

BACK IN ITALY AFTER A QUARTER OF A CENTURY



After Mussolini had come to power, at the end of October 1922, I lived four years in Italy, hiding and changing domicile from one town to the other, in order to elude the persecutions of the Fascist police. I was arrested a few times, but always succeeded to escape or get out without too much difficulty. But at the end of 1926, following the enforcement of the exceptional laws decreed by the regime, life became impossible to an anti-fascist as well known as I was, and I had to go in exile. I escaped through Switzerland, and was not to regain my country of origin until more than a quarter of a century later. It was not until quite recently that I ~~got~~^{could} to spend two months in Italy, crossing the peninsula from one end to the other, from Turin to Sicily.

The political general elections held in June 1953 had constituted a defeat for the party in power, i.e. the Christian democrats, who had lost the absolute majority of which they had disposed in the Parliament since 1948. The Communist and Socialist votes had increased from 8 to 9½ millions between 1948 and 1953; the deputies of these two Left-wing parties thus formed a bloc comprising 218 seats, approximately 35,4% of the total number. After these elections an atmosphere of pessimism prevailed, as to the political destiny of Italy;

according to estimates, another 14.6% of the votes in the next elections would have ensured the socialist-communists absolute majority, making it possible for them to get into power alone.

The Italians who came to see me in Paris - and who lived in close contact with government quarters - did not conceal their apprehensions, which sometimes assumed the proportions of panic. This situation of confusion and dejection prevailed all through the first quarter of 1954. Later, at the beginning of the fall of last year, I got the impression that something was changing in the Italian situation. In what direction did these currents move? What was the country heading for? It was impossible to reply to these questions only on the basis of what one could read in the papers or learn from some occasional eyewitnesses; it was imperative to resume contact with men and things on the spot. This was the reason for my trip to Italy.

I spent the three initial weeks in the North, mainly in Turin and in Milan, the two principal industrial centers of the peninsula. The "plant committees" elections were to take place shortly; the plant committees are appointed every year by the personnel of the plant - labor and employees - and in principle charged with maintaining relations with the management. Up to last year the majority of the plant committees was formed by delegates representing the General Confederation of Labor, a trade union organization headed by the Communist

Party and fellow travellers among the Socialists. The free and democratic unions only formed a minority, upon which the Communist majority exercised constant terror. It took a lot of courage to have one's name on the lists of the free trade unions, and when the communist party called for a strike or a manifestation for the end of some political manoeuvre in the plants, those who did not give in were persecuted and beaten. Their names were listed on panels on the walls inside the plants, and they were denounced as "traitors" and held up to public obloquy among their fellow workers.

This situation prevailed for approximately ten years. The communists were the masters, and everybody had to toe the line, including foremen, technical experts and the managers themselves. In the course of the (2-3) last years, however, some ^{changes} had occurred. A new trend was noticeable, which was going to lead to a change of ~~the~~ atmosphere and ^{of} ~~the~~ situation. The industrial leaders, who ever since 1945 had been obliged to give in and ~~submit~~ submit to the arrogant vexations of the communist chiefs, began to resist, very cautiously to begin with and then more and more openly. They pursued a methodical policy of fighting against the most outrageous practices, eliminating the most fanatic communist elements, those charged with the practical application of the communist party directives. The employers had been threatened and humiliated repeatedly;

I was told by the workers, that a manager of a Turin plant had been tied up by the communists and hung from a balcony, as if they intended to throw him down to the mob who kept insulting him and spitting on him.

The last straw was added in July 1948. A fanatic had fired a pistol against the deputy Togliatti, head of the communist party. This event occurred in Rome, and as soon as the radio spread this news, the communists launched a general strike order, hoping for a moment to be able to come to power thanks to this strike and the great confusion thrown everywhere, foreboding serious trouble. At the FIAT plant in Turin - the big car factory - the communists closed the door of the factory buildings in order to prevent the workers from leaving and force them to participate in the movement. The management, including the manager Vollette, were locked up in their offices, and thus prevented from leaving the plant. Groups of armed men from the communist partisan formations, which had not dissolved after the Liberation and which had their headquarters inside the plant, were reinforced by other armed elements arriving on trucks from the outside. The workers who wanted to leave and go home, were threatened with death and some of them beaten with great brutality. The communists led the whole operation, waiting for an order to emerge armed into the city. The communist party bosses, who had remained at their posts in Rome, while Togliatti

heavily injured, was hospitalized, were not plucky enough to seize the ~~situation~~ opportunity, although they represented the most callous elements, such as Longo, head of the international brigades during the Spanish civil war, and Secchia, head of the organization bureau of the party. After one day of general strike, they realized that their party had lost the game and that their dream ^{had} already vanished, due to the fact that the central government in Rome had kept composed and collected, remaining master of the situation.

