Our Book Review Section

POST WAR ITALY

Reviewed by ELLA G. WOLFE

"Rome or Death", by Carleton Beals, New York, The Century Co., $250. A discussion of the rise, development and political victory of Fascism in Italy.

In view of recent revolutionary developments in Germany, Spain and Mexico, developments, directly or indirectly influenced by the Fascisti movement of Italy, Rome or Death by Carleton Beals is of very special interest to us.

Beals lived in Italy during the rise and development of the Fascisti movement and its conquest of political power. He is an extremely careful student and his book is richly documented in the conditions and causes for the events that made possible a Fascist victory. The author has the magic gift of making history read like romance. In a stimulating, rapidly moving, brilliant style he discuses the parts played by Nationalism plus syndicalism; international revolutionary socialism; and clericalism during the post war period. With a few graphic strokes of his pen he gives us the reasons for the impossibility of a thoroly industrialized Italy. He says, "Italy is an exaggerated pushcart. She has no important natural resources, no iron, no coal, no petroleum, no cotton—her one industrial asset—water power in Lombardy and Central Italy." With the same vividness he compares the power of the Italian petty bourgeosie before and after the great war.

Necessary to Read.

He paints us a tensely stirring picture of the atavistic violence of the fascisti movement which worshipped the motto: "Hit first and find out afterward," and under this motto destroyed labor headquarters and labor papers, pillaged and burned Socialist co-operatives, murdered league officials and labor organizers. Therefore when the author declares, "It (The Fascisti movement) has never been, except in certain limited districts and for short periods a White Guard in the service of the reactionaries and profiteers," he is making a generalization completely contradicted by all the facts he himself advances and by all the testimonies of leading Fascisti that he quotes. From the character of their numerous punitive expeditions and of their programs formulated from time to time, the reader is left assured that the Fascisti movement, if not completely dominated, at least was financed by Italian Reaction and permitted itself to be guided by it in the destruction of the Socialist and Labor movement of Italy.

Excepting the above statement the whole book is a veritable mine of authentic information such as every worker who wishes to take part actively and intelligently in the American Labor Movement, can ill afford to miss. For altho the events are laid in Italy, they contain the same elements that are fuond in the struggle between revolution and reactiono the world over.

Co-operatives In Italy.

The second part of the book deals with the agrarian struggle. "Land! That has been the key to Italian prosperity and politics since long before the time of the Gracchi." "Italy's future lies in her soil." In this connection we find telling statistics on the super-concentration of land, especially in Sicily, on the evils of absentee landlordism; also an interesting picture of the universally hated Gabelloti (the agrarian middle-man and the slave-driver of the peasants).

As a background for the development of Agrarian Fascism we are treated to a careful and excellent study of the rise of the Co-operative Movement in Italy. Says the author: "The Italian co-operatives have been among the most happy expressions of voluntary associations in the world. They are much more extensive and thoroly organized than the old "artels" of the Russian self-governing co-operatives; they are more democratic than the grain banks of Portugal and Spain; and they are of more social significance than the Rochdale stores in England. Co-operatives are an integral part of every labor and peasant organization. The first thing a new sindacato thinks of doing is to establish a co-operative purchasing and selling society."

Rise of Labor Fascism.

The third part of "Rome or Death" deals with the rise of labor Fascism and the author indicates that the immediate effect of the success of labor Fascism was the disruption of the Italian labor movement.

Then follow the causes for the decline of the Socialist party; the clarification of the Fascist program, including Italy's foreign policy in the Mediterranean under the slogan of "The Mediterranean for the Mediterranean peoples;" the economic program for reconstruction characterized by such planks as the return of railroads, post and telegram system to private ownership, the settlement of industrial disputes by mixed organizations of labor and capital; the denial of the right to strike in the public service, etc.

Part four begins by sketching, in a masterly way, the magnetic Mussolini, the Breaker of Ballot Boxes, as the author picturesquely calls him, and ends by a vivid narrative of the romantic march on Rome by the Fascisti, and ends by a vivid narrative of the romantic march on Rome by the Fascisti.

Decay of Political Democracy.

The last part of the book discusses in detail the dictatorship of the Italian Fascist State. This is Carleton Beal's summary of Fascism: "Fascism has created the New Italy in an old, very old Europe—an Italy caught up in the vicious circle of isolated policy, depleted resources, financial bankruptcy, and expanding militarism; an Italy strangely imbued with a hierarchal spirit of Prussian sun-worship—yet lacking the temperamental restraint and lacking both the organizing ability and the industrial skill successfully to carry out a policy of aggrandizement; an Italy, which in spite of all logic, intends sooner or later to batter on the closed gates of the Mediterranean. This is the New Italy, which only yesterday weltered in corruption, disorganization, and chaos, which today has found a new faith in the "right of the strong." For fascism is backed by good bayonets, and fascism is a new weight flung in the balance of European politics. Some day, somehow, the eclectic, hazy, mystic idealism of fascism may be salvaged. But at present the new Italy marks one more milestone upon the road toward the general decay of political democracy in Europe.



The Poor Fish says he feels sorry for the peasants of Bessarabia but if they start to fight for their freedom they will only disturb the peaceful rule of the Roumanian nobles.

Labor Conv

May 5-15, ———, International Association of Oil Field, Gas Well, and Refinery Workers of America.

May 12-24, Cleveland, Ohio, Hotel Hollenden, The Order of Railroad Telegraphers.

May 12-17, Colorado Springs, Colo., Antlers Hotel, American Federation of Musicians.

May 26-31, ———, International Alliance Theatrical Stage Employes of the United States and Canada.

May 31-June 4, New York City, Hotel Imperial, United Wall Paper Crafts of North America.

June 4, New York City, Hotel Astor, Actors' Equity Association (Annual meeting).

July ——, Chicago, Ill., International Broom and Whisk Makers' Union.

July ——, ———, American Federation of Teachers.

July 1-10, Atlantic City, N. J., Continental Hotel, National Brotherhood of Operative Potters.

July 8-18, Atlantic City, N. J., Glass Bottle Blowers' Association.

July 14-21, New York City, Piano, Organ and Musical Instrument Workers' International Union of America.

July 15-20, ———, Retail Clerks International Protective Association.

July 21-27, Boston, Mass., International Plate Printers' and Die Stampers' Union of North America.

July 21-26, Atlanta, Ga., International Stereotypers' and Electrotypers' Union.

August 6-11, Chicago, Ill., International Brotherhood of Foundry Employes.