

TWO WHO ARE DEAD

The alternative is to recognise that a glut cannot be cured by economy and that in an age of plenty—whatever monetary system we may decide to adopt or adapt—‘society must,’ as Mr. Tawney has put it, ‘so organise its industry that the instrumental character of economic activity is emphasised by its subordination to the social purpose for which it is carried on.’

T. CHARLES-EDWARDS.

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ON March 2nd Francesco Luigi Ferrari, editor of the international review, *Res Publica*, official leader of the Popular Party abroad and its representative at all the international gatherings of Christian Democratic parties, died in exile in Paris at the age of 42. He had been badly gassed in the war; in 1920 he had received internal injuries from a Communist attack—remote causes, as far as it appears, of the abscess on the lungs that, an aftermath of neglected influenza, ended a life of useful achievement and still greater promise. Eighteen months earlier he had followed the funeral of Giuseppe Donati, his friend and colleague, the brilliant ex-editor of the militant *Popolo* of Rome, and who died of consumption accelerated by the privations of exile.

The deaths of both, in Catholic serenity and exaltation, were in harmony with their lives. They had spent themselves in the Catholic Social cause, in defence of the principles of *Rerum Novarum* in the political and economic field, and therefore it is well that they should be remembered.

It is doubly well because the vanquished are too soon forgotten. To-day at ten years' distance few recognise with what precision Germany is treading in the footsteps of the Italy of 1922, or remember that the Popular Party fought and lost the same battle the Centre has fought and lost to-day. *Vae victis!* While in Italy itself there is deliberate intent that the tides of oblivion should sweep over the exiles and all

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they stood for. Their very names may not be mentioned. The author of the life of Necchi, that 'modern saint' (reviewed in the February BLACKFRIARS), did not dare to recall that he was an ardent member of the Popular Party. That Party is officially dead; killed, like the other Italian constitutional parties, by the decree that made any propaganda on their behalf punishable by five years' imprisonment. But there is still a fear in Fascist circles (manifested *inter alia* by the attack on Catholic Action in 1931) that its ghost should walk.

Let us in justice to the dead and living recall what the Popular Party was. That when it arose, in 1919, with at once one hundred seats and over a million voters, it made Catholic opinion for the first time a real force in Italian politics. That its motto was 'Libertas,' the 'methods of liberty' as opposed to the 'methods of violence'; its domestic policy inspired by *Rerum Novarum*, its foreign policy one of international co-operation and reconstruction, (in 1921 Don Sturzo formulated a plan for a Danubian Union which, according to Count Sforza, would have changed the whole international situation). Behind it was the magnificent Catholic Trade Union organisation, with 1,200,000 members, associated with the International Federation of Christian Trade Unions; the co-operative movement with its four thousand affiliated land-banks; all that Christian Democracy had built up by a generation of dedicated labour, but which a few years have sufficed to scatter. It was this mobilisation of enlightened Catholic opinion that saved Italy from bolshevism in the three critical years immediately following the war, when Fascism was still on the side of extreme socialism.

Nevertheless, the Popular Party was the chief victim of that unreasoning panic of the 'haves' against the 'have nots' that, in obedience to some obscure psychological law, swept the country a full year after the real peril had passed. (We had the same phenomenon a year after the General Strike). The Popular advocacy of Free Trade, of the suppression of the costly protection of the parasitic iron and steel industries, so as to favour the export of the fruit, flowers and agricultural products natural to Italy, turned the powerful metallurgical industrialists into enemies.

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While the Popular programme of land reform, of the establishment of peasant small owners (after payment of due compensation) on the vast uncultivated *latifondia*, sent many of the big land-owners likewise into the arms of the Fascists. The success of the March on Rome was the direct consequence.

Donati and Ferrari were both early members of the Popular Party. The former had been a Christian Democrat since the beginning of the movement. On his return from the war, in which he had been several times wounded, and received the Silver Medal, he became Secretary of the Municipal Labour Office of Venice, then, having joined the Popular Party in 1920, almost immediately one of its leaders, and in 1922 editor of its powerful organ, *Il Popolo*. Ferrari before the war had distinguished himself chiefly by his work on behalf of the National Federation of Catholic University Students' Clubs. An eminent barrister, Counsel of the Court of Cassation, from 1919 onwards he concerned himself especially with the Catholic peasant organisations, promoting and defending them. Both he and Donati augured ill from the abortive attempt at collaboration between Populists and Fascists, and in April, 1923, when at the famous Turin Congress (in which, incidentally, that other 'modern saint,' young Frassati, took enthusiastic part) the whole Party reasserted its belief in the principles of liberty, they had the satisfaction of seeing that collaboration at an end.