In many places the communists were on the move: in Genoa the communist mayor had the city occupied, in Milan armed groups seized the Prefecture, in some places in Tuscany "Soviet Republics" were proclaimed, but the movement finally waned away; the communist dominated General Confederation of Labor had to order a cessation of the strike when the latter ~~was~~ degenerated. But the warning had been very serious. The industrialists decided to organize their resistance, the Government strengthened the police forces and the free unions broke off any connections with the communist organization.

Thus the anti-communist struggle began in the plants, both on the part of the management and on the part of the free unions. A typical example in this respect was the Fiat elections at the end of March 1955. The management spared no effort in order to make the elections a communist defeat. It would be ridiculous to pretend that the industrialists did not exercise pressure

to this effect. But it would be even more ridiculous to state that the pressure made on the part of the management in the plants was the main reason for the communist defeat, which proved possible only because a considerable revulsion had taken place in the minds of the workers. An increasing number of the workers had had enough of communist domination in the plants. We interviewed dozens of skilled workers just before the elections, these workers being the most successfully prepared elements from a trade union point of view: they were all of them determined to do away with the communist monopoly in the plants. The result appeared in the elections of March 29th: out of 48,000 workers and employees at the FIAT Works, participating in the vote, approximately 18,800 voted for the Socialist-communists and 29,300 for the free trade union lists. In the 1954 elections, the socialist-communists had obtained 31,600 votes; consequently they lost 12,760 votes in 1955; the free unions gained almost exactly all the votes which the socialist-communist union had lost. The communist organization, which previously held the great majority of the votes, became a minority. It was a heavy defeat: the balance of power had been reversed for the benefit of the free unions. This phenomenon was not an isolated case in Turin; more or less marked shifts in the same direction occurred everywhere. The communist suffered defeats even in other centers much more "red" than the FIAT plant; such was the case for example in the Milan suburbs, in Sesto San Giovanni, called "Italy's Stalingrad" and in the Emilia plants located in an area under close communist control.

The reasons for the communist defeat are much more serious than the party leaders want to admit. The pressure exercised by the management played its part, but would have been of a transitory effect, had not a labor rebellion ensued against the communist party. A constantly increasing number of the industrial workers of the North has lost confidence in the communist party which, instead of defending the interests of the workers, used the unions mainly as a means of fostering agitation in favor of Soviet foreign policy directives. The communist party centered almost all its efforts in the political campaigns aimed at collecting signatures for the innumerable manifestoes against the European Defense Community and later against the Western European Union. The workers are tired of these exercises in one continuous stream. Even within the communist party ranks a feeling of fatigue begins to break through; even if the "activists" remain mobilized, the masses do no longer follow them with the same faith as previously.

Within some communist cells murmurs begin to make themselves heard against the big party bosses who lead an all too ostentatious life, who are turning into "bourgeois". The importance of this opposition should not be exaggerated. The communist party asserts it has more than two million listed adherents and this figure probably is not very far from the truth. Before the rise to power of fascism, in 1922, the Communist party hardly counted more than 50,000 members in Italy, or even less; in 1955

it was more than 40 times bigger. It is by far the strongest communist party in Western Europe, since the French Communist Party, which was said to have attained 800,000 members, does not count more than approximately 300,000 members to-day. How should we explain the high membership figure of the Italian Communist party ?

There are many reasons for this, the principal ones being the following: first of all, there is the Fascist heritage. For twenty years Fascism endeavored to destroy the spirit of democracy in Italy, and was largely successful. Youth was brought up to hate democracy: the young people who were born during the first world war were at the most eight years old when Fascism came to power. Between 1922 and 1926 the democratic parties and groups were practically destroyed. When Fascism as a regime broke down in 1943, it left behind an inheritance of violence and dictatorial habits which largely facilitated the communist actions. The communists played an active role in the fight against the Germans and against the "Republic" created by Mussolini in Northern Italy, and this fact increased their popularity. In the period 1922-1943 the communists prepared their cadres abroad, in Russia, in France, in Spain, in America and elsewhere. All these elements returned to Italy and were joined by the prisoners who had been held in Fascist jails until these were opened after the coup d'etat of July or after the armistice of September 1943. The communist party was the only one which already in 1943 disposed of all its leading skeleton organizations, practically at full

strength. In 1944 it found its leader in Togliatti, who for many years had lived in Moscow, where he used to be one of the most faithful servants of Stalin.

