dedicated their attention during fifty years, and with an expenditure twice as great.

It is therefore useless to say that Italy has not done, and does not do all in her power to turn her national soil to account. On the contrary, one can safely ask if so great an effort has always found economic compensation? Science hesitates to give an affirmative answer, and can only bow before the high ideals of civilisation which the Duce pursues.

The same must be said for the wheat battle, which ended victoriously, notwithstanding the scepticism of European technicians of great fame. Mussolini desired to free the Italian nation from foreign dependence, and to give her back her wheat autonomy. And he succeeded, sending forth a generous appeal to all the farmers of Italy. Without increasing the area destined to the cultivation of wheat, he obtained a greater unitarian production, increasing the total annual produce from a medium of 45 million hundredweight to a medium of 70 millions.

So was the commercial balance considerably lightened, since it had

hitherto been gravely oppressed by the necessity for the importation of foreign wheat. In 1925 when Mussolini began his great wheat campaign Italy was still importing wheat to the value of three milliard and eight hundred millions. In 1935 that sum was reduced to only 71 millions.

More cannot be demanded from a country of such natural poverty in which the spirit of social solidarity is profound and widespread, as the numerous works of assistance of the Government and Fascist Party go to show. Last of all there was the law regarding the forty hour week, which divided bread yet further among Italian workmen helping them to better face unemployment.

And yet this great nation which has paid so notable a tribute to the cause of civilisation, has not yet attained the tenor of life which she merits, adequate to the function she performs in the world, in every field of art, science and thought. In May 1927, a famous physiologist, Professor Carlo Foa, published a study in the 'Gerarchia' review, particularly interesting upon the subject of the alimentation of the Italian nation. Certain figures afford bitter considerations.

"Every inhabitant of the United States", writes the eminent scientist "has annually an amount of food at his disposal which corresponds to the total of 1,866,250 calories; every Belgian consumes to the amount of 1,-

432,500; an Englishman to the amount of 1,380,000; a Frenchman to the amount of 1,358,000 and an Italian does not find more at his disposal than the amount corresponding to the total of 910,000.

Prof. Camis, who devoted himself to the careful study of the alimentation question in Italy, observes that the energetic value conveyed to the Italian people by its alimentation is not only insufficient but graver still is the defective quality of it, since the albumen of animal origin is lacking in it. This albumen constitutes 21% of the alimentary energy in the United States, 19% in England, 7,9% in France, and 3,4% in Italy".

How can one therefore, reasonably contest the right of Italy to a legitimate expansion? It is not a question of Imperialism, but of an elementary necessity of life.

il Bollettino

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DI CAROLINA INVERNIZZIO

17 Gennaio 1936

Appendice No. 21.

catoia del bosco, che la fanciulla conosceva bene.

La luce penetrava assai blanda in mezzo a quelle grandi querce che tutto coprivano della loro ombra; ma Lulla amava le misteriose tenebre della foresta, e non aveva paura.

Ad un tratto una voce beffarda la scosse dai suoi pensieri.

— Ah, ti trovo, finalmente!

Lulla trasalì, alzò gli occhi.

Era Eugenio che stava dinanzi a lei, Eugenio più ardito e cinico che mai.

Il cuore di Lulla batté con violenza, ma niente nel suo volto tradì la sua emozione.

— Che volete da me? — esclamò con tono aspro e selvaggio. — Io non ho nulla che fare con voi; sgombratevi il passo.

— Proprio? Lo sperai? Ebbene, disingannati. Io non ho dimenticato né perdonato che tu mi hai avvilito dinanzi ad Aurora, hai aizzato contro di me il suo cane, ed ora hai allontanato la signorina dal paese, certo per sottrarla a me.

— E se fosse? — disse arditamente Lulla.

— E te ne vanti ancora? Non sai di che cosa sono capace?

Lulla ebbe un riso stridulo, sinistro.

— Siete capace di tutte le viltà, non ne ho il minimo dubbio, — rispose

— Ah, non fate più il gradasso, ora! Vedete bene che non potete lotare né con me né con Flok.

