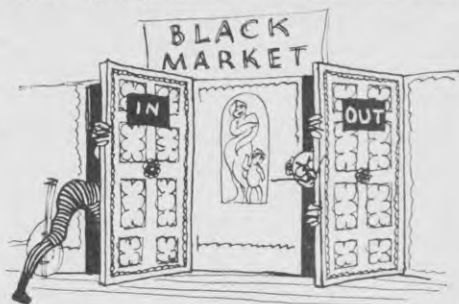


gramme for Italy was coupled with considerable propaganda in the towns; the *Milizia* was reorganized and expanded, and the grip of the Nazi-Fascist rulers was consolidated. Perhaps in order to test the security of their rule they called up the two youngest military classes in Italy, and all specialists from the Air Force and Navy. This was necessary because of the mass desertions which had occurred after the Armistice. The response to these orders was fairly good in the industrial north, but in the Marches and the Abbruzzi the decrees might never have been published for all the notice people took of them. I lived on a farm for some time; not one of my acquaintances who was selected for the draft ever had any intention of presenting himself. No sooner did Fascists arrive than they disappeared in company with others "outside the law"—as, for instance, escaped prisoners of war, partisans, and deserters. All of us hid in woods and caves until the danger was past.

Although in Northern Italy the inflation of the *lira* had not produced the economic chaos which was evident in the agricultural south, there was much hardship in the towns amongst the artisans and wage-earners. Before the Armistice the black market had flourished in Italy, the main source of supply being army stores. After it, however, the black market entirely supplanted normal economic channels. In fact, it was only through the black market that sufficient food could be obtained to keep the population above subsistence level. My memories of the winter months are coloured by the frequent slaughtering and sale of live-stock and by the transport and disposal of such articles as soap, olive-oil, flour, and tobacco, all of which were strictly rationed. The Fascists had instituted the death sentence for anybody engaged in contraband trading, and in some cases had actually carried this out, notably in Marcerta last February, when many people were shot and enormous quantities of flour, maize, hides, oil, and soap confiscated. The corruption of Italian officialdom was still very evident. A friend of mine, the biggest black market trader in the district, was twice on the

run from the police, and each time bought his freedom with "gifts" of some twenty thousand *lire* to the right people.

The Fascists made a survey of national resources and set up a system of rationing hopefully intended to last until next March. The only outcome of the issue of ration cards was the complete disappearance of rationed commodities from the market. Cigarettes, for instance, which were selling for sixty *lire* a packet on the black market, had previously been sold in small quantities on the open market at five *lire* a carton. When rationing began, the first month saw an



issue of one cigarette and one cigar per card in some districts. In the second month there was no issue at all. Olive-oil, the controlled price of which was between ten and twenty *lire* a litre, was sold in Rome for nearly nine hundred *lire* in April. There was no commodity which was not subjected to this enormous price inflation. The situation was aggravated by the German printing works at Aquila. This press ran full time, printing notes of large denominations. When German soldiers chose to pay for any commodity they produced a large roll of uncut notes rather resembling a toilet roll and cut off the desired amount. They openly scoffed at the paltry value of the great quantity of money which they carried. Payment in any case was merely a token, because lack of funds never prevented a German from taking what he desired from any shop or household.

The life I led at this time gave me first-hand experience of the reign of terror. I knew a farmer who was