The Italian communist party was represented in the government without interruption until May 1947 and benefited by this situation in order to augment its ranks and secure enormous advantages for itself. It had no competitor among the broad masses. In Italy there did not exist before 1947 any democratic socialist party: the only socialist party which existed at this period was the party headed by Nenni, who is exactly the opposite of a democrat. The only efficient resistance against the communist party was made by the Christian democrats, the leader of which, Alcide De Gasperi, who died last year, expelled the communists from the government in 1947.

One must not overestimate the strength of the communist party despite its two million listed members, not to talk of the communist youth organizations, which count some hundreds of thousand members. When the party cards have to be renewed in the first months of the year, one half of the communist party is mobilized in order to force the second half to subscribe for another year. Every member listed the previous year is subjected to an investigation; he is asked why he has not yet renewed his card. The questioned person sometimes tries to avoid the issue, to elude the question under one pretext or another, but in

the end he is forced to give in, unless he wants to take the risk of being banished from his neighborhood, from his village, from his plant. In certain regions of the Po Valley, failure to remain a party member implies for the worker the impossibility of finding a job and for the shopkeeper the loss of all his customers, without taking into account the dangers of physical violence. The party "activists" visit him at home, talk with his wife and extend their threats to include the whole family. The party card is often a sort of insurance against reprisals, a pledge of relative tranquility. One pays for the party card in order to be left in peace until next year. But this does not by any means signify that the number of cards corresponds to the number of convinced and determined members. I have talked with communists belonging to the party cells in Milan. Our cell, one of them told me, has some hundred members. The meetings are attended by a maximum of fifteen or twenty people. Out of these only some three or four participate in the debate, including the secretary. The others remain silent and leave after the meeting without having expressed their opinions. If we except the "activists" there is no political life within the cells. If some day the general situation became difficult for the party to any serious extent, at least one half of the holders of party cards would find some pretext for withdrawing their membership and taking a window seat instead of participating in the events.

The communist party is no longer in a position to organize strikes of any considerable duration in the industrial

areas of the North, particularly not within private industry. That is, for example, the reason for which the communist party is playing all its cards in the Genoa port strike, which has been lasting for more than three months; if the strike turned out to be a failure, the party would lose this big fortress - i.e. the port of Genoa and the surrounding area, its last card in the North. In addition to these considerations there are trade union reasons, for which the strike was originally launched.

A communist "activist" explained to me the program of action of his party in the following way: "In the North we have not made any headway and we have even lost ground. We do not bother too much about it, since we are going to gain in the South of Italy what we lose in the North, and thus the equilibrium will be restored". Before proceeding to examine what such a communist strategy may be worth, we have to state the results of our inquiry as regards a few other aspects of the situation: the inside conditions of the communist party itself, the struggle begun last March in small and medium-sized farms, and the rebirth of a certain sense of patriotism in veterans circles.

Within the Communist party, confidence in the leaders is not yet heavily shaken at least among the "activists".

At any rate - despite its two million listed members, the party fears more than anything to become isolated in the country. In order to avoid such a heavy handicap it has adopted prudent tactics, covering up its action with a mask of democracy and patriotism, but it has lost its bite, such as it still appeared up to 1950. The Italian communist party is no longer in a position to lead a mass struggle for power; if it tried to, it would inevitably be crushed, and that is why it has given up this idea. But the lack of activity to which the party is doomed in this field, weakens it - this same party which had made the masses believe that "D-Day" was impending. The masses, having waited for ten years without discerning any realization of this promise, begin to get demoralized, particularly in the North of Italy. The party can still hurt the country, particularly in the economic field, but it can no longer win the game, neither legally, nor through violent action.

