

miserably poor and illiterate. I have seen similar farms, and consider the wages quoted here to be typical.

But travelling through Italy we very rarely came into contact with the landowner himself. If we asked the peasants where he was, the reply would be a frown of hatred and some remark that he had gone "up north" with the Germans and the Fascists. The fact was that most of the big land owners were high up in the Fascist party, and had departed leaving a manager on the premises. It would be a blessing to Italy if these proprietors never returned from "up north." The peasant loves his land, and is part of it. If he could own it and the produce of it, he would be happy. On numerous occasions we met men who had been to America and succeeded in accumulating enough savings to return home and buy a small holding. They had realized their ambition in life—a fortunate few of them.

The Fascist War

Clearly, Italy has in no way benefited from Mussolini's war. Admittedly the Italians started a war of conquest. But not the Italian peasant. He did not start it, and, indeed, he declined to fight it. In Greece and in Egypt he much preferred to surrender than to fight for Mussolini—a fact which was fortunate for General Wavell at a critical stage of operations in the Middle East.

At the same time, man-power and materials were drained from the Italian economy to support her faltering armies in the field. At a later stage, a further and deeper draining took place for the



A village in ruins.

benefit of the German war machine. Foodstuffs and supplies were simply commandeered by the German Army, and worthless paper chits given in payment for them. As the situation grew more serious, the hated Todt Organization commandeered labour-power to work on German production and on military defence projects. This meant not only a great reduction in civil and political liberty (which was small, anyhow), but a further disorganization in Italy's economic strength.

Any trade within the Axis countries naturally benefited Germany alone. Within Italy itself, scarcity and rationing was accompanied by the inevitable black market. Commercial men, however, made the profits from this—not the peasants. The peasant was the loser in every case.

At the time of the Allied invasion of Italy, reactionary forces held the power in the land—the monarchy, some sections of the Catholic Church, the great capitalists, and the German command. Under their sway, Italy was economically crumbling to ruins.

The Allied Campaign

From the above short description of the set-up, it might seem that a successful Allied campaign in Italy would liberate the Italian people from a tyranny and give them the opportunity to remodel their country. But the latter aim is not so easy as it sounds. Many factors have combined to prevent Italy from effectively re-planning her future as yet.



A mined bridge in the forward area.