Il disgraziato, invece di rispondere, sentendo che il cane stava per slanciarsi addosso e che Lulla non avrebbe fatto un cenno per trattenerlo, con un balzo da scimmia si arrampicò su di un albero, ove ristette accovacciato, tremante, ma sicuro dai morsi di Flok.

Lulla fece un salto indietro e con atto improvviso si tolse di tasca la rivoltella di Aurora puntandola verso lui.

— Se non ve ne andate, se non mi sgombrate la via, — disse implacabile la selvaggia — vi giuro che vi brucio le cervella. —

I loro sguardi s'incrociarono. Fu un lampo, ma bastò perché Eugenio capisse che la fanciulla non minacciava fino a toccarla.

Egli tentò di scherzare. — Vai fuori armata, adesso?

— Certo, quando si sa di poter fare l'incontro di un furfante vostro pari. Orsù, andatevene!

Eugenio esitava, allorché si udì un rumore di foglie smosse ed un cane si slanciò verso di lui.

Era Flok.

A quella vista un'angoscia orribile assalì il miserabile, che per i morsi già avuti dal cane era stato più di quindici giorni con la gamba enfiata e zoppicava ancora.

— Chiamatelo, chiamatelo, Lulla,

— Siete capace di tutto, — ripeté.

Essa dette in uno scoppio di risa.

come tu non devi dubitare di me.

— Ti amo, ti ami, il tuo nome è di continuo sulle mie labbra, e desidero che tu vada orgogliosa di me.

— Gia' ho ricevuto degli encomii dai miei superiori per il mio coraggio, il mio ardore; ma essi non sanno che sei tu che mi sproni a compiere il mio dovere di soldato, di patriotta.

— Io sono contento di trvarmi qui, e mai come adesso ho compreso che l'esercito è la scuola della devozione e dell'onore: è come una grande famiglia, dove i capi non solo sono rispettati, ma ispirano dell'ammirazione, dell'amore.

— Finora, tanto io che Giuliano non abbiamo riportato alcuna ferita, sebbene si combatta sempre in prima linea. E la speranza della vittoria è in tutti e ci fa compiere miracoli.

— Consola i miei, di' loro che il mio coraggio non viene meno, sapendoli in buona salute, a te affidati, a te, amor mio, sposa mia, che sei tanto buona e che io adoro in ginocchio, come una santa.

— Tutte le ore che io e Giuliano abbiamo libere, le passiamo leggendo e rileggendo le care vostre lettere.

— Le tue parole d'amore sono fonte per me di tanta dolcezza, di tanta consolazione, come non immaginavate mai.

— E' sogno di trovarmi vicino a te, di stringerti fra le mie braccia, di ripeterti che sei mia, solo mia nella vita, nell'eternità.

— Tutti i miei baci.

— Questa lettera deve essere sta-

ta scritta prima dell'arrivo di Aurora, perché non mi parla di lei, — pensò Lulla, premendo il foglio del suo Beppe per la centesima volta sulle labbra.

I giorni trascorsero.

Mentre Lulla un pomeriggio stava per uscire dal podere e recarsi dai genitori di Giuliano onde sapere se avevano già avuto lettere del figlio in cui parlasse della sua fidanzata, incontrò il procaccia, che le porse una busta piuttosto voluminosa, a lei diretta.

Lulla riconobbe tosto sulla sopra-

scritta la calligrafia di Aurora.

Invece di rientrare in casa, la fanciulla si diresse in un angolo solitario del podere, dove era solita ritirarsi allorché desiderava trovarsi sola, abbandonarsi alle sue meditazioni.

Ella sedette all'ombra di una querica dal tronco gibboso, bassissima, con dei rami enormi che, intercettando i raggi cocenti del sole, creavano un'ombra deliziosa, freschissima.

Con le dita un po' tremanti aprse la busta, e, con alcuni fogli vergati da Aurora, trasse un piccolo taccuino.

Era il diario di Beppe.

Ma a prima vista Lulla non indovinò né seppe comprendere che cosa fosse.

Lo mise in grembo e si accinse a leggere i fogli dell'amica.

Pero, fino dalle prime righe, un pallore di morte si stese sul suo volto, ed ella si fregò ripetutamente gli oc