In March, elections took place in all the Italian provinces, with a view to appointing, for each municipality, boards of directors to head the mutual societies for Sickness Benefits among peasants and farmers. These Mutual societies were created following the passing of a law by Parliament. The elections took place in approximately 7,700 municipalities,

which means almost the totality of Italian municipalities, from Piedmont to Sicily. They covered more than one million peasants and farmers, - heads of families - entered on the electoral lists. The Federation of Direct Farmers - of a Christian-Democratic trend, obtained an average of 90% of the votes; the organization which the communists had formed - carefully avoiding to call it communist - did not obtain more than an average of 10% of the votes. The communists then accused the victors of having used disloyal means. But how can it be explained, that in the province of Ferrara, for example, where all the municipal administrations are at least socialist-communist, the anti-communist Federation gained all the leading posts in the Mutual Societies in all the municipalities of the province? And how can it be explained that in Emilia and Romagna the anticommunist organization of farmers and peasants obtained 76% of the votes and the communist organization only 24%, and moreover in a zone which only a few years ago was under absolute communist domination and subject to communist terror?

We had the opportunity of following closely the preparation of the electoral work in the chief town of a Piedmont province. The rural population was determined to defend itself, with its own means, against the communists. Their organization was connected by telephone with all the municipalities of the province, and its headquarters could thus

follow all the phases of the fight hour by hour, district by district. Every detail of the campaign was under control and all the preparatory electoral tasks had been thoroughly tackled. In other words, it was an organization, using fully up-to-date methods, based on the network procedures, which had hitherto remained the secret weapon of the communists only. The communists were beaten with their own arms on their ^{own} proper ground. The preparatory work had been done silently, without fuss, in a spirit of cold determination. The communists were not expecting much an offensive, and despite their organizational experience, they were taken by surprise and caught off their guard. One of the peasant leaders told me: "For the first time the communists missed the train."

The rural elections also proved, that even in the most red farming districts the farmers had - as one of them put it - "gotten rid of fear". Evidently it was only a beginning, but a beginning of decisive impact. This new fact made the communist cadres furious; they very well realized, that when they were no longer able to scare people into obedience, they were themselves about to be beaten. This also explains the murder of two Christian-democratic leaders in a small place located in the province of Reggio Emilia. A number of Christian Democrats had come together in an inn to celebrate the victory of their electoral list over that of the communists, in the Mutual Insurance Societies elections we have just been talking

about. A communist fired his gun against the participants in the banquet and killed two of them. It is obvious that this fanatic had not been ordered by the communist party to shoot and to kill. But the crime was nevertheless a result bred by the atmosphere in this region - an atmosphere of hatred and intolerance against anybody who did not yield to the communist directives. The murderer explained his act in the following way: "If one had not taught a lesson to the Christian democrats, who had ^{won} gained the elections, they would have been filled with arrogance and would have continued to work along the same lines, while the communists on the other hand would have lost their faces. It was a scandal which we could not tolerate." As a matter of fact the crime, on the contrary, set off a general stampede among the communists of Emilia. A great number of communist party members handed in their resignations; as soon as the state of fear had been overcome and the spell broken, the resistance against the communist monopoly grew and became stronger.

Among the new aspects of the Italian situation there is ~~unobscured~~ a third factor which must not be overlooked, i.e. the rebirth of a certain national feeling or patriotism, which is inclined to comprise all ex-service men, no matter whether they fought in the resistance movement against the Germans and against the militia of Mussolini, or side by side with the

Germans in Africa and Russia by Mussolini's orders. This does not by any means imply that the Italian people loves warfare or approves, today, of Mussolini's policy which involved this people in a war to which most of them were hostile. But the people has retained a feeling of affectionate devotion towards any Italian soldier having fought on any front, simply because they obeyed the government in their capacity of soldiers, being under the impression that it was their duty to obey. They often cursed Mussolini, but nevertheless they served, or believed they served Italy, their fatherland. An episode occurred in the Italian Parliament which made a painful impression on a considerable part of the population. The communist deputies rudely insulted Marshal Messe, Christian Democratic Senator, at a Senate session. Why? Because this marshal had been in command of the Italian divisions fighting against the Soviet army on the Russian front. Messe had never had anything to do with politics; he was a soldier and nothing else. But in the opinion of the communists, he had committed the inexpiable error of fighting in Russia, obeying the orders of his government. Messe had not been favorable to the project of sending an Italian expedition corps to Russia, nor had he concealed his views at that time, but he had obeyed and accepted the command to which he had been designated. He had later continued to obey by assuming the command of the Italian troops fighting in Tunisia and had been taken prisoner after a rather courageous fight.

