

Italy's wounds are deep!



PEOPLE in towns and villages all over Italy have been taking their donkey carts into the campagna and bringing back firewood—pitifully inadequate little piles of bracken and prunings from the olive groves which will have to see them through the winter. For there is going to be no coal or other fuel in the vast majority of Italian homes this winter, any more than there was coal last year or the year before that.

It is going to be a hard winter, comparable with that experienced under war conditions a year ago, with shortages not only of fuel but of food and clothing as well to harass millions of people already grappling with the daily problem of making ends meet. The prospect of the weeks of hunger and cold before them is a gloomy one for the people of a country groaning under the weight of mass unemployment and desperately short of coal and of the means of transport. In the grim realisation that an extremely difficult period lies ahead, they face the winter with apprehension.

Suffering, like most countries in Europe, from material, political and moral troubles at the same time, Italy in many ways is still a confused and unhappy State. But serious as her

political malaise may be, it is the economic condition of the country which is of the greater immediate interest to the individual Italian, confronted as he is with the problem of obtaining sufficient of the necessities of life for himself and his family. The Italian knows well that it will require many years of labour and effort to remove the traces of war from his country, and is more or less resigned to that fact. But it is the immediate problem, the question of domestic comforts, with which he is chiefly occupied as another winter draws on. At such a time neither the past nor the future matters a great deal. How to get through the day or the week is his chief concern.

The world has been at peace for only a few months. All the efforts of the United Nations, stupendous as they have been, could not effect an appreciable increase in the standard of living in Europe before many more months have passed. Problems of supply and transportation, as the result of the disruption of continental transport systems during the war, are tremendous and must continue so for a long time. War damage has deprived Italy of the use of great stretches of her pre-war railway network of 21,250 kilometres, while the