When in 1924 the murder of the moderate Socialist leader Matteotti, and the evident reluctance of the police to pursue investigations shocked the moral conscience of the whole country, it was Donati and the *Popolo* who led the journalistic enquiry that ultimately unravelled the mystery and led to the discovery of the missing corpse. And when it grew plain that those responsible were to be shielded (it will be remembered that Dumini, the confessed murderer, was eventually sentenced to two years' imprisonment, and that an amnesty ruled out all enquiry as to who were his employers), Donati laid before the High Court of the Senate a formal accusation against De Bono, the Chief of the Police, who was gravely implicated. De Bono was released on the sinister Scotch verdict of 'Not

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Proven' (he became subsequently Governor of Libya). The night before, Federzoni, the Home Secretary, had communicated to Donati that he 'would not be responsible for his life.'

Donati fled to Paris, and the story of that brilliant journalist becomes a tale of valiant struggle against odds. He became editor first of the *Giornale degl'Italiani*, then of the *Dovere*, anti-Fascist journals which he felt obliged to relinquish on finding, as Dante found six hundred years earlier, that an exile is too easily surrounded by '*compagnia malvagia e scempia*.' In 1927 he became a waiter in a friend's restaurant, till a disturbing cough alarmed the clients. In 1929 he worked as a printer, but in 1930 found congenial employment at last as Italian Professor in St. Edward's College of Malta. There he was greatly beloved by all; the Irish Rector has borne fervent testimony to his piety and singular charm. He had returned to Paris for the summer holidays when in August, 1931, his disease grew worse and he died, forgiving all and desiring to be forgiven by all. His last words were '*Exsultet, et jam angelica turba coelorum!*'

Ferrari had remained in Italy a few months longer. Among his papers is a letter to his wife, written in 1923. At that time more or less normal parliamentary conditions still persisted in Italy, and the Fascist Government had threatened that if the Populists opposed their electoral bill they would organise a direct assault on Catholic churches throughout the country. Ferrari determined to expose this infamous threat in a signed article, and knowing that to do so would imperil his life, explained his reasons to his wife in what he thought must be a letter of farewell. The events of the following day were such as would have robbed such a sacrifice of its practical utility, but his willingness to make it reveals his mettle.

Three times his house and legal offices had been sacked when in November, 1926, the new Fascist law providing for the deportation of political suspects without trial drove him to flight. The University of Louvain held out hopes of a professorship in law if he could take his doctorate there; his thesis, a juridical study of the Fascist regime, published by *Spes* of Paris, was accepted amid the applause

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of the professors, but political pressure caused the hoped-for post to be given to another. For Ferrari as for Donati the early years of exile were years of bitter poverty. Happier in this than his friend, he had succeeded in getting his wife and two small children out of Italy; two more were born, one in 1925, the other this January, two months before his death. To support them and himself he worked as a tutor, as a journalist, with, in the latter field, an ever increasing success. In character he was Donati's antithesis; in place of Donati's fiery and meteoric brilliance, he had the cool, clear brain that seizes a problem in all its details. When in 1931 he became co-founder and editor of *Res Publica*, that review sprang immediately to the first rank. 'The best review in Belgium!' was the comment of the King of the Belgians, and proven journalists such as William Martin, editor of the famous *Journal de Genève*, Dr. Gooch of the *Contemporary*, and Wickham Steed were instant with congratulations and glad to contribute to it.

Last November Ferrari transferred his residence to Paris, but as M. Henri Simondet, on behalf of the International Secretariat of Christian Democratic Parties, notes in a memorial article, when the Executive Committee met in Paris, for the first time Ferrari was absent. Influenza had already developed into the complication that would end his life.

'I commend my soul to God and to my Holy Patrons,' he wrote in his will, 'that they may make it worthy of eternal rest. As for my funeral, let it be that of the poor, no flowers nor speeches nor exaltation of any kind . . . I have hatred for no one. What has inspired me and sustains me is love for the Creator and His creatures. And among these, the great and unhappy people of my Italy. May they be free: God wills it.'

BARBARA BARCLAY CARTER.