Evidently the communist attacks against Messe did not meet with popular support. I saw it myself in Milan, where a big rally of "bersaglieri" had been organized. The "bersaglieri" are infantrymen wearing big hats embellished with cock feathers, and the Italian people has always been particularly fond of them. The manifestation was impressive and attended by large crowds of people. It was headed by Marshal Messe, who got a considerable part of the applause. The communists have accused General Messe of being a "Fascist Marshal", because he had been named marshal by Mussolini, following his exploits in Tunisia, to which even the English had rendered homage. But General Badoglio had also been appointed marshal by Mussolini; he was another one of the "Mussolini marshals", but this fact had not prevented the communist leader Togliatti, returning to Naples from Moscow, to participate in the government headed by Badoglio - on Stalin's order... Marshal Messe has taken the initiative to create an Association of ex-servicemen, within which he would like to group all soldiers having fought - during the first and the second world wars - in the Italian army, no matter on what front. This initiative will perhaps have political consequences of a certain bearing; at any rate it is in itself a symptom of the changes which are being operated in the Italian situation.

As pointed out before, the communist party hopes to recover in the South of Italy and in the islands (Sicily, Sardinia) what they are about to lose in the North. This ~~calculation~~^{expectation} does not seem valid to us, at least not in this form, and we even doubt that the communist leaders have pursued it so far. These leaders cannot be unaware of the fact, that if their party is weakened in the North - where the industries, the big banking interests, the essential ganglions of economic life, the most modern farming industries, and the most active and well developed populations are centered - if it lost too much ground in this part of Italy, it would find itself in a condition of inferiority, for which it could not compensate by successes obtained in the South.

Let us now have a look at these successes, which have given rise to many discussions and apprehensions regarding the future of Italy. There is no doubt as to the fact that the socialist-communists ~~have~~ made considerable headway in the elections in the period 1948-1953, increasing their score of the votes in Southern Italy and the islands from 23.3% to approximately 30%. This progress has been particularly marked in Sicily.

Southern Italy is, for the greatest part, an overpopulated region, where people live on land which in certain

sectors is of low fertility. Following the liberation of Italy, the Government has made great efforts in order to improve the conditions of these populations. An agrarian and land reform has been carried out in the areas - which previously used to lay waste - located between the South of Tuscany and the very gates of Rome and continuing between the Southern suburbs of Rome and certain provinces located in mountainous Northern parts of Campania. Anybody familiar with these regions forty years ago, is struck by the magnificent accomplishments which have replaced the almost desolate land ~~with thousands~~ and marshlands by thousands of farms on moderately cultivated land. The physical aspect of these zones has been transformed, the very face of nature has been changed. An enormous work has been accomplished. And at the same time the population living here has become conscious of new needs, of a desire for "social promotion", formerly unknown. A new world is born, and with it the ferments of a life in full development, the rising of a people waking up and endowed with an extraordinary vitality, a people which is trying to find its way. This tide of still elementary passions, has not yet found the social framework which could canalize and guide it. In the South - at least in a great part of the South - there did not exist previously any political parties, nor any modern organizations. The communists were the first on the spot, trying - and proving

successful to a certain extent - to monopolize this spring tide of mass psychology, still on an elementary level from a civic point of view. They rapidly created communist networks in all centers, small as well as big, adapting their propaganda to a local and still primitive mentality; they scored successes even more easily as the war had dissolved the old, aristocratic and rich families which had lived there for centuries with their faithful and passive tributaries, who had now been thoroughly shaken by the approach of new times.

The communist party tried to win over the local elements without political experience, to which it supplied cadres imported from outside. It met with considerable success, like a clever hunter chasing abundant game off its guard. People ask themselves when and where this communist wave will be stopped in The South, where it takes advantage both of the ancient miserable conditions and ^{the} progress gained thanks to the new reforms. In our opinion this tide is already about to turn. On the one hand the improvement of living conditions has formed new classes of peasants, who - once the fever caused by new economic and psychological transformations will have gone down - will rapidly turn conservative, wanting to preserve the property obtained ^{through} ~~thanks to~~ the reforms.

But there is a new and essential fact to be taken into consideration. Now the communists are no longer the only ones working politically among the broad masses. The Christian democrats are about to organize themselves in the same areas as a modern political party, using certain methods of organization, of which the communists previously held the monopoly. We visited Sicily, for example, and were able to see for ourselves, that among the young, among them men aged between 30 and 40 years, many had a good cultural background and a marked capacity for maintaining the contact with the masses, taking care of their needs and interests. This new generation, which already possesses a sufficient degree of maturity, forms an elite, increasingly capable of holding their own with the communists, through serious work, carried out with passion and realistic sense at the same time. It is capable of replacing the communists and defeating them, becoming increasingly conscious of its social mission and contributing new life and higher efficiency to the Christian democratic movement. The local elections, which will take place in Sicily on June 5th, 1955, will probably confirm this appreciation of the situation.

