

FASCIST SEX LAWS

FASCISM and the emancipation of women are inherently opposed. Fascism is the rule of force. It places woman in a subordinate position under the authority of the fighting male. With the nauseous repetition characteristic of it, it has continued to proclaim its views that the part of women under Fascism is to produce fighting men and to be the entertainment and servant of the tired warrior.

Mussolini in his conversations with Emil Ludwig stated: "Women must obey. My opinion of the role of women in the state is opposed to feminism. If I were to give women the vote, people would laugh at me; in state like ours, they ought not to count."

Since Fascism came to power, a law has been passed that no woman may teach a male person over eleven years of age in a subject which affects the formation of character and, as Fascism takes a very comprehensive view of how character and political opinion may be formed, this has a widely debarring effect.

Few people outside Italy are

aware of the astounding degradation in legal and social status suffered by the Italian womanhood under Fascism. The new Italian penal code punishes only what is regarded as the abuse of physical correction and discipline by the head of the family towards his wife and children. Only if the physical correction given by him cause the risk to a woman or children of mental or bodily illness is he held to be in fault, and he will then receive no more than six months imprisonment—instead of five years as in the former code. If the victim dies, the penalty is only eight years of being regarded as murder under the aggravated circumstances as in the former code.

Under the national socialist government of Hitler, which is but another name for the same type of force-sustained dictatorship as that controlling Italy, woman bears similar shackles and the imposing of them has been even more sensational and more loudly proclaimed. The German *Financial Times* observed: "The self-supporting woman injures man not only by be-

ing his competitor but also by depriving him of his pride of being the family's breadwinner."

The Nazi advent to power meant the immediate exclusion of women from their newly won seats in the Reichstag, the provincial Parliaments and all local legislative bodies to which they had been elected in considerable numbers after they won the rights of citizenship in the Revolution of 1918. A determined move was at once made to exclude women from all employment by public bodies, Government departments, local councils, hospitals and as far as possible even schools. All women under thirty-five years were made ineligible for Government employment and they were debarred if married to husbands in employment or to men of non-Aryan stock. The law of June 30, 1933, provided that married women were to be dismissed from all employment if their superiors considered them sufficiently provided for and unmarried women were also to be dismissed if it were held that they could be supported by parents, brothers or even sisters. Without waiting to pass any law the Nazi Government had already removed thousands of women from

public offices which they had occupied with great dignity and competence during the Republic.

For twenty-five years German women had possessed the right of admission to the Universities and to the practice of professions. Today only ten per cent of the women students who pass the Baccalaureat (equivalent to matriculation) are permitted to enter the University. The immensity of this injustice can be gathered from the fact that out of 10,500 women who passed this examination in 1930 only one thousand were permitted to study at the University. More than this, to all save ten per cent of those who are allowed to enter the University the right of practising the professions they study for, is absolutely refused and even to this small proportion the right is not guaranteed! Whatever may be the number who qualify, only seventy-five women a year are allowed to enter the medical profession. The official doctors' organ has announced: "The woman doctor is a hermaphrodite who offends the natural and healthy instinct of the people."

Scientific studies are a rigorously reserved to men. In the words of

an official communication in the *Koelnische Zeitung*: "Women must recognise that scientific work is specifically masculine . . . woman must never think in a theoretical manner; her brain ought not to occupy itself with abstract things." Strange sayings these in an age which has produced Marie Curie and Maria Montessori!

As teachers women may only fill subordinate posts. The organ of the Prussian teachers observed: "The men teachers' aversion to women superiors is in keeping with the healthy instinct of men." Everywhere the effort has been to drive women from skilled to unskilled labour in domestic service, on the land and in factory war work, particularly in the making of poison gases and explosives where they are employed at dangerous and debilitating processes.

Unemployed women are drafted to camps, where they wash, mend, clean and must undertake to do all work in house, stable, garden and field and attend lectures in Nazi philosophy after their labour of ten to twelve hours. Receiving no wages, with bad food, barns, sleeping on straw, they are liable to severe punishment. If one of them

be dismissed the fact is stated on her certificate and is a bar to obtaining other work. Large numbers of women from factories, offices, schools, Universities and Government departments have been thus drafted in city clothes and high-heeled shoes, working in the muddy fields for ten to twelve hours daily.

For girls between the ages of seventeen and twenty-one there is compulsory labour which is equivalent to men's military service. Some are congregated in camps for both domestic and military aid work; others are drafted to domestic work.

Women previously employed in responsible and skilled public and professional work have been drafted into the compulsory labour camps for work on the land.

Civilization has for many generations made steady progress in the elimination of women from heavy agricultural labour. Under Nazi rule Germany compels some of her most intellectually gifted women to such work under conditions approximating slavery!—*E. Sylvia Pankhurst, condensed from The Hibbert Journal, London.*