We have already stated, that the communist party in Italy primarily apprehends isolation; this is to a considerable extent a result of its ^{own} ~~proper~~ mistakes, this party having mainly been concerned with serving the interests of the Soviet Union.

This isolation may become more accentuated, if the factors referred to above continue to affect the industrial workers of the North, the rural districts, the lower middle classes and the popular masses which have certain patriotic feelings. That is the reason for which Mr. Nenni, the head of the socialist party, who has been and still remains a fellow traveller, and to whom true democracy is tantamount to the democracy of the Russian satellites, the so called "popular democracies", has many times tried to approach the Christian democrats, and particularly the left wing of this party. In order to carry out this operation successfully, - an operation which also is of interest to the communist party - Mr. Nenni has tried to adopt somewhat freer tactics than those used by the communist party. He knows that the Christian democrats will never participate in a united front together with the communists, and therefore tries to establish contacts with this party, which would be refused to the communists.

This manoeuvre on the part of Mr. Nenni has met with the sympathy of part of ^{the} left-wing, non-communist quarters. Apart from being a manoeuvre, this move sets a problem of great importance in Italy's political life. Italy is the only Western European country where the majority of the Socialist movement is closely connected with the communists. The social democrats of a trend somewhat related to that of the British Labor Party are

grouped within another party, i.e. the one headed by Mr. Saragat, presently vice-premier in the Scelba government. But this social democratic party only counts 19 deputies in the Parliament, while Mr. Nenni's socialist party has 75 seats. If the majority of the/ leaders of the latter party are pro-communist, their electorate is not always so, and maybe the majority of them have certain democratic feelings. It is obvious that if the majority of the approximately three and a half million electors, who in 1953 voted for Mr. Nenni's party, could be won over for democracy, this would change the political situation in Italy in a happy direction.

But in order that these electors should be won over for democracy, they must gradually, but within a rather brief period of time, be freed from the communist mortgage which burdens them. Communism and democracy are antithetic concepts. Marching with the communists means, whether you want it or not, going against democracy. This contradiction may remain concealed for some time, but in the end always bursts ^{out} open. Mr. Nenni's manoeuvre has given raise to many doubts and suspicions, particularly after he had openly adopted an attitude favorable to the election of Mr. Giovanni Gronchi as President of the Republic. Already in the second ballot Mr. Gronchi got the votes of the socialist deputies from Mr. Nenni's party. Before the events of October 1922 Mr. Gronchi was one of the leaders of the Christian

democratic party of that time, which was called "popular party". Mr. Gronchi was at that period an anti-fascist and convinced democrat and an equally convinced catholic trade unionist. It seems to me beyond any doubt that Mr. Gronchi has remained and still is an anti-fascist, a democrat and a Christian trade unionist. He loves the people, the economic and social status of which he would like to improve. But more than ^{that} so, he would like to see the popular classes integrated in the life of the nation, and he would like them to participate in the activities of the State, by cooperating with and strengthening ^{it} it. We did not meet Mr. Gronchi in Rome, but we followed the various stages of his election rather closely. I found that the election of Mr. Gronchi was mainly due to a conflict within the Christian democratic party. The demarcation line in this conflict did not run simply between the right-wing and the left-wing currents of this party. Undoubtedly the "left-wing" elements, and more particularly the trade unionists were in favor of Mr. Gronchi's election, having some views in common with him. But within the current which secured the success of Mr. Gronchi, there was also an important number of elements well known to hold "right-wing" views. It would be too long to analyse and to explain this curious and apparent anomaly, but it is nevertheless a fact.

Mr. Gronchi is, no doubt, a left-wing democrat and christian. In reply to a journalist who interviewed him shortly

after his election, he declared that he did not want to be an Italian Kerensky, as some people had pretended. Nobody can doubt the intentions thus expressed. But in politics intentions cost less than the facts and the forces set off, willingly or not. Mr. Gronchi is a highly cultured man, very scrupulous and having a long political experience. He should be followed with attention but also with sympathy in the new functions he is accomplishing. The political crisis which will occur in Italy in a few weeks' time, after the Sicilian elections at the latest, will be the touchstone of his wisdom and his political capacity.



A. ROSSI